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STRAPAROLA.

VOLUME II.



THE NIGHTS

OF

STRAPAROLA

NOW FIRST TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY

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VOLUME II



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Book the Second.





From Giovanni Francesco Straparola,
Greeting,
To all gracious and lovesome ladies.

DEAR ladies, there are many envious and spiteful men who are always and everywhere attempting to fix their fearsome fangs in my flesh and to scatter my dismembered body on every side, contending that the diverting stories which I have written and collected in this and in the other little volume are none of mine, but goods which I have feloniously taken from this man and that. Of a truth I confess they are not mine, and if I said otherwise I should lie, but nevertheless I have faithfully set them down according to the manner in which they were told by ten ladies gathered together for recreation. And if now I should let them see the light, it will not be for the sake of gratifying my own pride or to bring me honour or renown, but simply to please all of you, and especially those who may always count on my service, and to whom I owe continual devotion. Take then, dear ladies, with smiling faces the humble gift which your servant proffers, and heed not these snarling whelps, who in their currish fury would hang upon me with their ravenous teeth, but read my book now and then, taking such pleasure in it as time and place will allow, without, however, neglecting Him from whom comes all our weal. May you be happy, ever keeping in mind those who have your names graven on their hearts, amongst whom I do not count myself the least.

[This dedication in the edition of 1555 is dated from Venice, September 1st, 1553.]



Night the Sixth.





The Fables and Enigmas of Messer Giovanni Francesco Straparola da Carabaggio.

Right the Sixth.



HE shadows of a night sombre and overcast had spread themselves everywhere around, and the brilliant stars in the ample-domed heaven no longer gave their light, and Æolus, sweeping over the salt waves with a long-drawn moan, stirred up a tempestuous sea and blew hard against shipmen and voyagers, when our noble and faithful band of companions, caring nought for the violent wind or the swelling waves or for the cruel cold, betook themselves to their accustomed meeting-place and sat down in due order, having first made a respectful reverence to the Signora. She forthwith ordered the golden vase to be brought to her, and placed therein the names of five ladies. The first to be drawn out was that of Alteria, the second of Arianna, the third of Cateruzza, the fourth of Lauretta, and the fifth of Eritrea. This done the Signora directed these five to sing a canzonetta, and they at once obeyed her command and began to discourse sweetly the following song.

SONG.

O Love ! if faith rose with thee at thy birth ;
If ye, twin flowers of earth,
Should twine around my lady's name
And deck the presence I adore ;
Then never more
Should they divide, or time let sink my loyal flame.

She feels your power indeed, but not enough
 To let your onslaught rough
 Sway all her nature, and release
 Her passions kept so well in hand.
 And thus I stand
 With failing hope, while my desire doth aye increase.

When the singing of this sweet and most pleasant song was finished, Alteria, who had been chosen to tell the first story, laid aside her viol and bow and thus began.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Two men who are close friends dupe one another and in the end have their wives in common.



ANY are the tricks and deceptions which men nowadays practise one upon another, but of the whole mass of these you will find none comparable in craft and knavery to those which one friend will use in imposing upon another. And since it has fallen to my lot to open the entertainment this evening with a story, it has come into my mind to give you an account of the subtlety and cunning and treachery which a certain man employed in the befooling of another who was a close friend of his own. And although the first one who tried this knavish game completely duped his friend by the amazing cunning he displayed, yet in the end he found himself tricked by a craft and ingenuity no whit inferior to his own. All of which shall be clearly set forth to you if you will of your kindness give a hearing to my story.

In the famous and ancient city of Genoa there lived in times past two friends, of whom one was called by name Messer Liberale Spinola, a man of great wealth, and at the same time one much addicted to the pleasures of the world, and the other Messer Arthilao Sara, one of the chief merchants of the city. The friendship between these two was very warm and close; so great, indeed, was their attachment the one for the other, that they could scarce endure to be apart. And if it should happen by any chance that either one of these had need of aught belonging to the other, he could claim it without delay or

hindrance. And seeing that Messer Arthilao was engaged in numerous ventures in merchandise, and had in hand many affairs, both on his own account and on the account of others, he one day had to set out on a journey to Soria. Wherefore, having sought out his dear friend Messer Liberale, he thus addressed him in the same sincere and benevolent spirit he ever felt towards him: 'My friend, you know well, and it is manifest to all men, how great is the love and affection subsisting between us, how I always have relied and still rely upon you, both on account of the friendship we have had for each other for so many years past, and on account of the vow of brotherhood that there is between us. Wherefore, because I have settled in my mind to go to Soria, and because there is no other man in the world whom I trust as I trust you, I come with all boldness and confidence to you to entreat you to do me a favour, which thing, though it may cause no little disturbance to your own economy, I beg that you of your goodness, and for the sake of our mutual good feeling, will not deny me.' Messer Liberale, who was fully inclined to do his friend any kindness he might ask for, without further words concerning the matter, said: 'Arthilao, my dear friend, the love we have one for the other, and the bond of fellowship which our sincere affection has knitted between us, ought to render unnecessary all such discourse as this. Tell me now, without keeping aught behind, what your wishes may be, and lay me under your orders, for I am ready to discharge whatever duty you may put upon me.' Then said Messer Arthilao to his friend: 'My desire and request of you is to beg you that, so long as I shall be away, you will take under your charge the government of my house, and in like manner of my wife, calling her attention to anything that may be wanted, and whatever sum of money you may disburse on her behalf I will pay you in full on my return.' Messer Liberale, when he understood what his friend wanted of him, first gave him hearty thanks for the high opinion he had of his probity, in that he held him in such good esteem,¹ then he freely promised Messer Arthilao to discharge, to the best of his poor abilities, the task which had been put upon him.

When the time had come for Messer Arthilao to set out on his voyage, having first bestowed all his merchandise on board his ship, he recommended his wife Daria—who, as it happened, was three

¹ Orig., *del conto che faceva*.

months gone with child—to the care of his friend, and then set forth, sailing out of Genoa with his sails spread to a favouring wind, and with good fortune to aid him. As soon as Messer Arthilao was embarked and well on his way outward Messer Liberale¹ betook himself to the house of Madonna Daria, his well-beloved neighbour, and thus spake to her : ‘ Madonna, Messer Arthilao, your good husband and my very dearest friend, before he set forth on this voyage, besought me with the most pressing entreaties to take under my charge the care of all his affairs, and of you yourself, madonna, as well ; and likewise to keep you mindful of all the things for your good of which you may stand in need. I, for the sake of the affection which always has existed and still exists between him and me, promised him that I would perform any duty he might lay upon me. Wherefore I have come to you at once in order that you may let me know your will, without hindrance, concerning any matter which may suggest itself to you.’

Now Madonna Daria, who was by nature very sweet and gentle, thanked Messer Liberale heartily for this speech, begging him at the same time to be as good as his word if at any time she should find herself in need of his good offices. To this Messer Liberale answered that he assuredly would not fail her, and, in discharge of his promise, he was very constant in his visits to his fair neighbour, and took good care that she wanted for nothing. In the course of time it came to his knowledge that she was with child, but feigning to be ignorant thereof, he said one day to her, ‘ Madonna, how are you feeling ? doubtless somewhat estranged on account of the absence of your husband, Messer Arthilao.’ And to this Madonna Daria answered, ‘ Of a surety, my good neighbour, I feel his absence for many reasons, but above all on account of my present condition.’ ‘ And in what condition,’ said Messer Liberale, ‘ may you find yourself ?’ ‘ I am three months gone with child,’ Madonna Daria replied, ‘ and there is moreover something strange about this pregnancy of mine. I never felt myself so ill at ease before.’ Messer Liberale when he heard this said, ‘ But, my good neighbour, are you really with child ?’ ‘ I would it were you instead, my friend,’ said Madonna Daria, ‘ and that I were well quit of it.’¹

Now on account of what had passed it ensued that, in the course

¹ Orig., *e io farei digiuna*.

of interviews of this kind with his fair neighbour, Messer Liberale was so much charmed by her beauty and her soft plump figure, that he became hotly inflamed with amorous desire for her, and night and day could turn his thoughts to nothing else than how he might obtain gratification of his dishonest wishes, but the love in which he held his friend Messer Arthilao kept him back for a time. But after a while, spurred on by the violence of his passion, which melted all his good resolutions, he went one day to Madonna Daria and said, 'Alas! my dear friend, how deeply grieved I am that Messer Arthilao should thus have gone away from you and left you pregnant; because, on account of his sudden departure, he may very well have forgotten to complete the child which he begat and which you now carry in your womb. On this account, perchance, it has come to pass that your pregnancy is such an uneasy one.' 'Oh! my friend,' cried Madonna Daria, 'do you really believe that the infant which I bear in my womb may be lacking in one or other of its limbs, and that I may be suffering therefor?' 'Of a truth,' replied Messer Liberale, 'that is my opinion; nay, I hold it for certain that my good friend Messer Arthilao has failed to give it the due number of limbs. It often happens in cases of this sort that one child is born lame and another blind, one of this fashion and another of that.' 'Ah! my dear friend,' said Madonna Daria, 'this thing you tell me greatly troubles my mind. Where shall I look for a remedy, so that this misfortune may not befall me?' 'My dear neighbour,' Messer Liberale replied, 'be of good cheer and do not distress yourself in vain, for know that a remedy is to be found for everything except death.' 'I beg you, for the love you bear to your absent friend,' said Madonna Daria, 'that you will put me in the way of finding this remedy; and the sooner you can let me have it, the more I shall be bound to you; then there will be no danger lest the child should be born imperfect.'

When Messer Liberale found that he had brought Madonna Daria into a mood favourable for his purpose, he said to her: 'Dear lady, it would be great baseness and cowardice in a man if, when he saw his friend ready to perish, he did not stretch out his hand to aid him. Wherefore, seeing that I am able to supply the defects which your infant at present has, I should be a traitor to you and should be working you great wrong if I did not come to your assistance.' 'Then, my dear friend,' said the lady, 'do not make any longer delay, but set to work straightway, so that the child may be made perfect at

once ; for, besides the pity of it, it would be a most grievous sin.' 'Do not let any doubt on this score trouble you,' said Liberale ; 'I will discharge my duty to the full ; and now give orders to your waiting-woman that she get ready the table, and in the meanwhile we will make a beginning of the good work we have in hand.'

Thus, while the waiting-woman was getting in order the table, Messer Liberale went with Madonna Daria into the bedchamber, and having made fast the door, he began to caress her and kiss her, giving her the most loving embracements man ever gave to woman. Madonna Daria was mightily astonished when she saw what Messer Liberale's treatment was, and said to him : 'What does this mean, Messer Liberale ? Is it right that we should do such things in such fashion, good neighbours and friends though we be ? Alack a day ! it is too great a sin ; though, if this were not so, I do not know that I should refuse to consent to your wishes.'

Then replied Messer Liberale, 'Pray tell me which is the greater sin, to lie with your friend, or to let this infant come into the world maimed and imperfect ?' 'I judge that the greater sin would be,' replied Madonna Daria, 'to let a child be born, through the fault of its parents, in an imperfect state.' 'Then,' rejoined Messer Liberale, 'you would assuredly be guilty of a great offence were you to refuse to let me bring to pass all that work your husband left undone in the formation of the child.' Now the lady, who desired greatly that her offspring should come into the world perfect in all its members, gave credence to these words of her neighbour, and, notwithstanding the close tie between him and her husband, she gave way to his desires, and many and many a time hereafter they took their pleasure together. Indeed, so pleasant to the lady seemed this method of restoring to her infant whatever might be wanting, that she was ever begging Messer Liberale to take good heed lest he should fail, as her husband had failed before. Liberale, who found he had fallen upon a very dainty morsel, did his best, both by day and night, to make up anything which might be wanting in the child, so that it might be born perfect in every way. And when Madonna Daria had gone her full time, she was brought to bed with a lusty boy, who proved to be the very counterpart of Messer Arthilao, and perfectly formed, lacking nothing whatsoever in any of his parts. On this score the lady was overjoyed, and full of gratitude to Messer Liberale as the cause of her good fortune.

After a short time had passed Messer Arthilao returned to Genoa and betook himself to his home, where he found his wife restored to health and fair as ever, and she, full of joy and merriment, ran to meet him with her baby in her arms, and they embraced and kissed one another heartily. And as soon as Messer Liberale got news of the return of his friend, he quickly went to see and greet him, congratulating him on his happy return and on his well-being. A few weeks later it happened that Messer Arthilao, as he sat at table one day with his wife and fondled the child, spake thus : ‘ O Daria, my wife, what a beautiful child this one of ours is ! Did you ever see one better made ? Look at its whole presence, and admire its pretty face and its bright eyes, which sparkle as if they were stars ! ’ And thus, feature by feature, he went on praising the shapely boy. Then Madonna Daria answered : ‘ Of a truth there is nothing wanting in him, but that is not altogether owing to your fine performances, my good man ; because, as you know well enough, I was three months gone with child when you went away, and the child which I had conceived was not yet fully furnished with his members, whereby I had like to have had grave mischance in my pregnancy. Wherefore we have great cause to thank our good neighbour Messer Liberale, who was most eager and diligent to supply out of his own strength all that was lacking in the child, making good all those parts where your own work had failed.’ Messer Arthilao listened to and fully understood this speech of his wife, and felt wellnigh beside himself with rage. It seemed as if he had a sharp knife in his heart, for he quickly comprehended that Messer Liberale had played the traitor to him and had debauched his wife ; but, like a sensible man, he feigned not to have understood the meaning of what he had heard, and held his peace, turning the discourse, when he spoke again, upon other matters.

But when he was risen from table, Messer Arthilao began to cogitate over the strange and shameful conduct of his friend, whom he had loved and esteemed far above any other man in the world, and day and night he brooded and planned in what fashion, and by what method, he might best avenge himself for the great offence which had been wrought against his honour. The poor wight, thus enraged, harboured ever these projects, scarcely knowing what course he would take, but in the end he determined to do a certain thing which would let him bring to pass the issue he especially willed and desired.

Wherefore one day he said to his wife, 'Daria, see that to-morrow our table may be furnished a little more generously than is our wont, because I wish to invite Messer Liberale and Madonna Propertia his wife, our good neighbours, to dine with us; but take heed that, as you love your life, you speak not a word of any sort, and let pass anything you may see or hear without remark or notice.' And Madonna Daria agreed to do as he proposed. Then having left the house he betook himself to the piazza, where he met his neighbour, Messer Liberale, whom, together with his wife, Madonna Propertia, he bade come together on the following day. And Messer Liberale gladly accepted the invitation.

On the following day the two invited guests repaired to the house of Messer Arthilao, where they met a most friendly greeting and reception. And when they were all gathered together and were conversing on this thing and that, Messer Arthilao spake thus to Madonna Propertia: 'Dear neighbour, while they are getting ready the viands and setting the table, I would you took some trifle to sustain you.' And, having led her aside into a chamber, he handed to her a beaker of drugged wine with a toast thereto, both of which she took, and, without any fear whatever, ate the toast and emptied the beaker of wine. Then they returned, and, having placed themselves at the table, began merrily the dinner.

But long before the feast had come to an end, Madonna Propertia began to feel drowsiness stealing over her, so that she could scarce hold open her eyes, and Messer Arthilao when he perceived this said: 'Madonna, will it please you to go and rest yourself a little; peradventure last night your slumber was broken,' and with these words he conducted her into a chamber where, having thrown herself upon the bed, she fell asleep at once. Messer Arthilao, fearing lest the potency of his draught should pass off,¹ and that time might fail him for the carrying out of the project which he was secretly keeping in his mind, called Messer Liberale and said to him: 'Neighbour, let us go out for a little, and leave your good wife to sleep as long as she may need; peradventure she was astir somewhat too early this morning and is in want of sleep.' Then they both went out and betook themselves to the piazza, where Messer Arthilao made believe to be pressed in the despatch of certain matters of business, and having

¹ Orig., *non venisse à meno*.

bidden farewell to his friend, returned privily to his own house, and, being come there, stole quietly into the chamber where Madonna Propertia was lying. When he went up to the bed he perceived that she was sleeping quietly, whereupon, without being espied by any one of the people in the house or rousing the notice of the lady herself, he took away from her, with the utmost lightness of hand, the rings she wore on her fingers and the pearls from about her neck, and withdrew from the chamber.

The effects of the medicated draught had entirely dissipated themselves by the time Madonna Propertia awoke, and, when she felt inclined to rise and leave the bed, she remarked that her pearls and her rings were missing; so, having got up, she searched here and there and everywhere, turning everything upside down without finding any trace of the thing she was seeking. Wherefore, mightily upset, she rushed out of the room and began to question Madonna Daria whether by chance she might not have taken her pearls and rings, but Madonna Daria assured her friend that she had seen nothing of them; whereupon Madonna Propertia was wellnigh beside herself with agony. While the poor lady was thus distraught with grief and anxiety, without any notion as to where she should seek a remedy for her trouble, who should come in but Messer Arthilao, and he, when he saw his friend's wife so painfully agitated, said in a somewhat diffident tone: 'What has come to you, dear friend, that you are in such trouble?' In answer to this question Madonna Propertia told him the whole misfortune which had befallen her; whereupon Messer Arthilao, making as if he knew nought of the matter, thus spake to her: 'Make a close search, madonna, and consider well whether you may not have put these your jewels in some place which you no longer remember. But in any case, supposing that you should not be able to find them, I promise you, on the faith of our old friendship, that I will make such an investigation of the matter that they who have taken away these things of yours will find they have played a bad turn for themselves; but first, before we put our hands to the business, I beg that you will once more make a diligent search in every corner.'

Whereupon the ladies and the serving-women as well searched and re-searched the house from top to bottom, turning everything upside down and finding nothing. Messer Arthilao remarking their ill success, began to make an uproar through the house, threatening

now this one and now that with ill handling, but they all swore solemnly that they had no knowledge of the matter. Then Messer Arthilao, turning towards Madonna Propertia, said: 'My dear neighbour, be not overcome by this trouble, but keep a light heart, for I am at your service to see this matter to an end. And you must know, my dear friend, that I am the possessor of a secret of so great virtue and efficiency that by its working I shall be able to lay my hand on the man, whoever he may be, who has taken your jewels.'

When she heard these words Madonna Propertia said: 'Oh, Messer Arthilao! of your kindness I beg you to make this experiment, in order that there may be no cause for Messer Liberale to suspect me, or to think of me as an evil-doer.' Whereupon Messer Arthilao, seeing that the time was now come when he might meetly work his vengeance for the injury which had been done him of late, called for his wife and for the serving-women, and strictly charged them that they should get them gone out of the chamber, and that no one of them should dare to come near to it under any pretence, except he should summon her thither. And when his wife and the women folk were gone, Messer Arthilao closed the door of the chamber, and having drawn with a bit of charcoal a circle on the floor and figured therein certain signs and certain characters of his own invention, said to Madonna Propertia: 'Now, my dear friend, lie down on that bed and take heed you move not, neither have any fear on account of anything you may feel, forasmuch as I will not go hence till I shall have found your jewels.' 'You need not have the smallest fear,' said Madonna Propertia, 'that I will budge an inch, nor indeed do the least thing of any sort, unless I have your commands thereanent.' Then Messer Arthilao, having turned himself towards the right, made certain signs upon the floor, then turning to the left made other signs and conjurations in the air, and pretending the while to be conversing with a multitude of spirits, uttered all sorts of strange noises in a fictitious voice in such a way that Madonna Propertia was not a little bewildered, but Messer Arthilao, who had foreseen this, reassured her, and speaking comforting words to her bade her not to be affrighted. And when he had been within the circle for about half a quarter of an hour, he began to speak certain words in a gurgling tone, which were as follows:

What I have not found, what I am seeking still,
Lies hid in a valley deep beneath a smiling hill;

The one who holds it now, is the one who lost it then ;
So take your fishing-rod and you'll win it back again.

Madonna Propertia was fully as much astonished as pleased as she listened to these words, and, when the incantation was finished, Messer Arthilao said : ' Dear friend, you have heard all that was said. The jewels which, as you believed, you have lost, are somewhere about you. There is no need for any further grief. Keep up your spirits, and we will find them all. But it is necessary that I should seek for them in the place where you understand they are.' The lady, who was very desirous to get back her jewels, answered eagerly : ' Good friend, I fully comprehend all this. Do not delay, I beg you, but begin your search with all despatch.' Whereupon Messer Arthilao came forth out of the circle, and, having made ready for his sport by lying down beside the lady on the bed, straightway began his fishing, and, at the same moment when he made his first cast, he drew forth a ring from his bosom (without the lady seeing it), and this he handed to her, saying : ' See, madonna, how successful, how good a fisherman I am, how at the first cast I have recovered your diamond!' Madonna Propertia, when she saw the diamond, was greatly pleased and said : ' Ah, my good, kind friend ! I pray you not yet to cease your fishing ; then perhaps you will get back all the other jewels I have lost.' Messer Arthilao kept on at his angling like a man, now bringing out one lost jewel, now another, working so well with his tackle that finally he recovered and handed back to the lady every article that had been lost.

For this service Madonna Propertia was highly grateful and quite satisfied with the issue of the affair, and, having got back all her precious jewels, she said to Messer Arthilao : ' Dear friend, see how many and valuable things you have recovered for me by your good faith and diligence ; peradventure by another cast of your line in the same place you might win back for me a beautiful little kettle which was stolen from me some days ago and which I prized very highly.' Then Messer Arthilao answered : ' Most willingly would I do this, were I not somewhat wearied just at present over what I have already done. Be assured that at some future time I shall be quite ready to make a trial to get back your kettle, and I have good hope that we may succeed.' Madonna Propertia was fully content with this proposition, and, having taken leave of Messer Arthilao and Madonna Daria, she took her jewels and returned home with a light heart.

A short time after this it happened that one morning, when Madonna Propertia was lying in bed with her husband, and the two chatting pleasantly together, she said to him : ‘ Oh, husband ! i’ faith consider whether you might not, by taking a turn of fishing, find for me the little kettle which we lost a long time ago ; because, forsooth, some days since I happened to miss certain of my jewels, and Messer Arthilao our good neighbour was kind enough to come to my aid, and, by fishing for them most skilfully, found every one of them and gave them back to me. And when I begged him that he would try another cast with the view of finding the kettle, he told me that he was unable to recover it just then, seeing that he had wearied himself somewhat by the fishing he had already done on my behalf. Wherefore, I beg you, let us two make a trial to see whether we may not be able to get it back.’

Messer Liberale, when he listened to this speech, understood well enough what manner of repayment his neighbour had made him for his own trick, and, holding his peace, was fain to pocket the affront patiently. On the following morning the two neighbours, when they met upon the piazza, looked narrowly one at the other, but neither of them had the courage to broach the subject, so nothing was said on one side or the other. Nor did they take their wives into their confidence, but the issue of the affair was that for the future a common right was established for either one to take his diversion with the wife of the other.


This story told by Alteria was so mightily to the taste of the company that it seemed as if they would have gone on for the rest of the evening making remarks thereanent, and discussing the craft and dexterity with which the one friend had duped the other. But the Signora, when she saw that the laughter and the frolicsome speeches promised to go on somewhat longer than was meet, gave the word that the merriment should stop, and that Alteria should follow the established rule by propounding her enigma. Whereupon she, without making any further delay, thus gave it :

A useful thing, firm, hard, and white,
Outside in shaggy robe bedight ;
Hollowed within right cleverly,
It goes to work both white and dry.
When after labour it comes back,
You’ll find it moist and very black ;
For service it is ready ever,
And fails the hand that guides it never.

This enigma given by Alteria awakened amongst her hearers fully as much pleasure as had her story. And, notwithstanding the fact that certain traits thereof might seem somewhat to affront modesty, the ladies did not on this account forbear to discuss it, because they had on another occasion heard the same thing. But Lauretta, feigning to have no inkling of the meaning of the enigma, besought Alteria to explain it, and the latter, with a merry countenance, spake thus to her questioner : “ It is superfluous labour to carry crocodiles to Egypt, or vases to Samos, or owls to Athens. However, to do your pleasure, I will unfold my riddle. I declare that the instrument, partly plumed and partly perforated, is simply a pen such as one employs in writing, which, before one dips it in the inkstand, is white and dry, but when it is withdrawn therefrom is black and moistened and ready to serve the writer who holds it in whatever way he will.” As soon as Alteria had finished this explanation of her pretty riddle, Arianna, who was sitting beside her, stood up and began to tell her story.

THE SECOND FABLE.

Castorio, wishing to become fat, submits himself to treatment at the hands of Sandro, and being half dead thereby is soothed by a jest of Sandro's wife.

HE fable which Alteria has just told to us with no less grace than discretion calls back to my mind a certain drollery, as laughable perchance as hers, which I heard briefly told from the mouth of a noble gentlewoman a short time ago. And, if I should not succeed in setting it forth with that distinction and elegance with which it was told to me, I must beg you to hold me excused, seeing that nature has been niggard to me of those fine qualities granted so liberally to the lady of whom I speak.

Somewhat below Fano, a city of the Marches, situated on the shore of the Adriatic sea, there is a small town called Carignano, numbering amongst its people many lusty youths and fair damsels, and there, amongst others, dwelt a peasant named Sandro, one of the most witty and rollicking fellows nature ever made, and, for the

reason that he recked nought of anything save what gave him pleasure, let things go well or ill, he became so ruddy and fat that his flesh resembled nothing so much as a bit of larded bacon. And he, when he had come to the age of forty, took to wife a woman just as good-humoured and fat as himself, and a week never passed in which this good woman would not carefully shave her husband's beard in order that he might look more seemly and frolicsome. It chanced that a certain Messer Castorio, a gentleman of Fano, rich and young, but of slender wit, purchased in the commune of Carignano a farm, on which stood a house of moderate size, and there, with two of his servants and a lady whom he entertained for his pleasure, he would spend a greater part of the summer. One day when Castorio, according to his custom, was walking through the fields after dinner, he marked Sandro, who was turning up the earth with his crooked plough, and seeing what a fine fat ruddy fellow the peasant was with his smiling face, he said: 'Good neighbour, I cannot think what can be the reason that I am so lank and lean, as you see, while you are ruddy and well fleshed. Every day I eat the nicest viands and drink the costliest wines; I lie in bed as long as pleases me, and want for nothing. No man in all the world longs so keenly as I do to get fat, but the greater pains I take to that end, the leaner I grow. Now all the winter you eat nought but the coarsest food, and drink watered wine; you rise up to go to your work while it is yet night, and all summer long you never have an hour's rest; nevertheless your rosy face and your well-covered ribs make you a pleasure to behold. Wherefore, being greatly desirous to become fat, I beg you that you will, to the best of your knowledge and power, help me to lay on flesh, and tell me the method you have employed so greatly to your own advantage. Then, over and beyond the fifty gold florins which I purpose to give you forthwith, I promise to reward you in such wise that, for the rest of your life, you will assuredly be well satisfied with what I do for you, and rest content.'

Now Sandro, who was both cunning and roguish in grain, and was one of the red-haired sort, refused flatly to tell Castorio what he wanted to know so eagerly; but, after a little, feigning to be overcome by the lengthy importunities of Castorio, and amazingly taken in reality by the notion of fingering those fifty gold florins, he let loose his tongue somewhat, and, having given over his ploughing for a little, he sat down beside Castorio and spake thus: 'Signor

Castorio, you say you are mightily astonished over my fatness and likewise over your own lean condition, believing the while that a man gets fat or thin by reason of what he may eat or drink ; but in this you are vastly in error, for one may see any day eaters in any number, and drinkers as well, who rather gormandize than eat their food, and nevertheless are as thin as lizards. But if you will do for yourself what I have done, I will warrant you will soon be as fat as I am.' Then said Castorio, 'And what is this thing you did?' Sandro answered, 'Why, about a year ago I made a gelding of myself, and from the self-same hour when I did this I grew fat as you see.' 'But I wonder you did not meet your death thereby,' replied Castorio. 'What do you mean by death?' cried Sandro, 'seeing that the practitioner who did the business for me had such skill of hand that I felt not the least pain or hurt, and from that very time my flesh has been like the flesh of a young child. Of a truth I have never felt myself so well and happy as I find myself to-day.' 'And tell me, I pray you, the name of the man who did this service to you,' said Castorio. Ah! but he is dead, good man,' replied Sandro. 'Alas!' cried Castorio, 'what shall we do then seeing that he is dead?' Then Sandro answered: 'Do not be cast down; let me tell you that this good man, before he gave up the ghost, taught me, and made me the master of his art, which, from that time onward, I have regularly practised, castrating vast quantities of calves and fowls and other animals, which, as soon as I have tried my hand upon them, always lay on fat in a fashion that is wonderful to behold. Now, if you will only leave the charge of this matter to me, I will pledge myself that you will be highly contented with my handiwork.' 'But I fear I may die under the operation,' said Castorio. 'What folly is this you say? Death, forsooth! Look at the calves and the capons and the other animals I deal with in my calling; how many of these die?' cried Sandro. Whereupon Castorio, who was possessed with a stronger desire to grow fat than had ever infected man before, said he would take time to consider the business.

But Sandro, who saw that Castorio in truth was fully determined to follow the advice he had given him, bade him not delay, but to allow him straightway to try his art upon him. The foolish fellow agreed, and Sandro, who had with him a knife as sharp as a razor, at once set to work, and in a few seconds of time made a capon of Messer Castorio. Then he took some sweet oil and the juice of certain herbs

and made therewith a dressing, which he applied to the wound, and then helped Castorio to get up on his feet, as proper an eunuch as there was in the world. Castorio put his hand in his pocket and took therefrom fifty golden florins, which he gave to Sandro, and then, having taken leave of the crafty peasant, he went back to his house.

But before Castorio had known an hour's experience of life as a gelding, he began to feel the greatest pain and anguish that ever man had felt. He could never get rest for a single moment, and day by day his trouble increased, so that he was in great danger of death, and at the same time an offence to those about him. When this intelligence came to Sandro's ears, he was mightily affrighted thereant, and began heartily to wish that he had never played this scurvy trick upon Castorio, fearing lest the latter should indeed die of his injuries. Castorio, when he found himself brought into such a pitiable state, was so inflamed with rage on account of the pain he suffered and of the disgrace which must fall upon him, that he determined at all hazard to kill Sandro forthwith. So, to set about the business in the fashion he judged most fitting, he went, accompanied by two of his servants, to the house of Sandro, whom he found at supper, and spake thus : ' Sandro, this is a fine trick you have played me, and one which will assuredly be the death of me ; but before I die I promise you shall pay the price of the wickedness you have wrought.' To this Sandro replied : ' The affair was your own and none of mine, because it was by your prayers and supplications alone that I was induced to do this thing for you. But, in order that I may not seem to you as wanting in skill over my work, nor ungrateful for the reward you have given me, nor be reckoned as the cause of your undoing, I will ask you to come to me to-morrow morning in good time in my field, and there I will give you relief which will set you free at once from all fear of death on account of your ailment.'

As soon as Castorio had gone Sandro broke out into bitter weeping, wishing anxiously to fly the country at once and to betake himself into some foreign land, deeming that he heard the tread of the officer of justice always at his heels, about to put him in bonds. His wife, when she saw how overwrought with grief and care he was, and knowing nought of the reason thereof, inquired of him why he bore himself thus mournfully, whereupon he told her the whole story, word for word. The wife, as soon as she had rightly comprehended the cause of her husband's dismay, and taken heed, moreover, of the fact

that Castorio himself was a dolt and a witling, and that he of a surety stood in some peril of death, was at first somewhat troubled in mind herself, and began by rating her husband for his folly in thus having thrust his head into such danger. But afterwards she fell into a gentler mood, and comforted him, begging him to keep a light heart, for she would set to work to order the course of events so that he would be free from all serious danger.

Next morning, when the appointed hour had come, the wife took the garments of Sandro her husband, and, having put them on her back and a cap upon her head, she went afield with the oxen and the plough and set to work to plough the land, keeping a watch to see whether Castorio came as appointed or not. Before long he appeared, and, deeming that the wife of Sandro must be Sandro himself at work ploughing his field, he spake thus: 'Sandrin,¹ je meurs si ne prens pitié de moy, car la playe que m'as faicte n'est encores refermée, joint que la chair en est toute pourrie, et rend telle puanteur que je doute de mon salut. Et si en bref ne me donnes le remède necessaire, tu me verras mourir à les pieds.' La femme desguisée en Sandrin luy demanda veoir sa playe, et qu'elle y pourvoiroit. Adonc Castor, detachant sa brayette et hausante le devant de sa chemise, luy monstra l'overture que le chancre avoit desjà toute gastée. Ce que voiant, ceste femme luy dit en souzriant: 'Monsieur, vous monstrez bien que n'avez point de cœur de craindre la mort pour si peu de chose, que pensez neantmoins irreparable; mais vous estes trompé si le croyez ainsi; et quoy! si vous estiez comme moy, que seroit ce? Il y a un an entier que ma playe me fut faicte beaucoup plus grand que la vostre, toutesfois elle n'est encores consolidée, neantmoins vous voyez comme je suis gras, potelé et frais comme un œillet. Et affin que ne doutiez de ce que je vous dy, je vous en veux bien monstrier l'experience.' Ce disant, s'affermit d'une jambe contre terre, et levant l'autre sur les manches de la charue, haussa ses accoustrements et laschant une vesse lui fit baisser la teste pour regarder. Castor voyant ceste grande ouverture, n'estre encor refermée depuis le temps, se rejoüst en soy meme, delibérant de là en avant endurer patiemment la douleur qui provenoit de ceste incisure. Tellement que prenant courage au bout de quelque temps le pauvre commença à se guarir et devenir si gras et refaict qu'il donnoit plaisir à qui le regardoit.

¹ Translation by Pierre de la Rivey.

Les dames risent assez de Castro lequel estoit demeuré sans tesmoins mais la risée des hommes fut beaucoup plus grande quand ils veirent la femme de Sandrin, desguisée en son mary, lui monstra la nature. Et pour ce qu'aucun de la troupe ne se pouvoit abstenir de rire Madame se frappant les mains l'une contre l'autre fit signe qu'on se teust et qu'Ariane suivist l'ordre en recitant son enigme. La quelle pour ne sembler moins propre et gentille que les autres, dit ainsi :

Je veux que mon amy sur le ventre se couche,
Et pour le soulager voici ce que je fais ;
Je prens à belles mains la chose, et puis la mets
Dedans le trou ouvert si bien que je le bouche.
Après, en l'œilladant d'un regard comme louche,
Poussant et repoussant sans jamais avoir paix.
Je laisse cheoir dedans je ne sçay quoy d'épais,
Dont le tiède degout le rend morne et farouche.
Il se plaint sur la fin ; mais, pour l'encourager,
Et les tristes pensers de son cœur estranger,
Toujours je l'entretiens de toute ma puissance,
Tellement que jamais il n'est de moi laissé,
Que l'un, tout estonné, n'en ait pleine la pance,
Et l'autre ne s'en aille et recrue et lassé.

L'enigme raconté par Ariane blessa un peu les oreilles des auditeurs lesquels le trouvèrent aucunement vergongueux. Au moyen de quoy Madame, la reprenant avec aigres paroles, luy monstra qu'elle n'en estoit contente. Mais la gentile demoiselle, qui estoit toute plaisante et gaillarde, d'un visage ouvert et joyaux s'excusa disant : 'Soubs vostre reverence, Madame, vous n'avez juste occasion vous fascher à l'encontre de moy d'autant que mon enigme qui porte seulement avec soy un ridicule effect n'est deshonneste comme on le pense, et voicy la raison : Quand on veut bailler un clystère à un malade, ne le faiçt on pas plus souvent coucher sur le ventre ? Apres, ne prend on pas à belles mains la chose, c'est à dire la seringue, et la met on pas dans le trou ? Et pour ce que le malade prend le clystère contre son gré, se plaignant ordinairement, ne luy diçt on pas qu'il ne se fasche, ains prenne courage ? D'avantage celle qui luy donne, en poussant et repoussant, ne luy emplit elle pas la pance de la decoction ? Ce faiçt s'en retourne elle pas quasi toute lasse de la peine qu'elle a prise à l'entour du malade ? Ainsi voyez vous, noble assistance, mon enigme n'estre tant sale et vicieux que le faisiez du commencement."

The Signora, as soon as she heard and understood this excellent

interpretation of the laughable riddle, was appeased, and gave leave henceforth to the story-tellers to say whatsoever they would, without fear of being called to account. Cateruzza, whose turn it was to tell the third story, perceiving that the Signora's anger was moderated, and that free field had been given to her for her discourse, began her story in an animated style as follows.

THE THIRD FABLE.

Polissena, a widow, has divers lovers. Panfilio, her son, reprobes her thereanent, whereupon she promises to mend her ways if he will lay aside certain uncouth habits. He agrees, but his mother dupes him, and finally they go on in their old courses.



A WOMAN, when once she becomes thoroughly wedded to a certain practice, whether it be good or bad, finds it a hard matter to abstain therefrom, seeing that she is by nature disposed to continue to the end of her days in whatever habits she may have adopted. Wherefore I now purpose to tell you a story of an adventure which happened to a young widow, who, having lived a wanton's life a long time, could not by any means break away from it. Nay, even when her own son, moved by righteous desire, lovingly reproved her, she played a wily trick upon him in her subtle treachery, and went on in her evil ways. All of this I will set forth fully in the course of my tale.

There once lived, gracious ladies (it was not long ago, and on that account you may peradventure know something thereof), in the splendid and renowned city of Venice, a pretty little widow, who was called by name Polissena, still young in years and exceeding beautiful in person, but of very low estate. This woman had brought forth by her husband, who was dead, a son named Panfilio, a youth of good parts, of virtuous life, and of praiseworthy manners, who was at this time a goldsmith by trade. And because (as I have already said) Polissena was young, very handsome, and graceful, many gallants—and amongst these were some of the chiefest nobles of the city—cast amorous eyes upon her and wooed her persistently. And she, who in former days had tasted freely of the pleasures of the world and of

the sweetness of love's commerce, was not slow in giving assent to the solicitations of her wooers, and delivered herself up, body and soul, to the embraces of all those who would have her. So hot and amorous was her temper that she did not confine herself to the endearments of one or two lovers (which, seeing that she was young and so early left a widow, would have been a pardonable fault), but granted the favour of her person to all comers, having no regard for her own honour or for the honour of her husband.

Panfilio, who was fully cognizant of his mother's way of life (not that he in any way favoured it, but because from time to time he could not escape witnessing her shameful carriage), was deeply grieved thereanent, and suffered the deepest anguish of heart and that mental suffering, so hard to be borne, which any man of upright mind would of necessity feel in such a pass. Wherefore the wretched youth, living from day to day with his soul vexed by these torments, and not seldom feeling that the burden of his disgrace was more than he could endure, would oftentimes take counsel with himself whether it would not be better for him to slay his mother outright; but when he remembered that he had taken his being from her, he let go this cruel purpose and resolved to see whether he might not prevail upon her by words, and induce her to adopt a more cleanly manner of life. So one day he seized an opportune moment, and, having seated himself beside his mother, addressed her affectionately in the following terms: 'My beloved and honoured mother, it is with the greatest grief and distress that I now venture to approach you, and I am sure you will not refuse to lend your ears and listen to what I have to say. It is something which I have, until now, kept close hidden in my own heart.' Formerly I believed you to be wise, prudent, and circumspect; but now, to my sorrow, I know too well that you are none of these things, and so grieved am I on this account that I would to God I were as far from you as I am near to you.¹ You, as far as I can understand, are given over to the most scandalous life, one which, alike stains your own honour and the good name of my late father, your husband. And if you will not have any regard for your own character, I beg you at least to show some consideration for me, seeing that I am your only son, and one in whom you may reckon to find a firm and faithful support of your old age.'

¹ Orig., *esser tanto da lungi, quanto io vi sono da presso.*

The mother, when she had listened to these words of her son, laughed in his face and went on with her shameful manner of life as before. Panfilio, perceiving that she was in nowise moved by his entreaties and kindly words, resolved to waste his breath no more, but to let her go on as she list. It chanced that not many days after this, Panfilio, by a stroke of ill fortune, became infected with the itch, and in so malignant a form that he could scarce have fared worse had he been a leper. Besides, the weather was at this time very cold, and on this account he found it impossible to get cured of his distemper. In the evening poor Panfilio would sit anear the fire, and the heat thereof, inflaming his blood all the more, aggravated the itch tenfold and caused him to scratch himself without ceasing and to work himself into a frenzy. One evening, as he sat before the fire, as was his wont, scratching himself, there came to the house one of his mother's lovers and tarried a long time with her in amorous conversation. The wretched youth, besides being annoyed by the irritating scabs which vexed him cruelly, was further tormented and pierced to the heart at the sight of his mother in dalliance with her paramour. When at last the latter had taken his leave, Panfilio (still scratching his scabs) said to his mother : ' Mother, some time ago I exhorted you to restrain your lust and abandon this evil and dishonest manner of life, which covers you with foul shame and brings to me, who am your son, no small injury and ill-fame. But you, like the wanton woman you are, turned a deaf ear to what I had to say, and preferred to go on in the guilty indulgence of your carnal appetites rather than listen to my counsel. Ah, my dear mother ! I entreat you to have done with this disgraceful way of living. Keep that honour, which it is your duty to preserve, and cast this shame from you, and do not seek to kill me with grief and ill-fame. Do you not see that you may, at any moment, be called to your account, inasmuch as death is always by our side ? Do you not hear what evil things are said of you at every corner ? '

While Panfilio was giving forth this exhortation, he continued to scratch himself all the time, and Polissena, when she heard his preachings and saw his scratchings, planned a joke which she determined to play off on him, hoping thereby to put a stop to his complaints about her conduct, and it happened that this jest of hers came to exactly the issue she had forecast. Turning to her son with a mischievous smile she said : ' Panfilio, you are always grieving and

complaining to me concerning the evil life which—as you affirm—I lead. I own that my life is not a seemly one, and that your warnings and counsels thereanent mark you to be a good son ; but I ask you now whether you will do one single thing to please me, to serve as a proof that you are indeed as jealous of my honour as you protest. If you will consent to this, I, for my part, promise to place myself in your hands, and to have done with all my lovers, and to lead a good and holy life ; but if you fail to gratify me in this respect, be sure that I will pay no regard to your wishes, but will give myself over to a course yet more vicious than any I have hitherto followed.’ The son, who longed to see his mother return to an honest way of life more than for anything else in the world, made answer to her thus : ‘ Command me to do what you will, my mother ; for even were you to bid me throw myself into the fire and be there consumed to ashes, I would willingly carry out your wishes, if thereby I might be able to free you from the shame and infamy of the life you now lead.’ ‘ Listen then well to what I am going to say to you,’ said Polissena, ‘ and consider my words, for if you shall diligently carry out the injunctions I lay upon you, everything you wish shall be fully granted to you ; but if, on the other hand, you should fail in your promise, you will find yourself in a deeper state of ignominy than ever before.’ ‘ I bind myself to observe and perform any duty or task you may put upon me,’ said Panfilio. ‘ Then,’ replied his mother, ‘ I will tell you what thing this is I require you to do. It is nothing more arduous, my son, than that you should promise you will not scratch your scabs for three whole evenings. If you will observe this light request of mine, I will, on my part, satisfy your wishes.’

Panfilio, when he listened to the proposition made by his mother, sat for some time in thinking thereanent, and though, itching as he did, he knew full well that this condition of hers would prove no easy one to observe, he nevertheless accepted it with joy, and as a token of good faith shook hands with his mother upon the bargain. When the first of the evenings appointed for the trial had come, Panfilio, having left his workshop, went home, and throwing off his cloak began to walk up and down the room. After a little, finding himself somewhat cold, he sat down in a corner of the chimney close to the fire, and then the troublesome itch, provoked by the heat, began to molest him so sharply that he was sorely distressed and longed to scratch himself to get some ease. The mother, who was a

very cunning jade, had taken good care to have a hot fierce fire on the hearth, in order that Panfilio might be well heated, and now, when she saw him writhing and stretching himself out after the manner of a snake, she said to him, 'Panfilio, what is it you do? Take good heed that you break not your promise, for if you keep your word I will assuredly keep mine.' To this Panfilio made answer: 'Have no doubt of my constancy, mother. See that you are firm yourself, for I will keep my pledge.' And all the while they were thus talking they were both of them raging with desire, the one to scratch his itching hide, and the other to find herself once more with one or other of her lovers.

Thus the first evening passed, bringing great discomfort both to mother and son, and when the second came, Polissena again caused to be made a large fire, and having got ready a good supper awaited her son's return. Panfilio, firmly set on keeping his word, clenched his teeth and put up with his trouble as well as he could, and thus the second evening went by without any misadventure. Polissena, when she saw how steadfast in his determination Panfilio was, and considered how two evenings had already gone by without his having scratched himself at all, began to fear greatly that after all she would be the loser, and, mightily disturbed in spirit, began to lament her luckless case. For all this time she was strongly assailed by the pricks of amorous desire, and spent her time in devising some scheme whereby Panfilio might be driven once more to scratch his skin, and she herself in consequence of his failure to keep his promise, be free to wanton with her paramours. So for the next evening she made ready a delicate supper, with no lack of costly and heady wine, and awaited the coming of her son. When Panfilio returned and remarked the unwonted luxury of their evening meal, he was greatly astonished thereat, and, turning to his mother, he said: 'Mother, for what reason have you set out such a princely feast as this? Is it possible that you have indeed changed your mind?' To this Polissena made answer; 'Certainly not, my son; I am more firmly set in my purpose than ever, but by chance the thought struck me how you work hard every day at your trade, from early morn till nightfall, and besides this I could not fail to notice how sorely this accursed itch has worn and emaciated your body, scarcely leaving any life in you; so I felt deep compassion for your suffering, and was moved to set before you some more delicate dish than is our wont to eat, in order that you might gather strength therefrom, and assist

nature to withstand more readily the torments which you have to endure from the itch.'

Panphilio, who was young and simple, did not detect his mother's cunning scheme, nor espy the snake that was hidden amongst these fair flowers of her kindness, but at once set himself down to the table close to the fire, and began with his mother to eat with zest and to drink his wine with a merry heart. But the cunning and malicious Polissena would now go and poke up the logs and blow the fire in order to make it burn all the fiercer, and now ply the poor fellow with the delicate savoury dishes, which were highly seasoned with all manner of spices, so that his blood might be more and more inflamed by the food and the warmth of the fire, and he himself be forced, on this account, to scratch his itch. Therefore, at last, when Panphilio had sat for some time close to the fire and filled his belly to repletion, such a fury of itching came over him that he felt he must die if he could not scratch himself; but, by dint of twisting his body and fidgetting now to this side and now to that, he endured the torment as best he could.

But after a while the heat of the food, which had been carefully salted and seasoned with this intent, and the Greek wine, and the scorching fire, inflamed his blood so direly that the wretched Panfilio found his torment greater than he could bear; so, tearing open his shirt and laying bare his chest, and untrussing his hose, and turning up his sleeves over his elbows, he set to scratching himself with such a will that the blood began to run down from all parts of him as if it had been sweat, and, turning to his mother, who was laughing heartily to herself, he cried in a loud voice: 'Let each one enjoy his own fancy! Let each one enjoy his own fancy!' The mother, although she saw clearly that the game was now hers, feigned to be grieved amain, and said to Panfilio, 'My son, what folly is this of yours? What is it that you would do? Is this the way you keep the promise you have made me? Of a truth you will never again be able to throw it in my teeth that I have not kept faith with you.' Panfilio listened, scratching himself with all his might the while, and answered his mother with a troubled mind: 'Mother, let us for the future follow the bent which best pleases us. You must go about your business, and I will go about mine.' And from this hour the son never dared to question his mother as to her course of life, and she went back to her old habits, entertaining her lovers in freer measure even than before.

All the listeners were mightily pleased with this fable told by Cateruzza, and after they had spent some time in merry discourse thereanent, the Signora called upon the damsel to propound her enigma, and she, not wishing to interrupt the accustomed order of the entertainment, smilingly gave it in these words :

What thing is that we ladies prize :
Five fingers' breadth will tell its size ;
Divers fair nooks you find inside ;
No outlet, though the gate is wide ;
The first attempt will give us pain,
For free access is hard to gain ;
But later will grow long and straight,
And large and small accommodate ?

Cateruzza's obscurely-worded enigma gave abundant matter to the ladies and gentlemen to consider ; but, carefully as they debated it from every point, and turned it over and over again in their minds, they were not able to hit upon its real interpretation. Wherefore the prudent Cateruzza, seeing that they were all still wandering in obscurity and unable to grasp the meaning of her riddle, said promptly, " So as not to keep this honourable company any longer in suspense, I will give forthwith the interpretation of my enigma, subjecting myself, however, in this to the judgment of others, who may be much wiser than myself. My enigma, dear ladies, signifies nothing else than the glove which you wear to protect your hand ; this, you know, will sometimes cause you slight hurt when you first put it on, but soon accommodates itself to your pleasure."

This explanation was held to be quite satisfactory by the honourable company, and when Cateruzza had ceased speaking the Signora gave a sign to Lauretta, who sat at Vicenza's side, to take her turn in the story-telling. And she, with a pretty boldness of mien and speech, turned her bright face towards Bembo, and said : " Signor Antonio, it were a great shame if you, kindly and gallant gentleman as you are, did not tell the company some fable with your wonted grace and talent. I, for my part, would willingly relate one, but just now I cannot call to mind one which would be at the same time pleasing and droll. Therefore, I beg you, Signor Antonio, that you will bear the burden in my place, and if you grant me this favour, I shall ever consider I am greatly beholden to you." Bembo, who had in no way prepared himself for story-telling this evening, answered :

“Signora Lauretta, although I feel myself very unfit for the task, yet—seeing that a request from you is as potent with me as a command—I will accept the charge you lay upon me, and will strive to satisfy your wishes, at least in part.” And the Signora having given her gracious permission, he began his story in these words.

THE FOURTH FABLE.

A dispute having arisen between three sisters of a convent as to which of them should fill the post of abbess, the bishop's vicar decides that the office shall fall to the one who shall give the most eminent proof of her worthiness.

HOWEVER great may be the charm which modesty lends to people in general, I, nevertheless, rate it far higher, dear ladies, when one meets it in a man who knows his own self. Wherefore, with the good leave of the gracious ladies around me, I purpose to tell a story no less cleverly put together than pleasant, which, though it may prove somewhat overcharged with ridicule and wanting in decency, I will do my best to relate to you in modest and seemly terms, such as are due and proper. And if perchance at any time my narrative should affront your chaste ears, I would now forestall your pardon for the offence, entreating you to hold back your censure till some future season.

In the noble city of Florence there is a certain convent with an illustrious reputation for holiness of life and for religion; the name of it I will not give just now, for fear of marring its fair fame by any spot of scandal. It happened that the abbess of this house, who was afflicted by many and heavy infirmities, came to the end of her days and rendered up her soul to her Creator. Wherefore, she being dead and her body buried with all the solemn rites of the Church, the surviving sisters caused a meeting of the chapter to be summoned by the ringing of the bell, so that all those who had a voice therein might be called together. The vicar of monsieur the bishop, a prudent man and a learned, and one moreover who desired that the election of the new abbess should be carried out according to the strict letter of the law, gave the word to the assembled sisters to be

seated and spake thus to them : ‘Most respected ladies, you know well enough, I conclude, that the sole reason why you are gathered together here to-day is in order that you may make choice of some one who shall be the head over you. If this be so, at the bidding of the conscience which is in each of you it behoves you to elect the one who appears to you all the best fitted for the office.’ And all the sisters made answer that this was the course they were minded to follow.

Now it happened that in the convent there were three nuns betwixt whom there sprang up a very keen contention as to which of the three should be the new abbess, because each one had a certain following amongst the sisters, and had the reputation of being held in honour by other superiors, wherefore all three of these greatly desired the title of abbess. While the sisters were getting ready for the election of their new head, one of the three nuns just mentioned, named Sister Veneranda, rose from her seat, and, turning towards the other sisters, addressed them : ‘My sisters, and my children, whom I hold in such high affection, you can understand well enough with what loving zeal I have ever given my best energies for the service of the convent, so that I have not only grown old therein, but am become veritably decrepit. Therefore, on account of my long service and of my advanced age, it seems to me only just and proper that I should be elected as your head, and if my long-continued labours and the vigils and prayers of my youth fail to persuade you to choose me, at least let my infirm old age appeal to your consideration; for to this, above every other thing, your reverence is due. It must be apparent to you that I can reckon on only a very short span of further life. Wherefore you may be sure that I shall, before long, make way for some other of you. For this reason, my well-beloved daughters, I beg that you will give me this brief season of ease and pleasure, and keep well in your hearts all the good counsels which I have ever given you.’ And Veneranda, having finished her speech, weeping the while, was silent.

The appeal of the first sister being finished, Sister Modestia, a woman of middle age, rose from her seat and spake in this wise : ‘Mothers and sisters mine, you have heard without concealment, and you must have clearly understood the claims put forward by Sister Veneranda, who happens to be the most advanced in age of any of us; but this fact, in my estimation, gives her no special claim to be

chosen as our abbess, inasmuch as she is now come to such a time of life that, through senility, she has too much of simplicity and too little of counsel, and before long will herself require to be controlled and cared for, in lieu of controlling us. But if you, in your mature judgment, give due consideration to my good estate, and to the trust that is due to me, and remember of what ancestry I come, you cannot, of a surety, for the debt each of you owes to conscience, choose any other one but me to be your abbess. Our convent—as every one of you must know—is greatly vexed with processes and suits at law and has much need of support and protection, and what greater defence could you furnish to the monastery against its adversaries than the countenance and patronage of my family, who would give—supposing that I am elected your head—not merely their wealth and goods in your defence, but even their lives.’

Scarcely had Sister Modestia resumed her seat when Sister Pacifica rose to her feet, and, with the guise of deep humility, spake as follows: ‘I am well assured, most honoured sisters, nay, I may take it for certain that you, prudent and well-advised ladies as you all are, will feel no little astonishment that I, who came as it were yesterday to abide amongst you, should desire to put myself on an equality with, or even to supersede the two most honoured sisters who have already spoken. These ladies, both on the score of age and of experience, are far above me; but if, with the eyes of the understanding, you come to consider carefully how many and how great are my qualifications, of a surety you will rate more highly my fresh youth than the decrepit age of the one and the family claims of the other. I—as all of you must know quite well—brought with me hither a very rich dowry, by the aid of which your convent, which had fallen wellnigh to ruin through the lapse of time, has been reconstructed from roof to foundation. I say nought about the houses and the farms which have been bought with the money of my dowry, from which every year the house gains a great sum in the shape of rent. Wherefore, on account of these and of other qualifications of mine, and as a recompense for the many and great benefits you have received from me, it is your duty to choose me as your abbess, seeing that your food and your raiment depend (under God) upon my bounty,’ and having thus spoken she sat down.

When the three sisters had thus brought their discourses to a conclusion, the vicar of the lord bishop summoned all the nuns into his

presence one after another, and bade them write down the name of the sister whom, upon their conscience, they wished to be raised to the dignity of abbess. When this had been done, and when all the sisters had recorded their votes, it was found that all the three were equal as to the number of votes given for each, nor was there any difference between them. On this account there arose amongst all the sisters a very acrimonious dispute, and some wished to have the first named, and some the second, and some the third, for their head; nor could there be found any way of pacifying the contention. Whereupon the bishop's vicar, perceiving how dogged was the obstinacy of each faction, and bearing in mind that each one of the three sisters might well be promoted to the honourable office of abbess for the special qualifications duly cited, cast about in his mind to devise a way and means whereby one of the three might retain the post of abbess without giving any cause of offence or disaffection to the others. He ordered the three sisters who sought the office to be summoned into his presence, and thus addressed them: 'Well-beloved sisters, I comprehend fully your many virtues and your many qualifications, and I cannot but say that either one of you would be in the highest sense worthy to be chosen as abbess of this convent. But between you three honourable sisters the contest for election has been amazingly severe, and the votes given for each of you have proved to be equal in number. On this account—in order that you may continue your peaceful lives in love and quietness—I hereby propose to you to employ in the election of your abbess a method which—as I hope—shall lead to the contention being brought to an end to the satisfaction of you all. The method which I suggest is this: each one of you three sisters, who have put forth your claims to succeed to the office of abbess, shall exercise herself for the next three days to perform in our presence some special feat which shall be praiseworthy in itself and worthy of being held in remembrance, and whichever of these three sisters shall show herself able to perform the feat the most capable and most worthy of future fame shall be, by the good consent of all the sisters, duly chosen abbess, and to her shall be accorded all the honour and reverence which of right belong to her.'

This proposition of the bishop's vicar won the approbation of the three sisters, on which account they all with one voice promised to observe the conditions laid down. And when the day appointed

for the trial had come, and all the nuns belonging to the convent were gathered together in the chapter house, the vicar caused to be brought before him the three sisters who aspired to mount up to the high post of abbess, and questioned them severally as to whether they had given due thought to their affairs in the matter of performing some noteworthy feat as he had ordained, and they all gave answer that they had. Après¹ estans toutes assises Sœur Venerande, qui estoit la plus aagée de toutes, se mit au milieu de la place, et tirant de sa cucule une petite eguille de damas, laquelle y estoit attachée, leva ses robbes et sa chemise par devant, puis haulsant une cuisse en la presence de tous les assistans, pissa si delicatement au travers du trou de l'eguille, qu'une seule petite goutte ne tomba à terre que premier elle n'eust passé par le trou. Quoy voyant, le grand vicaire et les religieuses, pensèrent indubitablement que Venerande deust estre abbesse, jugeans estre impossible pouvoir faire chose plus subtile que ceste là. Ce faict, Sœur Modestie, qui n'estoit de beaucoup si vieille que l'autre, se leva, et s'estant mise en place marchande, tira de son sein un dé dont on joue, et le mit sur un banc, les cinq points dessus. Après print cinq petits grains de millet et mit chacun d'iceux en l'un des cinq points du dé; puis decouvrant son derriere et approchant ses fesses du banc sur lequel estoit le dé, fit un pet si gros et terrible, qu'il fit quasi évanouir de peur le grand vicaire et toutes les religieuses, et encore que ce pet sortist avec un bruiet violent et sifflement horrible, si fut il neantmoins tiré d'une belle adresse et dextérité, que le grain qui estoit au trou du milieu demeura en sa place, et les autres disparurent et ne furent jamais veus depuis. Toute l'assemblée ne trouva ceste espreuve moindre que l'autre; cependant demouroit coye, attendant ce que feroit Sœur Pacifique; laquelle, se mettant en jeu comme les autres, fit un tour, non d'une vieille, mais d'une jeune hommasse, pour ce qu'ayant tiré de sa pochette un noyau de pesche le jecta en l'air, puis soudain se retroussa par derriere, levant le cul en haut, et recevant le noyau avec les fesses, l'estreignit si fort qu'elle le grugea plus menu que n'est menue la poussière. The vicar, who was a man sage and well-advised, began forthwith to confer with the sisterhood and to give mature consideration to the amazing feats performed by the three competing sisters, and when, after a time, he perceived that there was

¹ Translation by Pierre de la Rivey.

little prospect of coming to a decision, he took time to deliberate as to what the final judgment should be. And, forasmuch as he was not able to find in his learned books aught which might guide him in deciding this matter, he let it go as a thing not to be solved, and even to this our day the dispute is still pending. Wherefore I call upon you, most learned and prudent ladies, to disentangle this question, which, on account of its importance, I should not venture myself to approach.

This story of Bembo's proved to be more a source of mirth to the men than to the ladies, seeing that the latter for very shame hid their faces in their laps and did not dare to look up. But the men discussed now one incident and now another of the story they had just listened to, and gathered no little diversion therefrom, till at last the Signora, seeing that their laughter was somewhat unbecoming, and that the ladies sat as though they had been changed into so many marble statues, commanded silence and put an end to the unseemly laughter, in order that Bembo might follow the accustomed rule by giving his enigma. But he, who had already spoken as much as was meet, turned towards the fair Lauretta and said: "It is now your turn, Signora Lauretta, to set an enigma. I may indeed have satisfied you in one matter, but that is no reason why I should satisfy you in another." And the lady, who had no wish to make delay by her refusal, thus began in order to relieve herself of her obligation :

A riddle I would have you guess ;
And though its meaning savours less
Of ruse than of a ribald jest,
I'll beg you take it at its best.
First I to my companion go,
He up above, and I below ;
Then something hard I take in hand,
And temper it with unguent bland,
And place it were it ought to go ;
Then work it featly to and fro,
And swing and sway it up and down,
Until success my efforts crown.

Everyone declared that the enigma proposed by Lauretta was fully as interesting as the story of Bembo, and, because it seemed as if few or any of the company could fathom its meaning, the Signora directed her to give the interpretation thereof. Then Lauretta, so as not to interpose any further delay, spake thus : " My riddle means

that there were two men who set to work to saw in pieces a huge beam of wood. One of these took in his hand the saw, which is a very hard thing, and went up above, while the other remained in the saw-pit beneath. The first then smeared the saw with oil, and placed it in the fissure of the beam, and then the two companions working together handled the saw up and down in order to accomplish their task."

The ingenious interpretation of this enigma gave the greatest pleasure to all the company, and, after the talk had ceased, the Signora gave command to Eritrea to begin the telling of her fable, and she straightway spake as follows.

THE FIFTH FABLE.

Pre Zefiro works a spell on a youth whom he finds eating figs in his garden.



IT has often been said, dearest ladies, that there are mysterious virtues abiding in words, and in herbs, and in stones; but stones assuredly may be held to excel both herbs and words in persuasive powers, as you will clearly see by this little tale of mine.

There once lived in the city of Bergamo a miserly priest, called Pre Zefiro, who by common report was said to be possessed of great wealth. This man had a garden situated beyond the city walls, near the gate which is called Penta. This same garden was surrounded in such a manner by walls and ditches that neither man nor beast could enter therein, and it was well planted with fruit-trees of every kind, and amongst others there was a great fig-tree with branches spreading on all sides, and laden every season with beautiful and excellent fruit, of which the priest was wont to partake every year with all the gentlemen and notables of the city. These figs were of a mixed colour, between white and purple, and they dropped tears of juice which were like honey. So precious were they, that they were always carefully guarded by watchmen. One night, when by chance the guardians were not on the watch, a youth clambered up into this fig-tree, and, having chosen the ripest figs, silently set to work to stow them away in their skins, just as they were, in the storehouse of his belly.

Pre Zefiro, having suddenly remembered that there were no watchmen in his garden, flew thither, and straightway saw the fellow sitting in the tree and eating figs at his leisure. Whereupon the priest began to beg him to come down, but as he took no heed of his words, Pre Zefiro threw himself on his knees and conjured him by heaven, by the earth, by the planets, by the stars, by the elements, and by all the sacred words which are written in the Scriptures, to come down from the tree; but still the youth ate steadily on. Pre Zefiro, seeing that he gained no advantage whatever by these adjurations, gathered certain herbs which grew round about in the garden, and once more conjured the fellow by the virtue which dwelt therein to come down, but he only clambered up higher so that he might fill himself with greater ease. Then the priest spake as follows: 'It is written that in words, and in herbs, and in stones, there are hidden virtues. I have conjured you by the first two, and they have availed nothing to bring you down out of the tree, now by virtue of the third I once more conjure you to come down to the ground.' So straightway he began to hurl stones at the thief with great rancour and fury, smiting him now on the arm, now on the leg, now on the spine; so that at last the youth, swollen and bethumped and bruised as he was on account of the frequent blows he had received, was obliged to come down from his perch. Then he took to flight, having first given back to Pre Zefiro all the figs which he had stowed away in his bosom. And thus stones proved themselves to be more potent as instruments of exorcism than either words or herbs.

Eritrea had no sooner come to the end of her brief story than the Signora bade her to follow it up with her enigma, so without further delay she spake as follows :

Gallant knights and ladies gay,
Tell me truthfully, I pray;
Answer quick to my behest,
Which of three you like the best?
That which is bound close and tight,
Or that makes you writhe by night,
Or that which in the evening grey
Will drive you from your bed away.
If my speech you fathom well,
Tell me, gentles, quickly tell.

All the listeners were mightily perplexed over this cunningly-

devised enigma propounded by Eritrea, and no one knew what answer to give. But the Signora pressed each one to give an opinion, and one gave preference to the narrow and well-tied, another the turn which comes early, and another that of the first watches of the night. Nevertheless not one of them understood the true signification of the riddle. Wherefore Eritrea, when she saw their want of agreement, said : "It does not seem right that my gracious hearers should remain any longer in doubt, so I will say at once that the thing which is bound close and tight is the scurf on the skin, which, if one wants to be cured of it, must be doctored and tied up tightly with bandages. The thing which causes a man to leave his bed in the night is the flux, since one suffering therewith must needs find relief. The last-named, which touches one in the evening hour, is the troublesome itch, which, when night is coming on, heats the blood and causes such intolerable irritation that one with it upon him is fain to tear his flesh with his teeth, as did the widow's son in the learned and elegant story we have lately heard from Cateruzza."

The ingenious explanation set forth by Eritrea to her very knotty riddle gave universal satisfaction, and when the listeners had all taken leave of the Signora, the hour being now late, they went their several ways, under promise to return the next evening to their wonted place of meeting.

The End of the Sixth Night.





Right the Seventh.





The Fables and Enigmas of Messer Giovanni Francesco Straparola da Carabaggio.

Right the Seventh.



It was at an hour when a dusky cloud began to spread itself over all parts of the cool and distant west, and when the well-loved spouse of Dis spread far and wide the obscuring shadows, that the honourable and loyal band of gentlefolk repaired once more to the palace of the Signora, and, hand in hand, took their accustomed seats as they had done on the nights which were past. Then Molino, by the order of the Signora, caused to be brought forth the vase, and, having thrust his hand therein, he drew out first the name of Vicenza, then that of Fiordiana, then that of Lodovica, reserving the fourth turn for Lionora, and the fifth for Isabella. Thus, having settled the order of the story-telling, the Signora gave the word to Laurretta that she should sing a song, and the damsel, without making any demur or excuse, at once began.

SONG.

Trembling I burn, and as I burn I freeze,
I hunger ever for a love
Which neither time nor fate can move.
I live bereft of ease;
For that my heart now bids me speak, and then
My courage fails, and I am mute again.

Ah, many a time would I my woes have told,
 To damp the flame that in me burns;
 But aye my courage backward turns,
 Lest by my pleading bold
 I should provoke your anger, and instead
 Of favour it should fall upon my head.

Thus fear and my desire are aye at strife,
 And surely fate a woeful end
 To my long martyrdom will send,
 And cut my thread of life;
 And for the love which sanctifies my breath,
 How transient is the life, how sure the death !

As soon as this sweet and tender song had come to an end, Vicenza, who was designated by lot to take the first turn of the story-telling this evening, rose upon her feet, and having duly saluted the Signora, began to speak in this wise.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Ortodosio Simeoni, merchant and noble citizen of Florence, goes to Flanders, where he becomes enamoured of Argentina, a courtesan, and forgets his lawful wife ; but the wife by magic working is conveyed to Flanders, and returns to Florence with child by her husband.

IT were long to tell how great is the love which a wife may bear to her husband, especially when she is mated with a man who is entirely to her liking. But, on the other hand, there is no hatred more fell than that of a woman who finds herself under the governance of a distasteful husband, for, as wise men tell us, a woman either loves or hates all in all. And this thing you will easily understand if you will give kindly attention to the tale I have it in my mind to tell you.

There lived once upon a time, gracious ladies, a merchant called Ortodosio Simeoni, a man holding noble rank in the city of Florence, and having to wife a lady called Isabella, who was fair to see, of gentle manners, and holy and saintly in her life. Ortodosio, being strongly moved to embark in traffic, took leave of his kinsmen and of his wife, lamenting sore as he bade them farewell, and, having set forth from

Florence, betook himself with his goods to Flanders. Having arrived in that country, it happened that Ortodosio, moved by fate, which seemed at first propitious, but proved evil in the end, hired a house opposite to that of a courtesan called Argentina, and he, being inflamed with an ardent passion for her, lost all thought of Isabella his wife and of his former life in guilty dalliance with her.

