STORIES TOTO TOLD ME

by

Frederick Baron CORVO

with a preface by
CHRISTOPHER SYKES

ST. MARTIN'S PRESS
New York
The coat of arms overleaf is that which Corvo invented for himself. It shows a Raven for Corvo sable on argent, a lapel of three and a cross potent on a field — argent and sable counter-charged, surmounted by a Hat Priestly sable for crest and surrounded for motto by the Greek ΕΣΤΑΙ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΚΑΛΩΣ

(All will be well)

Stories III, X, XIII, XVII were first published in *The Yellow Book* in 1895–6. The remainder were first published in *In His Own Image*, The Bodley Head, London, 1901

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St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 175 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10010
Printed in Great Britain
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 72-145439
First published in the United States of America in 1971

DIVO AMICO

DESIDERATISSIMO

D·D·D·

FRIDERICUS

Nè Dio, Suo Grazia, mi se mostra altrove,
Più che ’n alcun leggiadro e mortal velo;
E quel sol ano, perché ’n quel si specchia.

MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI, Sonn. LVII
THE AUTHOR of Stories Toto Told Me bore numerous names. He emerged from the font as Frederick William Rolfe, but later gave his full description as Frederick William Serafino Austin Lewis Mary Rolfe, supporting his right to the additional personal names by ingenious but not convincing arguments. Most of his journalism appeared under pseudonyms. For a while he lived as “Fr. Austin” and for most of his later years he was “Fr. Rolfe”, in both cases giving a false and calculated impression that he was a Catholic clergyman. The tales reprinted here were first published under the name of Baron Corvo, a title undiscoverable in the Almanac de Gotha.

There have been two biographies of Baron Corvo, as he is best remembered. The first was a brief masterly sketch published in the London Mercury in September 1923. It was
written by Sir Shane Leslie. A year later he republished it in expanded form as the introduction to a reissue by the Bodley Head of the whole of Corvo’s Toto stories. At that time Shane Leslie’s sketch was the only account of Corvo in existence, except for a violent newspaper attack which had appeared in the Aberdeen Free Press in Corvo’s lifetime, and had given a fairly full and fairly accurate account of his disreputable earlier days. The attack served Shane Leslie as an important source of information.

In 1923 A. J. A. Symons, then a young man of twenty-three, read Shane Leslie’s article. From this began his interest in the Corvo story. The interest was increased through his friendship with Christopher Millard, who had made a collection of Corvoniana, and through reading Corvo’s best book, Hadrian the Seventh. At length, in 1925, Symons set out on an exploration in depth, and the result, published in 1934, was that wonderful book The Quest for Corvo. It is a biography of a man whom the author had never met, written nevertheless in the first person singular, and, despite its extreme unconventionality, the idiosyncrasy never jars, and the result is a literary triumph. The book can without any exaggeration be described as one of the biographical masterpieces of our time. If it is better than anything that Corvo himself wrote, that is not to say that Corvo was not a worthy subject for this “experiment in biography”, nor to deny that he was a writer of considerable and intensely original merit. His only famous book, Hadrian the Seventh, is an astonishing feat of sustained imagination.

The main facts of Corvo’s life are briefly as follows. He was born in London in 1860 of a family of long-established piano-manufacturers. He went to school in Camden Town, and after some study at Oxford as an unattached student, he commenced as a schoolmaster. In 1886 he became a Roman Catholic. This entailed much sacrifice on his part as he was now no longer eligible to keep his post at Grantham Grammar School, but after a period of great hardship he was found employment by his new co-religionists. He was given a post at a Catholic school in Scotland recently founded by Lord Bute. He wanted to become a priest and in 1887 he was accepted for sacerdotal training by Oscott College. He was not a success there, and succeeded in irritating both his fellow-students and his superiors.

The kindly Archbishop of Edinburgh, however, who had met him in his Scottish days and discerned his talent, obtained Rolfe’s transference to Rome, to the Scots College for theological students. This occurred in 1889. He was no greater success there than at Oscott. He lasted as a collegiate less than six months, and among the reasons for his dismissal was the fact that he had incurred debts in Rome which had to be met by the hard-pressed seminary. The latter joined a growing crowd of individuals and groups who had to pay Rolfe’s debts in the course of the years. After an important period in his life, an obscure one which will be discussed later, Rolfe—or rather Baron Corvo—returned to his native land in 1891. There for the next sixteen years he lived, mostly in great wretchedness and penury, relieved from time to time by friends whose sometimes lavish kindness he invariably abused and forfeited. To this routine there was one exception in the case of Dr. E. G. Hardy, who had been his headmaster at Grantham and later became the Vice-Principal of Jesus College, Oxford. He kept Corvo as his secretary from September 1905 to January 1907 and would have kept him longer if Corvo had not gone away to live abroad and to follow his appalling career of self-destruction.

He left England and spent the rest of his life in Italy,
Preface

sometimes kept in pleasant circumstances by friends, more often starving, swindling, involving himself in the homosexual underworld, earning very little by his writing and a bit more by pandering. Like many men who grossly over-indulge in the pleasures of sex he ended as a debaucher of children. In 1913 he died in Venice, in extreme poverty, at the age of fifty-three. He was virtually unknown beyond a small circle of people who knew him personally, and these had all, except for Hardy, been turned by the perversity of his character from friends to foes. His failure was as complete as it could be. As a writer he was already forgotten, and from the beginning of his career he had been frustrated in his chief ambition. To the end he wanted to be a priest, and to the end he regarded the refusal of the Church authorities to admit him to Holy Orders as due to the spite of the British Catholic community. He was quite blind to his faults of temperament, an extraordinary circumstance when one remembers the penetrating observation manifest in all his writings. Such was his unhappy life.

Soon after leaving the Scots College, Corvo discovered the true direction of his talent. In his early days he thought he heard the call of three vocations. Until some time soon after 1890 he believed himself to be a painter. He showed ability, but never in a highly satisfying way. Those who know the little of his work that has survived (I am not one of them) agree that it is gifted, eccentric, and mediocre. He himself seems to have accepted the fact, when it faced him, that he was not a painter. His life would have been a better one in all likelihood if he had also recognized the falsity of what he took to be his vocation to the priesthood, but if this arrogant and haughty man could conceivably have made such an act of humility, there might have been no fine flowering of his literary talent, the great novel about the Papacy, which is unique in our letters.

The third, the literary vocation heard by Corvo, came from an authentic voice.

Precisely when Corvo recognized himself as a writer appears to be beyond discovery, but it seems a very reasonable guess that the moment of revelation occurred during the experiences which are reflected in the Toto stories. Here we come back to that obscure episode in Corvo's career to which allusion has been made, and which followed his expulsion.

The known facts are of the slenderest. Their outline is given thus by A. J. A. Symons in his book: "It is clear that he found a refuge with the Sforza-Cesarini family, but what the length of his stay was, and what his position in the household, remain obscure. It may be that during this uncertain interval he began to write a book—there is evidence in one of his later letters to justify the inference. Was he Keeper of the Archives as he sometimes boasted afterwards? What is certain is that at most this Roman vacation lasted less than a year, though during it he gained a lasting insight into Italian history and character."

His main protector in this family was the Duchess of Sforza-Cesarini. She and the rejected student had some things in common: they were both English, both converts to Roman Catholicism, and both had a great love of Italy. According to Rolfe's account, the Duchess adopted him as her grandson, and also made over to him a small property carrying with it the right to the title of Baron Corvo, much in the same way as an English property sometimes carries with it the right of the owner to describe himself as "lord of the manor", should he so wish. In those days the delegation of their minor titles was occasionally practised in this way by the heads of great Italian families such as the Sforzas, and both Corvo's biographers allow that it is just possible that Rolfe had
some genuine claim to the most unlikely of all his many names. The possibility is of course weakened by the fact that we only know about it from the Baron himself, and he was not a reliable witness. He was a great snob who was ashamed of his respectable middle-class origins, and he was a colossal liar who, apart from tall stories used for confidence-trick purposes, went so far as to relate as fact (in the *Wide World Magazine*) that he had once been accidentally buried alive in the Sforza-Cesarini mausoleum. It was this incident which led to the *Aberdeen Free Press* attack in 1898. Long before this his relations with the Sforza-Cesarinis had ended in the shipwreck which befell all his friendships in the end, with the exception of that with Dr. Hardy.

All Corvo's fictional writing has a stronger element of autobiography than is the usual case. It is never very difficult to relate his inventions to known experiences, or to the wild hopes which sustained him, and the daydreams which consoled him. The stories republished here seem incontrovertibly to reflect one of the few happy and (so far as anyone knows) guiltless periods of his life, that which he spent after leaving the Scots College, when he lived in the Sforza-Cesarini household. (Their name is used in the fourth item of this collection.) There is a sweetness and absence of bitterness, a gaiety too, about these stories, which is not typical of Corvo, and even when, usually through Toto, he girds at the clergy, especially at the Jesuits, he attacks with so much more of farce than of his accustomed, venomous rancour, that good feeling persists. The whole thing is fun. Only in one story does one hear, amid so much reflection of happiness, an echo of the misery from which Corvo's tormented and probably not quite sane temperament made complete escape impossible at any time. The passage occurs in the opening paragraphs of the seventeenth story given here, "About Some Friends".

