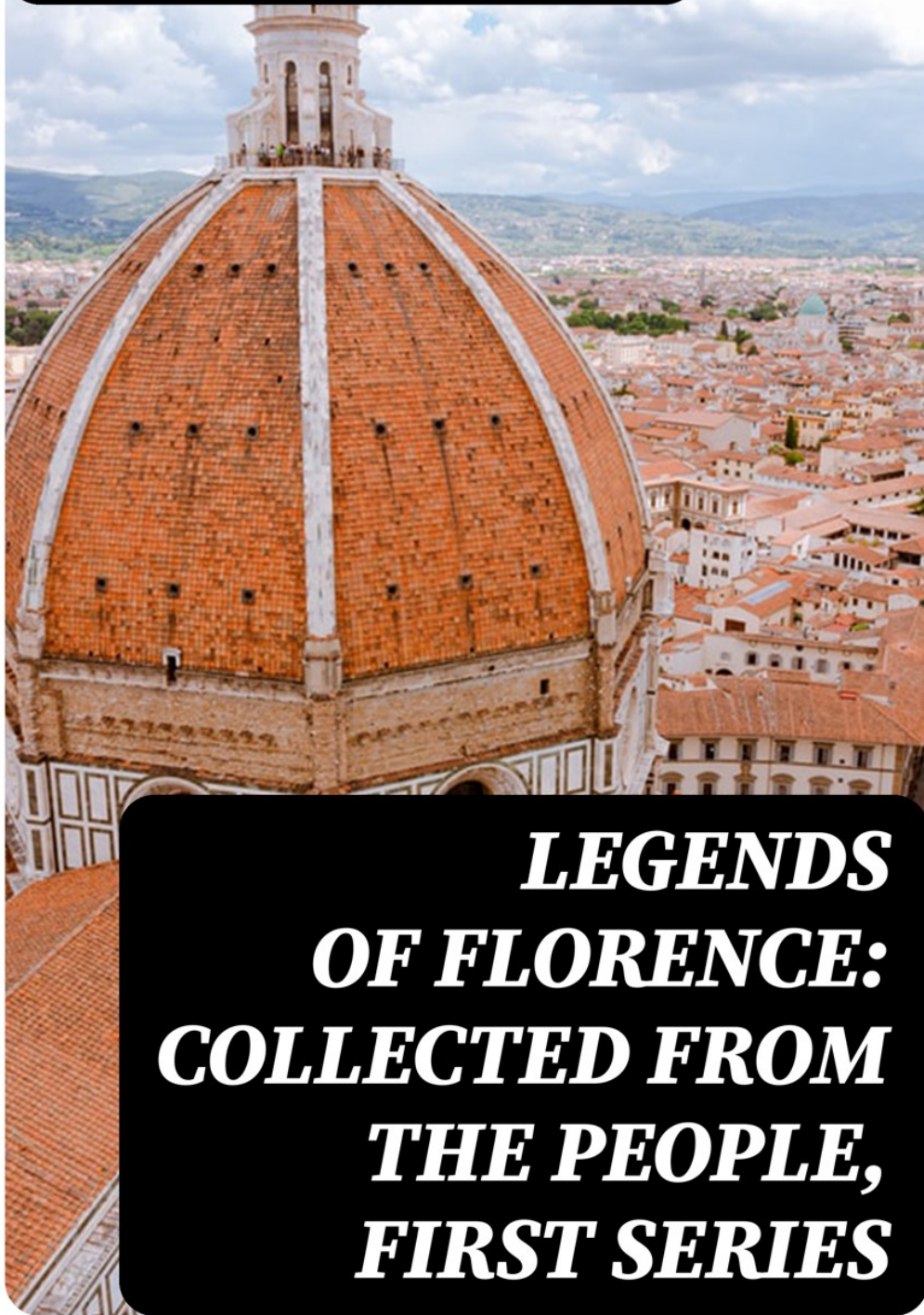


***CHARLES
GODFREY LELAND***



***LEGENDS
OF FLORENCE:
COLLECTED FROM
THE PEOPLE,
FIRST SERIES***

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Legends of Florence: Collected from the People, First Series

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PREFACE

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This book consists almost entirely of legends or traditions of a varied character, referring to places and buildings in Florence, such as the Cathedral and Campanile, the Signoria, the Bargello, the different city gates, ancient towers and bridges, palaces, crosses, and fountains, noted corners, odd by-ways, and many churches. To all of these there are tales, or at least anecdotes attached, which will be found as entertaining to the general reader as they will be interesting, not to say valuable, to the folklorist and the student of social history; but here I must leave the work to speak for itself.