Five years had passed away since Isabella had received any news of her husband. She knew not whether he was alive or dead, or in what land he was abiding. For this reason she was smitten with the greatest sorrow that a woman could feel, and it seemed to her continually as if the very life were being torn from out her breast. The unhappy Isabella, who was very devout and exceedingly reverent of all the ordinances of religion, went to the Church of the Annunciata every day, and there falling on her knees would pray to God with scolding tears and piteous sighs that He would grant her the speedy return of her husband. But her humble prayers, her long fasts, and her many charities availed her nothing. Wherefore the poor lady, seeing that neither for her fastings, nor for her prayers, nor for her almsgivings, nor for the many acts that she did for the welfare of others, did she obtain a favourable hearing, resolved to change her manner of living and to fix upon some other course. So, in the same measure as she had formerly been devout and fervent in her orisons, she henceforth gave herself up entirely to the practice of incantations and witchcraft, hoping that by these means her affairs might be brought to a more prosperous issue. She went therefore one morning early in search of a certain witch, Gabrina Fureta, and entreated her kind offices. She forthwith laid bare all her troubles to the wise woman, who was very old, and had greater experience in the arts of magic than any other person in the city; indeed, she could bring to pass things which were quite out of the ordinary course of nature, so that it was an amazement to see and hear them.

Gabrina, when she heard of Isabella's troubles, was moved to pity on her account, and having spoken divers comforting words, promised to help her, telling her to be of good cheer, for she should soon see her husband and rejoice over her reunion with him. Isabella, who was mightily gratified at this favourable answer, opened her purse and gave Gabrina ten florins; these the witch joyfully took, and, after having murmured certain mysterious words, she bade Isabella return to her at nightfall. When the appointed hour for the meeting had

come, the witch took her little book in hand and drew a small circle on the ground ; then, having surrounded the same with certain magic signs and figures, she poured out some subtle liquor from a flask and drank a drop of it and gave as much to Isabella. And when the lady had drunk it, Gabrina spake thus to her : ‘ Isabella, you know that we have met here to work an incantation in order that we may discover the place of your husband’s present abode, wherefore it is absolutely necessary that you should be firm and not flinch at anything you may see or feel, however terrible. And do not let it enter into your mind to invoke the assistance of God or of the saints, or to make the sign of the cross ; for if you do this you will never be able to recall what you have done, and at the same time you will be in the greatest danger of death.’

To this Isabella answered : ‘ Do not doubt my constancy in any way, Gabrina, but be sure that if you were to conjure up before me all the demons which live in the centre of the earth, they would not affright me.’ ‘ Undress yourself, then,’ said the witch, ‘ and enter the circle.’ Isabella, therefore, having stripped herself, stood naked as on the day when she was born, and boldly entered the circle, whereupon Gabrina opened her book and likewise entered the circle, and thus spake : ‘ Powers of hell, by the authority which I hold over you, I conjure you that you instantly appear before me!’ Astaroth, Fafarello, and the other demon princes, compelled by the conjurations of Gabrina, immediately presented themselves before her with loud shrieks, and cried, ‘ Command us to do thy will.’ Gabrina then said, ‘ I conjure and command you that, without any delay, you truthfully disclose to me where Ortodosio Simeoni, the husband of Isabella, now abides, and whether he be living or dead.’

‘ Know, Gabrina,’ said Astaroth, ‘ that Ortodosio lives, and is in Flanders, and that he is consumed by so fierce a passion for a certain woman called Argentina that he no longer remembers his own wife.’ When the witch heard this she commanded Fafarello that he should change himself into a horse and transport Isabella to the spot where Ortodosio was abiding. The demon, who was straightway changed into a horse, caught up Isabella and flew with her into the air, she in the meantime feeling neither hurt nor fear, and when the sun appeared he set her down unscathed in Argentina’s palace. This done, Fafarello put upon Isabella the form of Argentina, and so complete was the resemblance that she no longer seemed to be Isabella



but Argentina herself, and at the same time he transformed Argentina into the shape of an old woman who was invisible, neither could she hear or see anybody herself.

When the hour for supper had come Isabella in her new guise supped with Ortodosio her husband, and then, having withdrawn together into a rich bedchamber in which there was a bedstead with a downy bed thereon, she placed herself by Ortodosio's side, and he, while he thought he was in bed with Argentina, really lay with his own wife. And so ardent and impassioned were the tender caresses and kisses he bestowed upon her, and so close their embraces and kisses when they took their pleasure one with another, that in the course of that very night Isabella became with child. Fafarello, in the meantime, contrived to steal from the chamber a rich gown, all embroidered with pearls, and a beautiful necklace which Ortodosio had formerly given to Argentina, and when the following night had come Fafarello made Isabella and Argentina resume their own natural shapes, and at daybreak, having once more transformed himself into a horse and taken Isabella on the saddle, he transported her back to Gabrina's house, at the same time handing over the gown and the necklace he had stolen to the old woman. The witch, when she had received the gown and the necklace from the hands of the demon, gave them to Isabella with these words: 'My daughter, guard these things with care, for at the right time and place they will be real proofs of your loyalty.' Isabella took the garment and the fair necklace, and, having thanked the witch, she returned to her home.

After four months had passed Isabella began to show signs of pregnancy, and her kinsfolk, when they remarked this, marvelled greatly, as they had always held her to be a virtuous and saintly dame. Wherefore they often asked her if she were with child, and by whom; to which question she, with a cheerful face, would always reply that she was with child by Ortodosio her husband. But her kinsfolk declared this to be false, for they knew well enough that her husband had been absent from her for a long time, and was at the present moment in a distant country, and that, with matters standing as they did, it was impossible she could be with child by him. For this reason her kindred were greatly grieved, and began to fear the shame which should befall them, often taking counsel together whether they should not kill her. But the fear of God, the dread of the loss of the child's soul and of the murmurs of the world, and

their care for the husband's honour, restrained them from committing this crime, so they determined to await the birth of the little creature.

When the time of her lying-in had come, Isabella gave birth to a beautiful boy, but when they heard of it, her kinsfolk were overwhelmed with grief, and without hesitation wrote to Ortodosio in the following words: 'It is not with the design to give you annoyance, dearest brother, but in order to tell you the truth, that we write to inform you that Isabella, your wife and our kinswoman, has to our great shame and dishonour given birth to a son. Who his father may be we know not, but we would assuredly judge him to have been begotten by you had you not been away from her for so long a time. The child and his brazen-faced mother would have been before now deprived of life by us, had not the reverence which we bear to God stayed our hands on their behalf, for it pleaseth not God that we should stain our hands with our own blood. Set therefore your own affairs in order, and save your honour, and do not suffer this crime to remain unpunished.'

When Ortodosio had received these letters and the sad news therein written, he lamented greatly, and having summoned Argentina into his presence, he said to her: 'Argentina, it is absolutely necessary that I should return to Florence in order that I may despatch certain affairs of mine which are of no small weight. After a few days, when I shall have them set in order, I will come back to you forthwith. You, in the meantime, take good care of yourself and of my affairs, treating them in the same manner as if they were your own, and live merrily and always remember me.'

Ortodosio thereupon left Flanders, and with a prosperous wind sailed for Florence. Having come to his own house he was joyfully received by his wife; but as the days went on he was many a time seized with a diabolical inclination to kill her, and to leave Florence secretly, but when he considered the danger and the dishonour he would incur thereby, he determined to postpone his revenge to a more convenient season. So without delay he made known his return to her kinsmen, and after a while he sent out an invitation begging them to come and dine with him on the following day. When his wife's kinsmen, in response to the invitation given to them, arrived at Ortodosio's house, they were well received by him, and after their gracious welcome they all dined merrily together. When the dinner

had come to an end, and the table cleared, Ortodosio began to speak as follows : ‘ Kind brothers and sisters, I think that the cause of our meeting here together must be plainly manifest to you all ; wherefore it is not necessary that I should spend many words over the matter, but I will at once come to the subject which concerns all of us.’ And raising his eyes towards his wife, who sat opposite to him, he said : ‘ Isabella, who is the father of the child which you keep in this house ?’ and Isabella answered, ‘ You are his father.’ ‘ I ? I, his father ?’ said Ortodosio ; ‘ I have now been away these five years, and from the hour on which I departed you have not seen me, so how can you say that I am his father ?’ ‘ Still I declare that the child is your son,’ replied Isabella, ‘ and that he was begotten by you in Flanders.’ Then Ortodosio, waxing very wroth, cried out, ‘ Ah, woman, lying and brazen that you are ! when were you ever in Flanders ?’ ‘ When I lay in bed with you,’ answered Isabella. And then she told him everything from beginning to end—the place, the time, and the very words that had passed between them on that night. Ortodosio and her brothers, when they heard this thing, were filled with astonishment, but still they refused to believe her words. Wherefore Isabella, seeing the stubborn pertinacity of her husband, and knowing well that he did not believe what she said, rose from her seat, and having withdrawn into her chamber, she took the embroidered robe and the beautiful necklace and went back to the room where the company sat, and spake thus : ‘ My lord, do you know this robe which is so cunningly embroidered ?’

Ortodosio, quite bewildered and almost beside himself at the sight, thus answered : ‘ It is true that I have missed a similar robe, and I could never discover what had become of it.’ ‘ Know, then,’ said Isabella, ‘ that this is the self-same robe which you lost.’ Then she put her hand into her bosom and drew forth the rich necklace, and said, ‘ Do you also know this necklace ?’ And her husband, who could not deny that he knew it, said that it also had been stolen from him at the same time as the robe. ‘ But, so that my fidelity may be made clearly manifest to you, I will show you that I am worthy of your trust,’ said Isabella. And having spoken thus, she caused the nurse to bring the child, which she carried in her arms to her, and when she had stripped off its white garments she said, ‘ Ortodosio, do you know this child ?’ And with these words she showed him how one of its feet was faulty, for the little toe was

missing, and this afforded a true indication and absolute proof of her wifely fidelity, since Ortodosio's foot was in like manner naturally wanting of a toe. When Ortodosio saw this he was so completely silenced that he could not say a word in contradiction; so he took the child in his arms and kissed him and acknowledged him as his son. Then Isabella took greater courage and said, 'You must know, Ortodosio, my beloved, that the fastings, the prayers, and the other good works that I performed in order that I might have news of you, brought me fulfilment of my wishes, as you will presently hear. For one morning, when I was kneeling in the holy Church of the Annunciata, and praying that I might have news of you, my prayer was granted, and an angel carried me invisibly into Flanders and placed me by your side in bed, and so close and loving were the caresses which you bestowed on me that night that I then and there became with child. And on the following night I found myself in my own house in Florence again, together with the things I have just laid before your eyes.' When Ortodosio and the brothers had seen these trustworthy signs, and heard the words which Isabella spake with such great show of good faith, they all embraced and kissed one another, and in this wise, with all good feeling, they restored their affectionate relationship one with another.

And after some days had passed Ortodosio returned to Flanders, where he procured honourable marriage for Argentina, and, having laden his goods on a great ship, he returned to Florence, in which city he lived a long time in tranquil peace and happiness with Isabella and his child.

When Vicenza had come to the end of this pathetic story all the company applauded her warmly, and the Signora, with tears of pity in her beautiful eyes, signed to her to go on with her enigma, and Vicenza, without hesitation, gave it in the following words:

I am shining big and round,
When I am most ardent found;
They take me and conceal me quite
Between two tender things and white.
Here and there I move about,
Until my strength is all gone out.
Eyes I have, though I see not;
A fellow bold of temper hot.
When coldest nips the winter frost,
Then I am wont to warm you most.

Vicenza's subtle enigma won the praise of all who heard it, but there was not one of them, however sharp-witted, who was not baffled thereby. Wherefore Vicenza, perceiving that all were silent, and that her riddle was yet unsolved, stood up, and having obtained permission, thus explained it: "The subject of my enigma, ladies and gentlemen, is the warming-pan, which, after it is filled with burning cinders, is placed between the white sheets. It has eyes, that is to say, the holes pierced therein, and it is used when the weather is coldest." Fiordiana, whose turn it was to tell the next story, did not wait for the Signora's command, but with a smiling face began in the following words.

THE SECOND FABLE.

Malgherita Spolatina becomes enamoured of Teodoro, a hermit, and swims across the sea to meet him, but being discovered by her brothers and tricked by a false signal, she dies wretchedly by drowning.



L FIND that wise men have most aptly described love to be nothing but an irrational desire caused by a passion which has entered the heart through wanton thoughts. And its ill effects are: the squandering of earthly riches, the wasting of bodily strength, the destruction of the mind, and the loss of liberty. It knows no order, no reason; neither is there aught of steadfastness therein. It is the father of vice, the enemy of youth, the murderer of old age, and rarely or ever is its issue happy or prosperous. This is shown by the fate which happened to a damsel of the Spolatina family, who, being subjugated by love, ended her days most miserably.

Ragusa, noble ladies, is a celebrated city of Dalmatia, situated upon the sea. Not far from it there is a little island, commonly called the centre island, whereon stands a strong and well-built hamlet, and between Ragusa and the above-named island there is a rock on which is built a very small church and a little hut half covered with planks. This spot is barren and unwholesome, therefore nobody lived there except a hermit called Teodoro, who for the wiping out of his sins served very devoutly at this shrine. This

man, as he had no other means of support, went sometimes to Ragusa, sometimes to the centre island, to beg. It happened that Teodoro having one day gone to the centre island to seek for his bread according to his custom, found thereon what he never would have sought. For there appeared before him a lovely and gracious maiden called Malgherita, who, when she noted his handsome and seemly person, thought to herself that he was a man better fitted to enjoy human pleasures than to give himself over to solitude. Wherefore Malgherita took his image so ardently to her heart that day and night she thought of him and of nought besides. The hermit, who as yet recked nothing of the girl's passion, went on with his practice of begging, and often betook himself to Malgherita's house and craved alms of her. Malgherita, who was burning with love for him, always gave him alms, but she dared not disclose her love to him. But love, which is a shield for all who willingly serve under its rule, and never fails to point out a way by which each one may attain the desired end, gave at last somewhat of courage to Malgherita, and she accosted the hermit in the following manner : ' Teodoro, my brother, sole comfort of my heart, the passion which tortures me is so great, that if you will not have pity upon me you will forthwith see me lying dead before your eyes. I am consumed with such ardent love for you that I can no longer resist these amorous flames. Come to my aid at once, so that you may not be the cause of my death.' And having said these words, she began to weep passionately.

The hermit, who up to this time had never suspected that she loved him, stood as a man bemused ; but after a time he collected his wits and began to discourse with her, and such was the effect of their mutual converse that, letting go all thought of celestial things, they fell a-talking of earthly delights, and nothing now remained to them but to find the means of foregathering in order that they might accomplish their longed-for wishes. The young girl, who was very shrewd, said : ' My love, do not be afraid, for I will show you what measures we must needs take. This seems to be the plan which will best serve us. You will this evening, at the fourth hour of the night, place a lighted torch in the window of your hut, and I, when I see it burning, will at once come over to you.' Teodoro replied : ' Alas, my daughter ! how will you cross the sea ? You know that neither you nor I have a boat to carry us over, and to place ourselves

in the hands of others would be very dangerous for the honour and life of both of us.'

Then the young girl said : ' Let not any doubts trouble you, but leave the care of this matter to me, and I will find means of coming to you without fear of death or dishonour, for when I see the light burning I will swim over to you, and no one will know aught of what we do.' To this Teodoro made answer : ' There is surely great danger that you will be drowned in the sea, for you are very young and of no great strength, and the journey is long and your breath might easily fail you, and you be overwhelmed.' ' I have no fear,' said the maiden, ' that my strength will not carry me through, for I will swim as well as ever fish swam.' The hermit, seeing her firm determination, was satisfied, and when the dark night had come, according to the plan fixed upon he lighted his torch, and, having prepared a white towel, he awaited the coming of the maiden he longed to see with the greatest joy. She, when she saw the light burning, was filled with delight, and, having stripped off all her clothes, went barefooted and clad only in her shift to the seashore. There, when she had pulled her shift off her back, she entwined it about her head, and then committed herself to the sea, and in swimming she made such dexterous play with her arms and her legs that in less than a quarter of an hour she had gained the hut where the hermit awaited her. When he saw the maiden he took her by the hand and led her into his ill-covered hut, and, having taken the towel, which was white as snow, with his own hands he dried her all over ; then he led her into his little cell, and, having placed her on the small bed, he lay down beside her, and together with her he tasted the supreme enjoyment of love.

The lovers remained two full hours in sweet conversation and close embraces ; then the young girl, quite satisfied and happy, departed from the hermit, giving him however a promise that she would return to him. Malgherita, who learned full soon to delight in the sweet entertainment provided for her by the hermit, swam over to him every time she saw the light burning.

But that evil and blind Fortune, she who causes kingdoms to fall and upsets all human plans, she who is the enemy of the happy, would not long suffer this young girl to enjoy the company of her dear lover ; this Fortune, as though she were envious of the happiness of others, intervened and shattered all their schemes. For one night,

when the air was filled with baffling mists, Malgherita, who had marked that the light was burning, threw herself into the sea to cross over, but as she swam it chanced that she was seen of certain fishermen who were plying their trade in those parts. The fishermen, who took her to be a fish that was swimming past, began to watch her intently, and soon discovered her to be a woman, and furthermore observed that she entered the hermit's hut. They were very much astonished at this thing, and, having taken their oars in their hands, they rowed towards the shore, where, lying in ambush, they waited until such time as the girl, having come out of the hut, should swim back towards the centre island. But the poor girl could not conceal herself closely enough to avoid being seen by the fishermen, and they, having narrowly observed her, discovered who she was. And oftentimes after this they watched her make the perilous journey, and soon understood the signal of the lighted torch, whereupon they took counsel whether they should or should not keep the matter a secret. But then when they considered the disgrace which might fall upon the honourable family, and the risk of death which Malgherita ran, they changed their minds and determined to disclose the whole matter to her kinsmen; so, having gone to the house of Malgherita's brothers, they told them all the story from beginning to end. The brothers, when they heard and understood this sad news, would not believe it unless they should see it with their own eyes. But later on, when they were fully assured of the fact, they made up their minds that she must die, and after they had taken deliberate counsel together, they set to work to carry out their fell intent. Whereupon the younger brother, when the darkness of night began to fall, got into his boat and went quietly and alone to the hermit's hut, and begged him that he would not deny him shelter for this one night, forasmuch as a certain thing had happened to him, on account of which he stood in great danger of being taken and put to death by justice. The hermit, who knew him to be the brother of Malgherita, received him benigantly and embraced him, and all that night he remained with the young man, talking over divers questions and disclosing to him all the miseries of humankind, and the grave sins which corrupt the soul and make it a servant of the devil.

Whilst the younger brother remained with the hermit, the other two secretly issued from their house, and, having taken a small sail-yard and a torch, they entered a boat and rowed in the direction of



the hermit's hut, and, when they had come near it, they set the sail-yard upright, and tied the lighted torch to the top of it, awaiting what might happen.

Malgherita, when she saw the burning light, swam out boldly into the sea, according to her wont, and struck out in the direction of the hut. The brothers, who kept quite quiet, no sooner heard the movement which Malgherita made in the water than they took their oars in hand and silently rowed away from the hut, bearing with them the torch still burning. They rowed so gently that she heard nothing, neither could she see them on account of the darkness. The poor young girl thus perceived nothing but the lighted torch burning in the boat, and following this, she swam onward and onward. But the brothers put off so far from the land that they took her at last out into the high seas, and then, having taken down the sail-yard, they extinguished the light.

The unhappy girl, being no longer able to see the light, knowing nothing as to where she was, and already wearied with her long swimming, was quite bewildered, and finding herself beyond all human help, gave herself over for lost, and like a ship cast away she was soon swallowed up by the sea. The brothers, who saw that there was now no more chance of her escape, left their unfortunate sister in the midst of the waves and returned to their home. The younger brother, when daylight had appeared, gave due thanks to the hermit for his kind welcome, and departed from the hut.

Already the sad news had spread throughout the village that Malgherita Spolatina had disappeared, and on this account the brothers feigned to feel the greatest grief, but in their secret hearts they rejoiced immeasurably. The third day had scarcely passed when the dead body of this unfortunate girl was washed ashore by the sea near the hermit's hut, and when he had cast his eyes upon it and recognized it, he would fain have made an end of himself. But having taken hold of the body by the arm (nobody seeing him), he drew it out of the sea and carried it into his hut, and having thrown himself down by the corpse, for a long time he wept over it, and bathed her white bosom with abundant tears, and called upon her many times, but all in vain. And after he had wept his fill he determined to give her honourable sepulture, and to speed her soul with prayers and fastings, and with other good works. Then, having taken the spade with which he was wont to dig in his garden, he made a grave near his little church,

and, weeping plentifully, he closed her eyes and her mouth. Next, he made a garland of roses and violets, and this he placed on her head; then he gave her a last benediction, and kissed her, and put her into the grave, which he filled up with earth. And in this wise the honour of the brothers and of the lady was preserved, nor was it ever known what had become of her.

Many times in the course of this sad story had the ladies been moved to tears, and had been obliged to wipe their eyes with their kerchiefs. But the Signora found herself altogether mastered by grief on account of the sad ending of Fiordiana's fable, so she gave order to Molino to give them some merry enigma in order that pleasure might somewhat temper their present pain, and he without demur spake as follows :

Nurtured in the kindly nest
Of a maiden's glowing breast,
There I take my birth, and soon,
As reward for such a boon,
I labour hard by day, by night,
To bear her offerings rich and bright.
But as the moving stars fly past,
I'm shut within a prison fast.
Freed therefrom, I seek my mate,
And, bound to her by hidden fate,
That life may more abound thereby,
Embrace my doom and willing die.

Few or any of the listeners were able to fathom the meaning of Molino's learned riddle, and he, when he marked that they were all perplexed and at a loss, said: "The true interpretation of my enigma is this: in the month of May it is the custom of young maidens to place in their bosoms eggs of the silkworm, which there come to life, and in return for this boon the worms give the silk which they spin. Then the worm is shut up in the cocoon, and when it issues from this it is united with its mate, which lays more eggs, and then dies voluntarily." The solution of this intricate riddle appeared to the company to be no less clever than beautiful, and won unanimous praise. Then Lodovica, to whose lot it fell to relate the third story, stood up, and, having made a bow to the Signora, told the story which follows.

THE THIRD FABLE.

Cimarosta, a jester, goes to Rome, and confides a secret to Pope Leo, thereby procuring a beating for two of the private chamberlains.

THE fable, gracious and lovesome ladies, which has been so ingeniously told by Fiordiana, has given occasion for the shedding of many tears on account of its woeful nature, but as this is a spot better suited for laughter than for weeping, I have decided to tell you one which I hope will give you no small pleasure, for I will let you hear therein concerning the buffooneries done by a Brescian who went to Rome, thinking that he was about to become a rich man, but, failing in his schemes, ended his days in poverty and misadventure.

In the city of Brescia, which is situated in the province of Lombardy, there once lived a jester, Cimarosta by name, a very cunning fellow, but held in mean repute by his neighbours for the reason that he was much given to avarice, a vice which mars everything it touches, and also because he was a Brescian himself, and no prophet is well received in his own country.

When Cimarosta saw that he did not get the full appreciation which it seemed to him that his witty sayings merited, he was very indignant in his heart, and, without making his intentions known to anyone, he departed from Brescia and took his way towards Rome, thinking that he might there gather together a great sum of money, but things did not happen to him exactly according to his wishes, for in Rome men do not care for sheep that have got no wool.¹

The supreme Pontiff of Rome in those days was Leo, a German by birth, who, although he was a man of great learning, was prone at certain times (after the manner of divers great lords) to take delight in buffooneries and other diversions of a like character, but it was rare indeed that any jester would receive from the Pope any guerdon for his fooling. Cimarosta, who had no acquaintances in Rome, and did not know by what means he should bring himself to the notice of the Pope, made up his mind that he would go to him

¹ Orig., *perciocche la città di Roma non vuole pecora senza lana.*

in person and exhibit before him some proof of his wit. Wherefore he took his way to the palace of St. Peter's, where the Pope dwelt, and directly he entered therein he was accosted by a chamberlain, a stout fellow with a thick black beard, who called out to him, 'Where are you going?' And having put his hand on Cimarosta's breast he pushed him back. Cimarosta, when he saw the ruffled humour of the chamberlain, said with an humble tone of voice, 'Ah, my brother, do not deny me entrance, I beg you, for I have some most important questions to discuss with the Pope.' Then the chamberlain said, 'Get you away from this place as quickly as you may, otherwise you will get for yourself a reward which you will not find to your taste.' Cimarosta, however, still insisted on entering the palace, declaring over and over again that the business he wanted to discuss with the Pope was of a most important character. The chamberlain being at last persuaded by Cimarosta's pertinacity that some weighty business was afoot, and furthermore reckoning that an affair of this sort would of a certainty bring to Cimarosta a liberal reward out of the holy father's purse, agreed to let him in, but before opening the door he struck a bargain with him, which was that Cimarosta should, on his return from the Pope's presence, hand over to him the half of what had been awarded him, and Cimarosta promised readily that he would abide by this agreement.

Cimarosta, having passed over the threshold, entered into a second chamber, which was in the custody of a very affable young man, who, when he saw him, rose from his seat and came towards him, saying, 'What would you here, my friend?' And to him Cimarosta replied, 'I would speak with the Pope.'

To this the young man made answer, 'You cannot speak with him at present, for he is engaged with other affairs, and heaven knows when it will be convenient for you to have speech with him.' 'Ah,' cried Cimarosta, 'do not keep me back, for the things that I have to tell him are of the highest importance.' When the young man heard these words, there came into his mind at once the same notion which had suggested itself to the other chamberlain, and he said, 'If you wish to go in you must promise to hand over to me the half of whatever His Holiness may give you.' And Cimarosta readily promised to do this.

When Cimarosta at last made his way into the sumptuous papal chamber, his eye fell first upon a German bishop, who was standing

in a corner of the room at some distance from the Pope, and, having gone up to this prelate, he began to talk to him. The bishop, who had not the Italian idiom, spoke now in German, now in Latin, and Cimarosta, feigning to speak German (after the manner of buffoons), answered him, blurting out at random any words that happened to come to his lips. And they spoke in such fashion that neither the one nor the other understood a word of what was being said. The Pope, who was at the time occupied in talking with a cardinal, said to the latter, 'Do you hear the chattering that is going on over there?' 'Yes, holy father,' replied the cardinal. And when the Pope, who knew all languages perfectly, saw plainly that Cimarosta was playing a joke on the bishop, he was mightily amused thereat, and laughed aloud at the pranks which were going on. But in order that he might not spoil sport by stopping the joke, he turned his back upon them and pretended to talk with the cardinal on other matters.

Cimarosta and the bishop, therefore, having gone on with their wrangle for some time without one understanding a word which the other said—the Pope laughing heartily at the jest meantime—the buffoon at last said to the bishop in his mock Latin, 'From what city do you come?' The bishop answered, 'I am from the city of Nona.' Then Cimarosta said, 'Monsignor, it is no longer wonderful to me that you do not understand my language, nor I yours, for, you see, you come from the Nones and I come from the Complines.'¹ When the Pope heard this prompt and witty answer, he began to laugh so heartily with the cardinal, whom he was holding in conversation, that he almost burst his sides. Then, having called the fellow up to him, he asked him who he was, and whence he came, and what was his business. Cimarosta, throwing himself down upon the ground before the holy father and kissing his feet, told him that he was a Brescian named Cimarosta, and that he had come from Brescia to Rome in order to obtain a favour of His Holiness. The Pope said, 'Ask me whatever you desire.' 'I ask nothing else of your Holiness,' said Cimarosta, 'than twenty-five of the sharpest whip-cuts that are to be had.' When the Pope heard this foolish request he was mightily astonished and laughed heartily thereat, but still Cimarosta went on begging persistently that this boon and no other should be

¹ Orig., *Se voi siete da Nona, ed io sono da Compieta*—an attempted witticism on the canonical hours.

granted to him. The Pope, seeing that he was firm in this his wish, and being fully persuaded that he really meant what he said, bade them call a stalwart young fellow, to whom he gave orders then and there to lay on Cimarosta's back twenty-five good sharp cuts with a lash, and to put his whole heart into his work. The young man, obedient to the Pope's commands, straightway stripped Cimarosta as naked as on the day he was born; then he took a tough lash in his hand, and set himself to carry out the command given to him by the Pope. But Cimarosta with a loud voice cried out, 'Stop, stop, young man, and do not beat me!' The Pope, who saw this was part of the antics of the fellow, and did not know what he was about to do next, burst into loud laughter and commanded the youth to hold his hand.

When the young man had lowered his lash, Cimarosta, all naked as he was, knelt down before the Pope and with a flood of hot tears exclaimed: 'Holy father! there is nothing in this world which is more displeasing to God than broken faith. I, for my part, will keep my troth if your Holiness will give me aid and countenance. I, much against my will, promised to hand over, first to one of your chamberlains, and then to another, half of whatever your Holiness might be pleased to give me. I asked you for twenty-five sharp cuts with a lash, and you, in your natural kindness and courtesy, have consented to let me have them. Will you, therefore, in my name, give twelve and a half blows to one of the chamberlains and twelve and a half to the other. By this means you will be granting my request, and I shall perform my promise.'

The Pope, who as yet scarcely understood the drift of this matter, cried out, 'What is the meaning of this?' Then Cimarosta said, 'Holy father, when I wished to come in here and present myself to your Holiness, I was forced most unwillingly to chaffer and bargain with two of your chamberlains, who made me bind myself by oath and promise that I would hand over half of whatever your Holiness might of your beneficence grant to me. Wherefore, as I do not wish to fail in my given promise, I feel I am bound to hand to each of them his due share, and I will myself forego any part of the reward.'

When the Pope heard what Cimarosta said, he was greatly angered, and caused the chamberlains to be brought before him forthwith, and commanded that they should be stripped and beaten according to the terms of the bargain made between them and

Cimarosta. This order was promptly carried out, and when the young man had given each one of them twelve stripes, there yet remained one more stripe due to somebody to make up the full number of twenty-five. Wherefore the Pope commanded that the chamberlain who had been flogged last should have thirteen. But Cimarosta, interrupting him, cried out, 'That would hardly be fair, for in that case he would get more than I promised him.' 'What shall we do, then?' said the Pope. Cimarosta answered, 'Have them both tied together on one table, with their backsides uppermost, and then let the young man lay on to them together a single stroke, and a good sound one, that will include the two. And thus each one will receive his share, and I shall have righteously discharged my debt.'

When Cimarosta had left the Pope's presence without any reward in his pocket he was soon surrounded by a crowd of people who had heard rumours of the ready wit he had displayed. And a certain prelate, who was a good fellow, having come up to him, said to him, 'What is the latest news?' And Cimarosta immediately replied, 'Nothing less than that to-morrow we shall hear cries of peace.'¹ The prelate, who could not believe this (nor was there any reason why he should believe it), said to Cimarosta, 'You do not know what you are saying, for the Pope has been at war with France for a long time, and until now we have not heard a word about peace.' And after they had held a long dispute together Cimarosta said to the prelate, 'Messer, are you willing to make a wager with me of a good dinner that to-morrow there will not be cries of peace?' 'Yes,' answered the prelate. And forthwith in the presence of several witnesses they each deposited ten florins with the understanding that the loser should bear the cost of the dinner. Then the prelate took leave of Cimarosta in a merry humour, thinking that on the morrow he would hold high revel at the latter's cost. But Cimarosta, who in the meantime was not asleep, went to his lodgings, and having found the master of the house, said to him, 'My master, I would that you would do me a favour which may turn out to be both to your pleasure and to my profit.' 'What do you wish me to do?' said the landlord. 'Do you not know that you have but to command me?' 'I ask nothing less of you,' said Cimarosta, 'than that to-morrow your wife should don the old suit of armour which you have in your chamber,

¹ Orig., *dimane si criderà la pace.*

and you need not fear that aught of harm or dishonour will befall her, but leave the rest to me.'

It chanced that the landlord's wife was named *Madonna Pace*.¹ The armour *Cimarosta* had spoken of was that of a powerful man, very rusty, and of such great weight that anyone being dressed in it and stretched upon the ground, could not possibly raise himself without help, however valiantly he might strive. The landlord, who was a merry soul, and one well liked, knew *Cimarosta* to be full of banter, and for that reason wished to comply with his request.

When the morrow had come, the landlord made his wife put on all the armour, and, thus arrayed, he bade her lie down on the floor of her room. Then he said to the woman, 'Stand up now on your feet;' and she several times tried to get up, but could not move. *Cimarosta*, seeing that his plan was in a fair way to come to the issue he desired, said to the landlord, 'Let us go away.' And having closed the door of the room, which looked out on the public street, they departed. The landlord's wife, when she perceived that she was shut up alone in the room, and unable to rise, feared greatly that some untoward mishap was about to bechance her, and began to cry out with a loud voice. The neighbourhood, hearing the outcry and the clash of arms, ran to the landlord's house. *Cimarosta*, when he heard the tumult made by the men and women who had flocked together, said to his host: 'Do not move nor speak, but leave everything to me, for the laugh will soon be on our side.' So he went down the stairs and into the street, and asked this man and that who it might be who was screaming so vigorously, and they all with one voice replied, 'Do you not know they are the cries of *Madonna Pace*.' And having had these words repeated to him twice or thrice, he called several men to bear witness that they had heard the cries of *Madonna Pace*.

When the hour of the compline had passed, the prelate came and said, 'You have lost your wager of a dinner, brother, for so far we have heard no cries of peace.' 'I take it to be otherwise,' said *Cimarosta*. So between them there arose a sharp contention, and it became necessary to find a judge who should decide the case. And this judge, when he heard the reasoning of one side and of the other, and listened to the witnesses, who roundly declared that the whole neighbourhood had recently heard the cries of *Madonna Pace*, sentenced the prelate to pay for the feast.

¹ Mistress Peace.

Two days had scarcely gone by when Cimarosta, as he was passing through the city, encountered a Roman lady who was very rich, but ugly as the devil. This woman had managed to get a handsome youth for a husband, to the astonishment of all those who knew her. It happened that at the same moment a little she-ass passed, and Cimarosta turning to her said: 'Ah, poor little thing! if you had as much money as this woman you could easily get married.' It chanced that this saying was overheard by a gentleman who was a kinsman of the ugly woman, and he took a stick and gave Cimarosta such a blow on the head that he had to be carried by his arms and his legs back to his landlord's house.

The surgeon, in order that he might the better dress his wounds, had his head shaved. His friends when they came to see him said: 'Cimarosta, what have they done to you? Your head has been shaved.' And he said: 'By my faith, be silent and do not make mock of me, for if the skin of my head were of satin¹ or of damask it would be well worth a florin an ell, and now the whole of me is worth nothing.'

Now when the last hour of his life was approaching, a priest came to give him extreme unction, and when he was about to put the oil on his feet, Cimarosta said: 'Alas, good sir! do not oil me any more. Do you not see that my life is running off the reel fast enough?' All the bystanders when they heard this began to laugh, and thus Cimarosta, jesting even to the last moment of his life, died, and in this wise he and his buffooneries came to an unfortunate end.

Old was I before my day,
And when in infancy I lay,
I was a man-child strong and bold.
First I was plunged in water cold;
Then racked with torture fierce and fell;
Next scorched with heat. Then, sooth to tell,
Again with irons torn and rent;
Then out for homely service sent.
Useful my lot, though scant my fame;
Now if you can declare my name.

This subtle enigma commanded no small approbation from the whole of the honourable company, but not one listener was found clever enough to solve it. Whereupon Lodovica, like the prudent

¹ *Raso*, "satin" or "shaven."

girl she was, as soon as she saw that her riddle was likely to remain unguessed, said with a smile: "It is not because I am anxious to give a lesson to others, but because I do not wish to let this present company be any longer in suspense, that I propose to explain the meaning of the enigma I have just spoken. This, unless I am greatly in error, can be taken to mean nothing else but the flax. Because this plant is brought forth by its mother, that is to say the earth, of the male sex, then it is placed in cold running water to be steeped, then dried by the sun, next in a warm place, and heavily beaten by a mallet, and finally torn to pieces with iron, that is the shuttle, and also with thorns."

Everyone was greatly pleased with this explanation, and held it to be most learned. Then Lionora, who was seated next to the speaker, rose to her feet, and having made due salutation began her fable.

THE FOURTH FABLE.

Two brothers live together in great amity. After a time one of them desires a division of their goods; the other consents thereto, provided his brother will settle how this division is to be made. Whereupon the first brother makes the division, but fails to satisfy the other.



THE tender love which a father bears towards his children, beloved and gracious ladies, is indeed great; great, too, is the affection of one close and faithful friend for another, and great the attachment which a loyal citizen feels for his beloved country, but in my estimation the love between two brothers, who cling to one another with a sincere and perfect affection, is fully as great as any of those which I have named above. From love of this sort (although sometimes it happens quite otherwise) there may spring up the most blessed and happy results, which bring sweet fulfilment to the projects of men beyond their most sanguine hopes. Of this truth I could bring forward, if I would, numberless examples, these however I will pass over in silence, so as not to cause weariness to this noble and gracious company. But in order that I may duly fulfil the promise I have made to you, I will now lay before you, as an example, the case of two brothers who lived in our own time,

and this story of mine may prove to be, I hope, a source both of pleasure and profit to you all.

In Naples, a city which is justly celebrated and famous, one abounding in lovely women of virtuous carriage, and rich in all good things that the mind can think of, there resided, not long ago, two brothers, one of whom was called Hermacora, and the other Andolfo. These two men were of noble lineage, being scions of the great family of Carafa, and both were gifted with good parts and a lively wit. Besides this, they were concerned in large traffic of merchandise, whereby they had acquired for themselves great wealth. Now these two brothers, rich men, of noble parentage, and neither one as yet married, shared, as loving brothers should, the common expenses of their living, and so great was the attachment between them that the one would never think of doing aught which would not likewise be pleasant to the other.

In the course of time it happened that Andolfo, the younger brother—acting with the consent of Hermacora—took to wife a beautiful gentlewoman of noble blood named Castoria. This lady, as became a wise and high-minded woman, loved and revered Hermacora, her brother-in-law, as righteously as Andolfo her husband, and the one and the other alike reciprocated her affection; so that there reigned in this household concord and peace the like of which is seldom to be found. It pleased Heaven to give Castoria numerous children, and as the family grew in number, so in like manner grew their affection and welfare. Their riches also increased greater day by day, and, seeing that they were all of one mind and of one heart, no discord ever arose between them. When, however, the children were grown up and had arrived at full age, blind fortune, who is ever jealous of the happiness of others, indignantly interposed, seeking to sow discord and strife where before there had been such perfect union and peace.

For Andolfo, moved thereto by a childish and ill-regulated desire, was seized by the wish to part company with his brother, and to realize his share of their common fortune and to live by himself elsewhere. Wherefore he one day addressed his brother in these words: ‘Hermacora, we have now lived for a long time very happily together, sharing all our belongings, and a wrathful word has never been spoken between us. Now, in order that fickle fortune may not come, like the wind amidst the leaves, and sow discord between us,

bringing in disorder and disunion where hitherto concord and peace have reigned, I have determined to realize my part of our wealth and to go my own way. I do not propose to separate myself from you because you have ever done me aught of injury, but in order that I may be able to spend my own money according to my own liking.' Hermacora, when he understood what the foolish desire of his brother really was, could not help feeling deeply grieved thereanent, especially as he could not divine what the cause might be which was now urging his brother to separate himself so lightly from him. Wherefore with speech as gentle and loving as he knew how to use he began to advise and to beg Andolfo that he would forthwith banish this evil counsel from his mind. But in spite of everything he said Andolfo waxed more obstinate than ever and persisted in his malevolent desire, giving no thought whatever to the loss and injury which must be the issue thereof. At last he cried out vehemently : ' Hermacora, you ought to know well enough the saying that it is of no profit to argue with a man who has made up his mind ; therefore it is unnecessary that you should come to me with your wheedling speech to try and turn me back from following a course upon which I am firmly set. Furthermore, I have no mind that you should press me to give you any reason of mine as to why I choose to separate myself from you. I will only say that the sooner the division is made and we go our several ways, the better I shall be pleased.' Hermacora, seeing how strongly his brother was bent on carrying out his scheme, and that he could in no way move him with gentle speech, spake thus to him : ' Brother, since it pleases you that we should now divide our goods and part one from another, I (not however without deep pain and somewhat of displeasure to boot) am prepared to satisfy your wish and to do what you propose. But there is one favour I have to ask of you, and I beg you will not refuse to grant it to me ; for should you refuse it you would soon see me a dead man.'

To this Andolfo replied : ' Say what you wish, Hermacora, for in every other matter, except the one which we have just been discussing, I shall be willing to content you.' Then answered Hermacora : ' It is no doubt within the bounds of right and reason that we should divide our possessions and separate the one from the other. Now, seeing that this division has to be made by someone, I would that you should be that man, settling the two parts in such a fashion that

neither one of us shall have any cause to complain thereof.' To this Andolfo replied : ' Hermacora, it is scarcely seemly that I, being the younger brother, should be called upon to make this division. Surely such duty belongs rather to you who are the elder.'

In the end Andolfo, who was burning with eagerness for the division to be made in order to fulfil his darling wish, and unable to hit upon any other means of bringing the matter to an end, undertook the task of dividing the goods, and gave to his elder brother the choice of taking which share he would. Hermacora, who was a prudent, clever, and kindly-natured man, now pretended that the two parts had not been equally divided, although, in sooth, he must have seen that they had been apportioned with the strictest justice ; wherefore he said : ' Andolfo, the division which you have here made seems, no doubt, to you a just one, and for that reason you assume that neither one of us ought to complain ; but to me it does not seem just. Therefore I beg you to make another trial to divide it more fairly, so that neither you nor I should have any cause for discontent.' When Andolfo saw that his brother was ill-satisfied with the division he had made, he took away certain things from one of the shares and added them to the other, asking Hermacora whether the parts were by this change made equal, and whether he was now contented. Hermacora, who was in his heart all that was kindly and loving, nevertheless continued to cavil at his brother's work, and feigned to be still discontented therewith, although the division had been most righteously and justly made.

Meantime it seemed to Andolfo very strange that his brother refused to be contented with what he had done, and, with an angry look upon his face, he took the paper upon which the division had been reckoned and noted down, and tore it to pieces in his wrath. Then, turning towards his brother, he said : ' Go and divide our goods according to your own will, for I am bent at any cost on bringing this business to an end, even though it be finished to my own disadvantage.' Hermacora, who could not help seeing that his brother was sorely inflamed with anger, made answer to him in a kindly and gentle manner : ' Andolfo, my brother, put aside that scornful bearing, and let not your indignation get the better of your reason ; restrain your anger, temper your wrath, and learn to know yourself. Then, like a wise and prudent man, consider well whether the parts into which our substance has been divided are equal, and if you

find that they are not equal, divide them once more, for then I will of a surety be content, and take the share allotted to me without cavilling.'

Andolfo did not as yet comprehend the drift of the thoughts which were working in the kindly heart of his brother, nor did he perceive the artful net which Hermacora was designing to cast over him. So, growing yet more angry, he cried out to his brother with even greater rage than before: 'Hermacora, did I not tell you at the beginning of this business that you were the elder brother, and that it pertained to you to make this division of our wealth? Why did you not make it yourself? Did you not promise to be satisfied with any apportionment of the same which I might make? And now you fail to keep faith with me.' To this Hermacora answered: 'My dearest brother, if, after you have divided our goods and given me my share thereof, I find that this is not equal to yours, what wrong do I work you by complaining?' Then said Andolfo: 'What thing is there in all the house of which you have not been allotted your due share?' But Hermacora went on insisting that he had not been fairly treated, and they fell a-wrangling, the one saying 'Yes,' and the other 'No.' At last Andolfo said: 'I would much like to know in what respect I have failed to make the parts equal.' And Hermacora replied to him: 'My brother, you have failed in the most important part.' But after he had thus spoken Hermacora, seeing that Andolfo was waxing more and more angry, and that the matter, if it should be further drawn out, might bring scandal and hurt to the honour of their house, and peradventure place even their lives in jeopardy, heaved a deep sigh and went on: 'You declare, oh! my beloved brother, that you have indeed given me the full share which by right belongs to me, but this I deny and I will moreover prove the same to you by the clearest evidence, so that you may even see it with your eyes and touch it with your hands. Now, put your anger aside, and tell me whether, from the day when you led home to our house Castoria, your beloved wife and my dear sister-in-law, we have not all lived together in fraternal affection?' 'Assuredly we have,' answered Andolfo. 'Then,' asked Hermacora, 'has Castoria not striven to do her best in governing the house for the benefit of us all?' 'Certainly,' said Andolfo. 'Is she not the mother of all these children whom we have now around us?' asked Hermacora; 'and have they not, mother and children, lived at our common cost?' While Hermacora was thus speaking in this tender loving strain, Andolfo grew more and more astonished, and

he failed to see to what end his brother could be thus addressing him. Hermacora went on : ' My brother, you have indeed divided our goods, but you have not divided your wife and children, giving me my share of them. Shall I no longer have any part in their love and care? How am I to live without the society of my dear sister-in-law and of my beloved nephews and nieces? Give me, therefore, my share in the love of these, and then go in peace, for I shall be well content. If you cannot do this, I will not consent to the division being made. And in case (which God forbid) you will not agree to this proposition of mine, I swear that I will summon you before a human tribunal on earth, and there claim justice of you. If I cannot obtain it in this world, I will cite you before the tribunal of Christ, to whom all things are clear and manifest.'

Andolfo listened very attentively to the words spoken by his brother, and was mightily amazed at what he heard. Then for the first time he began to realize how great must be the tenderness of heart which stirred so strongly the deep well of love in Hermacora's bosom, and he was so overcome with shame and confusion that he hardly ventured to utter a word in answer to what Hermacora had said. At last he felt the justice of his brother's words, and his heart, heretofore so hard, was softened, and prostrating himself on the ground before his brother, he said : ' Hermacora, of a truth my ignorance has been great, and great also my fault. Greatest of all, however, are your devotion and loving-kindness. Now I see clearly my wretched error and my ignorant blindness. Now my eyes can pierce through the baffling mist which has hitherto blunted and obscured my gross perception. Of a truth I deserve the swiftest and the sharpest chastisement that the public tongue can pronounce against me, and I confess myself worthy of the severest punishment that can be devised. But, because your heart has ever been full of clemency and love towards me, I will venture now to draw near to you, as to a fount of living water, begging you to pardon my heinous fault, and promising never to forsake you, but to remain ever in affectionate union with you, together with my wife, and to allow you to dispose of my children as if they had been born to you.' Then the brothers embraced one another, while tears of love and reconciliation fell from the eyes of both of them, and in this manner they found perfect reunion one with the other, and from this time forth there never arose another word of discord between them. For many years they all lived

together in perfect peace, and after their death the children, and their children, were left the sharers of the great wealth they had accumulated.

This pathetic story of what had passed between the two brothers pleased greatly the whole company, and it here and there proved to be so pity-moving, that not only the ladies, but even the men shed tears when it was shown to them how great was the love which Hermacora bore to Andolfo his brother, and with what gentleness he had appeased Andolfo's obstinate humour, and in the end beaten back the attacks of evil fortune. When the Signora saw that the men, and the women also, were wiping away from their eyes the tears that flowed therefrom, she made a sign that everyone should straightway cease from weeping, and commanded Lionora to finish her story with an enigma, and the damsel at once spake as follows :

When we look on all around,
Many beauteous things are found.
Once I was a virgin fair ;
Now a mother's part I share,
Giving life so full and free
To him who once gave life to me.
And my mother's mate I feed,
Mother to my sire in need.
Tell me who is she who gives
Life to him through whom she lives ?

When Lionora had brought her enigma to an end, it won no little praise from all the company, and a certain one stood up and made an attempt to give an interpretation thereof, but his essay was a vain one, for he came not near the right solution. Wherefore Lionora, smiling gently, explained it in the following words : " Once upon a time there was an innocent old man who was unjustly thrown into prison and condemned to death by starvation, and was in consequence kept without food. But his jailers suffered his daughter to visit him, and she nourished him with the milk from her own breast ; thus from being a daughter she became a mother, giving life to him who had given life to her."

The enigma told by Lionora proved fully as interesting to the company as her piteous story. In order that the last of the damsels might complete the story-telling of the night, she sat down after she had made due salutation to the Signora, and Isabella, who had been chosen to fill the last place, rose from her seat and thus blithely began her fable.

THE FIFTH FABLE.

Three brothers, poor men, go out into the world and acquire great riches.



HAVE often heard it said that wit is ever the master of force, and that there is no undertaking in the whole world, however difficult and arduous it may appear, which man may not carry out by means of his ingenuity. This truth I will prove to you in a very brief fable, if you will lend me your attention.

There once lived in this excellent city of ours a poor man to whom were born three sons, but by reason of his great poverty he could find no means of feeding and rearing them. On this account the three youths, pressed by need and seeing clearly the cruel poverty of their father and his decaying strength, took counsel amongst themselves and resolved to lighten the burden which lay upon their father's shoulders by going out into the world and wandering from place to place with a staff and a wallet, seeking in this wise to win certain trifles by the aid of which they might be able to keep themselves alive. Wherefore, having knelt humbly before their father, they begged him to give them leave to go forth into the world in search of their sustenance, promising at the same time that they would come back to the city when ten years should have gone by. The father gave them the desired licence, and with this purpose in their minds they set forth and travelled until they came to a certain place, where it seemed to them all they would do well to part one from another.

Now the eldest of the brothers by chance found his way into a camp of soldiers, who were on the march to the wars, and straightway agreed to take service with the chief of a band. In a very short space of time he became highly expert in the art of war and a powerful man-at-arms and a doughty fighter, so much so that he took a leading place amongst his fellows. So nimble and so dexterous was he, that with a dagger in each hand he would scale the wall of every lofty fortress they assaulted.

The second brother arrived at last at a certain seaport, where

many ships were built, and, having betaken himself to one of the master shipwrights, a man who was greatly skilled in handicraft, he worked so well and with such diligence that in a little time there was no other of the workmen equal to him in his calling, and the good report of him was spread through all the country.

The youngest brother, as it chanced, came one day to a certain spot where a nightingale was singing most sweetly, and so mightily was he charmed and fascinated thereby that he ever went on his way following the traces and the song of the bird through shadowy valleys and thick woods, through lakes, through solitary places, through echoing forests, and through regions desert and unpeopled. So strongly did the sweetness of the bird's song take hold on him that, forgetful of the way which led back to the world of men, he continued to dwell in these wild woods; wherefore, having lived ten whole years in this solitary state apart from a dwelling of any kind, he became as it were a wild man of the woods. By the long lapse of time, and by unvarying and constant usance of the place in which he tarried, he became skilled in the tongue of all the birds to whom he listened with the keenest pleasure, understanding all they had to tell him, and being known by them as if he had been the god Pan among the fauns.

When the day appointed for the brethren to return to their home had come, the first and the second betook themselves to the place of meeting, and there awaited the third brother. When they saw him approaching, all covered with hair and naked of raiment, they ran to meet him, and, out of the tender love they had for him, broke out into plentiful tears, and embraced and kissed him, and went about to put clothes upon him. Next they betook themselves to an inn to get some food, and, while they sat there, behold! a bird flew up on to a tree and spake thus as it sang: 'Be it known to you, O men who sit and eat, that by the corner-stone of this inn is hidden a mighty treasure, which through many long years has been there reserved for you. Go and take it!' and having thus spoken, the bird flew away.

Then the brother who had last come to the place of meeting set forth plainly to the other two what was the meaning of the words which the bird had spoken, and straightway they digged in the place which had been described, and took out the treasure which they found therein. In this manner they all of them became men of great wealth, and went back to their father.

After they had tenderly greeted and embraced their father and given rich and sumptuous feastings, it chanced that one day the youngest brother heard the song of another bird, which spake as follows: ‘In the Ægean sea, within the range of about ten miles, is an island, known by the name of Chios, upon which the daughter of Apollo has built a massy castle of marble. At the entrance of this there lies a serpent, as the guardian thereof, spitting out fire and venom from its mouth, and upon the threshold is chained a basilisk. There Aglea, one of the fairest ladies in all the world, is kept a prisoner with all the treasure which she has heaped up and collected, together with a vast store of coin. Whoever shall go to this place and scale the tower shall be the master of the treasure and of Aglea as well.’ And when the bird had thus spoken it flew away. As soon as the meaning of its words had been made known, the three brothers determined to go to the place it had described—the first brother having promised to scale the tower by the aid of two daggers, and the second to build a swift-sailing ship. This having been accomplished in a very short space of time, they set forth, and, after crossing the sea with good fortune, wafted along by a favourable breeze, they found themselves close to the isle of Chios one morning just before the break of day. Then the man-at-arms by the aid of his two daggers climbed the tower, and, having seized Aglea and bound her with a cord, handed her over to his brothers. Next, after he had taken from their hiding-places all the rubies and precious stones, and a heap of gold which was also there, he descended, rejoicing greatly, and the three adventurers, leaving naked the land which they had plundered, returned to their homes safe and sound. But with regard to the lady, seeing it was not possible to divide her into three parts, there arose a sharp dispute between the brothers as to which one of them should retain her, and the wrangling over this point, to decide who had the strongest claim to her, was very long. Indeed, up to this present day it is still before the court; wherefore we will each settle the cause as we think right, while the judge keeps us waiting for his decision.

When Isabella had brought her short story to an end, she put her hand into her pocket and drew therefrom the scroll on which her enigma was written and gave it thus:

A proud black steed, with wings of white,
The earth ne’er touches in its flight;

II.

L

Behind it bears the rein which guides,
And wearies oft the wight who rides.
Great store of wealth within it brings.
Now flaps its plumes and now its wings ;
Now midst the strife of battle lies ;
Now peaceful fares ; has two great eyes,
But nought can see ; runs to and fro,
And bears man where he would not go.

This enigma set forth by Isabella with such great wit was in a certain sense understood by all the company, for it could be held to describe no other thing except a proud and stately ship, which is coloured black with pitch and has white sails ; it ploughs the sea, and flees the shore so as not to be shattered on the rocks. It has its rudder behind, which directs its course, and rows of oars on either side in the similitude of wings. In time of peace it is taken up with traffic, and in time of war it goes to battle. In front it has two great eyes, and sometimes by hazard carries men into strange regions where they have no desire to go.

And now because the hour was late the Signora bade them to light the torches, and gave leave to all the ladies and gentlemen to return to their homes, at the same time charging them strictly that on the following evening they should all return to the accustomed spot ready to continue the entertainment, and to this command they with one voice promised obedience.

The End of the Seventh Night.





Night the Eighth.





The Fables and Enigmas of Messer Giovanni Francesco Straparola da Carabaggio.

Right the Eighth.



THE fair-haired and luminous Apollo, the son of Jove the thunderer and of Latona, had now departed from our world, and the fireflies, having come forth from their dark and shadowy hiding-places, were flitting joyously through the dusk of night, which in every corner was overcome by the sparkling light they shed around, when the Signora, having repaired with the damsels to the noble hall, gave gracious welcome to the honourable company, who had come a few minutes before to the place of meeting. And when she remarked that all those who had come to last night's gathering were now present, she gave order for the instruments to be brought in, and after they had danced somewhat, a servant fetched the golden vase. Out of this a child drew five names, the first being that of Eritrea, the second that of Cateruzza, the third that of Arianna, the fourth that of Alteria, the last place being reserved for Lauretta. But before the sprightly Eritrea was suffered to make beginning of her fable the Signora let them know it was her will that they should all five together sing a canzonet, to the music of the instruments. Whereupon the damsels, with joyful faces, and looking as fair as angels, began in this fashion their singing :

SONG.

Ah, cruel ruthless fair !
How often from your eyes is sped the ray
That gives me life, that takes my life away.

My flowing tears will gain for me, I ween,
 If not thy mercy, yet at least thy ruth ;
 Nor care nor credence hast thou for my truth.
 And in your face serene
 I read a doom more dire to me is given ;
 An outcast I from Love and Death and Heaven.

The song, with its cadence so divinely soft, gave great pleasure to all who listened, but especially it commended itself to Bembo, wherefore, in order not to divulge the secret thought he cherished within his breast, he did not join in the laughter. And having turned towards the gracious Eritrea, he said : “ It is now high time that you should begin the story-telling with some delightful fable of your own ; ” and the damsel, without waiting for any further command from the Signora, with a smiling face thus began.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Three rogues journey together to Rome, and on the way thither pick up a ring, over which they come to high words as to who shall get it. Meeting a certain gentleman, they ask his arbitrament and he decides it shall go to the idlest loon of the three, but no settlement of the cause is made.



HAVE carefully considered, most excellent ladies, the exceeding great variety of conditions under which unfortunate mortals at present live, and of these I find none more wretched and unhappy than the condition of a lazy rogue, because men of this sort, on account of their mean estate, are ill spoken of by all and pointed at by every finger. Again, more often than not, they prefer to go on living in their rags and poverty than to give up their disgraceful calling. This contention I will prove, in the course of my story, concerning the adventures of three lazy rascals, after a fashion easily to be understood.

You must know, then, that (about two years ago from this present time) there lived in the territory of Siena three fellows, young in years, but as old and finished in all the arts of roguery and laziness as anyone could tell of or imagine. Of these one was called Gordino, seeing that he was more addicted to gluttony than the other

two; the second, because he was a poor weakling and of no good for aught, was called Fentuzzo by all who knew him; and the third, because his brainpan was very scantily furnished, went by the name of Sennuccio. Now one day it chanced that these three, finding themselves upon the high road, began to talk together, and Fentuzzo said: 'Whither are you bound, brothers?' To him Gordino replied: 'I am on the way to Rome.' 'And what are you bent on doing there?' Fentuzzo inquired. 'I am bent on finding out,' replied Gordino, 'some good adventure which will serve me well enough so as to allow me to live for the future without troubling myself about anything.' 'Ah, then, we will fare with you!' cried the two rogues. Then said Sennuccio: 'If it should fall in with your pleasure I will willingly join you in the enterprise.' Whereupon the two others gladly accepted his fellowship, and made a vow one with another that they would on no account part company until such time as they should be come within the city of Rome. And as they went along the road, talking together of this thing and of that, it chanced that Gordino cast his eyes down upon the ground and there espied a fine gem set in a gold ring, which shone so brilliantly that it wellnigh dazzled his sight. But, before this, Fentuzzo had pointed out the jewel to his two companions, and the matter came to an issue by Sennuccio picking it up and putting it upon his finger. As soon as he had done this there sprang up between the three a very violent dispute as to which of them had the best claim to the jewel.

Gordino maintained stoutly that it ought to belong to him, because he had first espied it. Said Fentuzzo, 'It surely ought rather to be mine, because I pointed it out to you.' 'It ought to belong to me rather than to either of you,' said Sennuccio, 'because I picked it up from the ground and put it on my finger.' And thus the knavish rascals kept up their wrangling, neither one being willing to give up his claim in favour of the others, till at last they went on from words to blows, and spent divers shrewd bouts of fisticuffs over each other's heads and faces till the blood ran down on all sides like rain. It happened that just at this hour a certain Messer Gavardo Colonna, a Roman noble and a man of high office, was on the road back to the city from visiting a farm he owned, and, having caught sight of the three ruffians from afar, and heard the sound of the uproar they were making, stopped short, and was sore stricken with confusion, and assailed with a pressing fear that they would most likely

fall upon him and take his life. More than once he felt moved to curb his horse and turn back in the way he had come, but at last he plucked up his courage and took heart, and continued his journey till he came up to the three companions, whom he addressed in these words : 'Ho, fellow-travellers ! what is the meaning of this hurly-burly between you ?' And to this Gordino made answer, 'Save your honour, good sir, the matter over which we are wrangling is this : we three have set forth from our respective homes, and, as luck would have it, we met one another on the road, and thereupon agreed to travel in one another's company to Rome. Wherefore, as we were journeying on and conversing together I espied upon the ground a very fair jewel set in gold, which by every claim of reason ought assuredly to belong to me, because I was the first to see it.' 'And I,' said Fentuzzo, 'declare that I first pointed it out to these two others, and on this account it appears that it ought to belong to me rather than to them.' But Sennuccio, who was not asleep, meantime said, 'I hold, signor, that the jewel ought to be awarded to me and not to the others, because without any sign being made to me thereanent, I picked it up from the ground and placed it on my finger. So neither one of us being disposed to give way to the others we began to fight, and thereby put ourselves in grave danger of death.'

Now when the Signor Gavardo had rightly apprehended the reason of the dissension between the three, he said : 'Tell me, my good fellows, whether you are disposed to refer the composition of this your dispute to me, so that I may find a way to bring you once more into accord ?' And to this they all three of them replied that they were willing it should be so, and pledged their faith that they would abide by any award which might be given by the gentleman in the business. Signor Gavardo, when he saw they were disposed to act fairly, said : 'Since you by common consent have placed yourselves in my hands, desiring that I should be the sole adjudicator of your dispute, I, on my part, only require two things to be done by you. One of them is, that the jewel shall be given into my hands ; and the other is, that each one of you shall set about devising how he may give the greatest proof of laziness. Then, at the end of fifteen days, the one who shall show himself to be the meanest, laziest rascal, shall become the undisputed master of the jewel.'

The three companions agreed straightway to these terms, and,

having given over the jewel into the gentleman's keeping, set out on their journey to Rome. When they arrived in the city they went their several ways, one going here and the other there, each one of them having made up his mind to endeavour to bring to pass, to the best of his powers, some achievement of laziness which should outdo any deed of the same sort hitherto accomplished, and be worthy to be kept in perpetual remembrance. Gordino at once found a master whom he agreed to serve on certain terms; and it chanced that this man bought one day in the piazza a lot of early figs of the kind which ripen at the end of the month of June, and gave the same to Gordino to hold till such time as he should return to his house. Gordino, who was enormously lazy and by nature no less of a glutton, took one of the figs, and—following the while in his master's steps—ate it secretly bit by bit. And because the taste of the fig tickled his palate very pleasantly, the lazy glutton went on, and covertly ate certain others of the figs. As the greedy rascal continued to gorge himself, it happened that at last he put in his mouth a fig which was of an extraordinary bulk; wherefore, being greatly afeared lest his master should spy out his theft, he thrust the fig into a corner of his mouth, as if he had been an ape, and kept it there. Of a sudden the master turned to look behind him, and casting his eye upon Gordino, he fancied that the fellow's left cheek was swollen somewhat. After looking him steadily in the face he was fully assured that the cheek was much swollen, and when he inquired of Gordino what had happened to him to cause such a swelling, the rascal stood as one dumb and answered not a word. When the master saw this he was mightily astonished, and said, 'Gordino, open your mouth so that I may examine what is the matter with you, then perhaps I may be able to devise a remedy.' But the wretched fellow would neither open his mouth nor utter a word; indeed, the more his master tried to make him open his mouth the tighter and closer shut the rascal kept his teeth. So at last, after the master had made divers trials to get Gordino's jaws apart, and finding none of them to be of any service, he took him to a barber who lived thereabout, fearing lest some sore mischance might happen to him, and showed him to the blood-letter, saying, 'Messer, a very foul accident has just happened to this my servant, and as you can see his cheek is swollen so much that he can no longer speak, nor can he open his mouth. I fear greatly that he may choke.' Whereupon the surgeon deftly touched the swollen

cheek and said to Gordino, 'What do you feel, good brother?' but he got no response. 'Open your mouth,' he went on, and the fellow did not move in the least. The surgeon, finding it hard to hit upon a method of working a cure with words, took up certain of his instruments, and began to make trial therewith to see whether he might be able to get the mouth open, but he could not by any manner of means induce the lazy rascal to move his jaws.

The surgeon now fancied that the evil must arise from an imposthume, which had gathered little by little and which was now mature and fit for treatment, so he gave the place a cut in order that the gathering might the easier disperse. This lazy rascal, Gordino, who had in sooth heard all that was said, did not move a muscle or utter a sound, but stood as still as if he had been a firm-built tower. Having done this the surgeon began to press the tumour, so as to be able to see what the discharge, which was coming therefrom, might be like; but in place of pus and putrefaction he found nothing but healthy blood mixed with the fig-flesh which Gordino still kept closely shut in his mouth. His master, seeing that all this turmoil had arisen over a fig, and seeing, moreover, what a lazy ruffian his servant was, bade the surgeon dress the wound, and then, when he was cured, told Gordino to be gone, and bad luck go with him.

Fentuzzo, who was no whit less given to slothfulness than Gordino, soon got rid of the few coins which he happened to have in his pocket, and failing, through his want of wit, to find anyone upon whom he could play the sponge, went about begging from door to door, sleeping now in this portico, now in that, and by times even out in the forest. It happened that on a certain night the vagabond ruffian came upon an old building fallen to ruin, and, having gone into it, found a heap of dung and a little straw, upon which he lay down and disposed himself in the best fashion he could, with his body on the heap and his legs stretched out beyond. Weariness came upon him, and he fell asleep; but, before he had lain long, there arose a violent wind accompanied by so great a downpour of rain and tempest that it seemed as if the world were coming to an end, nor was there any ceasing of rain and lightning all through the night. And seeing that the covering of the roof was old and rotten, a drop of rain-water which came in through a hole fell down into the eye of Fentuzzo, thereby awakening him and letting him rest quiet no longer. The wretched loon, on account of the arrant laziness which possessed him,

showed no disposition to withdraw himself from the place where he lay, or to elude the danger which was threatening him, but continued to lie on in the same spot, persisting in his dogged obstinate mood, and still keeping his eye in the place where the drops were falling, as if it had been a hard and insensible pebble. The stream of rain-water, which fell without ceasing from the roof, striking upon his eye in its descent, was so bitterly cold that before morning came the sight of the poor rogue's eye was destroyed. The next day, after he had been a short time astir to see how he might win some food for his belly, he found something was wrong with one of his eyes, and, fancying that he was but half awake, he put his hand over the other and shaded it, whereupon he discovered that the other was destroyed. As soon as he was certain that he was in this case, he fell into an immoderate fit of joyfulness, holding that no chance more favourable or luckier could have befallen him, and persuading himself that the feat of slothfulness he had just accomplished must of a surety win for him the prize of the jewel.

Sennuccio, who in the meantime had adopted a way of life no less sluggard than that of the other two, took a wife, a woman who was fully his equal in laziness, Bedovina by name. One evening after supper, the pair were seated near the door of the house to take the air a little, for the season was very warm. Said Sennuccio to his wife, 'Bedovina, shut the door, for now it is time for us to get to bed.' To this request she made reply that he might shut the door himself; and as they went on thus disputing, without either one consenting to shut the door, Sennuccio said, 'Bedovina, let us make a bargain, that the one who shall speak first shall shut the door.' The wife, who was both lazy by nature and obstinate by habit, agreed to this; so Sennuccio and Bedovina sat on, lazy wretches as they were, neither one daring to speak for fear of incurring the penalty of having to shut the door. The good woman, however, soon began to weary of the sport, and growing heavy with sleep she left her husband sitting on a bench, and, having taken off her clothes, went to bed.

A short time after this there passed through the street the serving-man of a certain gentleman, who was going back to his house. At this moment it chanced that the candle in the lantern which he carried went out, and, observing that Sennuccio's house was yet open, he went in and said, 'Ho, there! is anyone within? give me a light for my candle;' but no one answered him. The servant, having gone a little further into

the house, observed Sennuccio, who was sitting with his eyes wide open upon the bench, and made bold to ask him for a light, but the lazy fellow vouchsafed not a word in reply. Whereupon the servant, deeming that Sennuccio was fast asleep, took him by the hand and began to jog him, saying, 'Good brother, what ails you? Answer me quick.' But Sennuccio was not asleep, and only held his tongue through fear of being amerced in the penalty of having to shut the door, so he still kept silent. Then the servant went on a little further, and remarked a faint light on a hearth where the embers were yet alive, and when he entered the inner room he found no one there save only Bedovina, who was lying alone in the bed. He called to her and shook her roughly more than once, but she, like her husband, in order not to incur the penalty of having to shut the door, would neither speak nor stir. The servant, having taken a good look at her, found her comely, though miserly of her words, so he laid himself softly down beside her, and though not over well furnished for the task he undertook, contrived to accomplish it, Bedovina keeping dead silence all the while and quietly allowing him to do what he would with her, though her husband saw all that went on. And when the young man had gone his way Bedovina got out of bed, and, going to the door, found there her husband, who was yet awake, and by way of chiding him thus spake: 'A fine husband you are, certes! You have left me lying all night with the door wide open, giving thereby free course for any lewd fellows to come into the house, and never lifting your hand to keep them back. You of a truth ought to be made to drink out of a shoe with a hole in it.'¹ Whereupon the lazy rascal rose to his feet and gave answer to her in this wise: 'Now go and shut the door, little fool that you are! now I am equal with you. You, forsooth, thought you were going to make me shut the door, and you find yourself properly tricked. This is the way headstrong folk are always punished.' Bedovina, seeing that she had indeed lost the wager she had made, and at the same time enjoyed a merry night, shut the door forthwith, and went to bed with her cuckoldly knave of a husband.

