





The Novels of Bandello

Volume One

No 45

The Novels of Matteo Bandello Bishop
of Agen now first done into English
Prose and Verse by John Payne

Author of The Masque of Shadows Intaglios

Songs of Life and Death Lautrec New

Poems etc. and Translator of The Poems

of Master Francis Villon of Paris

The Book of the Thousand Nights

and One Night Tales from the

Arabic The Decameron of


Giobanni Boccacci

(El Boccaccio) and

Aladdin etc.

V o l u m e

O n e



LONDON: MDCCCXC: PRINTED FOR THE VILLON
SOCIETY BY PRIVATE SUBSCRIPTION AND FOR
PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY.

English Dept.

PQ
4606
N85E
v. 1

2-17-40

Biographical Note.

Blackwell 6 v.

369310

Biographical Note.

Matteo Bandello, the most celebrated novelist of the Italian Renaissance period, was born at Castelnuovo [di Scrivia] in Piedmont, then a part of Lombardy, a small town situated near Tortona, at the junction of the Scrivia (called by him *Schirmia*) and the Po. The date of his birth is not known, but, from various circumstances, it is probable that he must have been born in the penultimate decade of the fifteenth century. He tells us himself, in the Twenty-first Story of the First Part, that he came of a Gothic family settled at Castelnuovo, (which town he alleges to have been founded by the Ostrogoths, when they invaded Italy under Theodoric at the close of the fifth century,) and that his name was a corruption of Bandelchil, that of the Gothic founder of his family, the fanciful history of whose loves with Aluinda he gives us in the aforesaid story. His vocation was probably determined by the fact that his uncle, Fra Vincenzo Bandello, was the then

General of the Dominican Order, and our author accordingly (no doubt, at his kinsman's instance) became a Preaching Friar of the said Order and a member of the Convent of the Graces¹ at Milan, so often mentioned in his novels. He appears to have accompanied his uncle on his frequent journeys through Italy, France, Spain and Germany to inspect the convents of his order and to have thus acquired a knowledge of the world which afterwards stood him in good stead, both from a worldly and a literary point of view; and he seems indeed to have been the Dominican General's constant associate till his death in 1506. His chief places of residence, when in Italy, appear to have been Milan and Mantua, where he was in high favour with the illustrious families of Bentivoglio, Gonzaga, Rangone, Fregoso and others and enjoyed the friendship and patronage of most of the learned and illustrious men and women of the Italy of his day, to one of which latter, his early patroness, Signora Ippolita Sforza, wife of Alessandro Bentivoglio, the dispossessed Seigneur of Bologna, he attributes the original suggestion which led him to undertake the composition of his novels.

¹ *Santa Maria delle Grazie*, the refectory of which is glorified by the famous "Last Supper" of Lionardo da Vinci, who, as Bandello tells us in the dedication to one of his Novels, painted it during his own residence in the monastery.

The even course of his courtly and studious life was rudely interrupted by the war between the Spaniards and the French, in consequence of which, he and his family siding with the latter party, he was compelled, after the disastrous battle of Pavia, to take to flight and the Imperialists, during their occupation of Milan in 1525, burned his father's house and plundered his own library, destroying and damaging many of his books and manuscripts, a misfortune of which he complains as the great calamity of his life and from which he never entirely recovered. He tells us himself that he went wandering about Italy for some time, hoping for an opportunity of resuming his quiet literary life at Milan, but ultimately, finding the prospects of literature and study in Italy completely ruined by the ceaseless wars which ravaged the Peninsula, he resolved to expatriate himself and accordingly, accepting the offered hospitality of Cesare Fregoso, one of the chiefs of the French party in Italy, he retired with him to his castle of Bassens in Aquitaine, where he abode, living (as he expresses it), thanks to his patron's munificence, to himself and the Muses, till Fregoso's death in 1541. The patronage extended to him by the latter was continued by his widow, Signora Costanza Rangoni, the daughter of one of his earlier patrons, whose hospitality he appears

to have requited by educating her sons. This time of peace and tranquillity he devoted to the ordering of his manuscripts (great part of which he had now succeeded in recovering by the help of friends, who bought them back from the Spanish pillagers, or in reestablishing by the aid of copies previously presented by him to his patrons and acquaintances) and especially to revising and preparing his novels for publication.

In 1550, the bishoprick of Agen, in which diocese Bassens was situate, falling vacant by the death of its then incumbent, Jean de Lorraine, Henry II. of France presented Bandello to the see, in acknowledgment of the memorable services rendered by the Fregoso family to the French cause, under an arrangement, sanctioned by Pope Julius III., by which he was to hold the episcopate as "warming-pan" for his patron's younger son, Ettore Fregoso, who was being educated (apparently under Bandello's own auspices) for the church and for whose benefit half the revenues of the see were expressly reserved. Ettore, however, does not appear to have lived to carry out this family arrangement, as we find his elder brother Giano, the first-born son of Cesare Fregoso, succeeding Bandello as bishop on the latter's death. Bandello did not concern himself with the governance

of his diocese, which he left to the Bishop of Grasse, but occupied himself entirely with his literary labours, the chief fruits of which were his celebrated novels, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd parts of which, comprising about eight-ninths of the whole, were published in three volumes at Lucca in 1554, his old friend Aldus, to whom he intended (as he tells us in one of his dedications to the famous printer) to have entrusted the publication, having died long before. The fourth volume, containing the fourth and concluding part of the Novels, was not published till 1573, when it appeared at Lyons, certain difficulties raised by citizens of Lucca, as to stories in which their kinsfolk or ancestors played an ignominious or unworthy part, seeming to have delayed the appearance of this portion and to have hindered its publication at Lucca. The date of Bandello's death is unknown, the general opinion being that he died in 1561, but it is probable that he lived until shortly before (if not till after) the appearance, in 1573, of the fourth part of his Novels, as we find prefixed thereto a letter of his composition to the reader, in which (as also in the dedication of the first story) he gives some explanation of the circumstances of its publication.

Bandello was an erudite and capable Latinist, and had made considerable progress with the composition

of a great Latin Dictionary on a new plan, to the MS. of which he refers as having been lost at the sack of Milan. He was also a competent Greek scholar, having translated the *Hecuba* of Euripides, and was the friend and correspondent of Julius Cæsar Scaliger and other famous contemporary scholars. His works in Latin and Italian appear to have been voluminous, although few are extant, at least in print, and the pieces of verse scattered through his novels, if (which is probable) they are of his own composition, show him to have been a skilful and agreeable versifier. Besides these, he wrote a great number of Latin and Italian verses, of which the best known are those composed in honour of the celebrated Lucrezia Gonzaga of Gazuolo, the noblest-minded and most learned woman of her time, who had been his pupil and who, in a letter quoted in several literary histories, expressed her gratitude to him for his teachings and for the wise principles which he had instilled into her mind. The laudatory verses in question form a poem of eleven cantos in ottava rima and are generally found printed with another vernacular poem, "*Le Tre Parche*," a *Genethliacum* or natal ode in celebration of the birth of a son and heir, the above-named Giano Fregoso, to his patrons Cesare Fregoso and his wife Costanza Rangoni. The following translation of a

love-sonnet of his which I find in the thirty-first volume of Rubbi's great *Parnaso Italiano*, published at Venice in 1787, and which nowise savours of the ecclesiastic, will serve to give some idea of his lighter style :

Weary of smiting, yet unsatisfied,
 Love settled on her lap, whose lovely eyes
 And speech angelical on tyrant wise
 Usurp my freedom every time and tide.
 She, the unwonted heat when she descried,
 Cast down those lucent orbs, the world's true sun,
 And "What now doth this false and flattering one,
 This traitor here?" disdainfully she cried.
 Whereat Love waxed as one who unaware
 Treads on a snake, and as away he fled,
 "Where had I lighted? Is not this the fair
 Heaven-gladdening countenance?" amazed, he said ;
 "These be the lovesome eyes, the visage rare,
 These be the paps and breast where I was bred."¹

¹ *i.e.* meaning that he had mistaken the poet's mistress, by reason of her transcendent beauty, for his own mother, Venus ; a favourite conceit with the French, Spanish and Italian versifiers of the time.



CONTENTS OF VOLUME I.

Part the First.

	PAGE
The First Story. Buondelmonte de' Buondelmonti contracteth marriage with a damsel and after, leaving her, to take another to wife, is assassinated	12
<i>Book II</i> The Second Story. Ariobarzanes, Seneschal of the King of Persia, will e'en outdo the latter in courtesy, whence various chances betide	21
The Third Story. Of a trick played by a lady upon a gentleman and of the twofold return he rendereth her therefor	61
<i>Part II of Book I</i> The Fourth Story. The Countess of Cellant letteth assassinate the Count of Masino and hath her own head stricken off	79
The Fifth Story. Porcellio of Rome diverteth himself by making mock of the friar who confesseth him	91
The Sixth Story. Baldwin of Flanders taketh Judith of France at sea and espouseth her for his wife	103
The Seventh Story. Giulia of Gazuolo, being deflowered by force, casteth herself into the Oglio and so dieth	118
The Eighth Story. A jealous man, by means of a friar, heareth his wife's confession and slayeth her	130
<i>Part III of Book I</i> The Ninth Story. Mahomet, Emperor of the Turks, cruelly slayeth one of his women	147

	PAGE
<i>The Tenth Story.</i> A senator, taking his wife in adultery, letteth the adulterer escape and saveth his own honour, together with that of his wife	160
<i>The Eleventh Story.</i> A Siennese taketh his wife in adultery and carrying her forth, slayeth her	165
<i>The Twelfth Story.</i> The Lady Camilla Scarampa, hearing her husband's head to have been stricken off, dieth forth-right	174
<i>The Thirteenth Story.</i> Antonio Perillo after many travails espouseth his mistress and is with her smitten dead by lightning on their wedding night	179
<i>The Fourteenth Story.</i> Two gentlemen of Venice are honourably cozened by their wives	186
<i>The Fifteenth Story.</i> A strange adventure which befell a gentleman, giving him occasion to enjoy a lady of whom he had ceased to think	222
<i>The Sixteenth Story.</i> The Emperor Otho the Third loveth Gualdrada, without being loved of her, and marieth her honourably	235
<i>The Seventeenth Story.</i> Faustina and Cornelia, ladies of Rome, turn harlots and by practice regain their husbands' favour	243
<i>The Eighteenth Story.</i> Galeazzo stealeth away a damsel from Padua and after for jealousy slayeth both her and himself	264
<i>The Nineteenth Story.</i> A rare cheat put by a gentlewoman upon two barons of the kingdom of Hungary	273
<i>The Twentieth Story.</i> Signor Scipione Attellano telleth how Signor Timbreo di Cardona, being with King Pedro of Arragon in Messina, became enamoured of Fenicia Lionata and of the various and unlooked-for chances which befell, before he took her to wife	302

Part the First.

VOL. I.

I

Bandello

to the ingenuous and courteous reader.

Many years ago I began, at the instance of the illustrious lady Ippolita Sforza of ever sorrowful and honoured memory, (consort of the most affable Signor Alessandro Bentivoglio, whom God have in glory,) to write sundry novels; and what while she lived, albeit some thereof were dedicated unto others, natheless I presented them all unto her. But, the world being unworthy to have so lofty and glorious a spirit upon earth, our Lord God by an untimely death withdrew her unto Himself in heaven; and after her death it betided me as it useth to betide the whirlstone of a mill, which being set a-turn by a strong hand, though the said hand be withdrawn therefrom, yet doth the wheel, by virtue of the first motion, go still a pretty while revolving, without being touched. Wherefore, after the death of the aforesaid most noble lady, my

mind, which was ever fain to do obedience unto her, ceased not to set my feeble hand a-work, so that I persevered in writing now this, now that novel, according as the occasion offered itself to me, and on this wise I wrote many thereof. Now, there being sundry friends of mine who desire to see my said novels (and indeed no few of them have been already seen), they exhort me all day long to publish them. Many of them I have sacrificed to Vulcan;¹ those, however, which have contrived to escape the devouring flame, I have put together according as they came to my hand, observing no manner of ordinance, and have made three parts thereof, dividing them into three books, so they may abide in volumes as small as possible.² I bid not neither enforce any one soever to read them, but pray all whom it shall please to do so that they will deign to read them in that same spirit wherein they were written of me. I protest, indeed, that I have written them to pleasure and divert others; but whether I have anywise accomplished this, to your benevolent and sincere judgment,

¹ *i.e.* the fire; meaning he had burned them.

² Lit. smaller than shall be possible (*più piccoli che sarà possibile*), a curious Italian idiom of constant occurrence in Bandello.

gentle reader mine, I commit it. I will not say as said the most ingenious and eloquent Boccaccio, that these my novels are written in vulgar Florentine, for that I should tell a manifest untruth, I being neither Florentine nor Tuscan, but Lombard ; and if indeed I have no style (and I avow it), I have yet taken assurance to write these trifles, in the belief that history and stories of this kind may serve to divert, in what tongue soever they be written. Fare you well.

Bandello

to the illustrious and accomplished lady, the Lady
Eppolita Sforza e Bentivoglia.

There were present, the other day, at your house at Milan, many gentlemen, who, after their laudable usance, come thither every day for their diversion, for that among the company that resorteth thither there is still some goodly and delectable discourse toward of the things which betide day by day, as well love-matters as other chances. I having been despatched by Signor Alessandro Bentivoglio, your consort, and yourself to the Lady Barbara Gonzaga, Countess of Gaiazzo, on account of giving one of the ladies your daughters for wife to the Lord Count Roberto Sanseverino her son, and chancing presently to return thither with her gracious response, we betook ourselves, we three, into a chamber adjoining the saloon, where I set out to you that which I had negotiated. It seemed good to Signor Alessandro and yourself that the whole matter should be communicated to those gentlemen who waited in the saloon, so that each might give his opinion, and I accordingly, in the presence of all, expounded the case, even as I had before told it to you twain. The opinions of the company were various; algaes, all things well considered, it was concluded that it behoved not to bespeak the countess farther of this

business, lest Pope Leo should be angered against you, seeing that Archbishop Sanseverino, uncle of Count Robert, was presently in treaty for the giving his said nephew the sister of Cardinal Cibo; and you accordingly committed it to me to advise the countess of this determination, the which was punctually done of me on the following day. Among the company was the most debonair Messer Lodovico Alamanni,¹ the Florentine Ambassador, who, hearing the prudent resolution which had been taken, with apt words commended it amain and avouched that better might not be done; to which purpose he recounted a very cruel chance otherwhiles betided at Florence. This, being intently hearkened, greatly confirmed my lord your consort and yourself in the conclusion made; and I, the case appearing to me worthy of compassion and remembrance, wrote it down precisely as it was told by Alamanni. Thereafter, remembering me that you had sundry whiles exhorted me to cull of the choicest of the incidents which I heard recounted in divers places and make of them a book and having already written many thereof, I bethought me (complying with your exhortations, which with me stand in stead of commandment) to put together, in the guise of novels, that which I had written and observing no ordinance of time other than to dispose them as they came to my hand, to give unto each of them a patron or a patroness of my seigniors and friends. Wherefore, having written this of Alamanni's, I have deemed it well (albeit others of the ensuing stories have been narrated in your presence) to dedicate and ascribe it unto your name and so set it for head and ensign of defence unto my stories. Moreover, you (overweening of my powers) having been the

¹ The well-known poet and author of the celebrated bucolic poem "Della Coltivazione."

cause and origin of my writing these novels, such as they are, meseemed right that you should be the first unto whom I, in acquittance of my due servitude and of your many benefits bestowed on me, should make gift of one of them and that this one should be that which in the forefront of the book showeth the way unto the others. I am fain to believe, nay, I am most firmly assured, that you will read these my wares, for that I have oftentimes seen how blithely you take my trifles in hand and spend a good part of your time in reading them, nor are you content with this, but read them again and again and (what much more importeth) commend them. And although some might say that you praise my writings, not because they are worthy to be read or glorified, but because they come from me who am so much your servant and whom you, of your favour, have in a thousand cases shown that you tender more than belike (having regard unto that which I am) might behove,—you being, among the rarest ladies of our age, the most rare of virtue, of manners, of courtesy and generosity and adorned with goodly letters, both Latin and Italian, which add greater grace unto your divine beauty,—natheless, I hold myself therefor still of more account, knowing the keenness of your wit, your erudition and scholarship and all and singular other your rare and excellent gifts. An easy thing it is, indeed, every day to see the profound cognizance that is in you of polite letters, there being continually brought you verses, now Latin and now Italian, the which you reading with a turn of the eye, incontinent penetrate their sense, so that it seemeth you do no otherwhat than apply unto study. Many and many a time have I seen you engage in argument with our most erudite Messer Girolamo Cittadino, whom with an honourable salary you entertain about your person, upon some recondite passage occurring in the reading of poets or historians, and so

learnedly did you support your opinion with true arguments that it was an astonishment and a marvel to hear you. But what shall I say of your sagacious judgment, just, sound and perspicacious and nowise inclining unto one side or the other, save in so far as reason and truth draw it? Certes, it is a marvellous thing with what exceeding subtlety and profundity you whiles sift and winnow certain passages and go interpreting them, word for word and sense for sense, after such a fashion that you render all who hear you capable thereof. This maketh me, seeing [as I do] that, whenas you have a poem or other writing in hand, you choose out the good and the best that is therein and distinguish between style and style, praising that which is worthy of praise, on such wise that Momus¹ himself could not carp at your judgment,—this, I say, maketh me believe that, whenas you speak well of my writings, the affection which you bear me beguileth you not, your judgment being so sincere and everywise so upright and so steadfast. Marry, whoso heard you, that day whenas the doctor [of laws] and most sweet poet, Messer Niccolo Amanio, came to do you reverence² and there were read two sonnets, one of the Lady Cecilia Bergamina, Countess of San Giovanni in Croce, and the other of the Lady Camilla Scarampa,—how aptly you reasoned of the poet's office and how acutely you solved the doubts propounded to you and with what abundance of clear and apposite words and what goodly ordinance you expounded the whole,—had said that it was no woman who spoke, but one of the most learned and fluent and eloquent men of our day. I for my part remember me

¹ The God of fault-finding.

² Or, as would be said nowadays, "to pay his respects to you" (*farvi riverenza*). Amanio was a well-known Milanese poet of the time.

not to have heard any speak so abundantly¹ of such a matter as when, to my exceeding satisfaction and infinite contentment, I hearkened unto your exposition; whereat those to whom it was vouchsafed to hear you abode all so full of admiration that they knew not what to say. But I have let myself be carried over far astray, this being no due place for your praises, which call for far more chastened periods² [than these of mine]. Returning, therefore, to my story, which was presently narrated by Alamanni and after written down by me, I dedicate and consecrate it unto your glorious name, so that, should any chance to take my novels (whenas they shall be all together) in hand, he may know that I was moved by you to write them and that, if he find in them aught of good, he may thank, first, the Giver of every good, our Lord God, and after, you from whom it proceedeth. Again, if, as it may lightly happen, there be many things therein unpolished, ill expounded, set down without apt ordinance or expressed in barbarous language, let him ascribe it to the meanness and feebleness of my understanding and to my little knowledge and take in gree my good will, considering that I am a Lombard and in Lombardy, on the confines of Liguria, was born and have for the most part of my years been bred until this present and that, as I speak, so have I written,—not to teach others nor to add adornment to the vulgar tongue, but solely to keep folk in memory of the things which have seemed to me worth to be written and to obey you who commanded me thereof. Fare you well.

¹ *i.e.* exhaustively (*copiosamente*).

² or “styles”; lit. “more purged inks” (*più purgati inchiostri*).

The First Story.

BUONDELMONTE DE' BUONDELMONTI CON-
TRACTETH MARRIAGE WITH A DAMSEL
AND AFTER, LEAVING HER, TO TAKE
ANOTHER TO WIFE, IS ASSASSINATED.

It is my firm belief, my lords,¹ that our Lord God hath inspired you with His grace to take the determination to which you have come, to wit, to proceed no farther with the project of giving one of the ladies your daughters for wife to the Lord Count of Gaiazzo. The match indeed were mighty honourable and noble, the count being of the most ancient Sanseverino house, which for many an age of time past possessed and yet possesseth, in the kingdom of Naples, duchies, principalities, counties, baronies and most magnificent dignities, and hath produced men distinguished no less for excellence in the art of war than for other virtues. Moreover, the count himself is a very honourable gentleman, young and exceeding well proportioned of his person and nowise degenerate from his fathers and ancestors; wherefore there could betide you of him no otherwhat than a goodly and worshipful alliance. Nevertheless, (albeit, according to that which hath been said here, the countess his mother would gladly ally herself with you, by taking the lady your daughter

¹ *Signori miei*, meaning "my lord and my lady" (*i.e.* Alessandro Sforza and his wife, whom the speaker is addressing,) and not the company in general.

to daughter-in-law,) Pope Leo having already let enter upon a treaty for giving a sister of the Cardinal Cibo, who is his own sister's daughter, to the count to wife, methinketh there could not but ensue much hindrance to you thereof ; for that, you being exiled from Bologna and Pope Leo showing himself your wellwisher and having already done you many favours, he might take offence on such wise as to cause you no little prejudice, more by token that the affair is presently in treaty with the count himself at the court of France, where he is at this present to be found, through a gentleman expressly sent thither by the Cardinal. So that, my lords, you have dealt wisely in concluding to do as you have done ; nor will you want for sons-in-law according to the quality and degree of your condition. And to show you with some example how harmful it is to make a traffic of these matches, it pleaseth me to recount to you the woeful and lamentable nuptials of a citizen of Florence, the origin and occasion of the ruin and division of that our city, which had thitherto lived in the utmost peace and tranquillity, what while well nigh all Italy was full of strife and factiousness.

It was, then, in the year of our salvation one thousand two hundred and fifteen when the woeful chance of which I purpose to bespeak you befell, till which time our city had still been obedient unto the conquerors,¹ the Florentines seeking not to enlarge their territories nor to molest the neighbouring peoples, but concerning themselves only with their own conservation ; and like as it is with human bodies, wherein, the longer they tarry to sicken, so much the deadlier and more harmful are the infirmities, whether of fever or other ill, that after overcome them with a thousand perils,

¹ *i.e.* to whichever party was for the time being uppermost in the eternal strife between the papal and imperial factions.

even so was it with Florence, for that the later she was in adopting the parties and divisions which overspread all Italy, to its ruin, the more thereafter did she involve herself therein, over all the rest of the country, and the fiercelier did she ensue the factions, which were the cause of the miserable exile and cruel death of so many thousands of her citizens. For that, verily, an one reckon aright, methinketh as many men have been driven forth of Florence and as many others miserably slaughtered as would, an they were brought together, make a far greater city than this said Florence presently is.

But, to come to the fact, I must tell you that, amongst other noble and powerful families of our city, there were two most puissant for wealth and following of folk and of greatest repute with the people, to wit, the Uberti and the Buondelmonti, after whom the Amidei and the Donati flourished in the second place; and in this latter family of the Donati there was then a gentlewoman, a widow and very rich, with one only daughter, who was of a marriageable age and exceeding fair of favour. Her mother having reared her after the most accomplished fashion and bethinking her to whom she should marry her, there occurred to her thought many men noble and rich, who pleased her greatly; nevertheless, herseemed that he over all the others who was most to her liking was Messer Buondelmonte dei Buondelmonti, a very worshipful and magnificent and honourable gentleman, rich and robust and young, who was then the head of his house; wherefore she resolved to give her to him, but, herseeming the time was not apt, (for that both he and her daughter were young,) she went deferring the matter and made neither kinsman nor friend cognizant of this her design.

Whilst the widow temporized thus, thinking doubtless to be still in time, it chanced that a gentleman of the Amidei

family entered into treaty with Messer Buondelmonte to give him a daughter of his to wife and the affair being pressed on either side, things went on such wise that the dowry was agreed and the young lady contracted in marriage¹ to Messer Buondelmonte. The news of this match, for that it was between nobles, was forthright published throughout the city and the father of the betrothed damsel applied himself to the ordinance of the nuptials, so they should be celebrated with such pomp and magnificence as behoved unto the quality of the parties. The widow of the Donati family, hearing of this match and seeing herself foiled of her design, was sore chagrined thereat and might nowise be comforted, but still studied to find some means so Buondelmonte's alliance with the Amidei should not go forward. After she had well pondered and repondered the matter, no other means occurring to her, she bethought herself to essay an she might with the beauty of her daughter (whom she knew to be one of the fairest damsels of Florence) make shift to ensnare Messer Buondelmonte.

Accordingly, without imparting that her new² conceit unto any, but taking counsel with herself alone, she, no great while after, seeing Messer Buondelmonte come riding, without any company of gentlemen and attended only by his serving-men, along the street where she had her house, came down with her daughter to the door and as the gentleman was in act to pass thereon, she presented herself before him and said to him, with a smiling air, "Messer Buondelmonte, I rejoice with you amain in all that may content you and give you joy for that you have taken a wife, of whom may our

¹ Or "affianced," lit. "married" (*si maritò*); but it is evident by what follows that a betrothal only is meant.

² or "strange, rare" (*nuovo*).

Lord God vouchsafe you every gladness ! Albeit, in very deed, I had kept you this mine only daughter, whom you see here with me." So saying, she drew her daughter forward by the hand and would have the gentleman view her at his ease. The latter, noting the damsel's rare beauty and goodly fashions, fell straightway desperately enamoured of her and without taking thought to his faith already plighted to the Amidei and the contract formally made nor considering the sore affront he did them in breaking off the match and the disorders which might ensue thereof, did he repudiate his late-accepted bride,—overmastered as he was with desire and craving to enjoy this new beauty, whom he accounted nowise inferior to the other in birth and wealth,—with broken speech made answer to the widow on this wise, saying, "Madam, since you avouch that you have even till now kept this your fair and noble daughter for me, I were far more than ungrateful to refuse her, being yet able to do that which is most to your liking. To-morrow I will return hither immediately after dinner and we will talk more leisurely together." The good widow abode exceeding content and Messer Buondelmonte, taking leave of her and her daughter, went to do other his occasions; then, the night come, calling to mind the damsel's charms and waxing so inflamed for her that him-seemed every hour was a year till he should be possessed of her, he determined, without giving more thought to the matter, to celebrate his nuptials with her on the ensuing day. Reason, indeed, represented to him bytimes that this was a thing exceeding ill done and unworthy of an honourable gentleman, such as he was accounted, but the wretched lover had been so empoisoned by one brief sight of the girl's lovely eyes and so sore did the liquid and subtle fire of the love which he had vowed to the fair damsel enkindle and consume him that, on the morrow, as soon as he had dined, he betook

himself to the widow and that same day celebrated the ill-considered marriage.

When these untimely and precipitate nuptials were known about the city, it was generally accounted that Buondelmonte had demeaned himself like a fool and every one murmured at him. But over all and much more than all the Amidei were sore despited thereat, and with them the Uberti, who were allied to them by kinship, were infinitely provoked. Accordingly, taking counsel with other their kinsfolk and friends and full of despite and ill-will against Messer Buondelmonte, they concluded that this affront and manifest shame was nowise to be endured and that so foul a stain might not be washed save in the very blood of the enemy and mispriser of their alliance. Some, indeed, there were who, alleging the ills that might ensue thereof, would fain have had them consider the matter more maturely and not run so headlong to a conclusion; but one Mosca Lamberti, a very headstrong man and quick of hand, who was among the folk assembled, declared that whoso pondered divers courses took none and added the common saying that "A thing done hath an end." In fine, it was concluded that complete satisfaction might not be gotten without shedding of blood and so the charge of slaying Messer Buondelmonte was committed unto Mosca, to Stiatta Uberti, to Lamberuccio Amidei and to Uderigo Fisanti, all valiant and high-spirited young men of noble parentage. These, then, took order of that which behoved for giving effect to so parlous a homicide and began to spy out all the gentleman's comings and goings, to see an they might not avail to take him unprovided, so he should not escape from their hands; then, having diligently noted all and caring not to tarry longer to put the thing in execution, they resolved (it being Passion Week) that the Feast of the Resurrection should be hallowed

with his blood. Accordingly, on the morning of Easter Day, the conspirators, having ambushed themselves aforenight in the houses of the Amidei family situate between the Ponte Vecchio and San Stefano, abode await, looking for Messer Buondelmonte to pass, as he was used, before the said houses, for they had noted that he most times frequented that street.

The gentleman, who deemed it belike as eath a thing to forget an injury as to renounce an alliance, unthinking that the Amidei made any account of the affront which he had put upon them, mounted a very goodly white palfrey, early on Easter morning, and passed before the aforesaid houses, to go beyond the river. There he was assailed by the conspirators and being cast down from his horse at the bridge-end, was most cruelly despatched with many wounds at the foot of a statue of Mars that stood there. This murder, being committed on so notable a person, set all Florence by the ears and the folk rose that same day in riot and turmoil. Some set themselves to follow the Uberti, who were very potent in the city and in the country without, whilst others joined themselves to the Buondelmonti, so that all the city was up in arms. Now, because these two families were strong in palaces and fortresses and men, they warred it together a great while and there ensued many deaths thereof on either side. Ultimately, the Uberti, with the aid and countenance of Frederick the Second, King of Naples and Emperor, drove the Buondelmonti forth of Florence, and thereupon the city was divided between two factions, as was all Italy already, to wit, into Ghibellines and Guelphs ;¹

¹ The Guelphs were the supporters of the Papal faction against the Ghibellines or adherents of the Emperor Frederick the Second of Germany.

on such wise that thereafterward the discords and dissensions that befell between the two parties and between the nobles and the people and between the chief citizens and the populace wrought various and very great changes, still attended with exceeding great bloodshed and wrack of very goodly palaces and exile of many, the which was the ultimate ruin of many most noble families and needeth not for the nonce to be more particularly recalled. Suffice it to say so much thereof as may show how much ill proceeded from Messer Buondelmonte's repudiation of the nuptials contracted with the Amidei lady; the which, my lords, methinketh will yet more commend to you the wise and well-considered resolution that you have made, more by token that your right fair and nobly-bred daughters are yet children and may freely await a better occasion.¹

¹ This is the novel on which Fletcher is said to have founded his "Triumph of Death."

Bandello

to the most illustrious and excellent lord, Signor
Prospero Colonna, Lieutenant-General for the
Emperor in Italy.

It hath not escaped my mind, noble and most magnificent my lord, what you deigned to command me, what time you were a-pleasuring in the most delightsome garden of Signor L. Scipione Attellano. There you heard that, some days before, in the presence of the most worshipful and illustrious lady Signora Ippolita Sforza e Bentivoglia, the noble Signor Silvio Savello related a very goodly story which supremely pleased all the listeners; wherefore, Attellano telling you that I had written it down, you enjoined me to let you see it, and if I have tarried till now to acquit me of my debt, let the journey, which, as you know, it behoved me to go on the ensuing day, excuse me in your eyes. Now, having transcribed it, I send and give it to you, not as pretending thereby any whit to requite all the kindness you do me daily, (for that of the thousand good offices I owe you I am not sufficient to requite the least scantling), but to obey (as it behoveth me) not only your commandments, but every least sign of yours, such and so great is the obligation under which I feel myself towards you and which I freely confess unto all the world. I regret, indeed, that I have not availed to imitate Signor Silvio's eloquence, whereof in his narration he showed in effect great plenty; but I am a Lombard and he is a Roman. Fare you well.

The Second Story.

ARIOBARZANES, SENESCHIAL OF THE KING
OF PERSIA, WILL E'EN OUTDO THE
LATTER IN COURTESY, WHENCE VARIOUS
CHANCES BETIDE.

It hath been sundry whiles debated, most affable lady and you, courteous gentlemen, amongst men of learning and those dedicated to the service of courts, if any laudable work or act of courtesy or generosity that a courtier may use towards his lord should be styled liberality and courtesy or if indeed it should not rather be holden a matter of obligation and duty. Nor do folk differ without reason concerning this ; inasmuch as, in the opinion of many, it is abundantly clear that a servant can never avail daily to do so much towards his lord but much more shall still be due from him. For if by chance he have not the favour of his king and be yet fain (like all who serve) to have it, what thing, how difficult soever it may be, should he ever stint to do, so he may gain the desired grace? See we not many who, to ingratiate themselves with their prince, have exposed their own lives to a thousand risks and often to a thousand deaths? Again, if he find himself in favour and know himself beloved of his master, how many toils and how many annoys doth it behove him suffer, so he may maintain himself in repute and avail to retain and augment the gotten grace? It is, as you know, a common saying and one extolled by

the ingenious poet that it is no less a virtue ¹ to conserve things acquired than to acquire them. Others on the contrary contend and study with very potent arguments to prove that all the servant doth, beyond his bare due and over and above the obligation he hath to serve his lord, is a liberality and an occasion of binding his master unto himself and inciting him to fresh favours, it being known that, once a man doth his office unto which he is deputed of his lord and doth it with all due diligence and ability, he hath acquitted him of his duty and deserveth to be meetly guerdoned of him.² However, since we are not assembled here for debate, but for story-telling, we will leave disputations on one side, what while I tell you that which was wroughten of an illustrious king anent the matter in question; and my story ended, an there be any here who would fain discourse thereof more at large, methinketh he will have a free field to run at his leisure one or more courses, as it shall most please him.

You must know, then, that there was aforetime in the kingdom of Persia a king called Artaxerxes, a man of exceeding great heart and much exercised in arms. He it was who, as the Persian annals tell, or ever he had gotten any military rank in the army, being yet a private soldier, slew Artabanes,³ the last king of the Arsacidæ, under whom he served, and restored to the Persians the dominion of Persia, which had been in the hand of the Macedonians and of other peoples since the death of Darius,⁴ who was overcome by Alexander the Great; [that is to say,] for the space of some five hundred and thirty-eight ⁵ years. He, then, having freed all Persia and being made king by the people, held a court [which was a school] of magnificence and noble

¹ *i.e.* that no less virtue (or merit) is required, etc.

² *i.e.* of his lord.

³ A.D. 226.

⁴ B.C. 330.

⁵ Sic.

deeds ; and he himself, being most splendid in all his actions, over and above the titles which he had valiantly won in bloody battles, was holden throughout all the East for the most liberal and magnanimous prince of his day ; more by token that in his entertainments he was a new Lucullus, most hospitably entreating the strangers who came to his court. He had a seneschal, Ariobarzanes by name, whose office it was, whenas the king made a banquet in public, to fare, mounted on a white charger and holding a mace of gold in his hand, before the sewers who bore the king's meat in vessels of gold covered with the finest linen cloths, all counterpointed and wroughten in silk and gold after the goodliest fashion ; which said office of seneschal was supremely esteemed and was commonly given to one of the first barons of the realm. Now the said Ariobarzanes, (forby that he was of very noble lineage and so rich that there was well nigh none in the kingdom to match with him for wealth,) was to boot the most courteous and generous gentleman that frequented the court ; and to such a pitch did he carry the practice of magnanimity and of spending without stint that, leaving the middle term in which all virtue consisteth, he many a while, inclining unto extremes, fell into the vice of prodigality ; whence oftentimes it seemed that not only would he fain even himself with his king in works of courtesy, but studied with all his might to overpass and outdo him.

The king one day called for the chess-board and would have Ariobarzanes play with him at the chess, which game was in those days high in esteem among the Persians, a good player being honoured and extolled as is nowadays amongst ourselves an excellent reasoner upon matters literary and philosophical. Accordingly, seating themselves overagainst each other at a table in the royal hall, where were many

great personages who watched their play intently and in silence, they began, as best they knew, to assail one another with the chessmen and Ariobarzanes,—whether he played better than the king or whether the latter after some few moves had no longer his mind in the game or whatever might have been the cause,—reduced the king to such straits that needs must he suffer checkmate in two or three moves. Artaxerxes, becoming aware of his danger, waxed much redder in the face than of his wont and bethinking him an there were any means of averting the checkmate, gave all who viewed the game to know, by his sighs and shaking of the head and other gestures, that it irked him sore to be come to such a pass. The seneschal, perceiving this and seeing his lord's natural confusion, could not brook it, but made a cast, moving one of his knights of set purpose, to open the road to the other's king, on such wise that not only did he release him from the peril wherein he was, but left a rook of his own exposed and altogether unguarded, whereby the game abode equal. Thereupon the king,—who knew full well his officer's generosity and greatness of mind, for that he had made proof of him in many other things,—feigning not to see that he might have taken the rook, dealt the chessmen a blow with his hand and rising to his feet, said, “No more, Ariobarzanes; the game is yours and I confess myself beaten.” Now it occurred to Artaxerxes his mind that Ariobarzanes had done this, not so much of courtesy as to lay his king under an obligation to himself; the which himseemed was ill done, and therefore he would play no more. Algaates, he never by word or deed showed that this his seneschal's courtesy had displeased him, albeit indeed he would fain have had Ariobarzanes forbear such actions, whenas he played or did otherwhat with himself, and would have had him, if he must e'en play the courteous and the magnificent, do it with his inferiors or equals, forasmuch

as himseemed it was ill done that a servant should seek to tilt at equal weapons with his master in matters of courtesy and liberality.

Not many days after this, being in Persepolis, a chief city of Persia, he ordained a very goodly hunting of the wild beasts which that country produceth and which are very different from these of ours, and all being set in train, he betook himself with his whole court to the trysting-place. There, great part of a wood being compassed about with nets and overspread with many snares, the king, having posted his huntsmen as seemed to him fittest, applied himself with hounds and horns to rouse the game from their dens and lurking-places ; when, behold, there sprang out an exceeding fierce and nimble wild beast, which overleapt the nets at a bound and took to flight with the utmost swiftness. The king, seeing the strange animal, resolved to ensue it and put it to death ; wherefore, signing to certain of his barons, whereof Ariobarzanes was one, to attend him in the pursuit, he gave his horse the rein and addressed himself to follow the beast. It chanced that the king was that day mounted on a horse which was for its exceeding fleetness so dear to him that he would have given a thousand others of his to save that one, more by token that, besides its swiftness of foot, it was especially apt unto skirmishes and deeds of arms, and ensuing thus with a loose rein the flying (rather than running) beast, he so far outwent his company that he had presently none left with him save Ariobarzanes, (whose horse was on like wise holden of the best found at court) followed by one of his men, whom he still carried after him to the chase, well mounted. Now, as the three fared on at full speed, Ariobarzanes perceived that his lord's horse was fallen unshod of the forefeet and that the stones began to chafe his hoofs ; wherefore needs must the king lose the diversion which he

was in act to take of the chase or the horse be maird, neither of which things might betide without marvellously displeasing Artaxerxes, who was unaware that the horse had cast its shoes. The seneschal no sooner observed this than he dismounted and taking from his follower the hammer and pincers, which he still carried with him against such accidents, withdrew from his own good horse the two foreshoes to put them on the king's courser, purposing after to adventure his own steed in following the chase. Accordingly, he cried to the king to halt and warned him of his horse's peril; whereupon Artaxerxes alighted and seeing the two shoes in the servant's hand, took no more thought thereto, imagining belike that Ariobarzanes caused carry them against the like occasions or that they were e'en those which his own horse had cast, and waited for the latter to be reshod, so he might remount; but, when he saw the seneschal's good steed without foreshoes, he knew full well that this was one of Ariobarzanes his courtesies and bethinking himself to overcome him by that same means wherewith he studied to outdo himself, made him a gift of the horse, shod as he was. Thus, then, the king chose rather to lose the pleasure of the chase than to be outdone in courtesy by one of his servants, having regard to the greatness of soul of the latter, who seemed as he would fain vie with himself in glorious and generous actions. The seneschal deemed it unmeet to refuse his lord's gift, but accepted it with that same magnanimity which had caused him unshoe his own horse, algates awaiting another occasion of out-doing his master in courtesy and of making him beholden to himself; nor had they abidden long when there came up many of those who followed after and the king, taking one of his officers' horses, returned to the city with all his company.

A few days thereafterward, the king let publish a solemn and pompous jousting for the day of the Calends of May; whereat the prize to be given to the winner was a spirited and generous courser, with a richly wroughten bridle, curbed with fine gold, and a saddle of exceeding great price, whose furnitures were no whit unworthy of the bridle, whilst the reins were two chains of gold, very curiously fashioned. The horse was covered with a housing of three-piled gold brocade, garded with a very goodly fringe of broidery and hung all with morris-bells and rattles and campanels of gold, and at the saddle bow was a very costly tuck with a scabbard all engrailed with pearls and jewels of great price, whilst to the other side was made fast a very strong and goodly mace, curiously wroughten after the Damascus fashion.¹ Moreover, hard by the steed were set up, trophy-wise, all the harness which behoveth unto a knight-combatant, and that so rich and goodly that none might be more. The shield was marvellous and strong and might, together with a gilt and goodly lance, be seen on the day appointed for the jousting; and all these things were to be given to the victor in the jousts. Accordingly, many strangers resorted to so notable a festival, some to joust and some to look upon the splendid spectacle of the jousting. Of the king's own subjects there abode neither knight nor baron but there appeared, richly apparelled, and among the first who gave their names was the king's first-born son, a very valiant youth and of great renown in arms, who had from a child been bred and reared in the camp. The seneschal also gave his name and on like wise did many other knights, as well Persians as strangers, for that there was a general festival

¹ *i.e.* inlaid with gold upon steel or, as we should say nowadays, "damascened."

proclaimed, with safe-conduct to all strangers who chose to come or joust there, so but they were noble, and not otherwise. The king had elected for judges of the lists three old barons, who had in their day been doughty of their persons and approved in many emprises and were known for men of integrity and sound judgment; and these had their tribune amiddleward the lists, overagainst the place whereas the jousts were used to encounter. You may conceive that all the dames and damsels of the land flocked thither and there was such a concourse of people assembled as behoved unto such a festival; nay, there was, belike, no knight who jousts but had his mistress there and bore some token of her giving, as is the usance on such occasions.

At the day and hour appointed, all the jousts appeared with exceeding great pomp of rich surcoats and caparisons, and many lances having been broken and fair strokes stricken of many, it was the general opinion that the seneschal Ariobarzanes would carry off the prize of the tourney and that, after him, the king's son far outwent all the others, for that none of the jousts had furnished more than five courses, whereas the prince had maintained nine thereof. The seneschal boasted eleven lances, doughtily and fairly broken, and yet another venue that he should furnish made him the winner of the jousts; for that twelve courses had been that day appointed unto the jousts for the winning of the prize, and whoso first achieved them without hindrance carried off the meed. The king, forsooth, desired nothing so well as that the honour should fall to his son, but could ill see how this might be, for that he plainly perceived the seneschal to have overmuch advantage, wherefore he discreetly dissembled his feelings and let nought thereof appear in his countenance. On the other hand, the young prince, who jousts before his mistress, was like to die of chagrin, seeing himself out of

hope of the first honour, so that one same desire consumed the father and the son ; but the prowess and valiance of the seneschal and his being so near unto the goal altogether cut short their every hope.

Now the seneschal, who was that day mounted upon the good courser that the king had given him at the chase,—being about to run his last lance and plainly perceiving that the king burned with the most ardent desire to see his son victorious and knowing, to boot, the youth's mind, who, for the honour of the thing and the presence of the lady he loved, was all aflame with like desire,—determined to despoil himself of so great an honour and leave it to the son of his king. He knew full well that these his courtesies pleased not the king ; nevertheless, he was resolved, by persevering, to overcome his prejudice, not to have him bestow more largesse upon him, but solely to do himself honour and to acquire renown ; and himseemed the king was ungrateful to him in that he chose not to take in gree those his generous actions. Accordingly, being altogether purposed to do on such sort that the honour should fall to the king's son, he couched his lance and as the prince (for it was he who came against him) was on the point of encountering with him, he let his lance fall from his hand and said, " Let this my courtesy go with the others, unvalued though it be ;" whereupon the king's son struck his opponent's shield fairly and breaking his lance into a thousand splinters, won the tenth course.

Many heard that which the seneschal said, whenas he cast his lance to the ground, and all the bystanders perceived that he had forborne of set purpose to strike and achieve his last course, so the king's son might have the much-desired honour of the jousts. Therewithal he departed the lists and the prince, breaking his last two lances without overgreat pains, abode possessed of the prize and of the honour.

Accordingly, to the sound of a thousand instruments of music, he was escorted in great pomp through all the city, with the prize of the jousts carried before him, and amongst the rest the seneschal still accompanied him with a blithe countenance, extolling the youth's prowess. The king, who was a very sagacious man and had many a time made proof of his seneschal's prowess in other jousts and tourneys, tilting-matches and battles and had still found him prudent, well-advised and exceeding doughty of his person, perceived but too well that the dropping of the lance was not by chance, but had been done of set purpose, and was confirmed in his opinion of his magnanimity and generosity. And in truth exceeding great was the courtesy of Ariobarzanes the seneschal, so great that methinketh there are very few to be found who would care to imitate him. We daily see many who are liberal bestowers of the gifts of fortune and give very lavishly to these and to those, now raiment, now silver and gold, now jewels and many other things of great value, and great lords are seen not only to be large and liberal of these things unto those who serve them, but eke of their munificence to guerdon them with castles, lands and cities. What shall we say of those who oftentimes, to serve others therewithal, are prodigal of their proper blood, ay, and of life itself? Of such and the like instances all the books of the one and the other language¹ are full; but he who maketh light of glory and is lavish of his own honour is yet to be found. The victorious captain, after the bloody conflict, bestoweth on his fellow-soldiers the spoils of the foe, giveth them prisoners and shareth with them all the booty, but the glory and honour of the battle he reserveth unto himself; and (as divinely writeth the true father of

¹ *i.e.*, Greek and Latin.

Roman eloquence) those philosophers, who write of the obligation to make light of glory, themselves seek glory with their written books.¹

Now the king, to whom these magnanimities and courtesies of the seneschal were not pleasing, nay, were irksome, (for that he accounted it unseemly nor anywise sufferable that a subject and a servant should seek not only to even himself with his lord, but to oblige him with works of courtesy and generosity,) began, as it is used to say, to give him the offing² nor show him such good countenance as he was used, and in the end he bethought himself to give him to know that he was sore mistaken, an he thought to make his master beholden to him; and you shall hear how. It was an ancient and approved custom in Persia that the king should yearly with great pomp and festivity solemnize the anniversary of his coronation, on which day all the barons of the kingdom were bounden to present themselves at court, where the king held open house for eight days together with very sumptuous banquets and other kinds of entertainments. Accordingly, the anniversary of Artaxerxes his coronation come and all things bestowed in readiness, according to their several ordinance, the king, thinking to do that which he had in mind, commanded one of his privy chamberlains to betake himself to Ariobarzanes and say to him, "Ariobarzanes, the king biddeth thee go thyself carry the white charger, the mace of gold and other the ensigns of the seneschalship unto Darius thine enemy and tell him on the king's part that he is created Seneschal-general."

¹ An inexact quotation. Cicero says (Arch. xi. 26), *Ipsi illi philosophi etiam in illis libellis quos de contemnenda gloria scribunt nomen suum inscribunt*.

² Lit. to give him wing (*dargli dell' ala*), i.e. to avoid him, give him the cold shoulder.

The chamberlain did as it had been enjoined him of the king and Ariobarzanes, hearing this cruel message, was like to die of chagrin, more by token that Darius was the bitterest enemy he had in the world; nevertheless, like a high-hearted man as he was, he nowise failed to approve the greatness of his soul, but with a cheerful countenance said to the chamberlain, "Be it done as it pleaseth my lord; behold, I go at this present to put in execution that which he commandeth me;" and so with all diligence he did then and there. The dinner hour come, Darius served as seneschal and the king having taken his seat, Ariobarzanes with a cheerful aspect seated himself with the other barons at table. Great was the wonderment of all and there were some among the barons who commended the king and other some, according as the usance is of courtiers, who in secret called him ungrateful.

The king still kept his eyes upon Ariobarzanes, marvelling greatly for that he showed himself so blithe of semblance, and certes he accounted him a man of most generous mind. Then, to carry out the design which he had conceived, he began with sour sayings to make known unto all his barons the discontent which possessed him against Ariobarzanes and suborned sundry folk who should diligently spy out that which he said and did. Ariobarzanes, hearing his lord's words and provoked by flatterers who had been lessoned thereunto, whenas he saw that neither did the patience which he showed avail him nor the moderation profit him which he had used in speech, remembering him of his long and faithful service, of the mortal perils whereunto he had so often exposed himself for Artaxerxes, of the courtesies wrought and of other things galore which he had done and suffering himself be overcome of indignation, lost command of his patience and let himself be carried away of the greatness of

his soul, himseeming that, instead of receiving the honour that was his due, he had been blamed and that, in place of the recompense he merited, his office had been taken from him; nay, he went so far as to complain of the king with bitter repinings and to call him ungrateful, a thing accounted among the Persians a capital offence against the royal dignity. He would gladly have departed the court and retired to his castles, but this was not lawful unto him without the knowledge and licence of the king, and his heart suffered him not to crave leave of him.

Meanwhile, all that Ariobarzanes said and did was reported unto Artaxerxes; wherefore, he let call him one day to himself and bespoke him thus, saying, "Ariobarzanes, thy lamentations, scattered broadcast, thy bitter complainings, uttered now here, now there, and thy continual murmurings have by the many windows of my palace penetrated to mine ears and have given me to apprehend a thing of thee which I with difficulty believe. Now I would e'en know from thee that which hath induced thee to bemoan thyself thus; for thou knowest that in Persia to complain of one's king and especially to call him ungrateful is no less a default than to blame the Immortal Gods, inasmuch as our ancient statutes ordain that kings shall be revered even as the Gods, more by token that of all the offences punished by our laws, the sin of ingratitude is that which is most rigorously avenged. Come, then, tell me in what thou hast been wronged by me. For, albeit I am a king, it behoveth me to offend none without reason; else I should deserve to be called, not a king, as I am, but a tyrant, which I would fain never be."

Ariobarzanes, who was full of despite, ensuing withal the greatness of his soul, repeated all that he had said in divers places, complaining sore of the king; whereto the latter replied thus, saying, "Knowest thou, Ariobarzanes, the

cause which moved me (and justly) to deprive thee of the rank and office of seneschal? It was for that thou soughtest to deprive me of mine [own rank and office]. Unto me doth it pertain to be in all my dealings liberal, courteous and magnificent, to use courtesy unto every one, to bind my servants to me by giving them of my good and to reward them, not strictly according to the balance of the works done of them to my service and profit, but still to give them more than that which they have merited. It behoveth me never to keep my hands closed in the matter of worthy works of liberality nor ever show myself weary of giving unto my servants and unto strangers, according as the case requireth; for this is the proper office of every king and of myself in particular. But thou, who art my servant, thou seekest in a thousand ways with thine acts of courtesy,—not to serve me and do that which it behoveth thee do towards me who am thy lord, but by thy works to bind me unto thee with an indissoluble bond and to do on such wise that I shall ever abide under the utmost obligation to thee. Wherefore, tell me, what guerdon could I render thee, what gift could I give thee, what reward could I ever bestow on thee, so I might after be styled therefor liberal, an thou shouldst first have bounden me to thee with thy courtesies? High and magnanimous princes then first begin to love a servant whenas they largesse and exalt him, having still a care that the gift overpass the desert, for otherwise 'twere neither liberality nor courtesy. The conqueror of the world, the great Alexander, having taken a very rich and powerful city, which many of his barons desired to have and which had been sought of him by those who had honourably wearied themselves in arms to gain it and had shed their proper blood there, chose not to give it unto those who by their merits had approved themselves worthy

thereof, but, calling a poor man who was present there by chance, bestowed it upon him, so his magnificence and liberality, being used towards so mean and abject a person, should acquire the greater lustre and the brighter fame ; for that a benefit conferred on such a man cannot be said to proceed from any obligation, but is plainly seen to be sheer liberality, sheer courtesy, sheer magnificence and sheer generosity, proceeding from a lofty and magnanimous heart. Marry, I mean not to say that the faithful servant should not be guerdoned, for that that still behoveth, nay, but I would infer that the reward should still outpass the desert of him who serveth. Wherefore I say to thee that thou, meriting so much as thou meritest every day and seeking, as thou dost without cease, infinitely to oblige me with thy lavish courtesies, renderest me unable to requite thee, on such wise that thou estoppest the way against my liberality. Seest thou not that I am forestalled and prevented by thee in the midward of my wonted course, the which is with gifts to make my servants loving, grateful and beholden to me, giving them daily of my good, and if one of them by his service merit one talent, to give him two or three ? Knowest thou not that, the less the reward is expected by them, so much the rather do I give it them and the gladlier do I advance and honour them ? Apply thyself then, Ariobarzanes, henceforward to live on such sort that thou be known for servant and I reputed for lord, as I am. All princes, in my judgment, seek two things of their servants, to wit, love and fidelity, the which being found, they concern not themselves to look farther. Wherefore whoso seeketh, as thou dost, to vie with me in courtesy will find in the end that I shall bear him little goodwill therefor. And this more I will e'en say to thee that, whenas I will, I warrant me I will take from a servant of mine of his goods and

make them mine and withal I shall both by him and by others who know of it be declared truly courteous and magnanimous ; nor will this be denied of thee ; nay, thou wilt voluntarily confess it whenassoever it occurreth to my mind to do it."

Here the king stinted and Ariobarzanes very reverently, but with an undaunted spirit, replied to him on this wise, saying, "Never, most invincible king, have I sought to outdo or to equal your infinite and inconceivable courtesy with my actions, nay, I have but striven so to do that you, ay, and all the world, should plainly understand that I desire nothing so much as your favour, and God forbid I should ever fall into so great an error as that I should assume to vie with your greatness ! Who is there should seek to despoil the sun of his light ? Meseemed, indeed, and meseemeth yet that not only is it my duty to be a lavish bestower, for your honour and service, of my worldly goods, having had them of you, but that it behoveth me, to boot, for the welfare of your crown, to be not only liberal, but prodigal of this my life. And if it seem to you that I have sought to tilt with you at evens in the matter of magnanimity, you should have considered that I did this the more entirely to have your favour and to the end that you might from day to day incline more and more to love me, meseeming that the aim of every servant should be to seek with all his might the love and favour of his lord. Now, I may indeed, most invincible king, declare against my every belief, an you will have me confess thus, that to have been magnanimous, generous and courteous meriteth blame and chastisement and your disfavour, as hath very manifestly been proven upon me by your dealings ; albeit I am fain to live and die in my (to my thinking) honourable and laudable purpose ; but that a lord of mine, whose duty it is to give me of his good, can,

in taking from me mine own, approve himself liberal and courteous and that this is well done, I will never allow."

The king, hearing these last words, arose and said, "Ariobarzanes, it is presently no time to dispute with thee, for that the discussion and judgment of that which thou hast said and done of me I commit unto the grave consideration of my counsellors, who shall in due season maturely judge the whole, according to the laws and customs of Persia. For the nonce it sufficeth me that I am resolved to show thee by effect that that which thou now deniest is true and thou thyself shalt confess it with thine own lips. Meantime do thou begone to thy castles nor come again to the court, except thou be required of me." Ariobarzanes, hearing this final ordinance of his lord, returned home and betook himself much more than willingly into the country to his castles, glad to find himself no longer all day long under the eyes of his enemies, but full of discontent for the commitment which the king threatened to make to his council of the things said by him. Nevertheless, prepared to suffer every fortune, he went diverting himself with the pleasures of the chase.

He had two daughters, and no more, left him of his wife, who was dead, and both accounted very fair; but the elder was without compare more beautiful than the other and was greater of age than she by a year. The fame of their beauty spread abroad throughout all Persia nor was there any great baron in the land but had gladly allied himself with Ariobarzanes. Whenas the latter had abidden some four months at a castle of his, which pleased him more than the others by reason of the air, which there was perfect, and also because there was very goodly hunting there as well for hounds as for hawks, there came thither one of the king's heralds, who said to him, "Ariobarzanes, the king my master biddeth thee send him to court by me her of thy two daughters who is

fairer than the other." At this commandment, Ariobarzanes, unable to divine the king's intent, revolved divers things in himself concerning the matter and ultimately, in pursuance of a thought which occurred to him, determined to send the younger, who, as hath already been said, was not equal to the elder in beauty. Accordingly he betook himself to the damsel and said to her, "Daughter, the king commandeth me to send him the fairer of my daughters; but, for a reason of mine own, which it skilleth not presently to tell thee, I choose that thou be she who shall go to him ; but have a care (and stablish thyself in this purpose) never to tell him that thou art less fair than thy sister, inasmuch as silence [on this point] will bring thee exceeding great profit and to discover thyself would be to me a cause of irreparable injury, nay, even, belike of bereaving me of life. For the rest, whenas thou shalt know thyself with child, say not a word to any nor make any sign of pregnancy ; but, as soon thou seest thy belly grow great on such wise that it may no longer be hidden, then do thou, as shall seem to thee fittest, give the king to understand that thy sister is much fairer than thou and that thou art the younger."

The damsel, who was intelligent and quick-witted, having heard her father's injunctions and being made cognizant of his design, promised to do as it was enjoined her and accordingly, together with the herald, was escorted to the court by an honourable company. It was an easy matter to deceive the king and the others, for that, albeit the elder was the fairer, there was withal no such great inequality between the two sisters but that, if the younger was not indeed to be evened with the other, she still appeared unto all exceeding fair ; moreover, they were so alike of feature that whoso was not more than commonly conversant with them had not lightly perceived which was the elder, and

Ariobarzanes had, to boot, kept them on such wise that they might rarely be seen. Now the king's wife had died some years before; wherefore he determined to take to wife Ariobarzanes his daughter, who, for all she was not of royal blood, was natheless very noble. Accordingly, having seen her and judged her far fairer than he had apprehended by report, he solemnly espoused her in the presence of his barons and despatched a messenger to Ariobarzanes, bidding him send him the dowry of his daughter whom he had taken to wife. Ariobarzanes, hearing this news and overjoyed at so happy a chance, sent his daughter such dowry as she knew he had publicly engaged to give as well to the one as to the other of the twain. There were many at court who marvelled amain that the king, being already in years, should have taken to wife a girl and especially the daughter of a vassal of his, whom he had banished the court, and others commended him, according to the various usances of courtiers. Yet there was none of them who hit upon the true reason which moved the king to make this alliance, he having done this to make Ariobarzanes confess that, in taking his good, he deserved to be called affable and courteous.

