

which aroused his spirit, and afforded images or figures for his poetic mind, are we indebted for the most beautiful of Dante's creations. His attachment had at first been repulsed by Beatrice's father, owing to some early prejudice; but finding his daughter's happiness depended upon his consent, he had reluctantly yielded it, though he deferred their union from time to time upon the plea that Duranti was too much engrossed by the politics of his native city to make a good husband.

A few months previous to the period of which we are writing, a memorable battle had been fought between the Ghibelines and Guelphs, at Campoldino, in which Duranti distinguished himself for his bravery; but he received a severe wound, which his friends hoped would extinguish his fiery zeal. It only served, however, the more to excite it, and on his recovery he plunged with even more ardor into the excitement of the times. Count Portonari was seriously displeased, and represented to Duranti so vividly the consequences of his rashness, that he promised to withdraw himself as soon as possible from the coils in which he had been entangled. It was at this period that Beatrice received the letter we have mentioned, informing her of a new outbreak in the city, where Duranti had himself been attacked by a party of the Ghibelines, and would have been sacrificed but for the opportune arrival of some friends. She could not endure to think of him exposed to so many dangers which she could not share; and when she sought her father, it was with a determination to prevail upon him to consent to their union.

The loving father could not resist the entreaties of his fair child, and he promised, when they went to Florence to celebrate the Carnival, he would make the necessary arrangements for their nuptials.

It was the time of Carnival. The whole world of Florence were engaged in it, save the few who were sick, who then, more bitterly than ever, regretted that Azrael should be looking upon them with his evil eye; and the two lovers, the world forgetting, enjoyed that delightful intercourse which had been so long denied them. Duranti read many of his compositions to Beatrice, and listened with delight to her playful criticisms. They were indeed but the germ of the plant which was to bear such glorious fruit; yet the promise of its strength and beauty could be seen in these its first fruits.

He had already conceived the idea of writing an epic poem that should elevate the Italian language, which had not been thought to possess

sufficient power for any great literary composition; but Dante felt that the "lingua vulgare" was capable of much, and it was his aim to raise it to the rank of a classic tongue. How well he succeeded in his great endeavor, each succeeding age bears witness, in the immortality it has given to him and the gentle being whom he has made his guide through the world of spirits.

How full of happiness were these few days, but oh—how brief! A world of tender emotions and deep heart-feeling was compressed into them; and all his life long did Duranti Alghieri turn a backward look upon these, the only truly happy days which his stormy life permitted him to enjoy. The last day of the Carnival came. On the next, Beatrice was to return home; for her father kept sacred the days of fasting and penance which followed, and preferred passing them in the privacy of his own palace. The arrangements had been made for Beatrice's marriage at an early day in the bright and sunny month of May. There was comparative peace in Florence, and Alghieri had promised to withdraw himself from its divisions. He was not to accompany them home, having many arrangements to make previous to resigning the offices of trust which he held under the Guelph party. With a light heart, though a tearful eye, Beatrice bade him adieu. She thought they were soon to meet never again to be separated. No shadow cast its gloom upon the dial of her young heart; but Duranti was sad; a cloud was upon him which he could not remove—and a chilliness as of death crept over him while he watched the graceful guiding of her spirited jennet, as she rode away; and he could scarce return the smile which she gave him with the parting glance before she was lost to his view.

The travellers did not leave Florence till late in the afternoon, for the day had been hot, and they preferred to await a less fervid sun. Gaily passed the first hour or two, for Beatrice's heart, relieved from the anxiety she had long felt for her lover, was blithe and buoyant, and the motion of her favorite exercise made her almost unnaturally gay. As soon as they were out of the city in the beautiful open *campania*, she removed the velvet mask, which had partly shaded her exquisite face, and which it was the custom for ladies of her rank to wear when desirous to escape observation, and yielded herself to the "abandon" of the hour. Her father listened with delight to her playful sallies, and her bright picturing of the happiness she should enjoy, when united to Duranti. With love's prophetic hand, she sketched for him a future of undying fame. He was to immortalize not only himself but his age;