When the appointed fifteen days had passed, the three rascals sought the presence of Gavardo, who, when he had been fully informed of the above-written feats of the three companions, and had

¹ Orig., *Il sarebbe da darvi da bere con una scarpa rotta.*

given consideration to their several arguments, found himself in no wise disposed to make any award thereanent, for it seemed to him that under the vast canopy of heaven there could nowhere be found three other rascals who would equal these in laziness. So, having taken in hand the gem, he threw it down on the ground, and cried out that it should be the property of the one who might pick it up.

At the end of this amusing story there arose a great dispute amongst the hearers. Some held that the gem belonged by right to Gordino, others would have given it to Fentuzzo, and others to Sennuccio, all of the disputants giving excellent reasons for their particular views. But the Signora, observing that time was flying fast, made known that it was her wish that the question should be reserved for some future time, and bade all be silent in order that Eritrea might follow the due course by propounding her enigma; whereupon the damsel smiling merrily gave it in these words :

By the swampy drear seaside,
Gazing o'er the brackish tide,
Sits a bird of plumage gay
On a rail the livelong day,
Watching for the fish that swim
In the shallows under him.
Should a large one come that way,
Too lazy he to seize his prey,
Neglects it, hoping to discover
One bigger; but when day is over,
The lazy sluggard now must feed
On worms that in the marshes breed.


The above enigma given by Eritrea proved vastly pleasing to all the company, but no one fathomed its meaning save only Bembo, who declared it to be a certain bird, very timid in its habits, which men call Time-loser.¹ It dwelt, he affirmed, only in swampy places, because its favourite food was carrion, and so great was its sloth that it would sit all day long on a stake watching the fish swimming about. If it happened to see one of fair size it would not move, but would let the fish go by and wait for a bigger one, and thus, from morning till evening, it would often go without food. And then, when night had fallen, it would be driven by hunger to descend into the mud and go in quest of marsh-worms upon which to make its

¹ Perdigiornata.

meal. Eritrea listened to this clever solution of her enigma and saw clearly that Bembo had guessed it. Though she was somewhat annoyed thereanent, she did not let her discomposure be seen, but resolved to wait patiently for time and place to give him a flout in return. Cateruzza, when she saw that the enigma no longer engaged the attention of the company, cared not to wait for any further direction, and having cleared her voice somewhat began her fable in the following words.

THE SECOND FABLE.

Two brothers who are soldiers take to wife two sisters. One makes much of his wife, and is ill-rewarded by her disobedience. The other mishandles his, and she does his will. The former inquires of the latter how he may gain his wife's obedience, and is duly instructed thereanent. Whereupon he threatens his wife with punishment, and she laughs in his face, and ultimately makes scoff at him.

 HE learned and prudent physician, when he foresees that a certain disease will manifest itself in the human body, adopts those remedies which in his estimation promise fairest to preserve life, without waiting for the distemper to make itself apparent, because a new wound heals more readily than an old one. And a husband when he takes to himself a wife—I must here crave forgiveness of the ladies—should act in precisely the same fashion, that is, never to let her get the upper hand, lest, when some time afterwards he may wish to keep her in order, he may find such task beyond his powers, and be forced to follow in her wake for the rest of his life. Such in sooth was the case of a certain soldier, who, wishing to induce his wife to mend her ways, after he had too long delayed to assert himself, had to put up with the consequences of this failing of his to the day of his death.

No great time ago there lived in Corneto, a village near Rome, situated in the patrimony of St. Peter, two men who were sworn brothers; indeed, the love between them was just as great as it would have been supposing they had been born of the same womb. Of these one was called Pisardo and the other Silverio, and both one and the other followed the calling of arms, and were in the pay of the

Pope ; wherefore a great love and friendship sprang up between them though they did not dwell in the same house. Silverio, who was the younger in years and was under no family restraint, took to wife a certain Spinella, the daughter of a tailor, a very fair and lovely maiden, but somewhat over-flighty in humour. After the wedding was over and the bride brought home, Silverio found himself so completely inflamed and dominated by the power of her beauty that it seemed to him she must be beyond comparison, and straightway he fulfilled any demand that she might make upon him. Thus it came to pass that Spinella grew so arrantly haughty and masterful that she took little or no reck of her husband. And in time the doting fool fell into such a state that if he should ask his wife to do one thing, she would forthwith do something else, and whenever he told her to come here, she went there, and laughed at everything he said. Because the foolish fellow saw nothing except through his own foolish eyes, he could not pluck up heart of grace enough to reprove her, nor seek a remedy for his mistake, but let her go her own way, and work her own will in everything, according to her pleasure.

Before another year had passed away Pisardo took to wife Fiorella, the other daughter of the tailor, a damsel no less comely of person than Spinella, nor less sprightly in her disposition. When the wedding-feast was over, and the wife taken home to her husband's house, Pisardo brought forth a pair of men's breeches and two stout sticks, and said : ' Fiorella, you see here this pair of men's breeches. Now you take hold of one of these sticks and I will take hold of the other, and we will have a struggle over the breeches as to who shall wear them. Which one of us shall get the better of the other in this trial shall be the wearer, and the one who loses shall henceforth yield obedience to the winner.' When Fiorella heard this speech of her husband's, she answered without aught of hesitation in a gentle voice : ' Ah, my husband ! what do you mean by such words as these ? what is it you say ? Are not you the husband, and I the wife, and ought not the wife always to bear herself obediently towards her husband ? And, moreover, how could I ever bring myself to do such a foolish trick as this ? Wear the breeches yourself, for assuredly they will become you much better than they will become me.' ' I, then,' said Pisardo, ' am to wear the breeches and to be the husband, and you, as my dearly-beloved wife, will always hold yourself obedient to me. But take good care that you keep the same mind and do not

hanker after taking the husband's part for yourself, and giving me the wife's, for such licence you will never get from me.' Fiorella, who was a very prudent woman, confirmed all that she had hitherto said, and the husband, on his part, handed over to her the entire governance of his house, and committed all his chattels to her keeping, making known to her the order he desired to have observed in his household.

A little time after this Pisardo said to his wife: 'Fiorella, come with me. I wish to show you my horses, and to point out to you the right way to train them in case you should at any time have to put your hand to such work.' And when they were come into the stable he said, 'Now, Fiorella, what do you think of these horses of mine? are they not handsome? are they not finely tended?' and to this Fiorella replied that they were. 'But now see,' said Pisardo, 'how docile and handy they are.' Then picking up a whip he gave a touch now to this and now to that, saying, 'Go over there; come here.' And then the horses, putting their tails between their legs, went all together into a group obedient to their master's word. Now Pisardo had amongst his other horses a certain one, very beautiful to look upon, but at the same time vicious and lazy—a beast upon which he set but little store. He went up to this horse, and dealing it a sharp cut with the whip, cried out, 'Come here; go over there;' but the beast, sluggish and sullen by nature, took no heed of the whip, and refused to do anything his master ordered, lashing out vigorously now with one leg, now with the other, and now with both together. Whereupon Pisardo, remarking the brute's stubborn humour, took a tough, stout stick, and began to baste its hide¹ therewith so vigorously that he was soon out of breath with fatigue. However, the horse, now more stubborn than ever, let Pisardo lay on as he would and refused to budge an inch; so Pisardo, seeing how persistent was the obstinacy of the brute, flew into a violent rage, and grasping the sword which he wore by his side he slew it forthwith.

Fiorella, when she saw what her husband had done, was mightily moved with pity for the horse, and cried out, 'Alas, my husband! why have you killed your horse, seeing that he was so shapely to look upon? Surely it is a great pity to have slain him thus.' To this Pisardo replied, with his face strongly moved by passion, 'Know

¹ Lit., *pettinare la lana*.

then that all those who eat my bread and refuse to do my will must look to be paid in exactly the same coin.' Fiorella, when she heard this speech, was greatly distressed, and said to herself, 'Alas! what a wretched miserable woman I am! What an evil day it was for me when I met this man! I believed I had chosen a man of good sense for my husband, and lo! I have become the prey of this brutal fellow. Behold how, for little or no fault, he has killed this beautiful horse!' And thus she went on, grieving sorely to herself, for she knew not to what end her husband had spoken in this wise.

On account of what had passed Fiorella fell into such a taking of fear and terror of her husband that she would tremble all over at the very sound of his footstep, and whenever he might demand any service of her she would carry out his wishes straightway. Indeed, she would understand his meaning almost before he might open his mouth, and never a cross word passed between them. Silverio, who, on account of the friendship he felt for Pisardo, would often visit the house of the latter, and dine and sup there, remarked the manners and carriage of Fiorella, and, being much astonished thereat, said to himself: 'Great God! why was it not my lot to have Fiorella for my wife, as is the good luck of my brother Pisardo? See how deftly she manages the house, and goes about her business without any uproar! See how obedient she is to her husband, and how she carries out every wish of his! But my wife, miserable wight that I am, does everything to annoy me, and uses me in as vile a fashion as possible.'

One day it chanced that Silverio and Pisardo were in company together, talking of various things, when the former spake thus: 'Pisardo, my brother, you are aware of the love that there is between us. Now, on this account, I would gladly learn what is the method you have followed in the training of your wife, seeing that she is altogether obedient to you, and treats you in such loving wise. Now I, however gently I may ask Spinella to do anything, find that she always stubbornly refuses to answer me, and, beyond this, does the exact opposite to what I ask her to do.' Whereupon Pisardo, smiling, set forth word by word the plan and the means he had adopted when first he brought his wife home, and counselled his friend to go and do likewise, and to see whether he might not also succeed, adding that in case this remedy should not be found efficient, he would not know what other course to recommend.

Silverio was much pleased with this excellent counsel, and having

taken his leave he went his way. When he reached his house he called his wife at once, and brought out a pair of his breeches and two sticks, following exactly the same course as Pisardo had recommended. When Spinella saw what he was doing, she cried out: 'What new freak is this of yours? Silverio, what are you about? What ridiculous fancy has got into your head? Surely you are gone stark mad! Don't you think everybody knows that men, and not women, should wear the breeches? And what need is there now to set about doing things which are beside all purpose?' But Silverio made no answer and went on with the task he had begun, laying down all sorts of rules for the regulation of his household. Spinella, altogether astonished at this humour of her husband, said in a mocking way: 'Peradventure, Silverio, it seems to you that I know not how to manage a house rightly, since you make all this ado about letting your meaning be known?' But still the husband kept silence, and having taken his wife with him into the stable, he did with the horses everything which Pisardo had done, and in the end slew one of them. Spinella, when she saw this fool's work, was convinced in her own mind that her husband had in truth lost his wits, and spake thus: 'By your faith, tell me, husband, what crazy humours are these that have risen to your head? What is the true meaning of all this foolishness you are doing without thinking of the issue? Perhaps it is your evil fate to have gone mad.' Then answered Silverio: 'I am not mad, but I have made up my mind that anyone who lives at my charges and will not obey me shall be treated in such fashion as you have seen me use this morning towards my horses.'

Whereupon Spinella, when she perceived the drift of her besotted husband's brutal deed, said: 'Ah, you wretched dolt! it must be clear enough to you that your horse was nothing but a poor beast to allow himself to be killed in this manner. What is the full meaning of this whim of yours? Perhaps you think you can deal with me as you have dealt with the horse? Certes, if such is your belief, you are hugely mistaken, and you put your hand much too late to the task of setting things in order after the fashion you desire. The bone is become too hard, the sore is now all ulcerated, and there is no cure at hand. You should have been more prompt in compassing the righting of these curious wrongs of yours. You fool! you brainless idiot! do you not see what damage and disgrace must come upon you through these doltish deeds out of number of which you have been guilty? And

what profit do you deem you will get from them ? None, as I am a living woman.'

Silverio, when he listened to the words of his shrewd wife, knew in his heart that his effort, through the doting affection he had hitherto spent on Spinella, had miserably failed ; so he made up his mind, greatly to his chagrin, to put up patiently with his wretched lot till death should come to release him. And Spinella, when she perceived how little her husband's plan had turned out to his advantage, resolved that if in the past she had worked her own will with a finger she would henceforth work it with an arm ; for a woman headstrong by nature would sooner die a thousand times than go aside aught from the path which she has deliberately marked out for herself.

All the ladies laughed heartily over the foolish dealing of Silverio, but they laughed yet more when they recalled to mind the battle over the pair of breeches to decide who ought to wear them, and seeing that the laughter was growing louder and longer, and that time was on the wing, the Signora gave the sign for all to cease their talking so that Cateruzza might tell them her enigma according to the order of the revels, and Cateruzza, divining the Signora's wish, spake thus :

Ladies, I sure shall die straightway
If you the name correctly say
Of this the subject I propound.
It must be surely pleasant found ;
For all who taste its quality
Depart commending what they try.
Within my lips its tongue doth bide,
And close I hold it to my side ;
And when I down beside it lie,
All but the blind may us espy.

The enigma propounded by Cateruzza gave to the company even greater pleasure than her story, seeing that it afforded ample subject for reasoning ; some giving an interpretation thereof after one fashion and some after another, but all of these trials were far wide of the true meaning. Whereupon the discreet Cateruzza, with her merry face all covered with smiles, gave with the leave of the Signora the following answer to her riddle : " This enigma of mine simply describes the bagpipe, which lets its tongue, that is, the mouthpiece, be put into the mouth of the one who plays upon it, and holds it tight, and delights all who listen." Everyone was pleased with the solution of this cleverly-

constructed enigma, and they praised it greatly ; but in order that no time might be lost the Signora bade Arianna to follow in her turn, and the damsel, with downcast eyes, first made the due obeisance and then opened her little mouth to tell the following story.

THE THIRD FABLE.

Anastasio Minuto becomes enamoured of a gentlewoman, who rejects his addresses. He reproaches her thereanent, whereupon she tells her husband, who, on account of Anastasio's age, spares his life.



GRACIOUS ladies, although ardent wantonness (as Marcus Tullius writes in his book on old age) is at all times foul and disgraceful, nevertheless it is offensive in the highest degree when we encounter it in a hoary-headed old man ; for besides being in itself a wicked and unclean thing, it saps his strength, weakens his eyesight, robs him of his intellect, makes of him a disgrace and a byword, empties his purse, and, on account of the brief and troublesome term of pleasure it holds out to him as a lure, draws him on to put his hand to all sorts of wickedness. The truth of what I tell you will be made quite clear to you if, according to your wonted custom, you will give a kindly and gracious hearing to the fable I propose to relate to you.

In this our city, which in abundance of fair women outdoes any other in the world, there once lived a certain gentlewoman, very graceful and fully endowed with every beauty, having eyes which, in their loveliness, shone like the morning star. This lady lived in great luxury, and was entertained very delicately by her husband, save in the matter of his marital duties, in the discharge of which he was somewhat slack ; wherefore she chose for a lover a lusty and well-mannered youth of honourable family, and made him the object of her favour, lavishing upon him much greater love than she gave to her husband. Now after a time it happened that a certain Anastasio, a friend of her husband's, and now far advanced in years, became so violently enamoured of this gentlewoman that he could find no rest either by day or by night ; so consuming, indeed, was the passion and torment he felt on account of this love of his, that in a few days

he wasted all away, so that he had left scarcely any flesh to cover his bones. He had eyes bleared and rheumy, his forehead was ploughed with wrinkles, his nose was flat and dribbled constantly like that of a young child, and when he sighed the breath he gave forth had an odour so offensive that it nauseated or even poisoned those who had the ill fortune to be in his neighbourhood, and in his mouth he had but two teeth, which were more of a plague than a profit to him. Besides being afflicted with all these ills he was paralytic, and, although the sun might be in Leo and blazing hot as a furnace, the poor old wretch would never feel aught of warmth in his limbs.

This wretched old man, being ensnared and inflamed with senile passion, eagerly solicited the favours of the lady, now by the offer of one gift and now of another ; but she, although the gifts which he sent her were rich and of great value, refused them one and all, seeing that she had no need of any offering that he might make her, because her husband was a very rich man and took care to let her want for none of these things. Ofttimes Anastasio would make salutation to her in the street while she was on her way to or from the performance of her religious duties at church, imploring her to accept him as her faithful servant, and no longer to condemn him so cruelly to suffer death by love torment. But she, being a wise and prudent woman, would always cast her eyes down upon the ground, and without answering him a word hasten home.

It happened that Anastasio got intelligence how the young man, of whom we have lately spoken, used to frequent the gentlewoman's house, and he kept so careful a watch upon the goings and comings of the gallant that on a certain evening he saw him enter the house while the husband was absent from the city. When he remarked this he felt as great a pang as if a knife had been driven into his heart, and half beside himself as he was in the frenzy of passion, taking no heed either of his own honour or of that of the lady whom he sought, he took from his store a great quantity of jewels and money, and having gone to the lady's house knocked loudly at the door. The maid of the gentlewoman, when she heard that someone was knocking at the door, went on the balcony and cried out : ' Who knocks ? ' Whereupon the old man made answer : ' Open the door forthwith, for I am Anastasio, and I have certain weighty business to discuss with madonna.' The servant, when she knew who it

was, ran quickly to her mistress, who at that moment was taking her pleasure with her lover in the next room. Having called her out the maid said to her: 'Madonna, Messer Anastasio is below, knocking at the door.' To this the lady answered: 'Go down quickly and tell him to go about his business at once, for it is not my wont to open my doors to anybody at night when my husband is away from home.' The servant, having heard and understood these words of her mistress, went down as she had been directed and repeated them to Messer Anastasio, but the old man, feeling that he was slighted in being thus repulsed, grew angry and began to knock more fiercely than ever at the door and to insist on being let into the house. The gentlewoman when she heard this was filled with wrath and anger, not only on account of the hurlyburly made by the silly old man, but also because of her lover, who was in the house with her; so she went to the window and cried out: 'I am in truth mightily amazed, Messer Anastasio, that you should thus come without any consideration to knock and clamour at the doors of other people's houses. Go to bed, you silly old man, and do not annoy those who have no wish to annoy you. If my husband were at home and in the house I would open to you without delay; but seeing that he is abroad, I cannot and will not do this thing.' But the old man went on affirming that he wanted to confer with her on affairs of the greatest moment, and all the time they were talking kept on still knocking at the door.

The lady, perceiving how persistent was the importunity of the dirty old beast, and fearing lest he in his foolishness might speak words injurious to her honour, withdrew a little and took counsel with her young lover as to what she should do. He made answer that she might very well open the door and hear what thing it might be he had to tell her, and that she need have no fear. Whereupon the gentlewoman (the old man knocking vigorously outside the while) bade them light a torch for her, and then told her maid to open the door. When Anastasio had come into the hall, the lady, looking as fair and fresh as a morning rose, issued from her chamber, and, going towards him, asked him what business he had with her at that hour of the night. The amorous old dotard with wheedling and piteous words, and scarcely keeping back his tears, thus answered: 'Oh, signora, you are the only hope and support of my wretched life! Therefore let it not be a wonder to you that I, rashly and pre-

sumptuously forsooth, should come knocking at your door to your surprise and alarm. Of a truth I have not come to annoy you, but to make manifest to you the passion I feel for you, and how sharply I am tormented therefor. And I need not tell you that the cause of my woe is your surpassing beauty, which renders you the queen of all women, and if the founts of pity in your heart are not entirely sealed up, you will spare a thought for me who on your account die a thousand times a day. Ah, soften a little that hard heart of yours! Think nothing of my age nor of my mean condition, but of my true and devoted mind, and of the ardent love which I bear for you now, and will ever bear as long as my sad soul shall be joined to my stricken and afflicted body. And as a token of this my love for you, I beg that of your kindness you will accept this gift, and, trifling though it be, will hold it dear.' And with these words he drew from his bosom a purse full of golden ducats which shone bright as the sun, and a string of great round white pearls and two jewels set in gold delicately worked. These he presented to the gentlewoman, imploring her in the meantime not to deny him her love; but she, when she heard and clearly understood the words of the infatuated old man, thus made answer to him: 'Messer Anastasio, I always thought you were a man of better understanding than I now find you to be, forasmuch as you seem to have lost your wits entirely. Where is the good sense and the prudence which you as a man of mature years ought to exhibit? Do you think I am no better than a harlot that you come tempting me by your gifts? Certes, you are hugely mistaken if this is your belief. I have no need of these things you have brought hither, and I bid you carry them rather to some profligate woman who will serve your purpose. I, as you ought to know, have a husband who denies me nothing that I may require. Go your way then, and God speed you, and take care that you order your life aright for the short space of time which yet awaits you on earth.'

The old man when he heard these words was filled with grief and compunction, and said: 'Madonna, I cannot believe you mean what you say! Nay, I am sure that you have spoken thus because you are in fear of the young man whom you have now with you in your house.' And here he forthwith mentioned the gallant by name. 'If you will not content me,' he went on, 'and yield to my desires, I will assuredly denounce your conduct to your husband, who is my

friend.' The lady, when she heard Anastasio mention the name of the young man who was at this time in her chamber, was not in the least shamefaced and cast down, but on the other hand began to shower the most violent abuse upon the old man that had ever been spoken from one person to another. Then she took in her hand a stout stick, and she would certainly have given him a shrewd basting therewith had he not discreetly slipped down the stairs and fled from the house with all speed.

The lady, as soon as the old man had departed, went back into the chamber where she had left her lover, and, scarcely keeping back her tears, told him of the mischance that had befallen her. She feared greatly in sooth lest the villainous old man might carry out his threat and unfold everything he had seen to her husband, wherefore she began to take counsel of her gallant as to what course she should adopt. The young man, who was shrewd and well-advised, first comforted the lady and bade her be of good heart; then he set forth to her an excellent scheme which he had devised, saying: 'My soul, do not be alarmed or discouraged, but take the advice which I shall now give you, and rest assured that everything will come to a prosperous issue. As soon as your husband shall have returned to the house, set the whole matter before him concerning the old man's intrusion here just as it happened. And tell him how this wicked and miserable old dotard heaps slander upon you, saying that you have guilty relations with this man and with that. Then you must call over by name five or six young men whom you know, giving my name as the last on the list. Having done this we will leave the rest to fortune, which will of a certainty be propitious to your cause.'

This counsel given by her lover seemed to the lady wise and judicious, and she forthwith did everything as he had advised her. When the husband came home she at once presented herself with an aspect very sad and woebegone, and with her eyes streaming with tears. Then she began to curse the fate which tormented her so cruelly, and when her husband set himself to question her as to what her affliction was, she answered that she could not tell him. But after a little she cried out in a loud voice, weeping bitterly the while: 'Of a truth I know not what should keep me back from making an end of this wretched life of mine with my own hands! I cannot endure that a perfidious wretch should be the cause of my ruin and

lasting shame. Ah, unhappy woman that I am! What have I done amiss that I should be slandered and cut to the very quick in this wise, and by whom has this ill been wrought? By a very hangman, a murderer, who deserves a thousand deaths!' Having been pressed by her husband to speak further she went on and said: 'That headstrong old dotard, Anastasio, who calls himself your friend, that silly lecherous and wicked old man, did he not come to me a few nights ago asking of me things as dishonest as they were wicked, and offering me money and jewels as the price of my compliance? And because I would not listen to a word of what he had to say or consent to do what he wanted, he began to revile me shamefully and to call me a lewd woman, and to declare that I brought men into the house with me, entangling myself now with one, now with another. When I listened to such words as these I nearly died of grief, but after a little, having collected my wits and my courage, I caught up a stick wherewith to baste him soundly, and he, fearing lest I might carry out my intent, ran away as fast as possible and fled from the house.'

The husband, when he heard this speech of his wife, was vexed beyond measure and set about comforting her, saying that he would play Anastasio a trick which he would remember as long as he lived. Wherefore, when the following day had come, the husband of the lady and Anastasio chanced to meet one another, and before the husband could utter a word Anastasio made a sign that he had something to say to him, and the husband at once signified to him that he was willing to listen to anything he might have to tell. Whereupon Anastasio spake thus: 'Sir, you know how sincere the love and goodwill subsisting between us has always been; it would be impossible indeed to add aught thereto. On this account I, being urged by jealous care for your honour, have determined to say somewhat to you, begging you at the same time by the love there is between us, that you will keep what I shall tell you a secret, and that you will look into your household affairs as soon as may be with due prudence and foresight. And now, in order not to hold you in suspense by any long preamble, I will tell you that your wife is amorously sought by a certain young man, and that she, on her part, returns his love, and frequently takes her pleasure with him, thereby working great shame and disgrace upon you and upon all your family. All this which I tell you I declare to be the truth, for the other night, when you chanced to be away from the city, with my

own eyes I saw him enter your house wearing a disguise, and I saw him likewise issue therefrom early the next morning.' The husband, when he heard these words from Anastasio, flew into a violent rage, and began to heap abuse on him, saying: 'Ah, you villainous rascal, you hangman, you wicked wretch! What is there to keep me from seizing you by your beard, and pulling it out from your chin one hair at a time? Do I not know what manner of woman my wife is, and do I not know likewise how you attempted to corrupt her with money and jewels and pearls? Did you not tell her, you abominable wretch! that if she would not give assent and deliver herself up to your lawless passion you would denounce her to me, deeming that you might thus bring sadness and ruin upon the rest of her life? Did you not say how this man and that man and divers others took their pleasure with her? In sooth, had I not some pity for your old age, I would assuredly tread you under my feet, and not cease kicking you till your wretched soul should have left your body. Now go and be hanged,¹ you miserable old man! and never come into my sight again, for if ever I catch you loitering about my house, I will kill you out of hand.' The old man, when he heard these words, pocketed his disappointment² and slunk away like one dumb-founded, and the astute and wily gentlewoman in future, under her husband's protection, spent many a merry hour with her lover in greater security than ever.

When Arianna had brought her diverting story to an end every one of the listeners laughed heartily thereat, but the Signora made a sign by clapping her hands together that everyone should be silent. Then she turned towards Arianna and commanded her to complete her story with some merry riddle; and the damsel, unwilling to let herself appear less witty than the others, began as follows:

A useful thing, firm, hard and white,
Outside in shaggy robe bedight;
Hollowed within right cleverly,
It goes to work both white and dry.
When after labour it comes back,
You'll find it moist and very black;
For service it is ready ever,
And fails the hand that guides it never.

¹ Orig., *vatene in tua mal'bora*,

² Orig., *messe le pive nel sacco*,

The men all laughed at this enigma ;¹ not one of them, however, could explain what it meant. Whereupon Alteria, whose turn it was to tell the next story, gracefully explained it to them in the following words : “ This enigma signifies nothing else than the pen with which one writes. It is firm, straight, white, and strong. It is pierced at the head and soiled with ink. It is never weary, being swayed to and fro by the writer both in public and in private.” Everybody praised highly the sharp wit displayed by Alteria in explaining this subtly-devised enigma, except Arianna, who was greatly incensed with anger thereat, deeming that she herself alone could give the interpretation. The Signora, when she saw the vexation that burned in her eyes, said to her : “ Arianna, be calm, I beg ; for certes another time your own turn will come.” Then, turning herself towards Alteria, she commanded her to tell her fable forthwith. And the damsel in merry wise thus began it.

THE FOURTH FABLE.

Bernardo, a Genoese merchant, sells wine mingled with water, and on this account he is punished by Heaven by the loss of half his money.



THE tale which has just been told to you by my lovesome sister brings back to my recollection a certain accident which befell a Genoese merchant, who having sold wine with which water had been mixed, subsequently lost the money which he had received as the price thereof, and for this reason almost died of grief.

In Genoa, a noble city, and one in which great traffic in merchandise is carried on, there lived once upon a time a certain Bernardo, of the Fulgosa family, an avaricious wight, and one much given to unlawful dealing. Now this Bernardo decided to go to Flanders as supercargo of a ship laden with the finest wine of Monte Folisco, hoping to sell the same at a high price. After having set sail one day from the port of Genoa with good luck he passed over the sea without meeting any mischance, and came within a short distance of

¹ This same subject has been used by Straparola, under a slightly varied form, for the enigma at the end of the First Fable of the Sixth Night.

his destination in Flanders. There, having cast the anchor, he brought his ship to her moorings, and when he had disembarked he added to the wine so great a quantity of water that out of every single cask of wine he made two. Having done this, he weighed anchor and once more set sail, being carried by a fair and prosperous breeze into the port of Flanders.

And because at this season there was a great scarcity of wine in the country, the people of the place bought the aforesaid wine at a very high price. Thus the merchant was able to fill two great sacks with the golden ducats he received, and with these he departed from Flanders rejoicing mightily, and took his way back to his own country. When Bernardo had sailed a good distance from Flanders and found himself upon the high seas, he brought out all the money he had received, and having placed it on a table, began to count it. When he had finished counting it, he put it into two bags, which he tied up by the mouth very securely. Scarcely had Bernardo finished his task, when it chanced that a monkey which was in the ship broke its chain, and having jumped down on to the table, caught up the two bags of money and rapidly scrambled up the mast of the ship. When the ape had mounted up to the maintop rigging it began to take the money out of the bags and pretended to count it. The merchant, who was unwilling to do anything which might irritate the monkey, or to send in pursuit of it, lest through vexation it might throw the ducats into the sea, was in such terrible grief and anxiety that he nearly died thereof. He could not make up his mind what to do, whether he should go in chase of the monkey or stay where he was. After standing in doubt for some minutes, he decided at last that he would do better to keep quiet and to await whatever might ensue from the whim of the beast. The monkey, having untied the bags and taken out of them all the ducats, handled the coins and played with them for a long time. Then, having put them all back into the bags and tied them up securely, it threw one bag into the sea and the other it threw down to the merchant standing on the deck of the ship, as if to tell the cheating Bernardo that the money which had been thrown into the sea represented the price paid for the water which he had mixed with his wine, and that the bag now lying at his feet was the just price of the wine. Thus the water received what was paid for water, and Bernardo what was paid for wine. Wherefore, recognizing that this adventure had been brought to pass by

divine interposition, Bernardo submitted with patience, calling to mind the saying that ill-acquired goods are never lasting, and that, although he who wins them may enjoy them somewhat, they will surely bring to his heirs loss and ruin.

Alteria's ingenious fable won the high commendations of all the company, and when the Signora gave her the signal that she should tell her enigma she set it forth in the following words :

I am featly made, I trow.
Teeth I have and tongue also ;
Not a bone in me is found ;
Ever to one spot I'm bound.
I can neither talk nor bite ;
Thus I live with scant delight.
I beg you look with care on me ;
A hole right in my midst you'll see.
A wight to torture me comes next,
And through and through I am transfixt ;
Another comes and drags him forth,
And hangs him up as little worth.

This enigma gave rise to long discussion, but no one of all the company was able to find out the meaning thereof, except Isabella, who said : " This enigma can signify nothing else but a lock, which has teeth and a tongue, but no bones ; it cannot eat, and that which fastens it is the key, which likewise often unfastens the box as well. He who draws the key out of the lock hangs it up on some nail." When Isabella had finished her explanation of this obscure riddle, Lauretta, without waiting for further word from the Signora, began her fable.



THE FIFTH FABLE.

Maestro Lattantio, a tailor, undertakes to train his apprentice Dionigi in his craft; the latter, however, learns little of this, but acquires great skill in a certain art which the tailor secretly practised. Wherefore great enmity sprang up between them, Dionigi in the end debouring his master and espousing Violante, the daughter of the king.

THE judgments of men are indeed varied, and of many kinds, and varied likewise are their desires and wishes; while every single man (as the sage says) is full of his own conceit. On this account it is that, of the race of men, certain ones there are who give themselves up to the study of the law, others cultivate the art of oratory, and others indulge in the speculations of philosophy; one being inclined to this thing, and another to that—nature, who after all is the mistress of our actions, guiding the course of each one; for she, like a kindly mother, impels each one to that pursuit which is most delightful to him. This thing will be made quite clear to you, provided you will lend a gracious hearing to what I am about to say.

In Sicily, an island which in antiquity surpasses all others we know of, there is situated a noble city called in the vulgar tongue Messina, renowned everywhere for the secure and deep anchorage of its port. In this city was born one Maestro Lattantio, a man who put his hand to two crafts, and was highly skilled in the exercise both of the one and of the other. One of these, however, he practised openly in the eyes of the world, namely, his trade as a tailor; while the other, the art of necromancy, he kept a secret from all. It came to pass that Lattantio took for his apprentice the son of a poor man in order to make a tailor of him. This youth was called by name Dionigi, an industrious and prudent lad, who learnt with ease whatever his master attempted to teach him.

One day it chanced that Maestro Lattantio, having locked himself up alone in his chamber, was making trial of certain experiments in necromancy, and Dionigi, who had got some inkling of what his master was about, crept noiselessly up to the chamber door, and

through a crack therein saw plainly what thing it was that Lattantio his master was doing inside. As soon as Dionigi understood the purport of the thing he had seen he was ardently possessed with a desire to practise this art himself, and thought of nothing else but necromancy all day long, entirely casting aside all interest in his tailor's craft, not daring, however, to tell aught of what he had discovered to his master. Lattantio, when he perceived the change that had come over Dionigi; how, instead of the skilled and industrious fellow he formerly was, he had become ignorant and a know-nothing, and how he no longer gave any heed to his tailoring work as hitherto, dismissed him straightway and sent him home to his father.

The father of Dionigi, who was a very poor man, lamented sorely when his son came home again, and, after he had reproved the boy, and given him punishment, sent him back to Lattantio, begging the good tailor urgently that he would still retain him in his employ, that he would keep him under sharp discipline and give him his board. The father asked for nothing more in return than that Lattantio should teach Dionigi the tailor's craft. Lattantio, who was well aware how poor the father of his apprentice was, consented to take back the boy, and every day did his best to teach him how to use his needle; but Dionigi seemed to have become altogether a sleepy-head, and could or would learn nothing. On this account a day rarely passed when Lattantio did not kick him or beat him by way of chastisement, and often broke his poll so that the blood ran down over his face. In sooth, his back was better served with bastings than his belly with provender. But Dionigi took with patience all his punishments, and went every night secretly to the chink in the door and watched all that was being done inside the chamber. Now Maestro Lattantio, when he perceived what a chucklehead the youth was, and how he could learn nothing of the trade he was being taught, troubled himself no longer to keep secret the necromancy he practised, deeming that if Dionigi had a brain too dense to learn the trade of tailoring, he would assuredly never be able to fathom aught of the deep and intractable secrets of necromancy. On this account Lattantio did not try to keep aloof from his apprentice, but worked his spells freely in his presence. Dionigi, in sooth, was mightily pleased at this turn of things; for, although it seemed to his master that he was dull-witted and a simpleton, he found it no hard task to learn the whole art of necromancy; indeed, he soon became so skilled

and expert therein that he was able to work wonders which were even far beyond the powers of Maestro Lattantio.

One day Dionigi's father went to the tailor's shop, and there remarked that his son, instead of working with needle and thread, was engaged in carrying the fuel and water for the service of the kitchen, and sweeping the floors and doing other household work of the meanest kind. When he saw this he was mightily grieved and disturbed in mind, and, having taken the boy straightway out of Lattantio's service, he led him home. The good man had already spent much money in the purchase of clothes for his son, and in providing for his instruction in the tailor's craft; wherefore now, finding that he could not persuade the lad to learn his trade, he grieved amain, and spake thus to him: 'My son, you know well enough how much money I have laid out to make a man of you, while on your part you have never given me the least help by the trade I set you to learn. On this account I find myself now in the greatest want, and I know not whither I shall turn to find you food. I would, my son, that you could light upon some honest calling in which you might get yourself a living.' To this the son made answer: 'My father, before all else I wish to thank you for all the money and trouble you have spent in my behalf, and at the same time I beg you that you will cease to disquiet yourself because I have not learnt the trade of a tailor as was your intention and desire, forasmuch as I have acquired the mastery of another art which will be of far greater service to us in the satisfying of our wants. Therefore, my dear father, do not disturb yourself or be sorrowful, because I will soon let you see what great profit I am able to make, and how, with the fruits of my art, you will be able to support your family and keep good cheer in your house. I, by the working of magic art, will transform myself into the most beautiful horse ever seen, whereupon you, having provided yourself with a saddle and bridle, will lead me to the fair and there sell me. On the following day I will resume the form I now bear, and will return home. I must, however, bid you be careful that you give not the bridle to the buyer of the horse, for should you part with it I would not be able to return to you, and peradventure you would never see me again.'

Thereupon Dionigi straightway transformed himself into a beautiful horse, which his father led away to the fair and exhibited to many people who were present. All of these were greatly astonished at the

wonderful beauty of the horse, and at the marvellous feats it performed. It happened that at this very same time Lattantio was also at the fair, and when his eyes fell upon the horse he knew there was something supernatural about it; so, having returned to his house, he transformed himself into the guise of a merchant. Then he went back to the fair, taking with him a great quantity of money. When he approached the horse and examined it closely he perceived at once that it was really Dionigi, whereupon he demanded of the owner whether the horse was for sale, and to this question the old man replied that it was. Then, after great chaffering, Lattantio offered to give in exchange for the horse two hundred florins of gold, with which price the owner was fully content, only stipulating that the horse's bridle should not be included in the sale. Lattantio, however, by persuasive words, and by offers of yet more money, induced the old man to let him have the bridle also, and, having led the horse home to his own house and stalled him there, he tied him up securely and began straightway to beat him severely. This, moreover, he did every morning and every evening, until at last the horse became such a wasted wreck that it was a pitiable thing to look upon it.

Lattantio was the father of two daughters, and these damsels, when they saw the cruel treatment of the horse by their inhuman father, were greatly moved to compassion thereby, and every day they would go to the stable to fondle it and to bestow upon it many tender caresses. And one day it happened that they took the horse by the halter, and led it out of the stable down to the river, so that it might drink. As soon as the horse had come to the river's brink, it rushed at once into the water, and forthwith changed its form to that of a small fish, and straightway sought the deepest part of the stream. When the daughters saw this strange and unlooked-for thing they were altogether overcome with amazement, and after they had returned to their home they began to shed bitter tears, beating their breasts and tearing their fair locks.

Before very long time had passed Lattantio came back to his house and went at once to the stable, in order that he might beat the horse according to his wont, but he found it was no longer there. Whereupon he flew into a furious fit of anger, and, having gone into the house, he found there his two daughters weeping bitterly, and, without questioning them as to the cause of their tears (for he knew well enough already of their fault), he said to them: 'My daughters, tell

me straightway, without any fear for yourselves, what has become of the horse, in order that I may make an attempt to get it back.' The daughters, being somewhat reassured by their father's words, told him exactly all that had befallen them. As soon as Lattantio had heard and understood what had happened, he at once took off all his clothes, and, having gone to the bank of the river, he cast himself therein, transforming himself at the same time into a tunny, and pursued the little fish wherever it went in order to devour it. The little fish, when it knew that the voracious tunny was in pursuit, began to fear lest it might be eaten up ; so it swam close to the brink of the stream, and, having changed itself into a very precious ruby ring, leapt out of the water and secretly conveyed itself into a basket carried by one of the handmaidens of the king's daughter, who, for her diversion, was gathering certain pebbles along the river's bank, and concealed itself amongst these.

When the damsel had returned to the palace and had taken the pebbles out of the basket, Violante, the only daughter of the king, chanced to observe the ruby ring, and, having taken it up, she put it on her finger, and treasured it with the utmost care. And when night had come Violante retired to rest, wearing the ring still upon her finger, when suddenly the ring transformed itself into a handsome young man, who, embracing tenderly the snowy bosom of Violante, felt her two firm round little breasts, and the damsel, who was not yet asleep, was greatly alarmed thereat, and would have screamed aloud. But the young man, having put his hand upon her balmy mouth, would not suffer her to cry out, and, kneeling down before her, he craved her pardon, imploring her to aid him in his trouble, forasmuch as he had not come thither to put any shame upon her or to sully her pure mind, but driven by untoward destiny. Then he told her who he was, and the cause which had brought him into her chamber, and how and by whom he was persecuted. Violante recovered somewhat of her composure on listening to these words of the young man, and, perceiving by the light of the lamp which was burning in the chamber of what a graceful and seemly presence he was, felt greatly moved to pity thereby, and said to him : ' Young man, of a truth you have been guilty of great arrogance in coming here unsummoned, and greater still has been your presumption in touching that to which you had no right. However, now that I have heard the tale of your misfortunes which you have told to me, and as I am not made of marble, with a



heart as hard as a diamond, I am prepared to lend you any aid which I can give honestly, provided that you will promise faithfully to respect my honour.' The young man at once tendered to Violante many words of due gratitude for her kindly speech, and, as the dawn was now growing bright in the sky, he changed himself once more into a ring, which Violante put away amongst her most precious jewels. But she would often take it out so that it might assume human form and hold sweet discourse with her.

It happened one day that the king, Violante's father, was stricken with a grievous distemper which could be healed by none of the physicians, who all affirmed that his malady was one beyond the aid of medicine, and from day to day the condition of the king grew worse and worse. By chance this news came to the ears of Lattantio, who, having arrayed himself as a physician, went to the royal palace and gained admission to the bedchamber of the king. Then, having inquired of the king the nature of his malady and carefully observed his countenance and felt his pulse, Lattantio said: 'Gracious king, your malady is indeed grave and dangerous, but be of good heart. You will soon be restored to health, for there is known to me a certain remedy which will cure the deadliest disease in a very short time. Be, therefore, of good cheer, and do not be dismayed.' Whereupon the king said: 'Good master physician, if you will rid me of this infirmity I will reward you in such a fashion that you may live at ease for the rest of your days.' But Lattantio replied that he wanted neither lands nor gold, but only one single favour. Then the king promised to grant him anything which might be within his power, and Lattantio thus made answer: 'Sacred king, I ask for no other reward than a single ruby stone, set in gold, which is at present in the keeping of the princess your daughter.' The king, when he heard this modest demand, said: 'Master physician, if this be all the reward you claim, be assured that it will be readily granted to you.' After this Lattantio applied himself diligently to work a cure upon the king, who in the course of ten days found himself entirely rid of his dangerous malady.

When the king was quite recovered from his ailment and brought back to his former state of health, he one day bade them summon his daughter into the presence of the physician, and when she appeared he ordered her to fetch thither all the jewels she had. The daughter, obedient to her father's word, did what he commanded her, omitting, however, to bring back with her that one jewel which she

held dear above all others. Lattantio, when he had examined the gems, declared that the ruby which he so much desired to have was not amongst them, and that the princess, if she should make diligent search for it, would assuredly find it. The damsel, who was by this time deeply enamoured of the ruby, denied that she had it; whereupon the king, hearing these words of hers, said to Lattantio, 'Go away now and come back to-morrow, for in the interim I will bring such effective persuasion to bear upon my daughter that to-morrow the ruby will assuredly be yours.'

When the physician had taken his departure, the king called Violante to him, and the two having gone together into a room and closed the door, he asked her in a kindly manner to tell him about the ruby which the physician so ardently desired to have, but Violante firmly denied that she knew aught of it. When she had gone out of her father's presence, Violante went forthwith to her own chamber, and having fastened the door thereof, in her solitude she began to weep, and took the ruby and embraced and kissed it and pressed it to her heart, cursing the hour in which the physician had come across her path. As soon as the ruby saw the hot tears which fell from the lovely eyes of the princess, and heard the deep and woe-ful sighs which came from her loving heart, it was moved to pity, and straightway took upon itself the form of Dionigi, who with tender words thus addressed her: 'Dear lady, to whom I owe my life, do not weep or sigh on my account, seeing that I am your very slave, but rather let us seek for some remedy in this our calamity. Know, then, that this physician, who desires so keenly to get possession of me under the form of a ruby, is my bitter foe, who wishes to make an end of me, but you, as a wise and prudent damsel, will not, I am well assured, deliver me into his hands, but when he shall again demand me of you, you must then hurl me violently against the wall, feigning the while to be full of wrathful indignation, and I will provide for what may come after.'

On the following morning the physician went back to the king, and when he listened to the unfavourable answer given by the princess, he became somewhat angered, affirming over and over again that the ruby was indeed somewhere in the damsel's keeping. The king having once more called his daughter into the physician's presence, said to her, 'Violante, you know well enough that by the skill of this physician I have regained my health, and moreover that, as a

guerdon for his services, he did not demand of me great gifts of land or of treasure, but simply a certain ruby stone which he declares you have in your possession. I should have thought that you, on account of the love you bear me, would have given me, not merely a ruby, but even your own blood. Wherefore, because of the love in which I hold you, and because of the suffering and trouble your mother has undergone for your sake, I implore you that you will not deny this favour which the physician demands.' The damsel, as soon as she had heard and comprehended the wishes of her father, withdrew to her chamber, and having taken the ruby, together with many other jewels, she went back into her father's presence and showed the stones one by one to the physician, who, immediately his eye fell upon that one which he so greatly desired to have, cried out, 'Behold, here it is!' and made as if he would lay hands on it. But Violante, as soon as she perceived what he would do, said, 'Master physician, stand back somewhat, for you shall have the stone.' Then taking the ruby in her hand and feigning to be possessed with fierce anger, she said, 'Seeing that this is the precious and lovely jewel which you are searching for, the loss of which I shall regret for the rest of my life, you must know that I do not give it to you of my own free will, but because I am compelled to surrender it in obedience to my father's wishes.' And while she spake these words she threw the beautiful gem with all her strength against the wall, and the ruby, as it fell to the ground, opened forthwith and became a fine large pomegranate, which in bursting open scattered its seeds on all sides. When the physician saw that the pomegranate seeds were spread all over the floor of the room, he immediately transformed himself into a cock, and believing that he might thus make an end of Dionigi, began to pick up the seeds with his beak, but he was frustrated in this cruel design of his, because a certain one of the seeds hid itself in such a fashion that it escaped the notice of the cock. The pomegranate seed thus hidden waited for an opportune moment, and then changed itself into a crafty cunning fox, which swiftly and silently crept up to the crested cock, and, having seized it by the throat, slew it and devoured it in the presence of the king and of the princess. When the king saw what was done he stood as one confounded, and Dionigi, having taken upon himself his original form, told everything to the king from the beginning, and then with full consent was united in lawful marriage to Violante, with whom he lived many

years of tranquil and honourable peace. The father of Dionigi was rescued from his poor estate and became rich, and Lattantio, full of envy and hatred, came thus to a miserable end.

Here the diverting fable told by Alteria¹ came to an end, and forthwith all the listeners declared that it had given them great pleasure. Then the Signora made a sign to her that she should complete her duty by giving an enigma, and the damsel with a pleasant smile proposed one in the following terms :

Of lovers mine is sure the best ;
He holds me close upon his breast.
He fondles me ; our lips then meet
With kisses and caressing sweet ;
His tongue my mouth in fondness seeks,
And with such tender accent speaks,
That hearts with love are all afire ;
But brief the space of our desire.
For soon his lips from mine must stray,
To wipe the dews of toil away ;
And from me gently he doth move.
Now say, is this the end of love ?

This enigma furnished matter for no little talk amongst the men, but Arianna, who a short time ago had suffered somewhat from Alteria's bantering, now said : " Signori, do not give yourselves any trouble, nor in your hearts think aught that is unfavourable of this enigma which my sister has just set us to guess, for in sooth it can mean nothing else except the trombone, which is held close and swayed up and down by the player, and the water which gathers thereabout has to be wiped away in order that he who plays upon it may make music with less difficulty." Alteria, when she heard given the true interpretation of her riddle, was greatly disturbed in mind, and began to show signs of anger, but after a little, when she remembered that she had only been paid back in her own coin,² she laid aside her vexation. Then the Signora begged Madonna Veronica to give them a story, and she, without any preamble, began forthwith her fable in the following words.

¹ Sense demands that Lauretta's name should stand here and to the end of the fable in place of Alteria's. Straparola probably made the change in order to give Arianna a chance of retaliating upon Alteria for having solved her enigma in Fable III, Night VIII.

² Orig., *esserle stato reso il cambio*.

THE SIXTH FABLE.

A history of two physicians, of whom the one had great reputation and great riches, but little learning, while the other, though very poor, was indeed a man of parts.

IN these days, gracious ladies, higher honours are bestowed upon mere favourites, upon noble birth, and upon wealth, than upon science, which, although it may be concealed under the external seeming of mean and humble condition, nevertheless shines by its own virtue, and spreads light around like the rays of the sun. And this truth will be made manifest to you if you will, of your courtesy, incline your ears to this brief tale of mine.

There lived once upon a time in the city of Antenorea a certain physician, who was held in high honour and was at the same time a very rich man, but he was little versed in the art of medicine. Now one day it happened that this man was called to attend a gentleman, one of the chief men of the city, together with another physician residing in the place, who in learning and in the practice of his art was excellently skilled, but none of the rewards of fortune were his. One day, when they went together to pay a visit to the sick man, the first-named physician, richly habited like a great noble, felt the pulse of the patient and declared that he was suffering from a very violent fever, the St. Anthony's fire;¹ whereupon the poor doctor, without letting himself be seen by anyone, looked under the bed, and lying there he saw by chance some apple peelings, and from the presence of these he rightly judged that the sick man had surfeited himself with apples the night before. Then, after he had felt the gentleman's pulse, he said to him: 'Brother of mine, I perceive that last night you must have eaten of apples, forasmuch as you have now a grave fever upon you.' And as the sick man could not deny this speech, seeing that it was the truth, he confessed that he had done as the poor physician had said. After they had prescribed fit remedies for the distemper, the two physicians took their departure.

¹ Orig., *una febbre molto violēta et formicolare.*

It came to pass that as they were walking along together the physician who was a man of repute and high standing was greatly inflamed in his heart with envy, and besought insistently of his colleague, the man of low estate and fortune, that he would make known to him what were the symptoms through which he was able to determine that the sick man had been eating apples, promising at the same time to reward him by a generous payment for his own benefit. The poor physician, when he saw how great was the ignorance of the other, answered him in these words, scheming the while how he might bring him to shame : ‘ Whenever it shall next happen to you that you are summoned to work a cure upon any sick man, be sure that, as soon as ever you enter the room, you cast your eye under the bed, and whatever in the way of eatables you may see there rest assured that the sick man will have been eating of these. This which I tell you is a noteworthy experiment of the great commentator.’ And when he had received from the rich physician a sum of money for his information he went his way.

The next morning it chanced that the rich physician, who bore so high a reputation, was summoned to prescribe a remedy for a certain man who, although he was a peasant, was well to do, and had everything handsome about him.¹ When he went into the bed-chamber the first thing the physician saw lying under the bed was the skin of a donkey, and having asked of the sick man certain questions and felt his pulse, he found him suffering from a violent fever, wherefore he said to him : ‘ I see plainly, my good brother, that last night you indulged in a great debauch and ate freely of donkey’s flesh, and on this account you have run very close to the term of your days.’ The peasant, when he listened to these foolish and extravagant words, answered with a laugh : ‘ Sir, I beg that your excellency will pardon me when I tell you that I never tasted donkey’s flesh in all my life, and that for the last ten days I have set eyes on no ass but yourself.’ And with these words he bade this grave and learned philosopher go about his business, and sent to find another physician who might be more skilled in his art. And thus it appears, as I remarked at the beginning of my tale, that men put a higher value upon riches than upon skill or learning. And if I have been more brief in my story than is seemly, I beg you will pardon

¹ Orig., *ben accommodato*.

me, for I see that the hour is now late, and that you, by the nodding of your heads, have seemed to confirm every statement I have made.

As soon as Madonna Veronica had brought her short story to an end, the Signora, who, like the rest, was nearly asleep, gave the word to her to bring the night's entertainment to an end with some graceful and modest enigma, because the cock had already announced by his crowing the dawning of the day; whereupon Madonna Veronica, without demur, thus gave her enigma:

“ Fresh and rosy from your birth,
Honour of heaven and crown of earth,
Strong you are for good or ill,
The round world with your fame you fill.
Should you plead the cause of right,
Then darkness flies before the light.
But if evil be your view,
Rack and ruin dire ensue;
The massy globe of sea and land
Your hostile touch shall not withstand.

This enigma of mine signifies nothing else than the human tongue, which may be good and also bad. It is red in colour, and it is the honour of heaven, seeing that with it we praise and render thanks to God for all the benefits He grants to us. In like manner it is the crown and the glory of the world when man puts it to a good and beneficent use, but when he employs it in the contrary sense there is no state, however powerful it may be, which the evil tongue may not destroy and overwhelm. And of this truth I could bring forward examples out of number if the short space of time that yet remains to us, and your weary souls, did not prevent me.” And having made a due salutation she sat down.

When this enigma was finished it was received by the company with no scant praise. Then the Signora commanded that the torches should be lighted, and that all should return to their homes, at the same time laying strict command upon them that, on the following evening, they should return, well prepared with a stock of fables, to the accustomed meeting-place, and this command they all promised with one voice to obey.

The End of the Eighth Night.



Right the Ninth.





The Fables and Enigmas of Messer Giovanni Francesco Straparola da Caravaggio.

Night the Ninth.



VER the parched earth the humid shadows of the dusky night were already beginning to spread, and the sweet birds were gone quietly to sleep in their nests built amongst the leafy branches of the straight standing trees, when the lovesome and honourable company of ladies and gentlemen, having put away far from them all troublesome thoughts and cares, betook themselves to the accustomed place of meeting. And after certain graceful dances had been trodden with stately step, the Signora gave command that the vase should be brought forth and that the names of five of the ladies should be placed therein. Of these the first to be drawn out was that of Diana,¹ the second that of Lionora, the third that of Isabella, the fourth that of Vicenza, and the fifth that of Fiordiana. But the Signora let them know that it was her wish that, before the story-telling should begin, they should all five of them sing a song to the accompaniment of their lyres. Whereupon the damsels, with joyful faces and smiling as sweetly as if they had been angels, began their song in these words.

¹ No lady of this name is described amongst the ten original attendants of the Signora. She here appears for the first time, and later on tells a story in the Eleventh Night. But her name is missing when, in the Thirteenth Night, thirteen of the company take a turn at story-telling.

SONG.

Forsaken flowerets pale,
 Who needs you now to rise in flowery pride?
 Why are our lady's looks thus cast aside?
 Our lights decay and fail,
 And dimmed the sun which kills all other ray,
 The blessed sun, which day by day
 Has lighted us by will divine;
 Just as that gracious face of thine
 Has granted to our eyes free course to gaze.
 Ah! hope so fleeting and malign,
 And love, why hast thou barred from us the sight
 Of that sweet face, and changed our day to night?

The hearing of this amorous song, which perchance touched the inmost hearts of divers of the company, provoked many deep sighs. But everyone kept closely hidden in the bosom whatever love-secrets may have been there. Then the gentle Diana, knowing well that it was her duty to begin the story-telling of the night, without waiting for further command thus began.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Galafro, King of Spain, persuaded by the words of a chiromantist, who affirmed that his wife would make a wittol of him, builds a tower in which to keep his wife, but she is in the end cozened and enjoyed by Galeotto, the son of Diego, King of Castile.



IN like measure, lovesome ladies, as that fidelity, which finds its place in the nature of every honest woman, deserves praise and the highest commendation in the mouths of all men; so that opposite quality of disloyalty, if by ill-hap it should dominate her character, merits nothing but censure, and in equal degree to be visited with universal castigation and blame. The former stretches forth her arms into all parts, and is greeted by all the world with the most cordial welcome and caresses; while the latter, by reason of her feeble gait and of her defective strength, finds it a hard matter to go forward on her way, and on this account falls at last into miserable case and is forsaken by all. Wherefore, seeing that it is my duty to make a begin-

ning of the story-telling this evening, it has come into my mind to relate to you a fable which may perchance give you somewhat of pleasure and satisfaction.

Once upon a time there reigned over Spain a certain very powerful king, Galafo by name, a man of a very warlike temper, who by his valour conquered many adjacent provinces, which he added to his dominions. When King Galafo had grown to be an old man, he took to wife a young damsel who was called by name Feliciana. In sooth she was a very fair lady, very courteous in her manner, and fresh as a rose to look upon, and, by reason of her gentleness and gracious carriage, the king her husband loved her exceedingly, taking thought of nothing else than how he might please her. One day it happened that, while the king was passing the time in conversation with a certain man who by common fame was reputed to be exceedingly well skilled in the art of chiromancy, the desire came upon him that this soothsayer should examine his hand in order that he might know what things fortune held in store for him. The chiromantist, when he understood what the king's wish was, took hold of his hand and examined with the greatest care all the lines which were traced therein, and, after he had diligently considered them one and all, he stood silent and grew pale in the face. The king, remarking that the chiromantist had nothing to say and that his face was all white and confused, was at once fully assured that he must have discovered somewhat in the lines of his hand which was mightily displeasing to him; but, collecting his courage, he thus addressed him: 'Good master, tell me straightway what this thing is you have seen. Have no fear of any kind, because I will cheerfully listen to any declaration you may have to make to me.'

The chiromantist, assured by these words of the king that he might tell what he had seen without restraint, said: 'Sacred majesty, of a truth it irks me sorely that I should have come here to tell of things on account of which sorrow and hurt must needs arise. But, seeing that you have given me your good assurance and allowed me to speak, I will reveal to you all I have to say. Know, O king! that the wife for whom you nourish so ardent a love will one day furnish you with two horns for your brows, wherefore it is necessary that you should keep a very sharp and diligent watch over her.'

The king, as soon as he understood the purport of these words, fell into such a state that he seemed more dead than alive, and, when

he had given strict command to the chiromantist that he should keep the matter a secret, he granted him leave to depart. It came to pass after this that the king, haunted by this distressing thought, and pondering both by day and by night over what the chiromantist had revealed to him, and how he might best steer clear of the rocks of hurt and ignominy which lay before him, made up his mind to shut his wife close in a strong and massy tower, and to have her carefully secured and watched, which thing he straightway carried out. Already the report was spread through all the country how Galafró the king had caused to be built a stronghold, in which he placed the queen his wife under the most jealous guard, but no one knew what was the cause of her imprisonment. This report in the course of time came to the ears of Galeotto, the son of Diego, King of Castile, who, when he had well deliberated over all he heard of the angelic beauty of the young queen and the advanced age of her husband, and the manner in which he let her pass her days, keeping her shut up a close prisoner in a strong-built tower, resolved to make an attempt to put a trick upon this king, and in the end his scheming led him to the fulfilment of his plans exactly according to his desire.

Galeotto, therefore, for the carrying out of his project, gathered together a great quantity of money and store of rich stuffs, and set forth secretly for Spain; then, having come to his destination, he took two rooms on hire in the house of a certain poor widow. It chanced that one morning early King Galafró mounted his horse, and, together with the whole of his court, went forth to the chase, with the intention of spending several days abroad. When this news was made known to Galeotto he straightway set his enterprise afoot, and, having put on the raiment of a merchant, and taken divers of his wares of gold and silver which were fairest to look upon and were in themselves of the value of a kingdom, he went forth from the house and took his way through the city, exhibiting the merchandise he had to sell now in this place and now in that. At last, when he had come into the neighbourhood of the tower, he cried out over and over again in a loud voice, ‘If anyone wants to buy of my merchandise let him come forward.’

Now the handmaidens of the queen, when they heard the chapman shouting so loudly in the street, ran forthwith to the window, and, looking down therefrom, they remarked how he had with him all manner of beautiful cloths, embroidered with gold and silver in such wise that it was a delight to gaze thereupon. The damsels ran

immediately to the queen and said to her : ‘ Oh ! Signora, a little way from here there is a chapman going about with a store of the fairest stuffs ever seen, ware in no way fitting for mere townsfolk, but for kings and princes and noble men of high estate. And amongst these we have espied divers articles which are exactly fitted for your own use and enjoyment, all studded with gems and precious stones.’ Whereupon the queen, being earnestly desirous to have sight of wares so lovely as these, besought the keepers of the place that they would suffer the merchant to enter ; but they, fearing mightily lest they should be discovered and ill-handled therefor, had no mind to consent to her request, because the commandment laid upon them by the king was a weighty one, and they would assuredly have to pay with their lives for disregard of the same ; nevertheless, cajoled by the soft and winning speech of the queen and by the lavish promises made by the merchant, they at last gave him free leave to enter. Then the chapman, having first made to the queen the due and accustomed obeisance, spread out before her eyes the rich and precious things he had brought in. The queen, who was of a sprightly disposition and somewhat bold of temper, as soon as she marked that the merchant was well-seeming and pleasant to look upon, began to throw glances at him out of the corner of her eye¹ in order to rouse in him an amorous feeling. The merchant, who kept his eyes wide open the while, let his looks tell her without doubt that he was entirely of the same mind, and ready to give back love for love. And when the queen had looked at a great number of his things, she said : ‘ Master merchant, your wares in sooth are very fine : no one can gainsay. But amongst them all this one pleases me mightily, and I would fain know what price you put upon it.’ To this the merchant made answer : ‘ Signora, there is no sum of money in the world which would purchase these things ; but, seeing that you nourish so great a desire to possess them, I am willing to give them to you, rather than to sell them, if by these means I may be sure of winning your grace and favour, for upon these I set a higher value than upon every other possession.’ The queen, when she listened to this magnificent and generous offer, and considered the loftiness of mind which must have prompted it, said to herself that this man could not possibly be of mean condition, but must needs be someone of the highest station. Therefore, turning towards him, she spake thus : ‘ Good

¹ Orig., *incomincio ballesstrarlo con la coda dell' occhio*.

master, this speech you have just made is not the speech of a low-born man, or of one altogether given up to the greed of gain ; but it shows in happy wise the magnanimity which bears rule in your kindly heart. Wherefore I, however unworthy I may appear to be, make offer of myself to you in order that you may dispose of me according to your pleasure.' The merchant, when he perceived how kindly the queen looked upon him, and that the whole affair was like to come to the issue he so ardently desired, said to her : ' Signora, of a truth you are the one firm and enduring support of my life. Your angelic beauty, joined to the sweet and kindly welcome you have held out to me, has bound me with so strong a chain that I find it vain to hope I shall ever again be able to free myself therefrom. In sooth I am all afire with love for you, and all the water in the world could never extinguish the ardent flames which consume my heart. I am a wanderer come from a distant land for no other cause than to look upon that rare and radiant beauty which raises you far above every other lady now alive. If you, like the kindly and courteous lady you are, should take me into your favour, you would thereby gain a devoted servant, of whom you might dispose as if he were a part of yourself.' The queen, as soon as she heard these words, was quite overcome, and was seized with no small wonderment that the merchant was thus hotly inflamed with love of her ; but when she looked upon him and marked that he was well-favoured and graceful, and considered moreover how cruel was the wrong worked her by her husband in thus keeping her a close prisoner in the tower, she was entirely disposed to follow the drift of her desires. But before she granted to her suitor full compliance, she said, ' Good master, in sooth the strength of love must be mighty, seeing that it has brought me to such a pass that I seem to belong to you rather than to myself. But since that, by the will of fortune, I am as it were under the sway of another, I am content that what we have been discussing should have its issue in deeds, on one condition, which is, that I should keep for myself the wares you have brought hither as the price of my compliance.' The merchant, when he perceived of what a greedy temper the queen was, forthwith took up his costly merchandise and handed it over to her as a gift, and the queen, on her part, was overjoyed at the costly and precious wares which the merchant bestowed upon her, proving thereby that her heart was neither as cold as a stone nor as hard as a diamond. Then she took the young man



by the hand, and having led him aside into a little chamber adjoining, threw her arms about him and kissed and embraced him ardently. Whereupon the youth, drawing her towards him on the couch, threw himself down beside her, and, having put aside what stood in the way of his enjoyment, he turned towards her, and in their close embracements they tasted together the sweetest joys that lovers may.

Now as soon as the merchant had accomplished his full desire, he took his way out of the chamber, demanding of the queen that she would give him back the wares he had brought with him. She, when she heard what he required of her, was struck with amazement, and, all overcome with grief and shame, thus addressed him: 'Surely it does not become a noble-minded and liberal gentleman to demand a return of anything which he may have given away in good faith. This may indeed be the way of children, who by reason of their tender age have no great store of sense or intellect, but in sooth I am in no mood to hand back to you these wares of yours, seeing that you are come to the years of full understanding, and are very wary and circumspect, and stand in no need of guidance.' The young man, who was much diverted at this, made answer to her thus: 'Signora, if you will not give me what I ask of you, and let me take my leave straightway, I will not quit this place at all until the king shall have come back; and then his majesty, as a just and upright judge, will cause to be given back to me either the goods or the price thereof.'

The queen, beguiled by these words of the cunning merchant, and fearing lest the king should return and find him there, gave him back his wares, though greatly against her will. The merchant, having gone out of her presence, was about to make his way forth from the castle when the guards thereof set upon him, demanding payment for the good office they had done him in suffering him to enter. The merchant did not deny that he had promised to give them somewhat, but the promise was made on the condition that he should sell to the queen his merchandise, or at least some part of it. Now, seeing that he had got rid of no portion of it whatever, he did not consider himself bound to give them in payment anything at all; in sooth he was taking with him out of the castle the selfsame goods as he had brought in. On hearing what he said, the guardians, inflamed with anger and fury, swore that they would on no account let him pass out till he should have paid his shot.¹

¹ Orig., *se prima nō pagava il scotto*.

But the merchant, who was their master in subtlety, made answer to them thus : ‘ Good brethren, if it be your pleasure to forbid me egress, causing me to tarry here and lose my time, I promise you I will not budge from hence until your king shall have come back. Then he, as a high-minded and just sovereign, shall give judgment on the question between us.’ Whereupon the guardians, who were greatly afraid lest the king should return, and, finding the young man there, should forthwith cause them to be put to death for disobedience, threw the doors of the castle open to the merchant and let him go out at his pleasure. Having got free of the castle, and left therein the queen with a greater store of shame and vexation than of costly goods, he began to cry out in the streets with a loud voice, ‘ I know well enough all about it, but I have no mind to tell. I know well enough all about it, but I have no mind to tell.’

At this juncture King Galafró returned to the city from his hunting, and hearing from afar the clamour which the merchant was making, was mightily diverted thereanent, and, when he had come to the palace and repaired to the tower wherein the queen was kept in hold, he went to her apartment, and instead of greeting her in his accustomed manner, he said jestingly : ‘ Madama, I know well enough all about it, but I have no mind to tell ;’ and these words he repeated several times. The queen, when she heard this speech of her husband, was seized with the thought that what he said was in real earnest, and not by way of jest, and stood as if she were dead. Then, trembling in every limb, she fell down at the king’s feet, saying, ‘ O my lord and king ! know that I have been a false wife to you ; still I beg you graciously to pardon my heinous fault, although there is no sort of death I do not deserve therefor. Trusting in your mercy I hope to get your grace and pardon.’ The king, who knew nought as to the meaning of the words of the queen, was mightily astonished, and commanded her to rise to her feet and give him a full account of what might be troubling her. Whereupon the queen, with trembling voice and plentiful weeping, and speaking as one bereft of her wits, told him her adventure from beginning to end. The king, when he thoroughly understood the matter, spake thus to her : ‘ Madama, be of good cheer, and cease to disquiet yourself so pitifully, because whatever heaven wills to be must of a certainty come to pass.’ And the king forthwith gave orders that the tower should be razed to the ground, and accorded to his wife full liberty

to do whatsoever she would, in which state they lived happily and joyfully; while Galeotto, having victoriously carried out his intent, made his way home, carrying all his goods with him.

This fable told by Diana in the foregoing words pleased the company mightily, but they were much astonished that the queen should have been led to bring to light so easily her hidden fault, holding that she would have done better to suffer death a thousand-fold than to take upon herself such a scandalous disgrace. But fortune was kind to her, and kinder still was the king, who, by his pardon and by the strength of the love he had for her, set her at liberty. And now, in order to suffer the other damsels to go on with their story-telling, the Signora gave the word to Diana to propound her enigma forthwith, and she, when she heard the commandment of the Signora, spake it in these words:

Flying from their northern home
Cruel white-clad wanderers come;
Pitiless they smite to death,
And rob the sons of men of breath.
Round head and feet alike they spread,
And men are whelmed beneath the dead.
Here and there they take their flight;
On every hearth the fire burns bright.
And there men come and safe abide,
Protected from the foe outside.

Diana's enigma was a source of great pleasure to all the listeners, some of them interpreting it in one fashion and some in another; but very few gathered its real meaning. Then Diana expounded it in these terms: "This enigma of mine is intended to describe the white snow, which falls down in great flakes, and comes from the north, and without ceasing alights upon everyone—especially in the season of great cold—and there is no place to be found where men can shelter themselves therefrom." As soon as she had thus excellently set forth the meaning of her enigma, Lionora rose from her seat, which was beside Diana's, and in the following words made a beginning of her fable.

THE SECOND FABLE.

Rodolino, son of Lodovico, King of Hungary, becomes enamoured of Violante, the daughter of Domitio, a tailor. But Rodolino, having met his death, Violante, distracted by her exceeding grief, falls dead in the church upon the body of her lover.