I originally intended that this should be entirely a collection of relics of ancient mythology, with superstitions and sorceries, witchcraft and incantations, or what may be called occult folk-lore, of which my work on "Etruscan-Roman Remains in Popular Tradition" consists, and of which I have enough additional material to make a large volume. But having resolved to add to it local legends, and give them the preference, I found that the latter so abounded, and were so easily collected by an expert, that I was obliged to cast out my occult folk-lore, piece by piece, if I ever hoped to get into the port of publication, according to terms with the underwriters, following the principle laid down by the illustrious Poggio, that in a storm the heaviest things must go overboard first, he illustrating the idea with the story of the Florentine, who, having heard this from the captain when at sea in a tempest, at once threw his wife

into the raging billows—*perche non haveva cosa più grave di lei*—because there was nought on earth which weighed on him so heavily.

There are several very excellent and pleasant works on Old Florence, such as that portion devoted to it in the “Cities of Central Italy,” by A. J. C. Hare; the “Walks about Florence,” by the Sisters Horner; “Florentine Life,” by Scaife; and the more recent and admirable book by Leader Scott, which are all—I say it advisedly—indispensable for those who would really know something about a place which is unusually opulent in ancient, adventurous, or artistic associations. My book is, however, *entirely* different from these, and all which are exclusively taken from authentic records and books. My tales are, with a few exceptions, derived directly or indirectly from the people themselves—having been recorded in the local dialect—the exceptions being a few anecdotes racy of the soil, taken from antique jest-books and such bygone halfpenny literature as belonged to the multitude, and had its origin among them. These I could not, indeed, well omit, as they every one refer to some peculiar place in Florence. To these I must add several which remained obscurely in my memory, but which I did not record at the time of hearing or reading, not having then the intention of publishing such a book.

It has been well observed by Wordsworth that minor local legends sink more deeply into the soul than greater histories, as is proved by the fact that romantic folk-lore spreads far and wide over the world, completely distancing in the race the records of mighty men and their deeds. The magic of Washington Irving has cast over the Catskills and

the Hudson, by means of such tales, an indescribable fascination, even as Scott made of all Scotland a fairyland; for it is indisputable that a strange story, or one of wild or quaint adventure, or even of humour, goes further to fix a place in our memory than anything else can do. Therefore I have great hope that these fairy-tales of Florence, and strange fables of its fountains, palaces, and public places—as they are truly gathered from old wives, and bear in themselves unmistakable evidences of antiquity—will be of real use in impressing on many memories much which is worth retaining, and which would otherwise have been forgotten.

The manner in which these stories were collected was as follows:—In the year 1886 I made the acquaintance in Florence of a woman who was not only skilled in fortune-telling, but who inherited as a family gift from generations, skill in witchcraft—that is, a knowledge of mystical cures, the relieving people who were bewitched, the making amulets, and who had withal a memory stocked with a literally incredible number of tales and names of spirits, with the invocations to them, and strange rites and charms. She was a native of the Romagna Toscana, where there still lurks in the recesses of the mountains much antique Etrusco-Roman heathenism, though it is disappearing very rapidly. Maddalena—such was her name—soon began to communicate to me all her lore. She could read and write, but beyond this never gave the least indication of having opened a book of any kind; albeit she had an immense library of folk-lore in her brain. When she could not recall a tale or incantation, she would go about among her

extensive number of friends, and being perfectly familiar with every dialect, whether Neapolitan, Bolognese, Florentine, or Venetian, and the ways and manners of the poor, and especially of witches, who are the great repositories of legends, became in time wonderfully well skilled as a collector. Now, as the proverb says, "Take a thief to catch a thief," so I found that to take a witch to catch witches, or detect their secrets, was an infallible means to acquire the arcana of sorcery. It was in this manner that I gathered a great part of the lore given in my "Etruscan-Roman Remains." I however collected enough, in all conscience, from other sources, and verified it all sufficiently from classic writers, to fully test the honesty of my authorities.

