THE DEVIL'S PORTRAIT

BY

ANTON GIULIO BARRILI

Translated from the Italian by

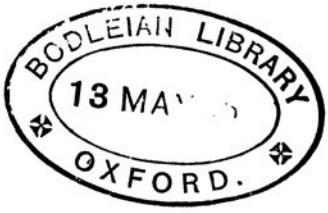
EVELYN WODEHOUSE

TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

London:
REMINGTON & CO., PUBLISHERS
HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C.

1885



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CHAPTER I

HAVE you ever been to Arezzo, gentle reader? If you have not, I beg you to go there on the very first opportunity, even if you have to make this opportunity yourself by inventing a pretext for taking you there. I assure you that you will thank me for my advice. The Val di Chiana is one of the pleasantest, as well as one of the most picturesque, of all the numerous valleys of 'that fair country where the *sì* resounds.' In fact a punster might assert that the *sì* was born at Arezzo, because the monk Guido, to

whom we owe the musical scale, was a native of that place. Though in reality, Guido only invented six notes, and omitted the seventh altogether. Perhaps the aforesaid punster might here retort, that the reason why Guido did not invent the seventh note was because it was in the language already, and that therefore the worthy man did not wish to have his trouble for nothing. However that may be, go through the Val di Chiana and stop at Arezzo. The town is not a large one, but what of that? Guadagnoli, who belonged to Arezzo, was perhaps thinking of his own native place, when he said to a certain beautiful lady:

'Signora, se l'essere
Piccina d'aspetto
Vi sembra difetto,
Difetto non è.' *

Yes, indeed, the town is small; but it has

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* 'Though to be small of stature
Seems in your eyes a crime,
Lady, it is not so in fact,
Believe my simple rhyme.'

wide, clean, and well-paved streets, which is by no means the case everywhere; it possesses many celebrated works of arts, to say nothing of a prefect, a bishop, a couple of good inns, and a Caffè dei Costanti, which latter at once gives you the idea of a whole population of lovers. Which indeed would not surprise me, for the women of Arezzo are passing fair—so fair, indeed, as well-nigh to make one forget all the great men who have been born there, from Mæcenas, the friend of Augustus, to Francesco Redi, the friend of wine.

In the meantime, gentle reader, come to Arezzo with me. We must travel there on horseback, not by rail, for we have gone back five centuries; we must pass through one of the four gates of the city, which is surrounded by a wall three miles in circumference, and dismount at the bottega of Mastro Jacopo da Casentino.

I say bottega, according to the custom of those times, but it would be called a studio now; for Mastro Jacopo da Casentino was an artist, and one, moreover, deservedly

reckoned among the best of his day. He was born at Prato Vecchio, and belonged to the family of Messer Cristoforo Landino, though his surname had come to him from a monk of Casentino, the prior at the monastery of Sasso della Bernia. The latter, having taken a fancy to him, remarked his great turn for painting, and placed him with Taddeo Gaddi, at that time when this worthy disciple of Giotto was working at his monastery.

Young Jacopo made great progress in the school of Taddeo Gaddi, both in drawing and colouring. Those, indeed, were the most prosperous days of painting! Giotto, in his later manner, had cast aside the rigid traditions of the Byzantine school concerning the representation of the human form, thus pointing out a way which all the youthful artists hastened to follow in the hope of surpassing the master in excellence. And Jacopo, who had accompanied Taddeo Gaddi to Florence, did not disappoint the high expectations that the latter had formed of him, and painted, amongst other things, the

tabernacle of the Madonna in the Mercato Vecchio, and the ceiling of Orsan Michele, which building was one day destined to serve as the Granary of the Comune.

Jacopo remained for some years with Gaddi, as though fully to test his powers. When he felt confident of being able to fly alone, he returned to Casentino, and while there executed at Prato Vecchio, Poppi, and other places in the same valley, many works which contributed to swell both his purse and his fame. Then, having been enticed by more substantial offers, he went to settle permanently in Arezzo, which city at that time enjoyed the privilege of self-government, under a council composed of sixty of the wealthiest and the most esteemed of its citizens, to whose charge the entire administration of affairs was committed.

Mastro Jacopo was not only a painter; he also possessed some knowledge of architecture. And as ever since the time of the Goths, water had been scarce in Arezzo, they having destroyed the aqueducts which brought it into the city from the little hill

of Pori, Mastro Jacopo was entrusted with the task of re-conducting it. This he performed in a most praiseworthy manner, by means of new channels beneath the walls, bringing the water to a fountain then called the Fonte dei Guincelli, but afterwards by a corruption of the same name the Fonte dei Veneziani.

But all this has but little bearing upon our subject. Let us proceed then, without dwelling any longer upon Mastro Jacopo's architectural achievements, to relate to our readers how he had some time before taken unto himself a wife, and lived as happily as a man can in this vale of tears, which alas is not invariably a Val di Chiana. In the meantime he enriched the churches of Arezzo with his paintings in fresco, these giving evidence of marvellous talent, both as regards manner and execution.

Another piece of good fortune had befallen Mastro Jacopo, namely, that of successfully instructing another in the principles of that art which he had himself learnt from Gaddi. In our days, a great painter no longer forms

a school, nor does he pride himself upon having talented disciples, as was the case formerly. Each artist works for himself in the strict privacy of his own studio, as though he feared that others might rob him of the secret of his manual skill, or of his art in mixing the colours. But in those times when art flourished so vigorously, a painter took both pride and pleasure in collecting others around him, and indeed hardly considered himself a master, unless he had half-a-dozen or so of scholars, amongst whom one at least, gifted with quicker apprehension and greater perseverance than the rest, might follow the manner and retain the traditions of the teacher, thus conferring honour on his school.

Of these scholars, apprentices, or *fattori* (as they were called in the days when an artist's studio was styled a *bottega*), Mastro Jacopo had several, but only one of them was worthy of the name of disciple. This youth's name was Spinello; he was the son of one Luca Spinelli, a Florentine, who had gone to settle in Arezzo about twenty years

before, on one of the many occasions when the Ghibellines were driven out of Florence. Arezzo, as you are perhaps already aware, belonged to the Ghibelline faction.

Spinello Spinelli was a fine young man, and a born artist like Giotto. Indeed, from his very infancy he had been in the habit of working such wonders with his pencil, that it was hard to believe it possible he had not had instructions from the best masters. Jacopo da Casentino, on seeing these sketches, desired to have him at his bottega. And Spinello was in no wise loth; on the contrary, he was dying of anxiety to go there, more especially since the day when, in the Duomo Vecchio, he had seen and admired Mastro Jacopo's finest work.

Now this beautiful work of Mastro Jacopo's which Spinello had had the opportunity of admiring in the Duomo Vecchio, was not the portrait of Pope Innocent VI., as might naturally be supposed. Mastro Jacopo's finest work was his daughter, Madonna Fiordalisa, who was born during his sojourn in

Florence while he was working there under Gaddi.

I call her Fiordalisa in order to avoid confusion. But the Tuscans of those days would have had no hesitation in calling her Madonna Fiordaliso, in the same way that they were in the habit of saying Madonna Fiore, Madonna Belcolore, thus making a masculine name agree with a feminine one. And indeed every feminine beauty and charm were revealed in Madonna's face, and in every part of her graceful person; from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot, there was not a fault to be found.

Fiordalisa, who, as I have said, was born in Florence, had only been a few months in Arezzo, but ever since the first days of her arrival she had been gazed at, noticed and universally acknowledged as a miracle of beauty. A great man may easily hide himself, and pass unknown and unnoticed amidst the crowd of a city to which he is a stranger; but it is impossible that a beautiful girl should remain thus concealed. The first person who catches sight of her, be it only a

transient glimpse, passes the word to a second, and this hearer on to a third, before he has even seen her himself. Whence it follows, that, as soon as the presence of the strange and beautiful creature is made known, a hundred pointers are stealthily let loose upon her track.

Now, the young men of Arezzo had lost no time; they had discovered the beautiful Florentine at once; they had unearthed her, and had started her, so to speak, as her own fellow-citizens would have started the cricket from his hiding-place, on the morning of the Feast of the Ascension. Fiordalisa only went out on Holy-days to repair to the Duomo Vecchio for the Divine Offices of the Church. But this was quite enough to enable them all to see her, and to attract in consequence a considerable gathering at the sacred edifice when she was about to pass by.

Spinello Spinelli had seen her there like the rest. He was a merry youth, and a trifle impulsive as well. But from that day when he first saw Madonna Fiordalisa, he began to reflect with some bitterness upon his condi-

tion, which did not permit him to outstrip all his other young rivals as he would have wished. I have already said that he was the son of a Florentine exile. Luca Spinelli exercised a calling at Florence, and there also he once owned four walls and a roof over his head. But the calling was nothing without clients, and the roof and walls had been sold by the Guelphs after they had banished him from the city. Had the case been reversed, the Ghibellines would have done precisely the same, so there was no reason to cry out against the injustice of the proceeding. It was merely the custom of those days. Now, thank God, we have improved a little, and certain things are no longer done; we confine ourselves to wishing to do them.

But though Spinello was not rich, he had a great deal else in his favour; he was young, and head over ears in love. Madonna Fiordalisa was the daughter of a painter. Observe the manner in which Fate had arranged the threads. He was a painter too, or at any rate he might become one, since the

inclination was by no means wanting, and he possessed, moreover, a certain facility of execution. A man does what he has to do so well when he is thinking of a beautiful woman! And above all, when he has realised that this is the only way of reaching her!

At that time Mastro Jacopo was at work in the church of San Domenico, or, to speak more correctly, in a certain part of it, namely, the chapel of San Cristofano. He was painting a representation from the life of the blessed Masuolo, a prophet, who in his time prophesied many disasters to the inhabitants of Arezzo. He had been commissioned to execute this work by a merchant of the Fei family, who had great cause for gratitude to the Saint, as the latter had released him from prison. And Mastro Jacopo had depicted Santo Masuolo in the very act of performing this miracle, which now-a-days would be accomplished by means of a bribe to the jailers, or a hole in the wall.

As you may suppose, Spinello began to frequent the Duomo, and to station himself

before the chapel of San Cristofano; and thus it was only natural that he should become a great admirer of the miracles of the blessed Masuolo, or rather as much of them as he could see through the crevices in the planks of the scaffolding. Mastro Jacopo before long perceived the youth's curiosity, and asked him whether by chance he felt a wish to see the fresco before it was shown to the merchant who had ordered it.

'Indeed I do, Messere,' replied Spinello, plucking up sufficient courage to meet so important an occasion. 'The merchant will pay you for your work but once; I will admire it as many times as it shall please you to let me see it before any other person.'

'A truly convincing reason,' said Mastro Jacopo with a smile, 'but will my blessed Masuolo in good sooth please you? Be it then as you will, and come up here on the scaffolding.'

Spinello did not wait to be asked twice; he ascended the platform, and gazed at the painting with open-mouthed admiration. It was quite natural that he should do so, not

only on account of the intrinsic merits of the work, but also from the great desire that he felt to enter into the good graces of the workman.

'Are you, perchance, a painter yourself?' said Mastro Jacopo to him suddenly.

'Oh, no, Messere,' answered Spinello, humbly bending his head, 'but it would make me very happy to become one under your training.'

'And why not? Let us first of all see what you can draw. An O like Giotto? A line like Apelles?'

'Alas, master, far less, I draw as well or as ill (whichever you are pleased to call it) as I can, without having ever had a shadow of instruction.'

'Well, well, take the brushes and that red ochre,' said Mastro Jacopo. 'Go to yonder wall where the plaster has not yet been spread and draw me the outline of a face.'

Spinello asked for nothing better. But although he felt confident that he should be able to acquit himself fairly well, he could not entirely overcome a certain feeling of

nervousness at having to work thus under the master's eye. If he could only succeed there and then, what happiness. Inspired by the thought of Madonna Fiordalisa, he at once seized a brush, and dipping it into the colour, began to draw upon the wall a half-length figure of San Giovanni. Having embarked upon this subject so boldly, he continued to draw with rapidity, in order to leave no time for repentance, and because he feared lest the brush should begin to tremble between his fingers.

Mastro Jacopo watched him at first in silence. Then, as the sketched figure began to appear before his eyes, he muttered a sound of approval.

Spinello had proved himself to be not only skilful, but astute. Skilful, because his drawing was fairly good; astute, because this half-length figure was a copy, taken from memory, of a San Giovanni which Mastro Jacopo had painted some months before at San Bartolommeo in the chapel of Santa Maria della Neve.

'Ah! ah!' said Mastro Jacopo, the

wrinkles, which the stern severity of his expression as critic had gathered on his forehead an instant before, beginning now to disappear. 'So you study the new art, young man?'

'Yes, master; and it seems to me that it is the best.'

'Well, it is, and it is not. I mean, it is necessary to choose a little better amongst its examples. Giotto di Bondone is a great master, and Taddeo Gaddi follows closely upon his heels. I would advise you to imitate them both. The other from whom you have been pleased to copy, is merely an artist among a dozen, whose only merit is, that he is inspired by a certain honesty of purpose.'

'You are no friend of his,' the young man answered slily. 'One can gather it from your words. But I will defend him even against you. For instance his story of San Martino in the chapel of the Vescovado'——

'Alas! my boy, alas!' interrupted Mastro Jacopo, with a smile which was quite out of character with the sadness of the exclamation.

'You should have been to Florence, and seen the Herod's feast which Giotto painted in the chapel of the Peruzzi at Santa Croce; you should have seen his Dante Allighieri into which he has infused an almost celestial sweetness of expression. But ah! you will not understand all this, my boy. What is your name?'

'Spinello. I am the son of Luca Spinelli, Messere.'

'Ah! I know your father by name, and also by sight. He is a worthy man. So, then, you wish to become a painter? Come, let us see, what have you done already?'

'But little, master. A few poor scraps—some pen and ink sketches.'

'From the life?'

'Oh, yes, master, from the life, and also from memory.'

'Of course, like this San Giovanni,' replied Mastro Jacopo, nodding his head. 'Never copy except from the life—remember that—or from Giotto; because, amongst all those who have been able to see nature, none ever saw it more clearly than he. At

all events, bring me your pen and ink sketches. I would fain see them.'

Mastro Jacopo, in the meanwhile, was descending from the platform, in order to return home. Spinello Spinelli asked permission to accompany him part of the way, more especially as their roads lay together, his own house being in the same part of the city.

When they were in the Via dell Orto, which is only a little way from the Duomo, the youth said to Mastro Jacopo:

'Here we are at the door of my house. If you will allow me, master, I will just run in and fetch my sketches, since you have expressed a wish to see them. I will be with you again immediately.'

'As you will,' replied Mastro Jacopo. Spinello Spinelli started off with the swiftness of a deer—or, perhaps, a squirrel would be a more fitting simile—seized a bundle of his papers, ran down the staircase four steps at a time, and resumed his way. He had caught up Mastro Jacopo before the latter had reached the angle of the Duomo.

The old painter gave a rapid glance at each one of the sheets. They were all of them either studies from the life or reminiscences—impressions jotted down in a manner that had in it both skill and freedom. Often they consisted of but a few strokes, but in these few strokes nature was apparent, hit off to the very life.

Whilst he was turning over the sketches, amongst other things he lit upon the portrait of a woman. It was merely an unfinished sketch, still the painter had no difficulty in recognising the model from which Spinello had copied. And thus while examining the drawing, he cast a side-glance at the young man.

Spinello did not see the painter's look, but he felt it, and his face grew crimson. Ah! cursed haste! Why could he not have waited half-an-hour, and taken his drawings to the master's house? In the violent hurry he was in, from his fear of letting this opportunity slip, he had seized everything he could lay hands on, higgledy-piggledy, and this little sketch in which he had given shape to

his recollection of Madonna Fiordalisa had fallen, against his will, into the hands of her father.

'Truly,' he said, making an effort to divert the painter's attention, 'they are but poor things, and certainly most unworthy of your notice. But what would you have? I know not how to do better.'

'Well, well,' replied Mastro Jacopo, 'modesty is a fine thing, my boy; but you are now wronging Nature, who has thus indicated your vocation very clearly. I am glad to have met with you. Cimabue deemed himself fortunate in encountering a young shepherd drawing the sheep of his flock on one of the flat rocks at Vespignano. I, on the other hand, have chanced upon a finished artist.'

And Mastro Jacopo muttered to himself as though in reply to some remark made by his familiar spirit. 'After all, where is the harm? If such an artist as this were to become my son-in-law, I ought rather to rejoice. It would be the best means of

attaching him to my school, and gaining an assistant.'

Then he continued aloud:

'Come to my bottega whenever you like, to-day even, if it pleases you. If your father is content, so am I, or I would rather say I am rejoiced. I make but one condition.'

'What is it? I agree to it at once,' said Spinello, whose eyes shone with contentment.

'That I am to keep your pen and ink sketches for myself. They will serve to remind us both of what you were when you first entered my bottega.'

Spinello could not contain himself for joy. An hour after this conversation, he went back to the painter accompanied by his father. Luca Spinelli and Jacopo da Casentino had but little difficulty in coming to terms, and thus Spinello remained in the service of the master.

That very evening Madonna Fiordalisa was seen by him in the modest light of her own home. Good God! how beautiful she looked there, twice as beautiful as when he

saw her in the Duomo at the Sacred Offices with her eyes cast down, and her head and throat jealously guarded by a veil of white silk flowing down over her shoulders.

Dressed simply in a robe of some half-woollen, half-silken stuff, made with loose sleeves, and large folds descending gracefully from her hips; a white kerchief just covering the nape of her neck, but no other trimming or superfluous adornment to disguise the curves of her perfect form. Madonna Fiordalisa seemed a very miracle of grace and beauty. The head crowned with chestnut tresses, and the profile of that delicately tinted face, both displayed such purity of outline, combined with such sweetness of expression, that it seemed to Spinello that he had never before beheld anything to compare with them.

Fiordalisa recognised the youth as one of her hundred eager admirers in the Duomo. He had hitherto been the most diffident of them. How was it that he had suddenly become the boldest, so bold

in fact as to be the very first to penetrate into her house?

While she was pondering thus, Mastro Jacopo said to her:

'This is a new pupil. He will be the greatest of them all, if he will only go on as he has begun, and does not suffer himself to be led astray by the frivolities of youth.'

At these words from her father, Fiordalisa, who had at first assumed a slightly severe expression, immediately softened in her manner, and greeted the new comer courteously.

He, on his part, conducted himself with thorough good-breeding. He had no eyes save for Mastro Jacopo, and hung upon every word that fell from the latter's lips. 'He who would win the daughter should make up to the mother,' says the proverb. Now Mastro Jacopo's daughter having long since lost hers, all that was left to Spinello was to make up to the father. And in the case of fathers, this is best done by listening to them with attention; no further efforts being

needed beyond saying from time to time '*et cum spiritu tuo.*'

Let us, however, say at once that Spinello did not find the time hang heavily on his hands while he was under that modest roof. Jacopo was a good master, and his pupil had a great desire to learn. And lastly, though Spinello apparently took but little heed of Madonna, she was very far from attributing this behaviour on his part to indifference. So many things can be said without actual speech. He, however, confined himself to saying one thing. Whenever he chanced to turn his head and look in her direction, he became the colour of flame.

Now, when a woman sees such things she requires neither eloquent speeches nor prolonged looks. All that is necessary is, that she should understand the true value of tints. And how should she fail of doing this when her father is a painter?

CHAPTER II

SPINELLO'S entry into the employment of Mastro Jacopo da Casentino made quite a sensation in the school. He had descended suddenly into its midst, like a stone thrown into a pond, making a splash of water and mud. Yes, also mud. Some waters only look clean when they are still. Just try the experiment of troubling them.

There were five apprentices in the bottega of Mastro Jacopo. Out of these five, only two possessed any real merit, or could be looked upon as hopeful students of art. The others showed no signs of promise,

and Mastro Jacopo employed them in mixing the colours, in grinding the various earths to powder on stone, and sometimes in running the errands of the bottega, and in carrying his portfolio of designs when he went out to work.

The names of these five dunces (as Mastro Jacopo was in the habit of terming them with a familiarity little to their liking) were Tuccio di Credi, Lippo del Calzaiuolo, Parri della Quercia, Cristofano Granacci, and Angiolino Lorenzetti, nicknamed Chiacchiera (or Chatterbox). No one of these ever attained to any degree of excellence in the art of painting, although two, as I have already said, might have done so—namely, Parri della Quercia and Tuccio di Credi. But poor Parri della Quercia died young, without leaving any other record of his name behind him than a picture of Santa Margherita in the cathedral church at Cortona; and Tuccio di Credi—well, Tuccio di Credi would have performed a more worthy action if he had only died in the place of Parri della Quercia.

Spinello's appearance in Mastro Jacopo's

bottega had aroused a real commotion amongst these five *fattori*. In the first place, because no one had any idea that this elegant youth was a painter. To earn a right to the name in those days, it was necessary to enter almost as a child into the service of some old artist, and there pass many years in grinding the terra di Siena, in baking the chalk of which the white for the frescoes was made, and even occasionally stooping so far as to carry the master his soup when he was at work on the scaffolding; on these occasions he was sometimes unable to leave off during the entire day owing to the very well justified dread lest the *intonaco* might dry before he had finished his labour.

Another cause of wonder amongst Mastro Jacopo's five scholars was this: that the newcomer had appeared bearing a portfolio of pen and ink sketches, which he claimed to have done himself, without any course of preliminary instruction. Of course all this went for nothing. Anyone who likes can spoil a sheet of paper, and think that he has done a drawing. The real misfortune was

this—that Mastro Jacopo had admired the sketches of this novice, and held them up as a pattern to the eldest of his scholars.

'Look, dunces,' he had said, thrusting a roll of the sheets under the noses of his *fattori*, 'and learn. How often do I tell you to imitate nature? Instead of which all of you waste your time in scratching your knees. That is to say when you are not playing at *zara*.'*

When they were left alone with the drawings of this famous artist who seemed to have fallen from the clouds, Master Jacopo's five pupils turned over the portfolio and inspected with curiosity the wonders which it contained. As may readily be imagined, they found them very poor performances indeed. There was no freedom of touch; the outlines were hard, the attitudes inartistic, the folds of the drapery so stiff and laboured that Cimabue would hardly have done worse in his earliest attempts. What did the master mean by setting up the smudges of this beginner as models? Was it to hoax them?

* A game which is played with three dice.

Whilst they were thus engaged in looking over and freely criticising the drawings, one of the party uttered a cry of surprise.

'What have you seen, Chiacchiera?' inquired Tuccio di Credi. 'Was it the basilisk?'

'Upon my word,' replied Chiacchiera, 'The master cannot certainly have seen this!'

'What! the basilisk?' said Granacci, laughing.

'This likeness,' replied Chiacchiera, without heeding the joke of his companions. 'Because it certainly is a likeness. Look here.'

And taking the sheet which had attracted his attention out of the portfolio, he placed it before the assembled company.

There were several figures on this sheet, but Chiacchiera pointed to one amongst them drawn in about the middle of it, and which had apparently been dashed off with considerable boldness and freedom, as though the result of some momentary impression. You will have already guessed that it was

the figure of a woman. The long gown had been roughly indicated by two strokes of the pen; its ample folds being suggested rather than drawn, by a few washes of ink. The arms issuing from beneath the slashed border of the mantle met at the waist; the right hand which rested on the left fore-arm, holding a small prayer-book. A veil covered the head, and its folds falling over the shoulders, mingled with those of the mantle. The outlines of the figure, as well as the few strokes shadowing forth the face, conveyed the impression that this little sketch was the likeness of a living person, drawn by the hand of a master, whilst the original was on her way to church.

'Well, what do you think of it?' continued Chiacchiera. 'Do you not recognise it?'

'The master's daughter!' cried Lippo del Calzaiuolo.

'My stars! so it is!' added Cristofano Granacci. 'Madonna Fiordalisa.'

'Certainly,' said Parri della Quercia; 'it is either she herself or else someone who greatly resembles her. But why did you

say just now that the master had not seen this drawing? It is impossible that he should not have recognised his daughter.'

'Well,' answered Chiacchiera, shrugging his shoulders, 'we must in that case conclude that the master has fallen in love with the pupil in return for the portrait he has made of his daughter. Naturally, he is so fond of her.'

'If that is all that is necessary in order to find favour in the eyes of Mastro Jacopo,' exclaimed Cristofano Granacci, 'we will all of us draw the portrait of Madonna Fiordalisa.'

'Do you then think it such an easy matter?' said Parri della Quercia.

'Why not? What is there so very difficult about it?' retorted Granacci.

'Everything,' replied Parri. 'Have you never noticed how she changes every moment?'

'Of course,' said Chiacchiera, 'fickle woman is like the moon—clear for an hour, but cloudy soon.'

