

tion of the best the world has to show, so near the beginning of the Twentieth Century, in the shape of the products of human science, industry, and ingenuity. Other nations, as well as the United States, are not above selfish and mercenary considerations, and it must be confessed that inducements offered for vigorous competition would have been much greater had the sixty-five millions of consumers in the American Union not been fenced around with a tariff which forbids the possibility of fair competition in its markets. One powerful motive for proving to the people of the Union the superiority of foreign productions in any given line was conspicuously wanting, so long as it was known that her people were virtually prohibited, or had virtually prohibited themselves, from purchasing wares of foreign production, no matter what their superiority. While there can be no doubt that the American protective tariff greatly tended to prevent the fullest success of the Fair as an exhibition of the world's manufactures, its effect as a great educational institution was no doubt magnificent. The series of object-lessons it presented of a thousand different kinds, was, beyond all comparison, superior to anything ever before attempted, if, indeed, anything of the kind was ever before attempted, which is doubtful. To take a single instance, it may safely be said that never before in the world's history was it possible for one to study, within the radius of a few miles, the faces, dress, manners, customs, and habits of so great a variety of races as were here assembled, clad each in its native garb, and exhibiting each its native mode of life and industry. A couple of weeks spent in the intelligent observation of these foreign villagers must have been no bad substitute for a year of foreign travel.

Any higher good which we may hope to have been wrought through the agency of the Exhibition, may be said to have been both incidental and designed. There can be no doubt that every occasion which thus brings the people of different climes and nations into familiar and friendly contact, though but for a few days, tends to promote the sense of common interests, to cultivate mutual sympathies, and to hasten the time when "men to men the world o'er, shall brithers be, an' a' that." As a peace-maker, and a promoter of friendship between nations there is nothing, save the spread of true religion itself, which can excel the international exposition, well conducted. There is every reason to hope that influences, direct and indirect, begotten of intercourse at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, will be felt in many countries, and in various ways, for years, and and if for years, for centuries to come. But in addition to all this indirect good which may be hoped for, there stand out prominently to memory also the series of World Congresses, which were no doubt conceived

in the spirit of the truest philanthropy, and which, as carried out, must have left indelible impressions and ennobling impulses in many minds. To say nothing of something like two hundred departmental congresses for the discussion of special questions, there were no less than about twenty general congresses, which were attended and participated in by many of the most distinguished men of the world, from almost every country. To specify no other, it can hardly be doubted that the Parliament of Religions, though looked upon by many with suspicion, must have set in motion trains of thought, started inquiries, generated impulses, and enkindled desires after the knowledge of the highest of all sciences which will tell upon the moral and religious progress of the world for generations to come. Take it all in all, the Columbian Exhibition, in spite of all defects and objectionable features, was a great triumph of enterprise and a great commercial and moral force, projected into the closing years of the century.

NOTES ON DANTE.—III.

DIVINA COMMEDIA.

We now approach the great achievement of the genius of Dante, the poem which he called *La Commedia* simply, to which title an early editor prefixed the word *Divine*, an addition which has been sanctioned by universal consent. It is needless to offer apologies for slightness of treatment: the conditions of this undertaking allow of nothing more. The deepest thinkers and the most finished scholars have devoted their erudition to the exposition of Dante, and the results of their labors would form a considerable library. Here no more is attempted than to give hints which may lighten somewhat the necessarily heavy labor of any serious student of Dante.

"Comedy," says Dante, in his dedication of the *Paradiso* to Can Grande della Scala, "is a certain kind of poetic narration, different from every other. As to the matter, it differs from tragedy, because the latter is in the beginning admirable and quiet; at the end or close, foul and horrible. Whereas comedy begins with adversity in something, but its matter ends prosperously. . . . Similarly, tragedy and comedy differ in style; the one being lofty and sublime, the other unstudied and ordinary. [Note here the proud humility of Dante]. Whence it is plain why this work is called a comedy. For, if we look at the matter, in the beginning it is horrible and foul, because it is hell; in the end it is prosperous, desirable and grateful, because it is Paradise. If we look at the style, it is unstudied and ordinary, because it is in the vulgar tongue in which even ordinary women speak to each other."

The original thought of the Divine Comedy was to glorify Beatrice, as we learn from the concluding words of the *Vita Nuova*. But we soon see that there is here much more than a memorial of the angelic child and peerless woman of Florence; we have a poem composed in glory of Divine mercy and grace. The historical aspect of the great composition

will sufficiently reveal itself to the careful reader, and the double meanings will be more or less apparent to one or another, according to their own spiritual discipline and experience. It is to the honor of Dante and his work that both have been ignored or ridiculed by the shallow and the secular; and that the ages and the men who have been distinguished by spirituality and depth have been the readiest to recognize the supremacy of the mighty Florentine.

In the present paper we are to deal with the whole poem in general, its sources, its language, its form, its meaning, its plan. It is intended to add three on the consecutive parts of the poem, the *Inferno*, the *Purgatorio*, and the *Paradiso*.

The Comedy was not the first work of its kind, although most of its predecessors on the same subject are now forgotten, and Dante owed little to them, except perhaps the suggestion. His work represents the whole learning of the time, and there is little difficulty in ascertaining the sources from which he drew. Chief among these are the Holy Scriptures, the Fathers, the Schoolmen, and first of them the great S. Thomas Aquinas, the Christian Mystics, and the Latin poets, especially Virgil. The reader should make himself acquainted with the sixth book of the *Aeneid* which contains the account of the visit paid by *Aeneas* to Tartarus and Elysium. Dante was probably also acquainted with Homer in a Latin translation.

The poem is in form a vision or a series of visions. The language will be considered in a note on the treatise *De Vulgari Eloquentia*; but it may here be remarked that, according to Boccaccio, it was begun in Latin, the first line running thus:

"Ultima regna canamus, flūido continuis mundo."

We can imagine something of what such a poem would have been, and how much we have gained by the change.

The verse in which the *Commedia* is composed is known as the *Terna Rima*, which, if Dante did not invent it, he at least made his own. Those who have given special attention to this subject declare that it "is not only a good metre for Dante's purpose, but it is the very best metre which human ingenuity and research could have selected. Its only possible rival would be blank verse." This opinion is expressed by a writer in the *Athenæum* (Oct. 14th) is commonly entertained. Three lines make a stanza, each line consists of eleven syllables, and lines one and three rhyme, while line two gives the rhyme for lines one and three of the following stanza.

Some notion of the structure of the *Terna Rima* may be gained from a specimen in Dante's *Plumptre's translation*, which is a very correct reproduction of the original, except that the lines are usually only of ten syllables instead of eleven.

"When our life's course with me had half-way sped,
I found myself in gloomy forest dell,
Where the straight path beyond all seemed
had fled.
Ah me! hard task it were in word to tell
What was that wood, wild, drear, and
led o'er,
Which e'en in thought renews that terror
fell,
So bitter 'tis—death's self were little more."

Of the translations of Dante, Cary's is still to hold an undisputed pre-eminence. Lowell's fellow's is accurate and literal, and it is accurate.