CHAPTER 1
How it happened that Mastro Cherry, carpenter, found a piece of wood that wept and laughed like a child.
Centuries ago there lived—
“A king!” my little readers will say immediately.
No, children, you are mistaken. Once upon a time there was a piece of wood. It was not an expensive piece of wood. Far from it. Just a common block of firewood, one of those thick, solid logs that are put on the fire in winter to make cold rooms cozy and warm.
I do not know how this really happened, yet the fact remains that one fine day this piece of wood found itself in the shop of an old carpenter. His real name was Mastro Antonio, but everyone called him Mastro Cherry, for the tip of his nose was so round and red and shiny that it looked like a ripe cherry.
As soon as he saw that piece of wood, Mastro Cherry was filled with joy. Rubbing his hands together happily, he mumbled half to himself:
“This has come in the nick of time. I shall use it to make the leg of a table.”