

## Old-fashioned.

Yes, I am a bit old-fashioned—

My children tell me so,  
But I can't help lovin' the good old ways  
They had in the long ago,  
When I was a good deal younger,  
When my hair was black as jet,  
Before the lines and the wrinkles came  
And I was my father's pet.

The old church hymns— I love 'em  
Sung in the good old way,  
"Long Metre" and "hallelujah"  
And nary an organ to play  
'They sing 'em now so funny  
With a hoppity-skip an' a jump,  
While the organ-man sets gaspin'  
An' tryin' his bust to pump.

I like the old style meetin'  
Where we knew just what to do.  
I declare, when I go to meetin' now  
I can't sit still in my pew,  
I think the Lord would be willin'  
To be served without such a fuss,  
And I know he'd be much better pleased  
If there never was no church muss.

My children laugh and wonder  
What makes their mother so odd,  
But I tell 'em I like the good old way  
Of praisin' an' servin' God.  
Yes, I am a bit old-fashioned;  
I like the straight-backed cheer  
An' not the ones they get to-day  
That come so dreadful dear.

All plush an' velvet an' satin—  
I own they're pretty to see,  
But the good old straight-back rocking cheer  
Is always the one for me.  
My darter laughs at the candle  
I take when I go to bed,  
An' make such fun o' the night-cap  
I wear on my old grey head.

Yes, I am a bit old-fashioned,  
My heart's in the good old days,  
I love the things of the long ago,  
An' all the queer old ways.  
But my soul looks ever onward  
To the time when rest shall come,  
When my dear old man on the shining strand  
Shall welcome me gladly home.

## The Story of a Beautiful Girl.

BY ABBY M. GANNETT.

On an afternoon, over six hundred years ago, in Florence, Italy, a shy boy, nine years of age, attended a party of many children of his own age—boys and girls. His name was Durante, but they called him Dante. Like all sensitive children, he found no pleasure in joining the sports, but in keeping apart and watching the players. If any one called out: "Come, Dante, don't stand moping there; come on, and join the fun!" he would draw still further away—perhaps hide behind some grown-up person, to look out on the play when he thought he would not be noticed.

One little girl particularly attracted Dante. He might first have noticed her because she wore a red dress. Years afterward he wrote of red: "It is a most noble colour." It was one of the colours of Florence—green and white being the others. Young as he was, Dante knew what patriotism meant, for those were stormy years in Italy, and often large numbers of the citizens were called to take up arms—and even the very children felt loyalty springing up in their hearts.

But soon Dante saw that the little girl with the red dress was a very wonderful child. It was not because her eyes, deep with colour and lights like gems, and her pure, oval face, and her waving hair, were beautiful—he thought, indeed, he had never seen anything like these—but because she moved among the others with the sweetness and gravity

an angel child might have, did she leave her heavenly home awhile to join in the sports of earthly children.

Dante was born a Catholic, and, therefore, was taught that, next to Jesus, Mary, the Virgin Mother, was the most radiant being that had ever blessed our earth. He may have felt that little Beatrice looked and moved as Mary must have when a child, such was the awe with which she inspired him. He could on no account have spoken to her; and if, in the games, she approached nearer him, his solemn eyes grew larger, and he held his breath, with a deeper sense of the wonder of her presence.

After that day, little Dante seldom met Beatrice, but the impression she made upon him was unchanged. He could not have expressed it in words, but the truth was that this child—with her lovely, thoughtful face, and her grave and beautiful ways—stood for him as the sign of what is beautiful, good, and true in the world. He had the soul of a poet, and such a soul is deeply impressed by all forms of beauty, because they speak of what is greater than all—the loveliness and holiness of spirit.

When almost a young man, Dante met Beatrice most unexpectedly one day upon the street. She was now a maiden, and seemed to him more wonderful than ever. She was dressed in white, while the flashing sunlight seemed to make her hair like gold. As she turned her clear, deep eyes toward him, she remembered him, and smiled. He was so overcome with the vision, and what he thought was her kindness in recognizing him, he said that it seemed as if whatever was gross in him was washed forever away.

