

**THE MONK'S
WEDDING;
A NOVEL**

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The Monk's Wedding; A Novel by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer & S. H. Adams

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CONRAD FERDINAND MEYER & S. H. ADAMS

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The Monk's Wedding.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY S. H. ADAMS.

THE MONK'S WEDDING

A NOVEL

BY

Conrad Ferdinand Meyer



BOSTON
CUPPLES AND HURD

94 Boylston Street

1887

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THE MONK'S WEDDING.

It was evening in Verona. Round a spacious hearth, glowing with a fire which filled its roomy depth and centre, sat a princely group. In the centre — Lord and Master — was that Scaliger whom they called Cangrande. Of the blooming ladies on either side of him, the one nearest to the fire and half in shadow, was his wife; the other upon whom the full light shone, his relative and friend. Near them were the other members of the party, leaving the remainder of the hearth free, according to courtly custom, and with significant glances and half-suppressed laughter they were telling stories.

Into this brilliant, joyous company, a grave man entered, whose stern features and long flowing robe seemed out of another world.

“Prince, I come to warm myself at your hearth,” said the stranger, in a tone of

mingled seriousness and disdain, adding reproachfully, "The negligent servants, despite this frosty evening, have delayed, or forgotten, to light the fire in the upper guest-chamber."

"Take a seat beside me, my Dante," replied Cangrande, "but, if you would feel a genial warmth, you must not sit, as is your wont, mutely gazing at the flames. We are amusing each other with stories and the hand which has to-day forged the *Terza Rima* (for in my astrological chamber I overheard you scanning the verse,) this mighty hand, I say, must consent to grasp our diverting plaything without shivering it to pieces. Dismiss the Goddesses" — he meant the Muses — "for a while and satisfy yourself with these lovely mortals" — and with a graceful wave of the hand Cangrande directed the eyes of his guest to the two ladies. Seemingly unconscious of his presence, the taller of them had not thought of moving, whilst the younger and more sprightly one gladly made place for the Florentine beside her. Disregarding, however, the invitation of his host he proudly chose a seat at the end of the table.

Either he was displeased at finding two ladies at the side of the Prince, if only for an evening, or he was disgusted with the court-fool who, with legs stretched out before him, was sitting on Cangrande's mantle which had fallen to the ground.

This fool, a toothless old man, with goggle eyes and soft sensual mouth, fit only for gabbling and licking sweet-meats, was beside Dante, the one elderly man in the company. He was called Gocciola, which means "little drop"—because it was his habit to secretly collect the little drops clinging to the empty glasses. He hated the Florentine with a kind of childish spite, seeing in him a rival for the, not always daintily bestowed, favor of the Prince. He made up a face, and grinning scornfully, had the boldness to call the attention of his pretty neighbor on the left to the profile of the poet sharply outlined upon the ceiling of the lofty room. Dante's profile was like that of a gigantic woman, with long aquiline nose and drooping lips—one of the Parcæ—or weird sisters. The light-hearted maiden turned aside to hide a childlike laugh. A clever looking youth,

who now drew nearer and was named Ascenio, helped her to smother it by addressing Dante with that measure of reverence with which the poet liked to be approached.

"Thou who art Italy's Homer and Virgil" — he said — "I beg of thee scorn not to share in our innocent sport. Deign to entertain us tonight, not with song, but with story."

"What is your theme?" Dante asked, still harshly though somewhat less ungraciously than at first.

"Sudden change of profession, with good, bad, or laughable results." the youth replied quickly. Dante was silent for a moment; with melancholy eyes he thoughtfully surveyed the company which did not wholly displease him, for he discovered, together with many shallow brows, some that were strikingly noble and powerful. "Has any one of you made the uncowling of a monk his theme?" he enquired, already in a milder tone.

"Yes, Dante," answered a soldier with a slightly foreign accent, who was dressed in chain armor, had an earnest, good-natured