The nuptials having been celebrated with all magnificence, Ariobarzanes sent the king a second dowry, like unto the first, saying that, whenas he appointed unto his daughters the dowry aforesaid, he had done it, looking to marry them to his equals, but, since he, who must needs be out of every exception,¹ was become the husband of one of them, him-seemed behoving to give him a greater dowry than he would have given unto whatsoever other had become his son-in-law. But the king would none of this additional dowry and

¹ Sic (*fuor d'ogni eccezione*).

accounted himself exceeding well paid with the beauty and fashions of his new bride, whom he entertained and honoured as his queen. Meantime, she conceived with child of a son, as after appeared at the bringing-forth, and concealed her pregnancy as best she might; but presently, seeing that, for the swelling of her belly, the thing might no longer be hidden and being very quick-witted and sagacious, she, one day, the king being with her and toying very familiarly with her, put him upon various discourse, in course whereof herseemed she might aptly enough avail to discover to him her case; on such wise that, coming to the purpose, she declared to him that she was not fairer than her sister.¹ The king, hearing this, was sore despited that Ariobarzanes should not have obeyed his commandment and albeit he much loved his wife, natheless, to compass his design, he called the herald, whom he had aforetime sent to demand the damsel, and sent her back by him to her father, bidding him say to him, "Ariobarzanes, since thou hast perceived that our king hath outpassed and overcome thee in generosity, thou hast chosen, instead of courtesy, to use with him malice and disobedience and to send him, of thy two daughters, not her whom I required of thee in his name, but her whom it seemed well to thee to send; a thing in very deed worthy of severest chastisement; wherefore he, no little incensed at such an act, sendeth her home to thee again and will have me bring him the elder; and on like wise I have brought thee back the dowry, all and part, which thou gavest her."

Ariobarzanes received both the damsel and the dowry with a good countenance and said to the herald, "My other

¹ Sic (*ella non era più bella della sorella*). According to what has gone before, we ought to read, "she was *less fair* than her sister" (*ella era meno bella della sorella*).

daughter, whom the king my master seeketh, I cannot presently send with thee, for that she lieth grievously sick in bed, as thou mayst see by coming with me to her chamber ; but I pledge thee my faith that, as soon as she is recovered, I will send her to court." The herald, having seen the damsel, who lay sick abed, returned to the king and told him all ; whereupon he abode satisfied and awaited the end of the matter. Now, the said damsel not recovering so soon [as was looked for], and the time coming of the other's delivery, she gave birth to a goodly boy in health and weal of mother and child, which was a cause of exceeding contentment and of infinite pleasure to Ariobarzanes, more by token that in a few days' time the new-born babe showed so like in his features to the king his father that more might not have been. As soon as the young lady was arisen from childbed, her sister being by this recovered and become fair again as before, Ariobarzanes sent them both to the king, richly clad and under honourable escort, having first lessoned them what they should say and do. When they arrived at court, one of Ariobarzanes his men said to the king, "Mighty prince, behold, here be, not one daughter only, that Ariobarzanes your slave sendeth you, but two, the which are all he hath."

The king, hearing and seeing the liberal courtesy of Ariobarzanes, accepted the whole and said in himself, "Needs must I do on such wise that Ariobarzanes shall with supreme contentment of mind abide overcome of me." Accordingly, ere the messenger who had brought the damsels departed, he sent to a son of his, who was called Cyrus, and said to him, "Son, it is my will that thou espouse to thy wife this damsel, my wife's sister, who is, as thou seest, very fair ;" the which the young man very willingly did. Moreover, the king, having taken his wife again, let call a solemn

festival and would have his son's nuptials celebrated with all manner triumphs and rejoicings to endure for the space of eight days. Ariobarzanes, hearing this good news nor having yet confessed himself outdone, nay, himseeming his design succeeded unto him to a wish, bethought himself to send the king the little son a while before born, who, as hath been said, resembled him as fly resembleth fly.¹ Accordingly, letting make a very goodly cradle of ivory, all counterpaced² with fine gold and adorned with gems of great price, he caused lay the child therein in very fine sheets of silk and gold brocade and let carry him, nurse and all, with a worshipful escort, to the king, at the time of the celebration of the aforesaid nuptials.

Artaxerxes was in a very richly adorned hall, in company of many of his barons, when he, who had it in charge to present the child to the king, caused lay the cradle at his feet and himself fell on his knees before him. The king and all his barons marvelled at this thing and awaited what the messenger should say; whereupon quoth the latter, still holding the cradle, "Most invincible king, on the part of Ariobarzanes my master and your vassal, I humbly kiss your royal hand and with all due reverence present unto you this gift. Ariobarzanes rendereth your highness infinite thanks of the great favour which it hath pleased you to do him, in deigning to ally yourself with him; wherefore, unwilling to show himself ungrateful for such courtesy, he sendeth you by me this gift." With this he uncovered the cradle and showed the lovely child, which was the winsomest thing in the world to see and showed as like unto the king as the half-moon to the other half; whereupon quoth every one, without

¹ Or as we should say, one pea resembleth another.

² *Contrapassata*, i.e. inlaid in compartments, panelled.

waiting to hear otherwhat, "Verily, most august king, this child is yours."

The king could not sate himself with gazing on the boy and such was the pleasure he took in his sight that he said nothing, what while the child, with divers pretty childish motions and toyings of his baby hands, turned oftentimes towards his father with the sweetest smiles. Then, letting call the queen and being by her also certified of the whole, he showed marvellous contentment and joyfully accepting his little son, was like to have avouched himself outdone. However, himseeming he was so far advanced that to draw back would have been a shame and a reproach, he determined yet again to use with Ariobarzanes a courteous magnanimity, by means whereof he should either altogether overcome him or have manifest reason for coming to a mortal feud with him. He had a daughter of twenty to one-and-twenty years of age, very fair and lovesome, as one who had been royally bred and nurtured, whom he had not yet married, reserving her for an alliance with some king or sovereign prince, and her dowry was the value of a thousand [camel-]loads of very fine gold and the revenues of sundry castlewicks, without counting raiment of great price and innumerable jewels which the queen her mother, dying, had left her.

The king, then, casting about for a way of outdoing Ariobarzanes, bethought himself to make him his son-in-law by means of this damsel, albeit himseemed that to condescend unto this was to abase himself no little, for that it is a grievous blot upon a lady of high lineage to take to husband a man of lesser birth; the which betideth not with a man, for a man, though he be most noble, doth not, an he take to wife a woman of meaner lineage than himself, fall thereby from his degree; inasmuch as, an the man be of noble and generous race, he ennobleth her whom he taketh and uplifteth her unto his own

greatness, though she be chosen from amongst the common folk, and the children that are born of her will all be noble, even as their father. But, if a woman, although most noble, marry one inferior to herself and her husband be not noble, the children that are born of the marriage will trace back, not to the mother's stock, but to that of the father and will abide unnoble, such and so great is the worship and authority of the male sex; whence many wise men say that man may be likened to the sun and woman to the moon, forasmuch as we see that the moon of herself shineth not nor could afford aught of splendour to lighten the darkness of the night, except she were illumined of the sun, the which with its vivid flames in due time and place enkindleth the stars and religheneth the moon; and on like wise doth woman depend upon man and from him taketh her nobility.

I say, then, that it seemed to the king he did ill to give his daughter to Ariobarzanes, and he feared to reap blame and reproach thereof, but emulation and the desire to come off the victor in that contest of courtesy outweighed and overcame all other considerations and all fear of shame. Accordingly, he sent to Ariobarzanes, bidding him to court, and he, hearing the king's commandment, came thither and lighted down at his palace that he had in the city; then went straightway to do his reverence to his lord, by whom he was received with a very blithe welcome; nor was it long before the king said to him, "Ariobarzanes, since thou art without a wife, we purpose to give thee one of our own choosing, but such that needs must thou be exceeding well content with her." Ariobarzanes replied that he was ready to do whatsoever he willed; whereupon the king let fetch his daughter, sumptuously arrayed, and there, in the presence of all the court, would have Ariobarzanes espouse her, the which was done with all due

ceremony; but Ariobarzanes showed little joy in this alliance and to all appearance bestowed very few caresses on his bride. All the barons and gentlemen who were present abode amazed to see such condescension on the part of their king, in that he should have taken unto himself a vassal of his to father and son-in-law, and blamed Ariobarzanes infinitely for his ungracious carriage. The latter abode all that day beside himself and what while the whole court was given up to mirth and nought was done but dance and the king himself held high festival for the nuptials of his daughter, he still occupied himself with his thoughts. That same night, after a most sumptuous supper, the king caused escort his daughter with the most ceremonial pomp to Ariobarzanes his lodging and let carry with her her exceeding rich dowry. Ariobarzanes received his bride with great honour and forthright, in the presence of all the barons and lords who had accompanied her, appointed her a dowry as great as that which he had received with her and sent back to the king the thousand loads of gold which he had given him to her portion. This liberality thus practised was to the king the cause at once of such extreme wonderment and of such cruel chagrin that he was in doubt if he should yield to him or doom him to perpetual exile. Himseemed the loftiness of Ariobarzanes his soul was unconquerable and he could not brook with patience that one of his vassals should assume to even himself with his king in matters of courtesy and liberality; wherefore he showed himself sore provoked, still considering in himself what he should do in the matter, and it was easy enough to see his despite and chagrin, inasmuch as he was disordered in countenance and looked graciously on no one.

Now, for that in Persia in those days kings were honoured and revered even as their Gods, there was amongst the

Persians a law that, whenassoever the king should be beyond measure angered, he should discover the occasion of his anger to his counsellors, who presently examined the whole with mature diligence and if they found the king unjustly incensed, they constrained him to be pacified ; but, an they found that he had just cause to be angry, they punished the causer of his choler more or less severely, according to the nature of the offence, now with banishment and now with the capital penalty, and their judgment was accepted without any appeal. The king, indeed, the sentence once pronounced, had power either altogether or in part to abate the penalty and to acquit the culprit, so it might be plainly apprehended that the sentence pronounced by the counsellors was very justice and that the king's pleasure to acquit any was sheer favour and mercy. The king was therefore constrained, by the statutes of the realm, to make known to his council the cause of his displeasure, the which he punctually did, and the councillors, after they had heard the king's reasons, sent for Ariobarzanes, of whom they would fain understand, by mature enquiry, why he had done such and such things. The lords councillors then proceeded to debate upon the question proposed and to vie with one another in searching out the truth of the case and in fine, after long argument, it was adjudged of them that Ariobarzanes should lose his head therefor, as well because he had presumed to even himself with the king, nay, to overpass him, as also because he had shown no joy at having to wife a daughter of his king nor had rendered the latter due thanks for so great a courtesy, it being firmly stablished among the Persians that, whenassoever the servant seeketh to outdo and overpass his lord, in whatsoever act or dealing and however laudable and worthy the action, he should, having regard to the contempt he hath for the kingly majesty, be beheaded therefor, for that he offendeth over-grievously

against his master ; moreover, the better to confirm this their judgment, the said lords councillors avouched that a like sentence had otherwhiles been executed of the Persian kings and recorded in their annals.

The case was thus : the King of Persia had gone to divert himself with many of his barons in the open country and having with him his falcons, proceeded to fly them at divers birds. After a while they started a heron and the king commanded that one of his falcons, which was holden for the best there (for that it was long-winded and soared even to the stars), should be loosed upon the heron ; the which done, the heron began to soar and the falcon to follow him briskly ; but, at the moment when, after many shifts and chances, the falcon was in act to stoop upon the heron and (as they say) to tire him, behold, there appeared an eagle. The valiant falcon, seeing the eagle, disdained to pursue the timid heron longer and making with swift wing for the eagle, assailed it fiercely and strove to bring it to the earth. The eagle defended itself lustily, till at the last the good falcon gripped it by the neck with his terrible talons and severed its head from its body, whereupon it fell to the earth, midmost the king's company. All the barons and gentlemen who were with the king infinitely extolled this feat and held the falcon for one of the best in the world, giving him such praises as themseemed behoved unto so magnanimous an action, on such wise that there was no one there but supremely commended him. The king, for aught that was said of any of the barons or others, spoke not a word, but, withdrawn into himself and absorbed in thought, neither praised the falcon nor blamed him. It was very late when the falcon slew the eagle, wherefore he commanded that all should return to the city. On the morrow the king caused a goldsmith make a very goodly crown of gold of such a form

that it might be set on the falcon's head ; then, whenas him-seemed it was time, he commanded that there should be set up in the market-place of the city a catafalk,¹ hung with cloths and tapestries and other trappings such as are commonly used for the adornment of the like royal monuments. Thither he let carry the falcon, to the sound of trumpets, and there, by commandment of the king, a great baron set upon his head the crown of gold, in guerdon of the admirable victory which he had gotten over the eagle ; after which, behold, there came the headsman, who, taking the crown from the falcon's head, severed it from his neck with the axe. All who were present abode confounded at these contrary effects and all began variously to discourse among themselves of the matter ; but the king, who stood at a window of the palace, watching the whole, caused proclaim silence and spoke thus, so loudly that he might be heard of the spectators, saying, " Let none presume to murmur at that which hath presently been wroughten anent the falcon, for that all hath been done of reason aforethought. I am firmly persuaded that it is the office of every magnanimous prince to take cognizance of virtue and of vice, so he may avail to honour virtuous and laudable actions and punish misdeeds ; otherwise, he should be styled, not a king or a prince, but a perfidious tyrant. Wherefore, having recognized in the dead falcon a certain generosity and greatness of mind, together with an exceeding lustihead, I have chosen to honour and guerdon this with a crown of the finest gold, for that, he having so valiantly slain an eagle, it behoved that such courage and prowess should be rewarded ; but, considering after that audaciously, nay, indeed, with temerity, he assailed

¹ *Catafalco*, i.e. a scaffold for the lying in state of a king or other great personage.

and slew his queen,¹ meseemed meet that he should suffer the due penalty of such wickedness, for that never is it lawful for the servant to imbrue his hands in the blood of his lord. The falcon, having, then, slain his queen and the queen of all the birds, who is there can with reason blame me if I have caused cut off his head? Verily, methinketh, no one." This judgment, then, the lords judges cited, whenas they pronounced sentence upon Ariobarzanes, and in accordance therewith, they decreed that Ariobarzanes for his magnanimity and liberal courtesy should be crowned with a wreath of laurel, so regard might be had to the generosity of his soul; but that, he having with such emulation, such intentness and such assiduous diligence, studied and done his every endeavour to vie with his king and to joust with and overcome him with equal, nay, greater generosity, and cause himself be acknowledged more liberal and magnanimous than he and having, to boot, murmured against him, his head should for this be stricken off.

Ariobarzanes, being advertised of the severe sentence passed upon him, received this empoisoned shaft of fortune with the same greatness of soul wherewith he had suffered the other blows of contrary and adverse fate and demeaned and contained himself on such wise that there was no sign seen in him of melancholy or desperation. This only he said with a cheerful countenance in the presence of many, "This alone was left unto me at the last, that I should be lavish unto my lord of my life and my proper blood; the which I will very willingly do and on such wise that the world shall know I can rather die than fail of my wonted liberality." Accordingly, letting call the notary, he made his testament, (for so the laws of Persia permitted) and

¹ *Aquila* (an eagle) is feminine in Italian.

having thereby increased unto his wife and his daughters their dowries and bequeathed unto his kinsfolk and friends that which seemed fit to him, he left the king great store of very precious jewels and to Cyrus, the king's son and his own son-in-law, besides a goodly sum of monies, he bequeathed all his arms, as well of offence as defence, together with all his horses and harness of war. Ultimately he ordained that, if his wife, who might be with child, should bear a son, the latter should be his universal heir, but that, if she bore a maid-child, she should be dowered equally with his other two daughters and that the residue of his substance should be divided between the three sisters in equal shares; and he also provided that all his servants should be guerdoned according to their degree; all which being, according to the custom of Persia, published the day before that whereon he was to die, it was adjudged of all that never had there been in that country (nor belike in those that neighboured it about) a more liberal and magnanimous man; and if there were some envious folk who had still sought to ruin him with the king, all the others showed themselves sore chagrined that he should die after such a fashion. Now, in the like cases it was not lawful unto any, whosoever they might be, to supplicate the king for the condemned man's life; wherefore the wife and daughters of Ariobarzanes, together with his kinsfolk and friends, abode in the utmost affliction and did nought but weep night and day.

The eighth day come, (for that the condemned man hath so much respite to set his affairs in order,) there was a tribune, all hung with black cloth, set up, by the king's commandment, amiddleward the great place, and overagainst it another covered with purple and silken stuffs, whereas the king, an he would, might sit in the midst of the judges, and the culprit's

sentence having been read, command with his own mouth that the same be executed or, if he would, liberate and absolve the condemned man ; but, if the king choose not to be present at the execution, the eldest of the judges, being possessed of the king's will, speedily carrieth the whole into effect. The king (whom indeed it grieved that so magnanimous a man and one in whom he so much trusted and his own father and son-in-law should have so horrible an end) chose that morning to be present at all, as well to see Ariobarzanes his countenance as also to find a means of saving him. Accordingly, Ariobarzanes was brought by the officers of justice upon the tribune and there splendidly apparelled and crowned with the laurel crown ; then, after a little, he was despoiled of the rich vestments and of the crown and clad in his wonted clothes.

The headsman abode awaiting the ultimate commandment to do his mournful office and had already upreared his trenchant glaive when the king looked Ariobarzanes (who was neither more nor less changed of his [wonted] colour and countenance than as if the thing concerned him not, and yet he might reasonably believe that the headsman was about to strike off his head) fixedly in the face and seeing his proud constancy and unvanquished mind, bespoke him thus, saying, in a loud voice that was heard of all, "Ariobarzanes, as thou must know, it is not I who have doomed thee to death, but thine own ill-ordered actions and the statutes of this realm which have brought thee to this pass ; and for that our sacred laws empower me or in part or altogether, as meseemeth good, to pardon every condemned criminal and restore him to his former favour, I will (so but thou wilt avouch thyself vanquished and deign to take from me thy life, by way of gift,) remit thee thy death and restore thee to thine offices and dignities."

Ariobarzanes, who abode kneeling with bowed head, looking for his head to be stricken off, raised his eyes and turned towards the king; then, bethinking him that it was not so much the king's ill-will as the envy and malice of others and the serpent-tongues of his enemies that had brought him to so dour a pass, he determined to make use of the compassionate generosity and favour of his lord and to abide on life, so he might not give his foes the satisfaction of seeing him die so cruel a death; wherefore, all reverently, but with a steadfast and sonorous voice, he thus replied unto the king, saying, "Most invincible my lord, revered of me even as the Immortal Gods, since of thy mercy thou wouldst have me live, I reverently accept my life of thee by way of gift (though, an I thought to live in thy disfavour, I would not accept it) and altogether avouch myself vanquished. I will, then, abide alive to consecrate unto thine every service the life which thou givest me, that, as a thing received from thy courtesy on loan, I may, for the benefit of thy sacred crown, restore it unto thee whensoever thou shalt will it; and this I will do as willingly as I now take it from thee. And since it hath pleased thee do me so much favour, I would fain, an it be not displeasing unto thee, say here in public that which presently occurreth unto me."

The king signed to him to rise to his feet and say what he would; whereupon he arose and silence being made in the crowd, he began to speak on this wise, saying, "There are two things, most sacred prince, which mostwhiles resemble the fluctuating waters of the sea and the unstableness of the winds, and yet innumerable is the tribe of fools who ensue them with every care and diligence. These two things, so much desired of every one, are princes' favour and ladies' love, and these oftentimes so deceive the loyal servant that in the end he reapeth thereof nought but repentance. To begin

with the matter of women, who, as is commonly said, most-whiles cleave unto their worst,¹ thou mayst see a young man, handsome, noble, rich, accomplished and endowed with many virtues, take a damsel to his sovereign lady and serve and honour her with the self-same fidelity which is due unto the Gods, making her every wish his ; nevertheless, loving, serving and praying his best, he cannot avail to bring himself in favour with his mistress, who, on the contrary, will love another void of every virtue and will make him possessor of herself; nor will she abide long in this case ere, turning away the latter, she will take the former ; but, inconstant and overweening, whenas she shall have exalted him to the stars, she will, moved by natural unstableness, let him fall even to the abyss. And unto whoso shall question her of the reason of this changefulness, she will know not to answer otherwhat than that it so pleaseth her ; whence it seldom chanceth that a true lover can make firm his footing ; nay, he still seeth his life blown this way and that by the fickle wind of womanly caprice. Again, thou mayst see, in the courts of kings and princes, one in such favour with his lord that it seemeth in very deed the latter can do nor say aught without him ; and yet, what while with every care and pains he studieth to maintain and to increase himself in his lord's favour, behold, the latter's mind changeth and turneth unto another and he who was late the first man at court findeth himself in a moment reduced to be the last. Again, there will be another, careful, diligent and assiduous in service, versed in all the practice of the court and far more concerned for his lord's affairs than for his own life ; but he doth all in vain, for that it is never requited him and he seeth himself grow old in service, without getting any return for his pains. A third

¹ *Lor peggiore*, i.e. that which is worst for them.

thou mayst see accomplished in all manner of learning, and yet he dieth of hunger at court, whilst another, ignorant and nothing worth, is, by his lord's caprice and not of his own desert, made very rich, and this happeneth, not because men of truth and learning are displeasing to the prince, for it is seen withal that he favoureth and advanceth many such, but because yonder man's character sorteth not with his own and (as it is said) their humours square not together.¹ How often will it happen that one is by chance encountered of thee, whom thou hast never yet set eyes on, and yet, as soon as thou seest him, he is hateful to thee as the pest and thou canst not anywise brook the sight of him, and the more he seeketh to do thee service and pleasure, the more doth he displease thee? On the other hand, thou shalt see one, whom thou hast on like wise never beheld and who at first sight so satisfieth and contenteth thee and pleaseth thee on such wise that, should he seek of thee thy very life, thou mightest not deny it him, and thou feelest a certain I know not what, which enforceth thee to love him; nay, though he do that which is against thy wish, natheless, all is well. What now may be the cause of these diversities and whether certain humours of the blood, moved by some occult celestial influence, conform one with other, who knoweth? In court matters, indeed, there is some foundation of reason to be found for these changes, to wit, the sharp and venomous pricks of pestiferous envy, which still holdeth the favourites of princes on the balance and in a moment uplifteth him who was alow and abaseth him who was aloft, on such wise that there is in courts no noisomer plague than this same disease of envy. All other vices are eath to heal in whoso hath them, or may with little pains be

¹ Lit. their bloods accord not together (*i sangui non si confanno insieme*).

quelled on such wise that they offend thee not ; but by what means, by what art and with what medicine wilt thou appease envy ? Verily, without thine own hurt, I see not how thou mayst avail to escape its sharp invidious stings. Take a man at court, a proud, self-sufficient, ambitious fellow, more puffed up with conceit than pride itself ; an thou do him reverence, whenas thou seest him, an thou honour and yield to him, an thou laud him to the skies and exalt him and humble thyself to him, straightway he is thy friend and extolleth thee for a wellbred and debonair courtier. Take a lecher, a man who is given to wanton dalliance and craveth no otherwhat than this fugitive pleasure ; an thou hinder him not in his amours, an thou blame not his pleasures, an thou praise him before the ladies, he will still be thy friend. Take a niggard or a glutton ; if thou medicine the former with a dose of monies and bid the latter oftentimes to dine with thee, the one and the other are straightway cured. But take an envious man ; what medicine wilt thou find to purge so pestilent a humour ? An thou wouldst assain this [his disease], needs must thou medicine him with thine own life ; else think not that any remedy may ever be found for him. And who knoweth not, if one infected with this pestiferous disease saw me at court more favoured of thee, most august king, than himself and perceived my services to be more acceptable unto thee or that I was better skilled in the use of arms or had the advantage of him in some other particular, such as might move him to envy me, who, I say, knoweth not that such an one might never be assained, except he saw me deprived of thy favour, expelled from court and cast into uttermost ruin ? Though I should daily give him magnificent gifts, though I should still render him honour, praise him as most I might and do him every service, it were all thrown away. He would never cease to practise against me, till he saw me

brought to ultimate misery; for all other remedies were inadequate and of none effect. This is the venomous disease that impeteth all courts, hindereth all worthy dealings and seeketh to do hurt unto all generous spirits. This is the darkling veil which oftentimes shadoweth the eyes of mankind with such obscurity that it suffereth them not to see the truth and so cloudeth the judgment that it is unapt to discern the just from the unjust, being thus a most manifest cause that a thousand errors are daily committed in human dealings. And to say thereof that which presently pertaineth unto our purpose, there is, in fine, no vice in the world that more marreth courts, more looseneth the bond of holy fellowship nor which bringeth more ruin upon princes than this same poison of envy; for that whoso giveth ear unto the envious, whoso hearkeneth unto their malignant inventions, cannot possibly do any good thing. But, to come now to the end of my discourse, the envious man doth not so much joy in his own well-being or take delight in his own advancement as he still rejoiceth and laugheth at others' ill fortune and bewaileth and sorroweth over their prosperity; nay, to see the two eyes put out of his fellow's head, the envious man would e'en pull out one of his own. These words, most invincible prince, I have been fain to say here in thy presence and in that of thy satraps and people, so all may understand that I had fallen into disfavour in thine eyes not of thine ill will nor of mine own default, but through the venomous tongues of the envious."

Ariobarzanes his most true speech pleased the magnanimous king, and albeit he felt himself touched to the quick by his words, nevertheless, knowing them true and such as might in the future be of profit unto all, he much commended them in every one's presence. Therewithal, Ariobarzanes having received from him his life in gift and

avouched himself vanquished, the king, knowing his worth and loyalty and loving him, as in truth he did, caused him come down from the scaffold and calling him up to his own place, gave him kindly welcome and kissed him, in token that every offence was remitted and pardoned unto him. Moreover, he ordained that all his offices should be restored unto him and to make him yet greater than he was, he gave him the city of Pasargada, where was the sepulchre of Cyrus, and commanded that he should be his lieutenant in all his estates and dominions and that all should obey him as his proper self. Thus the king abode the honoured father and loving son-in-law of Ariobarzanes and still took counsel with him of all his dealings nor did aught of importance without his approval.

Ariobarzanes, being thus restored to his master's favour and having by dint of sheer virtue overcome all his enemies and rent and broken the weapons of envy, became, after his advancement unto such grandeur, yet more royal and benevolent in his dealings and whereas erst he did one courtesy, he now did two; but he displayed his magnanimity on such wise and proceeded with such measure and temperance in his magnificent actions that all the world might clearly discern that he thus lavishly expended and bestowed upon others the goods given him by the king and by fortune, not to vie with his lord, but to honour him and the better to show forth the grandeur of his court; the which until his last day gloriously maintained him in the good graces of his prince, for that the king saw, clearer than the sun, that Ariobarzanes had been fashioned by nature to be a shining mirror of courtesy and generosity and that fire might be sooner deprived of heat and the sun of light than he estopped from the practice of magnificence; wherefore he stinted not to honour him, to exalt and to enrich him more

and more every day, so he might have the better means to give largely. And in truth, albeit these two virtues, courtesy and liberality, well become all and several, and without these a man is not verily a man, yet over all do they beseem rich men and princes and great lords, in whom they show as orient gems in fine and burnished gold or as in a very fair and gracious lady two lovely eyes and two goodly ivory hands, such as, most gracious lady, are your fair eyes and your hands beyond compare most beautiful.

Bandello

to the most affable gentleman Signor L. Scipione
Attellano.

There are some who marvellously delight in making mock of their fellows and who, whenas it betideth them to succeed in putting off some cheat on whosoever it may be, glory therein and hold themselves thereby of great account and mighty quick-witted and clever. Yet, if by chance the counterchange be rendered them, to wit, if they be befooled of others, it happeneth as with buffoons, whom it more displeaseth to be once outwitted than it rejoiceth them for an hundred scurvy tricks aforetime played upon others. So is it with these, who cannot brook that others should make mock of them, albeit themselves would fain never do other-what than cozen these and those. Wherefore meseemeth it is mighty well done an there be whiles rendered them a loaf for their bannock, so that, like as an ass giveth against a wall, such he may receive ;¹ the which was seen of these latter days, whenas the lord Count Antonio Crivello let rehearse his stage-play with so sumptuous an ordinance, a trick having been played upon Calcagnino the juggler, whereupon he fell into such a choler that, had he waxed but a little hotter,

¹ *Acciochè qual asino dà in parete, tal riceva* ; i.e. that he may get as good as he giveth. See my "Decameron of Boccaccio," Vol. I. p. 222, note.

methinketh he had died, albeit, whenassoever he cozeneth any, he laugheth and cracketh and prateth thereof to such a pitch that he often sheddeth tears for excess of laughter. Sundry folk debating one day of this matter and various things being alleged, to see if the origin of such humours might be ascertained, but there being none there who hit upon the true cause, they passed to discourse of other matters and it being devised of the tricks which men and women use oftentimes to play one another, Messer Ottonello Pasini, a learned man and a merry companion, told a story which much pleased all the listeners. This story I have written down and knowing you to be acquainted with the persons who figure therein and whom I have for obvious reasons forborne to name, I have bethought myself to make you a gift thereof, it not being permitted me to certify you with otherwhat how much I desire to do you service, as well because you deserve, for your rare and excellent qualities, to be of all respected and honoured as for the many favours which I have received from you. I warrant you, indeed, that, if the husband of the lady who was so finely cozened were alive, I should not publish this story, for that it might be the occasion of great mischief, putting arms peradventure in the hand of some friend of ours.¹ You will greatly oblige me if [after you have read it,] you will impart it to Seigniors Annibale and Carlo, your brothers, who will, I know, read it with pleasure, and you must also show it to our two Muses, the Countess Cecilia Gallerana and the Lady Camilla Scarampa, who are in truth in this our age two shining lights of the Italian tongue. Fare you well.

¹ *i.e.* embroiling him in a quarrel, forcing him to take up arms in his own defence.

The Third Story.

OF A TRICK PLAYED BY A LADY UPON A
GENTLEMAN AND OF THE TWOFOLD
RETURN HE RENDERETH HER THEREFOR.

It is not many years since there was, in a city of Lombardy, a gentlewoman of good repute and very richly married, who was more fantastical and humoursome than behoved unto a lady of consideration and took marvellous delight in giving the flout unto all. She was used oftentimes to befool this one or that and after laugh at him in company with other ladies, on such wise that none dared pay court to her nor use overmuch familiarity with her, for that she, being malapert and saucy and having the string of her tongue cut, or rather broken,¹ said all that came to her mind, [recking little what], so but she gave each his share, be he who he might, and had a stinging quip for every one. And for that in good sooth it beseemeth not a gentleman to contend with women nor bandy words with them, seeing they should still be respected and honoured of us men, well nigh all eschewed coming overmuch to parley with her, it being notorious how loose-tongued and how caustic she was of speech and that she had no respect for any. Nevertheless, she was beyond measure fair and so well formed in all the parts which make a fair lady and did all after such a

¹ Or, as we should say, "having her tongue well hung."

sprightly fashion and with such elegance and grace that it seemed every act, every gesture and every movement added unto her a certain I know not what, ay, and so goodly an air that she was without peer in all Lombardy. There were some who, not thoroughly knowing the lady's character, set themselves to court her and make love to her; but she, after feeding them awhile with dulcet looks, rid herself of them, now with one trick and now with another, on such wise that the unwary lovers abode woefully befooled. And albeit she was, as I have said, fashious and unlovesome, it pleased her withal to be courted and oftentimes, the better to allure gallants, she feigned to have a mind for the sport and to be enamoured of this one or that; but, ultimately, whenas the maggot bit her, it seemed as she had never known any one of them.

Now it chanced that a rich and very noble youth of the same city, albeit he had heard tell of the tricks played by the lady upon many men and understood her character and humour, seeing her so fair and agreeable and thinking every day, more than it behoved, upon her and her beauties which seemed to him angelical, rather than mortal, fell so cruelly in love with her that he could turn his thought unto nought else and perceived that he was more in another's power than in his own. Wherefore, revolving in himself various thoughts of this his new love and of the lady's fashions, which had been already told him, and waxing now glad and now sad, according as he hoped or despaired, he determined to seek, by every means in his power, to win her favours. Accordingly, he fell to passing often through the street where she dwelt and every day, seeing her at the door, saluted her very lovingly and then, halting, afoot or ahorseback, as the case might be, entered into discourse with her. And although he dared not discover himself to her with

words, algates his eyes and his ardent sighs spoke for him ; wherefore the lady, who was quick-witted and shrewd and immoderately delighted to be courted and who valued herself at her full worth or maybe more, ogled him bytimes out of the tail of her eye and studied little by little to give him to understand that she had compassion upon him.

Now the young man had a sister, who abode near his mistress's house, and for that meseemeth not well, for good reasons, to tell their very names, having already forborne the name of the city, we will call the sister Barbara and the lady herself Eleonora. This Barbara had been left a widow and was in act to rear a little son, her only child and exceeding rich as heir unto her dead husband, who had left her lady and mistress, and the youth, who shall be called Pompeo, was enforced, whenas he went to his sister's house, to pass before that of Eleonora ; the which he reckoned a very great favour [of fortune], more by token that his sister was very intimate with the said Eleonora and they were often in each other's company. He one day took courage to discover unto his mistress all his love, beseeching her to have pity on him and accept him to servant and saying many other things, after the manner of lovers. The lady, who recked not of any man alive, herseeming it were ill done to make mock of Pompeo, for that he was one of the first men of the city, bade him provide himself with another mistress and bespeak her no more of the matter ; but he, nowise abashed for this, persisted in following her and still, whenassoever he had commodity, entered upon discourse of his case, whilst she still showed herself dourer and more contrary to him, whereat he was like to despair.

Matters being at this pass, Pompeo chanced one day to hear that Eleonora's husband was gone into the country, it being towards the end of June, and it occurred to his mind

to go speak with the lady and essay to render her amenable to his amorous desires ; wherefore, without taking overmuch thought thereto, love lending him courage and assurance, he mounted his mule and betook himself with his servants to her house ; where, despatching all his men with the mule to his sister's lodging and bidding them await him there, he entered all alone, it being the hour of none.¹ In this fortune was favourable enough to him, inasmuch as the lady, who slept not at midday, was presently in a ground floor room, overagainst a doorway that gave upon the saloon, and there wrought at certain works of hers in silk. Pompeo accordingly, finding no one in the house, went straight to the saloon and putting in his head, saw the lady, ere he was seen of her, and entering, made towards her. She, raising her head, saw the young man and was all aghast, for that she was alone and all else in the house were asleep ; wherefore, ere he could speak, she said to him, "Alack, Pompeo, what bringeth thee hither alone at this hour ?" He made her due obeisance and answered that, hearing her husband was gone into the country, he had bethought himself to come visit her and abide awhile in discourse with her and that he had entered, without being seen, having first despatched all his people to his sister's house. Then he would have entered upon the subject of his love ; but she interrupted him, saying, "Alack, in what peril do you put your life and mine and on what a hazard² do you set my honour at this moment ! My husband is not gone without the city and cannot tarry long to return home ; for that he did but go out after dinner on a certain occasion and must presently be on his way back. For God's sake, Pompeo,

¹ *i.e.* three o'clock p.m.

² Lit. in what a balance (*balancia*).

an you reck aught of me, an you have any concern for my honour, get you gone, for the heart quaketh in my breast and mescemeth every moment I see my husband."

Scarce had she said these words when she heard her husband speak so loudly in the street that she knew him by the voice, as also did Pompeo; whereat she quaked for fear and Pompeo also was all a-tremble and knew not what to do. The husband halted awhile before the door, to talk with some one, ere he alighted from horseback; and meanwhile she, hastily bethinking herself what she should do,¹ caused Pompeo lie down on a great coffer that stood in the chamber where he had found her; then, with certain clothes which were there she covered him so well that none might espy him and bidding him on no account budge any whit, awoke one of her chamberwomen, who slept in an adjoining closet. Presently, the husband, having dismounted, entered the saloon and Eleonora, putting a good face on the matter, said with an assured voice, "Who is there? Who cometh?" He answered her and entering the chamber, seated himself on the bed and said to her, "Wife mine, I have bought of a poor devil an old sword, the best and finest blade that is in this city; nay, methinketh its like might not be found for many a mile round. I mean to let burnish it somewhat better and fit it with a fine velvet scabbard and after give it to our friend Captain Brusco; for certes none other weapon than this befitteth a man of his fashion." So saying, he let fetch the sword and showing it to his wife, said to her, "Look now if thou sawest ever such a blade."

The lady laughed and answered jestingly, "Faith, I

¹ Or "a sudden idea occurring to her;" lit., "aided by sudden counsel" (*da subito consiglio aiutata*).

have not given much thought to these weapons, for that this is no woman's business and I understand them not, nor should I know what to say of their excellence, save inasmuch as I see them well garnished and gilded, in which case they seem to me goodly. But I know not what you think to do with the arms and the armour you have in your closet ; more by token that with all these your swords and scimitars you would not carve a junket in three strokes. You were better buy otherwhat and spend your monies upon things of more profit." "Yea, forsooth," answered he, "I will buy coifs and gewgaws, such as you buy all day long, for that you women, except you have every day new fashions of headgear, new neckerchiefs and gold-garded housings to your coaches, with two pair of Naples coursers or four great Frieslanders in the shafts, it seemeth you cannot show yourselves abroad." "Ay, ay," rejoined the lady, "you must still missay of women and make war upon them. These toys sit well upon us and are our peculiar appanage ; for, an we dress homely, without seconding our natural beauties with art, you men make mock of us and say that we are ill-scoured, clad hoyden-fashion and fit but to abide in the kitchen ; but, whenas you see some other well tricked out, though she be not fair, so but her face be well plastered and beraddled with the Levant clout,¹ you run after her, as goats after salt. I warrant you I know you by heart, but in matters martial what did you ever ? It would seem, for all the arms you have, that you were the Emperor's captain, and yet I have already told you that you would not carve a junket." "Marry," quoth the husband, "one would say I had arms

¹ *Pezzuolo di Levante*, a cosmetic preparation, the rouge of the 16th century.

of wax or were star-stricken.¹ Cock's faith, I warrant me with this blade I would shear a horse in twain at one stroke, so trenchant and good and fine it is of temper."

The lady smiled and rising to her feet, went to the place where Pompeio lay; then putting her hand on one of her gowns, which was of crimson velvet and under which her lover was hidden, said to her husband, "I have a mind to lay you a good wager that you do not at two strokes cut this gown in twain, here where I have my hand." Now she had her hand upon Pompeio's legs, the humour having suddenly taken her to give her lover a fine fright, and to this end she challenged her husband to try to cut the gown, meaning not withal that the thing should have effect. You may conceive now how it fared with Pompeio, who, hearing what the lady said, abode more dead than alive and was like to discover himself and start up. But, being alone and unarmed withal and knowing that the husband was in the chamber with his servants and still had sword in hand, he was fain to lie still, though so ill at his ease that himseemed he had his head on the block and the headsman over him with the axe, in act to strike. Accordingly, revolving various things in himself and thinking withal that he had so many clothes on him that himseemed it was impossible they should be cut through at one stroke, he abode with a quaking heart, awaiting the issue of Eleonora's whim and covered the while with an ice-cold sweat. Meanwhile, the lady still asked her husband what he would wager that he would cut through her gown; and he, "Wife, I know not what profit it will bring either you or me to mar your clothes; meseemeth 'twere a loss to us both. But let us make the essay on somewhat else and you shall see what a fine temper is that of this sword; there is no razor

¹ Or "palsied" (*assiderato*).

that cutteth so well." "Nay, nay," cried the lady, "let us e'en wager on this gown; if you cut it, I will make you a cassock of the richest three-piled gold brocade, and if you fail of cutting it, you shall give me a gown of white satin." Now she had some revenues of her own from an inheritance which had been left her of an aunt of hers and from which she derived no little profit; wherefore herseemed she might freely wager with her husband.

He, seeing her determined to put the much-extolled sword to the proof, agreed thereto, after some debate, and rising from his seat, with uplifted arm, said, "Wife, tell me where you would have me strike and cut." Now she, as hath been said, had her hand upon the clothes right over Pompeo's legs and raising it, laid it over his thighs and answered, "Cut here, an your heart warrant you of coming off with honour." "Say you in earnest or do you jest with me?" asked the husband. "Nay, by my soul, I will cure you of the humour at one stroke." Quoth she, "I speak in good sooth and as most I may in earnest. But belike you might chance to cut here over easily, but not here withal;" and laid her hand upon her hidden lover's breast, then shifted it amiddleward his neck, saying, "Cut here, where this yellow ribbon is," and still kept her hand on the place. The husband, accordingly, put himself in act to strike and said to his wife, "Stand aside, an you would have me show you what this sword can do, and you shall see a stroke for once."¹ Now there were other gowns under Pompeo and upon him; wherefore she said, laughing, to her husband, "Marry, I believe you are man enough to mar me these gowns! Go to; an you marred them, I know not when I

¹ *Un colpo per una volta*, in modern parlance, "something like a stroke."

should get others. I have no mind for the nonce that you should approve me the strength of your arm upon my clothes."

With these and other words she brought the husband out of the chamber and he, mounting to horse, went a-pleasuring about the city; whereupon she, sending her women upon divers errands about the house, came back and released her wretched lover, who was more dead than alive and had a thousand times cursed the lady, himself and his love. When she had uncovered him, she said to him, smiling, "Come, get you gone about your business and importune me no more with love-matters; for that, whenassoever you dare to come to me at home after this fashion, I will pay you with the like coin and peradventure with worse." Pompeo, taking somewhat of heart, answered her, saying, "Lady mine, blame but the overmuch love which urged me to do this;" then, she suffering him not to multiply words, he departed, all torn with conflicting love and despite, and bethinking him how he might avail to have enjoyment of his love and avenge himself of the lady, there occurred to him a rare device and he awaited but an occasion of putting it in practice. Meanwhile he courted and followed the lady as before, albeit, whenassoever she saw him, she was constrained to laugh, remembering her how she had entreated him.

No great while thereafterward it chanced that Eleonora's husband departed Lombardy and betook himself to Rome. That same day, Pompeo, knowing he was to abide some months, feigned himself sick and let publish throughout the city that his sickness was very grievous; wherefore he abode some days shut in his chamber, having a renowned physician to attend him, who did whatever he wished.¹ Now he had

¹ *i.e.* who was his creature, his devoted friend and accomplice.

also possessed Madam Barbara his sister of his purpose and she accordingly one day invited Madam Eleonora to dine with her, who readily accepted the invitation, for that there was a great privacy between the two ladies. Whilst they were at dinner and in discourse of Pompeo's malady, there came a servingman and said to Mistress Barbara, "Madam, there hath presently betided your brother a strange accident and he hath lost his speech." "Alack," replied she, "let the coach be made ready." Then, Madam Eleonora comforting her and offering to go with her, they left their women to dine at home, whilst they both took coach and letting down the curtains, repaired to Pompeo's house. The latter was abed in a very dark chamber, whither the two ladies betook themselves and his sister, going up to the bed, said to him, "Brother, be of good heart ; here is Madam Eleonora come to visit you." He answered her some unintelligible words in a very weak voice, feigning himself grievously ill, whilst the servants, who had been lessoned what to do, made off and left the two ladies with their master. Presently, Madam Barbara, making a show of doing I know not what, stole slyly out of the chamber and shut the door.

Whenas the wily youth perceived that he had his cruel mistress at his mercy, he sprang out of bed and casting his arms about her neck, said to her, "You are my prisoner." She would fain have escaped from his hands, but struggled in vain, and he, holding her fast the while, opened a window. The lady wept, knowing that it availed her nought to cry out, and complained bitterly of Madam Barbara, styling her disloyal and traitress ; whilst the young man comforted her as best he might with loving words, bidding her set her mind at peace, for that he was altogether resolved to lie with her amorously, nor should she ever win forth of his hands till he had had his will of her and avenged

himself of the cruel and horrible trick which she had played him out of all reason, and added that in this latter particular they would be very different, since he would use no steel. But she would nowise be comforted and being, as she was, proud, froward, headstrong and despitiful, she foamed at the mouth for choler and chagrin and would by no means suffer herself to be quieted; nay, she shed floods of tears and seeing herself in her lover's power, without aid or recourse, was like to go mad.

Pompeo, after suffering her to weep and bemoan herself awhile, took her in his arms and kissing her in her despite again and again on the mouth and breast, began anew to put her in mind of things past, saying, "Mistress mine, you know how long I have been your servant and that there is nothing in the world, how hard soever it might be, which I would not have done for your love. You many a time showed me favour and gave me to understand that you held my service dear, and for that I had commodity neither of time nor of place to discover to you my most fervent love and that through you I was bereft of all peace and all repose, having lost sleep and appetite, I determined to take the opportunity which meseemed I had found, whenas it was told me that your husband was gone into the country. Accordingly, I came, all afire and trembling, to visit you, and you must e'en remember you of the manner in which you entreated me and that which you did [with me] against all equity; or if peradventure your arrogance and pridefulness have put out of your mind the terrible affright which you then caused me, you must not think that I have forgotten it; nay, I have it still at heart and am ever mindful how you (I having nowise merited it) put me in danger of death. Marry, you should not have gone to these extremes with me, but, knowing, as you did, how I loved you, you should, if

my love pleased you not, have given me courteous dismissal, so I might have bestowed my thoughts elsewhere. Now I mean to take of you such vengeance as shall seem to me fit and knowing that you would never have come to my house of your free will, I studied to bring you hither by practice, where being as you are, you will do mighty well to give me that which you cannot withhold from me."

Finally, after much debate, she was constrained to undo herself and go to bed with her lover, where they wrestled sundry times for the fall and still it fell to her to find herself undermost, whilst Pompeo took of her that amorous pleasance which he had so much desired. When they had made an end of their sport, Pompeo opened one of the doors and made the lady enter another chamber very richly arrayed, wherein was a bed that had been fit for the greatest prince, spread with four mattresses of bombast¹ and very fine sheets, all counterpointed in silk and gold. The coverlet was of crimson satin brocaded with gold and fringed about with silk of the same colour, profusely enmingled with gold; whilst at the head were four pillows, wonder-curiously embroidered, and curtains of cloth of gold and cramoizin, laced with bands of precious stuffs, encompassed about the rich bed. The chamber, in lieu of arras, was hung with crimson velvet, masterly wrought, and in the midst thereof was a goodly table, overlaid with a covercloth of Alexandrian silk. Moreover, there might be seen eight very goodly coffers of graven work set round about the chamber and there were four chairs of estate of crimson velvet, whilst divers pictures of Master Lionardo Vinci's limning added marvellous adornment to the place.

Meanwhile Madam Barbara had fetched thither some five-

¹ *Bambagio*, i.e. cotton-wool.

and-twenty young gentlemen of the first families of the city, and Pompeo, being advised of this, caused the lady lie down in the aforesaid bed ; then, covering her with a very rich veil, he scented the chamber with aloes-wood, Cyprus birdlets,¹ musk-balls and other perfumes and drew back the curtains, bidding her make no manner of movement, for aught she should hear. This done, he entered the saloon, richly dressed and all blithe of countenance, and greeted the gentlemen aforesaid with a gracious welcome. He was seen of all with the utmost wonderment, inasmuch as every one held him grievously sick ; wherefore he, noting their astonishment, bespoke them on this wise, saying, "Gentlemen and friends mine, methinketh you must all marvel sore at me, seeing me here whole and sound whom you before believed to be grievously sick. True it is that I have been exceeding ill and in peril of my life ; but I have to-day taken a health-giving medicine, which hath, as you see, made me whole ; and because I know that you were all grieved for my malady, I was fain to gladden you with my presence. Moreover, I will e'en let you see that same health-giving medicine which hath recovered me, so you will all pledge me your faith not to stir for aught that may betide ;" and therewithal he ushered them into the chamber. Themseemed they had entered into Paradise, so goodly was the place and so sweet the fragrance it exhaled.

The lady, who heard the folk enter and maybe knew some kinsman or familiar of hers by the voice, abode all a-tremble, unknowing what Pompeo would do ; and he, after the ordi-

¹ *Angelletti cipriani*. According to the commentators of Boccaccio (see my *Decameron*, Vol. II. p. 142, note) these were a kind of musical instruments attached to beds ; but here they appear to be a kind of perfume.

nance of the chamber had been loudly commended of all, each desiring to see who lay in the bed, said, "In this bed, gentlemen, is the precious and health-giving medicine which hath this day made me whole and which I purpose to show you, but piecemeal." So saying, he, with the aid of a servant of his, softly drew off the coverlet of the bed, taking care not to expose the lady's face, on such wise that she abode uncovered, save with a very thin sheet, which thoroughly hid no part of her dainty and delicate body. Pompeo, then, raising a little of the sheet, discovered two snow-white feet, small and somewhat long, with toes like sheer ivory, slender and long, and nails that seemed of very pearl; nor did he stop there, but tarried not till he had unveiled well nigh all the thighs, at sight whereof the lookers-on felt such an one awaken that slept, and Pompeo asked them how they deemed of that medicine. They all commended it to the utmost and would fain have tasted thereof; whereupon he, hiding with a part of the sheet that which lieth between the thighs, discovered the breast even to the throat, the which was a marvellous joy to the beholders to see, for that, although the whole body was most beauteously fashioned, the breast was wonder-goodly past all belief. They all with incredible delight beheld the well-upreared and snow-white bosom, with its two firm round breasts, that seemed moulded of alabaster, save that, for the lady's trembling, there was visible therein a certain fluttering which was marvellously pleasing to the eye. All looked to see the angelic face; but Pompeo at one stroke recovered the uncovered limbs and brought the gentlemen back into the saloon, where Madame Barbara had prepared a collation of such fruits as the season afforded, together with confections and excellent wines, and they ate and drank, discoursing divers matters the while, and after went their ways.

What while they were thus engaged, Madam Barbara betook herself whereas Madam Eleonora lay yet abed and said to her, "Madam, my brother hath e'en rendered you a loaf for your bannock." The lady prayed her fetch her her clothes, complaining sore of her for that she had betrayed her. Then came Pompeo and saluting her, said to her, "Lady mine, we are quits; algates, reason will have you own yourself in the wrong;" and went on to bespeak her on such wise that at the last he appeased her. Moreover, having tasted of her lover's embraces and found them sweeter than those of her husband, she suffered her choler altogether to pass and wrought on such wise that they long had joyance of their loves; nay, thenceforth she forbore to make mock of any and became exceeding debonair and amiable. Let this, dear my ladies, teach you not to make mock of others, an you would not be mocked with belike a double vengeance.

Bandello

to the most illustrious and excellent lady the Lady
Esabella da Este, Marchioness of Mantua.

Many a time, Madam, since the piteous death of the Countess of Cellant, have I remembered me of that which you said to me, no great while ago, in your most delightful pleasaunce, whenas she was yet the wife of her first husband, our [friend] Signor Erme Visconti, (whom God have in glory), for that he was reputed to be jealous of her, whereof he was much blamed in Milan. He suffered her to frequent scarce any place except the house of Signora Ippolita Sforza e Bentivoglia, where I often saw her and talked with her familiarly. Now I mind me that she, being but a girl and all agog, as girls use to be, for going to balls and merry-makings with the freedom enjoyed by the ladies of Milan, besought the said Signora Ippolita to make interest with her husband so she might have leave to go to a certain place, whither she was expressly invited. Signora Ippolita, accordingly, in my presence, did her errand unto Signor Erme, one day when we three were alone in discourse together. Signor Erme hearkened to the request preferred to him and smilingly answered her thus, saying, "Lady mine, I will not constrain myself for Bandello, knowing how much he is your servant and my friend. You will pardon me an I suffer not my wife to go whereas she wisheth and if I give her not as much liberty as is the usance in Milan, for that, knowing

my filly's trot and pace, meseemeth not well to leave the bridle on her neck. And I pray you of your favour to bespeak me no farther of this, for that I will not have her frequent other-where than in this house, whither she may still come by day and by night, whenas you are here." These words led Signora Ippolita and myself, after he was gone, to discourse amain whence this might arise ; but we could never hit upon the truth. Now, however, the ill-starred lady's woeful end and the life she led after Signor Ernes his death have undeceived all those who deemed her husband jealous ; nay, the wise gentleman was well aware of that which he did and (as he said) knew his hackney's trot. Indeed, Signor Ernes was a very prudent and sage young man and ruled her, what while he lived, on such wise that she was accounted one of the [most] virtuous and most mannerly ladies in Milan. But in this¹ meseemeth he was greatly at fault, for that, being, as you know, one of the first gentlemen of this city and very noble and rich, he should have taken to wife a lady of noble birth and breeding and not one who was nowise equal to him in blood, [such as was she whom he married,] for the sole sake of a fortune wholly made by usury. Whoso would rear blood-horses seeketh out high-bred mares, foaled of good and noble dams. On like wise, for those who delight in the chase, if dogs, of whatsoever kind they be, whether birders or beagles or limehounds, be not of a good breed, they will none of them and examine with diligence what the sire was and what the dam ; and if a bitch of theirs chance to be lined by an ill cur, they cast all the pups into the water. Again, an a man go about to buy cloth or shoes, he will c'en have them of good wool and good leather ; yet in taking a wife nothing is sought nowadays but wealth, albeit more heed

¹ *i.e.* in taking such a woman to wife.

should be taken unto this and it should with greater care be examined who was the father and who the mother than of all the rest. I will not name one of the principal feudatories of Lombardy, who, to have Duke Galeazzo's favour, took to wife the daughter of one of his captains, a woman who was horn-mad; and so well did this match prosper him that the sons he begat on her, for all they were great gentlemen and rich, were natheless all mad and wrought many notable follies, that were belike the cause of the ruin of the family. It being, then, discoursed, no great while ago, of this matter and various things said thereof, Messer Antonio Sabino, a man of good letters and much experience and governor of the young Counts Bolognini, the sons of Count Matteo Attendolo and of the Lady Agnese da Correggio, seigniors of Sant' Angelo, descanted awhile upon this subject, setting out, to the great pleasure of the listeners, all those qualities which should diligently be sought in a marriageable damsel and showing with lively arguments that the last [to be considered] should be the dowry. The talk turning presently upon the particular case of Signora Bianca Maria, I (for that I was in Romagna whenas her end befell) prayed him, for my satisfaction, tell me the story of her most ill-fortuned loves and of her death; the which he, who is still most prompt to comply in all he can with his friends' wishes, punctually (to my seeming) recounted to me. Wherefore, having written it down and added it to my other novels, so it may after be read therewith, I have bethought me to prefix your name thereto and to dedicate it unto you. And so, most illustrious Madam, I send it to you, beseeching you most humbly not to take it ill if in a thing of so little moment I avail myself of your noble and puissant name. Our most debonair Messer Mario can read it to you whiles, whenas the time hangeth heavy on your hands. May the Lord God preserve you!

The Fourth Story.

THE COUNTESS OF CELLANT LETTETH ASSASSINATE THE COUNT OF MASINO AND HATH HER OWN HEAD STRICKEN OFF.

You must know, gentlemen, that Signora Bianca Maria, of whom it hath been spoken, (I say Signora, of respect to the two husbands she had) was of mean birth and lineage little esteemed, her father being Giacomo Scappardone, a man of the common people at Casale in Monferrato. This said Giacomo, turning all he had into money, publicly set himself to lend at usance at exorbitant interest and having begun young to ply this trade, waxed so rich that he bought estates galore and still lending and spending little, amassed exceeding great wealth. He had to wife a Greek damsel, come from Greece with the mother of the Marquess Guglielmo,¹ who was the father of the Duchess of Mantua. She was a very fair and agreeable woman, but very different from her husband in age, for that he was already an old man and she had not overpassed her twentieth year. They had one daughter and no more, who was this said Bianca Maria, of whom I began to speak. The father died and the daughter abode very young, under the governance of her Greek mother, with a fortune in lands and houses of more than an hundred thousand ducats. The girl was

¹ Of Monferrato.

handsome enough, but so sprightly and engaging that none might be more so. When she was from fifteen to sixteen years old, Signor Ermete Visconti, the son of that reverend patrician, Signor Battista, took her to wife and brought her to Milan with exceeding great state and festivity. Ere she entered the city, Signor Francesco, her husband's elder brother, sent to give her a most magnificent coach, all encased and overlaid with gold, having a garniture of three-piled brocade, all slashed and spangled with the finest of broderies and fringes, and drawn by four coursers as white as ermine and exceeding great of price. In this coach she entered Milan in triumph and lived some six years' space with Signor Ermete, at whose death she retired to Casale and there, finding herself rich and free, fell to living very merrily and gallanting it with this man and that.

She was courted and sought in marriage of many, amongst whom the chief were Signor Gismondo, son of Signor Giovanni Gonzaga, and the Count of Cellant, a nobleman of Savoy, who hath his seignory in the Val d'Aosta and there hath many castlewicks with a very goodly revenue. The Marchioness of Monferrato, to pleasure her son-in-law, the Marquess of Mantua, did her every endeavour to marry her to Signor Gismondo and the match was well-nigh concluded; but the Count of Cellant knew so well to court her and so featly to bespeak her of his affairs that they espoused each other and duly consummated the marriage. This was supremely displeasing to the marchioness and she would fain have done Signora Bianca Maria an ill turn; altho', of regard for the count, she dissembled her despite and made no farther motion. The marriage was accordingly published and the nuptials celebrated with an ill augury for that which ensued. And indeed the result fully approved the truth of the current saying that those who take each other for

love leave each other for despite ; for they abode no great while together ere there befell between them the direst discord in the world, on such wise that, whatever might have been the cause thereof, she fled from her husband by stealth and took refuge in Pavia, where she hired a spacious and goodly house and led a life overfree and little honest.

Now Ardizzino Valperga, Count of Masino, and Signor Carlo his brother were at that time in the Emperor's service and the former, chancing to be in Pavia and seeing her, fell enamoured of her and spent the whole day in her house, doing her suit and service and using every art to compass his intent. Albeit a little lame of one foot, he was a handsome youth enough and very well bred, so that in a few days' space he became possessor of the lady and led the merriest life in the world with her for more than a year, so openly that it was the common talk, not only in the city of Pavia, but throughout the whole country. It chanced that Signor Roberto Sanseverino, Count of Gaiazzo, a gallant youth of his person and very well bred, came to Pavia and Signora Bianca Maria, casting her eyes upon him and judging him a better and lustier grindster¹ than her then lover, of whom belike she was weary, determined to beseech him to gallant in the latter's stead. Accordingly, she began to look coldly upon Signor Ardizzino and would fain have denied him farther access to her, by reason whereof they came to high words and the lady, who was more malapert than behoved, taking no thought unto that which had passed between them, proceeded to revile him, not only calling him a hipshotten cripple, but giving him many other injurious words. Ardizzino, who was unfain to carry double,² giving

¹ *Macinatore*.