F the passion of love be guided by the spirit of gentleness, and by the modesty and temperance which commonly are found united thereto, it seldom happens that it does not run to a prosperous issue. But when it delivers itself up to the promptings of voracious and inordinate appetite, it becomes a scourge to men and will often lead them to a terrible and disastrous end. The issue of the fable I am about to relate to you will let you see the reason of this, my brief homily.

I must tell you, gracious ladies, that Lodovico, King of Hungary, had an only son named Rodolino, and this youth, albeit he was still of tender years, was tormented nevertheless by the burning pricks of love. Now it chanced that one day, while Rodolino was standing at the window of his chamber and turning over in his mind memories of divers incidents in which he had heretofore taken much pleasure, his eye fell by chance upon a maiden, the daughter of a certain tailor. On account of the beauty and modesty and gentle manners of the girl he became so hotly enamoured of her that he could no longer enjoy any rest. The maiden, whose name was Violante, was not long in learning the nature of Rodolino's love towards her, and on her part was fired with a passion for him as ardent as his for her; so that when it chanced for a season that she failed to get sight of him she felt like to die. And as this mutual affection between the two increased day by day, Love, who is ever the faithful guide and the sure light of every gentle soul, brought it to pass that at last the maiden took courage to speak to Rodolino. The prince, happening to be at the window, and knowing the while well enough that Violante now gave him full return for his love of her, thus spake to her: 'Violante, of a truth you must know that the love I have towards you is so great that nothing but the coming of cruel gloomy death will ever quench it in my heart. Your most laudable and

gracious bearing, your sincere and modest manners, your lovely eyes which shine brightly as the stars, and all the other excellencies with which you are abundantly endowed, have so powerfully drawn me on to love you that I have resolved never to take to wife any other woman but yourself.' And Violante, who, although she was young in years, was astute in mind, made answer to him that, although he might love her as ardently as he declared, yet she loved him still more dearly. Furthermore, she affirmed that her love was not to be compared with his, seeing that a man does not love with his whole heart, but that his passion is often light and vain, and prone to lead a woman, who loves supremely, to a wretched end.

When Rodolino heard those words he cried out, 'Alas, my soul, speak not in this wise! Of a surety, if you yourself felt one thousandth part of the love I bear to you, you would never use such hard words; and, if you still find yourself unable to believe me, put me to the test straightway, and then you will learn whether I really love you or not.'

Not long after this it happened that King Lodovico, the father of Rodolino, was made cognizant of his son's passion for Violante, and was deeply grieved in his heart thereanent, because he feared amain lest some mischance might ensue which would prove to be a reproach and a disgrace to his kingdom. Therefore, without letting Rodolino perceive that he knew aught of this matter, he determined to despatch him forthwith to travel into divers far countries, so that the lapse of time and long distance might work in him forgetfulness of this untoward love of his. Wherefore the king, having one day called his son into his presence, said to him: 'Rodolino, my son, you know that we have no other children but yourself, and that in the course of nature it is not likely that any others will be born to us, so that the kingdom, after our death, must fall to you as our rightful heir. Now, in order that you may grow up a prudent and far-seeing man, and in due time and place may wisely and well rule this your kingdom, I have determined to send you for a while into Austria, where lives Lamberico, your uncle on your mother's side. There, also, you will find many learned men, who, for love of us, will give you wise instruction, and under their care and discipline you will become a prudent and lettered man.'

When Rodolino heard these words of the king he was sorely dismayed, and stood almost as one struck dumb; but, after he had recovered himself somewhat, he answered; 'My father, although it

will be to me a cause of grief and sorrow to be obliged to part from your presence—seeing that on this account I shall no longer live in the company of my dear mother and of yourself—yet, if such be your pleasure, I will at once obey this command of yours.’ The king, when he heard the dutiful answer made by his son, wrote a letter forthwith to Lamberico his brother-in-law, in which he set forth fully the whole matter, commending Rodolino to him as something as precious as his own life. The prince, when he had promised thus fully to obey his father’s commands, grieved bitterly in silence ; but, seeing that he could not honourably go back from his pledged word, he determined to carry it out.

Before, however, he took his departure from the city he found an opportunity of speaking face to face with Violante, desiring to instruct her as to how she should order her life until the time of his return, and how best the great love subsisting between them might be maintained. Therefore, when they were come together, Rodolino said : ‘Violante, in obedience to my father’s wishes I am about to separate myself from you in the body, but not in the heart, forasmuch as, wherever I may be, I will always remember you. I now conjure you, by the love which I have borne for you in the past and bear for you now and will ever bear for you till the end of my life, that you will never allow yourself to be joined in matrimony to any other man ; for, as soon as I return to this place, I will without fail make you my own lawful wife. In token of this my flawless faith, take this ring and hold it ever dear to you.’ Violante, when she heard this sad news, was almost ready to die of grief ; but, having recollected her wandering wits, she answered : ‘My lord, would to God that I had never known you, for then I should not have fallen into the cruel case in which I now find myself ! But since it is the will of heaven and of my fortune that you should thus go away from me, I beg at least that you will tell me whether your absence from home will be long or short ; for, supposing that you should stay away a long time, I might not be able to withstand the commands of my father, should he wish me to marry.’

To this Rodolino made answer : ‘Violante, do not thus bemoan yourself, but be of good cheer, for before a year shall have run its course you will see me back again. If, however, at the end of a year I do not return, I give you full permission to marry.’ And, having spoken these words, with many tears and sighs he took leave of her,

and the next morning, having mounted his horse in good time, he set forth towards Austria, accompanied by a goodly retinue.

When he had come to his journey's end, he was honourably welcomed by Lamberico his uncle, but in spite of this kindly reception Rodolino continued to be mightily borne down by the sorrow and love-sickness he felt on account of his beloved Violante whom he had left behind him, nor could he find any solace for his grief, although the young men of the court were very assiduous in providing for him all manner of fitting pleasure and recreation.

Thus Rodolino remained in Austria, having his mind all the while taken up with sorrow and with thoughts of his dear Violante, and it chanced that the year came to an end without his taking note thereof. As soon, however, as he became aware that a whole twelvemonth had rolled away, he begged of his uncle leave that he might return home to see his father and his mother, and Lamberico at once acceded to his wish. When Rodolino returned to his father's kingdom the king and queen caused great rejoicings to be made, and soon after these had been brought to an end, it was noised about the court that Violante, the daughter of Messer Domitio the tailor, was married, whereupon the king rejoiced greatly, but Rodolino was plunged in the deepest grief, lamenting bitterly in his heart that he himself had been the real cause of this cruel mischance. The unhappy young man, finding himself continually a victim to this wretched sorrow, and not knowing where to look for a remedy for the amorous passion which consumed him, wellnigh died of grief.

But Love, who never neglects his true followers, and always brings punishment to those who take no heed of their vows, devised a means by which Rodolino was able once more to find himself in the presence of Violante. One night Rodolino, without the knowledge of Violante, silently entered the chamber where she lay in bed with her husband, and, having stealthily crept between the bed and the wall, he lifted the curtain, and slipped quietly underneath it, and placed his hand softly on Violante's bosom. She, who had no thought that Rodolino was anywhere near her, when she felt herself touched by someone who was not her husband, made as if she would cry out, whereupon Rodolino, having put his hand over her mouth, checked her cry and told her who he was. Violante, as soon as she heard that the man beside her was in truth Rodolino, nearly went out of her wits, and a great fear came over her lest he might be discovered

by her husband ; so, as gently and discreetly as she could, she pushed him away from her, and would not allow him to kiss her. Rodolino, as soon as he was aware of this action of hers, persuaded himself that his beloved mistress had entirely forgotten him, seeing that she thus repulsed him ; so, casting about in vain for any consolation in the dire and heavy sorrow which weighed upon him, he said : ‘ Oh, cruel Violante, rest content now at least that my life is coming to an end, and that your eyes will no longer be troubled by the sight of me ! Peradventure later on the time will come when you will fall into a more pitiful mood, and will perforce be constrained to feel sorrow for your cruelty towards me. Alas ! how is it possible that the great love which you formerly had for me should now have fled entirely ? ’ And while he thus spake he clasped Violante in a close embrace, kissing her ardently whether she willed it or not. So great in sooth was his passion, that he began to feel his soul passing from his body ; wherefore, collecting all his forces and uttering one deep sigh, he yielded up his wretched life as he lay by Violante’s side.

The unhappy woman, as soon as she perceived that Rodolino was indeed dead, became as one bereft of reason, but after a little began to deliberate with herself as to what she should do in order to keep from her husband all knowledge of the sad mischance which had fallen upon her ; so she let fall, without making any disturbance, the corpse of Rodolino into the alcove beside the bed. Then, feigning to be disturbed by a dream, she shrieked aloud, whereupon her husband straightway awoke from sleep and asked her what had happened to cause her this alarm. Violante, trembling in every limb and half dead with fear, told him that in her dream it had appeared to her as if Rodolino, the king’s son, had been lying by her side, and had died suddenly in her arms, and rising from her bed, she found lying there in the alcove the dead body, which was yet warm. The husband of Violante, when he saw the strange thing that had happened, was mightily disturbed in mind, and feared greatly lest he might lose his own life on account of this ill-starred accident ; but, casting aside his fears, he took the dead body of Rodolino on his shoulders, and, having gone out of the house without being seen of anyone, he laid it down at the gates of the royal palace.

The king, as soon as the sad news had been brought to him, was fain to make an end of his life on account of the grief and anger

which assailed him, but later on, when his frenzy had somewhat subsided, he bade them summon the physicians, in order that they might see the corpse of Rodolino, and certify the cause of his death. The physicians, after they had separately examined the dead body, declared, one and all, that he had met his death, not by steel nor by poison, but through sheer grief. As soon as the king heard this, he gave orders for the funeral obsequies to be got in order, directing that the corpse should be carried into the cathedral, and that every woman of the city, of whatsoever rank and condition she might be, should, under pain of his high displeasure, go up to the spot where the bier was standing and kiss his dead son. Thither many of the city matrons repaired, and, for very pity, plentifully bewept the fate of the unhappy Rodolino, and amongst these came the wretched Violante. For a desire had come over her to look once more upon the dead face of him to whom, when he was alive, she refused the consolation of a single kiss. Wherefore, throwing herself down upon the corpse, and feeling certain in her mind that it was by reason of his great love for her that he was now lying there dead, she determined to die likewise; so, holding back her breath with all her force, she passed away from this life without a word. The other women, when they perceived what unlooked-for thing had occurred, ran to succour her, but all their labour was in vain, for her soul had verily departed from her body, and had gone to seek that of Rodolino her lover. The king, who was privy to the love subsisting between Violante and his son, kept the whole matter a secret, and gave orders that the two should be buried in one tomb.

As soon as Lionora had finished her pitiful story, the Signora made a sign to her to complete her duty by propounding her enigma, and the damsel, without any hesitation, spake as follows :

Left in peace I never move ;
But should a foe desire to prove
His mettle on me, straight I fly
Right over wall and roof-tree high.
If driven by a stroke of might,
I take, though wingless, upward flight ;
No feet have I, yet 'tis my way
To jump and dance both night and day ;
No rest I feel what time my foe
May will that I a-flying go.
No end and no beginning mine,
So strange my nature and design ;

And they who see me on the wing
May deem me well a living thing.

The greater part of the listeners comprehended the meaning of this enigma, which, in sooth, was intended to signify the tennis ball, which, being round in form, has neither end nor beginning, and is attacked by the players as a foe, and is driven by them now here now there, being struck by the hand. Isabella, to whom had been allotted the third place in the story-telling, rose from her seat and began to speak in the following words.

THE THIRD FABLE.

Francesco Sforza, the son of Lodovico Moro, Duke of Milan, follows a stag in the chase and becomes separated from his companions. Then, having taken refuge in the hut of certain peasants, who take counsel together how they may kill him, he is delivered by a child, who has become privy to the plot of the traitors, and the villains are afterwards quartered alibe.



THE fable just narrated to us by Lionora opens out to me a wide field to tell you of a very piteous adventure, which, in truth, may be held to belong to history rather than to fiction, seeing that it happened to the son of a duke, who, after many tribulations, brought it to pass that his enemies were made to taste a bitter punishment for the offences they had wrought.

I will tell you then that, in these our times, there lived in Milan Signor Francesco Sforza, the son of Lodovico Moro, the ruler of the city, a youth who, both during the lifetime of his father, and after his death, suffered much from the bolts of envious fortune. In his early youth Signor Francesco was of graceful figure, of courtly manners, with a face which gave fair token of his righteous inclinations, and when he was come to that age which marks the full bloom of youth—his studies and all the other becoming exercises being finished—he gave himself up to the practice of arms, to throwing the lance and following the chase, gathering from this manner of life no little pleasure. Wherefore, on account of his converse and of his prowess in manly exercises, all the young men of the city held him in great affection, and he, on his part, was equally well disposed towards them.

In sooth, there was no youth at all in the city who did not partake in a share of his bounty.

One morning the Signor Francesco gathered together for his pleasure a goodly company of young men, of whom not one had yet reached his twentieth year, and, having mounted his horse, rode away with them to follow the chase. And when they had come to a certain thicket, which was well known as the haunt of wild animals, they surrounded it on all sides, and soon it chanced that, on the side of the wood where Signor Francesco was keeping a vigilant watch, there broke forth a very fine stag, which, as soon as it beheld the hunters, fled away from them in terror. Francesco, who had the heart of a lion, and was likewise a perfect horseman, no sooner marked how rapid was the flight of the stag than he struck his spurs deep into his horse's sides and dashed away impetuously in pursuit, and so long and so far did he follow it that, having outridden all his companions, he found he had missed his way. Then, because he had lost sight of the stag, he gave up the pursuit, not knowing where he was or whither he should turn. Finding himself left alone and far away from the high road, and wotting nought as to how he should make his way back thereto—seeing that the dark shadows of night were fast gathering around—he lost his wits somewhat, and was in no small fear lest there should happen to him some mischance which would not be to his taste. And so indeed it fell out.

Signor Francesco took his way onward and onward through the dubious paths, and finally came upon a small cottage with a roof of straw, and of very mean and ill aspect. Having ridden into the yard he got down from his horse, which he made fast to the fence which was built around, and straightway went into the cottage, where he found an old man, whose years must have numbered ninety at least, and by his side was a young peasant woman, very fair to look upon, who held in her arms a five-year-old child, to whom she was giving nourishment. Signor Francesco, having made polite salutation to the old man and the young peasant woman, sat down with them and asked them whether of their kindness they would be willing to give him shelter and lodging for the night, not letting them know, however, who he was.

The old man and the young woman, who was his daughter-in-law, when they saw that the youth was of high station and of graceful seeming, willingly made him welcome, putting forth many excuses the while that they had no place for his accommodation at all worthy of his

condition. Francesco, having thanked them heartily, went out of the cottage to have care for his horse, and after he had duly seen to its wants he entered once more. The child, who was very lovesome, ran up to the gentleman's side with all manner of affectionate greeting and covered him with caresses, and Francesco on his part kissed the little one with many soft words and blandishments. While Signor Francesco was standing talking in familiar wise with the greybeard and his daughter-in-law, Malacarne, the son of the old man and the husband of the young woman, came home, and having entered the cottage, espied the gentleman who was chatting with the old man and caressing the child. He bade Signor Francesco good evening, getting a courteous return of his greeting, and gave orders to his wife that she should forthwith get ready the supper.

The master of the house then addressed Signor Francesco and begged to know what was the reason which had brought him into so savage and desert a place, and to this question the youth by way of explanation replied, 'Good brother, the reason why I have come to this place is simply because, finding myself alone upon my journey at the fall of the night, and not knowing whither to betake myself through being somewhat ill-informed as to the features of this country, I discovered by good luck this little cottage of yours, into which this good old father and your wife in their kindness bade me enter.' Malacarne, as he listened to the speech of the youth and marked how richly he was attired, and how he wore a fine chain of gold about his neck, of a sudden conceived a design against Francesco, and made up his mind, at all hazard, to first slay and then despoil him. Therefore, being firmly set upon carrying out this diabolical project of his, he called together his old father and his wife, and, having taken the child in his arms, went forth from the cottage. Then, when he had drawn them aside somewhat, he made with them a compact to slay the youth, and after they should have taken off from him his rich raiment to bury his body in the fields, persuading themselves that, when this should be done, no further report would ever be heard of him.

But God, who is altogether just, would not suffer these wicked schemings to come to the issue the miscreants desired, but brought all their secret design to light. As soon as the compact was finally made and their evil plans fully determined, it came into Malacarne's mind that he by himself alone would never be able to carry out the plan they had formed. And, besides this, his father was old and



decayed, and his wife a woman of little courage, and the youth, as Malacarne had already remarked, seemed to be gifted with a stout heart, and one who would assuredly make a good fight for his life, and perhaps escape out of their hands. On this account he resolved to repair to a certain place, not far distant from his cottage, and to enlist the services of three other ruffians well known to him who dwelt there, and then, with their aid, fully carry out his design. As soon as these three worthies understood what he would have them do, they at once consented to follow him, greedy of the gain he promised them, and having caught up their weapons, they all went to Malacarne's cottage.

There the child, having left the place where her mother and grandfather were together, returned to Francesco and gave him greetings and caresses more lovesome even than before, whereupon the young man, observing the very loving ways the little one used towards him, took her in his arms and caressed her tenderly and kissed her again and again. The child, seeing the glitter of the chain of gold about his neck, and being greatly delighted therewith (as is the manner often with children) laid hands upon the chain and showed that she would fain have it round her own neck. Signor Francesco, when he saw what great delight the child took in the chain, said to her as he caressed her, 'See here, my little one, I will give you this for your own.' And with these words he put it about her neck. The child, who had by some means or other become privy to the business that was afoot, said to Francesco without further words, 'But it would have been mine all the same without your having given it to me, because my father and mother are going to kill you and to take away all you have.' Francesco, who was of a shrewd and wary temper, as soon as he realized from the words of the child the wicked designs which were being woven against him, did not let the warning pass unheeded, but prudently holding his peace he rose up from his seat, carrying the child in his arms, having the collar about her neck, and laid her down upon a little bed, whereupon she, because the hour was now late, forthwith fell asleep. Then Signor Francesco shut himself close in the cottage, and, having made secure the entrance by piling up against the door two large chests of wood, awaited courageously to see what the ruffians without might do next. Then he drew from his side a small firearm, having five barrels, which might be discharged all together or one by one, according to will.

As soon as the young gentlemen who had ridden a-hunting with

Signor Francesco found that he had strayed away from their company without leaving any trace to tell them whither he might be gone, they began to give signal to him by sounding their horns and shouting, but no reply came back to them. And on this account they began to be greatly afeared lest the horse he rode might have fallen amongst the loose rocks, and that their lord might be lying dead or perhaps eaten by wild beasts. While the young courtiers were thus standing all terror-stricken, and knowing not which way to turn, one of the company at last cried out, 'I marked Signor Francesco following a stag along this forest path, and taking his course towards that wide valley, but, seeing that the horse he rode was swifter in its pace by far than mine, I could not hold him in sight, nor could I tell whither he went.' As soon as the others heard and understood this speech, they at once set out on their quest, following the slot of the stag all through the night in the anticipation of finding Signor Francesco either dead or alive.

While the young men were thus riding through the woods, Malacarne, accompanied by the three villains his comrades, was making his way back towards his house. They deemed that they would be able to enter therein without hindrance, but on approaching the door they found it fast shut. Then Malacarne kicked at it with his foot and said, 'Open to me, good friend. Why is it you keep thus closed the door of my house?' Signor Francesco kept silence and gave not a word in reply; but, peeping through a crevice, he espied Malacarne, who carried an axe upon his shoulder, and the three other ruffians with him fully armed. He had already charged his firearm, and now, without further tarrying, he put it to the crevice of the door and let off one of the barrels, striking one of the three miscreants in the breast in such fashion that he fell dead to the ground forthwith, without finding time to confess his sins. Malacarne, when he perceived what had happened, began to hack violently at the door with his axe in order to bring it down, but this intent he was unable to carry out, seeing that it was secured on the other side. Francesco again discharged his pistolet with such good fortune that he disabled another of the band by shooting him in the right arm. Whereupon those who were yet left alive were so hotly inflamed with anger that they worked with all their force to break open the door, making the while such a hideous rout that it seemed as if the world must be coming to an end. Francesco, who felt no small terror

at the strait in which he was placed, set to work to strengthen yet further the door by piling up against it all the stools and benches he could find.

Now it is well known that, the brighter and finer the night, the more still and silent it is, and a single word, though it be spoken a long way off, may at such times be easily heard; wherefore on this account the hurlyburly made by these ruffians came to the ears of Francesco's companions. They at once closed their ranks, and, giving their horses free rein, quickly arrived at the spot from whence came the uproar, and saw the assassins labouring hard to break down the door. One of the company of young gentlemen at once questioned them what might be the meaning of all the turmoil and uproar they were making, and to this Malacarne made answer: 'Signori, I will tell you straightway. This evening, when I came back to my cottage weary with toil, I found there a young soldier, a lusty fellow full of life. And for the reason that he attempted to kill my old father, and to ravish my wife, and to carry off my child, and to despoil me of all my goods, I took to flight, as I was in no condition to defend myself. Then, seeing to what sore strait I was reduced, I betook myself to the dwellings of certain of my friends and kinsmen, and besought them to give me their aid; but, when we returned to my cottage, we found the door shut and so strongly barricaded within that there was no making entrance, unless we should first break down the door. And not satisfied with outraging my wife, he has also (as you may well see) slain with his firearm one of my friends and wounded another to death. Wherefore, finding it beyond my endurance to put up with such ill-handling as this, I have made up my mind to lay hands on him dead or alive.'

The young men in attendance upon Signor Francesco perceiving what had happened, and believing Malacarne's tale to be true on account of the dead body lying on the ground before them and of the other man gravely wounded, were moved to pity, and having dismounted from their horses, cried out aloud, 'Ah, traitor and enemy of God, open the door at once! What is it you are doing? In sooth you shall suffer the penalty due to your misdeeds.' To this Francesco answered nought, but carefully and dexterously went on strengthening the door on the inside, knowing not that his friends stood without. And while the young men went on with their battering without being able, in spite of all the force they used, to open

the door, a certain one of them, having gone a little apart, espied in the yard a horse tied to the fence, and, as soon as he had drawn anigh thereto, he knew it to be the horse of Signor Francesco, so he cried out in a loud voice, 'Hold off, my comrades, and let go the work you are about, because our master is surely within there;' and with these words he pointed out to them the horse tied to the fence. The young men, as soon as they saw and recognized the horse, were at once convinced that Signor Francesco was shut up within the cottage, and straightway they called upon him by name, rejoicing greatly the while. Francesco, when he heard himself thus called, knew that his friends were at hand, and, being now freed from all dread of his life, he cleared away his defences from the door and opened it. And when they heard the reason why he had shut himself up so closely, they seized the two ruffians, and, having bound them securely, carried them back to Milan, where, after they had first been tormented with burning pincers, they were torn in quarters, while living, by four horses. The little child by whose agency the nefarious plot was found out was called Verginea, and her Signor Francesco gave in charge to the duchess, in order that she might be well and carefully brought up. And when she had come to an age ripe for marriage, as a reward for the great service she had rendered to Signor Francesco she was amply dowered and honourably given in marriage to a gentleman of noble descent. And after this they gave her in addition the castle of Binasio, situated between Milan and Pavia, which in this our day has been so sorely vexed by continual broils and attacks that of it there hardly remains one stone on another. And in this sad and terrible fashion the murderous thieves made a wretched end, while the damsel and her husband lived many years in great happiness.

All the listeners were quite as strongly affected by pity as by astonishment while they listened to this touching fable. But as soon as the happy issue thereof was declared, they all recovered their gladness, whereupon the Signora gave her command to Isabella that she should forthwith set before them her enigma, and she, with her eyes yet moist with tears, spake thus in modest manner :

Good sirs, amongst us here doth dwell
A thing whose seeming none can tell;
Though far away from us it flies,
Secret at home the while it lies.

At last the fatal day doth come,
 It leaves for aye its wonted home;
 To it the power divine is given
 To scan all things in earth and heaven,
 Survey the world from place to place,
 Within a single breathing space.
 Now who can craftily combine,
 And read aright these words of mine.

Isabella's learned and subtle enigma gave great pleasure to all the listeners, but there was not a single one gifted with understanding acute enough to disentangle its meaning; so Isabella in her modest way thus expounded it: "My enigma means the ever-varying thoughts of men's minds, which are invisible and run into every place, though at the same time they abide ever with the man in whose brain they are formed. Thought remains in one spot, it wanders around, and no one knows where; but, though it permeates every sphere of man's intellect, it still remains with him, and is the source from which infinite and varied phenomena take their rise." Weighty and subtle indeed was the solution of Isabella's enigma, and there was not one of the company who was not entirely satisfied therewith. Vicenza, who knew that it was now her turn to speak, waited for no further command from the Signora, but began her fable in the following words.

THE FOURTH FABLE.

Pre Papiro Schizza makes pretence of great learning, but in truth knows nothing. Like an ignorant fool he flouts the son of a certain peasant, who by way of revenge sets fire to his house and destroys it and all therein.



IF we, kindly ladies, were to investigate with due diligence how great the number of fools and ignorant persons around us might be, we would find it an easy matter to set them down as too numerous to be counted. And if we should be desirous to know, in addition, what are the mischances which arise from ignorance, it would behove us to consult experience, the teacher of all things, and she, like a kindly

mother, would duly instruct us. Now in order that we may not, as the vulgar say, go away with our hands full of flies,¹ I will here tell you that from ignorance there springs, amongst other vices, that one which men call vanity, the real foundation of every ill and the source of every human error, seeing that an ignorant man is ever prone to claim acquaintance with subjects concerning which he knows nought, and will desire to show himself to the world in a character which he has no claim to assume. It happened in this wise to a certain village priest, who accounted himself to be a man of learning, but who was, in truth, the greatest numskull nature ever created; and this man, cajoled by his imagined knowledge, lost in the end all his worldly riches, and narrowly escaped with his life, as you will be able to understand clearly from the following fable—a story which, perchance, you may have heard before.

I must tell you that in the territory of Brescia, a very rich, noble, and populous city, there lived, no great time ago, a priest whose name was Papiro Schizza, the rector of the church of the village of Bedicuollo, a place situate not far distant from the city. This man, who was really a grossly ignorant loon, was wont to assume the part of the scholar and to exhibit himself to anyone he might meet as a person of parts and learning; wherefore the country people round about regarded him with great favour, and honoured and esteemed him as a man of deep science.

It happened that, on the occasion of the celebration of the day of Saint Macario, it was appointed by the bishop that a pious and solemn procession should be made in Brescia, a special charge having been issued to all the priests of the city, as well as to those of the villages round about, that, under the penalty of a fine of five ducats, they should present themselves *cum cappis et coltis*² to do honour to this solemn festival, as was deserving to the memory of so pious a saint. In his round the bishop's nuncio went to the village of Bedicuollo, and, having found Messer Pre Papiro at home, he delivered to him the summons of monsignor the bishop that he should, under the penalty of five ducats, duly repair to the cathedral of Brescia on the day of Saint Macario *cum cappis et coltis*, in order that he might, together with the other priests, pay the reverence that was due to the appointed celebration. When the nuncio had taken

¹ Orig., *con le mani piene di mosche*.

² With copes and tunics. "*Cocta*," *tunica clericis propria*.

his leave, Messer Pre Papiro began to consider and to turn over in his mind what might be the purport of this summons which directed him to attend the solemn festival *cum cappis et coctis*, and pondering at hazard, now here, now there, he cudgelled his brains, by the aid of the small knowledge and learning he possessed, in order to beat out of them peradventure some notion as to the significance of the aforesaid words. After he had spent some time in struggling to grasp their meaning, it occurred to him at last that *cappis et coctis* must needs mean capons cooked, and nothing else. Having satisfied himself, like the fool he was, that this interpretation was the right one, without taking counsel of anyone else he picked out a pair of his finest capons and gave orders to his housekeeper to cook them with the greatest care.

When the following morning had come Pre Papiro mounted his horse at break of day, and, having ordered the capons to be placed in a dish, he carried them with him to Brescia and presented himself forthwith before monsignor the bishop, to whom he gave the roast capons, at the same time saying that he had received a command from the nuncio to come and do honour to the feast of San Macario *cum cappis et coctis*, and, in order to carry out these instructions to the letter, he had brought with him a pair of capons well cooked. The bishop, who was both wily and astute, and at the same time fond of a joke, marked that the capons were fat and well roasted, and, when he understood what an ignorant fool the priest really was, he was forced to press his lips tight together in order that he might not laugh aloud; so with a face full of merriment and good humour he accepted the capons, and in return gave Pre Papiro a thousand thanks.¹ Now Messer Pre Papiro, though he heard these words of the bishop clearly enough, had no inkling of their meaning through being such a stupid fellow, but deemed in his own mind that what the bishop meant by *mille gratis* was that he further required of him a thousand brushwood hurdles.² Whereupon the stupid loon, falling down on his marrowbones at the feet of the bishop, cried out: ‘Monsignor, I pray you by the love which you bear to God, and by the high reverence in which I hold you, that you will not lay so heavy a burden upon me, forasmuch as our village is sore stricken with poverty, and to supply a thousand brushwood hurdles would be

¹ *Resegli mille gratis.*

² *Grato*, a hurdle.

too grievous a tax for such poor folk as we are ; but at the same time, if five hundred hurdles will content you, I will promise that you shall have them whenever you may want them.' The bishop, although he was a man of keen wit, failed altogether to understand what was the meaning of Pre Papiro's words, but, in order that it might not be apparent how he had missed the drift of them, he agreed to the priest's proposal without saying a word thereanent.

Pre Papiro, as soon as the festival was over, took leave of the bishop, and, having duly received his benediction, returned to his own house. When he got home he collected all the waggons of the village, and after he had caused them to be laden with brushwood hurdles, he sent them into the city on the following morning as a present to the bishop. The bishop, when he saw the waggon-loads of hurdles and heard who it was who had sent them, burst into loud laughter and made no scruple about accepting them, and in this fashion the lubberly fool of a priest, through feigning knowledge which he possessed not, lost both his capons and his hurdles, and was put to shame and dishonour at the same time.

It happened that in the aforesaid village of Bedicuollo there lived a certain peasant, Gianotto by name, who, although he was a mere peasant and able neither to read nor to write, entertained nevertheless such a profound reverence for scholars of all kinds that, for their sakes, he would willingly have become a slave in chains. This man had a son, a youth of goodly aspect, and one who gave fair signs of growing up to be a man of science and a scholar, and Pirino was his name. Gianotto, who held his son in great affection, made up his mind to send the youth to study at Padua, resolving at the same time not to let him stand in need of any of the things which a student might require, and in the course of time he fully carried out this resolution. After having passed certain months in Padua, the youth, who was now well grounded in the grammarian's art, returned to his home, not, indeed, to abide there, but to pay a short visit to his parents and his friends. Gianotto, who was very anxious to do honour to his son, and at the same time curious to learn whether he was getting any profit from his studies, determined to bid his relations and friends to a fine feast at his house, and to beg Messer Pre Papiro to come likewise, and then and there to examine Pirino in the presence of them all, in order that they might judge whether or not he was spending his time and labour in vain.

When the day of the feast had come, all the relations and friends of the family came together at the house of Gianotto in answer to the invitation they had received, and after the benediction had been pronounced by Messer Pre Papiro, they all sat down at the table according to their age. When the dinner was finished and the board cleared, Gianotto rose to his feet, and said : ‘ Messer Papiro, I greatly desire (should it likewise be the pleasure of all here present) that you should now examine Pirino, my son, in order that we may see whether he may be gaining aught of good from his studies.’ To this Messer Pre Papiro answered : ‘ Gianotto, my good gossip, the burden that you would lay upon me by this request of yours is as nothing at all compared with what I would willingly do for you. It is in sooth a very trifling matter for a man of my capabilities.’ Then turning his face towards Pirino, who sat over against him, he said : ‘ Pirino, my son, we are all come together here for one and the same end. We all of us desire to promote your honour ; therefore we are curious to know whether you have well spent your time while you have been studying in Padua ; so, for the satisfaction of Gianotto, your good father, and for the contentment of this honourable company, I will now proceed to examine you in the subjects you have been studying, and if (as we all hope you may) you acquit yourself worthily, it will be a cause of no small gratification to your father and his friends and to myself. Tell me, therefore, Pirino, my son, what is the Latin for a priest ?’ Pirino, who was exceedingly well versed in all the rules of grammar, answered with confidence, ‘ *Presbyter*.’ Pre Papiro, when he heard the prompt and ready answer which Pirino gave to his question, said, ‘ But how can it be *Presbyter*, my son ? Of a truth you are mightily mistaken.’ But Pirino, who was well assured of his knowledge, answered boldly that the word which he had given was indeed the right one, and advanced many authorities to prove it. Upon this there arose between the examiner and the pupil a long dispute, Pre Papiro being in no wise willing to give way to the superior intelligence of the youth, and finally, having turned to those who sat at table, spake these words : ‘ Tell me, my dear brothers and sons, supposing that in the middle of the night something should happen to you of so grave a nature that you should wish to confess your sins, or require the eucharist, or any other sacrament which might be necessary for the salvation of your souls, would you not send forthwith to fetch the priest ? Most assuredly ! And then what would

you do first? Would you not knock at the priest's door? Of a surety you would. Then would you not say, "Hey presto, presto, good sir! Get up at once, and come as quickly as you can to give the sacraments to a sick man who is at the point of death?"' The peasants sitting round the table could not gainsay Pre Papiro's words, and declared them to be the truth. Then said Pre Papiro, 'To speak of a priest in Latin you must not say *Presbyter* but *Prestule*,¹ because he comes "presto, presto," to the sick man's aid. But, Pirino, I do not wish to press hard upon you on account of this first mistake; so I will now ask you to tell me what is the Latin for a bed?' Pirino answered promptly, '*Letus* or *Thorus*.' When Pre Papiro heard this answer he cried out again, 'Oh, my son, you are once more mistaken! Your teacher has indeed taught you badly.' Then, turning towards Gianotto, he said, 'Gianotto, when you come back home weary from the fields, do you not say immediately after you have supped, "I would fain go and repose myself"?' To this Gianotto answered, 'Yes.' 'Therefore,' said the priest, 'a bed is called *Reposorium*.' And all those present with one voice declared that this must be the truth. But Pirino, though he was by this time beginning to make a mock of the priest, did not dare to openly contradict him, lest he should thereby offend his kinsfolk who were present.

Pre Papiro, continuing his examination, went on: 'And what is the Latin for the table off which we eat our food?' '*Mensa*,' replied Pirino. Then Pre Papiro said, addressing the company, 'Alas, alas, with what little profit has Gianotto laid out his money, and how ill has Pirino spent his time, seeing that he knows nought of the Latin vocabulary or of the rules of grammar! I must tell you that the table at which men sit to eat is called *Gaudium*, and not *Mensa*, forasmuch as man, as long as he is at table, is in a state of joy and gladness.'² This explanation seemed a wise and laudable one to the company assembled, and they praised the priest highly, holding him to be a man of the deepest wit and learning. Pirino, though it went sorely against the grain, was forced to give way to Pre Papiro's ignorance, from the fact that he was restrained by the presence of his parents and kinsfolk.³ When Pre Papiro remarked how he had won the approbation of all the guests, he began to strut about as proudly

¹ *Presule* (Italian), a prior, a prelate.

² Orig., *quanto l'huomo sta à tavola, sta in gaudio et allegrezza.*

³ Orig., *perche egli era da propri parenti troncata la strada.*

as any peacock, and raising his voice, he asked in a loud tone, 'And what is the Latin for a cat, my son?' '*Felis*,' answered Pirino. 'Oh, you silly gull!' cried the priest. 'Is not a cat called *Salta-graffa*, because when you hold out to it any food, it quickly leaps up and attacks it with its paws, and grips it, and then runs off.'¹ All the villagers were struck with wonder at the priest's exposition, and listened with the greatest attention to the prompt way in which Pre Papiro put his queries and gave the answers, judging him on this account to be a highly learned man.

When the priest once more began his questionings, he said to Pirino, 'Now tell me what is the Latin word for fire?' '*Ignis*,' answered Pirino. 'What do you mean by *ignis*?' cried the priest, and turning towards the assembled guests afresh, he said to them, 'Brethren, when you take home the meat which you design for your dinner, what do you first do with it? Do you not cook it?' And all the listeners answered 'Yes.' 'Then,' said the priest, 'fire is not called *Ignis*, but *Carniscoculum*. And now tell me truly, Pirino, what is the Latin word for water?' '*Limpha*,' answered Pirino. 'Alas, alas!' cried Pre Papiro. 'What is this you say? A fool you went to Padua, a fool you have come back!'² And then, addressing the company, he went on: 'You must know, my good brethren, that experience is the mistress of everything in the world, and that water is not called *Limpha*, but *Abundantia*, for if you should happen to go to the river to draw water, or to water your beasts, you will never find there any want of water, and for this reason it is called *Abundantia*.' By this time Gianotto was almost like a man out of his wits owing to what he had heard, and he began to lament sorely over the time lost and the money ill-spent. When Pre Papiro perceived that the good peasant was thus mightily vexed, he said to Pirino, 'I will now ask you one thing more. Tell me what riches are called in Latin, and then we will have done with questioning.' '*Divitiæ, Divitiarum*,' answered Pirino. 'Oh, my son,' said the priest, 'you are wrong again, and completely mistaken, for riches are called in Latin *Sustantia*, seeing that they are the sustenance of man.'

When the feast and the questionings had come to an end, Pre Papiro drew Gianotto aside and said to him: 'Gianotto, my good

¹ Orig., *ella subito salta, e con la zatta s'attacca, graffa, e poi se ne fugge.*

² A version of the proverb, "*Chi bestia v'è a Roma, bestia ritorna.*"

gossip, you must by this time see plainly enough how little good your son has got by going to Padua; therefore, if you take my advice, you will not send him back to his studies, merely to lose his time and your money. Indeed, if you act in such wise, you will surely repent it.' Gianotto, who knew nothing of the true value of Pre Papiro's words, believed them fully, and, after he had stripped Pirino of his city-made clothes, he caused him to put on others of coarse homespun cloth, and sent him to tend the pigs. Pirino, when he found how he had been unjustly overborne by the priest's ignorance, and forced to sit silent instead of meeting him in argument (not forsooth because he was wanting in knowledge for the task, but because he was unwilling to vex his parents, who were doing him honour), was plunged in sore distress at finding himself degraded from the condition of a scholar to that of a swineherd. Moreover, he was inflamed with so great anger and fury that he determined to seek revenge for the ignominy and scorn that had been cast upon him, and in carrying out this design of his Fortune was favourable to him, forasmuch as one day, when he was leading out the pigs to pasture in front of the priest's house, he saw there a cat, which he first allured with a piece of bread and next caught with his hand. Then, having got a large bunch of flax, he tied it to her tail and set it on fire, and then let her go. The cat, feeling something tightly bound to her tail, and the fire scorching her hinder parts, fled straightway into Pre Papiro's house, and, darting through a crevice in the wall, she ran into the chamber next to the one in which the priest lay still asleep. Maddened with terror she ran under the bed, where there was stored a great quantity of linen, and in a very short space of time the linen and the bed and the whole room were ablaze. Pirino, when he saw that Pre Papiro Schizza's house was on fire, and that there was now no possibility of extinguishing the flames, began to scream out in a loud voice, '*Prestule, prestule*, get up quickly from your *reposorium*, and take care that you do not stumble over the *gaudium*, because the *saltagraffa* is coming and is bringing *carniscoculum* along with her, and unless you come to the rescue of your house with *abundantia* you will see the end of all your *sustantia*.'

Pre Papiro, who was still lying fast asleep in bed when Pirino began his shouting, woke up and strained his ears to catch the words, but he had no notion as to what Pirino meant, because he had clean forgotten the meaning of the words he had lately employed when

questioning the youth. By this time the fire was doing its work at all four corners of the house, and in a very little time Pre Papiro's own chamber would likewise be ablaze. At last, when he smelt the smoke, he got up quickly and found that his house was being burnt. Then he went straightway to try and extinguish the flames, but it was now too late, for the fire was burning fiercely on all sides, and he barely escaped from the house with his life. Thus Pre Papiro, being stripped of all his worldly goods, was left with no other cloak than his own ignorance; and Pirino, having fully avenged himself for the injuries he had received, gave over the care of his father's pigs and returned, as best he could, to Padua, where he prosecuted the studies he had already begun to such good purpose that he became at last a man of great renown.

After Vicenza had brought her laughable fable to an end, and had been highly praised therefor by all the company, the Signora gave command that she should forthwith propound her enigma, and the damsel, although the laughter still went round, spake it in these words :

Dead to men I seem to be,
Yet surely breath there is in me ;
Cruel is my fate, I trow,
Buffeted now high, now low.
But assaults of fist and heel,
Vex me not, for nought I feel.
Backwards, forwards, urged and driven,
Soaring high from earth to heaven,
Blameless I midst all my woes,
Yet find all men my bitter foes.

Vicenza, when she saw that no one of the company understood this ambiguous riddle of hers, thus in graceful and seemly fashion cut the knot : " This enigma of mine, which you have listened to with such close attention, is meant to typify the football, which, though it is dead, has breath inside it when it is blown out. It is thrown about by the players, now here, now there, now with the hands, now with the feet, and assaulted by all as if it were their chief foe."

Fiordiana, to whom had been allotted the last turn of story-telling for the night, rose from her seat, and said in her sprightly manner : " Signora, it would give me no small delight if the Signor Ferier Beltramo would, of his kindness, do me a certain favour, on account of which I should hold myself ever bound to him." The Signor

Ferier, hearing himself thus named and called upon to grant a favour, said: "Signora Fiordiana, it is your part to command, and mine to obey. Bid me therefore do whatever may please you, for I will use my best endeavour to carry out your full wishes." The damsel, when she heard this kindly answer, first thanked him heartily for his gracious consent, and then said: "I ask nothing less of you, Signor Ferier, than that you should now take the turn of story-telling which by right belongs to me, and recount a fable in my stead." Signor Ferier, when he heard this modest request, at first, as was always his custom, began to excuse himself, but after a little, perceiving that his own inclination and the wishes of all the company were inclined to support Fiordiana's prayer, he threw aside all show of demur, and said: "Signora Fiordiana, to gratify your wishes and the wishes of this honourable company I am inclined to do what you ask; but, if you find that you do not get from me what you desire, and what I, on my part, wish to give you, do not blame me, who am but a feeble instrument and little versed in such accomplishments, but blame yourselves, seeing that you will have been the prime cause." And, having thus made his excuse, he at once began his fable in these words.

THE FIFTH FABLE.

The Florentines and the Bergamasques convoke their learned men for a disputation, whereupon the Bergamasques, by a certain astute trick, outwit the Florentines their opponents.



WOULD remind you, comely ladies, that, however great may be the difference between men of wisdom and letters and men who are gross-minded and sensual, it has now and then come to pass that sages have been worsted by men of small learning. Is not indeed a clear proof of this set forth in the Holy Scriptures, where we may read how the simple and despised apostles confounded the understanding of those who were full of knowledge and wisdom? Also I will strive to set this plainly before you in this little fable of mine.

In times long past (as I have often heard tell by my grandsires, and perchance you may have heard the same) it happened that a

number of Florentine and Bergamasque merchants were travelling together, and (as it not seldom occurs) they fell to discussing many and divers matters. Now, as they were passing from one subject to another, a certain Florentine said: 'Of a truth you Bergamasques, as far as we can judge, are mightily stupid and thick-headed, and, were it not for the little traffic in merchandise which you exercise, you would be good for nothing on account of your coarse-grained tempers. It happens indeed that Fortune allows to you a certain degree of success as merchants, but this favour of hers is assuredly not granted to you by reason of your keenness of intellect, or of any learning that you may have gotten, but rather because of your rapacity and avarice, which cause you to be very sharp-set to grasp the smallest gain. In good sooth I know no men who are more gross and ignorant than you.'

On hearing these words a certain Bergamasque came forward and said: 'Now I, for my part, maintain that we Bergamasques are worth more than you Florentines according to any reckoning you like to bring forward. For although you Florentines may be gifted with a smooth and wheedling speech, which delights more than our own dialect the ears of those who listen, still in every other respect you are a long way inferior to the men of Bergamo. If you will take the trouble to make candid observation, you will find there is no man amongst our people, whether of high or low degree, who has not contrived to acquire some knowledge of letters. Beyond this, we are all of us always ready and eager for the prosecution of any great-souled enterprise. No one can say that a disposition of this sort is commonly to be met with amongst you Florentines, except perhaps in the case of a few of you.' Hereupon there arose a great contention between one party and the other; the Bergamasques not being willing to give way to the Florentines, nor the Florentines to the Bergamasques, each one speaking up for his own side; until at last a Bergamasque merchant arose and said: 'What is the good of all these wrangling words? Let us put the matter to the proof and make due provision for the holding of a solemn discussion, for which we will, Florentines and Bergamasques alike, let come together the very flower of our learned men, and in this wise it may be clearly demonstrated which of us holds the first place.' To this proposition the Florentines forthwith gave their assent, but after this there still remained to be settled the question whether the Florentines should

go to Bergamo, or the Bergamasques to Florence; wherefore, after much discussion, they agreed to settle the question by casting lots. So, having prepared two billets and put them into a vase, they drew one out, which drawing proclaimed that the Florentines should go to Bergamo.

The day for the discussion was fixed to be the kalends of May, and, this point having been decided, the merchants went back to their respective cities and referred the whole matter to their wise and learned townsmen, who, as soon as they heard what was proposed to be done, were greatly pleased thereanent, and set to work to prepare themselves for long and subtle disputations. The Bergamasques, like the astute and crafty folk they were, began to lay plans how they might best contrive to overreach the Florentines and to leave them covered with shame and confusion; thus, after having convoked all the learned men of the city, grammarians, rhetoricians, lawyers, canonists, philosophers, theologians, and doctors of every other faculty, they chose out of these the men of keenest wit, and bade them keep themselves in readiness at home, in order that they might do service as the rock and fortress of the city's reputation in the forthcoming dispute with the Florentines. The rest of the learned doctors they caused to be dressed in ragged clothes, and then bade them go out of the city and bestow themselves at different places along the road by which the Florentines must pass, directing them to accost the strangers at every opportunity, and always to speak with them in the Latin tongue. Therefore these learned men of Bergamo, having dressed themselves in coarse clothes and gone down amongst the peasants of the plain, set themselves to work at divers sorts of labour—some dug ditches, others delved the earth with pickaxe and shovel, one man doing this thing, and another that.

While the Bergamasque doctors were labouring in this fashion, so that anyone would have taken them to be mere peasants, lo and behold! the chosen Florentines came riding past in great pomp and splendour, and when they marked how there were certain men working in the fields, they cried out to them: 'God be with you, good brothers!' Whereupon those whom they took to be peasants answered: 'Bene veniant tanti viri!' The Florentines, thinking they were making some joke, said: 'How many miles have we yet to cover before we shall come to the city of Bergamo?' And to this the Bergamasques answered: 'Decem vel circa.' When the Florentines

heard this reply they said : ' Brethren, we address you in the vulgar tongue, whence comes it that you answer us in Latin ? ' The Bergamasques replied : ' Ne miremini, excellentissimi domini. Unusquisque enim nostrum sic, ut auditis, loquitur, quoniam majores, et sapientiores nostri sic nos docuerunt. ' Having left these men behind, the Florentines, as they continued their journey, saw other peasants who were digging ditches beside the high road, and, coming to a halt, they spake to them thus : ' Ho, friends ! ho, there ! may God be with you ! ' To which greeting the Bergamasques answered : ' Et Deus vobiscum semper sit ! ' ' How far is it to Bergamo ? ' inquired the Florentines ; whereupon the others answered : ' Exigua vobis restat via. ' And after this reply they went on from one manner of discourse to another, till at last they begun to dispute together on questions of philosophy, concerning which these Bergamasque peasants argued with such weight and subtlety that the Florentine doctors were hard pressed to answer them. Then, struck with astonishment, they said one to another, ' Of a truth it is a marvellous thing that these clownish fellows, who must spend all their time labouring at all manner of rural tasks, should be thus excellently instructed in polite letters. ' Then they rode on towards a neat and well-kept hostelry, standing at no great distance from the city ; but, before they had come thither, a stable varlet advanced to meet them, and invited them to alight at the inn, saying : ' Domini, libetne vobis hospitari ? Hic enim vobis erit bonum hospitium. ' And, for the reason that the Florentines were already wearied from the long journey they had made, they gladly dismounted from their horses, and, when they would have gone upstairs to go and repose themselves, the innkeeper came forward and spake thus, ' Excellentissimi domini, placetne vobis ut præparetur cœna ? Hic enim sunt bona vina, ova recentia, carnes, volatilia, et alia hujusmodi. ' Hereupon the Florentines were filled with greater amazement than before, and knew not what to say, forasmuch as all the people with whom they had conversed spoke Latin as if they had studied it from their earliest days.

A little after this there came into the room one in the guise of a serving-maid, who was, in sooth, a certain nun, a woman of great knowledge and learning. She had been well instructed as to how she should bear herself at this juncture ; wherefore she addressed them saying : ' Indigentne dominationes vestræ re aliqua ? Placet, ut ster-

nentur lectuli, ut requiem capiat?' The Florentines were utterly overcome with astonishment at these words of the serving-woman, and straightway began to talk with her, and she, after she had discoursed on many matters, using always the Latin tongue, brought forward for debate the subject of theology, and spake thereanent with such universal knowledge that every one of those who heard her was constrained to give her the highest praise. While she was thus holding dispute with the Florentine doctors there entered one dressed as a furnace-man, and swart with coal dust, and he, hearing the discussion which was going on between the serving-maid and the strangers, contrived to interpose a speech of his own, and put forth an interpretation of the Holy Scriptures so learned and erudite that all the Florentine doctors declared that they had never before listened to any discourse which excelled it.

When this controversy had come to an end the Florentines withdrew to get some rest, and the next day they took counsel amongst themselves whether they should return to Florence at once or go on to Bergamo. After much wrangling they came to the decision that it would be wiser to go back straightway. 'For,' said they, 'if such deep learning is found amongst field-labourers and innkeepers, and male and female servants, what must we expect to meet in the city itself, where men are always more accomplished than in the country, and given to nought else than the prosecution of learning from one year's end to another?' As soon as they had come to this decision, without hesitating further, and without having ever seen the walls of the city of Bergamo, they mounted their horses and rode back to Florence. In this wise the Bergamasques, on account of this wily stratagem of theirs, contrived to outwit the Florentines, and ever since that time the Bergamasques have enjoyed a privilege, granted to them by the emperor, to travel securely in all parts of the world without hindrance.

As Signor Ferier brought his story to an end, all the listeners laughed heartily, praising the astuteness of the Bergamasques, and casting blame and contempt on the cowardice of the Florentines. But because the Signora imagined that such discussion must needs redound to the dishonour of the Florentine doctors, for whom she had no small regard, she gave command that everyone should be silent, and that Signor Ferier should go on with his enigma. But he, turning towards Fiordiana, said, 'Signora, you have laid upon me the

burden of telling a fable which can have given but small pleasure to any of the listeners, so it would be only right and just that you should take upon yourself the task of setting an enigma. Do not, I pray thee, ask of me any such undertaking, seeing that I am no way practised or expert therein.' Fiordiana, who never lacked courage, spake boldly thus : "Signor Ferier, I will not refuse this duty, and at the same time I will thank you very heartily for all you have done for me." And then, with a merry face, she set forth the enigma :

I know not why, unfortunate,
I meet with such an evil fate,
That, though a valiant male I'm born,
Into a female all forlorn
I soon am turned. To work this change
Men fall on me with working strange.
With grievous heavy blows I'm wrought,
And made almost a thing of nought;
And next, a lot more painful yet,
In burning fiery furnace set,
To cruel men a boon to give.
And thus I die that they may live.

Because the hour was now late, and the grasshoppers had ceased their screeching, and the brightness of the dawn was beginning to shine in the east, the Signora gave the word that Fiordiana should forthwith tell the meaning of her riddle, and that after this everyone should go home, but not omit to return on the following evening, according to the established use. Whereupon the damsel in graceful and pleasing style thus cut the knot of her ambiguous enigma : "The enigma I lately gave you to guess in sooth means nothing else than wheaten corn, the name of which is of the masculine gender, but after it has been ground it changes its style and becomes feminine, to wit, flour. Then, after sore beating, it is made into dough, and finally is baked by fire to serve for the nutriment of man."

Then after all the company had warmly praised the solution given by Fiordiana, they rose from their seats, and having taken leave of the Signora, they went their several ways with eyes heavy with sleep.¹

¹ In the edition of 1556 the Ninth Night ends with this fable.

THE SIXTH FABLE.¹

A certain priest being enamoured of the wife of an image-carver, goes to her house, where a grave mischance befalls him.



F all our churchmen (I am speaking of unworthy and not of worthy clerks) were zealous after learning, thus giving an example to the lewd, and disposed to live in godly wise according to their rules, the ignorant rabble would have less occasion to rail at them and to pretend to teach them their duties. On the other hand, all men would then hold the priest in high reverence, and account themselves favoured by God if they should only touch the hem of a cassock. It is because our spiritual guides have taken the manners of secular folk, giving themselves up to the world in luxury and lasciviousness, doing things such as they would never suffer us to do, and holding in no reverence the state to which they have been called, that one hears evil report of them everywhere, both in public and in private. For this reason I have no scruple in telling you the story of a peccant clerk, which, though you may find it somewhat long, may prove both a pleasant diversion and a profitable lesson.

In the fair city of Florence there lived at one time a clerk named Messer Tiberio. To what order he belonged I cannot now undertake to say, as my memory has failed me. Suffice it to remark that he was a man well versed in letters, an eloquent preacher, subtle in argument, and standing well with everybody; but, for some reason to me unknown, he had cast off his monk's habit to become a secular. Nevertheless, though he had thrown his cowl into the nettle-bed, and, on this account, was not in such high esteem as heretofore, he still enjoyed the consideration of many persons of worship, and of the city as a whole.

It chanced one day—for Messer Tiberio had good repute as a confessor—that a pretty young woman called Prudence, a name which went well with her character, presented herself to lay bare her offences. She was wife to one Quinquino, a carver of images and the first craftsman of his day. This lady being on her knees before Tiberio,

¹ From the French of Pierre de la Rivey. See Notes, Night IX., Fable VI.

said to him : ‘Sir, my confessor, to whom I have hitherto gone, is dead, and having heard the report of your holiness and virtuous life, I have chosen to come to you, in his place, as my spiritual director.’

Messer Tiberio, seeing that she was fair and fresh as a bud with the dew upon it, graceful and well made, and in the flower of her youth, fell so hotly in love with her that he scarce knew what he said or did, being carried away by the very sight of her beauty. When he came to deal with the sin of luxury he asked her, ‘And now, my daughter, have you ever felt particular affection or preference for any priest or religious person?’ She, quite unsuspecting of a trick, and recking nothing of whither he was bent on leading her, replied, ‘Yes, surely. For my late confessor I felt all the love that a daughter has for a good father, and honoured and revered him as was his due.’ After this reply Tiberio plied her with such subtle speech that he contrived to learn what was her name, and her condition, and the place where she abode. This done, he commended himself to her, and besought her to hold him as dear as her late director, and, as a sign of his well-wishing, he promised at the next Easter to visit her and give her spiritual consolation. For this grace she thanked him, and, having received absolution, went her way. When she was gone, Messer Tiberio’s brain was well-nigh turned as he called up the fair image of his late penitent, and, wrapping himself up in his cloak of furs, he schemed how he might best win her favours; but the affair ran to an issue other than that which he had figured, so much easier is it to frame your design than to fill it in with colours. After Easter Tiberio did not forget to walk frequently before the house of Prudence, to whom, as often as he saw her, he made a courteous salutation, ogling her out of the corner of his eye; but she, like a modest woman, looked down and feigned not to see him. So instant was he, with his comings and goings and salutations, that Prudence began to fear lest his attentions should beget evil report; to prevent which she was careful to let herself be seen by him no more—a measure which gave no small chagrin to the priest, who was by this time so violently enamoured of her that he felt there was no escape from his thralldom save through the kindness of Signora Prudence. He sent to her a young clerk to beg her to suffer him to visit her as her ghostly adviser; but the clerk could get no reply to take back to Tiberio, who at once set her

down as prudent and careful to keep her own counsel. However, it is well known that one must often knock more than once at a door before it opens, and that a strong place need never surrender unless it be valiantly assaulted; so the priest resolved not to give over his essay, and every day he sent some fresh messenger to glean tidings of the lady. Prudence, noting the resolute humour of the priest, was much disturbed thereat; wherefore, at last, she felt constrained to speak to her husband, saying: 'Quinquino, for some time past Messer Tiberio, my confessor, has sent divers messengers to me, and whenever he meets me he gives me salutation, and, more than that, he pursues me, making the while I know not what fanciful speeches, which confuse me sorely. For this reason I have resolved to go no more where he can see me—a step I was unwilling to take without first letting you know.' 'And what reply have you given him?' said the husband. 'I have given none,' Prudence answered. 'You did well and very wisely,' said Quinquino; 'but I would counsel you, in case he should salute you again, or say any word to you, that you should give him in reply, as soberly and as discreetly as possible, some speech which may seem to you meet for the occasion. Then we may watch what the issue may be.' To this proposition Prudence freely assented.

Before many days had passed it chanced that Quinquino was called away after dinner on his affairs to another part of the city, and Prudence was left to take care of the house. Very soon Tiberio appeared, and, having observed that she was by herself, took off his hat with profound obeisance, and said, 'Good day, Signora,' and to this Prudence answered graciously, 'A good day and a happy year to you.' The priest, marking that she returned his salute, a good fortune which had never hitherto happened to him, imagined that her heart was softened, and that, her pity being aroused, she would now look kindly upon him. Encouraged by her voice, he entered the shop, where he remained more than an hour, setting before her ardently the object of his desire. At last, fearing lest Quinquino should return, he took his leave, begging Prudence to hold him in her good graces, and swearing to remain her devoted servant. For which she thanked him modestly, promising to hold in mind his request.

Soon after the priest was gone Quinquino came back, and Prudence told him all that had passed. 'You have done very well,' he

said; 'and the next time he comes you can beguile him with any favour which may be seemly and honest.' This she agreed to, and Messer Tiberio having whetted his appetite by the sight of the lady, began to prepare the next step by sending her divers presents, all of which she vouchsafed to accept, thus kindling in him the belief that if once he should get fair speech with her the prize would be won. He found her once more alone, and besought her with soft and winning words to give him her favour, without which he would surely die. To which she replied, 'Signor, I would willingly grant your wish, which indeed is my wish as well, did I not dread my husband's wrath, and to lose, it may be, both my life and my honour at the same time.' These words so powerfully affected Tiberio that he was like to die of grief; but, having recollected his wits, he besought her not to let him perish when she had it in her power to save him. Then Prudence, feigning to be touched in the heart, feigning also to yield to his prayer, accorded to him an assignation for that same night, her husband having gone into the country to buy wood. The priest, overjoyed at his success, departed in high glee.

When Quinquino returned Prudence told him exactly what she had done, and then he said to her, 'We must do more than this, and play him such a trick as will put an end to all his fancies, and keep him from ever annoying you again. Go and make the bed, and lock up every place except the chest, and clear away any lumber which may be lying on the presses. I will lie in wait, to be ready to send him about his business, as I will tell you.' Then he set forth to her the snare he had planned, and Prudence, having grasped her husband's intent, promised to carry it out.

To the priest this day seemed to be six years long. It was as if the night, which was to bring him into the arms of his love, would never come. He went to the market and bought good store of delicate meats, which he sent to Prudence, begging her to let them be cooked, and assuring her that he would not fail to sup with her at the appointed hour.

Prudence, as soon as the provisions arrived, began to bustle about in the kitchen, and Quinquino having hidden himself, they awaited the coming of Tiberio, who, as soon as he entered, hastened to give Prudence a kiss while she was busied over the cooking of the supper, but she drew back, saying, 'Signor, as you have had so much patience, have a little more; for it is hardly fit that you should

touch me, black and dirty as I am.' With these words she shifted and turned now one pot and now another, contriving to keep Messer Tiberio at a distance. Meantime Quinquino, on the watch, had taken his stand in a secret passage, from whence he could see and hear all that passed, a little in dread, mayhap, lest the trick might be played at his own cost. At this point of the affair Prudence, as she dawdled now over this and now over that, sorely taxed the patience of the poor priest, who, to make greater despatch, tried his hand at the pastry, wishing to figure as a cook himself; but this caused the lady to loiter all the more. Tiberio, fearing lest all the time should be taken up with these preparations, and none be left for the purpose on account of which he had come, said: 'Signora, so great is my desire to hold you in my arms that it has taken away all my appetite for food and drink, therefore I have decided to go without my supper;' and with these words he stripped and got into bed. Then Prudence, laughing secretly at the ridiculous figure he made, replied: 'What foolishness to turn your back on all these delicate meats. I can tell you, if you are simple enough to forego them, the loss will be all your own, for I am not going to bed without my supper.' All this time she was busy with her cookery, and the more the priest besought her to get into bed, the more there seemed to be done outside it. At last, seeing that he was worn out with impatience, she said, to keep him quiet: 'But one thing is certain, I will never go to bed with a man who sleeps in his shirt; therefore, if you want to have your will with me, you must take it off, and then you will see I shall be ready to do what you want.' Messer Tiberio, deeming this request to be but a trifling one, took off his shirt, and lay there as naked as when he came from his mother's womb. Prudence, seeing that he was ready to follow whither she would lead him, gathered up his shirt and all his other clothes and put them in a chest and turned the key. Then, though she made a great show of washing and perfuming herself, and getting ready for bed, she did little else but bustle about the room, till the poor wight between the sheets was half mad with impatience. Quinquino, who had espied through a crevice all that had passed, now saw that it was time for him to come upon the scene; so he went out by the back door, and, having come round to the front, knocked loudly thereat. Prudence, hearing her husband at the knocker, made as if she were beside herself with fear, and, trembling all over, she cried, 'Alas! what will become of me? for it is my husband who is without.'

I know his knock too well. Wretch that I am ! What shall we do so that he may not see you ?' Then said Tiberio : ' Bad luck indeed ; but quick, give me my clothes. I will put them on and hide under the bed.' ' Put on your clothes, indeed,' cried Prudence. ' What time will you find to do this ? No. I see another plan. Get up quick on the top of this dresser, and stand close against that cross there, with your feet crossed and your arms stretched out after the fashion of a crucifix, and then I am sure my husband, when he comes in and sees you in such a posture, will take you for some crucifix upon which he has recently been at work.' All the while Quinquino was knocking lustily without and calling ; and Messer Tiberio, in a dead fright lest he should be discovered in the bed, mounted the dresser, where he stationed himself quite still against the cross with his arms stretched out. Prudence then went down and opened the door to her husband, who rated her soundly for keeping him cooling his heels so long outside. When he entered the chamber he gave no sign of being aware of Tiberio's presence, but sat down to supper with his wife, and, this despatched, they undressed and went to bed.

What tortures poor Tiberio must have suffered, I leave to the imagination of those who may have writhed under the pricks of amorous desire, thus to see the husband gorging himself with the banquet which he had so carefully devised for his own delectation, only to find himself overwhelmed with shame and injury.

At last the morning began to dawn, and little by little the chamber grew light. Then Quinquino rose from his bed, and, having dressed himself, set to work at his carving ; but he had scarce begun when two nuns from a neighbouring convent came to the house, and having entered, thus spake to him : ' Master Quinquino, our abbess desires that you will send home at once the crucifix which several days ago she ordered of you.' ' My sisters,' Quinquino replied, ' will you say to the abbess that the crucifix is begun, but not yet finished. In two days' time, however, she shall have it.' ' But she told us to say,' replied the nuns, ' that, finished or not, she wishes it to be sent home, for you have kept her waiting too long.' Quinquino, feigning to be wroth at the persistence of the nuns, answered angrily, ' Now please to come in and see if I have not taken heed of your commandment, and whether the crucifix, as it is, is one which would suit the fancy of your abbess.' And when the nuns had entered he went on with his speech, pointing

towards Tiberio, 'Look up there over the dresser, and see whether you would like to have that crucifix just as it is, and whether you think the abbess would be satisfied with it.' The nuns, when they had closely scanned the woebegone figure he pointed out to them, exclaimed: 'Indeed the abbess would be hard to please were she not content therewith, seeing that you have counterfeited nature so well that your work seems like so much flesh and blood; of a truth it only wants speech. But there are parts of it which might perchance give offence; for you have carved, too much in the semblance of nature, something which might breed a riot in a convent of women.' 'No need to let that trouble you,' said Quinquino, 'I will give it the finishing stroke in a moment. Would to God I could cure a man of mortal sickness as easily as I can cure this fault!' And snatching up one of his sharpest tools, he said, 'Just watch and see how quickly I will rid it of everything that might offend the abbess and the other sisters;' and as he spoke he made for Tiberio as if to carry out his threat. The priest, who up to this moment had kept as still as if he were dead, no sooner saw the tool which Quinquino had taken up than he sprang down from his place without a word, and, naked as he was, took to flight, as if a red-hot poker were behind him, with Quinquino in pursuit. Prudence, fearing lest some scandal should get abroad, caught hold of her husband and held him back; so that poor Tiberio was able to make his way out of the house. Then the two nuns, who had been standing open-mouthed at these strange doings, ran out also and began to cry along the streets: 'A miracle, a miracle! the crucifix has come to life and run away.' And when they heard such clamour all the loiterers flocked round to see what was happening, and then fell to laughing hugely when they heard what the business really was. But poor Tiberio, when he had put on some garments, fled the city, and whither he betook himself I cannot tell. I only know that never again was he seen in Florence.

The whole company laughed at the notion of the poor priest, compelled to spend the whole night feigning to be a crucifix, and not daring to cough even, though he might have a hundred pounds of feathers tickling his throat, and they were still more diverted to figure him flying at full speed to save what he could not afford to lose, and the nuns crying out that a miracle had come to pass, and that the crucifix had run away. So loud and long was the merriment over this that the Signora had to clap her hands to restore silence, and,



this being done, she directed Vicenza to give her enigma, which was as follows :

Fresh and rosy from your birth,
Honour of heaven and crown of earth,
Strong you are for good or ill;
The round world with your fame you fill.
Should you plead the cause of right,
Then darkness flies before the light;
But if evil be your view,
Rack and ruin dire ensue.
The massy globe of sea and land
Your hostile touch shall not withstand.¹

“My enigma,” said Vicenza, “signifies nothing else than the tongue, in its good or evil humour. It is red, as we all know, and it is a glorious work of heaven when with it we praise God, and thank Him for all the benefits He has given us, and it is in like manner the glory of the world when it impels men to do good. So, when by its words it shows that it has given itself to evil, it spreads headlong ruin all around, and of this I could give you many examples if I did not see that the hour grows late.” And with these words Vicenza sat down.

¹ Straparola has used this enigma in the Sixth Fable of Night VIII.

The End of the Ninth Night.





Night the Tenth.





The Fables and Enigmas of Messer Giovanni Francesco Straparola da Carabaggio.

Right the Tenth.



ALREADY on all sides the beasts of the field, wearied by the fatigues of the day, were seeking to give repose to their tired limbs, some resting upon soft feathers, some upon the hard and sharp-pointed rocks, some upon the swart herbage, and some amidst the thick-leaved trees, when the Signora, with the damsels who attended her, came forth from their chamber and went into the hall of meeting, where was gathered together the company, ready to listen to the fables which were to be told. Having called one of the servants, the Signora directed him to bring the golden vase, and, after they had put therein the names of five of the damsels, the drawing began, and the first name to be drawn forth was that of Lauretta, the second that of Arianna, the third that of Alteria, the fourth that of Eritrea, and the fifth that of Cateruzza. But before the beginning of the story-telling, the Signora signified it to be her will that they should first dance a measure, and then that Bembo should sing them a canzonet, and he, being unable to provide himself with any sufficient excuse, began to sing in a sweet voice, while all the company sat listening in silence.

SONG.

Love's ardour or love's chills I feel no more,
No more they make me fain

To ply you with my prayers in hope to gain
 The last, the sweetest boon you hold in store.
 My spirit quails with fear,
 As to that hateful bourne I draw anear,
 The bourne by mortals shunned in vain.
 And is this fruit the sweetest I shall find,
 Enclosed within love's bitter rind?
 Shall I, when ended is my life,
 No solace find
 For all my weary days of strife?
 Shall there be granted me no rest benign
 Till I my tristful life for kindly death resign?