By that time Dante had begun to take part in the political life of his city. In it there was much to arouse the less admirable traits of his disposition. The stern and unyielding spirit for which he was afterward distinguished was being developed. He knew what it was to feel resentment, hatred, and revenge toward the party that opposed his own. Yet, after he met Beatrice, there was a season when he felt that he could forgive every enemy. Such is the influence goodness and purity have over the baser passions.

Two prominent political parties alternately ruled Florence—the Guelfs and the Ghibellines. The former adhered to the Pope; the latter to the Emperor of Germany. Dante belonged to the Guelfs then. It seemed as if he were to have a soldier's career—that he even might be called to die fighting for his beloved Florence. But events proved how far different his fate was to be, and that, through him, Beatrice was to have immortal fame.

They met but seldom, yet whenever he did see her he forgot everything else, even his wish to serve his city, as he contemplated her purity and goodness. Once they met at a bridal party, where she wore again a dress of white. In the atmosphere of peace and holiness that surrounded her, Dante for the first time had a sense of what heaven might be. We see that the influence came from the character of Beatrice much more than from her outward beauty. Its purity, nobility, and strength alone could have had enduring power over a nature like Dante's.

Beatrice married. Dante took up arms, and we hear of his brave fighting in the famous battle of Campaldino, when the Florentines defeated the people Arezzo. He returned to his city to be crowned with honours. Beatrice died; but the vision of her goodness was unfading in his mind, and he said he would write of her such words as had never been written of woman. He thought of

her as a glorious spirit that had returned to its heavenly home.

He married, and children grew up around him. He was made a chief magistrate of Florence. He was sent on a mission to Rome. This was the turning-point in his life.

The Guelfs had split into two factions—the Bianchi or White; and the Neri, or Black. Dante belonged to the Bianchi. While he was absent in Rome, the Neri obtained ascendancy, and he was forbidden to return to Florence on penalty of being burned. This was a terrible stroke. To be exiled from his home—from the city he had loved and served, for a time he knew not how long!

With other exiles, he made an ineffectual attempt to attack Florence; then he became a wanderer from city to city, until his death, at the age of fifty-six years.

This is his sad story; and we can well believe that he found no solace from his brooding thoughts upon his wrongs except in the contemplation of that peace and goodness of which Beatrice had been the emblem. The contrast between the wickedness and strife of the times and that spirit, all love and serenity, fixed itself more and more upon his mind.

So he came to think of the life of man, sinful and discordant as it was, and the life of man that might be beneficent and holy in the thought of God. It rose up before his mind as a mighty vision calling upon him to show it forth to the world. He resolved to write a great poem which should forever benefit his race.

Thus the "Divine Comedy" came to be written. The lonely, exiled poet, notwithstanding his wrongs and sorrows, loved his fellow-beings well enough to wish to help them turn from sin and seek the life of holiness. And we may well believe that it was the beautiful Beatrice who chiefly inspired this love.

Dante shows us the three stages of man's life on earth: that in which he unrepentantly sins; that in which he willingly bears punishment in order to purge away his guilt; and that where he has begun to live the life of goodness. These are called the "Inferno," the "Purgatorio," and the "Paradiso."

In the first canto of the "Inferno," the poet tells us of having been lost in a gloomy wood, where he met the Latin poet Virgil, who offered to conduct him through the dreary regions of hell and up the steep mountain of purgatory. Beatrice had come to him from paradise, and besought him to do this. Afterward she would guide Dante through the spheres of heaven. This meant that poetry, symbolized by Virgil; and heavenly wisdom, symbolized by Beatrice; had inspired Dante thus to unfold to man his life in its different phases, that he may be forever warned from evil, and desirous of choosing only virtue.

The part which Beatrice holds in the "Divine Comedy" is one equalled by no other literary work. Dante faithfully kept his promise, to write of her words such as had been dedicated to no other woman.

No true girl or woman, who reads of Beatrice in the "Divine Comedy," can feel otherwise than grateful to the poet for his noble conception, nor help longing to bring into her own life something of the beauty that marked this saintly character. He makes her the personification of the highest human and divine qualities. She is supernal beauty and holiness; yet we always recognize the pure girl who awakened the reverence of Dante in his early days in Florence.

We see how rare and angelic must have been the spirit that in those dark and turbulent years of