

Lanciotto resumed his seat in the

arbor, and his father sat at his side.

"'Tis not Pepe's gibes alone I fear," said Lanciotto, "'tis that of every idle

tongue in Rimini. Even now, as I

walk the street, the people look as-

kance at me, and I can read in their

faces their scorn for me and pity for

to accentuate my deformities. They

they will be ridiculed in the husband.

No, father, it cannot be; this marri-

"Lanciotto, you know, as well as I,

strenuous times, pregnant with war

the daughter of our enemy, and naught

it now occupies. So may your mar-

life; and such the husband's if he would retain his bride. The soldier's

bride should be his sword-the dints

in it, his children. Them I could love,

"Your fears are groundless, Lan-

lessons in the gentle art of wooing.

He'll teach you how to win the bride

and keep her, too. In a few days,

your fearsome thoughts will turn to

The preparations for Paolo's mo-

mentous journey were progressing progressing favorably. New garments and new accountements for himself and

attendant cavaliers, and a select body

of men-at-arms and noble steeds were

fitted for their use. He would journey

with all the pomp and splendor of a

prince-a becoming escort to so fair

a bride. And Paolo looked every inch

prince.
Before the departure of the caval-

temper, nature, form and features

bring her here and then, on seeing

me, refuse my hand. Let that not

"As you say, Lanciotto; I woo her

"But, if you find her to your liking,

not wrong me, as I have never seen

This marriage is but a union of our

houses, and 'twould serve as well for

you to marry her; and, perhaps, serve

you of the happiness of Francesca's

CHAPTER IV.

The Fair Francesca.

It was a dull, gray morning, and a heavy sea fog started from the Adria-

tic, rolled across the salt-marshes, and

clasped Ravenna in a moist embrace.

Very few of the inhabitants were astir.

Only two classes of citizens ventured

forth at an early hour in such dismal

weather; the fishermen and the re-

ligious devotee-the latter, however,

This morning, the fog had so wrap-

ped its gray mantle over the church of

may pass it by unnoticed. When the

ters also, and rolls majestically

through the nave, its moist sleeves

touching the marble columns on either

side leave great wet spots on them,

then, dividing at the altar, the fog re-

treats down either side of the church

toward the door, bathing, on its way,

the mosaic figures of the bishops who,

walls upon the faithful worshipers.

stony silence, look down from the

In the apse of the church, there is

great jeweled cross, symbolizing the

Saviour on the Mount of Transfigura-

tion. Moses and Elias lean forth from

valley below the apostles wait, rep-

the morning of our story, in the year 1285, two girls were kneeling in adora-

tion before the jeweled cross. After they have concluded their devotions,

and are walking down the nave, we

may observe that one of the girls is

unusually tall, but of a symmetrical and well-developed figure. Her face

is of a Grecian mold, fair skin, rosy

lips and large blue eyes. A mass of rich auburn hair crowns her beauteous

stately carriage that indicates pride of

birth and social position. Although

only 19 years of age, she has a com-

manding presence that aristocratic

lineage alone can give. Yet, withal, she bears herself with a maidenly

modesty that suggests innocence and

She is Francesca, daughter of Lord

Guido, tyrant of Ravenna. Her rank

and beauty have attracted many admirers from all parts of the province,

but she is an only child, and is of that

exalted rank wherein marriages are political events and daughters are

sacrificed to the exigencies of state

affairs. Her father may match her

to his enemy to conciliate an ancient

feud, or wed her to a political ally as pledge of continued friendship.

either event, her wishes will not be consulted. Why, then, should she in-volve herself in a hopeless affection

that would lead to despair and disap-

As she left the church, with down-

As she left the church, with down-cast eyes, she had not noticed the admiring glances of a young man who, half-concealed, watched her from behind one of the columns of the portico. The youth had not escaped the sharp eyes of the maid, who, a moment later, said to her mistress:

"Did you see Count Rubini behind the pillar in the portico? He has been

simplicity.

resented symbolically as sheep.

clouds on either side, and in the

enters the church, the fog en-

Saint Appollinare in Classe that one

were few in number

"No, my brother, this shows your

She shall be yours. Farewell!"

to give him his parting instructions,
"I depend on you, Paolo, to prepare

open as the noon-day sun.

honor and protect."

