

The Three Admonitions

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Italian

Intermediate

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A man once left his country to go to foreign parts, and there entered the service of an abbot. After he had spent some time in faithful service, he desired to see his wife and native land. He said to the abbot: "Sir, I have served you thus long, but now I wish to return to my country." "Yes, my son," said the abbot, "but before departing I must give you the three hundred ounces that I have put together for you. Will you be satisfied with three admonitions, or with the three hundred ounces?" The servant answered: "I will be satisfied with the three admonitions." "Then listen: First: When you change the old road for the new, you will find troubles which you have not looked for. Second: See much and say little. Third: Think over a thing before you do it, for a thing deliberated is very fine. Take this loaf of bread and break it when you are truly happy."

The good man departed, and on his journey met other travellers. These said to him: "We are going to take the by-way. Will you come with us?" But he remembering the three admonitions of his master answered: "No, my friends, I will keep on this road." When he had gone half way, bang! bang! he heard some shots. "What was that, my sons?"

The robbers had killed his companions. "I have gained the first hundred ounces!" he said, and continued his journey. On his way he arrived at an inn as hungry as a dog and called for something to eat. A large dish of meat was brought which seemed to say: "Eat me, eat me!" He stuck his fork in it and turned it over, and was

frightened out of his wits, for it was human flesh! He wanted to ask the meaning of such food and give the innkeeper a lecture, but just then he thought: "See much and say little;" so he remained silent. The innkeeper came, he settled his bill, and took leave. But the innkeeper stopped him and said: "Bravo, bravo! you have saved your life. All those who have questioned me about my food have been soundly beaten, killed, and nicely cooked."

"I have gained the second hundred ounces," said the good man, who did not think his skin was safe until then. When he reached his own country he remembered his house, saw the door ajar and slipped in. He looked about and saw no one, only in the middle of the room was a table, well set with two glasses, two forks, two seats, service for two. "How is this?" he said: "I left my wife alone and here I find things arranged for two. There is some trouble." So he hid himself under the bed to see what went on. A moment after he saw his wife enter, who had gone out a short time before for a pitcher of water. A little after he saw a sprucely dressed young priest come in and seat himself at the table.

"Ah, is that he?" and he was on the point of coming forth and giving him a sound beating; but there came to his mind the final admonition of the abbot: "Think over a thing before you do it, for a thing deliberated is very fine;" and he refrained. He saw them both sit down at the table, but before eating his wife turned to the young priest and said: "My son, let us say our accustomed Paternoster for your father." When he heard this he came from under the bed crying and laughing for joy, and embraced and kissed them both so that it was affecting to see him. Then he remembered the loaf his master had given him and told him to eat in his happiness; he broke the loaf and there fell on the table all the three hundred ounces, which the master had secretly put in the loaf.

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