The Toto stories which make up this book are from two separate publications. Numbers four, ten, twelve, and sixteen, come from the original *Stories Toto Told Me* which were first published in Henry Harland's famous quarterly *The Yellow Book* in the course of 1895 and 1896. The stories were a great success and were later published by the Bodley Head in number six of the *Bodley Booklets*. The success, considerable in esteem but trivial in the more interesting financial sense, encouraged Corvo to write twenty-six more Toto tales which were published in book form in 1901 under the less clear and somewhat affected title *In His Own Image*. From this publication are taken the sixteen remaining stories printed here. *In His Own Image* also enjoyed success, but again in no way to relieve Corvo's poverty. It was much noticed, but little bought. Corvo was never to know any other kind of literary success, even for his finest work *Hadrian the Seventh*, which never became much known outside Catholic circles in Cambridge, where the admiration of the Catholic chaplain, Monsignor Robert Hugh Benson (another friend with whom the author quarrelled), helped it to enjoy a vogue.

Corvo is very difficult to "place" in our letters. That he was published in *The Yellow Book* suggests quite rightly that he belonged to the self-consciously "decadent" school of our late nineteenth-century literature of fantasy. The Toto stories clearly owe something to Oscar Wilde's lovely *Happy Prince* stories, but one should not pursue the relationship further, and to see in him a literary disciple of Wilde is clearly wrong. He was a word-coiner to an extreme extent which can at times remind one of the absurd Richard Le Gallienne and other *Yellow Book* luminaries, especially the brilliant young Max Beerbohm; but again the resemblance should not lead one on to see more in it than that. In his *Yellow Book* days Max
could with a grave face use such a word as “pop-limbo” as if it were normal currency, and he was capable of describing how Edward VII, as Prince of Wales, would “watch at Newmarket, the scud-a-run of homuncules over the vert on horses...” But there was always a fund of common sense in Max, such as was remarkably absent in Corvo. No reader doubts that “pop-limbo” in the context means “nonsense”, or that the second quotation above refers to the Prince watching jockeys competing in a horse-race. But when Corvo in all seriousness uses such terms as “tolutiloquent”, “contortuplication”, “fumificables”, “zaimph”, “aseity”, “purrothrixine”, or “banysically”, the minority of his readers who remain feeling quite at home with all this erudition grows minute to invisibility. He and Max and Wilde had something in common, but it was very little. As in life, he belonged nowhere. He cannot be described in terms of a group, or even in terms of his own period, except in one respect where Corvo can be said to have been symptomatic of his day. That is in regard to his ardent if erratically followed religion, and it finds expression in these stories.

The years from 1870 to the conclusion of Pius XII’s pontificate form a very interesting period in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, and the present upheaval and disarray in that Church are in large measure due to the inevitable and long-delayed reaction against certain of the main trends of those decades. In this preface only one trend need be noted. Since the beginning of the second quarter of the nineteenth century (very roughly speaking) a new style in Catholic practice had been gaining ground, and this took the form of an extreme, emotional and one can even say fantastic devotionalism. There were many opponents of this trend, and when the extremists in the eighteen-sixties began to apply their devotionalism to their allegiance to the Pope and the doctrine of Papal Infallibility, it looked for a while as though they might provoke a schism. The crisis was averted at the last moment by the incomplete triumph of the moderate party at the Vatican Council of 1870. Very soon after the dispersal of the Council, the Papacy (which had openly sided with the extremists until the last moment) suffered a grave reverse, the loss of the Papal States. The effect of these events on Catholic conduct was at first sight most unexpected; it was to be found in positive intensification of extreme devotionalism. To make a very large generalization, too large to be open to proof, it would seem that while a majority of devout Catholics were seeking spiritual compensation for the political defeat suffered by the Papacy, the extremists determined to undo the partial victory of the moderates at the Council. Both found the same spiritual means ready to hand, this extreme and often defiant devotionism. It is here that Corvo and Toto come in.

Some Catholics were understandably shocked at these stories which threw such an absurd light on Roman Catholic belief, and some Protestants rejoiced at an exposure of the folly and superstition of Rome. But, so far as one can judge, such was not the majority reaction. Catholics were much more apt to delight in this picture of a simple, illiterate, beautiful Italian boy, with his indestructible faith and piety all expressed in the saintly fantasies and legends of the Roman peasantry. They smiled at the ignorant extravagances, but hardly in disapproval, and if there was evident exaggeration and caricature in Corvo’s record of Toto (we shall never know who was his model), they felt that they were those of a friend and fellow-worshipper. If there was superstition revealed in the stories, with their amazing confusions of Catholic tradition and pagan myth, and with their fanciful retelling of the creation and fall of man according to the Book
of Genesis, this was not likely to distress most of his Catholic readers, the majority of whom were enthusiastic converts. Nor were the typical Catholics who lived during that amazing revival of the old faith in England likely to find their Englishry affronted by Toto. They were the reverse of nationalistic, inclining to be not only plus papa le que le pape, but more Italian than the Italians. Revelations of superstition were not likely to shock people whose practice was dominated by devotionalism, and who never heard superstition denounced from the pulpit. What they were likely to find in the Toto stories was delightful evidence of the cosy spiritual atmosphere surrounding the lives of humble people who lived at the centre of the Faith. Corvo reflected a prevalent Catholic mood. One should perhaps think of the stories as being greatly extended and greatly sophisticated versions, contrived by a writer who had something of real genius in him, of those tales which are the subject of demure merriment among pious people, and have for long been commonplace in clergy houses and behind convent walls. If the merriment is demure this does not mean that it excludes wit, humour and penetration. Corvo’s singular talent shows how much of all three can be contained within what might be thought (especially in our foul-mouthed yet conventional age) to be a fatal limitation.

The stories, as a reader must notice, are uneven in quality. The form is a precarious one and depends for success, far more than most fiction, on a precise estimate of hit or miss, and without any comfortable half-way house between. This selection of twenty from a total of thirty-two spares the reader the tedium of reading Corvo misses, but as the stories occasionally follow one from another, a few of the less valuable have been rightly included.

This necessary inclusion strongly emphasizes the variety, what one may even call the excessive variety, of Corvo’s writing. This variety would have been less, probably, and probably with less of unevenness, had Corvo experienced the challenge of wide readership which forces the writer into relationship with his audience, but the variety would always have been extreme. As it is, the variety within the small compass of the Toto stories (though it is true that they deal with eternity) is one of the most surprising and interesting things about. Consider only the charm of slightness in the ninth in this collection, “About the Original Fritter of Sangiuseppe”, the almost Hieronymus Bosch quality of the twelfth, “About Beata Beatrice and the Mamma of Sampietro”, the fierce power in the sixth, “Why the Rose is Red”, and the poetic splendour of the last of these, the extraordinary Christianized version of the tale of Eros and Psyche which Corvo gave under the title “About Divinamore and the Maid Anima”.

What is one to make of the Baron? He perplexed and appalled the few of his contemporaries (except Dr. Hardy) who knew much about him, and more than fifty years after his death the enigma of this extraordinary phenomenon remains as challenging as at any time. Nevertheless to say, in our own permissive day, there has been a tendency to reverse the disapproving judgments passed on Corvo by Shane Leslie and A. J. A. Symons. His debauching of children, that most horrible of perversions, has been excused by a modern critic on the grounds that the evidence shows that most of them were debauched already before they got into the hands of this would-be priest, a conclusion on which the best comment is to be found in some words of Shakespeare: “An admirable evasion of whoremaster man.”

One possible defence of Corvo should however be noticed. Anyone who studies his life soon finds himself asking whether the man was perhaps mad? In a sense he
Preface

does seem to have been mad. He had several opportunities (of which the Hardy episode was one) of settling down in a decent, honourable, but relatively humble position which would have saved him from penury and given him sufficient leisure to write. He could never abide the thought of such a tame and colourless solution to his problems. His ambition was vast and unappeasable. He wanted glory and magnificence, even when he knew he must pay for it with starvation. Right at the end of his life a good Anglican clergyman who met him in Venice was moved by his plight to take charge of his affairs, and he did this so effectively that he obtained for his new friend a considerable advance on books (which were never written), subscribing generously himself. Corvo was saved. He instantly squandered the money, living in princely style—literally, for he maintained a gondola manned by four gondoliers, a privilege then reserved to Royalty!—had his hair dyed a brilliant red, installed himself in splendid apartments hung (so it was believed) with scarlet silk cut from the material used to make the robes of cardinals and for a brief time he put up a show of extravagance that was the astonishment of Venice. He was thus rapidly reduced to his accustomed state of squalor, and he ended as he had lived before the windfall, writing begging letters, threatening blackmail, suffering starvation and this time dying as the result of his privations. Such episodes (there were several) and his persecution-mania do suggest some paranoid condition. No explanation in terms of anti-bourgeois rebellion fits the case; such is never his theme, and his political views (once or twice faintly reflected in the Toto stories) were patriotic, conservative, anti-democratic, ultra-bourgeois, Blimpish in short. His complaint was never against the establishment, but that he was not at the top of the pyramid.

But if he had been really mad, rather than one whose mind was too easily liable to unbalance, it is difficult to see how he could have preserved the intellectual discipline which enabled him to write a small but not exigous number of well-thought-out books, some of them, such as the Chronicles of the House of Borgia, requiring long and detailed research. As Renan once pointed out, madness is never creative and a madman cannot really achieve anything though he may seem to do so for a little. In spite of his crazy absurdities Corvo's invention never flagged, nor did it ever fall far below his best.

It may be that explanation of the Corvo disaster lies in the self-multiplying evils of failure. We are so familiar with the corruption of success that we forget that of its opposite, and how nothing fails like failure, until in the end it eats into the very soul. Corvo was certainly one of the most appalling cases of failure of which we have detailed record.