"Obedience is a virtue in a soldier,"

riage serve to maintain it there."

age is impossible."

CHAPTER-III. The Court Jester.

The preparations for the marriage were now in progress. There was a general renovation of the ancient castle from its lower dungeons to the topmost pinnacle of the great tower; the accumulated dust and rubbish of years were being gathered and removed from every nook and crevice. The armor and various implements of war that had for a generation decked, undisturbed, the walls of the great hall were now furbished until they shone crystal. The retainers worked with a hearty will, for it was the first the weighty reasons that press this at the church, had made some impresmarriage amongst the present genera- marriage on us. The safety of our tion of the Malatesta family, and the occasion would prove a welcome relief Lord Guido and I are agreed that the from the harsh routine of hostile life. destinies of Rimini and Ravenna must Besides, it meant to the retainers a be united by a tie that will not be period of feasting and merriment with unusual freedom and privileges.

Lanciotto was a favorite amongst will alone suffice." the retainers and men-at-arms. their leader in time of war, or their comrade in time of peace, he al-ways treated them with a kindness handsome, a credit to both our houses," ers, whilst the bloom of her cheeks and consideration uncommon in those suggested Lanciotto. harsh days. He had their best wishes in his approaching marriage.

The bridegroom himself looked upon that he seeks; a name, like yours, that the preparations with a fearful heart.

His mind was rent by conflicting strenuous times, pregnant with war thoughts. One question tormented him and treachery, even in marriage we had ceased only when the tender must consider the safety of the state. pathos of the story had touched her thoughts. One question tormented him and treachery, even in marriage we and happiness, or only disappoint and sorrow? By day, by night, he racked his brain, but the answer never came. He walked his chamber floor, or wandered to and fro in the garden, with anxious face and knitted brows, in an effort to solve the question. One day, as he was seated in an arbor in the garden, Lanciotto saw Pepe, the court jester, approaching him. The sight of the motley garb and the dread of the fool's malicious tongue were added fuel to his mental fever. As Pepe drew

near, he said: "How now, my lord, why so sad?" 'That I have met a fool!' "That should make you merry, since we are brothers now," said Pepe. "You lack only the motley dress, the cap

"What mean you?" "To marry is to declare yourself a fool. There is an old adage that says, the man's that's married is a man

that's marred." 'When were you married, fool?" "When you were born. We were both marred at the same time." "Look you, Pepe!" said Lanciotto, "I'll have no jesting on the subject of my marriage. I'll brook no

insult from your errant tongue. One jest, one gibe—'twill be your last." 'Tis a delicate subject, my lord, that will not stand the strain of one Tis a delicate sword that cannot

cleave the shallow pate of a fool," re- cade, Lanciotto took his brother aside torted Lanciotto. wedding day. One mass would then her mind to find me as I am. suffice us both.

must be exposed to her as clear and "Begone, fool! or your idle tongue will lead your shoulders into trouble." "My shoulders do already grieve me wound my spirit, and do her wrong, to much; they are so small. my lord, that yours are large enough to bear the burden of a husband's happen!"

This taunt stung Lanciotto to the in your stead, and yet for you. quick. He arose and seized Pepe by the throat; his strong fingers would Paolo, woo her for yourself. 'Twould have made short work of the jester had he not been interrupted by Francesca and bear no love for her. a voice, close at hand, exclaiming: "Lanciotto! Lanciotto. The fool is

sacred-heed him not." It was the voice of Lord Malatesta, me better." Lanciotto released his hold of the jester, who quickly ran to a safe dis- generous nature, but I cannot deprive tance, then turned and uttered his defi-

"Ha! Lanciotto, hunchback! You will live to rue the day your profane hands were laid upon the sacred garb of the jester. Even a fool has feelings, and an insult will wear upon his memory until wiped out by revenge. A fool's sword is as sharp as his wit. Then, 'twill cut nothing but the vacant air," replied Lanciotto.

Pepe turned and walked away with a halting step, in imitation of Lanciotto, and at the same time singing: "The bridegroom came with a limping gait,

To greet a bride of high estate-Lord Malatesta sought to soothe Lanciotto's feeling. He said:

"My son, you should pay no attention to the jester's gibes. We have all winced before his cruel tongue, but his calling makes him sacred.'



