

Boccaccio's *Decameron*

Readings: From http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/index.php

“Night’s Lodging” (2nd Day/2nd Tale)

http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/texts/DecShowText.php?myID=nov0202&lang=eng

Second Day - Novel II

[Voice: *filostrato*]

[001] Rinaldo d'Asti is robbed, arrives at Castel Guglielmo, and is entertained by a widow lady; his property is restored to him, and he returns home safe and sound.

[Voice: *author*]

[002] The ladies and the young men, especially Filostrato, laughed inordinately at Neifile's narrative of Martellino's misadventures. Then Filostrato, who sat next Neifile, received the queen's command to follow her, and promptly thus began:

[Voice: *filostrato*]

[003] Fair ladies, 'tis on my mind to tell you a story in which are mingled things sacred and passages of adverse fortune and love, which to hear will perchance be not unprofitable, more especially to travellers in love's treacherous lands; of whom if any fail to say St. Julian's paternoster, it often happens that, though he may have a good bed, he is ill lodged.

[Voice: *filostrato*]

[004] Know, then, that in the time of the Marquis Azzo da Ferrara, a merchant, Rinaldo d'Asti by name, having disposed of certain affairs which had brought him to Bologna, set his face homeward, and having left Ferrara behind him was on his way to Verona, when he fell in with some men that looked like merchants, but were in truth robbers and men of evil life and condition, whose company he imprudently joined, riding and conversing with them. [005] They, perceiving that he was a merchant, and judging that he must have money about him, conspired to rob him on the first opportunity; and to obviate suspicion they played the part of worthy and reputable men, their discourse of nought but what was seemly and honourable and leal, their demeanour at once as respectful and as cordial as they could make it; so that he deemed himself very lucky to have met with them, being otherwise alone save for a single mounted servant. [006] Journeying thus, they conversed, after the desultory manner of travellers, of divers matters, until at last they fell a talking of the prayers which men address to God, and one of the robbers--there were three of them--said to Rinaldo: “ And you, gentle sir, what is your wonted orison when you are on your travels? ” [007] Rinaldo answered: “ Why, to tell the truth, I am a man unskilled, unlearned in such matters, and few prayers have I at my command, being one that lives in the good old way and lets two soldi count for twenty-four deniers; nevertheless it has always been my custom in journeying to say of a morning, as I leave

the inn, a paternoster and an avemaria for the souls of the father and mother of St. Julian, after which I pray God and St. Julian to provide me with a good inn for the night. [008] And many a time in the course of my life have I met with great perils by the way, and evading them all have found comfortable quarters for the night: whereby my faith is assured, that St. Julian, in whose honour I say my paternoster, has gotten me this favour of God; nor should I look for a prosperous journey and a safe arrival at night, if I had not said it in the morning.” [009] Then said his interrogator: “ And did you say it this morning?” [010] Whereto Rinaldo answered, “ Troth, did I, ” [011] which caused the other, who by this time knew what course matters would take, to say to himself: “ 'Twill prove to have been said in the nick of time; for if we do not miscarry, I take it thou wilt have but a sorry lodging. ” [012] Then turning to Rinaldo he said: “ I also have travelled much, and never a prayer have I said, though I have heard them much commended by many; nor has it ever been my lot to find other than good quarters for the night; it may be that this very evening you will be able to determine which of us has the better lodging, you that have said the paternoster, or I that have not said it. True, however, it is that in its stead I am accustomed to say the 'Dirupisti,' or the 'Intemerata,' or the 'De profundis,' which, if what my grandmother used to say is to be believed, are of the greatest efficacy. ” [013] So, talking of divers matters, and ever on the look-out for time and place suited to their evil purpose, they continued their journey, until towards evening, some distance from Castel Guglielmo, as they were about to ford a stream, these three ruffians, profiting by the lateness of the hour, and the loneliness and straitness of the place, set upon Rinaldo and robbed him, and leaving him afoot and in his shirt, said by way of adieu: “ Go now, and see if thy St. Julian will provide thee with good lodging to-night; our saint, we doubt not, will do as much by us; ” and so crossing the stream, they went their way. [014] Rinaldo's servant, coward that he was, did nothing to help his master when he saw him attacked, but turned his horse's head, and was off at a smart pace; nor did he draw rein until he was come to Castel Guglielmo; where, it being now evening, he put up at an inn and gave himself no further trouble. [015] Rinaldo, left barefoot, and stripped to his shirt, while the night closed in very cold and snowy, was at his wits' end, and shivering so that his teeth chattered in his head, began to peer about, if haply he might find some shelter for the night, that so he might not perish with the cold; but, seeing none (for during a recent war the whole country had been wasted by fire), he set off for Castel Guglielmo, quickening his pace by reason of the cold. Whether his servant had taken refuge in Castel Guglielmo or elsewhere, he knew not, but he thought that, could he but enter the town, God would surely send him some succour. [016] However, dark night overtook him while he was still about a mile from the castle; so that on his arrival he found the gates already locked and the bridges raised, and he could not pass in. [017] Sick at heart, disconsolate and bewailing his evil fortune, he looked about for some place where he might ensconce himself, and at any rate find shelter from the snow. And by good luck he espied a house, built with a balcony a little above the castle-wall, under which balcony he purposed to shelter himself until daybreak. Arrived at the spot, he found beneath the balcony a postern, which, however, was locked; and having gathered some bits of straw that lay about, he placed them in front of the postern, and there in sad and sorrowful plight took up his quarters, with many a piteous appeal to St. Julian,

whom he reproached for not better rewarding the faith which he reposed in him. [018] St. Julian, however, had not abandoned him, and in due time provided him with a good lodging.

[Voice: filostrato]

[019] There was in the castle a widow lady of extraordinary beauty (none fairer) whom Marquis Azzo loved as his own life, and kept there for his pleasure. She lived in the very same house beneath the balcony of which Rinaldo had posted himself. [020] Now it chanced that that very day the Marquis had come to Castel Guglielmo to pass the night with her, and had privily caused a bath to be made ready, and a supper suited to his rank, in the lady's own house. The arrangements were complete; and only the Marquis was stayed for, when a servant happened to present himself at the castle-gate, bringing tidings for the Marquis which obliged him suddenly to take horse. He therefore sent word to the lady that she must not wait for him, and forthwith took his departure. [021] The lady, somewhat disconsolate, found nothing better to do than to get into the bath which had been intended for the Marquis, sup and go to bed: so into the bath she went. [022] The bath was close to the postern on the other side of which hapless Rinaldo had ensconced himself, and thus the mournful and quavering music which Rinaldo made as he shuddered in the cold, and which seemed rather to proceed from a stork's beak than from the mouth of a human being, was audible to the lady in the bath. She therefore called her maid, and said to her: "Go up and look out over the wall and down at the postern, and mark who is there, and what he is, and what he does there." [023] The maid obeyed, and, the night being fine, had no difficulty in making out Rinaldo as he sate there, barefoot, as I have said, and in his shirt, and trembling in every limb. So she called out to him, to know who he was. [024] Rinaldo, who could scarcely articulate for shivering, told as briefly as he could, who he was, and how and why he came to be there; which done, he began piteously to beseech her not, if she could avoid it, to leave him there all night to perish of cold. [025] The maid went back to her mistress full of pity for Rinaldo, and told her all she had seen and heard. The lady felt no less pity for Rinaldo; and bethinking her that she had the key of the postern by which the Marquis sometimes entered when he paid her a secret visit, she said to the maid: "Go, and let him in softly; here is this supper, and there will be none to eat it; and we can very well put him up for the night." [026] Cordially commending her mistress's humanity, the maid went and let Rinaldo in, and brought him to the lady, who, seeing that he was all but dead with cold, said to him: "Quick, good man, get into that bath, which is still warm." [027] Gladly he did so, awaiting no second invitation, and was so much comforted by its warmth that he seemed to have passed from death to life. The lady provided him with a suit of clothes, which had been worn by her husband shortly before his death, and which, when he had them on, looked as if they had been made for him. So he recovered heart, and, while he awaited the lady's commands, gave thanks to God and St. Julian for delivering him from a woful night and conducting him, as it seemed, to comfortable quarters.

[Voice: filostrato]

[028] The lady meanwhile took a little rest, after which she had a roaring fire put in one of her large rooms, whither presently she came, and asked her maid how the good man did.

[029] The maid replied: “ Madam, he has put on the clothes, in which he shews to advantage, having a handsome person, and seeming to be a worthy man, and well-bred. ” [030] “ Go, call him then, ” said the lady, “ tell him to come hither to the fire, and we will sup; for I know that he has not supped. ” [031] Rinaldo, on entering the room and seeing the lady, took her to be of no small consequence. He therefore made her a low bow, and did his utmost to thank her worthily for the service she had rendered him. [032] His words pleased her no less than his person, which accorded with what the maid had said: so she made him heartily welcome, installed him at his ease by her side before the fire, and questioned him of the adventure which had brought him thither. Rinaldo detailed all the circumstances, [033] of which the lady had heard somewhat when Rinaldo's servant made his appearance at the castle. She therefore gave entire credence to what he said, and told him what she knew about his servant, and how he might easily find him on the morrow. [034] She then bade set the table, which done, Rinaldo and she washed their hands and sate down together to sup. [035] Tall he was and comely of form and feature, debonair and gracious of mien and manner, and in his lusty prime. The lady had eyed him again and again to her no small satisfaction, and, her wantonness being already kindled for the Marquis, who was to have come to lie with her, she had let Rinaldo take the vacant place in her mind. So when supper was done, and they were risen from the table, she conferred with her maid, whether, after the cruel trick played upon her by the Marquis, it were not well to take the good gift which Fortune had sent her. [036] The maid knowing the bent of her mistress's desire, left no word unsaid that might encourage her to follow it. Wherefore the lady, turning towards Rinaldo, who was standing where she had left him by the fire, began thus: [037] “ So! Rinaldo, why still so pensive? Will nothing console you for the loss of a horse and a few clothes? Take heart, put a blithe face on it, you are at home; nay more, let me tell you that, seeing you in those clothes which my late husband used to wear, and taking you for him, I have felt, not once or twice, but perhaps a hundred times this evening, a longing to throw my arms round you and kiss you; and, in faith, I had so done, but that I feared it might displease you. ” [038] Rinaldo, hearing these words, and marking the flame which shot from the lady's eyes, and being no laggard, came forward with open arms, and confronted her and said: “ Madam, I am not unmindful that I must ever acknowledge that to you I owe my life, in regard of the peril whence you rescued me. If then there be any way in which I may pleasure you, churlish indeed were I not to devise it. So you may even embrace and kiss me to your heart's content, and I will embrace and kiss you with the best of good wills. ” There needed no further parley. [039] The lady, all aflame with amorous desire, forthwith threw herself into his arms, and straining him to her bosom with a thousand passionate embraces, gave and received a thousand kisses before they sought her chamber. There with all speed they went to bed, nor did day surprise them until again and again and in full measure they had satisfied their desire. [040] With the first streaks of dawn they rose, for the lady was minded that none should surmise aught of the affair. So, having meanly habited Rinaldo, and replenished his purse, she enjoined him to keep the secret, shewed him the way to the castle, where he was to find his servant, and let him out by the same postern by which he had entered. [041] When it was broad day the gates were opened, and Rinaldo, passing himself off as a