This sweet song of Bembo's delighted all the listeners greatly, and, as soon as it had come to an end, Lauretta, rising from her seat, began her fable in the following words.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Finetta steals from Madonna Veronica, the wife of Messer Brocardo di Cavalli, a gentleman of Verona, a necklace, a string of pearls, and other jewels; which, by the aid of a certain lover of hers, Veronica recovers without letting her loss come to her husband's ears.



IN such times as I have employed myself in considering and reconsidering the cares and perplexities which, day by day, Fortune sends for the tormenting of wretched mortals, I have often come to the conclusion that no sufferings or sorrows can match those of a woman who loyally loves her husband, and is at the same time, without any just cause, despised and spurned by him. And on this account we ought not to be in any way astonished if at times women, unhappy and miserable as those I have spoken of, should put forth all their strength to find some remedy for their unhappy lot. If, perchance, these ill-fated ones should now and then inadvertently fall into some error, let not their husbands lay the blame on their wives, but on themselves, seeing that they are in truth the primary cause of any misfortune and shame which may overtake them. A fate like this, in sooth, might easily have befallen a certain gracious lady of whom I now intend to speak, but she was

prudent and wise, and by her virtue and strength brake in pieces the arrows of unlawful love, keeping unharmed both her own honour and that of her husband.

In Verona, a noble and ancient city, there lived in times now long past Messer Brocardo di Cavalli, a man of great wealth, and highly reputed. This gentleman, being unmarried, took for his wife a daughter of Messer Can della Scala, Veronica by name, who, although she was very beautiful, graceful, and modest, did not win her husband's love, for he (as it not seldom happens) entertained a woman as his mistress, who was the delight of his heart, and took no thought of his wife. Wherefore Madonna Veronica grieved sorely, for she could not endure to think that her rare beauty, which won the praises of all else, should be thus despised and rejected by her husband. It chanced that this fair lady, having gone into the country during the heats of summer, was walking all alone one day before the door of her house, sedulously debating within herself the conduct and the habits and the practices of her husband, and considering how little was the love he bore her, and how a lewd and vile strumpet, unclean and filthy, had so easily dazzled the eyes of his understanding that he saw no more clearly than a blind man. And while she was thus lamenting within herself, she said: 'Oh! how much better had it been for me if my father had given me in marriage to a poor man, than to this one who is so wealthy; for then I should have passed my days in greater pleasure and content than I do now. Of what good to me are all these riches? What profits it me that I go clad in sumptuous raiment, that I am decked with gems and necklaces and pendants and other precious jewels? Of a truth all such things as these are as mere vapour compared with the delights which a happy wife may enjoy with her husband.'

While the Signora Veronica was thus letting her mind dwell on these injurious thoughts, there came suddenly across her path a beggar woman, whose real trade it was to steal whatever she could find; moreover, she was so wily and cunning that she could easily have cozened, not merely a lady as distraught as Signora Veronica was, but any grave and prudent man she might have met. This woman, whose name was Finetta, no sooner saw the gentle lady absorbed in deep thought walking up and down in front of her house, than she began to weave a plot against her, and, having approached her, she saluted her respectfully and begged alms of her. The lady, who was

thinking of other matters than almsgiving, repulsed her with an angry look, but the wily and thievish Finetta was in no wise disposed to go away, and, peering earnestly into the lady's face, and observing how sad and sorrowful was the look thereon, she said : ' Oh ! gentle lady, what ill can have befallen you that you look so full of care ? Can it be that your husband leads you an ill life ? Will it please you that I shall tell you your fortune ? ' The lady, as soon as she heard these words, imagined that this common vagrant woman had discovered the wound which was tormenting her so cruelly, wherefore she began to weep bitterly, for it seemed to her as if she saw her husband lying dead before her eyes. Finetta, when she marked the scalding tears and the heartfelt sighs and the agonized sobbings and the bitter lamentations of the lady, said : ' What can be the cause of this piteous grief of yours, gracious madonna ? ' To this the lady answered : ' When you said that perchance my husband led me an ill life, you then laid bare my heart as with a knife. ' Finetta answered : ' Gentle lady, I need but to look a person narrowly in the face to tell exactly what her life may have been. Your wound, in sooth, is recent and fresh, and on this account can be healed without difficulty, but if it were of long standing and festered, it would be much harder to cure. '

The lady, when she heard the woman discourse in this wise, told her everything about the practices of her husband, and of the wicked life he led, and the evil treatment he gave her, failing to disclose nought of his doings, but telling everything to the beggar woman most minutely. When Finetta had listened to the whole of this pitiful story, she perceived that her own plans were in the way to come to an issue exactly according to her wishes, or even beyond them, and she said : ' Dear madonna, do not grieve any more, only keep steadfast and be of good cheer, and we will soon find a remedy for your trouble. I, whensoever it may please you, will devise for you a method by which you may win the ardent love of your husband, and cause him to follow you up like a man possessed. ' While they were thus talking together they went into the chamber where Madonna Veronica was wont to sleep with her husband, and, after they had both seated themselves, Finetta said : ' Madonna, if it should be your pleasure that we now set to work about this matter, I will ask you to send all the maids and servants forthwith out of this room to occupy themselves in the services of the house ; then we

can remain by ourselves here and do everything that is necessary for your case.'

After the servants had been dismissed from the room and the door thereof closed, Finetta said: 'Now bring to me the most beautiful of your golden necklaces, together with a string of pearls.' Whereupon Madonna Veronica opened one of her caskets and took therefrom a necklet with a fine pendant, and a string of oriental pearls, and handed the same over to Finetta. The woman, as soon as she had taken the jewels in her hand, asked for a cloth of white linen, and this Madonna Veronica at once handed to her. Then, having taken up all the jewels one by one, she made certain signs over them, according to the fashion such women use, and put them separately into the white cloth. Next, in the presence of Madonna Veronica, she tied up the cloth with the jewels therein tightly in a knot, and muttered over it certain secret spells, and made signs with her hands. Then, handing over the cloth to Madonna Veronica, she said to her: 'Madonna, take this cloth, and with your own hands place it under the pillow upon which your husband sleeps. Having done this, you will see that a wonderful thing will come to pass; but be careful that you do not open the cloth until to-morrow, because, if you do this thing, all the jewels will dissolve and disappear in smoke.' Madonna Veronica, having taken the cloth with the jewels tied up therein and placed it under the pillow whereupon Messer Brocardo was wont to sleep, Finetta said to her: 'Let us now go at once down into the wine cellar.' And thither they went accordingly.

As soon as they entered the cellar, the crafty Finetta's eye fell upon a wine butt which had been broached, whereupon she said, 'Madonna, you must now take off all the clothes that you have on you.' And the lady stripped herself, and stood as naked as when she was born. This done, Finetta drew out the tap from the wine butt, which was full of good wine, and said: 'Madonna, put your finger into this hole and keep it well closed, in order that the wine may not run out, and be sure that you move not from this place till I shall have come back to you, because I must now betake myself to a place outside, and there make certain mystic signs. Then all our work will be accomplished.' The lady, who put full faith in everything Finetta said, stood there, all naked as she was, and moved not, still keeping her finger in the hole of the cask, and while she thus

remained without moving the wanton Finetta went straightway into the chamber where had been left the jewels tied up in the cloth, and having untied this, she took out the necklace and the pearls, and in place of these she filled the cloth with pebbles and with earth. Then, after she had knotted it up again securely, she put it back in the same place, and straightway took to flight.

The lady, standing stark naked with her finger thrust into the bunghole of the cask, waited until Finetta should return, but when, after some time had passed, she found that the woman did not come back, and that the hour was now growing very late, she was seized with fear lest her husband should come and find her standing naked there in this wise, and should take her for a mad woman. Therefore, having found the tap, which lay by her side, she stopped the hole of the butt therewith, and put on her clothes and went up out of the cellar. A little time after this it happened that Messer Brocardo, the husband of Madonna Veronica, returned to his house and saluted her with a good-humoured face, saying : ‘ Well met, indeed, my dear wife, comfort and solace of my heart ! ’ The wife, when she heard this salute of a sort so strange to her and almost unnatural, stood as one confounded, and in her heart thanked God that He had sent this beggar woman to her, by whose aid she had found a remedy for her most weighty grief. And all through that day, and the following night as well, she remained in loving dalliance with her husband, exchanging sweet kisses as if they were newly-married folk. Madonna Veronica, full of joy and merriment on account of the endearments which her husband had bestowed on her, told him the whole story of the passion and the torment which she had suffered on account of her love for him, and he on his part promised to treat her ever afterwards as his beloved wife, and that the misunderstanding of the past should never trouble them again.

When the next morning was come, and when her husband had arisen from the bed to go a-hunting, after the fashion of gentlemen of high estate, Madonna Veronica went at once to the bed, and having lifted up the pillow, took hold of the linen cloth in which the jewels had been placed, and untied it, expecting to find therein the necklet and the pearls, but she found it full of pebbles instead. The wretched woman, when she perceived this, was utterly confounded, and knew not at all what course she should take, because in sooth she feared that her husband would kill her were she to make

known this loss to him. While, therefore, the poor lady was tormented with this fresh sorrow, and was turning over in her mind now this thing and now that, without being able to decide in what wise she might contrive to get back her beloved jewels, she at last determined, as an honest woman might, to enlist the services of a certain gentleman who for a long time had courted her with longing looks. This same was a certain cavalier of Verona, a gentleman of fine presence, of haughty spirit, famous for his prowess, and of honourable descent. He, like all others who are mastered by the passion of love, was so cruelly tortured by the flame which consumed him on account of Madonna Veronica, that he could get no rest at all; indeed, for love of her he spent much time in jousting and in all other kinds of martial exercises, and gave rich feasts and gallantries, thus making gay the whole city. But Madonna Veronica, who had entirely given her love to her husband, took little heed either of him or of his pompous displays, on account of which neglect the cavalier felt the greatest grief and sorrow that a lover ever knew.

Now as soon as Madonna Veronica's husband had left the house, she went to the window and espied, passing in the street, this same cavalier who was so deeply enamoured of her, whereupon she called to him, and thus cautiously addressed him: 'Good sir, you have told me full often of the burning and passionate love which you have always borne towards me, and still bear. I know that I, for my part, must often have seemed hard and cruel to you; but this humour of mine has not come of any lack of love for you, but of my firm determination to keep my honour intact, which thing I have placed before all else. Do not for this reason be astonished or offended that I have not at once given assent to your ardent wishes, for the sense of honour which keeps chaste the wife of a dissolute husband is something to be greatly commended and held dear. Although you have wrongly judged me to be hard and cruel and heartless towards you, I will not on that account refuse now to have recourse to you, with all faith and confidence, as to the fountain of my salvation. If you, as a devoted friend, will lend me succour in this my great trouble, and give me your ready assistance, you may for the future always hold me as one bound to you, and may dispose of me as if I belonged to you.' When she had finished her speech she described to him exactly the whole of her misfortune, and the cavalier, after he had listened to the words of his dearly beloved lady, first of

all thanked her that she had so graciously deigned to lay these commands upon him, and then gave her his promise that he would not fail in his aid, lamenting at the same time the mischance that had befallen her.

Hereupon the cavalier departed secretly, and, having mounted his horse in the company of four trusty comrades, went in pursuit of the woman who had taken flight with the jewels, and before evening had come he overtook her at a ferry which she was about to pass over. Then, having recognized her by the description which had been given of her, he seized her by the hair of the head and made her confess everything. With the recovered jewels in his possession he returned to Verona full of joy, and when he found a fitting opportunity he restored them to Madonna Veronica. And thus, without allowing her husband to become privy to her doings, she retained her honour without any spot upon her good name.

As soon as Lauretta had brought her fable to an end, the Signora made a sign that she should let her enigma follow at once. Whereupon the damsel, without further delay, gave it in these words :

Fair and lovely is my face,
Decked with every artful grace ;
With dames and maidens I abide,
And day and night am by their side.
A trusty friend I am alway,
For dust and heat I drive away ;
But, though I win them ease and joy,
I murmur at my base employ.
Forsooth, no path to honour lies
In flouting gnats and wasps and flies !

This enigma was forthwith interpreted by the greater part, if not all of the listeners, to mean the fan which ladies carry in their hands. Then, so as to preserve the accustomed order, the Signora bade Arianna to begin her fable, and she at once spake thus.

THE SECOND FABLE.

An ass escapes from his master, the miller, and comes by chance to a certain mountain, where he meets a lion, who asks of him what his name may be, whereupon the ass, by way of answer, inquires of the lion his name. The latter replies that he is the lion, while the ass proclaims that his name is Brancalone,¹ and, having been challenged by the lion to give proofs of his valour, carries off in the end the honours of the contest.



THE diversity of human affairs, the vicissitudes of time, the manner of life of evil-minded men, oftentimes bring it to pass that what is beautiful seems to be ugly, and that what is ugly seems to be beautiful. On this account, if it should happen that in this fable which I propose now to relate to you there should be found aught in any way offensive to your ears, I beg that you will give me your pardon, reserving for some other occasion any punishment which you may consider to be my due.

In Arcadia, a region of the Morea which gets its name from Arcadius, the son of Jove, a land in which was first discovered the rustic woodland shepherd's pipe, there dwelt in times now long past a certain miller, a brutal and cruel fellow, and one so irascible by nature that it needed but very little provocation to produce in him a violent access of rage.² This man was the owner of an ass with long ears and down-drooping lips, who, whenever he raised his voice, would make the whole plain re-echo with the sound of his braying. This poor ass, on account of the niggardly provender he got from the miller, both in eating and in drinking, was no longer able to undergo the hard work of the fields, or to endure the cruel beatings with the stick which his barbarous master was for ever inflicting upon him. Wherefore the wretched animal presented such a picture of lean and wasted misery that one could see nothing but his hide stretched over his miserable bones. One day it happened that the poor ass, exasperated beyond endurance by the many and heavy blows which were rained upon him every day by his cruel master, and by the scant supply of food he received, took flight from the miller, and went off, bearing his pack-saddle still on his back.

¹ *i.e.*, the clawed lion.

² Orig., *che poche legna accendevano il suo fuoco.*

The wretched beast travelled a long way on the road, and when he was almost worn out with hunger and fatigue he came to the foot of a very delightful mountain, which had little about it that was savage or wild, but seemed more like a fair and cultivated domain. The ass, remarking how green and beautiful it was, determined to ascend this mountain and to spend there all the rest of his life. Whilst he was deliberating over this question, he cast his eyes round about on all sides to make sure that he might not be observed of anybody, and, not seeing anyone round about who was likely to trouble him, he courageously mounted the hill, and with the greatest delight and pleasure began to take his fill of the sweet herbage which grew there, at the same time thanking God who had delivered him from the hands of that wicked and cruel tyrant his master, and had guided him to this place, where was to be found such abundant and excellent food for the sustenance of his wretched life. Whilst our good ass was thus living upon the mountain, feeding every day upon tender and fine grass, and having all the while his pack-saddle upon his back, lo and behold! a savage lion issued from a dark cave and saw the ass. Having looked at him for some time very attentively, he was mightily astonished that this beast should have been arrogant enough to dare to come up upon this mountain without his licence and knowledge. And for the reason that the lion had never before beheld an animal of this sort, he was afraid to go near him, and the ass, when he saw the lion, felt every hair on his body bristle and stand on end. Because of the sudden fear that seized him, he left off eating straightway, and did not dare to stir from the place where he stood feeding.

The lion, having plucked up a little courage, came forward and said to the donkey, 'What is it that you do here, my good friend? Who gave you leave to mount into these parts? And who may you be?' To these questions the ass, with rising pride and with arrogant spirit, said, 'And who may you be yourself who venture to ask me who I am?' The lion, greatly amazed at hearing this retort, answered, 'I am the king of all the animals.' 'And what may your name be?' inquired the ass. The other answered, 'Lion is my name. But you, what do men call you?' At these words the ass, putting on a still more braggart air, said, 'And I am called Brancaleone.' When the lion heard this speech, he said to himself, 'By his name, in truth, this animal before me may well be more powerful than I am myself.' Then he said to the ass: 'Ser Brancaleone, both your name and your

manner of speech show to me clearly that you are more puissant and stronger withal than I am. But nevertheless it would please me greatly that we two should make certain trials of our prowess, one against the other.' At these words the valour of the ass increased mightily, and, having turned his hinder parts towards the lion, said : ' Do you see this pack-saddle, and the piece of artillery I carry under my tail. Be sure if I were to give you a sample of its powers you would straightway die with fright.' And as he spake thus he gave a couple of kicks high in the air and at the same time let off divers crackers which were so loud that they set the lion's brain in a whirl. The latter, when he heard the resounding noise of the donkey's kicks, and of the cracking bombardment of his field-piece, fell in sooth into a fit of terror, and, because by this time evening was drawing near, he said to the ass : ' Good brother, it is in no wise my will that there should be any bandying of words between us, or that we should kill one another, seeing that there is in this world nothing that is worse than death. I would counsel, however, that we should both of us lay ourselves down to rest, and when the morrow shall have come we will meet, and then and there we will thrice make trial of our strength and prowess. Whoever of us two shall prove himself to be the worthier in these encounters shall remain the supreme lord and master of this mountain.' And so they agreed that it should be.

When the morning of the next day had come and the two competitors were duly met together, the lion, who desired especially to witness some proof or other of skill, said : ' Brancalone, I am in sooth become filled with the warmest regard for you, and I shall know no rest until such time as I shall have seen some wondrous deed wrought by you.' Whereupon they set out on their way, and as they journeyed together they came to a certain gorge of the mountain, very wide and deep. Then said the lion : ' Good comrade, the time is now come when we may see which one of us can best leap over this gorge.' The lion, who was very strong and active, no sooner went up to the gorge than he found himself on the other side of it. Then the ass, presenting himself with a great show of boldness at the brink of the gorge, made an effort to leap it, but in the course of his spring he fell right in the middle of the abyss, and there he remained suspended on a heap of uprooted timber, so that his fore part hung down on one side and his hind part on the other, thus leaving him in the greatest danger of breaking his neck. When the lion saw what had

happened, he cried out, 'What is it you are doing, comrade?' but the ass, who for the moment had come to the end of his powers, made no reply. Whereupon the lion, fearing amain lest the ass should die, descended forthwith into the gorge and went to succour him. As soon as Brancalone had been delivered from all pressing danger, he turned towards the lion with renewed arrogance, and heaped the most villainous abuse upon him that one creature could use to another. The lion, confounded beyond measure at what he heard, was filled with amazement, and demanded of the ass forthwith what might be the cause of this savage outburst of abuse, considering that he had, out of the love he felt towards him, saved him from death. Hereupon the ass, in order to show that he was in sooth greatly angered, answered haughtily, 'Wretched knave that you are! Do you ask me why I thus abuse you? I tell you that you have robbed me of the greatest pleasure I ever felt in the course of all my life. You indeed must needs fancy that I was dying, whereas all the time I was enjoying the purest delight.' Then asked the lion, 'And what was this great delight of yours?' The ass replied, 'I had bestowed myself carefully on the top of that wood, with one part of me hanging on this side thereof, and the other on that, desiring the while to learn for certain which part of me weighed the heavier, my head or my tail.' 'Now, I promise you, on my faith,' said the lion, 'that for the future I will not interfere with you on any account, and as far as I can see and clearly understand, you will surely be the lord and sovereign of this mountain.'

Thereupon they once more set forth, and after a time came to a river, very wide and swift in its current. Then said the lion, 'My good Brancalone, I would that we should both of us now make an exhibition of our prowess by swimming over this river.' 'I could think of no trial which I would more readily undertake,' said Brancalone, 'but I will ask you to take the water first.' The lion, who was mightily expert as a swimmer, swam over the river with great dexterity, and, after he had crossed, he stood upon the bank of the stream and cried out, 'Comrade, it is now your turn to swim over.' The ass, when he perceived that he could in no way go back from his promise to face the trial, cast himself into the river, and swam in such fashion that, by the time he was come into the middle thereof, he was so greatly hampered by the whirling eddies of the water that he was borne along, now with his head uppermost, and now his feet, and

sometimes sinking so deep in the stream that little or nothing of him was to be seen. The lion, looking upon this sight, and at the same time turning over in his mind the insulting words spoken by the ass, felt, on the one hand, that he dare not go to his rescue, and, on the other, the greatest fear lest he should be drowned if he were not succoured at once. Wherefore, standing in debate between yes and no, he determined (let anything happen which might) to go to his aid; so, having plunged into the water, he swam up close to the donkey's side, and seized him by the tail, and dragged him along until he got him out of the water safe on shore. The ass, as soon as he found himself standing upon the river's bank and now in no danger from the threatening waves, flew into a violent passion, and, all inflamed with rage, cried out in a loud voice, 'Ah! wretch that you are, and loutish knave, of a truth I know not what holds me back from making play with my artillery and letting you have experience of something which you might not find entirely to your liking. You are indeed the plague of my life and the destroyer of all my pleasure. When, forsooth, unfortunate wight that I am, shall I find another delight as great as the one you have just taken from me?' On hearing this, the lion, now more overwhelmed with fear than ever, said, 'But, my good comrade, I feared horribly lest you should be suffocated in the stream, wherefore I swam out to you and gave you my aid, thinking thereby to render you a service which would please you, and not an offence.' 'I bid you cease your prating at once,' replied the ass; 'but, first of all, there is one thing I want you to tell me. What gain, what advantage, have you reaped through your swimming across the river?' 'None at all,' answered the lion. Then the ass, turning towards him, said: 'Now look well here, and see whether, whilst I was in the river, I must not have found abundant diversion.' And with these words he shook himself violently, and straightway from his ears, which were filled with water, there came forth a great quantity of little fishes and of other small water-beasts, which he showed to the lion, saying the while in a tone of grief and complaint, 'Now do you see what a huge mistake you have made? If you had only allowed me to go down to the bottom of the river, I should have had the greatest pleasure in capturing fish of a sort which would have made you stand aghast with wonder. Therefore, take care for the future that you molest me no more; for if you do we shall become foes instead of friends, and that assuredly will be the worse for you. Indeed, should I at any time appear to you to be

dead, I do not wish that you should give yourself trouble on my account, forasmuch as that thing in me which may seem to you to be death will be in reality nought but contentment and life.'

Now the sun was already sinking beneath the horizon and making deeper and duskier the shadows on the earth, when the lion said to his companion that the time was now come when they ought to retire to rest, with the agreement that they should meet again on the following morning. And when another day had broken brightly the ass and the lion met as they had duly covenanted, and then and there settled that they would go to the chase, the one in this quarter, and the other in that, and afterwards, at a certain fixed hour, they should both return, and whichever of the two should then be found to have taken the greatest number of beasts of the chase should be adjudged to be the lord and master of the mountain. Forthwith the lion went in search of game, and in his hunting contrived to capture a great quantity of wild animals; but the ass, having found standing open the gate of a farmyard, made his way into the same and came upon a vast heap of rye stacked in the midst of the court. He straightway went up to this, and ate thereof such a huge quantity that his belly had like to burst. After he had thus filled himself he returned to the spot where he had agreed to meet the lion, and lay down at full length, whereupon, through the crowding of his belly, his battery of artillery kept up a bombardment loud and long. It happened that a chough which was flying through the air above beheld the ass lying prostrate upon the earth and moving not a limb, wherefore the bird concluded that he must be dead, and, having cautiously approached him, began to peck at his buttocks. The ass, as soon as he felt the sharp beak of the chough at work upon his hinder parts, gave a quick twist with his tail and caught the chough between it and his rump, and thus crushed the life out of him.

A short time after this the lion came back to the appointed place, charged with the prey he had captured, and when he beheld the ass lying prone on the ground, he cried out and said to him: 'See, good comrade! here are the beasts of the chase which I have taken.' Then said the ass, 'Tell me now in what fashion did you contrive to capture them,' and the lion at once recounted to him what manner of venery he had followed. But the ass, breaking in upon his discourse, said, 'What a fool and witless loon you must be! You have half killed yourself with fatigue this morning, ranging round the thickets and

the woods and the mountains, while I have never moved from this same place, and, as I lay upon the earth, have managed to catch with my tail and my buttocks such a vast quantity of choughs and of all sorts of animals that (as you may easily see) I have filled my carcass plentifully therewith. This one here is all I now have left, and this I reserved on your behalf, wherefore I beg that you will accept it as a mark of my high esteem.'

At hearing these words of Brancalone, the lion was more stricken with astonishment even than before, and, having accepted the gift of the chough for the respect he had for the ass, took it, and without uttering another word returned to his own booty. Then, as he was making his way at full gallop through the forest (not without a certain fear in his heart), he met a wolf, who was also going along at a great pace. The lion hereupon said to the wolf, 'Goodman wolf, where are you going all alone and so fast?' The wolf replied, 'I am bound on the execution of a certain business, which is of the highest moment to me.' Hearing these words, the lion sought to know what this business might be; but the wolf, as if he were in terror of his life, begged to be let go and not further delayed. Then the lion, perceiving the great peril into which the wolf was about to run, besought him earnestly that he would not go forward along that path; 'for,' said he, 'a little further on you will of a surety meet with Brancalone, a very fierce and dreadful animal, who carries under his tail a certain piece of artillery which goes off with a mighty explosion, and ill-fated indeed is he who comes within its fire. Besides this, he bears upon his back a certain thing made of leather, which covers the greater part of his body. He is covered with grey hair, and works all manner of wonderful deeds, and is a thing of terror to all those who come near him.' But the wolf, who perceived clearly enough from the account given by the lion what manner of animal this was concerning whom the lion spake, cried out, 'Good gossip, I beg you not to be at all afeard, for of a surety this one you speak of is nothing more nor less than a donkey, the vilest beast that nature ever made, and one fit for nothing else than to carry heavy burdens and to be well belaboured with the stick. I alone, in the course of my life, have eaten more than a hundred of this sort. Let us, therefore, go on together, good gossip, with assurance, and you shall witness the proof of all I say.' Then said the lion, 'Good gossip, I have indeed no mind to go with you, but if you feel that

you needs must go, go in peace.' Hereupon the wolf once more replied that there was no reason why the lion should have fear of aught, and the lion, when he perceived that the wolf stood quite firm in his contention, said: 'Since you wish so earnestly that I should be your companion in this enterprise, and since, furthermore, you give me full assurance that we shall run into no danger, it seems to me that it would be more prudent for us to approach him with our tails well knotted together, so that when we shall have come into his presence there may be no danger that one of us may run away and the other be left in his power.' Whereupon, after they had tied their tails tightly together, they issued forth to find Brancalone.

The ass, who by this time had once more got up on his four feet and was cropping the grass, espied the lion and the wolf while they were yet far off, and straightway fell into such a fit of terror that he deliberated whether he should not take to flight. But the lion, who had pointed out Brancalone to the wolf, said: 'There he is, good gossip. See, he is coming towards us. Let us not tarry here, for if we do, we shall of a surety both of us die.' The wolf, who by this time had seen the ass, and recognized what manner of beast he was, said: 'Let us stand our ground here somewhat, good gossip, and set your mind at ease, for I assure you that what we see over there is no other than an ass.' But the lion, whose fears seemed to grow greater every time he caught sight of Brancalone, here turned tail and took to flight, and whilst he was thus fleeing through rough brambles and jumping now over one thicket and now over another, a sharp thorn struck him as he was leaping and tore out his left eye. When he felt the prick of the thorn, he at once imagined it to be caused by a shot from that terrible cannon which Brancalone carried under his tail, and, coursing the while at the top of his speed, said to the wolf, 'Did I not tell you how it would be? Let us now fly for our lives. Do you not see that he has already shot out one of my eyes with his field-piece?' And quickening his pace every moment, he dragged the wolf along with him through sharp-piercing brambles, over scattered rocks, through thick woods, and other waste desolate places, till at last the poor wolf, all mangled and shattered, gave up the ghost.

After running some long distance the lion, deeming that they had by this time come to a place of safety, said to the wolf, 'Good gossip, now it seems to me that we might well untie our tails,' but

to this the wolf answered nothing, and the lion, looking towards him, saw that he was dead. Wherefore, stricken with amazement, he said : ‘ Alas ! did I not tell you the truth when I said that he would kill you ? See what has befallen us through going to meet him. You have lost your life and I have lost my left eye. But it is better to have lost a part than the whole.’ Then, having untied the knotted tails, he left behind him the dead wolf and departed, dwelling hereafter in the caves of the rocks, while the ass remained lord and master of the mountain, upon which he lived joyfully for many years. And for this reason it happens that nowadays asses are always found inhabiting civilized and cultivated regions, and lions in deserted and savage places, forasmuch as the common beast, by his fraud and cunning, proved himself to be the master of the ferocious lion.

The fable told by Arianna in such becoming wise here came to an end, and although it was somewhat indifferent in matter and wanting in strength,¹ still the fair and honourable company did not withhold their due meed of praise. And so that they might keep the same order which had been diligently observed upon every other evening, the Signora commanded her to set forth her enigma, and Arianna, without further hesitation, opened her lips as follows :

Rough, long, and round am I to sight,
 Yet ladies find in me delight ;
 They take me with a laughing face,
 And find for me a fitting place.
 They handle me in featly wise,
 And put me where my business lies.
 Next prick and pinch me, till I'm fain
 To do their will once and again.
 Now, ladies, if this thing you tell,
 'Tis plain to me you know it well?

This enigma which Arianna propounded won praise far warmer than did her fable, for the reason that it gave much more occasion for laughter, and was, moreover, interpreted by the men in a somewhat lascivious sense. The damsel, when she perceived that their exposition of it went far wide of the truth, said : ‘ Signori, what this enigma of mine is intended to describe is the staff upon which our ladies are wont to embroider with a needle lace or any other delicate

¹ Orig., *positiva et di poco succo*.

work. It is round and thick, and they have to hold it between the thighs when they are at work therewith. They turn it, handle it, prick it with their needles, and do with it whatsoever they will.' This subtle interpretation of the enigma was highly praised by the whole company, whereupon Alteria, as soon as she saw that all were silent and waiting for her, rose from her seat and thus began.

THE THIRD FABLE.

Cesarino di Berni, a Calabrian, quits his home in company with a lion, a bear, and a wolf, and coming to Sicily, finds the king's daughter about to be devoured by a monster. This beast, Cesarino, by the aid of his three animals, destroys, and gets to wife the princess, after having rescued her.



IN turning over the records of ancient and modern history I always remark that prudence holds a place as one of the most illustrious and noteworthy of the virtues with which human beings are endowed, for the man who uses prudence aright may call back his past experience and plumb the stream of current events, and, with his judgment matured thereby, provide for the future. Wherefore, seeing that I have to take my turn of story-telling this evening, I will give you a little fable which has been recalled to my mind by the one recently told by Arianna, and, although it is neither very laughable nor very long, it may perchance conduce in some measure to your amusement and your profit as well.

In Calabria there lived not long ago a poor woman of low estate, who had an only son called Cesarino di Berni, a youth of great discretion, and one endowed more richly with the gifts of nature than with those of fortune. It chanced on a certain day that Cesarino left his home and went into the country, and, having come into a deep and thick-leaved forest, he made his way into the midst of it, enchanted by the verdant beauty of the place. As he went on, he came upon a rocky cavern, in which he found in one place a litter of lion cubs, in another a litter of bear cubs, and in another a litter of wolf cubs, and, having taken one each of these, he carried them home with him, and with the greatest care and diligence brought them up

together. The animals in course of time came to be so much attached one to another that they could not bear to be apart, and, besides this, they had become so tame and gentle with the people of the house that they hurt nobody. But, seeing that they were by nature wild animals, and only domesticated by chance, and that they had now attained the full strength of maturity, Cesarino would often take them with him to follow the chase, and would always come back laden with the spoil of the woods and rejoicing at his good luck. Thus by his hunting Cesarino supported both his old mother and himself, and after a time the old woman, marvelling at the great quantity of game which her son always brought home with him, asked him by what means he contrived to entrap so fine a spoil, whereupon Cesarino answered that he got his game by the help of the animals which she must often have seen about the house. At the same time he begged her to be careful not to let this secret be known to anyone, lest the animals should be taken away from them.

Before many days had passed it happened that the old mother foregathered with a neighbour of hers whom she held very dear, not merely because she was a worthy upright woman, but because she was kindly and obliging as well. And as they were talking of this thing and that, the neighbour said: 'Neighbour, how is it that your son manages to take such great quantities of game?' And in answer thereto the old woman, forgetful of her son's warning, told her all she asked, and, having taken leave of her, went back to her home.

Scarcely had the old mother parted from her neighbour when the husband of the latter came in, whereupon the wife went to meet him with a joyful face, and told him all the news she had just heard from her old neighbour. The husband, when he had learned how the matter stood, went straightway to find Cesarino, and, having fallen in with him, thus addressed him: 'How is it, my son, that you go so often a-hunting, and never offer to take a comrade with you? Such behaviour is hardly in agreement with the friendship which has always subsisted between us.' Cesarino, when he heard these words, smiled somewhat, but made no answer to them, and on the morrow, without saying a word of farewell to his old mother or to his well-beloved sisters, he left his home, taking with him his three animals, and went out into the world to seek his fortune.

After he had travelled a very long distance, he came into Sicily, and there he found himself one day in a solitary uninhabited spot in

the midst of which stood a hermitage, which he approached, and, after having entered it and found it void, he and his three animals bestowed themselves to rest therein. He had not been there very long when the hermit to whom the place belonged came back, and when he entered the door and saw the animals lying there, he was overcome with terror and turned to fly. But Cesarino, who had watched the hermit's approach, cried out : ' My father, be not afraid, but come into your cell without fear, because all these animals you see are so tame and gentle that they will in no way do you any hurt.' Whereupon the hermit, assured by these words of Cesarino, went into his humble cell. Now Cesarino was much worn out by the length of his journeying, and, turning to the hermit, he said, ' My father, have you here by chance a morsel of bread and a drop of wine you can give me to bring back a little of my strength ? ' ' Assuredly I have, my son,' replied the hermit, ' but not, perhaps, of quality so good as you may desire.' Then the hermit, when he had flayed and cut up some of the game he had brought in with him, put it upon a spit to roast, and, having got ready the table and spread it with such poor viands as were at hand, he and Cesarino took their supper merrily together.

When they had finished their meal the hermit said to Cesarino : ' Not far from this place there lives a dragon whose poisonous breath destroys and annihilates everything around, nor is there found anyone in the country who can withstand him, and so great is the ruin he works that before long all the peasants of the land will be forced to abandon their fields and fly elsewhere. And over and beyond this, it is necessary to send him every day the body of some human being to devour, for, failing this, he would destroy everything far and near. By a cruel and evil fate the one chosen by lot for to-morrow is the daughter of the king, who in beauty and worth and goodness excels every other maiden now alive, nor is there aught to be found in her which is not worthy of the highest praise. Of a truth, it is a foul mischance that so fair and virtuous a damsel should thus cruelly perish, and she herself all the while free of any offence.'

Cesarino, when he had listened to these words of the hermit, thus replied : ' Let not your courage fail you, holy father, and fear not that evil will befall us, for in a very short time you will see the maiden set free.' And the next morning, almost before the first rays of dawn had appeared in the sky, Cesarino took his way to the spot where the dreadful monster had made his lair, taking along with him his three

animals, and, having come there, he beheld the daughter of the king, who had already been conveyed thither to be devoured by the beast. He went straightway towards her, and found her weeping bitterly, and comforted her with these words : ‘ Weep not, lady, nor lament, for I am come hither to free you from your peril.’ But even as he spake, behold ! the ravenous dragon came forth with a mighty rush from its lair, and with its jaws open wide made ready to tear in pieces and devour the delicate body of the beautiful maiden, who, smitten with fear, trembled in every limb. Then Cesarino, stirred by pity for the damsel, took courage and urged on the three animals to attack the fierce and famished monster before them, and so valiantly did they grapple with him that they bore him to the ground and slew him. Whereupon Cesarino, taking a naked knife in his hand, cut out the tongue from the throat of the dragon and put it carefully in a bag ; then, without speaking a word to the damsel whom he had delivered from this horrible death, he took his leave and went back to the hermitage, and gave the holy father an account of the deed he had wrought. The hermit, when he understood that the dragon was indeed destroyed, and the young maiden set at liberty, and the country delivered from the horrible scourge which had lately vexed it, was wellnigh overcome with joy.

Now it happened that a certain peasant, a coarse worthless rogue of a fellow, was passing by the spot where lay stretched out the dead body of the fierce and horrible monster, and as soon as he caught sight of the savage fearsome beast he took in hand the knife which he carried at his side and struck off therewith the dragon’s head from the body, and having placed the same in a large bag which he had with him, he took his way towards the city. As he went along the road at a rapid pace he overtook the princess, who was going back to the king her father, and, having joined company with her, he went with her as far as the royal palace and led her into the presence of the king, who, as soon as he saw his daughter come back safe and sound, almost died from excess of gladness. Then the peasant with a joyful air took off the hat he wore on his head and thus addressed the king : ‘ Sire, I claim by right this fair daughter of yours as my wife, seeing that I have delivered her from death.’ And having thus spoken the peasant, as a testimony of his words, drew forth from his bag the horrible head of the slain monster and laid it before the king. The king, when he beheld the head of the beast, once so fierce but now a thing of

nought, and considered in his mind how his daughter had been rescued from death and his country freed from the ravages of the dragon, gave orders for universal rejoicings, and for the preparation of a sumptuous feast, to which should be bidden all the ladies of the city. And a great crowd of these, splendidly attired, came to offer to the princess their good wishes for her delivery from death.

It happened that, at the very same time when they were getting ready all these feasts and rejoicings, the old hermit went into the city, where the news soon came to his ears how a certain peasant had slain the dragon, and how as a reward for his deed and for the liberation of the king's daughter he was to have the damsel to wife. When the hermit heard this he was heavily grieved, and putting aside for the time all thought of seeking for alms, he returned forthwith to his hermitage and made known to Cesarino the thing he had just heard. The youth when he listened to this was much grieved, and having brought forth the tongue of the slain dragon, he exhibited it to the hermit as a trustworthy proof that he himself had destroyed the wild beast. When the hermit had heard his story, and was fully persuaded that Cesarino was the slayer of the dragon, he betook himself to the presence of the king, and having withdrawn his ragged cowl from his head, he thus spake : ' Most sacred majesty, it would in any case be a shameful thing if a malignant rascally fellow, one for whom a hole in the ground is a home good enough, should become the husband of a maiden who is the very flower of loveliness, the example of good manners, the mirror of courtesy, and richly dowered with every virtue ; but it becomes much worse when such a rogue seeks to win this prize by deceiving your majesty, and by declaring the lies which issue from his throat to be the truth. Now I, who am very jealous of your majesty's honour, and eager to be of service to the princess your daughter, am come here to make it manifest to you that he who goes about making boast of having delivered your daughter is not the man who slew the dragon. Wherefore, O most sacred majesty, keep open your eyes and your ears likewise, and listen to one who has your welfare at heart.'

The king, when he heard the bold utterances of the hermit, was fully assured that the old man's words were those of faithful and devoted love, and gave heed to them forthwith. He issued orders at once that all the feasts and rejoicings should be countermanded, and directed the hermit to tell him the name of the man who was the

true rescuer of his daughter. The hermit, who wished for nothing better, said : 'Sire, there is no need to make any mystery about his name ; but if it will fall in with your majesty's wishes, I will bring him here into your presence, and you will see a youth of fair aspect, graceful, seemly, and lovable, gifted with manners so noble and honest that I have never yet met another to equal him.' The king, who was already greatly taken with this picture of the young man, bade the hermit bring him into his presence straightway. The hermit, having gone out of the king's palace, returned to his cabin and told Cesarino what he had done.

The youth, after he had taken the dragon's tongue and put it in a wallet, went, accompanied by the hermit and the three animals, to the king's presence, and kneeling reverently on his knees, spake thus : 'Most sacred majesty, the fatigue and the labour were indeed mine, but the honour belongs to others. I and these three animals of mine slew the wild beast in order to set your daughter at liberty.' Then the king said : 'What proof can you give me that you really slew this beast, inasmuch as this other man has brought to me the head thereof, which you see suspended here ?' Cesarino answered : 'I do not ask you to take the word of your daughter, which would assuredly be an all-sufficient testimony. I will simply offer to you one token, of a nature no one can gainsay, that I and no other was the slayer of the beast. Examine well the head you have in your keeping, and you will find that the tongue is lacking thereto.' Whereupon the king caused the dragon's head to be examined, and found it without a tongue ; so Cesarino, having put his hand in his bag, drew forth the tongue of the dragon, which was of enormous size—so great a one had never before been seen—and showed clearly thereby that he had slain the savage beast. The king, after having heard confirmation from his daughter, and on account of this production of the tongue by Cesarino, and divers other proofs which were offered, commanded them at once to take the villainous peasant and to strike off his head from his body. Then with great feasts and rejoicings the nuptials of Cesarino and the princess were celebrated.

When the news was brought to the mother and the sisters of Cesarino that he had slain the wild beast and had rescued the princess, and that moreover the damsel had been given him to wife, they resolved to travel to Sicily, and, having taken passage in a ship, they

were quickly borne thither before a favourable wind, and met with a very honourable reception. But these women had not been long in the land before they grew so envious of Cesarino's good fortune that they took thought of nothing else than how they might work his downfall, and their hatred, which increased day by day, at last stirred them to cause him to be privily murdered. Then, having considered in their minds divers deadly stratagems, they determined at last to take a bone and to sharpen the point thereof, then to dip the same in venom, and to place it in Cesarino's bed with the point upwards, so that, when he should go to rest and throw himself down on the bed, as is the wont of young people, he should give himself a poisonous wound. Having thus determined, they set to work to carry out their wicked design forthwith. One day, when the hour for retiring to rest had come, Cesarino went with his wife into the bedchamber, and, having thrown off all his clothes and his shirt, he lay down on the bed and struck his left side against the sharp point of the bone. And so severe was the wound, that his body forthwith swelled on account of the poison, and when this reached his heart he died. His wife, when she saw that her husband was dead, began to cry aloud and to weep bitterly, and the courtiers, attracted by the noise, ran to the chamber, where they found Cesarino dead. Having turned the corpse over and over again, they found it inflated and black as a raven, and on this account they suspected that he had been killed by poison. When the king heard what had occurred, he caused the strictest inquisition to be made; but, having come upon no clue, he gave over the search, and, together with his daughter and the whole court, put on the deepest mourning, and ordered the body of Cesarino to be buried with the most solemn funeral rites.

While these stately obsequies were being carried out, the mother and sisters of Cesarino began to be sore afraid lest the lion and the bear and the wolf (when they should find out that their master was dead) might scent out the treachery that had been used against him; so, having taken counsel one with another, they hit upon the plan of sealing up the ears of the three animals, and they managed to carry out their design. But they did not seal up the ears of the wolf so close but that he was able to hear a little with one of them as to what had been going on. So, after the dead body had been taken to the sepulchre, the wolf said to the lion and the bear, 'Comrades, it seems to me that there is bad news about.' But these two, whose ears were

completely stopped, could not hear what he said, and when he repeated the same words they understood him no better. But the wolf went on making signs and gestures to them, so that at last they knew what he wanted to tell them, namely, that someone was dead. Then the bear set to work with his hard crooked claws, and dug down into the lion's ears, deep enough to bring out the seal. And the lion did the same to the bear and to the wolf.

As soon as they had all got back their hearing, the wolf said to his companions, 'It seems to me as if I had heard men talking of our master's death.' And seeing that their master came not, as was his wont, to visit them and to give them their food, they held it for certain that he must be dead. Whereupon they all left the house together, and came straight to the spot where the dead body was being borne to the grave. As soon as the priests and the others who were assisting at the funeral saw the three animals, they all took to flight, and the men who were bearing the corpse put it down and fled likewise, but some there were of firmer courage who wished to see the end of the affair. Immediately the animals began to work hard with their teeth and claws, and before long they had stripped the grave-clothes off their master's body, and, having examined it very closely, found the fatal wound. Then the lion said to the bear, 'Brother, now is the time that we want a little of that grease which you carry in your inside; for if we shall be able to anoint our master's wound therewith, he will straightway recover.' Then answered the bear, 'No need to say another word. I will open my mouth as wide as I possibly can; then you may put your paw down my throat, and bring up as much grease as you will want.' So the lion put his paw down the bear's throat—the bear drawing himself together the while, so that he might be able to thrust it deep down¹—and when he had extracted all the grease he wanted, he anointed his master's wound therewith on all sides, and within and without. When the wound had become somewhat softened he sucked it with his mouth, and then thrust into it a certain herb the virtue of which was so potent that it immediately began to work upon the heart, and in a very short time rekindled its fire. Then Cesarino little by little recovered his strength and was brought back to life.

When those who were standing by saw this marvel they were

¹ Orig., *che si restringeva acciò che più in giù la potesse ficcare.*

struck with amazement, and straightway ran to the king to tell him that Cesarino was restored to life. The king, when he heard these tidings, went to meet him, accompanied by his daughter, whose name was Dorothea, and they embraced him and kissed him in the joy they felt over this unexpected ending of the affair, and with gladsome feasting and rejoicing led him back to the king's palace.

The news of Cesarino's resurrection soon came to the ears of his mother and sisters, and disturbed them mightily; nevertheless, feigning to be overjoyed thereat, they repaired to the palace to felicitate him with the rest; but, as soon as they came into Cesarino's presence, his wound immediately threw out a great quantity of blood. On seeing this they were struck with confusion, and their faces turned pale, whereupon the king, growing suspicious of their guilt, bade his guards seize them and put them to the torture. Which having been done, they confessed all; so the king forthwith commanded them to be burned alive, and Cesarino and Dorothea lived long and happily together, and left children to rule in their stead. The three animals, until they died in the course of nature, were tended with the utmost care and affection.

When Alteria had come to the end of her story, she gave her enigma in the following words without waiting for any further instruction from the Signora :

I bear myself a woman's name;
A brother's presence near I claim;
I live only by his death;
I die, and he regains his breath.
Our way together never lies;
From my pursuit he always flies.
Swifter than a bird's my way;
No man ever made me stay.
At supper time you'll find me near,
Although no portion of your cheer.
Birth and death are with me ever,
Yet they hurt or harm me never.

Alteria's enigma was so clever and ingenious that no one could lay claim to the least notion of its meaning, save only she who had recited it. So when she saw that they could not bring their wits together enough to disentangle it, she said: "My enigma, ladies and gentlemen, is intended to represent the night, which has a woman's name, and has a brother who is called the day. When the day dies

the night is born, and again, the night being dead, the day revives. She and the day can never go on their course together, and she flies like a bird, never suffering herself to be captured. And again, she is always with us at supper time."

Everyone was pleased at this pretty interpretation of the subtle enigma, and it was declared by all to be a work of great learning. But in order to prevent the present night from flying away and being overtaken by the day, the Signora gave the word to Eritrea to go on with her story at once, and the damsel gaily began to tell the following fable.

THE FOURTH FABLE.

Andrigetto di Val Sabbia, a citizen of Como, being in articulo mortis, makes his will, and leaves his soul, together with that of his notary, and that of his confessor, to the devil, and then dies doomed to hell.



HERE is a well-used proverb that a bad end waits upon every bad life, and for this reason it is far wiser to live piously, as a good man should, than to give a loose rein to one's conscience, and, without forethought, to work one's will unrestrained, as did a certain noble citizen who, when nearing his latter end, bequeathed his soul to the enemy of mankind, and then in despair (as was the will of divine justice) made an evil end.

In Como, one of the lesser cities of Lombardy, not far distant from Milan, there once dwelt a citizen called Andrigetto di Val Sabbia, who, though he was rich beyond any other man in Como in goods and heritages and land and cattle, paid so little heed to his conscience that he was ever prompt to rise early in the morning to undertake some fresh wickedness. His granaries were filled with all sorts of corn, the product of his farms, and it was his custom to peddle this away to the neighbouring peasants, in lieu of selling it to the merchants or to those who came with money in their hands; not being urged to this course by any compassion towards the poor, but rather designing thereby to snatch away from them any little bit of land which yet remained to them, and add it to his own, seeking always to gain his end in order that he might, little by little, get all the land round about into his own possession.

One certain year it happened that the country was afflicted by a

grievous famine, so that in many places men and women and children died of hunger, and for this reason peasants from all the neighbouring parts, both from the mountains and from the plains, betook themselves to Andrigetto, this one offering to let him have a meadow, that one a ploughed field, and the other a track of woodland, in exchange for corn and other provisions to serve their present need. And the crowd of people about Andrigetto's house, coming from all parts, was so great that one might well have believed the year of Jubilee was come.¹

There was living at that time in Como a notary, Tonisto Raspante by name, a man highly skilled in his calling, and one who far out-distanced all others of his craft in the address he showed in wringing the last coin out of the peasant's purse. Now one of the laws of Como forbade a notary to draw up any instrument of sale unless the money for the same should first have been counted over in his presence and in the presence of divers witnesses, and for this reason Tonisto Raspante, who had no mind to bring himself within reach of legal penalty, had more than once remonstrated with Andrigetto when the old usurer had required him to draw up contracts of sale which were contrary to the form of the statute of Como; but Andrigetto would heap foul abuse upon him, and even threaten his life if he persisted in his refusal. And because the usurer was a man of weight, a leading citizen, and one moreover who frequented assiduously the shrine of San Bocca d'oro,² the notary dared not run

¹ Orig., *che pareva il giubileo*. An allusion to the vast crowds of people who flocked to Rome at the times of Jubilee in quest of plenary indulgence. Giovanni Villan who went on one of these pilgrimages from Florence, declares there were never less than two hundred thousand strangers in Rome at these seasons; and Guglielmo Ventura estimates the total number of pilgrims in a Jubilee year at two millions. Dante (*Inferno*, xviii.) also refers to the enormous throng of Jubilee pilgrims in Rome:

“Come i Roman, per l'esercito molto,
L'anno del Giubbileo, su per lo ponte
Hanno a passar la gente modo tolto;
Che dall' un lato tutti hanno la fronte
Verso 'l castello, e vanno a Santo Pietro,
Dall' altra sponda vanno verso 'l monte.”

² Orig., *et correva continuamente San Bocca d'oro*. *Bocca d'oro*, a greedy lover of money. *San Giovanni Bocca d'oro*, coin or money given for a bribe, also a lewd manner of living. See the legend of the saint in Busk's "Folk-lore of Rome," p. 196, and Masuccio, "Il Novellino," i. 6.

counter to his will, but drew up the illegal contracts as he was commanded.

Just before the advent of a certain season when Andrigetto was wont always to go to confession, he sent to his confessor enough good cheer to give himself a sumptuous feast, and fine cloth enough to make hose for himself and for his servant as well, bidding him at the same time to keep himself in readiness on the morrow at the confessional. The priest, for the reason that Andrigetto was a man of wealth and of great weight in the city, took due heed of these words, and when he saw his penitent approaching made him dutiful obeisance, and prepared to receive his confession; whereupon Andrigetto, kneeling down and charging himself narrowly with divers transgressions, at last stumbled upon the sin of avarice, and laid bare in detail the history of all those illegal contracts he had made. The priest, who had read enough to know that these contracts were unlawful and usurious, began respectfully to take Andrigetto to task, pointing out to him that it was his duty to make restitution; but Andrigetto, who took this interference in very ill part, replied that the priest knew not what he was talking about, and that it behoved him to go and learn his duty. Now it was Andrigetto's habit often to send presents to the priest, who, fearing he might lose custom should the usurer resort to some other confessor, forthwith granted him absolution, with a light penance therewith, and Andrigetto, having thrust a crown into his hand, took his leave and departed with a light heart.

It chanced that soon after this Andrigetto was smitten with a malady so severe that he was given up by all the physicians. His relations and friends, perceiving by the report of the doctors that his disease was incurable, urged him to make his will, to regulate his affairs, and to confess himself according to the ways of all good Catholics and Christians; but he, who was altogether given up to avarice, and was accustomed night and day to think of nought else than how he might pile up more riches, took no thought of death, and put far away from him all those who would talk of such matter, causing rather to be brought to him now this and now that of his prized possessions, and taking delight in the handling thereof. But his friends were very pressing on his account; so to content them he let them summon Tonisto Raspante, his notary, and Messer Pre Neofito, his worthy confessor, in order that he might confess and

settle his worldly affairs. When these two had come into his presence they saluted him, and asked him how he was, and prayed to God to give him back his health, exhorting him at the same time to take courage, for with God's help he might soon be himself again; but the sick man replied that he felt much worse, for which reason he desired now to make his will and to confess. Then the priest, turning his discourse to matters of faith, admonished him that he should be mindful of God and bow to His holy will, by which means there would be granted to him the restoration of his bodily health. This done, Andrigetto directed them to bring in seven men to be witnesses of his will. When these were come he said to the notary, 'Tonisto, how much do you charge for every will you draw?' 'The law allows us a florin,' Tonisto answered; 'but we receive sometimes more, sometimes less, according to the wish of the testator.' Then Andrigetto went on: 'See, here are two florins, which I give you on condition that you set down everything I direct you to write.' The notary agreed to these terms, and, having invoked the name of God, and inscribed the year, and the month, and the day, according to the manner of his calling, began to write in these terms: 'I, Andrigetto di Val Sabbia, being of sound mind though infirm of body, bequeath and recommend my soul to God my creator, whom I thank with all my heart for the many benefits which He has showered upon me during this life.' But Andrigetto, interrupting him, said: 'What is it you have written there?' whereupon the notary replied, 'I have written this and that,' and told him word for word what he had set down. Then Andrigetto, in a passion of rage, cried out, 'And who told you to write in such terms? Why do you not keep the promise you made me? Now write down what I tell you—I, Andrigetto di Val Sabbia, infirm of body but sound in mind, bequeath and recommend my soul to the devil of hell.' The notary and the witnesses, when they heard these words, stood aghast, and, turning to the testator, said to him: 'Alas! Signor Andrigetto, what has become of your good sense and your ordinary prudence? Surely these are the words of a madman. Have done with such folly, for the love of God, as well as with such sins against your good name, which must bring scandal and disgrace upon all your family. Remember also that all those who up to this time have rated you as a wise and prudent man will set you down as the most wicked and mischievous traitor nature ever brought forth, if you thus cast behind

you all your well-being and salvation ; and, indeed, if you thus despise your own welfare and profit, how much more will you despise the welfare and profit of others !’ In answer to this Andrigetto, whose rage was now as hot as a burning brazier, replied, ‘ How ? have I not commanded you to write exactly what I shall tell you, and have I not paid you beyond your due to do this ?’ To this question the notary replied affirmatively. ‘ Then put down,’ said the testator, ‘ the things I tell you, and not those I have no mind for.’ The poor notary would fain have been quit of the whole business,¹ seeing how savage was the old man’s humour ; nevertheless, fearing lest he might die in a fit brought on by his anger, he wrote all that was dictated to him. Then said Andrigetto to the notary, ‘ Write this—Item, I leave to the devil also the soul of Tonisto Raspante, my notary, in order that I may have company when I depart from this world.’ ‘ Ah, Messer Andrigetto,’ cried the notary, ‘ you are doing me a great injury, and putting an affront on my honour and good name.’ ‘ Go on with your writing, rascal,’ cried the testator, ‘ nor trouble me more than I am troubled already. I have given you double fee to write according to my wish ; so write as I shall direct you—For if he had not so readily endorsed my knavish suggestions, and drawn up so many unlawful and usurious contracts, but had driven me from his presence forthwith, I should not now find myself taken in this snare. And because in time past he set more store on my payments to him than on my soul, or his own, I once more give and commend him to Lucifer.’

The poor notary, fearing that yet worse might befall him, wrote down all the foregoing words, and then Andrigetto went on : ‘ Write now—Item, I bequeath now the soul of Pre Neofito, my confessor, to be tormented by sixty thousand devils.’ ‘ What is this you say, Signor Andrigetto ?’ interrupted the priest. ‘ Are these the words of a sober man such as you have always been held to be ? Good God, recall what you have said. Know you not that our Lord Jesus Christ is merciful, with arms of pity always open, provided that the sinner be convinced of his offences, and repents and acknowledges his transgressions. Acknowledge, therefore, the grave and enormous sins you have committed, and pray God for His mercy, and He will plentifully pardon you. The means are at hand, and you have yet time to

¹ Orig., *che vorrebbe esser digiuno*.

restore what you have of other men's goods; and, if due restitution be made, God, who is all merciful and willeth not the death of a sinner, will pardon you, and receive you into paradise.'

Then Andrigetto answered, 'Wicked apostate priest, destroyer of my soul and of your own as well, man full of greed and simony! Fine counsel this, to give at such a time! Write, notary—I consign his soul to the centre of the pit; because, had he not been such a pestilential avaricious knave, he would not have been ever ready to absolve me from my sin, and then I should not have committed so many offences, nor should I find myself brought to my present state. What? does it seem honest and fitting that I should now strip myself of my wealth, ill-acquired though it be, and leave my children vagabonds and poor? No! keep counsel such as this for those whom it may profit. I will have nought to say to it. And, notary, write this also—Item, I leave to Felicita, my mistress, my farm in the village of Comachio, in order that she may be furnished with sustenance and raiment, and be able, from time to time, to take pleasure with her lovers as she has always done hitherto, and, when her life shall be finished, to come to me in the pit of hell and be tormented eternally with us three. And as to all my other goods, personal or otherwise, present or to come, I give them to my two legitimate sons, Comodo and Torquato, exhorting them to waste nothing of my estate in paying for masses, or matins, or vigils, or de profundis on my behalf, but rather to pass their time in gambling, wenching, drinking, brawling, fighting, and in all other nefarious and detestable courses, so that my goods, having been badly gotten, may in brief time be spent in like manner, and that my sons, when they shall be left bare, may hang themselves in despair. And this I declare to be my last will, and I call upon you all to witness it.'

When the will was written and executed, Andrigetto turned his face to the wall, and, with a roar like that of a bull, gave up his soul to Pluto, who had long been waiting for it. Thus the wretched sinful man, unconfessed and impenitent, made an end to his foul and wicked life.

When the gentle Eritrea had brought her story to a close, the whole company stood amazed at the folly, or rather the malice, of the wretched Andrigetto, who held it better to be the slave of the devil and the foe of the human race than to repent of his sin. And because the night was already somewhat advanced, Eritrea, without tarrying for the Signora's order, propounded her enigma:

I am supple, round, and white,
A good span's length will gauge me right;
If ladies to their service bind me,
Searching and alert they'll find me.
Give me but place, and lend a hand,
I'll enter and I'll take my stand.
But touch me not, on mischief bent,
Or dirty fingers you'll lament.

"It seems to me, Signora Eritrea, that your enigma can mean nothing else than the consigning of a soul to the devil," said Bembo, with a sly look; "but take care the devil get not into a certain warm place I know of, for then there may chance to ensue a conflagration." "I have no fear of that," said Eritrea. "Besides, my enigma has in no way the meaning you give to it." "Then expound to us the meaning at once," quoth Bembo, "and put an end to our perplexity." "Willingly," said Eritrea. "It signifies simply a tallow candle, which is white, and round, and not very hard, and if it be set up in the lantern, which is feminine in gender,¹ there is plenty of room for it to stand. Moreover, no one ever yet handled a tallow candle without getting dirty fingers."

Now the crowing of the cocks proclaimed that midnight was already long past, so the Signora made sign to Cateruzza to complete this night, the tenth of their pleasant entertainment, by the telling of some graceful story and witty enigma; and she, who was ever more ready to speak than to keep silent, began her story in these terms.

¹ Orig., *che ha nome di femina*.



THE FIFTH FABLE.

Rosolino da Pavia, a murderer and a thief, having been captured by the officers of the Podestà, is tortured, but confesses nothing. But afterwards, when he sees his innocent son put to the question, he straightway confesses, whereupon the prætor grants him his life, but banishes him the country. Rosolino becomes a hermit, and thus saves his soul.

HOW great may be the ardent and clinging love of a father towards a right-minded and well-conducted son no one can fully understand save the man who has children of his own, for the father not only strives to give the child everything that may be necessary for his bodily sustenance, but will often put his own life in jeopardy, and shed his blood for the exaltation and enrichment of his son. This saying I will prove to you to be true in the short fable which I propose now to relate to you; and, as this story will rather move your pity than your laughter, I think it will be of no little service for your instruction and learning.

In Pavia, a city of Lombardy famous both as a seat of learning and as the spot wherein is buried the most holy corpse of the venerable and divine Augustine, the smiter of the heretics, the lamp and effulgence of the Christian religion, there lived, not a great time ago, a certain lawless and wicked man, a murderer and a thief, one prone to every evil deed, and known to men by the name of Rosolino. And for the reason that he was a rich man, and the head of a faction,¹ many citizens attached themselves to him and followed him. Whenever he took to the road, he despoiled, and robbed, and killed, now this man, and now that. Besides this, the whole region round about held him in great dread on account of the numerous following he had. Though it happened that Rosolino was the author of so much wrongdoing, and though many complaints were lodged against him, nevertheless there was not a single citizen gifted with courage enough to prosecute him, for so powerful was the countenance and protection granted to him by divers knavish and evil-minded men, that the complainants, much against their will, were always forced to abandon any process they might have taken against him.

¹ Orig., *capo di parte*.

This man had one child, a son who in his nature was the complete opposite to his father, and led a life pure and worthy of all praise. Often, with soft and loving words, he would reprove his father for his wicked and ungodly life, and gently beseech him that he would now make an end of his nefarious career, drawing for him pictures of the yawning gulfs of peril amongst which he continually moved. But, to tell the truth, the wise and dutiful admonitions of the son proved to be altogether fruitless and vain, seeing that Rosolino only applied himself every day more assiduously to his infamous calling, and every week it was reported that such and such a man had been robbed, or that such and such a man had been killed. Wherefore, seeing that Rosolino was obstinately set in persevering in his ill courses, and becoming day by day more barbarous and wicked, it pleased God that he should at last be captured by the officers of the prætor, and led back to Pavia securely bound. Being brought before the judges, he was accused of all manner of premeditated wickedness, but all the charges brought against him he impudently denied.

After the prætor had listened to his words, he straightway commanded the officers to bind Rosolino with strong chains and to throw him into prison, at the same time directing that he should be carefully watched, and allowed for his sustenance three ounces of bread and three ounces of water a day. At this point there arose a great contention amongst the judges whether or not they should now condemn him upon the charges against him; but, after spending much time in wrangling, it was decided by the prætor and his court that Rosolino should be put to the torture in order that by this means they might extort a confession from his mouth. When the following morning had come, the prætor commanded his officers to bring Rosolino into his presence. He laid before the prisoner once more the charge against him, and he was once more met with a complete denial of the same. The prætor, perceiving what the fellow's humour was, gave orders that he should at once be bound for the strappado,¹ and then hoisted up on high. But, although Rosolino's frame was several times cruelly shattered by the tormentors, they were unable to make him confess anything concerning his offences; nay, rather, with the most robust courage he cried out, heaping all manner of abuse upon the

¹ Orig., *che fusse alla corda legato*. The strappado was chiefly used as a military punishment. The offender was drawn up to the top of a beam and then suddenly let fall.

prætor and upon his court. He declared they were wretches, thievish knaves and villains, adding that they themselves deserved the gallows a thousand times on account of the evil lives they led, and on account of the injustice they worked as administrators of the law. Not content with this, he went on to assert that he himself was a man of worth and good life, and that no one in the city could with justice bring any charge against him.

The prætor, after having taken the severest measures with Rosolino over and over again, and having left untried no form of torture in order to make him confess, found that he could extract nothing from the prisoner, who stood as firm in his resolve as a solidly-built tower, and mocked at the efforts of his torturers. This thing caused the prætor great trouble ; because, although he was well assured of Rosolino's guilt, he could not condemn him to death unless he should first confess. It happened that during the night, while he was reflecting upon the wickedness of Rosolino's nature, and likewise considering his steadfast determination, he found himself at fault, because he could not use any farther torments upon him, seeing that he had already cleared himself of the charges¹ while under torture. Therefore he determined on the morrow to assemble his court and propose a certain course of action which I will now explain to you.

When the following day had come, and the court had met, the prætor addressed the other judges, and said : 'Excellent and learned sirs, of a truth the courage and firmness of Rosolino, the accused, is very great, but we must not forget that his villainy is greater still, and that he would rather die under torture than confess to any of the charges made against him. Therefore it seems to me expedient (supposing that you all are of my mind) that we should, as a last resource, make trial of a certain method, which is this : Let us send our officers to fetch Bargetto, the son of Rosolino, and then, in the presence of the father, put the son to the torture. Then, when Rosolino shall see his innocent son under the hands of the tormentors, he will readily enough confess his crimes.'

This proposition of the prætor's won the approval of the rest of the court ; wherefore the prætor at once gave command that Bargetto should be seized and bound and brought into his presence. When this had been done, and Bargetto haled before the prætor, the latter

¹ Orig., *per haver già purgato ogni inditio*.

preferred certain charges against him,¹ and Bargetto, who was innocent of all crime, made answer that he knew nought of the matters of which they spoke. The prætor, when he heard this, straightway caused him to be taken to the torture chamber, and then, after he was stripped naked, he was put to the question in the presence of his father. Rosolino, seeing that they had taken his son a prisoner, and were now delivering him to torments, stood as one confounded, with his heart sharply wrung with grief. Thereupon the prætor (with Rosolino present all the while) commanded that Bargetto should be hoisted up on high, and, this done, he began to put many questions to the youth, who, being entirely innocent, knew not what to answer thereto. Then the prætor, feigning to be greatly angered, said, ‘I will soon let you know what I mean,’ and with these words he gave command that Bargetto should be strung up still higher. The wretched youth, who now felt the greatest pain and anguish, cried out in a loud voice, ‘Have mercy, signor prætor, have mercy, for I am innocent, and have committed none of these crimes!’ Thereupon the prætor, hearing him lament and weep in this fashion, said, ‘Confess then forthwith, and do not let yourself be thus torn in pieces. We know all from beginning to end, but we wish to hear the facts from your own mouth.’

To this Bargetto answered that he had no knowledge of what the prætor was talking about, and that there was no truth in the charges that were made against him. Hereupon the prætor, who had already instructed the chief torturer as to what he should do, made a sign to him to let Bargetto fall from top to bottom without mercy. Bargetto, on account of the words of the judge, and of the agony which he suffered in his arms, feeling, moreover, that he could not endure any torture sharper than that which he now felt, made up his mind to confess to any crime they might charge him with, although he might be entirely innocent thereof; so he cried out, ‘Sirs, let me come down, and I will confess everything in full.’ Then, when the cord had been relaxed little by little, and Bargetto stood once more in the presence of the prætor and his court and of his own father, he confessed that he had indeed committed all the crimes which were laid to his charge.

Rosolino, as soon as he listened to the false confession of his son, took counsel with himself concerning what had been done, and at last, stirred up by love of his son, and by the spectacle of his inno-

¹ Orig., *tolse il suo costituito*.

cence, said, 'Sirs, I beg you torture no more this son of mine, but let him go free, for he is innocent, and I am guilty.' Then, without being put farther to the question, Rosolino confessed his crimes one and all.

The prætor, after he had listened to the confession of Rosolino, and had caused it to be fully written down and ratified, said to the prisoner (as he was very curious to know the cause which had led him to confess), 'Rosolino, you endured the sharpest torture with great courage, and for a long time we were unable to extract any confession from you, but as soon as you saw your son Bargetto put to the question, and heard the confessions made by him, you changed your mind, and, without being put farther to the torture, you confessed all your crimes. Now, if God will give you grace, and have mercy upon your soul, I would gladly learn what was the reason of this change in your purpose.' 'Ah !' replied Rosolino, 'is it possible that your worships cannot divine this?' The prætor said, 'Of a truth we cannot.' Rosolino answered, 'If it is indeed true that you know it not, I will tell it to you, if you will deign to lend me your attention. You, noble sirs, merciful humane men and lovers of justice, you have seen and had exhibited to you clear proof of my endurance under torture ; but this was nothing to marvel at, because then you were torturing what was nothing else than a dead body. But when you put Bargetto, my only son, to the question, I then felt you were torturing a living thing.' Then said the prætor, 'You must be a dead man yourself if you say that your flesh is dead.' 'No,' replied Rosolino, 'I am not dead ; neither is my flesh dead, but living ; because when you put me to the torture I suffered nought, for the reason that this flesh which you now see (the same you tortured a short while ago) is not my flesh at all, but the flesh of my dead father, decayed and already fallen to dust. But when you set to torment my son, you tormented my own flesh, because the flesh of the son is verily and indeed the flesh of the father.'