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thought him a handsome, manly youth; but my father speaks ill of him, be-

cause there is some strife betwixt his family and our own." "It is the wonted way, my lady, Love is a contrary wench. Those we

love we cannot have."
"I did not speak of love, Nerissa. I love no one, save my father."
"If you would observe the pleading look and anxious manner of the count, I'am sure your heart would be touched.

Ah! If I had such a lover I would be

'Hush! Nerissa, you must not tempt me with such idle thoughts. help you."
His love is not for me. I cannot look "You ca on him with approving eyes. I would incur my father's anger-so speak of it comes." it no more."

Nerissa said no more, but she could

not refrain from thinking that Count Rubini would be a fitting husband for my bride. This marriage will serve were overlooked in the soldier, but but she tried to subdue them. Yet the comely features of the young nobleman were constantly before her. The of mine." devotion of the count as shown by his early visit and watchful attention city, our own safety, all depend on it.

That same afternoon, when the sun had dispelled the mists of the morning and the sky again displayed its severed by a passing breeze or the first angry word. The tie of marriage soft Italian beauty, Francesca was seated in an arbor in her father's "If so it be, why not unite Paolo to garden. A robe of soft silk, cut low as the fair Francesca? That would be a at the neck, displayed her delicate rivaled that of the roses that grew Lord Guido does not wish it so. It about her. On the seat, at her side, is the strength of your arm in battle lay a book containing her favorite poem, the story of Launcelot and Guenevere.

She had been reading the poem, and Your mother, when I married her, was gentle heart and brought tears of sympathy to her pitying eyes. She could but good came from it. It served to not see to read; her tears blinded her. place our house on the proud eminence She laid down the book and gave herself up to reverie. The moment was one calculated to evoke the memories of her own life and contrast it with

said Lanciotto, "so the marriage must that of the heroine of the romance. go on, even though I fall beneath it. Her thoughts reverted to the time Yet, I would Paolo had my place. 'Tis when, as a pupil in the convent, she not my mood to bend subservient to and her comrades were wont to dising compliments. Such is the courtier's and the manner of husbands they chose to be wooder by a cavalier who should come to the castle gate clad cient city.
in shining armor, and mounted on a For a few days longer he will exist in shining armor, and mounted on a prancing steed whose proud spirit period and the one sought for by young ladies of a romantic nature. Perhaps it has ever been so, in all ages, in all countries. Has not the rugged son of confirms that fact.

rich velvets and soft silks in place of rara avis in those days of strenuous life when war was man's usual vocation, when town was pitted against bor. The amenities of social life and the gentle arts of peace were crushed to earth beneath the stern necessities of war.

That day, in her reverie, Francesca wondered when her fairy priece would arrive. No one she had yet seen at her father's court bore his resemblance. Of late, her father had vaguely hinted of a marriage, but gave her no definite idea of his meaning. To her, her father's will was law, his choice must be accepted. So, she hoped, she prayed, that her father's choice would be her fairy prince.

CHAPTER V.

Francesca's Dream. Francesca was sitting in her cham, ber, idly gazing from the window at the landscape presented to her view. At her feet, lay Ravenna, active and bustling in the sunlight, but the only sound that reached her ear was the clattering of horses' hoofs. It was a scene of peaceful commercial activity, liable at any moment to be interrupted by a civic brawl between adherents of contending political parties, or by an invading army from a neighboring city. Ravenna was a small republic; so small that it was in constant danger of attack from its more powerful and ambitious neighbors. That was the

cause of Guido's anxiety. After following the course of the river as it meandered slowly and carelessly in a zig-zag manner, across the salt marshes. Francesca's eyes rested upon the calm blue waters of the Adriatic, sparkling in the sunlight. She was musing, dreaming, and halfexpecting that a fairy ship might sail into view on the bosom of the sea. bearing on its magic deck the fairy prince, coming to Ravenna to woo, and carry away as a happy bride, the fair Francesca. To her mind, the idea was not an improbable one. Whilst absorbed in this reverie, a knock came at her door. It startled her. It was the realization of her dream. the fairy prince knocking at the castle gate. Her heart throbbed with excitement; her breathing was short and quick. Then a second knock sounded, accompanied by a voice calling her name. It was Nerissa's voice. The

spell was ended. It was Nerissa with a message from She hastened to obey it. When she entered her father's apartment, he greeted her with more than ordinary Each urn was filled with newly-blo tenderness, and seated her at his side.