'I am not speaking of the mood, but of

the type,' replied Parri della Quercia. 'It is an exceedingly delicate one, with a peculiar expression which is not always the same at every hour of the day.'

'What Parri says is true,' remarked Lippo del Calzaiuolo, 'There are moments when she does not look like herself.'

Tuccio di Credi curled his lips, and gave his shoulders another shrug.

'Nonsense,' he said. 'The contour does not change thus easily. It must be the movable features, the eyes and the lips.

'Of course it is the eyes and the lips,' replied Parri della Quercia, 'and does this seem little to you? Now if some movement of the lips, or a different degree of intensity in the look, have power to change the expression of the face, it seems to me that the immobility of the contour has nothing to do with the matter. It would be more to the purpose to ascertain which of the two movable features has most to do with the alteration of the type.'

'I should say the mouth,' observed Lippo del Calzaiuolo.

'Certainly,' said Chiacchiera, 'when Madonna Fiordalisa smiles, she seems twice as beautiful.'

'It is not a question of ascertaining when she is most beautiful, for beautiful she is always,' replied Parri della Quercia. 'I only say that her expression often changes, and seems to assume a different aspect from the one it wore at first. She is always herself to anyone who knows her, and yet the beauty is of a different kind. The artist who had drawn her in one of these phases would imagine that he had not represented her faithfully if he were to see her in another.'

'But,' said Chiacchiera, 'Spinello, who is no painter, and can hardly even be called a beginner, has sketched her with two strokes of his pen in such a manner as to be recognised at once.'

'Great talent indeed,' exclaimed Tuccio di Credi, 'his sketch is a likeness as far as the general effect is concerned, fortunately for him he did not attempt any details. His parsimony in that respect has done him good service. Just see, with two strokes of his pen

he has produced a likeness of Madonna Fiordalisa, but if he had added two more he would have spoilt the whole thing.'

'What on earth could have possessed him to draw the master's daughter?' inquired Cristofano Granacci.

'Oh, come!' said Chiacchiera, 'do you think the reason so very hard to find? Of course he is in love with her. It is so natural that a young man should fall in love with a beautiful girl! Ask Tuccio di Credi, he will tell you'——

'That you are a fool,' struck in Tuccio di Credi, giving Chiacchiera a fierce look as though he would have eaten him.

But Chiacchiera was not so easily frightened.

'Just see,' he cried, grinning, 'Here is a clear proof of what Parri della Quercia was saying a short time ago about variety of expression. Look at Tuccio di Credi. Does he not seem quite a different person? Oh, Tuccio, if anyone were to draw your portrait at this moment, he would not certainly be rendering you a service.'

Tuccio di Credi in a general way, at least taking him altogether, was not at all a bad looking young man. His complexion, it is true, was of a slightly olive tint, but no one has ever pronounced olive to be an ugly colour, in fact there are some to whom this mixture of yellow and green is not by any means unpleasing. And then his hair and eyebrows, which were of the deepest black, harmonised well with the dark skin, so much so that the skin seemed to acquire a shade of delicate pallor from its contrast with a still more dusky hue. He also had a most mobile cast of features, thus fully confirming the jesting remark made by Chiacchiera. In the first place his face seemed to be divided into two distinct parts. The upper half was modelled in a most manly fashion, with bold and well-defined outlines; the lower part, on the other hand, was but timidly executed, as though, indeed, it had been barely sketched. One would have imagined that Nature, in fashioning that head, had wearied of her work when it was only half-completed. The nose, for instance,

was out of proportion with the width of the forehead; the thin, pale lips lacked firmness; the chin was unmistakably receding. In the whole face, which seemed to have been finished thus unwillingly, there was something discordant, which the few thin hairs about the mouth and the thicker beard had been insufficient to tone down and correct. Even in the eyes, dark yet lustreless, as though they had been painted with lamp-black, there was something wanting. As a rule, you could scarcely see them; they seemed to evade all scrutiny. When Tuccio di Credi was speaking to you, they always looked down and on one side of you, and then suddenly shifted their gaze to the other, without your having been able to detect them in the act of fixing themselves even upon the fastenings of your jerkin. Whilst watching the rapid passage to and fro of these two dull lights, you thought involuntarily of the fire-fly, who hovers first on your right hand, and then all at once appears on your left, having passed before you unperceived by concealing the flash of its phosphoric light.

Mastro Jacopo had once said of him: 'Tuccio di Credi will never be a good draughtsman. How is it possible that a man who never looks straight in front of him should see what is going on?'

At these jesting remarks made by Chiacchiera, Tuccio di Credi frowned and bit his lips. Then shrugging his shoulders, he replied:

'What folly! It is enough for the last comer to say a thing to you in jest, for you to begin at once to construct a theory out of it. Certainly you were not nicknamed Chiacchiera for nothing. Now you have scented the lover in a little sketch of a woman, and this is even worse than Parri della Quercia's discovery. And why? May one not meet a beautiful girl by the way, and feel a wish to draw her profile on paper in the same way that one draws a friar going a-begging, or a dog running along by a wall? The man who wishes to reach excellence in the art, sketches all that he sees. And if he chance to see some beautiful female form, would you have him shut his eyes and say *Domine sal-*

vum fac, like a pious hermit on being exposed to the temptations of the devil?'

'If only there had been two of these women in the collection,' rejoined Chiacchiera, who would not confess himself beaten. 'But in point of fact, this is the only one there is.'

'That proves nothing.'

'It proves a great deal. Either that there are no other beautiful women in Arezzo. Or else that they are all in the habit of shutting themselves up in their respective dwellings when this Giotto *redivivus* passes by.'

'Ah yes! Giotto *redivivus*. Well named indeed,' exclaimed Lippo del Calzaiuolo. 'If Mastro Jacopo were to hear you, he would hug you, and kiss you on both cheeks to boot.'

'Who speaks of Mastro Jacopo?' cried a voice, the sound of which overwhelmed the party with confusion. 'And pray who am I to kiss on both cheeks?'

'Master' said the youths drawing back and looking abashed and foolish.

The master came forward into the middle

of the group, and saw the portfolio containing Spinello's drawings.

'Ah,' he resumed in an altered tone, 'so you were studying? You also were admiring the work of this talented young man. Now then, let him whose cheeks I am to kiss, come forward and tell me what he thinks of Spinello Spinelli.'

'Master,' burst forth Chiacchiera, 'I do not know whether you will kiss my cheeks, or whether you will not rather bestow upon me a severe kick, when I say, with all due deference, that this Spinello, in making yonder little sketch, intended it for a likeness.'

'Well,' said Mastro Jacopo, his countenance clouding over, 'and if indeed he had intended it for a likeness, what harm do you all see in it?'

'None, God forbid! no harm whatever in the intention, only in the success of the attempt. Here, for instance, is Tuccio di Credi, who maintains that the resemblance is entirely due to the small number of strokes. Your protégé has caught the

general effect of the figure and nothing more. If he had a real portrait to execute, he would find himself sorely embarrassed.'

Mastro Jacopo shrugged his shoulders scornfully.

'Go to, you dunces! This is a young man, who, if he wishes to paint a portrait, young and inexperienced though he may be, will do it under the beards of you all, that is to say when your beards have grown.'

'Parri della Quercia is not of that opinion.'

'Ah, Parri? Well, then, let us hear the opinion of Messer Parri della Quercia.'

Parri thus dragged into the discussion by Chiacchiera's imprudence, replied modestly as follows:

'Indeed, master, I did not mean to underrate the merits of your new scholar. Although I do not yet know him in person, these pen and ink sketches, which you have set before us as examples, have caused me to think very highly of him. I did but say that Madonna Fiordalisa'——

Jacopo da Casentino started, and fixed his eyes upon the best of his disciples with

an expression which was half surly, half surprised.

'What has Madonna Fiordalisa to do with it?' he said interrupting him.

'She has this to do with it,' replied Parri della Quercia, 'that in those four strokes of which we were speaking when you came in ——By the way, here they are, can you not see in them the likeness of Madonna Fiordalisa? Or at any rate, one may say that they suggest the outline of her figure.'

'Well,' said, Mastro Jacopo, with the air of a man who does not intend either to admit a fact or to deny it. 'And what did you say next?'

'I said that though one may recognise Madonna in these outlines, still the sketch cannot be considered as a real portrait. To make one of your daughter I look upon as the most difficult task in the world, if, indeed, it be not wholly impossible. Madonna Fiordalisa has such a variable expression.'

'Variable expression! variable expression!' muttered Mastro Jacopo. 'I know not what

you mean. The old painters knew nought of all this new-fashioned slang of yours.'

'Master,' struck in Chiacchiera, seeing that Parri remained silent, 'it is the movable features that play these tricks, for the face has its movable features—at least, that is Tuccio di Credi's opinion.'

Mastro Jacopo was fated to experience one surprise after another.

'Ah, indeed! so Tuccio di Credi also has an opinion on the subject?' he inquired, sarcastically. Tuccio di Credi was hurt by his words, and also by the scoffing tone in which they were uttered.

'What harm would there be if I had, master?' he said. 'And what do you see so wonderful in it?'

'Nothing, in truth; nothing is wonderful where all of you are concerned, and as for harm, there would be none either, if you would only take the trouble to work as well. You are a set of good-for-nothing dunces.——At least I am wrong, you are good for something, and that is to chatter; so much so that one of you has derived his surname from his skill

in that accomplishment. To reason concerning principles, to compose treatises, to invent precepts, that is your business. Instead of which it should be work, work, and always work. The principles of art are here, in the unceasing labours of the hand and arm, the rest is comparatively worthless. Be so good as to leave the principles, the reasons and the precepts of art to those who have grown old in working. Some day you, when you have reached maturity—you also will be able to say to the young, "This is the right way and that is the wrong." On what authority? On that of your own experience. For without it all precepts are valueless.'

'Master,' Chiacchiera ventured to say, 'you are restricting the field of art.'

'What field are you prating about? The field of art indeed! here is another invention of chattering painters. You should have seen what the field of art really was, when the great masters were alive. No one ever heard any of this nonsense in the good old days of Giotto and Taddeo Gaddi.'

'Giotto was a reformer of the art,' retorted

Chiacchiera. 'And we should all aim at producing something new.'

'Oh, indeed, and do you think it is always possible to be doing something new? Beware, dunces, lest your innovations be only so many retrogressions. The only new thing which I recommend you to do is this: work, work, and never weary of working, and in the meantime leave off talking nonsense, and the devil take you.'

Having said this, Mastro Jacopo left the group, giving his shoulders a prodigious shrug as he did so. To which gesture Chiacchiera responded in behalf of them all, with a grimace.

Shortly afterwards, a young man looked through the door of the bottega.

'Is Master Jacopo da Casentino within?' he inquired, timidly.

'He is,' replied Chiacchiera. 'What do you want with him?'

Master Jacopo, hearing the new-comer's voice, appeared immediately on the threshold of his own room.

'Oh, that's right, my boy: come in!' he

cried. 'I have been expecting you. This is from henceforth your home. Here are your fellow-labourers: Tuccio di Credi, Parri della Quercia, Cristofano Granacci, Lippo del Calzaiuolo, and Chiacchiera, or rather we must call him first by the name which he received at his baptism—Angiolino Lorenzetti —and next mention that which competent judges have bestowed upon him.'

The young man to whom Master Jacopo's scholars were presented in the above order saluted them with a gracious inclination of his head, to which he added the words:

'We shall be friends, I trust.'

'Now, dunces,' resumed Master Jacopo, 'it is your turn to greet Spinello Spinelli, the author of the pen-and-ink sketches which you have just been looking at. He is a young man, who, provided he does not turn aside by the way, will make himself known to fame.

Master Jacopo's scholars, one and all, made an obeisance to Spinello. Parri della Quercia stretched out his hand besides, saying; 'Both friend and brother, if you will.'

But the others did not come forward and

receive him with open arms like Parri della Quercia.

'We shall be friends I trust,' said Chiacchiera, mimicking the new comer in a low voice. 'Behold what condescension! Would one not imagine him to be the reigning Duke of Bavaria at least?'

'Or the Saladin,' added Lippo del Calzaiuolo.

'It is more likely that he is *Calandrino* and nothing more,' concluded Cristofano Granacci.

Tuccio di Credi said nothing, but in his own mind he thought:

'Your friend, indeed! I' faith, you are a fool if you hope it.'

CHAPTER III

A BAD Easter to all pessimists, sceptics and other philosophers of a similar description, who maintain that man is naturally an envious animal, and that our good qualities are merely the result of patient education, in other words of extra polishing and varnishing.

However, thanks be to Heaven, and by the leave of the philosophers above-mentioned, there are still a few souls who are innately good, and whose virtue is the fruit of spontaneous generation, not produced by judicious grafting; and further, there are men who do

not suffer from the disease of envy, not even —and this is indeed praiseworthy on their part—when they perceive that Titius or Caius is gifted with sufficient genius or skill to excel them greatly in this or that branch of art or science.

Look, for instance, at Jacopo da Casentino. This old pupil of Gaddi's, this worthy follower of the traditions of Giotto, clearly foresaw that when the youth whom he had just taken into his bottega had acquired a little practice in the management of his brushes, he would become a great artist forthwith—a master, in fact, and one, moreover, who would far outstrip the best of his day. And therefore for him—for this young eagle whose feathers were just beginning to grow, Master Jacopo had laid aside his surly demeanour. For him too, he had found loving words, quiet diligence in teaching, and all the ineffable tenderness of paternal encouragement.

In this he was actuated by two distinct sentiments. The first of these was ambition. To be the master of a disciple who had as little need of reproofs as he had of incentives

to do better, and who, therefore, might shed an additional lustre upon the name of his teacher, this was the lawful object of Master Jacopo's ambition, and—which is more important—one whose attainment was certain. It would one day be said: Spinello Spinelli, the famous painter of Arezzo, was the pupil of Jacopo da Casentino. The disciple is worthy of the master; and if, moreover, it should be necessary to say, far better than the master, would it, in truth, be a great evil? To have discovered a powerful genius, to have dragged him forth from obscurity, to have fitted his wings to his shoulders so to speak, was not that indeed an honour to himself, a title to distinction in the eyes of posterity, especially when this title was supported by so many others besides?

Now that Master Jacopo da Casentino's visions were not delusive, the history of Italian art has clearly shown. The fame of Spinello Aretino has confirmed—if indeed it has not increased—that of his old master.

The other sentiment was of a purely domestic nature. 'I give him my daughter,'

Master Jacopo said to himself. He is as handsome as she is fair. He will speedily attain excellence in the art. He will be of the greatest assistance to me; my school will flourish. Arezzo will dispute the palm with Florence.'

And here Master Spinello—but come, we must not anticipate events, let us relate everything from beginning to end, not putting the cart before the horse.

Madonna Fiordalisa, as I have before said, was gracious to her father's new disciple. Many times during the course of the week, either upon one pretext or another, was Spinello Spinelli invited to dine with the master, an honour which fell but rarely to the lot of his companions at the bottega. Sometimes she even descended to the ground floor, and certainly this began to happen oftener than formerly. Now it was to tell her father that dinner was ready, or to ask his opinion upon some detail of domestic economy, and sometimes indeed she came without any real reason whatever. But ah, can a good reason be found for everything? Even philo-

sophers, who always wish to place reason as the foundation of their various systems, have often felt sadly at a loss to obtain it.

And Spinello's love burned in his heart, and the flame thereof shone forth through his eyes. As you know, reader, for you must once have gone through the same experience yourself, both love and a cough are hard to hide. And Madonna Fiordalisa also concealed but imperfectly the feeling which Spinello's love had stirred within her, or rather she did not conceal it at all. Why indeed should she? Had not this affection taken root, and was it not growing apace beneath the benignant gaze of her father? She was a little timid at first, and then on becoming conscious of the state of her own heart, assumed a haughty demeanour. But these weak defences, like the fortifications that are suddenly improvised by an army in an exposed country, hardly last long enough even to admit of the making of a simple *reconnaissance*; and Madonna Fiordalisa had not been long in discovering that her gentle and modest lover was anything but a deceiver. Her confidence

in him returned, and she gave him her heart unreservedly. How sweet is this complete surrender, thus undisturbed by any suspicion or any fear!

Whilst he was making this progress in her affections, and perhaps indeed for that very reason, our Spinello advanced rapidly in the study which he had embraced with so much ardour. He learnt easily all those details which now are known under the name of the mechanism of the art. He knew how to mix the colours both for painting in fresco and in *tempera*; how to paint the flesh and drapery so that the figure should stand out in strong and bold relief; which colours to use in painting in fresco—that is, those which are made of the earths only, and have no minerals in their composition—the degree of freedom of hand required to finish the work before the *intonaco* was dry, as well as the proper strength to give to the colours, because these, when the wall is soft, have an effect which will be completely altered when it dries. And he had learnt rapidly many other things as well, assisted thereto by the strength of his

desire as well as by practice: namely, to paint in *tempera*—that is with yoke of egg and fig-juice mixed with the colours; to paint in chiaroscuro by imitating works in bronze; and lastly, how to paint on external walls by indenting them with an iron instrument, thus laying in the colour so as to resist the action of the rain.

And all this without having had even once to go back to the first principles. Led by his own natural inclination to sketch from the life or, at all events, from nature, Spinello Spinelli had made considerable progress in the art of drawing, and could indicate, by means of red and black chalk, figures, attitudes, modes of attire, and anything else that struck his fancy. In working thus he had acquired a marvellous dexterity in representing with his pen everything that he saw, putting in the shadows and the transparent washes with a soft colour which he obtained by diluting ink with water. And lastly, as we have already seen from the drawings which he submitted to the inspection of Master Jacopo, he filled in every part with the strokes of his pen,

leaving the white paper uncovered for the lights on the figures only.

Besides which, in those early days of painting, there were no great examples to give to pupils to copy. Each one was, therefore, forced to draw from the life, thus introducing into his work the merits and defects of his own eye and his particular way of looking at nature. Thus if to you, intelligent reader, it may seem strange to find so many painters all of whom saw the human form more contracted than is actually the case, so that amongst the artists of that period, one never finds a trace of that perfection of form which is so common in nature, I would beg you to remember that these worthy reformers of the art were only just beginning to escape from the narrow limits set by the Byzantine painters, and therefore could hardly have acquired the necessary courage to see the truth in its entirety. It has been said that *Natura non facit saltum,* and art also is forced to advance by degrees.

On the other hand, if the painters of Giotto's school erred on the side of poverty

of form, they decidedly manifested a most praiseworthy regard for finish; and therefore, although the attenuated bodies of their figures display the imperfection of the anatomical knowledge possessed by these artists, their extreme care in drawing the extremities, as well as the expression of the faces, reveal to us clearly that profound feeling for truth which was destined to renovate the representative arts completely, thereby leaving the world no longer cause to regret the lost masterpieces of Apelles and Zeuxis.

But I have digressed enough, and must return to Spinello Spinelli. Seeing Master Jacopo at work inspired him with a desire to paint in fresco likewise, which in those days was considered to be the crowning-point of perfection in the art. He, however, never expressed this wish, thinking it would be too bold—almost a presumptuous one,—and therefore confined himself to observing the manner in which Master Jacopo prepared the cartoons, by enlarging the original designs to vast proportions. In order to obtain the correct effects of light, the artist

used sometimes to make models of the figures in clay, which, when grouped together in a given manner, showed the parts seen in relief, the shadows, and all the other various details which combine to form the perspective of a picture.

When Spinello had been three months with Master Jacopo, he had already, though barely twenty years of age, begun to help his superior with the frescoes at the Duomo Vecchio—that very Duomo where he had beheld Madonna Fiordalisa for the first time. It will of course be understood that he only traced on the *intonaco* the designs of his master, putting on the colour likewise under his superintendence.

You may imagine the rage of Spinello's companions. We must, however, except Parri della Quercia, a good and modest youth, who, being aware that nature never intended him to excel in the great art of fresco, contented himself with working at various triptyches and altar panels which Master Jacopo was occasionally commissioned to execute for some parish church or oratory

in the surrounding country. To paint in fresco required boldness of conception, freedom of hand, perfect self-confidence, as well as many other fine qualities which were not in Parri della Quercia's nature. But Master Jacopo's other disciples, though far inferior to Parri in skill, were also less modest than he, and chafed considerably at the sight of this new-comer shooting so far ahead of them in the mastery of the art, and, which was worse still, in the good graces of the master.

One day, when Spinello was working with Master Jacopo on the scaffolding in the Duomo, the latter said to him suddenly, without any warning:

'My boy, it is now time that you should begin to fly alone.'

'Fly alone!' exclaimed the young man, raising his eyes from the wall, in order to look at his master, 'what do you mean by that?'

'I think I have expressed myself clearly,' replied Master Jacopo. 'The wings of your genius have put forth their principal feathers; you can fly now without anyone's help.'

Spinello blushed, and looked down as he replied,

'Master, when I am by your side, I have the heart of a lion, but alone! think of it, yourself! will not my fate be that of Icarus of Crete, who lost his feathers, and falling, sank beneath the waves of the sea?'

'Behold now, how modesty has come to take up her abode with young men,' cried Master Jacopo, laughing. 'But, even granting that the comparison which you draw between your wings and those of Icarus is correct, no one tells you that you are to separate yourself from your master and second father. You shall still work under my eyes, please God, and always follow my counsels. You have quite enough firmness of hand and correctness of judgment to work alone. Will you make the attempt? One of the miracles of Saint Donatus has to be painted in the chapel hard by. The work is of the utmost importance, because it is for the saint's own sanctuary, but I have full confidence that you will execute it with honour.'

'But, O master, if I were to fail in the attempt! Will the Confraternity of the church entrust me with a work of so great importance?'

'They will not know it until afterwards,' replied Master Jacopo, shrugging up his shoulders; 'and we will efface the painting if it does not succeed according to the hopes which I entertain of your power.'

But Spinello still hesitated.

'Fine courage, forsooth!' exclaimed Master Jacopo. 'Is it thus that you love Fiordalisa?'

At the sound of these words, Spinello started, and his heart bounded within his breast. Picture it yourself, reader! It was the very first time that Master Jacopo had spoken to him of his daughter. And, for a first occasion, he had spoken very much to the purpose—do you not think so too?

'Ah, master, master, what are you saying?' cried the youth in great agitation. 'Have I understood you aright?'

Master Jacopo smiled, as fathers can smile, O ye youthful lovers, when they have nothing to refuse you.

'If so be that I have understood you aright from the first day that you entered the bottega, then you also have understood me aright to-day.'

Spinello Spinelli stood breathless, pale with emotion, and with his eyes wet with tears. He could not believe in his own happiness. He looked into the master's face, as though to seek there a confirmation of the words which he had heard, then he turned his eyes upwards, as though he were in search of a beloved image which he hoped to find ready to respond to his loving invocation.

'Well, what is the matter?' said Master Jacopo. 'Are you not satisfied?'

Spinello sank down on the steps of the platform which had been erected in order to enable Master Jacopo to approach the ceiling, and burst into a flood of tears.

'Come now, courage! Why this childish folly?' muttered Master Jacopo. 'If they were to hear you from below!'

'Oh, let me weep, my master, my father, let me weep. To have loved so long without any hope! To have come to you fearing

lest you should not accept me as a pupil! Then, to have lived thus by your side, despairing of ever being able to tell you—to confess to you—and always with the dread that I should hear either from your own lips or from those of some of the others in the bottega that Madonna Fiordalisa was betrothed! Oh, master, master, I would that you had been in my place yourself!'

'Oh, never fear. I have been in one very like it *in diebus illis;*' replied Master Jacopo. 'We all, sooner or later, go through these blessed anxieties. But, as you see, there was no cause for alarm. You were being thought of all the time that you were eating your heart out with suspicions and fears. It was ordained, moreover, that fortune was to come and seek you herself, and that the father should be the first to speak.'

'Oh, do not say that, my father, I entreat! You know well that it was only because I did not dare.'

'Of course not, you never do. But, mark well, my boy, this good fortune is to be yours only on one condition. You are to paint this

miracle of Saint Donatus, and it is to be indeed'——

'A miracle,' said Spinello interrupting him. 'It shall be one, I promise you.'

'I feel sure of it, and now let us go home, for we have done enough here for to-day.'

'No, master, let me remain. I wish to think of my subject.'

'What, here? At this height of fifty *palmi* (spans) from the ground?'

'What does it matter? My head is a thousand miles higher still; for am I not in the seventh heaven? and then, you see, master, we are now in the Duomo Vecchio. It was down there,' he continued, pointing to the ground, through the crevices of the platform, 'near that fourth pillar on the right-hand side, that I saw Madonna Fiordalisa for the first time. I did not know who she was, but yet my heart was struck. I hid myself that day behind yonder pilaster in the right aisle, that I might gaze at her profile without her perceiving it. What a joyful sight it was to my eyes! And every feast-day, you know, I saw her thus. It was the June of last

year. Blessed month, which contains so many feast-days! The others have not nearly so many, and are not to be compared with it. I waited for her at the entrance, making believe the while to be looking at something else; then I went back again. I remember, moreover, that it was a source of great grief to me.'