When the prætor heard this reasoning of Rosolino, he was powerfully moved to grant him free pardon for all his offences, but because justice would not suffer that such great crimes as his should go unpunished, he decided to send him into perpetual banishment ; not, indeed, that his wickedness deserved a punishment so light as this, but because of the love which as a father he bore to his son. Rosolino, when it was made known to him how light a sentence had been passed on him,

lifted his hands to heaven and gave thanks to God, promising Him with many oaths to put off his evil ways and live a holy life. Rosolino straightway departed from Pavia, and betook himself to a certain hermitage, where he passed a life of great sanctity, and did so great penance for his sins that, by the grace of God, he was held worthy of salvation, leaving a memory which from that time to this present day has been serviceable as an example for the good and as a warning to the wicked.

When Cateruzza's fable was finished, the Signora directed her to let follow her enigma at once, and the damsel, with a gentle voice, spake thus :

In a flowering meadow green,
A lovely gentle thing is seen ;
Gorgeous are its robes to view,
Bright with yellow, green, and blue.
It wears upon its head a crown,
And proudly paces up and down ;
Its splendid train it raises high,
And seeks its love with jealous cry ;
But gazing at its feet below,
It shrieks aloud for shame and woe.

Cateruzza's enigma was understood by the greater part of the company to refer to the peacock, the bird dedicated to the goddess Juno, which, with its feathers studded with eyes, and painted in various colours, gazes round about upon all, and bears itself proudly, but when it beholds its soiled and muddy feet, it lets down its gorgeous tail and stands stricken with shame.

As soon as the enigma had been explained, all the company rose to their feet and took leave of the Signora, promising her that they would all return on the following evening according to their wont.

The End of the Tenth Night.



Right the Eleventh.





The Fables and Enigmas of Messer Giovanni Francesco Straparola da Caravaggio.

Right the Eleventh.



THE shadowy night, nursing mother of the world's fatigues, had already fallen, and the wearied beasts and birds had gone to rest, when the gentle and amiable company of dames and cavaliers, putting aside all sombre thoughts, betook themselves to the accustomed meeting-place. Then, after the damsels had danced divers measures according to the rule of the assemblage, the vase was brought forth, and out of it, by chance, was first drawn the name of Fiordiana. Next came that of Lionora, then that of Diana, then that of Isabella, and lastly that of Vicenza.

When the instruments of music had been brought and tuned, the Signora gave the word to Molino and the Trevisan to sing a canzonet, and these two without delay sang as follows :

SONG.

The soft enchantment of your face,
Your beauty and your dainty grace,
Your eye, which neither coy nor bold,
Can work its roguish spell,
And, pretty thief, keep close in hold
My life, my death as well.

To lures like these I fall a prey,
They charm and bind me 'neath their sway,

And vanquished by their radiance quite
 I willing own thy power,
 And kiss my chains by day, by night,
 Until my dying hour.

Lives there a man from pole to pole,
 So base and churlish in his soul,
 So barbarous and dour a wight,
 Who, might he once be blest
 To gaze upon your bosom bright,
 Where love hath made his nest,

Would fail to turn from hot to cold,
 Now chill with doubt, now overbold
 With strong desire to call thee dear,
 And yet be doubtful still,
 If burning hope or chilling fear
 Could wake the keenest thrill ?

Whose breast, now soothed with love's delight,
 Now vexed with doubts that burn and bite ;
 Would not each hour send forth anew
 Its sighs their tale to tell—
 Sighs which might soften and subdue
 The lion fierce and fell ?

Nor all impatient would implore
 Both men and gods whom men adore,
 The heaven, the earth, the shining stars,
 The ocean deep and vast,
 To end forthwith these cruel wars,
 And give him peace at last ?

This sweet and lovely song, sung by Molino and the Trevisan, pleased mightily the whole company. So strong was its pathetic charm that it brought certain soft tears from the eyes of a certain one towards whom it was especially directed. And then, in order to begin at once the story-telling for the evening, the Signora bade Fiordiana to commence, and the latter, having made her due salutation, told the story which follows.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Soriana dies and leaves three sons, Dusolino, Tesifone, and Costantino. The last-named, by the aid of his cat, gains the lordship of a powerful kingdom.



It is no rare event, beloved ladies, to see a rich man brought to extreme poverty, or to find one who from absolute penury has mounted to high estate. And this last-named fortune befell a poor wight of whom I have heard tell, who from being little better than a beggar attained the full dignity of a king.

There was once upon a time in Bohemia a woman, Soriana by name, who lived in great poverty with her three sons, of whom one was called Dusolino, and another Tesifone, and the third Costantino Fortunato. Soriana had nought of any value in the way of household goods save three things, and these were a kneading trough of the kind women use in the making of bread, a board such as is used in the preparation of pastry, and a cat. Soriana, being now borne down with a very heavy burden of years, saw that death was approaching her, and on this account made her last testament, leaving to Dusolino, her eldest son, the kneading trough, to Tesifone the paste board, and to Costantino the cat. When the mother was dead and duly buried, the neighbours round about would borrow now the kneading trough and now the paste board, as they might happen to want them, and as they knew that the young men were very poor, they gave them by way of repayment a cake, which Dusolino and Tesifone ate by themselves, giving nothing of it to Costantino, the youngest brother. And if Costantino chanced to ask them to give him aught they would make answer by bidding him to go to his cat, who would without fail let him have what he wanted, and on this account poor Costantino and his cat underwent much suffering. Now it chanced that this cat of Costantino's was a fairy in disguise, and the cat, feeling much compassion for him and anger at his two brothers on account of their cruel treatment of him, one day said to him, 'Costantino, do not be cast down, for I will provide for your well-being and sustenance, and for my own as well.' Whereupon the cat sallied forth from the house and went into

the fields, where it lay down and feigned to be asleep so cleverly that an unsuspecting leveret came close up to where it was lying, and was forthwith seized and killed.

Then, carrying the leveret, the cat went to the king's palace, and having met some of the courtiers who were standing about it, said that it wanted to speak to the king. When the king heard that a cat had begged an audience with him, he bade them bring it into his presence, and, having asked it what its business was, the cat replied that Costantino, its master, had sent a leveret as a present to the king, and begged his gracious acceptance of the same. And with these words it presented the leveret to the king, who was pleased to accept it, asking at the same time who this Costantino might be. The cat replied that he was a young man who for virtue and good looks had no superior, and the king, on hearing this report, gave the cat a kindly welcome, and ordered them to set before it meat and drink of the best. The cat, when it had eaten and drunk enough, dexterously filled the bag in which it had brought the leveret with all sorts of good provender, when no one was looking that way, and having taken leave of the king, carried the spoil back to Costantino.

The two brothers, when they saw Costantino making good cheer over the victuals, asked him to let them have a share, but he paid them back in their own coin, and refused to give them a morsel, wherefore on this account the brothers hereafter were tormented with gnawing envy of Costantino's good fortune. Now Costantino, though he was a good-looking youth, had suffered so much privation and distress that his face was rough and covered with blotches, which caused him much discomfort; so the cat having taken him one day down to the river, washed him and licked him carefully with its tongue from head to foot, and tended him so well that in a few days he was quite freed from his ailment. The cat still went on carrying presents to the royal palace in the fashion already described, and by these means got a living for Costantino.

But after a time the cat began to find these journeyings to and from the palace somewhat irksome, and it feared moreover that the king's courtiers might become impatient thereanent; so it said to Costantino, 'My master, if you will only do what I shall tell you, in a short time you will find yourself a rich man.' 'And how will you manage this?' said Costantino. Then the cat answered, 'Come with me, and do not trouble yourself about anything, for I have a plan for

making a rich man of you which cannot fail.' Whereupon the cat and Costantino betook themselves to a spot on the bank of the river which was hard by the king's palace, and forthwith the cat bade its master to strip off all his clothes and to throw himself into the river. Then it began to cry and shout in a loud voice, 'Help, help, run, run, for Messer Costantino is drowning!' It happened that the king heard what the cat was crying out, and bearing in mind what great benefits he had received from Costantino, he immediately sent some of his household to the rescue. When Costantino had been dragged out of the water and dressed by the attendants in seemly garments, he was led into the presence of the king, who gave him a hearty welcome, and inquired of him how it was that he found himself in the water; but Costantino, on account of his agitation, knew not what reply to make; so the cat, who always kept at his elbow, answered in his stead, 'You must know, O king! that some robbers, who had learned by the agency of a spy that my master was taking a great store of jewels to offer them to you as a present, laid wait for him and robbed him of his treasure, and then, wishing to murder him, they threw him into the river, but by the aid of these gentlemen he has escaped death.' The king, when he heard this, gave orders that Costantino should enjoy the best of treatment, and seeing that he was well made and handsome, and believing him to be very rich, he made up his mind to give him his daughter Elisetta to wife, and to endow her with a rich dowry of gold and jewels and sumptuous raiment.

When the nuptial ceremonies were completed and the festivities at an end, the king bade them load ten mules with gold and five with the richest garments, and sent the bride, accompanied by a great concourse of people, to her husband's house. Costantino, when he saw himself so highly honoured and loaded with riches, was in sore perplexity as to where he should carry his bride, and took counsel with the cat thereanent. Said the cat: 'Be not troubled over this business, my master; we will provide for everything.' So as they were all riding on merrily together the cat left the others and rode on rapidly in advance, and after it had left the company a long way behind, it came upon certain cavaliers whom it thus addressed: 'Alas! you poor fellows, what are you doing here? Get hence as quickly as you can, for a great body of armed men is coming along this road and will surely attack and despoil you. See, they are now quite near; listen to the noise of the neighing horses.' Whereupon

the horsemen, overcome with fear, said to the cat : ‘What then shall we do?’ and the cat made answer : ‘It will be best for you to act in this wise. If they should question you as to whose men you are, you must answer boldly that you serve Messer Costantino, and then no one will molest you.’ Then the cat left them, and, having ridden on still farther, came upon great flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, and it told the same story and gave the same counsel to the shepherds and drovers who had charge of these. Then going on still farther it spake in the same terms to whomsoever it chanced to meet.

As the cavalcade of the princess passed on, the gentlemen who were accompanying her asked of the horsemen whom they met the name of their lord, and of the herdsmen who might be the owner of all these sheep and oxen, and the answer given by all was that they served Messer Costantino. Then the gentlemen of the escort said to the bridegroom : ‘So, Messer Costantino, it appears we are now entering your dominions?’ and Costantino nodded his head in token of assent, and in like manner he made answer to all their interrogations, so that all the company on this account judged him to be enormously rich. In the meantime the cat had ridden on and had come to a fair and stately castle, which was guarded by a very weak garrison, and these defenders the cat addressed in the following words : ‘My good men, what is it you do? Surely you must be aware of the ruin which is about to overwhelm you.’ ‘What is the ruin you speak of?’ demanded the guards. ‘Why, before another hour shall have gone by,’ replied the cat, ‘your place will be beleaguered by a great company of soldiers, who will cut you in pieces. Do you not already hear the neighing of the horses and see the dust in the air? Wherefore, unless you are minded to perish, take heed to my advice, which will bring you safely out of all danger. For if anyone shall demand of you whose this castle is, say that it belongs to Messer Costantino Fortunato.’ And when the time came the guards gave answer as the cat had directed; for when the noble escort of the bride had arrived at the stately castle, and certain gentlemen had inquired of the guards the name of the lord of the castle, they were answered that it was Messer Costantino Fortunato; and when the whole company had entered the castle they were honourably lodged therein.

Now the lord of this castle was a certain Signor Valentino, a

very brave soldier, who only a few days ago had left his castle to bring back thereto the wife he had recently espoused, but as ill-fortune would have it, there happened to him on the road, somewhere before he came to the place where his beloved wife was abiding, an unhappy and unforeseen accident by which he straightway met his death. So Costantino Fortunato retained the lordship of Valentino's castle. Not long after this Morando, King of Bohemia, died, and the people by acclamation chose Costantino Fortunato for their king, seeing that he had espoused Elisetta, the late king's daughter, to whom by right the succession to the kingdom belonged. And by these means Costantino rose from an estate of poverty or even beggary to be a powerful king, and lived long with Elisetta his wife, leaving children by her to be the heirs of his kingdom.

The fable told by Fiordiana gave great pleasure to all the company, and the Signora, in order that time might not be wasted, gave her command to propose her riddle forthwith, and the damsel in a sprightly ready spirit told it in the following terms :

Through a flowery garden gay,
A red and a white rose run alway ;
Unwearied ever along they fare,
And sparkle bright beyond compare.
There stands in the midst an oak-tree tall,
From which twelve branches spring and fall ;
And every branch from out its store
Give acorns four, and gives no more.

Amongst the company there was no one found who could interpret this obscure riddle, and although one affirmed it to mean this and another that, nevertheless all their solutions were faulty. Wherefore Fiordiana, perceiving that her enigma was like to remain unsolved, said : " Ladies and gentlemen, by my enigma I meant to shadow forth nothing else than the planetary system, which may well be likened to a garden filled with flowers, that is to say, the stars. Through it there runs a red rose, which is the sun, and a white rose, which is the moon, and these both by night and by day keep on their course shining bright and illuminating the universe. And in the midst of this system is planted an oak, which is the year, having twelve branches to typify the twelve months. On each branch grow four acorns, the four weeks."

When the listeners heard this, the real solution of Fiordiana's

clever enigma, they all gave it the highest praise, and Lionora, who sat in the next seat, without waiting for any further command from the Signora, began her story.

THE SECOND FABLE.

Xenofonte, a notary, makes his will, and leaves to Bertuccio, his son, three hundred ducats, of which the young man spends one hundred in the purchase of a dead body, and two hundred in the ransom of the daughter of Crisippo, King of Nobarra, Tarquinia by name, whom he afterwards takes to wife.



HERE is a common proverb which teaches us that we shall never be losers by the performance of any kindly act, and that this proverb is a true one is clearly shown by what happened to the son of a certain notary, who, though on one occasion he was censured by his mother for spending (as she deemed) his money amiss, was in the end commended by her, and was enabled to bring the affair to an issue pleasing to both of them.

In Trino, a village of Piamonte, there lived in times now some years ago, a notary, a discreet and intelligent man, called by name Xenofonte, who had one son fifteen years of age named Bertuccio, a youth who was by nature more simpleton than sage. It happened that one day Xenofonte fell ill, and, seeing that the end of his life was now drawing near, he made his last will, according to which instrument he appointed Bertuccio his lawfully-born son his heir, as it was natural that he should do, making, however, this condition, that he should not be permitted to enjoy full and uncontrolled possession of his estate until he should have attained his thirtieth year. In mitigation of this, however, he expressed a wish that when Bertuccio should be twenty-five years of age there should be handed over to him three hundred ducats of his wealth wherewith to trade and barter.

After the testator's death, when Bertuccio's twenty-fifth birthday had come, the young man demanded of his mother, who was the executrix of his father's will, that she should hand over to him one hundred ducats out of the above-named sum. The mother, who could not deny his request, seeing that it was according to her

husband's intention, at once gave him the money, begging him at the same time to employ it with prudence and judgment, and by the use of it make some gain for himself whereby they might be able to keep a better household. To this request of his mother Bertuccio replied that he would not fail to put it to a use which would satisfy her.

Having received his money, Bertuccio set out upon his travels, and as he journeyed he one day encountered a thief who had just slain a merchant on the public highway, and, although the poor man was quite dead, the robber still continued to strike and wound him afresh. When Bertuccio saw what the ruffian was doing, he was greatly moved to pity, and cried out, 'What is it you do, my good man? Do you not see that he is dead already?' Whereupon the highwayman, with his hands all stained with blood, cried out in an angry voice, 'Get you gone from here as quickly as you can, for your own good. If you do not, you will meet with something not to your taste.' Then said Bertuccio, 'Brother, are you willing to hand over to me the corpse of this dead man? If you will let me have it, I will pay you well for it.' The highwayman said, 'How much will you give me for it?' 'I will give you therefor fifty ducats,' replied Bertuccio. 'This is a very small sum of money compared with the value of the corpse,' said the highwayman. 'If you wish to have it, it shall be yours for eighty ducats.' Bertuccio, who was of a kindly, charitable nature, at once paid over to the highwayman eighty ducats, and having hoisted the dead body on his shoulders, he carried it off to a neighbouring church and there caused it to be honourably buried, leaving likewise the residue of the hundred ducats to be spent in sacred offices and in masses for the repose of the soul of the murdered man.

Bertuccio, being now stripped of all his money and having nothing in his purse wherewith to live, went back to his home, and when his mother saw him approaching she deemed that he must have made some money; so she went to meet him, inquiring of him how he had fared in his trafficking. He replied that he had prospered mightily; whereupon his mother rejoiced greatly, giving thanks to God that He had at last endowed her son with intelligence and good sense. Said Bertuccio: 'Yesterday, my mother, I traded so well that I saved your soul and mine own also; therefore, whenever our souls may take flight from these our mortal bodies, they will go direct to

Paradise.' And then he told her everything that he had done from beginning to end. As soon as his mother heard what he had to say, she was overcome with grief, and reproached him bitterly for his folly.

Before many days had passed Bertuccio once more approached his mother, and asked her to give him the rest of the three hundred ducats which his father had bequeathed to him. The mother, who was not able to gainsay this request of his, cried out as one in despair, 'Here are your two hundred ducats; take them, and do your worst with them, and never come back to this house again!' To this speech Bertuccio answered: 'Good mother, do not be afraid, but be of good cheer, for this time I will assuredly act so that you will be fully satisfied with me.' Whereupon the son, having taken his money, departed, and after he had travelled a short distance he came into a certain wood, where he chanced to meet two soldiers who had just captured Tarquinia, the daughter of Crisippo, King of Novarra. Between her two captors there had arisen a very sharp dispute as to which of them had the strongest claim on the person of their captive, and Bertuccio, when he came up to them, thus addressed them, saying: 'Oh! my brothers, what is this thing you are doing? Would you cut one another's throats on account of this damsel? If you will only hand her over to me I will give you in return a guerdon which will assuredly satisfy both of you.' Hereupon the soldiers left off fighting the one with the other, and demanded of Bertuccio how much he would be inclined to give them if they would promise to leave the damsel at his disposal. To this he made answer that he would give them two hundred ducats.

The soldiers, knowing nothing of the fact that Tarquinia was the daughter of a king, and being, moreover, in fear of death on account of what they had done, took the two hundred ducats, which they shared in equal parts, and left the damsel in Bertuccio's keeping. The youth, greatly delighted that he had delivered the maiden, went back once more to his home and said to his mother: 'Oh! mother, you will have no cause this time to make complaint that I have not spent my money to a good purpose, forasmuch as I, bearing in mind how solitary is the life you lead here, have purchased this damsel with the two hundred ducats you gave me, and have brought her home to you in order that she may bear you company.' The mother, when she perceived what her son had done, felt that this last freak of his was

in truth more than she could bear ; so turning towards him she began to assault him with bitter words and grave reproofs, wishing the while that he was lying dead before her, for the reason that in her sight he was nought else than the ruin and disgrace of the house. But the son, who was by disposition very gentle, did not let his anger be kindled by these words of his mother ; on the other hand, he tried with peaceful speech to comfort her, affirming that he had done this thing entirely for love of her, and so that she might no longer live such a lonely life.

The King of Novarra, when he discovered that his daughter was lost, sent out a great quantity of soldiers in divers directions to see whether they could gather any news of her, and after they had diligently searched all the country over and over again, the news was brought to them that in the house of one Bertuccio da Trino in Piamonte there was abiding a maiden whom the said Bertuccio had bought for the sum of two hundred ducats. Whereupon the soldiers of the king forthwith took their way towards Piamonte, and having come there they sought out Bertuccio, of whom they inquired whether a certain maiden had fallen into his hands. To this Bertuccio replied, ‘It is true that some days ago I bought a young girl from certain robbers into whose hands she had fallen, but who she may be I know not.’ ‘Where is she now?’ asked the soldiers. ‘She is in the keeping of my mother,’ answered Bertuccio, ‘who loves her as dearly as if she were her own child.’ When they had gone into Bertuccio’s house the soldiers found the princess there, and for the reason that she was now meanly clad and thin and shrunken of visage through the many sufferings and hardships she had undergone, they scarcely knew her. But after they had gazed upon her for some time, and duly conned each feature, they were assured, from the description given of her, who she must be, and declared that in truth she was Tarquinia, the daughter of Crisippo, King of Novarra, rejoicing mightily the while that they had found her. Bertuccio, who was fully satisfied that what the soldiers said was the truth, cried out, ‘Brethren, if the maiden be indeed the one ye seek, take her at once and conduct her home, for I am well content that it should be so.’ But Tarquinia, before she took her departure, laid a command upon Bertuccio, that if at any time news should be brought to him how King Crisippo was about to give his daughter in marriage, he should straightway betake himself to Novarra, and when he

should have come into the presence of the court, he should raise his right hand to his head to let her know that he was there, declaring in the end that she had resolved to have him for her husband, and no other man. Then, having bidden farewell to Bertuccio and his mother, she took her way back to Novarra.

The king, as soon as he beheld his daughter, who had been thus restored to him, wept plentifully for joy, and after many endearments and fatherly kisses he inquired of her how it was that she had been lost. Whereupon the damsel, weeping the while, told him all the circumstances as to how she had been captured by robbers, how these had sold her, and how, after all her perils, her virginity had been preserved. A short time after her return to her father's court Tarquinia recovered all her beauty, and became plump and fresh and lovely as a rose, whereupon King Crisippo let the report be spread abroad that he wished to find a husband for his daughter. As soon as this news came to the ears of Bertuccio, he immediately took his way towards Novarra, mounted upon an old mare who was so lean that it would have been easy to count all the bones in her body.

As the good Bertuccio was thus riding along, equipped in very scurvy fashion, he encountered a noble cavalier richly accoutred, and accompanied by a great train of followers. The cavalier, with a merry face, thus addressed Bertuccio : ' Where are you going all alone, my brother ? ' And to this Bertuccio replied, ' To Novarra. ' ' And on what business are you bound ? ' said the cavalier. ' If you will listen to me I will tell you why I am making this journey, ' said Bertuccio. ' Three months ago I delivered the daughter of the King of Novarra, who by ill-luck had been captured by robbers, and I ransomed her from their hands with my own money. Before she parted with me she laid a command upon me, that as soon as I should hear the report that her father was about to give her in marriage, I should forthwith go to Novarra, and, having made my way to the royal palace, should lift my right hand to my head as a sign of my presence. She told me, likewise, that she would take no other man for her husband but me. ' Then said the cavalier, ' But I, forsooth, will get there long before you, and will win the daughter of the king for my wife, for the reason that I am far better mounted than you, and clad in richer and more sumptuous apparel. ' Then said the good Bertuccio, ' Go on your way, my lord, and good luck go with you ! I shall rejoice at your good fortune as if it were my own. '

As soon as the cavalier saw how great was the urbanity, not to say the simplicity, of the young man, he said, ‘Give me at once your clothes and the mare you are riding, and take in exchange this charger of mine and my rich clothes, and ride on to Novarra, and good luck go with you! But I make a condition, that when you return to me here you shall give me back my clothes and my horse, together with the half of whatever you may have won for yourself.’ And Bertuccio made answer that he would agree to do all this.

Whereupon Bertuccio, mounted upon the noble horse and richly clad in the raiment of the cavalier, rode on to Novarra, and, having entered the city and reached the royal palace, he saw Crisippo the king standing on a balcony and looking down into the piazza. The king, when he remarked this handsome and well-favoured youth, so nobly mounted and accoutred, said within himself, ‘Ah! would to God that Tarquinia, my daughter, might be disposed to take this young man for her husband! Then, indeed, I should be mightily well content.’ After this he went down from the balcony into the audience chamber, where were gathered a great number of high nobility who had come to look upon the princess. Bertuccio, having by this time dismounted from his horse, went into the palace and stationed himself amongst the humbler folk therein congregated. The king Crisippo, seeing that a very large number of gentlemen and cavaliers had now come together into the hall, bade them summon his daughter into his presence, and when she was come he thus addressed her: ‘Tarquinia, you must know that a great number of noble gentlemen are here assembled to demand of me your hand in marriage. Now look round about you on every side, and consider well which one of all those you see here seems to please you best, and, when you have fixed on any certain one, he shall be your husband.’ Tarquinia, as she walked through the hall, caught sight of Bertuccio, who held up his right hand to his head in the manner prescribed by her, and she knew him at once. Then, turning towards her father, she said, ‘Sacred majesty, if it be your pleasure, I will take none other but this man for my husband.’ Thereupon the king, who desired as much as Tarquinia that this thing should come to pass, answered, ‘Be it as you will.’ And before the company dispersed the king caused the nuptials to be celebrated in the most sumptuous and magnificent fashion, to the great contentment and delight of bride and bridegroom alike.

And when the time came for Bertuccio to conduct his new spouse

to his home, he mounted his horse, and, having come to the spot where he had first met the cavalier, he found him still abiding there. The cavalier straightway accosted him, and said, 'My brother, take now this mare of yours and your clothing, and give me back my horse and my garments, together with half of whatever you may have gained since we parted.' Whereupon Bertuccio, with good grace, gave up the horse and the accoutrements which belonged to the cavalier, and besides these handed over to him the half of whatever gift the king had bestowed upon him. But the cavalier said, 'You have not yet given me the half of all that is my due, seeing that you have not divided with me your wife.' To this speech Bertuccio made answer, 'But in what manner will it be possible to divide her?' The cavalier said, 'Can we not cut her in half?' Then Bertuccio replied, 'Ah, my lord, it would be too great a sin and shame thus to slay such a woman! Rather than so wicked a deed should be done, and she be killed, take her all for your own, and lead her away, for I have already received benefits enough from your great courtesy.' The cavalier, when he perceived of what a simple and kindly nature Bertuccio was, said to him, 'Oh! my brother, take everything that I have, for all that you see here belongs to you, and I give you full possession of my horse, of all my raiment, of my treasure, and of my share in this fair lady. And now you must know that I myself am none other than the spirit of that man to whom you gave honourable sepulture after he had been slain by a highway robber, and on whose behalf you caused to be said many masses and other divine offices for the welfare of his soul. Wherefore I, as a recompense for the great service done by you, hand over to you everything I have, at the same time announcing to you that for you and for your good mother as well there are prepared habitations in Heaven above, where you will dwell in perpetual bliss.' And, having spoken these words, the spirit of the cavalier straightway disappeared.

After this Bertuccio returned to his home rejoicing, taking with him Tarquinia his bride, whom he presented to his mother, giving her at the same time a daughter-in-law and a daughter. The mother, having tenderly embraced Tarquinia, accepted her as her daughter, rendering thanks to the supreme Deity who had so beneficently worked on their behalf. And thus I declare at the end, as well as at the beginning of my story, that we shall never lose anything by doing a kindly action to another.

As soon as Lionora had brought her fable to an end, she turned to the Signora and spake thus : ‘Signora, by your leave I will conform to the rule which we have observed from the beginning.’ And the Signora with a gracious smile bade her give her enigma.

I tell of one who succour gave
Another one from death to save ;
In these our days we sadly own,
Such kindly deeds full rare are grown.
Because Life battles aye with Death,
Men chide thereat, and waste their breath.
First hid the meaning was, but soon
Revealed the purpose of the boon.
Life sat upon a branch above,
And gently giving love for love,
Drew back from death the one below,
Her kindly shield from bitter foe.

There arose a great dispute concerning the real meaning of this skilfully-conceived enigma ; however, there was no one who was keen-witted enough to hit the mark, so the prudent Lionora gave the interpretation thereof in this wise : “ By the brink of a clear gushing spring there stood a thick-leaved tree, in the high branches of which was a bird’s nest, full of lovely nestlings, over which the parent bird kept careful guard. It chanced that a youth who was passing by below caught sight of a serpent which was about to climb up into the tree, and killed it with his sword. Then the youth was seized with desire to get him to drink some of the water from the fountain, whereupon the mother of the nestlings he had saved from death befouled the water by casting down therein the dirt from her nest, and this thing she did again and again. The youth was mightily astonished at what he saw, and, having drawn up some of the water of the fountain, he gave it to a little dog he had with him to drink, and straightway the beast died by reason of the poisonous water it took. Then the youth understood how his life had been preserved on account of what the bird had done.” This excellent interpretation of Lionora’s subtle enigma won high praise from all the company, and especially from Diana, who, without any farther persuasion from the others, began her fable in the following words.

THE THIRD FABLE.

Don Pomporio, a monk, is charged before his abbot with excessive gluttony, and saves himself from punishment by telling a fable which hits somewhat sharply the weaknesses of the abbot himself.



I WOULD fain have been left free this evening and absolved from the burden of telling a fable, because in truth I find I cannot recall to memory a single one which will be likely to please you. But, in order to avoid any interruption of the rule which we have followed heretofore, I will do my best and relate one which, though you will hardly gather much pleasure therefrom, may nevertheless be worth listening to.

In times now long past there lived in a famous monastery a certain monk, a man of mature age, of some mark, and a huge eater ; indeed, he was wont to boast that it would be a light task for him to eat at a single meal a well-fattened quarter of veal and a pair of capons to boot. This good monk, who was called by name Don Pomporio, had a platter which he jestingly termed his oratory of devotion, and this platter was big enough in size to hold seven good ladlesful of soup. And over and above his due allowance of food, he made it his habit every day, both at dinner and at supper as well, to empty this platter, filled with broth or soup of one kind or another, without letting a single drop go to waste. Besides this, all the leavings which remained as overplus on the plates of the other monks, whether they were many or few, were gathered up as gifts to the oratory and put to the uses of devotion. And however foul and dirty they might be, it mattered nought to him, forasmuch as no scraps of any sort came amiss for the purpose of his oratory, and he devoured them as greedily as if he had been a famished wolf. The other brethren of the monastery, when they remarked the unbridled gluttony of this man and his inordinate rapacity, were mightily astonished at the baseness of his nature, and would often essay to remonstrate with him, now with kindly and now with sharp-tongued speeches, over his detestable courses. But the more the brethren busied themselves in trying to bring him into a better mind, the more there grew within him the lust to add to the heap of scraps for

his oratory, and he took no heed whatever of any words of counsel or reproach. I must not neglect to say that this swinish monk had one solitary virtue, that is to say, he never lost his temper, and his fellows might hurl at him what hard words they liked without rousing in him any spite or animosity.

But one day it came to pass that they carried an accusation against him before the father abbot, who, as soon as he heard what the charge against him was, caused him to be summoned into his presence and thus addressed him : ‘ Don Pomporio, there has been laid before me the testimony of your brethren as to your behaviour, and this, besides being in itself a crying shame to you, begets great scandal in the monastery.’ To this speech Don Pomporio made reply : ‘ Tell me then what is the charge that my accusers make against me. I am in sooth the meekest and the most peacefully-minded monk now abiding in your monastery. I never interfere with anyone or cause any disturbance whatever, preferring to pass my days in tranquillity and quiet, and if perchance I should suffer aught of injury at the hands of another, I bear my trouble patiently, and give no cause of offence therefor.’ Then said the abbot : ‘ But does this seem to you to be a seemly and praiseworthy thing? You have a certain trencher which you use, not like a decent monk, but rather like a dirty, stinking pig. Into this you gather, over and above your own allowance of food, all the fragments which your brethren leave as superabundant, and this mess you devour without consideration and without shame, not as if you were a human creature, or a man vowed to religion, but rather as if you were some famished wild beast. Cannot you see, gross beast and good-for-nothing as you are, that all the others in the monastery look upon you as a buffoon?’ Don Pomporio answered : ‘ And for what reason, good father abbot, ought I to be ashamed? Where in all the world shall be found any shame nowadays, and who has fear or respect for the same? If indeed you will give me leave and licence to speak freely, and without fear of consequences, I will answer you; but if you refuse this boon, I will simply yield you my obedience and keep silence.’ Then said the abbot, ‘ Say anything you like, for I am content to listen to you.’ Don Pomporio, assured by these words, then spake as follows : ‘ Father abbot, we in sooth are in the condition of men who carry dossers upon their backs, that is to say, we can see what lies upon our neighbour’s shoulders, but not what lies upon our own. I, if I had the chance

of filling my belly with rich and delicate food after the fashion of those who sit in high places, would assuredly eat vastly less of the stuff which I now swallow ; but, seeing that I eat rough simple food which is very easily digested, it seems to me in no wise a shameful thing to eat a good quantity of it.' The abbot, who was wont, together with the prior and with certain others of his friends, to feast sumptuously off choice capons and pheasants and godwits, took good heed of the words which the monk had spoken, and, fearing lest he should publish abroad what he evidently knew about the table kept by his superior, excused him forthwith, enjoining him at the same time to feed in the manner which pleased him best, and telling him that it would be his own loss if he should not discover the art of good eating and drinking.

Thereupon Don Pomporio went out of the abbot's presence carrying his pardon with him, and henceforth from day to day redoubled his allowance, heaping up his sacred oratory of devotion with more and more good things. The other monks still went on with their reproaches against him on account of his bestial greed ; so one day, by reason of their censures, he mounted the pulpit of the refectory and wittily related to them the following fable : ' In times now long past it chanced one day that Wind and Water and Shame foregathered in the same hostelry. Then, as they sat at meat together and talked, now of this thing and now of that, Shame spake in these words to Wind and Water : " When, O brother and sister ! have we ever before met together so peacefully as we are at this present moment ? " To this Water made answer : " Of a truth Shame speaks with reason, and forsooth God above only knows when again will be found another opportunity for our meeting ; but in case I should desire at any time to find you, O brother, tell me whereabouts your dwelling lies." The Wind said : " My sister, if you should wish ever to come to me, and to take your pleasure in my company, you need only search in the midst of every open place of outgoing, and in every narrow street, and you will quickly find me, for in such places as these I make my home. And you, Water, where do you live ? " " I abide," said Water, " in the lowest lying marshes, and amongst the watercourses, and however dry and parched the earth may be you will always find me there. And now tell me, Shame, where is your home ? " " Of a truth," said Shame, " I cannot tell ; forasmuch as I am a wretched creature and rejected by all. If you look amongst the

great ones of the earth, and seek me, you will assuredly never find me there, because they never desire to behold me, and make their jests upon me. If you search for me amongst the people of low estate, you will see that they are so debased that they care little for me. If you go in quest of me amongst women, whether they be matrons, widows, or maids, you will find your labour equally vain, seeing that all of these flee from me as from a monstrous thing. If you would see me amongst monks, or priests, or nuns, I shall be found nowhere near them, for it is their wont to drive me away with sticks and scars; and so it comes to pass that up to this hour I have not been able to light upon any dwelling-place where I can abide continually. Wherefore, unless I may be suffered to bestow myself with you, I shall be as one deprived of every hope." Wind and Water, when they listened to this speech, were strongly moved to compassion, and let Shame live in their company. But before many days had passed there arose a great tempest, and the wretched creature, vexed both by the wind and the water, and not finding any place of rest, was sunk and overwhelmed in the sea. From this time forth I have sought to find her in divers places, and I am still seeking her, but I have met with no trace of her, neither have I heard tidings of her from any man I have encountered. And for the reason that I have not been able to find her, I trouble myself little or nothing on her account; so I will live the life which seems good to me, and you can do the same, forasmuch as in this our day such a thing as Shame is not to be found in all the world.'

Although Diana in her opening words had led the company to expect little merit in her story, it won nevertheless the favourable notice of the company. But the damsel, who was free from ambition and little disposed to care for praise of any sort, at once set forth her enigma in these terms :

A goddess great, and fair, and strong,
 Bears rule amidst the mortal throng;
 No stranger sway than hers is given
 To any power of hell or heaven.
 Man hails her yoke with keen delight,
 Unmindful of the fatal blight
 She sheds on body and on mind,
 On play of wit, on impulse kind,
 On every grace from virtue sprung,
 On every fruit of brain or tongue.

Wretched the pilgrim to her shrine ;
 She strikes him with her touch malign,
 Dries up his blood till, fell and cold,
 Death comes and has him safe in hold.

The meaning of this enigma was divined, if not by all, by the greater part of the listeners. They declared this fair strange lady to be nothing else than gluttony, which weakens the bodies of all those who eat too much, and uproots every sort of virtue, and also is the cause and source of death itself, seeing that the tale of those who die on account of gluttony is vastly greater than that of those who fall by the sword. Isabella, who was sitting by Diana's side, remarked that they had now brought to a fitting end the discussion concerning the enigma, so she at once began to tell her fable in the following words.

THE FOURTH FABLE.

A buffoon by means of a pleasantry tricks a certain gentleman, and is cast into prison therefor, from whence, on account of another jest, he is liberated.



HERE is a saying which is with good reason held in wide esteem, that, though the antics of a jester may now and then divert us, it follows not that we must always take pleasure therein. On this account, seeing that I have been chosen to take the fourth place in the story-telling of the present evening, there has come into my mind the recollection of a fable which tells how a certain buffoon played a knavish trick upon a gentleman, who contrived to avenge himself and get full satisfaction, but in spite of this the fellow put yet another jest upon him, in such wise that he himself was thereby liberated from the prison into which he had been thrown.

Vicenza, as is well known to all of you, is a noble, rich, and splendid city, and the dwelling-place of many men of brilliant parts. Once upon a time there lived in this city Signor Hector, a member of the ancient and noble family of the Dreseni, who far surpassed all others of his age in the elegance of his discourse and the loftiness of his mind, thus giving and leaving behind him a noble name to those

who might come after him. In sooth, so great were the gifts of mind and body enjoyed by this noble gentleman, that he well deserved to have had his effigy carved as a marvel of art and workmanship, and set up in the public ways and the piazzas and churches and theatres of the city, and to have had his name exalted with the most enthusiastic praise as high as the stars of heaven. So great indeed was his beneficence, that it appeared as if no quality at all worthy of remembrance was wanting in him. His patience in listening was inexhaustible; equally weighty were the answers he gave to any who might inquire of him. His fortitude in adversity, the splendour of his deeds, the justice and mercy of his decisions—in short, the whole range of his conduct allowed it to be said that the great-souled Signor Hector took the foremost place amongst the members of the family of the Dreseni.

It happened one day that a certain gentleman sent to this illustrious nobleman a quarter of very choice veal. The servant who carried the meat, as soon as he came to the palace of the Signor Hector, chanced to meet there a sharp-sighted thief, and this latter, as soon as his eye fell upon the lackey with the quarter of veal, hastily went up to him and inquired of him who might have sent the meat he was carrying. Then, after having learnt from the servant who it was, the knave charged him to wait there awhile until he should have told the signor of the gift. Whereupon, having gone into the house, he began (after the manner of buffoons) to juggle somewhat and play the zany, tarrying some time in order to befool both the servant without and the master within, but letting fall no word concerning the present which had been sent. Then he went back to the door, and, in the name of the master of the house, he returned due thanks to the sender of the veal, in terms which were entirely well fitted for the occasion, ordering the servant at the same time to follow him, inasmuch as the Signor Hector desired to pass on the present to a certain friend of his. In this fashion he cleverly led the servant away to his own house, where he found his brother, to whom he handed over the veal with the intention of having it cooked for his own eating. This done, they went their several ways, and the servant, when he returned home, gave to his master the thanks which had been tendered to him in the name of Signor Hector.

One day, not long after this, the gentleman who had sent the quarter of veal met Signor Hector and put a question to him (as is

the custom of some to do) whether he had found the veal good and well fattened. Whereupon Signor Hector, knowing nought of the matter concerning which the gentleman spoke, demanded of him what veal he might be talking of, affirming that he himself had received no quarter of veal or third part either. Then the donor who had sent it called his servant and inquired of him concerning the person to whom he had given the meat. The servant forthwith gave full description of the man, saying, 'The man who took the veal from me in the name of his master was a fellow fat in his body, with a merry eye and a big paunch, and with a mumbling trick of speech. He bade me take the veal to the house of another gentleman.' Signor Hector, by means of this description, immediately perceived in his mind who the rogue must be, for the reason that the fellow in question was wont often to play such tricks. Thus, when he had summoned the knave before him, he found that the matter stood exactly as he had suspected, and after having taken to task the culprit, he sent him quickly to prison, and commanded them to clap his legs in fetters, indignant that such a disgrace and shame should have been put upon him by a juggler who had thus rashly ventured to deceive him.

But, as it came to pass, the rascally hanger-on was not fated to undergo a whole day's incarceration, because in the palace of the judicature, where the buffoon was examined, there was by a curious accident a certain officer called by name Vitello.¹ This man the prisoner begged to come to him, and, either to heap up one offence upon another, or to discover some way out of his misfortune, wrote a letter to Signor Hector in these terms, and gave the same to the officer to deliver: 'Gracious signor, trusting in the generosity of your lordship I accepted the quarter of veal which was sent to you as a gift, and now in return for your kindness I send you, as a recompense for your quarter, a whole calf, and thus recommend myself to your favour.' Then he despatched the letter by the hand of the officer, who promised to see it safely delivered in his name. The officer went without tarrying to Signor Hector, and handed over to him the letter, which he read forthwith, and then gave command to his servants that they should lay hold of the calf which the buffoon had sent him as a present and slaughter it. The officer, as soon as he heard the order given to the servants that

¹ Veal, a calf.

they should take him and butcher him, quickly unsheathed the sword which he carried by his side, and, brandishing it naked in his hand and winding his cloak round his left arm, began to cry out in a loud voice, ‘It is written indeed that in the dwellings of the great wickedness rules supreme, but you shall never make veal of this calf except you first kill and dismember him. Stand back, you knaves, if you do not wish to be dead men all of you.’ All those who were standing round were astonished at this strange speech and behaviour, but nevertheless they felt themselves constrained to break out into laughter. And on account of this jest the buffoon was set at liberty, showing thus that it was not without reason that the famous philosopher Diogenes declared how men should seek to avoid the envy of friends even more studiously than the snares of foes; forasmuch as the latter are evils plain to be seen, while the former, being secret and hidden, are far more potent for harm, because our fears are never aroused into watchfulness by their presence.

Isabella here brought her brief fable to an end, and won no small praise therefor from the honourable company. Then, to complete her task, she set to work and gave an enigma for solution in the following words :

Twofold are we in our name,
But single-natured all the same ;
Made with skill and art amain,
And perfected with bitter pain.
Fair dames our service meanly prize,
And poor folk like us large in size.
To countless men we lend our aid,
And never our hard fate upbraid ;
But when our useful task is done,
No thanks we get from anyone.

“This enigma,” she said, “means no other thing than the scissors with which ladies are wont to cut thread; but amongst the poorer sort of people, such as tailors, shearers, barbers, and smiths, they are found of a size much greater than that of those used by ladies.” Isabella’s pretty riddle pleased greatly the listeners, who praised it loudly. Then Vicenza, who had been chosen to fill the last place of this present night, began to relate her fable in these words.

THE FIFTH FABLE.

Frate Bigoccio becomes enamoured of Gliceria, and, having put on lay attire, fraudulently takes her to wife; then, having gotten her with child, forsakes her, and returns to his monastery; whereupon the superior, hearing of this deed, causes her to be honourably married.

DEAR ladies, I have heard it said many a time and often, that virtue is surely fated to come to ruin through persistence in deceitful courses—a saying which may well be illustrated by what happened to a certain monk, who was held by all to be a man of piety and wisdom. This same man, having been seized with love for a young damsel, whom he ultimately took to wife, was found out in his transgression, and forced to do severe penance therefor, while the damsel herself was honourably bestowed in marriage. All this you will be able to understand from the story I am going to tell.

In Rome there once lived a certain Frate Bigoccio, born of high and noble family. He was a very young man, and one furnished with many graces of person and gifts of fortune. But it chanced that the unfortunate youth became so hotly inflamed with love for a damsel of exceeding beauty that he came perilously near to make an end of his life by reason of his amorous passion. He could get no rest either by day or by night; he grew ghastly and lean in seeming; neither physicians nor drugs worked him any benefit; he took pleasure in nothing; neither the hopes of youth nor the prospect of the abundant wealth he might hope to inherit yielded him any solace. On this account (and for the reason that he let his thoughts ever run on in this same mood, now conjuring up one fantastic remedy for his ills and now another) he resolved at last to write and address to the superior of his monastery certain forged letters, demanding for himself leave to quit the place. Having thus made up his mind, he set to work to concoct the letters as aforesaid, making believe by means of the fraudulent words therein that they came from the hand of his father, who was very sick and infirm. He wrote in these terms: ‘Reverend father, forasmuch as it is the pleasure of God, the supreme and all-powerful, to put an end to my life, and seeing that death,

who is now very near to me, will not long delay to fetch me away, I have determined before I shall take leave of this world to make my last will and testament, and to appoint as my heir my only son, who has taken vows in the monastery of your reverence. And because there is left to me in my old age no other son but this one alone, whom I desire most earnestly to see once more, and to embrace and to kiss and to bless before I die, I beg you that of your kindness you will let him come to me with all speed; otherwise, be your reverence well assured that, dying in despair, I shall go straightway to the realms of Tartarus.'

The letter having been duly presented to the superior of the monastery, and the leave to depart therein prayed for obtained, the aforesaid Bigoccio took his way to Florence, where his father dwelt, and, after he had received from his father a good store of gems and money, he purchased therewith many costly garments and horses and all other effects necessary for the maintenance of a household. Then he departed for Rome,¹ where he hired for himself a house close beside that of his lady-love, attiring himself every day in some fresh suit of silken clothes of varied fashion. In the course of a few days he contrived to become intimate with the father of the beloved damsel, and bade him to come several times as a guest to his house, presenting to him as a gift now this thing and now that. After some long time had passed in this wise, Bigoccio found a fitting and opportune season for the forwarding of his design; for one day, when the two were talking together after they had dined concerning divers matters, and especially of their business affairs (as is the common practice of men at such times), the love-stricken youth, in the course of conversation, told his companion how he was strongly inclined to take a wife. Furthermore, he said that, having ascertained his guest to be the father of a daughter exceedingly fair and graceful, and dowered with every virtue under the sun, it would give him the supremest pleasure were he to win this fair damsel to wife, and be firmly united to her by the necessary bond. He declared at the same time that he was desirous of this union solely on account of the many and excellent reports which had been brought to him concerning the lady.

The father of the damsel, who was a man of somewhat low condition, made answer that his daughter was not of the same rank, or of like condition of life to Bigoccio; moreover, that he must bear

¹ Straparola writes "à Napoli," but this is manifestly a mistake.

in mind, in celebrating nuptials with her, how she was poor and he rich, she of plebeian, he of noble birth. Seeing, however, that he was so ardently set on having the damsel about his house, the father agreed to give her to him, not to fill a wife's place so much as a servant's. Then said the young man, 'Of a surety it would not be seemly that so dainty a maid should come to me in the office of a servant, because, by reason of her many excellent gifts, she is well worthy of a man of far nobler lineage than mine. However, if it should be your pleasure to give her to me, not for a handmaid, but for my beloved wife, I will take her gladly, and I will ever accord to her that real fellowship which is the due and lawful estate of a true matron.' In the end the two companions came to an agreement, and the nuptials were celebrated; so that Frate Bigoccio got to wife the young maiden he desired.

When the night was come the husband and wife went duly to bed, and after a little, in the course of their mutual endearments, Frate Bigoccio perceived that Gliceria his wife had put gloves upon her hands; therefore he said to her, 'Gliceria, take off the gloves from your hands and put them aside; forasmuch as it is not seemly that you should be thus gloved while we are abed together.' To this Gliceria answered: 'Oh! my good husband, I could never bring myself to touch a man at such times as these with my naked fingers.' Frate Bigoccio, when he heard these words of his wife, said nothing, but occupied himself as a bridegroom should. The next evening, when the pair were making ready for bed, Frate Bigoccio took secretly some hawk's jesses, with a lot of little bells affixed thereto, and having tied these around his middle, he got into bed thus accoutred, without letting his wife perceive what he had done, and began at once to caress and embrace and kiss her, she being gloved as on the preceding night. Now because she had by this time acquired a taste for the delights of married love, she made sign to her husband that she was at his disposal, and forthwith, to her great amazement, became aware of the presence of the hawk's jesses. Whereupon she cried out, 'Oh! my husband, what thing is this? Surely it was not here last night.' To this Frate Bigoccio replied, 'What you feel are hawk's jesses, such as men use when they go a-fowling.' Then turning towards his wife he made as if he would embrace her, but poor Gliceria found that the pleasure she longed for was not to be hers. After a little she cried out, 'Ah!

husband, these hawk's jesses are not at all to my taste.' Frate Bigoccio answered, 'If you find hawk's jesses displeasing to you, I can tell you that the gloves you wear are just as much an offence to me.' And so it happened that from this moment the pair agreed by mutual consent to cast aside both gloves and jesses, and henceforth they took much pleasure one with another, so that in course of time Gliceria became with child.

For the space of a year they lived together as husband and wife, and, when the time of Gliceria's delivery was drawing nigh, Frate Bigoccio laid hands secretly on all the best and richest things in the house and took to flight, taking these chattels with him and leaving his wife pregnant. Then, after he had put on his former habit, he went back to the monastery he had quitted; and his wife, having been brought to bed of a son, waited for a long time in vain the return of her husband.

It happened that Gliceria was in the habit of going now and then to the chapel of the before-named monastery to hear mass, and one day, by chance—or rather by the will of God, who governs all things—she discovered that the Frate who did the office was no other than her husband, and recognized him forthwith. Whereupon, with all the speed she knew how to use, she went to find the superior of the monastery, and told him, with the greatest care and circumspection, all the adventures which had befallen her, as are written above. The superior, when he had been informed of all the facts, and had satisfied himself of the truth of them, at once issued a process against Frate Bigoccio, and, after he had signed it, sent it on to the general of the congregation, who thereupon bade them lay hold of the Frate and make him do such a penance as he should remember for the rest of his days. Then from the moneys of the monastery they gave Gliceria a dowry and caused her to be secretly married to another, and, having taken possession of the child, they had it brought up at their own charges.

Here the gracious Vicenza brought to an end her fable, which all the listeners without exception praised heartily, and found much to divert them therein, especially when they were told how the lady with her gloved hands discovered the jesses with the little bells attached thereto. And because the hour was already late, the Signora directed Vicenza to let her enigma be given forthwith, and she, waiting for no farther order, set it before the company in the following terms :

From everyone I something take,
 But on myself no claim I make.
 Mark well my nature. If you gaze
 Into my face I mock your ways :
 For if you sorrow, I am sad ;
 But if you smile, you make me glad.
 Because I tell truth from a lie,
 Men call me wicked, false, and sly ;
 Strange saying this, but true I ween.
 So I, to let it clear be seen
 That truth nor honesty I lack,
 Will never tell you white is black.

Not a single one of all the company had wit enough to say what Vicenza's enigma was designed to mean, seeing that the true sense thereof was so carefully hidden under the rind. But Vicenza, like a sensible maiden, gave the solution in the following terms, in order that it might not be left unguessed : " The meaning of my enigma," she said, " is the mirror into which men, and ladies as well, are wont to gaze. This same thing catches the likeness of everyone who looks into it, but not its own. It does not show you one thing for another, but shows you to be that which you are in truth."

The enigma was indeed ingenious, and quite as ingenious was the solution. But, for the reason that the whitening dawn was now beginning to appear, the Signora gave leave to everyone to go home to rest, with the understanding, however, that they should all return well equipped on the following evening, forasmuch as it was her wish that every one of the company should tell a short fable, completed as hitherto by an enigma. And to this they all gave their assent.

The End of the Eleventh Night.





Right the Twelfth.





The Fables and Enigmas of Messer Giovanni Francesco Straparola da Caravaggio.

Right the Twelfth.



THE blithe and watchful birds had now some time ago fled before the approaching shadows of night, and the bats, enemies of the sun and sacred to Proserpine, had come forth from their wonted dwellings in the caves of the rocks and were briskly wheeling their flight through the dusky air, when the honourable and courteous company of ladies and gentlemen, laying aside every troublesome and hurtful thought, took their way in merry wise to the accustomed place of meeting. When they had all seated themselves according to their due rank the Signora came forward to meet them, and gave to each one a gracious salute. Then, after they had danced several measures, exchanging amorous talk the while, the Signora (since this was her pleasure) gave command that the vase of gold should be brought forth. Having put her hand therein, she drew out the names of five of the damsels. The first of these was that of Lionora, the second that of Lodovica, the third that of Fiordiana, the fourth that of Vicenza, and the fifth that of Isabella. To these five, and to all the others as well, was granted licence to discourse with full liberty on any theme which might best accord with their humour, on the one condition alone that the fables they might tell should be shorter and more succinct than those of the preceding night. To this they, all together, and each one on her own behalf, agreed readily. Then, having made choice of the damsels whose duty

it should be to relate the fables on this, the twelfth night, the Signora gave a sign to the Trevisan and to Molino that they should sing a canzonet, and these two, promptly obedient to her command, took up their instruments, and having tuned them, sang with graceful art the following song.

SONG.

Since Time makes youth and grace and beauty vain,
 And faster flies with every day,
 Why tarry still my sorrow to allay ?
 For life and time together fade and fly,
 And all our hopes are false and unavailing ;
 Vast our desire, but soon our days are fled.
 Wherefore in deep despair I lie.
 Too late ! ah, cruel lot of mortals failing !
 Remorse will come ; then you will mourn me dead,
 And blame your cruel words which worked my bane.
 Then pity now my amorous pain,
 While yet your beauty shines, and I of love am fain.

The delightful song, sung so harmoniously by the Trevisan and Molino, pleased mightily the whole company, and everyone gave it praise loud and high. Then, as soon as the Signora perceived that all were silent, she directed Lionora, who had been chosen by lot to relate the first fable of the twelfth night, to begin her story-telling forthwith. Whereupon the damsel without delay began in this wise.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Florio, jealous of his wife, is cleverly fooled by her, and is thereby so well cured of his malady, that hereafter they live happily together.



AGAIN and again have I heard it said, dear ladies, that the cleverest stratagems of art and science are helpless when pitted against the tricks of a woman, and the reason of this is that woman sprang at her creation, not from the dry barren earth, but from the ribs of Adam our first father. Thus in the beginning they are made of flesh and not of dust, what though in the end their bodies, like men's, must come to ashes. Therefore, as it is my duty to begin our pleasant entertainment to-night, I have

determined to tell you the story of a jealous husband, who, though he was always held to be one well dowered with knowledge and good sense, was nevertheless duped by his wife, and by this discipline quickly changed from a fool into a wise man.

In Ravenna, an ancient town of Romagna, the dwelling-place of many notable men, and especially of those skilled in medicine, there lived formerly a worthy physician of rich and noble family named Florio. He, being a sprightly youth and well looked upon by all—both on account of his gracious bearing and of his skill in his art—took to wife a very fair and graceful maiden by name Dorotea; but after the nuptials it fell out, by ill-hap, that her exceeding beauty kindled in his mind so great jealousy and fear lest someone should defile his marriage bed, that he caused to be stopped with brick and mortar every aperture of the house down to the smallest crack, and in addition to this he fixed over all the windows strong gratings of iron. He even went so far as to forbid anyone, however closely related by blood or joined by affinity or by friendship, from entering his house. In short, the jealous wretch spent all his strength and study, and kept watch day and night to rid himself of every cause which could possibly sully the chastity of his wife or make her forgetful of her marriage vow. Now, under both the civil and the municipal law it is held that those who are incarcerated on account of their own debts, or of bail or surety given to their creditors, ought to be liberated and discharged after a certain season of duress; nay, even malefactors and delinquents come under the same rule; but, as far as this poor lady was concerned, it was never found possible for her, in her long-enduring affliction, to cross the threshold of the house or to break loose from her captivity, for the reason that her husband kept for the guarding of his house and for his own service varlets who were devoted to his interests. Nor was he in any less degree watchful over these guardians themselves, except when he went in and out of the house for his own pleasure. He, however, like a far-seeing cautious man, never left his home without having first searched every nook and cranny of the house, and shut close all the issues thereof, and with the utmost diligence bolted the windows with bolts and locked them with keys made with the most marvellous cunning. Thus in this cruel affliction the lady passed every day of her life. Now this discreet and prudent wife (who was in sooth the very mirror of virtue and modesty, and might justly have been put on a level with the Roman

Lucretia herself), being moved with pity for this sottish delusion of her husband, considered well in her mind how she might best work a cure of his grievous distemper. The plan she ultimately fixed upon could never have been brought to a successful issue if her own natural wit had not made plain to her what notable enterprises women may perform and bring to pass. It happened that on a certain day she and her husband made an agreement to go together on the following morning, both of them clad in monkish garb, to confess themselves at a convent which stood outside the city. Having found out a method of opening one of the windows, she chanced to see, by looking through the bars of the iron grating, that there was passing by in the street a certain youth who had professed himself to be consumed by an ardent love of her. Wherefore, after she had cautiously called to him, she said, 'To-morrow morning early you must go, clad in monkish habit, to the monastery which stands just outside the town. Then I pray you to wait for me until you shall see me coming, and my husband as well, both clad in the self-same fashion, when you must hasten in merry guise to come towards me and embrace me and kiss me, begging me at the same time to come and dine with you, and showing yourself overjoyed at meeting me in this unexpected manner ; because, as I have already told you, I and my husband have agreed to go to-morrow both of us clad in the garb of religious persons to confess ourselves at the monastery aforesaid. So be wary and of good courage, and take care that you fail not to carry out these directions which I give you.'

As soon as she had spoken, the gallant youth went his way, and having put on monk's attire and laid in a good stock of all sorts of delicate viands and exquisite wine, repaired to the monastery the lady had spoken of, and made an agreement with the reverend fathers for the loan of one of the cells in which to sleep that night. When the morning had come, he caused to be got ready yet more dainty dishes for the feast over and above those which he had already prepared, and, this business being despatched, he began to walk up and down before the doors of the monastery. Before many minutes had passed he espied his lady Dorotea approaching, clad in the habit worn by the brethren, whereupon he straightway ran to meet her with glad and joyful countenance, like to one altogether overcome by some unlooked-for and excessive happiness. Then, casting aside all fear, he cried, 'Ah ! I leave you to think what a pleasure and delight it is to see you once

again, dearly beloved brother Felix, forasmuch as so long a time has elapsed without our meeting.' And with discourse like this they embraced and kissed one other, bedewing one another's faces with imaginary tears; and, this done, he made both Dorotea and her husband his guests, and invited them to enter his cell. Then he bade them rest themselves at the table, which was superbly spread, not a single thing being wanting which the heart of man could desire. And he, having seated himself by the dame, kept pressing the choicest morsels upon her, and kissing her ardently between every mouthful. The poor jealous husband, utterly dumbfounded by this strange freak, and with his belly fuller of rage than meat, knew not where to look, and forgot his eating and drinking in the heart-breaking vexation of seeing the rare and delicate beauty of his wife, which he had so carefully guarded for himself, thus polluted by the unlawful embraces and kissing of a lecherous monk.

With pastime such as this the day was spent, and when the dusk began to fall the husband of Dorotea, whose endurance was now almost at an end, thus addressed the young man: 'Brother, it nowise irks us to be in your company, and I take it that ours is not displeasing to you, judging from the caresses you lavish on my companion. But since nightfall is approaching, and since we have now been some hours absent from our convent, whither, as you know, we are bound to return for our lodging, we pray you to suffer us to take our leave.' To this speech the young man paid little heed, but the lady, marking a sign which her husband made to her, requested on her part that they might be allowed to go their way, which grace they obtained with some difficulty, and only after Dorotea and the young man had hugged one another closely and exchanged dozens of ardent kisses.

When the two novices in disguise had returned to their home, the husband straightway began to consider how he himself had been the cause of all the ill and torment he had lately suffered, and how, after all, it was ever lost labour on a man's part to strive against the deceits and subtle inventions of women. After a short review of his conduct, he recognized his past folly and pocketed his defeat, following up his recantation by opening all his windows, and knocking off all the bars and padlocks from the doors, so that in all the city there was not a house freer or more open than his. Thus, having abolished all restraints and granted to his wife full liberty to

go whithersoever she would, he lived with her in peace, being cured of the grave and serious malady which oppressed him. And Dorotea, freed from her cruel imprisonment, loyally kept faith with her husband.

When the graceful Lionora had brought to an end her diverting story, which commended itself fully to the taste of the company, the Signora gave the word for her to complete her task by setting forth her enigma, which without waiting for farther direction she did in the following terms :

One day upon a bank of grass
I came across a pretty lass,
And something else I also viewed
Of aspect rough and coarse and rude.
Then took the maid a thing in hand,
For such a purpose duly planned,
And steadily to work she went,
To carry out her fixed intent.
She held, and would not let it go,
But worked it smartly to and fro,
Until it gave her, brisk and neat,
A pleasant savour for her meat.

Although nobody fathomed the meaning of this enigma, the men began to laugh, and the ladies blushed somewhat and hid their faces. When she saw this, Lionora at once gave the interpretation : “It is a pretty village girl seated on a bank of grass and holding between her knees a large mortar, and in her hands a pestle. This latter she works lustily, braying certain herbs, to extract therefrom their juices, which she uses to flavour her sauce.”

The company received the solution of this difficult enigma with approbation, and when they had given over laughing, the Signora directed Lodovica to set forth her story, and she, to show her readiness, began at once in these terms.

THE SECOND FABLE.

A certain fool, after having enjoyed the favours of a fair and gentle lady, is rewarded by the husband of the same.



I HAD settled in my mind to relate to you a fable of a character differing somewhat from this I am about to tell, but the story we have just heard from this my sister here has induced me to change my purpose, and made me anxious to point out to you how it happens, not seldom, that one may reap advantage from the mere fact of being a fool, and to add, as a warning, that it is always an unwise thing to make fools the sharers of our secrets.

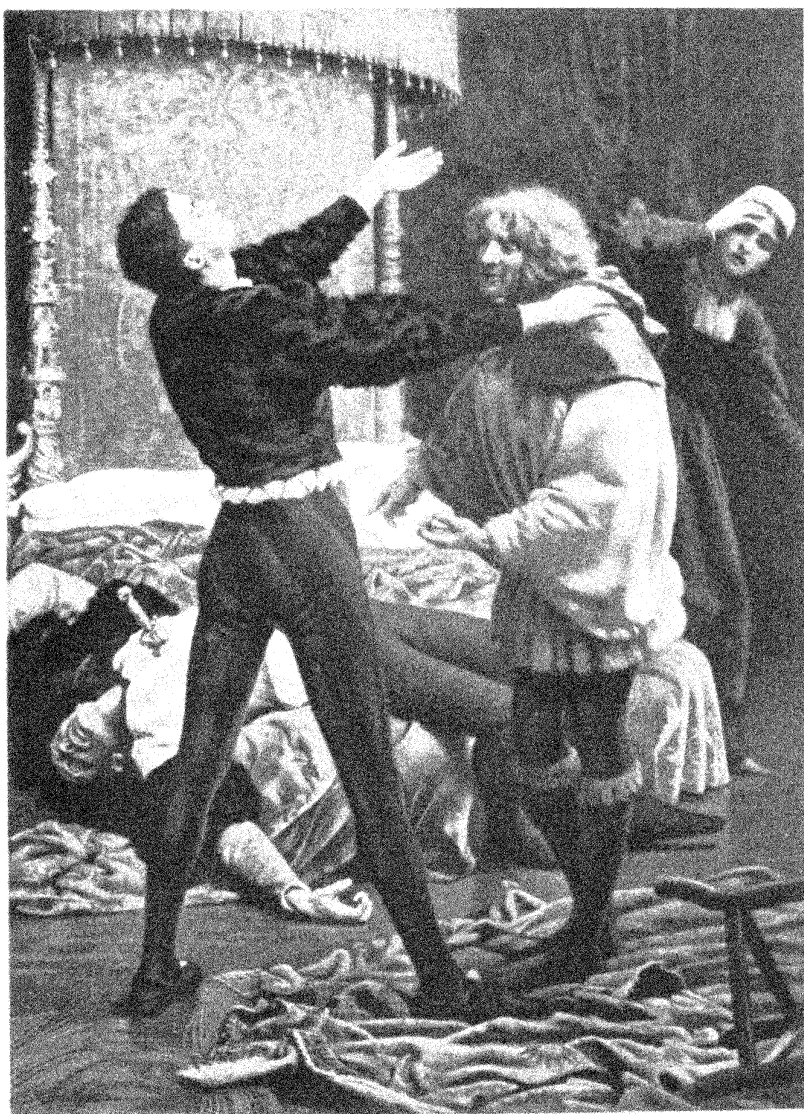
In Pisa, one of the noblest cities of Tuscany, there resided in these our times a certain lady exceedingly fair and graceful, but over her name I think it more decent and seemly to pass in silence. This lady, who was joined in the bond of matrimony with a gentleman belonging to a house of high lineage, of great wealth, and wide-spreading influence, was hotly inflamed with amorous passion for a young man of the city, fully as well furnished with charms of manner and person as she herself, and this youth she was wont to receive in her own house every day about the hour of noon, when with the greatest ease of mind and confidence they would bring into play the weapons of Cupid, both of them taking the greatest pleasure and delight from this gentle converse.

It happened one day that a simple fellow, crying out at the top of his voice, ran past the house in pursuit of a dog which had stolen from him a piece of meat and was flying with the same in its mouth along the street. And a great crowd of people joined in the chase, hooting and crying and making a hideous hurlyburly thereanent; wherefore the dog, mindful of its own skin and bent on saving its life, having found the door of the lady's house standing somewhat open, rushed into the entrance and hid itself. The fool, who had espied the dog as it was running into the door of the house, began to cry out in a loud voice as soon as he came up, knocking violently at the door and shouting, 'Drive out the thief who is hidden within here at once, and do not give shelter

to ribald rascals who richly deserve the gallows.' It chanced that at this same time the lady had her paramour with her, and she, deeming that the great concourse of people she saw below could only have come thither in order to hale forth her lover, and thus to publish abroad the offence he had committed, was in great fear lest he should fall into the clutches of justice and suffer the penalty prescribed by law for adulterers; so she opened gently the door of the house and allowed the fool to enter thereby. Then, as soon as she had once more closed the house, she threw herself on her knees before the simple fellow, and in the guise of a suppliant begged and entreated him that of his mercy he would keep silence, offering herself to him, just as she was, that he might take whatsoever pleasure of her he would, provided only that he should do nothing which might lead to the discovery of her lover. The fool (who forsooth showed himself to be shrewd enough in this matter) straightway put aside his former anger,¹ and began to embrace her tenderly and to kiss her, and in a very short space of time they fell to playing the game which Venus loves. Scarcely were they disengaged from their task when the husband of the lady came home unexpectedly, and, knocking at the door, called out aloud that someone should come and open to him.

Hereupon the lady, with noteworthy and commendable presence of mind—albeit she felt herself sorely stricken by this unlooked-for ill, and uncertain what course she should adopt in such a calamity—took the young man her lover and carefully stowed him away under the bed, all bewildered with fear and half dead as he was, and next made the fool get up into the chimney and there hide himself. Then she opened the door straightway to her husband, and, after she had lavished upon him many amorous caresses, she adroitly begged him to come to bed with her and take his pleasure. And, seeing that it was now the season of winter, the husband gave order that a fire should be kindled forthwith, because he felt he had need of warmth. Whereupon the lady caused them to bring wood for the making of the same, and she took good care that this wood should not be dry and prompt to burn quickly, but wood of the greenest that could be gotten. But the pungent smoke rising from the burning of wood of this sort made the eyes of the fool in the chimney smart acutely, and he found himself suffocated thereby in such a manner that he could

¹ Orig., *mandato il furor suo da banda*.



hardly draw his breath, and, in spite of all his efforts to keep quiet, he could not help sneezing.

When the husband of the lady heard this noise he peered up the chimney and espied the fellow who was hidden there, and at once began to abuse and to threaten him in good set terms, deeming him to be some lurking robber. But the simpleton cried out, and said: ‘Aha, Signor! you have spied out me, but you have not spied out the gallant who is hidden under the bed there. I, in sooth, have once enjoyed your wife, and once only; but he has befouled your bed a thousand times.’ When he heard these words of the fool, the husband became as it were beside himself with rage, and having looked under the bed, he found the lover there, and straightway slew him. Thereupon the fool, who had by this time come down from his hiding-place in the chimney, caught up a thick stick and began to cry out at the top of his voice, saying: ‘You have slain this man, who was a debtor of mine. By God, if you do not pay me the sum he owes me, I will lay a charge against you before the judge, and accuse you of the death of this gallant here.’

The homicide stood for a time considering well these words spoken by the fool; but in the end, when he perceived that he had little chance of getting the better of the fellow, and that his own position was one of great peril, he closed his mouth with a gift of a bagful of money. And by this means the fool by reason of his folly gained something which wisdom might well have lost.

As soon as Lodovica had came to the end of her brief fable she took up the telling¹ of her enigma at once, and, without waiting for farther word of command from the Signora, spake thus:

Gentle dames, I go to find
What aye to me is blithe and kind,
And having found it, next I ween
I set it straight my knees between;
And then I rouse the life that dwells
Within, and soon its virtue tells.
As to and fro my hand I sway,
Beneath my touch sweet ardours play—
Delights which might a savage move,
And make you faint through too much love.