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He paused. Francesca was puzzled to understand what was meant by this long preamble, delivered in a tone and manner so unlike her father's usual stern, commanding air. When he paused, as if for a reply, she simply echoed his last words, mechanically:
"I never will."

"I know I can rely on your obedience. Our little republic stands in grave danger from foreign foes. Even comely features and dark curly h now we are threatened by an invasion of the Venetians, and our citizens may revolt against me at any moment. Such peril is ever present."
"Yes, father; I wish that I could

"You can, my child, you may avert the danger, or help me to repel it when "How so, father?" inquired Fran-

cesca, with wondering eyes.
"By a marriage with Lanciotto, the son of Lord Malatesta, of Rimini. The her handsome mistress. The thoughts union of our houses would protect us of Francesca ran in the same channel, against a common foe, and insure neutrality between ourselves. I need their help, and they have equal need

"But I have never seen Lord Malatesta's son. What is he like?" "A man of honor and courage who will bring much credit to our house, sion on her, and though she had for-bidden her maid to speak of him, the bidden her maid to speak of him, the have selected him as your husband, did I not know his worth." "I should like to know something of

his personal appearance," suggested Francesca, timidly. "I understand, my child, you would like to know if he is young and handsome, a paragon of grace and beauty. Well, Francesca, that is quite natural. Young girls, just from the convent, have romantic ideas of life, and see only the outward form and feature of the man. They never look within for sterling worth. But you shall see and judge him for yourself. Within a week

for his bride. "I hope I shall like him-for your sake, my dear father."

"Not for my sake alone, but for the sake of Ravenna and our ancient I trust you will prove a worthy daughter of the house of Polenta." So saying, he kissed her on the forehead and dismissed her.

Francesca returned to her chamber and resumed her reverie. Her thoughts now assumed a more definite form. She knew, at least, that her fairy assumed a more definite form. a woman's whim, or mouth unmean- cuss their own future fortunes in life, prince was a count of the house of Malatesta, that he was now in Rimini; would choose. Francesca remembered and she scanned the southern horizon full well that the majority of the girls in an effort to catch a glimpse of the in an effort to catch a glimpse of the distant spires and towers of the an-

in her thoughts as the fairy prince; Your lears are global to a commend you to Paolo for should harmonize with that of his masthern then he will come knocking at the lessons in the gentle art of wooing. ter. Such was the ideal lover of the castle gate, and be thenceforth an actual living entity. That night as she tell asleep, her thoughts were of him. She was walking alone through a vast forest. A narrow path led through Mars been Cupid's fayorite since the thick bushes and beneath gigantic beginning of time? The history of love overhanging trees. The sun had set, and already darkness was gathering in Not so with Francesca. She had ever dreamed of a lover who should come in the form of a fairy prince, clad in hurried on, as her fear increased with the darkness. Then she imagined she shining armor, with fine curly hair heard footsteps behind her. She dared surmounted by cap and feather. Her not stop to look behind; she hastened lover should come bearing bright her already rapid pace in an effort to jewels and rich presents for his bride, escape her pursuer. Now, she could accoutrements and hear the panting breath of the unpanoply of war. His voice should be known creature; it was gaining on soft and musical, his manners should her. She was running with all her be gentle and courteous; he should be speed; her feet scarcely touched the combine the graces of a woman with in its embrace. At last she wandered the gallantry of a man. Francesca had from the path and became entangled set up a lofty ideal. She sought a in the bushes; she could go no farther: she turned and faced her pursuer. Before her, stood a creature with hideous town, and even neighbor against neigh- and rounded back-a frightful misshapen creature—with little semblance

> "Who are you?" she cried. With a mocking, fiendish grin, he re-

"I am your husband! Lanciotto!" Then, as he advanced to embrace her, she shrieked and fell to the ground haps?" in a swoon. The fall awoke her. It was a dream.

