

that they should be my heirs and should inherit after me that which I have reserved for myself in case I should fall into distress." Then he went unto one who was an old and dear friend and said unto him, "Lend me two gold florins." And he lent them, and Giovanni Cavazza invited his daughters and his sons-in-law to dinner; and after they had eaten he said unto them, "Wait ye for me here in the hall," and he shut himself up in his chamber. And there he began to count that money over and over again. The sons-in-law and the daughters watched at the keyhole and beheld the money. And Giovanni said aloud unto himself, "Whoever doeth good unto me, so will I do unto him; if these my sons-in-law and my daughters behave themselves well unto me, I will leave them the whole of this. And verily, if I should die of hunger, never in my life will I touch one penny of this money, for I desire that my daughters should have it all." And the daughters and their husbands heard all that he said; and when he had done this for a great while he made pretence of replacing the money and then issued forth from his chamber taking that money with him, but his sons-in-law believed that it was in the chest. Then he called his sons-in-law unto him and said, "Help me now and treat ye me well, and I will leave you rich men." And from that day forward they each strove who should do him the most honour, and clothe him and feed him and bear him company. At last he made his will and left much money to friars and priests and hospitals and to the poor, all for the love of God, and his sons-in-law did he leave to be his heirs, and they did bind themselves to pay the debts which he should leave unpaid. And he ordered that, so soon as he should be buried, the friars should give the keys unto his sons-in-law; and to these he said, "Bury me honourably, for ye can well do it, considering what I shall leave unto you." Each promised that he would do so. After this Giovanni lived with his sons-in-law and his daughters for a long time and in great honour, and at their expense. Then he died, and they caused him to be buried with much honour; and they returned home, thinking it a thousand years till they should obtain the keys. And they went to fetch them, but first they paid the debts, as Giovanni had ordered. And when the debts were paid they were given the keys, and they returned home and opened the chest and found therein the iron bar and the writing: "*This is the will of Giovanni Cavazza; he who unto others doth give himself and all, by this rod of iron shall he be killed withal.*"

Now this *example*, which is distinguished by that pleasant cheerfulness which enlivens some of Boccaccio's tales, this jest which pleased our moralist so much that he related it twice in his pages, and not without a touch of malice in his enjoyment, gives us an insight into certain hidden aspects of his nature, certain incorrigible defects in his character of astute and circumspect merchant. Beneath the habit of the devout moralist