It may be that a simpler explanation is the true one, and is to be found expressed in the traditional terms used by the Church in which (a thing to be remembered greatly to his credit) Corvo never lost faith for one moment, in spite of his desolating experiences as a Catholic. Sir Shane Leslie has suggested (he does not state) that the simple fact is that Corvo was in the power of evil; that evil had taken possession of him and he thus became its agent, whence it followed that whomever he met was liable to suffer misfortune, material or spiritual, and usually both. One may translate this into another set of traditional terms, by saying that he was a manifestation of that mysterious element in human fate, anciently described as "original sin". Many thoughtful people today, pardonably misled by the absurdities of fundamentalist teaching into confusing legend with what it transmits, have indignantly rejected the whole notion of original sin as a piece of childish fancy, but it is to be
Preface

noted that many others, not only among Christian believers, have perceived truth in a primitive myth which contains expression of a rare and terrible depth of observation. This leads on to immense questions not fitted to a brief essay. I only want to say here that it is hard to dismiss absolutely the notion that Corvo’s fantastically ill-starred career was the product of forces greater than himself. One cannot avoid the feeling that he was somehow doomed.

All the more delightful, then, to escape from the shadows and to see his marvellous talent through the clear prism of his earlier days, when the growing clouds of his last years were still on the distant horizon, and for a brief moment he had the gift of happiness in his grasp.

December, 1968

CHRISTOPHER SYKES

EDITORIAL NOTE

In the two volumes from which these tales have been chosen, some stories are loosely tied to each other by a sentence. Where this would no longer make sense, since one of the stories has been omitted, the cut has been noted and the missing words printed in a footnote.

I

BEING AN EPICK OF SANGIORGIO, PROTECTOR OF THE KINGDOM

A

T NINE we were at San Giorgio ad Velum Aureum.¹ Among the herbs on the floor, there was an unusual quantity of rosemary and thyme; and the scent was delicious. I brought an armful of pure primroses, to scatter round the altar of Sangiorgio. I showed to Toto the bulla, tied on the baldacchino of the basilican altar, without which no priest, save the Santo Padre, may officiate there. The eunuchs of the papal quire misbehaved, as usual, in a box on the epistleside. What an annoying mass it was! Just a series of florid soli, during which the disengaged singers sat and chatted at the back of their tribune, took snuff, and apparently made up their betting books, while the conductor smacked time with a roll of music. At the beginning of Gloria in excelsis Deo, a priest

¹In the original collection this story, Spring No. VJ, begins “The next morning...” [Ed.]

22

23
About Sodom, Gomorrah, etc.

"The notary wrote it, and put a pen in his hand, that he might sign the will."
"He signed it.
"As he wrote the last letter of his name, Padre Ciangli said very solemnly, 'What! All to the Son, and nothing to the Mother?'
"The dying man wrote, after Gesù,—e Maria. And the grey angel cut the thread there; and he died.

* *

"Sir, the Jesuits got no legacy that time; for the wealth of the Signor Inglese went, according to his last testament, to the Chiesa di Gesù-e-Maria, which is a church not belonging to the Jesuits at all, but to a religious Order whose name I do not know.
"And the Jesuits gnash their teeth at that delicious Padre Ciangli."

YOU KNOW, sir, that Sansebastiano and Sampancrazio were always very friendly together. While they lived in this world, they were used to get into mischief each in the other's company; for they were extremely fond of playing unexpected tricks upon the pagans who were putting the Christians to death.
"Then, when their turn came, they gladly suffered martyrdom; and Sampancrazio was killed by a black panther in the Colosseo of Rome, while Sansebastiano was struck as full of arrows as a hedgehog is of prickles; and when that did not kill him he was beaten with a club until he died. And then they both went to live in heaven for ever and the day after.
"Now, I shall let you know what appearance they present, so that you may recognise them when you see them. First of all, you must understand that the gods in
heaven have eternal youth; that is to say, if you are old when your life in this world comes to its end, you just shut your eyes while your angel-guardian takes you to paradise; and, when you open them the next minute, you are there, and you have gone back to the prime of your life, that is, to the age of forty-six when manhood begins, and so you are for always; but if you die while you are young you do not change your age, but remain at the age at which you died. That is, supposing you to depart in the odour of sanctity, or as a martyr, which last is better,— and, of course, you can always do that if you choose. And, even supposing it is good for you to have a little purgatory first, so long as you shall have kept good friends with Madonnina, she will go and take you out on the Saturday after you have died, and that door opens into paradise.

"And your body, too, is changed, so that you cannot suffer any more pains or illnesses. Oh, yes it is made of flesh, just the same to look at as this; but, instead of the flesh being made of the dust of the earth, it is made of the Fire of God, and that is why wherever the gods go they are all effulgent like the stars.

"Ah, well! Sansebastiano was eighteen years old when he went to heaven, and so he is always eighteen years old; and Sampancrazio was fourteen, and so he is always fourteen; and they are quite as cheerful and daring and mischievous as they were in this world; indeed when a joke has been played upon any of the gods, they always say, 'By Bacchus! there are those boys again.'

"There are, of course, very many boys in heaven, but now I am only telling you of these two—Sansebastiano and Sampancrazio, and the third, whose name is Sanluigi; and the fourth who is the angel-guardian of Sansebastiano, called Sebastianello.

"You must know that Sanluigi was altogether different from Sansebastiano and Sampancrazio. Of course, he had not been a martyr like them, though he was sumptuously furnished with curious virtues; and I suppose his manners are as formal as they are, because he has only been in heaven a little while, and finds the novelty surprising. He always goes about with his eyes on the ground, you know, and there is not a bit of fun in him. You see, he was a Jesuit; and there were no such things in the world until hundreds of years after Sansebastiano and Sampancrazio had gained their haloes. When he first came, Sansebastiano and Sampancrazio thought there was another boy like themselves to join in their games; and they were quite eager to make his acquaintance, and to give him a welcome. So the moment the cantors of the quire gave the intonation of the Iste Confessor, they rushed down to the gate to offer him their friendship. Sanluigi came slowly through the archway, dressed in a cassock and a surplice. He carried a lily in his hand, and his eyes were fixed upon the ground; but when Sansebastiano and Sampancrazio, whose arms were locked together, said how pleased they were to see him, he looked up at them shyly and said, 'Many thanks,' and then the vision of Sansebastiano so shocked him that he blushed deeply and re-veiled his eyes; and, afterward, he kept out of their way as much as possible.

"You see, sir, Sansebastiano was quite naked: indeed he had nothing about him but his halo and an arrow; for, when the pagans made a target of him, they stripped him of his clothes, and so he came to heaven like that. You may see his picture in the duomo whenever you choose, if you do not believe me. But he was so beautiful and muscular, and straight and strong, and his flesh so white and fine, and his hair like shining gold, that no one had ever thought of him as being naked. Sanluigi, however, found him perfectly dreadful; and pretended to shiver whenever he met him, which was not very often, because
About the Lilies of Sanluigi

Sanluigi spent most of his time in the chapel saying office.

"Sansebastiano did consider him a little rude, perhaps, and, of course, Sampancrario agreed with his friend; and, though they were quite good-natured and unwilling to make unpleasantness, still they could not help feeling hurt when this newcomer—and that was the worst name they ever called him—turned up his nose because their minds and their manners were more gay and free than his.

"One very hot afternoon in summer the two gods, Sansebastiano and Sampancrario, went to practice their diving in a delicious pool of cool water under a waterfall; and when they were tired of that, they reclined on the bank and dangled their legs in the stream, while the sun was drying their haloes.

"Presently Sanluigi came creeping along with an old surplice in his hand, and he went up to Sansebastiano and offered it to him, holding his lily up before his face all the time he was speaking. Sansebastiano did not move, but lay there on the green grass, looking at Sanluigi with his merry laughing eyes, and saying not a word; and Sampancrario did the same. Sanluigi repeated his offer from behind his lily, and implored Sansebastiano to put on the surplice,—just to hide his poor legs, he said. Sansebastiano replied that he did not think there was anything amiss with his legs, which were good enough, as far as he could see, because the Padre Eterno had made them like that, and He always did all things well. Then Sanluigi offered the surplice to Sampancrario, who was also naked, because he had been bathing; but he laughed as he answered, with many thanks, that he had some very good clothes of his own, which he would put on when his body was dry; and he pointed out his beautiful tunicule of white wool with a broad purple stripe down the front, and his golden bulla, and his sandals of red leather, with the ivory crescent on the toes, for he was noble, sir, and also a Roman of Rome. Sanluigi said that the tunicule was rather short but it was better than nothing; and then he turned to Sansebastiano and again entreated him to put on the surplice.

"Presently Sansebastiano stretched out a splendid arm from the long grass wherein he was lying, and he grabbed the surplice so suddenly that Sanluigi dropped down on his knees, and his lily became disarranged; and, while he was recovering himself, Sansebastiano rolled the surplice into a ball and tossed it over to Sampancrario, who threw it back to him; and the two saints played pallone with it quite merrily for some minutes; and all the time Sanluigi was protesting that he had not brought it out for that purpose, and beseeching them not to be so frivolous. But the game amused them to such an extent that they were now running to and fro upon the bank, and taking long shots each at other. Sansebastiano had just made a particularly clever catch; but in returning the ball he over-balanced himself and tumbled, splash heels over head, into the pool. This mischief had a bad effect upon his aim, and instead of the ball going in the direction he intended—that is to say, towards Sampancrario—it flew straight in Sanluigi’s face. He again was holding up his lily for a screen, and consequently it was crushed and broken, and all the blooms destroyed; and he seemed so grieved that the two friends—for Sansebastiano immediately swam to the side and climbed out of the pool—tried to console him by telling him that they would get him another in two winks of an eye.

