

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN ALFIERI AND HIS FLORENTINE LAUNDRESS,

NERA COLOMBOLI.*¹

- A. Why, Mistress Nera, what the devil's here?
To bring my stockings home at last undone?
- N. Undone! ah! God knows if I've sewn and sewn;
But they so *spider-web*, it's a despair.
- A. So *spider-web*, school-mistress! Why, that's queer.
- N. How? Any thing that we put off and on,
And wear and wear, till all the stuff is gone,
Does'nt it *spider-web*? I think it's clear.
- A. *Spider-web*? I don't take it: what d'ye mean?
- N. Lord bless me, Sir, break me a spider's web,
And see if I can sew it up again.
- A. Ah! It is I that am the unlick'd cub.
I grow grey writing Tuscan, but in vain:
A sorry graft, fit only for the grub.
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- A. Che diavol fate voi, Madonna Nera?
Darmi per sin co'buchi le calzette?
- N. Co'buchi, eh? Dio 'l sa, s'i'l'ho rassette;
Ma elle ragnano sì, ch'è una dispéra.
- A. *Ragnar*, cos'è, Monna vocaboliera?—

*Alfieri, a Piedmontese, writes this sonnet (which is doubtless a true recital) to shew the difficulty he found in acquiring the niceties of the Tuscan tongue, and how well they are felt and understood by the common people.

N. Oh! la roba, che l'uom mette e rimette,
 Che vien via per tropp'uso a fette a fette,
 Nun ragna ella e mattina e giorno e sera?

A. *Ragnar?* non l'ho più udito, e non l'intendo.

N. Pur gli è chiaro: la rompa un ragnatélo;
 Poi vedrem, se con l'ago i'lo rammendo.

A. Ah! son pur io la bestia! imbianco il pelo
 Questa lingua scrivendo, e non sapendo:
 Tosco innesto son io su immondo stelo.

A BLESSED SPOT.

FROM AN EPIGRAM OF ABULFADHEL AHMED, SURNAMED
 AL HAMADANI, RECORDED IN D'HERBELOT.

HAMADAN is my native place;
 And I must say, in praise of it,
 It merits, for its ugly face,
 What every body says of it.

It's children equal it's old men
 In vices and avidity;
 And they reflect the babes again
 In exquisite stupidity.

EDITORIAL NOTES

¹ Alfieri's sonnet CLXXXV "Difficoltà dell'apprendere il parlar toscano," composed on 28 March 1796; the two interlocutors are Alfieri and Nera Comboli, his Florentine maid.