

feels that honour calls him to the side of Agramante, while love loudly demands that he shall embrace the cause of the victorious Charles. Ruggiero has little to bind him to the Saracen king, by whose family his own father had been grievously wronged; and the fact that he had received knighthood at the hand of Agramante alone restrains him from leaving his service. The misfortunes of his master, however, revive the old affection; and again he tears himself from his own fair prospects to throw himself into the well-nigh hopeless struggle; nor is it till after the death of Agramante that the knight attaches himself to the service of Charlemagne. It is noteworthy not only in this instance, but with the other knights throughout the whole poem, that private considerations continually yield to the call of honour. Ruggiero puts away the cup of happiness from his lips, with the piteous appeal to Bradamante.

Io vi domando per mio onor sol questo
Tutto poi vostro è di mia vita il resto.

—Or. Fur., c. xxv., v. 45.

(I ask but this for my honour's sake, and all the rest of my life is thine.) Bradamante is not slow to respond in the same spirit. She hid in her heart the words that might have kept him at her side, and sent him away on his hopeless errand to the Saracen camp.

All onor chi gli manca d'un momento
Non può in cento anni satisfar nè in cento.

—Or. Fur., c. xxvii., v. 9.

(He who but for one instant fails at honour's call can never make amends in a hundred years, nor yet a hundred more.)

The final scenes in their story are a fitting ending to this stormy courtship. Ruggiero returns to France, after the death of Agramante, to find that the father of his promised bride is endeavouring to betroth her to Leon, Prince of Greece. In true knightly fashion he hurries to his rival's kingdom to settle his claim with the sword. He finds the kingdom of Greece at war with the kingdom of Bulgaria. Ruggiero fights in disguise on the side of the Bulgarians, and after many deeds of valour is taken by the Greeks through treachery, thrown into prison and condemned to death. Leon, ignorant of the fact that the captive is his rival, is filled with admiration of his courage and bravery, and, at great personal risk, generously sets him free. Meanwhile, Bradamante, who knows nothing of her lover's departure, entreats Charlemagne to allow her to enter the lists against her rival suitors. She promises to become the bride of any knight who can overcome her in single combat, feeling sure that Ruggiero will be the first to accept her challenge. The king consents, and the tidings reach her lover through the lips of his rival, Leon, who entreats Ruggiero to appear at the tournament in his place, for Leon himself is little skilled in the use of arms. Ruggiero feels compelled to consent, both from a sense of gratitude and from the oath he had sworn, to use his arms, if desired, on the prince's behalf. He agrees to wear Leon's armour, and to face Bradamante on the field. The principle of action in this case seems perhaps a little strained; but it was strictly in accordance with the rules of knightly honour. With a sinking heart, Ruggiero appears at the lists on the appointed day, clad in no enchanted armour, and wearing only a sword whose edge he had previously blunted, that it might neither cut nor pierce. Bradamante, who is fighting for love and liberty, and is well-nigh desperate at her lover's delay, fights with the energy of despair, while Ruggiero only seeks to defend himself and simply parries her blows. Bradamante fails to disarm him, and at the close of the day is adjudged as the prize of Leon. She appeals to the king for a fresh contest, but in the meantime Leon has discovered his rival's identity and generously resigns his claim to the warlike maiden. He is perhaps urged to this step by the consciousness that he is no fit mate for so high-spirited and martial a maiden. Thus the lovers' thorny path is at last made smooth for the marriage procession.

Ariosto was a shrewd observer of men and women, and the creatures of his fancy, in spite of the enchanted atmosphere which surrounds them, impress us with a strong sense of reality. We do not attempt to put them in the class of merely allegorical or mythical creatures. The men and women of the "Orlando Furioso" live and fight, and love and suffer as truly as those of our own day; and through the glamour of Fairyland we can trace the stir and working of human life. This sense of reality renders more vivid the picture presented of chivalric times, and partly accounts for the weight attached to Ariosto's judgment on matters of chivalry. Maffei, an Italian writer of the sixteenth century, relates that he had seen a treaty for peace fall apart because one of the parties failed to find a precedent in the "Orlando Furioso". Ariosto was an enthusiastic admirer of the chivalric mode of warfare, and seems to have regarded the rude sort of firearms, described in the ninth canto, as a wholly indefensible and satanic device. It is evident from the description of the machine, and its danger, both to friend and foe, and other motives perhaps than those of outraged piety caused Orlando to consign the diabolical engine to the sea, with the words:—

Mai cavalier per te d'essere arditto
Nè quanto il buono val, mai più si vanti
Il rio per te valer, qui giù rimanti,
O maledetto, O abominoso ordigno,
Che fabbricato nel tartareo fondo
Fosti per man di Belzebù maligno,
Che ruinar per te disegno il mondo,
All'Inferno, onde uscisti, ti rassegnò.
Così dicendo, lo getto in profondo.