"But Sanluigi said that would be of no avail, because he always got his lilies off his altars below there in the world, and no others would suit him; and there were none there now, because it was not his festa till to-morrow, and nobody would offer him any lilies till then.
About the Lilies of Sanluigi

"When they heard this, Sansebastiano and Sampancrazio burst into roars of laughter, and they made such a noise that the Padre Eterno, Who was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, sent one of the cherubini from the aureola to know what it was all about.

"Sampancrazio jumped into his tunicle and put his bulla round his neck, while Sansebastiano laced his sandals for him; and then the two friends stood at 'Attention!' as the Suprema Maestà e Grandezza came under the trees towards them. Of course you know, sir, that Sansebastiano was in the army when he lived in the world; and he had taught Sampancrazio.

"Then Sansebastiano looked boldly upon the Face of God, and said:

"'O Signor Iddio Altissimo, we were laughing at Gigi because he will not have the lilies of paradise, but prefers the nasty things which are put upon his altars in the world.'

"Sanluigi got quite angry at hearing his lilies called nasty; and the Padre Eterno said that the word certainly ought not to have been used unless Sansebastiano had a very good reason.

"Then Sampancrazio explained, that he was sure Sansebastiano did not mean to make any reflection upon the lilies giù lilies, because it would not be becoming to speak against the handiwork of the Padre Eterno; but it was because the people who offered the lilies to Sanluigi did not come by them in an honourable manner, that he had called them nasty: and Sansebastiano nodded his head forward and said that was just it.

"These words made Sanluigi still more angry; and his wrath was so righteous and so unaffected, that Sansebastiano saw him to be really in ignorance of the dirty tricks of his clients; so he said that if La Divina Maestà would deign to allow them, he and Sampancrazio would show

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About the Lilies of Sanluigi

Sanluigi the source from which his lilies came. The Padre Eterno was graciously pleased to grant permission, and passed serenely on His Way, for He knew Sansebastiano to be a boy whom you might trust anywhere.

"Then Sansebastiano told Sanluigi that if he could put up with the company of himself and of Sampancrazio, he proposed a little gita into the world that very night; because, the next day being his festa, all the boys would be getting lilies for his altars; and in the meantime he invited him to come and look over the ramparts.

"So the three young gods went and stood upon the wall of gold; and, beneath their feet, they could see the world whirling round in space. Sansebastiano pointed out that, by midnight, they would be just above a little white city which clustered up the side of a distant mountain. He said that it was called Genzano, and that the Prince Lorenzo di Francesco Sforza-Cesare had there a palace with the most beautiful gardens in all the world, which were certain to be a-brim of lilies at that time of year.

"Sanluigi made answer that he would like to say his matins and lauds, and to prepare his meditation for the morning, before they started; and he agreed to meet Sansebastiano and Sampancrazio at a little before midnight.

"You know, sir, that there is no night in heaven, or rather, I should say, that it does not get dark inside there; and so, when Sanluigi came to look for Sansebastiano and Sampancrazio, he found them in the orchard near the gate, turning a skipping-rope for Santagnese and some of her friends; but Sanvito and Sancello, being tired of playing morra, were willing to take their places at the rope; and then they were all ready to start on their journey.

"Sansebastiano called his angel, Sebastianello, and told him to what place it was desired to go.
About the Lilies of Sanluigi

"I ought to have let you know that the appearance of Sebastianello was exactly like that of Sansebastiano; only he did not carry an arrow, and he had huge wings growing out of his arms of the same colour as his flesh, but whiter towards the tips of the feathers. And then, of course, he was as high as a giant, like all the other angels—and a hundred cubits high is their ordinary size.

The three gods mounted him in this manner: Sampancrazio stood on his left instep and put one arm round his leg to steady himself; and Sansebastiano stood on his right instep and put one arm round his leg to steady himself too; Sanluigi also stood on the right instep of Sebastianello, close to Sansebastiano, who clasped him round the waist with his other arm. When they were ready, the angel, with a downward swoop of his wings, rose from off the wall of gold, and, spreading out his pinions to their full extent, remained motionless, and dropped gently but swiftly towards the earth.

"I should tell you that they had all made themselves invisible, as the gods do when they come down into the world, unless there shall be some one present who is good enough to merit a vision of the gods. When they were alighted in the garden by the magnolia-tree, they left the angel there; and went to sit down near the lily-beds. You understand that no one could see them, and they rested against the edge of the fountain and waited; and Sanluigi took out his beads to vile away the time.

"Presently, three or four men came into the garden very quietly, and they stood under the shade of a blue hydrangea bush. The eldest of them appeared to be giving directions to the others, and then they separated, and went each to a different part of the garden.

"Who were those men?" Sanluigi asked.

"Tell him, 'Bastiano,' Sampancrazio whispered.

"'Gardeners,' Sansebastiano murmured; 'they have to watch all through the night between the twentieth and the twenty-first of June.'

"'And I suppose they will be going to cut the lilies for the boys who are coming to fetch them?' Sanluigi said.

"Sansebastiano and Sampancrazio nearly choked with laughter; and then Sansebastiano said that, if Sanluigi would have the goodness to be patient, he should see what he should see.

"They watched the gardeners go and hide themselves in the syringas, and for some time there was silence.

"Then there came six ragamuffin boys, creeping cautiously through the darkness, who made their way towards the lily-beds. As soon as they were there, the men in the bushes jumped out upon them with a loud yell, whereupon the boys took to their heels, fleeing in a direction different to that by which they had come. The men gave chase, but they ran so swiftly that they were soon out of sight. Now, as soon as they were gone, twenty or thirty more ragamuffin boys rushed noiselessly out of the darkness, and began to cut the lilies into sheaves as fast as possible. In a short time there was not one left standing, and then they made off with their spoils and disappeared.

"The next minute the gardeners came back, loudly lamenting that they had failed to catch the robbers; but when they saw the beds where the lilies once had stood, they called for Madonna to have pity on them. And the chief gardener also wept, for he said the Prince would surely send him to prison.

"But the three gods continued to sit still by the fountain.

"Sanluigi was trembling very greatly; but because he is, as you know, of such an admirable innocence, he did not understand what he had seen; and he begged his companions to explain it."
About the Lilies of Sanluigi

“So Sansebastiano told him that the boys of the world were wicked little devils, and very clever, too. Wherefore it was their custom to send the six best runners first, because they knew that the gardeners would be watching. And these six were to make the said gardeners chase them and to lead them a long dance, so that the others could come, as soon as the place was clear, and steal the lilies. All of which had been done.

“And then Sanluigi grieved greatly at this appalling turpitude; but most of all because the gardeners would lose their places. So he asked Sansebastiano if he could not do something for them.

“Sansebastiano answered that they would be very pleased and quite happy if Sanluigi would show himself to them, for they were most respectable men, and pious into the bargain; neither had they sworn nor used bad words.

“But Sanluigi was so modest that he did not like to show himself alone, and he held out his hands, the one to Sansebastiano and the other to Sampancrazio, saying:

“‘My friends—if you allow me to say so—dear Bastiano—and dear Zino—who have been so kind to me, let us all show ourselves, and then I will give them back the lilies.’

“So they called Sebastianello and mounted upon his insteps again; and then a silver light, more bright than any star, beamed from them, and the gardeners saw in the midst of the blaze the giant angel by the magnolia-tree, and the three gods standing in front of him—Sanluigi in the middle, with Sansebastiano on his right hand and Sampancrazio on his left hand. Then the gardeners fell on their knees returning thanks for this vision; and, as the angel spread his wings and rose soaring from the ground, Sanluigi made the sign of the cross over the garden. But the men stood all amazed, and watched till the bright-
About Doubles in General

Sanvenanzio, she took him by the hand; and she said, 'If you please, santo signor professore, this is Sanvenanzio.'

"Tell me how you know that, my little deary," Sancassiano said.

"If you please, santo signor professore, and Santo Padre, and all you div' e dive di Dio," Santafilomena answered, as she made a pretty courtesy to the gods, 'Santagiulia and I spent the afternoon with Sanvenanzio in the apple-orchard; and, while the lazy creature took a nap, we made chains and wreaths of blue-bells; and, when he woke, we hung them on him. There are the blue-bells on the floor: he broke them with his naughty temper, when he saw Santagapito. He is my great friend, you know; and we have played together since the day on which he came to paradise. And I know well the yellow-silver colour of his hair, for I have often rumpled it when playing with him. That other lad has hair as red as virgin gold, quite different to the colour of my friend. Stoop down, boy," she said to Sanvenanzio.

"He lowered his head.

"Santafilomena plunged her fingers in his ruffling curls, and drew out the petals of a broken blue-bell, which she exhibited with triumph before the eyes of all.

"And the gods, having said their Deo Gratias, shouted with joy, 'Brava! Bravissima! Santafilomena! Sharp girl, that! Evviva! Evviva!'"

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BREAKFAST was ready, under the magnolia-tree. I like these late-spring breakfasts in the sun.

Guido and Ercole had executed a masterpiece in their simplicity, with three great bowls of beaten brass, one in the middle to support my book, one each at the opposite corners of the table, all filled with damask roses of the darkest purple, fresh, and breathing liquid odours as of cloves celestial! I gave the creatures compliments, and sat down to breakfast. Cocomeri ripieni, Port Salut, olives, perfumed oranges, pitch-flavoured wine,—delicious!