² *i.e.* was quick to take offence, had no mind to pocket an affront.

the bridle to his choler, called her strumpet and brazenfaced baggage and peasant-wench to her face, on such wise that, whereas there had been a great love between them, there arose a most bitter hatred on the one side and the other. Thereupon Signor Ardizzino departed Pavia and whereas-soever it chanced to be spoken of Signora Bianca Maria, said of her all the ill and all the foul things that could be said of a common gutter-wench; whilst she, to whom the ill her old lover said of her was oftentimes reported, so wrought upon the Count of Gaiazzo that she altogether abandoned herself to him. Then, whenas she thought to have ensnared him after such a fashion that she might dispose of him at her guise, she one day, they being at their amorous play and the count feigning himself all afire for her, besought him of most especial favour that he would cause assassinate Signor Ardizzino, who did nought but missay of her.

The count, hearing this monstrous request, marvelled sore, but answered her that, to pleasure her, he would do not only this, but far greater things and that he was still at her service. On the other hand, seeing the lady's malice and knowing Signor Ardizzino for a most noble person and his friend, from whom he had never received any manner of offence, he determined to seek to do him no harm, more by token that himseemed, on the contrary, Ardizzino had some reason to account himself affronted by him, who had, though unwittingly, ousted him from Signora Bianca Maria's favour; wherefore he studied to give himself a good time with the lady and on this wise he abode some months. But she, seeing that, albeit Signor Ardizzino had been twice or thrice at Pavia, the count had never caused attack him nor sought to have him assassinated, nay, on the contrary, made much of him and had sundry whiles eaten in his company, determined to rid herself of his converse. Accordingly, she

proceeded to feign herself ailing and to suffer herself be no more seen of the count, making now one excuse, now another, and alleging, in particular, that her husband, my lord of Cellant, had sent ambassadors to her to make his peace with her and that she was minded to do everything to return to him ; wherefore she prayed him frequent her no more, so that those who came to Pavia on her husband's part might be able to give a good account of her.

The Count of Gaiazzo, whether he believed this fable or not, made a show at the least of believing it and without more parley, desisted from that his amorous emprise ; nay, to have no occasion of returning thereto, he departed Pavia and went to Milan. Signora Bianca Maria, seeing the count gone and remembering her that she had been more at her ease with Signor Ardizzino, who loved her to excess, reverted from hate to love (or belike I should say rather, she changed humour) and inwardly resolving to return to her sometime amorous disport with the latter, found means to cause bespeak him [on her part] and excuse herself to him, giving him to understand that she was altogether his and evermore purposed so to be, so but it liked himself, and praying him on like wise vouchsafe to be hers in all and for all, even as she was resolved to be eternally his. Things passed on such wise that Signor Ardizzino returned to the dance and retaking possession of Signora Bianca Maria's charms, was with her day and night.

They abode together many days, until the lady took it into her head to let kill the Count of Gaiazzo, though, if any questioned her of the reason, I misdoubt me sore she had not known to find any, save that, being a woman of little understanding, to whom the greatest wickedness seemed nothing, she would have alleged her own disorderly and most iniquitous appetites, whereby, without any shadow of reason,

I will not say governed, but madly driven, she ultimately brought both herself and others to a miserable end, as you shall hear, if you will hearken to me. Having fallen into this humour and herseeming she might not live merry, what while the Count of Gaiazzo abode on life, nor knowing how to compass her intent, except she might procure Signor Ardizzino to be her minister, she, one night, what time they were abed together and engaged in amorous dalliance, said to him, "These some days past, my lord, I have had it in mind to ask you a boon, which I would fain have you not deny me." Quoth her lover, "I am ready to do all you shall command me, how difficult soever the thing may be, so but it be in my power to achieve it." Whereupon, "Tell me," asked she, "is not the Count of Gaiazzo your friend?" "Certes," replied he, "I believe he is my very good friend; nay, I love him as a brother and know that he loveth me and that, inasmuch as he might, he would do me every pleasure, even as I would him. But why do you ask me this?" "I will tell you," rejoined the lady and kissing him amorously some half a dozen times, went on to say, "You are grievously deceived, my life, for I am firmly persuaded that you have in him the greatest enemy in the world; and [you shall] hear how I know it, so you may not think this a mere imagination. What while he frequented me, we came once, how I know not, to discourse of you and he swore to me that he should never rest content an he let not one day plant a poisoned dagger in your breast and that he hoped shortly to do you such a turn that you should eat no more bread. And many other ill words he bespoke me of you, but the cause that moved him to this he would never discover unto me, albeit I besought him most urgently thereof. Al gates, angered as I was against you, I stinted not for that to beseech him desist from so foul an emprise; but he answered

me angrily that he was resolved to do it and bade me bespeak him of otherwhat. Wherefore be you on your guard against him and go heedfully, taking thought unto your affairs. But, an you will be ruled by me, I would counsel you how you might have no fear of him nor of his bravadoes; I would e'en make the first move in the game and that which he seeketh to do to you, I would do unto him. Marry, you have it in your power to turn the tables on him and so doing, you will still be commended and holden of more account. Believe me, an you forestall him not, he will not slumber; nay, but one day, when you have no thought thereof, he will cause kill you. Do as I counsel you and have him killed as quickliest you may, for that, besides doing your behoof and the office of a gentleman, in assuring your own life, which must needs be dear to you, you will do me also one of the most notable pleasures can presently be done me. Nay, if you choose not to do it on your own account, do it for the love of me, for that, though you should give me a city, the gift were not so dear to me as to see yonder babbler¹ dead; so, if you love me, as methinketh you do, you will rid the world of this overweening braggart, who regardeth neither God nor man."

The lady might have succeeded in persuading Signor Ardizzino of the truth of this her fable, had she not ended by discovering to him her inward affect, so that he judged her to be moved by some privy hate she bore the count, rather than by concern for himself, and held it for certain that the latter had never broached a word to her of such a matter. Nevertheless, he feigned to set great store by her warning and rendered her infinite thanks therefor, promising

¹ Lit. stuttrer, tongue-tied fellow, (*scilinguato*), but the context calls for the contrary epithet.

to conform to her sage counsel. But he had no thought of ensuing it; nay, he had it in mind to go to Milan and bespeak the count thereof; and so he did, for that, being in Milan and taking his opportunity, he sought out Signor Roberto and punctually discovered to him all that had passed between himself and his mistress. The count made the sign of the cross and answered, all full of wonderment, saying, "Alack, shameless strumpet that she is! Were it not that it can do a gentleman no honour to imbrue his hands in the blood of a woman and especially of an infamous trull such as she, I would tear her tongue out at her nape; but first I would make her confess how many a time she hath besought me with clasped hands to have you assassinated." And so discovering one to other the foul machinations of that vile woman, their eyes were opened to her malignity; wherefore they said of her all the ill that may be said of a wicked and shameless whore and recounted her villanies both in public and in private, making her the byword of the folk.

She, hearing what the two gentlemen said of her, feigned not to reck of it, but was inwardly all a-foam for despite and could think of nought but how she might most signally avenge herself thereof; wherefore she came by-and-by to Milan and hiring Signora Daria Boeta's house, established herself there. Now there was presently in Milan a Sicilian called Don Pietro di Cardona, who, for that he was a bastard son of the Count of Collisano, (him who fell in the battle of La Bicocca,¹) had the governance of Don Artale's company,² his legitimate brother. He was a

¹ The great battle of the 29th April, 1522, in which the French Marshal Lautrec was routed by the Imperialists, under Prospero Colonna.

² Or, in modern parlance, his "contingent."

young man of two-and-twenty years of age, swart-faced and melancholy of aspect, but well proportioned of his body, and seeing Signora Bianca Maria one day, fell passionately in love with her. She, knowing him and judging him a new-fledged squab¹ and an apt tool unto that which she so ardently desired, showed him a smiling favour and cajoled him as most she might, the better to ensnare and hoodwink him; wherefore he, having never yet had to do with a woman of quality and esteeming her one of the first ladies of Milan, was all consumed for love of her. Brief, she had him one night to lie with her and gave him a most loving welcome; then, feigning herself drunken with love of him, she lavished so many caresses on him and showed him such complaisance by way of amorous dalliance that he accounted himself the most fortunate lover in the world and thinking of nought but her, so entirely surrendered himself to her subjection that she, no great while after, having led up to the point with certain discourse of her fashion, besought the young man of especial favour that he should cast about to kill the Count of Gaiazzo and Signor Ardizzino.

Don Pietro, who saw but by his mistress's eyes, unhesitatingly promised to do it and used no delay in the matter, but determined to begin with Signor Ardizzino, who was presently in Milan, and accordingly, setting a watch upon him, learned that he was to sup abroad one evening; whereupon, it being wintertime, whenas folk use to sup late, he took five-and-twenty of his men-at-arms, all armed cap-a-pie, and awaited the gentleman's return. Now there is, as you know, a vaulted way leading on the left hand from the Contrada de' Meravigli to the Corso di San Giacomo.

¹ *Piccione di prima piuma.*

Pietro, knowing that Signor Ardizzino must pass there, ambushed himself with his men in a little neighbouring house and being presently advertised by his scouts of the count's coming, in company with Signor Carlo his brother, he disposed his men on such wise as to encompass them about and hem them in under the vault, where they showed fight. But what could two young men, with eight or nine serving-men, having nought but their swords, avail against so many men all clad in mail and armed with pikes and halberds? The mellay was brief, for the two ill-fortuned brothers were [quickly] slain, with well-nigh all their serving-men.

The Duke of Bourbon, who, having fled from France, was presently in Milan in the Emperor's name,¹ let lay hands that same night on Don Pietro and clap him in prison; whereupon he confessed to have done this by commandment of his mistress Signora Bianca Maria. She, knowing her lover taken and having leisure to flee, forbore (I know not why) to do so, and the Duke of Bourbon, having heard Don Pietro's confession, sent to take the lady, who, like a ninny, caused carry with her a coffer, wherein were fifteen thousand gold crowns, thinking by her arts to win forth of prison. A hand was lent to Don Pietro and he was helped to escape from prison; but she, having with her own lips confirmed her lover's confession, was condemned to have her head stricken off. The unhappy young woman, hearing the sentence and knowing not that Don Pietro had made his escape, could not resign herself to die; but, being carried into the ravelin of the castle, that looketh towards the Piazza, and seeing the block, she fell to weeping desperately and to entreating, for pity's sake, an they would have her

¹ *i.e.* who was then governor of the city for the Emperor.

die content, that they should suffer her see her lover ; but she spoke to deaf ears, and so the poor wretch was beheaded. Such, then, was the end of her unbridled appetite and whoso would fain behold her countenance limned from the quick, let him go to the great Convent Church and he shall see her there depicted.

Bandello

to the very worshipful seignior Signor Cesare Fieramosca, Lieutenant of the most illustrious Signor Prospero Colonna.

We have in Lombardy a proverb which is very often cited, to wit, that the wolf casteth his coat, but not his vice. And for that proverbs are words approved, needs must they most-whiles be true ; wherefore, when a man is seen to be grown old in an usance, whether it be good or ill, it may commonly be held certain that he will die therein. A man of worth may sin, and in fact doth whiles sin, but, being not inured unto evil, he with the aid of God's mercy becometh sensible of his error and repenting, returneth into the right way. Again, froward and wicked men, who have waxed hardened in ill-doing, are seen bytimes to do good and virtuous actions ; but they persevere not long therein ; nay, they soon return to their evil living ; for that, whenas a man, by dint of long and frequent practice, hath contracted habitude and usance in a thing, this same habitude and usance may uneath be done away. It being no great while agoe discoursed of this matter, at the house of the most noble Signor Galeazzo Sforza, Lord of Pesaro, who was then at Milan, and in the presence of the most illustrious lady the Lady Ginevra Bentivoglia, his consort, and the talk turning upon an old man who, having entertained a concubine more than twenty years, refused to

renounce her on his death-bed, the worshipful Messer Paolo Taeggio, Doctor of laws, related an extraordinary circumstance befallen in Milan, which made all who heard it marvel infinitely. Certes, the case is worthy of wonderment and pity, and were it not mingled with things sacred, it would to boot be exceeding laughable ; wherefore, to add number unto my novels, meseemed well to write it down and to dedicate it to your name, knowing as I do that you will no little marvel thereat, you who are exceeding punctilious in things sacred, as I have whiles proved. May it please you also suffer our pleasant friend, Gian Tommaso Tucca, read it, recalling to him the story of Il Rammarro, which you yourself wrote, whenas you were with the men-at-arms at Finale in the Ferrarese. Fare you well.

The Fifth Story.

PORCELLIO OF ROME DIVERTETH HIMSELF
BY MAKING MOCK OF THE FRIAR WHO
CONFESSETH HIM.

Messer Dionisio Corio, a gentleman of this city of high consideration and ancient family, used very readily, whenas he was in company, to divert the listeners with some story or other. He was a very goodly speaker and still had some fine thing in hand ; wherefore, when Signor Alfonso Visconti celebrated his nuptials with the Lady Antonia Gonzaga, I, being of the bidden guests, remember me that he related, amongst others, a story of a case betided at Milan, the which, for that it is to the purpose of the matter whereof you were presently in discourse, it pleaseth me to tell you. You

must know, then, that Francesco Sforza, who by force of arms acquired unto himself the Duchy of Milan, was in things military a man without doubt to be evened with whatsoever illustrious and ancient Roman; and albeit he was unlettered, having been reared from his tenderest years under the victorious captain Sforza Attendolo, his father, nevertheless, he still loved learned men, in whatsoever kind, and gave them great stipends.

Among many whom he thus entertained at Milan and elsewhere was one Porcellio,¹ a Roman poet, who, though born and bred at Naples, would fain be styled a Roman. He was a very good poet for those times, whenas polite letters, which had been so many hundreds of years buried, began to raise their heads and put on new polish; and whoso would fain see somewhat of his fashion, let him go to the palace that pertained erst to the famous Count Gasparo Vimercato, where he will see, in the saloons and chambers, at foot of sundry paintings, store of epigrams of his on various subjects, which bear witness to the vivacity of his wit; but his excellence in letters and the lustre of his muse were far overpassed by the many and enormous vices which abounded in him, whereof it was one of the most signal that kids' flesh still pleased him far more than whatsoever other meat might be given him, on such wise that it was his supreme delight to go on pattens through the dry.² Algates, to abate the ill opinion in which he was commonly holden at court, more than for any mind he had thereto, and urged to boot by Duke Francesco, who would fain have him use himself to other diet, he took to wife a widow of eight-and-twenty, whom the duke let give him and who

¹ A famous epigrammist and historian of the fifteenth century.

² See my "Decameron of Boccaccio," Vol. II. p. 231 *et al.*

had a goodly dower. The lady, who was a very well-bred person, soon perceived that her husband was loath to go ashipboard through the wet,¹ but, being a good-natured woman and hoping that he would in time change his usance, she resigned herself thereto as best she might, praying God all day long that He would vouchsafe to enlighten her husband's mind and turn him from so abominable a sin.

Presently, Porcellio fell most grievously sick, so that the physicians had scant hope of the poor old man's life, he having lost sleep and appetite, more by token that he was nearer seventy than threescore and was grown very feeble. His wife, seeing this, strove with a thousand excellent arguments to bring him to confess, and he hearkened to her, but after said that he would not do it; wherefore, seeing she wearied herself in vain, she sent to Duke Francesco, humbly beseeching him for the love of God to send some person of authority, who should persuade Porcellio, grievously sick as he was, to have some care of his soul, so he might not die like a dog, without the sacraments of the Church. The duke, hearing the pious petition of this good woman and affectionate wife, sent to the Convent delle Grazie² of the Friars of St. Dominick, which was then newly built, and letting call Fra Giacomo da Sesti, an old man of very holy life, informed him of that which he would have him do. The holy man, hearing the duke's will, betook himself straightway to Porcellio's house, where telling the lady how he came by the prince's commandment to visit and confess her husband, he was received by her with the utmost reverence. Then, after she had caused him sit, she proceeded fully to acquaint him with the depravity of her

¹ See my "Decameron of Boccaccio," *loc. cit.*

² *Santa Maria delle Grazie.*

husband's life, beseeching him with tears in her eyes to do his utmost endeavour to bring him to amendment. The friar shrugged his shoulders and had little mind to the task, but replied that, not to fail of his duty, he would do everything that was possible to him.

Accordingly, anxious to save a soul, which, according to his wife, was in the hands of the devil, he entered Porcellio's chamber and said, "The peace of God be upon this house and upon all those who dwell therein!" So saying, he went up to the bed and softly saluted the sick man, who feigned himself well-pleased to see him. Then, entering into various converse with him, he gave him to understand how the duke's most excellent lordship had sent him and wherefore and bespoke him with many good words, discreetly exhorting him to confess, for that he was ready to hear him at whatsoever time might be convenient to him. Porcellio, after he had thanked the duke for his courtesy and the friar for his pains, replied that he would confess then and there; whereupon, all having departed the chamber, the holy friar began with the utmost diligence to do his office and coming to the sins of the flesh, asked him shamefastly if he had ever sinned against nature. At this question, Porcellio, collecting himself,¹ considered the friar with amazement; then, as he were scandalized, "Sir," said he, "this is a strange question to ask me. Of what speak you? Never in my life have I sinned against nature."

¹ *In se raccolto*, which may also be rendered, "withdrawing into himself," as if he were struck speechless of amazement, and this is perhaps the better reading. The passage offers an example (one out of thousands) of the obscurity into which the Italian writers of the Middle Ages and Renaissance were led by their passion for imitating Latin concision.

The priest, ashamed to have put such a question to him, passed to other things, using every pains in his power so the sick man should confess himself throughly; then, seeing that Porcellio had no otherwhat to say, he assigned him such penance as he thought fit and gave him absolution, concluding that the goodwife must be grossly mistaken. When he had shriven him and bestowed on him a pious exhortation, he said to him, being about to take his leave, "Messer Porcellio, I will come to-morrow to visit you and if you remember otherwhat, I will hear you; and after order shall be taken that your parish-priest shall come and give you the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, to the end that, having taken the salutary viaticum, you may abide in readiness to do whatsoever shall please our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose hand abideth our life and our death." "I prithee do it," replied Porcellio, "for I will do whatsoever you shall command me;" whereupon the good father blessed him with the sign of the holy cross and departed the chamber.

The wife came to meet him and asked him if her husband was resolved to sin no more against nature; to which the holy friar courteously replied, "Madam, you may conceive that, when we hear the confession of any one, whosoever he may be and whether he be whole or sick, we do our whole duty, and it pertaineth not unto any to seek to know that which the penitent saith, nor doth it beseeem us, who are of our superiors deputed to hear confessions, anywise to discover aught which may be told us; nay, an we should reveal a confession, we should deserve to be put to death. But so much I will and may presently say to you, that you are grossly mistaken in the strange opinion you have of your husband. He (praised be God) hath nowise that filthy vice whereof you bespoke me, nay, he is very far therefrom." Whereupon the good woman, who well knew how the case

stood, said, weeping piteously, "Dear my father, I am nowise mistaken nor do I deceive myself; nay, my wretched husband it is who deceiveth himself and is ashamed to tell this frightful sin. Believe me, who know it, he is more wrapped up therein than is a chick in tow. For mercy's sake, father, come speak with him again and have no heed to that which he saith, for I assure you he hath told you a lie." "It is well, madam," answered the good friar; "I shall return hither to-morrow to cause him take the sacrament and if it be as you say, I will do that which behoveth unto me." So saying, he took leave of the lady and returned to his convent.

Next morning, he came to the sick man and said to him, after exchanging salutations with him, "My son, I am come back, so thou mayst this morning receive Our Saviour, as every true Christian should do; but, before so doing, the communicant must, in so far as human frailty comporteth, prepare his mind to the worthy harbourage of such a guest; wherefore it behoveth him to have entirely confessed himself of all his sins and to conceal nothing whatsoever from the priest. Thou toldest me yesterday that thou hadst nought other to say to me, but I am credibly advised that thou hast for shamefastness kept silence of a sin which is in thee. Now it skilleth not to do thus, for, hadst thou crucified Christ and didst heartily repent and confess thee thereof, He abideth yonder, nailed upon the cross, with open arms, and is still ready (so thou but will it) to pardon thee. Wherefore, my son, tell me freely thine every sin and like as thou thoughtst no shame to commit it, even so be thou not ashamed to confess it. Art thou before the judge of the criminal court, that thou shouldst tremble for thy life? Fear not, but tell me all as it standeth." "Father," replied Porcellio, "I thoroughly confessed myself yesterday and unto all the questions which

you put to me I answered the sheer truth ; algates, an you have any doubt, speak and I will quickly resolve you thereof." Thereupon the friar, full of jealousy for the sinner's welfare, said to him, "Son, it hath been affirmed to me that thou art guilty of the sin against nature ; nay, I am told that thou art a passing great offender in this respect ; wherefore, an it be so, it behoveth thee tell it me and repent thee of so abominable a vice, steadfastly purposing nevermore to commit it. An thou confess thee thereof, I will absolve thee therefrom ; else wilt thou go into Lucifer's mouth,¹ amongst the insupportable torments of hell."

Porcellio appeared somewhat provoked at these words and answered as in choler, "Sir, meseemeth you are another,² for that this which you say to me is not true, and whoso avoucheth me guilty against nature knoweth not what he saith ; nay, he lieth. In this matter you should credit me and not others ; none knoweth mine own affairs better than myself." The holy father, hearing this and knowing that it behoveth a confessor credit the penitent of that which he saith as well in his own favour as against himself, replied to him on this wise, saying, "Son, I have done my duty, according as God of His goodness inspireth me. Thou wouldst do well to send to the priest of the parish to bring thee the sacrament of the altar, for that I bespoke him thereof, as I came hither, and he awaiteth." Accordingly,

¹ Dante places Judas Iscariot, Brutus and Cassius, as the three greatest criminals of history, each in one of the mouths of his triple-headed Lucifer at the deepest deep of hell. See Canto xxiv. of the *Inferno*. Hence it is common with Boccaccio and writers of his school, who are supersaturated with Dante's ideas and style of thought and expression, to consign to Lucifer's mouth such as they consider criminals of a particularly heinous cast.

² *i.e.* a sinner, in accusing him falsely.

they sent thither and the wife, seeing that the friar had abidden a good while with the sick man and understanding, to boot, that the parish-priest was coming, concluded that her husband had confessed everything. Whilst they awaited the Sacrament, the friar abode in discourse of pious things with Porcellio, who presently said to him, "I know not nor do I wish to know who it may be hath defamed me to you by accusing me of the sin against nature, which was never in me; may God pardon him!" Here he fell to affirming to the friar with oaths that a lie had been told him and called all the saints of heaven to witness of his innocence, corroborating his words with the most solemn adjurations in the world.

The good father, seeing him near unto death, could not imagine that he said otherwhat than the truth, and the priest being come, poor Porcellio received the holy sacrament and to all appearance, showed great contrition; whereat his wife was exceeding rejoiced, thinking to have saved her husband's soul. Accordingly, the friar presently taking leave, the lady accompanied him to the door, thanking him heartily for the pious office he had done her husband and beseeching him to pray God that Porcellio might abide in that his mind and return no more to his vomit. The friar mildly rebuked her, saying, "Madam, you are over-obstinate and sin in deeming ill of your husband touching that whereof he is not guilty and in impeaching him, as you do, of so shameful a vice. This is not well, nor should one do thus." The lady, hearing this, stayed the friar, who would fain have departed the house, and bespoke him thus, saying, "Father, I would not have you depart displeased with me, who have done nought to merit your displeasure, and still less would I have my husband die like a brute-beast; nay, if he have, as he hath until this present, lived worse than animals without reason, I would e'en, an it be possible, have him die as all

good Christians should. That which I told you of him you must not think, indeed, that I said for jealousy or of some slight suspicion that betided me of him, for I were loath to commit myself so lightly ; but I have seen all with these two eyes ; nor (woe is me !) am I alone in this ; nay, all in the house will render you witness thereof. As if I had not an hundred times made a great outcry thereanent ! And I assure you he would not have ventured to deny it in my presence. Wherefore, father mine, take no heed to any denial he may make thereof, but, for God's sake, return to his chamber and endeavour to pluck him out of the Devil's clutches."

The holy man abode aghast at this and returning to Porcellio, said to him, "Alack, son, I know not what to think of thee ; thou deniest to me to have committed the sin against nature, wherewith thou art more burthened than as thou haddest Milan Cathedral on thy shoulders, and yet I am assured that thou art a thousand times fairer unto boys than are goats to salt." Whereupon Porcellio shook his head and said as loudliest he might, "Ho, ho, reverend father, you knew not how to question me. To divert myself with boys is more natural to me than eating and drinking to man, and you asked me if I sinned against nature ! Go to, sir, you know not what a tidbit is." The holy friar, stricken all aghast with this diabolical speech, shrugged his shoulders and looking upon Porcellio awhile with horror and amazement, as he were some frightful monster, said, sighing, "Woe's me, Lord God, I have let cast Christ into a fiery furnace."¹ Therewith he departed and meeting the lady, as he went, said to her, "Madam, I have done what I might."

¹ Referring to the Eucharist, which he had been the means of administering to Porcellio.

Meanwhile Porcellio called lustily for his wife, who ran hastily to her husband's chamber; whereupon quoth that ribald and wicked man to her, "Wife, let fetch me a bucket of water and tarry not." She asked what he would with it and he, "I would fain quench the fire about Christ, for yonder jackass of a friar telleth me I have cast him into a furnace," and told her all that passed; whereat she was grieved well nigh unto death. Porcellio presently began to amend and recovered of his sickness; whereupon, the thing being bruited abroad at court and about Milan, he was pointed at of all with the finger of scorn and was constrained to keep his house, and we may suppose that, like as he had lived as a beast, even so he died the death of a brute. To conclude, then, it may well be said that the wolf casteth his coat, but not his vice.

Bandello

to the illustrious lady the Lady Camilla Gonzaga
Marchioness of La Tripalda.

It was time, indeed, that I should receive from you at the least one reply to my three letters which I have written you since you departed Lombardy and went into the kingdom of Naples ; and I promise you, by that reverence which I have still borne you, that I had determined in myself to make an end of my writing and to send you no more of my letters, not indeed that I have put on the great master or have waxed prideful or that I no longer esteem you as erst I did or fail to recognize the divine gifts which are in you ; nay, but I had resolved upon this, so I might not weary you or become irksome to you. And what else could I have imagined, knowing that you had had my letters and seeing no tittle of your handwriting in so many days. Bethink yourself that, whenas you were at Casalmaggiore with your lady mother and I at Cremona, you wrote to me at the least twice a week. Now, praised be God, I have received your letter all full of courtesy, with so apt and feat an excusation of your tardiness in writing that I hold myself excellent well satisfied of you ; and to tell you the truth, an I thought still to have, for three of my letters, one so long and so goodly of yours, I should write you half a score every week. Wherefore, if I have complained of you to Signor Federico and Signor Pirro,

my lords and your brothers, and to my lady your mother, I heartily avow myself at fault, not in having complained unto them, for that therein I did aright, but in having been so slow to do it ; for, had I cried out sooner, they would the sooner have chidden you by letter, as they have done, and I should many days ago have tasted the exceeding great pleasure which I presently enjoy. Enough ; if [in the future] you be negligent in answering me, I shall know how to order myself, having so good a scourge at hand, wherewithal to make you sensible of my grievances. However, I purpose not at this present to reply, point by point, to your most sweet letter, reserving myself against the coming of Gabriel farmer, whom Signor Pirro is to send to Naples within the next eight or ten days, but will only address myself to that part where you bid me send you one of my novels ; wherefore, our friend Messer Giacomo Cappel having been here at Gazuolo, whither I came some ten days ago, and having told a story, which I straightway wrote down, I have transcribed it and send it to you by the present courier, having presently by me neither novels nor verses of mine own. Meknoweth well I have no need to bid you take it blithely or hold it dear, knowing that all my trifles have still been very pleasing to you ; nay, I would have you remember that which you said thereanent to her most illustrious ladyship of Mantua, whenas you were a-pleasuring with her. It remaineth for me only to assure you once more that I am as much yours as ever I was and that neither distance nor lapse of time will ever abate my affection, still less my reverence, for you. Fare you well.

The Sixth Story.

BALDWIN OF FLANDERS TAKETH JUDITH OF FRANCE AT SEA AND ESPOUSETH HER FOR HIS WIFE.

It was a very ancient usance of the Kings of France to send one of their vassals, or whoso was most a-gree to them, to govern the land of Flanders, which said governor they dubbed "the Forester"; for that, whenas that country first began to be inhabited, it was all full of very great and thick forests, albeit it was in course of time peopled and cultivated on such wise and became so civilized and frequented that it is presently a goodly and famous province and an exceeding mercantile. It chanced then that Charles, surnamed the Bald, Emperor of Rome and son of Louis le Debonnaire (who was also Roman Emperor), being King of France,¹ it chanced, I say, that at the court of the said [Charles the] Bald there was a certain Baldwin, son of Andacer, Forester [of Flanders], a very valiant and worthy man, goodly and accomplished of his person as whatsoever other courtier there and dear to the king and all his court. He being an assiduous frequenter of the court, his good fortune (which then began to favour him, so it might uplift him on high) ordained that he should fall so mightily enamoured

¹ A.D. 823-77.

of the king's daughter that he thought day and night of no otherwhat than to gain her favour. Wherefore, availing not neither knowing to live without her sweet and beloved sight, he wrought on such wise that the princess, who was called Judith, began on like wise to open her bosom to the amorous flames and to love him out of all measure; whereof Baldwin, who kept not his wit nor his eyes in his poke,¹ becoming aware, accounted himself the luckiest and most fortunate lover in the world and altogether addressed himself to joust and tilt and do all such things as he deemed good to maintain and augment her love. Moreover, whenasoever he spoke with her, (which, of the much converse and privacy that is used in that country, was very often,) he was nowise wanting unto himself, but studied with the goodliest fashions and the aptest words he knew to make known to her how sore he burned with love of her rare beauties and discreet manners. She showed herself nowise coy, but certified him that she was no less consumed and undone than he of the flames of love and desired no otherwhat than to find a fitting means how they might be together.

Their loves, then, being at this pass, news came to the king that Andacer the Forester, Baldwin's father, was dead; whereat Baldwin was exceeding afflicted and abode sore disordered. Now, it behoving the king to send one into Flanders for the governance of those parts, he came, after due consideration of the parts and fashions of all his barons and courtiers, to the conclusion that there was none who might better avail to administer such an office than Baldwin, more by token that he knew his father to have been supremely beloved and revered of all the Flemings, so that himseemed

¹ lit. hose (*calze*).

his memory must needs be of great service to the son. Accordingly, having come to this decision and imparted it to his councillors, all of whom commended his intent, he let call Baldwin to himself and said to him, "My friend, how much thy father's death hath grieved me, I might uneath avail to say and thou to credit. In him I have lost, not only a most faithful servant, the which is still noyous and grievous, but also a governor of Flanders, a province whose importance thou knowest. Thy father governed it on such wise and bore himself so featly towards the Flemings that themseemeth by his death they have lost, not a judge and a governor, but a tender and dear father; wherefore it seemeth good unto my council and to me to give thee this office of Forester, of our assurance that thou wilt, to the profit of the crown and for the conservation of these peoples, know how to imitate thy father and honourably to govern thyself on such wise that the Flemings and myself may abide exceeding well content with thee. Thus thy father's death should grieve thee less, since thou wilt have succeeded him in the office and dignity which he held, nor will it be so grievous unto myself, meseeming I have not lost Andacer, but have found another and maybe a better. On like wise the people will abide satisfied, themseeming, what while thou rulest over them, they are yet governed by thy father, so much beloved of them. Do thou, then, take order with thyself, so thou mayst go thither, whenas I shall ordain it thee; and touching the governance, there occurreth to me no otherwhat to say to thee than that thou ensue the steps and usances of thy father, for that, so doing, thou wilt be a just and an excellent governor." Now Baldwin was of his nature mighty liberal and had spent very lavishly upon liveries and amorous inventions, clothing his serving-men in the colours given him by the fair Judith; wherefore the king bade one of his treasurers give him ten

thousand francs, so he might the better avail to provide himself.

Baldwin, as best and aptliest he knew and might, thanked the king for the good opinion he had of him and for the gracious proof thereof which he was pleased to vouchsafe him and with all due reverence instantly besought him that he would, an it were possible, be pleased to commit so great an emprise unto some more experienced person, alleging his youth and lack of conversance with the affairs of such an office and excusing himself no less from receiving the money, whereof he prayed his majesty avail himself for other uses; but the king would accept no excuse that he could make and was altogether resolved that this government should be his and that he should take the money. The news spread straightway throughout the court and coming to Judith's ears, rendered her beyond measure woeful, for that her thought she should never see her lover more, it being the usage that the governors of Flanders should very seldom and only of urgent necessity go forth their province; wherefore she was full of exceeding chagrin and might not be comforted; and her secret dolour was the greater that it behoved her keep it hidden, lest she should make the folk aware of her fervent love.

On the other hand, the enamoured Baldwin, who set more store by a kind look or a soft word from his mistress than by all the Flanders and all the governments in the world, abode on like wise in the utmost affliction; for that, the more duty and reason would have him rejoice in the favour of his king and in so honourable an advancement, the more did his amorous appetite sadden him, knowing himself like to be bereft of her sight whom he loved with an infinite love. Accordingly, he abode exceeding ill content and made sore complaint of his departure, on such wise that all the court

marvelled infinitely to see him so melancholy, themseeming he should rather rejoice therein, as having, young as he was, attained to a dignity which the first barons of France had more than willingly accepted, for that, besides the honour, which was very great, the profit and advantage arising from such an office might not be reckoned; and being questioned by sundry folk of the cause of his chagrin, he answered that it was none otherwhat than that he knew himself insufficient unto such an emprise. Judith herself was likewise sore concerned therefor, but dared not, as hath been said, discover that which she hid within her breast; albeit indeed she made bitter complaint thereof to Baldwin, whenas they spoke in secret, whilst he excused himself for that he could do no otherwise, but vowed that he would always be her servant nor ever love another woman. There were, indeed, some at court who judged Baldwin to be in love, yet never hit upon the truth of the case, for that the two lovers had so discreetly ordered their amours that there was none who suspected Judith to be she whom Baldwin affected; and what caused her especial pain was that needs must she bytimes exhort her lover to obey the king.

The day came when he, having taken leave of the king, should depart, the which was such a heartbreak unto Judith that she sickened and abode some days grievously disordered, none of the physicians who tended her knowing what ailed her; although, had Erasistratos and Theombrotos¹ been there, it may be they would lightly have recognized her ailment, for of a certainty she was all afire with very fervent love, having never tasted that ultimate fruit which is so desired

¹ Celebrated Greek physicians of præ-Christian times. Erasistratos is credited with the invention of the method of discovering the secret cause of a love-sickness described by Boccaccio in the Decameron, Day II. Story 8, see my translation, Vol. I. pp. 208-10.

of lovers. I will not now tarry to recount that which the two lovers said to each other at parting and how many tears and sighs they shed and heaved. Suffice it that Baldwin, having taken leave of her by night at a window, set out and betook himself into Flanders, where, for the sake of his father's memory, he was honourably received of the inhabitants and thereupon proceeded, ensuing in Andacer's steps, to govern them with such sagacity and so discreetly to demean himself towards these and those, according to their several qualities and conditions, that he speedily endeared himself unto all; but neither honours nor grandeurs nor profit that he might have availed, I will not say, to quench his most fervent love, but even to abate its ardour in any least particular.

Whatwhile he abode thus, it befell that Ethelwulf, King of England,¹ coming from Rome, passed through France and to him King Charles promised Judith his daughter to wife. The princess, sore against her wish, was enforced spitefully to do her father's will, and accordingly being married to Ethelwulf, she accompanied her husband into England and there abode with him some six months, at the end of which time he fell sick and died; whereof she sent her father advice, beseeching him to send for her, for that she would fain return to France. On the other hand, she equipped a trusty messenger and despatched him in all diligence to Baldwin, to whom she wrote how she was shortly to take ship for France and that now would it be seen if he loved her as much as he said and gave him clearly to understand what she would have him do. When Baldwin heard this that his lady wrote and sent to him to do, his heart was fired to such a pitch of ardour that he was ready, without any whit of fear, to address himself to whatsoever parlous venture and

¹ *i.e.* Ethelwulf, King of Wessex, A.D. 836-58.

accordingly wrote and sent again to her, saying that he would presently show her that he loved her far more than his proper life, betide thereof what might. Therewithal he despatched the messenger back into England and dismissing him, said to him, "Go and commend me to thine and my mistress and tell her that I am ready to do whatsoever she enjoineeth me. I know well that all the world will hold me disloyal to my king, who hath so honoured and exalted me and all men will blame me; but what can I do, if my lady and Love, who can far more than the emperor and than myself, thus will and thus command me? Needs must I obey my lady and Love and I will do it, for I could nowise come to worse of my life than that wherein I presently am." The messenger departed with this letter and message and returned to Judith, who, hearing her lover's resolution, was mightily rejoiced.

Meanwhile, Baldwin applied himself to arm sundry ships and to order all that which he deemed needful for the achievement of the emprise which he had it in mind to essay, but all as most secretly he might, so none might divine his intent; to which end, there being then in Flanders¹ certain Genoese galleys, he privily engaged with the masters thereof and paid them largely, so he might after avail himself of their aid in his time of need. Moreover, he still entertained spies in England, so he might have intelligence of his mistress's departure, and awaited nought but this, himseeming an hour was a thousand years till he should come to the event, with a most assured hope of gaining his lady whom he so loved. Things being at this pass, King Charles, misdoubting him of nothing which might hinder his daughter's return to France, concerned himself only to provide for her honourable

¹ *i.e.* in the Flemish ports.

passage, with such a train as behoved unto the daughter of an emperor and the widow of an English king; wherefore he despatched a company of prelates and barons to fetch her, having with them gentlewomen and ladies of high rank. The French lords and their ship arrived in England, unhindered of the winds, and there found the queen in readiness to depart, and with her certain English lords and ladies, who had engaged with her to accompany her into France. Accordingly, no great while after, they all, French and English, embarked, in company with the queen and the other ladies, in two ships and giving their sails to the wind, put out to sea.

Meanwhile, Baldwin, being punctually advertised of all that had passed, set sail with his galleys and other vessels, all exceeding well furnished in every particular, and having taken on board many men of mettle and practised in naval battle, he steered for a certain place, where he was advised the queen would pass, and there lying to, awaited her coming. Nor did the event belie his expectation, for he had not abidden there overlong when he espied the two ships afar off, which, having but little wind, sailed very slowly. When he saw this, he embarked in a little boat and went from ship to ship, exhorting his men to fight valiantly, albeit he might assure them that they would meet with no manner of resistance from the two French ships, which they saw come sailing very slowly and well nigh without wind, nor would find any to offer them the least opposition, for that there were no fighting-men aboard. Moreover, he had distributed about the galleys and other his ships some of his trustiest men, who being cognizant of his purpose, went promising great guerdons to all who should fight lustily, as it behoved to come to blows. Then, order having been taken for everything, Baldwin, as captain of

the armament, caused head all his vessels' prows full upon the two ships, which abode well nigh without wind and in a manner becalmed; and accordingly they in a little while so encompassed these latter about and hemmed them in that the French and English abode all astonished, seeing a fleet so well in point and full of armed men ready for battle cry out¹ against them, "To arms, to arms!" Being on the instant summoned to strike their sails and yield themselves prisoners, an they would not be slaughtered without mercy and thrown into the sea to feed the fishes, the French enquired who was he that commanded the fleet, so they might know with whom they had to do.

Baldwin thereupon came forward and mounting the poop-castle of that one of his vessels which was nearest to the ships, said in a loud voice, "Sirs, I am Baldwin, Forester of Flanders, who am come hither to assail you and make you all prisoners; wherefore do you either yield yourselves for taken or stand upon your defence; for that you may nowise escape." The French gentlemen replied to him, saying that aboard those their ships was the daughter of their king and his, whom they were carrying back to France, the King of England being, as he must know, dead and having left Madam Judith a widow; whereupon quoth Baldwin to them, "My lords, you are greatly mistaken an you think me come hither to attack you, corsair-wise, to enrich myself and despoil you of your gear, or, as a barbarous assassin, to imbrue my hands in human gore. I desire neither purpose the one thing or the other; I have not bestirred myself nor fitted out this armament with so many valiant men as you see here upon any such venture; but, not to keep you in suspense and to declare to you my mind, you

¹ Sic (*un' armata gridar*, etc.)

must understand that Love alone it is that hath caused me take up arms and he alone in this emprise leadeth and counselleth and governeth me and teacheth me that which should be done of me. Love is my pilot, Love is the commander and captain by whose favour I trust to compass the desired end of my intent. That, then, which I go seeking with such pains and which I mean to have of you is my lady, Queen Judith, whom, having taken aboard in England, you are presently escorting into France with these ships. If you will give her up to me peacefully and without opposition, you shall be no otherwise molested in aught nor shall so much as a single stiver's worth be taken from you, and you shall be free to go whereas it most liketh you. Wherefore I counsel you for your good to give her to me, since you plainly perceive that you may nowise avail to hinder me from taking her. But, an you be unwise enough to offer me resistance and to deny her to me without battle, address yourselves unto defence and fight as stoutliest you may, for I certify you and plight you such troth as I have in the world that I mean not anywise to depart, without having the said Madam Judith in my power. Choose, then, which course seemeth to you most to the purpose; you have before you war and likewise peace; take that which most pleaseth you."

Now there were in the queen's company certain French barons, friends and familiars of Baldwin, who, knowing him and hearing that which he said unto all, abode full of wonder and astonishment and said to him, "Alack, my lord Forester, what words are these of yours? What is your intent? Have you lost your wit? Is this the fealty you owe to your king? Is this the homage you do him? Think you he will leave so heinous a treason without due chastisement?" They would have said more, but Baldwin cut short their words and said

to them with a haughty air, "Or do you give me my lady or take up arms to forbid her unto me." They, knowing themselves ill equipped for battle and having taken counsel together, let bring forward the lady and telling her what the Forester sought, asked her what she purposed to do; whereupon quoth she blithely, "As for me, an he will have me to wife, I will have him to husband, and when you come before the king my father, do ye tell him that he, having no regard to my youth, for that I had not yet overpassed my nineteenth year, gave me to husband one who had three sons by his first wife, whereof the youngest, who is here with me, is older than I. Now, King Ethelwulf being dead, I have provided myself and whilst I was yet in England, I took to husband my lord the Forester, whose age and quality, together with the love he beareth me, are well worthy of me; wherefore, I having written to him that he should without fail come to take me, he taketh me as his and I still purpose to be his."

If the French had before been confounded at Baldwin's speech, they presently abode stupefied, hearing the lady, who was, in the presence of all, espoused of her lover; and the latter, beyond measure rejoiced for the new treasure he had gotten, carried his wife aboard the galleys, with her paraphernalia and such of her damsels as chose to follow her. He after invited all the gentlemen aboard to land in Flanders and honour the princess's nuptials [with their presence]; but they went their ways into France and Baldwin, returning to Flanders, there celebrated his marriage with the utmost magnificence. King Charles, hearing this news, was sore incensed and thought to wage war upon Baldwin, but was constrained to turn his arms against the Italian levies and to march against his own nephews, Charles le Gros and his

brother,¹ who had levied a great army to oust him from the Roman empery and to ensue the war which their father² had already commenced; wherefore he made peace with Baldwin and advanced him from Forester to be Count of Flanders, investing him with that dignity for himself and his descendants and assigning him Flanders to the dowry of Madam Judith his daughter. Thereupon Baldwin levied a multitude of Flemings and despatched them to the aid of his father-in-law, who crossed the Alps into Italy and being overthrown by his nephews in a pitched battle on the plains of Verona, took refuge in our city of Mantua, where he fell grievously sick for chagrin of the defeat. Now he had a Jewish physician called Zedekiah, whom he still carried with him and who, being bribed by the king's nephews, poisoned him in a dose of medicine, whereof he died.

Baldwin, hearing of his father-in-law's death, knew so well to order himself with his wife's brother Louis le Bègue, who succeeded him in the kingdom of France, that he abode in peaceable possession of Flanders and lived long and happily with his beloved Judith, by whom he had many children, whose lineage hath endured many and many years. Of his race was another Baldwin, Count of Flanders, who, for his goodly fashions and warlike prowess, (he being a man of surpassing excellence in matters military), was in the year of our salvation one thousand two hundred and two created, at the election of many Christian princes, Emperor of Constantinople. Such, then, was

¹ Carloman.

² Louis II. of Germany, Charles's brother and rival in claiming the imperial crown.

the issue of the loves of Baldwin and Judith, though peradventure, had not a war been presently set afoot against King Charles, they had had another ending ; nor, because his audacity and hardihood stood him in good stead, must this be set up for an exemplar nor should men thereby adventure themselves to do the like affronts unto their lords.

Bandello

to the most illustrious and reverend seignior the lord
Cardinal Pirro Gonzaga.

If in our times, right worshipful my lord, that care and diligence were used which was long practised among the Greeks and Romans, in writing down everything that befell deserving of remembrance, I firmly believe that our age would be found no less worthy to be praised than those bygone ages, which writers so laud and extol; for, were we fain to range over the field of painting and sculpture, if our painters and sculptors are not to be preferred before those so much renowned of antiquity, yet will they be found at the least equal to them; nor, methinketh, in the matter of polite letters, should the orators, the poets, the philosophers and other the writers of our time anywise concede unto those of old days, whether Latin or Greek, that they are unable to compare with them. When was the military art in greater esteem than it is at this present? Certes, if Alexander the Great, Pyrrhus, Hannibal and Philopoemen, Quintus Fabius Maximus, those thunderbolts of war the Scipios, Marcellus, Pompey the Great, Caesar and so many other famous heroes were alive and saw our modern fashion of making war and that which is done with sulphur, saltpetre and charcoal, they would abide astonished and would yield to many of our captains; ay, and they would see in the private soldier

as much spirit, as much skill and as much valiance as in him of their own day. But the evil is that in our days there is none who delighteth to write that which betideth day by day, whence we lose many goodly and acute sayings and many noble and memorable actions abide buried in the sombre abysm of oblivion. And yet every day there befall the goodliest things, worthy to be consecrated to the remembrance of posterity ; whereof I will presently select one befallen of late years at Gazuolo. This story,—I being come to pay my respects to my noble friend Signor Pirro Gonzaga, your uncle, and it being discoursed of the various chances which betide,—the said Signor Pirro bade my worthy gossip, Messer Gian Matteo Olivo, who is half a poet, tell. You yourself were present, when my gossip told it, and said that, had it befallen in ancient times, we should have seen Giulia of Gazuolo no less celebrated and renowned in song than was the famous Lucretia of Rome, except that the former was of over-mean birth. Now, in putting together my novels, I have chosen that that which I then wrote down should be seen armed among the others with your princely and illustrious name, so you may know I am mindful of you. And how indeed could I be otherwise, you having still loved me and honoured me beyond my desert ? But I would fain have other occasion present itself to me than that of [the publication of] a novel to make known to you the heartfelt gratitude I bear you and the sincerity of the devotion I have vowed to you and to all your most illustrious house, by reason of the many favours and honours which I have received and yet daily receive [from you and them]. Fare you well.

The Seventh Story.

GIULIA OF GAZUOLO, BEING DEFLOWERED BY FORCE, CASTETH HERSELF INTO THE OGLIO AND SO DIETH.

Our lord Signor Pirro, Marquess of Gonzaga and Seignior of Gazuolo, which latter town you see yonder, situate upon the banks of the Oglio, overagainst the Po, and which hath by long succession been the appanage of his house, will have me, most gracious seignior and you, courteous gentlemen, relate to you the memorable circumstance of the death of one Giulia of that place, which befell no great while ago. The said most illustrious lord is much better able than I to tell you how the thing happened ; and there be many here also who would have satisfied you as well as I in this matter and punctually related the whole ; but since it is his pleasure that I be the teller, I am willing and bounden to obey him. It irketh me indeed that I am unapt to commend the generous and virile spirit of Giulia as the rare deed done of her meriteth. You must know, then, that, what while the most illustrious and reverend Monsignor Lodovico Gonzaga, Bishop of Mantua, sojourned here in Gazuolo, he still entertained a most worshipful court of many and worthy gentlemen, as became one who delighted in men of merit and spent very lavishly. In those days there was a damsel of the age of seventeen, called

Giulia, the daughter of a very poor and humbly born man of these parts, who had none other means of gaining a livelihood for himself and for his wife and two daughters (he had no more) than by labouring and toiling all day long with his hands. The wife also, who was a good woman, applied to earn somewhat by spinning and doing other like womanly offices. This Giulia was very fair and endowed with pleasing manners and much more sprightly and engaging than behoved unto so mean an extraction and was used to go a-field, now with her mother and now with other women, to dig and do other handiwork, according as need required. I mind me that one day, being with the most excellent Madam Antonia Bauzia, the mother of these our most illustrious seigniors, on the way to San Bartolommeo, we encountered the said Giulia, who might then have been some fifteen years old and who was returning home all alone, with a basket on her head. The princess, seeing so fair a damsel, caused stop the coach and asked her whose daughter she was. She replied respectfully, telling her father's name, and answered the princess's enquiries so much to the purpose that it seemed she had not been born and bred in a cottage and under a roof of thatch, but had lived all her life at court, insomuch that Madam told me she had a mind to take her into the house and rear her with her other damsels, and why she forbore to carry out her purpose I cannot now tell you.

To return, then, to Giulia, you must know that she never wasted her time on working days, but still wrought, whether alone or in company; albeit on holidays, as is the custom of the country, she went to dance after dinner with the other girls and took her pleasure modestly. It chanced one day, whenas she was about seventeen years old, that one of the aforesaid Lord Bishop's chamberlains, who was a Ferrarese

by birth, cast a lickerish eye upon her, seeing her dance, and himseeming she was e'en the lovesomest and fairest damsel he had seen for many a day and such that, as it hath been said, she appeared to have been reared in the courtliest houses, he fell so madly enamoured of her that he could turn his thought to nothing else. The dance, which had seemed very long to the chamberlain, being ended and another tune struck up, he invited her to dance and footed a galliard with her, a measure which she danced passing well and so justly in time that it was an exceeding pleasure to watch her and see how gracefully she moved. The chamberlain danced with her again and again and would, but for shame, have engrossed her for every dance, himseeming, whenas he held her by the hand, he felt the greatest pleasure he had ever known, more by token that, although she toiled all day long, she had a white hand, taper and very soft.

The wretched lover, thus suddenly enkindled by her beauty and fair fashions, thought, by looking upon her, to quench the newborn flames which miserably consumed him, but little by little, without perceiving it, made them greater, adding fuel to the fire at every glance. During the second and the third dance which he danced with her, he bespoke her with store of words and sweet speeches, after the wont of new-enkindled lovers; but she still answered him discreetly, bidding him not bespeak her of love, for that it besemed not a poor maid, such as she, to lend ear unto such toys, nor could the importunate Ferrarese get of her otherwhat. The dance ended, he followed her, to learn where she lodged, and found occasion, sundry whiles after, both in Gazuolo and elsewhere, to bespeak her and discover to her his most fervent love, still studying to convince her with his speech and to warm her ice-cold breast. But, for all he said to her, she was never anywhit stirred from her chaste purpose, nay,

she instantly besought him to leave her be and harass her no more. But the wretched lover, whose heart was cruelly fretted by the worm of loveliking, the harsher, the more obdurate and the more recalcitrant she showed herself, the more inflamed did he become, the hotlier did he pursue her and the harder did he labour to render her amenable to his wishes, albeit all in vain.

He caused bespeak her by an old woman, who seemed a very saint and did her office very diligently, studying with her flattering prate to debauch the chaste Giulia's constant mind; but the damsel was so well stablished [in honesty] that never a word the rascally old woman said to her might avail to penetrate her heart. The Ferrarese, understanding this, was the woofullest man alive, yet could not bring himself to think of leaving her and still hoped by dint of prayers and service and love and perseverance to mollify his mistress's cruel hardness, himseeming impossible he should not in the long run obtain her; but, as is commonly said, he reckoned without his host. Seeing that she daily showed herself more obdurate and that, whenas she saw him, she shunned him as he were a basilisk, he bethought himself to prove if gifts might not accomplish that which words and assiduity had failed to achieve, reserving force unto the last; wherefore he again bespoke the wicked old woman and gave her sundry trinkets of no great value, to carry on his part to Giulia. The beldam went and finding Giulia at home and alone, would have entered upon discourse of the Ferrarese, showing her the gifts he sent her; but the virtuous damsel, taking the trinkets, cast them all into the public way and turned the treacherous old crone out of doors, telling her that, if she ever again said a word to her, she would go up to the Citadel and tell it to Madam Antonia. The old woman, taking up the trinkets, returned

to the Ferrarese and told him that it was impossible to move the girl and that she knew not what more to do with her in the matter, whereat he was chagrined beyond the power of speech to tell and would gladly have withdrawn from the emprise, but that, whenas he thought of renouncing her, he felt himself like to die. In the end, the poor passion-blinded wretch, unable longer to brook his mistress's rigour, resolved, should a favourable occasion present itself, to take of her by main force, come thereof what might, that which she would not give him of her free will.

There was at court a serving-man of the Lord Bishop's, who was a great friend of the Ferrarese; nay, if I remember aright, he also was of Ferrara. To him the chamberlain discovered his ardent love and all the pains he had taken to inform the girl's heart with some little compassion, but that she had still shown herself harder and more inexorable than a rock of the sea and that he had never been able to move her, either by words or with gifts. "Now," said he, "seeing I may not live, an I content not my desire and knowing how much thou lovest me, I prithee take my part and help me to accomplish my wishes. She goeth oftentimes alone into the country and there, the corn being presently pretty high, we may avail to do our intent." The other without hesitation promised to stand by him and do all that he might wish; and the chamberlain, keeping close watch upon that which she did, heard one day that she was gone out of Gazuolo all alone.

Accordingly, calling his friend, he repaired with him whereas she did I know not what in a certain field, and began, as he was used, to entreat her to have pity on him. She, seeing herself alone, besought the young man to give her no more annoy and misdoubting her of some harm, made off towards Gazuolo. The chamberlain, unwilling to

let his prey escape him, made as he would fain bear her company with his friend and stinted not tenderly to beseech her, with humble, loving words, that she would have compassion of his pain ; but she, without replying to aught that he said, betook herself homeward in all haste and so they came presently to a great field of corn, which it behoved them cross. It was the last day but one of May and might be well-nigh noontide ; the sun was, according to the season, exceeding hot and the field far removed from any habitation. Whenas they came amiddleward the field, the youth cast his arms about Giulia's neck and offered to kiss her ; whereupon she cried out for help and would have fled, but was taken and thrown to the ground by the lackey, who forthright clapped a gag into her mouth, so she might not avail to cry out ; then both, taking her up, carried her by main force some distance from the path which traversed the field and there, the lackey holding her hands the while, the desperate youth deflowered the damsel, who was gagged and could make no resistance.

The wretched girl wept bitterly and with sobs and sighs showed her inexpressible chagrin ; but the cruel lover a second time, in her despite, lay with her amorously and took of her his fill of pleasure. Then he let ungag her and sought to comfort her with many loving words, promising her that he would never abandon her and that he would help her to marry, so that all should go well with her ; but she answered him nothing, save to entreat him loose her and let her go home, weeping bitterly the while. The chamberlain essayed anew to soothe her with soft words and lavish promises and would then and there have given her money ; but it was all spoken to deaf ears, for the more he strove to comfort her, the more piteously she wept, and seeing that he multiplied words upon her, "Young man," quoth she, "thou hast

done thine every will of me and hast sated upon me thy wanton appetite; I prithee, for pity's sake, loose me now and let me go. Let that suffice thee which thou hast done, for indeed it hath been overmuch." The lover, fearing lest, for the piteous lament she made, he should be discovered and seeing he wearied himself in vain, determined to leave her and accordingly made off with his friend. Giulia, having bitterly bewept her violated virginity awhile, readjusted her disordered headdress and drying her eyes as best she might, returned in haste to Gazuolo. Neither her father nor her mother was at home, but only for the nonce a sister of hers of some ten to eleven years of age, who, being somewhat ailing, had been unable to go abroad.

As soon as she came into the house, she opened a press, where she kept her trinkets and gear, and putting off all the clothes she had on her body, took a clean white shift and did it on. Then she donned her gown of fine bocasin,¹ white as snow, and a colleret of white embroidered lawn, with an apron of the same, which she was only used to wear on holidays. Moreover, she put on a pair of stockings of white silk and red shoes and dressed her head as quaintliest she might, winding a necklace of yellow amber about her neck; brief, she busked herself with the finest things she possessed, as she would fain go flaunt it on the notablist holiday of Gazuolo. Then, calling her sister, she gave her whatsoever else she had; after which she took her by the hand and locking the door, betook herself to the house of a neighbour of theirs, a woman sore stricken in years, who was grievously sick abed. To the good woman, weeping the while, she related the whole story of her misfortune and said to her, "God forbid that I should

¹ *Boccaccino*, a kind of fine linen stuff or buckram (old meaning).

abide on life, since I have lost that honour which was all I had to live for ! Never shall any point at me with the finger of scorn or say to my face, 'Vonder is a pretty girl who is become a whore and hath disgraced her family ; had she sense, she would hide herself.' I would not have it cast in the teeth of any of my kinsfolk that I voluntarily yielded myself to the chamberlain. My end shall make manifest to all the world and shall bear most certain witness that, if my body was perforce violated, my soul still abode free. These few words I have been fain to say to you, so you may report the whole to my unhappy parents, assuring them that never was there consent on my part nor willingness to comply with the chamberlain's dishonourable appetite. Abide in peace."

This said, she went out and making for the Oglio, followed by her little sister, who wept she knew not why, cast herself headlong into the deepest of the stream. Thither, at the outcry of the child, who sent up her shrieks to heaven, ran many, but too late, for that Giulia, who had voluntarily cast herself into the river, to drown herself, abandoning herself [to the current,] had straightway sunken. The Lord Bishop and Madam Antonia, hearing the sad event, let drag the river for her, and meantime the chamberlain, calling the lackey to him, took to flight. The body was presently found and the cause being divulged wherefore she had drowned herself, she was honoured with general mourning and many tears by all the women and eke the men of the country. The most illustrious and reverend Lord Bishop, it being impossible to bury her in consecrated ground, let place her in a depository,¹ which is yet there, purposing to bury her in a sarcophagus of bronze and set it upon yonder marble pedestal, which may

¹ *i.e.* a temporary tomb.

yet be seen in the piazza. Verily, to my seeming, such as it is, this our Giulia meriteth no lesser commendation than did the Roman Lucretia, and belike, if all be well considered, she should e'en be preferred before the Roman lady. Nature alone is to be blamed which to so magnanimous and generous a soul allotted not a nobler birth; yet noble enough is accounted whoso is a lover of virtue and preferreth honour before all things of the world.