—Or. Fur., c. ix., v. 90, 91.

("That true knight may never hereafter owe his valour to thy aid, or coward dare by thy help to boast himself above the brave, lie thou beneath the waters. O, accursed, O, abominable design, in lowest depths of hell wert thou framed by the malicious hands of Beelzebub, who thought by thee to desolate the world! Back to the hell whence thou didst come I send thee.") Thus he spake, and cast it in the depths of the sea.) And in another passage, after describing the resurrection of this same infernal machine, by the unhallowed art of a wizard, and its subsequent adoption throughout Europe, he bursts forth:—

Come trovasti, O scellerata e brutta
Invenzion, mai loco in uman core?
Per te la militar gloria è distrutta;
Per te il mestier dell'arme è senza onore;
Per te il valore e la virtù ridotta,
Che spesso par del buono il rio migliore:
Non più la gagliardia, non più l'ardire
Per te può in campo al paragon venire.

Chè s'io v'ho detto, il detto mio non erra,
Che ben fu il più crudele, e il più di quanti
Mai furo al mondo ingegni empî e maligni
Ch'immagino sì abominoso ordigno
E credero che Dio, perchè vendetta
Ne sia in inferno, nel profondo chiuda
Del cieco abisso quella maladetta
Anima, appresso al maladetto Ginda.

—Or. Fur., c. xi., v. 25-27.

(How, O cursed and vile invention couldst thou ever find a home in the human breast? Through thee the glory of battle is destroyed, the noble art of war is shorn of its honour. Valour and daring are made of none effect, for oftentimes through thee the coward is more mighty than the valiant man. Courage and manly virtue no longer dare stand before thee in the field. . . . If thus I speak, surely my words are true; most cruel, most deadly of all impious and unhallowed minds, that ever the world has seen, was the mind which designed this abominable machine. Yea, I believe that God, whose judgments are eternal, far in the depths of the profound abyss, has looked that guilty soul, hard by accursed Judas.) Ariosto's familiarity with Latin, French and Spanish literature appears constantly in his own writings, where classical and mythical allusions abound side by side with the more recent romantic legends of feudal Europe. This anachronism, however, did not shock the taste of Ariosto's day, any more than that of Spenser's. The style of Ariosto is well suited to his subject; the facility and rapidity of his language, the grace and brilliancy of his invention and the beauty of his descriptions, accord well with the stirring scenes he describes. But these qualities render his poetry extremely difficult of translation, and its special charm has always eluded any attempt to grasp it. His style is also characterized by a strong sense of humour, and by a shrewd common sense, as when Ruggiero says:—

Non riguardiamo a questo;
Facciam noi, quel che si può far per noi;
Abbia chi regge il ciel cura del resto,
O la fortuna, se non tocca a lui.

—Or. Fur., c. xxii., v. 54.

(Let us give no heed to this matter; let us ourselves do what is in our power, and leave the rest to Him who rules the world, or to fortune, if it be not His affair.) Or again—

Ch'è donna non si fa maggior dispetto
Che quando o vecchia o brutta le vien detto.

—Or. Fur., c. xx., v. 62.

(No greater displeasure can be done to a woman than to speak of her as either old or ugly.)

The defects of the "Orlando Furioso," though no less evident than its excellencies, are not sufficiently numerous greatly to detract from the beauties of the poem. His not infrequent extravagances, coarseness and poverty of thought are forgotten in the enchantment of his verse, and no other Italian poet has ever attained such universal and lasting popularity. The first success of the "Orlando Furioso" (it was republished sixty times in the sixteenth century) was no fleeting prosperity; and Ariosto still lays undisputed claim to the title of the most popular and best known poet of Italy.

But the main interest of the "Orlando Furioso" for us centres in the fact that it was the model of Spenser's "Faerie Queene." Spenser was born in 1552. That stir of fresh literary life had already begun which heralded the first strains of—

Those melodious burst which fill
The spacious times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still.

His predecessors, Wyatt and Surrey, were the leaders of the movement, and drew their inspiration from Italy, "for," as we are told by Puttenham, a writer of poetry, towards the close of the sixteenth century, "having travelled into Italy and there tasted the sweet and stately measures and style of the Italian poetry, they greatly polished our rude and homely manners of vulgar poesy from that it had been before, and for that cause may justly be said to be the first reformers of our English metre and style." Spenser, who was born nearly fifty years after Wyatt and Surrey, was not slow to feel the influence of Italian poetry. Though essentially an English poet, and an admirer of Chaucer and other early English writers, he had passed under the spell of the great masters of Italian literature. He knew and loved Petrarch, Boccaccio, Ariosto and his own contemporary Tasso, as many passages in his own works prove. For how could it be "but that . . . having the sound of those ancient poets ringing in his ears, he might needs in singing hit out some of their tunes." But he purified English literature of the affectations and conceits which had been imported into it with "the sweet and stately measures"

by his predecessors, and "laboured to restore as to their natural heritage such good and natural English words as have been a long time out of use, and almost clean disherited."