At the end, Guido and Ercole went away to fetch coffee. Toto, who had been shedding his city clothes, and getting his breakfast, came and stood by the left side of my table. I happened to reach for another mandarin, and I saw him with the corner of my eye.

Good gracious! The boy was livid, stiff and stark,
Why the Rose is Red

convulsed with silent rage. I never saw such a fury. But, of course, I took no notice. I was going to have an emotion by and bye; and I became as demurely watchful as my yellow cat Ania.

When Guido and Ercole returned, I saw Toto’s right fist clench till the knuckles grew quite pale, and Guido let the coffee-pot fall onto the grass. Toto snarled, “A—po—plex—y,” in a turgid undertone.

I dislike imprecations, and I said, “Sh;” while Guido ran to the house for another pot of coffee.

While I was sipping it, and using a cigarette, I made the following secret observations:

(a) Guido, who is Toto’s very delicately slim and agile little brother of thirteen years, with the most beautiful white to his eyes like chrusobert, stood on the right side of my table, turned to alabaster, looking wildly on the face of Toto, and with tears streaming down his cheeks;

(b) Ercole—a lusty bronze Roman with the visage of Iuvenis Octavianus—stood, a little behind and to the right of Guido, presenting an image of horror of the unknown;

(c) and, across the table, Toto glared like—the witch’s head.

* 

I went to take a look round my studio.

Toto followed, “Permission to forsake la sua eccellenza during ten minutes,” he asked. I nodded forward. He tore away like one frantick. From the terrace, I watched his tremendous legs stride headlong down the Via Livia to the city.

I played about for a little by myself and resolved to have a lazy hour doing nothing at all.

But here came a most shocking thing.

In the studio there is a large glass door which opens upon a little terrace, giving a lovely wide vista of the city below, then the Campagna, and beyond that the sea,

Why the Rose is Red

fourteen miles away. At the side of the terrace a stair leads down into the garden.

Darkening this doorway, Toto towered on high, with the hair of Guido in his right hand, and the hair of Ercole in his left. He forced them down upon their knees, and they wept piteously, and, antiphonally, they cried to me:

“V. Oh, pardon!”
“R. Pardon!”
“V. Ah, we did not know!”
“R. We did not know!”
“V. To la sua eccellenza, we wished to give pleasure!”
“R. To la sua eccellenza, we tried to give pleasure!”
“V. But it was our evil day!”
“R. If la sua eccellenza would only believe!”
“V. Oh, pardon!”
“R. Pardon!”

I became very angry. I am very cutting, in my rages. I said, “Go away, little sillies!”

They expected to be killed, I know. They were quite heart-broken, plainly. They got up and went away. Toto was for following, but I recalled him. There was a hideous bulge on his stomach. He had got some lump stowed away beneath his shirt at his waist.

“Beast,” I said, “what is the meaning of this? What have those rudikopaide done that you should make me such a scene?”

“Sir, they repent; and they ask for pardon.”
“Oh, yes!—pardon!—But for what crime?—They’ve broken something.—I know it!”
“No, sir. But for the insult.”
“Heaven be my aid and grant me final perseverance!” I cried, “what are you driving at?”
“The insult, sir; and they shall take their penance now,” he turned away, looking positively thadamanthine.
Why the Rose is Red

"Toto!—Come back!—Don't dare to move!—Here, go to the throne, and pose—like this!" I seized a little cast of the Hebe from Virinum in Carinthia and shoved it forward, musing over the inscription incised on the front of the right thigh, A. POPLICIUS. D. LANTIUS. TII. BARBIUS. Q. PL. TIBER.

Then I shut the doors and attended to the lighting of the model. He threw his vesture behind a screen, emerged, mounted the throne, considered the Hebe for a minute, undulated deliciously, and stiffened into the pose,—a horrid one, but one that served my purpose. I had my lion on a leash, and I began to fiddle with a charcoal stick on a bit of brown paper.

After ten minutes, I said, "Are you cold?"

Toto stirred not from his stony stillness; but his answering voice proceeded from a whisper to a roar, like this—

do

pp "No, sir." — p "Hot!" — f "Awful!" — f "Burning."

"You have taken a fever, my lad," I said; "driving over to the Campagna last night, I suppose." I went and felt his flesh. That was normal: also, his pulse.

"No, sir; but the insult!"

"Look here, Toto," I said; "if you will drop your beastly elliptical Latin manner of leaving every important thing to my imagination, and will try to express yourself like an Englishman for once, you will improve my temper. Dash it all, boy, what do you mean?"

"Sir, the insult!"

"Per Cristo! What insult? Two words now!"

"Sir, in the pip of an apple—the Roses!"

"Well! And the Roses?"

"They were Red, sir! Oh!" (with another roar) "they shall bleed,—those boar-pigs,—they shall bleed!"

"Silence!" I cried. "Come here!"

Why the Rose is Red

He descended the throne, and came to me. Fauno Furibondo—that's what he was! There was something of terrible in this boy. You could see his heart-beats. I looked upon him with disgust.

"Dress," I said.

He retired behind the screen. I must chain this lion more securely.

I made him kneel at my feet; and I took his throat in my two hands.

"Now lend me both your ears," I said. I saw attention concentrated in his eyes. "I think the Roses on my table to have been entirely exquisite. Simpaticissime! I am pleased with those Roses. Understand?"

He looked at me with unfeigned amazement; and, oh, how earnestly I watched the changes in his expression!

"I think Guido and Ercole to have very beautiful souls, or they could not have invented so beautiful a decoration for my table."

He thought me guilty of mockery. I saw anger in his glance; and I throttled him a little.

"Pax!" I said. "I mean what I say. I am delighted with those Roses."

Two emotions coursed processionally through his eyes. First, penitent appeal. Second, vexation.

"Tell me, Toto; what is that under your shirt?"

He put his hand into his bosom, and drew out a very nasty, coiled-up thing.

"What is it?"

"Sir, the sinew of a bullock."

"Where did you get it?"

"Sir, I ran down to the butcher for it."

"What do you intend to do with it?"

"Sir, I intend to flay the hides off Guido, my brother, and off Ercole of Rome, in order to appease la sua
Why the Rose is Red

Eccellenza who is so deeply wounded by vinegar-songs-of-wine that he has no words left wherewith to curse them."

I throttled him again. "For putting Red Roses on my table?"

"Yes, sir."

Without speaking, I looked long through the eyes into the soul of this amazing creature.

Then, I said, "Toto, I am a child; a baby; knowing nothing. I must have a teacher to make me understand.—What is the sin of Red Roses? Tell me?"

"Sir, it is the supreme insult, to offer Red Roses to an Englishman."

"Why?"

"Sir, the Red Rose is stained with blood—the blood of Holy Innocents. Therefore, it is a badge of infamy."

"Oh," I said. "Very well. And you are going to flay Guido and Ercole?"

"I am going to flay Guido and Ercole."

I released his throat.

"Toto mio," I said; "what good will those kids be to me without their skins? I prefer to give them their penance myself."

"Sir, if you will take that trouble, it will be better so. But, very humbly, I ask you to forgive them also."

"Yes, I forgive them freely." He bent down and kissed my ring. "Bring them to the anti-camera, now; and treat them very, very kindly. If you make them unhappy any more, I will kill you. Remember!"

Oh, such pathetic little abjects came in! Distressed ones, who, having innocently insulted the Lord whom they adored, only wished to die; for they had forfeited his favour for ever; and their hearts were broken! What an emotion!

I made the three boys sit down on stools. I was going to be impressive, and so I sat on the high chair. I said, "Guido and Ercole, you have offered me an insult; but you did it in innocence; and you are truly contrite. Is that so?"

"Oh, sir, yes!"

"Then, for your penance, you must promise to believe what I am going to tell you. Do you promise?"

"Oh, sir, yes!"

"Then listen. All through my life I have loved Red Roses. Therefore, you did not offend me by putting Red Roses on my table. But now I have learned that an Englishman ought to hate Red Roses, and not to love them. So I am converted, and you must never offer me any more red roses."

"No, sir, never, sir!"

"Well then, you are forgiven. And because I like you to be happy, we will all make an expedition to Velletri, to-morrow."

"Oh, sir!"

"And, for his penance, Toto, who committed the sin of anger because he wishes me well, must tell us why the Red Rose is a badge of infamy."

As though a tap had been turned on, Toto began to intone rhythmick cadences.

"When the Padre Eterno made the world, He resolved to plant a garden; and He sent one of the seven angels with a mere-yard of gold, to mark out a fine situation by the river-side, where were gentle hills and dales.

"He marked out this garden in the shape of a square, one thousand and five hundred miles each way, enclosed by an impenetrable hawthorn bush, white and pink, with flowers and fragrance on the inside, and piercing thorns without. Round the four sides of the garden went this hawthorn bush, one hundred and seventy-three cubits high, and one hundred and seventy-three cubits deep."
Why the Rose is Red

“The Padre Eterno planted groves of trees, all in beautiful order: orange-trees, and almond-trees, and apple-trees, and lemon-trees, and cherry-trees, with the blossoms always on the one side, for pleasure to sight and smell; and ripe fruit always on the other side for pleasure to the taste.