Bandello

to the worshipful Messer Lancino Turzio
Philosopher and Poet.

Methinks you cannot have forgotten the delectable debate so merrily holden of us aforetime in the house of our most excellent and upright friend, respected of the world and loved of us, Signor Giacomo Antiquario, apostolical protonotary, for that the matter was such as will not lightly have escaped your remembrance. We debated of whence it cometh that we all day long see many women of sense and discretion, what time they are most generally accounted well-advised and prudent, commit very great errors, whereby at one stroke they lose the good name which they theretofore had. We see this one, to have an ampler field for her appetite, poison her husband, as if, being a widow, she should be licensed to do whatsoever liked her. Another, fearing lest her husband discover the amours which she hath afoot, causeth him be slain of her gallant, and a thousand other things they do other than good, nay, oftentimes, exceeding blameworthy. And albeit fathers, brothers and husbands, to rid their sight of the manifest reproach which the ill life of their daughters, sisters and wives bringeth upon them, do many of them to death by poison, by steel and other means, it stinteth not withal but many of them, condemning life, which is naturally so dear unto all, and honour, which should be so much esteemed, suffer themselves to be carried away into some default or other by their unbridled appetites. Many things were said, we seeking to enquire if, according to the course of natural reason, there

might be found any cause for this their reckless way of life ; and the little brain given by nature unto women being alleged, for lack whereof they lightly suffer themselves to be dazzled by present pleasure, without regard to the future hurt and evil which oftentimes ensue thereof, it was answered that this argument was frivolous and of little weight, for that men, whom we would fain make out to be of more capacity, fall likewise into the same errors, since, albeit they see daily these hanged, those quartered and others burned, nevertheless, blinded by ill-ordered appetite, they cease not to commit thefts, larcenies, spoliations, homicides, adulteries and a thousand other wickednesses ; the which commonly betideth not of women, who, if they sin, err mostwhiles for having been overfond and credulous to the deceitful blandishments of men, who daily, nay, if the truth must be told, hourly, seek to beguile some one of them, it seeming unto many men matter for triumphing, as if they had expelled the Turk from Europe, whenas they have befooled a simple woman. Nevertheless, there being no woman present at our discussion, to plead the cause of her sex, and we men being naturally prone to gird at them, we all agreed, for lack of otherwhat, to lay the blame of their aberrations upon their lack of wit. But, should the world change and women once avail to have the staff in hand and apply themselves to the study as well of arms as of letters, wherein many would doubtless approve themselves most excellent, woe to us ! Methinketh indeed they would render us a thousand for one and more, and that they would make us abide all day long with the distaff by our side and reel and spindle in hand and would drive us into the kitchen for scullions ; and belike we were well requited, seeing we oftentimes without cause or behoof and against all reason do them all manner of unright and entreat them passing scurvily. But I purpose not to inveigh against

men or to do as the wind-bags of Milan, who rail at their friends, to appear wise; for that, in missaying of men, I should missay of myself. Nor do I choose to arm myself with the authority of the trite saying, "Plato is my friend, Socrates is my friend, but truth is dearer to me than either."¹ On like wise, I care not to missay of women nor to blame them, being myself born of a woman and loving them as I do and seeking still to honour them and do them worship in so much as I may, as many of them infinitely merit, but some much more than others; of which latter I purpose not at this present to tell you the beadroll, for that I have not set out with that intent to write you this my letter, but to possess you of a case which befell this past Lent (according to that which our learned friend Messer Stefano Dolcino told me some days ago, whenas we had supped with the most affable Signora Cecilia Gallerana, Countess of Bergamo) and from which you may gather that, notwithstanding all the considerations alleged in our discussion, those men who, casting reason behind their backs, give the rein to their passions, and those women who, making no account of honour, than which they should hold nothing goodlier or dearer, suffer themselves to be swayed by amorous desire, do mostwhiles bring themselves to an ill end. You will see also of what mischief the lewd and wicked life of certain monks is the occasion. This novel, then, I give you, so it may pass, under your name, into the reader's hands. Be pleased, after you have read it, to show it to our most affable friend Messer Dionisio Elio, who, I am very certain, will straightway fall into a mighty rage against the knavish friar; and in good sooth he will have no little reason therefor. Fare you well.

¹ *Amicus Plato, amicus Socrates, sed magis amicus veritas.*

The Eighth Story.

A JEALOUS MAN, BY MEANS OF A FRIAR, HEARETH HIS WIFE'S CONFESSION AND SLAYETH HER.

Milan, as you all know and as may every day be seen, is a city which hath few equals in Italy in whatsoever tendeth to render a city illustrious, populous and rich ; for that, where nature hath failed, the ingenuity of men hath made good the default and hath left nought to be desired of all that is necessary unto human life ; nay, more, the insatiable humour of mortals hath added thereunto all the luxuries and refinements of the East, together with the marvels and rarities which our age hath with inexpressible toil and grievous perils sought out in the world ¹ unknown unto past ages. Accordingly, our Milanese are most singular and splendid in all their banquets for abundance and daintiness of viands and themseemeth they cannot avail to live, except they still live and eat in company. And what shall we say of the pomp of the ladies in their habiliments, adorned with such store of wroughten gold, such laces and broderies and counterpointings and jewels of great price, so that, when bytimes a gentlewoman cometh to the door, it is as if one looked upon the Assumption² in the city of Venice. And in what city are

¹ *i.e.* America.

² *i.e.* the picture (the Assumption of the Virgin) by Titian in the Academy of Venice.

there nowadays known to be so many magnificent coaches, all overlaid with fine gold, adorned with the richest of graven work and drawn by four gallant coursers, as are daily to be seen in Milan, where more than threescore four-horse caroches and an infinite number with two are to be found, hung with the richest housings, slashed with silk and gold, and distinguished by so great a variety that, whenas the ladies go a-coaching it about the streets, it seemeth a triumph is in act to pass through the city, as was the usance of the ancient Romans, when they returned victorious from provinces subdued and kings outwarred and vanquished. I mind me presently of that which I heard said, this past year, in Borgo Nuovo, of the most illustrious lady, the Lady Isabella da Este, Marchioness of Mantua, who was then on her way to Monferrato, to condole with the Marchioness of that ilk, the Marquis Guglielmo being newly dead. She was visited in state by our noble ladies, as still she is whenassoever she cometh to Milan, and seeing so many rich coaches at once and those so sumptuously adorned, she avouched to the ladies, who came to do her reverence, her belief that there were not so many goodly equipages in all the rest of Italy. The ladies of Milan, then, being bred in these refinements and this pomp and accustomed to such delights and pleasures of familiar intercourse, are commonly of easy composition, debonair and complaisant and are by nature disposed to love and be loved and to make gallantry the great business of their lives. For me, to say what I myself think of them, meseemeth they lack nothing to make them altogether complete, except it be that nature hath denied them an utterance befitting their beauty, their manners and their graces, for that in effect the Milanese speech hath a certain twang, which is strangely offensive to a foreign ear. Algate,

they spare not to make good this their natural default with practice, for there be few of them who study not, by the reading of good books in the vernacular tongue and by consorting with well-spoken folk, to educate themselves and refining their speech, to acquire a correct and elegant fashion of utterance, the which rendereth them far lovesomer unto whoso converseth with them.

But, to come to the story which I purpose to tell you and which befell in Lent of this past year, you must know that there was here in Milan a gentleman of a city not far removed hence, who, by reason of certain lawsuits he had toward, anent the boundaries of a castlewick of his, had hired a commodious house, where he abode with a worshipful retinue. Being young and rich, when he had taken counsel twice or thrice a week, more or less according to circumstances, with his proctors and advocates, he left the care of his affairs to a secretary of his, who was exceeding well practised and versed in litigation, and applied himself all day long to lead a merry life, passing his time behind this or that lady's coach. One day, Count Antonio Crivello, letting present a comedy, as of his usance, made a sumptuous banquet unto many gentlemen and gentlewomen, amongst whom was the young litigant, whom henceforward we will call Lattanzio, for that I choose not for the nonce to use his real name, as on like wise meseemeth meet to do with the lady of whom it will behove me speak and who shall be named Caterina. Lattanzio, then, chanced to sit at supper beside Caterina, whom himseemed he had never yet seen, or, if he had e'en seen her, he had taken no heed to her. Now banquets are wont to beget great familiarity between those who find themselves near one to other at meat, and this befell between Lattanzio and the lady, for that he fell to

talking with her of various matters and to serving her, carving before her¹ and doing her the like offices, as is the wont of gentlemen at table.

Caterina was very engaging and agreeable and well-spoken, and if she was not of the handsomest, might yet company with the handsomest women, without being blamed. The twain, then, devising thus together and Lattanzio eying her very intently, he began unknowingly, little by little, the lady's converse and sprightliness pleasing him, to drink in the amorous poison at his eyes to such effect that, ere the tables were removed, he perceived but too well that the stroke of love had already penetrated deep into his heart; wherefore, an end being made of eating and the company falling to dancing, Lattanzio invited the lady to dance and she courteously accepted the invitation. Accordingly, taking her by the hand and footing a slow dance with her, he entered into discourse with her of things amorous, and she showing herself nowise shy of such talk, he pressed his point² a little farther and very lovingly discovered to her how much she pleased him, praising her fair fashions, her carriage, her manners, her sprightliness and her beauty; then, telling her how ardently he loved her for this, he besought her with courteous prayers to accept of him to servant and vouchsafe to have pity on him. The lady answered him very demurely, saying that she was well pleased to be loved of him, as of a gentleman who appeared to her discreet, well-bred and courteous and would wish nothing of her but what consisted with her honour.

¹ i.e. cutting her meat for her, as the esquire-carver (*ecuyer tranchant*) did for his lord, a part of a gentleman's devoir of gallantry in mediæval and Renaissance times.

² Lit. "pushed the pawn," a metaphor taken, of course, from the game of chess.

With these and the like discourses, the dancing being ended, they seated themselves side by side, still devising of love; and what while the entertainment lasted (which was till past midnight) Lattanzio ceased not to discourse of his case, still getting of her the same replies, all founded upon this, that it behoved her have regard to the love which it behoved her bear her husband and to his and her honour, which must needs be dearer to her than her life, and that, seeing him thus courteous and gallant, she loved him as a brother. Lattanzio, seeing the lady nowise loath to talk of love and having by this grown very familiar with her, contented himself with this for the nonce and escorted her home in company with many other men and ladies. Having thus learned where she dwelt and being enamoured of her in good earnest, he applied himself to discover where she went to church and found that she went well-nigh always to hear mass at San Francesco. Accordingly, he began assiduously to frequent that church and there, in company with other gentlemen, who were wont to resort thither, to pass his time paying court to his Caterina, who showed him a good countenance and appeared to take great pleasure in seeing him.

Presently there came Carnival time and its season of licence, during which Lattanzio, masked and mounted on a very gallant jennet, passed one day before the lady's house, and seeing her at the door, halted; then, giving her to know who he was, he entered into converse with her and there abode a pretty while, still discoursing of his love. Caterina showed herself more than commonly gracious to him and laughed and jested very familiarly with him, being inwardly half resolved to take him to lover; but first she would fain converse with him and learn, as she might, his humour and fashions. Lattanzio, him-

seeming he found her very familiar and agreeable, after beseeching her with infinite prayers to have pity of him and command him, for that she would find him most prompt to do her every service, humbly commended himself to her and departed; whilst she betook herself to her chamber and pondering Messer Lattanzio's love and the ardent prayers wherewith he had plied her, began to be somewhat more than of wont inflamed with love of him. Now her husband was exceeding fashious at home, and albeit he suffered her go where she would and dress sumptuously, yet oftentimes he gave her foul words. Moreover, he was sore enamoured of a fair damsel, who sold coifs, furbelows, laces, fraises and other women's toys in the street of San Raffaele, overagainst the Great Church, and of this the lady had notice from a gossip of hers, whereat she was sore despited and bethought herself to repay her husband in kind. Accordingly, herseeming Lattanzio was apt to her purpose, she showed him daily better countenance, wherewith he held himself exceeding content.

The gossip who had advertised the lady of her husband's amour abode hard by and had none other in the house save a little son of two years old and a young serving-maid. Lattanzio, then, continuing to pay court unto Caterina and having sundry whiles bespoken her under cover of the festivities, she one day, when her husband was to dine abroad, sent for her gossip and would have her dine with her, as she was oftentimes used to do. When they had dined and the masks began to pass through the streets, Caterina and her friend sat down at the window to talk; nor had they long abidden there when there passed many masks and amongst them Lattanzio, unmasked and mounted on a mule. He was in discourse with one of the masks and seeing his mistress at the window, courteously did her obeisance, hat in

hand. No sooner had he passed than Caterina said to her friend, "Gossip, know you the youth, who goeth conversing with yonder mask?" "Not I," replied the other; "but why do you ask me?" "I will tell you," rejoined Caterina, "being assured that you will credit me and that whatsoever I shall discover to you, you will keep secret, as you will see that my case requireth. You must remember that I have many a time privily bewailed myself to you of the strange life which my husband leadeth, in that, it being some seven years since I came into this his house, he hath never, the first year excepted, whenas I took no note thereof, been without some mistress or other, with whom he spendeth great part of his revenues. For the nonce he is all day long in the street of San Raffaele with Isabella, whom I know you know and to whom he gave this last Christmas, by way of fairing, seven-and-thirty ells of murrey Venice satin. He and I have sundrywhiles had ill words thereof together; but it availeth me nothing, so that I am oftentimes exceeding ill content, seeing this his sorry way of life. Wretch that I am, I might have married one of the counts of the Languschi family at Pavia, but my brothers would e'en have me be this vile fellow's. He hath this much of good that he giveth me great liberty in the matter of dress and of going where I will and in the governance of the house and in spending as it pleaseth me. Algates, at home he is more fashious than fashiousness itself, for that there is never meat cooked to his mind nor would he ever order aught whatsoever in the kitchen. He still hath these and those to eat with him, and the more folk there be present, the more he scoldeth and the more outcry he maketh and still he layeth on me the fault of everything, so that he is, as useth to be said, a devil in the house and a saint in the street. But that which most pincheth me and which I take most to heart is that the goodfornought

lieth not with me three times a month, as if I were palsied or bedridden or a threescore-year-old crone, I who have not yet seen three-and-twenty and am eke fresh and dainty; nay, an I be not the handsomest in Milan, I can pass muster among the rest, and if I would, I should not lack for wooers. I know, indeed, how many lovers (and those of the first men of the city) have courted me and solicited me with letters and messages and still have I given all the rebuff, ensuing the counsels of my mother of blessed memory, who still preached to me that I should set all my love and all my thoughts upon him whom I took to husband, even as she, good lady, did with my father; and so in good sooth have I done, still hoping for my husband to turn from that his ill life. But he goeth from bad to worse, so that I am determined to provide for my occasions, and may God pardon me, for I can live no more on this wise. Were I minded to live without a man, I had turned nun with an elder sister of mine, who hath made profession of religion in the Convent of Santa Radegonda. Now, gossip mine, I have made you this brief discourse, to have of you aid and counsel, being firmly assured that you will do for me all you know may bring me pleasance and profit." To this the goodwife very readily assented, and Caterina added, "You saw yonder youth pass a little ago on the mule, he whom you told me you knew not, but who seemeth to me mighty discreet and complaisant. He hath sundrywhiles bespoken me this carnival-time, requiring me of love, but I have never yet given him overgood words in answer, although, indeed, I have for some days past shown him more countenance than of wont. Now I am inwardly resolved that he shall supply my husband's default, whether by day or by night, on such priviest and easiest wise as may be possible. But, for that I doubt me we twain alone may not avail to bring this my desire to the wished-for end,

methinketh I should do well to discover myself to my old waiting-woman, who sleepeth in my chamber what time my husband lieth abroad, for I would never trust to young girls. What say you thereof, dear my gossip?"

"Indeed, madam," replied the good lady, "I have still had great compassion of you, seeing you fair, young and delicately bred and knowing the sorry life of my gossip your husband, and that which you have told me shall abide still buried in my breast. Inasmuch as you are determined not altogether to lose your youth, you do mighty well; but meseemeth you were best let me speak with the old woman and assay her mind, to see how it inclineth, and leave the manage of the affair to me, for that I hope to bring it to a good issue." Accordingly, they abode on this understanding that the gossip should bespeak the old woman and that, if she found her disposed to do their occasions, no time should be lost in putting Lattanzio in possession of the much-desired treasures, the lady having already forethought her of the manner in which he might very lightly avail to foregather with her whensoever her husband lay the night abroad.

Along one side of Caterina's house ran a certain blind alley and from this a door gave access to a biggish room on the ground floor, wherein were sundry very old wine-vats, which were no longer in use. This door (for that it was many years since it had been opened and that none resorted thither among the wine-vats and scarce any came and went in the alley) was unremembered of any in the house, more by token that there stood a great tun before it, which altogether hid it from sight. But love, which hath more eyes than Argus, lent the lady, whenas she had determined to introduce Lattanzio into the house, one of his, wherewith she espied the door and having well considered everything,

concluded that there was no surer means than this of giving effect to her desires. Accordingly, the gossip bespoke the old woman and found her fully disposed to do all that her mistress wished ; wherefore, having taken order with them of that which was to do, Caterina sought to such purpose that she lit upon certain ancient keys, among which the old woman, trying now one and now another, found that which opened the door.

This done, one day towards the end of the carnival, as Caterina stood at her door hard upon nightfall, Lattanzio passed masked and a-horseback and accosting her respectfully, gave her good even. The lady received him graciously and Lattanzio entering upon the wonted discourse of his love and craving her of commodity to speak with her in a privy place, she, after letting herself be twice or thrice entreated, unable to hold out longer and having no less desire than himself to foregather with him in private, bespoke him thus, saying, "I am fain, Lattanzio mine, to credit thee of all thou presently tellest me and hast so many a time told me of the love which thou bearest me and to put into thy hands my life and mine honour. Look, then, thou be so good a guardian thereof and govern both thyself and me on such wise that no manner hurt, still less shame, may ensue thereof. Thou seest yonder alley at the house-end ; this be it which shall give thee access to me, whenassoever my husband is abroad. And to have no occasion for sending messages to and fro, my gossip, who lodgeth in yonder house," here she showed him the door, "and who is cognizant of my whole mind, will advertise thee of all. My husband, an I mistake not, will not be here this evening, either to sup or to sleep. She will sup with me between two and three of the night¹

¹ *i.e.* between 8 and 9 p.m.

and at four¹ I will contrive for all my household to be abed, when my gossip will be at home. She will look for thee on the stroke of four and from her thou shalt know if my husband is to return or not and order thyself according to her instructions. But of one thing I would instantly beseech thee, that in this matter thou confide as little as possible in thy servants, lest, should they after leave thee, as often betideth, some one of them may be the occasion of making us the talk of the common folk."

Lattanzio, hearing this unhopèd-for speech and perceiving, by the sparkling of his mistress's eyes, that she was all afire for love, accounted himself the happiest and most fortunate man alive and abode so full of wonderment and allegresse that he could scarce contain himself and knew not what to say. However, collecting his wits, he rendered the lady such thanks as he most might and promised her that he would betake himself all alone to her gossip, hiding his love from all his servants; and so, with a heart aswim in a sea of syrup,² he took leave of her and returned home. That evening he supped little, being drunken with unwonted joy and mindful moreover that he was to post it that night, and at the stroke of four, setting out all alone, he betook himself straight to the gossip, who awaited him, with the door on the latch, and gave him to understand that the husband had not supped at home nor would lie the night there, that a brother of the lady's and another gentleman whom she knew not had been there, but had both taken leave before herself.

After many other things discoursed between them, Lattanzio took leave of her and entering the little alley, gave the signal appointed him by the gossip, whereupon the old woman, who was at the door, opened it so gingerly that he could scarce

¹ *i.e.* 10 p.m.

² Lit. sugar (*zucchero*).

avail to enter in, for that the vat hindered the door from being altogether opened. Having entered, he was softly led by the old woman to the lady's chamber, where what was the welcome she gave him and the caresses and amorous embracements which the two new-made lovers bestowed upon each other and what the pleasure and delight which, having gotten them to bed, they took one of other, amorously solacing themselves together, it were an over-long story to recount. Suffice it to say that Caterina on the ensuing day swore to her gossip that she had had far more pleasure that night than in all the time she had abidden with her husband. Before the day grew white, Lattanzio, forswinkt and exceeding well content, took his leave, after having at parting given his mistress more than a thousand kisses. As he was about to go forth the door, he gave the old woman half a score ducats, exhorting her to serve her mistress faithfully, in which case he would never fail her. She, who had never in her life owned so much money, thanked him amain and accounted herself richly requited; and Lattanzio, returning home, betook himself to sleep, having been in the saddle all night. Now the thing went on such wise that for a whole year Lattanzio found means of fore-gathering many times with his mistress, and the twain gave themselves the best time in the world. Meantime, the gossip had many ducats of Lattanzio, who promised her that, whenas her little son should be grown, he would take him to page.

The two lovers, then, having, as I have said, enjoyed their loves for some twelve months' space, on such wise that their joyance had its beginning in one carnival-time and lasted until the next, Caterina's husband, why I cannot say, took it into his head to suspect that, as he lay so seldom with his wife, she must e'en have some one in his room, who tilled her garden in his absence and watered it more freely than

he would have wished, and accordingly, waxing jealous and knowing not of whom, he fell to abiding at home more than of wont, especially by night, the which was not over-pleasing to the lovers. Then, Lent being come, he determined, an it were possible, to hear his wife's confession, and to this end he repaired to Sant' Angelo, where he sought out the friar to whom he knew Caterina was used to confess herself and entering into discourse with him of various matters, made himself very private with him, nor did he cease to frequent him till the friar, swallowing the bait, suffered himself to be so taken and blinded with the other's fables that he promised to post him near himself within his confessional, whenas he was to hear his wife's confession. This settled, the jealous man gave much monies to the friar (who received them in his gown, not to touch them with the hand)¹ and awaited the day when his wife should go to confess herself. The lady was used to send still a day in advance to advertise her spiritual father of her coming; the which being known of the husband, he straitly lessoned the friar of that which he was to ask her.

The appointed day come, the lady took coach after dinner and repaired to St. Angelo, whither her husband had already betaken himself. When she came to the church, she let call her father confessor and entered one of the closets which are made expressly for the purpose of confessing; whilst the rascally friar and the jealous madman, who went seeking that which he would fain not have found, taking their opportunity, entered the counter-closet,² without being seen of any. There, having begun her confession and coming to question of sins of lust, the lady confessed that which she

¹ Not to break the *letter* of his vow of poverty.

² *Contra-camerino*, i.e. the compartment of the confessional reserved for the priest.

wrought with her lover; whereupon, "Alack, daughter mine," quoth the wicked friar, "did I not severely rebuke thee thereof last year and didst thou not promise me never to do it more? Is this that which thou promisedst me?" "Father," answered the lady, "I could not nor might do otherwise, and the cause of all this is the ill life of my husband, who entreateth me as you know, for I have told you all otherwhiles. I am a woman of flesh and blood, like others, and seeing that my husband recked nothing of me, I provided myself as best I might. And at the least I do this much, that my doings are secret, whereas those of my husband are the byword of the folk and not only is it talked thereof in Broletto,¹ but there is no barber's shop nor other place where rhymes are not tagged withal. The which betideth not of my affairs; nay, all have compassion of me and say that he deserveth not so good a wife as I. I bore with him some seven years, hoping that he would amend and leave other folk's women; but the thing goeth from ill to worse. It grieveth me to do that which I do and I know that I offend against our Lord God Almighty, but I can do no otherwise."

"Daughter mine," rejoined the friar, "it behoveth not to do thus, for that these excuses avail nothing. Thou shouldst not do evil, because another doth it; nay, it behoveth thee brook everything with patience and wait till God shall touch thy husband's heart, more by token that belike he doth not all thou sayest. But who is this thy lover?" "Father," replied the lady, "he is a young gentleman, who loveth me more than his life." "I ask thee," repeated the friar, "how he is called." The lady, hearing this and having aforetime heard preach² that those with whom a sin is

¹ The Broletto appears to have been the public or market place of Milan.

² Or enounce, lay down as a rule (*predicare*).

committed should never be named in confession, lest they should be defamed, said, somewhat wonderingly, "Alack, father, what is this you ask me? I am not bounden to tell you that; let it suffice you that I confess mine own sins and not those of my friend." There ensued many words anent this, and in the end, the young lady refusing to promise to leave her lover, the friar declined to give her absolution.

Accordingly, she left the confessional and entering the church, said her prayers and after went out to take coach again; whereupon the cuckold of a husband, coming with fell intent and full of despise, forth of the confessional and the door of the convent, made straight for the coach and his wife, seeing him, awaited him. When he came within reach of her, he drew a poniard he had by his side and saying to her, "Shameless whore that thou art!" plunged it into her breast, whereupon she straightway fell down dead. Great was the outcry which was raised therefor and many folk flocked thither; but the husband made off I know not whither and in a few days made his escape into the Venetian territory, where, not long after, seeking to make peace with his wife's kinsfolk, he was by their contrivance hewn in pieces, one day as he went a-hunting. Look, now, what was caused by the headstrong humour of a husband, who would e'en know by undue means that which it behoved him to ignore, and what an issue had the wickedness of the rascally friar, who (according to what was avouched to me of one who should know) was sent *in pace*,¹ from which peace² our Lord God keep us all!

¹ *i.e.* cast into the perpetual solitary prison reserved for grave infractions of the monastic rule and styled with barbarous irony "in peace" (*in pace*), probably from the concluding words (*Ite in pace*, "Go in peace") of the judgment.

² *Pace*.

Bandello

to the magnificent and ingenious Messer Giobanni
Battista Schiaffenato.

How greatly, my most debonair Schiaffenato, they err who, whenas they see a man ogle a woman and sigh for her or do such extravagances as are common unto those who appear enamoured, say, "Yonder man loveth such and such a woman," and call lust love, is manifest unto whoso knoweth the distinctions which wise and learned men have with reason established between the [various] faculties of the human soul. And albeit love is an affection of the concupiscible appetite, it behoveth to divide it into many species, so we may come to the true and perfect love; but this were matter for over-long debate and a subject for a philosopher. Algaes, to come to that which set me upon writing to you, I must tell you that unto things natural it is ordained of nature, for the preservation of their essence, that they ensue that which profiteth and eschew that which harmeth, and [of] that [she] not only [advertiseth them] by a natural instinct, but engendereth in them an inclination to gainstand with their every might all that hindereth them of such ensuance or eschewal. The like is in us men, to whom nature hath given an appetency (called by the Peripatetics ¹

¹ *i.e.* Aristotle and his school.

the concupiscible appetite) to desire everything which seemeth unto us good and contrariwise to eschew that which we may judge to be hurtful unto us ; and she hath also of her bounty gifted us with another appetency (which hath been styled the irascible appetite) wherewithal we may apply ourselves to withstand whoso would fain forbid us the ensuance of good or hinder us from fending ourselves against evil. You must know, moreover, that the inclinations which are involved in these appetites, albeit they are apt to subject themselves unto reason, are nevertheless prone, as far as in them lieth, to contend withal and still set themselves as enemies in opposition thereto. The which is plainly to be apprehended in those, who, albeit reason showeth them that which is good, nevertheless, solicited by appetite, leave the good and cleave to the evil, especially in matters amorous, wherein men, contemning reason, live after the fashion of the beasts and act without reason, in that, urged by sensual appetite, unregulated by reason, they pass from the true love to that which is savage and bestial ; as was no great while agoe shown us by our pleasant and erudite friend Messer Francesco Appiano, who is a most learned physician and philosopher, whenas, in the presence of a very goodly company, he related the course which Mahomet, son of Amurath, Emperour of the Turks, held anent a love of his or (as it should rather be styled) a frenzy of the senses. This story, having written it down, I dedicate and consecrate unto your name and therein you will see how much they deceive themselves who give the name of love to their every disorderly appetite. Fare you well.

The Ninth Story.

MAHOMET, EMPEROR OF THE TURKS, CRUELLY SLAYETH ONE OF HIS WOMEN.

Will you be certified, ladies mine, that many say they love and know not what they say, for that what they call love is no love, but a disorderly appetite, an unbridled desire, a blind and bestial frenzy? Hearken unto me and judge if I tell you the truth or not, for I desire none other judges for the nonce, dear my ladies, than you. Mahomet, son of Amurath, King of the Ottoman Turks, was he who, to the exceeding reproach and eternal infamy of all the Christian princes of the time, stormed Constantinople in the year one thousand four hundred and fifty-three of our salvation and usurped the Greek empire, it being the one thousand and one hundred and ninety-first year since Constantine, son of Helena, established the seat of empire at Constantinople, whither he had removed it from Rome. And here it may be noted that, like as the Greek empire began with Constantine, son of Helena, even so it terminated and came to an end with Constantine Paleologus, likewise son of Helena, who, seeing the Turks entered into the city and that there was no means of recovering it, did off the robes which he wore over his armour and which bespoke him emperor and rushing into the midst of the infidels, slew many of them with his own hand, fighting manfully like the lusty and valiant soldier he was, till, at the last, without ever showing his back to the foe, he

fell down dead midmost his enemies, having lost all his blood for multitude of wounds. Mahomet, who was of his nature very cruel, having won this great victory, ordained that Calibasso, who had of his father been appointed unto him for governor, should be slain, for that he had, at the spoiling of Constantinople, forbidden many cruelties, and so the good old man was with various torments most cruelly done to death.¹

Now, the booty being reviewed which had been made in so rich a city, there was found among the spoil a very beautiful Grecian girl of sixteen to seventeen years of age, Irene² by name, who was accounted the fairest damsel ever seen; wherefore those to whose share she had fallen, thinking to pleasure their emperor, presented her to Mahomet, who was young and exceeding prone unto lust (as indeed for the most part are all the Turks) and seeing so fair a maid, was beyond measure charmed with her and commanded that she should be reserved for himself, purposing to give himself the goodliest time in the world with her. I dare not say that he ever loved her, for that, had he loved her, there had not ensued so horrible an issue thereof. Mahomet, then, began to converse with Irene and to take of her all those pleasures which a man may have of a woman and so much enamoured did he become of her and so greatly did her company please

¹ *Calibasso* is what the author of the "Cruise upon Wheels" would have called Bandello's "refreshing view" of the name of the Grand Vizier Khelil Pasha, the famous minister of Mohammed II. and of his father Mourad. Our author is mistaken in his statement of the cause of Khelil's execution; he was not put to death for interfering with his master's cruelties (which were indeed far less than would have been committed on such an occasion by any of the Christian princes of that time) but for a traitorous correspondence of long date with the Greek Christian court.

² i.e. *Irene* (ἱρήνη).

him that he never left her day or night, himseeming he might not nor could avail to live without her sight ; nay, the thing came to such a pass that he companied with her without ceasing some three years' space, recking nothing of aught that pertained unto the governance of the state, but leaving the care of everything to his bashaws. Wherefore, it seeming to many that matters of justice were ill administered and that the bashaws, governing after their fashion, looked solely to their own particular profit, there arose a great clamour at court and likewise among the people. Moreover, the janissaries and all other sorts of men affected unto war began to murmur strangely, themseeming the emperor was grown so effeminate that he might never more concern himself with things military ; and the outcry went waxing after such a fashion that it might rather be named a sedition than a murmuring. However, there was none dared say a word thereof to the emperor, knowing him terrible of his nature and beyond measure cruel ; and he for his part was so drunken with the charms of the fair Greek that himseemed he had gotten more felicity in the enjoyment of so lovely a lady than in the acquisition of so renowned an empire.

Accordingly, the sedition still waxing and there being already many who avouched that obedience should no longer be given to so effeminate a prince, but that one should be made emperor in his stead who would occupy himself with arms and apply to extend the limits of the empire and to magnify their Mahometan faction, Mustafa,—a youth of high spirit and very dear to the emperor, with whom he had been reared from a child and to whom he had privy access, wheressoever he was, though he were with the Greek,—one day, taking his occasion, as Mahomet walked for his pleasure in a garden all alone, accosted him reverently, as is their custom, and said to him, “ My lord, an it irk thee

not, I would fain bespeak thee of somewhat which, meseemeth, pertaineth unto thy weal and that of thy realm." "And what is to do?" asked Mahomet, graciously replying unto Mustafa. "My lord," answered the latter, "it is like, indeed, I shall seem to thee presumptuous in telling thee that which methinketh it is everywise incumbent on me to tell thee; but, my having from my earliest years been reared with thee and the many favours thou hast conferred on me, who have still been a most faithful slave to thee, embolden me to speak, in the firm assurance that thou, wise and prudent as thou art, wilt take all in good part. The life which thou hast led since the taking of Constantinople maketh all the people murmur, and especially thy soldiers, seeing it is presently three years that thou (be it permitted me for thy weal to speak thus) lovest thyself in a woman's company and appliest neither to the governance of thine empire nor unto things military. Knowest thou not, my lord, that, if thou suffer thy troops to become thus negligent and effeminate in sloth and idleness and to lose their accustomed valiance, thou sappest the very foundations of thine empire? Where is that thy greatness of soul which thou wast used to have aforetime? Where the desire which thou showedst, whenas thou wast a boy, to seek at all hazards to subjugate Italy and procure thyself to be crowned in Rome? Certes, this is not the true way to extend thy dominion, nay, rather it is that of minishing and losing that which hath been gotten. Deemest thou, if Ottoman¹ the First, who raised thy family unto greatness, had led the life thou leadest, that thou wouldst presently be emperor of Greece? Rememberest thou not to have read, in the annals of thy forefathers, that Othman, departing Galatia,

¹ *Othman.*

subjugated Bithynia and great part of the provinces which lie about the Greater Sea and for ten years that he reigned never gave himself to repose? His son Orcan,¹ ensuing the example of his father's valiance and emulous of his warlike worth, most felicitously conquered Mysia, Lycaonia, Phrygia and Caria and extended the limits of the realm even to the Hellespont. Amurath, who succeeded unto Urkhan, was the first who carried the Turkish arms into Europe, where he acquired Thrace, (the which is now called Roumelia) Servia and Rascia² and subjugated the Bulgarians. What shall I say to thee of Bajazet,³ who so valiantly gave battle in Europe unto Soliman his brother, who sought to oust him from the empery, and slew him? What a soul thinkest thou was his, whenas he dared to oppose himself, on the confines of Galatia and Bithynia, to Tamerlane and war with him, for all his four hundred thousand Scythian horse and his six hundred thousand footmen? After Bajazet came Calapin, Orcan and Moses;⁴ but, for that they fought among themselves, they acquired little of others' good. Mahomet, brother of Moses, who was thine ancestor, did he not conquer Macedonia and carry his arms even to the Ionian Sea, which confineth with the Adriatic? On like wise, in Asia, against the Lydians and the Cilicians, he made many expeditions worthy of memory. But what shall I say of

¹ *Urkhan*.

² Part of Old Servia, anciently so called, not the Slavonian province of the same name, which was not invaded by the Turks till after the date of the present story.

³ Bandello here apparently attributes to Bajazet (Bayazid I.) the doings of his son Mousa, who defeated and slew his brother Suleiman A.D. 1410.

⁴ Another mistake. Bayazid left four sons, Mohammed, Mousa (Moses), Isa and Suleiman, who contended for the succession and were all slain except the first, who became Sultan.

Amurath thy father, who, for the space of forty continuous years that he reigned, abode still in arms and marvellously enlarged the confines of the Turkish realm? His father dead, he crossed over from Asia into Europe and despite the Greeks, who favoured Mustafa his uncle, who sought the European provinces for himself, penetrated, with the aid of the ships of the Genoese, into Roumelia, where, coming to blows with his uncle, he, after long battle, overcame and slew him and abode peaceable possessor of all the kingdom. Thinkest thou, belike, that he contented himself with the kingdom his father left him and gave himself up unto idlesse? Thou must know, my lord, that there never was any of the Ottoman blood who more than he hath both harassed the Christian arms or been harassed of them. First, he avenged himself upon the Greeks, inasmuch as he took many of their cities by assault, laid waste their provinces, sacked many towns, ravaged the champaigns and made great part of Roumelia tributary unto himself. He stormed Thessalonica, a most illustrious city on the confines of Macedonia, which was then under the empery of the Venetians, and overpassed Tmarus¹ and Pindus with a very great host; with perpetual victory, he overwarred the Phocenses,² subdued the province of Attica, Bœotia, Ætolia and Acarnania and made all the peoples that are behither the Morea, even to the Gulf of Corinth, subject to his governance. John Castriot,³ unto whom all the Epirote name⁴ yielded obedience, for fear of losing his estate, gave

¹ Disguised by Bandello under the name of *Tomaro*.

² *Focenses*, i.e. the people of Phocis, a province of Central Greece, in which were situate Delphi and Parnassus.

³ Father of George Castriot, better known as Scanderbeg.

⁴ *Il nome Epirotico*, (Nomen Epiroticum), i.e. all the tribes of Epirote blood; cf. Nomen Latinum.

into thy father's hands Croia City and three of his sons, together with many other noble hostages. What shall I say to thee of the battle which he waged against the Emperor Sigismund and Philip, Duke of Burgundy, where was the flower of the Christian chivalry? He routed the Emperor and taking the Burgundian prisoner, carried him captive to Adrianople, where Philip purchased his liberty with a great sum of gold.¹ No great while after, thy father sent an army of an hundred thousand horse to lay waste Hungary, where it wrought exceeding great hurt to that province, under the governance of Mesibecco.² He after took to wife the daughter of Zorzo Dispota,³ who was thy mother, and by force of arms conquered unto himself all the dominions of his father-in-law.⁴ It booteth not presently to recall thy father's other warlike expeditions against the Hungarians, thou having been present thereat in person, whenas thou sawest his diligence, his vigilance and his constancy; nay, had he given himself to idlesse, thou wouldest not now be so great a prince as thou art. But tell me, I prithee, thinkest thou, for that thou hast gotten the Greek empire and so greatly enlarged thy dominion, to abide in peace and seest thou not that it behoveth thee more than ever to provide for the stability of thy power? Many of thy subjects presently obey thee and honour thee, who, should a lusty

¹ Bandello here confounds, in inextricable confusion, the battle of Nicopolis, waged A.D. 1396 by Bayazid I. against Sigismund, King of Hungary, and Jean de Nevers, son and heir of Philip, Duke of Burgundy, when he put Sigismund to flight and took Nevers prisoner, and that of Varna, A.D. 1444, when Amurath (Mourad II.) defeated and slew Ladislas, King of Hungary.

² Mousa Beg?

³ *i.e.* George, Despot of Servia.

⁴ The whole of this sketch of the Turkish conquests is full of errors and is indeed so confusedly and ignorantly written as to be almost beyond correction.

war befall thee, would take up arms against thee. Thou must e'en know that all Christendom thinketh no otherwhat than to do thee hurt ; and I understand that their Pope doth nought but send his prelates hither and thither, to unite all the princes of Christendom for thy ruin. If the Christians should unite together, which God fend, what should we do ? If thou persevere in this thy womanly way of life and unnerve thyself on such wise that thy strength be little by little consumed and thy manhood weakened, if thy soldiers no more wield arms and things warlike fall into oblivion, what will betide, if the Christian princes of Europe unite with the Sophy of Persia, thy bitterest enemy, and with the Soldan of Egypt, who is no less thine adversary ? My mind abhorreth to think of this and I pray God that He possess not the Christians with this design, for that assuredly thine empery would resolve itself into smoke. Come, my lord, arouse thyself, for thou hast slept over-long ; approve thee a man and not a woman ; ensue the footsteps of thy foregoers, apply thyself to the governance of thine empire and look that thy soldiers be all day long arms in hand. Nay, if this Greek girl e'en please thee so that thou mayst unceasingly leave her, what hindereth thee to carry her with thee in thine expeditions ? Wherefore canst thou not enjoy her beauty and occupy thyself at the same time with war ? Thy pleasures were far more delightsome to thee if, after having assailed and carried a city, thou shouldst couch thyself in her arms, than now whenas thou abidest ever by her side. Do but essay to separate thyself from her for some days and thou wilt of experience find what I tell thee to be true, for that thou wilt clearly perceive the difference which is between continual pleasures and those which are but interruptedly enjoyed. It remaineth unto me, my lord, to tell thee that all the victories which thy forefathers have

gained and the conquest which thou hast made of this Greek empire, are nought, an thou maintain and increase them not, for that no less a virtue than to acquire is it to know to preserve things acquired. Conquer, conquer thyself, my lord, and thou wilt conquer all the rest. I beseech thee, then, if I have said aught to thee which fretteth thy spirit, to pardon me of thy clemency and think that my servitude and my jealousy for thine honour and thy weal have prompted me unto this. I assure thee, indeed, ay, and most religiously can I swear to thee that I have said nought save with intent to advantage thee, and with thyself it now resteth to do all that seemeth unto thee for thy profit."

With this Mustafa was silent, awaiting what his lord should do. When Mahomet saw his slave silent, he abode awhile without saying a word, revolving various things in himself and plainly discovering in his face the fluctuation of his spirits and the conflict which was toward in his breast, insomuch that Mustafa was sore in doubt for his life. His words had cruelly wrung the emperor's heart, and he felt himself so much the sorelier pierced and stung to the quick as himseemed Mustafa had told him the truth and spoken like a most faithful servant; yet, on the other hand, he was so entangled in the snare of the immoderate delight which he took in the fair Greek's company that he felt his heart cleave asunder in his breast, whensoever he represented to himself the necessity of leaving her or even of removing from her for a day. Ultimately, unknowing how to answer his occasions without the sacrifice of the ill-starred Greek and having inwardly determined that which he purposed to do, he turned to Mustafa and said to him, with a good countenance, "Mustafa, great hath been thy boldness in bespeaking me thus; but let the having been reared with me and my

having still found thee most faithful to me avail thee. Moreover, I acknowledge that thou hast told me the truth and I will shortly do on such wise that thou and all the others shall see that I know how to conquer myself. Go and look that to-morrow all the bashaws and the chiefs of my soldiery be present at midday in such a hall of my palace." This said, he rejoined the fair Greek and abode with her all that day and the ensuing night, wherein, according to that which he said after, he took more pleasure with her than he had ever before done.

On the morrow he dined with her and would have her clothe herself in richer apparel and adorn herself with gems of greater price than she had ever yet worn; the which she did, unknowing, poor wretch! that she was decking herself for her own exequies. On the other hand, Mustafa, unknowing his lord's mind, assembled all the chief men of the court in one of the halls of the palace at the appointed hour, each marvelling at the emperor's summons, for that it was long since any had seen him in public. All being, then, assembled in the hall and discoursing variously among themselves, behold, in came the emperor, leading by the hand the fair Greek, who, being, as she was, very handsome and most sumptuously apparelled, appeared a very goddess come down from heaven upon the earth. Upon Mahomet's entrance, all the Turks prostrated themselves before him and did him reverence after their manner, to whom quoth he, halting amiddleward the hall and still holding the fair Greek in his left hand, "According to that which hath been told me, you murmur at me for that I abide all day long with this damsel; but I know none of you who, if he had so fair a lady by his side, would part from her. How say you thereof? Let each frankly tell me his mind." Hearing this their lord's speech and seeing a beauty such

as they had never beheld, all declared that he was much in the right if, being young, he took his pleasure of so fair a creature and that it nowise behoved him depart from her; whereupon the cruel barbarian replied to them, saying, "And I mean to let you know that there is nought in the world which shall avail to hinder me from applying to the magnification of the house of Othman."

So saying, he suddenly laid hold of the lady's hair with his left hand and with the right taking a knife, which he had by his side, slit her weasand in sunder; whereupon the unfortunate woman fell to the ground, dead. Then, as if he had killed a swallow (it being presently three years since he had carried Constantinople by storm), he gave commandment for the mustering of an hundred and fifty thousand fighting men, with whom he overran all Bosnia and thinking to take Belgrade, suffered that memorable defeat which was given him of the Christians under the conduct of John Hunyady, surnamed the White, who was father to the glorious King Matthias Corvinus. You may see, then, that in Mahomet there was neither love nor pity, for that, as he chose no more to solace himself with the fair Greek, there was no occasion for the barbarous wretch to slay her. But such are the usances of the Turks, and whoso should seek to recount the particular cruelties practised by this Mahomet would have overmuch to do, they being innumerable.

Bandello

to Signor Vicenzo Attellano.

It being discoursed, whereas we were these days past, of Messer Bernardino Busto, a physician, and how, finding his wife abed one night with her gallant, who straightway made off, he then and there, albeit the snow lay deep upon the ground, turned the lady out of doors, barefoot and with one sole shift on her back, various were the opinions of those who spoke, even as men's humours and inclinations are various. You (an you remember aright) said that you had never had a wife nor yet a mind to take one, chancing to have three most engaging nephews, the sons of your brother, whom you love and tender as your proper children ; but that nevertheless, should it ever occur to you to marry and should you by misadventure make acquaintance with the way to Cuckoldshaven, you would not put either your wife or yourself to shame, but would take coach to catch the hare,¹ as do the wise who have no mind to become the byword of the common folk. There were many who commended this opinion and many and various things were said thereupon. Among the rest it was spoken of a certain French lord, who,

¹ Lit. take the hare with the coach or cart (*pigliar la lepre col carro*), a somewhat obscure proverbial expression, meaning to act with deliberation and forethought, not to course the hare with beat of drum.

having been some months absent from his country and returning home, brought with him a little bastard son whom he had begotten upon a gentlewoman, and surprising his wife in childbed, on such wise that she might not avail to hide the child to which she had given birth some four or five days before, kissed her and said, "Wife mine, you have been at your tricks and I at mine; of that which is past be it no more spoken; let bygones be bygones and for the future let us apply to live merrily." All laughed at the baron and it was said that he had eaten overmuch saffron.¹ It was told likewise of a gentleman of Mantua, who, finding that his wife had her lover in bed, shut the door on such wise that it might not be opened, knowing the window to be grated, and went off to San Sebastiano to speak with Signor Francesco Gonzaga, Marquess of Mantua, of whom he craved leave and licence to slay the adulterer who was with his wife, and the latter also; whereupon quoth the Marquess to him wrathfully, "Cuckoldy patch that thou art, an thou dare to ruffle a hair of thy wife's head or his who is with her, I will have thee hanged; albeit, hadst thou slain them forthright, whenas thou foundest them together, I swear I would have pardoned it to thee; but now begone and let him go free." And so one said one thing and one another. Finally, the excellent doctor [of laws] Messer Francesco Midolla, councillor of the parliament of Milan and your kinsman, a man of singular erudition and great experience, said, "Gentlemen, an you will hearken to me, I will tell you how discreetly a senator of Paris comported himself in a similar case;" and thereupon he recounted a memorable circumstance, which, having added it to the number of my novels, I now present unto you. Fare you well.

¹ Apparently referring to the stupefying effect of that herb, when eaten in quantity.

The Tenth Story.

A SENATOR, TAKING HIS WIFE IN ADULTERY,
LETTETH THE ADULTERER ESCAPE AND
SAVETH HIS OWN HONOUR, TOGETHER
WITH THAT OF HIS WIFE.

It is no great while, my lords, since, what while I was in Paris, there was a senator or councillor of the parliament (which is the chief of many that be in France) who, being presently in years, had taken to wife a fair damsel, also French, whom he loved with an exceeding love. She, being red-haired and lusty and finding her husband feeble and unable to water her garden as often as she could have wished, more by token that he rose well-nigh every morning before day, what time she would fain have played at the clipping-game and put the devil in hell, abode sore ill content, seeing her youth waste without pleasure; wherefore she determined to provide herself as best and most secretly she might, bethinking herself that she might lightly have commodity therefor, so but she should find a gallant to her mind, for that, my lord her husband going betimes to the parliament and returning home late, she would meanwhile have leisure to satisfy her occasions. Accordingly, having come to this resolution, she fell to standing at the door and the window, to see who went along the street and make choice of one who should seem to her most to her purpose;

but, albeit she saw many men pass every day, yet well-nigh none was to her liking, till one day it chanced that there passed one of from six to eight-and-twenty years of age, who, courteously vailing his bonnet to her and faring on his way, pleased her greatly at first sight.

Now he was a Lombard, who had occasion to pass that that way five or six¹ times a day, or more or less, according to the affairs he had in hand ; which the lady observing and having three or four days noted his passing and still finding him more to her taste, she began, whenas she saw him pass, to give him a good countenance and show him that the honour he did her was exceeding agreeable to her. The youth, who was exceeding quick of wit, perceiving this, bethought himself that it were belike not ill done to essay to make acquaintance with the lady ; but, as he passed one day before her, according to his wont, she said to him, "My lord, whither go you thus in such haste?" And waxed all red in the face. The Lombard, who was well enough versed in the French tongue, halted and answered her respectfully, saying, "Madam, I go to the Pont Notre Dame on certain occasions of mine ; but an there be aught wherein I may serve you and you will deign to command me, you will find me ever ready to obey you, for that I have long desired to be your servant." Then, seeing the lady's eyes sparkle, he went on to press his point and tell her that it was some months since he had fallen sore enamoured of her, but that, being a stranger, he had never dared discover to her his fervent love. In fine, the lady, being yet more desirous thereof than he, appointed him that he should on the morrow be in the street betimes and that, as soon as my lord went out to repair to the parliament, he should enter the house and betake himself

¹ Lit. four or six, the equivalent Italian idiom.

straight to such a chamber, which she showed him. The Lombard punctually did her bidding and found himself abed with her, where, approving himself another gates bed-fellow than her husband, he touzled her to her heart's content and in three hours rode five posts, without changing horses. Nay, the thing went on such wise that the Lombard finding a fat soil and a dainty and the lady a husbandman who was still lustier and more gamesome, they soon agreed to keep the field tilled and in fine they waxed so privy¹ together that even in the middle of the day he came whiles to deal a spade-stroke or two.

On this wise they abode many months, till, being one day together and the Lombard wantoning it over-heedlessly with the lady, they were overheard by one of the household, who, misdoubting him of the fact, lay in wait and saw the young man come forth of his mistress's chamber; wherefore he kept a watch on the lady and letting her not out of his sight, perceived that generally of a morning, whenas my lord left the house, the gallant entered it. Accordingly, telling the thing to another, who served the husband as secretary, and leaving him on guard, he one morning, what time the Lombard was closeted with the lady, went [to the Parliament-house] and discovered all to his master. The latter straightway returned home and letting shut the house-door, stationed the two serving-men at the stair-foot, armed with halberds, so that, if the gallant escaped from his hands, they should kill him. Then, putting off his gown and taking a sword in his hand, he repaired to the chamber and knocked, calling the lady by name, who, finding herself surprised, gave herself up for lost, but nevertheless opened the door, which the husband straightway shut.

¹ Lit. "they so forgot themselves" (*si dimenticarono*); but this is probably a misprint for *si dimenticarono*.

Now the Lombard was unarmed and had already donned his doublet and hose, when my lord said to him, "I know not who thou mayst be, but, an thou tender thy life, take thy clothes and jump straightway down from this window." This seemed to the young man a buttered toast, and accordingly, taking his cassock and mantle, he leapt down into a neighbour's courtyard, fortune so favouring him that he was seen of no one. My lord doctor then shut the window and made the lady get her to bed again; then, calling up the two spies into the chamber, he said to them, "Where is he who you told me was abed with my wife, cozening knaves that you are to seek to defame an honest woman? You were certainly drunken, a pair of base churls! Go to; for this once I pardon it you, but in future look you open your eyes well." The men went down, all confounded and knowing not what to say, whilst the husband, having given his wife a severe rating and charged her fall no more into the like default, returned to the senate; but the lady, unable to forget her lover, found other means of being with him on more secret wise. Now seemeth it not to you, my lords, that this councillor was better advised than Messer Bernardino Busto or the doltish Mantuan? Certes, if he knew how to counsel others, in this most parlous case he counselled himself passing well for the salvation of his own honour and that of his wife.

Bandello

to the ingenious Messer Pietro Barignano.

The last sonnets and the very goodly madrigal, which you gave me at Montechiaro in the Brescian, I showed, whenas I was at Brescia, to our most affable friend Messer Emilio Emilii. I will not now tarry to tell you that which he and I said of your dulcet style and of your ingenious and goodly fancy. I will only say that I read them again and again, on my way between Montechiaro and Brescia, and the more I read them, the more the desire grew on me to read them afresh, the which also happened to Messer Emilio. Now, to send you a novel of my fashion, here is one which not long ago in Mantua, in the presence of my most illustrious mistress, the Lady Isabella da Este, Marchioness [of that ilk], the most agreeable Messer Domenico Campana Strascino recounted, being on his return from Milan to Rome and having that day dined in the country with Messer Mario Equicola and myself. The circumstance is historical and Dante maketh mention thereof in his Purgatory. Algaes I have been fain to put it with my other histories or novels and to dedicate it to you. Fare you well.

The Eleventh Story.

A SIENNESE TAKETH HIS WIFE IN ADULTERY AND CARRYING HER FORTH, SLAYETH HER.

Siena, my native place, did ever, as it doth yet, abound in fair and gracious ladies, amongst whom there was aforetime a very fair damsel called Pia de' Tolomei and of a very noble family. Being of age to be married, she was given to wife to Messer Nello¹ della Pietra, the richest gentleman of Siena and the most puissant of all that were in the Maremma. Pia, who had been enforced of her parents to take him, against her will, found herself in passing scurvy case, being fair and fresh and a girl of eighteen to nineteen years of age and married to a husband of over fifty, who caused her keep more fast-days than my lord judge [Ricciardo] di Chinzica taught Bartolommea Gualanda his wife or² than do many Spaniards, whenas they feed at their own charges, for that then they live on bread and water and a radish; nay, if Nello whiles gave her her pittance, he most times made a stalemate of it, ringing the changes in pure waste,³ so that the fair

¹ Dim. of Lionello, Paganello, Daniello, etc.

² See my Decameron, Vol. I. p. 238 *et seq.*

³ Lit. "spending (or wasting) deuces" (*spendendo doppioni*). A "deuce" (*doppione* or *doppio*) is a peal rung with a pair of bells. The meaning is evident.

damsel fared mighty meagrely and was the more discontent that Nello for the most part kept her at his castles in the Maremma.

Once, amongst other times, he carried her to Siena, where it behoved him sojourn some months, anent a lawsuit which he had with the city, touching a matter of boundaries; whereupon she resolved to make provision for her occasions and cast about to procure herself abundance of that whereof her husband was so chary with her and of which he kept her in such extreme dearth and having seen many young men of the city and well considered the manners, the usances, the fashions and the favour of each, she was marvellously taken with a youth of the Ghisi family, by name Agostino, from whose stock it pleaseth me to believe that our modern Mæcenas and furtherer of all the ingenious of our time, Signor Agostino Ghisi, is descended, he who is so good, so rich, so liberal, so courteous and so great a lover of men of wit and merit. Accordingly, fixing her eyes on this man and showing herself all smiling, whenassoever he might see it, she did on such wise that he perceived himself to be amorously belooked of her; whereupon, nowise shunning the flames of love, he opened wide his breast thereto and did his every endeavour so she also should perceive how he burned for her; the which was easy enough to do, for that, whenassoever she saw him, she took particular note of all his fashions. Both, then, being thus afire, Messer Agostino wrote her an amorous billet and conveying it to her hand by means of a good woman,¹ had of her the desired response. It was the common desire of both to foregather together, so they might amorously pleasure themselves; but, for the great household Messer

¹ *Una buona donna*, a common Italian euphemism for a bawd, a go-between.

Nello kept, it was well-nigh impossible at any hour for Ghisi to come in to her at home, without being seen. On the other hand, she might not depart the house nor go anywhither but she was accompanied by men and women ; wherefore both were passing ill content nor knew how to find a remedy for their affairs.

Now it chanced that Messer Nello let come from his estates a great quantity of grain for the provision of his household, being minded to pass the ensuing winter at Siena, and Pia, hearing of this, advised her lover thereof, giving him to understand what herseemed he should do ; whereat he was beyond measure rejoiced and addressed himself to do that which she had written to him. As chance would have it, the day the grain arrived, Messer Nello let call a conference of doctors of the law concerning his lawsuit at the house of the eldest of them, and at such conferences he would still be present, so that he abode there from after dinner till nightfall. The grain was brought what time he left the house and his steward, sending for sundry porters, bade carry up the sacks to the loft. Ghisi, who had clad himself porter-fashion and was so well disguised that no one in the world would have known him, came up with the rest and was called by the steward to help carry up the grain. Now he desired nothing better ; so he shouldered his sack and mounting the stair, emptied it in the granary. Then, knowing how the chambers of the house lay, for that he had viewed them otherwhiles, and contriving to be alone, he, on his way down, entered a closet and shut the door, according as it had been written him of the lady, who abode on the watch for her lover's coming.

The closet in question opened upon the bedchamber, whither she had withdrawn and where, feigning a wish to sleep, she shut herself in all alone ; then, opening the closet

door, she found Messer Agostino, who had already doffed his porter's clothes and abode in a doublet of murrey satin. As soon as she saw him, she cast her arms about his neck, kissing him a thousand times, and he on like wise embraced her very straitly. But I will not tarry particularly to recount to you the caresses which they bestowed upon each other and how many bouts they wrestled for the fall. Let each of you bethink himself what he would have done in like case, had he been truly enamoured.

Pia, having once tasted the sweetness of her lover's embracements, waxed so sore enkindled with new ardour that herseemed it was impossible to live without having her beloved Ghisi continually by her side ; and on like wise the young man found her so kind, so engaging and so lovesome that himseemed he was in paradise. After she had diverted herself awhile with her lover, she went forth the closet and opening her chamber-door, abode for a little with her women ; then, knowing that her husband was not to return home till the evening, she went back to the closet, under colour of having somewhat to do. There, then, abiding joyously together and devising of the means whereby they might avail to renew their delights in the future, so that this which had been the first time should not be the last, they debated many things and themseeming they could find no device to their liking, Ghisi said, "Only lady mine and life of my life, an you will deign to hearken and approve my counsel, methinketh it will be an easy thing for us to foregather otherwhiles and make merry together ; to which end, dear my life, meseemeth you were best make choice of one of your damsels, in whom you may trust, and to her open your heart, so that by her means I may avail to come bytimes into the house, in such disguise and after such a manner as we shall find to be best."