traveller from distant parts, entered the castle, and found his servant. Having put on the spare suit which was in his valise, he was about to mount the servant's horse, when, as if by miracle, there were brought into the castle the three gentlemen of the road who had robbed him the evening before, having been taken a little while after for another offence. Upon their confession Rinaldo's horse was restored to him, as were also his clothes and money; so that he lost nothing except a pair of garters, of which the robbers knew not where they had bestowed them. [\[042\]](#) Wherefore Rinaldo, giving thanks to God and St. Julian, mounted his horse, and returned home safe and sound, and on the morrow the three robbers kicked heels in the wind.

“Wronged Wife” (2nd Day/9th Tale)

http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/texts/DecShowText.php?myID=nov0209&lang=eng

Second Day - Novel IX

[Voice: filomena]

[001] Bernabò of Genoa, deceived by Ambrogiuolo, loses his money and commands his innocent wife to be put to death. She escapes, habits herself as a man, and serves the Soldan. She discovers the deceiver, and brings Bernabò to Alexandria, where the deceiver is punished. She then resumes the garb of a woman, and with her husband returns wealthy to Genoa.

[Voice: author]

[002] When Elisa had performed her part, and brought her touching story to a close, Queen Filomena, a damsel no less stately than fair of person, and of a surpassingly sweet and smiling mien, having composed herself to speak, thus began:

[Voice: author]

“ Our engagements with Dioneo shall be faithfully observed; wherefore, as he and I alone remain to complete the day's narration, I will tell my story first, and he shall have the grace he craved, and be the last to speak. ” After which prelude she thus began her story:

[Voice: filomena]

[003] 'Tis a proverb current among the vulgar that the deceived has the better of the deceiver; a proverb which, were it not exemplified by events, might hardly in any manner be justified. Wherefore, while adhering to our theme, I am minded at the same time, dearest ladies, to shew you that there is truth in this proverb; the proof whereof should be none the less welcome to you that it may put you on your guard against deceivers.

[Voice: filomena]

[004] Know then that certain very great merchants of Italy, being met, as merchants use, for divers reasons proper to each, at a hostelry in Paris, and having one evening jovially supped together, fell a talking of divers matters, and so, passing from one topic to another, they came at last to discuss the ladies whom they had left at home, [005] and one jocosely said: “ I cannot answer for my wife; but for myself I own, that, whenever a girl that is to my mind comes in my way, I give the go-by to the love that I bear my wife, and take my pleasure of the new-comer to the best of my power. ” [006] “ And so do I, ” said another, “ because I know that, whether I suspect her or no, my wife tries her fortune, and so 'tis do as you are done by; the ass and the wall are quits. ” [007] A third added his testimony to the same effect; and in short all seemed to concur in the opinion that the ladies they had left behind them were not likely to neglect their opportunities, [008] when one, a Genoese, Bernabò Lomellin by name, dissociated himself from the rest, affirming that by especial grace of God he was blessed with a wife who was, perhaps, the most perfect paragon to be found in Italy of all the virtues proper to a lady, ay, and in great measure, to a knight or squire; inasmuch as she was fair, still quite young, handy, hardy, and clever beyond all other women in embroidery work and all other forms of lady's handicraft. [009] Moreover so well-mannered, discreet and sensible was she that she was as fit to wait at a lord's table as any squire or manservant or such like, the best and most adroit that could be

found. [010] To which encomium he added that she knew how to manage a horse, fly a hawk, read, write and cast up accounts better than as if she were a merchant; and after much more in the same strain of commendation he came at length to the topic of their conversation, asseverating with an oath that 'twas not possible to find a woman more honest, more chaste than she: nay, he verily believed that, if he remained from home for ten years, or indeed for the rest of his days, she would never think of any of these casual amours with any other man.

[Voice: filomena]

[011] Among the merchants who thus gossiped was a young man, Ambrogiuolo da Piacenza by name, who, when Bernabò thus concluded his eulogy of his wife, broke out into a mighty laugh, and asked him with a leer, whether he of all men had this privilege by special patent of the Emperor. [012] Bernabò replied, somewhat angrily, that 'twas a boon conferred upon him by God, who was rather more powerful than the Emperor. [013] To which Ambrogiuolo rejoined: “ I make no doubt, Bernabò, that thou believest that what thou sayst is true; but, methinks, thou hast been but a careless observer of the nature of things; otherwise, I do not take thee to be of so gross understanding but that thou must have discerned therein reasons for speaking more judiciously of this matter. [014] And that thou mayst not think that we, who have spoken with much freedom about our wives, deem them to be of another nature and mould than thine, but mayst know that we have but uttered what common sense dictates, I am minded to go a little further into this matter with thee. [015] I have always understood, that of all mortal beings created by God man is the most noble, and next after him woman: man, then, being, as is universally believed, and is indeed apparent by his works, more perfect than woman, must without doubt be endowed with more firmness and constancy, women being one and all more mobile, for reasons not a few and founded in nature, which I might adduce, but mean for the present to pass over. [016] And yet, for all his greater firmness, man cannot withstand--I do not say a woman's supplications, but--the mere lust of the eye which she unwittingly excites, and that in such sort that he will do all that is in his power to induce her to pleasure him, not once, perhaps, in the course of a month, but a thousand times a day. How, then, shouldst thou expect a woman, mobile by nature, to resist the supplications, the flatteries, the gifts, and all the other modes of attack that an accomplished seducer will employ? Thou thinkest that she may hold out! [017] Nay verily, affirm it as thou mayst, I doubt thou dost not really so think. Thou dost not deny that thy wife is a woman, a creature of flesh and blood like the rest; and if so, she must have the same cravings, the same natural propensities as they, and no more force to withstand them; wherefore 'tis at least possible, that, however honest she be, she will do as others do; and nought that is possible admits such peremptory denial or affirmation of its contrary as this of thine. ”

[Voice: filomena]

[018] Whereto Bernabò returned: “ I am a merchant and no philosopher, and I will give thee a merchant's answer. I acknowledge that what thou sayst is true of vain and foolish women who have no modesty, but such as are discreet are so sensitive in regard of their honour that they become better able to preserve it than men, who have no such solicitude; and my wife is one of this sort. ” [019] “ Doubtless, ” observed Ambrogiuolo, “ few

would be found to indulge in these casual amours, if every time they did so a horn grew out on the brow to attest the fact; but not only does no horn make its appearance but not so much as a trace or vestige of a horn, so only they be but prudent; and the shame and dishonour consist only in the discovery: wherefore, if they can do it secretly, they do it, or are fools to refrain. [020] Hold it for certain that she alone is chaste who either had never suit made to her, or, suing herself, was repulsed. And albeit I know that for reasons true and founded in nature this must needs be, yet I should not speak so positively thereof as I do, had I not many a time with many a woman verified it by experience. And I assure thee that, had I but access to this most saintly wife of thine, I should confidently expect very soon to have the same success with her as with others.” [021] Then Bernabò angrily: “'Twere long and tedious to continue this discussion. I should have my say, and thou thine, and in the end 'twould come to nothing. But, as thou sayst that they are all so compliant, and that thou art so accomplished a seducer, I give thee this pledge of the honour of my wife: I consent to forfeit my head, if thou shouldst succeed in bringing her to pleasure thee in such a sort; and shouldst thou fail, thou shalt forfeit to me no more than one thousand florins of gold.”

[Voice: filomena]

[022] Elated by this unexpected offer, Ambrogiuolo replied: “ I know not what I should do with thy blood, Bernabò, if I won the wager; but, if thou wouldst have proof of what I have told thee, lay five thousand florins of gold, which must be worth less to thee than thy head, against a thousand of mine, and, whereas thou makest no stipulation as to time, I will bind myself to go to Genoa, and within three months from my departure hence to have had my pleasure of thy wife, and in witness thereof to bring back with me, of the things which she prizes most dearly, evidence of her compliance so weighty and conclusive that thou thyself shalt admit the fact; nor do I require ought of thee but that thou pledge thy faith neither to come to Genoa nor to write word to her of this matter during the said three months.” [023] Bernabò professed himself well content; and though the rest of the company, seeing that the compact might well have very evil consequences, did all that they could to frustrate it, yet the two men were now so heated that, against the will of the others, they set it down fairly in writing, and signed it each with his own hand. [024] This done, Ambrogiuolo, leaving Bernabò at Paris, posted with all speed for Genoa. Arrived there, he set to work with great caution; and having found out the quarter in which the lady resided, he learned in the course of a few days enough about her habits of life and her character to know that what Bernabò had told him was rather less than the truth. So, recognising that his enterprise was hopeless, he cast about for some device whereby he might cover his defeat; [025] and having got speech of a poor woman, who was much in the lady's house, as also in her favour, he bribed her (other means failing) to convey him in a chest, which he had had made for the purpose, not only into the house but into the bedroom of the lady, whom the good woman, following Bernabò's instructions, induced to take charge of it for some days, during which, she said, she would be away.