'And let us hear why!' exclaimed Master Jacopo laughing.

'It was,' resumed Spinello, 'because all the young men of Arezzo acknowledged her to be the fairest of the fair. Alas, I thought, how many of them are as desirous as I am of finding favour in her sight! And how many of them have not just cause to hope that they may be more successful than I in doing so! I feared, and the overwhelming strength of this fear gave me the courage to approach you. Do you remember how I trembled like a leaf? And then, when in my exceeding haste I committed the error of bringing you all my drawings, without thinking at the time that there was one amongst them' ——

'Of course, the likeness of my daughter,' said Master Jacopo. 'Oh, yes, never fear, I saw it and recognised it at once. If I had not guessed the beginning, how should I have been able to understand the remainder? And also, mark this, my boy: when I thus passed over in silence the drawing of the likeness, I resolved upon a certain thing.'

'What was it?'

'That if this boy should turn out ill,' continued Master Jacopo, 'if perchance he were not to become a great painter, I would pack him off at once. Luckily for you, you have always been a steady young man, and have, in consequence, justified my faith in you. Well then, are we agreed? Is the miracle to be done?'

'Have no fear, it shall be done. Let me remain here in the Duomo, to gather inspiration from the place. I feel within me the strength of a lion. But tell me, master, was not this miracle of Saint Donatus, the destruction of a serpent which infested the country?'

'Yes; it is a simple act of benediction.'

'Go then, master, and leave me to think of my subject. I hope that before leaving the Duomo an idea will have come to me.'

Master Jacopo smiled for the second time, and with a friendly wave of the hand to Spinello, descended the ladder.

When he was left alone on the scaffolding, Spinello Spinelli took the red chalk, and began to draw a few strokes on the paper. But he stopped almost immediately. His brain was in a whirl; he thought of Madonna Fiordalisa, and of the possibility which now smiled upon him for the first time of making that divine creature his own.

'It would have been better to go straight home,' he thought, 'and then set to work. That would have inspired me.'

But no sooner had this idea passed through his mind than he discovered it to be an erroneous one.

'No,' he added. 'I must first of all deserve to see her. If I contrive to execute something good, it will be a sign that I do deserve it.'

As he said this he approached the edge of

the platform; and, directing his gaze to that spot in the nave where he had seen Madonna Fiordalisa for the first time, he wafted a kiss down to it on the tips of his fingers, and with the kiss a prayer—a mental ejaculation. Certainly, the latter must have been the first one which in the house of God played the trick of descending instead of rising.

Then, seized with a sudden inspiration, he set to work with an almost feverish anxiety. No sooner had the idea struck him than he embodied it in form, his brain working simultaneously with the pencil which flew so rapidly over the paper.

Spinello depicted the Saint in the act of advancing towards the serpent, his right hand is raised against him with a gesture of denunciation, and with his left he seems to be infusing courage into the crowd of terrified citizens, some of whom have already taken flight, whilst others are on their knees invoking the help of Heaven. Saint Donatus stands erect, and though deeply moved, seems to be in no wise overcome by fear. The apparent weakness of his bodily powers, as well

as the sweetness of his expression, contrasted thus with the savage fierceness of the monster, seem to express the noble conception of an upright conscience standing firm even in the face of the greatest dangers, and a faith in God which courageously overcomes every obstacle. The serpent resembled the Egyptian crocodiles in the shape of his claws and his mouth, as well as in the scales protecting his body; his wings were like those of the fabulous dragons, which, having derived their origin from the popular legend of Saint George of Cappadocia, were so frequently represented in olden days. The venomous beast was still gazing at his fatal adversary, his jaws wide open as though he were on the very point of devouring him. But already the body was beginning to bend, and the rings of the belly to writhe; the sharp and horrible claws, stiffened by a spasm, clutched vainly at the air. There was something peculiarly striking and terrible in the contrast between the attitude of the fierce monster, and the tranquil bearing of the Saint performing the miracle, and from

whose uplifted hand the smiting power was apparently at that very moment issuing forth.

'Ah, at last!' cried Spinello, as soon as he had dashed off the outlines of his design upon the paper. 'This picture shall *not* be cancelled.'

Soon afterwards, having finished his drawing, he rolled it up, and came down from the scaffolding.

'Do you always leave off work as late as this?' asked the sacristan of the Duomo on seeing him cross the middle aisle. 'But what is the matter? You look like a man who has heard good news.'

'Good indeed,' replied the young painter, 'though, perhaps, it might not appear such to you.'

'If I may rejoice for your sake, why should I not find it good? Let me hear it.'

Spinello went up to the priest, and putting his lips close to his cheek, whispered in his ear:

'I am going to be married.'

The sacristan drew back in order to be able to see Spinello's face; then bit his lips

like a man who expected to hear a totally different announcement, and who, moreover, did not see much felicity in the seventh sacrament.

'Is that so, Spinello?' he exclaimed. 'Then may you be happy. Nevertheless, I should have thought that, in your own case, the wife of the artist had been there.'

And he pointed with his finger to the head, which is the seat of the goddess of the imagination.

'No, you are wrong,' Spinello replied, quickly, 'the wife of the artist is here.'

And he pointed to the heart, the abode of passion.

'You are right,' said the sacristan, 'provided always that one does not suffer there. In that case, farewell art.'

Spinello was of opinion that there were sentiments which the poor priest was incapable of comprehending, so giving him one of those pathetic glances which always seem to convey so many things, possibly because they do not say any one thing in particular, he went through the door of the Duomo. He

hastened his steps, because on that day he was invited to dine with the master, and the hour, as has been said, was late.

In a few minutes he was to see Madonna Fiordalisa. But how should he dare to raise his eyes to look at her after Mastro Jacopo's embarrassing discourse? Happily, however, the tranquil manner in which she received the future Apelles soon made him understand that her father had not thought it a fitting time to speak to her on the subject. And Spinello was grateful to him for his reticence, because it left him at liberty to gaze into Fiordalisa's face without reserve, and to contemplate her beauty to his heart's content, thinking, while he did so, with youthful delight: 'My child, you do not know what I know; you are to be mine, beautiful creature, mine; the pledge of victory is there in that roll of paper which I have laid on yonder walnut-wood chest.'

Mastro Jacopo, before sitting down at the table, led his favourite disciple aside, and said to him,

'Well, did the idea come to you?'

'Yes, master, it did.'

'And are you satisfied with it?'

Spinello made a sign with his head which was intended to mean 'Pretty well,' but a mischievous smile played about his lips.

'Ah, you rogue,' exclaimed the old painter. 'You are satisfied and will not confess it. Show me your design.'

'No, master, not now. If you will allow me, I will put it off until to-morrow. I am not yet quite sure of my conception. Although whilst I was carried away by the excitement of composition, it seemed to me to be a good one, yet now'—and here Spinello turned his eyes in the direction of Fiordalisa, whose delicate profile stood out clearly against the lights of the dinner-table in the back-ground—'now, when I think of the greatness of the reward, I fear that I have only produced a *pasticcio*. Wait until to-morrow. I will sleep upon it in the meantime, and then try to alter my sketch.'

'Be it as you will,' said Mastro Jacopo, 'and now to dinner. I do not feed myself

through the eyes like you, and I am quite famished.'

The following morning Spinello examined his work again. He thought it defective, and no doubt it was so, as must inevitably be the case with anything which has been executed hastily. But it also possessed the merits of hasty work, for together with some trifling exaggeration which was easily rectified, there were both unity of conception and freedom of execution. He made the sketch over again, altering some parts of it, and also, with a few touches here and there, giving increased expression to some of the countenances; and at last, when he considered that he had improved it sufficiently, he ventured to place it beneath the eyes of the master.

Poor Spinello literally trembled when he saw the old painter sitting in judgment over his drawing, and absorbed in a profound silence which seemed to bode him but little good.

Mastro Jacopo always examined things after this fashion. His attention was concentrated upon his subject; he never indulged

in exclamations or raised his eyebrows. When he had carefully considered whatever he was called upon to judge in every possible light, when he had pondered over and valued each part of it, weighing everything, so to speak, in the goldsmith's accurate balance, then only, according to his opinion, he allowed a 'good' or a 'bad' to escape from him, but nothing more.

On this occasion, however, he was less reserved.

'Good!' he said, after a prolonged pause. 'I am satisfied with you. The composition is cleverly conceived. The calm attitude of the saint conveys much. If you can but impart the same expression to the head when you paint upon the wall that you have succeeded in producing on the paper, by my troth, you will have gained a great victory?'

Spinello, quite beside himself with joy, threw his arms round the master's neck.

'Come, come!' said the old painter, parrying this demonstration of affection

with difficulty. 'You know I am not Fiordalisa.'

'Pardon me, my father,' cried Spinello. 'I am so happy. To be praised by you is to me the greatest and the most coveted reward.'

'Yes, after the hand of Fiordalisa,' muttered Mastro Jacopo. 'Well, well, we understand each other, and I do not complain. After all, are not the hand of the daughter and the praise of the father equally my own property?'

Spinello asked the master's permission to begin mixing the colours that very day, in order to be sure of obtaining the suitable tints. The following morning he began to work upon the cartoon. Having already measured the space on the wall which the fresco of the Miracle of Saint Donatus was to occupy, and also calculated the number of sheets of paper which it would require to fill that space, all that remained to him to do was to join each of the sheets together at the edges with paste, made of boiled flour. When that was done, and the joinings were

dry, he fixed the cartoon against the wall, by gumming the edges. Then, having drawn across his original sketch as many horizontal and perpendicular lines as were necessary to reduce it to a given scale, he marked off, at proportionate distances, the same number of lines upon the cartoon, thus rendering it easy to adapt the first sketch to the size of the fresco which he proposed to execute.

Spinello worked hard enough for four; even Luca Giordano, surnamed Luca Fa Presto, had he been present, would have been forced to yield the palm to him in that respect. When he had finished his intersection of lines, he placed a piece of charcoal on the top of a stick, and standing in front of the wall with one eye on the original sketch and the other on the cartoon, began to reproduce upon the latter the outlines of the former. Two days later, the cartoon of the Miracle of Saint Donatus was finished, to the great satisfaction of Mastro Jacopo, who, during the whole of the time that the work was in progress, had not permitted any of the other young men to enter the church. Indeed, of what

use would they have been? To mix the colours for him? Master Jacopo during those two days mixed them for himself, as any youthful painter would have done. So true it is that any one person can, at his will, dispense with the help of another, be the latter servant or assistant.

On this occasion, indeed, it was just the opposite, for the old painter had given a helping hand to his favourite scholar, by erecting the platform for him in the chapel in which he was to paint. And when the cartoon was finished, he caused the masons to cover the wall, which had been previously carefully scraped, with a substantial coat of plaster, making them, moreover, spread a second one over as much of its surface as Spinello thought he would be able to colour in one day.

As soon as the plaster was perfectly smooth and level, the young man fixed the cartoon upon it, and traced the sketch of his composition on to the wall, in order to ensure the outlines being quite correct. He then began to put on the colour according to the

pattern of the miniature sketch which he had made beforehand.

The day on which Spinello began to paint, Mastro Jacopo descended from his own platform at about the hour of sunset, and mounted upon that of his pupil, in order to see what progress he had made.

'Well done, indeed!' he said, on finding that the entire figure of the saint was already painted, and that the attitude and expression of the head left nothing further to be desired. 'This time it is my turn to embrace you.'

You may imagine Spinello's joy! I will not attempt to describe it.

Mastro Jacopo resumed:

'Is it then necessary to be in love in order to work well? Alas, my boy, under these circumstances, I shall never produce anything good again, for the season of love is over for me.'

That very day, leaving the church an hour before his usual time, Mastro Jacopo visited Luca Spinelli, in order to hold a certain conversation with him which had the effect of filling the old Florentine's heart with joy.

After which, on reaching his own house, he drew Fiordalisa on one side and said to her without any further preliminaries:

'Do you know that I am thinking of marrying you?'

Fiordalisa blushed, but did not tremble. She had guessed what was to follow, and received her father's announcement in the most eloquent silence. Eloquent at least to us who know all, but not so to Jacopo da Casentino, who was in complete ignorance of the state of his daughter's heart.

'Well,' he said after a moment's pause, 'is it thus that you receive my announcement?'

'Father,' murmured Fiordalisa, with her head bent down, 'whatever you do . . . . will be right.'

'Yes, this is right enough,' replied Mastro Jacopo, who felt sorely inclined to laugh, 'but if by chance it should be to someone whom you did not like?'

Fiordalisa hung her head still lower than before, and began to fidget with the hem of her apron.

'Let us come to the point at once, since

you insist upon keeping silence, and will not answer me' continued Mastro Jacopo. 'What would you say to Spinello Spinelli?'

Fiordalisa's heart gave a bound, but a bound of joy which defies expression. She blushed again, and then in a faint voice replied to her father:

'Whatever you do'——

'Will be right; I know the burden of your song already,' replied Mastro Jacopo, giving his daughter a tap on the cheek. 'Then it shall be done, since this is your opinion, and has been mine for some time. Look up, my child, to receive your betrothed. I think I hear his step upon the stairs.'

Fiordalisa, not having had time to regain her natural colour, assumed an additional shade of crimson when she saw Spinello before her. The latter knew nothing yet either of the conversation which Mastro Jacopo had had with his own father, or of the announcement that the old painter had made to his daughter. But the silence of the scene, together with Madonna's blushes,

told him enough to make him feel as confused in her presence, as she was agitated in his.

'And have you then nothing to say?' cried Master Jacopo. 'Why do you both stand there in front of me looking so stupid and confused? Look here, Fiordalisa, at the man who never ventures. I would wager that in his fear of not being successful, it has never occurred to him to think that it was a case of a ring.'

'Oh! how can you say so?' exclaimed Spinello, touched to the quick.

And putting his hand into the small purse that hung from his girdle, he drew from it a little golden circle. Then approaching the girl, he took her trembling hand, and said,

'Madonna, I know not whether it will be small enough for your angelic little finger. But if it displeases you not'——

Madonna neither answered Yes nor No, but she allowed him to take her hand, and to place the ring upon her finger.

The young lover fell upon his knees, and kissed the hand of his betrothed. Then rising, he approached her timidly, and gazing at her

with eyes full of ardent love, he whispered in her ear:

'I am happier than a king.'

Mastro Jacopo had withdrawn, not wishing to play the part of the unwelcome third. Two loving hearts may well dispense with witnesses when they pour out their confidences to one another, even when these witnesses are the authors of all their felicity.

Although it was past supper time, Jacopo da Casentino did not suggest sitting down to that meal. The old painter was waiting for some one.

Shortly afterwards a sound of footsteps was heard in the next room, and Tuccio di Credi appeared upon the threshold. Poor Tuccio's countenance was always a gloomy one, but to-day it wore quite a funereal expression.

'Master,' he said, 'Messer Luca Spinelli is here.'

'Ah, that is right: bring him in,' cried Mastro Jacopo. 'Children, before returning home, I went to Luca Spinelli's to beg him to make one of our family party this evening.

It is right that your fathers should meet on this day, which is such a joyful one for you both. Do you not think so? It is a pity,' he added mentally, repressing a sigh, 'that the mothers cannot be here too!'

Tuccio di Credi, who preceded the newcomer by a few steps, drew aside in order to allow him to pass. The old Florentine advanced, and wrung the hand extended to him by the painter, then going up to his future daughter-in-law, kissed her on the forehead. If you could only have seen poor Tuccio di Credi at that moment!

'Messer Luca,' said Jacopo da Casentino, 'this is not a formal invitation. We will just speak a few words to each other whilst our children, totally unheeding our conversation, are saying a thousand themselves. This betrothal must be celebrated by a family feast, which shall take place on Sunday, at your good pleasure. Tuccio di Credi can in the meantime announce it to his companions in the bottega, who are quite at liberty to spread the intelligence to the four winds of heaven.'

Tuccio di Credi replied to the latter part of Mastro Jacopo's speech, with a sign of assent.

'Master, I offer my congratulations both to you and to the betrothed couple. When is the wedding to take place?'

'In two months,' replied Mastro Jacopo, 'when your companion has finished a work which he has just begun in the Duomo Vecchio. I wish that you would learn from this example, young men, to labour with good-will. Although Spinello Spinelli is the last comer, yet here he is, as you see, far in advance of you all. Do not take what I say amiss.'

'Why should we take it amiss?' asked Tuccio di Credi, shrugging his shoulders with an air of profound indifference. 'He who is the most deserving has the right to account himself fortunate. It is enough for us, that you do not deprive us of your good-will.'

'You shall have it, and welcome,' replied Mastro Jacopo, with that manner of his which seemed to be made up in equal parts of jesting and surliness; 'although sometimes

you make me despair of you, bad boys that you are. On Sunday then; and be sure you prepare your finest songs. We will indeed make merry.'

Tuccio di Credi took leave of the company and departed.

That day he had been the last person left in the bottega. It had thus fallen to his lot to receive Luca Spinelli, who had come with such a mysterious air to seek Mastro Jacopo at this unseasonable hour. He, of all the people of the world, had been fated to be the first to hear this matrimonial announcement, which, to him, was as sorrowful as it was unexpected.

Tuccio di Credi did not know what to say or to think; he had completely lost his head. He even very nearly forgot to shut up the bottega. On leaving it, he walked mechanically through the streets of Arezzo, till he came to an inn kept by a Greek, where the evening convivial meeting of Mastro Jacopo's disciples was wont to take place. His countenance was so gloomy, that his companions

immediately left off laughing, and asked him if he felt ill.

'Do you want some gruel? A cordial? An electuary?' said Chiacchiera to him. 'Have some of this, it is Montepulciano, and the Greek swears that he has not watered it.'

Tuccio di Credi briefly refused by a gesture Chiacchiera's proffered glass.

'Have you heard the news?' he said.

'What news?' asked Cristofano Granacci.

'If you do not tell it us, how can we know it?' added Chiacchiera.

Tuccio di Credi remained silent for a moment, apparently to collect his strength; then in a sepulchral voice, he announced the sad intelligence to his companions.

'Spinello Spinelli, the last one who entered the bottega, is about to wed Mastro Jacopo's daughter.'

His words were greeted with a cry of astonishment.

'How did you hear it?' inquired Chiacchiera.

'I heard it from Mastro Jacopo himself, who has invited us to the feast of betrothal on

Sunday, and enjoined us to prepare our very best songs.'

'Oh! he shall have them,' said Chiacchiera. 'I promise you he shall have them. Such a fine marriage! The jesters ought to be there too.'

'Indeed,' Parri della Quercia quietly remarked, 'we might have expected it.'

'Expected it!' said Tuccio di Credi, 'and why?'

'Because it was easy to see that Spinello Spinelli was a great favourite with Mastro Jacopo.'

'As a pupil I do not deny it,' replied Tuccio di Credi, 'Mastro Jacopo has his little weaknesses like Saint Anthony. But even Saint Anthony forbore to take his pet with him into Paradise, and no one could have imagined that Mastro Jacopo would bestow his daughter upon Spinello Spinelli. You know that several men have sought her in marriage, amongst others Buontalenti, who is as rich as Crœsus.'

'True,' said Parri della Quercia, 'but you must bear in mind the reason for Mastro

Jacopo's refusal. He has always said that his daughter should wed one of his own calling. Spinello Spinelli is a painter.'

'Hold! not so fast!' struck in Chiacchiera. 'Spinello Spinelli is a Mastro Imbratta (Master Dauber) a *fattore* like the rest of us. He is certainly not to be compared with you, Parri della Quercia, who have already executed a tryptich in distemper, which was praised by the judges.'

Parri della Quercia smiled, and thanked him with a nod of his head.

'At all events,' he said, resuming the subject, 'although he may not have painted yet in distemper, no one has any right to dub him with the nickname of Mastro Imbratta. Recollect his pen and ink sketches.'

'Oh, yes, great talent indeed!' cried Chiacchiera. 'As though that were art. The artist should prove his skill by painting upon wood.'

'Or else upon the wall,' added Parri. 'Spinello Spinelli has the right to call himself a fresco-painter from henceforth; Mastro

Jacopo has given him one of his latest subjects to execute.'

'Yes, he has employed him in tracing the cartoon upon the wall, and in putting the colour on the background.'

'Alas, a good deal more than that,' struck in Tuccio di Credi.

'More than that? And what?'

'He has commissioned him to paint a whole compartment in the Duomo Vecchio. Do you understand? A whole compartment! And Spinello has conceived the subject, and designed the cartoon likewise. But is it not possible that the Master may have corrected the drawing, and given the general idea of the sketch, and so on?'

'There is not a doubt but that he has done so,' exclaimed Chiacchiera. 'And perhaps he has even conceived the subject as well.'

'It is possible,' replied Tuccio di Credi, 'as the work is being done on the ceiling of the Duomo, to which the Master will not permit any one of us to have access; one may believe anything.'

'There is more in this than meets the

eye,' declared Cristofano Granacci. 'So now he has developed into a painter! And what may be the subject of the work which this sly fellow is engaged upon?'

'A Saint Donatus slaying the serpent with a benediction.'

'You have seen it then?'

'I? No. I only heard of it from the custodian of the church. But I can tell you nothing more than this,' added Tuccio, who apparently already regretted having touched upon the subject.

But the others noticed it not, nor did they wish for any further particulars. They were perfectly furious, and could not understand it.

'Ah! this is too much,' cried Lippo del Calzaiuolo. 'So Mastro Jacopo has a Benjamin. If he had only acted in the same manner towards all of us. If he had advised us, helped us, pushed us on, we should have been painters too. A pretty thing indeed, to do a pupil's work, and then to palm him off as an artist! And—which is no joke—a fresco-painter. But how will the

Confraternity tolerate this little piece of buffoonery?'

'What does it matter to the Confraternity?' said Tuccio di Credi. 'Provided that the work pleases them, they will not go in search of difficulties where they do not exist.'

'And we who are dunces! we who are good for nothing!' cried Cristofano Granacci. 'Ah, my beloved and revered Master Jacopo da Casentino, as sure as I stand here, I will leave you in the lurch, planted there upon your two feet.'

'And pray how many feet would you have him planted upon?' inquired Chiacchiera, who could never resist the opportunity of making a joke.

'I say that I am going away,' shouted Granacci, 'I can take up my abode at Florence with Giottino, or at Siena with Berna, both of whom wish to have me.'

'To do what?'

'What you will never do, Tuccio, if you live a thousand years,' retorted Granacci.

'Come, do not let us quarrel about it,' struck in Lippo del Calzaiuolo. 'Cristofano

is right, and I intend to follow his example; I shall betake myself to the bottega of Agnolo Gaddi, for here, one learns nothing.'

'That is true,' remarked Chiacchiera. 'Mastro Jacopo seems to think that he is keeping us out of charity, as they keep sick people in a hospital. Spinello is the only man in Arezzo, and on him he even bestows his daughter's hand. This indeed is too much! What on earth is he enamoured of?'

'Perhaps of the likeness which Spinello attempted to draw of Madonna Fiordalisa,' remarked Lippo del Calzaiuolo.

'If he were even able to draw portraits,' exclaimed Granacci. 'Those two or three strokes of a pen and ink sketch count for nothing in my opinion. I should just like to see him in a work of some importance.'

'You will see him in the Saint Donatus,' said Parri della Quercia.

'But if it is not his own,' replied Granacci. 'We wish to form our opinion from a work done by himself, under our very eyes, and not from a fresco of Mastro Jacopo's palmed off as his.'

'Who says that it is not his?' Parri della Quercia asked timidly.

'Did you not hear? Tuccio di Credi says so.'

'Hold, Cristofano; I said nothing. At least I have only hinted at a suspicion, or rather at the possibility of a suspicion. But if you ask me what I think of it, I tell you that I suspect nothing, and I believe that Spinello will always bring good meal out of his sack. Let us speak of other things, or rather, let us leave off speaking altogether. Did you not offer me an electuary or a cordial a little while ago? I am more hungry than thirsty, and I would rather take something solid.'

CHAPTER IV

My reader, have you ever noticed those foolish sheep, which the wandering exile, Dante Allighieri, seems to have watched so often, and has described to us in his sacred poem? They come forth from the fold by ones and twos and threes, they follow one another blindly, and what the leader does, the rest immediately copy, even when it is a question of venturing on the brink of a precipice at the risk of breaking all their necks.