The ladies, as they listened to this enigma, restrained themselves

¹ Orig., *diede di piglio*.

from laughing aloud as best they could; but, carried away by the sweetness and wit thereof, they were compelled to give it at least the approving tribute of a smile. Certain of them indeed were disposed to censure the fair damsel who told it, and to speak injuriously of her modesty in unhandsome terms; whereupon she, sensible of the wounds which were being dealt to her honour, spake thus: "Those who are full within of lewdness and malignity can only put forth what is unclean and evil, and those of you who are in such case have judged my words to mean something entirely foreign to my own conception of them; for this enigma of mine is simply intended to describe the viol da gamba, which instrument a lady, when she desires to play upon the same and to give delight to her friends around, places between her knees, and then, having taken in her right hand the bow, she moves this to and fro in order that she may draw forth from her instrument those sweet sounds which in sooth often make us faint and sick with love." Having heard this solution of Lodovica's subtle enigma, all the listeners were fully satisfied and content therewith and praised it highly; but, in order that no more time should be lost, the Signora gave the word to Fiordiana that she should forthwith begin to tell to them some pleasant love-story, exhorting her at the same time that she should follow the example of the others in the matter of brevity. Then Fiordiana, without letting her voice be muffled by her teeth, spake as follows.

THE THIRD FABLE.

Federigo da Pozzuolo, a man learned in the language of animals, is urgently pressed by his wife to tell her a certain secret, but in lieu of this he beats her in strange fashion.



IT is the duty of all wise and prudent men to hold their wives in due fear and subjection, and on no account to be induced by them to wear their breeches as head gear. If indeed they should be led to follow other courses than these they will of a surety have good cause to repent in the end.

It happened one day that Federigo da Pozzuolo, a young man of

great parts and prudence, was riding towards Naples on a mare of his which was in foal, carrying behind him on the crupper his wife, who was also pregnant. Likewise there was a young colt which followed the mare its mother, and, having been left some distance behind on the road, it began to neigh, and to cry out in its own language, 'Mother, mother, go slowly, I pray you; because I, being very young and tender, and only just a year old, am not able in my pace to follow in your footsteps.' Hearing this the mare pricked up her ears, and, sniffing the air with her nostrils, began also to neigh loudly, and said in answer to her colt, 'I have to carry my mistress, who is with child, and in addition to this I bear a young brother of yours in my womb; while you, who are young and brisk, carry no burden of any sort strapped on your back, and yet you declare that you cannot travel. Come on, if you wish to come; but if not, go and do whatever pleases you.'

The young man, when he understood the meaning of these words (for be it known he was well skilled in the utterances of birds and of all the animals that live on earth), smiled somewhat; whereupon his wife, who was greatly filled with wonder thereanent, questioned him as to the reason why he smiled. To this her husband made answer that he had laughed spontaneously; but that, if in any event he should be led to tell her the cause of his laughter, she might take it for certain that the Fates would without more ado cut the thread of his life, and that he would die on the spot. But the importunate woman was not satisfied with this, and replied that she wanted, at all hazard, to know the reason why he had thus laughed; adding that if he would not tell her she would lay hold of him by the weazand. Then the husband, finding himself thus placed in a position of difficulty and danger, answered her, speaking thus: 'When we shall have returned to Pozzuolo you shall set in order all my affairs, and make all the necessary provisions both for my body and my soul after death. Then I will make known to you all you want to learn.'

As soon as her husband had given her this promise the wicked and malicious woman was silent, and when they were returned to Pozzuolo she quickly recalled to mind the promise which had been made to her, and forthwith besought her husband to be as good as his word. Whereupon Federigo replied by charging her to go at once and fetch the priest, forasmuch as, seeing that he must needs die on account of this

matter, he was anxious first to confess himself, and to recommend himself to his Maker. As soon as she should have done this, he would tell her all. Thereupon the wife, who was determined to see her husband lying dead rather than give up aught of her pestilent wishes, went forthwith to summon the confessor.

At this moment, while Federigo was lying in his bed, overcome with grief, he heard his dog address certain words to his cock, who was crowing aloud: 'Are you not ashamed of yourself, wretch and ribald that you are, to crow thus? Our good master is lying very near his last breath, and you, who ought to be sorrowful and full of melancholy, keep on crowing as if you rejoiced thereat.'

To these words the cock promptly made answer: 'And supposing that our master should die, what have I to do with that? Am I, indeed, to be charged with causing his death? He wishes to die of his own accord. Do you not know what is written in the first book of the "Politics," "The wife and the servant stand on the same footing."'¹ Seeing, therefore, that the husband is the head of the wife, it is her bounden duty to regard the usages and customs of her husband as the laws of her life. I, forsooth, have a hundred wives, and, through the working of fear, I make them all most obedient to my commandments, castigating now one and now another, and giving pecks wherever I may think they are deserved. And this master of ours has only a single wife, yet he knows nought how to manage her, and to make her obedient to his commands. Let him die forthwith. Do you not believe that our mistress will soon find for herself another husband? So let it be with him, seeing that he is a man of such little account, and one disposed to give way to the foolish and unbridled will of his wife.'

The young man, when he had comprehended and well considered in his mind the words he had just listened to, at once altered his purpose, and felt deeply grateful to the cock for what he had said. The wife, after she had come back from seeking the priest, was still pertinacious to learn the cause of her husband's laughter; wherefore he, having seized her by the hair, began to beat her, and gave her so many and lusty blows that he nearly left her for dead.

This fable did not vastly please those of the listeners who were ladies, especially when they heard tell of the sound basting which

¹ "Amongst non-Greek peoples, on the other hand, females and slaves stand on one and the same footing."—ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, b. i., c. 2.

Federigo gave his wife. Nevertheless, they grieved amain when they heard how she would fain have been the cause of her husband's death. When all were at length silent, Fiordiana, so as not to disturb the order they had followed from the beginning, propounded her enigma in the following words :

Once on a time I had a view
Of what would have seemed strange to you.
A damsel, working at her trade,
Who now an opening roomy made,
Now shut it close ; then took with care
Something a span in length and fair ;
Its name I knew not. First within
The space she thrust its point so thin,
And then the whole ; and worked away
With merry eye and aspect gay ;
As you would say, were you to meet
One plying thus with hands and feet.

This enigma which Fiordiana set the company to guess gave plentiful occasion for jest and merriment, forasmuch as the greater part, if not all of the listeners put a very immodest gloss upon it. But Fiordiana, who, on account of the laughter which went round, perceived that the company had judged evilly of her enigma, rose to her feet, and with a smiling face said : "Ladies and gentlemen, the sound of your merry laughter tells me plainly that you imagine the sense of the enigma I have just told to you to be indecent, or, I should say, flagrantly indecent. But, in sooth, if you will listen to me with attention, you will find there is nothing lewd about it, as you now seem to think ; for indeed my enigma is meant to display to you a graceful damsel working at a loom. She works the treadles with her feet, and with her hands makes the shuttle fly from this side to that through the space between the threads, and pulls forward the frame of the loom in order that the weft may be closely woven."

All the company gave praise to this high flight of Fiordiana's wit, which they affirmed to be more excellent even than they had anticipated from her, and thereupon they all together held merry discourse. But, in order that too much time should not be taken up in talking and laughing, the Signora made a sign to Vicenza that she should take her turn in telling a story ; when the damsel, with a merry smile, began in the following words.

THE FOURTH FABLE.

Concerning certain sons who were unwilling to carry out the testament
of their father.



THE greatest folly men or women can commit is to indulge in the dream of doing some good or other after they shall have gone to another world, forasmuch as in this our day obedience to the behests of the dead is treated as a thing of little account, or, rather, of no account at all. This is a matter which I have tested again and again, seeing that, of all the money which has been left to me, I have only been able to obtain possession of a very small portion. This, indeed, has come to pass through the fault of the executors, who, in their desire to make more wealthy the rich, have only succeeded in impoverishing the poor—a contention you will be able to understand clearly from the arguments I mean to set before you.

I must tell you that in Pesaro, a town of the Romagna, there once resided a certain citizen, a man held in high repute, and very wealthy, but at the same time loth to part with his money. This man, deeming that he had come to the end of his days, made his last will and testament; by which instrument, after appointing his sons (of whom he had many) the general heirs of his estate, laid upon them the burden of first paying out of his wealth a very large number of legacies and gifts in trust. After the testator was dead and buried, and duly mourned according to the custom of the country, the sons assembled themselves together and took counsel as to what course they should follow in the matter of the legacies which their father had bequeathed for the good of his soul. These they found to be very great and excessive, forasmuch as that, if they should set themselves to carry out the will in its entirety, these bequests would assuredly swallow up the entire estate. In such case this property of theirs would prove to be for them an absolute loss, rather than a benefit of any sort or kind.

When, therefore, they had fully debated the business, the youngest of the brothers rose in the meeting and spake the following words: ‘ You must know, my brethren, that there is one thing which (if such

a form of speech be permitted) is even truer than truth itself; and by this I mean, that if the soul of our father is engulfed in the abyss of hell, and condemned to remain there, it will be altogether vain and unprofitable for us to pay the legacies he has left for the repose of his soul, seeing that there is no redemption found for a spirit in hell, and that for those who enter therein there is no hope of ever coming forth again. And if he should be now in the flowery fields of Elysium, where reigns perpetual and eternal repose, he stands assuredly in no need either of legacies or of bequests in trust. Again, if he should have been sent to purgatory, there to be cleansed of his sins for a certain season, it is plain and clear to all, that when the purifying fires shall have done their work, his offences will disappear, and he will be entirely freed therefrom; and again, in this case, legacies will profit him nought. For these reasons, therefore, I would advise that—leaving the soul of our father to be cared for by divine providence—we should forthwith divide our father's estate, and enjoy the same as long as we shall live, in like manner as he enjoyed it during his lifetime, in order that the dead may not profit more thereby than the living.'

I say once more, at the conclusion of this brief fable of mine, that it behoves us to do our good works while we live, and not after we are dead, forasmuch as in these days (as I have already remarked at the beginning of my fable) men keep little or no faith with the dead. The subtle reasoning of the youngest brother's speech won the approval of all the company, save only Vicenza herself, to whom the case applied. But so as not to stand before the assembly as one grief-stricken, she ended her fable by setting for the others to guess an amusing and sprightly enigma, which was as follows :

I come with gladsome voice and face,
And close by you myself I place;
Then leaning over you I bend,
And something deftly down I send,
Until it touch the fountain bright,
In which I take such dear delight.
And as I deep and deeper sound,
The keenest, sweetest joy is found.
But, strange! I come all brisk and gay,
And silent, weeping, go away.

“This enigma of mine is intended to describe the maid-servant

who early in the morning and again in the evening is wont to repair to the well to draw water. While she goes thither the buckets make a noise, and as soon as she arrives near the well she leans over it, and having taken the rope in her hand, she lets it down into the well with the bucket attached thereto, and rejoices in her task. The deeper down she sends the bucket in order to reach the cool fresh water, the more she is heated in drawing it up again. Moreover, she puts the bucket into the well dry and clattering, and draws it forth silent and dripping."

The company judged this enigma to be a very pretty pleasant jest, and laughed long and loud over the same. And now that it was finished, Isabella at once began to tell her fable in the following words.

THE FIFTH FABLE.

Sixtus, the Supreme Pontiff,¹ by a single speech enriches a servant of his named Gierolomo.



THE tales hitherto told by these our sisters have been so charming and witty, that I fear greatly lest I may fail to please you on account of the meanness of my skill when compared with theirs. However, I will not on this account hold aloof from the pleasant custom we have here adopted, and although it happens that the fable which I am about to relate to you has been already told by Messer Giovanni Boccaccio in his 'Decameron,'² still he has not there set it forth exactly after the manner in which I propose to treat it, seeing that I have added thereto somewhat which may serve to make it more acceptable to your taste.

Pope Sixtus IV., a man of Genoese extraction, was born at Savona, a city on the seacoast. Before becoming Pope he was known by the name of Francesco da Rovere, and in his youthful days he

¹ Francesco della Rovere. He was born at Celle, a village near Savona, in 1414, became general of the Franciscan order, and was elected Pope, as Sixtus IV., on the death of Paul II. in 1471. He died in 1484.

² "Decameron," x., 1. Told by Boccaccio of Alfonso, King of Spain, and Ruggieri di Figiovanni. Straparola has added the concluding incident.

was sent to school at Naples, where amongst his mates was a certain boy, a citizen and compatriot of his own, called Gierolomo da Riario.¹ To this young Da Rovere Gierolomo was faithfully devoted, serving him continually both while he was a schoolboy and afterwards when he became a monk and a prelate. And when he was elevated to high episcopal office, this same man still continued instant in his service, and grew old in the faithful discharge of his duties. When Sixtus had been elevated to the highest pontifical dignity through the sudden death of Pope Paul, he followed the ordinary custom and called over in his mind the names of all his servants and attendants, bestowing upon them rewards which were munificent, and in some cases even beyond reason, with the exception of this same Gierolomo, who in return for his long years of faithful service, and for all his too great love and devotion, got no other recompense than forgetfulness and ingratitude. Which thing, I opine, must rather have happened to him through some malice of fortune than for any other reason. On this account the said Gierolomo, overcome with grief and disappointment, desired to ask leave of the Pope to quit the place and return to his own country; so, after he had gone down on his knees in the presence of His Holiness, the licence he desired was granted to him. So great indeed was the ingratitude of the Pope towards his old servant, that he refused to give him either money, or horses, or varlets for the journey; and furthermore (which was the worst blow of all) he required Gierolomo to render a strict account of his stewardship—a thing which happened likewise to Scipio Africanus, who publicly displayed to the Roman people the wounds he had received in the service of the state, and found himself afterwards rewarded with exile as a guerdon for his great deeds.

It has been said with great truth of avarice that it works its greatest evil when it shows itself ungrateful. Gierolomo, after he had departed from Rome, went towards Naples, but as he journeyed not a single word fell from his lips until he came to a certain pond which lay by the roadside. As he was passing by this there came upon the horse he was riding the desire to stale; whereupon the beast eased nature then and there, thus adding water to water. And when Gierolomo marked this, he said: 'Of a truth I see that you are like

¹ According to Bayle there were other versions current as to the relations between Della Rovere and Riario. Some held the latter to be the Pope's nephew, some his son; while others hinted at a more sinister connection.

the Pope my patron, who, following no righteous rule in what he does, has let me go away to my home without recompense of any sort, only giving me his gracious leave and licence as the payment for my long labour in his service. Is there in sooth a more miserable thing in all the world than the man from whom benefits drop away and perish, and upon whom injuries of all sorts close round on every side?' The servant who was in Gierolomo's company stored up these words in his mind, reckoning that in patience the speaker of them surpassed Mutius, and Pompey, and Zeno. And journeying in this wise they came to Naples.

Then the servant, after he had taken leave of Gierolomo, returned to Rome, and related to the Pope word by word everything that had happened, and Sixtus, when he had well considered the words which had been told to him, bade the servant go back straightway to Naples with a letter commanding Gierolomo to return and present himself before the Pope under pain of excommunication. Gierolomo, when he had read the Pope's letter, rejoiced greatly, and took his way back to Rome as quickly as he might. The Pope, after Gierolomo had duly kissed his feet, commanded him to present himself on the following day in the senate, at the hour of the council, after the trumpets had sounded. In the meantime the Pope had caused to be made two very beautiful vases of exactly the same size, and in one of these he placed a great number of pearls, rubies, sapphires, and other precious stones and jewels of very great value, while in the other there was nothing but pieces of metal, both vases when filled being exactly the same weight.

The next morning, when the priests, bishops, presidents, ambassadors and prelates had come into the senate house and the Pope had taken his seat upon his tribunal, he caused the two aforesaid vases to be brought into his presence, and then called Gierolomo before him and addressed the assembly in the following words: 'My dear and well-beloved sons, this man whom you see before you has been faithful and obedient to my commands beyond all others who have ever served me, and I cannot praise him too highly for the manner in which he has borne himself since the first years of his service. Wherefore, in order that he may now obtain the due reward for his devotion, and no longer have occasion to complain of his fortune and of my ingratitude, I will give him the choice between these two vases, allowing him to be his own arbiter and to take and enjoy the one upon which his choice may fall.'

After listening to those words of the Pope, Gierolomo set himself to choose one or other of the vases, but the luckless and unhappy wight, after considering and reconsidering, fixing now upon one and now upon the other, ended (as bad luck would have it) by choosing the one which was filled with pieces of metal. When the other vase was uncovered and Gierolomo saw the great treasure which it contained, how it was filled with emeralds, sapphires, diamonds, rubies, topazes, and other kinds of precious stones, he was overcome with amazement and was like to die of vexation. The Pope, when he observed how disappointed and grief-stricken the poor fellow looked, exhorted him straightway to confess himself, declaring that this thing must have happened to him as a punishment for certain sins which he had neglected to acknowledge. Then, after Gierolomo had duly confessed himself and received absolution, the Pope imposed upon him as a secret penance, that for a whole year he should come every day at a fixed time into the senate (into which place it was lawful for no man to enter unbidden), where the private affairs of kings and of states and of great nobles were debated, and then and there whisper an Ave Maria into the Pope's ear. Sixtus also gave command that every door at which Gierolomo might present himself should straightway be opened to him, and that he should have continued free access to the papal presence with all the honour that it was possible to bestow.

Therefore, when the next day had come, Gierolomo, without saying a word to anyone, went into the Pope's presence, bearing himself in worshipful wise, but having at the same time a certain air of presumption about him. Having gone up beside the seat of Peter, he straightway did the penance which had been imposed upon him. As soon as he had finished whispering into the Pope's ear he turned and went out, whereupon all those who were present were mightily astonished at what they had seen, and the ambassadors wrote tidings to their sovereigns saying that Gierolomo was the real Pope, and that all questions coming before the senate were dealt with and settled as he willed. By reason of this report Gierolomo very soon gathered together a great sum of money made up of the many gifts which were sent to him by all Christian princes, so that in the whole of Italy there was to be found no man richer than he. And in this wise it came to pass that by the end of his year of penance he found himself well content with his lot, and the possessor of great riches.

Next the Pope created him a noble of Naples and of Forli, and of many other cities besides. So Gierolomo, from the low condition in which he was born, became distinguished and illustrious in the same way as Tullus Hostilius and David, who spent their youth in feeding sheep, but later on in their lives the one reigned over and doubled the extent of the Roman empire, and the other became the chief of the kingdom of the Jews.

As soon as the fable told by Isabella had come to an end in the fashion they all desired, Molino rose to his feet and said : " There was no need, Signora Isabella, for you to excuse yourself in any way at the beginning of your fable, seeing that it has far outdone all those which have been told this evening." To this Isabella replied : " Signor Antonio, if I indeed believed what you say to be the honest truth I should be greatly elated, because in that case I should have won the praise of him who is praised by all. But because you say this by way of jest, I am content to remain in my ignorance, leaving the glory of success to these my sisters, who are of more brilliant parts than I am." But, in order that the discussion might not be farther prolonged, the Signora made a sign that Isabella should let follow her enigma at once ; whereupon the damsel, still elated with the praise given her, spake thus :

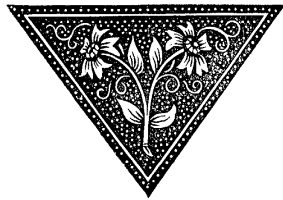
Good sir, there was a time I trow,
Which time is gone for ever now ;
Wherefore the thought comes back to me,
That once I something gave to thee
Which I had not. Now I decline
To give it, though 'tis really mine.
Hard must it be for you to dream
Of what I was, what now I seem ;
How once I had what now I lack.
Therefore into the streets go back,
And call on one who lacks it too,
And beg her give this boon to you.

Here Isabella brought her enigma to an end, and because it was one full of deep mystery, it was interpreted by the company in varying wise, but not a single one fully grasped its meaning. When Isabella perceived this, with bright and merry face she said : " With your leave, ladies and gentlemen, I will at once explain the meaning of the enigma which I have just recited to you. In sooth, it is intended to describe a lovesick lady not yet married who was

altogether subdued by the love of a certain gentleman. But after she was married to another she would have no more dealings with her lover, and on this account she persuaded him to take his way about the streets, seeking the love of those ladies who had no husbands."

The skilful solution of Isabella's subtle enigma delighted the company greatly, and they one and all praised it. But now already the crested cock had announced the coming of the bright morning ; so the illustrious company took leave of the Signora, who, with a joyous face, begged them all to return in good time to the meeting-place on the following evening, and they one and all promised with the best grace to obey her.

The End of the Twelfth Night.





Eight the Thirteenth.





The Fables and Enigmas of Messer Giovanni Francesco Straparola da Caravaggio.

Night the Thirteenth.



HCEBUS had already taken his departure from this land of ours, and the clear brightness of the day was gone and faded, so that now no longer did the forms of objects round about make themselves clearly apparent, when the Signora, having come out of her chamber accompanied by the ten damsels, went to the head of the staircase to give gladsome welcome to the gentle company who had already disembarked from their boats. Then, when all had taken their seats according to their rank, the Signora said : “ It seems to me that to-night it would be well and becoming—after you have danced according to your wont and sung a canzonet—for all the gentlemen as well as all the ladies to tell each one a fable, forasmuch as it is not seemly that this burden should be laid on the ladies alone. And thus (always supposing that what I propose meets with the approval of this honourable company) each one will tell his story on the one condition that it shall be short ; so that, on this the last night of carnival, everyone may have time to set forth his fable. Now the Signor Ambassador, as the chief person amongst us, shall fill the first place, and then, one by one, you shall all take turns according to your degree.” The proposal of the Signora won the approval of all, and, after they had danced somewhat, she gave command to the Trevisan and to Molino to attune their instruments and to sing their canzonet thereto. Whereupon

these loyal sons of obedience took up their lutes and discoursed the following song :

SONG.

The choicest gifts of beauty and of grace
 That mortal beauty ever knew,
 Lady, kind Nature lavishes on you.
 When gazing on your lovely face,
 Your bosom into perfect beauty swelling,
 Where Love holds sway, proud of his ivory throne,
 I hear my fancy telling
 That surely you were made in God's own place,
 And sent on earth to honour us alone,
 To bid us for our trespasses atone,
 And teach how far excelling
 Our feverish life of heat and cold
 Those glories are the blest in Heaven behold.

The canzonet sung by the Trevisan and Molino delighted all the listeners, and they applauded it heartily. When it had come to an end, the Signora begged the Signor Ambassador to make a beginning of the story-telling, and he, who had nought of rustic incivility in his manner, at once began in the following wise.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Maestro Gasparino, a physician, by the virtue of his art works a cure on certain madmen.



THE burden which the Signora has laid upon me, in bidding me relate to you a fable, is indeed a very heavy one, forasmuch as in my opinion this office pertains to ladies rather than to men ; but, since it is her desire and the desire of this honourable and worshipful company as well, that I should play the story-teller, I will set to work with all my strength to satisfy your wishes, and though I may not succeed in pleasing you entirely, I hope I may divert you somewhat by what I am going to tell you.

In England there once lived a certain man, very rich, and the head of his family, who had only one son, a youth named Gasparino,

whom he sent in course of time to Padua in order that he might apply himself to the study of letters. The youth, however, took very little care to acquire any knowledge of literature, and much less in endeavouring to surpass his fellow-students in the pursuit of learning, seeing that he employed almost the whole of his time in playing cards and other games of chance, which he practised diligently in the company of certain dissolute companions of his who were entirely given up to lascivious and worldly pleasures. In this course of life he consumed the whole of his time, and his money as well, and, instead of studying medicine and the learned works of Galen, as he was in duty bound to do, he spent his energies in mastering the game of bowls, in playing cards, and in indulging himself in such practices as alone gave him delight.

When five years had passed away he returned to his native country, whereupon all those who met him saw clearly enough that during his course of study he had gone backwards instead of forwards. He wished, forsooth, to make believe to be a Roman, but all his friends set him down as a barbarian and a Chaldean,¹ and after a little he fell into such ill repute amongst all the people of the city in which he dwelt, that men pointed at him with their fingers, so that he became a byword and the talk of the town. I leave you to picture to yourselves how great must have been the grief of his unfortunate father, who in any case would much liefer have lost all his money, and his daily bread as well, than have laid aside the pride which he had nourished of making his son a man of mark, and was now in a fair way to lose both the one and the other. Wherefore, one day, the father, hoping by this means to assuage somewhat the grief which tormented him, called his son to him, and having opened the chest in which he kept his money and his jewels, he gave the youth, who of a truth was in no way deserving of such bounty, the half of all his goods, saying to him, ‘My son, take this your share of your paternal heritage and get you gone from my presence, so that I may see your face no more; for I would rather be a childless man than have living with me a son who brings shame upon me through his infamous life.’

In less time than it takes me to tell the son laid hands on the money and jewels, and, readily obeying his father’s injunction, took his

¹ *Chaldeo*—by metaphor a violent and furious fellow.

departure. Having travelled a great way from his home, he came one day to the outskirts of a forest, near which he perceived a mighty river. On this spot he set to work to build a great house of marble, fitted with bronze doors, and round about it he caused the river to flow on all sides, cutting certain trenches and watercourses in such wise that he could make the water rise and fall according as it best suited his purpose. Thus he dug some of the trenches in such manner that the water could be made to rise therein to the full height of a man, in others it would rise up to a man's eyes, in others to his throat, in others to his breast, in others to his navel, in others to his thigh, and in others to his knees. To the side of each of these trenches he caused to be attached an iron chain, and over the entrance door of this great house he set up a tablet with the following inscription written thereon, 'The place where madmen are cured.'

In the course of time the fame of Gasparino's house spread abroad, and it became known to all men; so that from various quarters madmen were brought thither to be cured in such vast numbers that it might have been said to rain madmen. When they were brought in the master of the place caused them to be put in the trenches he had made, according to the degree of the madness which afflicted them. Some of them he treated with blows, others with vigils and fasts, others needed only to breathe the fine pure air round about, and thus, little by little, he would bring them back to their right minds. In front of the entrance door in the spacious courtyard he was accustomed to keep some of the madmen, and men of weak intellect, whose wits had been disordered through being struck by the exceeding hot rays of the sun.

It chanced one day that a huntsman passed by this spot carrying a hawk upon his fist, and accompanied by a great number of hounds. As soon as the madmen who were in the courtyard caught sight of him, they were greatly astonished at the spectacle of a man thus riding by with his hawks and his dogs, and one of them straightway began to question him as to what might be the nature of the bird which he carried on his fist, and whether it was a trap or a snare wherewith to catch other birds, and for what reason he kept and nurtured it. The huntsman at once answered, 'This bird which you see here is called a hawk, and is very rapacious by nature; these other animals are dogs, who go a-searching for certain fat birds, very

good to eat, called quails. When they have found them, this hawk captures them, and then I eat them.' Whereupon the madman questioned him again, saying, 'Now tell me, I pray you, what is the price you paid for these dogs, and for the hawk, and for the horse which you are riding?' The huntsman answered, 'I bought my horse for the sum of ten ducats, my hawk cost me eight ducats, and my dogs twelve. Besides this, they cost me twenty ducats every year for their nutriment.' 'Now, prithee, tell me,' said the madman, 'and tell me truly, how many quails do you catch in the course of the year, and what is the value of the same?' The huntsman made answer, 'I take two hundred or more, and they are worth to me at least two ducats.' Then the madman (who in this matter was assuredly no madman, but rather one of good sense) raised his voice and cried, 'Get you gone quickly, madman that you are! You spend fifty ducats a year in order that you may gain two, and in this reckoning you take no account of the time you lose in getting them. Fly, for God's sake, fly! For if the master of this place should chance to find you here, he will certainly put you into one of these trenches, where you will be drenched and half drowned. I myself am a poor fool, but you forsooth are a bigger fool than I am—bigger, indeed, than the worst of the madmen in this place.'

The fable told by the Signor Ambassador won the praise of all the company, although it partook little of the nature of a fable, being a record of sober truth, seeing that huntsmen as a rule surpass all other fools in their folly; that is to say, a man, when he has not enough to live upon, loses his time and his money as well in following the chase. The Signor Ambassador, not wishing to fall behind any of the others in his task of story-telling, next propounded a choice enigma in the following words:

Say, have you ever heard them tell
About a creature said to dwell
Far in the East? Though full of guile,
'Tis conquered by a maiden's smile,
And in her lap will listen tame—
No lion, though it bears the name.
Contented in her arms to die,
Its horned head it carries high,
And by its loving tears they say
All poisonous bane is washed away.

The graceful enigma set by the Signor Ambassador gave the

company no less delight than the fable he had told to them, for it presented to the minds of the ladies a suggestion of unknown delight, and, though all guessed its meaning, nevertheless not one of the company was disposed to declare it, but prudently waited until the ambassador himself should unfold it. After a while, he, with a smiling face, declared that the answer to it was the unicorn, an animal which, although it is treacherous and immoderate, holds the estate of virginity in such high esteem that it will hide its head in a damsel's lap, and let itself be there killed by the huntsman. The Signora, who was sitting by the side of the ambassador, now began her fable in the following wise.

THE SECOND FABLE.

One Diego, a Spaniard, purchases a great quantity of hens of a peasant, and, being in debt therefor, puts a cheat upon the peasant and upon a Carmelite friar as well.

THE fable which the Signor Ambassador has just told to us was so fine and so delightful a piece of work that I cannot hope to follow it up by anything of my own which shall have one-thousandth part of its merit. But, so that I may not show myself in any way reluctant to conform to the proposition which I made at the beginning of this evening's entertainment, and before the Signor Ambassador began to tell his story, I will relate a fable which will show you that in spite and malice the Spaniards surpass even the roughest boors.

In Spain is situated a city called Cordova, close to which there runs a very pleasant stream, the river Bacco. In this town was born a certain Diego, a very crafty fellow, well-to-do in the world, and one altogether given over to fraud and deception. This man, having a desire one day to give a supper to certain of his companions, and not being provided with the wherewithal to carry out his desire, cast about in his mind how he might play a trick upon a neighbouring peasant, and thus, at the poor fellow's expense, make a feast for his friends, which thing he brought to pass exactly according to his own wishes.

Diego, having betaken himself to the piazza in order to buy some fowls, met there the peasant, who had for sale a great quantity of hens and capons and eggs, and for these Diego now began to chaffer, promising at last to pay for all the fowls which were there four florins, a sum with which the peasant professed to be well satisfied. Diego, having hired a porter, sent him at once to his house with the fowls, without, however, paying the cost of the same to the seller, though he was besought by the peasant to settle his debt forthwith. But Diego protested that he had not the money in his pocket; at the same time telling the peasant that, if he would go with him as far as the monastery of the Carmine, where his uncle,¹ one of the brothers, was living, the money for the price of the hens would at once be forthcoming. And with these words they went in one another's company to the aforesaid monastery. It chanced that in the church of the monastery certain ladies were assembled to make their confessions to one of the brothers. But Diego, contriving to get speech with the monk, whispered in his ear, "Good father, this peasant who has come hither in my company is my gossip, a fellow who carries divers heretical notions in his head. And though he is well-to-do in the world, and comes of decent family, he is not over-strong in the brain, and is oftentimes afflicted with the falling sickness. It is now full three years since he went to confession. He comes now and then into a saner mind, and on this account I, moved thereto by charity, and by fraternal love, and by friendship, and by the tie of spiritual brotherhood which exists between us, have given a promise to his wife so to manage that he should confess himself. And for the reason that the good name and fame of your saintly life is so well known in all the city and the country round about, we have come to your reverence, begging you that, of your supreme goodness and for the love of God, you will vouchsafe to listen to him patiently and to correct his faults.'

In reply to this, the brother said that at this present moment he was somewhat fully occupied, but that as soon as he should have attended to the needs of these ladies (pointing to them with his hand) he would be quite willing to hear the confession. Then, having called the peasant to him, he begged him to wait a little, promising the while that he would quickly do all he wanted. Whereupon the peasant, deeming that what the brother said had reference to the money which

¹ Orig., *suo barba*. In the Lombard districts "*barba*" is often used for "*zio*," an uncle.

was owing to him, declared that he would willingly wait. And, having done this, the crafty Diego went off, leaving the poor swindled peasant waiting in the church. The brother, as soon as he had in truth finished his task of confessing the ladies, called to the peasant to come over and settle himself down on the stool. The fellow came quickly enough, and, having uncovered his head, forthwith demanded of the good brother his money. But the brother bade him to go down on his knees at once, and directed him, after having crossed himself, to say the paternoster. Then the peasant, finding that he had been tricked and defrauded, flew into a violent fit of rage and anger, and, looking up to heaven and blaspheming, he cried out, 'Ah, wretch that I am! what evil have I done that I should be thus cruelly tricked by this Spanish knave? I do not want to confess or to receive absolution. I want the money he promised that you would give me.' The good brother, who knew nought of what these words might mean, said to the peasant by way of rebuke, 'They speak truly who say that you are possessed with a devil, and are not in your right mind;' and, having opened his missal, he began a form of conjuration, as if he had some evil spirit or other to deal with. The peasant, who was by this time in no condition to endure such words as these, demanded with a great uproar to be paid the money which had been promised him by Diego, declaring that he was in no wise possessed, nor a madman, but that he had been cozened out of what poor wares he had by this rascally Spaniard. Girding and lamenting in this fashion, he called upon the bystanders for assistance, and having seized the monk by his hood, he cried out, 'I will never leave hold of you until you shall have handed over to me my money.'

The good monk, when he saw how things stood and that he could no longer defend himself from the peasant, excused himself with soft and wheedling speech by saying that he himself had been tricked by the Spaniard. But on the other hand the peasant (holding him firmly the while by the hood) affirmed that the monk had duly made this promise on his own account, saying, 'Did you not promise me, in so many words, that you would quickly despatch this affair of mine?' 'I promised,' answered the brother, 'that I would hear your confession.' While they were thus wrangling together, there came up certain old men, who began to work upon the good monk's conscience, and in the end constrained him to pay to the peasant what the Spaniard owed him. Thus the wily accursed and villainous

Diego gave a sumptuous feast to his friends with the hens and capons before mentioned, showing clearly thereby that the malice of a Spaniard surpasses that of any other ruffian you can find in all the world.

The Signor Ambassador, who had lent the closest attention to the fable told in such marvellous wise by the gentle Signora, now gave it his warmest commendation, declaring that by the telling of it she had completely worsted himself as a story-teller. And this saying all the company loudly confirmed with one voice. Then the Signora, marking how high was the praise thus given to her, smiled merrily, and, having turned her sweet face towards the ambassador, spake thus :

To my sire, the subtle breath
Of life my mother gave—and death.
I took being from his grave,
And nurture kind my mother gave
To me and to my brothers too,
Till we to full perfection grew.
Long together did we dwell,
Until there came a foeman fell,
Who many of us crushed and killed.
Sure we with love and grace are filled,
Since we give life and daily bread
To him who snaps our vital thread.

Not one of the company succeeded in grasping the meaning of this enigma, although long time was spent in making comments thereupon ; wherefore the Signora, perceiving that no one was likely to hit the mark, said : “ Ladies and gentlemen, this enigma of mine means nothing more nor less than the wheat which is born from the grain of wheat, its father, and from the earth its mother. The earth destroys the corn, and in destroying it the wheat is born, which the earth nourishes until it grows to maturity. The wheat lives in close union with its brothers, that is, the grains in the ear, until the day when the miller crushes out its life by grinding it in his mill. And so great is its benevolence that it gives life to him who destroys it.” The solution of the Signora’s enigma won the praise of all, and, when she had concluded it, Signor Pietro Bembo began his fable in the following words.

THE THIRD FABLE.

A German and a Spaniard happening to sit at meat together, there arises between their servants a dispute as to which was the most liberal, which question in the end was settled in favour of the German.



THE fable just told to us by our worthy Signora brings back to my memory a certain dispute which arose from the envy kindled between the servants of a German and of a Spaniard who chanced to meet at the same table, and although this fable of mine is very short, it may nevertheless be found entertaining and a source of pleasure to many.

It happened one day that a German and a Spaniard, having arrived at the same hostelry, took their meat together, being served with many delicate viands of all sorts and in great abundance. As they were thus dining the Spaniard handed to his servant now a morsel of meat and now a morsel of fowl, giving him to eat now this thing and now that. The German, on the other hand, went on eating silently, swallowing one thing after another without thinking in any way of his servant. On this account there arose between the servants a feeling of great jealousy, the servant of the German declaring that the Spaniards were the most liberal and regardful of men, and the servant of the Spaniard confirming what he said. But after the German had finished his meal, he took the dish with all the meat that was therein, and, handing it to his servant, bade him take his supper thereof. Whereupon the servant of the Spaniard, being filled with envy at the good luck of his companion, recalled the opinion he had just given, and murmuring to himself spake these words: 'Now I know well that the Germans are liberal beyond all other men.'

This fable teaches us that no one is ever contented with his own lot. Messer Pietro Bembo without any farther delay set his enigma in the following words:

I dwell in such a lofty spot
That soaring wings can reach me not;
Much help I give to feeble sight,
Working alone by wisdom's might.

I high exalt the soul serene,
 But never let my light be seen
 By those who claim too much of me.
 Oft am I made appear to be
 What I am not, just through the deed
 Of things that neither know nor heed.

“ This enigma,” said Messer Pietro, “ simply describes the science of astrology, which must needs be prosecuted in some lofty spot, up to which one could not fly even with wings.” As soon as he had finished the exposition of his subtly-devised riddle, the Signora Veronica rose to her feet and in this wise began her fable, speaking thus.

THE FOURTH FABLE.

Fortunio, a servant, endeavouring to crush a fly, kills his master, and saves himself from the gallows by a pleasantry.



LWILL first tell this illustrious company that I have often heard it urged by men of weight that misdeeds which are wrought unwittingly do not carry the guilt of those done with intent ; hence we look more lightly on the transgressions of fools and children, and of people of a like condition, than on those committed by graver folk. Forasmuch as it is now my turn to tell a story, I will tell of the adventure which befell one Fortunio, a varlet, who, desiring to kill a horse-fly which was annoying his master, killed inadvertently the master himself.

There lived in the city of Ferrara a rich grocer of good descent, who had in his service Fortunio, a fat good-tempered fellow of very slender wit. Now in the great heats the grocer was wont to lie down to sleep in the middle of the day, and at such times it was Fortunio's part to keep off the flies with a fan, lest they should disturb his master. One day it chanced that, amongst the others, was a very greedy meddlesome horse-fly, which took no heed of Fortunio's fanning, nor of his strokes, but alighted constantly on the grocer's bald pate and stung him grievously. And though the fly was chased away three or four times, it always came back to give fresh trouble. At last the servant, incensed at the boldness and persistency of the

fly, rashly made trial to kill it when it was about to settle again on his master's temple and suck his blood. Simple fool that he was, he caught up a weighty bronze pestle, and, striking at the fly with all his might with the intent to kill it, he made an end of the grocer instead. As soon as Fortunio saw that he had slain his master and thereby made himself liable to death by the law, he took counsel with himself how he might best save his neck, and first resolved to seek safety in flight, but he afterwards fixed upon another scheme, which was to bury the corpse secretly. Therefore, having wrapped up the dead body of his master in a sack and carried it into a garden adjacent to the shop, he buried it there. This done he went to the sheepfold, and, having chosen a big old ram, he took it and threw it down the well.

As the master did not appear at his usual hour in the evening the wife's suspicion fell upon Fortunio, and she questioned him as to her husband's whereabouts, but the fellow declared stoutly that he knew nothing of it. Then the good wife, overcome with grief, began to weep and to call for her husband aloud, but she called in vain. She went to her kinsfolk and told them her grief; whereupon they sought the governor of the city, and laid the crime to Fortunio's charge, demanding that he should be imprisoned and put to the question, in order to make him tell what had become of his master. The governor, having put the servant in hold and tied him to the rope, gave him the strappado as prescribed by law, on account of the charges against him. Handling of this sort was not to his taste, and he forthwith promised to tell all he knew, if they would let him down. So they brought him before the judge, and this was the cunning tale he had prepared for their befooling: 'Yesterday, O judge! when I was asleep near the well, I was awakened by a great noise, as of some mighty rock being hurled down into the water below. In my amazement I ran to the well and looked into it, but the water was quite clear and I could see nothing amiss; so I turned to go back to the house, when the same noise again met my ears. I am now quite sure in my mind that my master, when trying to draw some water up out of the well, fell down into it. Now, that the truth of the matter may be laid bare, I make petition that all now present may go to the spot: then I will descend into the well and disclose what I may find therein.' The judge was favourable to Fortunio's prayer, holding that experiment is the surest proof, and that no evidence can equal what is brought before one's eyes,

and betook himself to the well, bidding the whole assembly follow. There went not only the worshipful persons who were about the judge, but also a vast crowd of the common people, who were curious to learn what might be the issue of the affair.

Fortunio, obeying the commandment of the judge, went straight-way down the well, and, when he had reached the bottom, made believe to be searching for his master's body in the water ; but what he found was the carcass of the old ram which he himself had lately cast in. Feigning to be vastly amazed at this, the cunning fellow bawled up from the bottom of the well : ' O my mistress ! tell me whether your husband, my poor master, had horns or not ; for I have alighted on somebody down here who has got an enormous pair, both long and large. Is it possible that he can be your husband ? ' And when the goodwife heard Fortunio's question she was so much overcome with shame that she could not find a word to say for herself. Meanwhile the bystanders waited, open-mouthed with curiosity, to set eyes on this corpse with horns, and to see whether it really was the body of the missing grocer or not ; and when they saw hauled up Fortunio's old ram, they all clapped their hands, and were shaken by loud laughter. The judge, when he saw the issue of Fortunio's search, deemed that the foolish fellow was acting in good faith, and that he verily believed what he brought out of the well to be the remains of his master. On this account the judge let him go free, as innocent, but the grocer was never seen more, and the good wife, to her dying day, bore the shame anent the horns which Fortunio's cunning trick had cast upon her.

The men and the ladies as well laughed heartily over the story of the old ram in the well, but chiefly they were diverted at the confusion brought upon the wife by Fortunio's trick. Forasmuch as the evening was now advanced, and divers gentlefolk had yet to tell their stories, the Signora Veronica without pause put her enigma, which ran as follows :

In the ground my head is buried,
Yet with care I'm never harried.
In my early youth and fresh,
White and tender is my flesh,
Green my tail. Of lowly plight,
The rich man's scorn, the boor's delight.
The peasant on me sets good store,
The noble casts me from his door.

This enigma of the Signora Veronica won praise from all the company, and although nearly everyone mastered its meaning, none was willing to take upon himself the honour of unfolding it, but left this task rather to the Signora herself. Noting the silence of the company, she said : " Although my wit is slender, I will, if it pleases you, set forth to the best of my poor ability the solution of my riddle. It is the leek, which as you all know lives with its head underground, and has a green tail, and is favoured less by lords than by labourers on the table." When Veronica had spoken and unfolded her pretty enigma the Signora called upon Signor Bernardo Capello to narrate one of his fables, counselling him to be brief, as the night was far advanced, and he at once cleared his mind of serious thoughts and thus began.

THE FIFTH FABLE.

Vilio Brigantello kills a robber who was set in ambush to murder him.



VERY famous poet has said that the man who takes delight in beguiling others must not cry out and lament if by chance a cheat should be put upon himself. I have remarked that those who have an inclination to trick their fellows are very often, or I might say always, tricked themselves. This same fate befell a robber, who, having made up his mind to slay a certain craftsman, was killed by his intended victim.

In Pistoia, a city of Tuscany between Florence and Lucca, there dwelt an artisan, very rich, and possessed of great store of money, who was called by name Vilio Brigantello. But this man, on account of the fear of robbers which haunted him, feigned to be living in a state of great poverty, dwelling all by himself without either wife or servants in a small cottage, which however was well furnished, and full of all the things which men find necessary for their existence. And in order to make it yet more apparent to men how poor and beggarly was his estate, he clad himself always in the commonest, meanest, and dirtiest attire, and kept a strict guard over the coffer which held his coin. Vilio was very alert, and a most careful workman to boot, but in the spending of his money he was avaricious and a miser, allowing

himself no better diet than bread and cheese with wine thereto, and the roots of plants.

Now it came to pass that certain cunning and crafty robbers, suspecting with good reason that Vilio was the possessor of a good sum of money, went one night to his cottage at the hour which seemed to them most suited to their purpose of robbing him. And for the reason that they were unable with their crowbars and other implements either to open the door or to break in the same, and growing at the same time somewhat fearful lest they should arouse the neighbours by the noise they made in their evil work, they settled upon a plan of tricking Vilio, and thus accomplishing their purpose in another way. It chanced that amongst these thieves there was one who was very familiar and well acquainted with this Vilio, and who had often made great show of his friendship ; so much so, that now and again he had taken him home to his own house to dine. The thieves now tied up in a sack the one who was the leader of their band and their guide, and made believe that he was dead ; then, having carried him just as he was to the artisan's cottage, the fellow who put himself forward as Vilio's friend advanced and begged him urgently to take the sack into his charge and guard it well until they should come back to fetch it, promising the while that they would return before long. Vilio, who knew nothing of what was behind, let them bring into the house the body they had with them without hindrance, after listening to the importunity of his pretended friend. Meantime the robbers had arranged a plan amongst themselves that as soon as Vilio might be sound asleep their leader should get out of the sack, and, after having killed the artisan, should lay hands on all his money and whatever of his effects might seem best worth having.

Thus the sack with the robber inside was placed within the cottage while Vilio was busily working at his craft close to the candle. Now and then he cast a glance towards the sack in which the robber was hidden (as is the habit of those who are timid by nature and easily stricken with fear), and it seemed to him as if the body stirred somewhat within the sack. Thereupon, having risen from his seat, he quickly snatched up a stick of myrtle wood thickly studded with knots, and brought the cudgel to bear upon the skull of the robber with such good purpose that he straightway made a dead man of him, making him a real corpse in lieu of a pretended one. The fellows of the robber aforesaid, when they had awaited his return

until the breaking of the day and saw no sign of their leader, imagined his absence was caused by the fact that he had fallen asleep. So, being more afeared on account of the daylight which was now fast approaching than for the safety of their friend, they took their way back to the cottage of the artisan and asked him for the sack which they had yesterday left in his charge. As soon as Vilio had closed the door and well barricaded the same, he handed the sack over to them, addressing them the while in a loud voice : ‘ Yesterday you brought me, instead of a corpse, a live man in this sack, with the view of frightening me. Now therefore I, to frighten you in turn, give back to you a corpse instead of a living man.’ When the band of robbers heard these words they stood like men confounded, and, having opened the sack, they found in good sooth the dead body of their trusty mate therein. Then, in order to pay due honour to their daring leader, they cast his body with many sighs and tears into the sea, where it sank out of sight. Thus the man who had planned in his mind to trick and deceive the artisan, was himself tricked and deceived.

With these words the Signor Bernardo brought to an end his ingeniously-told fable, which amused greatly all those who listened to it. The Signora thereupon begged him to let follow his enigma at once, according to the rule, and he began it forthwith in the following words :

From sire alone I sprang and grew ;
 No mother dear I ever knew ;
 But fate decreed that all must give
 Their fostering aid to make me live.
 Soon to bulk immense I grow,
 And o’er the world I spread and flow,
 And though to some I’m fierce and fell,
 Most men my praises loud will tell.

Many of the listeners believed that they had divined the meaning of this graceful and scholarly enigma, but it proved that the belief of all of them was ill founded, seeing that their understanding had in every case wandered far from the truth. Wherefore Capello, perceiving that the discussion threatened to be long, spake thus : “ Ladies and gentlemen, let us lose no more time, because the enigma I have set you to guess means nothing else than play, which springs from a father alone, and is supported and nourished by all men. In a very brief space of time it has spread over the entire world, and it

is welcomed and made much of in such manner that, even though a man may lose on account of it, he does not on this score chase it away from him, but still gets pleasure from its existence." This explanation of the subtly-conceived enigma gratified all the listeners greatly, especially Signor Antonio Bembo, who was much addicted to play. But, seeing that the hours of the night were passing, or rather flying, the Signora gave direction to Signora Chiara to make a beginning of her fable, and the latter, having got up from her seat and placed herself on a higher chair—she being somewhat short of stature—at once began to speak as follows.

THE SIXTH FABLE.

Lucietta, the mother of Lucilio, a useless and good-for-nothing fellow, sends him out to find the good day. This he does, and returns home bearing with him the fourth part of a certain treasure.



I HAVE always understood, gracious ladies, from the writings of the world's sages, that Fortune helps on those who are alert and watchful, and puts to flight the timid and panic-stricken. And that this saying is a true one I will prove to you by telling you a very brief fable, which perchance may be somewhat of a pleasure and satisfaction to you.

In Cesenna, an illustrious city of Romagna, near to which flows a river called the Savio, there once dwelt a little widow, very poor, but of good repute, and Lucietta was her name. This woman had a son, the most useless and sleepy-headed loon that nature ever made, who, when once he had gotten himself to bed, would never get up therefrom till noon, and then, raising himself up, he would gape and rub his eyes, stretching his arms and his legs out of the bed like the good-for-nothing rascal he was. On account of all this his mother was grievously vexed, because she had formed a hope that this son of hers might prove to be the staff and support of her old age. Wherefore, in order to make him a careful, vigilant, and accomplished man, she made it her practice every day to instruct him in this fashion: 'My son, any diligent and cautious man, who wishes to have the good day, must needs rise up betimes at the

breaking of the dawn, forasmuch as Fortune stretches out her hand to aid those who are on the alert, and not to those who lie asleep in bed. Thus, O my son! if you will take the advice I give to you, you shall find the good day, and rest content therewith.'

Lucilio (for so the widow's son was named), more ignorant than ignorance itself, failed to gather the meaning of his mother's exhortation, and, considering the husk rather than the kernel of her words, he roused himself from the deep and profound sleep that was upon him, and went out of the house. When he had gone forth from one of the city gates, he straightway composed himself to sleep in the open air, stretching himself right across the highway, where he greatly hindered the course of all those who were journeying towards the city, and in like manner those who were coming out therefrom. Now this same day it happened by chance that three men, citizens of Cesenna, were bound out of the town on a certain errand, which was to dig up a rich treasure they had discovered, and to carry it home with them. It was after they had dug it up, and when they were minded to transport it into the city, that they found themselves face to face with Lucilio, who was lying down on the highway. The fellow, however, was not at this moment asleep, but was on the alert to find the good day after the fashion which his mother had counselled him to follow. As the first of the three citizens passed by where Lucilio lay, he said to him, 'My friend, may you have the good day!' whereupon Lucilio answered, 'Aha! I have one of them,' meaning thereby to speak of the day. The young citizen, with his mind filled with thoughts of the treasure, and putting a meaning upon the words other than that which they were intended to bear, deemed at once that they had reference to himself; which thing, indeed, was no marvel, seeing it is written that those who are conscious of their misdeeds are always prone to imagine every word they hear spoken to be spoken of them. The second citizen, as he passed Lucilio, saluted him in like fashion, and gave him the good day, and to him Lucilio replied that he had two of them, meaning to say that he had now two of the good days. The third citizen came close behind the other, and he also in exactly the same manner gave the good day to the fellow lying on the road. Whereupon Lucilio, now all on the alert, got up on his feet and said, 'And now I have all three of them; of a truth the plan I laid has prospered for me in marvellous wise;' wishing to let it be known by these words that he had now three good days.

The three citizens, when they heard the last speech of Lucilio, fell into great terror and affright lest the youth should go to the governor of the town, and make known to him how they had been occupying themselves; so they bade him come to them, and forthwith narrated to him the whole story of the treasure, giving him in the end a fourth part thereof as his share. With his heart filled with joy, Lucilio laid hands on his share, and, having taken his way back to his home, he gave over the treasure to his mother, saying, ‘Good mother, of a truth the grace of God must be with me, seeing that in following the commandment you laid upon me I have found the good day. Take now this money, and keep it well, so that it may serve for our support.’ Whereupon the mother, joyful in the possession of the money which her son had gained, encouraged him always to keep a sharp look-out for the future, for the reason that he might very likely meet with other good days like to this one.

The Signora, perceiving that Madonna Chiara’s fable had now come to an end, begged that she would oblige her by setting an enigma for the company to guess, so that the rule they had hitherto followed might not be broken, and Chiara, in whose mind ill thoughts had no place, gave her enigma in the following words :

Full many beasts of every kind
In nature’s kingdom we may find ;
But one there is of tender mood,
Of loving heart and spirit good,
Which, when its sire grown blind and weak,
With age his food no more can seek,
Will guard him safe and feed him well
Within a warm and cosy cell.
So none may ever blame its greed,
Or tax it with ungrateful deed.

“ This enigma of mine which I have just propounded is intended to show forth the virtue of gratitude under the form of a bird called pola,¹ which, when it sees its father no longer able to fly on account of the weakness of old age, exhibits its gratitude by preparing for him a nest, and by giving him food upon which he may nourish himself till the day of his death.”


The Signor Beltramo, who was sitting near to Chiara, perceiving that his turn had now come to tell a story, and feeling reluctant to

¹ A chough.

wait for the command of the Signora, at once began to tell his fable in the following wise, with a merry look upon his face the while.

THE SEVENTH FABLE.

Giorgio, a servant, makes a covenant with Pandolfo his master, with respect to his service, and ends by summoning him before the tribunal.

 HE illustrious gentlemen and the lovesome ladies whom I see around me have already narrated such a vast number of stories that meseems there is left little or no material to serve my needs. But so as not to mar in any way the fair process of our entertainment I will put forth the best power that is in me to tell you a fable which, though it may not shine with great wit, will at least give you somewhat of diversion and pleasure, as you will presently see.

Pandolfo Zabbarella, a gentleman of Padua, was in his day a brave and great-souled man, and one of much forethought. It happened, once upon a time, that he found himself in great need of a servant who should attend to his wants, and not being able to find one exactly to his taste, he engaged himself at last with a fellow who, although outwardly he gave fair promise, was in sooth both crafty and malicious. Ser Pandolfo asked him whether he would be willing to come and live with him and be his servant, whereupon the man, whose name was Giorgio, replied that he was, making, however, a condition that no other service should be required of him than to attend to Messer Pandolfo's horse and to accompany him wherever he might go, seeing that he was unwilling to involve himself in any other duties than these. Pandolfo having assented to these terms, they were reduced by a notary to the form of an agreement, under which each one bound himself by promise to observe his contract, pledging all his possessions as security therefor.

One day, when Pandolfo was riding along a muddy and villainous road, his horse by accident floundered into a ditch and was unable to extricate himself therefrom by reason of the mud. Whereupon Pandolfo called upon his servant aloud to give assistance, fearing lest he should run into danger of losing his life. But the servant only

stood still and stared at him, affirming that it was no business of his to give aid in such a case as this, seeing that no provision thereanent was to be found in the contract between them. Then, having drawn forth from his pouch the agreement, he began to read most minutely all its different headings to see whether there was in them any clause which would meet such a case as the one now in question. Meantime his master called out to him: 'For God's sake, my brother, help me quickly!' Whereupon the servant made answer: 'In sooth I cannot help you, forasmuch as to do so would be contrary to the form of our agreement.' 'Then,' said Pandolfo, 'if you will not help me and deliver me from the danger I am in, I will not pay you your wages.' To these supplications Giorgio replied that he could not possibly do this because he would thus render himself liable to the penalties set down in the contract. And if by good fortune the master had not been helped out of his peril by the wayfarers who were passing along the road, he would assuredly have never been able to get free therefrom by his own efforts. On account of this adventure they entered into a fresh agreement, which they caused to be drawn up, by which the servant pledged himself, under certain penalties, to give assistance to his master whenever he might be called upon, and never to depart from him, or to leave his side.

It chanced one day that Pandolfo was walking with certain gentlemen of Venice in the church of Saint Anthony,¹ and the servant, obedient to the wish of his master expressed in the contract, walked there likewise, almost rubbing shoulders with him the while, and refusing to leave his side. Wherefore the gentlemen and all the others who were present laughed immoderately on account of this strange behaviour, and were diverted thereanent not a little. On this account the master, after he had returned to his house, took his servant sharply to task, telling him that he had behaved in an ill and sottish manner in walking in such fashion up and down the church, keeping himself so unduly close, and showing neither respect nor reverence to his master nor to the gentlemen who were then in his company. But the servant, shrugging his shoulders, affirmed that he had done nothing more than to obey the commands which were laid upon him, and forthwith cited the covenants of the agreement which were written in the deed lately made between them. On

¹ Orig., *nella chiesa del Santo*. In Padua St. Anthony is always called Il Santo.

account of what had passed the master desired that they should enter into a new contract, by the terms of which the master required the servant to keep himself at a greater distance ; whereupon Giorgio followed Ser Pandolfo about all day long a hundred feet in the rear, and however loudly the master might call, and whatever signs he might make to the servant to bid him come anear, the fellow refused to lessen the distance between them a whit, but continued to follow his master at exactly the distance he was required to keep between them by their agreement, fearing lest by coming any nearer he might incur the legal penalty prescribed in the contract. But Pandolfo, irritated by the stupidity and lack of sense in his servant, explained to him that the term 'distance' in the contract should be held to signify a space of three feet.

The servant, who was now clearly enlightened as to the wishes of his master, forthwith took a stick three feet in length, and, placing one end thereof against his own chest, and the other against his master's shoulders, followed him about in this fashion. The townsfolk and the craftsmen of the city, when they looked upon this strange sight, laughed long and loud at what they beheld, deeming that this servant must of a surety be a madman. But the master, who as yet knew not that the servant was following him with a stick bestowed in this wise, was mightily astonished when he found that all the passers-by were thus gaping and laughing at him. As soon as he had discovered the reason of their merriment, he flew in a rage, and rated his servant soundly, and made as if he would give him a grievous beating ; but the fellow, with loud weeping and lamentation, began to excuse himself, saying : ' O master ! you do wrong in wishing to beat me. Have I not made a bargain with you ? have I not in sooth observed your commands in every respect ? when have I ever gone against the least of them ? Here is the deed ; read it, and then punish me if you can find that I have in any way been lacking in my duties.' And in this manner the servant, as before, got the better of his master.

It chanced that one day the master sent the servant to the butcher's shop to buy some meat, and—as it is the habit of masters sometimes—speaking ironically he said to Giorgio, ' Go on this errand, and see that you spend not more than a year over it.' Whereupon the servant, whose fault was that he obeyed too strictly his master's commands, went away to his own country, and there abode till the

year had rolled away. On the first day of the succeeding twelve-month he went back to his master, carrying with him the meat, whereupon Messer Pandolfo was greatly amazed, for the reason that he had long ago forgotten what he had ordered. He reproved the fellow on account of his flight, saying : ‘ You have come back a trifle too late, you thief who deserve hanging a thousand times !¹ By God, I will make you pay as you deserve for all the trouble you have given me, you wretch, you rascal ! Do not think to get any penny of wage from me ! ’ To this Giorgio replied that he had duly carried out all the clauses of the contract between them, and had obeyed to the letter all the commands of his master contained therein. ‘ Remember, good master, that you bade me be gone on my errand not more than a year, and here I am, back to the very day ; wherefore you must pay me the salary which is due to me. ’ And thus, when the cause was carried before the tribunal, the master was required by the sentence of the court to pay his servant the wages he had agreed to give him.

Although Signor Beltramo had borne himself somewhat bashfully in setting forth the beginning of his story, the listeners were in no way dissatisfied with the fable he told them ; nay rather, they with one voice gave it high praise, begging him at the same time that he would, with his wonted kindness, set them an enigma to guess. Then he, unwilling to run counter to the wishes of such a gracious audience, spake in the following words :

Far in the sultry distant east,
There dwells a gentle kindly beast ;
Its head is large, its body small,
And patient is its mood withal.
With eyes bent on the ground it goes,
And from them oft the tear-drop flows.
I thus describe it clear and true,
So you may keep its form in view ;
For whoso gazes in its eyes,
Finds bane therein and straightway dies.

Signor Beltramo’s graceful enigma was listened to by the assembly with somewhat of wonder, and no one grasped the meaning thereof. The explanation of it was that it was meant to describe a small

¹ Orig., *ladro da mille forche*.

animal called a *catopleba*,¹ which goes always with its eyes fixed on the ground. This beast, though it is fair to look upon, should be regarded by men with great caution, because in truth it bears death in its glance. Qualities like these may well be attributed to the devil, who urges on and cajoles a man, and afterwards kills him by means of some deadly sin, and leads him to the death eternal. As soon as the solution of this scholarly enigma was finished, Lauretta, who sat next to Signor Beltramo, thus began to tell her fable.

THE EIGHTH FABLE.

Gasparo, a peasant, having built a chapel, calls it after the name of Saint Honorato, and puts the rector in possession thereof. The rector and his deacon pay a visit to the peasant, in the course of which the deacon, without forethought, brings to pass a certain jest.



HE vice of gluttony is in sooth a heinous one, but it is nevertheless more tolerable than the vice of hypocrisy, forasmuch as the gluttonous man only puts a cheat upon himself, while the hypocrite, with his simulated actions, seeks to deceive other men in his desire to appear to be what he is not, and to do what he has no notion of doing. All this came to pass in the case of a certain village priest, who, by the means of his hypocrisy, put an offence both upon his soul and on his body, as I will in a few words let you understand.

Close to the city of Padua there stands a village called Noventa, in which once dwelt a certain peasant, a rich man and very devout. This man, out of his devotion to religion and for the unburdening of his own sins as well as those of his wife, built a chapel, and, having endowed the same with a sufficient sum of money and called it by the name of Saint Honorato, presented a priest to be the rector and governor thereof, a man well versed in the canon law. One day, which happened to be the vigil of a certain saint—but not one commanded to be kept by our sacred mother the Church—the rector

¹ *Catopleba*—a wild beast, little of body, heavy and slow; his head so great that his body can scarce bear it. Whosoever looketh upon his eyes falls presently down dead.

aforesaid called for his deacon, and the two went together to pay a visit to Ser Gasparo, that is, to the peasant who had nominated him as governor of the chapel; whether for the furtherance of his own affairs, or for any other cause, I leave you to decide. When the two arrived, the good peasant, wishing to pay them due respect, caused to be got ready a sumptuous supper, with roast meats, tarts, and divers other good cheer, and was most pressing that they should remain for the night as guests under his roof. But the priest declared that he might on no account eat any meat that day, seeing that it was a sacred vigil; thus pretending to follow a habit which in sooth was entirely strange to him. He made a great show of fasting, and would not touch a morsel of the food for which his starving belly was crying. Upon this the peasant, being unwilling to divert him aught from the ways of devotion, gave command to his wife that she should keep such dishes as were already well forward in preparation in a cupboard to serve for the following day.

When the supper was finished, and when they had come to an end of their converse thereafter, they all betook themselves to rest in the peasant's house—Ser Gasparo with his wife, and the rector with the deacon, the two chambers being situated side by side. When midnight had come, the priest roused the deacon from his sleep, and in a whisper inquired of him where the goodwife had bestowed the tart which had been prepared for supper, declaring at the same time that, unless he could give his famishing body something to eat, he must needs die of hunger. Whereupon the deacon, obedient to his command, rose from bed, and, little by little, softly picked his steps to the spot where had been put away the remains of the feast, and from these he took a good slice of the tart. But on his way back, while he imagined he was going into his rector's chamber, he went by accident into that of his host. Now, seeing that it was in the summer season, when the sun is high in Leo, the wife of the peasant lay stark naked and uncovered on the bed by reason of the great heat, and was making noises like the puffing of a pair of bellows. The deacon, deeming all the while that he was in the rector's chamber, said, 'Here, good master, take the tart you told me to fetch, and eat it, if such be your pleasure.' Hearing the goodwife puffing as vigorously as ever, the deacon went on to say that there was no need to blow the tart thus, seeing that it was cold already, but no heed was taken of his words, and the puffing and blowing still went on; so the

deacon, growing somewhat angry and wanting to be rid of the tart, began to feel about with his hands, and, having alighted upon something which he took to be the rector's face, he put down the tart thereupon, knowing not that it was really the exposed hinder parts of the peasant's wife. She, as soon as she was sensible of something cold upon her buttocks, awoke from her sleep and began to cry out aloud, and thus aroused her husband by the noise she made, and began to tell him what manner of thing it was that had befallen her. The deacon, who by this time had discovered how he had got into the wrong chamber, gently stole away into the one adjoining, where lay the rector. Ser Gasparo, having got out of bed and lighted a candle, made a search through all the house, and, when he beheld in what strange place the tart was, he was mightily amazed, deeming that it could only have come there through the working of some evil spirit or other. Whereupon he called the priest, and told him what had happened; so the poor wight was forced to set about singing psalms and hymns with an empty belly, and to sanctify the house in every part with holy water. This done, they all went back to their beds.

And thus (as I declared at the opening of my story) hypocrisy brought an offence both to the soul and to the body of the priest, who, after planning to fill himself with the tart, had to go fasting against his will.

All the gentlemen laughed heartily when they heard tell how the peasant's wife had made a puffing and blowing as though she had been a pair of bellows, and how, as the tart was cold already, there was no need for her to cool it. But in order that an end might be made of the hearty laughter, the Signora gave the word to Lauretta to tell her enigma at once, and the damsel, still laughing, spake it in the following words:


Like lofty house I stand on high,
And yet no house in sooth am I.
Like mirror all around I shine,
And stand before the place divine
Where you repair to kneel and pray
That all your sins be washed away.
I live, but with my vital fire
I am consumed, and soon expire.
In every glorious fane I live,
And light to all who worship give;

But frail and brief my life withal,
I die if once to earth I fall.

The enigma thus set by the graceful Lauretta was accounted a very scholarly feat, and not a single one of the listeners failed to give high praise thereto, begging her at the same time to let follow forthwith the interpretation thereof. And the damsel, who desired nothing better, expounded it in the following words : “ This enigma of mine is intended to describe the lamp which, placed before the sacrament, sheds light over every part of the church. Day and night it consumes itself, adorning the sanctuary the while, and its being is assuredly a frail one, seeing that it is made of glass.” As soon as Lauretta had finished the explanation of her riddle, Signor Antonio Molino, whose turn in the story-telling came next, began to speak in these words.

THE NINTH FABLE.

A certain damsel, named Filomena, having been placed in a convent, falls into grave sickness. She is treated by divers physicians, and in the end is discovered to be hermaphrodite.

HE secrets of nature, most gracious ladies, are indeed mighty and beyond counting, nor does there live in all the world a man who by the powers of his intellect is able to realize the character thereof. On this account the thought has come into my mind to relate to you something which happened (for in sooth this is no fable) no great time ago in the city of Salerno.

In Salerno, a city of high renown, and one in which handsome women especially abound, there lived a certain gentleman belonging to the house of Porti, the head of a family and the father of one daughter, a damsel in the full flower of her beauty and not yet past the sixteenth year of her age. This maiden, who was called Filomena, found somewhat irksome the pursuit of the many gallants of the city who flocked about her on account of her great beauty and sought to have her to wife. The father, seeing that his daughter was in a position of some danger, and fearing lest some ignominy or other should fall

upon her by reason of the provocations she daily received, determined to take her to the convent of San Iorio in the city of Salerno; not indeed with the view of letting her make formal profession of the monastic life, but in order that the sisters might have charge of her until such time as she should find a husband.

It happened that while this damsel was abiding in the convent she fell a victim to a grave attack of fever, during which she was nursed and tended with the greatest care and diligence. At the outset of her illness certain herbalists came to minister to her cure, and these, with weighty oaths and professions, pledged themselves to bring her back to her former good health in a very short space of time. But all their efforts were of no avail. Whereupon her father caused to be brought to her divers physicians of great skill and experience, and some old women as well, who promised forthwith to give her a remedy which should work a cure of her malady. In the meantime the fair and gracious maiden was further afflicted by a grievous swelling of the groin, which grew to the bigness of a large ball. By reason of this ailment she suffered so great pain that she did nought else but groan and lament in piteous wise; so that it seemed as if she were indeed come very near to the end of her days. Her kinsfolk, deeply moved by the wretched lot of the young girl, sent to minister to her surgeons of renown, men highly commended as professors of their art; and some of these, after they had carefully viewed and examined the spot where the swelling was, declared that the root of the herb marsh mallow, well cooked and mixed with the lard of swine, ought to be applied to the place in order to alleviate the pain and the swelling; others prescribed different treatment, while others denied that there would be any use in applying to the patient either this or that of the remedies which had been suggested. On one point they were all agreed, namely, that they must, in any case, cut open the swelling in order to remove therefrom the cause of the pain.

