

The plot is by no means of the author's creation ; but, just as the plots of many of Shakespeare's plays have been derived from Boccaccio or other like compilers of stories and legends, has been borrowed from an Italian legend of the same title as the drama. Silvio Pellico, the Italian dramatist, has drawn on the same source for his tragedy, "*Francesca da Rimini*." Briefly, then—for brevity is possible, owing to the simplicity of the plot—let us outline the story of the unhappy Paolo and Francesca.

Giovanni Malatesta, tyrant of Rimini, found that old age was creeping fast upon him. His incessant wars with neighboring tyrants and the intestine feuds of his little state had given him no time to marry or dream of marriage. War and blood had been the subjects of his thoughts and reveries. Now he languished for a calm, and a wife, "to lead him gently down the slant of life." Accordingly, he despatched his brother—his more than brother, bosom friend, sharer of his griefs and joys—Paolo, to Ravenna, to entreat of the tyrant of that city the hand of his daughter Francesca. Paolo was successful in his suit. In great state he led the lovely daughter of Ravenna to her betrothed.

Soon after his return to Rimini and immediately before the marriage ceremonies were to take place, Paolo abruptly declared to his brother his intention of leaving Rimini, as he had urgent need of so doing. As no further reason was given, Giovanni was completely mystified, for heretofore no secrets had ever existed between these brother-friends. His earnest entreaties and pleadings, coupled with the persuasive prayers of Francesca, availed nothing except to stiffen him in his resolve. Yet no departure was ever undertaken more unwillingly than his. Why did he go? What inexplicable barrier of a secret now partially separated the brothers? It was this: Paolo loved Francesca and knew it; Francesca loved him, but knew it not. He feared the results when her love should become conscious; nor would his sense of honor allow him to remain near her any longer.

He left the palace, but journeyed no farther than Rimini. Tortured in spirit, he wandered aimlessly through the town,