

fire, which he gave to the lady to eat. Then love departed in great grief. The substance of this dream is embodied in the first sonnet, and Dante remarks that "the true meaning of this dream was not then seen by anyone, but now it is plain to the simplest."

This first poem is of interest as being probably the first composition of this kind by Dante which we still possess. It stands first, not only in the V. N., but in the complete collection of Dante's shorter poems, known as the *Canzoniere*. Translations of the V. N. or of the poems have been made by Mr. (afterwards Sir Charles) Lyell, Rossetti, Sir Theodore Martin, Dean Plumptre, and Mr. C. E. Norton. All of these have great merits. Lyell's translation is in the manner of Cary. Norton's is more after the fashion of Longfellow's, only that he preserves the rhymes, and he has some admirable essays. Plumptre also preserves the form and rhyming of the original, and has some admirable notes. In the specimens here given all these versions have been used, and the aim has been to make the rendering exact and almost verbal.

Dante, one day, gazing at Beatrice, was supposed to be looking at a lady near her, and, to prevent remarks on the former, he allowed the error to go uncorrected; and when this lady went away he poured out his grief in a poem. So, on the death of a beautiful young friend of Beatrice, he wrote two sonnets; but in all these poems there was an underlying reference to Beatrice, and in fact it was always his worship of her which inspired his poetic utterances. Thus, the latter of these two sonnets (in Chap. VIII) ends with the following undoubted reference to his lady:

"Who is this lady will I not disclose  
Save what may by her qualities be known.  
Who merits not salvation,  
Let him not hope to hear her company."

By these roundabout methods of paying homage, on Dante's part the result of pure reverence, he became suspected of inconstancy and even of wantonness; and "on this account," he says (Ch. X.), "namely because of that wanton talk, which seemed to impute vice to me, that most gentle lady, who was the destroyer of all the vices, and the queen of the virtues, passing by a certain place, denied me her most sweet salute, in which lay all my bliss." And then he goes on to speak of her gracious influence over him, subduing resentment and kindling charity and mercy. The loss of her salutation filled him with grief. He writes a Ballata, telling it to find Love and with him as advocate make the poet's defence:

"With sounds of sweetness, when thou goest with him,  
Begin these words,  
As soon as thou her pity shall have craved:  
'My lady, he who sends me unto you,  
When it shall please you, prays you  
That you will hear me offer his defence.  
Love is the cause who, by your beauty's means,  
Constrains him, as he will, to change his aspect.  
Reflect why on another he hath gazed,  
When all the time his heart remained unchanged."

Tell her, 'O Lady that his heart is stayed  
With such confirmed faith  
That every thought is bent on serving you.  
Yours he became in youth, and never swerved.'  
If she believe thee not,  
Tell her to question Love if this be true,  
And at the last present a humble prayer  
To pardon him, if he hath caused her pain  
And if by message she should bid me die  
Her servant's strict obedience she shall prove."

Further on he tells us of having met

Beatrice in a company of ladies when he was so overcome with emotion as to excite the ridicule of those present. (C. XIV.) This was the occasion of a sonnet to Beatrice, explaining the cause of his emotion, after which he added, in his comment: "This is ambiguous and impossible to explain to any one who is not in like degree the liegeman of love." Afterwards he declares (Ch. XVIII.) that, as he had lost the happiness which came from receiving his lady's salutation, he must now find satisfaction in the contemplation and celebration of her excellency. Out of this explanation comes the beautiful Canzone on the graces of Beatrice. We give the third of the six stanzas.

"My lady is desired in the high heaven:  
Now of her virtue will I make you know.  
I say: Who so would seem a gentle dame  
Should go with her; for when she passes by,  
Love casts o'er evil hearts a chilling blight,  
Which freezes and destroys their every thought.  
And whom Love does permit to gaze upon her,  
He only proves her virtue more and more;  
For then there comes to him what gives him health,  
And humbles him till he forgets all wrong.  
And yet a greater grace hath God bestowed:  
Never can he end ill who speaks with her."

In another poem he answers the question: What is Love? In another he sets forth the loveliness of Beatrice. Beatrice's father dies and this becomes the occasion of two poems. Then he has a dream foreboding the death of Beatrice, and this is embodied in a canzone.

