

Classic Poetry Series

**Franco Sacchetti**  
**- poems -**

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## Franco Sacchetti(c. 1335 – c. 1400)

Franco Sacchetti, was an Italian poet and novelist.

### <b>Biography</b>

Born in Florence or in Ragusa (modern Dubrovnik), he was the son of Benci di Ugucione, surnamed "Buono", Florentine merchant of the noble and ancient family of the Sacchetti. While still a young man he achieved repute as a poet, and he appears to have traveled on affairs of more or less importance as far as to Genoa, Milan and Slavonia.

After 1363 he settled in Florence. When a sentence of banishment was passed upon the rest of the house of Sacchetti by the Florentine authorities in 1380 (after the Ciompi revolt) it appears that Sacchetti was expressly exempted, per esser tanto uomo buono ("because he is a real good man"), and in 1383 he was one of the eight, discharging the office of prior for the months of March and April.

In 1386 he was chosen ambassador to Genoa, but preferred to go as podestà to Bibbiena in Casentino. In 1392 he was podestà of San Miniato, and in 1396 he held a similar office at Faenza. In 1398 he received from his fellow-citizens the post of captain of their then province of Romagna, having his residence at Portico. The date of his death is unknown; most probably it occurred about 1400, though some writers place it as late as 1410.

He wrote sonnets, canzoni, madrigals, and other poems; his best known works are however his Novelle (short stories). They were originally 300 in number, but today only 258 remain, the rest having been lost. They were not fitted into any framework like that of Boccaccio's Decameron. The best of them are of a humorous character; and their style is more simple and colloquial than Boccaccio's. The story given as a specimen probably exists (under one form or another) in the folk tales of every European nation.

Sacchetti died at San Miniato around 1400.

# Ballata

'O LITTLE shepherdesses fresh and fair,  
Say whither do you come so soft and rare?  
Say, whither lies the land where you were born,  
Where sweeter fruits than any do betide?  
With radiant smiles your faces you adorn,  
Yet neither gold nor silver is your pride,  
I trow Love fashioned you with him to bide,  
Angels you seem yet tattered raiment wear! '

'We live upon a hill beside some trees;  
Humble our cot, we sleep in tiny bed  
Both one and all together at our ease  
When homewards we our gentle flocks have led  
At eventide; by nature we are fed  
Day after day in flowery meadows fair.'

95 'Your loveliness might well indeed make moan,  
Which only among hills and vales is seen,  
Though the proud cities of the world would own  
It worthy to hold honourably, I ween!  
Poor lassies, had you not far happier been  
Out of these woods in more refinèd air? '

'Nay, we are well contented with our fate,  
And, when we tend our flocks in pastures bright,  
Merrier we are than you who go in state  
To revel in your chamber shuttered tight;  
Riches we do not crave nor gold delight,  
But weave gay songs and garlands for our hair! '

O Ballad, were I now as long ago,  
I'd be a shepherd lad upon a hill;  
I'd mark these lassies' goings, but none should know;  
I'd seek their company with a right good will;  
For ever we'd be calling 'Jack' and 'Jill,'  
And wheresoe'er they went I'd follow there.

Franco Sacchetti

# Caccia

ONCE, deep in thought, I, passing 'neath some trees,  
Beheld a troop of maidens gathering flowers;  
One cried: 'Ah look'; another: 'Nay, see these,'  
'What hast thou there?' 'I doubt not lily-showers.'  
'And here, I trow, are violets blue.'  
A rose — woe's me, a thorn hath pricked my finger through! '  
'Alas, alas! '  
What's that in the grass? '  
'A cricket.' 'Make haste,  
Here are salads to taste.'  
'No, no! '  
'But it's so.'  
97 'Thee and thee I will show  
Where the mushrooms do grow:  
And this is the way  
For the wild-thyme spray.'  
'Come homewards, it darkeneth and soon it will rain,  
It lightens, it thunders, hark! vespers again! '  
'But it's early still! '  
'Lend an ear if you will.'  
'The nightingale, I'll be bound.'  
'I hear a louder sound.'  
' 'Tis strange to me.'  
'O what can it be? '  
'Where, where? '  
'Out there? '  
'In the bushes.' Tic, toc.  
Ever nearer the knock,  
Till a snake crept out:  
Then they turned about  
In a wild affright:  
'Ah me, sorry plight! '  
'Alack aday! '  
'Flee away! '  
Then the rain poured down forlorn,  
One slipped, another fell,  
One trod upon a thorn,  
Bossoms were spilled pell-mell,  
Some cast aside, some left to lie,

Most fortunate who could swiftest fly:  
And while I watched what they would do  
The rain-shower drenched me through and through.

Franco Sacchetti

## On A Wet Day

As I walked thinking through a little grove,  
Some girls that gathered flowers came passing me,  
Saying -- "Look here! look there!" delightedly.  
"O here it is!" "What's that?" "A lily? love!"  
"And there are violets!"  
"Farther for roses! O the lovely pets!  
The darling beauties! O the nasty thorn!  
Look here, my hand's all torn!"  
"What's that that jumps?" "O don't! It's a grasshopper!"  
"Come, run! come, run!  
Here's bluebells!" "O what fun!"  
"Not that way! Stop her!"  
"Yes! this way!" Pluck them then!"  
"O, I've found mushrooms! O look here!" "O, I'm  
Quite sure that farther on we'll get wild thyme."

"O, we shall stay too long; it's going to rain;  
There's lightning; O! there's thunder!"  
"O shan't we hear the vesper bell? I wonder."  
"Why, it's not nones, you silly little thing!  
And don't you hear the nightingales that sing --  
Fly away, O die away?"  
"O, I hear something; hush!"  
"Why, where? what is it then?" "Ah! in that bush."  
So every girl here knocks it, shakes and shocks it:  
Till with the stir they make  
Out scurries a great snake.  
"O Lord! O me! Alack! Ah me! Alack!"  
They scream, and then all run and scream again,  
And then in heavy drops comes down the rain.

Each running at the other in a fright,  
Each trying to get before the other, and crying,  
And flying, and stumbling, tumbling, wrong or right; --  
One sets her knee  
There where her foot should be;  
One has her hands and dress  
All smothered up with mud in a fine mess;  
And one gets trampled on by two or three.

What's gathered is let fall  
About the wood, and not picked up at all.  
The wreaths of flowers are scattered on the ground,  
And still as, screaming, hustling, without rest,  
They run this way and that and round and round,  
She thinks herself in luck who runs the best.

I stood quite still to have a perfect view,  
And never noticed till I got wet through.

Franco Sacchetti