her bed in a fright. She was trembling, and her brow was bathed with perspiration. She slept no more that night. She sat at the window and watched the stars pale and vanish, one by one, before the power of the new-born day; she saw the sun rise mysteriously out of the misty surface of the Adriatic Sea; she saw the fishermen pursuing their lazy course up the river with their night's catch of fish; she saw the streets of the city awak ening to the life of another day. Her eyes saw these sights, but paid no nor communicated the same to her aching brain. The dream absorbed her thoughts, irritated her, worried

Throughout the day, she could not drive it from her memory; the hideous spectre was constantly before her eyes. She was nervous, restless; and fearful that the vision was prophetic. was a woman-therefore she believed in dreams and premonitions. It must have some significance. What could it be? She saw only one interpretation. The Count of Rimini was some mysterious creature, a monster description. That idea took firm possession of her mind. The romance of her wedding was absorbed and wholly extinguished by this dreadful doubt which, like jealousy, grew stronger every hour without any apparent rea-

-She instructed her maid to make inquiries amongst the soldiers, and obtain some particulars in regard to the personal appearance of the count. She could not await his arrival. She must

> CHAPTER VI. Lanciotto's Envoy.

The day was perfect. The blue sky of Italy was cloudless. The sun shon brightly, but seemed to have abated some of its wonted heat in honor of Guido that he wished to speak the day. From early morn the with Francesca in his apartment. The tainers of Lord Guido had been astir summons was an unusual one and to dress the palace in holiday attire. meant an interview of grave intent. Not a speck of dust remained on the mosaic floors. Each marble pillar was polished until it reflected like a mirror, somed flowers. The armor and the "My child, I have sent for you on spears and other implements of war a matter that is of serious moment to both of us. You were, in early life, bereft of a loving mother's care; since every particle of light. The soldiers, with shimmering arms and culrasses and fresh doublet and hose, added to the gayety of the scene. Even the stern face of Lord Guido relaxed into the semblance of a smile as he viewed the transformation of his dingy, ill-

kept palace into a bower of beauty. But why this change? Last night a courier arrived with a dispatch stating that the Count of Riminf would arrive this day to escor the bride to her future ho

very devout of late. Methinks it is not the saints he comes to worship."

"What do you mean, Nerissa?"

"You will pardon me, my lady, but I have thought his eyes saw naught but you, that you are his divinity."

"For my part," said Francesca, "I have noticed him once or twice and thought him a handsome manly youth:

then, I have fried to fill a double role, father and mother in one. You made accompanied by her maids of honor, A flourish of trumpets indicated that the visitors had arrived at the palace gates. A few minutes later, a page announced, "The Count of Rimini."

He paused. Francesca was puzzled to understand what was mounted by the pages, bearing caskets of jewels as pages, bearing caskets of jewels as presents to the bride. Then came Paolo, followed by his body-guard and

a few men-at-arms.
As Paolo advanced to the dais to greet the tyrant of Ravenna, a confused murmur ran through the hall. It was a murmur of admiration and surprise at the handsome youth, the comely features and dark curly hair. his slender but athletic figure, and his graceful bearing were adorned by a doublet of crimson satin slashed with white; his costume, from cap to toe, was of the same crimson tint-a color that served to enhance the rich, dark beauty of his youthful features.

After making his obeisance before Lord Guido, Paolo raised his eyes and beheld, for the first time, the beautiful Francesca. He stood mute from astonishment; his eyes remained fastened on her blue orbs. His steadfast gaze abashed her; she dropped her eyes and lowered her head. Paolo was brought to a realization

of his position by the voice of Guido:

'Welcome to Ravenna, son of Malatesta! You seem to be the worthy scion of a noble father." "Lord of Ravenna, I thank you! I bring you greetings of friendship from Lord Malatesta. I come on an errand of peace, and hope I may prove to be a harbinger of joy and fortune to both our houses. I have come to pluck the choicest flower in Ravenna's garden and carry it back to Rimini. A rumor was current in Rimini that Lord Guido's daughter was the fairest lady in Ravenna. I now perceive that such rumor conveyed only half the truth-I find her to be the fairest lady in all Italy. Be assured that she will receive in Rimini that welcome which

her virtues and her beauty merit." "We know the honor of your noble house, and can trust to its care the he will come to Ravenna to claim you flower of Ravenna. We will be prepared to depart for Rimini within three days; until then, be our guest. "I thank you!" said Paolo. "With your permission I will retire to rest myself and remove the stains of travel from my clothing." That evening, when the maid Nerissa

was assisting her mistress at her toilet, Francesca was in the best of spirits. "Did you see him, Nerissa? Is he not handsome?" asked Francesca. "Who, my lady?"