[Voice: filomena]

[026] So the lady suffered the chest to remain in the room; and when the night was so far spent that Bernabò thought she must be asleep, he opened it with some tools with which he

had provided himself, and stole softly out. There was a light in the room, so that he was able to form an idea of its situation, to take note of the pictures and everything else of consequence that it contained, and to commit the whole to memory. [027] This done, he approached the bed; and observing that the lady, and a little girl that was with her, were fast asleep, he gently uncovered her, and saw that nude she was not a whit less lovely than when dressed: he looked about for some mark that might serve him as evidence that he had seen her in this state, but found nothing except a mole, which she had under the left breast, and which was fringed with a few fair hairs that shone like gold. So beautiful was she that he was tempted at the hazard of his life to take his place by her side in the bed; [028] but, remembering what he had heard of her inflexible obduracy in such affairs, he did not venture; but quietly replaced the bedclothes; and having passed the best part of the night very much at his ease in her room, he took from one of the lady's boxes a purse, a gown, a ring and a girdle, and with these tokens returned to the chest, and locked himself in as before. In this manner he passed two nights, nor did the lady in the least suspect his presence. [029] On the third day the good woman came by preconcert to fetch her chest, and took it back to the place whence she had brought it. So Ambrogiuolo got out, paid her the stipulated sum, and hied him back with all speed to Paris, where he arrived within the appointed time. [030] Then, in presence of the merchants who were witnesses of his altercation with Bernabò, and the wager to which it had given occasion, he told Bernabò that he had won the bet, having done what he had boasted that he would do; and in proof thereof he first of all described the appearance of the room and the pictures, and then displayed the articles belonging to the lady which he had brought away with him, averring that she had given them to him. [031] Bernabò acknowledged the accuracy of his description of the room, and that the articles did really belong to his wife, but objected that Ambrogiuolo might have learned characteristic features of the room from one of the servants, and have come by the things in a similar way, and therefore, unless he had something more to say, he could not justly claim to have won the bet. [032] “ Verily, ” rejoined Ambrogiuolo, “ this should suffice; but, as thou requirest that I say somewhat further, I will satisfy thee. I say, then, that Madam Zinevra, thy wife, has under her left breast a mole of some size, around which are, perhaps, six hairs of a golden hue. ” [033] As Bernabò heard this, it was as if a knife pierced his heart, so poignant was his suffering; and, though no word escaped him, the complete alteration of his mien bore unmistakable witness to the truth of Ambrogiuolo's words. After a while he said: “ Gentlemen, 'tis even as Ambrogiuolo says; he has won the bet; he has but to come when he will, and he shall be paid. ” [034] And so the very next day Ambrogiuolo was paid in full, and Bernabò, intent on wreaking vengeance on his wife, left Paris and set his face towards Genoa. He had no mind, however, to go home, and accordingly halted at an estate which he had some twenty miles from the city, whither he sent forward a servant, in whom he reposed much trust, with two horses and a letter advising the lady of his return, and bidding her come out to meet him. At the same time he gave the servant secret instructions to choose some convenient place, and ruthlessly put the lady to death, and so return to him. [035] On his arrival at Genoa the servant delivered his message and the letter to the lady, who received him with great cheer, and next morning got on horseback and set forth with him for her

husband's estate. [036] So they rode on, talking of divers matters, until they came to a deep gorge, very lonely, and shut in by high rocks and trees. The servant, deeming this just the place in which he might without risk of discovery fulfil his lord's behest, whipped out a knife, and seizing the lady by the arm, said: "Madam, commend your soul to God, for here must end at once your journey and your life." [037] Terror-stricken by what she saw and heard, the lady cried out: "Mercy for God's sake; before thou slay me, tell me at least wherein I have wronged thee, that thou art thus minded to put me to death." [038] "Madam," said the servant, "me you have in no wise wronged; but your husband--how you may have wronged him I know not--charged me shew you no mercy, but to slay you on this journey, and threatened to have me hanged by the neck, should I not do so. You know well how bound I am to him, and that I may not disobey any of his commands: God knows I pity you, but yet I can no otherwise." [039] Whereat the lady burst into tears, saying: "Mercy for God's sake; make not thyself the murderer of one that has done thee no wrong, at the behest of another. The all-seeing God knows that I never did aught to merit such requital at my husband's hands. [040] But enough of this for the present: there is a way in which thou canst serve at once God and thy master and myself, if thou wilt do as I bid thee: take, then, these clothes of mine and give me in exchange just thy doublet and a hood; and carry the clothes with thee to my lord and thine, and tell him that thou hast slain me; and I swear to thee by the life which I shall have received at thy hands, that I will get me gone, and there abide whence news of me shall never reach either him or thee or these parts." [041] The servant, being loath to put her to death, soon yielded to pity; and so he took her clothes, allowing her to retain a little money that she had, and gave her one of his worsor doublets and a hood; then, praying her to depart the country, he left her afoot in the gorge, and returned to his master, whom he gave to understand that he had not only carried out his orders but had left the lady's body a prey to wolves. Bernabò after a while returned to Genoa, where, the supposed murder being bruited abroad, he was severely censured.

[Voice: filomena]

[042] Alone and disconsolate, the lady, as night fell, disguised herself as best she could, and hied her to a neighbouring village, where, having procured what was needful from an old woman, she shortened the doublet and fitted it to her figure, converted her chemise into a pair of breeches, cut her hair close, and, in short, completely disguised herself as a sailor. She then made her way to the coast, where by chance she encountered a Catalan gentleman, by name Segner Encararch, who had landed from one of his ships, which lay in the offing, to recreate himself at Alba, where there was a fountain. [043] So she made overture to him of her services, was engaged and taken aboard the ship, assuming the name Sicurano da Finale. The gentleman put her in better trim as to clothes, and found her so apt and handy at service that he was exceeding well pleased with her.

[Voice: filomena]

[044] Not long afterwards the Catalan sailed one of his carracks to Alexandria. He took with him some peregrine falcons, which he presented to the Soldan, who feasted him once or twice; and noting with approbation the behaviour of Sicurano, who always attended his master, he craved him of the Catalan, which request the Catalan reluctantly granted. [045] Sicurano proved so apt for his new service that he was soon as high in grace and favour

with the Soldan as he had been with the Catalan. Wherefore, when the time of year came at which there was wont to be held at Acre, then under the Soldan's sway, a great fair, much frequented by merchants, Christian and Saracen alike, and to which, for the security of the merchants and their goods, the Soldan always sent one of his great officers of state with other officers and a guard to attend upon them, [046] he determined to send Sicurano, who by this time knew the language very well. [047] So Sicurano was sent to Acre as governor and captain of the guard for the protection of the merchants and merchandise. Arrived there, he bestirred himself with great zeal in all matters appertaining to his office; and as he went his rounds of inspection, he espied among the merchants not a few from Italy, Sicilians, Pisans, Genoese, Venetians, and so forth, with whom he consorted the more readily because they reminded him of his native land. [048] And so it befell that, alighting once at a shop belonging to some Venetian merchants, he saw there among other trinkets a purse and a girdle, which he forthwith recognised as having once been his own. Concealing his surprise, he blandly asked whose they were, and if they were for sale. [049] He was answered by Ambrogiuolo da Piacenza, who had come thither with much merchandise aboard a Venetian ship, and hearing that the captain of the guard was asking about the ownership of the purse and girdle, came forward, and said with a smile: "The things are mine, Sir, and I am not disposed to sell them, but, if they take your fancy, I will gladly give them to you." [050] Observing the smile, Sicurano misdoubted that something had escaped him by which Ambrogiuolo had recognised him; but he answered with a composed air: "Thou dost smile, perchance, to see me, a soldier, come asking about this woman's gear?" [051] "Not so, Sir," returned Ambrogiuolo; "I smile to think of the manner in which I came by it." [052] "And pray," said Sicurano, "if thou hast no reason to conceal it, tell me, in God's name, how thou didst come by the things." [053] "Why, Sir," said Ambrogiuolo, "they were given me by a Genoese lady, with whom I once spent a night, Madam Zinevra by name, wife of Bernabò Lomellin, who prayed me to keep them as a token of her love. [054] I smiled just now to think of the folly of Bernabò, who was so mad as to stake five thousand florins of gold against my thousand that I could not bring his wife to surrender to me; which I did. I won the bet; and he, who should rather have been punished for his insensate folly, than she for doing what all women do, had her put to death, as I afterwards gathered, on his way back from Paris to Genoa."

[Voice: filomena]

[055] Ambrogiuolo had not done speaking before Sicurano had discerned in him the evident cause of her husband's animosity against her, and all her woe, and had made up her mind that he should not escape with impunity. [056] She therefore feigned to be much interested by this story, consorted frequently and very familiarly with Ambrogiuolo, and insidiously captured his confidence, insomuch that at her suggestion, when the fair was done, he, taking with him all his wares, accompanied her to Alexandria, where she provided him with a shop, and put no little of her own money in his hands; so that he, finding it very profitable, was glad enough to stay. [057] Anxious to make her innocence manifest to Bernabò, Sicurano did not rest until, with the help of some great Genoese merchants that were in Alexandria, she had devised an expedient to draw him thither. Her plan succeeded; Bernabò arrived; and, as he was now very poor, she privily arranged that

he should be entertained by one of her friends until occasion should serve to carry out her design. [058] She had already induced Ambrogiuolo to tell his story to the Soldan, and the Soldan to interest himself in the matter. So Bernabò being come, and further delay inexpedient, she seized her opportunity, and persuaded the Soldan to cite Ambrogiuolo and Bernabò before him, that in Bernabò's presence Ambrogiuolo might be examined of his boast touching Bernabò's wife, and the truth thereof, if not to be had from him by gentle means, be elicited by torture. [059] So the Soldan, having Ambrogiuolo and Bernabò before him, amid a great concourse of his people questioned Ambrogiuolo of the five thousand florins of gold that he had won from Bernabò, and sternly bade him tell the truth. Still more harsh was the aspect of Sicurano, in whom Ambrogiuolo had placed his chief reliance, but who now threatened him with the direst torments if the truth were not forthcoming. [060] Thus hard bested on this side and on that, and in a manner coerced, Ambrogiuolo, thinking he had but to refund, in presence of Bernabò and many others accurately recounted the affair as it had happened. [061] When he had done, Sicurano, as minister of the Soldan for the time being, turned to Bernabò and said: “ And thy wife, thus falsely accused, what treatment did she meet with at thy hands? ” [062] “ Mortified, ” said Bernabò, “ by the loss of my money, and the dishonour which I deemed to have been done me by my wife, I was so overcome by wrath that I had her put to death by one of my servants, who brought me word that her corpse had been instantly devoured by a pack of wolves. ”