"And then said Love: 'No more I hide from thee;  
Come and behold our Lady who lies here.'  
Then dream-like phantasy  
Conducted me to see my lady dead;  
And as I looked, I saw  
That ladies with a veil were covering her;  
And with her was such sweet humility  
It seemed as though she said, 'I am in peace.'"

By-and-bye the vision becomes a reality. Beatrice passes away at the age of twenty-four; and he writes a canzone which is at once a dirge for Beatrice and a celebration of her entrance into Paradise. It ends thus;

"Sad song of mine, now weeping go thy way,  
And find again the dames and maidens sweet  
To whom thy sisters all  
Were wont to be the bearers of delight.  
And thou who art the daughter of my sorrow  
Go forth disconsolate and dwell with them."

In Chapter XXXVI. we come to a sonnet, the twenty-sixth poem of the series, which presents us with one of the greatest difficulties in Dante's life. A noble (gentile) lady, young and very beautiful, beholding the poet's grief was moved to compassion and love; and Dante's heart went forth to her and found consolation in her affection. But the glorified Beatrice appeared to him and this drove out of his mind the thought of the other.

Now, it is quite true that, in the *Convito*, Dante declares that this gentle lady signified a merely human philosophy which, for a time, displaced Divine Revelation, and Mr. Davidson, in his excellent edition of Scartazzini's Hand-book, decides in rather an offhand manner that the "gentle lady" can have no other meaning. But we cannot help here taking the view of his author, especially when we find it supported by critics like Witte, Hettinger, and Plumptre. If we give up the literal meaning here, we shall be in danger of cloing the same with Beatrice herself.

Finally he announces his resolution, in the closing paragraph of the book, "to speak no more of this blessed one until I could more

worthily treat of her. And to attain to this, I study to the utmost of my power, as she truly knoweth. So that, if it shall please Him through whom all things live that my life shall be prolonged for some years, I hope to say of her what was never said of any woman. And then it may please Him who is the Lord of grace that my soul may go to behold the glory of its lady, namely, of that blessed Beatrice who in glory looketh upon the face of Him *qui est per omnia Saecula benedictus*." Here is the promise of the *Commedia*; and we know how splendidly it was kept.

It is not easy, in this fragmentary manner, to give any adequate idea of the beauty of this remarkable work. It is fresh, simple, direct; in short, Dantesque. Even where it is crude, it bears within itself the pledge of greater things to come.

The other lesser works must be considered hereafter.

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### PARIS LETTER.

The colliers' strike in the north of France, where 50,000 men are out, continues to be a puzzle; no one can fix a date when it will terminate. The Socialist deputies occupy the coal regions haranguing the strikers to no-surrenderism. The strike ought to be viewed as the vanguard, in sympathy with the English stand, and feeling its way to the general strike for the continent—later. The working classes have made up their minds on one point, to possess a better division of the cake they help to make. At Amiens a fresh strike has broken out among the dyers, who are very skilled artisans in the matter of coloring stuffs and velvets. A few months ago they struck, and demanded higher wages. Ultimately the employers acceded. The latter at once formed themselves into a syndicate, resolved to augment their prices to be charged manufacturers, corresponding to the concessions made to the hands. The increase prices naturally would fall on the consumer, which would not be unfair, if all interested were fairly treated. The dyers have now addressed their employers thus: "You have made no sacrifices for us since you are gaining more money, that is to say, losing none. We demand two francs a week higher pay all round, and ten hours' work in place of eleven."

Holland has ever been to the front in labor questions. A royal commission has been occupied inquiring into the several phases of the work problem. It inclines to the Government taking in hand the supervision of all societies of the "friendly" order to handle assurances against work accidents, and for the according of pensions to the toil-worn aged. The commission proposes also to protect adults, just as much as women and children against dangers from machinery and unhealthy factories. It is divided on the subject of compulsory education, because children have to care for the house while their mothers have to go out and work. In the case of agricultural children, their attendance would be only compulsory during the half year when field labor would be impossible, but to accord to parents the right to select the school and fix the exceptional attendance.

It would be well if the "soul doctors," that latest class of publicists, would give a diagnosis on the Franco-Russian Alliance, what are its aims, outside of imagination and