Pia, herseeming she had no woman in the house who was apt to their purpose, was loath to take this course; nevertheless such was the love she bore Agostino that, even had she seen manifest death therein, she could not choose but comply with him. Moreover, bethinking herself that she might anywise avail to foregather with him once and again and have more of those dulcet days which she had begun to taste and belike some goodly night also, she answered him that she would e'en consider whom she should take to confidant of their loves. These discoursements they mingled from time to time with the sweetest kisses and took, to boot, those amorous delights which are so ardently desired of lovers; and so they passed that day in the utmost contentment. Towards nightfall Pia opened the closet-door, which gave upon the stair, and there being none there at that hour, let out her lover, who, in his porter's habit, with his sack on his shoulder and his cord about his middle, descended the stair and albeit he was seen below of certain of the household, made his way out, unrecognized of any.

The lady abode sorrowful for the departure of her lover, but so well satisfied with him that herseemed in those few hours she had enjoyed far more pleasure than in all other the days of her life, whilst Ghisi, on his side, could not take his fill of thinking how great was the delight he had tasted with his Pia, who in very truth was such,¹ both by name and by nature. The lady, then, having made choice of one among her women who seemed to her apt to the purpose, discovered to her the love that was between Ghisi and herself, praying her not only to keep the thing hidden, but to address herself to aid her, so that her lover might bytimes avail to foregather with her. The damsel promised to do all she asked

¹ *i.e.* pitiful, tender-hearted (*pia*).

and to be very secret, and so by the exercise of their joint wits, Pia contrived from time to time to have Ghisi to foregather with her, clad now as a beggarman and now as a woman, and whiles they gave themselves a rare good time together; whereof both parties abode exceeding well content.

But fortune, which seldom suffereth two lovers long to enjoy their loves in peace and on a little honey oft streweth abundance of wormwood, was fain to trouble these their happy loves, for that, they taking overmuch assurance and using over-little discretion in their commerce, it chanced one day that an old serving-man of the house, who had been bred and reared with Messer Nello, saw the waiting-woman put Ghisi furtively out of the closet, disguised as a beggar; wherefore, misdoubting him of that which was toward, he lay in wait many a time, the better to spy out the truth, and one day saw Ghisi come forth the closet in woman's apparel and observed the waiting-woman use certain gestures which increased his suspicions, more by token that he plainly perceived, by his gait and fashions, that the stranger was no woman, but a man, though who it was he divined not. Accordingly, that same day he discovered all to Nello, who, thinking to wreak a cruel vengeance upon the women and daring not do aught thereof in Siena, where his wife's kinsfolk were powerful, set his law-affairs in order and suddenly departing the place with his household, betook himself to the Maremma, where he was lord and seignior.

There, after he had by dint of torments extorted the truth from the waiting-woman, he let strangle her and said to his wife, who wept pitifully, her mind misgiving her of the miserable end which awaited her, "Vile woman that thou art, weep not for that which thou hast of thy free will chosen; rather shouldst thou have wept when the thought took thee to send me to Cuckoldshaven. Commend thyself to God, an

thou have any concern for thy soul, for I will have thee die, as thou deservest." Then, leaving her in the hands of his serjeants, he bade them throttle her and accordingly the lady, crying her husband mercy and devoutly craving pardon of God for her sins, was straightway strangled without pity. This is that Pia whom the most ingenious and erudite Dante hath placed in purgatory¹ and this that I have told you I found aforetime briefly set down by my great-grandfather in a book, wherein was many another circumstance recorded of the things which befell in those parts.

¹ Ricordati di me, che son la Pia etc.—*Purg.* V. 133 etc.

Bandello

to the most illustrious lady The Lady Camilla
Scarampa e Guidobuona Greeting.

I have many a time heard debate whether of the two passions sooner slayeth a man, joy or grief, each side having their own arguments in approof of that which they avouched, as by saying that, in an immoderate passion of joy, the vital spirits were exhaled and in a great grief, were straitened and suffocated. And though the matter is daily put in question, meseemeth the suit is still sub judice and abideth undecided, for that, as our sprightly friend Messer Barignano said well in a madrigal of his,

My wish new hope shall borrow,
For folk die not of sorrow;

nevertheless, if joy bytimes have bereaved one of life, there lack not withal folk who die of grief, the which might be approved by numerous examples. But for the present I will content myself with showing, by one sole case which happened, no great while since, to a lady of your own name and blood, that grief snappeth the thread of human life; and which, for that therein not only is it seen to be certain that grief slayeth folk, but thereby is apprehended the immense love which the wife bore to her husband, I wrote down so soon as I had heard it. I had gone, this past Carnival-time,

into your native country of Asti, where I sojourned sundry days in the house of Signor Count Giovan Bartolomeo Tizzone, your cousin and governor of that city for Maximilian Cesar,¹ and there, it being debated of the aforesaid question, Signor Giovanni Rotario recounted the circumstance of which I speak. Wherefore, having, as I said before, written it down, I would not have it seen without your illustrious name; for that, speaking as it doth of the Lady Camilla Scarampa, meseemed meet that it should be given and dedicated to the Lady Camilla Scarampa, and I am the fainer to send it to you that the lady your mother and Signor Aloisio Scarampo, your brother, who were present at the narration, avouched the said Lady Camilla to have been of your blood and that on her account you were given the name you bear. The which will be a reason why this my novel cannot be other than dear to you and it pleaseth me to believe that it will be the occasion of procuring me the sight of some goodly composition of your fashion, meseeming it is an age since I had of you or letters or verses, albeit it should e'en behove you whiles bethink yourself of me, who am so much your servant. But how cometh it that you have never made any manner of mention in your writings of so noble and piteous a death as that of this your kinswoman, who in truth deserveth to be kept alive in the remembrance of posterity? Fare you well.

¹ *i.e.* the Emperor Maximilian.

The Twelfth Story.

THE LADY CAMILLA SCARAMPA, HEARING
HER HUSBAND'S HEAD TO HAVE BEEN
STRICKEN OFF, DIETH FORTHRIGHT.

The question which you, gentlemen, have courteously debated amongst yourselves leadeth me to tell you,—not a story, for I will not give that name to my narrative,—but a brief and piteous case, whereby you will see that one dieth not only for excess of joy, but eke for grief. Signor Costantino Aranite, having been expelled from his dominions by the Emperor of the Turks and being a very near kinsman of the Marquess Guglielmo of Monferrato, withdrew to Casale, where, the Marquess being yet a child, he governed the marquisate in his name. It befell in those days that Signor Scarampo degli Scarnpi, a very rich and noble family of venerable antiquity in that city, who had to wife a most fair and lovesome lady of the same house, Camilla by name, came to words with a gentleman of Monferrato touching the boundaries of their respective seigniories, for he had a very fine estate in Monferrato, as well as sundry goodly castlewicks in the Langhe.¹ Now in the days when Charles VIII., King of France, passed into Italy and went

¹ The Langhe (sing. Langa) is a small province of Piedmont, between Alba and Ceva.

to take the kingdom of Naples, this said Scarampo was in pleading at Casale, before the Marquess's council, to maintain his seigniorial rights, which he of Monferrato sought to usurp upon him, and seeing that that justice was not done him to which himseemed he had a right and that his adversary had more favour, he complained thereof twice or thrice to the Marchioness and to Signor Costantino, but, being unhearkened, was sore despited therefor. He was much richer and more puissant than he against whom he pleaded, for that, as I have said, he had many goodly places both in the Astesan¹ and elsewhere; wherefore he determined to do himself justice, considering not that for the fief he had in Monferrato he was the Marquess's subject and vassal and would be punished by the law for every offence he should commit against his authority. Methinketh he looked only to the age of the Marquess, who was yet a boy, and considered not that Signor Costantino, being a newly-made governor, studied to have himself obeyed and to be feared, so he might acquire authority. Accordingly, mustering a multitude of men from his other places, he fell in at unawares upon his adversary's castlewick and made reprisals thereon, in course whereof many things were plundered by his followers and sundry folk slain.

As soon as the thing was known at Casale, Signor Scarampo was in the marquess's name forbidden to proceed farther and it was commanded him restore all that had been taken and appear in person before the marchional council. Scarampo, however, contemning his lord's commandment, not only did not restore that which his men had plundered, but returning anew to his adversary's place, arms in hand, did worse than before and concerned not himself to appear.

¹ *i.e.* the province of Asti.

Signor Costantino, hearing this and himseeming it was all to the shame of the lord marquess and the detriment of the marchional jurisdiction and that little account was made of himself, let make a fresh ordinance, commanding him within five days' space to present himself personally at Casale, under pain of being deprived of his fief and losing his head. Scarampo, suffering himself to be governed by choler and despite and scorning this new commandment, went on to do far worse than before ; nay, thinking to make good his retreat to his castles beyond the Po, he went and burned his enemy's village and put all to sack and ruin. Signor Costantino, having in a manner foreseen these excesses, had gotten him folk in readiness and coming suddenly upon his unruly vassal, laid siege to his castle, ere he might avail to depart thence, as he had designed to do.

The Lady Camilla, his wife, hearing this ill news, made every endeavour to throw victual into the castle, but, for the strait and diligent guard kept by the enemy, might nowise avail to communicate with her husband ; wherefore, knowing that he needed nought but bread, she was sore concerned and misdoubting her of that which betided, despatched one of her men post haste to Louis, Duke of Orleans in France, beseeching him to provide with all possible speed for Signor Scarampo's safety. The Duke, who held the latter very dear, straightway despatched a chamberlain of his with letters under his hand to the Marchioness of Monferrato, praying her of her favour not to suffer Signor Costantino to proceed farther against Signor Scarampo and engaging to reduce him to obedience and make him repair all his adversary's losses. The marchioness, as soon as she had the duke's messenger, despatched him with his letters to Signor Costantino, who was then in treaty with Signor Scarampo, and the latter, having no more victual in the castle and

having eaten his horses and whatsoever else was there, surrendered at discretion.

The chamberlain presented his lord's letters, but Signor Costantino, moved by I know not what demon, had no sooner read them than he let smite off Signor Scarampo's head in his own castle; the which was afterward the cause of his own ruin, for that three years had not passed ere Louis, Duke of Orleans, was made King of France and took the Duchy of Milan; whereupon Signor Costantino was constrained to flee from Monferrato, for that the king had sworn to put him to death, as he fell into his hands. But let us return to the Lady Camilla, who, hearing this cruel news of her husband, whom she loved as her very life, fell straightway on her knees and praying God to pardon her sins, besought Him to vouchsafe her death. Certes, a marvellous thing it was to see this fairest lady, in the act of praying God, drop dead in the presence of her folk; for that no sooner had she said, "Lord God, since my consort is dead, leave Thou me no longer on life," than her heart was straitened upon her on such wise that, without another word, she fell to the ground. Her serving-men and women, deeming her aswoon, came round her and studied with various means to recall her vital spirits; but, it presently appearing by manifest tokens that she was dead, she was buried with general lamentation and grief of all.

Bandello

to Signor Mario Equicola d'Abello Greeting.

Strange and whiles fearsome are the shifts of fortune, which daily we see betide, and we, availing not to find the cause which bringeth them to pass, abide full of wonderment thereat. But, if we believe, as we are bounden to believe, that there falleth no leaf of a tree without the will and permission of Him who created all things from nought, we must bethink ourselves that the judgments of God are unfathomable abysses and study, in so far as human frailty permitteth us, to shun dangers and perils, whilst supplicating the Divine compassion to keep us therefrom. Let us leave fools to do homage to Fortune and praise the satiric poet who said, "Fortune, we men make a god of thee and set thee in heaven." Now I send you a story of a marvellous chance, full of astonishment and pitifulness, which befell of late at Naples, according to that which the amiable and accomplished youth, Messer Giovantommaso Peggio, recounted, no great while ago, in the house of the Lord Abbot di Gonzaga. Be pleased, when you have perused it, to read it to our common mistress, Madam Isabella da Este, Marchioness of Mantua, and commend me to her good graces. You will also have the kindness to impart it to her most debonair damozels, who were wont to take such pleasure in reading my trifles, not forgetting our most amiable and erudite Messer Gian Giacomo Calandro and my merry friend Signor Girolamo Negro, so greatly beloved of me. Fare you well.

The Thirteenth Story.

ANTONIO PERILLO AFTER MANY TRAVAILS
ESPOUSETH HIS MISTRESS AND IS WITH
HER SMITTEN DEAD BY LIGHTNING ON
THEIR WEDDING NIGHT.

There was at Naples, no great while ago, one Antonio Perillo, a young man of very honourable family, who, being left rich by his father's death, gave himself immoderately unto gaming and in a little while acquired the reputation of a cozenor. Albeit the dice were his chief study, he nevertheless became enamoured of Carmosina, the daughter of Pietro Minio, a very rich merchant, and wrought on such wise that the fair damsel became aware of his passion. She, seeing him very comely and still arrayed in rich and elegant apparel, freely opened her innocent breast to the amorous flames, and Antonio speedily perceived that his love was returned. Nevertheless, he was so given to gaming that on no account might he avail to wean himself therefrom ; wherefore the heedless youth in a little time squandered well-nigh his whole patrimony. Withal he forbore not to essay an he might have Carmosina to wife ; but her father, knowing the ill life he led, gave him to understand that, he being a gambler and having diced away the most part of his good, he would on no wise give him his daughter. Antonio, seeing himself refused on account of his love for play and of his poverty, abode sore chagrined, more by token that, extreme as was his poverty,

he had never till then perceived to what sore straits he had brought himself by his disorderly appetites ; but this repulse opened his eyes and made him see that he had been deservedly rejected ; wherefore he became beyond measure woeful and inwardly cursing his ill luck, like a man beside himself, dared not present himself in public.

At last, having bethought himself anew, he altogether forswore play and with the aid of sundry kinsfolk, got together a good sum of money, being resolved from gambler to turn merchant and betake himself to Alexandria of Egypt, there to traffic and labour to such purpose that he should return home rich. Accordingly, departing Naples, he took ship for Egypt, but the vessel on board which he had embarked had scarce fared fifty miles on the high seas when there arose of a sudden divers contrary winds, which, being each beyond measure tempestuous, so strained and buffeted the ship that the mariners more than once gave themselves up for lost. Algates, like men of mettle as they were, they used every art and endeavour in so extreme a peril ; but, being assailed by a very high sea, they were at last overmastered by the tempest and constrained to let the ship scud whereas the wind drove it. They abode three days in this case, when, as they drew near unto Barbary, the sea began, towards nightfall, to subside ; but, darkness coming on, what while they took heart again and thought to have outweathered the fury of the storm, they were fiercely attacked by the galleys of a certain Moorish corsair and being all half-dead for long travail, were taken without resistance and carried prisoners to Tunis.

The news of the loss of the ship and the captivity of all aboard soon reached Naples, and Carmosina, who abode beyond measure woeful for the departure of her lover, hearing that he had fallen into the hands of the Moors, long and bitterly bewailed this calamity and was like to die of grief.

Now Pietro Minio, Carmosina's father, was used every year to make a voyage into Barbary and on his return, to ransom ten or twelve Christian prisoners, from whom, an they had the means, he in due time recovered the money advanced ; but, if they were poor folk, he for the love of God freely let them go, without any payment, whither they would. Antonio Perillo had been a slave more than a year when Minio bade his factors in Tunis redeem half a score prisoners, according to wont, the which was done, and among those thus ransomed was Antonio, but he was grown so bearded that Minio knew him not, nor did he choose to make himself known. They were all carried to Naples, where Carmosina straightway knew her lover and gave him to know by signs that she had recognized him ; whereat he abode exceeding well pleased. She after, by means of a woman of the household, contrived to speak with him and said to him, after many words, "Since my father hath refused thee to son-in-law, for that thou art poor, I will furnish thee with monies, wherewith to betake thee anew to trafficking and enrich thyself, so thou mayst live honourably and at the same time take me to wife, for that I will never have other husband than thyself." Antonio thanked the damsel and promised her all she asked ; whereupon she, finding means to rob her mother of jewels and her father of a good sum of money, gave the whole to her lover, who, paying the factors the amount of his ransom, took ship a second time and set sail for Alexandria.

In this second voyage fortune was favourable to him and he applied himself with such diligence to traffic and to gain that the report reached Naples how he was altogether changed and prospered exceeding well in his affairs. Accordingly, after awhile, his venture having so well succeeded to his hand that he was grown richer than

before, he set himself to buy back the estates he had sold, still sending monies to the house of an uncle of his, who did his occasions; then, returning to Naples, he speedily acquired the name of a man of wealth and consideration, the which afforded his Carmosina great satisfaction; wherefore, himseeming he should no longer be rejected, he caused anew require Minio of his daughter's hand. Minio, seeing Antonio to have become, for the love of Carmosina, another man from that which he had erst been, consented to the match and Antonio accordingly, espousing his hardly-earned Carmosina, applied himself to the ordinance of that which was needful. The nuptials were celebrated with the utmost magnificence and the two lovers accounted themselves the happiest creatures in the world. Then, as they discoursed together, Antonio recounted to his fair bride the grief he had suffered, whenas he was rejected for poverty, his resolution to change his manner of life and the miserable servitude he had endured in Barbary, whilst she for pity kissed him oftentimes, weeping tenderly the while.

The marriage was after blessed by the priest and Antonio carried his beloved bride to his own house, where he made a sumptuous banquet to their kinsfolk and friends, both he and she with infinite desire expecting the coming of the night, whenas they hoped in some measure to assuage the fire of their most fervent love. But fortune, repenting her of having, after so many perils and such great fatigues, comforted these two lovers, changed these blithe and joyful nuptials into bitterest lamentation. It was in the beginning of the month of June, when, supper ended, the newly-married pair were put to bed about two of the night,¹

¹ *i.e.* 10 p.m.

and needs must we believe that they tenderly embraced each other and together amorously took the long-desired delight; but they had not been an hour abed when there arose a turbulent and tempestuous wind, which brought on a frightful storm of thunder and lightning, together with an exceeding heavy and violent rain, and as it went still thundering and lightening, the two lovers were overtaken in their bed of the fiery arrows of the levin and stricken on such wise that they were both found dead, naked and straitly embraced; wherefore there arose an exceeding great lamentation in the house and lasted all the night. Next morning, the dreadful event having gotten wind, to the general sorrow of all Naples, the two ill-fortuned lovers were reverently laid in one same sepulchre, upon which were graven the following verses, together with many other epitaphs, both Latin and Italian;

Ye happy lovers, in tranquillity
 That 'joy your loves, unhindered of dismay,
 Consider if there were afflictions aye
 To match with those which in myself you see.

I sought to take in Hymen's net with me
 My dear-loved bride, and ravished straight away
 From hope, unresting, found myself astray
 Amidst a thousand woes by land and sea:

And when at last my hope began to flower,
 My plant of bliss was all by fortune's hate
 Uprooted in the evening of its prime;

For thundering Jove in one same woeful hour
 Me and my lady slew. Ah cruel fate!
 Who lucklesser than I in this our time?

Bandello

to the most learned Aldo Pio Manuzio¹ of Rome.

Since you departed Milan, whereas you were lodged in the house of the very worshipful Signor Giacomo Antiquario, I have given you no account of the matter which you left in my charge, and therein I have been governed by the advice of the said Signor Antiquario, of whom you know how much he loveth you and how ardently he desireth your honour and profit. Now by those means and favours² whereof we erst spoke together, I have so ordered your affair that the issue will be such as you desire. May God on like wise grant you to obtain that for which you are in treaty in other quarters, so we may in our day see an academy, which shall take measures for the maintenance in as great perfection as may be of good letters, Greek and Latin, in Italy, where they presently flourish. The which will render your name eternal, seeing that you first lent, ay, and still do lend, marvellous help to the studious in the matter of the printing of books in the one and the other tongue, and that not only by the beauty and clearness of your characters and the correctness of your impressions, but also by your daily diligence in publishing all the good authors that may be had. And in this you spare neither monies nor pains, a

¹ The renowned printer, commonly known by his Latinized name of Aldus.

² *Favori*, i.e. influences, protections.

thing that in truth showeth the greatness and excellence of your mind. Again, what shall I say of the vulgar tongue, the which was in a manner buried and the books thereof so ill corrected that, if Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio had seen their writings, as they were imprinted, they would not have known them, until you restored them to their native purity. But if, as is hoped, the institution of the academy ensue, the Latin and Greek tongues and the vernacular will regain their purity and the liberal arts be restored to their pristine lustre. Now, knowing that it will pleasure you to hear how my novels go waxing, you having erst read and commended sundry of them, and exhorted me to collect as many thereof as might be, I must tell you that I have already written many, whereof I send you one related no great while agone by the magnificent Messer Lorenzo Gritti, he being here in the house of Signora Ippolita Sforza e Bentivoglia, who was presently in childbed. This, then, it is my wish, shall still be yours and be read under your name, so I may in some measure make a beginning with the payment of the many obligations which I owe you; for with what can I avail to requite you, save with those poor and mean creatures which are born of my wit? It remaineth to me to remind you that you will be pleased to avail yourself of me, in all that is possible unto me, as of your creature, assuring you that, whenas I have brought these my novels to an end, I will send them to you alone, that you may make them worthy of the public, and that as well to do that whereof you have required me as because I know, to boot, that they will of you be given forth, if not as they deserve for their goodness, at the least as it behoveth unto the name of the most affable and erudite Aldo. Fare you well and be mindful of me.

The Fourteenth Story.

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VENICE ARE HONOUR- ABLY COZENED BY THEIR WIVES.

In Venice, my native place, a very rich city and abounding, as any other of Italy, in fair and agreeable ladies, there were, in the days when Francesco Foscari, a very wise prince, ruled the principality,¹ two young gentlemen, whereof one was called Girolamo Bembo and the other Anselmo Barbadico. Between these two, as often happeneth, there was a mortal enmity and so fierce and rancorous a hatred that they still studied with secret snares and practice to do each other shame and injury by every means in their power ; and to such a height had their feuds and their dissensions grown that it seemed well-nigh impossible to bring them to make peace with each other. Now it befell that they both at one same time took wife, and as chance would have it, they married two most noble and very fair and lovesome damsels, who, having been reared and fostered under one same nurse, loved each other as sisterly as if they had been born of one mother. Anselmo's wife, who was called Isotta, was the daughter of Messer Marco Gradenigo, a man held in very great esteem in our city and numbered amongst the procurators of St. Mark, who were not then so numerous as they are nowadays, for that only the wisest men and those

¹ *i.e.* was doge.

esteemed most excellent were elected unto so noble and weighty a dignity and none was appointed by reason of ambition or for monies. Luzia, the other damsel, who had taken to husband Girolamo Bembo, the other of the two young men, was the daughter of Messer Gian Francesco Valerio, a man of knightly rank and well-versed in polite letters, who had gone divers embassies for his native state and was presently returned from Rome, where he had, to the exceeding satisfaction of all the city, filled the office of ambassador¹ at the court of the Supreme Pontiff.

The young ladies, coming, after they were married, to know the enmity that reigned between their husbands, abode sore chagrined and afflicted, themseeming impossible to renounce that amicable commerce to which they had been used from their tenderest years. Nevertheless, being both discreet and prudent, they resolved, not to give occasion to their husbands to scold at home, to leave their wonted privacy and loving familiarity and not to foregather, save at fitting times and places; and in this fortune was favourable enough unto them, for that their mansions not only neighboured, but adjoined one the other and each had a little garden in the rear, which gardens were divided only by one slight hedge, so they might see each other daily and oftentimes converse. Moreover, the people of the two households were wont, so but they were unseen of their masters, to use very familiarly together, the which was exceeding agreeable to the two friends, for that, whenas their husbands were abroad, they might at their leisure enjoy each other's company, by means of the garden; and this they did very often.

¹ Lit. orator (*oratore*), i.e. spokesman, the title anciently given to ambassadors from the Italian states to the Holy See.

Now, the thing standing on this wise, there passed some three years without either of the two ladies conceiving with child, and meanwhile, Anselmo, oftentimes beholding the lovesome charms of Madam Luzia, became so sore enamoured of her that himseemed he might not fare well what day he fed not his eyes awhile upon her sight. Luzia, who was quick and subtle-witted, was not slow to observe the amorous glances which he cast at her ; wherefore, feigning neither to love him nor, on the other hand, to disregard him altogether, she kept him thus in suspense between the two, so she might the better espy to what end this his pursuit should tend ; algates, she seemed to see him with pleasure rather than otherwise. On the other hand the goodly manners, the discreet fashions and the delightsome beauty of Madam Isotta pleased Messer Girolamo as much as ever lady pleased lover ; wherefore, he knowing not to live without her sweet sight, it was an easy matter for Isotta, who was exceeding shrewd and well-advised, to perceive this new love. Being very virtuous and discreet and loving her husband with all her heart, she gave Girolamo neither more nor less countenance than she was wont to do unto whatsoever townsman or stranger saw her and was unknown of her. But he waxed hourly more inflamed and losing all control over himself, as one whose heart was transfixed of Love's shaft, could turn his mind to nought but her.

The two ladies were wont to go to mass every day and well-nigh always to the Church of San Fantino, for that those who rise late may there hear mass said up to midday. They sat somewhat removed one from other and the two lovers were still to be found pacing the aisles, one on this side and the other on that, so that both acquired the name of jealous, all seeing them fare thus after their wives ; but, on the contrary, they sought to send each other into Cornwall with-

out ship.¹ Now it befell that the two ladies, each as yet knowing nought of her friend's case, determined to advise each other of these enamourments, lest there should, in time to come, betide aught that might anywise tend to mar the goodwill they bore one another. Accordingly, one day, whenas neither of the husbands was at home, they repaired, according to their wont, to converse with each other over the garden-hedge, and no sooner were they come thither than they both at once fell a-laughing and after the accustomed loving salutations, Madam Luzia began on this wise, "Isotta, dearest sister mine, thou knowest not yet that I have to tell thee of thy husband the finest piece of news was ever heard." "And I," rejoined Madam Isotta, "I can e'en tell thee of thine a story which will make thee no little marvel and belike fall, to boot, into a mighty great choler." And each saying to other, "What is it? What is it?" both in the end told that which their husbands went seeking; whereat, albeit they were full of despite against the latter, they laughed amain. Then, themseeming they were apt and sufficient (as in effect they were) to stay their husbands' appetites, they fell to blaming these latter and to saying that they well deserved to be sent to Corneto, as indeed they would have been, were they as dishonest women as themselves were little discreet and virtuous; and anon, after much discourse of the matter,

¹ *i.e.* to send them to Cuckoldshaven; a wordplay turning upon the Italian name (*Cornovaglia*) of Cornwall, the first half (*cornio*) of which signifies a horn, the traditional emblem of cuckoldry. The names of several towns, such as Corneto (in the Roman Maremma), Cornazzano and Cornigliano (in the Milanese), of which the word *cornio* forms part, are also used by Bandello and other Italian writers in the same sense (*e.g.* to have the freedom of Corneto, to become a burgess of Cornazzano, to make the journey to Cornigliano without leaving home, etc., etc.) and for the same reason.

they came to the conclusion that they were best await with one accord that which their husbands should proceed to seek farther; wherefore, having taken order of that which them-seemed most expedient and appointed with each other to advise together every day of all that should betide, they departed the gardens and applied themselves for the nonce to ensnare their lovers as most they might with blithe and dulcet looks and give them hopes of compliance with their wishes. Accordingly, whenas they chanced to see them at San Fantino or elsewhere about Venice, they showed them a smiling favour and feigned themselves all blithe and bold.

The two lovers, seeing the gracious countenance shown them by their mistresses, bethought themselves that, there being no means of speaking with these latter, needs must they make use of letters, and having found certain brokeresses, with whom our city still useth to abound, each wrote his lady-love an amorous epistle, to the effect that he ardently desired to have privy speech of her; and in a few days, there being no great difference of time between the twain, they despatched them. The roguish ladies, on receipt of the billets, at the first feigned themselves somewhat froward to the procuresses, according as they had agreed together, but ultimately gave them an answer which was rather hopeful than otherwise. Now they had shown each other the letters, even as they had received them, and had laughed together amain thereover. Then, themseeming their device should stand them in exceeding good stead, each kept her husband's letter for herself and they agreed together that, without doing each other any hurt, they would play their husbands a fine trick, on such wise as you shall presently hear; to wit, that each, after suffering herself to be sufficiently importuned, should send to her lover, declaring herself ready to comply

with his wishes, providing the thing might be kept secret nor ever be known and if he had courage to come to her at home at such times as her husband was abroad, meaning still by night, for that by day it might not be done, without their being seen. Moreover, the two astute and quick-witted ladies took order together, with the aid of their serving-women, whom they had made privy to their plot, that each should enter the other's house, by way of the garden and there, shutting herself in a chamber without light, await her own husband nor anywise suffer herself to be seen or known.

This ordinance taken and established, Madam Luzia appointed her lover to enter the house at four of the ensuing night,¹ by the ground-floor door, which he would find open and where the servant would be ready to guide him to her chamber, inasmuch as Messer Girolamo was that evening to take ship and go by night to Padua, which should he fail to do, she would advertise him thereof. Madam Isotta, on her side, sent to say the like to Messer Girolamo, assigning him for five of the night, for that Messer Anselmo was to sup and sleep with certain of his friends at Murano. The two lovers accounted themselves the luckiest men that were aye, themseeming that, in planting, as each thought to do, the horns on the enemy's beaver, they did as great a feat of arms as if they had taken Jerusalem from the Saracens or ousted the Grand Turk from the empery of Constantinople; wherefore they could scarce contain themselves for excess of gladness and thought each hour a day till the night should come. The evening, so much desired of all four, come at the last, the exulting husbands gave (or at the least thought to have given) their wives to believe

¹ *i.e.* the fourth hour after sunset.

that needs must they lie that night abroad on account of certain matters of importance.

The crafty ladies, who saw the ship a-sail on the right tack, feigned to credit all and the young men, taking each his barge (or as we style it, gondola) and supping at certain taverns, went a-pleasuring about the canals of the city, against the coming of the appointed hour. Meanwhile the two foster-sisters foregathered in the garden towards the third hour of the night, and after they had talked and laughed a while together, each entered the other's house and was carried by her friend's serving-woman to her mistress's chamber, where, lights being kindled, she diligently applied herself to observe how the room was situate and that which was therein and very minutely committed to memory everything of note which she could espy there; after which, putting out the light, she awaited the coming of her husband, trembling the while. On like wise, at four of the night, Madam Luzia's waiting-woman posted herself at the door, to await the arrival of Messer Anselmo, who, no great while after, came thither and being blithely admitted by the maid, was carried by her to the chamber and guided to the bed. All was dark as a wolf's throat, wherefore there was no danger that he should know his wife, more by token that the two ladies were alike in stature and speech, so that in that darkness they might uneth have been distinguished one from other.

Anselmo accordingly put off his clothes and being lovingly received by the lady, took his own wife in his arms, thinking to embrace Girolamo's wife, and kissed her a thousand times and more and was as often kissed of her in return. Then, addressing themselves to amorous disport, they played sundry bouts at wrestling and still, to Anselmo's extreme pleasure, it fell to the lady's lot to lose. Girolamo

on like wise made his appearance at five of the night and being brought by the serving-maid to the chamber, lay with his own wife, more to his own satisfaction than that of the lady. Now the two young men, thinking to hold their mistresses in their arms and intent upon showing themselves fresh and lusty cavaliers, wrought much more prowess of their persons than they were used and embraced their wives with such ardour and amorous vigour that these latter, as it pleased our Lord God and as the delivery in due season made manifest, abode with child of two goodly boys ; whereat both ladies, having never yet borne children, abode overjoyed.

This commerce endured a good while, on such wise that few weeks passed but the two couples foregathered, nor withal did the husbands anywise perceive that they were duped ; nay, they had not the least suspicion thereof and they might the less avail to have any that there was never light brought into the chamber and the ladies still excused themselves from giving them tryst by day. By this time each of the latter was grown great of the belly, whereat the two husbands were marvellously rejoiced, each being firmly persuaded that he had set the Corneto crest¹ on the other's head ; but each had e'en tilled his own glebe and not that of another and the water had run its due course for the watering of its own demesne. The fair and faithful friends, seeing themselves thus waxen big in this amorous counterdance, began to take counsel together on what wise they might avail to withdraw from that emprise, fearing lest some scandal ensue thereof, which might be the occasion of adding to the enmity which prevailed between their husbands ; and whilst they were in this mind, there befell somewhat which, without

¹ *i.e.* the horns.

their advisement, opened to them the way of ending the business, but not on such wise as they desired.

There abode on the canal, not far from their houses, a very fair and charming young lady, who had not yet accomplished her twentieth year and who had a little before been left a widow by the death of Messer Niccolo Delfino, her husband. She was the daughter of Messer Giovanni Moro and was called Gismonda; and over and above the dowry had of her father, which was more than ten thousand sequins, she found herself possessed of a good sum of money, jewels, silver plate and other gear given her of her husband by way of superdower. Of her Aloisio Foscari, the Doge's nephew, was ardently enamoured and did his every endeavour to have her to wife; wherefore he courted her all day long, pressing his suit with all diligence and daily soliciting her with letters and messages, and did and said to such purpose that she consented to give him audience one night at a window which gave upon a little street or alley. Aloisio, beyond measure rejoiced at this much-desired news, betook himself all alone to the lady's house, between five and six of the night, carrying with him a rope-ladder, for that the window was very high. Coming to the trysting-place, he made the signal which had been appointed him and waited for his mistress to throw him down a twine, according as it had been agreed, for the drawing up of the ladder; the which was quickly done, and he, making the ladder well fast to the twine, not long after saw it drawn up. Gismonda, having the end of the ladder in hand, bound it firmly to I know not what and signalled her lover to mount; whereupon Aloisio, emboldened by love, briskly climbed up and being come well-nigh to the window, of his over-haste to enter and embrace the lady, who was at the casement, or whatsoever else might have been the cause thereof, fell backward and strove twice or thrice, but in vain,

to grip the ladder; however, this much it availed him that he fell not with his full weight upon the pavement of the quay; else had he doubtless been killed on the spot; nevertheless, such and so sore was the shock that he broke well-nigh all his bones and made a deep wound in his head. The hapless lover seeing himself so miserably fallen, albeit he accounted himself a dead man, yet the true and fervent love which he bore the young widow was mightier in him than was the exceeding dolour of that most grievous fall and the weakness of his body, all bruised and broken and well-nigh crippled. Accordingly, raising himself as best he might and holding his head fast with his hands, so the blood might not drop therefrom and give occasion for any impeachment of his mistress's honour, he dragged himself along the quay towards the houses of Anselmo and Girolamo aforesaid. Having made his way thither with great difficulty and being overcome with cruel anguish, he could fare no farther and swooning, let himself sink to the earth, as he were dead, on such wise that, as he lay with the blood streaming from the wound in his head, whoso saw him had not known him for other than a dead man.

Madam Gismonda, woeful beyond measure for this grievous mishap and sore afraid lest her unhappy lover should have broken his neck, was somewhat reassured, when she saw him gone, and drew up the ladder into the chamber. As for the ill-starred Aloisio, he had scarce fallen down aswoon, when up came one of the officers of the watch with his serjeants. Finding the young man lying upon the ground and knowing him for Aloisio Foscari, he caused take him up and believing him to be dead, commanded that he should be carried to a church hard by, the which was done. Now, considering the place where he had found him, he strongly suspected that either Girolamo Bembo or Anselmo

Barbadico, before whose houses himseemed the homicide had been committed, had slain him, more by token that he had heard I know not what scuffling of feet at one of their doors. Accordingly, he divided his troop into two parts, one of which he despatched in one direction and the other in another, and studied, as best he might, to surround the two houses. Now, as chance would have it, he found both the doors left open, through the carelessness of the serving-women, the two lovers having that same night entered each the other's house, to lie with their mistresses; wherefore, hearing the trampling and noise made by the officers about the house, the ladies incontinent sprang out of bed and taking up their clothes, made off by the garden-way, each to her own house, without being seen, and there tremblingly awaited the issue of the affair.

Girolamo and Anselmo, unknowing what the noise might be, were taken at unawares by the officers of the watch, what while they made haste to clothe themselves in the dark, on such wise that Girolamo fell into the hands of the police in Anselmo's chamber and Anselmo in that of Girolamo; whereat the captain and serjeants no little marvelled, all knowing the enmity which reigned between them. But, many torches being kindled and the two gentlemen brought forth of the house, far greater was the astonishment of these latter when they knew themselves to have been taken, well-nigh naked, each in the other's house; and how much despite was added thereunto each may tacitly conceive and credit for himself; but above all, they abode beyond all belief enraged against their innocent wives and eyed each other askance. With this they were carried off to prison, where they first bethought them to enquire the cause of their arrest and presently understanding that they were imprisoned as murderers of Aloisio Foscari and robbers of each other,

they were sore chagrined, for all they were neither assassins nor thieves, seeing that all Venice would learn that they, whose mortal enmity was very manifest, were become fellows in that whereof fellowship should nowise be; and albeit they could not brook to speak together, as those who hated one another to the death, natheless, they both had their minds fixed upon one same thought. At last being full of the bitterest rancour against their wives and the place being dark, whereas no light of the sun might enter, the which relieved them of great part of their shamefastness, they came, I know not how, to discourse together and pledging themselves with the most awful oaths to discover to one another the truth how they came to be taken each in his neighbour's chamber, each frankly avowed the course he had holden to get possession of the other's wife and minutely recounted all that had passed. Accordingly, accounting their wives for two of the foulest strumpets in all Venice and forgetting, in their despite against them, their own old and cruel enmity, they made peace with each other and became friends, and themseeming they might never more brook the sight of men nor go barefaced about Venice, they abode in such chagrin and affliction that death had been far welcomer to them than life. Then, seeing no resource to which they could turn for comfort or support in their tribulation nor any remedy within their power and being sunken in the utmost despair, they conceived a scheme whereby themseemed they had found the way to rid themselves at one stroke of trouble and shame and life; to wit, they agreed, with a certain fable of their fashion, to feign themselves the authors of Aloisio Foscari's death and having, after various discourse, stablished themselves in this their fell and cruel purpose and hourly approving it more and more, they waited but to be examined by the ministers of justice.

Meanwhile, Foscaro¹ had, as we have said, been deposited for dead in a church and straitly commended to the chaplain thereof, who, letting lay him amiddleward the church, kindled two tapers, one on his either side; then, all the company having departed, master priest also determined to betake himself for less unease to his bed, which should yet be warm, and sleep out the rest of the night; but himseeming the tapers, which were not entire and very short, might not burn more than two or three hours, he took two whole ones and set them in the place of those which were well-nigh consumed, so that, should any kinsman of the dead man or other come thither, it might appear that he had had good care of him. Then as he was about to depart, he saw the corpse move somewhat and himseemed also, looking it in the face, that the eyes had opened a little; whereat he was no little amazed and was like to cry out and take to his heels. However, he took heart of grace and going up to the supposed dead man, laid his hand on his breast and feeling the heart beat, was certified that he was not dead, albeit, for the great quantity of blood he had lost, he judged but little life could harbour in him, and that exceeding feeble. Accordingly, calling a comrade of his, who was already gone to bed, he with his aid and that of a clerk, carried Foscaro

¹ Singular of *Foscari*. The plural of a surname is, in strictness, always used by the Italians in speaking of a man by his full name, *dei* being understood between the Christian and surname, as *Aloisio (dei) Foscari*, Aloisio of the Foscaros or Foscaro family; whilst, when he is denominated by the surname alone, it is used in the singular, *il* (the) being understood; e.g. (Il) Bandello, (Il) Foscaro, i.e. the particular Bandello or Foscaro in question for the nonce. This rule, however, is constantly violated by our author and his contemporaries.

as softliest he might to his own lodging, which adjoined the church, and fetching a surgeon who dwelt therenigh, willed him diligently examine the wound in the head. The surgeon, having skilfully and carefully examined the wound and purged it as best he might of the already corrupt blood, knew it to be not mortal and applied oils and other precious unguents thereto, on such wise that Aloisio well-nigh altogether recovered his senses ; moreover, he anointed all his bruised body with a certain very comfortable ointment and left him to repose.

The priest slept at his ease till the morrow, when he betook himself, with the good news of Foscaro's life, to the captain by whom he had been given into his charge, but found him gone to the palace of St. Mark to speak with the doge ; whither he also repaired and being admitted into the ducal chamber, rejoiced the prince with assurance of his nephew's life, with the news of whose death the captain had but then sore saddened him. The doge commanded that one of the night-marshals¹ should in due season betake himself, together with two renowned surgeons and him who had already tended his nephew, whereas the sick man lay, as well that he might thoroughly inform himself of the case as that the three physicians might see and provide all that behoved unto the sick man's well-being. Accordingly, whenas it seemed to him time, the magistrate and the physicians set out and fetching him who had first tended the wounded man, understood from him that the wound, though dangerous, was yet not mortal and betaking them to the priest's lodging, entered the chamber where the young man lay. There finding him awake, albeit yet somewhat dazed, they proceeded diligently

¹ *Signori della notte*, nearly answering to the French "Commissary of Police."

to question him how the thing had befallen, bidding him freely tell all, for that the first leach had already certified them that his wound was not a sword-hurt, but that he had either fallen down from on high or had been stricken with some mace ; nay, he held it for certain, from that which he had been able to learn, that he had broken his head by falling from a high place. Aloisio, taken at unawares by the physician's questions, discovered, without overmuch consideration, the circumstance of his fall, what was the height of the window and to whose house it pertained ; but scarce had he said it ere he repented him sore of having spoken, and of the extreme chagrin which befell him therefor, the strayed vital spirits on such wise revived in him that he incontinent elected rather to die than to say aught which might redound to his mistress's dishonour. The marshal asked him what he went seeking at that hour at Madam Gismonda's house and at so high a window, whereupon, unable, by reason of the asker's authority, to keep silence and unknowing what to say, he straightway determined in himself that, as his tongue had erred by unconsidered speech, his body should bear the penalty ; wherefore, rather than sully in any particular her honour whom he loved more than his proper soul, he resolved to put his own life and honour into the hands of the law and said, " I have already said, nor do I offer to unsay it, that I fell from the window of Madam Gismonda Mora's house, and that which I went seeking there at that hour I will e'en, since in any case I am a dead man, tell you. Thinking that Madam Gismonda, (who is said to be exceeding rich in jewels and monies) being young and a widow and without men in her house to defend her, might easily be robbed of me, I went thither to steal the whole from her and having with mine engines contrived to make a certain ladder fast to the casement, I climbed up thereby, firmly purposing to slay whoso-

ever sought to oppose me or offer me resistance. But my ill luck willed that the ladder, being ill fastened, gave way with me and I, thinking to make my way home with the ladder, which was of ropes, swooned by the way I know not where."

The magistrate, whose name was Messer Domenico Mari-petro, marvelled greatly at this speech of Aloisio's and was sore chagrined therefor, for that all who were in the chamber (and they were many, as commonly betideth in like cases,) had heard him ; but, being unable to do otherwise, he said to him, " Aloisio, thy folly hath been passing great and I am sore grieved thereat ; but I owe more regard to the state and to mine own honour than to whosoever it may be. Thou shalt therefore abide here under such guard as I shall leave with thee, for that, wert thou not in the plight wherein I find thee, I would incontinent have thee haled to prison, as thou deservest." Then, leaving the young man under good guard, he betook himself to the Council of Ten, a tribunal most worshipful in our city and of very great authority, and finding the lords of the council assembled, punctually reported the whole unto them. The chiefs of the council, who had already heard complaints without end of robberies done anights about the city, commanded one of their officers to keep Aloisio Foscari under the straitest custody in the priest's house, against he should be in case to be examined and constrained with tortures to tell the truth, holding it for certain that he must have committed many other robberies or should at the least know who were the thieves. It was after debated of Girolamo Bembo and Anselmo Barbadico, who had been found at midnight, well-nigh naked, each in the other's chamber, and taken prisoners, and the councillors having far more important business whereof to treat, for the war which they had in hand against Filippo Maria Visconti, Duke of

Milan, it was concluded to deal with them another time, but that they should, algates, be examined meanwhile.

The Doge had been present at the whole deliberation and was one of those who had spoken most severely against Aloisio ; nevertheless, it was exceeding uneath to him to believe that his nephew, a young man of great wealth and very goodly fashions, should have stooped to so base and abominable a crime as that of theft ; wherefore he fell to revolving various things in his mind and finding means to have the young man spoken withal in the utmost secrecy, wrought to such purpose that he had of him the truth of the case. On the other hand, Girolamo and Anselmo, being questioned by the ministers deputed thereunto by the seigniory, of that which they went doing at such an hour, each in the other's house, confessed that they had sundry whiles observed Aloisio Foscari pass before their houses at unseasonable hours and that they saw him by chance, unknown to each other, halt there that night ; wherefore, each firmly believing that he came thither for his own wife, they issued forth and taking him between them, slew him. This confession they made openly, according as it had been agreed between them, and as to the fact of their having been found each in the other's house, they told I know not what fable not over well-contrived, wherein they gainsaid each other.

The Doge, hearing all this, abode in the utmost amazement nor knew how to come at the truth of the matter ; wherefore, the Council of Ten being assembled as of wont with their assessors, after an end had been made of all whereof there was to treat and all were about to depart, the sagacious prince, a man of exalted understanding who had mounted to the supreme magistracy through all the inferior grades, said, "My lords, there remaineth a thing for us to

treat, whereof perhaps the like was never yet heard tell. Before us are two arraignments, the issue whereof, to my thinking, will be very different from the general opinion. Anselmo Barbadico and Girolamo Bembo, between whom there hath still been a cruel enmity, bequeathed them well-nigh in inheritance by their fathers, have been taken by our serjeants half-naked, each in the other's house, and without torture or even fear of being tortured, but on the mere interrogation of our deputies, have freely confessed to having assassinated Aloisio, our nephew, before their houses; and albeit our said nephew liveth and hath been smitten neither of them nor of others, yet do these confess themselves murderers. Who knoweth how the fact standeth? Again, our nephew avoucheth that, going to rob the house of Madam Gismonda Mora and to kill whoso should offer him resistance, he fell from the windows to the ground; wherefore, many being the robberies known to have been of late committed in our city, it might lightly be concluded that he hath been the author thereof and that accordingly it should behove to get the truth from him by means of tortures and he being found guilty, to deal him that severe chastisement which he meriteth. Now, when he was found, he had with him nor ladder nor arms of any kind; whence it may be presumed that the fact standeth otherwise; and for that, among the moral virtues, moderation hath still been commended of all with the utmost praise and that justice, an it be not justly exercised, becometh injustice, meseemeth that, in this case and in these extraordinary circumstances, it behoveth us use more moderation than rigour of justice. And lest it appear that I speak without foundation, consider that which I have to say to you. These two deadly enemies confess to that which may not anywise be, for that our nephew, as hath already been said, liveth and the wound

which he hath is, by his confession, not steel-made. Now who knoweth but the shame of being taken each in the other's chamber and of finding their wives unchaste may have given them occasion to contemn life and to desire death? We shall find, if diligent inquisition be made, that there is otherwhat here than that which folk think. Wherefore it behoveth straitly to examine the case, more by token as it is manifest by their confession that they say nothing which hath likelihood. On the other hand, our nephew impeacheth himself for a thief and confesseth to boot that he would have entered Madam Gismonda Mora's house with deliberate intent to murder whoso should offer him resistance; and under this tussock, also, to our seeming, there is another gates serpent hidden than is supposed. He was never yet accused of such excesses nor hath the least suspicion thereof ever been had; and you all know, moreover, that, Godamercy, he is possessed of honourable riches and hath no need of other folk's good. Truly, his thefts should be of another gates fashion than that to which he confesseth. It seemeth therefore to us, my lords, an it e'en please you, that the investigation of these cases should be left to us and we pledge you our faith that the whole shall be examined of us with the utmost diligence and we trust to bring the matter to such an issue that we shall nowise be blamed with justice, reserving the final pronouncement unto your judgment."

The doge's sage discourse was very pleasing to the lords of the Council and the question being put to the vote, it was the opinion of all that not only the examination of the charges in question, but also the final judgment, should be committed unto him. Accordingly, the wise prince, being already fully informed of his nephew's case, applied himself solely to search out the cause for which Bembo and Barbado thus fondly accused themselves of that which

they had not done, and in due time, himseeming, after many consultations and many researches and enquiries made, (his nephew being by this well-nigh altogether healed, on such wise that he might have gone about, had he been at liberty,) he had spied out enough of the case of the two imprisoned husbands, he communicated the whole to the lords of the Council of Ten. Then, taking effectual means to have it bruited abroad in Venice how Anselmo and Girolamo were to be beheaded between the Two Columns and Aloisio hanged, he awaited that which their ladies should do. The report spreading throughout Venice, it was variously spoken thereof in the city nor was discourse held of otherwhat, either in public or private ; and for that all three were of very honourable lineage, their kinsfolk and friends fell to casting about an some means might not be found for their liberation. But, the confessions which they had made being published and report, as daily happeneth, still exaggerating the evil, it was avouched that Foscaro had confessed to many robberies, so that there was neither kinsman nor friend dared speak for them. Madam Gismonda, who had bitterly bewept her lover's mischance, hearing the confession he had made and clearly perceiving that, rather than sully her fair fame, he had elected to lose honour and life together, felt her heart kindle with such fervent love towards him that she had well-nigh died thereof ; wherefore, finding means to send to speak with him, she exhorted him to be of good heart, for that she was determined not to let him die, but to discover the fact as it had befallen and in proof of what she should say, to show the amorous letters he had written her and produce to the judge the ladder of ropes, which had been kept by her in her chamber. Aloisio, hearing the amorous revelations which his mistress was purposed

to make for his deliverance, abode the happiest man in the world and letting render her infinite thanks for her love, promised her that, as soon as he was out of prison, he would straightway espouse her to his lawful wife ; whereat the lady was beyond measure content, loving him more than her soul.

Meanwhile, Madam Luzia and Madam Isotta, hearing the report of the approaching death of their husbands and understanding how the case stood with Madam Gismonda, whereof Madam Luzia knew I know not what by a woman of her acquaintance, conceived the case to be even as it was ; wherefore, taking counsel together of that which was to do for their husband's weal, they took gondola and repaired to the said Madam Gismonda, with whom, all three having imparted to one another all the circumstances of their several cases, they abode of accord to take measures for saving their men's lives. The two wives, after the arrest of their husbands, had fallen into ill savour with their friends and kinsfolk, it being believed of all that they were two most profligate women ; wherefore none had ever visited them nor condoled with them of their misfortune. Now, it being made known that the prisoners were to be put to death by the hands of justice, they notified their kinsfolk not to concern or trouble themselves with anywhat nor endeavour farther for their husbands' deliverance, but to abide of good heart, for that they were altogether virtuous and that their husbands should suffer neither hurt nor shame. They asked them but to procure one of the Lords Advocates to intronit the case and for the rest leave them the charge of all, for that they had no need of proctors nor advocates. This seemed exceeding strange to the prisoners' kinsfolk and they knew not what to think, holding the case over-shameful and the disgrace great. Nevertheless, they hastened to do that

whereof they were required and understanding that the Council of Ten had privily committed to the doge the investigation of the two cases, they presented to the prince a petition in the name of the three ladies, who sought of him no otherwhat than audience. The doge, seeing his device in a fair way of success, assigned them a day certain, when they should appear before himself and the lords of the Council of Ten, together with the members of the College.¹

The day come, all the lords assembled together, eager to see in what the case should result; whereupon the three ladies repaired to the palace with a worshipful company and passing through the place of St. Mark, heard many who missaid of them. Some, little discreet as are the common folk and the populace, cried, "Here be fine honest gentlewomen; doff your bonnets to them, for that, without sending their husbands out of Venice, they have landed them at Corneto; and the brazen-faced strumpets are not ashamed to let themselves be seen, on such wise that it seemeth indeed they have done a most praiseworthy deed." Others railed at them on other wise and so each had his say at them. Moreover, seeing Madam Gismonda there, they doubted not but she was on her way to the Seigniorie, to appeal against Aloisio Foscario, so that none hit upon the truth. The three ladies, coming to the palace and ascending the high marble stairs, were conducted into the hall of the College, whereas the Doge had appointed them audience; and they being arrived there with the next-of-kin, the prince commanded, before any spoke, that the three prisoners should be likewise brought thither. Thither came also many other gentlemen, who waited with the utmost impatience to see the issue of

¹ Apparently the Electoral College, to whom was deputed the election of the doges.

such strange occurrences. Silence being commanded, the prince turned to the ladies and said to them, "You have supplicated us, noble ladies, to vouchsafe you a public audience; behold, we are here ready to hear you patiently, whatsoever you have a mind to say." The two husbands were incensed to the utmost against their wives and boiled with rage and despite insomuch the more that they saw the ladies present themselves with all boldness and confidence before so awful and venerable and majestic a tribunal, as if they were the rarest and worthiest women in the world. The two faithful friends were full well aware of their husbands' choler nor were they anywise daunted thereby; nay, smiling and nodding their heads to each other, woman-fashion, they showed by their gestures as if they made mock of them. Anselmo, who was somewhat more spiteful, more choleric and more impatient than Girolamo, kindled into such a passion of anger that for far less many a man hath died, and having no regard to the sanctity of the place where they were, fell to giving his lady the foulest words in the world, nay, was like to run at her and thrust his fingers into her eyes; and indeed, an he might, he would have done her a mischief.

Madam Isotta, hearing herself thus shamefully reviled of her husband in the presence of such and so many lords and gentlemen, nevertheless took courage and availing herself of the licence which the prince had already granted her, began, with an assured voice and a cheerful countenance, to speak thus, saying, "Most serene prince and you, magnificent seigniors, since my dear husband so uncivilly complaineth of me, methinketh Messer Girolamo Bembo must needs be of like mind towards his own wife; wherefore, an it were not replied to them, it would seem they spoke the truth and that we were guilty of some great wickedness. Accordingly, with your good favour,

most excellent seigniors, I will, in Madam Luzia's name and mine own, say that which presently occurreth to me in defence of ourselves and of our honour, it behoving me change purpose of that which I had thought to say, for that, had he held his peace and not, overcome with choler, had recourse so hastily to revilings, I should have spoken after another fashion to their acquittance and our own exculpation. Nevertheless, in so far as my feeble powers avail, I will endeavour to do both the one and the other, and I say, then, that our husbands complain of us against all right and reason and without any manner of cause, as I shall presently give them proof in hand. I am firmly persuaded that their complaining and their bitter chagrin arise from two causes, and none other, to wit, from the homicide which they have falsely confessed to having committed and eke the jealousy which cankereth their hearts, of their belief that we are unchaste women, they having been taken each in the other's chamber and well-nigh abed. But, if they had imbrued their hands in another's blood, what, a' God's name, should it concern us thereof, though this should e'en afflict and torment them, since so heinous a crime would have been committed of them without our counsel, without our aid and without our knowledge? Forsooth, I for my part cannot see why we women should suffer any manner of blame for this misdeed and still less why they should complain of us, since we all know it to be a meet thing that whoso doth ill or giveth occasion to do it should bear the due penalty and suffer severe chastisement, even as the divine laws ordain, and thus give example unto others to abstain from evil practices. But why should we contend farther of this, when the very blind would see right to be on our side, more by token that, Godamercy, Messer Aloisio is seen to be alive and avoucheth altogether

the contrary of that which our little (to us) loving husbands have fondly confessed? And even if they had so far transgressed as to dip their hands in the blood of whosoever it might be, it were for us with reason to complain of them, ay, and to bewail us thereof amain, for that they, being born of most noble lineage and gentlemen of this most illustrious city, which hath still kept its liberties inviolate and pure, should have become swashbucklers, murderers and men of the vilest sort, sullyng their illustrious blood with so shameful a blot and leaving us widows in our youth. It must, then, be that they complain of us for that each was seen and taken at midnight in the other's chamber, and this, indeed, methinketh is the head and front, the occasion and the origin of all their despite and all their sufferance. This I know well is the nail which transfixeth their hearts, and I certify you that they complain not of otherwhat; wherefore, without throughly examining the whole matter or taking thought unto everything, they have fallen into desperation and like men desperate, have accused themselves of doing that which they never did nor belike thought to do. But, not to cast words to the winds and so that which I purpose to say may be said once and for all, to the intent, that you, my lords, may not abide occupied with longsome disputations, having affairs of state to treat, I entreat you, most excellent prince, that you will make them declare on what account they so bitterly complain of us."

The two husbands being accordingly, at the Doge's bidding, questioned by one of the lords of council, they both replied that the having discovered their wives, whom they believed most virtuous and whom it behoved to be so, to be whores was the sole cause of the despite and chagrin which fretted their hearts and that, unable to suffer such dishonour nor

to brook to live in the sight of men, they had been led, for desire of death, to confess that which they had never done. Madam Isotta, hearing this, took up again her discourse and said, turning to her husband and to Bembo, "Then, of what do you complain that is not well? Nay, it pertaineth rather unto us to complain of you. Marry, what went you seeking, husband mine, at such an hour, in the chamber of my dear friend [Madam Luzia]? What was there in her chamber more than in your own? And you, Messer Girolamo, what enforced you, abandoning your wife's bed, to seek that of my husband by night? Were not the sheets of the one as white, as fine, as clean and as well perfumed as those of the other? I, for my part, most serene prince, do infinitely complain and will eternally complain of my husband, for that, to enjoy another woman than myself, he hath forsaken me and gone elsewhither, albeit I am not yet bedridden and may pass muster among the fair women of this our city; and the like doth Madam Luzia, who, as you see, may also be numbered among the fair. Each of you in truth should have contented himself with his own wife and not, as you have perversely done, abandoned her, seeking better bread than is made of wheat. A fine thing, indeed, to leave seemly, fair and virtuous wives for those of others! You complain of your wives, but you should rather blame yourselves, not others, and endure reproach and sufferance with the utmost patience, for that, having wherewithal to fare well at home, you sought to cozen each other with your amours, like men grown weary and surfeited of their household cheer; but, thanks to God and to our discreet advisement, if hurt and shame there be, it must e'en be all yours. For, by Christ His Cross, I see not that that there is more licence conceded to you men to do ill than unto us, albeit, through the

faintheartedness of our sex, you are still fain to do that which most liketh you. However, you are not, for all that, lords and masters nor are we slaves, but claim ourselves consorts,¹ for that the most holy laws of matrimony, the which was the first sacrament given of God unto mortals, after the creation of things, require that troth be equal and the husband beholden to be faithful to the wife, even as she to him. Of what, then, go you complaining, if one still receive as good as he giveth?² Know you not that it behoveth the scales of justice to hang even and not incline more to one side than to the other? But let us leave questioning of this and come to that wherof we are here. Two things, most just prince, have brought us before your august presence and that of these illustrious lords, we who had not else dared to present ourselves in public, and still less should I have ventured to speak in this most august assembly, the which is conceded only unto experienced and eloquent men and not unto us, who scarce suffice unto the needle and the spindle. Our first intent, in leaving our houses to come hither, was to make known that our husbands were no assassins and that they had murdered neither Messer Aloisio, who is here, nor any other; and of this we had worthy and sufficient testimony; but for this we need not weary ourselves, the

¹ *Ci domandiamo consorti*, i.e. look for companions and helpers on equal terms, not masters, in our husbands. We may also read, "We call or assert ourselves [to be] consorts."