[Voice: filomena]

[063] Albeit the Soldan had heard and understood all that had passed, yet he did not as yet apprehend the object for which Sicurano had pursued the investigation. Wherefore Sicurano thus addressed him: [064] “ My lord, what cause this good lady has to boast of her lover and her husband you have now abundant means of judging; seeing that the lover at one and the same time despoils her of her honour, blasting her fair fame with slanderous accusations, and ruins her husband; who, more prompt to trust the falsehood of another than the verity of which his own long experience should have assured him, devotes her to death and the devouring wolves; and, moreover, such is the regard, such the love which both bear her that, though both tarry a long time with her, neither recognises her. [065] However, that you may know full well what chastisements they have severally deserved, I will now cause her to appear in your presence and theirs, provided you, of your especial grace, be pleased to punish the deceiver and pardon the deceived. ” [066] The Soldan, being minded in this matter to defer entirely to Sicurano, answered that he was well content, and bade produce the lady. Bernabò, who had firmly believed that she was dead, was lost in wonder; likewise Ambrogiuolo, who now divined his evil plight, and dreading something worse than the disbursement of money, knew not whether to expect the lady's advent with fear or with hope. His suspense was not of long duration; [067] for, as soon as the Soldan signified his assent, Sicurano, weeping, threw herself on her knees at his feet, and discarding the tones, as she would fain have divested herself of the outward semblance, of a man, said: [068] . “ My lord, that forlorn, hapless Zinevra am I, falsely and foully slandered by this traitor Ambrogiuolo, and by my cruel and unjust husband delivered over to his servant to slaughter and cast out as a prey to the wolves; for which

cause I have now for six years been a wanderer on the face of the earth in the guise of a man.” [069] Then rending her robes in front and baring her breast, she made it manifest to the Soldan and all others who were present, that she was indeed a woman; then turning to Ambrogiuolo she haughtily challenged him to say when she had ever lain with him, as he had boasted. Ambrogiuolo said never a word, for he now recognised her, and it was as if shame had reft from him the power of speech. [070] The Soldan, who had never doubted that Sicurano was a man, was so wonder-struck by what he saw and heard that at times he thought it must be all a dream. But, as wonder gave place to conviction of the truth, he extolled in the amplest terms the constancy and virtue and seemliness with which Zinevra, erstwhile Sicurano, had ordered her life. [071] He then directed that she should be most nobly arrayed in the garb of her sex and surrounded by a bevy of ladies. Mindful of her intercession, he granted to Bernabò the life which he had forfeited; and she, when Bernabò threw himself at her feet and wept and craved her pardon, raised him, unworthy though he was, to his feet and generously forgave him, and tenderly embraced him as her husband. [072] Ambrogiuolo the Soldan commanded to be bound to a stake, that his bare flesh, anointed with honey, might be exposed to the sun on one of the heights of the city, there to remain until it should fall to pieces of its own accord: and so 'twas done. [073] He then decreed that the lady should have the traitor's estate, which was worth not less but rather more than ten thousand doubloons; whereto he added, in jewels and vessels of gold and silver and in money, the equivalent of upwards of other ten thousand doubloons, having first entertained her and her husband with most magnificent and ceremonious cheer, accordant with the lady's worth. [074] Which done, he placed a ship at their disposal, and gave them leave to return to Genoa at their pleasure. So to Genoa they returned very rich and happy, and were received with all honour, especially Madam Zinevra, whom all the citizens had believed to be dead, and whom thenceforth, so long as she lived, they held of great consequence and excellency. [075] As for Ambrogiuolo, the very same day that he was bound to the stake, the honey with which his body was anointed attracted such swarms of flies, wasps and gadflies, wherewith that country abounds, that not only was his life sucked from him but his very bones were completely denuded of flesh; in which state, hanging by the sinews, they remained a long time undisturbed, for a sign and a testimony of his baseness to all that passed by. And so the deceived had the better of the deceiver.

“Tancred and Ghismonda” (4th Day/1st Tale)

http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/texts/DecShowText.php?myID=nov0401&lang=eng

Fourth Day - Novel I

[Voice: **fiammetta**]

[001] Tancred, Prince of Salerno, slays his daughter's lover, and sends her his heart in a golden cup: she pours upon it a poisonous distillation, which she drinks and dies.

[Voice: **fiammetta**]

[002] A direful theme has our king allotted us for to-day's discourse; seeing that, whereas we are here met for our common delectation, needs must we now tell of others' tears, whereby, whether telling or hearing, we cannot but be moved to pity. Perchance 'twas to temper in some degree the gaiety of the past days that he so ordained, but, whatever may have been his intent, his will must be to me immutable law; wherefore I will narrate to you a matter that befell piteously, nay woefully, and so as you may well weep thereat.

[Voice: **fiammetta**]

[003] Tancred, Prince of Salerno, a lord most humane and kind of heart, but that in his old age he imbrued his hands in the blood of a lover, had in the whole course of his life but one daughter; and had he not had her, he had been more fortunate.

[Voice: **fiammetta**]

[004] Never was daughter more tenderly beloved of father than she of the Prince, who, for that cause not knowing how to part with her, kept her unmarried for many a year after she had come of marriageable age: then at last he gave her to a son of the Duke of Capua, with whom she had lived but a short while, when he died and she returned to her father. [005] Most lovely was she of form and feature (never woman more so), and young and light of heart, and more knowing, perchance, than beseemed a woman. Dwelling thus with her loving father, as a great lady, in no small luxury, nor failing to see that the Prince, for the great love he bore her, was at no pains to provide her with another husband, and deeming it unseemly on her part to ask one of him, she cast about how she might come by a gallant to be her secret lover. [006] And seeing at her father's court not a few men, both gentle and simple, that resorted thither, as we know men use to frequent courts, and closely scanning their mien and manners, she preferred before all others the Prince's page, Guiscardo by name, a man of very humble origin, but pre-eminent for native worth and noble bearing; of whom, seeing him frequently, she became hotly enamoured, hourly extolling his qualities more and more highly. The young man, who for all his youth by no means lacked shrewdness, read her heart, and gave her his own on such wise that his love for her engrossed his mind to the exclusion of almost everything else. [007] While thus they burned in secret for one another, the lady, desiring of all things a meeting with Guiscardo, but being shy of making any her confidant, hit upon a novel expedient to concert the affair with him. She wrote him a letter containing her commands for the ensuing day, and thrust it into a cane in the space between two of the knots, which cane she gave to Guiscardo, saying: “Thou canst let thy servant have it for a bellows to blow thy fire up to night.” [008] Guiscardo took it, and feeling sure that 'twas not unadvisedly

that she made him such a present, accompanied with such words, hied him straight home, where, carefully examining the cane, he observed that it was cleft, and, opening it, found the letter; which he had no sooner read, and learned what he was to do, than, pleased as ne'er another, he fell to devising how to set all in order that he might not fail to meet the lady on the following day, after the manner she had prescribed.

[Voice: fiammetta]

[\[009\]](#) Now hard by the Prince's palace was a grotto, hewn in days of old in the solid rock, and now long disused, so that an artificial orifice, by which it received a little light, was all but choked with brambles and plants that grew about and overspread it. From one of the ground-floor rooms of the palace, which room was part of the lady's suite, a secret stair led to the grotto, though the entrance was barred by a very strong door. [\[010\]](#) This stair, having been from time immemorial disused, had passed out of mind so completely that there was scarce any that remembered that it was there: but Love, whose eyes nothing, however secret, may escape, had brought it to the mind of the enamoured lady. [\[011\]](#) For many a day, using all secrecy, that none should discover her, she had wrought with her tools, until she had succeeded in opening the door; which done, she had gone down into the grotto alone, and having observed the orifice, had by her letter apprised Guiscardo of its apparent height above the floor of the grotto, and bidden him contrive some means of descending thereby. [\[012\]](#) Eager to carry the affair through, Guiscardo lost no time in rigging up a ladder of ropes, whereby he might ascend and descend; and having put on a suit of leather to protect him from the brambles, he hied him the following night (keeping the affair close from all) to the orifice, made the ladder fast by one of its ends to a massive trunk that was rooted in the mouth of the orifice, climbed down the ladder, and awaited the lady. [\[013\]](#) On the morrow, making as if she would fain sleep, the lady dismissed her damsels, and locked herself into her room: she then opened the door of the grotto, hied her down, and met Guiscardo, to their marvellous mutual satisfaction. The lovers then repaired to her room, where in exceeding great joyance they spent no small part of the day. [\[014\]](#) Nor were they neglectful of the precautions needful to prevent discovery of their amour; but in due time Guiscardo returned to the grotto; whereupon the lady locked the door and rejoined her damsels. At nightfall Guiscardo reascended his ladder, and, issuing forth of the orifice, hied him home; nor, knowing now the way, did he fail to revisit the grotto many a time thereafter.