The witches in Italy form a class who are the repositories of all the folk-lore; but, what is not at all generally known, they also keep as strict secrets an *immense* number of legends of their own, which have nothing in common with the nursery or popular tales, such as are commonly collected and published. The real witch-story is very often only a frame, so to speak, the real picture within it being the *arcanum* of a long *scongiurazione* or incantation, and what ingredients were used to work the charm. I have given numbers of these real witch-tales in my "Etruscan-Roman Remains," and a few, such as "Orpheus and Eurydice," "Intialo," and "Il Moschone," in this work.

Lady Vere de Vere, who has investigated witchcraft as it exists in the Italian Tyrol, in an admirable article in *La Rivista* of Rome (June 1894)—which article has the only demerit of being too brief—tells us that "the Community of Italian

Witches is regulated by laws, traditions, and customs of the most secret kind, possessing special recipes for sorcery," which is perfectly true. Having been free of the community for years, I can speak from experience. The more occult and singular of their secrets are naturally not of a nature to be published, any more than are those of the Voodoos. Some of the milder sort may be found in the story of the "Moscone, or Great Fly," in this work. The great secret for scholars is, however, that these pagans and heretics, who are the last who cling to a heathen creed out-worn in Europe—these outcast children of the Cainites, Ultra-Taborites, and similar ancient worshippers of the devil, are really the ones who possess the most valuable stores of folk-lore, that is to say, such as illustrate the first origins of the religious Idea, its development, and specially the evolution of the Opposition or Protestant principle.

As regards the many legends in this book which do not illustrate such serious research, it is but natural that witches, who love and live in the Curious, should have preserved more even of them than other people, and it was accordingly among her colleagues of the mystic spell that Maddalena found tales which would have been long sought for elsewhere, of which this book is a most convincing proof in itself; for while I had resolved on second thought to make it one of simple local tales, there still hangs over most—even of these—a dim, unholy air of sorcery, a witch *aura*, a lurid light, a something eerie and uncanny, a restless hankering for the broom and the supernatural. Those tales are Maddalena's every line—I pray thee, reader, not to make them mine. The spirit will always speak.

Very different, indeed, from these are the contributions of Marietta Pery, the *improvvisatrice*, though even she in good faith, and not for fun, had a horseshoe for luck; which, however, being of an artistic turn, she had elegantly gilded, and also, like a true Italian, wore an amulet. She, too, knew many fairy tales, but they were chiefly such as may be found among the *Racconti delle Fate*, and the variants which are now so liberally published. She had, however, a rare, I may almost say a refined, taste in these, as the poems which I have given indicate.

I must also express my obligations to Miss Roma Lister, a lady born in Italy of English parentage, who is an accomplished folk-lorist and collector, as was shown by her paper on the *Legends of the Castelli Romani*, read at the first meeting of the Italian Folk-Lore Society, founded by Count Angelo de Gubernatis, the learned and accomplished Oriental scholar, and editor of *La Rivista*. I would here say that her researches in the vicinity of Rome have gone far to corroborate what I published in the "Etruscan-Roman Remains." I must also thank Miss Teresa Wyndham for sundry kind assistances, when I was ill in Siena.

There is no city in the world where, within such narrow limit, Art, Nature, and History have done so much to make a place beautiful and interesting as Florence. It is one where we feel that there has been vivid and varied *life*—life such as was led by Benvenuto Cellini and a thousand like him—and we long more than elsewhere to enter into it, and know how those men in quaint and picturesque garb thought and felt four hundred years ago. Now, as at the present day politics and news do not enter into our habits of thought

more than goblins, spirits of fountains and bridges, legends of palaces and towers, and quaint jests of friar or squire, did into those of the olden time, I cannot help believing that this book will be not only entertaining, but useful to all who would study the spirit of history thoroughly. The folk-lore of the future has a far higher mission than has as yet been dreamed for it; it is destined to revive for us the inner sentiment or habitual and peculiar life of man as he was in the olden time more perfectly than it has been achieved by fiction. This will be done by bringing before the reader the facts or *phenomena* of that life itself in more vivid and familiar form. Admitting this, the reader can hardly fail to see that the writer who gathers up with pains whatever he can collect of such materials as this book contains does at least some slight service to Science.

