

**DON TARQUINIO: A  
KATALEPTIC  
PHANTASMATIC  
ROMANCE. [LONDON]**

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Don Tarquinio: A Kataleptic Phantasmatic Romance. [London] by Fr. Rolfe

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**FR. ROLFE**

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DON TARQUINIO  
A KATALEPTIC PHANTASMATIC  
ROMANCE

*By*

FR. ROLFE

[ 'FREDERICK BARON CORVO' ]

NĒVE ME IMPEDIAS NĒVE LONGIUS PERSEQUARIS

*ὄπως μήτε ἀντιστήσει μοι μήτε ἔψει  
πορρωτέρω*



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CHATTO AND WINDUS  
LONDON

PP  
52.36  
1.1

TO  
H. R.  
FROM  
HIS AFFECTIONATE BROTHER

MS. A. 9. 2. 1. 1. 1. 1.

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To some, Love comes so splendid and so soon,  
With such wide wings, and steps so royally,  
That they, like sleepers wakened suddenly  
Expecting dawn, are blinded by His noon.

To some, Love comes so silently and late,  
That all unheard He is ; and passes by,  
Leaving no gift but a remembered sigh,  
While they stand watching at another gate.

But some know Love at the enchanted hour ;  
They hear Him singing like a bird afar :  
They see Him coming like a falling star :  
They meet His eyes—and all their world's in flower.

ETHEL CLIFFORD.

## PROLOGUE

DEAR HERBERT:

When the last century was a-dying, a certain idiot asked me to write the history of one day in the life of a man of fashion in the era of the Borgia. It was to include every single act and deed of his during a given four-and-twenty hours: because it was wanted for a magazine, which proposed to publish a series of such histories illustrating the manners and customs of the Smart Set in all ages.

Of course I instantly thought of the holographs which Don Tarquinio Giorgio Drakon-toletes Poplicola di Santacroce wrote for the edification of his son Prospero. They purport to have been written about 1523-1527, as the leisurely effort of a man of unbounded



energy very anxious to express himself; and there was one of them which certainly seemed pat to my purpose. It actually did describe all Don Tarquinio's doings on one day in 1495, from (a little before) 6 p.m. to 6 p.m. round the clock. It was very exciting and very comical.

So I did it. But it was by no means easy: as you'll readily understand when I hint that the frightful man wrote an Italian jargon of his own, which was all Greek where it wasn't Latin. No doubt the fashion of his age was to write macaronics: but consider his English translator's difficulties!

And then again, think what it means to boil down a book into a magazine article. You see, the terms of my commission were that I was to set down everything the gentleman did. But he did such a lot. And he explained it all so voluminously, with a wealth of detail which simply could not be omitted.

And of course my version was rejected.

It was a mere category — not a story. I myself could see that.

I put the thing in a cupboard with curses, on the idiot who had invited me to do a useless thing, on myself for being ass enough to waste four months in trying to make a sow's ear out of a silken purse — I mean, in attempting to compress a piece of real and serious and elaborate history, and an amazingly amusing character study, and a breathlessly intricate story of adventure, into a merely ephemeral ten pages or so of journalism.

There the papers lay until a week ago, when I had just finished my new book, and was rummaging among my belongings with the idea of tidying-up before beginning something fresh.

They looked as though they might be interesting.

I took them out ; and conned them over.

Little by little I saw what an accented

fool I had been not to let Don Tarquinio tell his own tale, in his own quaint acute humorous sensuous conscientious way. For it's all nonsense to say that the Fifteenth Century can't possibly speak to the Twentieth, because it is the Fifteenth and not the Twentieth, and because those two centuries haven't got a Common Denominator. They have. It's Human Nature.

And, so, since you're always bothering me to write a book which is not about silly Catholic clergymen, or incomprehensible antiquities, or abnormal modernities—for once I'll let my Waterman's Ideal be his Barnum, and tralate to you Don Tarquinio's holograph.

You'll find him and his fellows just as deliciously and comically silly, and just as haphazardly and unexpectedly wise, and just as good, and just as bad, as the people whom you meet every day of your life, who always go such a frightfully long way round in their endeavours to attain their objects,—and not a bit like the disagreeably unnatural