² Lit. Whatsoever an ass giveth against a wall, such he receiveth (*Quale asino dà in parete, tal riceve*). I cannot find any satisfactory explanation of this very common proverbial saying, which may be rendered in two ways, according as *quale* and *tale* are taken as relating to a thing or a person. The probable reference seems to be to the circumstance of an ass making water against a wall, so that his urine returns upon him.

presence of Messer Aloisio altogether relieving us of the pains which it might have behoved us take, nor is other than he known to have been slain.

However, there remaineth one thing unto us, to wit, my friend Madam Luzia and I respectfully beseech the most serene prince that he deign, of his favour and authority and that of these most excellent seigniors, to reconcile us with our husbands and cause us have peace and pardon of them, whenas we shall have given them proof in hand that we are the injured and they the injurers and that our default (if default it can be called) hath been but in so much as they would have it. To come, then, to the conclusion of the matter, I say that I was never so young a maid but I heard it said of my lady mother of blessed memory (who oftentimes lessoned myself and my sisters and Madam Luzia withal, who was brought up with us) that all the honour a wife can do her husband consisteth in this, that she live very virtuously, for that, without modesty, a woman should not abide on life, more by token that, when the wife of a gentleman or of another is known to yield her body unto others, she becometh a common strumpet and is pointed at of all with the finger of scorn, whilst her husband likewise is blamed and derided of all, themseeming this is the sorest wrong and affront that a man can suffer at his wife's hands, ay, and the shamefullest dishonour that can be cast upon families. The which we knowing and willing not that the disorderly and unbridled appetites of our husbands should bring them to an unseemly end, we have with a loyal and commendable deception made such provision therefor as seemed to us the lesser evil. I know that it booteth not here to recount the enmity which hath these many years past prevailed between our husbands' fathers and after, unhappily, between themselves, for that it is notorious unto all our city.

Wherefore we, who had been reared together from the cradle, whenas we became aware of our husbands' enmity, made a virtue of necessity, choosing rather to lack of our most sweet converse than to give them cause for clamour at home. But the nearness of our dwellings showed that which that unnatural enmity hid from and denied us; wherefore, whenas our husbands were abroad, we betook ourselves for converse together into our little gardens, which are divided by a very slight fence of reeds. And discreetly availing ourselves of that commodity and perceiving that you, husbands ours, were (or belike feigned to be) enamoured each of the other's wife, we imparted to each other these your loves and still read together the amorous letters which you sent us; nor did it seem good to us to do you any scorn of this your disloyalty towards us your wives, albeit it had well beseeemed you, for that to have advertised you [each of the other's doings] would have been contrary to our desire, seeking, as we did, no otherwhat than that you should become friends; wherefore, had aught been told you of these enamourments, it had but added enmity to your enmity and caused you take up arms against each other. Having, then, taken counsel together and finding ourselves of one mind, we agreed upon a device which we deemed might be carried out without hurt or shame to either party, nay, to the pleasure and satisfaction of all, and accordingly, every night whenas you feigned to go abroad to this place or that, Madam Luzia, with the help of Cassandra, my waiting-woman, came to my chamber by way of the garden, whilst I, by means of Giovanna her maid, repaired to her chamber by the same road; and you, being conducted by these our women each to the other's chamber, lay each with his own wife and so tilled your own field and not, as you thought, that of another. And for that your embracements were those not of husbands, but of lovers, and

that you still clipped us with more ardour than was your wont, we presently found ourselves both with child ; the which should be supremely grateful to you, if it be true that you had so great a desire as you showed to have children. If, therefore, no other default aggrieve you, if conscience prick you of no otherwhat and if you be chagrined for nought else, live merry and render us thanks for our shrewdness and for the salutary cheat we have put upon you, and if till now you have been enemies, henceforth, laying aside your ancient feuds, make peace with one another and for the future live as affable gentlemen, offering up your enmities to your native land, the which, as a pitiful and loving mother, would fain see all her children of one same mind. Now, lest you should believe that I have forged all I have said, fable-wise, for your deliverance and our profit, here be all your letters sent unto us."

Therewith she and Madam Luzia gave their husbands, one after the other, so many proofs and countertokens and so well approved the truth of their assertions to the prince and the councillors that the two gentlemen avouched themselves content and all the lords of the council held themselves excellently well satisfied, all with one accord pronouncing that Anselmo and Girolamo should be free ; and so, of the common consent of the doge and the councillors, they were both entirely acquitted. The kinsfolk and friends of both husbands and wives had heard Isotta's long discourse with the utmost wonderment and supremely commended the acquittance rendered, holding both the ladies for sage and discreet and Madam Isotta, to boot, exceeding eloquent, in that she had thus well pleaded her own and her friend's case and that of their husbands. Anselmo and Girolamo with great gladness publicly embraced and kissed their wives ; then, clasping each other's hands and embracing, they made a pact of brotherhood together and thenceforth abode in perfect

harmony, turning their lascivious love for each other's wives into brotherly good will, the which was the cause of the utmost contentment to all the city. Then, all being silent again, the doge turned with the most gracious air to Madam Gismonda and said to her, "And you, fair damsel, what seek you? Tell us your occasions boldly, for we will gladly hearken to you."

Madam Gismonda, waxing all red in the face and showing lovelier than of wont for the natural vermillion which overspread her cheeks, abode awhile with her eyes bent upon the ground; then, taking somewhat of courage, she raised them modestly and said, "If, august prince, it behoved me speak in the presence of persons who had never loved or who knew not what love is, I should feel more than doubtful of that which I have to say, and belike I should not dare to open my mouth. But, having otherwhiles heard tell by my father of blessed memory that you, most serene prince, disdained not in your youth to open your breast to the flames of love, nay, were a most passionate lover, and holding it for certain that there is none here who hath not loved or little or much, I am persuaded that, for that which shall presently be spoken of me, I shall of all find not only pardon but indulgence. Wherefore, to come to the fact, God forbid that I, seeking to appear a she-saint or one of those women who mumble paternosters and discoursing all day long with the saints, give birth to devils, should prove ungrateful, knowing ingratitude for a wind which troubleth and drieth the well-spring of divine compassion! My life is dear to me, as it is naturally wont to be unto all, and after it I put honour, which should belike be preferred before it, since there is no doubt that without honour it profiteth nothing to live and that this life is a living death, whenas man or woman liveth with a shameful stain upon the brow. But the love

which I bear my only beloved, Messer Aloisio Foscari, whom you see yonder, is over all things dear to me and consequently I tender him far more than my life ; and this indeed with very good reason, for that, though I had never in the past been loved of him (who hath e'en loved me as fondly as can be) nor held him dear (whom I have tendered most dear and loved as, nay, far more than, my very eyes), the most tender and devoted proof which he hath in this last circumstance given me of his love, showing himself lavish, nay, prodigal of his own life, lest I should abide under the least suspicion of immodesty, rendereth it incumbent upon me to have him evermore incomparably dearer than life and soul themselves. And where was ever such generosity so freely practised of any lover ? Who was there aye aforetime that of his proper choice elected to die, rather than shame another ? Certes, medeemeth, few or none, for that rare are those of such a composition, ay, rarer than white crows. O singular and never heard generosity ! O never enough to be extolled proof of love ! O love, that is indeed love and in which no manner of feigning can be conceived ! Messer Aloisio, rather than in the smallest particular sully my fair fame or leave in any one's mind the least inkling of doubt, which might bring suspicion on me, hath of his proper will confessed himself a thief, having far more concern for me and for mine honour than for his own honour and his own life. And albeit he might have saved himself a thousand ways, nevertheless, having avouched himself, whilst yet half dazed with the shock, to have fallen from my windows and perceiving how apt this confession was to prejudice my fair fame and dim the brightness thereof, he chose of his own free will rather to die than to say another word which might anywise beget an ill opinion of me or occasion me so much as a pin's point of reproach. Wherefore, unable to take

back that which he had already said of the fall or to colour it on such wise as should serve well, he bethought himself to save another's fair fame with his own undoing. Since, then, he hath thus unhesitatingly put his life in most manifest peril for my welfare and advantage and hath been far more careful for the conservation of my fair fame than for himself, shall I for his acquittance stint to adventure mine honour? But what say I? Mine honour? Nay, both mine honour and my life; nay, had I a thousand lives, I would give them all for his salvation, and should I recover it again a thousand thousand times, as often would I adventure it afresh, so but I knew that it might in the least particular avail to profit him. It grieveth me indeed and will still grieve me that it is not permitted me to do more than this which my scant ability suffereth; if he should die, certes, I might not avail to live, and were he not here, what should I do on life? Nor, most just prince, for all this do I look to lose a grain of honour, for that being, as may be seen, young and a widow and seeking to marry again, it was lawful unto me to court and be courted, without other end, withal, than to find me a husband sortable unto my degree. But, should I e'en lose mine honour, why should I grudge to lose it for him, who, to save mine, as it hath so oftentimes been said, was fain to lose his own? Now, to come to the fact, I say with all due reverence that it is not true that Messer Aloisio ever came to my house as a thief or against my will. He came thither, indeed, with my consent and came as a dear and a tender lover. For, except I had given him leave to come, how could he have found means to carry a rope-ladder so far aloft and fix it there on such wise that it should still be fast? And if the window in question be that of the chamber where I sleep, how stood it open at that hour, an I willed it not? Nay, I, with the aid of my serving-woman,

after I had let him down the twine, whereto he bound the ladder, drew it up and having dighted it on such wise that it might not come loose, signed to Messer Aloisio to mount. But, as his and my ill fortune willed it, he, to my inexpressible grief, fell headlong to the ground, without even availing to touch my hand. Wherefore let him revoke the confession he hath made of being a thief and tell the case even as it was, since I am not ashamed to confess it. Here be the many letters he hath written me, craving speech of me and still seeking me to wife ; here is the ladder, which hath till now remained in my chamber, and here is my waiting-woman, who hath been go-between and helper to me in everything."

Messer Aloisio, being interrogated of the lords, confessed the case as it was ; whereupon he was on like wise acquitted of them and chose to espouse his beloved mistress to his lawful wife ; whereof the doge mightily commended him. Accordingly all the kinsfolk of the two parties repaired to Madam Gismonda's house, where Aloisio solemnly espoused her and the nuptials being celebrated after the most sumptuous and worshipful fashion, Messer Aloisio and his wife lived long in peace and happiness. Madam Luzia and Madam Isotta in due time gave birth to two goodly boys, to the no small contentment of the fathers, who thenceforth lived tranquilly with their wives and used each other as brothers, laughing many a time over the cheat discreetly put upon them by the ladies. The wise advisement of the doge was infinitely commended throughout all Venice and much increased the renown of his prudence ; and in truth he was a most prudent prince and with his wisdom and counsel greatly enlarged the dominion of the republic, which latter, in the end, showed itself little grateful to him therefor, deposing him from his ducal dignity, for that he was over-old.

Bandello

to the illustrious lord Signor Francesco Cantelmo
Duke of Lora.

The day after I departed Mantua and came to Gazuolo, your and my affable and most complaisant friend Messer Paris Ceresaro sent me, by a servant of his, your letter which you wrote me from Milan, and which was beyond measure grateful to me, how grateful, indeed, I cannot say, for that in sooth it was to me (an it may be said) more than most grateful. And since I shall shortly be in Milan, where I shall sojourn some time, I will not at this present make you any answer to the last part of the said letter; for that, when we are together, I shall by word of mouth much better accomplish that which you would fain have done of me than I might presently do with letters, and I am well assured that we shall obtain the whole without any difficulty and that the more easily inasmuch as he for whose services you have occasion standeth in need of the favour of the most illustrious my lord of Lautrec,¹ the which will lightly be gotten him by you, he seeking nought but what is just and honourable and you having great interest with the said lord, as your faithful and

¹ Odet de Foix, Seigneur de Lautrec, the well-known Marshal of Francis I. of France, who was then governor of Milan for that prince.

assiduous services and your rare virtues merit. Now, to return to your letter, consider if it could have found me at a better place and time than presently at Gazuolo. As soon as I had read it, I gave it into the hands of our most courteous friend, Signor Pirro Gonzaga, with these precise words, "Were I presently at Mantua or elsewhere, I should, incontinent on the receipt of this letter, take horse and go in quest of you, wherever you might be, for the service of Signor Francesco. Judge, then, what I shall do, being here in your presence." Therewith he read the letter and said to me, laughing, "Take thy letter and say not a word to me, for I will do nought whereof thou mayst bespeak me; but that whereof Signor Francesco writeth thee I will well to do." Then he added that he was making ready to go to the court of the most Christian king and would pass through Milan, where you should have all you desire, and maybe we should go in company. It remaineth to me to answer the third part of your letter, wherein you pray me impart to you sundry of my novels. I had a mind to wait till I should come to Milan, but, bethinking myself that I can avail to satisfy you at this present, I send you one of an adventure befallen, no great while ago, at Mantua, which I wrote down of these latter days, it having been recounted, by way of pastime, in the presence of Madam Isabella da Este, Marchioness of Mantua, by Messer Alessandro Orologio, secretary of the most illustrious and most reverend Signor Gismondo Gonzaga, Cardinal of Mantua. This, then, I send you and will that it be yours in testimony of our love. Moreover, at Milan I will show you many others, given by me to divers friends and patrons of mine, for that I had no otherwhat wherewithal I might approve myself grateful. Fare you well.

The Fiftieth Story.

A STRANGE ADVENTURE WHICH BEFELL A
GENTLEMAN, GIVING HIM OCCASION TO
ENJOY A LADY OF WHOM HE HAD CEASED
TO THINK.

The matter whereof the worthy Ludovico Guerrero da Fermo spoke a little while ago hath remembered me, most excellent Madam, of a case which befell this past winter in the city of Mantua; and since I am constrained by your ladyship to play the story-teller, albeit it is none of my business, I will, to obey you, tell that which occurreth to me. As all of us here both saw and felt, the cold which prevailed at that season was so great and so excessive that I for my part remember me not to have ever known a greater; and albeit throughout all Lombardy the snow fell in great abundance and the cold made every one quake on extraordinary wise, in Mantua especially, which is subject to very cold winds, the cold was so intense and the snow lay so long upon the earth that all who were there abode amazed thereat. Our most limpid lake, which embraceth the city and girdleth it with its waters, was all turned to solid crystal, whilst the renowned and pleasant Mincio, the which, meandering through our smiling meadows, useth to afford a most delightful view to the inhabitants, was frozen into the hardest ice and seemed to be grown all of sheer glass. But what shall we say of the famous king of waters? The proud Po, curbing

its swift course and waxen all of marble, not only had its waters congealed by the constraining power of the cold, but, in many places of its ample bed, afforded a very sure bridge to whoso would fain overpass it. Of this, most excellent madam, you can of your person afford us assurance, for that you yourself at Borgo Forte lighted down upon its frozen waters and crossed over to the other bank on foot, attended by many of our gentlemen and the most part of these fair damsels who are here. It was for this forbidden unto all ships to go either about the Po or upon the lake, and still less might they navigate the Mincio, so that such of our Mantuans as have their estates beyond the Po were debarred the usance of the victual and other produce of their farms. Moreover, you know how the Venetians, with the aid of the French, had laid siege to Verona, to the defence whereof Maximilian Cæsar, under whose empery the Veronese abode, had appointed the right noble and valorous Signor Marco Antonio Colonna, a man much esteemed and famous for his virtues and prowess. Now so long as the siege lasted, (to wit, some months) the French soldiers and the Venetians sacked many of our villages, nay, they even burned some thereof and daily pillaged and carried off to their camp whatsoever they found about the country that was apt for the sustenance of men and horses. It being, then, impossible to avail ourselves of the produce of the thither side of the Po and the other part of our fields, to wit, those which lay towards Verona, being despoiled of everything, there befell a sore dearth in Mantua and that whereof there was the most lack was cattle-provender, for that neither hay nor straw nor oats was to be had there for money.

Our city, then, being in this plight, it befell that one of our gentlemen, a youth of good letters and passably

endowed with the gifts of fortune, who had his estate beyond the Po, found himself with three horses in the stable and knew not how to do, altogether lacking of provender for the cattle. Wherefore, as he went one day a-walking about the city, he fell to devising with his serving-men of the means he should take to feed his horses, there being neither straw nor hay nor corn in the house nor any to be had for money in the place; and one of them, in the course of talk, said to him, "Master, not an hour ago I saw a load of hay drawn to such a street and halted by the oxherd before such an one's house. Maybe he would lend or sell you a part thereof against you may avail to let bring of your own from the country. The rigour of the cold tendeth in some measure to abate and the Po will soon begin to be once more navigable." The young man, hearing this, bethought himself to enquire for the hay by some friend of his, not being on speaking terms with the owner, for that, he having paid his court to the latter's wife, the husband had become aware thereof and waxing jealous, viewed him with an ill eye. Meanwhile, he made for the street where the hay stood and seeing the hour late (for it was nigh upon dusk) and the waggon standing untouched, concluded that they would wait till the morrow to unload it. Accordingly, he said to his serving-men, "Methinketh the load will abide for this night in the street; wherefore, an your hearts misgive you not, we will come hither, towards five or six o' the clock,¹ and fill some sacks therefrom and carry them home." They promised to do as he said and accordingly, at the appointed hour, he repaired thither with sacks and men, saying, "God pardon it me, for that

¹ *i.e.* 11 or 12 p.m.

need constraineth me, and I will requite the owner of the hay far more than the worth thereof. My horses will have six or seven days' provender and meanwhile something will aid us, so that they will not die so soon." It was the darkest night in the world and there was no one to be seen about the streets; wherefore, himseeming he had commodity to do that which he purposed, he caused four serving-men who were with him proceed, as most speedily and secretly as they might, to fill the sacks with the ill-guarded hay.

Whilst they were all intent upon the spoil, they heard one coming towards them along the street, whereupon they withdrew behind the hay and abode still. Now the new-comer was a gentleman enamoured of a fair young lady, the wife of the owner of the hay, who had appointed him to lie the night with her, for that her husband was absent from Mantua. He, hearing nothing, gave the signal for his admission into the house, nor was it long ere one of the lady's waiting-women showed herself at a lower window, which was well-nigh overagainst the hay, and calling the gallant by name, said to him in a low voice, "Sir, you must have a little patience, for that there came here hither late this evening a kinsman of my lady's husband, who is not yet gone to bed, and it hath behoved us make him ready the chamber whither you have otherwhiles been used to resort. I warrant you there could nought betide my lady which would cause her so much annoy; but there is a remedy for all things save death, for that, despite him who is come to us, we have dighted you the closet on the ground floor, the window whereof giveth upon the garden and where you hid yourself once before, whenas my lord came home, unlooked for, on the day of the Blessed Hosanna.¹ Wherefore, do

¹ *i.e.* Palm-Sunday, so called by the common people from the word Hosanna, which frequently occurs in the service for that day and which they ignorantly suppose to be the name of a female saint.

you move about the street a little, so the cold may not benumb you, and I will come open you the door as soon as I safely may."

Our friend, who abode crouched with his servants behind the hay, heard all this and concluded that, if the lady, whom he had long served and courted, had shown herself contrary to his wishes, it was because she loved another. Wherefore it occurred to his mind that he might, by means of some device, contrive to foregather with her and he said in himself, "My rival seeketh to do the contrary of my emprise, for that he would fain load the gentleman's good abed, whose hay I go about to unload; but the swill-pot deemeth one thing and the taverner another,¹ for that I myself will both unload the hay and load the lady." Accordingly, carnal appetite awakening in him and the old love kindling into new flame, he made no delay about the matter, but, hearing his rival, who was alone, go walking at a distance from the house, he softly called his servants and followed after him, making a great scuffling with his feet; whereupon the other, unwilling to be recognized in such a place and eke mis-doubting those who came after him to be officers of the watch, departed the street and turned into another way. The hay-stealer, seeing this, let him go about his business and posted his servants, two at each end of the street where the lady dwelt, which was very short and abutted upon two others; then, bidding them deny every one passage, he stationed himself near the door of the lady's house, looking for the serving-maid to come open the door, more by token that he was well acquainted with the ordinance of the house and the way to the closet aforesaid.

The lady, who recked of no otherwhat than the admission

¹ Italian way of saying, "He reckoneth without his host."

of her lover, bestirred herself to hasten the going to bed of her husband's kinsman, together with the two servants who accompanied him ; which done, she despatched the maid to see if the gallant were yet in the street. The young man, who abode intent upon every least motion, heard some one come towards the door and divining who it was, summoned all his assurance and plucking up a lion's heart, awaited the opening of the door. The maid, then, presenting herself as before at the window, spat softly and he forthwith gave the signal which he had heard his rival make, whereupon she incontinent opened the door and the young man, entering in, would fain have said I know not what ; but the girl, clapping her hand on his mouth, whispered him not to speak, on account of the strangers, who were but that moment gone to bed, and carrying him to the little room, left him there, whilst she betook herself to her mistress, who was in discourse with others of the household beside the fire in the saloon, and signed to her that her lover was in the house and awaited her in the closet.

The young man, as soon as he found himself alone, bethought himself in the first place to do out the light that burned there, so he might not so soon be known, nor was he far out in his advisement ; then, as soon as he had extinguished the candle, he unbuckled his sword and setting it down hard by, seated himself on the bed, which was richly dight, considering the while how he should deal with the lady at the first encounter. The latter, as soon as she knew her lover (or him whom she believed to be her lover) safe in the closet, bade all betake themselves to rest nor would herself depart the saloon till she had first seen every one forth thereof ; whereupon, going out, she withdrew, with the maid her confidant, to her bedchamber, where she abode awhile, to give time for

all to retire to their several places ; then, presently descending a stair all alone and without any light, she stole softly down to the closet and opening it with the keys she had with her, shut the door behind her. Thereupon, "Alack," quoth she, "you are here without light," and would have kindled the candle at the chamber-fire, which was well nigh spent ; but the good youth came up to her and catching her lovingly in her arms, kissed her and said to her softly, "Welcome, my soul." She returned his caresses and answered, "You are welcome ; but let me light the candle and rekindle the fire, for you must needs be palsied with the cold."

Now he had, at his first entering in, warmed himself at the fire, which then burned brightly, and after scattered the brands, to deaden it, so it might give no light, for which same reason he nowise desired to have the candle lighted. Wherefore, kissing her tenderly and muttering divers broken and inarticulate words, as he were drunken for love of her, he carried her to the bed and there, without speaking, lest he should be discovered, he for a good space amorously accomplished his every desire of the lady, to the supreme delight of both parties. However, whether it was that she took suspicion at the unwonted way of speech of the young man, who dared not speak plainly, or that she perceived the change of knife or whatever else was the cause, she determined to certify herself if she had lain with her wonted lover or with another and accordingly said, "I must e'en light the candle and rekindle the fire, for the cold is great and I care not to abide without light." The young man answered her not a word, but, plucking up courage, prepared to justify himself as best he knew, fully persuaded that, when the lady saw him, they would incontinent

come to blows. Accordingly, she arose and taking the candle, relighted it; then, blowing up the embers, she added wood thereto on such wise that the room became all bright. Meanwhile, the youth, feigning drowsiness, stretched himself face downward on the bed and lay thus without stirring.

The lady, seeing him couched on this wise, concluded that he had been overcome with sleep and that he needed rest, being wearied for the past swink; wherefore she would not arouse him, but seated herself by the fire, against he should awake, misdoubting of him none the less therefor. Presently, herseeming every least delay was an age and urged by the suspicion that irked her, she went up to the bed and putting her hands on his shoulders, shook him lightly and said, "Up, sluggard that thou art! This is no time for sleep; up, up, arouse thyself!" The young man, come to this pass and seeing that he might no longer conceal himself, made a show of drowsiness and stretching himself, as one whose sleep is broken against his will, said, "Alack, who is there? Who waketh me?" And turned his face to the lady, rubbing his eyes. She knew him forthwith and seeing with whom she had lain, abode all confounded and motionless as a statue, unknowing what to say; whilst the youth sprang up and taking her in his arms, laid her, more dead than alive, upon the bed, fondling her and giving her store of fair words.

At this juncture the maid,—having belike a mind to sleep, for that she still lay in the lady's chamber, whenas she was with her lover, and having to boot the key of the closet,—opened the door and entering, saw that they had not yet put off their clothes; whereupon, knowing nothing of the cheat, "How now?" quoth she. "What

do you that you undo yourselves not and get you to bed ? It is full time to go to rest ; come, I will help you undo yourselves." Whereupon the lady, having somewhat recovered herself, replied, weeping bitterly, "Woe's me, sister, I am betrayed. See in whose arms I have lain ! Alack, wretched woman that I am, I shall never more be glad in this life ! I shall never more be a lady nor dare to go abroad in public again !" The maid, hearing this lamentation and knowing not to what end her mistress used such words, drew near the twain and recognizing the youth, was like to cry out ; but, remembering her that she might be heard of her master's kinsman, she contained herself and fell to weeping and lamenting passing sore in company with the lady.

The young man, who still held the weeping and woe-begone lady in his arms nor, for all her struggles to win free, had ever chosen to let her go, comforted her and kissed her, despite her resistance, soothing her with a thousand fondling tricks and saying, "Sweet my soul and heart of my body, fret not yourself neither take it in ill part that that which I have never, for all my long and faithful service, availed to obtain of you, my life, I have made shift to achieve by dint of craft and practice. Say not, dear my mistress, that you have been betrayed by me, but blame rather Love, who hath so sore enkindled me for you that He hath left me no rest day or night. He it is who taught me the way hither ; He brought me to this place and He alone hath been my guide and my leader. You know well that it is more than five years since I became enamoured of your rare beauties and of your pleasantness and fair fashions and that I spent a great part of my youth in ensuing you day and night, without getting of you even a kind look. And although I still found you hard, cruel and contrary to my wishes, nevertheless I

was never stirred from my constant purpose, nay, rather meseemed my love still waxed and grew hourly greater. Wherefore I took no heed unto aught else day or night nor ever occupied my thoughts with otherwhat than seeking the means and the manner how I might avail to gain your favour, that so my most bitter pains, my grievous torments and the pangs of hell which did so miserably consume me might be appeased and I might find some solacement for so anguishful a life. And for that I could not nor might conceal so great a fire as that which these your fair eyes," so saying he kissed her on the eyes, "these eyes, I say, kindled in me, the devouring flames showed themselves in me on such wise that your husband became aware thereof and began to be sore misdoubtful of me and to converse with me no longer; nay, whenas he saw me, he turned another way. Wherefore I, who would rather die than be to you the occasion of any annoy, forbore to set foot in this your quarter, that I might not add suspicion unto that which your consort had already conceived. On like wise in church and at entertainments and balls I contented myself with seeing you and after betook myself otherwhither; whereof you must have been very well aware. Nay, belike you thought that I was no more your servant and that I had put off the immense love I bore you, like a garment; but you were altogether mistaken, for that my love, far from being quenched, was not even anywhit cooled; wherefore, availing not, lady mine, to see you by day, I came every night to look upon the walls of your house and passed through your street nine or ten times. A thousand times, whenas I knew your husband to be in the country, I felt the door, to see if it were shut or not, with intent to betake me to your chamber and if I found it open, to enter therein and beseech you to such purpose that you should have compassion

of me; but the occasion never served me. And for that I knew another to be dearer to you than myself and that you had vouchsafed him your love and caused him oftentimes come to you by night, I kept such strait watch upon him and so diligently noted your doings that I chanced at last upon the occasion which I so greatly desired.

This night, coming, as of my wont, to look upon the walls of your dwelling and being before the door, I heard steps and not to be known or seen of the new-comer, withdrew behind your load of hay, which standeth in the street, thinking to wait till he should pass by; but he, whenas he came over-against the door, gave such and such a signal, whereupon this maid here came to the lower window and told him that a kinsman of your husband was come hither this night and was not yet gone to bed; and so I heard all she said to him. Wherefore I bethought myself to try my fortune and see if my design might succeed to me; the which, thanks to Love, hath betided me, and you, whom I have still desired far more than the light of mine eyes, have been in my power. Marry, mistress mine, it cannot be that what hath been done should turn again and be undone; and if you be as sage and prudent as you are fair, you will calm yourself and consider how much ill may betide, an you choose to abide obstinate and in this choler wherein I see you, for that I purpose not to depart hence without your favour; wherefore, heart of my body, accept me for the true and loyal servant I have ever been to you and if you desire to prove my faith, make all such assays thereof as you may, for that you will still find me far prompter and readier to obey you than you can be to command me."

In fine, he contrived to plead his cause with such eloquence and passion that the lady at last made peace with him and both of one accord put off their clothes and betook

themselves to bed, where they slept little, giving themselves the best time in the world. The lady had mightily pleased the young man and he acquitted himself so valiantly in the tilting-field that she became somewhat enkindled for him. Meanwhile the maid, at her mistress's desire, betook herself to rest and the youth's servants, not forgetting the hay, no sooner saw their master admitted into the house than they applied themselves to the load and carried it all home, at several journeys, in the sacks. By and by, the lady's old lover returned and made the signal, but the maid, knowing the lodgment taken, turned a deaf ear to him ; wherefore, seeing that none stirred, he concluded that the presence of the husband's kinsman had hindered her coming. But the youth's caresses had changed the lady's heart ; nay, what while she abode abed with him, she held him still in her arms and having proved how much more worth he was than the other, resolved to be ever his. Accordingly, her former rigour turned to kindest love, she took new order with him for the discreet enjoyment of their loves and after, finding means to excuse herself to the other, gave him by her maid to understand that it was no longer possible for them to foregather together. Thus, then, the discreet lady, having proved the one and the other, clave unto him whom she deemed the doughtier and better-worth of the twain, and the new lover, having begun in sport, continued in earnest and ensued and yet ensueth that his love, often laughing with the lady over the fortunate cheat.

Bandello

to the divine Violante Borromea of Florence
greeting.

If women, of what degree or age soever they be, whenas they are required by men of aught other than honest, knew how much this title of honesty importeth unto the feminine sex, how worship-worth it is and how lovesome and precious it rendereth them in men's eyes, they would not, forsooth, be so compliant and so ready to give themselves for a prey unto men as they are oftentimes seen. Yet should they know, both by hearsay and by reading and oftentimes, to boot, by cases which daily betide, that women without number have been duped through having overlightly believed and that men in general desire as many women as they see and are never or very rarely content with one alone ; yet all day long they thrust their heads into the net and run to their manifest ruin, even as the moth, lured by the brightness of the flame, fleeteth to its certain death. Nor, methinketh, is otherwhat the cause of this than that many are blinded for lack of wit and others, flattering themselves that or by their beauty or by other means they may avail to bind men and hold them still in subjection, find themselves far out in their reckoning. Not thus aforetime did your ever-to-be-commended and honoured townswoman, the most noble Gualdrada, who accounted it far more to have this title of honesty than the

grace and favour of Otho the Third, Emperor of Rome.¹ The which, as it betided,—the noble, young and provident captain Signor Marco Antonio Colonna, being, after the defeat inflicted upon Signor Bartolomeo Liviano at Torre San Vincenzo, lodged in the venerable convent of Santa Maria Novella,—Fra Sebastiano Buontempo, doctor in theology and prior of the said convent, related in his presence, and the story appearing to me worthy of eternal remembrance, I have written it down, as you see, and dedicated it to your name. And how could I better bestow it than to dedicate the generous action of one magnanimous virgin unto another no less virtuous and magnanimous, such as you are? Persevere, then, and be constant in ensuing the road upon which you have entered, for that every day the love of virtue will wax in you and that of good letters, which letters, being used, as you use them, will render you immortal unto future ages. Fare you well.

The Sixteenth Story.

THE EMPEROR OTHO THE THIRD LOVETH
GUALDRADA, WITHOUT BEING LOVED OF
HER, AND MARRIETH HER HONOURABLY.

You were saying, illustrious sir, that it seemeth to you a hard matter for a girl, being solicited by an enamoured and idle youth and daily importuned with frequent messages, to resist, and I answered you that, although indeed I could not deny that it was a matter of some difficulty, yet I averred to

¹ *i.e.* of Germany.

you that none, whether man or woman, need do aught except inasmuch as he or she wisheth, so but the person in question be resolved. And for that I promised to tell you a goodly story to this purpose of an adventure which befell one of our gentlewomen in this most noble city, I will, now that you are unoccupied with matters warlike, briefly recount it to you. You must know, then, that the Emperor Otho the Third, on his return from Rome, where he had with the most solemn pomp been invested with the imperial crown by the Supreme Pontiff, Gregory the Fifth, halted in this city, all Tuscany being then subject to the emperor, who had committed the governance thereof unto Hugo, Marquess of Brandenburg, his cousin, a man of singular integrity and high in esteem with all classes.

Being there on St. John Baptist's day, who is the patron of Florence, and attending mass in that Saint's church, whither all the city had flocked, he saw a very fair damsel of marriageable age, the daughter of Messer Bellincione Berti dei Ravagnani. Now this damsel had the name of being the fairest, the lovesomest and the most charming girl not only of Florence, but of all Tuscany, and whithersoever she went, she drew unto herself the eyes of all who were there. When the emperor beheld her, he was marvellously delighted with her favour, the which so pleased him that, what while he abode in the church, he still kept his eyes fixed upon her fair face and inwardly considering now this part of her, now that, and supremely commending them all, he became little by little, without perceiving it, ensnared by the pleassance of the sight and waxed more enamoured of her manifold charms than behoved unto the majesty of so great a prince. The more he viewed her, the fairer she seemed to him, more by token that he still descried in her some new beauty, which he had not before observed. Divine service ended, to

the exceeding chagrin of the emperor, who would fain have had it last all day, the damsel departed with her companions and Otho on like wise returned to his palace, where, the tables being laid, he sat down to meat, but ate little or nothing, having his every thought so intent upon the young lady's charms that he could take heed unto nought else. Wherefore, feeling himself enkindled on such wise that himseemed impossible even to abate, far less to quench, the flames of love, he abode sore disordered and knew not what to do.

Meanwhile, he charged a trusty chamberlain of his enquire whose daughter she was, giving him the particulars of her apparel and of the place which she occupied in the church. The chamberlain did his errand diligently and sought to such effect that he discovered the name of the girl's father and reported it to the emperor, who, enquiring of the gentleman's condition, learned that he was of very noble family, but poor and shallow-witted ; wherefore, being loath to use any manner of violence, he resolved, after much consideration, to seek to compass his intent by means of the father. Accordingly, he sent for him one day to the palace and causing every one avoid the chamber, would have him seat himself by his side, albeit he demurred amain to do it ; then, sighing, he bespoke him thus, saying, " You must e'en know, Messer Bellincione, that all men are naturally prone to love and that, be it vice or virtue, this inclination is an infirmity which spareth none and vexeth all, for there is no heart, so it be that of a man, but sooner or later feeleth the pricks of love. If you look at sacred history, you will find Samson, the strongest, David, the holiest, and Solomon, the wisest, of men, to have been all marvellously subject unto love. If you read the Roman, the Greek and other histories, how many men will you

not find who have loved beyond measure ! Cæsar, the first founder of the Roman Empire, to whom all the world submitted, was the slave of Cleopatra, who came near to make Mark Anthony go mad for love. What did Masinissa ? How did Hannibal comport himself in Apulia ? Nay, I could tell you of many other most illustrious men, captains, kings and emperors, who bared their bosoms to the flames of love and ensued the amorous standard ; but I doubt not but all this is as manifest to you as to me. Wherefore, assured that you are a man who have loved in your youth, I will not blush to discover to you my own sentiments and make known to you my supreme desire and after require you of such aid as may afford some solace unto my ill. Indeed, had I not this confidence in you, I should feel myself so resourceless¹ that in truth I should no more know what to do ; but I am fain to believe that I shall find in you indulgence, compassion and help. You must know, then, not to keep you longer in suspense, that I love your daughter far more than mine own self. I have striven, inasmuch as it was possible to me, to expel this passion from my heart, but in vain ; wherefore I find myself reduced to such a pass that, without your daughter's love, the end is come of my life. I might, indeed, have done such things as you may conceive for yourself to have her, but I desire that all be done secretly ; wherefore I have had recourse unto you, who, I know, can (so but you will) fully satisfy me, the which an you do, it shall be the cause of your greatness and of hers."

Messer Bellincione, having heard the emperor, thought his fortune made, since so great a prince was enamoured of his daughter, and without overmuch consideration, replied

¹ *Sconsigliato* ; but *quere* in mistake for *sconsolato*, disconsolate ?

to him thus, saying, "Most august my lord, be of good heart, for my daughter shall still be at your commandment. I will go speak with her and do on such wise that I shall shortly bring you good news." The emperor abode beyond measure rejoiced at so ample a promise and Bellincione, returning home, called his daughter into his chamber and said to her, "Gualdrada," for such was the girl's name, "I bring thee good news; for thou must know that the emperor, as he hath told me with his own mouth, is enamoured of thy charms and will, so thou show thyself complaisant unto him, make thee a great lady. Thou seest that, although we are gentlefolk, we are poor; God sendeth us fortune; let us know how to take it." The proud and virtuous damsel suffered not her graceless father to say more, but, inflamed with just disdain, "Then," quoth she, "you would make a whore of me, ere I be a wife? Marry, though I were married and you bespoke me of this, I would not hearken to you, and shall I hearken, being a virgin? God forfend that ever man alive, an if not he who shall espouse me, should possess me! Go and bespeak me no more of this."

The father abode all confounded and dared say no more to her; then with this reply he returned, sore chaff-fallen, to the emperor, who, hearing Gualdrada's sage and virtuous answer, was beyond measure disconsolate and abode a pretty while as he were a marble statue rather than a live man. Then, revolving in himself the magnanimous resolution of that chastest virgin and inwardly commending it without end, he said to her father, "I have determined, by conquering myself and subduing my rebellious passions, to show the world that, like as I know how to overcome others, even so do I know to overcome myself; whereof the love I have borne and shall still bear your

daughter shall bear the surest witness." Accordingly, he called his privy chamberlain and said to him, "Guido," for such was his name, "we purpose to give thee a wife, such as we would choose for our own son. Thou shalt espouse the daughter of Messer Bellincione here and we will give thee to her dower Casentino and many other castlewicks of ours in Val d'Arno."

Therewith he sent to summon all his barons and the gentlemen of his court and Messer Bellincione brought thither the fair and virtuous Gualdrada; whereupon the emperor, having made known unto all his love and the virgin's prudent and wise reply, drew from his finger a ring of great price and gave it to Guido, who then and there espoused the fair Gualdrada therewith. The grant of the promised dower was that same day made out and the emperor still called himself Gualdrada's knight; moreover, whenas she was espoused by Guido, he kissed her on the brow and commended her to God nor would ever again see her. From Guido and Gualdrada sprang two most illustrious families, one of the Counts Guidi and the other of the Counts da Puppio, who long held the seigniories given them by the emperor in Val d'Arno and Casentino. They were after, in the time of Filippo Visconti, Duke of Milan, expelled from this our commonwealth and some of them retired into Romagna, where they founded the family of the Counts of Bagno, who are nowadays possessed of many castlewicks in the parts of Cesena.

Bandello

to the most illustrious seignior Signor Geronimo
Adorno Greeting.

Albeit, magnanimous seignior mine, it is daily visible, by the many chances which betide, how grossly those husbands deceive themselves, who, scorning the love of their wedded wives, follow after those of other men, you may natheless more easily apprehend it from a novel which I wrote, many days ago, whenas I was at Rome, and which I now consecrate unto your name. Nor should that be accounted a lesser error which women commit, who, perceiving that their husbands, to spare the household gear, go about to spend other folk's good, study with all their wit to plant the stag's-horn crest on their brows, for that, like as the husbands merit exceeding great blame for breaking the marriage vow, even so are wives deserving of grievous chastisement, who beray their consorts with a stain so abominable and so shameful in the eyes of the world. Being one day, during the reign of Pope Julius the Second, at the Castle of Sant' Angelo in Rome, whither I had gone to bespeak the very learned and ingenious Messer Sigismondo da Foligno, the Pope's secretary, of a certain business, I found with him Messer Gian Battista Almadiano, a man of learning and secretary unto Monsignor Olivero Caraffa, Cardinal of Naples, and other gentlemen, amongst the rest

my most affable friend Signor Angelo del Bufalo, and they talked of a husband who had that day killed his wife, having found her with a courtier. Signor Angelo, saying that the husband in question had shown himself better advised than another Roman of whom he had heard tell, was prayed by the other gentlemen to recount the case and would have excused himself, saying that the circumstances were somewhat unseemly; but Almadiano said that there was no harm in recounting, in reading or in hearkening to things according as they had befallen, but that the harm lay in doing them; whereupon he related the story. And for that it chanceth to cite the name of my lord your father of blessed memory, I have bethought myself to dedicate it to you, so it also may have a patron like the others, more by token that it may bytimes, in the midst of your public occupations, (for that you have the affairs of all Europe on your hands) remember you of your Bandello, whom you so loved whilere. But why say I *loved*? I am very certain that your love for me is even as it was in Milan, as well for the kinship which is between your most illustrious house and mine own, through Madam Adornina, daughter of Signor Prospero Adorno and wife of the worshipful doctor and knight Messer Giovanni Antonio Bandello, my uncle, as also because you know how much I love, honour and revere you. Fare you well.

The Seventeenth Story.

FAUSTINA AND CORNELIA, LADIES OF ROME, TURN HARLOTS AND BY PRACTICE REGAIN THEIR HUSBANDS' FAVOUR.

Since Signor Gian Battista Almadiano reassureth me and relieveth me of the fear I had of being blamed, I will tell you, gentlemen, as briefliest I may, how two Roman ladies most shamefully entreated their husbands and how, having been common gamesters in the stews, they were after accepted by them for good and chaste, with the particulars whereof I was, these many days ago, acquainted by a credible person who knew the whole comedy. You must know, then, that, in the pontificate of Alexander the Sixth, there was at Rome a townsman called Marco Antonio, who, being passing rich in lands and herds, took to wife one Faustina, a lady of the same city, of wealth and lineage conformable to his own, but craftier and more adventurous than becometh unto a woman. No great while after, Marco Antonio chanced to espy a young lady married to another citizen and accounted one of the fairest women of her day at Rome, but very little loved of her husband ; and no sooner did he set eyes on her than he became beyond measure enamoured of her lovesome beauty and suffered himself to be so carried away by his ravenous appetite that he set his whole heart upon her and himseemed

he might not live without her sight. Accordingly, casting aside all other concern, he occupied himself with this alone, passing oftentimes before her house and continually frequenting the church whither she went ; and presently, himseeming he was well enough seen of her, he laid strait siege to her with letters and messages ; nor did this suffice him, but being very rich, he studied to mould her to his wishes by dint of gifts befitting a lady of higher rank than herself.

After awhile, the young lady, who was called Cornelia and who had as yet made no sign, sent to him, saying that, were he not married, she had been ready to do his every pleasure and would have abandoned her husband (who was a brawler and a man of lewd life and recked nothing of her, but all day long squandered his substance on shameful wise about all the brothels in Rome) to flee with him whithersoever he would. Marco Antonio, having gotten this answer and blinded with love of the lady, bethought himself to slay his wife and flee with Cornelia, but first to sell all he might and get him a good sum of money, wherewithal to live. Having conceived this fell design and stablished himself therein, he gave Cornelia by a messenger to know of his resolution, promising her that he would never abandon her and would carry with him such a store of monies and jewels as should suffice them to lead a merry life whercassoever it pleased them. This was pleasing to Cornelia, fain as she was, falcon-wise, to fly free, and she signified her mind to Marco Antonio, who, hearing this, gave out, the better to provide himself and to have more colour for selling his gear, that he had a mind to turn merchant and to go with certain Genoese into Syria. Accordingly, he fell to selling, to-day one thing and to-morrow another, making good cheap of all, to be the sooner despatched, and would fain have had Faustina his

wife sell certain vineyards and other lands that she had, but she would nowise consent to do it.

There was then at wharf in the Tiber a pretty big Catalan ship, waiting but for weather to set sail, which Marco Antonio learning, he determined to tarry no longer about the matter and advertised Cornelia of his purpose, so she might be prepared to carry into effect that which had been concerted between them. However, the messenger who came and went between the two lovers, (our Lord God permitting not that such wicked designs should altogether succeed) moved by intense pity, privily gave Faustina warning of the whole plot. When she heard how her husband sought to slay her and flee with Cornelia, she was filled with fear and astonishment and abode a good while as she were rather a marble statue than a live woman; then, recovering herself somewhat, she shook off her affright and seeing that her husband was minded to kill her, not for any default that she had ever committed against him, but only for the ardent and lustful love which he bore Cornelia, she thanked the messenger as most she might and filled his hand with monies, assuring him that she would never betray him and praying him most instantly not to fail to let her know the time of departure, whereupon he promised punctually to advise her of all. The man gone, Faustina began to enquire into her husband's doings and seeing that he sold to-day a field and to-morrow a vineyard and would have had her sell her own estates, held all that had been told her for true; wherefore, thinking to oppose to her husband's mine a countermine, she privily agreed with an excellent wood-worker to make her an image of the same bigness as herself and fashioned on such wise that the skin of a beast was very closely fitted thereunto, and to this, having learned the exact time at which her husband purposed to

kill her, she made fast certain bladders full of a thick red liquid, that should pass for blood.

She was used in summer to lay herself on her bed at noon-tide and sleep an hour or two, and it was then that her husband thought to slay her. Accordingly, the time come, she repaired to her chamber and laid in the bed the image she had let make, on such wise that it seemed her very self asleep, having first made certain cords fast thereto, so she might shake it at her pleasure, when hidden under the bed. Then, having made ready all that she purposed to carry with her, to wit, what soldiers call sleeve-gear,¹ and telling the serving-women that she was minded to sleep, she shut the chamber-windows and hid herself under the bed. Presently, Marco Antonio came home and hearing that his wife slept, sent two women who were in the house upon divers errands which behoved that they should be two hours abroad, having first rid himself of such serving-men as he was used to keep. This done, he betook himself to the chamber, where he believed his wife to be asleep, and entering as softliest he might, saw, as he thought, by the little light which came through the open door, the lady lying prone upon the bed. Accordingly, putting out his left hand and laying it on the image's head, he drew a poniard and plunged it with all his might into the thing's loins. Faustina, who was under the bed and felt the shock, pulled the cords on such wise that the image shook all over; whereupon Marco Antonio, thinking his wife would have arisen, dealt it a second stab and

¹ *Roba da manica*, matters of great worth and little bulk, that one may carry in one's sleeve. The loose, hanging sleeves of the time were, as in the East, much used as pockets; see post (Part the Third, the Story of Pietro, the Venetian apothecary's son, who murdered his aunt for her money) for an instance of this custom.

pierced it through and through. The first stroke made the red liquid flow abundantly and the second likewise ; wherefore, feeling that his wife no longer moved and thinking to carry her away, he took the image and cast it into a commodity which was in the chamber. He had already caused Cornelia betake herself, clad as a page, to the ship, on board which, having agreed with the master, he had likewise sent a chest wherein were all his monies and jewels ; and so, locking the chamber-door, he made off to the wharf.

Faustina, as soon as she heard her husband gone, finding no one in the house, put off her Roman clothes and clad herself in a courtesan's habit, which she had ready ; then, taking such few monies as she could lay her hands on, together with sundry shifts and other small matters of hers, she repaired to the river-bank and agreed for a passage with the master of the ship wherein Cornelia was, feigning to be of Barcelona, the which she might lightly do, for that she knew the Spanish tongue exceeding well. She was very fair and young ; wherefore, being in a courtesan's habit and putting on the manners and fashions of a strumpet, she fell to serving those who were in the ship, I mean not at setting the sails or the like sailorly offices, but with those commodities which men commonly seek of women ; nay, whoso would might have her favours for a groat ; nor was the vessel yet clear of the Tiber mouth ere she had already ridden over fifteen posts.

As soon as they were out of the river, they steered for Civita Vecchia, on their way to Genoa, and so they sailed two days with very fair weather. Meanwhile Marco Antonio caused Cornelia abide below with the chest and seeing the overmuch familiarity which Faustina used with the sailors and the passengers and eyeing her straitly, himseemed she was his wife. However, hearing her still speak Spanish and

seeing that for every least price she gave her coach¹ to hire and knowing, moreover, how he had served his wife with his own hand, he took her for a Roman courtesan and had a mind to try how she could trot. Accordingly, he accosted her and would have kissed her; but she with a very stern air gave him a shove with her hands in the breast and drew back from him angrily, saying, "Get thee to the gallows, hangman that thou art! How darest thou accost any woman, whosoever she may be, having slain thy wife? God send thee fire from heaven to burn thee! Had I an hundred thousand commodities for men's pleasure and shouldst thou offer to give me all the treasure of the world and make me empress, I would not oblige thee with one of them. Thou haddest a young lady to wife at Rome, noble and very fair, and to pleasure another woman, who hath a husband, thou madest thyself her butcher. As I passed through thy street, on my way to the ship, I saw much people in thy house and heard a great outcry; whereupon I entered, in company with many others, and saw thy bed all full of blood. It is true thy wife's body hath not yet been found; but have no fear, filthy cur that thou art, for God will punish thee. Begone to the devil, may he break thy neck for thee, and get thee out of my sight, thou worthless knave." These words she said half in Spanish and half in Italian, speaking as those from beyond the mountains use to do, whenas they would speak Italian, and he, hearing this rebuke, abode all aghast and confounded.

They were near Porto Venere,² where they thought to take harbourage, when there arose a furious tempest, which drove them towards the land; wherefore, unable

¹ *i.e.* her person.

² At the entrance of the Gulf of Spezzia.

to steer for the port and fearing to break upon some rock, they determined, for the saving of their lives, to lighten the ship. Accordingly, the sailors fell to throwing overboard all the wares and gear that came to their hands and bringing on deck packs, bales, chests and what not else, took, amongst the rest, Marco Antonio his chest, to cast it into the sea. Cornelia, who was clad as a man, came on deck, crying out, and would have hindered them from throwing the chest overboard. Marco Antonio also ran thither; but the mariners, having respect unto none and doing all for the preservation of their lives, cast the chest overboard, and in the confusion, Cornelia, clinging to it with her hands, fell with it into the sea. The ship, driven by the wind, flew through the water at such a rate that none might lend her aid, and the wretched Marco Antonio in despair was like to throw himself overboard. However, seeing that there was no help for it, he resigned himself as best he might, nor did the death of his Cornelia concern him so much as the loss of his jewels and monies, which were in the chest. They were overagainst the promontory, which the Genoese call Capo di Monte, when this befell and the wind that drove them shoreward waxing stronger, the ship, after the sailors had laboured in vain to bring her head round to seaward, struck upon the rocks near Rapallo, but on such sort that all on board were saved; whereupon, all winning to land, one took one way and one another, as useth to betide in like shipwrecks.

Faustina, who called herself Giulia, followed after Marco Antonio, to see what he should do, carrying with her the few small matters she had brought aboard ship. Marco Antonio, finding himself ashore, without a farthing in his pocket, knew not what to do and resolved, in his despair,

to kill himself. Accordingly, to be quit of his misery, he made for a coppice on a neighbouring hill and there, thinking to be seen of none, took his girdle and garters and making a rope thereof, knotted it about his neck ; then, climbing a tree, he made the end fast to a branch and let himself drop ; but the rope, unapt to bear his weight, gave way and he fell to the ground, without doing himself any hurt. Faustina, who had followed him and hidden herself in a thicket hard by, came out of the bushes and began to give him the foulest rating in the world ; whereupon he, seeing himself surprised, turned to her and said, " Fair damsel, since thou art come hither, prithee oblige me with one of thy veils, so I may hang myself withal, for I am resolved to live no longer." Was it not enough, kind sirs, that Faustina should see her husband reduced to such a plight that he craved rather death, though on shameful wise, than life, and that she should have cuckolded him, before his eyes, with an hundred vagabonds and rascal loons and made such mock of him as seemed good to her ? But she, not yet sated with vengeance, was determined to see him kick against the wind. Wherefore, hugging herself for joy, " I'faith, Roman," quoth she, " I am content to aid thee in this particular, albeit thou meritest it not, and lend thee a cord to break thy neck withal, so thou mayst begone to the devil's stead by such a shameful death as sorteth with thy villanies." So saying, she undid her pack and gave her husband the cord wherewith it was bounden. He, with her aid, climbed up into an oak and made the rope fast to a branch ; then, making a noose and knotting it about his neck, he let himself drop with a violent jerk ; but the bough, which had seemed apt to support the greatest weight, broke suddenly in sunder and came to the earth, together with Marco Antonio ; whereupon his

wife, to torment him yet more, said to him, smiling, "Look now, miserable Roman, an thou be hateful to the whole world; for that, whenas thou wouldst hang thyself, the very trees disdain to bear such vile and abominable carrion as thou art. Judge, then, how it is with thee. How much better were it, luckless wretch that thou art, hadst thou drowned thyself with thy strumpet, what time we were at sea." Whereunto the truly ill-fortuned Marco Antonio answered her with tears in his eyes, saying, "What am I to do, fair damsel, an I cannot avail to rid myself of life? I am beside myself: I have killed my wife and lost my mistress and my monies and whatsoever else was left me; I am an exile from my country and an I may not escape from my misery by death, what wouldst thou have me do? Would at the least I had a knife, for I would soon see an I might avail to open this vile breast!"

His wife, somewhat moved by these words, said to him, "Roman, God be with thee, let bygones be bygones; for there is no help for it. Nay, an I thought thou wouldst change thy fashions and be with me other than thou wast with thy wife, I would have pity on thee and put thee such means in hand that thou and I should triumph together.¹ But I misdoubt me that, for every paltry wench thou mightest espy who should anywise please thee, thou wouldst leave me on the Barbary shallows and belike do with me as thou didst with thy wife. Thou seemest to me so scant of wit that I know not what to think of thee." "What wilt thou have me do?" said Marco Antonio. "It may be thou wilt say that to me which will cause me spare my life and forever abide infinitely beholden unto thee." "Harkye, then," rejoined the lady, "I am Giulia of Barcelona and

¹ *i.e.*, lead a merry life of it.

was carried as a child to Rome, where so well hath it betided me that I find myself possessed of some hundreds of ducats. An thou wilt swear to me to bear me good company,¹ I will put myself at thy disposition and we will repair to some city herenigh, where thou shalt let me out for hire and we will give ourselves the best time in the world."

The plan seemed to Marco Antonio excellent and he swore to her whatsoever she might require, pledging her his faith that he would still be obedient unto her, and so they betook themselves in company to a village hard by, where, finding that they were very near Genoa, they resolved to go thither and there set up shop² and did so. I know not myself what to say of this devil of a woman.³ How think you? Did not she use her husband mighty cavalierly? Marry, it should have sufficed her to have played the common gamester aboard ship, without willing her husband to be her applesquire at Genoa. God keep us all from women of her kidney! They came, then, to Genoa and taking lodging in a brothel, set about earning their livelihood; and I warrant you Faustina approved herself exceeding doughty of her person, being every evening rather wearied than sated.⁴ This foul craft they plied many days, herseeming she was not yet sufficiently avenged of her husband.

Now it came to the knowledge of Faustina's kinsfolk how Marco Antonio kept a certain Giulia of Barcelona at his call in a brothel at Genoa; wherefore, his wife's bed having

¹ *Che mi farai buona compagnia*, i.e. to be a faithful friend and comrade to me.

² Sic (*piantar bottega*).

³ Sic (*diavolo di femina*).

⁴ An allusion to the famous passage in which Juvenal (Sat. vi. 130) describes Messalina as "lassata viris, nec dum satiata."

been found full of blood and no sign of her body and it being moreover accounted in a manner certain that he had carried off Cornelia, no sooner had they gotten this news than they went to complain to the pope, from whom they obtained a brief directed to the governor of Genoa. Now Signor Agostino Adorno was then governor of that city in the name of Lodovico Sforza, Duke of Milan, and he, being an exceeding just and politic man, determined, on receipt of the apostolical brief, to put it in execution. Now his secretary was a liegeman of his own from Castelletto and had been many a time carried home by Faustina, whom he knew as Giulia of Barcelona, to lie with her. He, having seen the brief, told Giulia all and she, being by this half-repentant for her husband's sufferings, reported it to him, whereupon the unhappy Marco Antonio gave himself up for lost and knew not what to do ; but she, unwilling to let him die on this wise, said to him, " Marco Antonio, be of good courage, for, an thou do as I bid thee, all shall go well. I have many a time heard thee say that I am exceeding like of favour unto her who was thy wife ; if this be true, espouse me and tell me the names of thy kinsfolk, that I may keep them well in mind ; so wilt thou be able, whenas the lord governor sendeth for thee, to say that I am Faustina and that it is lawful unto us to do that which most pleaseth us with our bodies." The lady's counsel marvellously pleased Dan Dunderhead and he accordingly embraced it eagerly and espoused her.

The governor sent that very day to summon him and caused him be interrogated by his secretary in his presence ; whereupon he answered that he had departed Rome with his wife and that all his monies and goods had been cast overboard for stress of weather ; wherefore, having no other means of livelihood, they had been reduced

to do as was known of all. In proof of this he caused call his wife, who boldly presented herself and being examined apart, gave excellent account of the whole. Now there was a young man come from Rome, in charge of the brief, who was factor unto Faustina's parents and knew her very well. He was summoned to attend the examination, and albeit the lady's habit and the ill life she had led had somewhat disfeatured her, nevertheless himseemed her fashions were those of Faustina; moreover, she gave so good an account of herself and of her husband, from the first day whenas he espoused her in Rome, that the factor knew not what to object to her. Marco Antonio did the like, altogether conforming with that which was said of Faustina, and so they continued to gain their living with the sweat of their bodies.

