

Boccaccio

[Opéra comique, in three acts; text by Zell and Genée. First produced at the Carl Theatre, Vienna, February 1, 1879.]

PERSONAGES.

Boccaccio, novelist and poet. Leonetto, his friend and student. Pietro, Prince of Palermo. Lutteringhi, a cooper. Lambertuccio, a grocer. Scalza, a barber. Fratelli, a bookseller. Checco, a beggar. Fresco, the cooper's apprentice. Fiametta, Lambertuccio's adopted daughter. Beatrice, Scalza's daughter. Isabella, Lutteringhi's wife. Peronella, Lambertuccio's sister. Filippa. Oretta.

[Beggars, students, citizens, coopers, courtiers, etc.]

The scene is laid in Florence; time, near the close of the fourteenth century.

Suppé is fond of introducing real characters among the personages of his operas, and in this one, which has become such a favorite, sharing equally in popularity with "Fatinitza," we find Boccaccio of the "Decameron," and the Fiametta whom he has immortalized in it (the Princess Maria of Naples, with whom he fell violently in love) masquerading as the adopted daughter of Lambertuccio, the grocer. In the opera he is rewarded with her hand in the finale. In reality, Maria, the Fiametta of the "Decameron," was already the wife of another when Boccaccio was enamoured of her. She died long before her lover, but her memory was cherished by him, as in the case of Beatrice and Dante, and to her we owe undoubtedly the collection of tales in the "Decameron" which furnished such abundant material to subsequent poets, story-tellers, and dramatists.

The story of the opera is a simple one. Pietro, the Prince of Palermo, is to be married to Fiametta in accordance with the wishes of his

father, and goes to Florence for that purpose. The Duke, her father, for reasons of his own, has had her reared as the adopted daughter of Lambertuccio, a grocer, who was not aware of her royal birth and intends that she shall marry Pietro, to whom she was betrothed in infancy. On his way to Florence Pietro falls in with a madcap lot of students, whose leader is Boccaccio, and he joins them in many of their pranks. Boccaccio himself has incurred the anger of the Florentine men for having ridiculed them in his stories, and he too is in love with Fiametta. Pietro among his other adventures has made love to a married woman whom the students induced him to believe was the niece instead of the wife of Lutteringhi, the cooper. He has the misfortune before presenting himself to the Duke and Fiametta to be mistaken for Boccaccio and to receive a sound beating. In the dénouement, when he is about to be united to Fiametta for reasons of state, Boccaccio, knowing that he is loved by her, arranges a play in which the misdeeds of Pietro are set forth in such strong light that she refuses the latter and gives her hand to the poet.

The most popular numbers in the opera are the serenade to Beatrice, "Lovely Charmer, hear these Sounds"; Boccaccio's song with chorus, "I see a Gay Young Fellow standing nigh"; the charming duet for Fiametta and Peronetta, "Listen to the Bells' Sweet Chime"; Fiametta's romanza, "If I have but Affection"; the duet for Boccaccio and Fiametta, "A Poor Blind Man implores your Aid"; Leonetto's song, opening the second act, "The Girl of my Heart's a Treasure"; the cooper's rollicking song, "My Wife has a Scolding Tongue"; the coquette song by Isabella, "Young Maidens must beware"; the "cretin" song by Boccaccio, "When they ask me for the News"; the graceful waltz song by Fiametta, "Blissful Tidings, reassuring"; the rollicking drinking-song of Pietro, "See the Goblet flash and sparkle"; the duet for Boccaccio and Fiametta, "Mia bella fiorentina," in the Italian style; and the sextette, "Ye Foolish Men," which leads up to the finale of the last act.