“The hills He crowned with pine-forests; and He decked their slopes with little olive-groves. Here were vineyards of white and purple grapes. There were palms and poplars by the brooks. Along the pools, He placed osiers and willow-trees and bulrushes for bordures: and He made great lawns of fine green grass as soft as the fur of cats, where the young Lord Adamo might rest under shady trees. Each lawn was surrounded by bushes of a different kind; and on each lawn were different kinds of trees and different kinds of flowers. One lawn was bordured by syringa-bushes and adorned with wall-flowers, and heliotrope, and golden-rod. Another lawn was bordured by blue hydrangea bushes, and studded with poppies and meadow-sweet. A third lawn was bordured by bushes of rosemary, and ornamented with southernwood and lilies; and there were white peacocks, and peacocks purple in their pride. Under the walnut-trees were hyacinths, under the sycamore-trees were primroses, under the mulberry-trees were asphodels, under the cedar-trees were forget-me-nots, under the chestnut-trees were daisies, under the oak-trees were violets. On the pools, great white lilies floated; and, at their marges, were iris and marigold, and moss.

“Oh, what a beautiful garden!

“Yet the Padre Eterno was not content. What He had done was very good, according to the Scripture; but it was not His best. He had not done His all; and He wished for one more flower to be the queen of the garden. So, under the oak-trees, He planted a thorn; and He starred the thorn with a bloom having five petals, tender as wings of butterflies, white as the soul of a little child, and having a heart of purest gold.

“Then the Nine Quires of angels came singing through the garden; and, in a blossom of magnolia, they collected odours from the lily, and the violet, and the hyacinth, and thyme and wall-flower and orange-blossom and meadow-sweet and southernwood and rosemary. And the Padre Eterno poured the perfume from the magnolia-chalice over the new white flower, and called it Rosa Mystica. He appointed the Sixth Quire of angels, that is to say, the Dominations, to guard and tend it night and day.

“These things having been done, the Padre Eterno put the young Lord Adamo into His garden. And, in order that he might not be alone, He made him sleep; and while he slept, He gently divided him in two pieces, a large one, and a small, but each piece alive by itself though belonging to the other. The large piece of the Lord Adamo was called Man; and the small piece was our Mother Eva, who is Woman. But Sathanas, who always goes against Domeniddio in everything, was very angry when he saw this; and he struggled with the Padre Eterno, to prevent Him from dividing the Lord Adamo. And so the pieces came in different shapes, being unequally divided: there is more of man than of woman; and the one always longs for the other; for, until they are joined together, neither the man nor the woman is complete and perfect, as the Padre Eterno designed.

“That was in the first hour. Then came the business of the animals; and, when that was finished, the Lord Adamo and our Mother Eva walked in the beautiful garden, tasted the fruit, admired the flowers, and loved each the other well under shade of trees.

“On the lawn of lilies there were two strange trees:

104

105
Why the Rose is Red

the one a quince-tree which was called the Tree of Wisdom; the other a tree of blood-red pomegranates, which was called the Tree of Life. Who ate the fruit of one, knew all the wisdom that the world has ever known or shall know. Who ate the fruit of the other, became immortal like the gods. And the Padre Eterno had forbidden the Lord Adamo and our Mother Eva to touch those trees, though they were free to use all the rest of the garden at their will.

"At the fifth hour the sun was in his strength, and the Lord Adamo left our Mother Eva sleeping under the great quince-tree, and went down to the water-side for coolness.

"Sathanas saw his opportunity. He came into the garden shaped like a serpent covered with green scales, having the head and bosom of a woman, black as the pit. He coiled around the trunk of the quince-tree, and he whispered to our Mother Eva, sleeping, while she thought it was a dream, advising her to eat the quinces, and to gain wisdom.

"At the sixth hour the Lord Adamo came up from the water, cool and fresh. He could not see Sathanas, who was too cunning to let himself be caught by Man. But our Mother Eva rose up in her sleep, and she mounted on a coil which the serpent made for her, till she could reach the quinces in the tree. And, in her dream, she plucked quinces, and she ate them; she gave quinces also to the Lord Adamo, saying that they would make him wise; and, in his admiration, he ate them too. "So, tempted and deceived by Sathanas, they disobeyed. Then, to the Lord Adamo and to our Mother Eva, came wisdom in an overwhelming torrent. Every good thing they had known before, and now they knew every bad thing as well, and they had much fear (for knowledge brings fear), thinking of the anger of the Padre Eterno when He should know their sin.

They wandered through the garden, hand in hand, weeping, weighted with all the wisdom that all men have ever had or shall have. Also, they wept because they knew that they had stripped themselves of the favour of the Padre Eterno, and were naked and unarmed against Sathanas.

"While they wandered weeping, the sun began to lose his power, and at the seventh hour the Lord Adamo and our Mother Eva found themselves again upon the lawn of lilies. But what a change! What ruin! And what horror! For the peacocks had broken all the snow-white lily-blooms, and trampled down their slender graceful stems, and all the serpent's trail was strewn with violets crushed and dead.

"Suddenly soft music from a distance floated through the trees, and the Lord Adamo and our Mother Eva shivered with fear, knowing the Padre Eterno to be walking in the garden, and they hid themselves in the bushes of rosemary.

"Ah! who can hide from the Signor Iddio Onnisciente? Then, for their penance, the Padre Eterno drove the Lord Adamo and our Mother Eva out into the wicked world, and the garden of paradise faded like a dream.

"But the angels of the Sixth Quire knelted down and confessed, saying, 'O Padre Celeste e Domeniddio, we have sinned, and yet we know not how, for the Rose which You deigned to give into our care has changed,—changed though we never ceased to watch it,—white were all its flowers, white as the soul of a little child, and behold, now Maestà, some are as red as blood.'

"The Padre Eterno answered: 'O Domina- tions, to whose charge We have given the Rose, you have no blame. Sathanas has stained Our garden with Sin. For,
Why the Rose is Red

by disobedience, Man has gained wisdom, and wisdom brings Sin. And there shall be many nations of the Man: they will be wise, and they will sin. And the nations will separate themselves through the sin of envy; and each nation will mark itself by some sign through the sin of Pride. One nation will wear the violet for its sign; and the violet will be crushed by the serpent of deceit. Another nation will wear the lilies for its sign; and the peacocks of pride will trample down the lilies of humility. And yet another nation will wear the Rose for its sign; and cruelty will stain the wearers of the Rose. Strong shall they be, and some strong without mercy or pity. They will live on the lives of the weak, or feeble, whom they make their slaves; they will stain the whiteness of the Rose with the blood of innocents. Yet, not all will sin, for though some will choose the evil, more will choose the good, and there remain White Roses for the nation which We shall choose to crown with glory and honour, and to which We shall give dominion over the works of Our Hands, Benedictavos Omnipotens Deus et Pater et Spiritus Sanctus.

"Then the garden of paradise was carried up to heaven, on the wings of the Nine Quires of Angels. And, once in the life of every man an angel of the Sixth Quire brings to him a White Rose for remembrance, that the mystery of its fragrant purity may remind him of that lost garden where the gods are waiting for him, if he wills to come."

1 Toto never knew, and never shall know, that the Red Rose is the badge of the Duchy of Lancaster—a duchy infested by as naturally unkind a race of people as the Spaniards. But I try to have a due regard for the fitness of things, and, in my opinion, the Badge of the Red Rose suits the Duchy of Lancaster quite well. I refrain from recording personal experiences, and content myself with the remark that, until a few years ago, Lancashire Cotton Mills were run by night as well as by day, two sets of children being employed, and forced to slave their little lives out in terror of the overlooker’s cane. These innocents were pauper children, imported by contract from the West and South of England, and they only survived amid their appalling surroundings for an average space of five years (cf. evidence of Robert Owen before Royal Commission of 1817). When I reflect that, while the world rang with shouts of English triumph after Waterloo, a Lancastrian section of the House of Commons was found to oppose Bills—introduced by Sir Robert Peel, for preventing children, under nine years of age, from working more than seventy-four hours each week—I feel very thankful that the White Rose—the pure prime-rose, for example—is the Rose of England, and not the infamous local Rose of Lancaster, dyed Red with the Blood of Innocents, victims of minotaur-manufacturers.
Love Desire and Love Divine

called Desire. In appearance, they are the same; in action, they are the same. But in effect they are not the same.

"It is a matter of heart.

"One or the other comes into your heart; and, there, he makes his home. It depends on your own will, whether you admit him, or no. If you keep him out, your heart withers away, till it might as well be the heart of a Jesuit. If you admit Desire, you regret it afterward. If you admit Divin Amore, you do the best action of your life, and you are never sorry any more. Yet, it is a difficult task to tell the one from the other, and to decide which shall be your guest; unless you can persuade your angel-guardian to give you good advice. For, at first, they come to you in the form of a little child, sweet, innocent, and asking for a home. You take in this little child, and show him kindness; and he returns your fondlings and your kisses and caresses, till you love him so that you find you cannot do without him. In your heart, he grows to boyhood; and, on the sly, when you are not looking, he makes weapons,—arrows, and a bow, like an archer,—and wings bloom upon his arms, so that he may fly away, and leave you, when the moment comes: but, of this, you have no knowledge. And, then, at last, he gains his full strength; and he is vigorous, and terrible; and he arises in his majesty; and, with his arrow, he wounds your heart, and strikes you down, his victim and his slave.

"When he has flown away, your heart burns, and craves a medicine to heal its wound. And you search for this, holding out your hands, weeping, yearning, until you find relief. And, only now, can you be certain of the god whose wound you bear.

"The wound itself is the desire for happiness. And, if the god, who gave it, was Desire, then you will strive and struggle for the happiness of yourself, and of yourself alone. But, if Divin Amore has wounded you, then there
About the Love which is Desire

must be another beside yourself; and, for that other, you will gladly strive, gladly suffer, gladly die, or very gladly live, which is the hardest thing of all.