[Voice: fiammetta]

[\[015\]](#) But Fortune, noting with envious eye a happiness of such degree and duration, gave to events a dolorous turn, whereby the joy of the two lovers was converted into bitter lamentation. [\[016\]](#) 'Twas Tancred's custom to come from time to time quite alone to his daughter's room, and tarry talking with her a while. [\[017\]](#) Whereby it so befell that he came down there one day after breakfast, while Ghismonda--such was the lady's name--was in her garden with her damsels; so that none saw or heard him enter; nor would he call his daughter, for he was minded that she should not forgo her pleasure. But, finding the windows closed and the bed-curtains drawn down, he seated himself on a divan that stood at one of the corners of the bed, rested his head on the bed, drew the curtain over him, and thus, hidden as if of set purpose, fell asleep. [\[018\]](#) As he slept Ghismonda, who, as it

happened, had caused Guiscardo to come that day, left her damsels in the garden, softly entered the room, and having locked herself in, unwitting that there was another in the room, opened the door to Guiscardo, who was in waiting. Straightway they got them to bed, as was their wont; and, while they there solaced and disported them together, it so befell that Tancred awoke, and heard and saw what they did: [019] whereat he was troubled beyond measure, and at first was minded to upbraid them; but on second thoughts he deemed it best to hold his peace, and avoid discovery, if so he might with greater stealth and less dishonour carry out the design which was already in his mind. [020] The two lovers continued long together, as they were wont, all unwitting of Tancred; but at length they saw fit to get out of bed, when Guiscardo went back to the grotto, and the lady hied her forth of the room. [021] Whereupon Tancred, old though he was, got out at one of the windows, clambered down into the garden, and, seen by none, returned sorely troubled to his room. [022] By his command two men took Guiscardo early that same night, as he issued forth of the orifice accoutred in his suit of leather, and brought him privily to Tancred; who, as he saw him, all but wept, and said: “ Guiscardo, my kindness to thee is ill requited by the outrage and dishonour which thou hast done me in the person of my daughter, as to-day I have seen with my own eyes. ” [023] To whom Guiscardo could answer nought but: “ Love is more potent than either you or I. ” [024] Tancred then gave order to keep him privily under watch and ward in a room within the palace; and so 'twas done. [025] Next day, while Ghismonda wotted nought of these matters, Tancred, after pondering divers novel expedients, hied him after breakfast, according to his wont, to his daughter's room, where, having called her to him and locked himself in with her, he began, not without tears, to speak on this wise: [026] “ Ghismonda, conceiving that I knew thy virtue and honour, never, though it had been reported to me, would I have credited, had I not seen with my own eyes, that thou wouldst so much as in idea, not to say fact, have ever yielded thyself to any man but thy husband: wherefore, for the brief residue of life that my age has in store for me, the memory of thy fall will ever be grievous to me. [027] And would to God, as thou must needs demean thyself to such dishonour, thou hadst taken a man that matched thy nobility; but of all the men that frequent my court, thou must needs choose Guiscardo, a young man of the lowest condition, a fellow whom we brought up in charity from his tender years; for whose sake thou hast plunged me into the abyss of mental tribulation, insomuch that I know not what course to take in regard of thee. [028] As to Guiscardo, whom I caused to be arrested last night as he issued from the orifice, and keep in durance, my course is already taken, but how I am to deal with thee, God knows, I know not. [029] I am distraught between the love which I have ever borne thee, love such as no father ever bare to daughter, and the most just indignation evoked in me by thy signal folly; my love prompts me to pardon thee, my indignation bids me harden my heart against thee, though I do violence to my nature. But before I decide upon my course, I would fain hear what thou hast to say to this. ” So saying, he bent his head, and wept as bitterly as any child that had been soundly thrashed.

[Voice: fiammetta]

[030] Her father's words, and the tidings they conveyed that not only was her secret passion discovered, but Guiscardo taken, caused Ghismonda immeasurable grief, which

she was again and again on the point of evincing, as most women do, by cries and tears; but her high spirit triumphed over this weakness; by a prodigious effort she composed her countenance, and taking it for granted that her Guiscardo was no more, she inly devoted herself to death rather than a single prayer for herself should escape her lips. [031]

Wherefore, not as a woman stricken with grief or chidden for a fault, but unconcerned and unabashed, with tearless eyes, and frank and utterly dauntless mien, thus answered she her father: “ Tancred, your accusation I shall not deny, neither will I cry you mercy, for nought should I gain by denial, nor aught would I gain by supplication: nay more; there is nought I will do to conciliate thy humanity and love; my only care is to confess the truth, to defend my honour by words of sound reason, and then by deeds most resolute to give effect to the promptings of my high soul. [032]

True it is that I have loved and love Guiscardo, and during the brief while I have yet to live shall love him, nor after death, so there be then love, shall I cease to love him; but that I love him, is not imputable to my womanly frailty so much as to the little zeal thou shewedst for my bestowal in marriage, and to Guiscardo's own worth. [033]

It should not have escaped thee, Tancred, creature of flesh and blood as thou art, that thy daughter was also a creature of flesh and blood, and not of stone or iron; it was, and is, thy duty to bear in mind (old though thou art) the nature and the might of the laws to which youth is subject; and, though thou hast spent part of thy best years in martial exercises, thou shouldst nevertheless have not been ignorant how potent is the influence even upon the aged--to say nothing of the young--of ease and luxury. [034]

And not only am I, as being thy daughter, a creature of flesh and blood, but my life is not so far spent but that I am still young, and thus doubly fraught with fleshly appetite, the vehemence whereof is marvellously enhanced by reason that, having been married, I have known the pleasure that ensues upon the satisfaction of such desire. [035]

Which forces being powerless to withstand, I did but act as was natural in a young woman, when I gave way to them, and yielded myself to love. Nor in sooth did I fail to the utmost of my power so to order the indulgence of my natural propensity that my sin should bring shame neither upon thee nor upon me. [036]

To which end Love in his pity, and Fortune in a friendly mood, found and discovered to me a secret way, whereby, none witting, I attained my desire: this, from whomsoever thou hast learned it, howsoever thou comest to know it, I deny not. [037]

'Twas not at random, as many women do, that I loved Guiscardo; but by deliberate choice I preferred him before all other men, and of determinate forethought I lured him to my love, whereof, through his and my discretion and constancy, I have long had joyance. [038]

Wherein 'twould seem that thou, following rather the opinion of the vulgar than the dictates of truth, find cause to chide me more severely than in my sinful love, for, as if thou wouldst not have been vexed, had my choice fallen on a nobleman, thou complainest that I have forgathered with a man of low condition; and dost not see that therein thou censurest not my fault but that of Fortune, which not seldom raises the unworthy to high place and leaves the worthiest in low estate. [039]

But leave we this: consider a little the principles of things: thou seest that in regard of our flesh we are all moulded of the same substance, and that all souls are endowed by one and the same Creator with equal faculties, equal powers, equal virtues. [040]

'Twas merit that made the first distinction between us, born as we were, nay, as we are, all equal, and those whose merits were and were approved

in act the greatest were called noble, and the rest were not so denoted. Which law, albeit overlaid by the contrary usage of after times, is not yet abrogated, nor so impaired but that it is still traceable in nature and good manners; for which cause whoso with merit acts, does plainly shew himself a gentleman; and if any denote him otherwise, the default is his own and not his whom he so denotes. [041] Pass in review all thy nobles, weigh their merits, their manners and bearing, and then compare Guiscardo's qualities with theirs: if thou wilt judge without prejudice, thou wilt pronounce him noble in the highest degree, and thy nobles one and all churls. As to Guiscardo's merits and worth I did but trust the verdict which thou thyself didst utter in words, and which mine own eyes confirmed. [042] Of whom had he such commendation as of thee for all those excellences whereby a good man and true merits commendation? And in sooth thou didst him but justice; for, unless mine eyes have played me false, there was nought for which thou didst commend him but I had seen him practise it, and that more admirably than words of thine might express; and had I been at all deceived in this matter, 'twould have been by thee. Wilt thou say then that I have forgathered with a man of low condition? If so, thou wilt not say true. [043] Didst thou say with a poor man, the impeachment might be allowed, to thy shame, that thou so ill hast known how to requite a good man and true that is thy servant; but poverty, though it take away all else, deprives no man of gentillesse. Many kings, many great princes, were once poor, and many a ditcher or herdsman has been and is very wealthy. [044] As for thy last perpended doubt, to wit, how thou shouldst deal with me, banish it utterly from thy thoughts. If in thy extreme old age thou art minded to manifest a harshness unwonted in thy youth, wreak thy harshness on me, resolved as I am to cry thee no mercy, prime cause as I am that this sin, if sin it be, has been committed; for of this I warrant thee, that as thou mayst have done or shalt do to Guiscardo, if to me thou do not the like, I with my own hands will do it. [045] Now get thee gone to shed thy tears with the women, and when thy melting mood is over, ruthlessly destroy Guiscardo and me, if such thou deem our merited doom, by one and the same blow. ”

[Voice: fiammetta]

[046] The loftiness of his daughter's spirit was not unknown to the Prince; but still he did not credit her with a resolve quite as firmly fixed as her words implied, to carry their purport into effect. So, parting from her without the least intention of using harshness towards her in her own person, he determined to quench the heat of her love by wreaking his vengeance on her lover, and bade the two men that had charge of Guiscardo to strangle him noiselessly that same night, take the heart out of the body, and send it to him. [047] The men did his bidding: and on the morrow the Prince had a large and beautiful cup of gold brought to him, and having put Guiscardo's heart therein, sent it by the hand of one of his most trusted servants to his daughter, charging the servant to say, as he gave it to her: “ Thy father sends thee this to give thee joy of that which thou lovest best, even as thou hast given him joy of that which he loved best. ”

[Voice: fiammetta]

[048] Now when her father had left her, Ghismonda, wavering not a jot in her stern resolve, had sent for poisonous herbs and roots, and therefrom had distilled a water, to have it ready for use, if that which she apprehended should come to pass. [049] And

when the servant appeared with the Prince's present and message, she took the cup unblenchingly, and having lifted the lid, and seen the heart, and apprehended the meaning of the words, and that the heart was beyond a doubt Guiscardo's, she raised her head, and looking straight at the servant, said: "Sepulture less honourable than of gold had ill befitted heart such as this: herein has my father done wisely." [050] Which said, she raised it to her lips, and kissed it, saying: "In all things and at all times, even to this last hour of my life, have I found my father most tender in his love, but now more so than ever before; wherefore I now render him the last thanks which will ever be due from me to him for this goodly present." [051] So she spoke, and straining the cup to her, bowed her head over it, and gazing at the heart, said: "Ah! sojourn most sweet of all my joys, accursed be he by whose ruthless act I see thee with the bodily eye: 'twas enough that to the mind's eye thou wert hourly present. [052] Thou hast run thy course; thou hast closed the span that Fortune allotted thee; thou hast reached the goal of all; thou hast left behind thee the woes and weariness of the world; and thy enemy has himself granted thee sepulture accordant with thy deserts. [053] No circumstance was wanting to duly celebrate thy obsequies, save the tears of her whom, while thou livedst, thou didst so dearly love; which that thou shouldst not lack, my remorseless father was prompted of God to send thee to me, and, albeit my resolve was fixed to die with eyes unmoistened and front all unperturbed by fear, yet will I accord thee my tears; which done, my care shall be forthwith by thy means to join my soul to that most precious soul which thou didst once enshrine. [054] And is there other company than hers, in which with more of joy and peace I might fare to the abodes unknown? She is yet here within, I doubt not, contemplating the abodes of her and my delights, and--for sure I am that she loves me--awaiting my soul that loves her before all else."