"Why the Count of Rimini-my bethrothed, my fairy prince, who arrived today. Did he not look handsome in that crimson costume? I fell in love with him at once. My father will not require to urge me farther in this marriage. I will consent joyfully, and an honest answer, Francesca?" thank the saints for sending such a husband." "But, my lady, are you not mis-

This gentleman is not your taken. bethrothed. "How so, Nerissa? What do you mean?

"Is not your betrothed named Lanciotto?" "Yes; Lanciotto, Count of Rimini, son of Lord Malatesta. The very man who came today."

"You will pardon me, my lady, if I question truly." am mistaken, but I heard it said by some of the soldiers that the man who came today is not Lanciotto; that he is Paolo, a younger brother." "Surely, that cannot be," said Fran-lesca. "They called him Count of Rimini, and he looked at me so carn-

estly, so tenderly; it must be he! Tell me, how do these soldiers know that he is not Lanciotto?" bred in the court, not in the camp; ground. It was close behind, and "Some of the men at-arms have be a courtier, not a soldier. He must every instant she expected to be seized fought in battle at the side of Lanciotto, and know him well. He is deformed, a hunchback-" "What! Lanciotto - deformed - a

hunchback. "No, my lady; I did not mean that. face and glaring eyes, distorted limbs I meant to say that he is as strong and courageous as a lion; the bravest soldier in all Romagna.' "But you spoke of a deformity. What "Careless words, my lady. I meant

them not. I know not why I said them. "You have heard it spoken of, per-"No, my lady. I know nothing of it."

"Tis passing strange! Such was the creature of my dream. My father shall answer me tomorrow. Nerissa, you may go!' Francesca passed a restless night.

Her mind was filled with doubts and suspicions, which were strengthened every hour as she recalled to memory certain words and actions father that had been inexplicable heretofore Had her father concealed from her the truth concerning Lanciotto? Was it true that Lanciotto was lame or deformed? It must be so! Else why did he not come himself to woo Rimini? It was a duty that custom



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imposed on him to perform in person yet he had sent a brother. story. Dreams are warnings sent from doubtful than before. If the hand-Heaven to guide us in the dark, mys- some Paolo had been her chosen husterious future, and disclose to us the band, she would have been shoals whereen our bark of life will happy. She confessed to herself that strand and be destroyed if we con- she already loved him. She would demn the caution.

CHAPTER VII.

A Mystery to the Bride. As early as possible next morning, Francesca sought her father in his own apartment. There, she could speak to him without reserve. found him alone and, without any preliminary cavilling, she at once broached the subject.

"Father, I have come to ask you a question to which I deside an honest answer.'

"Have I ever given you aught but "None, save such as silence might imply. The offense of omission may be as great a crime as that of actual commission.' "How now, child? You speak in

riddles.' "I have heard a rumor from more "Aye, Francesca, I have seen him

through a score of the enemy. arm so strong, no sword so true as his.

The bravest soldier in Romagna!"

broke the spell and Paolo stepped forward, saying: 'I do not doubt his courage, father,'

time to frame his answer. He was drawing the hily from its peaceful se-"Your answer, father" continued Francesca. Her persistency and his inability to

devise a suitable reply combined to render him irritable Why, my daughter, your question is absurd. How, think you, could a man deformed, a hunchback, in the midst of the enemy, hold his own against a score; and this, I have seen Lanciotte do. He is a proper man, a brave soldier, and a fit husband for any woman-even for my daughterelse I had not chosen him for you. So,

say no more!' But is he as well-favored as his brother who arrived here yesterday?" demanded Francesca, still seeking a direct answer.