The having occupied myself with Marco Antonio and Faustina had well-nigh made me forget Cornelia, who, having fallen into the sea, clung to the chest and stablishing herself with her breast thereon, was, as her fortune willed it, cast ashore, more dead than alive, by the raging sea, near a hamlet of the Riviera di Levante. Now a good woman was come down to the seashore, with her two young daughters, upon certain occasions of hers and espying the chest, perceived that there was a man thereby, for that Cornelia was clad like a man. Finding that she was alive and hearing from her that she was a woman, she caused her daughters take up the chest and carry it to her house, whilst she herself supported Cornelia thither. There, a good fire being made, Cornelia abode free¹ and not to be ungrateful to the good wife

¹ *Restò libera*; i.e. came to herself and found herself free or delivered from peril, *libera* being here used by ellipse for *liberata*.

who had delivered her, gave her so much money that she avouched herself well pleased. Now she had clad herself anew in women's apparel with the clothes she had in the chest, so that, she being very fair, a boatman of the country began to wax private with her and made himself master not only of her person, but eke of her good; but, as it often chanceth that a churl knoweth not a good thing when he hath it, he entreated Cornelia mightily scurvily and she accordingly cast her eyes upon a fellow of the same country, with whom she made off one day, what while the boatman was abroad, carrying her gear with her. Her new gallant, who had neither house nor home, entertained her some days in one place and another of the Riviera, leading a merry life with her monies and spending without stint, and presently betook himself with her to Genoa, where after they had abidden five or six days, her fine friend robbed her of all her monies and jewels and made off I know not whither. The poor lady, finding herself alone and unknowing whither to turn, made shift to hire a sorry lodging near the public place and there abode, serving whoso required her; and being very fair, she began ere long to have such a press of custom that whiles she had no time to eat.

Marco Antonio, hearing Cornelia extolled of all and espying her, as he passed thereby, knew her not again, but deemed her very fair. Now he chanced to have lent his wife to a gentleman, who had carried her off to his country-house at Terra Alba, where she abode well-nigh a whole week; wherefore, having a mind to lie with Cornelia, he betook himself to her lodging and found her all alone in her chamber, for that one had that moment taken leave, having discharged his lading. Accordingly, he saluted her and laid himself

by her side, but no sooner were they face to face than they knew each other and no little was the wonderment of both. Cornelia, overcome with feminine despite, turned to him with a stepmother's countenance and said, "Welcome, welcome to the butcher of his wife and the deceiver of her whom he feigned to love so dear! Presumest thou to seek aught of pleasure from me, whom thou sufferedst erst cast into the sea, like vile offal? Darest thou appear before me? Begone to the devil, and may he carry thee off body and soul!" Poor Marco Antonio studied as best he might to appease her, but could never prevail with her to lend him her mortar to make sauce, and so he went his ways, flouted by her. Marry, he was indeed unlucky, in that at one and the same time he had both his wife and his mistress in the stews and saw himself denied of both that which they gave to a thousand rogues and vagabonds for a trifle; yet verily, there was no shame but well beseemed him, for that, being the husband of a fair and virtuous lady, he had, not content with her embraces, sought others and would e'en (as is commonly said) have better bread than is baked of wheat. Algaes, it cannot be said that Faustina deserved other than blame, for that, whatever her husband might offer to do to her, she should not have turned from honest most dishonest.

Now Marco Antonio, recalling the past time, returned to his pristine love and became more than ever inflamed for Cornelia; wherefore, himseeming that without her he was without life, he essayed by a thousand means to detach her from him who had her in keeping; but the latter, who made no small profit by her, found means, knowing that he entertained a woman in the stews, to let her know how her man comported himself. Faustina, enquiring after the woman in question and finding her to be Cornelia, misdoubted her lest her husband should flee with her anew

and herseeming she was now sufficiently avenged of him, determined to put an end to so long and shameful a comedy. Accordingly, she found means, by way of certain merchants, to write to an aunt of hers, who was abbess of a convent of holy women at Rome and who, on receipt of letters from her niece, whom she thought dead, did that which the latter sought and wrote to Marco Antonio, bidding him, for his exceeding great use and advantage, betake himself to Rome, clad as a pilgrim, and visit the nunnery. The letters were very urgent and Marco Antonio knew that she who wrote them was a lady of excellent repute; wherefore, having great faith in the abbess, whose prudence and authority he had proved in many things of moment, he determined to quit that his shameful trade and leaving the Catalan woman¹ to her own devices, to carry Cornelia back to Rome. Accordingly, he found means to have speech of the latter twice or thrice and bespoke her to such purpose that she, desirous to escape from such miseries, at last consented to go with him to Rome. Faustina, who had her eye on him all day long and knew the plot he had in hatching, feigned herself unaware of aught that he did; and so Marco Antonio, having let make palmers' habits for himself and Cornelia, set off with her one day and fearing the chances of the sea, went overland, by the Riviera di Levante and Tuscany, to Rome.

Faustina, that same day, embarked on board a brigantine bound for Rome and arriving there more than half a score days before Marco Antonio, betook herself secretly to her aunt the abbess, by whom she was lovingly received and carried to her own chamber. There, having imparted the matter to two of the oldest sisters, they wrought on such

¹ *i.e.* Faustina, who professed herself a Barcelonese.

wise that in two or three days the nuns perceived that the mother superior had some one in her cell, which gave rise to great murmuring in the convent. Accordingly, the abbess let ring to chapter and all the sisters being there assembled, she bespoke them thus, saying, "Dear my daughters, it hath come to mine ears that many of you think I have some man in my cell. Verily, you have known me so many years and my life hath ever been so open unto all that it behoved not any of you to deem evil of me; algates, I am well pleased that you should be jealous of the honour of this sacred community, may our Lord God bless you and vouchsafe you His holy favour! Wherefore, now that I cannot nor should any longer conceal from you the person whom I have so long hidden in my cell, I am content that it be manifest unto all, but I will not that it be revealed to the laity, under pain [of punishment for the breach of your oath] of obedience." Then, turning to the two old nuns, she gave them the key of her chamber and said to them, "Mothers mine, go ye to my cell and bring hither the person who is therein."

The nuns went away and brought Faustina, whose hair they had already polled and clad her as a nun, to the chapter-house. She came with such an air and making such manner obeisances that it seemed, indeed, as she had still been engaged in saying paternosters and avemarys, and at the abbess's instance, thus bespoke the nuns, saying, "Reverend mothers, you must know that, some seven months ago, Marco Antonio my husband, one day, as I lay asleep at noontide, dealt me two dagger strokes, that pierced me through and through, and thinking me dead, cast me into the commodity of my chamber. I, who had from a child been still devoted to Our Lady of Loretto, clung in falling to a beam, which jutteth out in the jakes, and vowed, [so I were saved,] to go barefoot to Loretto and offer up an image

twice transfixed with a poniard. Having made this vow, I felt myself straightway all whole, on such wise that there sheweth no scar on me, and issuing forth of the jakes, I betook myself hither, where my aunt of her favour hath entertained me and these two venerable mothers have of their courtesy nourished me all this while." The nuns, hearing this, bathed their breasts with tears and so firmly believed the whole story that they would all have made oath that Faustina had abidden all that time in the nunnery. Now she had found means to have the serving-man, who had advertised her of her husband's purpose to slay her, withdraw from the jakes the image which her husband had cast therein in her stead; moreover, with the nuns she ordered herself so fealty that they all held her for the most virtuous woman in Rome.

Marco Antonio presently came thither with Cornelia and betook himself forthright to the abbess, by whom he was lovingly received and who, after due greetings, said to him, "Thou must know, Marco Antonio, dearest nephew mine, that, an I loved thee not as a son, I had not caused thee come hither, and had I learned sooner where thou wast, I should not have tarried so long. My son, it is wont to be said that things past are eather blamed than amended, and that which hath once been done, who shall cause it be undone? Thou knowest what manner of life thou hast led at Genoa, the which whenas I heard, I sent straightway for thee, and if thou be minded to live honourably, the means will not fail thee, for that, if indeed thou have sold great part of thy good, there is yet so much left thee that thou mayst avail to live according to thy rank. But I would fain be certified that thou art disposed henceforward to live as it behoveth men of honour; in which case I would procure thy banishment to be revoked and restore thee thy wife, my

niece ; but I misdoubt me lest thou, inured as thou art unto ill, mayst, like the frog, be unable to win forth of the mire. How sayst thou?" Marco Antonio, hearing this, replied to her thus, saying, "Most reverend mother mine, I am very certain that you of your kindness love me full well and indeed I have already had right good earnest of your love. But you must know that I, carried away by youthful frenzy, slew Faustina, and yet you say you will cause me have my wife again ; I know not how that may be." Whereto, "I am well aware," rejoined the abbess, "that thou knowest it not ; but God, more pitiful than we deserve, hath miraculously preserved thee Faustina my niece ; and thou shalt hear how." Here the good abbess, with tears in her eyes, repeated the story which Faustina had told the nuns in chapter assembled.

Marco Antonio, hearing this, was moved to repentance and all overcome with compassion and tenderness, began likewise to weep ; then, scarce able to express himself in words, "Most honoured mother mine," quoth he, "an I might be certified that Faustina yet liveth and that she by your intercession pardoneth me the default committed against her, I should have nothing left to desire." Thereupon the abbess sent to call Sister Faustina, who came with her head veiled and her face bound with the nun's chinband and falling on her knees before her aunt, with her eyes on the ground, said, "Mother mine, what would you with me?" "Dear my niece," replied the abbess, "lift thine eyes and look if thou knowest him who talketh with me." Accordingly, she raised her eyes shamefastly and changing countenance all at once, "Woe's me, mother mine," quoth she, "this is that villain of a husband of mine, may God pardon him !" And so saying, with abundant tears she gave token of the utmost emotion. Marco Antonio,

from a Roman become a citizen of Goito,¹ cast himself at her feet weeping and craving her pardon, and but for the iron grate,² he would have fallen on her neck like a madman. Madam Faustina, seeing herself safe in port, made as if she were indignant and would not hearken to him; but the abbess and all the nuns, who had already borne witness of her devout life, wrought on such wise that she, albeit somewhat unwillingly, gave ear to his prayers and forgave him all his offences, on condition that he should never again meddle with other women. This done, order was taken for the annulment of his banishment and Goodman Gull, learning the vow made by Faustina, obtained a dispensation for himself to accomplish the vow by going barefoot to Loretto in her stead.

Now it befell that Cornelia's husband was killed in the house of a courtesan at Ponte Sisto; wherefore she, understanding from Marco Antonio the astounding miracle wroughten on Faustina's behalf and being no less wily than the other, knew so well to order her affairs that she contrived to make folk believe that she had fled from her husband, for the ill-fellowship he bore her, and had since been still in the company of an old widow her kinswoman, but now, hearing him to be dead, had come forth of prison. It was an easy thing to make the whole believed, there being none concerned over-diligently to investigate the matter. Meanwhile Marco Antonio carried Faustina home for good and pious, Faustina, whom he had seen at sea and ashore and in the public stews abandon herself unto a thousand ribald knaves and whom he

¹ The inhabitants of Goito appear to have borne the same reputation for simplicity in Italy as those of Gotham, Carpentras and Schilda in England, France and Germany respectively.

² The interview seems to have taken place in the convent-parlour, where the visitors were separated by the usual grating from the nuns.

had himself entertained for a public harlot and had many a time let out to hire. Cornelia, after abiding a year in a widow's habit, married again very honourably and both women were accounted very saints by their husbands, so well did they know to trick out their fables. For my part, I know not what to say of them, except to pray God that He keep us all from falling into the hands of like women, who make black white and white black ; nor yet know I what to say of the holy mother abbess and of the two old nuns, who so complaisantly forged lies and so devoutly maintained them. I do not indeed deny that it was a holy and praiseworthy deed to reconcile husband and wife, for that meseemeth it is anywise a pious work and worthy of commendation ; but I would not have such reconciliations brought about by means of false miracles, which seem indeed as one would jest with our Lord God, as with a familiar friend, and to my thinking, Cornelia found a more probable and credible means of ordering her affairs ; but, be that how it may, I have told you the story neither more nor less than as I heard it told.

Bandello

to the magnificent and ingenious Messer Antonio
di Pirro Greeting.

Though it were discoursed for thousands and thousands of years of the errors which are brought about by jealousy, whenas it getteth hold upon man or woman and of all the evils whereof it is the cause, methinketh one might never come to an end thereof, it being daily seen how great a variety of strange defaults it engendereth. Moreover, this blameworthy vice having been denounced of many, I purpose not at this present to impeach it farther, knowing I should but lose my pains, but only to set down in writing a thing which befell, no great while ago, in a city of Lombardy and whereby, though nought else were ever said on the subject, the monstrous banefulness of jealousy may lightly be apprehended. And for that it happened to a person, to name whom might be the occasion of some scandal, I shall abstain from setting down the true names, albeit, indeed, our most debonair Messer Benedetto da Corte named them, whenas he related the circumstance in question at the house in Pavia of Signora Leonora, his sister and wife of Signor Scaramuzza Visconti. Having, then, written it, I send it forth under the shield of your learned name, knowing it will to this my novelling¹ be such as was erst unto Perseus the shield of Pallas against Medusa. And who can doubt that you will vouchsafe me your protection, seeing that in Pavia you are still he who taketh upon him the defence of strangers? Withal, I feel myself no stranger in your eyes, knowing how much you love me. Fare you well.

¹ Novelletta.

The Eighteenth Story.

GALEAZZO STEALETH AWAY A DAMSEL FROM PADUA AND AFTER FOR JEALOUSY SLAYETH BOTH HER AND HIMSELF.

There was, in the time of the wise though ill-fortuned prince, Signor Lodovico Sforza, in a city of the Duchy¹ a merchant exceeding rich in lands and gear and great of credit in trade. He took to wife a young gentlewoman, well bred and of a generous spirit, by whom he had one son and no more. The latter was not ten years old when his father died, leaving him heir unto all his good, under the care of his mother, who, desiring that her son should revert to the pristine nobility of her ancestors, would not have him set hand to things mercantile, but with the utmost diligence let breed him gently and made him apply unto letters and other exercises befitting a gentleman, busying herself meantime, as best she might, with the settlement of her husband's accounts current for matters mercantile in Italy, Flanders, France and Spain, nay, even in Syria, with intent to buy lands for her son, who was called Galeazzo. The lad grew up exceeding gallant and high-spirited and delighted, not only in letters, but in music and riding and the use of arms and wrestling and the like, to the exceeding satisfaction of his mother, who furnished him lavishly with clothes and horses and monies,

¹ Of Milan.

letting him lack of nothing that pleased him. In a few years she satisfied all her husband's debts and recovered that which was owed him of other merchants, with the exception of one only account with a Venetian gentleman, who was trading in Syria and returned to Venice when Galeazzo was from sixteen to eighteen years old ; whereupon the latter, desirous, as youths are, to see new countries and especially the famous and worshipful city of Venice, besought his mother to let him go thither. This youthful desire was not displeasing to the lady ; nay, she encouraged him to go thither and would have him settle accounts with the Venetian gentleman ; wherefore she sent with him an experienced factor and commended him, to boot, to a merchant of the city, who was a great friend of the family.

Galeazzo accordingly set out, exceeding well furnished with clothes and servants, and coming to Venice, presented himself to his father's friend, by whom he was joyfully received and in company with whom he repaired to the Venetian gentleman and making himself known to him, told him the occasion of his coming. The Venetian, hearing this, said to him, " Dear my son, thou art welcome. True it is that, all things taken into account, I abide indebted in the sum which thou allegest, as your factor must have reckoned ; and if I have not sooner acquitted it, at the least by letters, it is because I arrived here scarce three days ago, with the galleys from Syria. Now I am ready to satisfy thee, but needs must thou wait eight or ten days, so I may go to Padua, where I have my wife and all my family." Galeazzo replied that he would willingly wait and would in the meantime go viewing Venice, and so he did. Then they repaired together to Padua, and nothing would serve the Venetian but Galeazzo must go lodge with him. Accordingly, he resorted to his house with one only page,

sending all the others to the hostelry, and the Venetian, who had otherwhiles abidden many days in Lombardy in the house of Galeazzo's father and had been exceeding well entertained, entreated the young man with the utmost honour. Now he had a fair daughter of fifteen years old, of whom Galeazzo, seeing her all day long and having never before proved what manner thing love was, became most ardently enamoured ; whilst she, perceiving his passion and the youth pleasing her, nowise shunned the amorous stroke, but became beyond measure enamoured of him and things came to such a pass that, having once or twice had commodity to speak with each other, they took order for that which you shall hear. Her father was within three days to give all the monies to Galeazzo and return with him to Venice, where it behoved him sojourn some time, and the two lovers agreed together that she should within two days after their departure flee from home under the charge of a trusty servant of Galeazzo's, whom he had feigned to send to his mother ; nay, the Venetian had himself written to her by him, but the good servant lay hidden in Padua against the appointed time.

Accordingly, Galeazzo, having gotten the monies, returned with the gentleman to Venice, whence by his counsel he let remit to Milan all the monies received, by bills of exchange, and did not bought aught without him, when, behold, news came to the Venetian how Lucrezia his daughter had fled aforenight and no trace could be found of her ; whereupon her father, beyond measure woeful, determined to leave all else and return to Padua. Galeazzo, feigning himself grieved for this mischance, offered to go with him whithersoever he would ; but the Venetian thanked him and departing, could learn nothing of his daughter ; wherefore he returned to Venice and found Galeazzo yet there. The latter presently

returned home into Lombardy, but dared make no mention to his mother of the ravished girl. Meanwhile, the servant hired a suitable house and throughly furnishing it according to the ordinance given him, lodged the damsel therein, under the guardianship of Galeazzo's nurse and her husband. The young man, to the marvellous contentment of both parties, culled the flower and the fruit of his Lucrezia's maidenhead and loved her more than his proper life, sleeping well-nigh every night with her and spending lavishly upon her. His mother, albeit she knew he supped and slept often abroad, said nothing and Galeazzo abode some three years with his Lucrezia, leading the merriest life in the world. At the end of this time it befell that his mother bethought herself to give him a wife, but he would nowise consent to take her, and she, misdoubting her son was enamoured elsewhere or had maybe taken a wife after his own fashion, set such a watch upon him that she learned all he had done at Padua, wherewith she abode sore discontent and found means, one evening whenas he was at supper at the house of a cousin of his, to have Lucrezia carried off by three masked men and placed in a nunnery hard by.

Galeazzo, after supper, thinking to go sleep with the damsel, found his foster-father and mother weeping bitterly and learned from them how three masks had gagged Lucrezia and carried her off. At this news he was like to die of grief and wept all night and on the morrow betimes he betook himself to his mother's house, where he shut himself in his chamber and abode all day without eating. His mother for the nonce made no enquiry of that which her son did ; however, on the ensuing day, seeing that he refused to dine, she went to visit him in his chamber, but he besought her, sighing and weeping, to let him abide as he was. She sought to learn from him the cause of that his affliction, but

he answered her no otherwhat than tears and sighs, the which she seeing and moved to compassion, bespoke him thus, saying, "Dear my son, I could never have believed that thou wouldst hide from me aught in the world ; nay, methought thou wouldst have discovered to me all thy troubles ; but I find myself greatly mistaken. Algates, thanks to my diligence, I have discovered the cause of thy chagrin and know that thou lovest Lucrezia, whom thou stolest away from our friend in Padua. How goodly an action this was thou mayst full well bethink thee ; but it is presently time for succour and not for blame. Wherefore do thou take heart and comfort and apply to recruit thyself, for thou shalt have again thy Lucrezia, whom I put in a nunnery, meseeming that, not finding her again, thou wouldst e'en comply with my wishes and take a wife, as it should behove thee do."

Galeazzo, hearing this, was as it were recalled from death to life and shamefastly confessed to his mother how he loved Lucrezia more than his proper life, instantly beseeching her to fetch her to him then and there ; but she constrained him to take patience for that day and would have him eat and recruit himself, promising him that she would on the morrow go fetch the damsel and bring her home. What shall we say? Galeazzo but now was fain to die, having lost sleep and appetite for chagrin ; yet with this mere promise he became altogether comforted. He dined and supped that evening and that night, hoping to have his Lucrezia again, he slept very well. The ensuing day come, no sooner was he risen from bed than he importuned his mother to send for Lucrezia, whereupon she, to content her son, took coach and repairing to the nunnery, reclaimed the damsel and carried her home with her. When the lovers saw one another, they ran to cast their arms about each other's

necks, weeping for tenderness, and embracing very straitly, drank each the other's hot and salt tears. Then Galeazzo, after he had lovingly kissed and rekissed his Lucrezia a thousand times, weeping the while, bespoke her thus, saying, "Sweet my soul, how hast thou fared without me? What manner of life hath been thine? Hath it not irked thee sore not to have seen me all this time? Certes, I thought to die, nor know I indeed how I am alive. Alack, my life, who shall certify me that another, during this time of thy separation from me, hath not enjoyed these thy beauties? I feel myself die of jealousy and my heart is rent in sunder in my body. Wherefore, heart of my body, so we may die but once only and escape this most grievous affliction, it were far better that we die together and at one stroke put an end to these our misdoubtings."

So saying, he took a poniard, which he had by his side, and stabbed the damsel to the heart, whereupon she fell incontinent prone on the earth, dead; then turning the bloody steel against himself, he plunged it into his breast and let himself sink upon the dead Lucrezia. Great was the outcry and passing sore the lamentation that arose in the house and the ill-starred mother, like one desperate, sent up her shrieks even to the sky. Galeazzo lingered all that day and died towards the going down of the sun. The poor mother, without hearkening to consolation or comfort, long bewept her dead son; a case truly worthy of pity and compassion and apt to make stones weep, not to speak of you, gentle and delicate ladies, who have already tears in your fair eyes. So the truth of the matter might not become known, the mother's brethren caused privily bury the two lovers, giving out that they had died of the plague; the which was the lightlier credited for that there was present suspicion of pestilence in the city, and moreover

a physician and a surgeon, debauched with monies, declared the case to be thus. Nevertheless the matter could not be so straitly concealed but that the fact came to be known even as it had ensued. Can any, then, deny that jealousy is a pestiferous worm and that it blindeth men? If indeed this of Galeazzo's may be styled jealousy and not rather madness and frenzy.

Bandello

to the most illustrious Signor Sforza Bentivoglio.

What while, of these latter days, the charming and accomplished Signora Cecilia Gallerana, Countess of Bergamo, took the waters of the baths of Acquario, for the fortification of her stomach, she was continually visited by many gentlemen and gentlewomen, as well for that she is the pleasant and ingenious lady whom you know as because the loftiest and goodliest wits of Milan and of the strangers there present are all day long in her company. There do men sing, there architects and painters limn, philosophers reason of things natural and poets recite their own and others' compositions, so that whosoever delighteth to discourse or to hear debate of any question of art or letters or philosophy findeth food sortable unto his appetite, for that it is still in the presence of this illustrious lady discoursed of things pleasant, ingenious and charming. It befell one day that, it having been debated at length of matters poetic between two famous wits, namely, Signor Antonio Fregoso Fileremo, Knight, and Messer Lancino Curzio, the learned and agreeable Messer Girolamo Cittadino took the Hundred Tales¹ of our most sprightly Boccaccio in hand and said, "My lady countess and you, gentlemen, since the debate concerning poetry is ended, methinketh it were well that we entered

¹ *i.e.* the Decameron.

upon some blither and less exalted discourse or that one or two of Boccaccio's novels be read, as it shall most please you." "Our Cittadino hath said well," quoth the Lady Camilla Scarampa, "so our understandings, wearied with the learned matters whereof it hath been debated, may be somewhat solaced with pleasant discourse and light-some speculations." To which added the Lady Costanza Bentivoglia, wife of the lord Count Lorenzo Strozzi, "And I also am of your way of thinking; but, for that all who are here have many a time read and heard the Hundred Novels, it is my opinion that some one of you should tell some story or novel which is not so well known." "So be it," cried well-nigh all the company, whereupon the Lady Cecilia besought Signor Manfredi of the Seigniors of Correggio, a well-bred youth and a pleasant, that he would vouchsafe to tell a story; and he, after some demur, finally recounted us one, which much pleased the merry company. Now, I having written it and bethinking myself to whom I should give it, you among many occurred to me, unto whom it sorteth more than unto any other, for that you, albeit yet in the flower of your youth, are, over and above the many qualities which be in you, endowed with mature fashions and provident discretion, and I am firmly persuaded that you would never have been so presumptuous as were the two Hungarians named in my story; wherefore, reading of their follies, you will daily study more diligently to measure your actions, according to your sage wont, by the compass of reason and so overpass the expectation which your goodly breeding hath still given us. Fare you well.

The Nineteenth Story.

A RARE CHEAT PUT BY A GENTLEWOMAN UPON TWO BARONS OF THE KINGDOM OF HUNGARY.

I know not, most lovesome and worshipful Signora Cecilia, if I ought thus lightly, at your request, to address myself to story-telling, being not overpractised in that craft, wherein I see sundry of this noble and worshipful company, who, having experience thereof, would acquit themselves far better than I and with greater satisfaction of all, and I had liefer sit to hear them than be myself the teller. But, for that I will e'en have your courteous prayers still stand me in stead of commandment, I will, as best I know, tell a story, the which, not many years ago, my uncle, Signor Niccolo di Correggio, related, on his return from the kingdom of Hungary, whither he had gone, by commitment of Duke Lodovico Sforza, in attendance upon Signor Dom Ippolito da Este, Cardinal of Ferrara, when he went to take possession of the bishoprick of Strigonia.¹ You must know, then, ere I proceed to tell you the story, that Mathias Corvinus was then, as every one must by report have understood, King of Hungary, who, for that he was very warlike and a man of great and goodly presence, was the first famous king that ever reigned in that kingdom and eke the most dreaded of the Turks ; and amongst his

¹ *i.e.* Esztergom (*hod.* Gran) in Hungary.

other virtues, as well in arms as in letters, he was the most liberal and the most courteous prince of his time. He had to wife Queen Beatrice of Arragon, daughter of King Ferdinand the Old of Naples and mother's sister to Alfonso, now Duke of Ferrara, a princess excellently accomplished in letters and adorned with fair fashions and every other virtue pertaining unto a lady of whatsoever degree. She, being no less courteous and liberal than King Mathias her husband, bethought herself of nought else than how all day long to honour and guerdon those who seemed to her to deserve it for some virtue or quality, so that men of every nation, accomplished in whatsoever kind of exercise, resorted to the court of these two magnanimous princes and there each, according to his merit and degree, was well seen and entertained.

Now it chanced in those days that a Bohemian knight, a vassal of King Mathias, (for that he was also King of Bohemia), born of a most noble house and very doughty of his person and expert in arms, became enamoured of a very fair and noble damsel, who passed for the most beautiful woman of the country and had a brother, though a gentleman, poor and exceeding ill provided with the goods of fortune. The knight himself was not very rich and had but one castle of his own, where he might hardly avail to live according to his rank. Being, then, enamoured of the fair damsel, he sought her in marriage of her brother and had her to wife, with a very small dowry. He had not till then been thoroughly sensible of his poverty, but the bringing home of his wife opened his eyes and he began to perceive how ill he was in case and how hardly he might maintain himself with the scanty revenues of his castlewick. He was a man of worth and humanity, who would nowise oppress his vassals with extraordinary expenses, contenting himself

with that rent-service which they had been used to pay unto his ancestors and which was but a very small matter ; wherefore, seeing that he had need of some extraordinary succour, he bethought himself, after much inward debate, to take service about the person of King Mathias his suzerain and there so approve himself and do on such wise that he and his wife might avail to maintain themselves according to their rank. But such and so ardent was the love he bore his lady that himseemed impossible to live an hour without her, much less to abide long at court divorced from her presence, for that it misliked him to carry her with him and keep her whereas the court should sojourn, and by dint of musing all day long upon these matters, he became exceeding melancholy.

His wife, who was a discreet and quick-witted damsel, seeing her husband's humour, misdoubted her he might perchance have some cause of dissatisfaction with herself and accordingly said to him one day, " Dear my husband, an I feared not to displease you, I would fain ask a boon of you." " Ask what most liketh you," answered the gentleman. " So but I may, I will with all my heart do whatsoever you shall require me, for that I desire to pleasure you as much as I tender my life." Therewithal the lady very modestly besought him that he would be pleased to discover to her the cause of the chagrin which was visible in his face, for that herseemed he was much more dejected than of his wont and did nought but muse and sigh, shunning that general fellowship wherein he was used to take so much pleasure. The gentleman, hearing her request, considered awhile and presently said to her, " Dearest my wife, since it pleaseth you to know the cause of my pensiveness and the occasion of my seeming melancholy, I will freely tell it you. All my thoughts, wherein you see me so deeply sunken, tend unto

this end, to wit, that I would fain find a means and a way whereby you and I may avail to live worshipfully, according as our rank requireth ; for that, regard had to the quality of our kindred, we live mighty poorly ; and the reason of this is that your father and mine squandered much substance which our ancestors left them in heritage. Now I, all day long debating this question in myself and making divers projects, have been able to find no expedient save one which is much more to my mind than any other, to wit, that I repair to the court of our sovereign lord King Mathias, of whom I am already known in the wars. I cannot doubt but I shall have of him good provision and find favour in his eyes, for that, he being a very liberal prince and loving men of merit, I will order myself on such wise that by his courtesy and generosity we may avail to live more at ease than we presently do. And I am the more confirmed in this expectation inasmuch as otherwhiles, whenas I served the Waywode of Transylvania against the Turks, I was solicited by the Count of Cilia to enter the royal household. But, on the other hand, when I think that it will behove me leave you here alone, I cannot reconcile myself to the thought of removing afar from you, as well for that my heart will not suffer me live without you, whom I love uniquely, as also because, seeing you so young and fair, I fear to suffer some dishonour through my absence ; for, when once I am gone, I misdoubt me the barons and gentlemen of the country will forthright do their every endeavour to win your love ; the which once happened, I, as one dishonoured, might never brook to be seen amongst men of honour. This, then, is the whole knot which holdeth me here bounden, so that I cannot nor may avail to provide for our occasions : and now, dear my wife, you have heard the cause of my pensiveness." This said, he was silent.

The lady, who was a woman of worth and magnanimity and who loved her husband with an infinite love, no sooner knew him to have made an end of his discourse than, putting on a blithe and cheerful countenance, she answered him on this wise, saying, "Ulric," for such was the gentleman's name, "I also have many and many a time bethought me of the greatness of your and my ancestors, wherefrom meseeming we are by none of our fault far removed, I have often set my wits awork to devise some means of putting us in better case than this wherein we presently are. For albeit I am a woman and you men say that women are scant of courage, I warrant you it is the contrary with me ; nay, I can tell you that I have a much higher and more ambitious spirit than should mayhap behove unto me and that I would fain avail to maintain the rank which was holden (according as I remember me) of my mother. Algate, I know in so far to temper my desires that I shall still rest content with all that is most pleasing to you. But, to come to the fact, I may tell you, that, as, like yourself, I pondered our occasions, it occurred to my mind that, you being young and doughty of your person, there was no better shift for us than that you should take service with our king, and I deem it now so much the more profitable as I hear from yourself that he hath known you aforetime in the field ; wherefore it pleaseth me to believe that the king, who hath still been a just judge of men's merits, can do no otherwise than make goodly and fit provision for you. Of this my thought I dared not bespeak you, fearing to offend you ; but, now that you have opened unto me the way, I will not stint to tell you my opinion. Do you after that which shall seem to you best and most to the purpose of your honour and your profit. As for me, albeit, as I said a little before, I am naturally ambitious and would fain make an honourable figure amongst

other women and show myself in public with more worship and bravery than they, nevertheless, since our fortune is such as we see it, I could be content to abide with you what time we have to live in this our castle, where, Godamercy, we lack not of wherewithal to entertain ourselves honourably and procure us that which behoveth unto our service, so but we choose to content ourselves with things needful and expend our revenues with measure and modesty. Here can we sojourn commodiously enough with two or three serving-men and as many women and keep, to boot, a pair of hackneys, leading a blithe life and a quiet. If after we have sons, we will, whenas they come of age for service, send them to court or place them with other noblemen, so that, if they be deserving, they will get them honour and good, and if they prove little or nothing worth, the loss will be theirs. And God knoweth it were my supreme contentment that we might still avail to abide together in weal and in woe what time is left us to live. But, having some knowledge of your soul, which setteth more store by an ounce of honour than by all the gold in the world, and seeing you so dejected, I have still supposed (albeit other thoughts have passed through my mind) that your melancholy arose from one of two causes, to wit, that either you were ill satisfied with my behaviour or that you were chagrined at being unable to exercise yourself in arms and fill your due place among gentlemen of worship. Now, as she who loveth you over all created things, I have still chosen that your every wish should be mine, and so, what while it is vouchsafed me to live, I will ever choose, loving your contentment far better than my proper life. Wherefore, an you resolve to betake yourself to King Mathias his service, the chagrin that will without doubt overcome me for your absence I shall sweeten with the contentment which I shall feel, seeing you accomplish so

praiseworthy a desire as is yours, and shall go beguiling my thoughts with your dulcet memory, hoping to see you far happier than you presently are. As for your saying that you fear lest I be assailed by those who will seek to overcome my virtue and bereave me of your honour and mine own, I assure you that, an I wax not altogether mad, my firm resolve is rather to die than ever to sully my chastity in the smallest particular. Of this, indeed, I cannot nor may give you other pledge than my sincere faith, which if you knew but how fast I hold and how inviolable, you would certes be so content therewith that never would the least spark of misdoubtance enter your mind. So that, unknowing what other assurance to give you of this, I must commit myself to the actions which shall ensue, in the hope that the life I shall lead will be such as shall daily render you witness thereof. Nevertheless, all means and ways, which it shall please you essay for your assurance, will be of infinite contentment to me,¹ as unto her who seeketh no otherwhat than to satisfy you. Nay, should the whim take you to shut me up in one of the turrets of this castle until your return, I will gladly abide there, anchoress-wise, so but I may know that I do what pleasureth you."

The knight heard his wife's reply with the utmost delight and after said to her, "Dearest consort mine, I much commend the greatness of your soul and am well pleased that you are of my opinion. Moreover, it affordeth me inexpressible contentment to know your firm determination to preserve our honour and in this I exhort you to persevere, still remembering you that, when a lady hath lost her honour, she hath lost whatsoever worth she may avail to

¹ *A me saranno di contentezza infinita*, an elliptical phrase, signifying, "will be one and all acceptable to me."

have in this life and meriteth no longer to be styled a lady. Now, that which I told you I had in mind to do being a matter of moment, I shall not, methinketh, do it out of hand; but, when I carry it into effect, I assure you that I will leave you here lady and mistress of all. Meantime I will take better thought to our behoof and advise with my friends and kinsfolk and after address myself unto that which shall be judged most expedient. Meanwhile let us live blithely." Then, nothing in fact disquieting him save the doubt which he had of his wife, for that he saw her young and dainty and passing fair, he went still devising in himself how he might find a means for his assurance.

Abiding in this thought, he chanced, no great while after, to be one day in company with sundry other gentlemen, where, it being discoursed of various things, there was one who recounted an adventure happened to a gentleman of the neighbourhood and how he had gotten him the love and favour of a lady by means of an old Polack, who passed for a great enchanter and abode for a physician at Cuziano,¹ a city of Bohemia where mines of silver and other minerals are in great abundance. The knight, whose castle was not far thence, made an occasion for going thither upon certain business of his and seeking out the Polack, who was a man far advanced in years, bespoke him at length, requiring him, in fine, that, like as he had afforded another aid in the ensuing of his loves, even so he should vouchsafe him the means of certifying himself that his wife would do him no unright nor send him oversea into Cornwall.²

¹ Probably Czihana, a town between Pilsen and Eger, the name of which, as pronounced by the natives (*Tcheehāna*), is easily corrupted into Cuziano.

² *i.e.* Cuckoldshaven. See ante, p. 189, note.

The Polack, who was, as you have heard, exceeding skilled in matters of magic, said to him, "My son, thou requirdest me of a grave thing and one unto which I might never avail, for that (God only excepted) there is none can certify thee of a woman's chastity, they¹ being naturally frail and much inclined unto lechery, so that they lightly yield compliance unto the prayers of the lovers; nay, few of them there be who, being besought and solicited, abide honest, and those few are worthy of all honour and reverence. However, I have a secret, wherewithal I can in great part avail to satisfy thy desire, the which is such that I can by means of my art, in the space of a few hours, mould thee, with a certain composition of my fashion, a little figure of a woman, which thou mayst still carry with thee in thy pouch in a little box and view as many times a day as it shall please thee. If thy wife break not her marriage-troth unto thee, thou wilt still see the figure as fair and fresh of colour as at first and it shall seem as it were newly come from the limner's hand; but, should she think of yielding her body unto whosoever it may be, the figure will wax pale; and if it befall that she come to the fact and go so far as to abandon herself unto another, the figure will straightway become black as quenched coal and will stink on such wise that the stench shall be wonder-strongly smelt all about. Moreover, whenassoever she shall be essayed, the image will wax yellow as very gold."

This marvellous device much pleased the knight and he put such faith therein as is given to the truest and most certain things, moved and certified by the report which he

¹ *i.e.* women. This irregular use of the figure enallage is common in the old Italian writers. See my "Decameron of Boccaccio" *passim*.

heard of the magician and his skill, whereof those of Cuziano related most incredible things. Accordingly, agreeing with him for the price, he received the magic figure and returned, overjoyed, to his castle, where having abidden some days, he determined to go to the court of the glorious King Mathias and made known his resolve to his wife. Accordingly, he set the affairs of his household in order and committed the governance of the whole to the lady ; then, having already provided himself with all whereof he had need for his voyage, he set out, albeit it was with sore sorrow and trouble of mind he parted from his wife, and repaired to Alba Reale,¹ where in those days abode King Mathias and Queen Beatrice, by whom he was gladly received and well seen ; nor had he long sojourned at court before he became in great favour with all. The king, who already knew him, appointed him an honourable provision and employed him about many affairs, all which he brought to a good issue, according to the king's pleasure, and thereafter, being despatched to the defence of a certain place, which was beleaguered of the Turks, under the commandment of Mustapha Pasha, he drove the infidels within their own confines, earning the reputation of a valiant and stout soldier and a prudent captain ; the which greatly increased him in favour and acceptance with the king, so that, over and above the monies and other gifts which he daily received from him, he had of him, to boot, a castlewick in fee, with a fine revenue. Wherefore himseemed he had made an excellent choice in that he had come to court and entered the king's service and returned thanks to God who had inspired him thereunto, hoping daily for better things and abiding the blither and the more content inasmuch as he many times a day took in

¹ *Ibid.* Stuhlweissenburg in Hungary.

hand the precious box, wherein was his wife's image, which latter he still saw as fair and fresh of colour as if it had that moment been limned.

Now the report reached the court that Ulric had a wife in Bohemia who was the fairest and loveliest young lady in the two kingdoms ; whence it befell one day, what time there were many courtiers in company, whereof he was one, that a Hungarian baron said to him, "How cometh it, Signor Ulric, that it is now nigh upon a year and a half since you departed Bohemia and yet you have never returned thither to visit your wife, who, according to that which general report avoucheth, is so fair a damsel? Certes, you must reckon mightily little of her." "Nay," replied Ulric, "I reckon exceeding much of her and love her as my very life ; but my not having gone to visit her in all this time is no small argument of her worth and of my faith ; of her worth, that she should be content for me to serve my king and that it should suffice her to have frequent news of me and me of her, commodity failing us not to visit each other very often with letters ; whilst my faith and the obligation by which I know myself bounden unto our lord the king, from whom I have received such and so many favours and benefits, together with the constant battling that is toward with the enemies of Christ on the frontiers, have far more avail with me than the love I bear my wife ; and I am the more willing that my duty towards my king should outweigh husbandly love inasmuch as I know that I may live assured of the fidelity and constancy of my lady, as of one who, over and above her beauty, is discreet, well-bred and very virtuous and who tendereth me dearer than any created thing and loveth me even as her proper eyes."

Quoth the Hungarian, "These be brave words that you say of being assured of your wife's fidelity and chastity,

whereof she herself might not be certified, for that one while a woman will be in one mind and not be moved for prayers nor gifts of all the world, who will another day, at one sole look of a young man, at one simple word, one burning tear, one brief entreaty, wax compliant and yield herself altogether a prey unto her lover's pleasure. Who is there or who was there ever can or could have this assurance? Who is there knoweth the secrets of the hearts, which are impenetrable? Certes, methinketh none save God our Lord. Woman of her nature is fickle and variable and the most ambitious animal that is in the world. And what woman, perdie, is there who desireth not neither craveth to be courted, solicited, wooed, honoured and loved? And it often chanceth that those who account themselves most wily and think with feigned glances to feed divers lovers, are after all those who, espying not the amorous snare, run head foremost into the net and entangle themselves therein on such wise that, like birds taken in the lime, they cannot nor may after extricate themselves. So that, Signor Ulric, I see not how your lady should be privileged of God our Lord more than other women who are made of flesh and blood, on such wise that she may not be debauched." "Say what you will," rejoined the Bohemian, "I am persuaded that it is even as I say and am fain to believe that it is so in effect. Each knoweth his own affairs; nay, even the fool knoweth better that which aileth him than do his neighbours, wise though they be. Wherefore, believe that which seemeth good to you, for I forbid it not unto you, and leave me to believe that which most liketh me and which occurreth to my mind, seeing that my belief cannot molest you nor can your unbelief do me any hurt, each being free in the like cases to think and believe that which most besorteth him."

There were many courtiers and gentlemen present at these parleys, who said, this one thing and that another, of the case, according as we see it happen whiles; wherefore many and various were their opinions upon the matter, and for that men are not all of one same temper and many flatter themselves that they know more than their fellows and are so stubborn in their conceits that they may nowise be satisfied with reason, the debate was like to come to brawling and clamour. The case was reported to the queen, who, being a lady to whom jars and contentions at court were beyond measure displeasing, let call before her those who had been engaged in the discussion and desired that the talk should be punctually repeated to her; then, having heard the whole, she declared that each in effect was free to think what he would upon such a matter, but that it was e'en rash and presumptuous folly to judge all women after one fashion, as on like wise it was acknowledged a very great error to say that all men were alike of usances, the contrary being daily manifest, for that in men as in women there are as many differences and varieties of humour and character as of brains and two brothers and two sisters, born at one birth, will most whiles be of contrary temperaments and of very diverse fashions, that which pleasing one displeasing the other; wherefore she avouched herself firmly persuaded that the Bohemian knight was in the right to believe that which he believed of his wife, having long consorted with her, and concluded that in this he did prudently and like a wise and well-advised man.

Now, because (as is evident) human appetites are insatiable and some men are more daring, or rather more obstinate and rasher, than others, there were two barons of the court, Hungarians and harebrained, featherpated fellows, who bespoke the queen on this wise, saying, "Madam, you

do well, being a woman, to maintain the cause of women ; but our heart warranteth us that, were we whereas this same rare marble-breasted lady abideth and might speak with her, we would without fail breach that adamantine heart of hers and bring her to do our pleasure." "I know not," replied the Bohemian, "what might happen nor what you would do ; but I know well that I do not deceive myself." Many other things were said and both waxing warm over the debate, the two Hungarian lords, over-persuaded of their sufficiency for every emprise, reaffirmed that which they had first said and swore that they would forfeit all they possessed of goods moveable and immoveable, if within five months' space (so but Signor Ulric should bind himself not to go whereas the lady was nor advertise her) they brought her not to do whatsoever pleased them. The queen and all who hearkened laughed amain at this their speech and made mock of them, which they seeing, said, "You think, madam, that we speak by way of pleasantry and in jest ; nay, but we speak in right earnest and desire to be put to the proof, so it may be seen who hath the better opinion."

What while the dispute was yet toward, King Mathias heard the whole story and straightway betook himself to the queen, who still strove to do away that their extravagance from the two Hungarians' heads ; but the latter, seeing him come, besought him that he would be pleased to cause Signor Ulric lay a wager with them, for that, an they achieved not that whereof they vaunted them, they were willing to lose their whole substance and that it should be unconditionally given by the king to the Bohemian, provided that, an it was as they maintained, the latter should pledge his faith not to do his wife any hurt and should retract his false opinion and thenceforth believe women to be naturally

amenable unto lovers' prayers. Ulric,—who held his lady for certain to be most virtuous and loyal and faithful and believed, as in the Evangel, in the testimony of the image, which in all the time of his absence he had never seen pale nor black, but whiles yellow, according as she had been required by any of love, and which had still returned forthright to its native colour,—said to the Hungarian barons, "You have entered upon a parlous venture, wherein it pleaseth me also to engage, on condition that I shall still be free to do with my wife that which pleaseth me. For the rest I will wager all I have in Bohemia against what you will say you will stake, that you will never bring her to do your will, and of this I will say not a word, either to her or to any other."

They wrangled over this again and again, till at last, the Bohemian, goaded by the overweening of the two Hungarians, said, in the person of the king and queen, "Since Signor Ladislas and Signor Albert," for so were the two Hungarians called, "are e'en resolved to be put to the proof of that whereof they vaunt themselves, I am ready, with your good leave and favour, most august king, and yours, my lady queen, to accord them that which they demand." "And we," rejoined the Hungarians, "affirm anew all that we have said." The king did his utmost to divert them from this contention, but at last, importuned by the two Hungarians, he issued a royal decree, according as it had been agreed between the parties, of which, having seen it written, the two barons took a copy, as likewise did the Bohemian. The two Hungarians then went away to make their preparations and agreed together that Signor Albert should be the first to go try his fortune with the lady and that Signor Ladislas should follow, after a month and a half. Accordingly Signor Albert set out, with two serving-

men well equipped, and made directly for the Bohemian's castlewick, where being arrived, he alighted at an inn in the hamlet and enquiring of the lady's fashions, understood that she was very fair and virtuous past compare and beyond measure enamoured of her husband. Nevertheless, he was nowise discouraged, but on the morrow clad himself richly and going up to the castle, let the lady know that he would fain visit her; whereupon she, who was exceeding courteous, caused admit him and received him very graciously.

The baron marvelled greatly at her beauty and grace and at the goodly manners and modest fashions which he saw in her; then, they being seated, he told her that, moved by the report of her surpassing beauty, he had departed the court to visit her and that in sooth he found her far fairer and more lovesome than was said; and with this he fell to plying her with store of soft speeches, so that she straightway apprehended that which he went seeking and whither he would fain bring his bark; wherefore, so he might come the quicklier to harbour, she entered upon discourse of matters amorous, studying little by little to give him assurance. The baron, who was not that which he accounted himself, nay, rather was inexpert and feather-pated, gave not over prating and presently avouched himself passionately enamoured of the lady, who feigned herself somewhat coy of such discourse, but nevertheless ceased not to show him a favourable countenance, on such wise that the Hungarian in two or three days did no other-what than lay open siege to her. She, seeing him to be a new-fledged gull, bethought herself to play him such a trick that he should still remember him of her; wherefore, no great while after, feigning herself no longer able to resist his attacks, she said to him, "Signor Albert, methinketh

you are a great magician, for that it is impossible for me not to do your pleasure; the which I am ready to do, provided one thing ensue thereof, to wit, that my husband shall never know it, for he would without fail slay me. And in order that no one of the household may wot thereof, do you to-morrow, towards the eating-hour, come to the castle, as is your wont, and tarry not here nor elsewhere, but betake yourself straight to the chamber of the great tower, on the door whereof are graven in marble the arms of the realm, and shut the door after you. You will find it open and I will presently come to the chamber, where we may at our ease, unseen of any, (for I will look that none be thereabout,) have enjoyment of our loves and give ourselves a good time." Now this chamber was a very strong dungeon, which had been made aforetime for the safe-keeping of some gentleman whom it was not desired to put to death, but to hold in prison what while he should live.

The baron, having gotten this (to his thinking) favourable response, accounted himself the happiest and most fortunate man in the world and would not have wished to acquire a kingdom;¹ wherefore, having thanked the lady as most he knew and might, he took leave and returned to his inn, so blithe and joyful that he could scarce contain himself. Next day, the appointed hour come, the baron repaired to the castle and finding no one there, went straight to the chamber, according to the lady's injunction. Finding it open, he entered and pushed the door, which shut of itself, being contrived on such wise that it might not be opened from within, without the key, and having to boot a very strong lock on the outside. The lady, who was

¹ Or, in modern parlance, "would not have changed places with a king."

on the watch not far off, no sooner heard the door shut than she issued from the chamber where she was and coming to that where the baron abode, locked the door from without and carried off the key. This said chamber was, as hath been said, in the great tower of the castle and had in it a bed well enough arrayed; but the window, which gave light to the place, was so high that one might not win thereto without a ladder; for the rest it was very apt for an honourable prison.

Signor Albert seated himself, awaiting the lady's coming, according to her promise, as the Jews look for the Messiah; and whilst he abode in this expectation, building a thousand castles in the air, he heard a wicket open in the chamber-door, which was so strait that it scarce sufficed to admit a loaf and a beaker of wine, such as it is used to give unto prisoners. He, thinking it was his mistress who came to visit him and endow him with her favours, arose and so doing, heard a waiting-woman's voice, which bespoke him thus through the opening, saying, "Signor Albert, my mistress the Lady Barbera," for such was the name of the lady of the castle, "sendeth to tell you by me that, you having come to this her place to rob her of her honour, she hath imprisoned you as a thief and purposeth to cause you suffer such penance as shall seem to her behoving and as your offence meriteth. Accordingly, what while you abide here, an you would eat and drink, needs must you earn your victual with spinning, as do poor women for the sustenance of their lives. Moreover, I certify you that, the more yarn you spin, the better seasoned and the more abundant will be your diet; else will you fast upon bread and water; and be this said to you once for all, for that you will have no farther notice thereof." So saying, she shut the wicket and returned to her mistress.

At this extraordinary announcement, the baron, who thought to have come to a wedding and who, the better to post it, had eaten little or nothing that morning, abode the most confounded man alive ; his vital spirits altogether forsook him and losing all strength and breath, he let himself sink upon the chamber-floor, as if the earth had failed beneath his feet, on such wise that whoso saw him had accounted him more dead than alive. He abode thus a pretty while and presently somewhat recovering himself, he knew not if he dreamt or if that were indeed true which he had heard from the damsel. However, seeing that he was for certain in prison, like a bird in a cage, he was like to die or go mad for despite and rage, raving like one frenzied, and passed the rest of the day, unknowing what to do, ranging to and fro in the chamber, raging, sighing, blustering, blaspheming and cursing the day when he had been so mad as to seek to storm the chastity of another man's wife. Moreover, he called to mind the loss which ensued to him therefrom of his goods, he having with the king's consent staked them upon the venture ; but what afflicted him beyond measure was the shame, the ignominy and the ridicule which awaited him, whenas this should be known at court (for it might not be but the thing should be known of all), and himseemed whiles his heart was nipped and torn with red-hot pincers, so that he lost well-nigh all sense. Presently, as he ranged madly about the chamber, he espied in a corner a distaff full of flax, with the spindle attached thereto, and overcome with choler, was like to break and rend them in pieces, but contained himself, I know not how.

At suppertime the damsel returned and opening the wicket, saluted him, saying, "Signor Albert, I am come to take the yarn you have spun, so I may know what supper I am to

bring you." The baron, full of the utmost rage and despite, if before he was wroth, at this speech kindled into yet greater fury and gave her the foulest words were ever given to woman of lewd life, reviling her on unseemly wise and railing at her as he were at liberty in one of his own castles. The damsel, who had been lessoned by her mistress, replied to him, laughing, "I' faith, Signor Albert, you do exceeding ill to bluster it against me and bespeak me foul, since these your extravagances amount to nothing here. You must be well aware that an ambassador is privileged. My lady would know of you what cause moved you to come hither and if there be any who is cognizant of your coming, and this needs must you tell me, over and above the spinning. You are reduced to such a pass that you do but kick against the wind and bray water in a mortar, an you think ever to come forth hence, except you spin and tell that whereof I have required you. Submit yourself patiently to this manner of life, for there is none other means nor remedy for your case, and if you think to do otherwise, you do but rack your brains in vain. This is the firm and determinate conclusion that you shall have none otherwhat to eat and drink than a scantling of bread and water, except you spin and say an there be any who knoweth the end unto which you are come hither. An you would live, show me the yarn you have spun and tell me the truth of the case; if not, refrain therefrom.' Then, seeing that he had not spun nor was disposed to tell her that which was required of him, she shut the wicket. The ill-starred baron that evening had neither bread nor wine; wherefore, in accordance with the proverbial saying that Who goeth supperless to bed Shall toss and turn till morning-red, he never closed an eye all night. Now, no sooner was he safe in the chamber than his servants and horses were by the lady's appointment secretly and adroitly

taken and confined, together with his baggage, in a secluded place, where they were excellent well provided with victual and lacked nought but liberty, and she after gave out that Signor Albert was returned to Hungary.

To return to the Bohemian gentleman, I must tell you that, knowing one of his two antagonists to have departed the court and ridden into Bohemia, he looked every moment upon the enchanted image, to see if it should change colour, and accordingly, during the three or four days that Signor Albert went seeking to render the lady compliant with his wishes, whensoever he spoke with her, her husband saw his image wax yellow and after return to its native hue ; then, perceiving that it changed no more, he held it for certain that the Hungarian had been repulsed and had accomplished nothing ; whereof he abode beyond measure content, him-seeming he might henceforth be sure of his wife's virtue. Nevertheless, his heart was not altogether at rest nor was he wholly reassured, misdoubting him lest Signor Ladislas, who had not yet departed, might be more fortunate than his friend and obtain that which the latter had not availed to have.

Meanwhile, the morning come, the imprisoned baron, having eaten nothing the foregoing day neither slept anywhit by night and seeing that he had no means of issuing thence, except he obeyed the lady, made a virtue of necessity and, after taking much thought to his case, elected, for the gaining of his living, to discover the convention made by himself and his friend with Signor Ulric and to take the distaff and spin. Accordingly, albeit he had never before spun, nevertheless, instructed by necessity, he took the spindle and began to spin as best he knew, spinning now fine, now coarse and now middling and making so unhandsome a thread that it had caused whosoever saw it laugh heartily. He toiled

amain all the morning and at dinner-time up came the accustomed damsel, who, opening the wicket, asked him an he were disposed to reveal the cause which brought him to Bohemia and how much yarn he had spun. The Hungarian shamefastly told her all that had been covenanted with Signor Ulric and after showed her a spindleful of yarn; whereupon quoth the girl, smiling, "It is well; hunger driveth the wolf out of the wood; you have done excellent well to tell me the fact as it standeth and to spin to such purpose that methinketh we may with your thread make our mistress shifts which will serve her for rubbing-clouts, should she be troubled with an itching skin." So saying, she brought him good victual for his dinner and left him at peace. Then, returning to her lady, she showed her the yarn and told her the whole story of the covenant between Signor Ulric and the two Hungarians; whereat the lady, though aghast at the snares which the latter had spread for her, was natheless well pleased that the matter should go as it went and that her husband should know her integrity and honesty. Accordingly, ere she chose to advise the latter of aught, she determined to await the coming of Signor Ladislas and deal him also the chastisement which he deserved for his overweening and dishonourable intent, marvelling sore at the rashness and presumption of the two barons, in that, unknowing what manner woman she was, they had staked all their substance upon such a hazard; whereby she knew that they must e'en lack of wit and be foolhardy. But, not step by step to recount the particular things that befell day by day, the which would make an overlong story and would belike be tedious, I must tell you that Signor Albert, caged as he was, in a little while learned to spin excellent well and so to beguile his ill chance and Madam Barbera caused the damsel carry him abundance

of good and dainty viands, but, being solicited to go speak with him, would nowise consent thereto.

Meanwhile, Signor Ulric daily viewed and reviewed his goodly image, which abode still of one same fashion, fair and fresh-coloured. Now it had been oftentimes remarked of one and another how the Bohemian opened his pouch a thousand times a day and taking out a little box, intently considered that which was therein, then, shutting it again, replaced it in his pouch, and he had been questioned of many what manner of thing this was, but had never chosen to discover it unto any nor was there any, to boot, who had divined the truth ; for who, perdie, could ever have conceived such an enchantment ? Moreover, the king and queen would fain have known what it was he so often and so intently contemplated, nevertheless, themseemed not well to question him of the matter.

A month and a half were now passed since Signor Albert departed the court and was grown an expert spinster ; wherefore Signor Ladislas, seeing that his friend, despite that which had been agreed between them, sent him neither message nor letter of how he had fared, abode sore perplexed what he should do, imagining many and various things in himself ; then, concluding that his comrade must e'en happily have achieved his emprise and gotten the desired fruit of the lady and that, immersed in the deep and ample ocean of his pleasures, he had forgotten the appointed ordinance and concerned not himself to advise him thereof, he resolved to set out and try his fortune in turn. Accordingly, without overlong tarriance, he made ready all he deemed needful for the journey and taking horse with two servants, set out for Bohemia and fared on day by day till he came to the castle where the fair and virtuous lady abode and lighting down at the hostelry where Signor Albert had lodged before him, he

made diligent enquiry of the latter and learned that he had departed many days before. At this he marvelled sore, but knew not what to think of his friend's case and imagining everything except the truth, determined to address himself to the essaying of the venture whereupon he had departed Hungary. Accordingly, enquiring of the lady's manners and fashions, he understood of her that which was the common voice and report throughout those parts, to wit, that she was beyond compare discreet, lovesome and engaging and most virtuous.

She was straightway advised of the baron's arrival and knowing the occasion of his coming, bethought herself to pay him also in that coin which he went seeking. Accordingly, on the morrow, Signor Ladislas presented himself at the castle, as coming from King Mathias his court and wishing to pay his respects to the lady of the place, and being admitted to her presence, was received by her with a blithe and pleasant favour. They entered into discourse and the lady showing herself mighty merry and (as the saying is) a good wench,¹ Signor Ladislas began to flatter himself that he should make short work of his emprise. However, for this first time he chose not to descend to any particular of his purpose, but gave her to understand, in the course of general talk, that, having occasion to visit Bohemia and hearing the report of her beauty and grace and sprightliness and fair fashions, he had been loath to depart without seeing her and that he had found her far surpassing that which was reported of fame; and the first visit having passed thus, he returned to his inn. Meanwhile, Madam Barbera determined in herself that Signor Ladislas should not be kept overlong in suspense, being inwardly sore incensed against the two

¹ Lit. a good fellow (fem.), i.e. *buona compagna*.