And to conclude—with the thing to which I would specially call attention—I distinctly state that (as will be very evident to the critical reader) there are in this book, especially in the second series, which I hope to bring out later, certain tales, or anecdotes, or jests, which are either based on a very slight foundation of tradition—often a mere hint—or have been so “written up” by a runaway pen—and mine is an “awful bolter”—that the second-rate folk-lorist, whose forte consists not in finding facts but faults, may say in truth, as one of his kind did in America: “Mr. Leland is throughout inaccurate.” In these numerous instances, which are only “folk-lore” run wild, as Rip Van Winkle, Sleepy Hollow, and Heine’s Gods in Exile are legend, I have, I hope, preserved a certain *spirit* of truth, though I have *sans mercy* sacrificed the letter, even as the redcap goblins, which

haunt old houses, are said to be the ghosts of infants sacrificed by witches, or slain by their mothers, in order to make *folletti* or imps of them.

Now as for this reconstructing Hercules from a foot, instead of giving the fragment, at which few would have glanced, the success consists in the skill attained, and the approbation of the reader. And with this frank admission, that in a certain number of these tales the utmost liberty has been taken, I conclude.

CHARLES GODFREY LELAND.

FLORENCE, *April 6*, 1894.

THE THREE HORNS OF MESSER GUICCIARDINI

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“More plenty than the fabled horn
Thrice emptied could pour forth at banqueting.”

—KEATS, *The Earlier Version of “Hyperion.”*

“Prosperity is often our worst enemy, making us vicious, frivolous, and insolent, so that to bear it well is a better test of a man than to endure adversity.”—
GUICCIARDINI, *Maxims*, No. 64.

I did not know when I first read and translated the following story, which was obtained for me and written out by Maddalena, that it had any reference to the celebrated historian and moralist, Guicciardini. How I did so forms the subject of a somewhat singular little incident, which I will subsequently relate.

LE TRE CORNE.

“There was an elderly man, a very good, kind-hearted, wise person, who was gentle and gay with every one, and much beloved by his servants, because they always found him *buono ed allegro*—pleasant and jolly. And often when with them while they were at their work, he would say, ‘*Felice voi poveri!*’—‘Oh, how lucky you are to be poor!’ And they would reply to him, singing in the old Tuscan fashion, because they knew it pleased him:

“‘O caro Signor, you have gold in store,
With all to divert yourself;
Your bees make honey, you’ve plenty of money,
And victuals upon the shelf:
A palace you have, and rich attire,
And everything to your heart’s desire.’

“Then he would reply merrily:

“‘My dear good folk, because you are poor
You are my friends, and all the more,
For the poor are polite to all they see,
And therefore blessed be Poverty!’

“Then a second servant sang:

“‘Oh bello gentile mio Signor’,
Your praise of poverty ’d soon be o’er
If you yourself for a time were poor;
For nothing to eat, and water to drink,
Isn’t so nice as you seem to think,
And a lord who lives in luxury
Don’t know the pressure of poverty.’

“Then all would laugh, and the jolly old lord would sing in his turn:

“‘O charo servitor’,
Tu parli tanto bene,
Ma il tuo parlar
A me non mi conviene.’ . . .

“‘My boy, you answer well,
But with false implication;
For what to me you tell
Has no true application;
How oft I heard you say
(You know ’tis true, you sinner!)
“I am half-starved to-day,
How I’ll enjoy my dinner!”
Your hunger gives you health
And causes great delight,
While I with all my wealth
Have not an appetite.’

“Then another servant sang, laughing:

“‘Dear master, proverbs say,
I have heard them from my birth,
That of all frightful beasts
Which walk upon the earth,
Until we reach the bier,
Wherever man may be,
There’s nothing which we fear
So much as poverty.’

“And so one evening as they were merrily improvising and throwing *stornelli* at one another in this fashion, the Signore went to his street-door, and there beheld three ladies of stately form; for though they were veiled and dressed in the plainest black long robes, it was evident that they were of high rank. Therefore the old lord saluted them courteously, and seeing that they were strangers, asked them whither they were going. But he had first of all had them politely escorted by his servants into his best reception-room. [3a]

“And the one who appeared to be the chief replied:

“‘Truly we know not where we shall lodge, for in all Florence there is, I trow, not a soul who, knowing who we are would receive us.’