"Desire is Selfishness. Divin Amore is Sacrifice."

* * *

(a) WHY CATS AND DOGS ALWAYS LITIGATE

"Desire makes you greedy for food, avaricious for money, or power, or houses, or vineyards, or farms, and a lecher, hot with lust for women. Desire was the lord of Giuda detto Iscariote, who sold his Master for thirty lire; of the prince in antick times who fed his fishes with the flesh of living boys and girls, to please his palate with their fine rich flavour; and he was the lord of Sathanas, making him so proud that he rebelled against Domenidio, striving to dethrone Him, and to take His Closed Crown.

"That was very long ago; and this was the manner of it. First, Sathanas was Chief of the Second Quire, that is to say, of the archangels. And, one day, it happened that the said Sathanas robbed the mirror which belonged to La Suprema Maestra e Grandezza. Looking into that mirror, he saw his own reflection, all of the most magnificent and noble, as you might expect. The more Sathanas looked, the more splendid did he find himself.

"Then came Desire, sweet and innocent, asking for a home.

"After a few years, Desire had become a power; also, he had made his weapons: and, at last, he let his arrow fly into the heart of Sathanas.

"The wound itched, till Sathanas knew that nothing on earth could satisfy him. Looking daily at his image in the mirror, it was easy to persuade himself that his beauty deserved a better fate than that of being just the Chief Archangel, and no more. After that, he took no rest until he had persuaded half of the other angels and archangels to agree with him.

And the Love which is Divine

"Then, with Desire, the terrible, always goading him, he laid a plot to drive the Padre Eterno from His Throne: and, using bones, and stones, and other enchantments, he took the shape of a dragon, many miles in length, and having a hundred heads. In this guise, he came suddenly upon the Court of Heaven. There was not time to beat him back, for he gave no warning.

"But, in an instant, the Holy and August Personages changed their shapes into the shapes of little creatures such as no one would suspect; and they hid in caves under the holy mountain, till the time should come for dealing with Sathanas as he deserved. The Padre Eterno took the shape of a white ram, as Lord of the flock. Madonnina became a fish, in honour of her Son. San Michele Arcangiolo became a raven, that grave and noble bird. San Gabriele Arcangiolo took the shape of the heron which gave its name to the city of Ardea, in order that he might fly swiftly as the messenger of the Padre Eterno. And, in like manner, the others changed, as well.

"But Desire, the terrible, drove the hundred-headed dragon, Sathanas; and he came ramping round the holy mountain, hunting for his prey. He saw the heron; but he did not know it to be San Gabriele Arcangiolo; and he passed on. He saw the raven; but he did not know it to be San Michele Arcangiolo; and he passed on. When he came near the white ram, he did a silly thing, for he knew not Who it was; and he was passing on: but the Padre Eterno hurled lightnings at his hundred heads, smiting him with thunder-bolts, till he was bruised and beaten down.

"Then, the Holy and August Personages resumed their Proper Shapes, hastening back to heaven, and making preparations for a battle-royal.

"First, that He might know His enemies from His friends, the Padre Eterno, by an Act of Will, turned the
About the Love which is Desire

rebels-angels and archangels black, and red, and brown, and green; while the company of heaven shone all yellow-gold and silver-white. To San Michele Arcangiolo, He gave the rank of general-in-chief, who led his radiant army forward chanting Qui es Deus! 1

"Now, when the Padre Eterno blasted Sathanas with lightnings, the fire of them dried up the little brook where Madonnina was hiding in the form of a fish; and, as a fish, without water, dies, she changed her shape again, taking the appearance of a snow-white cat, gentle, superb, and gratia plena. Desire, the terrible, marked this; and it made him think. He shook Sathanas to his senses, and made him do away the dragon shape and form himself like a black dog. In an instant it was done. Then Desire made Sathanas to know that the snow-white cat was, possibly, a Personage; and that to capture her, and to keep her as an hostage, might enable him to come to terms with the Padre Eterno,—perhaps, even, to win that rank and power for which he had rebelled.

"So, when, the snow-white cat began to move away with dignity, and to ascend the holy mountain, showing neither haste nor terror, the black dog barked with fury, and hemmed her in. But she sprang upon a rock near by, and swelled her tail, and arched her back, and spat upon him; and, being altogether most terrific, she kept her foe at bay. When the black dog presumed to come too near, she struck him in the face, and made him yowl. All that the fool could do was to jump about and bark around her station, until his army should come to his assistance.

"Meanwhile, San Michele Arcangiolo made short work of the rebels. He drove them out of heaven and chased them down the holy mountain. They resembled a torrent, all black, and red, and brown, and green, flying before

1 Who art thou if not God!

And the Love which is Divine

the irresistible might of legions shining silver-white and yellow-gold. Squadron after squadron of the rebels, in disorder, dashed by the little rock; too terrified and too confused to listen to the frantic calls of Sathanas; until, at last, the triumphant host of heaven swept along: and, then, the snow-white cat sprang upward, changing into the glorious form of the Madonna. At this the angels waited while they said their Salve Regina, and legions of them bore her, on their wings, to her throne in heaven. Other legions continued in pursuit, driving the black dog Sathanas, and his minions, to another mountain very far away, where the earth opened to engulf them. There San Michele Arcangiolo took Sathanas, in his own shape (which is the shape of an archangel but of a different colour, being black, and red, and brown, and green, having a hundred cubits of height, and wings not of feathers, but of skin like the wings of bats and dragons), and he chained him in the lowest pit for a thousand years, with the chain of Selfishness and Pride, which Desire had made him forge.

"From these histories, la sua eccellenza will understand why cats and dogs should always litigate. And, also, you will know about Desire, the sweet, the sly, the terrible."

(β) ABOUT DIVINAMORE AND THE MAIDEN ANIMA

"Altogether another Personage is Divinamore.

"He, also, comes to you, looking so sweet, so dear. He, also, grows to boyhood, working secretly the while in the home which you have let Him make with you. When His wings have blossomed, and His full strength is on Him, He, also, lets His arrow fly into your heart, and makes Himself your Lord; giving you a wound so dire that you must spend your life to ease its pain.

238

239
About the Love which is Desire

"But, as the wound of Desire receives relief,—but never a cure,—when you labour for yourself; so the wound of Divinamore can be made to cease from aching only when you search for, and lose, and trouble for yourself, that some other may have happiness. And, sir,—it is a strange thing to tell you this, though it is the naked truth, for Frat’ Innocente-of-the-Nine-Quires said it, and he is not a liar,—the more base, or treacherous, or unworthy, be the person for whose happiness you labour; and the more anguish, or shame, you seek to take upon your shoulders; so much the more will you win relief from the aching of the wound of Divinamore.

"Sir,—in two words,—

UNDER-GO, OVER-COME

*

"Now I will speak of Divinamore and of the maiden Anima; also of their victory over Desire.

"Anima was a little maiden, white as an almond, fresh as a young carnation. She lived in the world, alone with her sisters.

"Divinamore stood up there in paradise, near the throne of Madonnina. Serene in the vigour of his youth, He was as beautiful as spring.

"He looked upon the lovely maiden; and He wished her well.

"Since she was a baby, He had watched her; and, one day, He saw Desire go and ask her to give him lodging in her heart. She was only a little girl; and Desire seemed only to be a little boy.

"Divinamore saw Desire wind himself about her, till she yielded gladly to him. He saw Desire grow potent, and prepare his weapons, while the maiden bloomed. He saw Desire arise in his full length, and strike his arrow in her heart. Then He knew that Anima must own Desire for her lord.

And the Love which is Divine

"Divinamore became very sad; for He loved Anima, and wished to have her for His Own.

"Wistfully He looked to His Mother for advice, being the Best of sons. Then, Madonnina taught Him; and she spoke, and said, ‘My Son, only he can win the maiden Anima whose heart is pierced by the arrow of Divinamore.’

"Then He drew an arrow from His quiver; and struck it deep in His Own Heart, giving Himself the wound of Divinamore for the sake of the maiden Anima.

"All day, His wound tormented Him: and, when the night was dark, He spread His plumage, and descended swiftly, silently; and He came to the maiden Anima, as she lay sleeping on her bed, dreaming dreams with which Desire had filled her. And He took her in His arms, and whispered in her ear, saying that a god was come to give her happiness, and to win her for His Own.

"The maiden Anima heard Him. She was glad; for she longed for admiration above all things. And, though she could not see Him, for the night was dark, she had great happiness in the fragrance which He breathed, and in the god-like loveliness of form which she could feel, and in the youthful ardour of His embrace; but, chiefly, when she told herself that her beauty had made her the beloved of a god.

"Every night, for many nights, He held her in His arms; and she never saw Him; for He always vanished before the break of day.

"Every day, for many days, she longed for Him, because He gave her happiness.

"And every night, for many nights, He prayed to her to be His Own true love.

"Often she asked Him for His name; for she was proud at thinking that she had a god for her lover, and she wished to tell her sisters of this honour.

240

241
About the Love which is Desire

"But Divinamore answered that true love went hand in hand with perfect trust; wherefore, she should trust Him, and never seek to know His name.

"This gave her no content: in secret, she resolved to satisfy her longing.

"There came a night when Divinamore lay sleeping by her side. She rose; and went to fetch a lamp, that she might feast her eyes upon Him: for she did not love Him truly, but only for the honour and the happiness she had of Him. Here was selfishness, caused by the arrow of Desire.