[Voice: fiammetta]

[055] Having thus spoken, she bowed herself low over the cup; and, while no womanish cry escaped her, 'twas as if a fountain of water were unloosed within her head, so wondrous a flood of tears gushed from her eyes, while times without number she kissed the dead heart. [056] Her damsels that stood around her knew not whose the heart might be or what her words might mean, but melting in sympathy, they all wept, and compassionately, as vainly, enquired the cause of her lamentation, and in many other ways sought to comfort her to the best of their understanding and power. [057] When she had wept her fill, she raised her head, and dried her eyes. Then: "O heart," said she, "much cherished heart, discharged is my every duty towards thee; nought now remains for me to do but to come and unite my soul with thine." [058] So saying, she sent for the vase that held the water which the day before she had distilled, and emptied it into the cup where lay the heart bathed in her tears; then, nowise afraid, she set her mouth to the cup, and drained it dry, and so with the cup in her hand she got her upon her bed, and having there disposed her person in guise as seemly as she might, laid her dead lover's heart upon her own, and silently awaited death. [059] Meanwhile the damsels, seeing and hearing what passed, but knowing not what the water was that she had drunk, had sent word of each particular to Tancred; who, apprehensive of that which came to pass, came down with all haste to his daughter's room, where he arrived just as she got her upon her bed, and, now too late,

addressed himself to comfort her with soft words, and seeing in what plight she was, burst into a flood of bitter tears. [060] To whom the lady: “ Reserve thy tears, Tancred, till Fortune send thee hap less longed for than this: waste them not on me who care not for them. Whoever yet saw any but thee bewail the consummation of his desire? But, if of the love thou once didst bear me any spark still lives in thee, be it thy parting grace to me, that, as thou brookedst not that I should live with Guiscardo in privity and seclusion, so wherever thou mayst have caused Guiscardo's body to be cast, mine may be united with it in the common view of all. ” [061] The Prince replied not for excess of grief; and the lady, feeling that her end was come, strained the dead heart to her bosom, saying: “ Fare ye well; I take my leave of you; ” and with eyelids drooped and every sense vanished departed this life of woe. [062] Such was the lamentable end of the loves of Guiscardo and Ghismonda; whom Tancred, tardily repentant of his harshness, mourned not a little, as did also all the folk of Salerno, and had honourably interred side by side in the same tomb.

“The Falcon” (5th Day/9th Tale)

http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/texts/DecShowText.php?myID=nov0509&lang=eng

Fifth Day - Novel IX

[Voice: dioneo]

[001] Federigo degli Alberighi loves and is not loved in return: he wastes his substance by lavishness until nought is left but a single falcon, which, his lady being come to see him at his house, he gives her to eat: she, knowing his case, changes her mind, takes him to husband and makes him rich.

[Voice: author]

[002] So ended Filomena; and the queen, being ware that besides herself only Dioneo (by virtue of his privilege) was left to speak, said with gladsome mien:

[Voice: dioneo]

[003] 'Tis now for me to take up my parable; which, dearest ladies, I will do with a story like in some degree to the foregoing, and that, not only that you may know how potent are your charms to sway the gentle heart, but that you may also learn how upon fitting occasions to make bestowal of your guerdons of your own accord, instead of always waiting for the guidance of Fortune, which most times, not wisely, but without rule or measure, scatters her gifts.

[Voice: dioneo]

[004] You are then to know, that Coppo di Borghese Domenichi, a man that in our day was, and perchance still is, had in respect and great reverence in our city, being not only by reason of his noble lineage, but, and yet more, for manners and merit most illustrious and worthy of eternal renown, was in his old age not seldom wont to amuse himself by discoursing of things past with his neighbours and other folk; wherein he had not his match for accuracy and compass of memory and concinnity of speech. [005] Among other good stories, he would tell, how that there was of yore in Florence a gallant named Federigo di Messer Filippo Alberighi, who for feats of arms and courtesy had not his peer in Tuscany; [006] who, as is the common lot of gentlemen, became enamoured of a lady named Monna Giovanna, who in her day held rank among the fairest and most elegant ladies of Florence; to gain whose love he jousted, tilted, gave entertainments, scattered largess, and in short set no bounds to his expenditure. However the lady, no less virtuous than fair, cared not a jot for what he did for her sake, nor yet for him.

[Voice: dioneo]

[007] Spending thus greatly beyond his means, and making nothing, Federigo could hardly fail to come to lack, and was at length reduced to such poverty that he had nothing left but a little estate, on the rents of which he lived very straitly, and a single falcon, the best in the world. [008] The estate was at Campi, and thither, deeming it no longer possible for him to live in the city as he desired, he repaired, more in love than ever before; and there, in complete seclusion, diverting himself with hawking, he bore his poverty as patiently as he might.

[Voice: dioneo]

[009] Now, Federigo being thus reduced to extreme poverty, it so happened that one day Monna Giovanna's husband, who was very rich, fell ill, and, seeing that he was nearing his end, made his will, whereby he left his estate to his son, who was now growing up, and in the event of his death without lawful heir named Monna Giovanna, whom he dearly loved, heir in his stead; and having made these dispositions he died.

[Voice: dioneo]

[010] Monna Giovanna, being thus left a widow, did as our ladies are wont, and repaired in the summer to one of her estates in the country which lay very near to that of Federigo. [011] And so it befell that the urchin began to make friends with Federigo, and to shew a fondness for hawks and dogs, and having seen Federigo's falcon fly not a few times, took a singular fancy to him, and greatly longed to have him for his own, but still did not dare to ask him of Federigo, knowing that Federigo prized him so much. [012] So the matter stood when by chance the boy fell sick; whereby the mother was sore distressed, for he was her only son, and she loved him as much as might be, insomuch that all day long she was beside him, and ceased not to comfort him, and again and again asked him if there were aught that he wished for, imploring him to say the word, and, if it might by any means be had, she would assuredly do her utmost to procure it for him. [013] Thus repeatedly exhorted, the boy said: " Mother mine, do but get me Federigo's falcon, and I doubt not I shall soon be well. " [014] Whereupon the lady was silent a while, bethinking her what she should do. She knew that Federigo had long loved her, and had never had so much as a single kind look from her: wherefore she said to herself: How can I send or go to beg of him this falcon, which by what I hear is the best that ever flew, and moreover is his sole comfort? And how could I be so unfeeling as to seek to deprive a gentleman of the one solace that is now left him? [015] And so, albeit she very well knew that she might have the falcon for the asking, she was perplexed, and knew not what to say, and gave her son no answer. [016] At length, however, the love she bore the boy carried the day, and she made up her mind, for his contentment, come what might, not to send, but to go herself and fetch him the falcon. So: " Be of good cheer, my son, " she said, " and doubt not thou wilt soon be well; for I promise thee that the very first thing that I shall do tomorrow morning will be to go and fetch thee the falcon. " [017] Whereat the child was so pleased that he began to mend that very day.

[Voice: dioneo]

[018] On the morrow the lady, as if for pleasure, hied her with another lady to Federigo's little house, and asked to see him. [019] 'Twas still, as for some days past, no weather for hawking, and Federigo was in his garden, busy about some small matters which needed to be set right there. When he heard that Monna Giovanna was at the door, asking to see him, he was not a little surprised and pleased, and hied him to her with all speed. [020] As soon as she saw him, she came forward to meet him with womanly grace, and having received his respectful salutation, said to him: " Good morrow, Federigo, " and continued: " I am come to requite thee for what thou hast lost by loving me more than thou shouldst: which compensation is this, that I and this lady that accompanies me will breakfast with thee without ceremony this morning. " [021] " Madam, " Federigo replied with all humility, " I mind not ever to have lost aught by loving you, but rather to have been so

much profited that, if I ever deserved well in aught, 'twas to your merit that I owed it, and to the love that I bore you. [022] And of a surety had I still as much to spend as I have spent in the past, I should not prize it so much as this visit you so frankly pay me, come as you are to one who can afford you but a sorry sort of hospitality.” [023] Which said, with some confusion, he bade her welcome to his house, and then led her into his garden, where, having none else to present to her by way of companion, he said: “ Madam, as there is none other here, this good woman, wife of this husbandman, will bear you company, while I go to have the table set.” [024] Now, albeit his poverty was extreme, yet he had not known as yet how sore was the need to which his extravagance had reduced him; but this morning 'twas brought home to him, for that he could find nought wherewith to do honour to the lady, for love of whom he had done the honours of his house to men without number: [025] wherefore, distressed beyond measure, and inwardly cursing his evil fortune, he sped hither and thither like one beside himself, but never a coin found he, nor yet aught to pledge. Meanwhile it grew late, and sorely he longed that the lady might not leave his house altogether unhonoured, and yet to crave help of his own husbandman was more than his pride could brook. In these desperate straits his glance happened to fall on his brave falcon on his perch in his little parlour. And so, as a last resource, he took him, and finding him plump, deemed that he would make a dish meet for such a lady. [026] Wherefore, without thinking twice about it, he wrung the bird's neck, and caused his maid forthwith pluck him and set him on a spit, and roast him carefully; and having still some spotless table-linen, he had the table laid therewith, and with a cheerful countenance hied him back to his lady in the garden, and told her that such breakfast as he could give her was ready. [027] So the lady and her companion rose and came to table, and there, with Federigo, who waited on them most faithfully, ate the brave falcon, knowing not what they ate.

