



The Lord, St. Peter and the Blacksmith

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Italian

Intermediate
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In a little town about as large as Sebio or Thiene once lived a master-smith,—a good, industrious, and skilful man, but so proud of his skill that he would not deign to reply to anyone who did not address him as “Professor.” This pride in a man otherwise so blameless gave universal dissatisfaction. One day our Lord appeared in the blacksmith’s shop, accompanied by St. Peter, whom He was always in the habit of taking with Him on such excursions. “Professor,” said the Lord, “will you be so good as to permit me to do a little work at your forge?” “Why not? it is at your service,” replied the flattered smith. “What do you wish to make?” “That you will soon see,” said the Lord, and took up a pair of tongs, with which he seized Peter and held him in the forge until he was red-hot. Then he drew him out and hammered him on all sides, and in less than ten minutes the old bald-headed apostle was forged anew into a wonderfully handsome youth with beautiful hair.

The blacksmith stood speechless with astonishment, while the Lord and St. Peter exchanged the most courteous thanks and compliments. Finally the master-smith recovered himself and ran straight up to the second story, where his sick old father lay in bed. “Father,” he cried, “come quickly! I have just learned how to make a strong young man of you.” “My son, have you lost your senses?” said the old man, half terrified. “No; only believe me. I have just seen it myself.” Finding that the old man protested against the attempt, his son seized him forcibly, carried him to the shop, and in spite of his shrieks and entreaties, thrust him into the

forge, but brought nothing out but a piece of charred leg, which fell to pieces at the first blow of the hammer. Then he was seized with anguish and remorse. He ran quickly in search of the two men, and fortunately found them in the market-place. "Sir," he cried, "what have you done? You have misled me. I wanted to imitate your skill, and I have burned my father alive! Come with me quickly, and help me, if you can!" Then the Lord smiled graciously, and said: "Go home comforted. You will find your father alive and well, but an old man again." And so he did find him, to his great joy. From that time his pride disappeared, and whenever any one called him "Professor" he would exclaim: "Ah, what folly that is! There are gentlemen in Venice and professors in Padua, but I am a bungler."

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