"And when she brought the lamp, she saw the Lad who lay upon her bed; and she trembled very greatly, because she knew her Lover to be Divinamore Himself: and, as she trembled, a little drop of oil fell upon His shoulder from the burning lamp; and He awoke; and before her eyes, He vanished, going back to paradise, because Anima had shown herself to be unworthy.

"Then she wept, and moaned her loss, until her sisters ran to know the reason of the noise. To whom Anima answered, that Divinamore had deigned to love her, and to visit her by night in secret, but now He had deserted her, and for that she wailed. But the envious sisters scoffed, saying that she lied; and, not Divinamore, but some lewd hob, some stripling of the farmyard, was her lover. Therefore they gave her blows, and drove her out into the world, calling her a liar, and a wicked girl.

"Desire was her lord. It was he who made her suffer. She thought only of herself; and she longed for Divinamore to return, and give her happiness.

"But Divinamore loved her truly: and, though He might not let her see Him, nor grant her the happiness of His embraces, until that He had conquered her, and had made her give Him perfect trust, yet the wound of His own heart forced Him to resolve to labour alway for her welfare, to spare her pain, and that she might gain happiness in another way.

"And, as she wandered, homeless and forlorn, Divinamore went with her; and she never saw Him.

"By His Mother's throne, He left His quiver and His bow. He stripped Himself of all His god-like panoply. He came into the world, in secret, to serve His beloved Anima as her slave. When she climbed the rocks of the mountain, He went before, lifting sharp stones from her path, until His arms were aching. When she passed through forests, He thrust back thickets, and tore a road through thorny briars, until His hands were bleeding. Across the streams, He laid His young body for a bridge. He shielded her from storms, placing Himself between her and the sting of blasting rain.

"All the time, she was wailing to herself that it was not a fitting thing for a maiden who had had the honour of the embraces of a god to be, as she was now, homeless and forlorn. Surely this was not what she deserved, seeing that she was not a common wench. So, by degrees, she forgot the happiness of her Lover's arms, and longed for fortune and for fame.

"Then, Divinamore led her, though she never knew He was her Leader, to a distant country, where the people took her for the most beautiful maiden ever seen, and worshipped her.

"She could not speak their language; but she understood their gestures; and she knew that they admired her loveliness. To herself, she said that here, at last, was the place where fame and fortune would be found.

"Divinamore remained in the outskirts of the crowd, where Anima could not see Him. Swiftly, He went from one man to another; and, as He passed, He whispered, in each ear, that the maiden was fit to be a queen. And, as the whisper dropped into each ear, men turned to view the
About the Love which is Desire

whisperer; and they saw no one but a Lad, Whose
delicate skin was tanned by sun and rain, and blue with
bruises, Whose hands and feet were sore through travel
and toil. They could not think that He had said those
words: and they took them for a sudden thought, and not
a voice. They shouldered Him aside. He fell beneath their
feet. They trampled on His weary limbs. But, anon, He
raised Himself, and went on, unabashed, whispering
that Anima was fit to be a queen.

"At last, they caught Him in the act; and they
demanded who He was that dared to speak of Anima.

"He said, 'I am called Divinamore; and I love her.'

"They mocked Him for a fool, asking what might be
the measure of His Love?

"He said, 'I love the maiden Anima more than I love
Myself.'

"They jeered at Him, spitting in His face, and beating
Him upon His breast. Unwilling tears streamed from His
lovely eyes. His flesh quivered in agony. But He did not
quail.

"They dragged Him to the middle of the crowd; and
thrust Him face to face with Anima; to whom they
bowed respectfully, making signs to ask whether she
knew the Lad.

"But Anima perceived that she was held in honour;
and Desire, her lord, made her happy in this honour,
desiring continuance of the same. Therefore, when she
saw the Lover, Whose arms had once embraced her, in His
sorry plight, she was ashamed of Him; and she threw her
head backward, denying that He was anything to her.

"But Divinamore cried, undauntedly, that Anima was
fit to be a queen; for He knew her thoughts: and He had
bound Himself to serve her at all costs, by reason of the
arrow in His heart, which made Him choose to suffer, if
that only He might win happiness for His beloved.

And the Love which is Divine

"'Give her a royal robe,' He cried, 'a crown, a sceptre,
and a throne.'

"'For His persistency, they beat Him on His breast and
back, tearing His tender flesh, until eight rods were
broken. Into His forehead, they thrust eleven sharp
spikes of barberry. But He cried the louder, 'Give her a
royal robe, a crown, a sceptre, and a throne.'

"'They tried to test the measure of His love, saying, 'If
that You love the maiden Anima more than You love
Yourself, what will You sacrifice that we should crown
her queen?'

"'Instantly, He answered, 'A limb for every sign of
sovereignty.'

"Then, with great respect and honour, they led the
maiden Anima to the palace; and there they dragged the
Lad who claimed to love her.

"In the doorway, they felled Him to the ground. Her
lord, Desire, filled Anima with pride; so that she trod
upon the crushed and broken body which, formerly, had
been her joy.

"They made the Lad stand up; and they signed to
Anima that she should mount the throne. She ascended
the steps, and took her seat. They nailed the right foot of
Divinamore to the threshold.

"They placed a crown upon the head of Anima. They
nailed the left foot of Divinamore to the threshold.

"They placed a sceptre in the hand of Anima. They
made Divinamore stretch His right hand straight and
high; and they nailed it to the lintel.

"They robed Anima in royal robes, woven from the
wings of butterflies. They made Divinamore stretch His
left hand straight and high; and they nailed it to the
lintel.

"Anima sat as queen.

"She saw the Victim, who had sacrificed Himself to
About the Love which is Desire

give her glory, strained stiff, as on a rack, before her eyes; His hands and feet transfixed by nails, His brows bleeding at eleven wounds, His body torn by eight rods, and His Heart pierced by the arrow of true love.

"Divinamore was come to the end of His pilgrimage. He had given, to His beloved, the happiness that she craved. He had reached the threshold of His love's abode. From that threshold, His eyes fed upon her beauty. And, there, nails held Him fast.

"But Anima was a crowned queen, and, in her heart, were happiness and pride.

"Madonna in paradise looked at her with anger. She seized the quiver and the bow, which Divinamore had left beside her throne. She fitted an arrow on the string. She shot at the proud heart of Anima.

"So sure was her aim, so swiftly did the happy arrow fly, mindful of its errand, that it cleaved its way into the very wound which, formerly, Desire had made. There, it purged the maiden's heart from every taint of selfishness which had held her in bondage to Desire.

"And behold a marvel!

"For now the heart of Anima was pierced by the arrow of true love; and now she had no happiness in regal state, purchased with so dear a price. She only longed to suffer for Divinamore.

"She left her throne, and ran to Him. She prayed that He would say what she must do to ease His pain.

"He looked upon her with dimmed eyes. His body drooped in languor. He was dying.

"She was kneeling at His feet; but He could not raise her: for nails held His hands.

"He murmured that He gladly bore the torment of His wounds, if that they gave her happiness.

"But she said that she would not see Him suffer; and that she wished to cast away her royalty, to set Him free.

And the Love which is Divine

"She said that the nail in His right foot had bought her throne; but she would not have it at that price. She stooped down, and drew out the nail.

"She said that the nail in His left foot had bought her crown; and she cast away the crown. She stooped down, and drew out the nail.

"She said that the nail in His right hand had bought her sceptre; and she cast away the sceptre. And, having raised herself, she drew out the nail.

"She said that the nail in His left hand had bought her royal robes, woven from the wings of butterflies; and she cast away the robes. And, having raised herself, she drew out the nail.

"So she renounced her royalty.

"She had nothing, now, which she could offer to Divinamore, except herself, and her true love. She wondered whether He would consider these to be worthy gifts.

"She hid her face in her hands.

"In her shame, she trembled.

"She did not dare to hope.

"She feared that He could never love her any more, seeing how that she had made Him suffer. But she waited: and, with her tears and kisses, she healed the wounds of the nails, the bruises of the rods, the gashes on His brow.

"Divinamore was free. The vigour of His youth returned.

"In His arms, He took His beloved Anima. She felt Him burn, she saw Him shine, with true love.

"The royal robes, woven from wings of butterflies, which she had cast away, were lying at her feet. Her Lover signed the cross upon them. The butterflies, who had given their earthly plumage for those robes, came back from paradise; and, on their radiant wings, Divinamore and the maiden Anima ascended from the world.
Love Desire and Love Divine

"Before the throne of Madonnina the maiden kneeled; and she prayed for pardon, to the mother, for the sufferings of the Son.

"But Divinamore raised her.

"She flung herself into the furnace of His love. And in that fervent heat, she changed into a butterfly having wings as white and fragrant as an evening lily.

"And Divinamore wears her on His heart, for ever, as His Own true love."

GLOSSARY

ABRAMO, SIGNOR PATRIARC’: Abraham, the patriarch of the Old Testament (Genesis).

ADAMO, LORD: Adam, the first man, the creation of whom is described in the first chapters of Genesis.

ADONE: Adonis of Classical mythology, a beautiful youth loved by Aphrodite. He was killed by a wild boar and a plant was said to have sprung from his blood.

AGNELLO DI DIO: Christ, lit. “the Lamb of God”.


ANIMA: based partly on the Psyche of Greek legend with whom the god Eros slept on condition that she did not look upon his face. At length overcome by curiosity, she lit a lamp but a few drops of the oil from it dropped on Eros and woke him. He left her and she was pursued by Aphrodite, Eros’s jealous mother. Psyche overcame the trials set by the goddess for her and through Eros’s intercession with Zeus she was able to join him in heaven as an immortal.