[Voice: dioneo]

[028] When they were risen from table, and had dallied a while in gay converse with him, the lady deemed it time to tell the reason of her visit: wherefore, graciously addressing Federigo, thus began she: [029] “ Federigo, by what thou rememberest of thy past life and my virtue, which, perchance, thou hast deemed harshness and cruelty, I doubt not thou must marvel at my presumption, when thou hearest the main purpose of my visit; but if thou hadst sons, or hadst had them, so that thou mightest know the full force of the love that is borne them, I should make no doubt that thou wouldst hold me in part excused. [030] Nor, having a son, may I, for that thou hast none, claim exemption from the laws to which all other mothers are subject, and, being thus bound to own their sway, I must, though fain were I not, and though 'tis neither meet nor right, crave of thee that which I know thou dost of all things and with justice prize most highly, [031] seeing that this extremity of thy adverse fortune has left thee nought else wherewith to delight, divert and console thee; which gift is no other than thy falcon, on which my boy has so set his heart that, if I bring him it not, I fear lest he grow so much worse of the malady that he has, that thereby it may come to pass that I lose him. [032] And so, not for the love which thou dost bear me, and which may nowise bind thee, but for that nobleness of temper, whereof in courtesy more conspicuously than in aught else thou hast given proof, I implore thee

that thou be pleased to give me the bird, that thereby I may say that I have kept my son alive, and thus made him for aye thy debtor. ”

[Voice: dioneo]

[\[033\]](#) No sooner had Federigo apprehended what the lady wanted, than, for grief that 'twas not in his power to serve her, because he had given her the falcon to eat, he fell a weeping in her presence, before he could so much as utter a word. At first the lady supposed that 'twas only because he was loath to part with the brave falcon that he wept, and as good as made up her mind that he would refuse her: however, she awaited with patience Federigo's answer, which was on this wise: [\[034\]](#) “ Madam, since it pleased God that I should set my affections upon you there have been matters not a few, in which to my sorrow I have deemed Fortune adverse to me; but they have all been trifles in comparison of the trick that she now plays me: the which I shall never forgive her, seeing that you are come here to my poor house, where, while I was rich, you deigned not to come, and ask a trifling favour of me, which she has put it out of my power to grant: how 'tis so, I will briefly tell you. [\[035\]](#) When I learned that you, of your grace, were minded to breakfast with me, having respect to your high dignity and desert, I deemed it due and seemly that in your honour I should regale you, to the best of my power, with fare of a more excellent quality than is commonly set before others; [\[036\]](#) and, calling to mind the falcon which you now ask of me, and his excellence, I judged him meet food for you, and so you have had him roasted on the trencher this morning; and well indeed I thought I had bestowed him; but, as now I see that you would fain have had him in another guise, so mortified am I that I am not able to serve you, that I doubt I shall never know peace of mind more. ” [\[037\]](#) In witness whereof he had the feathers and feet and beak of the bird brought in and laid before her.

[Voice: dioneo]

The first thing the lady did, when she had heard Federigo's story, and seen the relics of the bird, was to chide him that he had killed so fine a falcon to furnish a woman with a breakfast; after which the magnanimity of her host, which poverty had been and was powerless to impair, elicited no small share of inward commendation. Then, frustrate of her hope of possessing the falcon, and doubting of her son's recovery, she took her leave with the heaviest of hearts, and hied her back to the boy: [\[038\]](#) who, whether for fretting, that he might not have the falcon, or by the unaided energy of his disorder, departed this life not many days after, to the exceeding great grief of his mother. [\[039\]](#) For a while she would do nought but weep and bitterly bewail herself; but being still young, and left very wealthy, she was often urged by her brothers to marry again, and though she would rather have not done so, yet being importuned, and remembering Federigo's high desert, and the magnificent generosity with which he had finally killed his falcon to do her honour, she said to her brothers: [\[040\]](#) “ Gladly, with your consent, would I remain a widow, but if you will not be satisfied except I take a husband, rest assured that none other will I ever take save Federigo degli Alberighi. ” [\[041\]](#) Whereupon her brothers derided her, saying: “ Foolish woman, what is't thou sayst? How shouldst thou want Federigo, who has not a

thing in the world? ” [\[042 \]](#) To whom she answered: “ My brothers, well wot I that 'tis as you say; but I had rather have a man without wealth than wealth without a man. ” [\[043 \]](#) The brothers, perceiving that her mind was made up, and knowing Federigo for a good man and true, poor though he was, gave her to him with all her wealth. And so Federigo, being mated with such a wife, and one that he had so much loved, and being very wealthy to boot, lived happily, keeping more exact accounts, to the end of his days.

“Brother Onion” (6th Day/10th Tale)

http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/texts/DecShowText.php?myID=nov0610&lang=eng

Sixth Day - Novel X

[Voice: dioneo]

[001] Fra Cipolla promises to shew certain country-folk a feather of the Angel Gabriel, in lieu of which he finds coals, which he avers to be of those with which St. Lawrence was roasted.

[Voice: author]

[002] All the company save Dioneo being delivered of their several stories, he wist that 'twas his turn to speak. Wherefore, without awaiting any very express command, he enjoined silence on those that were commending Guido's pithy quip, and thus began:

[Voice: dioneo]

[003] Sweet my ladies, albeit 'tis my privilege to speak of what likes me most, I purpose not to-day to deviate from that theme whereon you have all discoursed most appositely; but, following in your footsteps, I am minded to shew you with what adroitness and readiness of resource one of the Friars of St. Antony avoided a pickle that two young men had in readiness for him. [004] Nor, if, in order to do the story full justice, I be somewhat prolix of speech, should it be burdensome to you, if you will but glance at the sun, which is yet in mid-heaven.

[Voice: dioneo]

[005] Certaldo, as perchance you may have heard, is a town of Val d'Elsa within our country-side, which, small though it is, had in it aforetime people of rank and wealth. [006] Thither, for that there he found good pasture, 'twas long the wont of one of the Friars of St. Antony to resort once every year, to collect the alms that fools gave them. Fra Cipolla--so hight the friar--met with a hearty welcome, no less, perchance, by reason of his name than for other cause, the onions produced in that district being famous throughout Tuscany. [007] He was little of person, red-haired, jolly-visaged, and the very best of good fellows; and therewithal, though learning he had none, he was so excellent and ready a speaker that whoso knew him not would not only have esteemed him a great rhetorician, but would have pronounced him Tully himself or, perchance, Quintilian; and in all the country-side there was scarce a soul to whom he was not either gossip or friend or lover. [008] Being thus wont from time to time to visit Certaldo, the friar came there once upon a time in the month of August, and on a Sunday morning, all the good folk of the neighbouring farms being come to mass in the parish church, he took occasion to come forward and say: [009] “ Ladies and gentlemen, you wot 'tis your custom to send year by year to the poor of Baron Master St. Antony somewhat of your wheat and oats, more or less, according to the ability and the devoutness of each, that blessed St. Antony may save your oxen and asses and pigs and sheep from harm; [010] and you are also accustomed, and especially those whose names are on the books of our confraternity, to pay your trifling annual dues. To collect which offerings, I am hither sent by my superior, to wit, Master Abbot; wherefore, with the blessing of God, after none, when you hear the bells

ring, you will come out of the church to the place where in the usual way I shall deliver you my sermon, and you will kiss the cross; [011] and therewithal, knowing, as I do, that you are one and all most devoted to Baron Master St. Antony, I will by way of especial grace shew you a most holy and goodly relic, which I brought myself from the Holy Land overseas, which is none other than one of the feathers of the Angel Gabriel, which he left behind him in the room of the Virgin Mary, when he came to make her the annunciation in Nazareth.” [012] And having said thus much, he ceased, and went on with the mass. [013] Now among the many that were in the church, while Fra Cipolla made this speech, were two very wily young wags, the one Giovanni del Bragoniera by name, the other Biagio Pizzini; who, albeit they were on the best of terms with Fra Cipolla and much in his company, had a sly laugh together over the relic, and resolved to make game of him and his feather. [014] So, having learned that Fra Cipolla was to breakfast that morning in the town with one of his friends, as soon as they knew that he was at table, down they hied them into the street, and to the inn where the friar lodged, having conspired that Biagio should keep the friar's servant in play, while Giovanni made search among the friar's goods and chattels for this feather, whatever it might be, to carry it off, that they might see how the friar would afterwards explain the matter to the people. [015] Now Fra Cipolla had for servant one Guccio, whom some called by way of addition Balena, others Imbratta, others again Porco, and who was such a rascallion that sure it is that Lippo Topo himself never painted his like. [016] Concerning whom Fra Cipolla would oftentimes make merry with his familiars, saying: “ My servant has nine qualities, any one of which in Solomon, Aristotle, or Seneca, would have been enough to spoil all their virtue, wisdom and holiness. Consider, then, what sort of a man he must be that has these nine qualities, and yet never a spark of either virtue or wisdom or holiness. ” [017] And being asked upon divers occasions what these nine qualities might be, he strung them together in rhyme, and answered: “ I will tell you. Lazy and uncleanly and a liar he is, Negligent, disobedient and foulmouthed, iwis, And reckless and witless and mannerless: and therewithal he has some other petty vices, which 'twere best to pass over. [018] And the most amusing thing about him is, that, wherever he goes, he is for taking a wife and renting a house, and on the strength of a big, black, greasy beard he deems himself so very handsome a fellow and seductive, that he takes all the women that see him to be in love with him, and, if he were left alone, he would slip his girdle and run after them all. [019] True it is that he is of great use to me, for that, be any minded to speak with me never so secretly, he must still have his share of the audience; and, if perchance aught is demanded of me, such is his fear lest I should be at a loss what answer to make, that he presently replies, ay or no, as he deems meet. ”

[Voice: dioneo]