Mastro Jacopo's apprentices could not reconcile themselves to the new-comer's good fortune, and were, in consequence, contem-

plating a deep design. Of course Parri della Quercia must not be included amongst the number, as his natural sweetness of disposition prevented him from sharing his companions' evil feelings. Tuccio di Credi did not join them either, and, having thrown the stone, was carefully hiding his hand.

Parri, as I have already said, was just, and acknowledged Spinello's genius; but he was of a meek disposition, and therefore, a trifle timid. His good sense enabled him to distinguish at the first blush good from evil; but he was by nature averse to all resistance, and inclined to stand aloof. He was one of those men who know the world by intuition, if not by actual experience, and who do not wish to attempt impossibilities. He was fond of his art, and worked at it with diligence, which is as much as to say, without intense ardour. Certainly, if he had come into the world a century earlier, he would never have accomplished the deliverance of the art of painting from the Byzantine shackles that fettered it; though, on the other hand

this much might be said for him, that, had he only lived a little longer, he would probably have painted more graceful Madonnas, and less severe Christs than any of the other artists in the olden style. But having been born in the fourteenth century, and having become one of the disciples of the new school, he followed closely on the lines of Giotto's successors, without aspiring to anything beyond. And as was the artist, such was the man. Good and prudent, sensible and moderate in everything that he did, he concealed with the natural sweetness of his disposition the organic disease which some few years later was to carry him to the grave. And this will show you why Parri della Quercia suffered the angry passions of his companions to take their course, without tormenting himself by trying to soothe them.

As for Tuccio di Credi, you have seen how, after having made the announcement, and insinuated the suspicion, he had hastened to say that the thing could not be true,

and that Spinello Spinelli was a heaven-born genius, and a new source of hope to art. In asserting this had he really changed his opinion? Or, was he following the course of a secret design?

However that might be, Angiolino Lorenzetti, Lippo del Calzaiuolo, and Cristofano Granacci, had no need of his help to induce them to go, they having reached a point when his peaceful exhortations—had he thought it necessary to make any—would only have produced a contrary effect.

'Do you look upon the matter in that light?' he said to them in conclusion. 'Please yourselves, then. A poor wretch like myself, who has not the good fortune to be in request elsewhere, is obliged to be satisfied with this bread. When one is in need, one must perforce sing small.'

The three angry youths had taken counsel together. They could not endure to remain any longer in Mastro Jacopo's bottega, and felt an insane desire to quit a school where not only did they learn nothing themselves, but were further constrained to be

spectators of another's good fortune. Chiacchiera was appointed to speak for them all.

The next morning, as Mastro Jacopo was about to leave the bottega to repair to the Duomo Vecchio, he said to the young men who were assembled at their work:

'Have you heard? we are to have some family rejoicings on Sunday, and you are all invited to partake of the *pan forte* (spiced cake) on that day.'

Master Jacopo, to tell the truth, did not renew this invitation with a very good grace. He was annoyed that, since Tuccio di Credi had already informed them of the impending event, they had not spoken to him in the first instance themselves, and he considered that a teacher—a master so justly celebrated as he was, had a right to expect this slight attention on the part of his pupils.

The young men stood and listened, looking silently at one another whilst he was speaking. The moment had now arrived for Angiolino Lorenzetti to do full justice to his nickname of Chiacchiera. So leaving off grinding the colours, the only task which

he was capable of performing satisfactorily, he answered the master as follows:

'Only think how unfortunate! We shall have to forego that pleasure.'

'Hey day!' cried Mastro Jacopo. 'And pray, what new thing is this?' And he looked at the others as he said it, apparently in the expectation of hearing from them some explanation of Chiacchiera's words. But they still remained silent, and Chiacchiera continued to speak in behalf of them all.

'Look here, master,' he said, 'this new thing is a design conceived by all three of us, namely, by myself, Cristofano Granacci, and Lippo del Calzaiuolo. We are going away.'

'You are going away?' exclaimed Mastro Jacopo, opening his eyes very wide. 'And, —if one may be allowed to ask—why?'

'Of course, we are bound to tell you,' said Chiacchiera, with an air of great humility. 'Although, to tell the truth, three dunces, three worthless scamps like ourselves'——

'Egad! that is true,' said Mastro Jacopo, interrupting him. 'For the first time in

your life, you have hit the right nail upon the head.'

'What would you have, master? From hearing these things so often from your lips, one learns them at last,' retorted Chiacchiera, with an ironical accent. 'Only think what a fortuitous combination of circumstances! There are some people in the world who are not altogether of your opinion. For instance, Agnolo Gaddi, who lives at Florence, is disposed to have Lippo del Calzaiuolo with him, and Giottino—also of Florence—and Berna, of Siena, are both competing for the company of our Cristofano Granacci.'

'Ah,' exclaimed the old painter, 'and have these three worthy men really cast their eyes upon you?'

Cristofano Granacci and Lippo del Calzaiuolo nodded their heads in brief reply.

'I cannot congratulate them,' said Mastro Jacopo. 'And now, since you have not told me all, let us hear who is disposed to take a soup sucker like you.'

'Oh! do not make yourself uneasy on my account. I will go anywhere I like. The

first offer I meet with will serve my purpose. After all, what good are we doing here? We grind, we mix, we paste the cartoons, we open and shut the bottega; in short it is domestic service, and not a school of painters. Excuse me, Mastro Jacopo, I may be a soup sucker, a bread eater, or anything else that you are pleased to term me, but I am in the habit of calling things by their right names. What are we all doing here? In what way have you taught us the principles of the art?'

Mastro Jacopo was thunderstruck by this boldness of speech. He had been on the point of despatching them, all three, to the devil by the shortest route, but Chiacchiera's last words, containing the formal accusation, touched him to the quick.

'By the soul of ——,' he cried suddenly, breaking out, 'what is this that you accuse me of? Do you think that art is to be taught like reading, writing, and arithmetic? I was brought up in a school of painters myself, and can therefore recollect how Taddeo Gaddi taught, just as he, in his turn, could recollect

the method of Giotto di Bondone. I used to grind and mix, to open and shut the bottega as you do; I went on the master's errands, and handled the broom when necessary, far more often, indeed, than I handled the brushes—in short, I performed the same humble duties that you perform yourselves. But with this difference, that you complain, and I never did; that you cannot see or understand anything, and that I endeavoured to profit by the examples which I had before my eyes. In watching what the master did I learnt—whether correctly or incorrectly, and call it the latter if you like—to do something myself. I guessed, when guessing was easy, and anything that I could not understand at first, I asked the master to explain. The master's duty is to answer questions—not to consider what to teach boys from the very beginning. Do you understand me, dunces? Can one instil into a man by means of precepts a thing which nature has not given him the power of acquiring by daily example? Grammar may be taught by rules, but not the art of painting. Now, what has

been your practice since you have been in the bottega? Have you ever asked me why this thing was done, and why that? Have you ever paid any attention to what I was doing myself? Though I cannot know for certain, yet when I take into consideration the result, it seems to me that I might say with truth that you have never looked, as you most certainly have never asked. And now then, what have you got to complain of?'

Chiacchiera waited until this flow of words had ceased, and then replied:

'Oh, you did not leave to all your scholars the task of learning by themselves.'

'Not to all? I think that I have,' replied Mastro Jacopo. 'Tuccio di Credi, for instance, and Parri della Quercia have managed to make some use of their eyes. I will even admit that from seeing them more attentive than you were, I may now and then have given them some advice. Why were you not more like them? I should then have done the same to you.'

Chiacchiera replied to this speech by a toss of his head.

'I do not mean either Tuccio or Parri,' he said, presently. 'I am speaking of Spinello Spinelli—the latest comer, and your future son-in-law. He is your Benjamin, Mastro Jacopo—at least if I know what the meaning of that word is. He appears before you at the bottega, with four scrawls of his pencil, and you at once fall in love with him, as Cimabue did with Giotto.'

'As Cimabue did with Giotto! well said indeed,' replied Mastro Jacopo. 'For, in truth, Spinello Spinelli deserves all that I have done for him. What do the rest of you find to complain of in that?'

'As far as your caprice is concerned, nothing. Everyone is at liberty to knead his own dough into whatever shapes he likes best. But your way of doing it!—can you not see it yourself? It is that which offends us. Spinello Spinelli comes to you with a bundle of pen and ink sketches. We will even admit, to please you, that they are beautiful, and worthy of Giotto. But how is

it that three months after his entry into the bottega, he passes over the heads of both Tuccio and Parri, who have been with you for three years? How can he have acquired skill enough in the management of the colours to work with his own hand at the backgrounds of your compositions?'

'At the backgrounds, these are your own words; at the backgrounds,' cried Mastro Jacopo, in a tone of triumph.

'Ah!' replied Chiacchiera, who, now he had once started, was ready to go all lengths, 'if it were only a question of backgrounds. . . . . But you have done more than this, Mastro Jacopo. To this little sucking painter, you have entrusted a work of great importance, which you yourself were commissioned to execute by the Confraternity of the Duomo.'

'Ah, you know that too, then?' muttered the old painter, a trifle disconcerted.

'Of course I do. All Arezzo knows it likewise.'

Mastro Jacopo shrugged his shoulders.

'I am glad to hear it,' he said, For now

there will be no need for me to announce it to any one. Spinello will cover himself with distinction, and that is the main point.'

'With your help, master, there can be no doubt of the result,' answered Chiacchiera, solemnly.

'What do you mean by that, you rascal?'

'What you have already guessed,' rejoined the impertinent scholar. 'In short, that this is too great a jump for the strength of your Benjamin. From pen and ink sketches to fresco! And without having in the meantime produced anything worthy of notice! Not even a head! Because,' continued Chiacchiera, becoming still more animated, 'we have none of us ever seen him make a drawing from nature or from the life. Unless you are pleased to count as such that profile of Madonna Fiordalisa.'

'Ah, now I understand!' exclaimed Mastro Jacopo. 'Why did you not say at once that you were jealous? But, know this, I give my daughter to whom I like; and even if I had seen fit to throw her away upon one

of you, I should not have been able to satisfy you all!'

'No, master, you are wrong; we are not in the least jealous,' replied Chiacchiera. 'We feel the profoundest respect for Madonna Fiordalisa, but nothing further. We only mentioned the profile which Spinello drew of her, in order to say, or rather to repeat, that it was not a portrait. Spinello has caught the general effect of the figure and that is all. If he had to draw a real portrait, he would find himself sorely embarrassed.'

'Oh yes, the old story,' muttered Mastro Jacopo. 'I have always answered you from the first, that if Spinello wishes to draw a portrait, he will do it under your very beards, you blockheads.

'He will certainly not draw that of Madonna Fiordalisa,' retorted Chiacchiera, who seemed to take a perverse pleasure in contradicting his master. 'Parri della Quercia, and Tuccio di Credi, both of whom stand there as quiet as mice, have explained to you why and wherefore to draw a portrait

of Madonna Fiordalisa would be by no means the easiest of tasks.'

'I hear, I hear. There you go back again over the same old ground with your foolish notions. But, were it only to annoy all of you, Spinello shall draw the portrait of his betrothed, and send every one of you away with a flea in his ear.'

'No, master, he will not be able to do that,' Chiacchiera answered derisively. 'I have already told you that we do not intend to remain in Arezzo. As regards myself, if you have any commissions in Florence'——

'Go where you please, and the devil take you,' interrupted Mastro Jacopo. 'And when do you intend to relieve us of your company?'

'This very day. As soon as I have packed up my goods and chattels I will carry out your wishes in that respect.'

'And a very good thing too,' muttered the old painter. 'And the rest of you?'

The question was addressed to Cristofano Granacci, and Lippo del Calzaiuolo. They both replied quickly,

'With him, master, at the same hour.'

'Go then,' said the master, in a voice of thunder, and giving his shoulders a prodigious shrug. 'Go with him, and a plague upon you all.'

This was Mastro Jacopo's farewell to his three worthy scholars, Angiolina Lorenzetti, nick-named Chiacchiera, Lippo del Calzaiuolo and Cristofano Granacci.

Mastro Jacopo was not angry with these apprentices of his for thus taking their departure, for this indeed relieved him of three utterly useless individuals, complete hindrances to him, instead of helps, in the bottega. His displeasure was caused by the want of respect that they had shown him, and therefore, as you may imagine, he was not long in recovering his equanimity. He was already more tranquil by the time that he had reached the Duomo, where the freshly-prepared space of *intonaco* was awaiting his brush. But he would not mount upon his platform before having seen Spinello, who had already been at work for two hours upon his Miracle of Saint Donatus. A fine

work, in sooth, and one which displayed a correctness of proportion, a vigour of touch, and a boldness of execution which were perfectly marvellous to behold.

'The rascals,' thought Mastro Jacopo, when he had mounted upon his platform. 'Here is an excellent youth, who was as unmistakably born a painter, as I was born a male. Would it be possible to do anything better than that? And to think of the perversity of those jealous fools! They will go and relate at Siena and Florence, or at the devil—may he take them!—that I have given Spinello the design, or, what is worse still, that I have executed the work from beginning to end. And there will be people who will believe it! What, indeed, will people *not* believe? In fact, it is quite a wonder that liars are not still more fertile in their inventions, when there is so great a disposition in the world to believe the worst of everything.'

Spinello heard the muttering, and turned round to look.

'Oh, master, is it you? What were you saying?'

'Nothing, nothing, I was only talking to myself. You know that it is the defect of the aged.'

'I thought that you were finding fault with this daub of mine, and I was feeling quite glad of it.'

'Glad! and, if one may be permitted to ask, why?'

'Because you never correct me, and I should be so thankful to have your advice and your admonitions.'

'Advice! admonitions! You do not need either.'

'You are too good to me. But I, as you see, am by no means satisfied with my own performances,' said Spinello modestly. 'I am terribly afraid lest my picture should turn out to be a daub after all. When I began to put on the colour, I thought that I had wrought a great work; but now—now, alas! it seems to me but a miserable thing. The poverty of the subject'——

'Well, what would you have had then?

Did you wish it to be like the Battle of Montaperti?' exclaimed Mastro Jacopo, laughing. 'Recollect that it is a miracle of faith which you are painting. Saint Donatus' bearing expresses deep emotion, but not fear, for there is no need for the display of this feeling. His faith is not in himself, but in the help of God, and this it is which reassures him, and makes him stand so firm and tranquil. The people in the background of the picture are yielding to the sentiment of terror, and it is natural that they should do so, because their faith is not so deep as that of the Saint. And herein lies the beauty of the contrast. Did you not intend to mark it thus when you conceived the subject of your picture?'

'Yes, that is exactly what I did intend,' Spinello candidly replied. 'But, mayhap I have brought out this contrast too forcibly, and a slight confusion of the lines has been the result.'

'Why do you torment yourself thus? It is very good as it is. The figure of the Saint is in the foreground: the multitude in the

distance, and this you have represented by a less bold colouring. That which is increased by the effect of the lines is diminished by the less vivid tints. Did you not take this into consideration when you began to paint?'

'Yes, I did; moreover, it seemed to me to be the right thing to do in order to produce the necessary blending of the distances.'

'Well, if that be so,' said Mastro Jacopo, emphasising the sentence with one of his accustomed shrugs. 'Go to, my boy! You have done well, I tell you, and let those who are jealous of you tear their hair.'

'Those who are jealous of me! Why do you say that? Is there anybody here who is jealous of me?'

'Anybody who is jealous of you! Of course there is. No fewer than three persons, in fact, who are taking their departure from the bottega this very day.'

Spinello, perturbed by this sudden announcement, left off working that he might turn fully round on his platform and inquire by a mute gesture the particulars of this new event.

'It is quite true,' Mastro Jacopo went on to say. 'The three young rogues were displeased at your painting the fresco in the Duomo. How they heard of it, I know not. Though indeed there are some things which one can never conceal. In short, they accuse you not only of being good for nothing yourself, but of having got me to draw the sketch in miniature, the cartoons, and all the rest. Do you understand, they say that *I* have done all this? I, who have never so much as given you a word of counsel. The knaves, but I gave it to them well. And now they have gone, the devil knows where, which has taken a great weight off my mind.'

'I hope that Parri della Quercia is not amongst them,' faltered Spinello. 'He at all events, who seems so good and kind.'

'No; he is not. Nor Tuccio di Credi either. The latter has not a very pleasing exterior, but he is like a prickly pear—uncomely to look at, but good inside. The three impudent rascals who have just left me are Chiacchiera, Granacci, and Lippo del

Calzaiuolo. I shall be glad from henceforth to hear neither speech nor tidings of them.'

Spinello Spinelli resumed his interrupted work, but more from the necessity of colouring his piece of plaster whilst it was still fresh, than from any anxiety on his part to do so. He was mortified, poor young man, at seeing the master lose three scholars in this manner, and all because of him. Though they were worth but little as disciples, still Jacopo da Casentino found them useful as *fattori*, and their absence would certainly be felt in the bottega. Master Jacopo's Benjamin only succeeded in consoling himself partially for this misfortune after having examined his conscience and thereby convinced himself that he was free from any shadow of blame in the matter. Indeed, he had always endeavoured to please these three young men, as well as all his other companions in the bottega; he had invariably behaved to them with courtesy, and on many occasions, with the impulsive warm-heartedness so natural to youth, had even gone so far as to implore their friendship, but they

had responded to his advances with very little cordiality.

Mastro Jacopo's bottega was melancholy enough when Spinello set foot in it again on his return from the Duomo. The tongues which were wont to wag most freely were wanting—those of the three scapegraces, whose chatter so often provoked the wrath of the master.

Spinello went up to Parri della Quercia, who was sitting with an easel in front of him, engaged in copying a little Madonna of Mastro Jacopo's.

'If you only knew how grieved I am at what has happened!' he said. 'But you, at any rate, do not think it is my fault, do you?'

Parri laid down his brush for an instant, and held out his hand to Spinello, then replied briefly:

'You must have patience.'

It was not much, as you see, and almost seemed as if Parri della Quercia did not wish to find fault with anyone. But that shake of the hand atoned for the brevity of his speech.

Leaving Parri to his work, Spinello passed on and approached Tuccio di Credi who was grinding colours in a corner.

The latter did not even give him time to open his mouth.

'Why do you give it a thought?' he said. 'Three *fattori* have gone away, certainly, but here are three of us left to do the work of all. It will not by any means be necessary to shut up the bottega. I have already begun to do Chiacchiera's work, as you see; indeed, I think I do it better than he did, for I grind more and chatter less. Believe me, Spinello, no one in this world is absolutely indispensable.'

'You are right,' replied Spinello; 'and I will help you too, if you will let me. I use so many colours myself, and it is not fair that you should work for me. But, once for all, I am really grieved that these poor young men should have left the bottega.'

'Come, do not pity them too much. The rascals will be happier away from us than with us. Besides which, they will be sure to find some other abode to their liking.

The only thing for you to do is to laugh at the whole affair, as doubtless they are all three doing at this very moment at the Greek's Inn, and drinking a stirrup-cup to boot.'

Spinello was of opinion that Tuccio di Credi was a good fellow in spite of his unprepossessing appearance. And he called to mind the words of Mastro Jacopo, comparing him to a prickly pear, unlovely to look at, but good within.

'One should never judge by looks,' he mentally concluded. 'Here is a young man to whom I took a dislike at first, and he turns out to be the best fellow in the world.'

CHAPTER V

'All Arezzo knows it,' Chiacchiera had said. But all Arezzo did not know it then, though it heard it as soon as the three idle young men had left the bottega, for they spread the news to the four winds of heaven. Spinello, the son of Luca Spinelli, that inexperienced youth, was a great artist—or, we should rather say, that the three slanderous tongues went about telling a completely different tale. According to them, Spinello was but a sorry painter, who had won for himself the reputation of being a great artist under false pretences, by

persuading Mastro Jacopo to paint his pictures for him. This vain young fellow was decking himself with the plumage of the peacock; it was therefore but fair that his meanness should be solemnly proclaimed. But, as occasionally happens, certain calumnies produce an effect totally different to that which their authors intended. It must be borne in mind that Spinello had been up to that time completely unknown. Had he been indeed a great painter, or reputed as such, and someone had risen up to assert that his pictures were painted by another, and that he merely put his name to them, the statement would doubtless have been fully believed by the majority of those who heard it, and half-believed by the rest. But as no one knew yet that Spinello had ever put his brush to a wall, this drawing down upon him of universal attention could not fail to do him good.

'Oh, yes, they are jealous, of course,' people said, shaking their heads compassionately. 'Messer Luca's son is very young, and his companions are displeased that this

chicken should have broken out of the shell before its fellows. But the fact of Mastro Jacopo having allowed him to paint one of the compartments in the Duomo which he was commissioned to execute himself, clearly shows the good opinion which he must have of his disciple. As for the master doing the pupil's work, what do they mean by such a thing? Certainly he could not have been induced to do it by money, for the Spinellos have the greatest difficulty in scraping together enough to pay for their dinner and their supper. From some whim of his own? A pretty sort of whim indeed, which impels him to give up both money and fame! Why it would be sheer folly! Mastro Jacopo bestows upon Spinello his fair daughter, beauteous as a rosebud and bright as a sunbeam, whom he even refused to give in marriage to Buontalenti, who is as rich as Crœsus. Do you think that he would give him to one of his own *fattori*, if the young man had not sufficient genius and skill to equal him in the art? No, no; it is merely the idle chatter of those who are jealous of him; you may rely upon it that this Spinello is a falcon

fresh from the nest, the feathers of whose wings have grown, and who is therefore capable of taking part in the sport himself.'

Thus, contrary to the back-biter's intention, the young man's name was soon in everybody's mouth, as one of the most hopeful disciples of the art. He was, moreover, a native of Arezzo, which patriotic recommendation, for this once at least, carried with it some weight. For, all through the revival of Italian art, not one single painter of merit as yet had been born within the walls of Arezzo. From thenceforth the city would boast of him, and the world would talk of Spinello Aretino. Do you call this nothing?

There arose amongst the inhabitants a feverish and longing desire to see the painting. And while waiting till the day when the scaffolding should be removed, and the fresco disclosed to view, some of them began to greet Spinello when they met him in the streets, even without knowing him personally.

'Good-day, young master!' they used to

say to him. 'And how is your fresco getting on?'

'Very well, heaven be thanked,' replied the youth, colouring as he spoke. 'I have yet about eight or ten days' more work to do upon it, and then the scaffolding will be taken down. But I am sadly afraid that I shall not fulfil your expectations. Suppose that by chance I should make a bad job of it after all.'

Then they laughed at his jesting words, and wished all success to his work, and that it might turn out well.

But what he said in jest, the Confraternity of the Duomo feared in earnest. What on earth could Mastro Jacopo be thinking of thus to entrust to one of his *fattori* a work of such importance, and one, morecver, which he had been commissioned to paint himself? Was it possible that he could be making game of them? Or were they to conclude therefrom, that, impelled by greed of gain, he was in the habit of accepting every commission he could get, and then, being unable to execute them all himself,

of dividing them amongst the worthless little painters of his bottega? In the meantime they had no intention of letting the deception pass unnoticed, and therefore set to work to reprove him for it.

But Jacopo da Casentino, on his part, replied thus to the remarks made by the members of the Confraternity:

'I promised you,' he said, 'to do the best in my power. Now what would you say, my worthy sirs, if, in return for your money, I were to give you something even better than what I can do myself?'

'Better!' exclaimed the members of the Confraternity. 'Out upon you!'

'Yes, better, I repeat. This is no jest; Spinello Spinelli is young, as you are well aware. But is it necessary that a man should grow old in order to produce a master-piece? He is a youth of great merit, who will not only surpass me, but many others besides.'

'One can see that you are quite wrapped up in him,' the members of the Confraternity remarked facetiously.

'Yes, Messeri, I am wrapped up in him.

But I think I may also say, that, in this affair I am not acting in such a manner as to deceive anybody. I am about to bestow my daughter upon this young man, together with a property worth two thousand florins, and everything else that she will inherit when I pass away to a better life, which I do not intend to be sooner than I can help. Do you, most honoured sirs, account yourselves more sagacious than I am with regard to this matter?'

'Mastro Jacopo, you know the proverb: Everyone is at liberty to knead his own dough into whatever shapes he likes best. But the money which we spend is not our own; we administer the funds of the community.'

'True. And I will not ask anything from you for this work of Spinello's if it should not turn out according to your liking. Of course,' Mastro Jacopo hastened to add, like the prudent man that he was, 'in that case it must be understood that the wall is to be scraped, and that you are to pay me the price agreed upon, when I have painted

another compartment myself. I warn you, however, that mine will not be one bit better than his.'

The members of the Confraternity could find nothing to say against so reasonable a proposal. And their curiosity was excited still further by the tone of confidence in which he spoke.

Ten days afterwards the fresco was completed, and ready to be disclosed to view. You may imagine how rapidly the news spread through the city, and how many people hurried to see the painting. Nothing else was talked about throughout the whole of Arezzo.

