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.

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.

* Author: Vittorio Alfieri; Translator: Leigh Hunt / Transcribed and annotated by Alessandra Crotti.

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.