[020] Now, when he left this knave at the inn, Fra Cipolla had strictly enjoined him on no account to suffer any one to touch aught of his, and least of all his wallet, because it contained the holy things. [021] But Guccio Imbratta, who was fonder of the kitchen than any nightingale of the green boughs, and most particularly if he espied there a maid, and in the host's kitchen had caught sight of a coarse fat woman, short and misshapen, with a pair of breasts that shewed as two buckets of muck and a face that might have belonged to one

of the Baronci, all reeking with sweat and grease and smoke, left Fra Cipolla's room and all his things to take care of themselves, and like a vulture swooping down upon the carrion, was in the kitchen in a trice. [022] Where, though 'twas August, he sat him down by the fire, and fell a gossiping with Nuta--such was the maid's name--and told her that he was a gentleman by procuration, and had more florins than could be reckoned, besides those that he had to give away, which were rather more than less, and that he could do and say such things as never were or might be seen or heard forever, good Lord! and a day. [023] And all heedless of his cowl, which had as much grease upon it as would have furnished forth the caldron of Altopascio, and of his rent and patched doublet, inlaid with filth about the neck and under the armpits, and so stained that it shewed hues more various than ever did silk from Tartary or the Indies, and of his shoes that were all to pieces, and of his hose that were all in tatters, he told her in a tone that would have become the Sieur de Châtillon, that he was minded to rehabit her and put her in trim, and raise her from her abject condition, and place her where, though she would not have much to call her own, at any rate she would have hope of better things, with much more to the like effect; [024] which professions, though made with every appearance of good will, proved, like most of his schemes, insubstantial as air, and came to nothing.

[Voice: dioneo]

[025] Finding Guccio Porco thus occupied with Nuta, the two young men gleefully accounted their work half done, and, none gainsaying them, entered Fra Cipolla's room, which was open, and lit at once upon the wallet, in which was the feather. [026] The wallet opened, they found, wrapt up in many folds of taffeta, a little casket, on opening which they discovered one of the tail-feathers of a parrot, which they deemed must be that which the friar had promised to shew the good folk of Certaldo. [027] And in sooth he might well have so imposed upon them, for in those days the luxuries of Egypt had scarce been introduced into Tuscany, though they have since been brought over in prodigious abundance, to the grave hurt of all Italy. [028] And though some conversance with them there was, yet in those parts folk knew next to nothing of them; but, adhering to the honest, simple ways of their forefathers, had not seen, nay for the most part had not so much as heard tell of, a parrot.

[Voice: dioneo]

[029] So the young men, having found the feather, took it out with great glee; and looking around for something to replace it, they espied in a corner of the room some pieces of coal, wherewith they filled the casket; which they then closed, and having set the room in order exactly as they had found it, they quitted it unperceived, and hied them merrily off with the feather, and posted themselves where they might hear what Fra Cipolla would say when he found the coals in its stead. [030] Mass said, the simple folk that were in the church went home with the tidings that the feather of the Angel Gabriel was to be seen after none; and this goodman telling his neighbour, and that goodwife her gossip, by the time every one had breakfasted, the town could scarce hold the multitude of men and women that flocked thither all agog to see this feather.

[Voice: dioneo]

[031] Fra Cipolla, having made a hearty breakfast and had a little nap, got up shortly after none, and marking the great concourse of country-folk that were come to see the feather, sent word to Guccio Imbratta to go up there with the bells, and bring with him the wallet. [032] Guccio, though 'twas with difficulty that he tore himself away from the kitchen and Nuta, hied him up with the things required; and though, when he got up, he was winded, for he was corpulent with drinking nought but water, he did Fra Cipolla's bidding by going to the church door and ringing the bells amain. [033] When all the people were gathered about the door, Fra Cipolla, all unwitting that aught of his was missing, began his sermon, and after much said in glorification of himself, [034] caused the confiteor to be recited with great solemnity, and two torches to be lit by way of preliminary to the shewing of the feather of the Angel Gabriel: he then bared his head, carefully unfolded the taffeta, and took out the casket, which, after a few prefatory words in praise and laudation of the Angel Gabriel and his relic, he opened. [035] When he saw that it contained nought but coals, he did not suspect Guccio Balena of playing the trick, for he knew that he was not clever enough, nor did he curse him, that his carelessness had allowed another to play it, but he inly imprecated himself, that he had committed his things to the keeping of one whom he knew to be “ negligent and disobedient, reckless and witless. ” [036] Nevertheless, he changed not colour, but with face and hands upturned to heaven, he said in a voice that all might hear: “ O God, blessed be Thy might for ever and ever. ” [037] Then, closing the casket, and turning to the people: “ Ladies and gentlemen, ” he said, “ you are to know, that when I was yet a very young man, I was sent by my superior into those parts where the sun rises, and I was expressly bidden to search until I should find the Privileges of Porcellana, which, though they cost nothing to seal, are of much more use to others than to us. [038] On which errand I set forth, taking my departure from Venice, and traversing the Borgo de' Greci, and thence on horseback the realm of Algarve, and so by Baldacca I came to Parione, whence, somewhat athirst, I after a while got on to Sardinia. [039] But wherefore go I about to enumerate all the lands in which I pursued my quest? Having passed the straits of San Giorgio, I arrived at Truffia and Buffia, countries thickly populated and with great nations, whence I pursued my journey to Menzogna, where I met with many of our own brethren, and of other religious not a few, intent one and all on eschewing hardship for the love of God, making little account of others' toil, so they might ensue their own advantage, and paying in nought but unminted coin throughout the length and breadth of the country; [040] and so I came to the land of Abruzzi, where the men and women go in pattens on the mountains, and clothe the hogs with their own entrails; [041] and a little further on I found folk that carried bread in staves and wine in sacks. And leaving them, I arrived at the mountains of the Bachi, where all the waters run downwards. [042] In short I penetrated so far that I came at last to India Pastinaca, where I swear to you by the habit that I wear, that I saw pruning-hooks fly: a thing that none would believe that had not seen it. Whereof be my witness that I lie not Maso del Saggio, that great merchant, whom I found there cracking nuts, and selling the shells by retail! [043] However, not being able to find that whereof I was in quest, because from thence one must travel by water, I turned back, and so came at length to the Holy Land, where in summer

cold bread costs four deniers, and hot bread is to be had for nothing. And there I found the venerable father Nonmiblasmetesevoipiac, the most worshipful Patriarch of Jerusalem; [044] who out of respect for the habit that I have ever worn, to wit, that of Baron Master St. Antony, was pleased to let me see all the holy relics that he had by him, which were so many, that, were I to enumerate them all, I should not come to the end of them in some miles. However, not to disappoint you, I will tell you a few of them. [045] In the first place, then, he shewed me the finger of the Holy Spirit, as whole and entire as it ever was, and the tuft of the Seraph that appeared to St. Francis, and one of the nails of the Cherubim, and one of the ribs of the Verbum Caro hie thee to the casement, and some of the vestments of the Holy Catholic Faith, and some of the rays of the star that appeared to the Magi in the East, and a phial of the sweat of St. Michael a battling with the Devil and the jaws of death of St. Lazarus, and other relics. [046] And for that I gave him a liberal supply of the acclivities of Monte Morello in the vulgar and some chapters of Caprezio, of which he had long been in quest, he was pleased to let me participate in his holy relics, [047] and gave me one of the teeth of the Holy Cross, and in a small phial a bit of the sound of the bells of Solomon's temple, and this feather of the Angel Gabriel, whereof I have told you, and one of the pattens of San Gherardo da Villa Magna, which, not long ago, I gave at Florence to Gherardo di Bonsi, who holds him in prodigious veneration. He also gave me some of the coals with which the most blessed martyr, St. Lawrence, was roasted. All which things I devoutly brought thence, and have them all safe. [048] True it is that my superior has not hitherto permitted me to shew them, until he should be certified that they are genuine. However, now that this is avouched by certain miracles wrought by them, of which we have tidings by letter from the Patriarch, he has given me leave to shew them. But, fearing to trust them to another, I always carry them with me; [049] and to tell you the truth I carry the feather of the Angel Gabriel, lest it should get spoiled, in a casket, and the coals, with which St. Lawrence was roasted, in another casket; which caskets are so like the one to the other, that not seldom I mistake one for the other, which has befallen me on this occasion; for, whereas I thought to have brought with me the casket wherein is the feather, I have brought instead that which contains the coals. [050] Nor deem I this a mischance; nay, methinks, 'tis by interposition of God, and that He Himself put the casket of coals in my hand, for I mind me that the feast of St. Lawrence falls but two days hence. [051] Wherefore God, being minded that by shewing you the coals, with which he was roasted, I should rekindle in your souls the devotion that you ought to feel towards him, guided my hand, not to the feather which I meant to take, but to the blessed coals that were extinguished by the humours that exuded from that most holy body. [052] And so, blessed children, bare your heads and devoutly draw nigh to see them. But first of all I would have you know, that whoso has the sign of the cross made upon him with these coals, may live secure for the whole of the ensuing year, that fire shall not touch him, that he feel it not. ”

[Voice: dioneo]

[053] Having so said, the friar, chanting a hymn in praise of St. Lawrence, opened the casket, and shewed the coals. Whereon the foolish crowd gazed a while in awe and reverent wonder, and then came pressing forward in a mighty throng about Fra Cipolla

with offerings beyond their wont, each and all praying him to touch them with the coals. [[054](#)] Wherefore Fra Cipolla took the coals in his hand, and set about making on their white blouses, and on their doublets, and on the veils of the women crosses as big as might be, averring the while that whatever the coals might thus lose would be made good to them again in the casket, as he had often proved. [[055](#)] On this wise, to his exceeding great profit, he marked all the folk of Certaldo with the cross, and, thanks to his ready wit and resource, had his laugh at those, who by robbing him of the feather thought to make a laughing-stock of him. They, indeed, being among his hearers, and marking his novel expedient, and how voluble he was, and what a long story he made of it, laughed till they thought their jaws would break; [[056](#)] and, when the congregation was dispersed, they went up to him, and never so merrily told him what they had done, and returned him his feather; which next year proved no less lucrative to him than that day the coals had been.