Hungarians, who, herseemed, had been over-presumptuous in taking to the highway, like common marauders, to despoil her of her honour and bring her in eternal disfavour with her husband, nay, even in danger of death. Accordingly, she let order another chamber, wall to wall with that where his friend span, and when Signor Ladislas returned, she began to show him especial favour and gave him to understand that she burned for him ; nor was it long ere he also found himself in prison and the accustomed damsel signified to him, through an opening in the door, that, if he had a mind to live, needs must he learn to reel and bade him look in a corner of the room, where he would find sundry hanks of yarn and a reel, adding, " Fall to and reel and lose no time." Whoso had presently looked upon the baron's face had thought rather to see a marble statue than a live man, for that he was well-nigh mad with despite and was like to lose his senses ; however, after the first day, seeing that there was no help for it, he fell to reeling. The lady then released Signor Albert's servants and caused carry them, together with those of Signor Ladislas, to their masters' chambers, so they might see how the twain earned their living ; then, letting take the two barons' horses and all their gear, she gave the servants leave to depart and at the same time despatched one of her own men to her husband, advising him of that which she had done.

The Bohemian gentleman, hearing this good news, went to do his homage to the king and queen and in their presence recounted the whole history of the Hungarian barons, according as he had learned it by his wife's letters ; whereat they abode full of wonderment and supremely commended the lady's advisement, accounting her exceeding virtuous and discreet and very astute. Signor Ulric then claimed the execution of the agreed convention,

whereupon the king assembled his council and bidding each tell his opinion, the arch-chancellor of the kingdom was, after due deliberation, despatched, with two councillors, to the Bohemian's castle, to make enquiry of the two barons' case. Accordingly, they interrogated the lady and her waiting-woman and divers others of the household, as also the two Hungarians, whom Madam Barbera had some days before let put together, so they might earn their livelihood by spinning and reeling, and having diligently enquired into the whole, returned to the court, where King Mathias, together with the queen and the chief barons of his realm and all his councillors, maturely examined the matter and after much debate, wherein the queen took the part of the lady and afforded the Bohemian her support, decreed that Signor Ulric should have possession of all the goods and fiefs of the two barons for himself and his heirs for ever and that the said barons should be banished both Hungary and Bohemia, under pain of being publicly scourged by the common hangman, whensoever they should return thither.

The judgment was duly executed and so the Bohemian gentleman had the whole of the Hungarians' property, whilst the two unfortunates were escorted forth of the two kingdoms and declaration made unto them of the sentence pronounced against them, the which was of many reputed over-rigorous and severe, especially by the friends and kinsfolk of the two barons. Nevertheless, the agreed convention being clear, the judgment was of all accounted just and such as might stand in the future for a warning unto many, who lightly and without any manner of reason judge all women to be of one fashion, whereas the contrary is daily seen by experience, for that women are of various kinds, even as are men. Moreover, the king and queen would have the valiant and virtuous

lady come to court, where she was lovingly received by them and regarded of all with infinite admiration, and the queen, taking her for lady of honour, assigned her an ample provision and ever after held her dear. The knight, thus waxen in goods and grace and much cherished of the king, lived long in peace and prosperity with his fairest lady and not forgetting the Polack, who had fashioned him the wonder-working image, sent him a rich present of monies and other things.¹

¹ This story is the foundation of two well-known plays, "The Picture" of Massinger and "Barberine" of Alfred de Musset. The latter poet, with true French heedlessness, has taken the word *Polacco*, Pole (cf. Shakspeare's "Polack"), for the proper name of the magician of whom Ulric buys the magic image, which he makes a mirror.

Bandello

to the most magnificent and illustrious lady Signora
Cecilia Gallerana Countess of Bergamo Greeting.

This summer last past, you having, for the extreme heats which consumed the place, departed Milan and retired with your household to your castle of San Giovanni in Croce in the Cremonese, it occurred to me to go with Signor Lucio Scipione Attellano to Gazuolo, whither we were bidden by the noble Signor Pirro Gonzaga; wherefore, passing near your castle, we had thought to commit a sacrilege an we came not to pay our respects to you. I will not now stay to recount how courteously and with how affable a welcome we were received by you and hospitably enforced to sojourn that day and other twain with you, who, leaving your accustomed and delightsome studies in poesy, Latin and vernacular, passed the most part of the time in pleasant discourse with us. On the second day, certain gentlemen of Cremona who had estates in the neighbourhood being present with you, there were sundry stories told at the season of the noontide rest, amongst which that which our Attellano related much pleased all the company and was with apt words amply commended of yourself; wherefore I then and there bethought myself to write it down and make you a gift thereof. Accordingly,

on my return from Gazuolo to Milan, remembering me of my determination, I put the said story in writing, and albeit I have not availed, in this my novel, to render the dulcet speech of our fluent and eloquent friend, I have not withal chosen to forbear from sending it to you. May it please you then to accept it, as you use to accept all that is given you of your friends, and do me the favour to lay it up in your museum,¹ where are deposited the goodly verse and flowery prose of so many learned men and where you hold such lofty converse with the muses that you occupy the first place amongst the learned ladies of our time. Our Lord God prosper your every thought ! Fare you well.

¹ *Museo*, frequently used by Bandello in the sense of study or library.

The Twentieth Story.

SIGNOR SCIPIONE ATTELLANO TELLETH
HOW SIGNOR TIMBREO DI CARDONA,
BEING WITH KING PEDRO OF ARRAGON
IN MESSINA, BECAME ENAMOURED OF
FENICIA LIONATA AND OF THE VARIOUS
AND UNLOOKED-FOR CHANCES WHICH
BEFELL, BEFORE HE TOOK HER TO WIFE.

In the course of the year one thousand two hundred fourscore and three¹ of our salvation, the Sicilians, themselves seeming they might no longer brook the domination of the French, one day, at the hour of vespers, with unheard-of cruelty massacred all who were in the island, for so was it treacherously concerted throughout all Sicily ; nor did they slay men and women only of French extraction, but every Sicilian woman, who might be conceived to be with child by any Frenchman, they butchered that same day ; nay, thereafter, if any were proved to have been gotten with child by a Frenchman, she was put to death without mercy ; whence arose the infamous renown of the Sicilian Vespers. King Pedro of Arragon, having advice of this, came straightway thither with his power and seized the sovereignty of the island, for that Pope Nicholas the Third urged him

¹ March 30, 1282, is the generally accepted date of the Sicilian Vespers.

thereto, telling him that the island belonged unto him, as husband of Costanza, daughter of King Maufred.¹ The said King Pedro held his court many days in Palermo on right royal and magnificent wise and made high festival for the acquisition of the island. Presently, hearing that King Charles the Second,² son of King Charles the First, who held the kingdom of Naples, came by sea with a great armament to expel him from Sicily, he went out against him with such ships and galleys as he had and joined battle with him, whereupon sore was the mellay and cruel the slaughter. In the end King Pedro defeated King Charles his fleet and took himself prisoner; after which, the better to prosecute the war, he removed with his whole court to Messina, as to that city which is next overagainst Italy and whence one may speedily pass into Calabria.

There, what while he held a right royal court and all was joy and gladness for the gotten victory, joustings being made and balls holden daily, one of his knights, a baron of high repute, by name Don Timbreo di Cardona, whom King Pedro supremely loved, for that he was doughty of his person and had still borne himself valiantly in the past wars, fell passionately in love with a young lady hight Fenicia, the daughter of Messer Lionato de' Lionati, a gentleman of Messina, lovesome, debonair and fair over every other of the country, and little by little became so inflamed for her that he knew not nor wished to live without her sweet sight. Now the baron aforesaid, having from his childhood still served King Pedro by land and by sea, had been mighty richly guerdoned of him, for that, besides gifts without

¹ The last King of Sicily of the Suabian dynasty, dethroned and slain by Charles d'Anjou at the battle of Benevento A.D. 1266.

² Then crown prince only of Naples, his father being still alive and on the throne.

number which he had gotten, the king had then late bestowed upon him the county of Colisano, together with other lands, so that his revenues, over and above the entertainment which he had of the crown, were more than twelve thousand ducats. Don Timbreo, then, fell to passing daily before the young lady's house, accounting himself happy what day he saw her, and Fenicia, who, though but a girl, was quickwitted and well-advised, speedily perceived the cause of the gentleman's continual passings to and fro. It was notorious that Don Timbreo was one of the king's favourites and that there were few of such avail as he at court; wherefore he was honoured of all. Accordingly Fenicia, seeing him, over and above that which she had heard tell of him, apparelled on very lordly wise and with a worshipful following and noting, to boot, that he was a very handsome young man and seemed mighty well bred, began in her turn to look graciously upon him and to do him honourable reverence. The gentleman waxed daily more enkindled and the more he looked upon her, the more he felt his flame increase and this new fire being grown to such a height in his heart that he felt himself all consumed with love of the fair damsel, he determined to have her by every possible means. But all was in vain, for that unto all the letters and messages he sent her, she never answered otherwhat than that she meant to keep her maidenhead inviolate for him who should be given her to husband; wherefore the poor lover abode sore disconsolate, more by token that he had never been able to prevail with her to receive or letters or gifts. Algate, being resolved to have her and seeing her constancy to be such that, an he would possess her, needs must he take her to wife, he concluded, after long debatement of the matter in himself, to demand her of her father to wife. And albeit himseemed he greatly

abased himself in seeking such an alliance, yet, knowing her to be of ancient and very noble blood, he determined, such was the love he bore the girl, to use no more delay about the matter.

Having come to this decision, he sought out a gentleman of Messina, with whom he was very familiar, and to him opened his mind, possessing him of that which he would have him do with Messer Lionato. The Messinese accordingly betook himself to the latter and did his errand to him even as it had been committed unto him by his friend. Messer Lionato, hearing such good news and knowing Don Timbreo's rank and consideration, tarried not to take counsel with kinsfolk or friends, but by a most gracious reply discovered how agreeable it was to him that the gentleman should deign to ally himself with him and going home, acquainted his wife and Fenicia with the promise he had made of the latter's hand. The thing was extremely pleasing to Fenicia, who thanked God with a devout heart that He had vouchsafed her so glorious an issue to her chaste love and showed her gladness by her countenance. But fortune, which ceaseth never to cross folk's weal, found an extraordinary means of hindering nuptials so desired of both parties ; and hear how.

It was published abroad in Messina how Don Timbreo di Cardona was in a few days to espouse Fenicia dei Lionati, which news was generally pleasing to all the Messinese, for that Messer Lionato was a gentleman who made himself loved of all, as one who sought to do hurt unto none and succoured all as most he might, so that all showed great satisfaction at such an alliance. Now there was in Messina another cavalier, young and nobly born, by name Signor Girondo Olerio Valentiano, who had approved himself exceeding doughty of his person in

the late wars and was moreover one of the most magnificent and liberal gentlemen of the court. He, hearing this news, abode beyond measure chagrined, for that he had a little before fallen enamoured of Fenicia's charms and so sore was he stricken of love's shafts that he thought for certain to die, except he had her to wife. Accordingly, he had resolved to ask her in marriage of her father and hearing the promise made to Don Timbreo, thought to swoon for dolour; then, finding no remedy for that his pain, he fell into such a frenzy that, overmastered with amorous passion and having no regard unto any manner of reason, he suffered himself to be carried away into doing a thing blameworthy in any one and much more so in a knight and a gentleman such as he was. He had in all their warlike enterprises been well-nigh always Don Timbreo's comrade and there was a brotherly friendship between them, but of this love, whatever might have been the cause thereof, they had still forborne to discover themselves to each other.

Signor Girondo, then, bethought himself to sow such discord between Don Timbreo and his mistress that the match should be broken off, in which case, demanding her of her father to wife, he hoped to have her; nor did he tarry to give effect to this mad conceit and having found a man apt unto the service of his blind and unbridled appetite, he diligently acquainted him with his mind. This man, whom Signor Girondo had taken unto himself for confidant and minister of his wickedness, was a young courtier, a man of little account, to whom evil was more pleasing than good and who, being fully instructed of that which he was to do, went next morning to visit Don Timbreo, who had not yet left the house, but went walking all alone for his pleasure in a garden of his hostelry. The

young man entered the garden and Don Timbreo, seeing him make for himself, received him courteously ; then, after the wonted salutations, the new-comer bespoke Don Timbreo, saying, " My lord, I come at this hour to speak with thee of matters of the utmost importance, which concern thine honour and well-being, and for that I may chance to say somewhat which will peradventure offend thee, I prithe thee pardon it to me ; nay, let my friendly devotion excuse me in thine eyes and believe that I have bestirred myself to a good end. Algaes, this I know, that this which I shall presently tell thee will, an thou be still that noble gentleman which thou hast ever been, be of very great service to thee ; and to come to the fact, I must tell thee I heard yesterday that thou hast agreed with Messer Lionato de' Lionati to espouse Fenicia his daughter to thy wife. Look, now, my lord, what thou dost and have regard unto thine honour. This I say to thee for that a gentleman, a friend of mine, goeth well-nigh twice or thrice a week to lie with her and hath enjoyment of her love ; nay, this very evening he is to go thither, as of wont, and I shall accompany him, as I use to do on such occasions. Now, an thou wilt pledge me thy word and swear to me not to molest me nor my friend, I will cause thee see the place and all ; and that thou mayst know [the whole], my friend hath enjoyed her these many months past. The regard I have for thee and the many pleasures which thou of thy favour hast done me induce me to discover this to thee ; so now thou wilt do that which shall seem to thee most to thy profit. It sufficeth me to have done thee that office in the matter which pertaineth unto my duty towards thee."

At these words Signor Timbreo was all confounded and was like to take leave of his senses ; then, after he had abidden awhile, revolving a thousand things in himself, the

bitter and (to his seeming) just despite which possessed him availing more with him than the fervent and loyal love he bore the fair Fenicia, he with a sigh answered the young man on this wise, saying, "My friend, I cannot nor should but abide eternally obliged to thee, seeing how lovingly thou concernest thyself for me and for mine honour, and I will one day give thee to know effectually how much I am beholden to thee. Algates, for this present I render thee, as most I know and may, the heartiest thanks in my power, and since thou freely profferest thyself to cause me see that which I should never have imagined for myself, I beseech thee, by that lovingkindness which hath moved thee to advertise me of this matter, that thou stint not to bear thy friend company and I pledge thee my faith, as a true knight, that I will offer neither thee nor him any manner of hurt or hindrance and will still keep the matter secret, so he may enjoy this his love in peace, for that I should from the first have been better advised and should, with well-opened eyes, have made diligent and curious enquiry of the whole." Whereupon quoth the young man to him, "Do you, then, my lord, betake yourself this night at the third hour to the neighbourhood of Messer Lionato's house and ambush yourself in the ruins overagainst the garden."

Now there abutted upon these ruins a face of Messer Lionato's house, wherein there was an old saloon, whose windows stood open day and night, and there Fenicia was bytimes used to show herself, for that from that quarter the beauty of the garden was better to be enjoyed; but Messer Lionato and his family abode in the other part of the palace, which was ancient and very great and might have sufficed for a prince's court, not to say a gentleman's household. This settled, the deceitful youth took his leave and returned to his patron, to whom he reported that which he had appointed

with Don Timbreo ; whereat the perfidious Gironde was mightily rejoiced, himseeming his device succeeded to his wish. Accordingly, the hour come, he clad one of his serving-men on worshipful wise and perfumed him with the sweetest essences, having lessoned him beforehand of that which he was to do ; and the disguised servant set out in company with the youth who had bespoken Don Timbreo, followed by another, with a step-ladder on his shoulder. Now, what was Don Timbreo's state of mind and what and how many were the thoughts which passed through his mind all that day, who might avail to recount at full ? I for my part know that I should weary myself in vain ; suffice it to say that the over-credulous and ill-fortuned gentleman, blinded with the veil of jealousy, ate little or nothing that day and whoso looked him in the face accounted him more dead than alive. Half an hour before the appointed time he went to hide himself in that ruined place, on such wise that he might very well see whoso passed there, himseeming yet impossible that Fenicia should have yielded herself unto another. However, he said in himself that girls are fickle, light, unstable, humoursome and greedy of new things, and on this wise, now condemning and now excusing her, he abode intent upon every movement.

The night was not very dark but exceeding still, and presently he heard the noise of coming feet and eke some broken word or two. By and by he saw the three pass and recognized the youth who had that morning advertised him, but could not recall the faces of the other twain. As they passed before him, he heard the perfumed one, him who played the lover, say to him who bore the ladder, "Look thou set the ladder featly to the window, so it make no noise, for, when we were last here, my lady Fenicia told me that thou lettest it fall over-heavily. Do all adroitly and quietly."

Don Timbreo plainly heard these words, which were to his heart as so many sharp spears, and albeit he was alone and had none other arms than his sword, whilst those who passed had two partisans and most like were armoured to boot, nevertheless such and so poignant was the jealousy which gnawed at his heart and so sore the despite which inflamed him that he was like to issue forth of his ambush and falling fiercely on the three conspirators, to slaughter him whom he judged to be Fenicia's lover or else, abiding dead himself, at one stroke to end the anguish and misery he suffered for excess of dolour. However, remembering him of his plighted faith and esteeming it overgreat baseness and wickedness to assail those who had the assurance of his word, he awaited the issue of the matter, all full of choler and despite and gnawing his heart for rage and fury.

The three, then, coming under Messer Lionato's windows, on the side aforesaid, set the ladder very softly against the balcony and he who played the lover climbed up by it and entered the house, as if he had intelligence within. The which when the disconsolate Don Timbreo saw, firmly believing that he who climbed up went to lie with Fenicia, he was overcome with the cruellest anguish and felt himself all aswoon. However, just despite (as he deemed it) availed so much in him that, doing away all jealousy, it not only altogether quenched the sincere and ardent love which he bore Fenicia, but converted it into cruel hatred; wherefore, caring not to await his rival's coming forth, he departed the place where he was ambushed and returned to his lodging. The youth saw him depart and recognizing him, deemed that of him which was in effect the case; whereupon not long after he made a certain signal and the servant who had gone up coming down, they all repaired in company to the house of Signor Gironde, to whom they related all that had passed;

whereat he was marvellously rejoiced and himscemed he was already possessed of the fair Fenicia.

On the morrow, Don Timbreo, who had slept very little that night, arose betimes in the morning, and sending for the townsman, by whom he had demanded Fenicia in marriage of her father, acquainted him with that which he would have him do. The Messinese, fully informed of his mind and will, betook himself, at his instance, towards dinner-time, to the house of Messer Lionato, whom he found walking in the saloon, against dinner should be ready, and there likewise was the innocent Fenicia, who wrought certain broideries of hers in silk, in company of her mother and of two sisters of hers, younger than herself. The citizen was graciously received by Messer Lionato, to whom said he, "Messer Lionato, I have a message to deliver to you, to your lady and to Fenicia on the part of Don Timbreo." "You are welcome," replied he; "what is to do? Wife and thou, Fenicia, come and hear with me that which Don Timbreo giveth us to understand." Quoth the messenger, "It is commonly said that an ambassador, in delivering that wherewithal he is charged, should not incur any penalty. I come to you, sent by another, and it grieveth me infinitely to bring you news which may afflict you. Don Timbreo di Cardona sendeth unto you, Messer Lionato, and unto your lady, bidding you provide yourselves with another son-in-law, inasmuch as he purposeth not to have you to parents-in-law, not indeed for any default of yourselves, whom he believeth and holdeth to be loyal and worthy, but for that he hath with his own eyes seen a thing in Fenicia which he could never have believed, and therefore he leaveth it unto you to provide for your occasions. To thee, Fenicia, he saith that the love he bore

thee merited not the requital which thou hast made him therefor and biddeth thee provide thyself with another husband, even as thou hast provided thyself with another lover, or, better, take him to whom thou hast given thy virginity, for that he purposeth not to have any manner of dealing with thee, since thou hast before marriage made him a burress of Corneto."¹

Fenicia, hearing this bitter and shameful message, abode as she were dead and on like wise did Messer Lionato and his lady. Nevertheless, taking heart and breath, which had well-nigh failed him for amazement, Messer Lionato thus replied to the messenger, saying, "Brother, I still misdoubted, from the first moment when thou bespoked me of this marriage, that Don Timbreo would not abide constant to his demand, well knowing myself, as I did and do, to be but a poor gentleman and none of his peer. Algames, meseemeth that, an he repented him of taking my daughter to wife, it should have sufficed him to say that he would none of her and not (as he doth) cast upon her so shameful an impeachment as that of harlotry. True it is that all things are possible, but I know how she hath been reared and what her usances are. God the Just Judge will one day, I trust, make known the truth." With this reply the gentleman took his leave and Messer Lionato abode persuaded that Don Timbreo had repented him of the proposed alliance, himseeming it were overmuch condescension and derogation on his part. Now Messer Lionato's family was one of the oldest in Messina and both noble and of high repute; but his wealth was only that of a private gentleman, albeit it was matter of record that his forefathers had anciently owned many lands and castles,

¹ See ante, p. 189, note.

with a most ample jurisdiction ; but, through the various revolutions of the island and the civil wars which had betided, they had (as is seen in many other families) been dispossessed of their seigniories ; wherefore the good old man, having never seen aught in his daughter other than most honourable, concluded that Don Timbreo had taken their poverty and present ill fortune in disdain.

On the other hand, Fenicia, hearing herself thus wrongfully impeached, was sore disordered for excess of dolour and heart-sickness and abandoning herself to despair, like a tender and delicate maid as she was and unused to the blows of perverse fortune, had tendered death dearer than life ; wherefore, overtaken with grievous and poignant anguish, she let herself fall as one dead and of a sudden losing her natural colour, resembled a marble statue rather than a live woman. She was taken up and laid upon a bed, where with hot cloths and other remedies her strayed spirits were presently recalled to her, and the doctors being sent for, the report spread throughout Messina how Messer Lionato's daughter Fenicia was fallen so grievously sick that she abode in peril of her life. At this news there came many ladies, kinswomen and friends, to visit the disconsolate damsel and learning the cause of her sickness, studied, as best they knew, to console her ; wherefore, as is wont to betide among a multitude of women, they said various things concerning so piteous a case and all of one accord severely blamed Don Timbreo. They were for the most part about the bed of the sick girl, who presently, having plainly apprehended that which was said, collected all her strength and seeing that well-nigh all wept for pity of her, besought them with a feeble voice to forbear ; then [silence being made] she spoke thus on languid wise, saying, "My honoured mother and sisters, I pray you dry these tears, for that they avail you not,

while to me they are an occasion of fresh dolour and profit nothing for the case betided. Thus hath it pleased our Lord God and it behoveth us have patience. The bitterest of the dolour which I suffer and which goeth little by little wearing away the thread of life in me, is not that I am repudiated, albeit that is a source of infinite grief to me, but the manner of this repudiation it is that cutteth me even to the quick and afflicteth my heart beyond remedy. Don Timbreo might have said that I pleased him not to wife and all had been well; but, through the fashion of his rejection of me, I know that I incur everlasting reproach in the eyes of all the Messinese and shall still pass for guilty of that which not only I never did, but which assuredly I never yet thought to do; nay, I shall still be pointed at with the finger of scorn for a strumpet. I have ever confessed and do anew confess myself no match for such a knight and lord as Don Timbreo; for that my parents' little means sought not to marry me in such high place. But, in the matter of nobility and antiquity of blood, the Lionati are known as the most ancient and noble of all this island, we being descended from a most noble Roman house which flourished before our Lord Jesus Christ took flesh, as is testified by very ancient writings. Now, even as for lack of wealth I confess myself unworthy of so great a gentleman, so on like wise I say that I am most unworthily repudiated, seeing it is a very manifest thing that I have never thought to give any man that of myself which right willeth should be reserved unto my husband. God (whose holy name be still praised and revered) knoweth that I say sooth; and who knoweth but the Divine Majesty would save me by this means? For that, belike, being so nobly married, I had been swollen up with pride and waxed arrogant, contemning this one and that, and had peradventure been less mindful of God's goodness towards me. Now may

He do with me that which most pleaseth Him and vouchsafe me that this my tribulation may enure to the welfare of my soul. Moreover, with all my heart I do most devoutly beseech Him to open Don Timbreo his eyes, not that he may take me again to bride,—for I feel myself dying little by little,—but that he, to whom my faith hath been of little price, may, together with all the world, know that I never committed that mad and shameful default, whereof, against all reason, I am impeached ; so that, if I die in this infamy, I may ere long abide justified. Let him enjoy another lady unto whom God hath destined him and live long with her in peace ; for me, in a few hours six feet of earth will suffice me. Let my father and my mother and all our friends and kinsfolk have at the least this scantling of comfort in this so great affliction that I am altogether innocent of the infamy which is laid to my charge and take to witness my faith, which I here plight them, as behoveth an obedient daughter ; for that weightier pledge or testimony I cannot presently give. Suffice it me to be before Christ's just tribunal acknowledged innocent of such wickedness ; and so unto Him who gave it me I commit my soul, the which, desirous of quitting this earthly prison, taketh flight towards Him."

This said, such was the greatness of the anguish which beset her heart and so sorely did it straiten it that, offering to say I know not what more, she began to lose power of speech and to falter out broken words, which were understood of none, and all at once there spread an ice-cold sweat over her every limb, on such wise that, crossing her hands upon her breast, she let herself go for dead. The physicians, who were yet there, unable to find any remedy for so grievous a case, gave her up for lost, saying that the fierceness of the pain had burst her heart in sunder, and so they went their ways ; nor had Fenicia long abidden, all cold

and pulseless, in the arms of those her friends and kinswomen than she was of all accounted dead, and one of the physicians, being called back and finding no pulse in her, declared her to have given up the ghost. What cruel lamentations were made over her, what tears were shed and what piteous sighs heaved, I leave it to you, compassionate ladies, to conceive. The wretched tearful father and the dishevelled and woebegone mother would have made stones weep, whilst the other ladies and all who were there kept up a piteous lamentation. From five to six hours were now past and the burial was appointed for the ensuing day; wherefore the mother, more dead than alive, after the multitude of women had departed, kept with her a kinswoman of hers, the brother's wife of Messer Lionato, and the twain, letting set water on the fire, shut themselves up in a chamber, without other person; then, stripping Fenicia naked, they fell to washing her with warm water.

Fenicia's strayed spirits had now been near seven hours abroad, whenas, what while the cold limbs were in bathing, they returned to their accustomed office and the damsel, giving manifest signs of life, began to open her eyes. Her mother and kinswoman were like to cry out; however, plucking up courage, they laid their hands on her heart and felt it make some movement; wherefore they were certified that the damsel was alive and accordingly, without making any stir, they plied her on such wise with hot cloths and other remedies that she returned well-nigh altogether to herself and opening wide her eyes, said with a heavy sigh, "Alack, where am I?" Quoth her mother, "Seest thou not that thou art here with me and with thine aunt? There had so sore a swoon overcome thee that we deemed thee dead, but (praised be God) thou art e'en alive." Whereupon, "Alas," replied Fenicia, "how much better

were it that I were dead and quit of such sore afflictions!" "Daughter mine," rejoined her mother and aunt, "it behoveth thee live, since God so willet it, and all shall yet be set right." Then the mother, concealing the joy she felt, opened the chamber-door a little and let call Messer Lionato, who came incontinent. When he saw his daughter restored to herself, it booteth not to ask if he were glad, and many things having been debated between them, he willed, in the first place, that none should know aught of the fact, purposing to send Fenicia forth of Messina to the country-house of his brother, whose wife was there present. Then, the damsel being recruited with delicate viands and wines of price and restored to her former beauty and strength, he sent for his brother and fully instructed him of that which he purposed to do. Accordingly, in pursuance of the ordinance concerted between them, Messer Girolamo (for so was Messer Lionato's brother named) carried Fenicia that same night to his own house [in Messina] and there kept her very secretly in his wife's company. Then, having made the necessary provision at his country-house, he one morning betimes despatched his wife thither with Fenicia (who was now sixteen years old), a sister of hers of from thirteen to fourteen and a daughter of his own; and this he did, to the intent that, Fenicia growing and changing looks, as one doth with age, they might in two or three years' time marry her under another name.

The day after the accident,¹ it being reported throughout all Messina that Fenicia was dead, Messer Lionato let order her obsequies according to her rank and caused make a coffin, wherein, unperceived of any, her mother, willing not that

¹ *i.e.* the falling ill of Fenicia.

any should meddle therewith, laid I know not what ; then, shutting the lid, she nailed it and luted it with pitch, on such wise that all held it for certain that the damsel's body was therewithin. At eventide Messer Lionato and his wife and kinsfolk, clad all in black, escorted the coffin to the church, making such a show of extreme grief as if they had in very deed followed their daughter's body to the tomb ; the which moved every one to pity, for that, the occasion of Fenicia's supposed death having gotten wind, all the Messinese held it for certain that Don Timbreo had forged the story aforesaid for his own ends. The coffin was accordingly interred, with general mourning of the whole city, and thereover was set a monument of stone, emblazoned with the ensigns of the Lionati, whereon Messer Lionato let grave this epitaph :

Fenicia hight I. As ill-fortune hade,
I was affianced to a cruel knight,
Who, soon repenting him of nuptial plight,
Unto my charge a foul transgression laid.

I, as an innocent and tender maid,
Seeing myself impeached with such unright,
Chose rather die than live in all men's sight
Shown for a strumpet. Sword or dagger's blade

There needed none, alack, to me to die ;
Sharp grief was deadlier than steel, forsooth,
Whenas I heard me slandered causelessly.

With my last breath I prayed God of His ruth
To show the world their error by and by,
Since my vowed bridegroom recked not of my truth.

The tearful obsequies made and it being freely spoken everywhere of the cause of Fenicia's death and various things discoursed thereupon and all showing compassion of so piteous a case, as of a thing¹ which had been feigned, Don Timbreo began to suffer exceeding great chagrin, together with a certain oppression of the heart, for that he knew not what to believe. Himseemed indeed he should not be blamed, having himself seen a man go up by the ladder to enter the house; but, presently, better considering that which he had seen, (more by token that his despite was now in great part cooled and reason began to open his eyes,) he bethought himself that he who had entered the house might belike have climbed up thither, either for some other woman or to steal. Moreover, he called to mind that Messer Lionato's house was very great and that none abode whereas the man had gone up; nay, that Fenicia, sleeping with her sister in a chamber within that of her father and mother, might not have availed to come to that side, it behoving her pass through her father's chamber; and so, assailed and tormented by conflicting thoughts, he could find no repose.

On like wise, Signor Gironde, hearing the manner of Fenicia's death and knowing himself to have been her murderer, felt his heart like to burst for excess of dolour, as well because he was passionately enamoured of her as also for that he had been the true cause of so great a scandal, and was like twice or thrice for despair to have plunged a poniard into his own breast. Unable either to eat or to drink, he abode as he were an idiot, nay, rather, a man possessed, and could take neither rest nor repose. Ultimately, it being the

¹ Sic (*come di cosa*), meaning, apparently, arising from or brought about by a false or unfounded accusation. This is a notable instance of the obscurity caused by the affectation of Ciceronian conciseness so common with the old Italian writers.

seventh day after Fenicia's funeral and himseeming he might live no longer, an he discovered not to Don Timbreo the wickedness he had done, he betook himself to the palace, at the hour when all went home to dine, and encountering the knight on his way to his hostelry, said to him, "Signor Timbreo, let it not irk you to come with me hard by on an occasion of mine." Timbreo, who loved him as a comrade, went with him, discoursing of various matters, and a few steps brought them to the church where Fenicia's monument stood. There come, Gironde bade his serving-men await him without and besought Don Timbreo to lay the like commandment on his ; the which he straightway did. The two gentlemen, then, alone entered the church, where they found no one, and Gironde carried Timbreo to the chapel where was the pretended tomb. There he fell on his knees before the tomb and unsheathing a poniard which he had by his side, gave it naked into the hand of Don Timbreo, who waited, all full of wonderment, to know what this might mean, more by token that he had not yet observed whose tomb it was before which his friend knelt. Then, in a voice broken with sobs and tears, Gironde thus bespoke him, saying, "Magnanimous and noble knight, having, as I judge, done thee infinite wrong, I am not come hither to crave thee of pardon, for that my default is such as meriteth it not. Wherefore, an ever thou look to do aught worthy of thy valour, an thou think to act knightly, an thou desire to do a deed to God acceptable and grateful to the world, plant that steel which thou hast in hand in this wicked and traitorous breast and make of my vicious and abominable blood a befitting sacrifice unto these most sacred ashes of the innocent and ill-starred Fenicia, who was late entombed in this sepulchre ; for that of her unmerited and untimely death I of my malice was the sole cause. Nay, if thou, more

compassionate of me than I of myself, deny me this, I will with mine own hands wreak that uttermost vengeance on myself which shall be possible unto me. But, an thou be that true and loyal knight thou hast been till now, who would never brook the least shadow of a stain, thou wilt forthright take due vengeance both for thyself and for the ill-fated Fenicia."

Don Timbreo, seeing himself before the resting-place of the fair Fenicia's body and hearing that which Gironde said to him, was well-nigh beside himself and could nowise conceive what this might be. However, moved by I know not what, he fell to weeping bitterly and besought Gironde to rise to his feet and more plainly to discover the matter. Therewith he cast the poniard far from him and after did and said to such purpose that Gironde arose, weeping the while, and thus replied to him, saying, "Know, then, my lord, that Fenicia was most ardently beloved of me and on such wise that, should I live an hundred lives, I might nevermore hope to find comfort or consolation, since my love was to the hapless maid the occasion of a most bitter death; for that, seeing I might never have of her a kind look nor a least token conformable unto my desires and hearing that she was promised to thee for wife, I, being blinded by my unbridled appetite, conceived that, so but I found a means of preventing her from becoming thy wife, I might after, demanding her in marriage of her father, have espoused her. Wherefore, unable to devise another remedy for my most fervent love, without farther consideration I hatched the blackest treason was ever plotted and caused thee by practice see one go up by night into her house, who was none other than one of my servants; moreover, he who came to speak with thee and who gave thee to understand that Fenicia had bestowed her love upon

another was lessoned and set on by me to the errand which he did thee. Accordingly, Fenicia was on the ensuing day repudiated by thee and through that repudiation the ill-fortuned maid died and is here buried. Wherefore, I having been the butcher, the hangman and the barbarous assassin who hath so cruelly wronged both thee and her, I beseech thee with clasped hands," and here he fell on his knees anew, "that thou wilt e'en take due vengeance for the wickedness committed of me ; for that, when I think of the dire calamity whereof I have been the cause, I hold life in horror."

Don Timbreo, hearing these things, wept passing bitterly and knowing that the error, once committed, was irreparable and that Fenicia, being dead, might no more return to life, determined not to seek to avenge himself upon Gironde, but, by pardoning him his every default, to procure Fenicia's fair fame to be vindicated and that honour restored to her, whereof she had without cause been so shamefully bereaved. Accordingly, he bade Gironde rise to his feet and after many heavy sighs, mingled with most bitter tears, bespoke him on this wise, saying, "How far better were it for me, brother mine, that I had never been born or that, an I must needs come into the world, I had been born deaf, so I might never have heard a thing so hurtful and so grievous to me and by reason whereof I shall never again live happy, considering that I, of my over-credulity, have slain her, whose love and the singular and surpassing virtues and qualities wherewith the King of Heaven had endowed her merited of me another gates guerdon than so shameful a defamement and so untimely a death ! But, since God hath so permitted it, against whose will there stirreth not a leaf upon a tree, and since things past may eather be blamed than amended, I purpose not to take of thee any manner of vengeance, for

that to lose friend upon friend¹ were to add dolour unto dolour, nor withal would Fenicia's blessed soul return to her most chaste body, which hath accomplished its course. Of one thing I will e'en rebuke thee, so thou mayst never more fall into a like error, and that is that thou discoveredst not to me thy love, knowing that I was enamoured of her and knew nothing of thy passion; for that, ere I caused demand her of her father, I would in this amorous emprise have yielded place unto thee and overcoming myself, as magnanimous and generous spirits use to do, would have preferred our friendship before my appetite; nay, maybe thou, hearing my reasonings, wouldst have desisted from this thine undertaking and so this scandal had not ensued. However, the thing is done and there is no means of procuring it to be undone; but in one thing I would fain have thee complease me and do that which I shall bid thee." Quoth Gironde, "Command me, my lord, for that I will do all without exception." "I wish then," rejoined Don Timbreo, "that, Fenicia having been of us twain wrongfully impeached for a strumpet, we, in so far as we may, restore her her fair fame and render her due honour, first in the eyes of the disconsolate parents and after of all the Messinese; for, that which I let say to her having gotten wind, the whole city might lightly believe that she was a harlot. Else meseemeth I should without cease have her angry shade before mine eyes, still crying sore to God for vengeance against me."

To this, still weeping, Gironde straightway answered, "To thee, sir, it pertaineth to command and to me to obey. I was before bounden unto thee by friendship and now, through the wrong which I have done thee and which thou,

¹ *Amico sovra amico*, i.e. one friend after another.

like an over-pitiful and loyal knight, so generously pardonest unto me, base and perfidious wretch that I am, I am for ever become thy servant and thy slave." These words said, both, weeping bitterly, fell on their knees before the sepulchre and with clasped hands humbly besought pardon of Fenicia and of God, the one of the wickedness committed and the other of his own credulousness; then, their eyes dried, Timbreo would have Gironde go with him to Messer Lionato's house. Accordingly, they repaired thither and found Messer Lionato, who had dined in company with sundry of his kinsfolk, in act to rise from table. When he heard that the two gentlemen would fain speak with him, he came to meet them, all full of wonderment, and bade them welcome; whilst they, seeing him and his wife clad in black, fell a-weeping for the cruel remembrance of Fenicia's death and could scarce speak. Then, two stools being brought and all having seated themselves, Don Timbreo, with many sighs and sobs, recounted, in the presence of as many as were there, the woeful story of the cause of Fenicia's (as he believed) most cruel and untimely death and cast himself, he and Signor Gironde, on the ground, craving her father and mother pardon of the wickedness committed. Messer Lionato, weeping for joy and tenderness, lovingly embraced them both and pardoned them their every wrong, thanking God that his daughter was acknowledged innocent.

Then Don Timbreo, after much talk, turning to Messer Lionato, said to him, "Sir and father, since ill fortune hath willed that I should not become your son-in-law, as was my supreme desire, I pray you, nay, as most I may, I require you that you will still avail yourself of me and mine, as if the intended alliance had indeed ensued between us, for that I will still have you in such reverence and obedience as a loving and obedient son should have for his father. And

if you will deign to command me, you shall find my deeds conformable to my words, for that certes I know nothing in the world, how difficult soever it may be, but I would do it for you." For this the good old man lovingly thanked him and finally said to him, "Since you have so freely made me such courteous proffers and since adverse fortune hath deemed me unworthy of your alliance, I will make bold to crave you of one thing, the which will be eath for you to do ; to wit, I pray you, by that loyalty which reigneth in you and by what love soever you bore the unfortunate Fenicia, that, whenas you have a mind to marry, you will vouchsafe to give me to know thereof and that, if I proffer you a lady who shall please you, you will take her to wife." Don Timbreo, himseeming the disconsolate old man asked a little thing in requital of such a loss as that which he had suffered, proffered him his hand and kissing him on the mouth, replied to him thus, "Sir father, since you ask so slight a thing of me, I being bounden to you for a far greater and wishing to show you how much I desire to do you a pleasure, not only will I take no wife without your knowledge, but her alone will I marry whom you shall counsel me and give me ; and this I promise you upon my faith, in the presence of all these noble gentlemen." Signor Gironde on like wise bespoke Messer Lionato with fair and goodly words, avouching himself still most apt unto his pleasures ; which done, the two gentlemen went to dinner. The thing was presently bruited abroad in Messina, so that it was manifest unto all that Fenicia had been unjustly impeached, and on like wise she herself was that same day advised by her father, through an especial messenger, of that which had betided ; whereat she was mightily rejoiced and returned thanks to God for her recovered honour.

Fenicia had now abidden about a year's space in the

country, where all went so well that none knew her to be alive, and meantime Don Timbreo held strait intercourse with Messer Lionato, who, having advised his daughter of that which he thought to do, applied himself to the ordinance of the things which pertained unto his purpose. Now in this space of time the damsel was waxen fair beyond belief and having accomplished her seventeenth year, was grown on such wise that whoso saw her had never known her for Fenicia, especially as they held the latter to be dead. Her sister, Belfiore¹ by name, who abode with her and was some fifteen years old, appeared in very truth a most fair flower and showed little less beauty than her elder sister; which Messer Lionato, who went often to visit them, seeing, he determined to tarry no longer of carrying his design into effect. Wherefore, being one day in company with the two gentlemen, he said, smiling, to Don Timbreo, "It is time, my lord, that I should acquit you of the obligation which you, of your favour, have undertaken towards me. Methinketh I have found you a very fair and charming young lady to wife, with whom, when you have seen her, you will, to my thinking, be content. And if belike she be not taken of you with so much love as that wherewith you were to espouse Fenicia, of this I can e'en certify you that you will have in her no less beauty, no less nobility and no less gentillesse. With most engaging manners and other womanly charms, she is, Godamercy, abundantly provided and adorned; but you shall see her and it shall after be in your discretion to do that which shall seem to you most to your advantage. On Sunday morning I will come to your lodging, with a chosen company of kinsfolk and friends, and do you and Signor Gironde be

¹ *i.e.* Fair flower.

in readiness, for that it behoveth us go some three miles without Messina to a village where we shall hear mass, after which you shall see the damsel of whom I have bespoken you and we will dine in company."

Timbreo accepted the invitation and the ordinance appointed and on Sunday made ready betimes to take horse with Signor Girondo. Presently Messer Lionato arrived with a troop of gentlemen, having let make honourable provision at his country-house of everything necessary, and Don Timbreo, being advised of his coming, mounted to horse with Signor Girondo and their servants. Then, good day given and taken, they all in company rode forth of Messina and devising, as it happeneth on such occasions, of various things, they came presently, without perceiving it, to the house, where they were honourably received. They heard mass at a neighbouring church ; which ended, they all betook themselves into a saloon, magnificently arrayed with Alexandrian arras and carpets. All being assembled, there came many gentlewomen out of a chamber and amongst them Belfiore and Fenicia, which latter showed as she were the very moon, whenas she most shineth in the serene heavens among the stars. The two knights and the other gentlemen received them with a respectful greeting, as every gentleman should still do with ladies ; then Messer Lionato, taking Don Timbreo by the hand and carrying him to Fenicia, who had still, since her bringing into the country, been called Lucilla, "Here, Sir Knight," said he, "is Signora Lucilla, whom I have chosen to give you to wife, an it so please you. If you will be ruled by me, you will make her your spouse ; nevertheless, you are at liberty to take her or leave her."

Don Timbreo, seeing the damsel, who was in truth most fair, was at first sight marvellously pleased with her and

being already determined to content Messer Lionato, bethought himself a little and answered, "Sir father, not only do I accept this damsel, whom you now present to me and who seemeth to me a right noble young lady, nay, but I would on like wise have accepted any other who had been proffered me of you. And so you may see how desirous I am to content you and may know that the promise I made you is no vain one, this damsel and none other do I take to my lawful spouse, so but her will be conformable unto mine." Whereupon the damsel made answer and said, "Sir knight, I am ready to do all that which shall be bidden me of Messer Lionato." "And I, fair damsel," rejoined Messer Lionato, "exhort you to take Don Timbreo to husband;" wherefore, to make no further delay with the matter, sign was made to an ecclesiastic,¹ who was there present, that he should pronounce the accustomed words, according to the use of Holy Church; the which he discreetly doing, Don Timbreo by word of mouth then and there espoused his Fenicia,² thinking to espouse one Lucilla. Now, whenas he first saw the damsel come forth of the chamber, he felt at heart a certain I know not what, himseeming he discovered in her countenance features of his Fenicia, and could not take his fill of looking upon her; nay, all the love which he had borne Fenicia he felt turn to this new damsel.

The espousals made, water was forthright given to the hands [and the company sat down to table,] at the head whereof was set the bride, with Don Timbreo on her right hand; overagainst whom sat Belfiore and next after her Signor Gironde, and so in turn a gentleman and a lady side by side. Then came the viands, delicate and in the goodliest

¹ Lit. "a doctor" (*dottore*), *i.e.* of theology.

² *i.e.* solemnly plighted his troth to her. As to this ceremony, see the notes to my Decameron, *passim*.

ordinance, and all the banquet was sumptuous and fair and softly served ;¹ nor lacked there of discourse and witty sallies and a thousand other diversions. Ultimately, fruits being set on such as the season afforded, Fenicia's aunt, who had abidden with her the greater part of the year in the country and who was seated at table beside Don Timbreo, seeing the dinner draw to an end, said merrily to the latter, as if she had heard nothing of the things occurred, "Sir bridegroom, had you never a wife?" At this question, he felt his eyes fill with tears, which fell before he could reply ; however, overcoming natural emotion, he replied to her on this wise, saying, "Mistress aunt, your most affable enquiry bringeth me back to mind a thing which I have ever at heart and through which methinketh I shall early end my days ; for that, albeit I am most content with Signora Lucilla here, nevertheless, for another lady, whom I loved and whom, dead as she is, I love more than myself, I feel a worm of dolour at my heart, which still goeth fretting me little by little and tormenteth me sore without cease, more by token that I, against all right, was the sole occasion of her most cruel death." Signor Girondo would fain have replied to these words, but was hindered with a thousand sobs and with the abundance of the tears which fell in streams from his eyes ; however, at last, with half-broken speech, "Nay, sir," said he, "it was I ; I, disloyal traitor that I was, was e'en the butcher and minister of the death of that most hapless damsel, who was worthy, for her rare qualities, to live longer than she did, and thou wast nowise to blame therefor, seeing all the fault was mine."

¹ The old Italians seem to have attached as much importance as do the modern English to this matter of quiet and silent service. On this point see my "*Decameron of Boccaccio*," *passim*.

At this discourse the bride's eyes also began to fill with tearful rain, for the cruel remembrance of the past heartbreak which she had so bitterly suffered; what while her aunt followed on and said to her new-made nephew, "Prithee, sir knight, of your courtesy, now there is nought else whereof to discourse, tell me how this circumstance befell, whereat you and this other gentleman yet weep so piteously." "Alack, madam aunt," replied he, "you would have me renew the cruellest and most despairful dolour was ever suffered of me, the thought whereof alone unmanneth and consumeth me; but, to pleasure you, I will tell you all, to my eternal affliction and little honour; for that I was overcredulous." Accordingly, he began and not without burning tears and to the exceeding pity and wonderment of the listeners, recounted all the piteous story from beginning to end; whereupon quoth the matron, "Sir knight, you tell me a strange and cruel case, whereof perchance the like never befell in this world. But tell me, so God aid you; if, before this damsel here had been given you to wife, you might have availed to recall your beloved to life, what would you have done to have her alive again?" Don Timbreo, still weeping, answered, "I swear to God, mistress mine, that I am right well pleased with this my bride and I hope daily for yet better content from her; but, might I before have availed to buy back the dead, I would have given the half of my years to have her again, over and above the treasure I would have expended to that end; for that in truth I loved her as much as woman can be loved of man, and were I to live thousands and thousands of years, dead as she is, I should still love her and for love of her should still have as many as are here of her kinsfolk in reverence." Whereupon, Fenicia's rejoiced father, unable longer to conceal the gladness which possessed him, turned to his

son-in-law, weeping for excess of contentment and tenderness of heart, and said to him, "Marry, sir son and son-in-law, for so must I call you, you do ill approve with your acts that which you say with your mouth, inasmuch as, having espoused your much-loved Fenicia and abidden all the morning beside her, you have not yet recognized her. Whither is this your so fervent love gone? Hath she so changed favour, are her fashions so altered that, having her by your side, you know her not?"

These words suddenly opened the eyes of the enamoured knight and he cast himself on his Fenicia's neck, kissing her a thousand times and viewing her with fixed eyes, fulfilled with joy without end. And still the while he wept softly, without availing to utter a word, inwardly calling himself blind; and it being presently recounted of Messer Lionato how the case had betided, they all abode full of extreme wonderment and to boot exceeding rejoiced. Signor Girondo, then, rising from table, cast himself, weeping sore, at Fenicia's feet and humbly besought her of pardon. She received him kindly and with affectionate speech remitted unto him the wrongs he had done her; then, turning to her husband, who still accused himself of the default committed, she prayed him with sweetest words nevermore to bespeak her of the matter, for that, he not having erred, it nowise behoved him crave pardon of her; and so, kissing and weeping for joy, they drank each other's hot tears, all full of extreme contentment.

Then, what while all abode in the utmost gladness and it was preparing to dance and make merry, Girondo, accosting Messer Lionato, who was so full of joyance that him-seemed he touched the sky with his fingers, besought him to vouchsafe him a very great favour, which would [he said] be to him a cause of marvellous contentment. Messer

Lionato bade him ask what he would, for that, were it a thing unto which he might avail, he would very gladly and willingly do it. "Then," said Girondo, "I ask you, Signor Lionato, to father-in-law and father, Signora Fenicia and Signor Timbreo to sister and brother-in-law and Signora Belfiore here to my lawful and loving consort." The good father, seeing new joyance heaped on him and well-nigh beside himself for such an unhop'd happiness, knew not if he dreamed or if that were indeed true which he heard and saw; but, himseeming he slept not, he thanked God with all his heart, who guerdoned him so magnificently, past his desert, and turning to Signor Girondo, courteously avouched himself content with that which pleased him. Then, calling Belfiore to him, "Thou seest, daughter," quoth he, "how the thing goeth. This knightly gentleman seeketh thee to wife; an thou wilt have him to husband, it will greatly content me and thou hast every reason to do it; so tell us freely thy mind thereof." The fair maid, all trembling, in a low voice shamefastly replied to her father that she was ready to do whatsoever he wished; and so, to make no delay about the matter, Signor Girondo, with the consent of all their kinsfolk, gave the fair Belfiore the ring with due ceremony of accustomed words; whereat infinite was the contentment of Messer Lionato and all his family. Moreover, for that Don Timbreo had espoused his dear Fenicia under the name of Lucilla, he then and there formally espoused her anew under her true name; and so all the day was spent in dancing and delight.

The fair and lovesomest Fenicia was clad in a robe of the finest damask, white as virgin snow, and was tired with a certain headdress which was wonder-goodly to behold. She was fairly tall for her age and well enough in flesh,

algates still waxing, for that she was but a youngling maid. Her bosom, under its thin and costly kerchief of the finest silk, showed somewhat upraised, jutting out in the shape of two round apples, duly parted one from other. Whoso beheld the winsome colour of her countenance saw a pure and pleasing whiteness, overspread with modest and maidenly red, the which not art, but the master-hand of nature suffused more or less with purple, according to the various chances and occasions which betided her. The swelling breast appeared a very mould of white and polished alabaster, under the round little throat which seemed of snow. But whoso saw her sweetest mouth open and shut, as it gave utterance to her dulcet speech, might certes say that he had seen an inestimable treasury, enchased with the finest rubies and full of the richest and goodliest orient pearls were ever sent us of the odorous East. Moreover, an thou sawest those her two lovely eyes or rather two shining stars, nay, rather two flashing suns, what while she winsomely turned them hither and thither, thou mightest e'en swear that Love harboured in those serenest lights and edged his piercing shafts in their most lucent splendour. How fairly showed her curled and frolic tresses, which, straying over the pure and spacious forehead, seemed very threads of clear and lucent gold, as they wantoned it to the dulcet breathing of the gentle breeze ! Her arms were of just proportion, with two loveliest hands so exquisitely wrought that envy itself had found nothing wherein to amend them ; and in fine all her shape was lovesome and slender and so graciously fashioned of nature that there lacked nothing unto her. Moreover, she moved now part, now all of her person so timely and so sprightly, according as the occasion required, that her every act, every sign and every movement was full of infinite grace and it seemed she needs must ravish the

hearts of the beholders by main force. Wherefore who named her Fenicia¹ nowise departed from the truth, for that she was indeed a phoenix who far excelled all other damsels in beauty. Nor yet did Belfiore show less goodly of presence, save that, being more a child, she had not such majesty and grace in her movements and gestures as her sister.

They abode all that day in joy and merriment and the two bridegrooms could not take their fill of viewing their mistresses and enjoying them by way of speech. But Don Timbreo especially was beyond measure rejoiced and could scarce bring himself to believe that he was where he was, misdoubting him he dreamed or that belike this was some enchantment wrought by magic art. On the morrow, they made ready to return to Messina and there celebrate the nuptials with such solemnity as pertained unto the rank of the two gentlemen, who had first by post advised a friend of theirs, mighty inward with the king, of that which had betided them and had committed unto him that which they would fain have done. Accordingly, he that same day went to do obeisance to King Pedro in the name of the two knights and to him recounted the history of the latters' loves and all that had passed from beginning to end; whereat the king discovered no little gladness and sending for his consort, would have the courtier once more tell the whole history in her presence; the which he punctually performed, to the great satisfaction and no small wonderment of the queen, who, hearing the woeful chance that had befallen Fenicia, was constrained to weep for very pity of the damsel. Then, for that in those days of King Pedro, more than in those of all other princes, there reigned a frank and generous courtesy

¹ From *Fenice*, phoenix.

and he it was who best knew how to reward whosoever deserved it¹ and his queen also was very gracious and debonair, he opened his mind to her and told that which he had in mind to do. The queen, hearing so magnificent a resolve, mightily commended the intent and pleasure of her lord and husband; wherefore, letting diligently order all the court and invite all the gentlemen and gentlewomen of the city, the king bade all the most worshipful barons of the realm go forth Messina, with an innumerable company of knights and gentlemen, under the care and governance of the Infant Don Giacomo Dongiavo, his first-born son, and meet the two sister-brides.

Accordingly, all being executed after the goodliest fashion, they fared forth the city and had not ridden a mile when they met the two brides, who with their husbands and many other persons came pricking merrily towards Messina. When they drew near, the Infant Don Giacomo caused the knights,² who had dismounted to do him reverence, take horse again and courteously giving them and the fair sisters joy of their espousals in his father's name, was himself received of all with the utmost reverence. The greetings of all the courtiers and of the others of the company who came from Messina to the two bridegrooms and their brides were no less debonair than welcome, and so the two knights and their ladies courteously thanked them all; but above all they rendered unto the Infant Don Giacomo such most thanks as might be given of them. Then they fared on in company towards the city, devising and making merry, as is usual at such joyous seasons, whilst Don Giacomo

¹ This is the king of whom the pretty story of Monna Lisa (see my "Decameron of Boccaccio," Day X. Story 7) is told.

² *i.e.* Timbreo and Gironde.

entertained now Signora Fenicia and now Signora Belfiore with pleasant discourse. The king, being punctually advised of all that had passed, mounted to horse, whenas it seemed to him time, with the queen and a worshipful train of gentlemen and ladies and met the goodly coming company at the entering in of the city; whereupon all dismounted to do obeisance to the two princes and were graciously received. The king then commanded that all should remount and posted himself between Messer Lionato and Don Timbreo, whilst the queen set the fair Fenicia on her right hand and Belfiore on her left and the Infant Don Giacomo joined himself unto Signor Gironde. On like wise did all the other gentlemen and ladies, following all in succession after the goodliest ordinance, and all, at the king's bidding, made for the royal palace. There they dined sumptuously and after dinner, Don Timbreo, by commandment of the king, recounted, in the presence of all the company, the whole history of his loves; which done, they fell to dancing and the king kept open court all that week, ordaining that all comers should eat in the royal palace for that space of time.

The festivities ended, the king called Messer Lionato to him and asked him what dowry he had promised his daughters and what means he had of giving it. Messer Lionato answered that nothing had been spoken of the dowries, but that he would give them such honourable portions as his means permitted; whereupon quoth the king, "It is our pleasure to give your daughters that dowry which shall seem to us behoving unto them and unto my knights, and we will not anywise have them be of more expense to you in the future." And so this most munificent king, with the singular approof, not only of all the Sicilians, but of whoso heard it, calling to him the two bridegrooms and their

ladies, would have them all formally renounce all claim to any share of Messer Lionato's substance and published a royal ordinance to that effect, confirming every such act of renunciation; then, immediately thereafterward, he most honourably endowed the two brides, not as a citizen's daughters, but well-nigh as his own, and increased unto the two husbands the entertainment which they had of him. The queen, no less magnificent, generous and liberal than her consort, would have the two brides ladies of her household; wherefore she assigned them a rich yearly provision out of certain of her revenues and still held them dear; and they, who were, in very deed, most debonair, comported themselves on such wise that in a brief space of time they had gotten the goodwill of all at court. Moreover the king gave Messer Lionato a very honourable office in Messina, wherefrom he drew no little profit; but, feeling himself advanced in years, he procured his said office to be confirmed unto a son of his.

Thus, then, did it betide Don Timbreo of his most honourable love, whilst the ill that Signor Gironde sought to do was converted unto him for good, and both long after enjoyed their mistresses, living in the utmost peace and oftentimes recalling with pleasure the mischances happened to the fair Fenicia. This same Don Timbreo was the first who founded in Sicily the most noble family of the lords of the house of Cardona, whereof there be nowadays both in Sicily and in the kingdom of Naples many men of no small account. In Spain, on like wise, that same most noble stock of Cardona flourisheth, producing men no whit unworthy, whether in arms or in matters civil, of their forbears. But what shall I say to you of the two most noble brothers, Don Pietro and Don Giovanni di Cardona, valiant in truth and excellent

gentlemen and soldiers? I see some of you here present who have known Signor Don Pietro, Count of Colisano, Lord High Constable and Admiral of Sicily, whom Signor Prospero Colonna, a man without compare, honoured and whose sage counsel he prized. And certes the Count of Colisano was a man of singular merit. He fell at the battle of La Bicocca,¹ to the general grief of all Lombardy; whilst Don Giovanni, his brother, Marquess of La Palude, was slain a great while before, fighting valiantly under the walls of Ravenna, in the battle which there befell between the French and the Spaniards.² But I, without perceiving it, have suffered myself, in lieu of story-telling, to digress into panegyric.³

¹ 29th April, 1522.

² At which Gaston de Foix, Duc de Nemours, defeated the combined Spanish and Papal armies, 11th April, 1512.

³ This is the story on which Shakspeare founded his "Much Ado about Nothing."

END OF VOL. I.

F1151-2
15

University of California Library
Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

Phone Renewals
310/825-9188

OCT 02 2001
REC'D YRL

APR 12 2004