Lord Guido. "Then why did he not come himself? Why did he send his brother?" "I do not know, my child. I did not

coming himself, and now I learn it is his brother who has come in his stead. There is some mystery, and, I suspect, deceit. I inherit your proud spirit, and will not brook deception.' "Francesca, when you see Lanciotto. you will find him to be all that I have represented."

With such evasive answers, Francesca had to be content. She left her Besides, her dream confirmed the father's apartment no wiser, but more question him to solve her doubts. He was so young, so noble, he would not deceive her. It was late in the afternoon before she had an opportunity to talk with him in private. At that time she was sitting in her favorite arbor in the garden, when she saw Count Paolo coming down a pathway that

would bring him close to her retreat. Paolo was sauntering through the garden, quite ignorant of the presence there, at that moment, of Ravenna's choicest flower. Yet his thoughts had been centered on her since the moment of their first meeting. Her entrancing beauty had captivated him at first sight, and it was only by the strong sense of duty and loyalty which he owed to his brother that he was restrained from laying his heart at her feet. He was thinking of her as he wandered through the garden; but he did not observe the presence of Franthan one quarter that Lanciotto, to whom you have bethrothed me, is deformed, a hunchback, and otherwise head, he met the gentle gaze of her ill-favored by nature. You have seen soft, blue eyes. He stood still, from him, my lord, and can answer my surprise and admiration, and knew not what to say. After a momentary silence. Francesca felt embarrassed on many a battlefield cut his way and, trembling, rose to her feet. This No movement on the part of Francesca

"Pardon me! I do not wish to dissaid Francesca; "it is his form and turb you. I did not know that you features I suspect. What of them?" were here, or I should have taken an-Lord Guido could not reply to this direct question at once. He required flowers, but had no thought of with-

> "I was about to return to the palace. so your arrival has not disturbed me,

"May I be your escort?" said Paolo. "If you will. I have a desire to ask you some questions concerning your brother. You understand that I know, as yet, very little about my bethrothed husband. My father has told me nothing, save the fact that he is a brave soldier. "Aye! that he is, my lady; he has

the stoutest heart and keenest blade in all Romagna.' "I doubt it not; but I would know if he is fair to look upon," said Francesca.

"As fair as he is brave. In battle he has the courage of a lion; in time 'As like as two brothers!" said of peace his heart doth throb with sympathy and love for every friend. "Count Paolo, it seems to me that you like others, do trifle with my questions and seek to avoid a direct answer. Why this mystery? To me, his "You told me that Lanciette was promised bride, nothing should be hidden.

> "I seek not to conceal, my lady. said Paolo, "but, as I see it, the qualities of heart and mind so far outweigh all other considerations that I do dwell on them the most. 'Tis they that make or mar our lives and happiness. The face and figure are but outer shell that may contain a fickle heart and empty mind. We should seek within to find the pearl, heart of gold, the qualities that ive forever and are remembered even after death. When we lose a friend. is not his fair face or comely figure that we do mourn-but his kind heart and tender words; they never die.' "Fair words, my lord, and noble thoughts; but my question is not answered. I must insist--stopped. Her father was approaching from the palace. When he

had drawn near, he said: "Francesca, my child, you must hasten your preparations; we depart for Rimini tomorrow." "Why so soon, my lord?"

"Hear that, Paolo! Behold a bride who would not haste her wedding day! hope, Paolo, you may prove a stronger magnet to some fair lady. Go, Francesca, and prepare for the journey. I would discuss with Paolo some affairs of state." After Francesca had left them,

Lord Guido said to Paolo: "This marriage must be hastened. My daughter grows suspicious, and may refuse to go, if we delay. We will leave for Rimini tomorrow morning." "I fear, my lord, that we do wrong in concealing from her Lanciotto's deformity. He charged me to tell her all, and will be angry if we deceive her. I wish that she were told, yet the task is not to my liking. What think you, my lord? Should you not tell

Lord Guido hesitated a moment, as though debating the matter in his mind, then replied: "No; let us wait until we reach Rimini. 'Twere better so. Once there,

we'll have no trouble. [To be continued.] A swallow, if in a hurry, travels 128

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