“‘And who art thou, lady?’ asked the Signore. And she replied:

“‘Io mi chiamo, e sono,
La Poverta in persona,
E queste due donzelle,
Sono le mie sorelle,
Chi voi non conoscete
La Fame e la Sete!’

“‘I am one whom all throw curse on.
I am Poverty in person;
Of these ladies here, the younger
Is my sister, known as Hunger,
And the third, who’s not the worst,
Is dreaded still by all as Thirst.’

“Blessed be the hour in which ye entered my house!’ cried the Signore, delighted. ‘Make yourselves at home, rest and be at ease as long as you like—*sempre sarei benglieto.*’

“And why are you so well disposed towards me?’ inquired Poverty.

“Because, lady, I am, I trust, sufficiently wise with years and experience to know that everything must not be judged from the surface. Great and good art thou, since but for thee the devil a beggar in the world would ever move a finger to do the least work, and we should all be in mouldy green misery. Well hath it been said that ‘Need makes the old woman trot,’ [3b] and likewise that *Poverta non guasta gentilezza*—‘Poverty doth not degrade true nobility,’ as I can perceive by thy manner, O noble lady. Thou, Poverty, art the mother of Industry, and grandmother of Wealth, Health, and Art; thou makest all men work; but for thee there would be no harvests, yea, all the fine things in the world are due to Want.’

“And I?’ said Dame Hunger. ‘Dost thou also love me?’

“*Si, Dio ti benedicha!*’ replied the Signore. ‘*La fame ghastiga il ghiotto*’—‘Hunger corrects gluttony.

“Hunger causes our delight,
For it gives us appetite;
For dainties without hunger sent
Form a double punishment.’

‘Hunger is the best sauce.’ Thou makest men bold, for *chane affamato non prezza bastone*—a hungry dog fears no stick. Thou makest the happiness of every feast.’

“‘*Ed io, Signore?*’ said Thirst. ‘Hast thou also a good word for me?’

“‘*A Dio, grazie!* God be praised that thou art. For without thee I should have no wine. Nor do men speak in pity of any one when they say in a wine-shop, “He is thirsty enough to drink up the Arno.” I remember a Venetian who once said, coming to a feast, “I would not take five gold *zecchini* for this thirst which I now have.” And to sum it all up, I find that poverty with want to urge it is better than wealth without power to enjoy, and, taking one with another, the poor are honester and have better hearts than the rich.’

“‘Truly thou art great,’ replied Poverty. ‘*Gentile, buono, e galantuomo a parlare*—gentle, good, and noble in thy speech. In such wise thou wilt ever be rich, for as thou art rich thou art good and charitable. And thou hast well said that Plenty comes from us, and it is we who truly own the horn of plenty; and therefore take from me this horn as a gift, and while thou livest be as rich as thou art good and wise!’

“‘And I,’ said Hunger, ‘give thee another, and while it is thine thou shalt never want either a good appetite nor the means to gratify it. For thou hast seen the truth that I was not created to starve men to death, but to keep them from starving.’

“‘And I,’ said Thirst, ‘give thee a third horn of plenty; that is, plenty of wine and temperate desire—*e buon pro vi faccia*. Much good may it do you!’

“Saying this they vanished, and he would have thought it all a dream but for the three horns which they left behind them. So he had a long life and a happy, and in gratitude to

his benefactresses he placed on his shield three horns, as men may see them to this day.”

When I received this legend, I did not know that the three horns on a shield form the coat of arms of Messer Guicciardini, the historian, nor had I ever seen them. It happened by pure chance I went one day with my wife and Miss Roma Lister, who is devoted to folk-lore, to make my first visit to Sir John Edgar at his home, the celebrated old mediæval palazzo, the Villa Guicciardini, Via Montugli.

On the way we passed the Church of the Annunciata, and while driving by I remarked that there were on its wall, among many shields, several which had on them a *single* hunting-horn, but that I had never seen three together, but had heard of such a device, and was very anxious to find it, and learn to what family it belonged.