The platform having been removed during the night, the supports were taken down in the morning, and then the church was opened to visitors. The first to see the painting were the members of the Confraternity of the Duomo Vecchio, the canons, the priests, and the senators of the Commune. After these dignitaries the people were allowed to enter, and all of them immediately advanced under the arch of the chapel to gaze at the ceiling

where the worthy Saint Donatus was in the act of performing his glorious miracle, with a large cross raised aloft in the air.

Spinello was absent, not daring to remain there now that he was the object of the inquisitive glances of his fellow-citizens, and perhaps also of their anything but good-natured remarks. You already know that he began to lose faith in the merits of his work on its reaching the stage when it became necessary to prick the design off the paper cartoon on to the wall. So you can picture to yourselves how it appeared to him when finished. But in his stead stood Master Jacopo, as ready for the fray as any paladin guarding a bridge in the days of old.

The impression produced was good, in fact, excellent. They all marvelled that so young a man should have been able to accomplish so much. And their wonder increased still further, when they began to examine the painting in detail. The grouping was cleverly imagined, and arranged with exquisite discrimination, and the noble attitude of the saint was well conceived. The two-

fold action of his figure was represented in a perfectly natural manner, by the right hand being thus raised in benediction, and the left stretched backwards as a signal to his people to remain quiet and calm. Terror, anxiety, and hope, each found adequate expression in the faces of the multitude of men and women who were crowded together in the back-ground of the picture. Standing alone, in conflict with the serpent, Saint Donatus displayed a marvellous serenity—a feeling which seemed to be completely justified by the immediate effects of his benediction. The monster whose horrid shape and flashing eyes gave him such a threatening aspect as to curdle the blood of the beholders, was writhing in the death-struggle; he felt himself expiring while still wishing to slay. All this was rendered with surprising skill; composition and design alike reflecting honour upon the artist. Not one amongst the judges could possibly maintain that the work was Mastro Jacopo's; there was a perceptible difference in the style, which

was lighter and softer throughout. And the colouring! That really was a sight worth seeing, so rich was it in beauty and energy.

'Rich, too rich perhaps,' had remarked one of those critics who seek to find faults where there are none, and never despair of finding them.

'The painting is still a little fresh,' replied another near him. 'Wait.'

'You mean to say that we do not yet see the real tints,' retorted the first speaker. 'How then can we judge? May not the colours fade as the plaster dries? Of course the main point in fresco is to be able to tell beforehand the true effect that the tints will have. How is it possible that he should do so, when he is only twenty or thereabouts?'

In spite of this critic, who was so anxious to forecast the future, Spinello Spinelli's work created a sensation which defies description. And during the whole of that day and many others successively, a vast concourse of people assembled in the Duomo

Vecchio. It was the opinion of all, that the city had now good cause to rejoice—for her painter had been born.

Mastro Jacopo received the congratulations of the citizens in his usual gruff manner.

'Do not speak of me, for I have nothing to do with it,' was his answer to those who tried to attribute to his teaching the merits of his skilful disciple. 'I have hardly taught him anything. He came to me just as he might have come to any other; and, indeed, he would have succeeded just as well with anybody else as he has done with me. The only difference that I can acknowledge is this, that perhaps another master might have been jealous of him, and might have kept him back—very far back, and would certainly never have deputed him to paint the compartments which he had been commissioned to execute himself. Instead of which, I have done for Spinello what one does—or what one should do—for a friend. But, for heaven's sake, do not speak to me of a school, do not speak to me of instruction. That fortunate youth

had always the spark of genius in his head, and he brought it to my hearth, and kindled the flame thereat himself. Just a glance at what I was doing and no more. For, in short, the merely mechanical part, the common-place drudgery of the art must be learnt from someone. And here my share of the credit ends. Truth is one, and should be uttered without reserve.'

'Yet,' they replied, 'Spinello speaks of you in the highest terms, and tells all the world that he owes everything to you.'

'Spinello has a good heart, and speaks after its dictates. But, pardon me, how is it possible that I should have taught him so much in the course of a few months? Shall I tell you how it has come to pass? Spinello's head was fashioned after the manner of the old painters, and is full of splendour and truth. He has the feeling for colour in his eyes, the mobility of quick-silver in his fingers, the fever of art in his veins. Such was Giotto di Bondone, and such he would have been still if anyone out of the crowd of insignificant painters had noticed and adopted him

instead of Cimabue. By my troth, it did not require a master-mind to appreciate Giotto; anyone could do so who was not a downright ass.'

With such remarks as these, Mastro Jacopo contrived to rid himself of his pertinacious flatterers. Perhaps he spoke a little too strongly; but this was necessary in order to do away with the effects of the assertion made by Chiacchiera and his worthy companions, that the master had had a hand in Spinello's painting.

'Egad! they shall never say again,' he muttered between his teeth, 'that Saint Donatus is my work.'

To the members of the Confraternity of the Duomo Vecchio, as soon as they had seen the painting and heard the cross-fire of praises, of which it was the object, Mastro Jacopo spoke in this fashion:

'Well, my most honoured sirs, what is your opinion now? Are we to scrape off the plaster, and paint another Miracle of Saint Donatus?'

'Ah, Mastro Jacopo, you were right,'

the worthy men replied. 'This is a scholar who will do you credit.'

'Say rather, Messeri, a son-in-law who will make me happy.'

'Ah, yes, that is the reward which you bestow upon him. If his disposition is as good as his hand is skilful, your daughter is lucky indeed, and so are you, Mastro Jacopo.'

Spinello, on his part, was oppressed by the greatness of his joy, and conqueror though he was, had almost the aspect of a fool. Excuse the comparison, but I have always pictured to myself that the heroes of the Roman triumphs must have had a somewhat similar appearance, and more especially Petrarch, when they bore him to receive his wreath of laurel on the summit of Campidoglio. At that moment, poor Messer Francesco must have felt quite overwhelmed — almost dismayed, in fact, with the thought of Rome's greatness in his heart, and the image of Madonna Laura before his eyes. Love and glory—the living fire and the glittering light, are, when

borne together, the heaviest loads man can be called upon to carry on his journey along the pathway of life—a pathway so full of hidden obstacles and treacherous pitfalls.

The master had embraced him, with tears in his eyes, and Parri della Quercia had wrung his hand with a 'Well done' that came straight from his heart.

Tuccio di Credi, when it came to his turn had added:

'Enjoy the applause; it will help you to bear the hissing. For mark, life is all like that. To-day you are uplifted to the height of the chandelier, to-morrow hurled down, and forced to run away like a beaten hound.'

Tuccio di Credi was a philosopher of the pessimist type. But his words did not displease Spinello. When we are enjoying all the fulness of perfect happiness, we listen gladly even to pessimists. To be thus reminded of the wrongs that are in store for us, produces the effect of a discord in harmony, which gives a pleasing variety to the piece, and, instead of wounding our ears, tickles them agreeably.

Besides which, troubles were an heritage of the future, and Spinello lived absorbed in the present, sunning himself in the light of Fiordalisa's eyes, who likewise felt oppressed by this great joy. It seemed, to her, to be replete with a new feeling which she had not yet had time to study. Why, indeed, should she study it? The whole world appeared in her eyes to be both great and beautiful, and this was the matter of most vital moment. The air seemed filled with ineffable treasures and fragrant and mysterious odours, which lulled to sleep the very blood in her veins. She had a presentiment of future blessedness and ecstasy in store for her, as one who is reclining luxuriously on a soft bed feels an expectation almost amounting to a fore-taste of a pleasant dream. In this delicious half-sleeping, half-waking state, the fair betrothed hearkened to the murmur of the breeze and the whisper of a gentle voice. The murmur seemed to say to her, 'Life is passing fair; the whisper said, 'I love you.'

In love every little thing is a world, and, what is more, a new world. We linger with

pleasure over various trifles which, at any other time of our life we should pass by almost unheeded. And then, in gazing upon a beloved face, what marvels do we find! What treasures, what raptures, what intoxicating delights! Even though the practised eye, experienced in such matters, should discover there some slight defect, this soon becomes a new source of pleasure, and seems like an added charm and the very quintessence of perfection; it seems to be moreover the stamp of its truth, as the hall-mark is upon gold. For is it not the incarnation of beauty that we seek for most ardently in the beautiful? And is it not the note of truth which distinguishes the woman from the statue, the reality from the dream?

Spinello's contemplations were of necessity interrupted by his custom of going every morning to the Duomo Vecchio, where Mastro Jacopo's new works yet remained to be finished. But the old painter was ashamed of employing his famous scholar in such humble services.

'Hark ye!' he said to him on one occasion. 'It is not for such as you to hold the brushes and to mix the colours for me. You have just accomplished a beautiful work, and one that has been rightly praised; but it is not meet that you should rest upon your laurels. I counsel you forthwith to try your hand upon another one, and let this be in a different manner from the first. A good archer, when he goes into action, always carries with him two strings to his bow. It is not enough for you to paint only in fresco, though doubtless it is a fine style of painting, perhaps the finest style of all, as it defies the lapse of time, and recommends itself to the admiration of future generations. But a good picture painted in distemper, will also find favour in the eyes of posterity. And, now that I think of it, your enemies accuse you of never having copied from the life. Paint a portrait now, and let it be that of your betrothed. Indeed as you are to rob me of her in two months time, you should at least leave me her picture, as a legacy. Do you consent?'

'My father,' cried Spinello, greatly confused, 'if I did but dare'——

'Of course, I should have remembered that you never do dare. Strange boy! but when it is I who not only permit you, but entreat you to do it.'

'Oh, it was not on that account that I spoke,' replied the young man. 'The reason that I do not dare, is because I fear that I shall not succeed. The idea of drawing Madonna Fiordalisa's likeness has come into my head more than once. In fact —must I then confess it to you?—When I am at home and all alone in my little room, I try to console myself for her absence by drawing her profile on paper, and I always do it ill, so ill indeed that it is maddening to think of it.'

'And yet you succeeded the first time; do you not remember it?'

'Yes; but it was barely three or four strokes. The sketch gave the idea of Madonna Fiordalisa, but it could not be called her portrait. To execute anything really deserving of that name, complete

accuracy of outline is necessary, it is not enough merely to suggest, one must paint thoroughly, and the more minute parts should be faithfully represented. Now, you see, my father, when I set to work, strongly determined not to rest satisfied with merely a vague resemblance, I find myself sorely embarrassed, and thus it happens, that, in spite of the best will in the world, in spite of the firmest intentions'——

'You mean to say, that there lies the difficulty,' said Mastro Jacopo. 'And it is quite natural that this should be so. The faculty of remembering the features of an absent person so exactly as to be able to reproduce them accurately on paper, is given to few. Certainly it is the test of a good memory, but this is not the peculiar attribute of the painter. It is of far greater importance that he should be able to copy faithfully what is before him, than that he should remember more or less accurately what he has only seen once. Have the original before you, and if you do not then succeed in representing it with truth, then, and then alone, should

you be discouraged. So now the matter is settled, and you shall begin to-morrow.'

Spinello agreed to the master's proposal with a mixture of longing and fear. Though in reality it was nothing more than he had been in the habit of doing every day. Were not his eyes ever fixed upon Madonna Fiordalisa? But, oh! the misfortune was this, that from henceforth, when in her presence, he would no longer be able to spend his time in storing up delicious sensations, but would instead, be forced to express upon the ungrateful wood, that which his eyes saw so clearly, but which his fingers would represent so poorly.

'Madonna,' he said to Fiordalisa that very evening, 'your father wishes me to endeavour to portray your beloved features. Do you consent thereto?'

The girl blushed, and cast down her eyes.

'What an idea!' she said presently, with an air of confusion, in which was, however, mingled a slight touch of feminine malice.

'From being compelled to look at me so

constantly, you will end by thinking me ugly.'

'Do you mean to say that I shall not succeed in making you as beautiful as you really are?' Spinello at once replied. 'But this must needs be so, for Nature, who is jealous of her own handiwork, will not allow herself to be equalled by me.'

The girl smiled, and Spinello, on seeing those beautiful coral lips unclose, lost his head straightway.

'Fair angel,' he whispered, approaching her with an air of great diffidence; 'pray grant me your pardon in anticipation. It is to please your father.'

As he said this, he ventured (he who never ventured) to take the fair hand which was yielded to him willingly enough. He kissed her hand since he was not able to kiss those parted lips which I have mentioned above, and which seemed to him like a glimpse of Paradise. But what would have become of him if he had been able? Even the touch of her hand upon his lips seemed to produce the effect of an electric spark striking him

suddenly, for he trembled all over from head to foot.

The day after, in obedience to Mastro Jacopo's command, he seated himself before the easel, with his panel all ready prepared to receive the outlines of that exquisite face. Trembling with agitation, he began with his red chalk pencil to draw the first strokes. But the first attempt did not seem to satisfy him, for he almost immediately erased what he had done and began to draw it over again, though only to rub it out afresh. He went over the same labour nine or ten times in succession, bathed in a cold perspiration, like some poor beginner who is required to perform a task which is beyond his capacities. How often was he seized with despair! How often did he wish, that he had not merely one, but ten miracles of Saint Donatus to paint instead, even though he should be compelled to bear all the opprobrious remarks of his jealous rivals to boot! In fact, to tell the honest truth, poor Spinello would gladly have changed places with the Saint himself and slain the serpent

with a benediction, even at the risk of being devoured by the monster in the event of the miracle proving unsuccessful.

You may imagine the difficulties that presented themselves in formidable array before his eyes as he reflected that beauty in the human face does not consist in a mere combination of geometrical lines. With the aid of geometry, an ugly woman or one of indifferent appearance may be delineated; but in a beautiful face there is such a complication of curves, convexities, and other delicate touches, that it is impossible to copy it minutely; one should divine it instead, seize it, and express it at once, with the same perfect fusion of the parts which compose it, together with the happy freedom with which nature has carried out her own design. And in the first place, the shape of Madonna Fiordalisa's head presented to the eye an outline of peculiar beauty, but one which wavered in such an indeterminate manner between the round and the oval, that it was a task of the utmost difficulty to seize it with accuracy. Besides which must be taken into

consideration the fact that the panel was a flat plane, and therefore the effect of the outline of the figure had necessarily to be obtained by means of the gradual receding and vanishing away of the curves and extremities, and by the arrangements of the high lights on the parts seen in relief. Spinello came to the conclusion, that the attainment of a perfect outline was a matter of light and shade, which should be left to be put in later on with the brush, and he therefore resigned himself to accepting a line which however did not really satisfy him.

Whilst he is endeavouring to seize a resemblance that eludes him, let us endeavour too to portray Madonna Fiordalisa's features. The result will be more or less of a failure; but in these difficult tasks, it is something even to have made the attempt.

The outline of the face is already familiar to you. Picture then to yourself a low forehead, rounded slightly and symmetrically, and shadowed by locks of chestnut hair, bordering on brown, and looking in fact almost black from their contrast with the

milk-white complexion which was at the sametime so transparent, that the soft pink colour beneath, and the tender blue tracery of the veins were clearly apparent. Though the eyes were not large, they seemed to acquire a rich fulness, from the delicate and clearly-pencilled curve of the eye-brows, beneath which the lids were rather deeply set; and their beauty was moreover still further enhanced by the long thick lashes, which gave a bright and pearly hue to the white surrounding the pupils. These, though their colour was chestnut, flecked with golden lights, looked, in their turn, almost black by the contrast. The cheeks were slightly rounded, the nose was straight and fine, and the space small between the gracefully formed nostrils and the delicate lips, which were not modelled after that sinuous fashion, in which an art as false as it is effeminate has so often represented them, both in painting and in sculpture, but in a simple and beautiful curve; lips of a pale pink coral, which, when parted by the smile that came to them so often and

so readily, disclosed two rows of glittering pearls. Divine mouth, nest of love, and indeed a glimpse of paradise, as it had appeared to Spinello.

Passing over many other particulars, I may as well say at once, that Madonna Fiordalisa was a miniature piece of perfection. An indescribable charm of freshness, purity, and childlike innocence, seemed to radiate from and illumine her lovely features. On seeing her, one's thoughts forthwith turned to Eve newly born, to Venus issuing from the froth of the sea, and also to those delicious fruits that are to be seen hanging in full ripeness from their parent branches, on which the dew loves to rest in tiny drops, and which, if I may be permitted to pursue the comparison, make the beholder's mouth water, so inviting do they look to the taste.

And Spinello had to paint! Poor Spinello! I begin now to understand myself, why it was that he could not seize the outlines, and that the third day after he had begun his work found him still in the same state, and in sore

difficulties with the colours, which never seemed to yield him the required tints.

That same day, Mastro Jacopo, having left his work in the Duomo an hour earlier than usual, came to see how the portrait was progressing, and took up his position behind Spinello, from whence he could see not only his own beautiful daughter, but also all the strokes that his favourite disciple was dashing on to the picture with his brush.

'Oh, my father!' the young man said, with a sigh. 'It is not good, I know it but too well.'

'Away with you, you insatiable boy!' was the master's muttered exclamation. 'I am also full well aware, that if you are bent at all costs upon reaching perfection, which is never to be attained in this world, it certainly is not good. Can you not see why, yourself? You are vexing yourself needlessly on account of that craze of yours for representing every trifling detail.'

'But ought I not to set down everything?' asked Spinello. 'Must I not bring out those pink and blue tints, which, blended together,

are to be seen appearing through the creamy white of the complexion?'

'Of course, and add also orange, lilac, grey, and purple,' replied Mastro Jacopo. 'And then, if it is not Madonna Fiordalisa's likeness, it will, at all events, be that of a rainbow.'

More convinced by the master's jest than he would have been by a more logical reason, Spinello set to work to alter the painting; but every change he made seemed to be one for the worse. The misfortune was this, that although he had drawn the outlines of the face over and over again a dozen times, they did not satisfy him at all, and thus, while laying on the colours, he could not get the original defect out of his head. But where was this defect, where did it conceal itself? It was impossible to lay hold upon it. All the various proportions were correct, but the line was wanting; that mysterious line which blends and unites them into the complex harmony of truth. To hit off this line, that was the great question. You know how many painters have racked their

brains in the endeavour, but without success. For, in spite of modern opinion to the contrary, it is a great deal easier to become a good colourist than to seize this said line. I am aware that the aid of photography has been brought to bear upon the subject, and that the *camera-lucida* and the *camera-obscura* are powerful auxiliaries in finding that which the artist's own eye cannot always give him. But is it quite certain that the sun does not himself deceive? The difference of level which always exists between two parts of the object seen, even though these parts be almost touching each other, is the cause of a trifling fault, which, increasing by degrees during its transit to the eye, spoils the eurythmy of the model, and therefore the line, this mysterious line of truth is not really given, even by the faithful reflections of these *cameras*, whether they be lucid, black, optic, or of any other description.

Spinello, poor fellow, was devoured by rage and grief, and made Madonna Fiordalisa laugh in consequence. The beautiful girl had instinctively understood that this was

the only way of consoling him. It would seem at first to be exactly the opposite; but you know, O most amiable reader, that there are smiles and smiles! The smile of a beautiful mouth, for instance, produces upon us an effect like that of a ray of sunlight to the eyes, a pleasing sound in our ears, and a delicious odour to our nostrils, all occurring simultaneously. Only reflect a little, and you will see that I am right, or, rather, that Madonna Fiordalisa was right in smiling.

Nor did the girl find being forced to sit thus for four or five hours during the day in front of Spinello, in the least wearisome. At first she used to blush when she found herself the object of such attentive, and, if the whole truth must be told, such longing glances. But custom by degrees had borne its fruits. Was it not indeed necessary that Spinello should look at her thus? For, it is a well-known fact, that to paint a portrait is no slight undertaking, the complication of the lines, the blending of the colours, and the due arrangement of light and shade, are none of them things which can be executed

without thought. Nay, rather, it is essential to pay attention to every single thing, and in order to do this, one must not merely glance at, but diligently observe each part, often going back five or six times upon the work already done. And if the sixth time should not suffice, we must patiently go over it again even until the twelfth.

Besides which, there are many details to each of which a considerable time—perhaps even an entire sitting—must be devoted separately; and this is especially the case if the artist be diligent, and if he have, in addition, a tendency to be carried away by the influence of beauty.

Yet, in spite of so much diligence, and of so strong a desire to do well, to succeed in producing a work that was merely tolerable, was sad in the extreme, and poor Spinello was deeply afflicted thereat.

'There must be some sorcery in it,' he said to Mastro Jacopo, who was endeavouring to console him. 'Either the panel, the brushes, or my hand itself, or mayhap some other part of me, must be bewitched. Do

you not see, Master? I cannot succeed in representing those little lines which seem to lie between the oval of the chin and the curve of the cheek. In fact the outline of that part is altogether wrong, that is quite clear. And then, that other almost imperceptible little dimple between the nose and the cheek. I have not been able to get that either. And the expression of the eye, good heavens! and just look at the mouth, what a forced look it has!'

'Of course, you would like it to speak,' observed Mastro Jacopo.

'Or that it should show some animation, at least,' replied Spinello. 'I have made it so stiff, that it is quite painful to look at it.'

'My boy, as I have told you already, while you are tormenting yourself in the search after what is best, the good escapes you. Do you wish to bear out the truth of Parri della Quercia's remark?'

'Parri! what has he to do with my portrait?'

'Yes,' continued Mastro Jacopo; 'I remember a curious dispute that took place

once between my respected scholars.' Parri della Quercia maintained that to paint Fiordalisa's portrait would be a most difficult undertaking—one, in fact, well-nigh impossible on account of her variable expression. What he meant was this, that both the aspect and expression of her face seemed to change at every moment. And Tuccio di Credi—that other wise-acre—added further, that this difficulty lay in the movable part of the face, which, according to him, were the eyes and the lips.'

'Ah!' said Spinello, 'and perhaps Tuccio di Credi may have been right.'

'What! Here is another of you losing his senses!' exclaimed Mastro Jacopo. 'As if we had not all got eyes and lips! And why should it be difficult to reproduce the movable features of one face, and easy to do those of another?'

'Pardon me, master, but I think I understand it,' replied Spinello Spinelli. 'In obtaining the likeness of a face, the fact of the features, as well as the other projecting parts, being more strongly and boldly marked has

often been of great assistance to me, as has also been the beard, which varies in its manner of growing, the moustache concealing the lips, and so forth. A woman's face is far harder to draw, and the difficulty increases in proportion as the features are more refined, and the lines, connecting together the various parts, softer and more delicate. And if besides all this, the eyes and the lips which play so prominent a part in the countenance, are perpetually changing their expression'——

'You see what a fool I am!' cried Mastro Jacopo, interrupting the flow of his disciple's conversation. 'I do not believe in Tuccio and Parri's sophisms, and only allude to them because you also seem to have become infected by the disease of your companions. By my troth, they know absolutely nothing on any subject whatever, and merely talk at random, like the impudent young rascals that they are. For you see, my boy, it would be the ruin of art, if these boasters, with their maxims, were allowed to get the upper hand. I tell you that it is a case of

working, and nothing else—of working always, and suffering the idlers to prate as they will. To copy and to conceive, to conceive and to copy; that is the question. Should you not succeed at first you must try again. You may accomplish it the second time or the third. But even if you try twelve times without succeeding, you must have patience and persevere until the twenty-fourth. Bear this well in mind, for it annihilates all the maxims of the drones. It is always some error in your vision that spoils your work, and causes you to waste your time in patching it up. What is the use of going over this or that part again with your brush, if the whole drawing is out of proportion from the very beginning? Make an entirely fresh start, and you will get on much better.'

That day, Spinello made up his mind to put aside the portrait he was doing and to begin another.

Shall I tell you that he was more successful with this one than with the first? It would be an untruth. Shall I give you an

account of his failure? It would be a repetition. But it was quite certain that the turn of the successful attempt had not come yet. And Spinello, having either made some mistake in the proportions, or else from having omitted to reproduce some almost imperceptible touches which would have helped to impart resemblance to the face, began really to believe that some sorcery was at work. And thus, when he had proceeded some way with it, and had become aware that the second portrait was even worse than the first, he gave way to an access of sudden anger, and threw down his pallet and brushes.

'Oh, Fiordalisa,' he cried, 'nature mocks us poor fools who have been smitten with a desire to equal her, or at all events to follow her closely with our miserable expedients. Or may be it is my ignorance, and I throw the blame thereof upon art. Perhaps I have presumed too much upon my powers, and have been guilty of sacrilege, downright sacrilege. But it was not my doing, I assure you; it was your father who urged me to

make the attempt; it was he who kindled this fever in my bones;' and bowed down upon his chair, with his elbows resting on its arms, poor Spinello Spinelli covered his face with his hands, and fairly cried with anguish.