As soon as they had come to this decision they bade summon all the inmates of the convent, as well as divers matrons and kinsfolk of the gracious damsel who was sick. Then one of the aforesaid surgeons, a man who in skill greatly excelled all his colleagues, having taken his operating knife, made a light incision therewith, and with the greatest dexterity cut through the swelling in the twinkling of an eye, and perforated the skin. And when they looked

to see come forth from the wound either blood or putrefaction, lo and behold ! nothing of the sort happened—the only result of their operation being the transformation of their patient from a damsel into a young man. Though I am now telling you the sober truth in lieu of a fable, I cannot keep back my laughter. All the nuns fell straightway to weeping with grief, not indeed because of the wound which had been inflicted upon the damsel, or because of the distemper she had suffered, but rather on their own account, seeing that they would vastly have preferred that this event, which came to pass openly, should have happened in secret and without the knowledge of anyone except themselves. After what had occurred, for the sake of their good name they must needs send the damsel at once forth from the convent, whereas they would dearly have loved now to keep her amongst themselves. The physicians who were standing by could do nought else but laugh, and thus in a trice the damsel, restored to health, became both man and woman. Now I, forsooth, have told you in place of something fictitious, something which is true—something, moreover, which I can speak of from the testimony of mine own eyes, forasmuch as I saw her after the event described above clad as a man, she partaking the while of the nature both of the one sex and of the other.

The Signora, when she saw that Molino's fable had come to a laughable end, and marked at the same time the rapid flight of the hours, addressed him, telling him that it behoved him to propound his enigma forthwith, according to the rule they had hitherto observed. Whereupon Molino, unwilling to keep the company any longer in suspense, spake thus :


From a mother born alone,
 Other parent I have none.
 Unwilling to my mother's side
 I oft return, and there abide.
 I am a strong and pungent wight,
 And some in me find great delight ;
 Others hate me for the bane
 I bring to them, and loud complain.
 Thus my destined part I play,
 Working ever night and day ;
 But children none, by fate's decree,
 Will ever take their life from me.

Not one of the company could imagine what might be the

meaning of Molino's enigma except Cateruzza, who had been chosen to tell the next fable. "Signor Antonio," said the damsel, "the obscurely-devised enigma you have set us to guess can mean nothing else than salt, which has no father, and has for its mother water. And to this mother the child will often return. Likewise, by its flavour it pleases some, and displeases others." Having thus given her solution of the riddle the damsel was silent for a short space ; but, remarking that no one else spake a word, she opened her pretty lips and thus began.

THE TENTH FABLE.

Cesare, a Neapolitan, after a long course of study at Bologna, takes his degree as doctor, and having returned to his home, files for reference all the judgments he has heard, in order the better to give his own decisions.

 HERE are three things, gracious ladies, which may be said to lay waste the world and to turn everything upside down. These three are money, hatred, and favouritism, and the truth of this saying you will readily understand if you will give a kindly hearing to the fable I am about to tell you.

Lodovico Mota (as indeed you may have heard before) was a far-seeing and wise man, and one of the foremost citizens of Naples, and, being unmarried, he took to wife the daughter of Alessandro di Alessandri, who likewise dwelt in the city, and by her he had an only son, to whom he gave the name of Cesare. When the child was old enough to receive instruction his father put him under the charge of a teacher to learn the rudiments of letters, and next sent him to Bologna to study the civil and the canon law. Here he abode some long time, getting however very little profit from his sojourn, although his father, who was keenly set on making his son a learned man, bought for him all the books of the jurisconsults of the canon law, and the works of all the learned men who had ever written on the one and on the other faculty, deeming that his son would be able to outstrip all the other pleaders of Naples, and nurturing the belief that he would, on this account, be in touch with the best clients and

concerned in all the important cases before the courts. But Cesare, though he was a youth who had studied much, was wanting in the essential groundwork of legal science, and bare of all knowledge of letters; consequently he understood not the things he read, and such facts as he had got by heart he would mouth out with great show of impudence, in preposterous fashion, and without any due ordering. So he would let one argument of his contradict another, thus showing his ignorance; forasmuch as he would constantly be wrangling with his mates, taking the truth for falsehood and falsehood for the truth. And like an inflated windbag he would go into the schools with his ears closed, and there build castles in the air. Because ignorant people are never weary of repeating the saying that it is an unseemly and disgraceful thing on the part of those who are possessed of great riches to spend their time in study; so Cesare, who in sooth was well-to-do, got little or no profit from prosecuting the study of the civil and canon law.

On this account, being willing and ready to let his own ignorance come into competition with the learning of those others who had not wasted their oil and their time, but had studied long and diligently, he resolved with arrant presumption to offer himself for advancement to the grade of doctor. Wherefore, having presented himself before the senate with this purpose in his mind, and having taken up all the points of dispute which were proposed, he was set to show his acquirements publicly in the presence of a crowd of people. He began to exhibit black for white, and green for black, thinking that, as he was blind himself, all the others around must be blind likewise; nevertheless, either by good fortune, or by the power of money, or by favouritism and friendship, his claim was allowed, and he was made a doctor. Afterwards, accompanied by a vast crowd of persons of quality, he made a progress through the city to the music of pipes and trumpets, and returned to his house clad in robes of silk and purple, so that one would have taken him for an ambassador rather than for a doctor of laws.

On a certain day this worthy master, dressed in his purple robe and velvet stole, prepared certain strips of paper and strung them together after the fashion of a notary's file, and then placed them altogether in a vase. While he was thus engaged, his father by chance came to him and asked him what he was minded to do with the papers he was preparing. Whereupon Cesare thus made reply: 'It

is written, my father, in the books of the civil law that all decisions ought to be looked upon as belonging to the category of fortuitous chances.¹ Now I, who have studied the inmost spirit, and not merely the letter of the law, have made up these files at hazard, upon which I have noted down divers decisions, which, with God's good will, I will deliver without any trouble to myself to the litigants before me when by your aid and patronage I shall sit as a judge in the high court. Does it not seem to you, O my father ! that I have in very subtle wise investigated and solved this question ?' The father, when he listened to these words, was as a man half dead with grief, and having turned his back upon his useless lout of a son, left him in his ignorance to do the best he might.

Cateruzza's diverting story was received by the honourable company with the utmost pleasure, and after they had spent some minutes over discussing the same, the Signora directed her to let follow her enigma, and she, without waiting for further command, gave it in the following words :

I trust I may not you offend
 In asking you, my worthy friend,
 Whether a certain thing you have
 Which lately in your charge I gave,
 Which straight you took and folded tight
 Between your left leg and your right.
 This I must know and know straightway,
 For much I grieve when 'tis away.
 Good friend, your wrath I understand.
 Fear not, for you shall hold in hand
 This thing which lies upon my thigh,
 Sways up and down, now low, now high,
 And galls me sore, and hangs behind ;
 So take it when you are inclined.

When Cateruzza had finished, the listeners looked one at the other, hardly knowing what to say. Whereupon she, perceiving that not one of them understood the meaning of the riddle she had propounded, spake thus : " Ladies and gentlemen, stand no longer in suspense, for I will straightway tell you the meaning of my enigma, although I find myself scarcely equal to the task. There was once a young man who lent to his friend his horse to ride out to his country house, which horse the friend sold. As the latter was on his way

¹ Orig., *che le sententie si deono connumerare tra i casi fortuiti.*

back, he was espied by the young man, who asked him what had become of the horse, and, finding no sign of it, was greatly perturbed in mind. Whereupon his friend bade him take comfort, forasmuch as he had the money for which he had sold the horse safe in his purse, which galled him somewhat by hanging down behind him." After Cateruzza with her subtle wit had thus revealed the meaning of her enigma, the Signora turned her glance towards the Trevisan, and in modest wise made a sign to him that he should forthwith let follow a story in due order. And he, without any wilful demur, began to speak in the following terms.

THE ELEVENTH FABLE.

A poor novice sets out from Cologne to travel to Ferrara, and having approached that city at nightfall, takes shelter by stealth in a certain place, where a terrifying adventure befalls him.



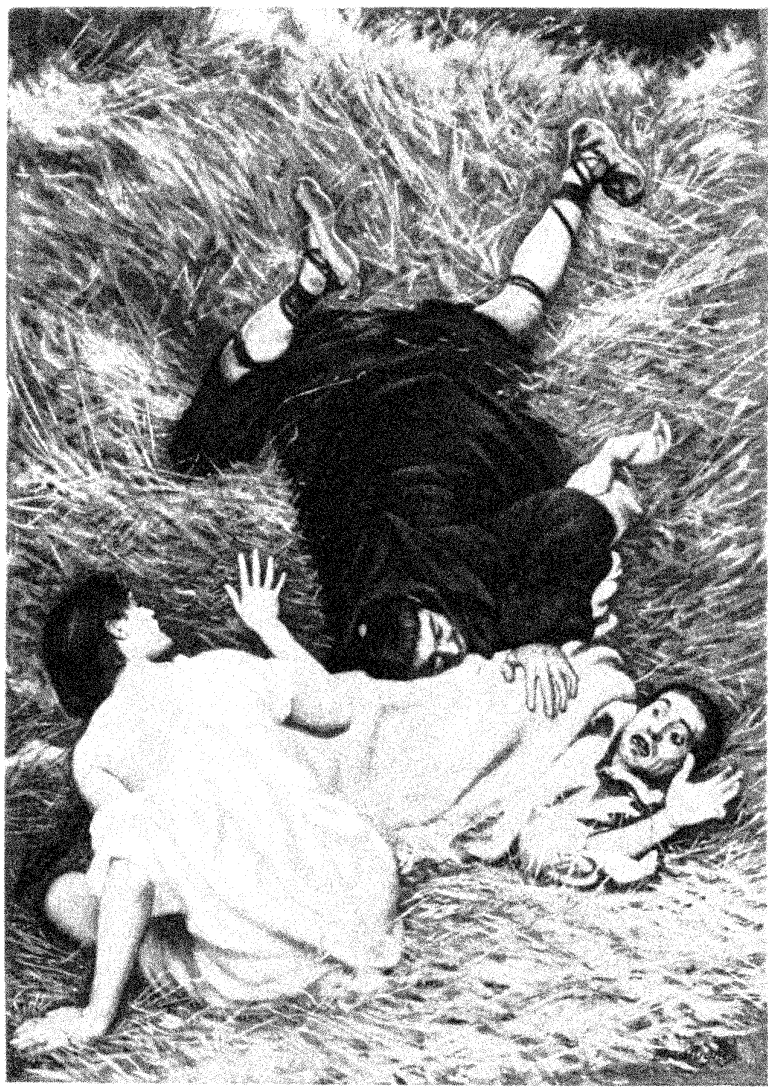
FEAR is sometimes begotten, most lovesome ladies, from too great confidence, and sometimes from the pusillanimity of our nature, which by rights ought to fear only those things which have real power in themselves to work evil to others, and to ignore all those which have nothing terrible about them. I wish, dear ladies, to relate to you an adventure—a real one, and nought of jest therein—which happened in this our day to a certain poor novice and brought to him no little misfortune. He, having set forth from Cologne to journey to Ferrara, passed by the abbey and by the high ground above the swamps of Rovigo, and by the time he had reached the confines of the Duke of Ferrara's territory night had fallen. And although the moon was shining brightly, nevertheless the solitude and the strangeness of everything around him worked very powerfully upon the poor fellow's fears—he was indeed little more than a youth—and he was, moreover, much adread lest he should meet his death at the hands of malefactors or by wild beasts. As the poor wight wandered along, not knowing whither he should betake himself, and sensible that he had not a coin of any sort in his pocket, he saw before him a farmyard, somewhat removed from the other buildings of the homestead, and having made his way into this

without being seen or heard by anyone, he climbed up into a straw-loft by a ladder, which was placed conveniently against a wall, and, when he had ascended thither, he bestowed himself to rest for the night as best he could.

But scarcely had he settled himself to sleep when there climbed also into the loft a brisk young man, carrying a sword in his right hand and a shield on his left arm. The newcomer began to whistle softly, and the poor monk in the straw, hearing this, thought he was discovered, and every hair on his head stood upright with terror, and, crouching down still deeper in the straw, he lay as still as a mouse. Now the armed newcomer, who was indeed a neighbouring curate, was inflamed with love for the wife of the owner of the adjacent house. The novice waited for a little space in keen anxiety, and then there issued from the house near a lady in her night-dress, plump and very fair, and she also made her way up to the loft. Directly the priest saw her he threw aside his sword and shield, and ran to embrace her and kissed her, and she on her part was not slow to return his endearments, and what followed I dare say you can guess.

As soon as the novice up in the straw perceived what was going on, his courage returned, for he now knew that the priest had not come there to do him any hurt, but to take pleasure with the frolicsome dame. Wherefore, being seized by curiosity and no longer afraid, he stretched his head out of the straw the better to observe how the lovers were occupying themselves, but leaning over too far forward he lost his balance, and there being nothing but straw to support him, he fell down right on the top of the lady and the priest, and gave his leg no little hurt by this accident.

The two lovers, being very ardently intent on the object for which they had foregathered, and still straining to pluck the ripe fruit of their desire, as soon as they espied the cloak and the headgear of the black brother were mightily confounded at what they saw, and deemed that it must be some horrid night-walking ghost. Wherefore they both took to flight, trembling and filled with fear, and leaving behind the sword and the shield. The novice, with his broken shin and likewise much terrified, slunk away as best he could into a corner of the loft, and having burrowed a large hole in the heap of straw, hid himself therein. The priest, who began to be in some fear of discovery, seeing that his sword and shield were well known, returned to the loft, and espying nothing more of the ghost, he picked up his



weapons, and, albeit somewhat disturbed in spirit, returned to his own house.

When the morrow was come, the priest, having a mind to say the mass in good time in order that he might despatch certain private affairs of his own, stationed himself at the church door and waited for his clerk, who was to come and help him with the office. As he stood there watching, who should come up but the poor novice, who, for fear lest he should be discovered in his lodgings and roughly handled, had got up before day. Now just as he came up to the church the priest asked him whither he was bound, whereupon he answered, 'I am going to Ferrara.' When the priest farther inquired of him whether he was in any haste, he replied that he was not, and that it would serve his purpose very well if he were to reach Ferrara by nightfall. Then the priest asked the young monk whether he would be willing to stop and help to say the mass, and to this proposition the novice readily assented.

The priest, noting that the young monk had on a black robe, and that his hood and gown had divers straws hanging thereto, at once began to suspect that he might be talking to last night's ghost, wherefore he said, 'My brother, where did you sleep last night?' To this the novice made answer, 'I slept mightily ill upon a straw stack in a place not far from here, where about midnight I fell down and well-nigh broke my leg.' The priest, when he heard these words, was yet more confirmed in his belief that the novice was the man he suspected him to be, and he did not suffer him to go his way until he had fully disclosed to him the whole matter as it stood. And after the mass had been said the novice dined with the priest, and then went his way with his broken shin. But before he departed the host besought him that, on his journey back, he would pay another visit to the place, forasmuch as he was taken with the fancy that the lady herself should hear the whole story from the lips of the young monk. But he did not return, for, having been warned in a dream, he travelled back to his monastery by a different road.

As soon as the fable told by the Trevisan had come to an end and had been duly praised, he, without allowing any farther lapse of time, made a beginning of his enigma in the following words :

Its length and breadth shall I disclose ?
Upon my lap it nestles close ;


I stroke it and I hold it tight.
 To all around it gives delight.
 Fair ladies, is it strange to you
 It does its work correct and true ?
 Though rapture sweet within may dwell,
 'Tis passive till it knows me well.

“I would never wish, most gracious ladies, to suffer reproof from you on the score of impropriety for having brought forward in such an assembly as this anything which might seem offensive to your chaste hearing. But in truth this enigma of mine is in no way allied to aught that is unseemly, but on the other hand to something which delights you much and from which you take no small pleasure. My enigma, in sooth, is meant to describe the lute, the handle of which is somewhat more than a span in width, while its body is wont to rest in the lap of the person who plays it, thus giving delight to all who listen.”

Everyone praised loudly the subtle enigma propounded by the Trevisan, and especially the Signora, who listened to it with great pleasure. As soon as all were once more silent, the Signora gave the word to Isabella to let follow her fable, and she, who was neither deaf nor mute, spake in the following wise.

THE TWELFTH FABLE.

Guglielmo, King of Bertagna, being grievously afflicted by a certain malady, causes to be summoned all the physicians for the restoring and preservation of his health. One Maestro Gottredo, a doctor and a very poor man, gibes him three maxims, by which he rules his life and recovers his health.

N sooth those may well account themselves born under a lucky star, or even somewhat more than mortal, whose judgment naturally leads them to avoid with success all such things as are noxious, and to seek such things as may be most beneficial and profitable to them. But men of this sort, who are willing to observe certain rules in their manner of life, have in all times been hard to find, and nowadays there are very few of them left. Nevertheless, it happened entirely otherwise in the

case of a certain king, who, having received from a physician three rules for the preservation of his health, regulated his life strictly thereby.

I think, nay, I am sure, gracious ladies, that you have never heard tell of the story of Guglielmo, King of Bertagna, who in his day had no peer either in prowess or in courtesy, and who was, as long as he lived, the special favourite of fortune. In a certain year it happened that this king fell grievously sick, but, being young and full of courage, he gave little thought to the malady; but, as his illness continued and grew worse from day to day, things came to such a pass that all hope of preserving his life was gone. On this account the king gave orders that all the physicians of the city should come together into his presence, and then and there freely give their opinions concerning his state. As soon as the will of the king had been made known, every one of the medical faculty, of whatever grade or condition he might be, repaired to the royal palace and presented himself before the king. Amongst this crowd of physicians there was one named Maestro Gotfreddo, a man of seemly life and of adequate learning, but very poor, and meanly clad, and shod still worse. And, forasmuch as he was so badly accoutred, he had not confidence enough to put himself forward in an assembly of so many learned and illustrious men, but, through very shame, stationed himself behind the door of the king's chamber, where he could hardly be seen, and there he stood concealed, listening the while to all the opinions pronounced by the careful and learned physicians within.

As soon as all the physicians had come into the presence of the king, he thus addressed them: 'Most worthy and excellent doctors, I have summoned you all here into my presence for no other reason than to learn of you what may be the cause of the grave distemper which now assails me, and to beg of you that you will exercise all your skill and diligence in curing the same, giving me such remedies as my condition may require, and thus restoring me to my former health. And as soon as you shall have made me well again, you shall give me whatever rules may seem to you the most fitting in my case for the preservation of my health for the future.' To this the physicians made answer: 'Sacred majesty, to confer the boon of health is beyond our power. Power such as this lies only in the hands of Him who rules all things with His nod. Nevertheless,

we will endeavour, as far as within us lies, to supply you with every remedy which may possibly serve for the restoration of your health, and for the conservation of the same when you shall have recovered it.'

And hereupon the learned physicians began to dispute amongst themselves as to the source of the king's illness, and as to the remedies which they proposed to prescribe therefor, each one of them (as is the custom of the faculty) giving out his own opinion, citing the authority of Galen, of Hippocrates, of Avicenna, of Æsculapius, and of the other great doctors. The king, as soon as their opinions had been clearly set before him, happened to turn his eyes towards the door of the chamber, and caught sight of some sort of shadowy form which was there manifest. Whereupon he demanded of them whether there remained any one of their number who had not yet spoken. They answered him that there was none. But the king, who was fully assured that he had seen someone, said: 'If I am not a blind man, it is plain to me that there is something, I know not what, behind that door. Now what may this be?' To the king's question one of the learned doctors made answer: 'Est homo quidam,' making mock the while, and playing jests upon the poor physician, never considering that it often comes to pass that art is made the sport of art.¹ Hereupon the king made Gotfredde understand that he was to come into his presence, and he perceived that this man, ill clad as he was, was in truth a physician. He came forward, and, trembling with fear, bent himself down in humble reverence, and made a courteous obeisance to the king, who, after having first bidden him be seated with all due honour, asked him what might be his name. To this he made answer: 'Sacred majesty, my name is Gotfredde.' Then said the king, 'Maestro Gotfredde, you must needs have got sufficient intelligence of my condition from listening to the wrangling which these right worshipful doctors have made since they have come into my chamber, wherefore there is no necessity that the whole story should be told over again. Now tell me what you have to say concerning my illness.' 'Sacred majesty,' answered Gotfredde, 'although I may, with due desert, style myself the meanest, the least learned, and the poorest speaker in all this gathering of venerable masters, by reason of my penury and of the low esteem in which I am held, nevertheless, in order to show myself

¹ Orig., *che l'arte dall' arte e schernita*.

obedient to the commands of your highness, I will labour with all the strength which in me lies to make clear to you the origin of your distemper, and to give to you a certain regimen and rule of life, by following which you will be able to ensure sound health for the future. You must know, gracious sire, that this infirmity of yours is in no sense a mortal one, seeing that it springs not from any fundamental element of your nature, but from some violent and unseen accident. This ailment, indeed, in like manner as it came suddenly upon you, shall suddenly dissipate itself. In order that you may regain your former health, I ask no harder task of you than that you should be careful in your diet, taking at the same time a little of the flower of cassia for the cooling of your blood. If you will do this, in eight days you will be sound and well again. And when your health shall have been restored to you, you must, if you desire to keep yourself well for any long time, carefully observe these three precepts. The first is, that your head be always dry. The second is, that you keep your feet warm. The third is, that in taking your food you follow the example of the beasts of the field. If you will put these precepts of mine into execution, you will long keep out of harm's way, and will be a robust and healthy man.'

The physicians standing round, as soon as they heard the good advice given by Maestro Gotfredo to the king concerning his rule of life, began to laugh so long and loud that they were like to burst their chaps with laughter, and, turning towards the king, they cried: 'These, in sooth, are the canons; these are the rules of Maestro Gotfredo; here we see the fruit of his studies! Fine remedies, indeed, are these—fine provision to have made for such an illustrious king!' and in this fashion they went on, making mock of him. The king, when he heard the loud laughter which arose from the assembled physicians, gave command straightway that every one should be silent and should give over laughing, and furthermore directed Maestro Gotfredo to bring forth his reasons in favour of the course he had recommended. 'My lord and king,' said Gotfredo, 'these my fathers in learning, men highly to be honoured, and greatly skilled in the art of medicine, have shown themselves not a little amazed anent the rule I have laid down for the governance of your health, but if they would bring their sound and sober judgment to the consideration of those causes from which spring the diseases of men, perchance they would not laugh so heartily, but

would be disposed to listen with attention to the words of one who maybe (with all respect be it spoken) is both wiser and more skilled than they themselves. Be not astonished, sacred majesty, at this proposition of mine, but set it down as a certain truth that all the infirmities with which men are afflicted derive their origin either from an excess of bodily heat, or from taking cold, or from a superfluity of noxious humours. Wherefore, as soon as ever a man finds himself in a sweat through weariness or through the great heat, he ought forthwith to wipe himself dry in order that the moisture which has come out of his body may not return thereinto and so produce a distemper. Again, a man ought to keep his feet warm to prevent the damps and chills which the earth gives forth from ascending to his stomach, and from his stomach to his head, thus to generate pains in the head, an unwholesome habit of the stomach, and innumerable other ills. What I meant by the example of the beasts of the field, is that man ought to eat only such food as is fitted for his habit of body, as do the animals which have no reason, nourishing themselves with diet suitable to their nature. Let us now take the case of the ox or of the horse. If you were to offer to either of these a capon, or a pheasant, or a partridge, or a bit of fine fat veal, or any other meat, he assuredly would not eat thereof, seeing that food of this sort is not what his nature requires. But if you should place before him hay or any other provender, he would at once fall to eating, because the food is what is fitting for him. Again, give the capon, or the pheasant, or the meat, to a dog, or even to a cat, and it will straightway devour it, because it is appropriate food. And on the contrary, these beasts will not touch the hay or the corn, because it is not the diet they require, but unfitted for their nature. Therefore I beg you, O my lord! to give up eating all such food as is not suited to your habit of body, and to take only the things which agree with your temperament. If you will do as I tell you, you will enjoy a long and healthy life.'

The advice which Gotfredde gave greatly pleased the king, who, putting full faith therein, kept to it closely, and, having dismissed the other physicians, retained Maestro Gotfredde about his person, holding him in high reverence on account of his virtue and worth. Thus, from being very poor, Gotfredde became a rich man, a reward he well merited, and having been appointed sole guardian of the king's health, he lived happily ever after.

Isabella, whose fable had greatly delighted the whole assembly, here paused, having brought her story-telling to an end, but almost immediately went on with her enigma in these words :

Marvel not, O lady fair !
At what I now to you declare ;
For truth itself is not more true,
Though it may worthless seem to you.
One time, when pressed by danger fell,
A friend I found who served me well ;
But had I not, with force amain,
Sent him into his place again,
I should have met my death straightway,
And vanished from this world away.

For some reason the meaning of this enigma appeared to the ladies to be somewhat immodest, but in truth it was nothing of the sort, because under the husk there lay another sense different altogether from the one which it bore, as they imagined, on the surface. It was as follows: a youth being chased by catchpoles, took to flight, and, as he was running, he saw standing open the door of a house; whereupon another man, to save him, thrust him into this house and closed the door thereof, and shot the bolt into its place, that is, into the hole it fitted. If he had not acted thus the youth would have been undone, because he would have had to go to prison.

Scarcely had Isabella brought to an end the exposition of her enigma, when Vicenza, without waiting for any command from the Signora, took up her turn with the following discourse.



THE THIRTEENTH FABLE.

Pietro Rizzato, a spendthrift, is reduced to poverty. Then, having found a treasure, becomes a miser.

PRODIGALITY is a vice which brings a man to a worse end even than avarice, forasmuch as the spendthrift devours both his own substance and that of other men as well, and, when once brought to want, is ill looked upon by all; nay rather, all people are wont to fly from him as from one bereft of reason, and an outlaw, and to make mock of him. So indeed it happened in the case of a certain Pietro Rizzato, who, on account of his reckless spending, was brought to the greatest misery. Then, having by chance discovered a treasure, he became a rich man and a niggard to boot.

I must tell you, then, that in Padua, a city very famous for its learning, there dwelt in times past one Pietro Rizzato, a courteous gentleman, exceedingly comely in person, and furnished with wealth in more abundant measure than any other citizen, but at the same time a spendthrift, forasmuch as he would give continually to friends of his now this thing and now that, in such wise as appeared to him to square with the condition of each of them. Wherefore, on account of this over-lavish habit of his, he had a great crowd always following on his traces, and guests were never wanting at his table, which was every day abundantly set with the most delicate and precious viands. This man, among his other acts of folly, wrought two which seem worthy of special remark; one of which happened on a certain day when he was going, in the company of some other gentlemen of Padua, to Venice by the Brenta. Remarking that each one of his companions was seeking diversion, this one in making music and that one in some other fashion, he, in order not to appear the only one unoccupied amongst them, set himself, as the saying is, to make ducks and drakes of pieces of money, by casting them one by one into the stream. The other, which in sooth was of a graver nature, was as follows: one day, when he was staying at his country house, it happened that a troop of young men came to pay their respects to him, and he, as soon as he caught sight of them, set fire to the

houses of all his workpeople in order to show due honour to his guests.

For this reason it soon came to pass that Pietro, consumed with the desire to content his appetites in every possible manner, and living dissolutely without any kind of restraint, found himself at the end of his wealth, and at the same time free of the company of all those friends who had heretofore paid court to him. He, in the past, when he was in the full enjoyment of his wealth, had given sustenance to a great tribe of hungry familiars, but now that he himself was both hungry and thirsty, he could find not a single one ready to give him to eat or to drink. He had clothed the naked, now there was none willing to cover his own nakedness; he had cared for those who were sick, now he called in vain for someone to relieve his infirmities; he had given loving entertainment to all, honouring them as best he could, now he met nothing but frowning looks from his friends, who fled from him as from some contagious pestilence. And although the poor wight was thus brought to such a cruel and bitter pass of poverty, being naked and ailing, and vexed, moreover, with a grievous dysentery, he let pass in patience his miserable and unhappy life, thanking God always for having given him an understanding mind.

It happened one day that the wretched man, all dirty, and afflicted with the itch as well, made his way into a certain ruined building, not for the sake of pleasure, but simply to ease nature. While he was there his eyes fell upon a spot in the wall, fallen to decay through age, and in a large crack thereof he beheld the shining of gold. Having broken down the wall, he came upon a great vase of baked earth, filled with fine golden ducats, which he bore back secretly to his house, and began to spend for his needs, not lavishly, as heretofore, but in moderate wise according to his requirements. His friends and close companions, who had courted him so assiduously at the time when he had lived a jovial life, as soon as they saw that he was once more a man of substance forthwith imagined that they would find him the same spendthrift as hitherto. Thus, having sought his presence, they began to wheedle and to flatter him, deeming that they would now be able again to live at another's charges. But the matter came not to the issue they desired, forasmuch as they found him in no sense a fool and a spendthrift, and one disposed to lavish his goods sottishly and to be always feasting; they discovered rather that he had become prudent and careful, and even avaricious. When these companions

of his inquired of him by what means he had acquired so much money, he made answer to them that, if any of them wanted to get wealth, they must first suffer as grievously from dysentery as he himself had suffered, meaning by this speech that, before he had found his treasure, he had been forced to shed his blood.¹ Wherefore the aforesaid friends and companions, as soon as they saw that it would be no easy matter to draw any further profit for themselves from Pietro, went their way.

This fable gave great pleasure to all the company, for the reason that it showed openly that friends ought to prove their worth, not when the world goes well with us, but when it goes ill, and that extremes of all sorts are evil. As soon as all were once more silent, the Signora commanded Vicenza to let follow her enigma, and the maiden had no sooner heard the words of the Signora than she spoke somewhat saucily as follows :

Now, learned sir, I prithee say,
What is it that is born to-day,
Again to-morrow born ? When dead,
Beneath the earth it hides its head ;
But there not fated to remain.
Short is its day of toil and pain ;
Early and guiltless oft it dies ;
No stain of sin upon it lies ;
And old or young, or large or small,
We find them in our dishes all.

The whole company judged the enigma thus propounded to be a very difficult one, whereupon Vicenza, like the discreet damsel she was, explained its meaning in the following wise : “ This twice born thing is the egg, from which there is born without any gossip the chick, which has but a short span of life, and often dies before it has committed any offence, that is to say, before it has ever known the pleasure of its mate. And fowls, whether they be small or big, are good for our use.” This fair interpretation of a very difficult riddle was a cause of wonder to all the grateful company, and there was not one who withheld high commendation of the same.

And now, because the reddening dawn began to appear, and because the time of carnival had come to an end and the first day of Lent had begun, the Signora, turning towards the honourable company with her face lighted up with pleasure, spake thus : “ Know well, all

¹ Orig., *che prima haveva sparso 'l sangue, che trovato avesse li danari.*

you illustrious and honourable gentlemen, and you also, ladies, most lovesome and highly honoured, that we are now come to the first day of Lent. On this account it seems to me right that we should at once put aside the solace of our delightful conversation, our amorous dances, and sweet music and mirthful fables.” The gentlemen, and the ladies as well, who desired nothing more than what was thus proposed, assented with words of high commendation to the expressed wish of the Signora ; so, without lighting the torches—because, indeed, it was now broad daylight—the Signora gave command that they should all betake themselves to rest, and that no one should again repair to the place of meeting except at her request. Whereupon the gentlemen, having been dismissed by the gracious Signora with such exceeding and eminent modesty (on account of the ending of the carnival, and for no other reason), showed themselves obedient to her command, as had ever been their wont in the days that had elapsed. They all bowed reverently, with every gesture of respect they had been accustomed to use, and, having left the Signora and the ladies to repose themselves, they made their way to their homes.

The End of the Thirteenth and last Night.





Notes.





Notes.

NIGHT THE FIRST.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Salardo—

Sources, Imitations, and Parallels. “Gesta Romanorum,” c. 124.—“Cento Novelle Antiche,” Nov. C.—Sacchetti, Nov. XV.—“Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles,” Nov. LII., “Les trois monumens.”—Hans Sachs, “Der Marschall Sophus und sein Sohn.”—Gueulette, “Contes Tartares,” “L’histoire de Sinadab fils du Médecin Saccan.” “Cabinet des Fées,” t. 21, p. 66.

The story in the “Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles” is a translation of Sacchetti’s novel. This fable was published in London in 1790 under the title, “Novella cioc copia d’un Caso notabile intervenuto a un gran gentiluomo Genovese.”

THE SECOND FABLE.

Cassandrino—

This story may have been suggested by the history of Rhampsinitus given by Herodotus, ii. 121.

Imitations and Parallels. Grimm, No. 192, “The Master Thief.”—Wolf, “Hausmärchen.”—“Inventaire général de l’histoire des Larrons.” Paris, 1625.

THE THIRD FABLE.

Scarpafico—

Sources, Imitations, and Parallels. “Hitopadesa.”—“Directorium,” John of Capua, i. 10.—“Gesta Romanorum,” 132.—Fortini, Nov. VIII.—Boccaccio, “Decameron,” IX. 3.—“Poggii Facetiæ,” CCLXVIII.—“Cento Novelle Antiche.”—Hans Sachs, “Der Schwanger Pauer.”—“Till Owleglass,” 78.—Gueulette, 106-109 (“Cabinet des Fées,” t. 22, p. 132).—Grimm, “Household Tales,” No. 61, “The little Peasant” (ed. Lang, London, 1884).¹—“Nouveaux Contes à rire.”—Lover, “Legends and Stories of Ireland,” “Little Fairly.”—Imbriani, “Novellaja Milanese,” 23.—Andersen, “Little Klaus and Big Klaus.”—Pitré, “Fiabe, Racconti e Novelle,” 157, “Uncle Capriano” (Lu Zu Crapianu).—Stahl, “Mitternachtblatt,” 35 and 36.—Campbell, “Popular Tales of the West Highlands,” vol. ii., p. 229.

¹ Quotations from Grimm may always be referred to this edition.

This fable is made up of two separate stories. In Poggio's tale three rogues persuade a fool first that he is sick, then that he is very sick, and finally that he is dead; and Owleglass makes a boor believe that green cloth is blue. "Little Fairly," which is a parallel to the part of the fable describing Scarpafico's revenge on the knaves, is a version of a widely-spread popular legend, and is very much like Straparola's tale. In the story of "Peasant Kibitz" (Büsching, "Volks-sagen," p. 296), there are certain variations. Kibitz lets his wife be killed by the peasants, and then sets her up by some railings with a basket of fruit. A servant, who has been ordered by his master and mistress to buy something from her, pushes her into the water because she returns no answer. For this Kibitz receives the carriage the master was driving, and all belonging to it. In the people's book, "Rutschki, or the Burgher of Quarkenquatsch," various incidents from this story are used, the purchasing of the old chest, in which the lover is hidden, for the cowhide, and the setting up the dead wife. Rutschki puts some butter in her lap, and sets her by the side of the well, and the apothecary, coming to buy butter, can get no answer from her, so he shakes her, and pushes her into the well, for which he has to pay Rutschki a thousand thalers. The betrayal of the shepherd at the end is also quite different. Rutschki, having been condemned to death, is shut in a chest and carried to the pond; but, as this is frozen, the peasants leave the chest by the brink while they go to get tools to break the ice. A cattle dealer comes by, and Rutschki, hearing him pass, calls out, "I will not drink any wine; I am not thirsty." The cattle dealer asks him what he means, and Rutschki tells him that he has been elected burgomaster, but that he cannot take the post because, as burgomaster, he would be obliged, when he took office, to drink a glass of Burgundy, and he never drinks wine. He also says they have set him there in order that the frost may make him long for a warm draught. The cattle dealer offers to give him his herd in exchange for his place in the chest. Rutschki agrees, and after the exchange bolts the dealer in the chest and goes off with the cattle. The peasants, after they have put the chest into the pond, meet Rutschki with the cattle, and learn from him that he found them at the bottom of the pond, whereupon they all jump in and are drowned.—Grimm, vol. i., p. 423.

The trick of pretended murder through stabbing a bladder filled with blood has a parallel in an episode in Achilles Tatius. See also Max Müller, "Chips from a German Workshop," for remarks on the "Master Thief," vol. ii., p. 232.

THE FOURTH FABLE.

Tebaldo—

Sources, Imitations, and Parallels. "Le Roman de la Belle Hélène de Constantinople."—Matthew Paris, "Legend of Offa, King of the West Angles."—"Emaré," an old English rhyme, edited by Ritson.—Ser Giovanni, "Il Pecorone," X. 1.—Gower, "Confessio Amantis."—Chaucer, "The Man of Lawe's Tale."—Grimm, No. 65, "Allerleirauh."—Basile, "Pentamerone," II. 6.—Pitré, "Fiabe, Novelle e Racconti," No. 43.—R. H. Busk, "Folk-lore of Rome," "Maria di Legno."—Perrault, "Peau d'Âne."—In Crane's "Italian Popular Tales," p. 337, references to many parallel stories are given.

Tebaldo's craft in getting the children into his power by offering the spindles

to the queen, recalls the trick of the magician in the story of Aladdin, and the episode of the bloody knife might have been taken direct from Chaucer :

“Werie for-wiked in their orisons
 Slepith Cunstance and Hermigild also,
 This knight through Sathanas temptatiouns
 All softly is unto the bedd ygo,
 And cut the throte of Hermigild atwo ;
 And laid the bloody knife by Dame Cunstance,
 And went his wey, there God geve him mischance.”

NIGHT THE SECOND.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Galcotto—

Sources, Imitations, and Parallels. “Pantcha Tantra.”—See Loiseleur Deslongchamps, “Essai sur les Fables indiennes” (Paris, 1838), p. 39.—Pitré, “Fiabe, Novelle e Racconti,” No. 56, “Lu Sirpenti.”—Comparetti, “Novelline,” No. 9 and No. 36.—Basile, “Pentamerone,” II. 5.—Madame D’Aulnoy, “Le Prince Marcassin.”—Count Hamilton’s fairy tales, “Pertharite et Ferrandine.”—Grimm, No. 108, “Hans the Hedgehog.”—Perrault, “Riquet à la Houppe.”

Pitré in notes to No. 56 gives “Il Re Cavallu” and “Il Re Scursini” as parallel fables. There is a similar story in Campbell’s “West Highland Tales,” and another in Crane’s “Italian Popular Tales,” “Zelinda and the Monster.” “The Enchanted Pig,” a story from the Roumanian given by Mr. Lang in the “Red Fairy Book,” comes also under the same formula, as does one in “Cossack Fairy Tales,” R. Nisbet Bain.

THE SECOND FABLE.

Filenio—

Sources, Imitations, and Parallels. Ser Giovanni, “Il Pecorone,” II. 2.—“Les deux changeurs,” Montaignon, “Receuil général,” i. 245.—“Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles,” I.—Bandello, Part I., Nov. 3. A translation of this fable is given in Painter’s “Palace of Pleasure.” The plot of the three ladies against Filenio may have suggested that of Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page in the “Merry Wives of Windsor.”

THE THIRD FABLE.

Carlo—

Sources. Jacopo di Voragine, “Legenda aurea.”—Bollandi, “Acta Sanctorum.”—“Dulcitius,” a comedy written by Hroswitha, a Saxon monk, at the end of the tenth century.

THE FOURTH FABLE.

The devil—

Sources, Imitations, and Parallels. Macchiavelli, “Belphegor.”—“Brevio,” Nov. 4.—Sansovino, “Cento novelle.”—Chapuis, “Les Facétieuses Journées,” III. 3.—La Fontaine, “Contes,” “Belphegor.”—R. Browning, “Dramatic Idyls,” “Dr. —.” *Vide* Dunlop’s “History of Fiction,” London, 1888, vol. ii., p. 188, note.

THE FIFTH FABLE.

Simplicio—

Sources, Imitations, and Parallels. Boccaccio, "Decameron," VIII. 8.—Chapuys, "Les Facétieuses Journées," IX. 8.—La Fontaine, "Contes," "Les Rémois."

NIGHT THE THIRD.

THE FIRST FABLE.

A simple fellow—

Imitations. Basile, "Pentamerone," I. 3.—Madame D'Aulnoy, "Dauphin."—Cinthio degli Fabritii gives the story of a fisherman who was endowed by a magic fish with powers somewhat akin to Pietro's.

Vide notes by Lainez in the French translation of Straparola by Louveau and De la Rivey (1726).

THE SECOND FABLE.

Dalfreno—

Dr. F. W. Schmidt, in "Die Märchen des Straparola" (Berlin, 1817), has collected in his notes to this fable numerous examples of the fairy horse in the popular tales of the middle ages. The manner in which the hero procures the water of life recalls the parallel episode in Night IV., Fable 3, and may like this latter have been taken from "The Thousand and One Nights." The restoration of Livoretto to life has a parallel in the story of Virgilius, as given in "Early English Prose Romances," ed. Thoms (1858), and in that of Medea. The search for the water of life and youth is the theme of countless stories of all periods, from the time of Alexander to that of Ponce de Leon. Compare also Basile, "Pentamerone," III. 7, for difficult tasks put upon a favoured courtier; Grimm, No. 62, "The Queen Bee," and "Tooti Nameh," No. 21.

THE THIRD FABLE.

Biancabella—

Imitation. "Illustres Fées," "Blanchebelle."

THE FOURTH FABLE.

Fortunio—

Source and Imitation. Ser Giovanni, "Il Pecorone," IX. 2.—Madame D'Aulnoy, "L'Oiseau bleu." The theme of this story seems to be a variation of that of "Œdipus."

THE FIFTH FABLE.

Isotta—

This is one of the stories of the youth who could not be made to lie. Versions of it occur in "Gesta Romanorum," c. 111, and in the "Forty Viziers." It is also to be found in Pitré, "Fiabe, Novelle e Racconti," No. 78; in Imbriani, "Conti Pomiglianesi," No. XII., "Giuseppe a Vereta"; and in "Turkish Tales" (London, 1769), vol. ii., p. 258, "History of Saddyq, Master of the Horse to Togaltimur Can."

Oesterley's notes to the "Gesta Romanorum" (Berlin, 1872), and Loiseleur

Deslongchamp's "Essai sur les Fables indiennes," may be consulted as to the oriental origin of this fable.

NIGHT THE FOURTH.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Richard—

Sources, Imitations, and Parallels. "The Thousand and One Nights."—"The Romance of Merlin."—"Romance of the Seven Sages."—Basile, "Pentameron," IV. 6.—Gueulette, "Contes Tartares," "Le Centaure Bleue."

In the "Romance of Merlin," the enchanter visits the palace of Julius Cæsar in the shape of a stag, and interprets a certain dream in which Cæsar had seen a crowned sow and twelve young lions which he caused to be burnt. The stag tells Cæsar that only a wild man can declare the meaning of the dream, whereupon Cæsar offers his daughter as a reward to the man who shall bring such a savage before him. Merlin reappears as a wild man of the woods, and laughs when he sees the empress and her twelve ladies in waiting, explaining to Cæsar that the sow is the empress, and the lions her attendants, who are really men in women's attire. The whole thirteen are straightway consigned to the flames. Liebrecht, in his notes to Dunlop, compares this story with that of Vararuchi ("Somadeva," ed. Brockhaus, Bd. i., p. 35). In this the king orders a certain Brahmin, with whom the queen was wont to converse, to be led off to execution. As the condemned man was going through the market place, a fish lying on a stall laughed aloud, whereupon the king demanded of the Brahmin what might be the meaning of this. The Brahmin explains that the fish laughed because the king's wives lived licentiously, keeping in the palace a number of young men disguised as women. The episode of the Sultana and the disguised slaves in the Introduction to "The Thousand and One Nights" is akin to a part of the story, and there is likewise a parallel to it in the "Tooti Nameh."

Benfey remarks that the version of the story given in the "Romance of Merlin" and in "Straparola" is more faithful to the Indian original than the Turkish or Persian form.

THE SECOND FABLE.

Erminione—

Sources. The "Romance of Virgilius." In Rome Virgil made a brazen serpent, which was set up in a public place. Litigants were accustomed to swear to the truth of their speech, holding their hands in the serpent's mouth, and if they swore falsely their hands would be bitten off. The bronze mask, the "Bocca della Verità," which is still to be seen under the portico of Sta. Maria in Cosmedin in Rome is associated with this legend.

In Pauli's "Schimpf und Ernst" there is a story, No. 206, which is almost exactly like Straparola's fable. See also Malespini, No. 98.

THE THIRD FABLE.

Ancilotto—

Sources, Imitations, and Parallels. "The Thousand and One Nights."—"Dolopathos," the metrical version of the "Seven Wise Masters."—Madame D'Aulnoy, "Princesse Belle Étoile."—Grimm, No. 96, "The three little Birds."—Carlo

Gozzi, "L'Augellino bel Verde." — Pröhle, "Märchen," No. 3.—Wolf, "Hausmärchen," p. 168.

The guardian dragon of the tree and the coat covered with mirrors occur also in the story of "Alexander and the Basilisk," as given in "Historia Alexandri Magni de prœliis." Dr. Schmidt in his notes to this fable gives similar instances from the "Gesta Romanorum," and from Vincentius Bellovicensis, "Speculum Historiale."

In the "Augellino bel Verde," Carlo Gozzi—who as a Venetian probably went to the "Piacevoli Notti" for his materials—has constructed a story much less like to the Eastern original than Straparola's, and has very cleverly woven into it a satire on the philosophic ideals of the period, after the fashion then current. The wicked queen-mother, Tartagliona, causes to be buried alive her daughter-in-law, Ninetta, on the pretence that she has brought forth two puppies, and has ordered Pantaleone, the chief minister, to drown the real children. They are rescued by the wife of a pork-butcher named Truffaldino, a worthless ruffian, who soon turns them out of doors. But they, in the meantime, have become learned in philosophy by reading stray leaves of the works of Helvetius and Holbach, which Truffaldino had used to wrap up his sausages, and they now hold that wisdom lies in choking every feeling and in flying to solitude. They come upon a broken statue, which proves to be the *eidolon* of one Calmon, who, 300 years ago, had been turned into marble through holding opinions like theirs. The brother and sister laugh at him and go their way, taking with them a magic stone which he gives them. Afterwards, when they throw the stone into the air, a sumptuous palace rises before them, and in this they live blessed with every luxury. Truffaldino now reappears, explaining that he is advised to seek them now they are rich, just as he felt obliged to cast them out when they were poor, self-love being the only guide of action. Renzo, the brother, hereupon kicks him out, and, like his sister Barbarina, becomes somewhat spoilt by prosperity. In the meantime the little green bird has been keeping alive the ill-starred Ninetta in her tomb. Tartaglia, the king, her husband, grows almost doting, and one day sees the magic palace from his own window, and falls in love with Barbarina, and proposes to marry her. She, ignorant as to who he is, and fired by ambition, consents; but the queen-mother, suspecting evil, refuses to allow the marriage unless the bride shall bring as a dower the singing apple, the dancing water, and the little green bird. Barbarina urges her brother to seek the same. This adventure is almost the same as the one told by Straparola, but in the restoration of the statues to life Gozzi puts in divers local touches which must have delighted a Venetian audience exceedingly.

THE FOURTH FABLE.

Nerino—

Sources, Imitations, and Parallels. Ser Giovanni, "Il Pecorone," I. 2.—Masuccio, Novels 34 and 35.—Molière, "L'École des Femmes."—Doni, "Novelle," No. 38.—La Fontaine, "Contes," "Le Maître en Droit."

In the "Merry Wives of Windsor," Shakespeare probably drew upon an English version of Ser Giovanni's tale for those scenes where Falstaff describes the progress of his intrigue with Mrs. Ford, and the contrivances by which he escaped the search of the jealous husband. As this story does not occur in

Painter, Shakespeare must have gone to Tarleton's "Newes out of Purgatorie," in which the tale is told under the title of "The two Lovers of Pisa," or to the collection, "The fortunate, deceived and unfortunate Lovers," the first story of which, "Lucius and Camillus," is a translation of Ser Giovanni's "Bucciolo and Pietro Paulo."

NIGHT THE FIFTH.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Guerrino—

Imitations and Parallels. Basile, "Pentamerone," III. 7. In this story is an episode closely allied to the tasks put upon Guerrino.—Madame D'Aulnoy, "Prince Guerini."—Grimm, No. 136, "Iron John."—Wolf, "Hausmärchen," p. 269.

The cure of the fairy by a fit of laughter has a parallel in a passage in Grimm, No. 64, "The Golden Goose;" in "Les quatre Facadins," "Cabinet des Fées;" in "Il Medico Grillo," "Novelle popolari Toscani;" Pitré; and in Basile, "Pentamerone," III. 5.

In this fable are combined several of the leading motives of the popular storyteller. The wild man of the woods, a figure found in the folk-lore of every European country, as well as in the "Orlando Innamorato" of Boiardo; the knight who is taken to live with a fairy, as in the ballads of "Tamlane" and "True Thomas;" the heroic youth who is sent to perform impossible tasks; and the ordeal by choice.

THE SECOND FABLE.

Adamantina—

Imitations and Parallels. Nerucci, "Novelle popolari Montalesi," "Il Ciuchino caca-zecchini."—Basile, "Pentamerone," I. 1, and V. 1.—The story of the "Goose with the golden Eggs" comes under the same formula as this fable. See Clouston, "Popular Tales and Fictions," vol. i., p. 123.

THE THIRD FABLE.

Bertaldo—

Sources, Imitations, and Parallels. "Les Trois Bossus" (Montaiglon, "Recueil général et complet des Fabliaux des XIII^e et XIV^e siècles," Paris, 1872), No. 2.—"Estourmi," fabliau par Hugues Piaucele, also in the above-named collection, No. 19.—"The Thousand and One Nights."—"The Seven Wise Masters."—In Dunlop's "History of Fiction," vol. ii., p. 42, is a long list of variations of the same story.—Gueulette, "Contes Tartares," "Les trois Bossus de Damas."—Pitré, "Fiabe, Novelle e Racconti," No. 164.

THE FOURTH FABLE.

Marsilio—

Source. Boccaccio, "Decameron," VII. 1.

The motive of the blindfolded husband is a common one in the "Hitopadesa." It recurs in the "Disciplina Clericalis," Petrus Alphonsus, in the "Gesta Romanorum," and in many of the French fabliaux.

NIGHT THE SIXTH.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Two friends—

Sources, Imitations, and Parallels. Boccaccio, "Decameron," VIII. 8.—Cinthio degli Fabritii, "Libro della origine delli volgari proverbi," No. XVI.—"Poggii Facetiæ," CCXXIII.—"Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles," Novel 3.—Bonaventure des Periers, "Contes ou nouvelles récréations," Nouvelle 2.—La Fontaine, "Contes," "Le Faiseur d'oreilles."—Grécourt, "Poésies," "Les cheveux et la réponse imprévu."

This fable is made up of two separate stories. The first part is taken from Poggio, and the second from "Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles."

THE FIFTH FABLE.

Pre Zefiro—

Source. Morlini, "Novellæ fabulæ et comediæ," Novella LXI., "De Clerico."

A passage in the story reads like a translation from Pauli's "Schimpf und Ernst." Pre Zefiro's conjuration may be compared with the advice which the wise Solomon gives to a sorely-tormented husband. "In Worten in Kräutern und in Steinen ist grosse Kraft. Da der Mann die beiden ersten angeblich angewandt hatte versuchte er die in den Steinen verborgene Kraft."—"Schimpf und Ernst," Augsburg, 1597, p. 101.

NIGHT THE SEVENTH.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Ortodosio—

Sources and Imitations. Boccaccio, "Decameron," III. 9. The subject of this story was a favourite one with the French novelists, and several versions of it may be found in "Nouvelles françoises en prose du XIII^e siècle," edited by MM. Moland et d'Hericault (Bibliothèque Elzevir).—Basile, "Pentamerone," V. 6.

Boccaccio's "Giletta of Narbonne," which Straparola has here imitated, is commonly held to be the source (through Painter's translation) of Shakespeare's "All's Well that End's Well;" and in 1513 Bernardo Accolti wrote a comedy called "Virginia," also taken from this source. In "Sagenkreise," B. iv., p. 377, Graesse suggests the "Romance du Comte d'Artois et de sa Femme" as the probable origin of Boccaccio's tale.

In the "Somadeva" (ed. Brockhaus), B. xii., p. 125; in "Hindoo Tales, or the Adventures of Ten Princes," Jacob's translation; in Fauche, "Tetrade," vol. ii., p. 220; and in "Indian Fairy Tales" (Stokes), are to be found examples of the oriental versions of this story.

THE SECOND FABLE.

Malgherita—

Sources, Imitations, and Parallels. The first part of this story was probably

suggested by Hero and Leander.—Chapuys, "Facétieuses Journées," IV. 4.—
"Euphrosiné et Melidor," Bernard le Gentil.

THE THIRD FABLE.

Cimarosta—

Sources, Imitations, and Parallels. Sacchetti, Nov. CXCV.—Weber's "Metrical Romances," "The Ballad of Sir Cleges."—See Graesse, "Sagenkreise," p. 251.—"Nouveaux Contes à rire," "Le Brochet de Florentin."—T. Wright, "Latin Stories," "De janitore imperatoris Frederici."

THE FIFTH FABLE.

Three brothers—

Sources and Parallels. Morlini, Nov. LXXX. "de Fratribus."—"Tales of a Parrot" (Tooti Nameh), from the Persian of Nakshebi, No. 22 (London, 1801).—Grimm, 129, "The Four Skilful Brothers."—Basile, "Pentamerone," V. 7. Clouston, "Popular Tales and Fictions," cites several versions of this story, vol. i., p. 277.

NIGHT THE EIGHTH.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Three rogues—

Sources. This story is one of the numerous class dealing with foolish and obstinate people. See Bernoni, "Fiabe popolari" (Venice, 1875), Fable XIII.—Pitré, "Fiabe, Novelle e Racconti," Nos. 181 and 257.—"Poggii Facetiæ," LIX. There is a novel dealing with the same subject by Antonio Guadagnoli, "La lingua d'una donna alla prova." Pitré notices several Sicilian popular tales of a like character in his remarks on No. 257. To the same category belongs the popular story of the obstinate wife who disputed with her husband on the subject of "scissors."

THE SECOND FABLE.

Two brothers—

Sources, Imitations, and Parallels. Hugues Piaucele, "Fabliau de Sire Hain et de Dame Anieuse," Legrand d'Aussy, iii. 175, and also the "Fabliau de la dame qui fut corrigée," iii. 187, in the same collection ("Fabliaux, ou contes, fables et romans du XII^e et du XIII^e siècle," Paris, 1829).—Sacchetti, Nov. 138.—"Der böse Rauch," Hans Sachs.—Tieck's "Deutsches Theater," i. 19.—"Der Rauch beisst," an old German ballad in Mone's "Anzeiger," v. 79. Molière's "École des Maris" may have been suggested by this fable.

THE FOURTH FABLE.

Bernardo—

Sources. "Cento Novelle Antiche," XCV.—Morlini, Nov. XLVII., "De Mercatore Jannuensi."

THE FIFTH FABLE.

Maestro Lattantio—

The episode of the cock and the pomegranate seeds recalls a similar one in

"The Second Calendar's Story" in the "Thousand and One Nights," and is probably an imitation of it, and the bridle incident may have been taken from "Gulnare of the Sea."

A story called "The Italian Tailor and his Boy" by Robert Armin, printed in 1609, is an imitation of this fable. It has also been translated into French by Chapuys in "Les Facétieuses Journées" (1584). There is a like story in Celio Malespini; also in Grimm, No. 68, "The Thief and his Master;" in "Fiabe Mantovane" (Turin, 1879), No. 8; in Pröhle, "Märchen für die Jugend," No. 26; in "Wallachian Stories," A. and W. Schott, No. 18; in "Eventyr og Folkesagen," Etlar, p. 36; in "Utile col dolce," a novel by P. Casalicchio; and in "Cossack Fairy Tales," R. Nisbet Bain.

THE SIXTH FABLE.

A history of two physicians—

Sources, Imitations, and Parallels. "Poggii Facetiæ," CIX.—Morlini, Nov. XXXII., "De medico et mediculo."—See Pitré, "Fiabe, Nouvelle e Racconti," No. 180, "L'appriinnista di lu medicu."—In Pauli's "Schimpf und Ernst" there is a similar episode, the lesser doctor being the other's assistant. This fable has also been imitated by Chapuys in "Les Facétieuses Journées," VIII. 9.

NIGHT THE NINTH.

THE SECOND FABLE.

Rodolino, son of Lodovico—

Source. Boccaccio, "Decameron," VIII. 4.

THE THIRD FABLE.

Francesco Sforza—

He was the younger son of Lodovico Moro and last Duke of Milan, and on the death of his brother Massimiliano became duke. After his death in 1535 the duchy was seized by the Emperor Charles V.

Lainez in his notes to the French translation of Straparola (1726) says that the adventure told in this story really happened to Maximilian of Austria—afterwards Maximilian II.—the son of the Emperor Ferdinand I.

THE FOURTH FABLE.

Pre Papiro—

Sources, Imitations, and Parallels. The episode of the capons taken to the bishop occurs in "Poggii Facetiæ," XXII.—Bonaventure des Periers, "Contes ou nouvelles récréations," Nov. XXI.—"Discours facétieux et très récréatifs" (1610), p. 16.

THE SIXTH FABLE.

A certain priest—

In De la Rivey's translation this story stands as Fable IV., Night IX. In his notes to the issue of 1857 M. Jannet says that in all the editions of Straparola published since 1557 it has been replaced by "Pre Papiro Schizza," thus implying that it would be found in all the issues prior to that date. But it is neither in that of 1555 nor in that of 1556. The earlier editions of Part II. (1553 and 1554) I have not been able to consult.

I can find no trace of this story elsewhere than in the authorities given by M. Jannet, so I transcribe his notes as they stand.

"Origines. Le prêtre crucifié, fabliau, analysé par Legrand d'Aussy, t. iv., p. 160.—Sacchetti, Nov. 84.—Legrand d'Aussy indique un autre fabliau sur le même sujet intitulé 'Le Forgeron de Creil' reproduit dans Malespini, Nov. 93, dans 'l'Enfant sans souci,' p. 274.—Dans les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, Nouvelle 64, même accident arrive à un prêtre, par suite d'une plaisanterie imprudente. Cette nouvelle se retrouve dans Henri Estienne, 'Apologie pour Herodote,' chap. xv., Amst., 1785, t. i., p. 297.—Dans Agnolo Firenzuolo, Nov. IV., un prêtre surpris par le mari, est contraint de se châtrer lui-même."

In his notes to the French translation of 1726, Lainez gives the title of the story in Italian: "Frate Tiberio Palavicino apostata, poi fatto Prete Secolare et Maestro in Theologia, ama la moglie di Maestro Checino intagliatore. Ella con consenso del marito in casa l'introduce, e trovata da lui, con una ignominiosa beffa fuori lo manda e da morte lo libera."

Lainez declares that this fable was suppressed in the greater number of the Italian editions as too offensive to religion. Certain editions omit it, even when retaining Fable IV., Night VI., a somewhat eccentric feat of censorship, seeing that the last-named fable and certain others, *i.e.*, Night I., Fable V., Night X., Fable IV., Night XI., Fable V., Night XIII., Fable XI., exhibit the churchmen of the time in an equally unfavourable light.

Brakelmann in his "Inaugural Dissertation" repeats more than once Jannet's misstatement that this fable was first taken out of Night IX. in the edition of 1558.

NIGHT THE TENTH.

THE SECOND FABLE.

An ass—

Upon this fable is founded "Brancaleone, Historia piacevole et morale" da Antonio Giovanni Besozzi (Milan, 1610). Köhler, "Jahrbuch," viii., p. 246, gives various notes on the trials of skill between the ass and the lion. In "Discorsi degli Animali," Messer Agnolo Firenzuolo, is a story of a similar contention between a lion and an ox. In Pitré, "Fiabe, Novelle e Racconti" there is a parallel story, "Brancaluini," No. 271.

THE THIRD FABLE.

Cesarino—

In "Die Märchen des Straparola" by Dr. F. W. Schmidt there are copious notes to this fable illustrative of the cases in which various heroes of romance have been aided by benevolent animals. In this fable the liberation of the princess is a form of the Andromeda legend. There is a similar story in Schneller, "Märchen und Sagen" (Innsbruck, 1867), No. 39; also in Basile, "Pentamerone," I. 7; in "Somadeva" (ed. Bloekhaus), Bd. ii., p. 142; in Grimm, No. 60, "The Two Brothers;" and in "Cossack Fairy Tales," R. Nisbet Bain.

NIGHT THE ELEVENTH.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Soriana—

Straparola seems to be the originator of this story, but it is manifestly akin to the "benevolent animal" class of fable. Gonzenbach ("Sicilianische Märchen") gives one, No. 53, which resembles it somewhat, and in Basile, "Pentamerone," II. 4, there is a still closer version. There is also a Tyrolese variation in Schneller, "Märchen und Sagen" (Innsbruck, 1867), "Il Conte Martin dalla Gatta."

This story spread through Western Europe through Perrault's fable, "Le Chat Botté," and through Tieck's. It may be remarked that Straparola's cat does not wear boots, and that the concluding episode is greatly amplified by Perrault. In Straparola the owner of the castle is absent when Constantino arrives, and is killed on his way home. Perrault gives us the ogre in possession, who is eaten by the cat after changing himself into a mouse. The fate of the ogre may have been suggested by that of Maestro Lattantio. See note to Night VIII., Fable V. The version in Tabart's "Collection of Popular Stories for the Nursery," (London, 1809), is a translation of Perrault's fable.

THE SECOND FABLE.

Xenofonte—

In "Italian Popular Tales," Mr. T. F. Crane gives an Istrian story, "Fair Brow," which is practically the same as this fable, and many references to others of a similar character, pp. 350, 351.

THE THIRD FABLE.

Don Pomporio—

The fable told by Pomporio, "Wind, Water, and Honour," is found in Pitré, No. 274. Gasparo Gozzi also has a version of it, "Il Fuoco l'Acqua e l'Onore": "Il Fuoco l'Acqua e l'Onore fecero un tempo comunella insieme. Il Fuoco non puo mai stare in un luogo, e l'Acqua anche sempre si muove, onde tratti dalla loro inclinazione, indussero l'Onore a far viaggio in compagnia. Prima dunque di partirsi tutti e tre dissero che bisognava darsi fra loro un segno da potersi ritrovare se mai si fossero scostati e smarriti l'uno dall' altro. Disse il Fuoco, e se mi avvenisse mai questo caso che io mi segnasse da voi, ponete ben mente colà dove voi vedete fumo: questo e il mio segnale e quivi mi troverete certamente. E me, disse l'Acqua se voi non mi vedete piu non mi cercate dove vedrete seccura o spaccature di terra; dove vedrete salci alni cannuce o erba molto alta e verde, andate costa in traccia di me e quivi sarò io. Quanto a me disse l'Onore, spalancate ben gli occhi e ficcatemigli bene adosso e tenetemi saldo perchè se la mala ventura mi guida fuori di cammino sicchè io mi perda una volta non mi trovereste piu mai."

THE FOURTH FABLE.

A buffoon—

Source. Morlini, Nov. VII., "Excellentis quondam Hectoris Carafæ."

THE FIFTH FABLE.

Frate Bigoccio—

Source. Morlini, Nov. XXXVI., "De monacho qui duxit uxorem."

In this case Straparola has altered Morlini's fable at the expense of decency by adding the episode of the gloves and jesses. M. Jannet, in his notes to De la Rivey's translation, says that Morlini borrowed the above-named incident from Cornazzano, but he is here in error, as there is not a trace of it in Morlini's fable.

NIGHT THE TWELFTH.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Florio—

Sources. Morlini, Nov. XXVI., "De viro zelotypo."—Masuccio, "Il Novellino," II. 1.

THE SECOND FABLE.

A certain fool—

Source. Morlini, Nov. XXX., "De stulto qui mulierem pulchram devestavit."

THE THIRD FABLE.

Federigo—

Sources. "The Thousand and One Nights," Introduction.—Morlini, Nov. LXXII., "De Puteolano."—"Gesta Romanorum," c. 68.

In "Schimpf und Ernst" (Stuttgart, 1866), there is a story akin to this, "Ein bösz Weib tugenhaft zemachen," No. 134. Dr. Schmidt's notes on this fable concerning the language of animals are very full and interesting. See "Die Märchen des Straparola," pp. 323-29.

THE FOURTH FABLE.

Concerning certain sons—

Source. Morlini, Nov. XXXII., "De filiis."

THE FIFTH FABLE.

Sixtus—

Sources and Parallels.—"Barlaam and Josaphat," ch. 6.—"Gesta Romanorum," c. 109.—Vincentius Bellovicensis, "Speculum Historiale," lib. 14.—"Cento novelle Antiche," Nov. LXV.—Boccaccio, "Decameron," X. 1.—Gower, "Confessio Amantis," 1-5.—Morlini, Nov. V., "De summo Pontifice Sisto."—Pauli's "Schimpf und Ernst."

The first part of this fable has some resemblance to an episode found in "Fortunatus Siculus," by Busone d'Agubbio, vol. ii., cxvii. In the "Gesta Romanorum," a lady is put to the ordeal by choice, and is asked to select one of three caskets, an episode which probably suggested to Shakespeare the parallel one in the "Merchant of Venice." In Dunlop's "History of Fiction," vol. ii. p. 139, is a valuable note dealing with diverse versions of the story.

NIGHT THE THIRTEENTH.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Maestro Gasparino—

Sources. "Poggii Facetiæ," II.—Morlini, Nov. LXXVII., "De medico qui curabat mente captos."

THE SECOND FABLE.

One Diego—

Sources. Fabliau, "Les trois Aveugles de Compiègne," Montaignon, "Recueil général," i. 70.—Morlini, Nov. XIII., "De Hispano qui decepti rusticum monachumque Carmelitanum."—Sozzini, Nov. I.

THE THIRD FABLE.

A German and a Spaniard—

Source. Morlini, Nov. VI., "De Theotonico et Hispano simul comedentibus."

THE FOURTH FABLE.

Fortunio—

Source. Morlini, Nov. XXI., "Aromantarii famulus."

This is one of the numerous stories illustrating the blunders of the well-meaning fool. Basile, "Pentamerone," I. 4, is of the same class, as are No. 190, Pitré, "Fiabe, Novelle e Racconti," and two stories in "La Novellaja fiorentina," Imbriani, p. 545. Pitré, in the "Bibliotheca delle Tradizioni popolari," iv., pp. 291, 444, gives two other versions. See also Gonzenbach, "Sicilianische Märchen," No. 37. Max Müller, "Chips from a German Workshop," vol. ii., p. 234, gives a parallel story from the "Pantcha Tantra," and there is another in "Icelandic Legends," translated by Powell and Magnússon (London, 1866).

THE FIFTH FABLE.

Vilio—

Source. Morlini, Nov. XX., "De Cerdone qui insidiantem latronem eum interfecturum interfecit."

In Bebelius, "Facetiæ," there is a similar story, "De quodam Carbonaro."

THE SIXTH FABLE.

Lucietta—

Sources, Imitations, and Parallels. Morlini, Nov. XXIX., "De matre quæ desidiosum filium ut reperiret bonum diem misit."—"The Story of the Charcoal Burner," in Dasent's "Tales from the Fjeld."—"Fiabe Mantovani," Visentini, No. 41, "Gambara." See also Grimm, No. 98, "Dr. Knowall;" and Benfey, "Pantcha Tantra," i. 374; Gonzenbach, "Sicilianische Märchen," No. 57; and Imbriani, "Novellaja Milanese," Nov. X.; Sir John Malcolm's "Sketches of Persia," chap. xx.

The earliest version of this fable is probably the one in the "Kathá Sarit Ságara." See Tawney's translation, b. vi., ch. 30. There is another in Bebelius, "Facetiæ" (1506).

THE SEVENTH FABLE.

Giorgio—

Source. Morlini, Nov. LXXIV., "Argutus famulus."

This story refers rather to the perverse than to the stupid servant. Pitré, "Fiabe, Novelle e Racconti," No. 156, gives several similar stories, as does Sacchetti, Nov. XXVII.

THE EIGHTH FABLE.

Gasparò—

Source. Morlini, Nov. LIX., "De rustico qui, condito sacello, rhetorem præsentavit."

THE NINTH FABLE.

A certain damsel—

Source. Morlini, Nov. XXII., "De Hermaphrodita."

THE TENTH FABLE.

Cesare—

Sources. Morlini, Nov. LXVIII., "De jurista qui tenebat sententias in filzis."—"Poggii Facetiæ," CCIII.

THE ELEVENTH FABLE.

A poor novice—

Source. Morlini, Nov. LIV., "De Sirentino adone qui inspireto puellam depudavit." The likeness between these two stories is not very close.

THE THIRTEENTH FABLE.

Pietro Rizzato—

Source. Morlini, Nov. LI., "Asotus juvenis."