What was my astonishment, on arriving at the villa or palazzo, at beholding on the wall in the court a large shield bearing the three horns. Sir John Edgar informed me that it was the shield of the Guicciardini family, who at one time inhabited the mansion. I related to him the story, and he said, “I should think that tale had been invented by some one who knew Guicciardini, the author, very well, for it is perfectly inspired with the spirit of his writings. It depicts the man himself as I have conceived him.”

Then we went into the library, where my host showed me Fenton’s translation of the “History” of Guicciardini and his “Maxims” in Italian, remarking that the one which I have placed as motto to this chapter was in fact an epitome of the whole legend.

I should observe, what did not before occur to me, that the family palace of the Guicciardini is in the Via Guicciardini, nearly opposite to the house of Machiavelli, and that it is there that the fairies probably called, if it was in the winter-time.

THE PILLS OF THE MEDICI

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“When I upon a time was somewhat ill,
Then every man did press on me a cure;
And when my wife departed, all of them
Came crowding round, commending me a spouse;
But now my ass is dead, not one of them
Has offered me another—devil a one!”—*Spanish Jests*.

“*Tu vai cercando il mal, come fanno i Medici*”—“Thou goest about seeking evil, even as the Medici do, and of thee and of them it may be said, *Anagyram commoves*.”—*Italian Proverbs*, A.D. 1618.

The higher a tree grows, the more do petty animals burrow into its roots, and displace the dirt to show how it grew in lowly earth; and so it is with great families, who never want for such investigators, as appears by the following tale, which refers to the origin of the Medicis, yet which is withal rather merry than malicious.

D'UNO MEDICO CHE CURAVA GLI ASINI.

“It was long ago—so long, Signore Carlo, that the oldest olive-tree in Tuscany had not been planted, and when wolves sometimes came across the Ponte Vecchio into the town to look into the shop-windows, and ghosts and witches

were as common by night as Christians by day, that there was a man in Florence who hated work, and who had observed, early as the age was, that those who laboured the least were the best paid. And he was always repeating to himself:

“‘Con arte e con inganno,
Si vive mezzo l’anno,
Con inganno, e con arte,
Si vive l’altra parte.’

“Or in English:

“‘With tricks and cleverness, ’tis clear,
A man can live six months i’ the year,
And then with cleverness and tricks
He’ll live as well the other six.’

“Now having come across a recipe for making pills which were guaranteed to cure everything, he resolved to set up for an universal doctor, and that with nothing but the pills to aid. So he went forth from Florence, wandering from one village to another, selling his pills, curing some people, and getting, as often happens, fame far beyond his deserts, so that the peasants began to believe he could remedy all earthly ills.

“And at last one day a stupid contadino, who had lost his ass, went to the doctor and asked him whether by his art and learning he could recover for him the missing animal. Whereupon the doctor gave him six pills at a *quattrino* (a farthing) each, and bade him wander forth thinking intently all the time on the delinquent donkey, and, to perfect the

spell, to walk in all the devious ways and little travelled tracks, solitary by-paths, and lonely *sentieri*, ever repeating solemnly, '*Asino mio! asino mio! Tu che amo come un zio!*'

“Oh my ass! my ass! my ass!
Whom I loved like an uncle,
Alas! alas!’

“And having done this for three days, it came to pass, and no great wonder either, that he found Signore Somaro (or Don Key) comfortably feasting in a dark lane on thistles. After which he praised to the skies the virtue of the wonderful pills, by means of which one could find strayed cattle. And from this dated the doctor’s success, so that he grew rich and founded the family of the Medici, who, in commemoration of this their great ancestor, put the six pills into their shield, as you may see all over Florence to this day.”

There is given in the “Facezie” a story which may be intended as a jest on this family. It is as follows:

“It happened once that a certain doctor or *medico*, who was by no means wanting in *temerita* or bold self-conceit, was sent as ambassador to Giovanna la Superba, or Joanna the Proud, Queen of Naples. And this Florentine Medico having heard many tales of the gallantries of the royal lady, thought he would try the chance, and thereby greatly please himself, and also the better advance his political aims. Therefore, at the first interview, he told her that he was charged with a secret mission, which could only be confided to her ‘between

four eyes,' or in private. So he was taken by her into a room, where he bluntly made a proposal of love. [8]

“Then the Queen, not in the least discomposed, looking straight at him, asked if that was one of the questions or demands with which he had been charged by the Florentines. At which he blushed like a beet and had no more to say, having learned that a bold beggar deserves a stern refusal.”