Madonna Fiordalisa rose and approached him, gazing at him the while with a compassionate expression. Spinello did not see her drawing near him, but he felt a gentle hand resting on his head, and a soft arm passing over his temples.

'Be calm, Messere,' said the divine creature. 'You must have a little patience. After all, not being able to draw a portrait is not such a very serious evil.'

'Not serious?' he said, remaining quite still in the same attitude, so as not to part with the touch of that adored hand. 'Not serious, do you say?' But do you not understand, Fiordalisa, that it is your portrait, *your* portrait, that I cannot succeed in painting? Now, if I did not see, if I did not feel your beauty, the reason of my failure would be clear to me; but in

that case alone. And since this is not so,'——

'Since this is not so,' repeated Madonna Fiordalisa, in a jesting tone, 'we must seek another reason. Might it not be, because you feel it too much?'

Spinello turned round suddenly.

'Aye! of that you may rest assured,' he exclaimed in a tone of deep conviction.

And seeing her so resplendent in her beauty, with her face lit up by that divine smile, he could not resist the strong desire that impelled him to seize her hand, and then gaining courage from her submission, he ventured to put his arm round her waist, and press the adorable creature to his heart.

Moments of indescribable sweetness, of celestial rapture, your recollection remains impressed upon our souls during our whole life long! She whom you once clasped to your breast in a sudden impulse of love, was the fairest of all God's creatures; and for that one brief moment, as fleeting as the lightning's flash, she was so fully and entirely yours that no envious power, not even

the shadow of a profane thought, could come between your heart and hers. What other thing can we desire or hope for that will not be less than a moment thus sublime? And does not everything else in life, whether it come in the shape of gratified vanity, honours attained, or satisfied ambition, count for nought, when compared with these ineffable raptures of the spirit. We become aware of this, either when life is on the point of leaving us, or else when that profound disgust begins to seize us of all that we once held most desirable in it.

Fiordalisa had gently disengaged herself from Spinello's loving embrace.

'Work, I desire it,' she said, but not so much because she wished to lay her commands upon him, as to recover her own equanimity.

Spinello obediently took up his pallet and brushes.

'Oh, when will you be mine!' he murmured, placing himself again in front of the easel.

'Am I not yours already by my plighted troth?' she asked, gently smiling.

The promised sweetness of his ardently longed-for happiness floated before Spinello's eyes, well-nigh dazzling him. And it was only by dint of a strong effort of will that he regained his equanimity, for the thrill of that embrace still coursed through his veins.

A sound of footsteps on the stairs helped to restore his self-possession, and immediately afterwards Mastro Jacopo appeared on the threshold.

Spinello's back was turned to the door, and therefore he could not see him, but Fiordalisa who could, noted that he had a perturbed mien.

'What is the matter?' she anxiously inquired.

'What is the matter?' repeated Spinello, made uneasy by her anxiety.

'The matter is—that we have been born under an unlucky star,' muttered Mastro Jacopo, sinking down in a chair, and throwing his cap in a corner.

'Speak, for God's sake!' cried Spinello,

leaving off his work. 'What serious thing can have happened to you?'

'Serious, aye, indeed it is serious!' exclaimed the old painter, looking at his cap which had rolled on the ground; 'and those members of the Confraternity! The manner in which they told me of it! As though it were my fault, and that I had taken them in. We must paint another one, devil take it! another one exactly like the first. But in the meantime how foolish it makes us look. And what will they say of us in Arezzo?'

'What?' said Spinello, who fancied that he had gathered from these broken sentences the cause of Mastro Jacopo's displeasure. 'Is it possible that they have found fault with one of your paintings? Do they then dare to dispute upon the subject of art with you?'

'Find fault? Dispute with me? It is quite another matter,' cried the old painter. 'It is about the Miracle of Saint Donatus. Do you hear? the Miracle of Saint Donatus.'

'Ah, that is not so bad!' exclaimed

Spinello. 'And what has my poor painting done to the members of the Confraternity!'

'It is spoilt, that is all.'

'What? How? Spoilt?' faltered poor Spinello.

'Yes, my boy. You should just see what it is like now. A real mess. But let me relate things in their proper order, or you will not understand. I was at work upon the platform, with Parri della Quercia to mix the colours for me. Suddenly I am sent for by the members of the Confraternity. What can they want with me to cause such haste? As good luck would have it, I had not begun to paint. I descend from the platform and go into the sacristy. There they all surround me with an air of mystery, and say: "Messer Jacopo, we have bad news for you to-day." I was petrified. "For me? It cannot be about any of my belongings?" "No, calm yourself; no misfortune has befallen anybody. It concerns the fresco of your favourite disciple, Spinello." "What then? Have you anything left to say on the subject of that fresco? Did you not accept it? Were you

not pleased with it, as, I think I may say with truth, were all the rest of the people of Arezzo?" "Yes, indeed, very much pleased, but what would you have, Messer Jacopo! It would seem that your disciple, though he may be a good draughtsman, is not a good colourist." "The devil! What new thing is this? I instructed him in the use of the colours myself, as I did in everything else. What fault do you find with Spinello Spinelli's colouring?" "Well, come and see for yourself. The wonderful fresco is now no longer to be recognised." Troubled by this announcement, I cried, "Let us go."'

'And did you go?' interrupted Spinello, trembling all over. 'And did you see?'

'I did go, my boy, and certainly I did see. By the Sacred Cross I do not know how it could have happened. What colours did you use in painting the miracle of Saint Donatus?'

'Yours, my father. You provided me with the colours yourself. They were some

of those that had been ground in the bottega by Chiacchiera.'

'Ah, I might have known it!' cried Mastro Jacopo, striking his forehead with his hand. Chiacchiera, who left us so suddenly! What the devil can he have put into them? Mineral colours, no doubt, in order to ruin all your work.'

'But speak, and tell me more,' replied Spinello. 'You have not yet explained to me what has happened to the fresco.'

'Picture to yourself the worst that could possibly have happened. The saint's face is now no longer to be recognised. It is green, blue, black, anything, in short, that you like, except the natural colour of flesh. Your Saint Donatus is more leprous than Job. And those worthy members of the Confraternity! you should have heard how they abused you! and how, without seeming to do so, they sneered at me. Of course they considered me to blame for having entrusted the work to you. "It is a great misfortune," they said to me, adding many taunting remarks, besides. I would not listen to them

any longer, and fled from them and their poisonous tongues.'

Spinello was dismayed, and well-nigh stupified, like the poor peasant who sees his field laid waste by the storm, and the hopes of a year blighted in an hour. This is a classical simile, if I am not mistaken, but do not blame me on that account, for it is the only one that occurs to me. You will observe also that I neither enlarge upon it, nor do I draw from it the full construction of which it is capable.

'Come now, do not take it so deeply to heart,' said Fiordalisa, on observing the great dismay of her betrothed. 'Have you lost courage already?'

'Oh, Madonna!' exclaimed Spinello. 'How can I bear up against this blow? A little while ago I thought that some sorcery was at work. But now, alas! I perceive that art is not for me. Do you not see it yourself? For here, in painting your portrait, I have failed completely. And down there, that which was good once, and might have won me renown, suddenly turns out ill.

What must I think? That I have dreamed a beautiful dream, and awoke therefrom to the greatest misery.'

Mastro Jacopo's beautiful daughter tossed her head with an air of incredulity.

'At all events,' she said, 'your presence here is no dream.'

Spinello raised his eyes, and looked at her. Certainly this was no dream. The beautiful creature was indeed standing before him, comforting him, both with her sweet words and with her divine smile. After all, she was his promised bride; of that there could be no doubt, as there might be concerning his true vocation for art.

'Come, now, take courage,' added Jacopo. 'Let us go to the Duomo, and see the state of your poor fresco. I know that it will be an additional sorrow to you, but it will put you in a rage as well, and in some cases rage is better than despair. And if you feel the blood mounting to your head, so much the better, for then you will be seized with a desire to efface the painting and begin it entirely afresh,'

'Master, you say well. Ah, you have not yet lost confidence in me, as I have in myself. But will the Confraternity consent?'

'Why should they not?'

'But, they might possibly wish that the work should be done by you. And perhaps, even, apart from that possibility, it might be better.'

'Go to, you foolish boy! The Confraternity will never do me the injustice to believe that I should consent to a substitution of that kind. Well, the scaffolding shall be erected, and we shall see. It is enough for them that I take upon myself the entire responsibility. If the work should not turn out to be as beautiful and as sound as we wish, I make a vow to Saint Luke, who is the patron saint of painters, that in that case two of us will give up art. However, there will no longer be any danger of that.' Mastro Jacopo added smiling. 'Recollect that Chiacchiera is no longer here to grind the colours for us.'

'Oh, you need have no fear on that score, my father,' Spinello promptly replied. 'No

one shall touch them. I will grind, mix, and do everything myself.'

And as he said this, Spinello rose up to accompany the master. The expedition they were about to make was a sad one, but Fiordalisa's sweet words had comforted him; and art, through his lady's eyes, seemed to smile upon him once more.

CHAPTER VI

The misfortune that had happened to Spinello's fresco had made a great commotion in Arezzo, a greater one even than that which a month ago had been stirred by the intelligence that it had fallen to the lot of that town to number an artist among her citizens.

Many people hastened to the Duomo Vecchio in order to see the unfortunate Saint Donatus, the city's patron saint, who had thus turned every imaginable hue; and Spinello's friends grieved at the sight, and his enemies exulted. Had he then enemies besides his companions in the bottega?

Certainly; why not? Amongst the enemies of an industrious man should be reckoned idlers of every description—and these are by far the most numerous class; frivolous persons, who praise you when they have no other alternative, but who, when the fitting moment arrives, are only too glad to deal you a blow.

Amongst a crowd like this formed, as you may imagine, of persons who were not over good-natured, the comments passed upon the new painter's fresco were many and various. When old Jacopo arrived in the Duomo, accompanied by Spinello Spinelli and Tuccio di Credi, who had joined the other two with the view of comforting his friend, a group was collected round a great and imposing personage, whose name (be it spoken with all due deference) was Messer Lapo Buontalenti. This celebrated art critic did not lack *quattrini;* (white farthings) on the contrary, he had so many that they served him in lieu of discrimination.

'Good-day, Mastro Jacopo,' said the Cavaliere, a sacastic little laugh accompanying

his words. 'So you have come to see the leper?'

'I have, indeed, Messere,' replied the old painter; 'the leper who is about to be healed.'

'Ah, good!' rejoined Buontalenti. 'Then you intend to perform the miracle yourself?'

'No, Messere; it will not be performed by me, but by my disciple Spinello Spinelli, who has been the victim of this scurvy trick.'

'And he who laughs last will laugh the most heartily,' added Spinello, passing through the group, and bestowing a severe look upon his railing critic as he did so.

Buontalenti could not mistake the object of either the look or the retort. He was laughing himself at that very moment, and ridiculing the painter's misfortune.

'Are you alluding to me, young man?' he inquired haughtily. 'Know, then, that I do not laugh at you. I can only pity one who thinks himself so much better than his fellows, and who cannot take even a true remark in good part.'

'Reserve your pity then for your own

needs,' replied Spinello. 'You who come and set yourself up as a critic, without even knowing by which end to take hold of a brush.'

And he passed on, giving his shoulders a shrug by way of adding emphasis to the remark.

'Do you hear the impudent scoundrel?' cried Buontalenti. 'If we were not in the house of God, I should feel sorely disposed to kick him.'

'Leave him alone, Messere,' said another wise-acre. 'These young painters are like bladders filled with wind, which burst of their own accord.'

'If they did but know the proper effect of the colours,' added another. 'But on the contrary, they use pigments made of minerals in fresco-painting, instead of those made only of vegetables.'

'Who told you this?'

'Oh, several persons; amongst others, Bindo del Rosso, who is one of the members of the Confraternity. Moreover, I have had a great deal to do with painters, and can

vouch for the truth of it myself, as I feel satisfied that this is how the thing has happened. Painting in fresco indeed! it is ridiculous to talk of such a thing. It is no easy matter, as it is to swallow an egg,' the orator went on to say, seeing that he had collected an audience round him. 'There is no doubt that besides being the most beautiful style of painting, it is the one requiring the greatest skill, for it consists in executing in one day alone that which, in the other methods, the artist may occupy many days in executing, and in retouching the work already done. For, in order to succeed in producing a really good painting in fresco, it is absolutely necessary to work upon the plaster whilst it is still fresh, without leaving off at all until the colouring of that portion of it prepared for the day is completely finished. For, if the artist be dilatory in painting that piece of the wall which is ready to receive the colours, the exposure of the plaster to either cold, heat, wind, or frost, soon forms a slight incrustation upon it, and this causes the whole work to spot, and to

develop stains of mildew. For this reason, then, the wall, while it is being painted, must be perpetually moistened, and the pigments employed thereon must not be minerals, but earths alone, with the exception of the white, which should be made from white marble dust, or slaked lime. Finally, when the painting is finished, it is essential to beware of retouching it with colours which are tempered with either glue, yoke of eggs, gum, or tragacanth, because such a method of proceeding would prevent the wall from developing in due course the requisite clearness, and the colours would lose their brilliancy by thus being touched again on the surface, and turn black in a very short time. Now, I say that this young man who has so boldly undertaken to paint in fresco, was ignorant of these things. And since he was thus ignorant, as is evident from the spoiling of his painting, why commit to him a work of such importance?'

'Yes,' said Buontalenti, 'why was the

compartment entrusted to him? What do you think of it, Tuccio?'

The question was addressed to Tuccio di Credi, who had lately joined the group.

'I, Messere,' he replied cautiously. 'I think that poor Spinello has been betrayed by one of his companions in art, who has been incited thereto by jealousy of his fame. For, indeed, it is impossible to believe him ignorant of the effect of the colours. It would be tantamount to saying, that he did not know the first rudiments of painting.'

Then drawing near to Messer Lapo Buontalenti, making him a courteous obeisance, as though he were requesting permission to continue his route, he threw him at the same time a secret glance of intelligence.

'Wait a minute,' said Buontalenti, grasping him familiarly by the arm, but accompanying him a step or two further on, instead of holding him back. 'You think then? You suspect that'——

Then changing the subject abruptly, he continued in a low voice,

'What news have you?'

'I have something to say to you, Messere,' replied Tuccio di Credi. 'The father is more obstinately determined than ever to give the girl to him in marriage. We must resolve upon some other plan.'

'Well, come to me this evening; we shall then be alone,' said Buontalenti.

Tuccio di Credi left him, in order to rejoin Spinello and Messer Jacopo, who were in the sacristy disputing with the members of the Confraternity.

I said that they were disputing, but I should have confined myself to the singular number, for Spinello remained perfectly silent, while Mastro Jacopo was sustaining the entire weight of the conversation with these captious gentlemen.

Mastro Jacopo, on these rare occasions when he left off muttering, and took to talking instead, might have given ten points out of sixteen to Marcus Tullius Cicero. Marcus Tullius when he was speaking *pro domo sua* be it understood. For indeed, the old painter, while defending Spinello's cause, was speaking also slightly for himself. Was

it not he who had entrusted the work to his disciple? And was not that disciple to wed his own beautiful daughter? Imagine, then, the eloquence of his arguments with the Confraternity! Spinello had accomplished a marvellous work, that was beyond a doubt, and, what was more, all had agreed in saying so, whether they were members of the Confraternity or not. As far as the colours and the proper preparation of the plaster were concerned, all the materials used in painting the miracles of Saint Donatus were precisely the same as those with which Mastro Jacopo himself had wrought all the other frescoes in the Duomo. Moreover, both Mastro Jacopo and Spinello Spinelli knew already on whom to lay their fingers. Under any circumstances, however, the Confraternity need be under no apprehension, for the disaster would be promptly remedied. Though they naturally attached great importance to the decoration of their church, Spinello attached quite as much — if not more—to his own reputation. All that these wretches would gain by their treachery,

would be to make this poor and deserving young man work harder than ever. All this, however, was little to the purpose; the important point was this, that in a month's time they would all see another Miracle of Saint Donatus, fully as beautiful as the first, and executed in accordance with every principle of art. Not only was Spinello's own credit at stake upon the result, but also the honour of the master and his school, an accident of this description never having occurred to them before.

'Besides which,' added Mastro Jacopo, 'this time I shall be there myself to watch, and no colours shall be allowed to come into the Duomo except those which we have ground and mixed ourselves.'

The members of the Confraternity bowed their heads in token of assent, and gave Mastro Jacopo leave to act as he thought best in everything, provided that he took upon himself both the responsibility and the expense.

'Have no fear, most worshipful gentlemen,' said Mastro Jacopo, in reply, feeling

thoroughly satisfied with this arrangement. 'I have sworn to lay down my brushes if things do not turn out as they should.'

The following morning the Duomo was closed to all importunate and inquisitive visitors, and the masons began to erect the scaffolding in the chapel of Saint Donatus without further delay. While this was being done, Spinello Spinelli was forced to reply to all those who stopped to speak to him on his way from the bottega to the Duomo, and to swallow condolences more or less sincere, and which are always wearisome to one whose spirit is oppressed.

I have never yet been able to understand, why on earth certain formal persons never seem to take into consideration the effect that some of their speeches produce. It would be quite enough to say: 'Well, things have gone wrong with you, patience, try again, and better luck next time.' But no, it is absolutely necessary that they should come up to you with a long face, and clasp your hand with both their own, at the same time lifting up their eyes to heaven

as though they were offering up your misfortunes to the Almighty, and then embark upon a tedious speech which seems as though it would never end. These consolations have the effect of disheartening you more than ever. How much worse then is it when you know that the condolences are false, for in that case, alas! you are forced to reject the sweet and retain the bitter, which is calculated to produce a sensation of nausea.

As you will have gathered from the above reflections, Spinello Spinelli was only too glad to escape from all such encounters, and in his existing state of mind he thought every acquaintance wearisome. He therefore accomplished his daily journeys from the bottega to the Duomo, and from the Duomo back again to the bottega with a swiftness which might have earned for him the nickname of 'Arrow.'

The new scaffolding having been erected by the masons, Spinello who was enabled by its means to approach his poor fresco, was not long in discovering that mineral colours

had been ground instead of earths, and some other devilish ingredient mixed with them besides. What this ingredient was, neither he nor Mastro Jacopo could ascertain, for in those days that valuable method of determining the constituent parts of substances by chemical analysis had not yet been discovered. Once more they both cursed Chiacchiera, mentally dedicating him as an offering to the evil spirits, as the ancient Hebrews were wont to do with the scape-goat of the tribe; after which Spinello set to work to draw the cartoons, whilst the masons were scraping the ceiling.

Unfortunate fresco! After having shone for a week before the eyes of the astonished multitude, it had suddenly disappeared from view, as a fair woman disappears after having enchanted half the world with her blooming beauty. But although the end of Spinello Spinelli's fresco had been premature, its fate had not been in other respects identical with that of a beautiful woman who dies young, for it had grown more unsightly gradually. day by day, and those who had praised it the

most had already begun to decry it. Such is the instability of human opinion!

Influenced partly by rage, but more by his love's consoling words, Spinello set to work with the energy of four. As you may suppose, Madonna Fiordalisa's portrait was laid by for the present. Unhappy portrait! it had been a failure from the very first, and therefore deserved its fate.

Mastro Jacopo did not regret it. He who had expended so many arguments in advising that the picture should be painted, was the first to recommend its being put aside. A short interval was necessary to enable the mind of the painter to recover its equanimity, and his eye to free itself from certain errors of vision; there would be time enough to think of resuming this work later on. But Spinello himself had no intention of doing so, either later, or ever. You know that he looked upon the hopeless impossibility which seemed to attend his efforts to depict Fiordolisa's lineaments, as the result of enchantment. Why should he run the risk of drawing upon himself the wrath of the evil

spirit who mocked him so cruelly? It was better to think no more about it.

Besides which the Miracle of Saint Donatus demanded all his time. He was full of ardour, and spent the whole of each day upon the scaffolding, working with all his might and main, the brushes flying backwards and forwards in his hands as does the shuttle in those of a weaver. A month after the scene with the members of the Confraternity which I have related above, the new fresco was completely finished. Each thing used in connection with it had been most carefully examined —I had almost said, passed through a sieve— the plaster and the sand as well as the colours. Mastro Jacopo watched like one of the Eight themselves, no one excepting Spinello and himself being allowed to set foot upon the platform. In fact so particular was the old painter upon the point, that the verger of the Duomo had received orders to forbid him— Mastro Jacopo himself—to ascend upon the scaffolding during Spinello's absence.

'One can never tell what may happen!' he laughingly remarked. 'I might possibly

walk in my sleep, find my way into the Duomo, and try to get up there and play some evil trick under the influence of the Devil.'

The most worshipful members of the Confraternity inspected the new painting, and congratulated the young artist both upon his industry and his skill. The people were summoned, and admired likewise. Spinello, in doing his work over again, had altered some of the details, hoping thereby to improve the picture. And undoubtedly the composition was superior to the first one; it had gained in boldness and freedom, the drawing was more correct, and the painting of the various parts considerably improved. He who has had to do any work over again, even though it should have been commended under its original form, will enter into my meaning. But captious critics were not wanting to affirm that the first fresco was the best. And perhaps they may have spoken the truth unconsciously, for the freshness of a first impression can never

again be renewed, even although the work be more correctly executed.

Yet in spite of the favourable comparison made by the general public between his present work and his former one, and although he was praised and exalted to the very skies, Spinello's spirits did not rise to the level of his reputation. On the contrary, the poor young man faded, languished, and drooped visibly.

'My boy,' said Mastro Jacopo to him one day, 'you are not satisfied with things in general, and are waiting for something else; I might almost say, manna from heaven!'

'What do you say, master?' exclaimed the youth, in confusion.

'Deny it if you can. It is not quite the same as manna, I admit, but something very like it. For instance,' the old painter added slyly, 'one little word from a certain father that I wot of. And I, dolt that I am, had taken it into my head that you were satisfied with glory alone!'

'Oh, my father,' replied Spinello, who had guessed at last whither Mastro Jacopo's

words were tending, 'glory is only beautiful because her sex is feminine. But a real and living woman, saving your presence, is far more highly to be prized than glory, who is only a woman, according to the rules of grammar.'

'Ah, you will not say so always,' replied Mastro Jacopo. 'For you see that now I am in love with that sham woman, glory. Though, indeed, I am no longer the same man that I was of yore. Yet, when I was your age, I loved both the one and the other, or rather, the one for the other. But now, to speak seriously, is not this how matters stand with you? You wish to distinguish yourself in order to attain an end?'

'And also to pluck a flower which you hold too high above my reach,' said Spinello, laughing.

'Eh, what? you young rascal; too high? Do you expect me then to fling it at your feet? But enough of this,' added Mastro Jacopo, perceiving that the poor lover was again looking serious. 'What do you say

to Saint Luke's Day? You know that Saint Luke is the patron saint of painters.'

'I say,' replied the youth, bending his head, 'that it wants thirty days to the feast of Saint Luke.'

'You think that that is too long a time to wait? But you must have patience, for Fiordalisa also has various preparations to make.'

Spinello Spinelli threw himself into Mastro Jacopo's arms.

'Come now, courage,' muttered the old painter. 'Do not weep; it is a trick that I believe I have forgotten, and I might become jealous of you;' and as he said this, Mastro Jacopo wiped away two bright drops, which seemed to have made their appearance on purpose to belie the truth of his words.

That day Spinello Spinelli entered the bottega with a radiant expression. So much so, that those two silent and obscure workers, Parri della Quercia and Tuccio di Credi raised their astonished eyes to contemplate the young cherubin who appeared to be quite beside himself with joy.

'Well, what is it?' asked Parri della Quercia. 'Your eyes are positively sparkling.'

'I should just think that they were,' replied Spinello. 'There is great news, my friends, great news. I will give you a hundred guesses.'

'Good lack!' exclaimed Parri della Quercia, 'it must, indeed, be something which pleases you.'

'Well done! you have guessed it at once.'

'Oh, one can see by your mien that it must be something good. But we must wait to hear from your lips what the thing really is, because neither a hundred nor even a thousand guesses would suffice us.'

'Saint Luke! Saint Luke!' cried Spinello, fairly dancing for joy, and throwing his arms round his friend Parri. 'Do you understand me?—Saint Luke's day!'

'It falls, if I mistake not, on the 18th of October,' answered Parri della Quercia.

'What does it matter to me when it falls? I was about to tell you that on that day I am to wed Madonna Fiordalisa.'

'Ah!' said Parri; 'accept my warmest congratulations. Although, indeed, you can well afford to dispense with them.'

'You are wrong, Parri. Congratulations from friends, besides being a proof of their good will, like favourable omens, bring good luck to him who receives them. Both yours and Tuccio's are most precious to me.'

