

four solid trunks of wax flamed at the sides of the tabernacle.

XIV

The five days of the festival Anna lived thus within the church from early morning until the hour at which the doors were closed—most faithfully she breathed in that warm air which implanted in her senses a blissful torpor, in her soul a joy, full of humility. The orations, the genuflections, the salutations, all of those formulas, all of those ritualistic gestures incessantly repeated, dulled her senses. The fumes of the incense hid the earth from her.

Rosaria, the daughter of Sblendore, meanwhile profited by moving her to pity with lying complaints and by the miserable spectacle of the paralytic old man. She was an unprincipled woman, expert in fraud and dedicated to debauchery; her entire face was covered with blisters, red and serpentine, her hair grey, her stomach obese. Bound to the paralytic by vices common to both and by marriage, she and he had squandered in a short time their substance in guzzling and merry-making. Both in their misery, venomous from privation, burning with thirst for wine and liquor, harassed by the infirmities of