That the main idea of the "Faerie Queene" was derived from the "Orlando Furioso" there can be little doubt. Spenser makes no secret of his familiarity with and indebtedness to Ariosto. He uses the material lying to his hand in the "Orlando Furioso" as freely as Ariosto had used the writings of Virgil and Homer, in some cases transferring passages entire, in others simply making use of tales and incidents as Shakespeare has so frequently done. The story of the crime and punishment of the coward Braggadocchio in the "Faerie Queene" is almost identical with the story of Martano in the "Orlando Furioso"; the tale of Claribel in the "Faerie Queene" with that of Geneura in Ariosto's poem. The story of Spenser's Britomart is in the main the story of Bradamante; the portraits of the two warrior maidens are almost identical, and many incidents in the career of the one recur in that of the other. The visit of Britomart to Merlin is a reproduction of the scene where Bradamante visits the wizard's tomb under the guardianship of Melina. On one occasion Bradamante astonishes the knights assembled in the castle to disarm themselves after the day's adventures, with the vision of her beauty. She lays aside helmet and shield, her long hair falls on her shoulders and "reveals her a maiden no less proud in arms than fair in face." So Britomart, on a similar occasion, "was for like need enforst to disarray."

Her golden locks that were in trammels gay
Upbouden, did themselves adown display.

Then of them all she plainly was espyde
To be a woman wight, unwist to be
The fairest woman wight and that ever eie did see.

—F. Q., B., III., c. ix.

Both authors celebrate "the antique glory which whilome wont in women to appeare," and blame the petty jealousy of man who refuses to allow them due credit for their "brave gestes and prowess martiall," and seeks "to coyne streight laws to curb their liberty," and to keep the praise of warlike deeds to himself. The bondage of the Red Crosse knight and his degradation by the false Duessa, find their parallel in the enslavement of Ruggiero in the garden of the enchantress Alcina. And, like Spenser's Duessa, Alcina has her deformity discovered, and her false charms destroyed before her lover's eyes. The enchanted shield of Ruggiero is found in the possession of Spenser's Artegall, and the "blast of that dread horn," which Astolfo was wont to blow, is sounded by Arthur's squire before the gates of the obstinate castle. The student of Ariosto meets with many old friends in the pages of Spenser. But the flowing and harmonious numbers, the brilliancy of language, and the innate love of beauty found in both poets are the real points of resemblance between them.

The Spenserian stanza has been supposed to be a development of the octave stanza (ottava rima) of Boiardo and Ariosto. But a comparison of the two stanzas lends little support to this view. The octave stanza consists of eight lines, usually dodecasyllables, with a recurring rhyme in the first, third and fifth lines, and in the second, fourth and sixth lines. The seventh and eighth lines always rhyme. It is an intricate and somewhat monotonous metre, which the fire and rapidity of Ariosto's style alone preserve from undue uniformity. The Spenserian stanza, since familiar to English readers in many of Keat's and Byron's poems, consists of eight decasyllabic lines and one dodecasyllabic or Alexandrine. Of these the first and third lines rhyme, the second, fourth, fifth and seventh, and the sixth, eighth and ninth. It appears to have been Spenser's own invention.

The allegory which, in Spenser's poem, occupies an important place, fills an entirely subordinate position in Ariosto's work. It is true that we are told that an allegorical truth underlies the poem, but it is continually lost sight of in the bewildering panorama of knights, ladies, giants and enchanters which pass before our eyes. In the "Faerie Queene" the spiritual truth in the poet's mind is kept constantly in view. No magic or melody of the verse obscures it from him who reads. The most cursory study of the two poets cannot fail to show how far Spenser surpasses Ariosto in the majesty and serenity of his language and in the breadth and grandeur of his views of life. Where shall we find in Ariosto lines like these:—

He there does now enjoy eternal rest
And happy ease which thou dost want and crave
And further from it daily wanderest:
What if some little payne the passage have
That makes frayle flesh to feare the bitter wave,
Is not short payne well born that brings long ease
And lays the soule to sleepe in quiet grave?
Sleepe after toill, port after stormy seas.
Ease after warre, death after life, doth greatly please.

—F. Q., B. I., c. ix.

Or take those lines, which describe the ministering angels:—

How oft do they their silver bowers leave,
To come to succour us that succour want?
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
The flitting skyes, like flying Pursuivant
Against fowle fendes to aid us militant!
They for us fight, they watch and dewly ward,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant;
And all for love, and nothing for reward.
O! why should heavenly God to man have such regard?

—F. Q., B. II., c. viii.

Purity of thought is another distinguishing feature of the poetry of Spenser. The writings of Ariosto are often marred by a moral laxity and licentiousness which were