Tuccio di Credi on being thus called upon to participate in Spinello's happiness, responded in that solemn voice of his which sounded as though it were issuing from some great depths:

'I wish you every happiness.'

'And you will be my companions through the ceremony, will you not?' resumed Spinello, who, being accustomed to his friend Tuccio's tone of voice, paid no special heed to it.

'Most certainly,' replied Parri della Quercia; 'your joy is also ours.'

'And it is great, as you know—so great that I cannot contain it—so great that I am in constant dread of—— But come, I must not say anything foolish. I only wished to

make you understand the immensity of the happiness of calling the beloved object your own. When one loves'——

'As you do; I quite understand;' said Parri della Quercia, with his usual placid expression.

Parri, like the good fellow that he was, was indeed heartily glad. Knowing that he himself had not been born to fill any exalted position, it pleased him in this conscious mediocrity of his—which was however free from any touch of jealousy, to watch the progress of such fortunate individuals as were able to soar to those greater heights whence a man can grasp anyone of the world's most coveted prizes, whether it be a crown, laurel, or an embrace from loving arms, the smile of glory, or the caress of a woman.

Tuccio di Credi, on the other hand, had become as livid as death. You have already been told, however, that his complexion was of an olive hue, which colour is readily turned to a more ghastly shade under the influence of strong emotion, and Tuccio's pallor might

pass for a sign of deep joy, instead of—as it really was—one of extreme malevolence.

He also, before Spinello had entered the bottega and won the affections of Mastro Jacopo's beautiful daughter, had loved her himself, though without hope. And further, since he must needs be robbed of her, he would have preferred that it should be by some other than Spinello—Buontalenti, for instance, or any one of her numerous admirers in Arezzo. Of course, under any circumstances, he would have hated his rival, but not with so bitter a hatred as that roused by one of his companions in the art, whose happiness would be ever before his eyes, as though to remind him of his own meagre worth. 'Look here,' (this marriage seemed to say to him) 'Madonna Fiordalisa—that angel of beauty—was to be bestowed as a reward upon him in whose breast the sacred fire of art was most brightly kindled; and you were not that man.'

But when one loves, what matters it (the reader will say) whether the beloved object

be torn from us by Caius or by Sempronius? It matters exceedingly, if in addition to love, there be envy.

CHAPTER VII

We are already near the great day, and as yet we have not made a very close acquaintance with Madonna Fiordalisa, who is to be the heroine of the feast. We have admired her outward beauty, but her mind is still unknown to us, and though we have gazed upon the flower, we have not yet been permitted to inhale its perfume.

Fiordalisa had dwelt for many years in the house of Mastro Jacopo, who, though a loving father, was also somewhat a gruff one, and entirely absorbed in his art. She was scarcely more than an infant when her

mother died, and this loss entailed upon her the burden of many domestic duties imperfectly realised at first, but which had by degrees forced themselves upon her notice, and which the girl had undertaken as wisdom came to her with years. She had always been a serious child, before she developed into a self-possessed young woman.

Besides which she had experienced betimes the necessity of being able to take care of herself. The spring-time of beauty had in her case come early, and the buzzing of the insects had begun at the same time. Praised, admired, courted openly, though with manifest assiduity, beset on all sides by languishing glances, greeted by sudden exclamations, turns of the head and halts, all in themselves saying a multitude of things, Fiordalisa had had every possible temptation to become vain. And perhaps this temptation would in the end have been too strong for her, if the presence of a mother, by keeping away the more importunate adorers, had left the

beautiful creature free to choose amongst the crowd those who were the most retiring of them. At any rate this maternal protection would have enabled her to intoxicate herself at will with all the divers species of incense, whose fumes ascended around her. But, as I have said before, Fiordalisa was alone; she had neither the leisure nor the inclination for self-analysis; she was constrained to be on her guard against all, without seeming to notice any. Now you know what takes place when generous liquor is shut up at the seasonable moment; it ferments of its own accord, and seems to gain strength from some kind of solitary meditation. And thus, in Fiordalisa's mind, the imagination had worked the harder in proportion as its sphere was the more restricted. Real life oppressed her with all its conventionalities, its observances, and its necessities; but her spirit emancipated herself from its trammels by living a life apart, and refining, beautifying, and exalting its own ideal.

Mastro Jacopo was under the impression that he ruled his beautiful daughter, because

when he said to her, 'Do such and such a thing,' she hastened to obey him. And the father had no conception that he never commanded or advised one single thing which had not been previously inspired by her, or else prepared long beforehand with sapient wiles. For instance, the girl had realised betimes, that one day it would fall to her lot to marry, and consequently to quit the paternal roof. And when that day came, who would take care of her father? A man living by himself needs so much, that to manage his house properly, the presence of a woman is more than useful to him, it is absolutely indispensable. And it is not enough that he should be in such thriving circumstances as to be able to afford the luxury of two or three maid-servants, for even if he had ten of them they would not be equal to one wisely ruling and watchful house-keeper. Thus you can imagine the graceful wiles which Fiordalisa employed in order to insinuate by degrees into the mind of her father the advisability that the daughter of an artist should wed an

artist. It was a prospect that harmonised well with Mastro Jacopo's eccentric fancy; he had therefore appropriated as his own this little idea which had first taken root in the brain of his fair daughter.

Why had she taken it into her head to imbue him with it? I know that you, astute reader, bearing in mind the popular saying, which has been confirmed by constant observation, that we only welcome wise ideas when they are in accordance with pleasing realities, will not give credence to a reason of so domestic a nature. But, as though on purpose to prove the falsity of the saying, Fiordalisa had no reality of the kind that you imagine. She had not before her eyes anything in any degree approaching to a personification of rising genius. Her father's scholars were rough and unpolished youths, when they were not worthless young scamps—all of them indeed mere shop-boys and apprentices, not artists capable of winning a young girl's heart. Madonna Fiordalisa had influenced her father's mind in

this direction solely from a feeling of pride. And this is the reason thereof.

At this time the art of painting was just beginning to be held in some repute, more on account of the fame of Giotto and his talented disciples, than from the recognition of its claims to be reckoned amongst the liberal arts. But, a few years before, the painters in Florence had enrolled themselves into a special Confraternity, and Mastro Jacopo, who had been one of the first to join this association, had painted for the oratory thereof a 'Saint Luke painting the picture of the Virgin,' This, however, did not yet suffice to confer nobility upon painters; it being an old-established fact that honours and distinctions can only acquire lustre with time. Besides which the company of Saint Luke had not formed itself with any very proud intentions; it owed its origin to the following cause: The masters who flourished at that time, those who painted in the old Greek style, as well as those who followed the new manner of Giotto, being of opinion that the fine arts had undergone a complete

revival, not merely in Florence, but throughout the whole of Tuscany, had resolved to establish the aforesaid company, under the protection of Saint Luke, the evangelist; its principal objects being to render thanks and praises to God in the oratory dedicated to that saint, and the assembling together of its different members from time to time in order that they might attend to the wants, either of mind or body, of any who chanced to stand in need of their ministrations. The above sentence is a long one, but it is only an abridgment of one still longer, by Messer Giorgio Vasari. Moreover, the painters formed only a small fraction of the whole body of artists, which in those days included armourers, makers of shields and bucklers, and many other artificers of a like description. Nor did the painters esteem themselves in any way different from these latter, because they all wrought nothing but noble subjects, such as devices for the shields of warriors. Giotto's celebrated retort to the upstart who wished him to paint his arms for him, is a plain proof of the community of labour

existing amongst the artists of those days. The displeasure of the restorer of Italian art was not caused so much by the fact of being called upon to depict a shield, as by being forced to accept a commission from a man of low birth, who discoursed upon the subject of arms, as though he were the Grand Duke of Bavaria at least.

The condition of the art of painting in those days might be compared to that of young eagles in the nest, when they feel their plumage growing and therefore begin to flap their wings, although the principal feathers have not yet begun to shoot. Madonna Fiordalisa took a fond pride in her father's art, for which I trust that no one will blame her. Those angels and virgins which he painted, and at which so many of the gentlemen of Florence, as well as those of Arezzo, gazed in open-mouthed admiration, were so many quarterings of nobility for his house—just as good ones, moreover, as the arms of succession of the emperors of Germany, or the royal arms of France. Thus Madonna Fiordalisa care-

fully cherished this little pride of hers in her heart. And since it was necessary to contemplate marriage, for the very obvious reason that a beautiful girl such as she was could not possibly avoid it, she determined to consider the subject for herself. She would have no mere common artificer, and under any circumstances, her father would not have consented to her marriage with an individual of that description. On the other hand, a gentleman, even if he had happened to find favour in the sight of Mastro Jacopo, would have nothing to say to her, for she felt instinctively that the great and powerful ones of the earth were not for the daughter of a painter. Madonna Fiordalisa did not wish to descend; but on the other hand, she had no ambition to scale a height where the comparative humility of her birth might be made a subject of reproach to her. In that fair little body there beat the heart of a queen.

No one will tell me, I hope, that in thus giving her a touch of pride, I am making her appear unamiable. Hypocrisy should

not spoil art, though it sometimes happens that it spoils nature. We all have our share of pride, and it would be far better to confess it honestly, each one for himself, than seek to blame it in others. Fiordalisa, for her part, only had a proper amount, and, moreover, hers was of that quality which does not wound the feelings of others, but only produces the effect of making us respect ourselves, and which is a powerful stimulus to good works, or, at any rate, to noble thoughts.

The pleasing reality which, as I have said, was still wanting to the beautiful Fiordalisa when she began to insinuate into her father's mind the idea of desiring none but an artist for his son-in-law, presented itself at length in the person of Spinello Spinelli. The girl recognised in him the latest addition to the ranks of her adorers in the street, and the most diffident of them all. But she was slightly disturbed at first at the thought that he, being gifted with more presumption than the rest, had dexterously contrived to introduce himself into Mastro Jacopo's house under cover of a vocation for art which he

did not really feel. Fiordalisa was one of those women to whom presumption is no recommendation. But she was not long in discovering that Spinello had not deceived her, and she began to view in him the incarnation of that ideal which she had so long cherished in her mind. Her heart had awoke; her imagination, on the other hand, so active at first, and accustomed to wander off in its search after chimeras, fell asleep, and dreamed a beautiful dream which had its foundation in truth.

One of the stages of love is a sort of delicious half-sleeping, half-waking state, the full sweetness of which (as is the case with other happy conditions of being) we only become conscious of either when the sensation has wholly ceased, or else given place to some other feeling. That is the time when the heart begins to awake, roused by the confused murmurings of a mysterious voice; whilst the reason, having been quieted by sound arguments, or else satisfied as to the remoteness of all danger, takes advantage of the other's watchfulness to fall asleep itself,

thus leaving the soul entirely free to yield to the sweet feeling which has taken possession of it. All affections pass through this delicious period of infancy, a period free from all subjects either of desire or dispute, when we accept life and all else besides as the glad season offers it to us. This is the time when the man notices the dress that a woman wears, in order that he may recall it later on, together with every other outward manifestation of her beauty; it is the time when the woman ponders over the most trivial sentences and ends by discovering in them a hidden meaning. And in the time to come the man will be able to say: 'Do you know that the first time that I felt that I loved you you were dressed in such and such a manner.' And the woman on her side: 'Do you remember, one day, in such and such a place, at such and such an hour you told me that you did not like *marrons glacés*?' Precious infancy of love! During that sweet trance has been accomplished the great mystery of the inter-penetration — I was on the point of saying, the transubtantiation—of

two hearts, two souls, and two existences. And on the discovery of the actual state of their affections, neither of the two know how it has all come to pass, when love entered, or by what means. They would fain know it, both in order that they may satisfy the gentle curiosity which they feel on the subject, and also that, if possible, they may renew so pleasing an impression. But in vain; the origin defies our search, or if, perchance, we succeed in tracing it, we can only do so dimly and indistinctly. Such is that other sublime mystery, the infancy of language. How did the child learn to speak? When, and by what means, did he first discover the connection between the sentences, and the secrets of the conjugations? Look, and you shall not find; knock, and it shall not be opened unto you, either now or hereafter.

By the time that Fiordalisa had perceived the full extent of her affection for the new scholar, Mastro Jacopo himself had become even more infatuated by Spinello's merits than she was attracted by his person. On

that occasion when her father told her of Spinello's love for her, signifying at the same time his own very great regard for his disciple, and that thus the only link wanting in the chain, was that she should love the youth herself, Fiordalisa, though startled at the abrupt form in which Mastro Jacopo had worded this announcement, was not in the least surprised at its substance. Neither Spinello's love nor her father's benevolent intentions were in any way unfamiliar to her; she knew and felt them both.

Even Spinello's artistic triumph in the matter of the fresco in the Duomo, great though it was, she had likewise foreseen. That event had followed as a matter of course, for as it was the key of the nuptial-chamber, so to speak, it was only natural that Spinello should work miracles in order to obtain it. Of this she had never doubted, because both the reason of the undertaking and also the cause of Spinello's victory were vested in herself, and thus she was the conscious repository of divine power. How many things this beautiful creature knew!

But mark! Not so many now as she did formerly. For instance, she once knew how many men in Arezzo were in love with her. Not, I would beg you to believe, that she had stopped to count them, but because it was impossible to avoid seeing them. Nor could their whispered ejaculations, even when they did not take the form of articulate speech, fail of reaching the ear. Madonna Fiordalisa saw without looking and heard without listening; but as soon as she became conscious of her love for Spinello, she ceased both to hear and to see anything else in the world. The sixth sense with which women are gifted in order that they may seize that which escapes universal attention was suddenly extinguished in her; she saw but one man's form, and heard but one man's voice. Outwardly, she was as calm and as self-possessed as in those days of yore when she used to hear the sound of the hymns of praise which greeted her from all sides, and, I might almost say, the crackling of the hearts which burned all along her triumphant

way. But in her mind there was one thought that would brook no rivals, and her heart was filled with one image which left no space for any external impression.

Do you remember the fable of that beautiful princess upon whom a benignant fairy had bestowed the power of reading the hearts of others until the time came when she should be able to see clearly into her own? One day the princess awoke in a more sorrowful mood than usual, and on looking into her own heart saw that it was troubled. The poor girl was in love. The fable goes on to say, that at first she did not know where to seek for peace, but at length she was consoled by her protectress. 'Of what avail is it,' said the fairy, 'to be able to read the hearts of others? The proudest satisfactions of vanity cannot be compared to the smallest consolations of love.'

Although the ruin of the fresco, by occurring at such an inopportune moment, had delayed the happiness of our lovers, still, there was no reason why it should destroy it

altogether, for the hand which had completed the first work so successfully might well begin a second one. Fiordalisa had divined the presence of some enemy, and her suspicions further pointed to one who was actuated by jealous motives. But her father had only seen in the affair a trick on the part of some envious rival in the art, and even went so far as to pretend that he knew upon whom to lay his hands. The sudden departure of Chiacchiera, Granacci, and Lippo del Calzaiuolo from the bottega confirmed the old painter's suspicions, and Fiordalisa, laying aside her doubts, sought not to investigate further, nor did she cast her eyes around to scan countenances which might possibly have turned pale beneath her scrutiny. After all, of what use was it to search for the enemy when it was so certain that Spinello would bear away the palm? Fiordalisa reanimated the courage of her lover, persuading him that out of this evil would come a still greater good, because in a second attempt he would display—if such a thing were possible

—an increased freedom and boldness of execution.

The event fulfilled her prediction, and in the applause of all his fellow-citizens, who, having admired the first painting, extolled the second to the skies, Spinello gained a joyful victory over his unknown enemy. And Mastro Jacopo, as proud and happy as it was possible for a father to be, bestowed upon his young disciple the highest reward that he had to give, namely, the assurance that the wedding should take place in a month. A month! Hardly time enough in which to make the necessary preparations.

That festival of Saint Luke would be a great day indeed! But every saint must have his vigil, and Mastro Jacopo rightly determined that that of the third evangelist and earliest christian painter should be observed also. And as the wedding day was to be one of solemn assembly, they must keep the eve thereof in anticipation by making it the occasion of the nuptial feast.

Mastro Jacopo's establishment was that of a person in well-to-do circumstances

without being actually wealthy. Moreover, in those days even the commercial nobility lived simply and unostentatiously. The painter's household consisted merely of one old maid-servant, who performed the domestic duties and ministered to the wants of all, even accompanying Madonna Fiordalisa when she went forth to attend the Divine Offices. However, her unaided services not being sufficient to meet the requirements of so important an occasion, it became necessary to hire four or five supernumeraries to assist during that day of great domestic preparations. Besides which both Parri della Quercia and Tuccio di Credi contributed their help right willingly, each of them doing as much work as four in their efforts to assist their master, by running his errands, and otherwise attending to all his wants. In time of need we find out our true friends, and this was the least they could do to express their gratitude to him.

The old painter rejoiced at the sight of so many people assembled in his house. There were not many relations amongst them, be-

cause neither he nor Spinello were natives of Arezzo. But they contrived to get together an aunt, and a couple of cousins of both sexes, besides a dozen or so of old friends, who might almost be looked upon in the light of relations. Added to these, there were Mastro Jacopo's scholars, and one or two of those festive souls who are always bidden to feasts, in order that they may enliven the company with their jests and their songs.

That day Messer Luca Spinelli kissed the fair Fiordalisa on the cheek, and addressed her by the sweet name of daughter. How beautiful she was in her robe of half-woollen, half-silken stuff, and a white kerchief just covering the nape of her neck! It was the very same attire that she was wont to wear when she went to the Duomo—the one in which she saw Spinello for the first time, and my readers will appreciate the delicate thought that had impelled her to array herself thus, leaving her more gorgeous raiment for the morrow.

But, alas! though Fiordalisa was beautiful to look upon, she was certainly ill at ease in

her mind. Messer Luca remarked that his future daughter-in-law, or rather his beloved daughter, since from henceforth he would have the right to call her thus, bore upon her countenance the signs of an inward grief.

'My good Luca,' said Mastro Jacopo, drawing him on one side, 'what would you have? All women are addicted to little superstitions. We have been obliged to take four or five extra persons into the house on a job, to help in all the work, which seems to have brought about a state of chaos. And this morning one of these louts—or rather one of these careless hussies, as it was a woman—in packing up some of my daughter's things in one of her trunks, let fall a small mirror, which was, as you may suppose, shivered to atoms; and then to make it worse, she must needs, like a perfect fool, begin to cry out what a misfortune it was!'

'It is, indeed;' remarked Luca Spinelli. 'A mirror is an expensive thing.'

'Yes, indeed it is;' but there was no need to anticipate any other disaster besides the breakage. My daughter herself had no

foolish ideas of that kind; but you will understand that to be told on the eve of a wedding that the breaking of a looking-glass brings bad luck, is certainly anything but pleasant. However, I endeavoured to console her by assuring her that the misfortune only befalls the person who breaks it. Was I not right in saying so? But a truce to these childish follies. Let us now to table, after we have asked the blessing of God.

Yet, though Madonna Fiordalisa was grave of aspect, do not attribute it to this trifling mishap, forgotten a few minutes after it had occurred. Both she and her betrothed were self-contained and undemonstrative, as is the case with all lovers when they have reached that moment when they find themselves forced to shield their joy from importunate and inquisitive eyes, and also to hide, from motives of courtesy, the weariness which they experience when they are constrained to waste their time in the society of the profane.

Fortunately, though the demeanour of the two lovers was slightly tinged with melan-

choly, Mastro Jacopo was gay enough for them both, and for eleven other betrothed couples to boot. Those whose dispositions are naturally of the most surly, become, on those rare occasions when they happen to be in a good humour, far more boisterously cheerful than their fellows, and cast into the shade a dozen or so of professional jesters and buffoons.

Mastro Jacopo had ample cause to rejoice. His daughter was going to be married. It was the common lot of young girls, but the usual form of expression just made use of, did not quite suit this occasion, for Madonna Fiordalisa was not 'going' to be married; she remained where she was, and her husband must therefore come to her. For it was the painter's wish that his son-in-law should live with him, and to this, Luca Spinelli—who, as you know, was not rich—readily agreed. And thus Mastro Jacopo was able to say with truth, that he had given his daughter with one hand and taken her back with the other.

Many people in Arezzo, including all the inhabitants of the street in which Mastro

Jacopo lived, had taken part in these family rejoicings. The painter was universally esteemed, his daughter universally beloved, or rather to make use of our native hyperbole, adored. Only think! Before the door of the house, trees had been planted, hung with garlands of flowers, thus turning October into May, to the entire confusion of the almanac. And the street-singers were assembled under the windows to celebrate Madonna Fiordalisa's nuptials, and expressed their homage in graceful melodies, to which it was quite a treat to listen.

I will not attempt to describe the dinner, but will confine myself to saying that it was fully worthy of the occasion, and most convivial as regards the flow of wine and of conversation. Tuscan wine in general, and Val di Chiana in particular, is generous liquor; it produces a pleasant feeling of cheerfulness without affecting the head.

But Spinello only sipped it, and barely tasted a morsel. He was looking at Fiordalisa. He listened to the jests, he smiled at the compliments and accepted the good-

wishes, but without inwardly heeding them. He was looking at Fiordalisa. Every now and then, however, by a strong effort of will, he collected his thoughts, and asked himself,

'Is it I, really I, who am to wed her? or is it all a dream? I' faith, I know not. I will try to convince myself to-morrow.'

The day was beautiful, though, perhaps, slightly too hot for the month of October. As Spinello looked at Fiordalisa, which he did every moment, he fancied that something seemed to be the matter with her. Fortunately, the repast being just over, he was able to approach her and ask in a low tone:

'Madonna, what is the matter? Does anything ail you?'

'It is nothing,' she replied; 'only the heat.'

'So I might have imagined,' said Spinello. 'It is very oppressive shut up in here, and with so many people too. Come out with me, Madonna, and breathe a little fresh air.'

Fiordalisa readily assented, and went out into the verandah with Spinello. It was the evening hour, and the sun was beginning

to sink behind the roofs of the neighbouring houses. The sky was splendid, of a brilliant golden hue, dashed here and there with purple reflections. Though under the verandah the air still felt warm from the refraction of the sun's rays upon its walls and little marble columns, the cool evening breeze was wafted to them from the street. Fiordalisa gratefully inhaled its refreshing breath.

'What a beautiful evening!' exclaimed Spinello. 'And to-morrow's dawn will be still finer!'

Fiordalisa turned towards him with a smile, but the smile was faint and weary, and faded away almost as soon as it appeared upon her pallid lips.

'My darling!' continued Spinello, drawing nearer to her, 'you do not feel well to-day.'

'It is true,' she said. 'I do not know quite what ails me. I felt as though I were dying when I was within.'

'Good God,' exclaimed the young man in great agitation. 'You must take something. If I only knew!'——

'Oh, do not make yourself uneasy about

that. I took a cordial to-day, before coming in to dinner. I felt a little exhausted even then.'

Spinello's uneasiness would have been roused by a far slighter cause. And on turning his head in the undecided manner of one who does not quite know what he is looking for, he beheld in the space of the doorway opening out on to the verandah, the gloomy countenance of Tuccio di Credi.

'Tuccio,' said he, 'call Mastro Jacopo hither, I entreat you.'

Tuccio's face, when he appeared thus in the verandah, wore an expression which was half-curious and half-indifferent. He felt annoyed at being detected in the act of spying upon the young couple, and was on the point of endeavouring to make his retreat unperceived, when he heard Spinello's voice.

'I will do so at once,' he replied, carrying off, under a semblance of surprise at this unexpected request, the shock that he had experienced in finding himself discovered.

And he went quickly to do Spinello's

bidding. Almost immediately afterwards, Mastro Jacopo came out into the verandah.

'Do you want me? What is the matter? what has happened?' he cried, when he saw Spinello turning to him with such an agitated countenance.'

'The matter is—— Oh, my father, do not alarm yourself more than is needful. Fiordalisa does not feel very well. The heat in there suffocated her.'

'Ah, I understand,' replied Mastro Jacopo, recovering slightly from his first alarm; 'she is not accustomed to this kind of excitement. Fortunately, it need only occur once in a lifetime. You feel better now, my dear child, do you not?'

'Yes, father,' the girl replied in a faint voice. 'The air seems to do me good; but I feel that I want to breathe so much of it —so much. I am a little tired, and a little sleepy as well.'

In the meantime several of the other guests had come out into the verandah.

'What has happened?' asked Luca Spinelli. 'Tuccio di Credi came in just now looking

quite dazed. Ah, Fiordalisa! Does she not feel well?'

'She is a little tired, it is nothing,' replied Mastro Jacopo, but his accent belied his words. 'The heat of the room was too much for her—to say nothing of all the talking!'

'Of course it must have been the heat, we felt it also ourselves,' chimed in the two cousins. 'But the fresh air will do her good. Will it not Fiordalisa?'

