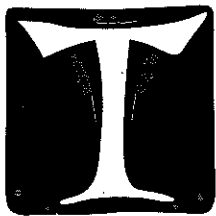


ITALY



This is a classic noodlehead or numbskull tale, named for the foolish characters who believe just about everything Campriano the farmer tells them. As for Campriano, he's not quite the fool people take him for!

The Story of Campriano




here was once a farmer named Campriano. Each day he could be seen tending the grapes in his vineyard or turning over the soil in the fields with the help of a tired old mule. Campriano usually kept to himself and didn't have much to say to the other farmers. Perhaps that was why they said, "Campriano is such a simpleton. It's a wonder he is able to put enough food on his table."

Most days when the work was done, the farmers left the fields together. They talked loudly, boasting about the size of their harvests and the abilities of their animals. Campriano rarely joined in. "Campriano has nothing to boast about," the other farmers would say among themselves.

One morning before setting out to work, Campriano fed his mule a handful of gold coins he had saved. The mule worked all morning long, and all afternoon, too, and then it was time to go home.

Campriano left the fields just as two neighboring farmers who often



teased him were leaving. Campriano's mule stopped along the lane, leaving a pile of droppings on the road. The two farmers stopped and stared at the pile in disbelief.

"Campriano!" one of the farmers exclaimed. "Your mule's droppings are full of money!"

"Oh, I know," replied Campriano, with a perfectly straight face. "I don't know what I'd do without my mule. He's a real treasure."

"You must sell your mule to us," insisted the two farmers.

"Oh, I could never do that," answered Campriano.


"Are you asking too much for him?" one of the farmers wanted to know. "Is that why you won't sell him to us?"

"Oh, it's not that," said Campriano.

"Then we'll give you five hundred crowns for him," the two farmers offered.

Campriano thought about this for a minute, then said, "Fine." Between them, the two farmers came up with five hundred crowns and led the mule away.

When they got home the two farmers were excited. They called their wives to the barn and told them to spread bedsheets on the floor to catch all the gold pieces that the mule would drop during the night. The next morning the farmers raced to the barn, only to discover the sheets covered with manure. "We've been tricked!" the two men



shouted. "Campriano will pay for this!" Grabbing two pitchforks, the farmers set off in the direction of Campriano's house.

Campriano's wife answered the door. "My husband isn't here," she told the enraged farmers. "He's working in the vineyards."

The two farmers marched out to the vineyards, madder than ever. "You cheat, you liar, you scoundrel!" they shouted at Campriano. "We should have you arrested for what you've done to us!"

"Come, come, neighbors," Campriano calmly replied. "What seems to be the trouble?"

"Your mule is a worthless animal. He makes piles of droppings like any other mule," one farmer said. Campriano looked puzzled, then asked, "What did you feed the beast?"

"Only the best fresh grass and cold water from the spring," the farmers replied.

"Why, there you have it," said Campriano. "My mule doesn't eat what other mules eat. He's used to eating stalks and rough grass that turn into hard coins. I certainly hope this doesn't spell the end of this good mule," he added, looking concerned. "Let me come and have a look at him. If he's all right, I'll take him back and return your money. But if any harm has come to him, I'm afraid that he is your problem and our deal stands."

"Agreed," said the two farmers.

"I'll meet you at your barn in just a few minutes," Campriano said. "I just want to stop by my house to let my wife know where I'll be."

When Campriano reached his house, he told his wife, "You must



"Oh, I wish I had known they were coming," said Campriano's wife. "I would have prepared something special. No matter," she added. "We'll just have some soup." And with that, Campriano's wife set the table and opened the cupboard, taking out the steaming hot soup pot. "What!" the two farmers exclaimed in surprise. "A pot of soup that cooks by itself in the cupboard? How does it do that without any


Campriano told her. her chores there. "I have invited our neighbors to join us for lunch," name. She came from the hen house, pretending to have just finished wife was not there. Campriano stepped outdoors and called his wife's The two farmers accompanied Campriano to his house, but his

"I'm afraid there is nothing to be done. This is your problem, as you agreed. But so that there are no hard feelings, come join me for lunch at my house. My wife is a wonderful cook."



do something for me. Boil up a pot of soup on the stove. When I come home for lunch, take the pot from the cupboard, as though it has been cooking there." Campriano met the two farmers at their barn. "Oh, this doesn't look good," he said when he had seen his mule. "I'm surprised the poor beast is still alive. If only I had known what you would feed him." "What do we do now?" the farmers wailed.





fire underneath it?"

"Oh, I don't know what we would do without this soup pot," said Campriano, without batting an eye. "It makes workdays so much easier for my wife and me. We know there will always be a nice pot of soup ready and waiting when we come in to eat."

"You must sell us the pot," declared the two farmers. "Things didn't work out with the mule, and this will help make up for it. We'll give you another five hundred crowns for the soup pot."

"Well, I suppose that's only fair," said Campriano, and the two farmers left with the pot.

Of course, the two farmers were not a bit happy when they discovered they had been fooled again. They stormed back to Campriano's house, fists upraised.

"We're taking no chances with you," they told Campriano, throwing him into a big grain sack that they tied closed with a big knot. They ran a stout pole through the knot, and each took an end of the pole and hoisted it on their shoulders.

Where were the farmers headed? To the pond near the village tavern. Only they were thirsty after carrying their heavy load and decided to stop and have a cold drink in the tavern. Campriano felt himself being lowered to the ground, and when he could tell that the two farmers had entered the tavern, he started moaning, "I won't have her! I tell you, I won't have her!"

A young farmer leading a cow was walking past when he heard Campriano's cries. The farmer looked puzzled, but when Campriano repeated, "I won't have her," the young farmer bent down near the sack and asked, "Who won't you have?"

"The king's daughter," replied Campriano from inside the sack. "The king wants me to marry his daughter, but I really can't do it. Oh, she's beautiful, and she dresses in jewels from head to toe, but I can't marry her. I am just a simple farmer, and a simple farmer I want to stay."

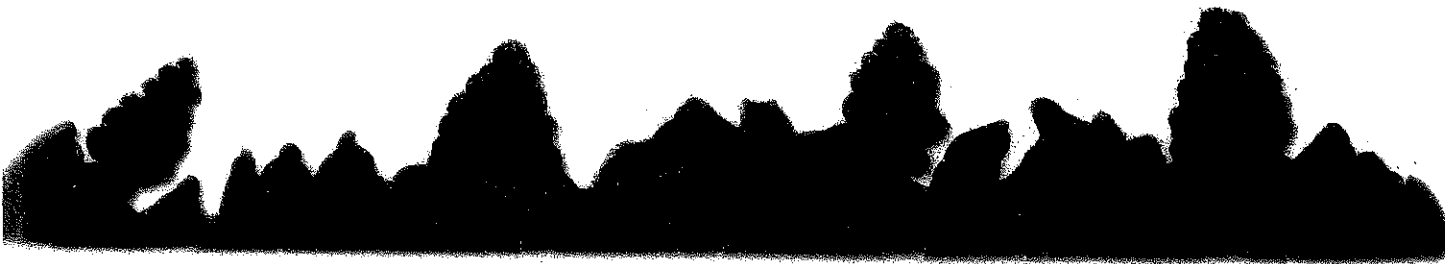
"You say the princess is beautiful and you say she is rich?" asked the young farmer. "I'd do anything to be in your shoes!"


"Well, that's easy enough,"
Campriano offered. "Take my
place in this sack. I'm sure the
king would much prefer you as
a son-in-law, seeing as you are
at least willing."

"I'm willing, all right!" exclaimed the young farmer, undoing the sack's knot. "You may as well take my cow," he added, "as I'll have no need for her now." And with that Campriano traded places with the young farmer and led the cow away.

When the two farmers came out of the tavern they picked up their bundle and carried it to the pond's edge. "Good riddance!" they shouted as they tossed the sack into the water. (A very wet and angry young man was seen leaving the pond not much later.)

The two farmers were certainly surprised when they got home to see Campriano leading his new cow. "Campriano, is that you?" questioned one of the farmers. "Where did you get that nice-looking cow?"





asked the other.

"You'll never guess," replied Campriano. "Did you know that the tavern pond leads to the Land of Plenty? I had always heard this was so, but I never believed it until I saw it with my very own eyes. Why, I came away with just this one cow, but there are hundreds more like her still down there."

"Free?" asked the farmers.

"Absolutely free," replied Campriano.

The two foolish farmers hardly heard Campriano's last words. They turned and ran down the road to the tavern pond as fast as their legs would take them. They were last seen diving into the pond. What happened to them? No one knows for sure, but they were never seen in those parts again.