The name of the Medici naturally gave rise to many jests, and one of these is narrated of Gonella, a famous *farceur*. It is as follows:

“One morning, at the table of the Grand Duke Lorenzo, there was a discussion as to the number and proportion of those who followed different trades and callings, one declaring that there were more clothmakers, another more priests than any others, till at last the host asked Gonella his opinion.

“‘I am sure,’ said Gonella, ‘that there are more doctors than any other kind of people—*e non accade dubitarne*—and there is no use in doubting it.’

“‘Little do you know about it,’ replied the Duke, ‘if you do not know that in all this city there are only two or three accredited physicians.’

“‘With how little knowledge,’ answered Gonella, ‘can a state be governed. It seems, O Excellency, that you have so much to do that you do not know what is in your city, nor what the citizens do.’ And the result of the debate was a bet, and Gonella took every bet offered, his stakes being small and the others great—*A quattrino*

e quattrino si fa il fiorino—Farthings to farthings one by one make a pound when all is done.

“The next morning Gonella, having well wrapped up his throat and face in woollen stuff, stood, looking pitifully enough, at the door of the Duomo, and every one who passed asked him what was the matter, to which he replied, ‘All my teeth ache terribly.’ And everybody offered him an infallible remedy, which he noted down, and with it the name of him who gave it. And then going about town, he made out during the day a list of three hundred prescribers, with as many prescriptions.

“And last of all he went to the palace at the hour of supper, and the Grand Duke seeing him so wrapped up, asked the cause, and hearing that it was toothache, also prescribed a sovereign remedy, and Gonella put it with the name of the Duke at the head of the list. And going home, he had the whole fairly engrossed, and the next day, returning to the palace, was reminded of his bets. Whereupon he produced the paper, and great was the laughter which it caused, since it appeared by it that all the first citizens and nobles of Florence were physicians, and that the Grand Duke himself was their first Medico. So it was generally admitted that Gonella had won, and they paid him the money, with which he made merry for many days.”

This tale has been retold by many a writer, but by none better than by an American feuilletoniste, who improved it by giving a number of the prescriptions commended. Truly it

has been well said that at forty years of age every man is either a fool or a physician.

I have another legend of the Medici, in which it is declared that their armorial symbol is a key, and in which they are spoken of as wicked and cruel. It is as follows:

I MEDICI.

“The Palazzo Medici is situated in the Borgo degli Albizzi, and this palace is called by the people *I Visacchi* (*i.e.*, figures or faces), because there are to be seen in it many figures of people who were when alive all witches and wizards, but who now live a life in death in stone.

“The arms of the Medici bear a great key, and it is said that this was a sorcerer’s or magic key, which belonged to the master of all the wizards or to the queen of the witches.

“And being ever evil at heart and cruelly wicked, the old Medici sought restlessly every opportunity to do wrong, which was greatly aided by the queen of the witches herself, who entered the family, and allied herself to one of it; others say she was its first ancestress. And that being on her death-bed, she called her husband, or son, or the family, and said:

““Take this key, and when I am dead, open a certain door in the cellar, which, through secret passages, leads to an enchanted garden, in which you will find all the books and apparatus needed to acquire great skill in sorcery, and thus thou canst do all the evil and enjoy all the crime that a great ruler can desire; spare not man in thy vengeance, nor woman in thy passion; he lives best who wishes for most and gets what he wants.’

“Thus it came to pass that the Medici became such villains, and why they bear a key.”

Villains they may have been, but they were not so deficient in moral dignity as a friend of mine, who, observing that one of the pills in their scutcheon is blue, remarked that they were the first to take a blue pill.

Since the above was written I have collected many more, and indeed far more interesting and amusing legends of the Medici; especially several referring to Lorenzo the Magnificent, which are not given by any writer that I am aware of. These will appear, I trust, in a second series.

“A race which was the reflex of an age
So strange, so flashed with glory, so bestarred
With splendid deeds, so flushed with rainbow hues,
That one forgot the dark abyss of night
Which covered it at last when all was o’er.
Take all that’s evil and unto it add
All that is glorious, and the result
Will be, in one brief word, the Medici.”