'Yes,' the girl murmured, partly closing her eyes.

'I think,' said Spinello, who had observed this movement on her part, 'that it would do her good to walk a little. Do you not think so too, Fiordalisa?' and he drew nearer, and whispered a loving word in her ear.

'Let us go,' she faltered. 'It will do me good—with you.'

But she gave no further signs of any wish to rise. Instead of attempting to do so, she slightly moved her head, at the same time placing her hand upon her breast, as though to retain something that was on the point of escaping from her.

Spinello threw himself on his knees before her, and seized her by the arm.

'Good God! what is the matter?' he cried in terror. 'Fiordalisa, my love!'

At the sound of that appealing voice, the girl, opening her eyes with difficulty, looked languidly at Spinello. She closed them again almost immediately, though her lips still moved as if she were about to speak. Then sinking back like one who is weary, she let her head fall upon her shoulder.

Two piercing shrieks broke forth simultaneously from Mastro Jacopo and from Spinello. But, alas! the fair Fiordalisa was beyond the reach of hearing the despairing cries wrung from those two mighty loves of which she was the object.

'What is the matter?' inquired Messer Luca. 'She has fallen asleep, that is all.'

'Yes, father, you are right,' cried Spinello Spinelli. 'A doctor! A doctor! Who will go for a doctor?'

A suspicion of some serious calamity began to dawn upon the minds of these present, and they all immediately volunteered to

go in search of a doctor. But Mastro Jacopo was the first to start up, and no one had the courage to dispute the errand with him. The old father rushed off like a madman. Those who caught sight of his face as he left the party in such haste, fairly shuddered with fear.

The scene round poor Fiordalisa's inanimate form was one of indescribable disorder and confusion. All the guests wished to be of some use. Each one of them trusted to succeed in restoring her to consciousness. The women were the first to make the attempt, and hastened to loosen her gown, Spinello and the other men, impelled by a sentiment of delicacy, withdrawing while they did so. Some of the latter, in obedience to the request of the old aunt, who took upon herself to exert the authority inherent to her age, and to the degree of her relationship, went in quest of vinegar, aromatic liquids, and any other remedies that seemed likely to be of use. Fiordalisa's face and neck were copiously sprinkled, but in vain ; she gave no signs of life.

They were all still intent upon their efforts to revive her when Mastro Jacopo returned. The old painter had performed his errand with the speed of lightning, and was now accompanied by Mastro Giovanni da Cortona, one of the most talented disciples of Æsculapius that Arezzo possessed at that time.

'Well?' cried the old man stepping out into the verandah. 'Has her consciousness returned?'

The sorrowful countenances of the bystanders told the poor father that his hope of finding that she had recovered during his absence was a vain one. He approached her wringing his hands in despair and crying:

'My daughter! my daughter!'

Poor father! he made their hearts bleed to look at him.

'Come, take courage,' said Messer Giovanni da Cortona. 'You should not lose heart thus. It is only a swoon.'

The worthy follower of Galen advanced into the middle of the group, and proceeded to examine the girl closely. First he looked

at her face, which was as white as marble; then he felt her pulse and her heart, in order to investigate the sources of life; finally putting his cheek to her lips to ascertain whether any breath still issued from them. At each stage in his examination the by-standers pressed more closely round him, gazing fixedly into his eyes, as though to read his verdict there before it was pronounced by his lips. Messer Giovanni's expression, which had been serious from the very first, assumed a shade of deep sadness after this prolonged scrutiny, and a tear glistened in his eye.

'For God's sake speak!' cried Mastro Jacopo, seized with a mortal dread. 'There is hope, is there not?'

Messer Giovanni looked at him sorrowfully.

'Poor father,' he replied, 'you uttered God's name; lift up your prayers to Him, for He alone by a special act of His mercy, can restore your angel to life.'

'Ah!' exclaimed the old man, in a voice choked with sobs. 'What did you say,

Giovanni da Cortona? Lift up my prayers to God! My daughter! I want my daughter. Doctor! doctor! do you hear? You must save her; I desire it.'

Messer Giovanni bowed his head like a man who feels the grief of another, but is at the same time powerless to console him.

'But it is impossible! Impossible!' resumed Master Jacopo. 'My daughter! My daughter! Dead? Nothing ailed her this morning. 'Ah,' he added, recollecting suddenly, 'The mirror! The mirror!'

The doctor turned to those standing around and inquired by a mute gesture the meaning of these mysterious words. Messer Luca deemed it advisable to relate to him all that he knew himself concerning the breaking of the mirror, and the sorrowful impression that this so-called evil omen had left upon Fiordalisa's mind. Messer Giovanni then desired to hear all the minute particulars of the affair from the women-servants.

'And what did you give her?' he asked.

'A cordial, Messere. The poor young lady felt faint, and we thought it better to give

her something comforting, So we prepared a drink of yoke of eggs, beaten up with a little lemon-juice. Did we not do right?'

'Yes, quite right,' replied the doctor; 'but in all probability no comforting drink would have done her any good, after a violent excitement like that. Such things will happen occasionally,' he added, as though he were speaking to himself. 'The veins which lead to the heart, from being too weak, are liable to give way under the pressure of a sudden shock. Alas for our poor human organisation!'

And having ended his speech with this melancholy *epiphonema* Messer Giovanni da Cortona turned to Mastro Jacopo who verily stood in need of his friendly ministrations. The poor father was wailing and lamenting like one beside himself. He wound his arms round his daughter's inanimate form, kissing her cold cheek, and fondling and stroking back the chestnut locks, which the water had caused to cling to her temples, then gently moving her, he renewed his kisses and caresses, and called her aloud by her name.

But in vain; the poor lifeless flesh was powerless to respond to his entreaties, and the arms which he had lifted fell back motionless again to her sides.

The scene was indeed most heart-rending. They implored Mastro Jacopo to leave the spot, but their entreaties had only the effect of increasing his violence, and it became necessary to remove him by force. In the meantime the women had borne the young girl's body into the house, and laid it on her own little bed.

All this time Spinello Spinelli had not uttered a word. He had fallen into a state of utter prostration, almost amounting to stupor. The look that Fiordalisa had cast upon him when she was dying was ever before his eyes, and though he seemed to be watching fixedly, and listening attentively, yet in reality he saw and heard nothing of what was passing around him.

Parri went up to him, and putting his arm round him, endeavoured to force him into the house.

'Courage!' he said. 'Be strong. Let us

try to console her poor father, who is well-nigh beside himself with grief.'

Spinello gazed absently at his fellow student.

But at that moment all that had happened seemed to flash across him, and he burst into a flood of tears.

'Who weeps here?' demanded Mastro Jacopo, in a voice of thunder: 'I forbid any one to weep. Let there be an end of all this disturbance. Do you wish to kill her? She shall not die. She is my daughter, my own flesh and blood. I will guard her; I will shut her up, so that no living soul shall see her. Do you hear? No one shall wed her, Buontalenti least of all. He aspired to her merely because he is rich. I will have nothing to say to any man whether he be rich or poor. Fiordalisa shall remain at home, always by the side of her old father, to comfort his old age. Do they still persist? Well then, we will go away, we will leave this house, we will go and seek her mother. Doctor, you must save her, do you hear me? Have a care, doctor. Her mother would kill

me if I did not bring back her love to her again. And know too that I, before dying myself would slay you with my own hands.'

Messer Giovanni da Cortona gazed sorrowfully at the poor demented painter. And he reflected inwardly to himself, that in the human organization the space is too small which intervenes between sanity and madness.

And how short too is the distance from the altar to the tomb! There, in her own little room, the fair inanimate form of Fiordalisa lay stretched upon the bed. So tranquil was her aspect, and her attitude so full of repose, that it seemed as though she slept, and those who gazed at her might well have echoed the words of the poet.

'Morte bella parea nel suo bel viso.' *

The women were gathered round her bed, weeping and praying. Spinello, crouched in a corner, gave no signs of life beyond the sobs which from time to time convulsed his throat. In the next room Tuccio di Credi and Parri della Quercia looked at one another

* The fairness of her face made death seem fair.'

sadly, shaking their heads and sighing the while, like men who have been struck by one common blow.

That evening the priest of the Duomo sent the sacristan to Messer Jacopo's house to ask him at what hour the following morning it would be convenient to him to be in church for the nuptial ceremony.

The people in the house who were watching Mastro Jacopo thought it better not to thwart this delusion of his. So the old painter, going up to the man, thus replied:

'I cannot tell you. My daughter sleeps, and I will not have her disturbed. And, moreover, the wedding is not to take place.'

'Why?' asked the sacristan, casting an astonished glance around, yet failing to perceive the signs which the others were making to him. 'What has happened?'

The old aunt came forward and led him to the door.

'Tell the priest to come and offer up the prayers for the dead,' she whispered to him, in a voice choked with tears, 'for Fiordalisa died a few hours ago.'

CHAPTER VIII

THE terrible misfortune that had befallen Mastro Jacopo was deeply felt throughout Arezzo. The old painter had many friends, and was popular even among those who knew him but slightly; while Fiordalisa, as you have already been told, was universally regarded as a perfect miracle of grace and beauty. The news of her death came upon them all like a clap of thunder.

Poor Mastro Jacopo! Yet, as those compassionate souls who pitied him so deeply observed with truth, God, in thus depriving him of the consciousness of his loss, had sent

him comfort together with the misfortune. For when sorrows such as this come to rob us of our happiness and of all that made life dear to us, is it not better to lose our reason too, than to be for ever haunted both by night and by day by the dreadful shadow of our own despair? Death indeed would be better still, but this deliverance is not always vouchsafed to those that mourn. Life, which sometimes only hangs by a thread, on other occasions cleaves to us so firmly that it almost seems as if our very grief itself helped us to retain in our possession this useless gift. Thus, after having been struck and well nigh destroyed by the lightning, the trunk of an oak tree sometimes survives the storm, and nourishes upon what remains of its bark a few poor lingering branches.

Thus lived Jacopo da Casentino, in total unconsciousness of his own existence. But two months after the loss of his daughter, he also found the way of eternal peace. Not having been able to prolong her life, he died in the hope of being able to restore her himself to the arms of her mother.

Do not pity him. The dead are far less to be pitied than the living, who are thus condemned to drag on an existence which is bereft of all happiness.

The old painter's remains were honourably interred in Sant' Agnolo, an abbey belonging to the Order of the Camaldolese Friars, in the neighbourhood of Prato Vecchio. The poor madman had been conducted thither shortly before his death by his relations, in the hope that his own native air of Casentino might restore to his unquiet spirit some degree of calm. But, alas, even that last hope proved a vain one!

When the tidings of the death of Taddeo Gaddi's old pupil reached Arezzo, it renewed the grief felt by all the inhabitants at that other death to which it was so closely connected, as is the effect to the cause. Their thoughts turned to Madonna Fiordalisa. They recalled her marvellous beauty, like some ray of sunshine grudged too soon to this earth. Nor could they reconcile themselves to the idea of having thus lost for ever the light of her divine smile.

You will doubtless wish to know how Messer Lapo Buontalenti had received the sad intelligence. This wealthy and powerful gentleman had left Arezzo the very day of Madonna Fiordalisa's death. His love for the painter's daughter was known to many, and it was known too that he had demanded her hand in marriage, and that Mastro Jacopo had refused it to him. It was natural, therefore, that he should feel aggrieved, as it is never pleasant to hear the word No said to us, even when there are strong reasons for saying it. It will readily be understood that Buontalenti was not particularly anxious to remain in Arezzo to witness Fiordalisa's marriage with Spinello; and thus his retiring to live for a time upon a property that he owned among the mountains near Pistoja was not in the least remarkable. Messer Lapo having carried his bitter disappointment to such a remote spot, there is no means of knowing whether the news of Madonna Fiordalisa's death added to its burden, or whether, on the contrary, he derived from it the only comfort vouchsafed to

souls in perdition, which, as you know, consists in making their own misery seem less severe by the thought that others have to endure a similar torment, or perhaps a still greater one.

Spinello also had left Arezzo after this utter ruin of his happiness. Had he remained there any longer, he would, most assuredly, have died of a broken heart, for there is no greater aggravation of sorrow than the being forced to remain amid the very scenes where the blow has struck us, and where the remembrance of it will consequently be the most vivid. Thus the only one of Mastro Jacopo's scholars who was left in the well-known bottega was that gentle and timid artist, Parri della Quercia. Strange sequence of events! That a painter of panels in distemper, who had never ventured to work upon a wall, should succeed both to the place and to the traditions of Jacopo da Casentino, who was, above all, a painter in fresco, and who had never painted a panel in his life! The memory of Mastro Jacopo has, however, been handed down to

us in the following Latin epitaph, for the versification of which I am not responsible:

> Pingere me docuit Gaddus; componere plura
> Apte pingendo corpora doctus eram
> Prompta manus fuit; et pictum est in pariete tantum
> A me; servat opus nulla tabella meum.

Tuccio di Credi, like a charitable soul, proposed, of his own accord, to bear Spinello company, a task which he performed with unwearied assiduity. He persuaded him to go with him to Florence, a journey which Messer Luca had himself recommended, hoping that the perturbed mind of his son might be thereby benefited. You may imagine how grateful the father felt to Tuccio for thus constituting himself the guardian and guide of the unfortunate young man.

Spinello had not a particle of will or inclination remaining to him, and suffered Tuccio to manage everything. He was like the shipwrecked mariner who has lost all that he possessed, and who bereft of hope stands gazing dully, without anger and without fear, at the troubled element which has wrought

him so much evil. Spinello followed his companion silently, accepting his services, and hearkening to his words of consolation, though without having any distinct idea what he was doing or saying. Happily Tuccio di Credi was given neither to long speeches, nor to delicate attentions, so that there was no danger of his erring on the side of importunity. And this friendly roughness of his suited well with Spinello's tacit obedience.

While the one superintended the petty details of their joint existence, the other followed the wandering course of his own sad thoughts, which led him every instant back to the Duomo Vecchio at Arezzo, where he had prayed at Fiordalisa's tomb. The image of his adored lady, breaking the sepulchral seal, sometimes came to hold converse with him. Ah, could he but have represented her as she appeared ever before his eyes!

On their arrival at Florence, the two friends established themselves in a modest dwelling in the Via della Scala. They went out together every day, walking slowly as far as the piazza of Santa Maria Novella,

where Spinello was in the habit of remaining for some time silently gazing at the setting sun. At a given hour, Tuccio di Credi approached his friend, and said to him, 'Let us go!' when Spinello immediately rose and followed him, without a word, as a young child follows its mother. On their return home, the woman who kept the house gave them a lighted candle, and bid them Good-night. It was indeed a monotonous existence; but such an existence is the only one that is in keeping with great sorrows.

Now, it happened that from thus passing daily along the Via della Scala and before the church of San Nicolò, a new building which had lately been erected by Messer Dardano Acciaiuoli in fulfilment of a vow, the deep-seated grief from which Spinello Spinelli was suffering attracted the attention of a gentleman who, for certain reasons of his own, found it necessary to be often in that place.

Between this unknown gentleman and the two silent wayfarers had sprung up that sort of half-intimacy which the fact of people

seeing one another constantly, produces in such cases. It must have been the lot of each one of you, my readers, daily to tread a given way, and in so doing to become so intimately acquainted with the external appearance of certain unknown persons that it almost seems a lost day to you when you do not chance to encounter them under the familiar aspect to which your eye has grown accustomed.

The old gentleman—for indeed the stranger was no longer in the first bloom of his youth—having remarked the sadness of Spinello's expression, realised at once that he was a man whose soul was borne down by the burden of some great sorrow. A feeling of kindly curiosity impelled him to follow the two taciturn youths, and thus three times consecutively he had seen Spinello go and rest himself on the low wall in the Piazza di Santa Maria Novella and there remain for a long time absorbed in meditation, his friend in the meantime going about his own business and then returning to fetch him. Who could those two mute individuals be? And what

was the cause of that profound grief which was impressed on the countenance of the younger of the two? The old man was fain to know it, and therefore having for the third time watched Spinello seat himself in his accustomed place in the square, he hastened after his companion.

'Pardon me,' he said, stopping him in his walk, 'possibly the question that I am about to ask you may be an indiscreet one, but it is that desire which a man should ever feel to help his fellows which induces me to put it.'

'Messere,' replied Tuccio di Credi, with a bow, 'your aspect is that of an honourable man. I pray you to tell me in what I can serve you.'

'I see you daily with a young man whose face wears a most sorrowful expression,' the old gentleman replied. 'He seems indeed to have experienced some grievous misfortune.'

'Alas, yes, Messere, an irreparable one!' answered Tuccio di Credi. 'Death has robbed him of the lady to whom he was betrothed.'

'Ah! that is just as I thought!' exclaimed the other. 'And what is your friend's name?'

'Spinello Spinelli. He is a native of Arezzo, though his family originally came from Florence, and his betrothed was the daughter of Mastro Jacopo da Casentino.'

'The painter?'

'Yes, Messere; he only survived his daughter two months.'

'Sad indeed!' murmured the old man—'and what is your friend doing now?'

'Nothing at present, for he has been too deeply overwhelmed by this great blow, but he is by profession a painter.'

'As you are doubtless yourself.'

'Yes, Messere, but I am considerably his inferior. He has already proved himself to be a most skilful painter in fresco, and one of his works, which is to be seen in the Duomo Vecchio at Arezzo, is considered by good judges to lose none of its merits in thus being placed side by side with the paintings of his old master.'

'Meseems that I have heard it spoken of,'

remarked the old gentleman. 'And you say that now he does nothing?'

'Absolutely nothing, Messere. His grief is so great that it has deprived him even of the power of taking thought for the common necessaries of life. His father entrusted him to my care, and if I were not with him, he would most certainly allow himself to be starved to death.'

'Poor fellow,' exclaimed the old man, shaking his head sorrowfully. 'I should like to do him some good. And he too might be of use to me. Would you have the kindness to tell him so? Or, better still, to bring him to me.'

'With pleasure; but where?'

'Yonder, to the Church of San Nicolò, in the Via della Scala. It is closed at present, but you can enter it through the door of the sacristy. I shall expect you to-morrow at the hour at which you take your accustomed stroll.'

'We will be there, Messere,' replied Tuccio di Credi. 'But, for whom have we to ask?'

'For Dardano Acciaiuoli; that is my name.'

Tuccio made first a gesture of surprise, and then a low bow. The family of the Acciaiuoli was one of the most illustrious in Florence.

The following day, instead of accompanying his friend as far as the Piazza of Santa Maria Novella, Tuccio di Credi stopped in front of the Church of San Nicolò.

'Shall we go in?' he said.

'For what purpose?' asked Spinello.

'To look at it. It is a new church, and perhaps there may be some frescoes there.'

And as he said this, without waiting for the reply of his companion, Tuccio di Credi went towards the door of the sacristy. Spinello followed him.

The church was empty, and looked white from the last coat of plaster with which it had been covered. An old gentleman was standing in the middle of the nave, gazing at the ceiling. Spinello concluded that he was either the architect or one of the members of the Confraternity of the church.

This gentleman advanced slowly towards the young men, and said, addressing himself to Tuccio:

'Do you want anything, my good sirs?'

'No,' replied Tuccio, giving him at the same time a meaning look. 'We had merely come in to look at the paintings, but there do not seem to be any.'

'The building was only finished a few days ago,' the old man courteously replied. 'The frescoes will come in good time, when we find someone to paint them. Do you practise that art yourselves?'

'We do, Messere; I am but an indifferent artist, but my friend is a very good one.'

'And your name, if I might venture to ask it? Mine is Dardano Acciaiuoli.'

Spinello felt bound, in courtesy, to acknowledge the old man's words with a slight bow, while his companion replied to the question for them both.

'My name is Tuccio di Credi; that of my companion, Spinello Spinelli. We are both of the school of Mastro Jacopo da Casentino.'

'Ah!' said Messer Dardano. 'Then your friend is the artist who painted the Saint Donatus in the Duomo Vecchio at Arezzo.'

At this remembrance poor Spinello heaved a sigh which seemed to come from the lowest depths of his heart. He, however, again bowed slightly, in acknowledgment of Messer Dardano Acciaiuoli's courteous mention of him.

'I congratulate you,' Messer Dardano went on to say, turning to Spinello. 'So young, and already such a skilful painter; but pardon me if, while conversing with you, I have an eye to my own interests as well. A favourable opportunity has presented itself and I hasten to seize it. Messer Spinello, will you paint for me? These walls await your brush.'

Spinello did not expect Messer Dardano to conclude his sentence in this manner, and was quite disconcerted thereat.

'Messere,' he said, 'indeed—I ought to be grateful for your good opinion: but how is it

possible that I should resume my work? My soul is very sorrowful.'

'But why should this prevent you? I do not ask you to be joyful. Great griefs refuse to be comforted, and I respect the one which oppresses you. But, mark my words, work is the most efficacious medicine. Do you sorrow for one who was very dear to you? Then your work will be as the offering up of a prayer in her behalf.'

'I would fain die; my life is a burden to me,' murmured Spinello.

'Oh, do not speak thus, Messere. At your age there are still duties to be fulfilled towards the world. At every age there are duties to be fulfilled towards God. We may indeed desire to go to Him by the shortest road; but the granting of this desire (should we have deserved such a boon by having lived a life free from any baseness) rests with Him alone. Accept my proposal, Messer Spinello; you will not work only for me when you work in the house of God.'

How was it possible to resist so loving an appeal? That very union which Messer

Dardano represented as existing between work and prayer, was well calculated to attract a soul as sorrowful as Spinello's. Thus the young painter accepted the offer before leaving the church.

Dardano Acciaiuoli had caused this sanctuary to be erected in order to bury therein a brother of his, who had been a bishop. For that reason it was dedicated to San Nicolò, this saint having during his life-time fulfilled the office of Bishop of Bari. And the dedication of the church, as you may suppose, was to supply the required theme to the painter, who thereupon conceived and designed many episodes from the life of the saint.

A week after the dialogue which I have briefly alluded to, the scaffolding was erected, and Spinello set to work, assisted by Tuccio di Credi, who ground and mixed his brother-artist's colours for him, far better than he had ever done in Arezzo.

Nor had Messer Dardano Acciaiuoli cause to regret having given this commission to Spinello Aretino. On the contrary he took

great credit to himself for the happy thought which had impelled him to follow that silent youth in the street, believing it to be almost an inspiration from heaven. In those days of living faith, it was quite natural to look upon the incident in that light, for reason placed no obstacle in the way.

Spinello acquitted himself so successfully in this work, both with regard to drawing and colouring, that it soon became the principal topic of conversation in Florence, and all Messer Dardano's friends and acquaintances desired to see the frescoes painted by the youthful native of Arezzo, before the scaffolding was taken down. On hearing of the fame of Spinello, and appreciating the merits of the figures which he painted, another notable citizen of Florence, Messer Barone Capelli, commissioned Acciaiuoli's young protegé to paint, in the principal chapel of Santa Maria Maggiore, several stories in fresco from the life of the Madonna, with some others from the life of Sant' Antonio the abbot, and afterwards a picture of the consecration of the same church,

which ceremony had been performed by Pope Pelagius. In this work, which was very highly praised by those competent to judge of such things, Spinello depicted Messer Barone Capelli himself from the life, in the dress of those times, the portrait being exceedingly well executed, and the resemblance most striking. He always succeeded admirably with portraits, as though to increase the bitterness of his regret at having never been able to seize the likeness of Madonna Fiordalisa.

After he had finished the principal chapel at Santa Maria Maggiore, Spinello worked next in the church of the Carmine, and painted several stories in the chapel of the Holy Apostles, Saint James and Saint John. Amongst other subjects he represented that of the wife of Zebedee's children asking Christ that one of her sons might sit on God's right hand and the other on His left in the kingdom of heaven. The Confraternity of the church considered this such a wonderful work that they very soon wished

for more frescoes by the same hand, so commissioned Spinello to paint the interior of another chapel in the same church and near the larger one which he had just completed. And in the decoration of this he gave proof of singular genius, for, desiring to represent the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, which subject was rather too large for the ceiling alone, he contrived to extend it over the walls as well in such a skilful manner as to produce upon the eyes of the spectators the effect of one complete and perfect whole, there being no apparent interruption in the shape of angles and indentations.

As you see, commissions abounded, and there were others besides those I have already enumerated. In a chapel of the Santa Trinità, Spinello executed an Annunciation in fresco, which was universally admired. He also painted a picture in distemper for the high altar of the church of Sant' Apostolo wherein he represented the Holy Ghost in the act of descending upon the Apostles in tongues of fire. I refrain from

mentioning all the paintings in Santa Lucia de' Bardi and in Santa Croce for fear of wearying my readers, and also lest my story should savour too much of the nature of a catalogue.

END OF VOL. I