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Baldo, Volume 1: Books I-XII (The I Tatti Renaissance Library)

Teofilo Folengo

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Teofilo Folengo (1491-1544) was born in Mantua and joined the Benedictine order, but became a runaway monk and a satirist of monasticism. In 1517 he published, under the pseudonym Merlin Cocaio, the first version of his macaronic narrative poem *Baldo*, later enlarged and elaborated. It blended Latin with various Italian dialects in hexameter verse, inventing a deliberately droll language whose humor depends on the mixture of high and low tonalities. An important example of the mock-heroic epic, the work was a model for Rabelais and was frequently reprinted.

Baldo, the hero of these picaresque adventures, is a descendant of French royalty who starts out as something of a juvenile delinquent. The poem narrates episodes which include imprisonment; battles with local authorities, pirates, shepherds, witches, and demons; and a journey to the underworld. Throughout Baldo is accompanied by various companions, among them a giant, a centaur, a magician, and his best friend Cingar, a wickedly inventive trickster ("practicus ad beffas"). This edition provides the first English translation of this hilarious send-up of ancient epic and Renaissance chivalric romance.

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