FURICCHIA, OR THE EGG-WOMAN OF THE MERCATO VECCHIO

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“Est anus inferno, vel formidanda barathro,
Saga diu magicis usa magisteriis,
Hæc inhians ova gallina matre creatis.
Obsipat assueto pharmaca mixta cibo,

Pharmaca queis quæcunque semel gallina voratis,
Ova decem pariat bis deciesque decem.”

STEUCCIUS, *cited by* P. GOLDSCHMIDT,
Verworffener Hexen und Zauberadvocat. Hamburg,
1705.

“E un figliuolo della gallina bianca.”—*Old Proverb.*

The Mercato Vecchio was fertile in local traditions, and one of these is as follows:

LEGEND OF THE LANTERNS.

“There was in the Old Market of Florence an old house with a small shop in it, and over the door was the figure or bas-relief of a pretty hen, to show that eggs were sold there.

“All the neighbours were puzzled to know how the woman who kept this shop could sell so many eggs as she did, or whence she obtained them, for she was never seen in the market buying any, nor were they brought to her; whence they concluded that she was a witch and an egg-maker, and this scandal was especially spread by her rivals in business. But others found her a very good person, of kindly manner, and it was noted in time that she not only did a great deal of good in charity, and that her eggs were not only always fresh and warm, but that many persons who had drunk them when ill had been at once relieved, and recovered in consequence. And the name of this egg-wife was Furicchia.

“Now there was an old lady who had gone down in the world or become poor, and she too had set up a shop to sell eggs, but did not succeed, chiefly because everybody went to Furicchia. And this made the former more intent than ever to discover the secret, and she at once went to work to find it out.

“Every morning early, when Furicchia rose, she went out of doors, and then the hen carved over the door came down as a beautiful white fowl, who told her all the slanders and gossip which people spread about her, and what effort was being made to discover her secret. And one day it said:

“‘There is the Signora who was once rich and who is now poor, and who has sworn to find out thy secret how thou canst have so many eggs to sell, since no one sees thee buy any, and how it comes that invalids and bewitched children are at once cured by the virtue of those eggs. So she hopes to bring thee to death, and to get all thy trade.

“‘But, dear Furicchia, this shall never be, because I will save thee. I well remember how, when I was a little chicken, and the poultry dealer had bought me, and was about to wring my neck—b’r’r’r!—I shudder when I think of it!—when thou didst save my life, and I will ever be grateful to thee, and care for thy fortune.

“‘Now I will tell thee what to do. Thou shalt to-morrow take a pot and fill it with good wine and certain drugs, and boil them well, and leave it all hot in thy room, and then go forth, and for the rest I will provide. *Addio*, Furicchia!’ And saying this, the hen went back into her accustomed place.

“So the next morning, Furicchia, having left the wine boiling, went forth at ten o’clock, and she was hardly gone ere the Signora, her rival, entered the place and called for the mistress, but got no answer. Then she went into the house, but saw nothing more than a vast quantity of eggs, and all the while she heard the hen singing or clucking:

“‘*Coccodé!* Dear me!
Where can Furicchia be?

Coccodé! Furicchia mine!
Bring me quick some warm red wine!
Coccodé! Three eggs I have laid!
Coccodé! Now six for your trade.
Coccodé! Now there are nine,
Bring me quickly the warm red wine!
Coccodé! Take them away;
Many more for thee will I lay,
And thou wilt be a lady grand,
As fine as any in all the land;
And should it happen that any one
Drinks of this wine as I have done,
Eggs like me she will surely lay;
That is the secret, that is the way.
Coccodé! Coccodé!

“Now the Signora heard all this, and knew not whence the song came, but she found the pot of hot wine and drank it nearly all, but had not time to finish it nor to escape before Furicchia returned. And the latter began to scold her visitor for taking such liberty, to which the Signora replied, ‘Furicchia, I came in here to buy an egg, and being shivering with cold, and seeing this hot wine, I drank it, meaning indeed to pay for it.’ But Furicchia replied, ‘Get thee gone; thou hast only come here to spy out my secret, and much good may it do thee!’

“The Signora went home, when she begun to feel great pain, and also, in spite of herself, to cluck like a hen, to the amazement of everybody, and then sang: