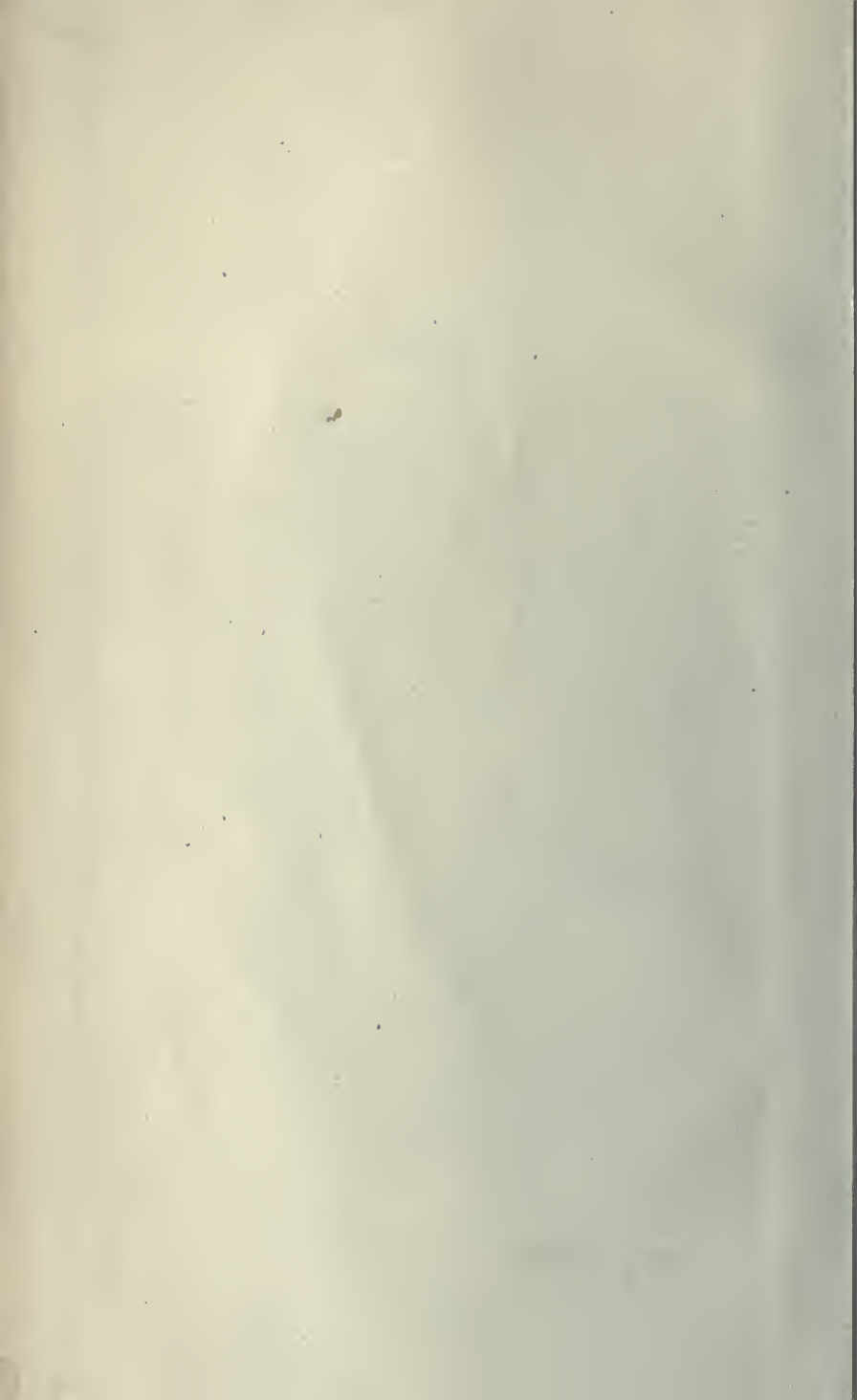


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DANTE AND HIS ITALY

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DANTE AND HIS ITALY.

BY

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LONSDALE RAGG, B.D.

FREBENDARY OF BUCKDEN IN LINCOLN CATHEDRAL; ENGLISH CHAPLAIN AT VENICE

WITH THIRTY-TWO ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO VINU
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ALLA
INSPIRATRICE E COMPAGNA
DE' MIEI STUDI
LAURA MIA MOGLIE
PER ME SEMPRE BEATRICE

TO THE INSPIR
TRIX AND COMPANION OF
MY STUDIES - LAURA
MIA MIA MOGLIE - BEATRICE
PER ME SEMPRE BEATRICE

Beautiful sentiment

PREFACE

THE primary purpose of this volume is to present a vivid picture of life in Italy in Dante's day, based, as far as possible, upon original authorities.

The author is conscious of omissions, imperfections and inequalities; but he wishes it to be understood that the book is intended to be a sketch rather than a finished picture. Hence no attempt has been made to deal exhaustively with the history or the literature of the period, which are only treated in such a way as to supply what is necessary for the purposes of the general reader.

The plan of the work is simple. Opening with a bird's-eye view of Europe at the critical moment of Dante's life, the "ideal date" of his vision, it then starts afresh with the beginning of the century that closes with his death, and traverses the period in ever-narrowing circles: Europe, Italy, Florence, and finally Dante and his literary friends in Florence and his hosts in exile.

As the writer's desire is to look at the period through Dante's own eyes, and to help his reader

to do so, he has found it necessary to quote Dante incessantly. And since translations are at best unsatisfactory—does not the poet himself tell us as much?—he is quoted almost always in the original. But as a concession to the reader to whom Italian (or shall we say Dante's Italian?) is unfamiliar, a paraphrase or interpretation of every passage so quoted has been interwoven in the text, and the latter has been so worded that if the quotations be "skipped" the sense runs on without interruption.

To the Dante student, whether a beginner or more advanced, it is hoped that these quotations and the frequent references in the footnotes will prove a real boon; and the writer ventures to believe that, when used in connexion with the index, they may render the volume of occasional service even to the "full-grown Dantist".

The author's affectionate homage is due to his principal guides. Not to speak of Dante himself, to whom the whole book is a tribute of homage, there is the immortal gossip, Fra Salimbene,¹ and the great Florentines, Giovanni Villani and Dino Compagni. Who could wish for more interesting *ciceroni* or for more congenial companions?

¹ Mr. G. G. Coulton's *From St. Francis to Dante* (Nutt, 1906) unfortunately appeared too late for use or reference in the notes of this volume. It contains a *Catena* of translated passages from Salimbene (with illustrations from other mediæval sources) which the English reader will find both racy and instructive.

Nor should Cantinelli and Griffoni and their fellow-chroniclers in Muratori's collection be left without acknowledgment : but for these and other published authorities the reader must be referred to the special list, and must believe that the author is grateful for everything that he has been able to employ. Three exceptions, however, call for special notice. Carducci's inspiring essays (now collected in one volume, the *Prose*) and his little *Primavera e Fiori* have been eminently useful ; as also Edmund Gardner's edition of Rossetti's *Early Italian Poets*, and, above all, Paget Toynbee's *Dante Dictionary*.

Any one who has been privileged to work seriously in Italian libraries and archives will understand the difficulty which confronts an English student who would fain acknowledge in detail the personal obligations he has incurred. The present writer owes, however, conspicuous thanks to Prof. Albano Sorbelli and his colleagues of the "Archiginnasio" at Bologna, in whose well-ordered library the bulk of his special reading was accomplished. And among other friends in Bologna he would gratefully mention Cav. G. Livi, Director of the State Archives ; Cav. Alfonso Rubbiani, honorary director of the restoration of S. Francesco and the Palace of the Podestà and of many another good work ; and Dott. L. Frati of the University Library. Outside Bologna he owes thanks to Comm. Corrado Ricci,

to Professor Arnaldo Bonaventura, to the authorities of the Laurentian and Riccardian Libraries at Florence and the Ambrosian Library at Milan. To the courtesy of Sig. Pietro Poppi of Bologna, Sig. R. Moscioni of Rome and Sig. A. Guerrieri Cortesi of Sarzana he is indebted for certain of the illustrations. The Senator Villari and his learned and distinguished wife have been good enough to peruse a large portion of the MS. ; while the Nob. Cav. Taddeo Wiel and Dott. Angelo Dubini in Italy, and Dr. Paget Toynbee in England have very kindly looked over the proofs. The former have saved the book from the disfigurement of not a few typographical errors in the Italian quotations, while the latter has rendered substantial help in matters of still greater moment, alike by his writings and by his personal criticism.

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DANTE AND HIS ITALY

CHAPTER I

THE YEAR OF JUBILEE—POET AND PONTIFF

THE year 1300 saw Rome crowded with enthusiastic pilgrims of all nations.

The Eternal City seemed to have vindicated once more her title to be the "Lady of Kingdoms," the mistress of the world; her claim to that supreme homage, reverence, awe, which could draw one who owed her but little personal love to worship the very stones of her walls, the very ground on which she stood.¹

True, her ancient splendours are half-buried in the *débris* of successive barbarian sieges, her miles of marble palaces and temples long since converted into a quarry for the builders of grim mediæval fortress-homes. True, her once-frequented public baths—the sign and pledge of something more than a high standard of mere physical cleanliness—are forgotten as though they had never been, since the Goths of the sixth century cut the great aqueducts: the luxurious cleanliness of classical and early

¹ Dante, *Conv.* iv. 5 (Oxford ed. p. 301): "E certo di ferma sono opinione, che le pietre che nelle mura sue stanno sieno degni di reverenza, e 'l suolo dov' ella siede sia degno oltre quello che per gli uomini è predicato e provato."

Christian days is replaced by a characteristic mediæval inheritance of picturesque squalor and dirt. True, again, her august municipal organisation—parent of countless thriving polities throughout the length of Italy—is reduced to the barest shadow of a name, is caricatured in the interminable faction-fights of the Colonna, the Orsini, and the other “senatorial” families, recalling, but in a more savage, mediæval guise, the old street battles of the days of Cicero, Clodius and Milo; but with this difference, that whereas the Clodian faction-fights had been but an occasional feature of the life of ancient Rome, in the Rome of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries such tumults are the dominant characteristic. The city which of all others claimed to be the House of God on earth has become a veritable group of robbers’ dens, the daily battlefield of the fierce “noble” families.

And this continuous internal warfare, while it blighted all real progress, whether social or commercial, within the city, tended at the same time to divert the artificial channel of prosperity and wealth afforded by the normal presence of the papal court. A den of robbers was no fitting or congenial home for the chief Shepherd of Christ’s flock. And the recent struggle with the imperial House of Swabia,¹ in which the anti-papal party had found vigorous allies within the city, had accentuated the difficulty. In consequence, Popes had rarely resided in Rome of late: Naples, Perugia, even distant Lyons had been more favourite places of residence; and so the city which boasted the shrines of the Prince-Apostles had lost not only prestige, but also the solid advantage it had formerly possessed as the goal of wealthy pilgrims and the re-

¹ See below, pp. 46, 47, 62 *sqq.*, 79, 80.

1850
CALIFORNIA

70 2111
ANNO 1110



CONTEMPORARY STATUE OF BONIFACE VIII
DUOMO, FLORENCE. ATTRIB. TO ANDREA PISANO

ceptacle into which flowed from every source the offerings of Christendom.

But now at last the good old times had returned. A new Pontiff had arisen, of the grand and masterful type of Gregory VII and Innocent III: a man imbued with the loftiest ideals of theocracy, a man to set his foot upon the necks of kings. Benedetto Gaetani, known as Boniface VIII, had elected five years ago to begin his pontificate in the city itself. His journey from Naples, where the Consistory had been held which chose him Pope, had been a triumphal progress. As he entered the gates of Rome a whole people acclaimed him; the very Orsini and Colonna forgetting, for the moment, to fly at each other's throats, as they paid instinctive homage to a nature at least as proud and masterful as their own.

The magnificent ceremonies of his coronation, on 23rd January, 1294,¹ marred though they were for the more superstitious by the evil auguries of a thunderstorm and a street brawl in which no little blood was shed, had left an ineffaceable impression of splendour and dignity. Two kings—the Kings of Naples and Hungary—had humbly attended the mounted Pontiff in his solemn procession from Saint Peter's to the Lateran, and their royal hands had ministered to him in the banquet which followed.

And the succeeding years, though marked by constant anxiety and conflict, and occasional humiliation and defeat, had largely fulfilled the promise of the coronation. This "Servus servorum Dei" had shown himself—if not meek and humble as in his coronation oath he had sworn

¹ Described by his nephew Cardinal Jacopo Stefaneschi: see Raynald, *Ann. Eccl.* tom. iv. sub ann. 1294. Well summarised by Tosti, *Op. Compl.* vol. ii. pp. 100 sqq.

to be¹—yet able, industrious, indefatigable, unswervingly loyal to his own theocratic ideal. His industry was indeed surprising, as his extant correspondence demonstrates: ² beginning with a long and careful epistle in which he announces his election to Edward I of England and other sovereigns, and shadows forth the main lines and principles of his intended policy. Three, four or five letters of great length and of the very first importance would often be despatched in a single day, and on at least six different occasions during his pontificate the number of Bulls alone reaches eight. And these letters often show real eloquence and high feeling and tact, as well as scriptural and legal learning, and an immense grasp of the affairs of Europe.

Magnificent in his ambitions and his claims, in his grasping clutch alike of wealth and of privilege—in his princely generosity also, where expenditure could serve his ends—he seemed in this last year of the century to have reached the climax of his grandeur. This year found him the centre of unexampled enthusiasm, as he dispensed to thousands of pilgrims the awful privileges which none but the “Vicar of Christ” on earth ³ could presume to give; “a full and liberal—nay the very fullest possible—forgiveness of all their sins”: *non solum plenam et largiorem*, so ran the words, *imo plenissimam omnium suorum concedemus et concedimus veniam peccatorum.*⁴

¹ See his *professio fidei* in Raynald, *Ann. Eccl.* tom. iv. sub ann. 1294: “Ego, Benedictus Caietanus presbyter cardinalis et electus ut fiam per Dei gratiam hujus sanctae sedis Apostolicae humilis minister, profiteor,” etc.

² See Potthast, *Regesta Pont. Rom.* tom. ii.

³ Dante himself gives this title to the Pope more than once: *Purg.* xx. 87; *Par.* xxv. 15; *Mon.* iii. 3 (p. 364); *Mon.* iii. 7 (p. 368); and even calls him *Dei Vicarius*; *Mon.* i. 2 (p. 341); iii. 1 (p. 363), etc.

⁴ See the Bull, *Antiquorum habet fide* in Coqueline, iii. p. 94.

Such was the offer made to all who fulfilled the conditions of the pilgrimage—made in the name of “the mercy of God Almighty,” and by “the authority of His Apostles Saint Peter and Saint Paul,” and in “the plenitude of his own Apostolic power” by this last great Pope of the Middle Ages. And it brought him face to face with the living enthusiasm of a whole world.

Whatever we may think of the later stories in which he is represented as proclaiming himself to the applauding crowds as Pontiff and Emperor in one, we cannot doubt that he exercised upon them the sovereign fascination of a strong, majestic nature playing a part absolutely in harmony with his own temperament and convictions: nor can we doubt that the Pope in turn received from contact with the convinced and sincere homage of these countless devout pilgrims who knelt before him day after day a corresponding thrill of encouragement, and of belief in his his own high mission and in that of the revived papal authority.

Whether or not the idea of this Jubilee Celebration originated in the papal court is not absolutely clear. Our documentary evidence seems to represent it rather as a spontaneous demand from without. “From east and west,” says a contemporary writer,¹ “from men and women, from Christians of every sort, the cry went up: ‘Give us thy blessing ere we die! We have heard from them of old that every Christian who in the hundredth year shall visit the bodies of the blessed Apostles Saint Peter and Saint Paul, is freed at once from sin and from its punishment.’” And, indeed, if the Pope’s own nephew is to be

¹ *Cronicon Astense* (written by G. Ventura, who died 1325); Muratori, *R.S.I.* tom. xi. p. 192: “Da nobis benedictionem tuam antequam moriamur,” etc.

trusted,¹ there was borne to Rome that year on a litter an old Savoyard who had outlived the century, and declared that he had been present as a child at the Jubilee of the great Pope Innocent III. just a hundred years before.

✓ Be that as it may, a Consistory was held, and though no very clear precedent seems to have been discovered among the Archives,² the Jubilee was duly promulgated on the 22nd day of February. Boniface welcomed the longing of the Christian world, and in so doing not only filled to overflowing the coffers of the papal treasury, but revived in a most striking and effective way the waning prestige of Rome and of the Holy See.

There still remains, attached to one of the pillars of Saint John Lateran, a relic of this Jubilee: a small fragment of a fresco in which traces of Giotto's hand are discernible beneath the deposit of zealous but misguided restoration. It contains three figures, and the central one is that of Boniface.³ The Pope is seated high up under a baldacchino supported on four columns of porphyry or serpentine. He is clad in a sumptuous cope and crowned with the tiara. His left hand rests on a rich Oriental carpet which drapes the balcony in front of him, his right is raised in benediction: he is in the act of proclaiming the Jubilee. On his left hand a clerk is seen holding a roll of parchment on which is inscribed the customary formula which heads a papal Bull: BONIFACIUS EP. SERVUS SERVORUM DEI AD PERPETUAM REI MEMORIAM.

A fuller representation of the same scene is depicted,

¹ *Jacobus Cardinalis* in Raynald, tom. iv. sub ann. 1300.

² *Ibid.* pp. 284, 285. The intention that it should be repeated every hundredth year was frustrated by the impatience of Clem. VI, who reduced the period to fifty years in 1350.

³ See article by Eugène Müntz, in *Mélanges d'Archéologie*, etc., of the French School at Rome, 1881, p. 127 sqq.



BONIFACE PROCLAIMING THE JUBILEE
LATERAN, ROME. FRAGMENT (RETOUCHED) OF FRESCO BY GIOTTO



more crudely, in a document still existing in the Ambrosian Library at Milan.¹ From this we see that the Pope is enthroned on the *pulpitum* or *moenianum*, a lofty dais or stand erected for this special occasion in front of the Lateran; the main structure of which existed certainly as late as 1572 and was probably demolished during the alterations under Sixtus V. The loggia, in the Milan sketch, is elaborately emblazoned with the arms of the Pope's family, the Gaetani, and those of the Church. In the galleries to right and left of the Pontiff are ranged bishops and mitred abbots backed by courtiers and halberd-bearing papal soldiery. Below is depicted a representative crowd of knights and dames, clerics and layfolk listening with rapt joy to the proclamation of this most plenary indulgence, so freely offered to all.²

Yet not quite to all. There were some whom Boniface expressly excluded, in a Bull *Nuper per alias* which he published a week later, on 1st March. And the most significant exception—one bound up, as we shall see, in a most tragic way with the Pope's own future—was that of the two deposed cardinals, Jacopo and Sciarra Colonna, and of all who should befriend them.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the effect produced ✓ on contemporary Europe by this promulgation of the Jubilee year of Indulgence.

Sceptics there were in plenty. The seeds of a sceptical liberalism had been sown broadcast by Frederic II and his circle,³ the pioneers on the intellectual and artistic side of that earlier Renaissance of the thirteenth century which is in some ways more impressive—though it was less

¹F. inf., No. 227, fol. 3. See Müntz, pp. 129, 130, and plate iii. at end of volume. It is reproduced as frontispiece to this book by kind permission of the Authorities of the *Biblioteca Ambrosiana*.

²Müntz, as above.

³See below, ch. iii., p. 88 sq.

markedly successful—than that which transformed the Western world two centuries later. Sceptics there were even among high ecclesiastics, like that Bishop of Parma of whom Salimbene tells us¹ that in his last illness he refused the Blessed Sacrament, saying that he “believed nothing of such a faith”; and when asked why then he had become a bishop in the Church, frankly replied, “For the sake of the riches and honours”.

And among many devout and religious souls there was a loosened allegiance to the papal authority.² The fierce crusade against the Albigensian heretics, which had marked the pontificate of Innocent III nearly a century earlier, had resulted to all appearance in a complete victory for the Roman Church. In the charitable fervour of Saint Francis and the stricter zeal of Saint Dominic, the Papacy had found instruments ready to its hand, and the Church was nominally purged of a strange growth of mingled Manichæan and Antinomian disorders. But apart from the fact that persecution is always ultimately suicidal, authority had received a shock from which it never quite recovered. Groups of “Cathari” and “Patarini,” besides the more sober and spiritual Waldenses, still lingered on not only in France but in Italy itself. Some of Boniface’s own Bulls are launched against these. And the more intelligent among the faithful majority who retained their loyalty to the traditional system could not but be affected in some degree by the liberal and independent ideas which were in the air. In distant Norway, Papacy and Church were already distinguished from one another. King Haakon IV,³ when in 1247 Pope Innocent IV offered him the imperial crown of the excommunicated Frederic

¹ *Chron.*, sub ann. 1233. ² Cf. N. Tamassia, *S. Francesco*, ch. i.

³ Reigned 1217-1263, grandfather of Haakon V (1299-1319): Dante’s “quel di Norvegia,” *Par.* xix. 139.

II, replied: "I will gladly fight the foes of the Church, but not the Pope's private enemies".

But the mass of European Christendom still attached an absolute value not only to those central sacramental ordinances which have been the heritage of the faithful in every age, but also to the claims of definite, authoritative power beyond the grave, which found their characteristic expression in the mediæval system of Indulgences.

So when in the early days of 1300 the decree went forth, Europe rose with one accord and set out, staff in hand, to seek the shrines of the Apostles.

It was a time of comparative peace throughout the Western world. In England, Edward I, "the simple-living Henry's"¹ son, had completed his conquest of Wales, and was—thanks to Boniface's own good offices—temporarily at peace with France. The "mad pride" which impelled Scot and Englishman alike to violate the border² was still bearing fruit in bloodshed; but the Scottish war could not effectually block the way to Rome for either nation, nor make pilgrimage impossible except for those actually engaged in the field.

In France, Philip the Fair had, for the time, crushed Flanders to his will,³ and was holding royal tournaments at which knights were present from Germany and England. He had made himself unpopular at home, paying his army with debased money,⁴ and he was still to reap

¹ *Purg.* vii. 132.

² *Par.* xix. 122:—

. . . la superbia ch' asseta,
Che fa lo Scotto e l' Inghilese folle,
Sì che non può soffrir dentro a sua meta.

³ *Villani*, viii. 32.

⁴ *Par.* xix. 118:—

. . . il duol che sopra Senna
Induce, falseggiando la moneta.

the fruits of his cruel injustice to the Flemish count. But France was nominally at peace, nor had the royal mandate yet been issued which should forbid men or money to leave France for Rome.

In Germany, Albert of Hapsburg had conquered and slain his rival Adolphus of Nassau in June, 1298, and had not yet commenced his aggressive designs upon Bohemia, that should "lay waste the kingdom of Prague"—

Per che il regno di Praga fia deserto.¹

Now for two years he had been recognised as King of the Germans and of the Romans, and his title to the empire was only waiting for the tardy recognition of the Pope, which Albert lacked the courage or the inclination to come and claim.

Italy had long been a hot-bed of faction, as the central scene of the contest between Papacy and Empire, and of the antagonism between Teutonic feudalism and the Latin municipal spirit—now expressing itself in the undisciplined vigour of young communal life just growing up into self-consciousness.

Yet even here there was a momentary lull in the normal storm of battle.² Villani records how just at this time it happened that Genoa had made an advantageous peace with her great rival Venice³ (May, 1299), and with her fierce, but sadly worsted competitor Pisa⁴ (August, 1299), and how in the same year, by the mediation of Florence, the long and distressing war was brought to an end which had raged in the Emilia between Bologna on the one hand, and Modena, Reggio and Ferrara on the other;⁵

¹ *Par.* xix. 117.

² *Annal. Vet. Mutinens.*: "Et tanta pax et quies fuit per totam Italiam, quod omnes ibant undique securi ad ipsam urbem".

³ Villani, viii. 27.

⁴ *Ibid.* 30.

⁵ *Annal. Vet. Mutinens.*

so that the Lord of Ferrara could attend without distraction to the brilliant marriage ceremonies of his widowed sister, Beatrice, and Galeazzo Visconti of Milan.¹ Frederic of Aragon, it is true, still held out in Sicily against the House of Anjou and the Church; but the Sicilian war erected no effective barrier against pilgrimage, like that raised sixty years before by another Frederic, when, on the death of Celestine IV, the Swabian emperor prevented the Conclave from assembling, and so kept the Apostolic See vacant for more than two years;² or, still earlier, when in the days of Gregory IX, wishing to obviate a General Council summoned against himself, the same Frederic not only barred the land routes to Rome, but, by means of his Pisan allies, captured and killed or imprisoned the foreign prelates who tried to make the port of Ostia by sea!³

Artificial difficulties were singularly few, but the natural ones were by no means despicable. Apart from the enormous length of the journey for the majority, from the elementary character of the high roads, the rudeness of the means of transport, the scarcity and poorness of the hospices, and the constant peril of footpads, the elements themselves were not altogether propitious.

The winter indeed, as the Modenese chronicler tells us,⁴ was one of unexampled severity, and the most ardent and lusty pilgrim must have felt something of dismay, as February passed into March and March made way for April, and still the snow fell with hardly a day's cessation, converting the Emilian plain into a blinding desert of trackless

¹ The wedding is alluded to in *Purg.* viii. 79-81.

² Salimbene, sub ann. 1241.

³ Villani, vi. 19.

⁴ *Annal. Vet. Mutinens.* in Muratori, R.S.I. tom. xi. p. 75.

white, and doubling the difficulties to be surmounted in the passes of the Apennines.

But no obstacle short of sheer impossibility could have turned back the flowing tide of pilgrims. Old men, women and girls, and little children all were there, thronging the roads and tracks. The poorest, who could not afford a beast, walked all the long way afoot. Devoted sons, Æneas-like, carried feeble parents on their backs.¹ "From Italy," says the Pope's nephew and biographer,² "and from the neighbouring islands of Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica"—from behind the mountains and beyond the sea—"from Gaul and Spain, from England, from Germany and Hungary"—from every country in Europe and from the distant Orient, they crowded in their thousands into the city; and the beggars who stood all day long by the city gates, whose profession made it natural for them to count the passers-by, reported that in a single day fully 30,000 passed in and out. Another eye-witness, Giovanni Villani,³ estimates that throughout those memorable months the city never contained fewer than 200,000 strangers within her walls. The crowds were indeed enormous.

An Italian crowd is always good-humoured, unless it is deliberately set upon revolution and bloodshed; but this motley throng—including even some converted Tartars, if report be true—in which nerve-worn travellers were trying all day long to make themselves heard and understood in twenty different languages at once, exhibited a patience and a good humour that excited the admiration of a true-

¹ *Annal. Vet. Mutinens.* as above.

² *Jacob. Card.* in Raynald, sub ann. 1300, tom. iv. pp. 284, 285.

³ Villani, viii. 36: "Io il posso testimoniare, che vi fui presente e vidi".

born Italian like Villani.¹ Yet by sheer force and weight of such appalling numbers not a few were crushed to death ere they reached the actual goal of their arduous pilgrimage, and that in spite, as we shall see, of carefully planned arrangements for their protection.²

“Frequently,” says another eye-witness³ (who supports Villani’s figures), “did I see women trodden under foot of others, and I myself more than once barely escaped the same fate.”

“A vast army,” says the anonymous but certainly contemporary Parmese chronicler, Salimbene’s younger compatriot,⁴ “was seen to pass daily in and out by the Claudian Way; barons and ladies from France and other distant lands rode in, attended sometimes by a cavalcade of more than forty or fifty followers. And well-nigh all the houses along the same Claudian Way,” he adds, “both without and within the city, were turned into inns, and sold food and drink to the foreigners; and every day they were thronged with folk, and there was a very good supply of victual.”

A severe tax, this, upon the resources of the town; yet the multitude more than paid its expenses. The offerings that came into the papal treasury defied all calculation. “Day and night,” says Ventura, “two clerics stood at the altar of Saint Paul with rakes in their hands, raking in *pecuniam infinitam*.” And the price of board and shelter

¹ Villani, as above: “E fu la più mirabile cosa che mai si vedesse”—to behold these thousands of pilgrims “con molta pazienza, e senza romori o zuffe”.

² Dante, *Inf.* xviii. 28-33 (see below, pp. 17, 18).

³ G. Ventura, *Cron. Astense*, c. xxvi.

⁴ *Cron. Parmense*, in Muratori (see Bonazzi, p. 1, in new series of Muratori).

for man and beast was exceeding high, he tells us, as he himself experienced.¹

Yet he speaks with enthusiasm of the abundance of bread and wine and flesh and fish, as does also Villani, who couples this ample provision with the patience and good humour of the crowd as "the most marvellous thing that ever was seen". It was reserved for Baronius in a later age to assign to Boniface's catering the dignity of an actual miracle—a miracle, be it noted, which was significantly accompanied by a bread famine in Perugia,² and no doubt in other neighbouring cities! Yet we cannot but share the admiration of the contemporaries and see therein a testimony to the Pope's genius for organisation and the largeness of his ideas upon expenditure.

Half a dozen eye-witnesses have left us their impression of the great scene.

Ptolemy of Lucca, the Dominican, once confessor of Saint Thomas Aquinas, who lived in Florence as prior of St^a Maria Novella during the two eventful years that followed, was resident in Rome in 1300, engaged on business of his Order. His writings are dry and terse, but he gives us a strong sketch of Boniface's character and for our picture of the Jubilee he contributes (beyond what we have already quoted) an estimate of the "daily oblations" as amounting to a thousand "*libras provinciales*."

Then there was Guglielmo Ventura, the chronicler of Este, who fulfilled his fifteen days of devotion manfully being then about fifty years old. In his extreme old age,

Cron. Astense, c. xxvi.: "Foenum carissimum ibi fuit, hospitia carissima, taliter quod lectus meus et equi mei super foeno et avena constabant mihi tornesium unum grossum".

This is recorded in the Summary which introduces the Chronicle of Perugia.



CARDINAL STEFANESCHI WORSHIPPING THE REDEEMER
SALA CAPITOLARE, VATICAN. DIPTYCH BY GIOTTO

a quarter of a century later, he wrote his record ; still marvelling at the catering, and at the dearness of his lodging, still mindful of his narrow escapes of being crushed to death.

Jacopo Stefaneschi,¹ Cardinal of Saint George, the Pope's own nephew and candid biographer ; a man of real culture, and for his time no despicable writer of Latin verses, had unrivalled opportunities of viewing the great functions from the papal side. This ecclesiastic, from whom is drawn our knowledge of the Pope's entrance into Rome and his coronation, and of the Consistory at which the Jubilee was discussed, has left us also his impressions of the year. He too, like Ptolemy,—seeing perhaps with his uncle's eyes—makes much of the enormous offerings to the treasury. But from him we derive matter of far more interest : the vivid local colour, and the throbbing, pulsing life. Not least interesting is his picturesque story of a miracle, fully in tune with that epoch of high spiritual elevation and excitement.

It was a cleric of the Cardinal's own title-church of Saint George, who lay prostrate before the image of the Holy Virgin. Suddenly, as from the lips of the Virgin herself, came these words : " To all hath God in mercy granted indulgence ! "

" Nay, even to me ? " said the priest.

The Mother was silent. Then, after a pause :—

" To all hath God in mercy granted indulgence, to the living and to the dead ! "

Again the prostrate cleric cried : " Nay, even to me ? "

Finally, as though relenting in sympathy with his scruples, the Blessed Virgin added : " To all the living

¹ Of whom Giotto painted a portrait on a diptych still at Rome, see illustration.

and the dead hath God in mercy granted indulgence—and to thee!”

But to lovers of Florentine history, the presence of Giovanni Villani is of much more moment, for it was from those days in Rome, as he himself tells us, that he drew the inspiration which set him to write his Chronicle of Florence, Rome's glorious daughter.

The passage is too well known to be quoted, save in the beautiful original.

“E trovando mi io in quello benedetto pellegrinaggio nella santa città di Roma, veggendo le grande e antiche cose di quella, e leggendo le storie e' grandi fatti de' Romani scritti per Virgilio e per Sallustio, e Lucano, e Tito Livio, e Valerio e Paolo Orosio, e altri maestri di storia . . . preso lo stile e forma da loro, tutto si come discepolo non fossi degno a tanta opera fare . . . considerando che la nostra città di Firenze, figliuola e fattura di Roma, era nel suo montare e a seguire grandi cose, siccome Roma nel suo calare . . . e così negli anni MCCC tornato da Roma, cominciai a compilare questo libro, a reverenza di Dio e del beato Giovanni, e commendazione della nostra città di Firenze.”¹

But there were other Florentines present, and much “in evidence”. All the great powers of Europe, we are told, were represented at the papal court by Florentine ambassadors on that occasion. And it was then, according to tradition, that Boniface, appreciating the uniqueness of the Florentine genius, declared that besides the four elements of earth, air, fire and water recognised by contemporary philosophy, the universe contained a fifth—the Florentines: “I Fiorentini sono il quinto elemento”.

¹ *Cron.* viii. 36.

And Giovanni Villani was not the only illustrious Florentine who drew his inspiration from the Jubilee.

Dino Compagni,¹ who is, after all, our fullest and most graphic authority for the inner history of Florentine factions between the years 1280 and 1312—the days which witnessed Dante's early manhood and political life, his exile, and the successive disappointments of his longing to return—Dino, who was of the same party colour as Dante, and like Dante fulfilled the office of Prior in those troublous days, makes this year of Jubilee the pivot of his chronicle.²

That Dino was there in person we have no proof, but we know that Dante was,³ and it is in this presence of his that, for us, the climax of dramatic interest is reached.

Dante was there: and though it is with the spiritual aspect of the Jubilee that he was chiefly concerned, he too contributes one little touch to our picture of the scene:—

Come i Roman per l'esercito molto
L'anno del Giubbileo, su per lo ponte
Hanno a passar la gente modo colto :
Che dall' un lato tutti hanno la fronte
Verso il Castello, e vanno a Santo Pietro ;
Dall' altra sponda vanno verso il monte. . . .⁴

Thus he describes as an eye-witness the double file of the "great host" of pilgrims that passed to right and left across the bridge of Sant' Angelo, those on the one side having their faces set towards Saint Peter's, the others

¹ Thought by some to be classed with Dante, in *Inf.* vi. 73, as one of the "two just men" to be found in Florence in 1300.

² On the 1st of May, 1300, the factions of "White" and "Black" originated. See Del Lungo's handy *Edizione Scolastica* of Dino, introd. p. x. Cf. Villani, viii. 39.

³ See note at end of chapter.

⁴ *Inf.* xviii. 28-33.

returning from the Apostle's shrine. And though the context (it is in the eighth circle of the great abyss of the *Inferno*) might suggest a scene of savage confusion, we learn at any rate that the confusion was modified by the practical provisions of Roman fore-thought, which had erected a temporary barrier¹ down the middle of the bridge, and so preserved the poor women and children from being crushed to death.

Dante chose this year as the symbolical one in which to place his "Vision"; and he tells us how, as he and his guide emerged from the horrid murk of Hell before daybreak on the Easter Festival (*i.e.* the 10th of April, 1300), they were informed by a spirit just landed on the shores of the Mountain of Hope that for three months past free passage had been allowed to all and sundry—"to whosoever listeth to enter the Angel's bark"—

Veramente da tre mesi egli ha tolto
Chi ha voluto entrar con tutta pace.²

And the speaker implies that his own passage has been somewhat delayed, owing to the "congested traffic" between Tiber mouth and the shores of Purgatory, in consequence of Boniface's special Indulgence.

There is something of humour in the suggestion, as it strikes us to-day, and there may have been a touch of playfulness in Dante's mind as he penned the lines.³ But we cannot suppose that he took a light view of the Jubilee as a whole. Dante was there not as a sceptic, but as a devout pilgrim. We may picture him visiting the shrines

¹ According to the Anonimo Fiorentino, a human barrier, like that of London policemen: "Certi, sopra ciò diputati, stavono in sul ponte, e quei che venivono a San Piero mandavono da una parte del ponte," etc.

² *Purg.* ii. 98.

³ On Dante's humour, see further, chap. v. p. 190 *sqq.*

day by day with his friend Giotto di Bondone,¹ and kneeling, perhaps, with humble devotion among his fellow-pilgrims from Florence on a Friday or a Festival before the "Veronica," displayed, as Villani tells, on those days "for the consolation of the Christian pilgrims":² "quella immagine benedetta," as Dante himself had spoken of it earlier,³ "la quale Gesù Cristo lasciò a noi per esempio della sua bellissima figura"—"that blessed likeness which Jesus Christ left us of His most fair countenance". As he kneels there his devout enthusiasm for that ancient relic is kindled to fresh flame as he watches the eager gaze of strangers from beyond the Adriatic, who murmur to themselves in awestruck wonder: "Lord Jesus Christ, Who art very God, say, was this the likeness of Thy countenance?"

Signor mio Gesù Cristo Dio verace,
Or fu sì fatta la sembianza vostra? ⁴

And as he kneels with face upturned—the face of ethereal beauty which the same Giotto has depicted for us in the chapel of the Bargello at Florence⁵—we too are kindled, for we see the author of the *Vita Nuova* being transformed into the author of the *Divina Commedia*.

¹ Giotto was almost certainly in Rome and working for Pope Boniface between 1296-1301.

² *Cron.* viii. 36. Villani calls it "la Veronica del sudario di Cristo". It is the veil which, according to tradition, the Saviour accepted to wipe His brow as He went to crucifixion, and handed it back to S. Veronica marked with the impression of His Sacred Face (see Paget Toynbee, *Dict.* 553).

³ *Vita Nuova*, § 41 (p. 231). He is there probably alluding, not to the Jubilee but to the annual exhibition of the relic in Holy Week. But he speaks of "molta gente". ⁴ *Par.* xxxi. 103-8.

⁵ Reproduced on p. 269 from a photograph of Seymour Kirkupp's original drawing made previous to the fatal "restoration". The fresco is accepted now as Giotto's by Sig. Corrado Ricci and the best Italian experts.

For though the germ of the sacred poem is to be found already eight or more years earlier, in the *Vita Nuova* itself, while its maturer thoughts and its developed arrangement must be assigned to a considerably later date, we shall but be following Dante's own lead if we think of him as finding "in quello benedetto pellegrinaggio nella santa città di Roma," at least one great source of inspiration for his vision of that mystic pilgrimage in which he passed through the heavenly portal of Saint Peter into the Eternal City above.

Dante was there as pilgrim, not as critic, still less as sceptic. It was all intensely real, intensely serious to him. Fearless in his judgment of persons he is bold to place Popes and renowned ecclesiastics in Hell, where he reserves a place among the simoniacs for the very Pope of whose "indulgence" he has come to avail himself.¹ He places on the slopes of the Mount of Hope excommunicate persons like Manfred, who had died under the ban of the Church and been forbidden Christian burial: confident that the ample embrace of infinite goodness is ready to receive the vilest sinner, if he repent, irrespective of the most authoritative judgment made on earth:—

. . . Io son Manfredi

· · · · ·
 Orribil furon li peccati miei ;
 Ma la bontà infinita ha sì gran braccia,
 Che prende ciò che si rivolge a lei.²

But this is no rebellion against the Church as such. And even in the story of the end of Guido da Montefeltro, when the fiend carries off from the very grasp of an astonished Saint Francis a soul absolved beforehand by Pope Boniface himself; it is not the validity of any

¹ *Inf.* xix.

² *Purg.* iii. 112, 121 sqq.

accepted doctrine of the Church's authority to absolve that the poet impugns, but rather the monstrous idea that absolution can be given by anticipation for a sin which the "penitent" at the moment of confession is deliberately set upon committing: "Absolution involves penitence; but penitence and the will to sin cannot exist together—they are incompatible, mutually contradictory":—

Ch' assolver non si può chi non si pente,
Nè pentere e volere insieme puossi
Per la contradizion che nol consente.¹

To the Church herself he is profoundly loyal, boldly and sternly as he denounces abuses; and it is indeed out of her accepted mediæval doctrine about "the other world" that his genius is to weave the story of his un-earthly pilgrimage, so universally true, so free in its inmost core from any limitations of mediævalism.

For the pilgrim of the *Divina Commedia* as for the philosopher of the *Convivio*, the "Holy Church," is "Spouse and Secretary" of Christ, and what she says, believes and preaches is to be accepted as from our Saviour's mouth.² For him theology—the received theology of Saint Thomas and his fellow doctors—is full of a Divine certitude, peace-giving, incontrovertible: "La divina Scienza che piena è di tutta pace, la quale non soffera lite alcuna d'opinione o di sofistici argomenti, per la eccellentissima certezza del suo soggetto, lo quale è Iddio".³

(The Pope himself may err and be found among the lost, but his office is sacrosanct and worthy of highest reverence. Dante instinctively falls upon his knees when he comes upon Adrian V in Purgatory, and when the ex-Pope,

¹ *Inf.* xxvii. 118-20: *cf.* Dante's bold assertion in *Mon.* iii. 8 (p. 369): "Not even God Himself could absolve me impenitent".

² *Conv.* ii. 6 (p. 259).

³ *Ibid.* 15 (p. 269).

prostrate himself in penance for the sin of avarice, remonstrates: "What motive hath caused thee thus to kneel?"

Qual cagion . . . in giù così ti torse?

the poet replies: "Your dignity forbids me, in conscience, to stand upright":—

. . . per vostra dignitate
Mia coscienza dritto mi rimorse.¹

And so with Boniface, seventh successor of Adrian—richly as "the mighty sinner" will deserve the outrage of Anagni, when, three years hence, he shall be seized and flouted by treacherous hands, and humbled even to death. Boniface is still "Vicar of Christ," and those who lay hands on him are binding, mocking, crucifying the Lord Himself in His official representative; it is the vinegar and the gall once more, and the Lord slain amidst living robbers: "Veggio in Alagna," says the shade of Hugh Capet, in his tirade against his own royal descendants:—

Veggio in Alagna entrar lo fiordaliso,
E nel Vicario suo Cristo esser catto
Veggiolo un altra volta esser deriso;
Veggio rinnovellar l'aceto e il fele,
E tra vivi ladroni esser anciso.²

Here they are, face to face now, the great Pontiff and the greater poet; the poet one among two hundred thousand penitents and pilgrims; the Pontiff standing alone, in the most exalted position which the world had to offer. Next year the two would be facing one another in a very different way.

✓ Boniface was already over seventy years of age, but he bore the weight of his years marvellously well. He stood up tall and strong—seven and a half hands is the measurement of his corpse—like the theocratic Colossus that he

¹ *Purg.* xix. 127 sqq.

² *Ibid.* xx. 86-90.

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CONTEMPORARY STATUE OF BONIFACE VIII
MUSEO CIVICO, BOLOGNA. BY MANNO BOLOGNESE

was. The grim statue, which was even then being beaten out by Manno, the metal worker of Bologna,¹ and may still be seen in the museum of that city, represents in its present state something between a symbol and a caricature of the formidable Pope. Despoiled in the days of the French Revolution of the jewels which once adorned it, and of the double crown which encircled the portentous erection upon the head; robbed also of the two keys (presumably of precious metal) which the left hand used to grip; it is a sinister image and a haunting one, scarcely recognisable as a companion to the somewhat idealised stone statue which still adorns the Duomo at Florence,² replaced in those precincts by the late Duke of Sermoneta a nineteenth-century scion of the Pope's family, the Gaetani. One characteristic the Bologna statue faithfully reproduces, and that one of the least impressive—the “slightly prominent ears”.

The most valuable, as portraiture, of the representations that are left to us, according to the judgment of a distinguished Italian critic,³ are those two which remain in

¹ Before Niccolò dell' Arca there was no native school of *sculpture* in Bologna. “Nel 1300 quando il commune volle erigere una statua a Bonifazio VIII per il ricupero di Bazzano, non si era trovato all' uopo in tutta Bologna che Manno orefice, il quale lavorò a sbalzo quel fantoccio di rame battuto e dorato, dell' anima di quercia . . . di cui il pregio consiste tutto in una certa evidenza di probabile somiglianza fisionomica a Bonifazio benchè ottenuta involontariamente col processo della caricatura,” Cav. Alfonso Rubbiani, *Cenni Storici*, p. 311.

² The Florentine statue is almost certainly not (as Vasari) by Andrea Pisano. It has usually been assigned to the year after the consecration of the new cathedral, *viz.* 1297, but more probably belongs to the period 1301-4, when the Neri, by the machinations of Boniface, dominated Florence.

³ Corrado Ricci, chapter on “Ritratti di Bonifazio VIII,” in *Santi ed Artisti*. See illustration at the end of this chapter.

the crypt of Saint Peter's—relics of the old tomb to which, almost certainly, Andrea Pisano set his hand. These show a full oval face with lineaments noble, severe and dignified, and make it clear (as does also the Florentine statue), that the Pope of threescore years and ten looked decidedly "younger than his years".

But though contemporary portraiture only helps us up to a certain point, we can picture the man fairly exactly from the records of those who exhumed his embalmed body some three centuries later.¹

The bald, or nearly bald, head; the broad brow, full cheeks and shaven chin, recalling, though with greater regularity and beauty of feature, the familiar visage of Saint Thomas Aquinas, evinced, as his deeds and words evinced, a typical, vigorous and thorough ecclesiastic of the Middle Ages. The firm, massive jaw was adorned with teeth both large and sound, save that two were lacking beneath the upper lip. The hands—so endlessly uplifted in blessing during those days of Jubilee—were long and graceful (as the statues also record) with tapering fingers and nails. The veins and nerves were

¹ The details as to Boniface's corpse were written down at the time by the notary Grimmoaldus on Tuesday, 11th October, 1605. They are given in Raynald, *op. cit.* sub ann. 1303 (p. 356), and effectually disprove the story that in his death-agony he gnawed his hands. The following are the chief points: Total height of body, *palmarum* 7 and *quartorum* 3. Circumference of head *palm.* 2 and *quart.* 1 (the head, thought the experts, had been mainly bald). He had further *genas pingues, frontem latam, mentum sine barba, cartilagine aurium mediocres foris prominentes, dentes omnes, et quidem magnos et firmos* (except 2 that had been wanting in life from the upper jaw), *manus longas et pulchras palmi 1 brevis cum unguibus longis* (with marked veins and nerves); *pedum quilibet palmi 1 continebat. In cingulo palm. 3½*. Finally, *sano ac robusto fuit corpore, ut periti iudicarunt*; and for his expression, *severitatem magis quam hilaritatem ostendebat.*

clearly marked, telling of a certain delicate sensitiveness to balance the sheer force of the head and face.

A strong man and highly gifted—his foes are the first to admit it. A man with lofty ideals of a sort, but unscrupulous in his methods of compassing them. "He guided the Church," says Dino, "after his own way, and abased whoso thought not with him."¹

A man of some refinement—scion of an ancient and noble house which had attained pontifical rank nearly two centuries earlier²—a man of immense learning and ability.

When the infant Dante³ was being borne to his "fair San Giovanni"⁴ to be immersed in the waters of that "ancient baptistry" of Florence, as generations of his forefathers had been carried before him, and so "begin his life as a Christian";⁵ Benedetto Gaetani was already

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita ;

a prominent ecclesiastic and perhaps the most distinguished canonist of his time.

In 1283, when Dante, as a youth of eighteen years, fresh from his pupil life under the good friars of St^a Croce, had his second eventful meeting⁶ with the "glorious Lady of his mind," Benedetto had been three years a Cardinal

¹ *Cron.* i. 21 : "Fu di grande ardire e alto ingegno, e guidava la chiesa a suo modo e abbassava chi non li consentia". Ptolemy of Lucca speaks still more strongly, calling him "Fastuosus et arrogans ac omnium contentivus".

² We assume a family relationship with Giovanni Gaetani who was Gelasius II.

³ In the spring or early summer of 1265.

⁴ "Il mio bel San Giovanni," *Inf.* xix. 17.

⁵ *Par.* xv. 134-35 : "E nel antico vostro Batisteo

Insieme fui cristiano e Cacciaguida."

⁶ *Vita Nuova*, § iii. (p. 206).

and had begun to distinguish himself in diplomatic service. When, seven years later, the young poet was experiencing his first taste of battle at Campaldino and Caprona, of which he has left us such vivid incidental reminiscences in the *Divina Commedia*,¹ the Cardinal was peacemaking in Portugal—already engaged in the affairs of a kingdom, and soon, as legate in France, to set his hand to the task of moulding the destinies and depressing the ambitions of the two most vigorous dynasties of Europe, the Capetians and the Plantagenets. A few years more and he was attempting the same thankless task from a higher station. Celestine V, monk and recluse, endured five months of nightmare in a position for which he felt neither the taste nor the ability, leaning pathetically upon the strong arm of Cardinal Gaetani: and when (under pressure, so enemies alleged, from the same Cardinal) he made the “great refusal” which brought down on him Dante’s relentless condemnation,² he resigned the papacy practically into the Gaetani’s hands.³ And so it came to pass that on 24th December, 1294, a few months before Dante entered on political life in his own city, Benedetto Gaetani was elected Pope, and crowned a month later at Rome as Boniface VIII.

¹ Campaldino in the famous Buonconte passage, *Purg.* v. 85-129; Caprona, *Inf.* xxi. 94-96.

² *Inf.* iii. 59, 60. The identification of Celestine V with him

“Che fece per viltà il gran rifiuto”

is practically certain. See Toynbee, *Dict.* p. 145.

³ The formula of Celestine’s abdication on 13th December, 1294, is given by Raynald, tom. iv. p. 155, and Potthast, *Regesta*, ii. 1921, 1922. “Ego Coelestinus papa V. motus ex legitimis causis . . . sponte ac libere cedo papatui et expresse renuncio loco et dignitati, oneri et honori, dans plenam et liberam facultatem ex nunc sacro coetui cardinalium eligendi et providendi dumtaxat canonice universali ecclesiae de pastore.”

Here was a man to appeal to the scholarly mind of Dante. A man who, years before him, had been through the severe intellectual discipline of the University of Paris; the exceptionally astute and brilliant canonist, who was still talked of, no doubt in Dante's day, as Dante himself was talked of a generation later.¹

No true philosopher, perhaps, after the ideal of one who complains that "students of law and medicine and practically all the monks who study do so not for love of knowledge but from a utilitarian desire to win money or dignity";² but yet a man whose circle of ideas at least intersected that of Dante, and who could, on occasion, have met the author of the *Convivio*, the *Monarchia* and the *Quaestio* in the arena of argument, with all the subtle weapons of mediæval dialectic. A man of culture, too, and æsthetic taste—a great patron of art and architecture, who even at that moment was enriching Rome with the work of Dante's own Giotto. Again, Boniface was a man of the imperial type, the largeness of whose schemes and ideas could not fail to attract the attention of Dante, nor to exercise some sort of fascination—if sinister fascination—over that exceptional imagination which moved so naturally through the vast spaces of the universe. And when to these qualities was added the dignity of his office

¹ Boccaccio, *Vita di Dante*, § 2 (ed. Solerti, p. 15): "Già vicino alla sua vecchiezza n'andò a Parigi dove con tanta gloria di sé, disputando più volte, mostrò l'altezza del suo ingegno, che ancora narrandosi se ne maravigliano gli uditori". On Boniface's fame as a canonist see the contemporary tributes in Potthast, ii. 2023. He is "Unus de majoribus clericis juristis totius orbis," and "Utriusque juris scientia preditus ac in omni temporali negotio mirabiliter eruditus".

² *Conv.* iii. 11 (p. 287): "Non si dee chiamare vero filosofo colui che è amico di Sapienza per utilità; siccome sono Legisti, Medici, e quasi tutti i Religiosi, che non per sapere studiano, ma per acquistare moneta o dignità".

—of the “Successor of Peter,” the “Pilot of Peter’s Ship,” the “Chief Shepherd,” “Father of Fathers,” “Gate-keeper of the Kingdom of Heaven,” “Husband of the Church,” “Vicar of Christ and of God”¹—the force of religious tradition must have intensified still further upon a devout soul like Dante’s, the inevitable influence of a remarkably strong personality.

As he knelt among the crowd to receive the Pope’s benediction, was he not thrilled with the consciousness that this man, too, was great in his way—no mere peg for the display of magnificent ecclesiastical vestments, no merely mechanical channel even of sacramental blessing, but a Man, and a foe in some sense worthy of his steel?

(For as men they must needs be foes. Boniface was indeed not only official head of Christendom, but likewise head of that Guelf party—the party of the Church as against the Ghibellines and imperial aggression—to a section of which Dante also belonged. But the Guelfs in Florence, as in various other cities, were now subdivided again into opposing factions of “White” (*Bianchi*), the patriotic party, and “Black” (*Neri*), the violent, extreme and more aristocratic section; and Boniface had already shown himself a partisan, heaping caresses on Corso Donati, the truculent leader of the *Neri*, and receiving with favour one whom his city had banished as a rebel.² For years back the Pope had been talked of in Florence and his

¹ ‘Successor Petri,’ *Purg.* xix. 99, *Mon.* iii. 8 (p. 369); ‘Nauclerus naviculae Petri,’ *Ep.* vi. 1 (p. 407); ‘Sommo Pastore,’ *Par.* vi. 117; ‘Pater patrum,’ *Ep.* vii. 7 (p. 411); ‘Ostiarius regni coelorum,’ *Mon.* iii. 8 (p. 369); ‘Marito [della Chiesa],’ *Inf.* xix. 111; ‘Vicario di Cristo,’ *Purg.* xx. 87, *Par.* xxv. 15; ‘Dei Vicarius,’ *Mon.* i. 2 (p. 341), etc.

² In 1296 Boniface had interposed to legalise Corso’s uncanonical marriage; in February, 1300, he had presented him with the Governorship of Massa Trebaria.

sinister designs on Tuscany discussed among the dominant Whites.¹ Dino's narrative vibrates with the mingled anxiety and indignation with which they regarded his schemes. He had interposed, on the second anniversary of his coronation (23rd January, 1296), to forbid imperiously the recall of the unjustly banished popular reformer, Giano della Bella. In the same year he had hampered the Commune in its dealings with its own "criminous clerks," and had sent Cardinal Matteo d'Acquasparta, the "lax Franciscan," to press the Florentines into the service of that unpopular crusade of his against the Colonna family.

Into the details and the merits of that contest we cannot enter here. This fierce clan, conciliatory just at the beginning of Boniface's pontificate, had been a thorn in his side ever since he had attempted, in the interests of justice, to interfere in their family affairs. They had opposed him in Consistory and in public; they had even stooped to highway robbery of his household furniture and plate. Finally, aggravated by his excessive reprisals, they were to combine with his arch-enemy, Philip the Fair of France, to cast doubts on the validity of his pontificate, and to concert the measures, more successful than creditable, which resulted in his humiliation and death. It was war to the knife. Yet although the institution of the crusade—never to flourish again in its true soil after the disastrous loss of Acre in 1291—had already been diverted from its original purpose, when, on grounds as much humanitarian as political, a former Pope had organised a Crusade against those monsters of cruelty, Ezzelino da Romano and his brother Alberico, this cannot be said to have justified Boniface.

¹ On the whole of this subject see Levi's article on "Boniface and Florence," in *Arch. Soc. Rom. di Storia Patria*, vol. v. 1882.

At any rate Florentine opinion in Dante's circle was strongly against this "war at the Lateran" (near which the Colonna dwelt in Rome), which the "Prince of our modern Pharisees," forgetful of poor Acre, "is waging not against Saracens or Jews but against Christian enemies":—

Lo Principe de' nuovi Farisei
 Avendo guerra presso a Laterano
 E non con Saracen, nè con Giudei;
 Che ciascun suo nimico era Cristiano—

words put into the mouth of Guido da Montefeltro, where, amid the flames reserved for fraudulent counsellors, he tells the story of his own part in Boniface's subsequent treachery to the surrendered Colonna.¹

And the echo of Dante's indignation resounds not only in *Malebolge*, for precious documentary records still remain to tell us how he voted when the Pontiff's demand for a levy was brought before the united Councils of Florence in the June of 1301:—

*Quod de servitio faciendo domino Papae nihil fiat!*²

At the beginning of 1300 before the promulgation of the Jubilee, the Pope had become embroiled again with the sturdy Commune of Florence, demanding under pain of extreme ecclesiastical penalties the stoppage of a legal process against three Florentine criminals who happened to be in the circle of his favour.

No notice was taken of this, so Boniface wrote to the Archbishop of Florence, summoning the chief accusers of the three to Rome. The Commune replied by electing the most prominent of these—the corrupt³ but astute⁴

¹ *Inf.* xxvii. 58-121.

² Scartazzini, *Dantologia*, p. 138 (3rd edition, Hoepli, 1906).

³ *Par.* xv. 128; *cf.* reference in Toynbee, *Dict. s.v.* "Lapo Salterelli," p. 330.

⁴ Dino, *Cron.* i. 23; ii. 10, 22, etc.

Lapo Salterelli to the dignity of prior of the Republic! And now, after putting in motion against his enemies the machinery of the Inquisition, Boniface launched against the recalcitrant citizens the great Bull *Perlato pridem*,¹ in which he asserts in terms every whit as strong as those of the famous *Unam Sanctam*, hurled two years later at the head of Philip the Fair, the absolute sovereignty of the Pope over cities, kings and princes, and every living creature: *Romanus Pontifex*, he says, *vices gerens Illius qui vivorum et mortuorum iudex est constitutus a Deo, et cui in celo et in terra omnis est data potestas, imperat super Reges et Regna . . . super omnes mortales obtinet principatum*. And again, *Huic militantis ecclesie summo Jerarche omnis anima debet subesse*.

This letter was despatched on the 15th of May—let us hope, for Dante's peace of mind, after his fortnight of pilgrimage, which may perhaps be assigned to Holy Week and Eastertide.²

Recent conjecture has seen in the same Bull the origin of Dante's own treatise *De Monarchia*, wherein the poet denounces as unscriptural, unhistorical, illogical, unphilosophical the temporal claims of the Papacy.)

Yes, and before the Bull *Perlato pridem* had reached Florence, another momentous letter,³ despatched on the 13th, was well on its way to Germany: the purport of which is well summed up in a very early motto attached to one extant copy of the document—PAPA BONIFACIUS VOLEBAT SIBI DARI TOTAM TUSCIAM—"Pope Boniface was desirous to have the whole of Tuscany given into his

¹ Levi, *Boniface and Florence*, p. 455.

² From 15th June to 15th August he was resident in Florence as Prior, so he cannot have been in Rome in the summer.

³ *Apostolica Sedes*; reprinted by Levi, p. 450.

hands". In this letter, in fact, he openly entreats the Duke of Saxony, one of the imperial electors, to further with Albert of Austria, the Emperor Elect, his design to have the imperial rights over Tuscany renounced in favour of the Holy See, to whose territory that province formed so embarrassing an interruption.

Dante and Boniface were both alike ardent lovers of Florence, but the passion of the latter was like the selfish passion of a carnal lover, whose one desire is possession and lordship; while that of the former was the pure white fervour of a child's love, to whom the slightest indignity offered to his mother comes home as a personal pain, and whose affection is selfish only in this, that separation from the loved object is felt as death.

In the autumn of the following year these two "lovers of Florence" met again, and now at closer quarters. Dante was no longer a religious pilgrim, but a political ambassador. Florence and Bologna, both cities of the Guelf or Church party, had combined to protest against that policy of foreign interference in their affairs which Boniface had already initiated in appointing Charles of Valois, brother to the King of France, his *paciario* or official peace-maker in Tuscany and the neighbourhood.

Boniface was too astute to allow Florence the support of Bologna: he adroitly managed to separate the two groups. Dante and his two colleagues were closeted with the Pope by themselves, and Dino afterwards heard, presumably from one of the two, what passed in that momentous interview.

"Why are you Florentines so obstinate?" said the Pope, with that mixture of imperiousness and confidential frankness which he well knew how to command: "Humble yourselves before me, for verily I say to you, I have no

other intention than that of peace for you." And then, giving them no opportunity of venting their elaborately prepared representations, the issue of which was keeping a whole city in suspense: "Go back, two of you," he said, "and they shall have my benediction if they procure that my will be obeyed."¹

Two to go and one to stay. And the hostage . . . to be left like another Simeon bound in the house of Pharaoh. . . . Which of the three shall it be? Boniface had seen Dante face to face: here was the man who might thwart him. Better to keep this one in honourable imprisonment till the thing should be over and done!

Was it not during these months when he was forced into an unsympathetic intimacy with the inner life of Saint Peter's—that See whose traditional bounty to the righteous poor was now, alas, no more, not through its own fault, but through that of its unworthy occupants²—was it not then that he acquired that fine scorn for the venal and simoniacal Roman Curia, which made him declare in after years that during this very year of Jubilee his exile "was being planned in the place where all day long they make merchandise of Christ"?—

Questo si vuole, e questo già si cerca
E tosto verrà fatto a chi ciò pensa
Là dove Cristo tutto dì si merca.³

And so it was. Dante, his heart boiling over with that indignation which burst forth again and again white-hot

¹ Dino, *Cron.* ii. 4: ". . . Perchè siete voi così ostinati? Umiliatevi a me: e io vi dico in verità che io non ho altra intenzione che di vostra pace. Tornate indietro due di voi, e abiano la mia benedizione se procurano che sia ubidita la mia volontà."

² *Par.* xii. 88-90.

³ *Ibid.* xvii. 49-51.

even when Boniface had been dead for years—Dante, pacing the corridors of the papal court like a lion in the cage—found his city betrayed, the loyal *Bianchi* handed over treacherously into the hands of the *Neri*, a permanent tyrannical ascendancy of the latter established in Florence, and himself condemned in his absence and cast out, with his best friends, to wander “through all parts where the Italian tongue is spoken,”¹ a homeless vagabond.

Charles of Valois had not indeed succeeded in handing over a tamed and docile Tuscany to the Pope, any more than he had succeeded in a more martial task which had been assigned to him in the south, the task of driving Frederic II of Aragon out of Sicily. Among his contemporaries, so Villani tells us, his ineffectiveness was proverbial: “Messer Carlo came to Tuscany as peace-maker, and left the country at war; he went to Sicily to make war, and concluded a shameful peace”.² But he had done much to alter many lives. He had filled his own pockets, according to the Pope’s significant hint “at the fount of gold”—“Messer Carlo,” says Dino,³ “domandando danari al Papa, gli rispose che avea messo nella fonte dell’ oro!” And “by his means,” as one of his own advisers protested, “a noble city was brought to ruin”.⁴

There were, then, personal reasons enough why Dante and Boniface should be cordial enemies; but we should be doing great wrong to both of them if we interpreted their antagonism on a purely personal basis. It is much more: it is an inevitable antagonism of principle between the successor and imitator of Gregory VII and the author

¹ *Conv.* i. 3 (p. 240).

² G. Villani, *Cron.* viii. 50.

³ Dino, *Cron.* ii. 25.

⁴ *Ibid.* 18, fin.: “Maestro Ruggieri . . . gli disse: ‘Sotto di te perisce una nobile città’”.

of the *De Monarchia*. We are plunged at once into the midst of that age-long struggle between Papacy and Empire, at once so abstract and so concrete, which supplied the foundation, or at any rate the pretext, for all the fierce faction-troubles of thirteenth-century Italy. Of that we shall see more later on. Here we are concerned solely with the great principle which divided Pontiff and Poet, and set them poles apart.

Dante has left us his views incidentally in the *Convivio*; more systematically in the *Monarchia*, more maturely (though again incidentally) in the *Divina Commedia*.

For him the supreme temporal and the supreme spiritual authority—the “Roman” Empire and the Papacy—are both alike Divine, both alike derived immediately from God, and, as such, responsible to Him alone, and inalienable. The Emperor, who wields the supreme temporal power, is, as a man, enshrining an immortal soul, subject in religion to the successor of Peter; but as Prince he is absolutely independent. His supreme and God-given mission is the ordering in peace and justice of the bodily, earthly life of man—the securing, in fact, of that environment in which each may find due opportunity of material self-development. The Pope’s mission is an entirely different one—to direct men’s souls to heaven—higher, in a sense, than the Emperor’s, inasmuch as the soul is higher than the body, heaven than earth; but carrying with it no shred of higher or lower jurisdiction in temporal things.

Such, in brief, is Dante’s view; and it is one which has gained ground throughout the centuries.

Boniface, on the other hand, took as his ideals and his models Gregory VII and Innocent III—men who strove, and strove successfully in their day, to establish in the

name of the Almighty a papal tyranny over all earthly sovereigns. Of these two, the great Hildebrand is never even mentioned by Dante, while Innocent is only named incidentally and that in a purely spiritual capacity, as authorising the Order of Saint Francis.

In fact, as a living writer has well remarked, "Dante seeks in the Pontiff only and always the Priest: the Prince he rejects, irrespective of the merits of individual Popes".¹

This principle finds perhaps its strongest expression in the terrible words towards the end of the *Paradiso* put into the mouth of Saint Peter, who, in denouncing the avarice of his successors, is made to brand the Pope of 1300 as a usurper, and to declare that his own Apostolic throne on earth is "now vacant in the sight of Christ". Boniface is,

Quegli ch' usurpa in terra il loco mio,
Il loco mio, il loco mio, che vaca
Nella presenza del Figliuol di Dio.²

✓ To this contest between Pontiff and Poet there could be but one immediate issue. The most masterful Pope of the Middle Ages, fresh from the homage of a whole continent, pitted against a simple citizen and one of a party proverbial for lack of that self-confidence that is indispensable to success! So Dante and his friends went into exile, and Dante at least never set foot again within the walls of that "bellissima e famosissima figlia di Roma, Fiorenza,"³ in which his heart was buried.

¹ Del Lungo, *Secolo e Poema di D.*, p. 267: "Egli cerca nel Pontefice, solamente e sempre, il sacerdote, e respinge, cattivo o buono, tuttoquanto sia principe".

² *Par.* xxvii. 22-24. Dante, however, can scarcely be claimed as an adherent of the view of a literal usurpation, put forth by Philip the Fair and the Colonna; as such he could not have written the lines about his capture, *Purg.* xx. 86-90, quoted above, p. 22.

³ *Conv.* i. 3 (p. 240).

Boniface's triumph was indeed short-lived. Just two years after he had received and outwitted the Florentine envoys the tragedy of Anagni was enacted.

The Pope had now added to his enemies that monster of unscrupulous vindictiveness, Philip the Fair of France, who made common cause with the despoiled and exiled Colonna. The harlot of the Roman Curia, in Dante's forcible figure, has suffered her eyes to wander from the face of her seducer; and so the caresses and embraces of the "lustful giant" are changed to cruel blows.¹ Boniface was suddenly surprised and betrayed,² as he slept secure among his own people, by an armed band headed by Sciarra Colonna—the whilom robber of his furniture—and William of Nogaret, who bore the *fiordaliso*, the banner of the House of France. It was just at midnight, on the Vigil of the Blessed Virgin's Nativity, 7th September. On the first alarm the old man summoned quickly such servants as remained loyal to him, and had himself vested in the robes of his pontificate. Sitting in state, crucifix in hand, he met the Gaul in silence, even as the Senators of old Rome had faced the wild soldiery of Brennus. After three days of durance—in which he was denied all food and drink, yet apparently found strength and courage to launch against Philip's head his last bolt, the Bull *Super Petri solio*—he was rescued by a repentant populace. But the shock and the humiliation had already done their work. Within forty days he was dead; gnawing his own hands—so ran the probably unfounded tale—in the frenzy and fury of his last agonies.

We may allow him, then, his short-lived triumph, for it

¹ *Purg.* xxxii. 148-56.

² See the collection of contemporary accounts of Boniface's capture and death in Potthast, *Regesta*, ii. 2022, 2023.

is Dante who has conquered in the long run. Had Dante been left at peace in Florence, with the ties and cares of home and the absorbing and growing interests and claims of a municipal life in which he had only just begun to make himself felt, the *Monarchia* might never have been finished, and the *Divina Commedia*, if completed, would certainly never have assumed its present shape.

Posterity would have been the loser; the literary heritage of mankind would have been immeasurably the poorer. But Boniface would have been better off. For among all the many accusers by whom that grand sinner has been denounced, none has had more influence than Dante upon the judgment passed by posterity on his deeds and his character. The violent and sometimes scurrilous diatribes of King Philip and his circle—the recriminations of the exasperated Colonna—the quaintly abusive *rime* of Fra Jacopone da Todi—the invectives and innuendos of the various Ghibelline chroniclers—all these are forgotten, or only remembered by the student of history; but the thunderbolt of Dante's denunciation has branded Boniface's name for ever.

✓ When one reads these denunciations of a man who, at any rate, had much of noble in his character, and with all his greed of power, and of money as a source of power, is not accused of wanton brutality or of licentiousness, one is tempted to wonder what place the poet would have found in his *Inferno* for the typical Popes of the Renaissance! Hell would surely have to be remodelled to accommodate a Holy Father who should combine unblushing simony with unspeakable forms of sin against nature, and daily betrayal and murder of intimate friends with deliberate treachery against the whole of Christendom. Boniface was at least a gentleman in many senses of the word, and

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to pass back to the corruption of his court from the foetid atmosphere of that of the second Borgia is like passing into fresh and bracing air.

Perhaps Dante would have seen in Boniface's unscrupulousness the seed of all that followed. But be that as it may, the Boniface of literature has so irrevocably taken his place with his fellow-simoniacs, Nicholas III and Clement V, in the eighth circle of the great abyss¹—where, by a fine, dramatic irony, Nicholas is made to mistake Dante's voice for that of the expected Pontiff—the Boniface of literature is so firmly planted head downwards in his little pit, kicking his frizzling feet in the air, that it is extremely difficult for the Boniface of history to get an impartial hearing.

Yet had he lived a hundred or two hundred years before, we cannot doubt but he would have left as great a name as Gregory VII or Innocent III. With all his ability—and it was great and versatile—he could not discern the signs of the times: and he failed, as all must fail who apply to one age the methods and ideals of another.

¹ Malebolge, third bolgia; see *Inf.* xix.

Note on Dante's Presence in Rome.—The Author is, of course, aware that the preceding chapter contains much that is still matter of discussion. Dante's presence in 1300 is purely a matter of inference, but his part in the subsequent embassy is vouched for by Dino Compagni, Leonardo Bruni and Filippo Villani, and, indirectly, by Boccaccio: a modern criticism is tending now to accept the traditional view. See long note in Villari, *Hist. of Florence*, English trans. (Unwin, 1905), pp. 512-14.

CHAPTER II

DANTE'S CENTURY

I.—KINGS, EMPERORS AND POPES

✓ DANTE'S century—if we may give that name to the hundred years that embrace the lives of Boniface and Dante, and is completed with the latter's death in 1321—is an epoch of greatest interest in Europe. The *Trecento* has been compared to an Italian May. And we cannot fail to mark the characteristics of May time: its teeming and seething life, its miracles of swift advance, under the combined influence of sun and rain, changing the whole face of Nature in the course of a few tepid days and substituting a paradise for a wilderness; in its fascinating display of blossom, doomed sometimes to issue in no permanent result of fruit, yet losing nothing of its peculiar beauty thereby: and last, but not least, in its burst of song.

To whatever department of life we look, Italy, and not only Italy but Europe in general, is growing visibly during these hundred years: a growth of flower or weed, of sound shoot and blossom that bears promise for the future, or else of showy, useless wood and leafage.

X In politics, in religion, in the arts of life—everywhere there is change. Old ideals are passing away and old institutions with them, and though the old find doughty champions, their prowess is doomed to ineffectiveness.

The new order, often represented by strangely unlikely characters, is marked out for conquest—either at once, or in the second Renaissance that is to follow. For this thirteenth century is a veritable Renaissance, with its manifold awaking into new life, with its transitional un-settlements of old faiths and old standards of morals, with its great leaders and impressive personalities.

It has, indeed, been asserted¹ that the individual did not emerge till later; that his day dawns with the fifteenth century; that in the *Trecento* he is still merged in the family, the party, the community, lacking spontaneity and originality of movement, wanting in that independence of character that makes a man rise to be something more than a reflection of his environment. That there is some truth in this assertion, as expressing a broad comparison between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance commonly so called, it would be idle to dispute. But there is truth also on the other side. Who would deny originality and personal individuality to Frederic of Swabia, or to Francis of Assisi and his brother-reformer Dominic Guzman? Who could fail to see such gifts in Philip the Fair or in Boniface VIII, in Edward Plantagenet and in Simon de Montfort? Each of them owed much, no doubt, to heredity and environment—for, after all, even Frederic II, enigma as he was, was human—but each, in his way, set a mark of his own upon the history of Europe—the mark of a strong personality.

¹ *E.g.* by P. Monnier, *Quattrocento*, ii. *init.*: "L'individu disparaît devant l'ensemble; la personne s'annihile dans le groupe". And again, "La Chrétienté d'abord; l'empire et l'église ensuite; la féodalité, la cité, l'université, distribuent, unissent, et régissent l'univers, discipliné comme une armée ou comme un couvent". And he quotes Burckhardt, Emile Gebhart and Villari to the effect that the Middle Age is "par excellence l'époque de la règle et de la masse".

And what these achieved in politics and religion, others accomplished also in other spheres: Michael Scot, "the wizard," and the Franciscan Roger Bacon in the fields of physical science; in scholastic lore, Thomas Aquinas the Dominican, original in the very thoroughness of his systematic apotheosis of authority and tradition; Giotto di Bondone and not a few others, in art and architecture; Giovanni Villani in history; Dante Alighieri and his Circle in poesy and literature. And among the characters that have less in them of originality commonly so-called, there is often a downrightness and intensity that makes them live before us in a way that can scarcely be predicated of half the great names of the later Renaissance. Ezzelino da Romano, the typical man of blood, at whose name men might cross themselves as at that of the Fiend; Saint Louis, the saint-soldier, original in the freshness and *naïveté* of his royal humility, and his brother, Charles of Anjou, "the Church's champion," with all the limitations as well as the virtues of the obsolescent Age of Chivalry; Peter of Aragon, Charles' great opponent in Sicily—knight also he, and Alpine climber to boot—surely one of the first on record?¹ Philip of Ravenna, the fierce, masterful, worldly Archbishop; John of Parma, the saintly and statesmanlike general minister of the second generation of Franciscans; John of Jerusalem, a very human figure, gigantic, valorous, yet always nervous before a fight.

It is fortunate for us that we have this wonderful time not only imaged in the matchless pages of the *Divina Commedia*, where the characters which come before us in the three kingdoms of the other world are prevailingly

¹ Salimbene gives (under the year 1285 [ed. princeps, p. 354]) a most graphic account of Peter's ascent of "Mons Canigosus".

Italian and often provokingly obscure ;¹ but also, in a far different way, in the fascinating records of Fra Salimbene ; a man as original, in his own way, as any of the great personages about whom he writes.

It is the interpretation of the Middle Age by Dante himself that concerns us most ; indeed the main aim of the present work is to see those times, as it were, through the Master's eyes ; but the garrulous Friar of Parma throws a perfect flood of light on the earlier part of our period. He is no historian at all—at least not in the same class with Thucydides or even with Giovanni Villani—he has but a limited grasp of the tendencies of things or of the true sequence of events, his style is rough and ridiculously discursive : yet his book is alive, and gives a most vivid picture of the seething life of those days. His picturesque and piquant anecdotes, his graphic and sometimes humorous character-sketches not seldom illuminate the more obscure allusions of the *Divina Commedia*. The Parmese Chronicler thus supplies for the Europe of the first half of the thirteenth century something of that vivid foreground colouring which G. Villani gives us for the Italy of the second half, and Dino Compagni—perhaps most vivid of all—for Florence in the century's closing years.

For Salimbene, who was a true Franciscan of the first age, mingled freely with big and little, with pious and worldly ; he travelled far and kept his eyes always open ; he met, and conversed with, and took stock of many of

¹ Dante seems to deny this in *Par.* xvii. 136 sqq. :—

Però ti son mostrate in queste rote
 Nel monte e nella valle dolorosa,
 Pur l'anime che son di fama note.

And indeed the obscurity is often due to lacunæ in our knowledge, as the constantly fresh documentary discoveries bearing on the *Commedia* seem to show.

the most famous men of his day. The characters which he artlessly describes are often identical with Dante characters,¹ and his anecdotes were written when Dante was scarcely out of his teens, for Salimbene was born in 1221, just a century before Dante's death.

He has lively stories to tell, not only of the great Frederic, whom he had seen and admired and detested, and of the kings whom Dante meets in the Flowery Vale,² of Popes and Archbishops, great Churchmen and great soldiers ; but also of other of Dante's characters who have left no mark on history, like the divining cobbler, Asdente of Parma. The very unimportance of the man makes the example the more interesting, and will justify us in spending a word or two upon it. This man, says Salimbene, "was called toothless because of his prominent teeth : Asdenti, idest absque dentibus, . . . per contrarium, quia magnos habet dentes et inordinatos, et loquelam impeditam".³

Dante meets the cobbler, it will be remembered, among the false diviners in the "fourth bolgia,"⁴ in company with the mythical Manto and the mysterious Michael Scot : a sad, distorted train, who pass along shedding hot tears from eyes doomed ever to look backwards instead of forwards :—

Vedi Asdente

Ch' avere atteso al cuoio ed allo spago
Ora vorrebbe ; ma tardi si pente.

And in a passage in the *Convivio*⁵ where he is discoursing on the etymology of "nobile," he adduces the Parmese

¹ So too are those of Salimbene's contemporary, Cantinelli, the chronicler of Faenza (see edition in Muratori, new series, fasc. 14, 15, pref. pp. xxii. xxiii.), but these latter are local, confined to Romagna, and not, as Salimbene's, personages of general historical interest ; nor has Cantinelli the same charm of originality. He is not a gossip.

² *Purg.* vii. 91 sqq.

³ Sub ann. 1284 (p. 303).

⁴ *Inf.* xx. 118.

⁵ *Conv.* iv. 16 (p. 318).

cobbler playfully as an illustration of his point. "If 'nobile' meant simply 'nominato e conosciuto,'" he says, "then Asdente, the cobbler of Parma, would be more noble than any of his fellow-citizens."

Salimbene shows him to us in a much more gracious light, and the pathos of Dante's lines about his "late repentance" is intensified when we read of him as a "humble, gentle, courteous fellow," without pomp or vain-glory even when entertained by the Archbishop of his city, and while quick to detect any misquotation of Scripture by others, always careful to qualify his own predictions with "ita mihi videtur," or some such phrase.¹

With such help, then, as Salimbene and a few of his fellow-chroniclers afford, we may essay the bewildering task of sketching some aspects at least of this remarkable period and its most remarkable men. And we begin, by a happy coincidence, with the year of Salimbene's birth, 1221.

Our period opens towards the end of the long and peaceful reign of Pope Honorius III. Innocent III is dead; the Pontiff whom Englishmen remember with gratitude, as the chastiser of King John; the iron ruler, lofty but generous in spirit, the gifted author (according to one tradition) of that noble hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*; yet humble enough, as Salimbene records, for the sake of example, to take up a manuscript always into the pulpit when he was preaching.² Innocent III is dead;

¹ Salimbene, *loc. cit.*

² "Solitus erat aliquando librum tenere coram se, cum populo praeedicabat. Cumque quaererent cappellani cur homo sapiens et litteratus talia faceret, respondebat dicens: 'Propter vos facio, ut exemplum dem vobis, quia vos nescitis et erubescitis discere'" (Salimbene, sub ann. 1216).

and we have to wait till 1295 and the accession of Boniface VIII for a really strong character in the chair of St. Peter.

Meanwhile the prestige and the temporal power of the Papacy are to be reduced exceeding low, in death-grapple with the imperial House of Swabia.

Frederic II, inheriting from his mother, the Norman Constance, Sicily and the south of Italy, combined imperial claims with a firm footing in the peninsula where it was always the concern of the Papacy to keep the emperor's authority as shadowy as possible. By the more pugnacious Popes, like Innocent IV, or Gregory IX (who canonised Saint Francis and excommunicated the entire orthodox Church of the East!) this was naturally regarded as a menace to their position. If in our own time Pius IX and Leo XIII were forced into an attitude of constant protest, lest the Pope should be reduced to the level of a mere "chaplain of the House of Savoy," so too the Pontiffs of Frederic's time might dread lest the Chair of Peter should become a mere appanage to the Court of the Hohenstaufen.

And the dread was not unreasonable, for in the time of Gregory IX, as Salimbene relates, the Popedom had lost to Frederic nearly all the "Petrine Patrimony" with which the mythical "Donation of Constantine" and the actual but vaguely defined gifts of Pepin and the Countess Matilda had endowed it.

Rome was practically surrounded and enclosed in the Swabian's dominions, and had the emperor's schemes in Lombardy and the Emilia been successful, the blockade of the Papacy would have been, so to speak, effective; for even the approach by sea was rendered precarious by Frederic's Pisan allies.¹

¹ Cf. above, chap. i. p. 11.

Innocent IV, whom Salimbene admires as a generous supporter of the Franciscan Order, but criticises as a thorough-going nepotist, was elected in 1243, after an interregnum for which Frederic's terrorism was responsible.¹ Next year he fled to France and abode there till Frederic's death, hurling his anathemas upon the emperor from the safe asylum of Lyons. In vain he attempted, in 1247, to divert the arms of Saint Louis from the East against the Church's enemy at home. "Leave Frederic to the Divine Judgment," said the French king; and two years afterwards that judgment fell.²

What future might have been in store for the Holy Roman Empire, but for the constant and in the end successful hostility of the Papacy, none can say. Certain it is that these years which wasted Italy with useless war, did much to transform and weaken permanently the two great traditional institutions of Western Christendom, the Papacy and the Empire.

With the House of Swabia perished the practical possibility of Dante's ideal *Monarchia*; for Henry VII's descent into Italy in 1311, on which the poet built such high hopes, was but the passage of a brilliant meteor.

Meanwhile the steady growth of kingly power in England and in France was developing a serious menace to the paramount authority of Papacy and Empire alike.

When Boniface VIII (as we have seen) attempted in the early years of the fourteenth century to apply to

¹ On the death of Celestine IV (Nov., 1241) Frederic succeeded in closing all the roads to Rome, "ne aliquis transiret qui Papa fieret". The blockade was so vigilant that Salimbene himself was taken prisoner more than once, and had to learn cryptic methods of bearing messages. "Tunc didici et excogitari," he says (sub ann. 1241), "scribere litteras diversis modis sub cautela."

² Salimbene, sub ann. 1247 (p. 87).

European politics the rough and ready methods of the great Innocent, he committed a fatal anachronism, and fell before the might of the "Fiordaliso".

Let us turn aside, then, for a moment, and glance at the development of affairs in Northern Europe which was to affect so profoundly the future of both Empire and Papacy; as illustrated by the contemporary chronicler of Parma and the Florentine Poet.

These hundred years (1221-1321) witness a great political and social evolution on both sides of the English Channel. In England this period includes the last years of the long reign of Henry III (1216-72), the whole of the lifetime of Edward I (reigned 1272-1307), and most of the tragic and ineffective reign of Edward II (1307-27). This last reign falls, however, too late for Salimbene, and is too insignificant, if not also too late, for notice in the *Divina Commedia*.¹

Constitutionally and socially, the period embraces the genesis of the Lower House of Parliament, and the development of the Upper House under the strong hand of Simon de Montfort; the evolution of an English aristocracy less feudal in its ideas than that of Norman days, and more in touch with the *bourgeoisie*; and the corresponding modification and constitutionalising of the royal power. The same years witness a notable development of the great English Universities, especially Oxford, where even at the beginning of the century, in 1209, the body of scholars and teachers already amounted to 3,000. Here Robert Grosseteste, the most accomplished scholar of his day, whom Salimbene mentions with evident admiration, showed himself a warm supporter of the Franciscan movement; so that before the end of the reign of

¹ See, however, below, p. 53 sq.



'KING, EMPEROR AND POPE': A FOURTEENTH CENTURY GROUP
SPANISH CHAPEL, S. M. NOVELLA, FLORENCE. SIMONE MARTINI

CCCLXXVII
CCCLXXVIII
CCCLXXIX
CCCLXXX
CCCLXXXI
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Henry III, who was at first a little alarmed at the great strides made by the Friars, the predominance of Franciscanism at Oxford was almost supreme.¹

Salimbene, who as man and monk had special opportunities of studying and comparing the characteristics of the different nations of Europe, seems to have formed a favourable estimate of his English contemporaries. He finds them indeed mighty drinkers, ready to gulp down a whole goblet of wine at a draught, and expecting their comrades to do the same (in contradiction, as he quaintly observes, of the scriptural precept of Esther i. 8). But for this bibulous tendency he would make allowances: "The English must be forgiven if they are eager to drink good wine when they can, because, unlike the French, who are also given to drink, they have but little wine in their own country".² And in another place he gives incidentally his serious estimate of the national worth, when in describing an eminent Franciscan—"a fine singer, spare and moderately tall, handsome in person, of holy and honest life, well mannered and learned,"³ he says he was "*anglicus natione, et homo vere anglicus*". Such a man was to him more typical of England than was Henry III, Dante's "Re della semplice vita," who had in his strong and masterful son "migliore uscita".⁴ Yet he admires King Henry in his Franciscan way, and has delightful stories to tell of him, illustrating his naïve and humble piety and the shortness of his temper, quickly roused and as soon appeased.

The first story⁵ is thoroughly Franciscan, and might

¹ Jessop, *Coming of the Friars*, p. 41 sqq.

² Salimbene, sub ann. 1248 (p. 93).

³ *Ibid.* 1284 (p. 317).

⁴ *Purg.* vii. 131.

⁵ Salimbene, sub ann. 1248 (p. 134).

almost have come out of the *Fioretti*. It serves incidentally to show how the King—at first, as we are told, openly jealous of the swift advance of Franciscanism among English nobility—was eventually conquered by sheer force of goodness.¹ John of Parma, the saintly and gifted general of the Franciscan Order was in England, and went to see King Henry. On hearing of his approach, “the King of England straightway rose from his table and went down from his palace, and came hurrying up to the monk whom he embraced and kissed. And when his knights reprimanded him, for that he had demeaned himself over much, running to meet an insignificant little wight (*uni homuncioni*), he answered and said: ‘I did it to the honour of God and the blessed Francis, and because I have heard great sanctity ascribed to this man. He therefore demeaneth not himself over much who showeth honour to the servants of God; for the Lord saith: “He that receiveth you receiveth Me”.’ And the king’s answer,” adds the chronicler, “was esteemed a good one and they commended and praised him because he had done exceeding well.”

Another and less favourable aspect of his simplicity is brought out in the following anecdote,² which also adds one or two interesting touches: “The king . . . was esteemed a simple man (*simplex homo*); and one day when he was sitting at meat with his knights a certain jester said in the hearing of all: ‘Hearken, hearken! Our king is like the Lord Jesus Christ.’

“The king, hearing this, was exceeding glad, to wit that he should be likened to so great a Lord. And then began he to urge the jester that he should say in what things he was like Christ (and jester and king both spoke in the

¹ Jessop, *Friars*, p. 42.

² Salimbene, *loc. cit.*

French language and right well sounded the vulgar tongue of France on their lips). The jester then replied: 'It is said of our Lord Jesus Christ that he was every whit as wise in the very moment when He was conceived, as when He attained to the age of thirty years. In like manner our king is just as wise now as when he was a little child.'

"When he heard this the king was exceeding wroth, and ordered them that stood by to take the jester and hang him.

"But they, when they had gone up with him, did him no harm. They tied indeed a rope round his neck, but they themselves stood beneath to support him: and so they played a game with him, lifting him but little from the ground. Then said they to him: 'Begone from these parts, until the king's anger be quieted, lest his indignation break forth against thee and against us who have spared thee'.

"Then they of the king's household returned and said that they had perfectly fulfilled his commands."

More saint than monarch, like Edward the Confessor, his practical and administrative incapacity did not bring down like Edward's the cataclysm of a foreign conquest. And the Barons' Revolt, headed by Simon de Montfort, though for the moment apparently weakening the prestige of the monarchy, served in the end to strengthen it by consolidating the realm itself in the developments to which we have already alluded; while the tarnished lustre of the Royal House shone out with greater brilliancy in the person of Henry's youthful champion, son and successor.

It was in the year of Dante's birth that Simon met his death in battle at Edward's hands, and the shadow of that tragedy comes before us in the *Divina Commedia*,¹ where

¹ *Inf.* xii. 118-20.

the victim of a sacrilegious murder is described as having devotees still upon the bank of the Thames:—

Mostrocci un' ombra dall' un canto sola
Dicendo : " Colni fesse in grembo a Dio
Lo cor che in sul Tamigi ancor si cola".

The shade pointed out by Nessus is that of Simon's son Guy, who, in the year 1270, to avenge his father's death upon the House of Plantagenet, slew Henry, son of Richard, Earl of Cornwall, "in God's Bosom," during the celebration of the Mass in the Church of St. Silvestro at Viterbo.

The century saw in Edward Longshanks a strong man, worthy of the steel of Philip of France and of Boniface VIII; and one who, like Philip, knew how to strengthen his kingdom and lay deep the foundations of royal prerogative. And if Edward's son was to be ruined and hounded to death by Philip's daughter¹ the nemesis was soon to follow: genius should "skip a generation," and the third Edward, Longshanks' true successor, was to found on that most unfortunate marriage a claim which made the lives of Philip's descendants a burden to them for the space of a hundred years.

Edward I was no mere crusading knight like Richard Lionheart, no mere aggressor, contending in pride with the equally obstinate pride of Scotland—

. . . la superbia ch' asseta,
Che fa lo Scotto e l' Inghilese folle,
Sì che non può soffrir dentro a sua meta—²

he was also a legislator, an "English Justinian," who had the insight to read the signs of the times, and to employ in his service one of the most famous lawyers of famous Bologna, carrying him off to England on his own return

¹ See, however, below, p. 53 *sq.*

² *Par.* xix. 121-23.

from the East.¹ Of him Sacchetti tells a quaint story to illustrate the fact that like a true man, though he knew his own worth, he hated flattery.² But Salimbene has no gossip to relate of the son like that which so illuminates the character of his father, the simple "Arrigo".

Of Edward II, as we said above, there is probably no mention in the *Divina Commedia*, though some would refer to him the lines just quoted from the nineteenth canto of *Paradiso*. The Scottish war, which he inherited from his father, became indeed, in his feeble hands, a more obvious exhibition of "folly": but if there is any reference in the passage to this later phase of the conflict, it is only in a general way, and "l'inghilese" will include alike the masterful father and the feckless son.

But if Edward of Carnarvon has found no place in the portrait gallery of Dante's *Commedia*, recent research is fain to claim for him a curiously pathetic following in the poet's footsteps. We are asked to think of him as dying in lonely exile in a Lombard hermitage, after years of homeless wanderings. If the reputed letter of Manuele del Fiesco be authentic, the discrowned monarch escaped from Berkeley Castle in his warder's clothes at the moment when the would-be murderers were upon him. The royal tomb at Gloucester, on this theory, harbours the remains of a jail-porter, whose heart was palmed off on the savage Isabella as that of her murdered husband. Meanwhile Edward, after various adventures, including a secret visit to John XXII at Avignon, and a pilgrimage

¹ Francesco d' Accorso, who lectured at Oxford for years. He is mentioned in *Inf.* xv. 110.

² Franco Sacchetti, *Novelle*, iii. He soundly buffeted a Lombard who approached him with fulsome eulogies but rewarded the man handsomely when his flattery gave place to denunciation.

to the relics of the "Three Kings" at Cologne, found his "ultimo rifugio" in Lombardy, the region of Dante's "primo ostello" dwelling as a hermit first in the Castle of Melazzo near Acqui, and then at Cécima, near Voghera, where he passed away with words of intercession on his lips: "agendo penitentiam," says the writer of the letter, "et Deum pro nobis et aliis peccatoribus orando".¹

Of the French character, Salimbene's estimate is scarcely so favourable: but of that we will speak later. The century saw in France as in England a steady growth of the royal power and influence.

Philip Augustus (d. 1223) had succeeded during his long and eventful reign in aggrandising the monarchy at the expense of the barons and more than doubling the area of the French kingdom. When he had ascended the throne in 1180 all the western and most of the northern coast, and more than a third of the line of the Pyrenees were subject to the kings of England, who, as Dukes of Normandy and Brittany and Counts of Anjou possessed a feudal sway over nearly two-thirds of the French territory. Philip wrested from the luckless John² the major

¹ See Costantino Nigra: "*Uno degli Edoardi in Italia: Favola o Storia?*" (*Nuova Antologia*, April, 1901, fasc. 1). The document which purports to be a copy of a letter written to Edward III by Manuele del Fiesco, Canon of York, Notary to the Pope, and afterwards (1343-1348) Bishop of Vercelli, contains the substance of a confession made by Edward of Carnarvon to the said Manuele. It was discovered in 1877 among the episcopal archives of Maguelone by A. Germain, who published an account of it in the following year. The copy has no date, but must have been already in the collection at Maguelone by 1368 if not earlier. It is given *in extenso* by Nigra, pp. 11-13.

² Dante nowhere mentions our King John: for the "re Giovane" (not *Giovanni*) of *Inf.* xxviii. 135, is almost certainly his elder brother Henry, who though he never actually reigned is called "le reys joves" by Bertran de Born. The same "re Giovane d'Inghilterra" appears in

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA



SAINT LOUIS OF FRANCE

DETAIL FROM 'MARIAGE MYSTIQUE' BY (?) JEAN PERRÉAL

part of these dominions, leaving only Gascony, Périgord and Aquitaine in English hands, together with the Channel Islands, a poor relic of the Norman duchy.

The prestige of the Royal House was further enhanced alike by the chivalrous memories of Philip's grandson, Saint Louis, and by the unscrupulous worldly wisdom of Louis's grandson, Philip the Fair.

St. Louis with his mild look and stern ascetic face¹—the face of one who is at once mystic and true man—strange contrast to the weak and mobile features which tradition gives to our Henry III: St. Louis, a veritable Franciscan on the throne,² constantly unsuccessful as he was in his pious undertakings, lifted the Royal House, by force of his pure simplicity, to a high place in contemporary esteem.

He was ever a lover of the Franciscans³—the "Third Order" claims him as one of its earliest members—and very touching is Salimbene's description of his visit to a convent in the South of France, on his way to embark for the first of his two crusades.

The tall, spare, graceful figure, with "the expression of an angel on his countenance"; the king, travelling on foot in pilgrim garb, "a most excellent adornment to the

Villani, v. 4, and in the *Novellino* (*Novv.* xv. xvi. xliv. lxxxvii.), as a pattern of courtesy and generosity. The *Novellino* collection, if in part later than Dante, must be also partly contemporary and partly earlier. See further, note on p. 125 below.

¹ See illustration.

² "Re vera magis erat dicendus monachus quantum ad devotionem, quam quantum ad arma bellica miles" (Salimbene, sub ann. 1248 (p. 94)).

³ A precious MS. of Psalter and Hours (now in the collection of H. Yates Thompson, Esq.), illuminated probably before 1270 and for a sister of St. Louis—perhaps by the king's own direction—has, prominent among its illustrations, devotional pictures of Franciscans and Dominicans, and a representation of the miracle of the Stigmata.

royal shoulders"; turning aside again and again to kneel and crave some poor hermit's prayers; entering the church, and, after a most devout genuflexion, remaining rapt in prayer before the altar; kneeling again devoutly before the brethren in Chapter, and "asking their intercessions for his venture and for the family and the people he was leaving behind . . . so that some of the French brethren who stood by wept inconsolably out of devotion and piety". After which, as Salimbene records, other speeches were made, followed by a sumptuous *maigre* repast at the king's expense. The complete *menu* is given us by the chronicler. It consisted of no less than eight courses, and nothing seems to have impressed the good friar more than the exceeding whiteness of the bread—"panem albissimum"—and the royal excellence and the abundance of the wines, to which "after the French manner" shirkers were compelled by their neighbours to do justice.¹

Or again he is shown to us in another place sitting on the unpaved floor of the church and calling the brethren to him: "Venite ad me fratres dulcissimi et audite verba mea". Whereupon the *frati* and the king's three brothers seat themselves round him in a circle, hanging upon his saintly lips.²

It is the same "buono Luigi" who two years later, when the first success at Damietta had been followed by

¹ This is an abstract of the *menu*, which is surely one of the most interesting mediæval documents existing! "*Primo cerasas, postea panem. . . . Vinum . . . Postea . . . fabas recentes cum lacte decoctas—pisces et caneros—pastillos anguillarum—risum cum lacte amigdularum et pulvere cynamomi—anguillas assatas cum optimo salsamento—turtas et juncatas—fructus.*" And the service, he adds, was perfect—"omnia curialiter fuerunt apposita et sodule ministrata" (Salimbene, sub ann. 1248 (p. 96)).

² Salimbene, sub ann. 1248 (p. 96).

the crushing blow of his brother's death and his own defeat and capture, ransomed from captivity under the infidel, helped to bury with his royal hands the dead soldiers whose every hardship and privation he had shared.

In his second and last crusade in 1270 he fell a victim to the epidemic which decimated the whole army. We read how his gentle spirit passed away praising the Lord incessantly ; praying for a more complete detachment from the world ; interceding for his people, that God would be their "hollower and protector"; and finally departing with the Psalmist's cry : "Introibo ad domum tuam, adorabo ad templum sanctum tuum, et confitebor nomini tuo, Domine".¹

Salimbene's estimate of Louis IX is more than corroborated by the king's personal friend and follower, the Sire de Joinville, whose admiration is that of soldier not of friar, and by the undoubted facts of his contemporary influence in the courts of Europe. St. Louis, if he does not attain, yet approximates most nearly of all the characters of that age to the ideal, alike as Churchman, knight and king. He is no weakling, no narrow-minded ascetic. Pure and gentle in his own life he is fair-minded even towards his enemies. Keen Catholic as he is, and ready even to permit rigorous measures against those heretics whose appalling propaganda seemed to threaten the very life of Catholicism, he is yet (as we have seen) capable of taking an impartial line in the quarrel between Frederic II and the Papacy. Severely just in his internal administration he will not allow injustice in his liegemen towards their own feudal inferiors, nor concede to ecclesiastics immunity to infringe the laws to which laymen have to bow. His practical justice and his personal character alike did

¹ Salimbene, sub ann. 1271 (p. 258).

much to consolidate his kingdom. He was, says Professor Tout,¹ "incontestably the first prince in Europe," and the natural arbiter in European quarrels. Such was the soul that passed away so peacefully in the fierce blaze of an African August before the walls of Tunis.

True, he had to wait some twenty-seven years for formal canonisation ; but when Boniface in one of his moments of reconciliation with Philip the Fair issued from Perugia the bull of the grandfather's sainthood, he was but doing an act of tardy justice, in contemporary eyes, and setting the Church's seal upon an accomplished fact.

Philip the Sinner, well started on his career of self-aggrandisement, had already made full use, we may be sure, of the popular reverence for Louis the Saint, though he could appreciate also the market-value of a Bull of canonisation. And with the advantage of an imposing person, an iron will, a clear head and a diplomatic tongue, he was able, in spite of many a glaring mistake, to brow-beat a masterful Pontiff, to despoil and bring to naught the mighty Order of the Templars, and to leave his House more firmly established than ever as the sovereign power in the land, and a most potent factor in the counsels of Europe.

A single anecdote may serve to show the contrast between his methods and those of the pious St. Louis ; and to illustrate also his genius for making capital even out of his humiliations.

In December, 1301, Boniface, whose long quarrel with Philip had just been embittered by the latter's imprisonment of his legate Bernard de Saisset, wrote a curt letter to the King on the subject of his free dealings with benefices in the realm. Here are his words :—

¹ *Empire and Papacy*, chap. xvii. p. 393 sqq.

“Fear God and keep His commandments. We would have thee know that in temporal and spiritual matters alike thou art subject to us. The collation of benefices and prebends in nowise pertaineth to thee. If thou hast the charge of any that be vacant, reserve their fruits for them that shall succeed thereto ; and if thou hast made any collations, such collation we decree to be null and void, and in so far as it have actually proceeded, we revoke the same. And those who think otherwise, we esteem to be heretics.”

The king's reply is a parody of the Pope's letter, even ruder, but relieved by a suggestion of humour :—

“Philip by the grace of God King of the Franks, to Boniface, pretended Chief Pontiff, wisheth little or no health.

“Thy supreme fatuity must know that in temporal matters we are subject to none ; that the collations of churches and prebends pertain to us by royal prerogative ; that we make their fruits our own, that the collations hitherto made are valid for the future and in perpetuity, and that we will defend the possession of them right manfully against all comers. And those who think otherwise we esteem to be demented.”

Then Philip called together his magnates, showed them the Pope's missive, and asked them from whom they held their fiefs. They unanimously replied : “From the King”. Upon which he renewed his decrees of 1296 against “sending money out of the country,” and it was resolved by the representatives of the nation that any French subject invited to Rome by Boniface should refuse to go. Thus the artful Philip was able at once to vent his private spleen, and, by rousing the patriotic spirit of the “estates of the realm” against Papal interference, to rally them round the throne.

Philip's self-assertive and self-aggrandising policy was not indeed without antecedents. His great-uncle, the capable and pushing Charles of Anjou (of whom we shall have more to say presently) had given an "aggressive twist" to the policy of the Capetian House during the reign of the good and mild Philip III, and even in the last years of Saint Louis, who allowed this brother, against his own better judgment, to accept from the papacy and wrest from the Swabians the crown of Sicily and Apulia. But if Charles of Anjou can be described as "the evil genius of the House of France"¹ the part played by Philip IV remains well-nigh indescribable!

Saint Louis is scarcely once referred to in all Dante's writings.² He had his seat, no doubt, in the mystic rose of Paradise, though in which of the nine heavens he would have appeared must be left to conjecture. His son Philip III, "le hardi," reclines in the Valley of Princes in Purgatory: the father, already canonised three years at the date of Dante's Vision, is naturally not to be found there. Is his place, perhaps, with Godfrey de Bouillon and Robert Guiscard in the heaven of Mars?³ or is it rather with Peter Damian, in the home of contemplative souls?⁴

Philip IV, "le bel," looms larger in the *Divina Commedia*; a baneful and ugly figure, in spite of his handsome person.

He is the "mal di Francia," whose "vita viziata e lorda" is a grief to his father and father-in-law in the other world.⁵

He is the "evil plant" sprung from Hugh Capet's root, "that overshadows all the Christian soil so that it

¹ Tout, *Empire and Papacy*, ut supra.

² *Purg.* vii. 127.

³ *Par.* xviii. 46 sqq.

⁴ *Ibid.* xxi.

⁵ *Purg.* vii. 109.

but rarely fructifies".¹ In the tragedy of Anagni to which we have already alluded, he is the "new Pilate"; and unsated by his cruel violence to one Pontiff, he joins in unholy alliance with another—Clement V—"to profane, unsanctioned, the Temple of God": an allusion apparently to his spoliation and suppression of the Templars' Order.²

His unjust war against Flanders calls for Divine vengeance; which shall overtake him in a violent and horrible death³; and his debasing of the coin with which he paid the army that conquered Flanders is recorded in heaven's unerring record of evil deeds.⁴

Dante evinces no great love for the Fleur-de-lys. He had, as we know, good cause to curse the day when the Pontiffs first called in against the empire this northern kingdom that was to be Italy's evil genius for many generations. The logical outcome of that invitation, the mission of Charles of Anjou to Tuscany in 1301, was the cause of Dante's banishment.

This novel invocation of a foreign Power (for the German-Roman empire was, in theory at least, not foreign to Italy), marks the third and last stage of the mediæval struggle between Pope and Emperor.

The first stage is the contest between Gregory VII and Henry IV (1073-85); and has its climax in the dramatic scene where the penitent emperor stands shivering in the snow before the walls of Countess Matilda's castle at Canossa, waiting till it shall please the Pontiff to grant him absolution.

The second stage is reached when the Englishman, Adrian IV, and the Tuscan, Alexander III, founder of the first Lombard league, successfully resisted the might

¹ *Purg.* xx. 43 *sqq.*

² *Ibid.* 91-93.

³ *Par.* xix. 120.

⁴ *Ibid.* 118, 119.

of Barbarossa, and vindicated the practical liberty and independence of the Italian communes. This stage, too, has its dramatic climax, when Alexander puts his foot upon the Emperor's submissive neck at Venice.

The third is the struggle lasting through seven papal reigns, with Barbarossa's grandson, Frederic II and his family. Here again the victory seems to lie on the side of the Papacy, which succeeds after a veritable death-grapple, in utterly overthrowing and indeed extinguishing the House of Swabia. But the victory was dearly bought.

It was Gregory IX (1227-41) who set the fatal precedent of an alliance with France. Not content with reviving the Lombard League of the previous century, he tried to induce Saint Louis's brother Robert to accept the crown of Frederic II, whom he had excommunicated and deposed.¹

Robert refused, and died, as we have seen, on crusade; but ere his death Pope Urban IV (1261-64), himself a Frenchman from Troyes,² had enticed another brother, Charles of Anjou, to accept the crown of Naples, and wrest it from Manfred. The French victories of Benevento (1266) and Tagliacozzo (1268),³ and the removal of Manfred and Conradin, last scions of the brilliant House of Swabia, mark in an ill-omened way the beginnings of that "dalliance of the harlot with the giant,"⁴ which not

¹ It is related that Frederic, on hearing of the excommunication, sent for the imperial crown, and placing it on his head exclaimed: "I still possess this crown, and without a bloody struggle I shall not suffer it to be plucked from me by the attack of any Pope or Council!" (Neander, *Ch. Hist.* vol. vii. p. 247, Eng. tr.).

² Jacques Pantaléon, Archdeacon of Liéges, and afterwards successively Bishop of Verdun and (Latin) Patriarch of Jerusalem.

³ Referred to by Dante, *Inf.* xxviii. 15-17, among typical instances of carnage.

⁴ *Purg.* xxxii. 148.

only added a fresh bitterness to the already fierce feuds of Guelf and Ghibelline, but also bore fruit, less than half a century later, in the humiliation and "Babylonian captivity" of the Papacy. It is the old story of Hengist and Vortigern—a story often repeated in history. The doughty ally at first so effectively useful soon becomes unmanageable, and finally tyrannical. France, the loyal "eldest son of Holy Church" is a thorn in the side of Boniface VIII; Clement V is its mere slave and tool.

The literature of Italy from the thirteenth century to the nineteenth abounds in diatribes against French interference, and in frank criticism of the Gallic character. Salimbene does not, like Machiavelli, go back to Cæsar's description of the Gauls—"E però Cesare disse i Francesi essere in principio più che nomimi, e in fine meno che femina";¹ but he is at one with the fifteenth century writer in his account of their fickleness and their inability to play a losing game, their unbridled insolence when successful. "Sono umilissimi nella cattiva fortuna; nella buona insolenti," says Machiavelli: "superbissimi enim sunt . . . et stultissimi," writes Salimbene, "et qui omnes nationes de mundo contemnunt, et specialiter anglicos et lombardos . . . et ipsi revera contemnendi sunt, et ab omnibus contemnuntur". "When they have well drunk," he adds, "they think they can conquer and overwhelm the whole world at one blow: but they are mistaken." In both of these estimates we may see something of *animus*, but the *animus* is the result of bitter experience. In Salimbene's case, his whole bias as a Franciscan and a Churchman would be to favour the cause of the Frenchman, Charles of Anjou, the Church's champion against the house of Swabia. But he was a man and

¹ Machiavelli: *Ritratti delle cose della Francia*.

a Christian too, and even in those days of violence and ferocity the brutality of Charles' French soldiery in the kingdom of Naples roused his indignation to white heat: so much so that the terrible reprisals of the "Sicilian Vespers" seem to him well-earned. The last words of his chronicle that remain to us are a justification of the cruelties suffered by the French captives after the Aragonese victory of 1287. What mercy did they merit who robbed the poor of corn and flesh, of capons, fowls and geese, and all they had to live upon; and not content with "commandeering," met remonstrance with brutal blows from which not even fair and delicate ladies were exempt?¹

Yet on Charles himself neither Dante nor Salimbene are so severe. Dante, though crediting apparently the contemporary tale which made the Angevin responsible for the death of Aquinas,² places him in the Valley of Princes, side by side with his rival, Peter III of Aragon, husband of Constance, the sole surviving representative of the Hohenstaufen, who, after the Sicilian Vespers in 1282, had wrested Sicily from Charles' kingdom. Charles "of the manly nose" is singing there in concert with the large-limbed Aragonese.³

The evil and grasping courses of the House of France are dated indeed in Hugh Capet's tirade⁴ from the marriage by which this Charles won the rich dower of Provence. It was this access of power and wealth that took from them all sense of shame:—

Lì cominciò con forza e con menzogna
La sua rapina . . .

But it is on "un altro Carlo"—Charles of Valois, brother of Philip the Fair—that the vials of wrath are poured out.⁵

¹ Salimbene, sub ann. 1287 (p. 399).

² *Purg.* xx. 69.

³ *Ibid.* vii. 113 sqq.

⁴ *Ibid.* xx. 61 sqq.

⁵ *Ibid.* 70 sqq.

The brother of St. Louis at least fought, not like his great-nephew, with "the lance wherewith Judas jousted,¹" but with the recognised weapons of chivalry. And the picture that Salimbene draws both of Charles and of his rival Peter is interesting, because it marks the importation into Italy of that element of chivalry which being a product, in part, of the feudal system, never took real root in the land.

Very picturesque is his account of the elaborate arrangement for a trial by combat in Gascony which was to have decided the quarrel between Charles and Peter about the crown of Sicily, a combat on which Charles had obstinately set his heart, in spite of the hesitation of Pope Martin IV ; and which never took place because Peter defaulted at the last moment. Each of the rivals was to appear with a hundred picked men at the place and time appointed, and the umpire was to be the King of England : and each of the principals swore upon the Gospels that if either should fail to appear, the defaulter (*absque impedimento corporis*) should be accounted "no king, but a false traitor and an infidel for the rest of his life".

Charles arrived duly, and presented himself before "Johannes de Grili," knight and seneschal of the illustrious King of England, and awaited Peter from morn till eve ; but the latter never showed his face, albeit he had been seen alive and well near by no long time before. Some said he feared foul play at the hands of his rival's nephew, Philip le Hardi, whose army was waiting just over the border ; others that he had appeared at the appointed time and place to keep the letter of his oath, but had come disguised as a merchant !

Charles was to Salimbene, as we have seen, the Church's champion : "Serenissimus Rex Karolus, illustris, sacro

¹ *Purg.* xx. 73, 74.

sanctae Matris Ecclesiae Romanae clypeus et protector". And he was a true knight, devout and valorous, of that age of chivalry which was passing away.

As he accompanied his saintly brother to embark on the crusade of 1248 his devotion was marked and admired. In a Franciscan church "he made many genuflexions before the altar in the aisle near the door. And I saw," says Salimbene, "both Charles praying fervently and the king waiting for him by the door without; and I was greatly edified."

He was devout, but he was also valorous and skilled in battle, "homo magnifici cordis et fortis armatus et doctus ad bellum et qui multis se periculis exponebat ut faceret sibi nomen". There was a knight of the Campagna who challenged all comers to single combat, and had hitherto conquered all who accepted his challenge. Charles must needs accept the challenge "for the honour of France"—incognito—in spite of the warnings and entreaties of his son, who misquoted Ecclesiastes¹ in vain. "And so on the day appointed the two knights faced one another in the lists. At the third call of the trumpet they charged and met in even shock. And so mightily did the strong fall upon the strong that all were astounded, yet did they not fall from their chargers, nor was either shifted from his saddle, and each struck the other in the face so stoutly that both lances were shivered from point to hasp.

"Thereafter King Charles was fain to fight with maces (clava), and offered himself to sustain the first blow. But the Campagnian knight sprang upon him like an osprey or a falcon, 'sicut nisus super aviculam, vel sicut accipiter insilit in anathem,' and grasping his mace in both hands struck so hard a blow at his head that, if the mace had

¹ *Eccles.* v. 8: "Excelso alius excelsior est," etc.

fallen true, the king had doubtless been slain. But the blow slid off from the head, by the shoulder, to the ribs, and smote the saddle so mightily that the horse was thrown upon his knees, and the king fell unconscious, with two of his ribs broken."

The king's son and the attendant knights bore him to his tent, and when his armour was stripped off the true quality of the unknown champion was discovered. As soon as he came to himself Charles asked whether the knight were still awaiting him, for he was eager to take his turn with the mace. "Stay quiet," answered the son, "for the physicians say you have two ribs in your body broken." And indeed the victorious knight when he heard who it was he had smitten "mounted his charger and fled away to the Marches of Ancona, where he lay in hiding for many a day".

"All this," says Salimbene, "did King Charles suffer and undergo to preserve the honour of France: for he would not that any 'Lombard' should be reputed more valorous than the French."¹

There are two other names worth noting here, as types of the Frankish chivalry well-known in Italy in the thirteenth century. The one figures in Dante's *Commedia*, the other in Salimbene's *Chronicle*. The first is closely linked in history with Charles of Anjou.

In the Hell of the Sowers of Discord, where Dante alludes to the carnage of Tagliacozzo, he attributes Charles's victory over Conradin to the astute advice of Erard de Valéry:—

. . . là da Tagliacozzo
Ove senz' arme vinse il vecchio Alardo.²

¹ Salimbene, sub ann. 1285 (pp. 355, 356).

² *Inf.* xxviii. 17, 18.

This doughty warrior—"cavaliere francesco di grande senno e prodezza,"¹ as Villani describes him—had accompanied Saint Louis and his brother Charles on their first crusading expedition in 1248, and during that campaign had shown his daring in rescuing his own brother Jean from the very hands of the Turks, and his playfulness in combining with Charles of Anjou to practise a harmless deception on the saintly king, winning by guile permission to hold a tourney which he had already forbidden. After various adventures, including an imprisonment in the Netherlands from which Charles had ransomed him, Erard returned to the East in 1265. But years and hardship, though they failed to touch his spirit, had worn down his bodily strength, and in 1268, having well-nigh completed his term of threescore years and ten, he set out homewards, intending to spend his remaining days in France.

Landing in the south of Italy on his homeward journey, he found himself, by a happy coincidence, in the presence of his friend and benefactor at the moment when the latter was on the point of giving battle to the forces of Conradin at Tagliacozzo. Charles, masterful as he was, listened readily to the veteran's counsel, and kept a large force in reserve, to fall upon Conradin's troops when demoralised by their apparently easy victory. Thus it was "il vecchio Alardo" who was really responsible for that momentous triumph; and a less lofty and ardent spirit might well have been content to rest upon such a success, and reap in peace the fruits of Charles's gratitude. But such was not the taste of this old crusading Ulysses. The call of the East was too strong for him. Two years after Tagliacozzo Saint Louis embarked on his last expedition, and the brave Erard must needs accompany him;

¹ *Cron.* vii. 26.

returning in 1271 with the orphaned host to spend his last six years of life in honour and usefulness at home.

Such was "il buono messere Alardo di Valleri,"¹ of whom the Burgundian poet Rustebuef sings:—

" Mes sire Erars de Valeri,
A cui onques ne s'aferi
Nus chevaliers de loiauté."²

Our second typical knight is also an old man when he comes before us. John of Brienne was already well on in life in 1200 when Erard was born; and when the latter was still a lad of ten, had begun a new career as "King of Jerusalem". A penniless adventurer, but redoubtable for his experience of war, he had been chosen by Philip Augustus in 1210 as husband of Mary of Montferrat, the heiress of the Latin Crown of the Holy City.

Fifteen years later he made a magnificent but disastrous alliance, when he gave his daughter Yolande in marriage to Frederic II. John himself had gained the throne of Jerusalem by marriage, and now he found himself ousted by his own son-in-law, who claimed the crown in turn as husband of the heiress of Mary of Montferrat.³ Small wonder that he is found in command of the papal troops that overran Apulia during Frederic's absence in 1228-29!

But for Salimbene⁴ he is always "King of Jerusalem," and always a hero. Gigantic in stature—a very "Charles son of Pepin" in size and strength and skill—he overawes even the dauntless Frederic, who dare not play the tyrant

¹ G. Villani, vii. 26, 27.

² Toynbee, *Dict. s.v.* "Alardo," p. 16, whence are drawn the details given above.

³ Another daughter of John's married Baldwin II, last Latin Emperor of Constantinople.

⁴ See especially *Chron.* sub ann. 1229 (p. 19).

in his presence. He rescues from his drawn dagger a devoted nephew whom the imperial uncle is on the point of murdering, crying out upon Frederic for a "son of a butcher": *Fi di becer diabole!*¹

"When in battle he swung his mace to right and left, the Saracens fled as if they had seen the devil, or a ravening lion." "When he entered into battle and was warmed to the fight no man dared to stand before his face." And his was not the mere brute courage that comes from physical robustness unhampered by sensitive nerves. To his own lackey he was, at any rate, no stage hero. Every time his armour was being buckled on "he trembled like a reed in water"—not, as he affirmed, for bodily fear, but "lest his soul should not be duly prepared for death".

If the French blood of the House of Anjou contributed anything of value to the sum of Italian life in the thirteenth century, it was this example of knightliness—a chivalrous spirit which is, for the most part, sadly to seek, alike among Guelfs and Ghibellines in the distracted peninsula.

In Dino Compagni's *Canzone del Pregio*, we have set forth by one who is in the strictest sense a contemporary of Dante, the ideals of chivalrous living as they appeared to a prudent and thoughtful Florentine "popolano," who managed to keep a clear head and calm judgment amid the political and social hurricanes that ushered in the fourteenth century. In quaint style and language borrowed from the Provençal singers, he points out the way to honour and virtue specially adapted to each several walk in life. Emperor, king, baron, governor, knight,

¹ "Guitarottus," heir of the Jerusalem kingdom. According to Salimbene, Frederic tried first to poison the boy, but failing that, made at him with a dagger during a game of chess. John then makes the above exclamation *gallico suo*, and carries off the intended victim.

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AN EARLY FOURTEENTH CENTURY KNIGHT

GUIDO RICCIO DA FOGLIANO
PALAZZO COMUNALE, SIENA. FRESCO BY MARTINO DI SIMONE

squire, judge, notary, physician, merchant and goldsmith—each has his ideal of conduct portrayed in turn: the last two, and especially the last, included, apparently, as typical of the trade guilds or “Arts” of the Florentine commune. And reading, as we legitimately may, between the lines, we may deduce from the *Canzone* the characteristic defects of the time. For our present purpose Dino's stanza on knighthood is most to the point, and it may be worth while to quote it in full, as a specimen of the whole *Canzone*:—

Cavallieri che'n pregio vole intendre
 Metta la spada sua'n dritti servigi,
 Chè pregio non aquistan vani fregi
 Senza vedove ed orfani difendre
 Conven che sempre stea prod' ed acorto,
 E tutto sia de cortesia fornito.
 E pensi, l' ordin suo fu stabilito
 In difendre ragione e strugier torto;
 E no a mangiare
 Per ingrassare,
 Ma per pugnare ove forza è mestiere.
 Tegna cavalli e fanti a su' podere,
 E vesta bello, e sia largo in donare.

Is it too much to see here an echo of Dante's lament at the decline of chivalry? The noble purposes for which the “order was established” are in danger of being forgotten. The knight of Dino's day is fast becoming a “carpet knight,” or “valiant” only “as a trencherman”. Let him bestir himself and see to it that his blade is bright and keen and is wielded in right causes. No amount of “vain pomps” will avail to show him a true cavalier, though it beseems him, indeed, to keep plenty of good horses and retainers, as many as he can afford, to apparel himself as befits the dignity of his order, and to make the bounty of his largess proportionate to his state.

His true glory is to "abound ever in courtesy," "to be alert to protect the weak—the widow and the orphan". The end of knighthood is defence of the right and destruction of the wrong: for this, force is sometimes required; and that is what the knight is for.

This "pregio" or "meed" of Dino's is just that generous nobility in word and deed and largess which Dante has immortalised in a single phrase:—¹

Il pregio della borsa e della spada,

which had but few contemporary examples, save that of the Malaspina of Lunigiana, and the three survivors of the old-fashioned style of "valour and courtesy," who lingered on in Lombardy²—Corrado da Palazzo, "the good Gherardo," and Guido da Castello, "the guileless Lombard," afterward's Dante's fellow-guest during his exile at Verona; to whom may also be added (if we accept the estimate of the *Convivio*³ as against that of the *Divina Commedia*), "il nobilissimo nostro Latino Guido Montefeltrano".

In another passage in the *Convivio*⁴ Dante takes the opportunity of a definition of the word "cortesia" to bewail the decline of that knightly virtue. Its very meaning is now commonly misunderstood: it is confined to largess (as to-day we confound "charity" with "almsgiving"); whereas largess is but one out of many departments in which knightly generosity displays itself. And in the modern world, he goes on, the very etymology of the word is being emptied of all meaning. "Courtesy" is the characteristic virtue of the courts of princes: so it was, in fact, in the old days; but to-day the contrary is

¹ *Purg.* viii. 129.

³ *Conv.* iv. 28, 61 *sqq.* (p. 335).

² *Ibid.* xvi. 119 *sqq.*

⁴ *Ibid.* ii. 11, 55 *sqq.* (p. 263).

the case, and the word appropriate to modern courts—especially those of Italy—would not be *cortesia* but *turpezza*—turpitude.

Charles of Anjou, as we have seen, was in many ways a knight of the old type—valorous and sincerely devout. Within the enclosure of the lists at least, as Salimbene's story shows, he could be generous, and was a stickler for fair play. And if he had much to gain by his descent into Italy, the invasion was, in name at least, a championship of the weak—of the Church, harassed and threatened by the overweening House of Hohenstaufen.

Among the most chivalrous figures in Italy of that date are Manfred and Conradin, his opponents of that House, to whom, it must be confessed, he offered scant "*cortesia*,"¹ but were they not under the ban of Holy Church, and so outside the pale of knightly mercy? Yet even the Hohenstaufen influence, with all its imperial prestige, its example of brilliant courtly life, lit with the glamour of a new school of lyric poetry, had helped to extinguish the spark of chivalry from Italy.

Salimbene draws a harrowing picture of the demoralisation of Italian political and social life during those years of struggle. The bloody factions which rent such cities as Parma, Bologna, Modena, Reggio, Cremona; the wars between many of these, and above all the fierce strife between Florence and Pisa; the "accursed divisions," the wanton outrages, the swift and pitiless reprisals, the countless ebullitions of corporate and individual treachery: "evils

¹ The outrageous treatment of Manfred's body described in *Purg.* iii. 124 *sqq.* is not the work of Charles, who had him buried beneath the bridge of Benevento, and would willingly have accorded Christian burial had he not been excommunicated: "je le fairois volontiers, s'il ne fût excommunié" (G. Villani, vii. 9).

which endure to this very day (he is writing in 1285) and cannot be finished nor come to an end, by reason of the depravity of man and the iniquity of the devil". . . . All these troubles the good friar, as a loyal partisan of the Church, lays at the door of the devoted Frederic II, "the sower of the seeds of discord," "haereticus, epicureus, corrumpens universam terram".

Dante is more just, partly from native insight, partly because he is living later and can view those years in a truer perspective. He recognises, as Salimbene does, that the lamentable decay of "cortesia" has resulted from the long strife of the Papacy with the House of Swabia; but he refrains from apportioning the blame:—

In sul paese che Adice e Po riga
Solea valore e cortesia trovarsi
Prima che Federico avesse briga.¹

Chivalry, as we have already suggested, of the romantic type of Northern Europe is a fruit of feudalism, and as such is not indigenous to Italian soil. For examples of knightly word and deed the poets of Italy—even Dante himself—must draw from the legends of King Arthur's Round Table or Charles' Paladins.²

But chivalry was in the Hohenstaufen blood, on the Swabian and the Norman side alike, and or ever the House of Anjou brought French notions into Italy there was a strain of Teuton stock in many of the noble families of the peninsula.

It was not the Hohenstaufen that quenched the spark of chivalry in Italy, but the fatal strife, not of their own seeking, which divided the whole country into opposing camps of Guelfs and Ghibellines.

¹ *Purg.* xvi. 115-17.

² *Cf.* below, ch. vii. p. 236.

But a new and gentler order of chivalry was arising, in the Brotherhood of Saint Francis of Assisi, in whose obedience both John of Jerusalem and Guido of Montefeltro spent their last days; a knighthood of charity and brotherliness that should give to the passionate Italian nature some of those lessons in "cortesia" and "gentilezza" of which, by reason of its non-feudal history, it stood perhaps in special need.¹

Curiously enough the order of Saint Francis and the House of Hohenstaufen are linked together in history by the formidable name of Innocent III.

¹On the "chivalrous idea" as not indigenous to Italy, *cf.* Carducci, *Prose*, p. 279: "dell' elemento cavalleresco . . . non dubitiamo asserire che fu straniero fra noi e importato".

CHAPTER III

DANTE'S CENTURY

II.—THE LEGACY OF INNOCENT III

WHEN Innocent III died on the 16th of June, 1216, he left behind him three remarkable *protégés*, each in his way as great a man as himself, and one of them at least destined to leave a more lasting mark upon the world and the Church than that of Innocent or even of the seventh Gregory. These *protégés* are Frederic of Swabia, Francis of Assisi and Dominic Guzman.

Innocent had nourished and brought up the young Frederic under his own tutelage and protection, vainly hoping so to obviate the political dangers involved in the young prince's person. He had also, on 8th October, 1215, given his sanction and blessing to the small house of Augustinian Canons founded by Dominic for the purpose of combating heresy by the cultivation of sound and forcible preaching. And before he died—and this is the sole aspect in which his brilliant reign appeals to Dante—he had set the Church's authoritative seal upon the rule of Saint Francis, who—

. . . regalmente sua dura intenzione
Ad Innocenzio aperse, e da lui ebbe
Primo sigillo a sua religione.¹

¹ *Par.* xi. 91-93.

The century which we are studying opens in 1221, the year after Frederic's coronation as Emperor, the very year of Saint Dominic's death at Bologna, and the year in which Saint Francis founded (as is said) his famous Third Order to which Dante himself probably belonged. It is the year of that "Pentecostal Chapter" at Assisi, from which Cæsarius of Spire¹ went forth, and in eighteen months won to the cause eight principal cities of Germany. Three years must pass ere Francis should receive at La Verna the famous *stigmata*, the marks of Christ crucified, which he was to bear on his body for two years, till his death—that "last seal," given not by any Pope, however great, but by Christ Himself; when—

Nel crudo sasso intra Tevere ed Arno
Da Cristo prese l' ultimo sigillo,
Che le sue membra due anni portarno.²

Frederic, Francis and Dominic: three great names, each in his way typical of the age. It will be well to follow up our sketch of the chief European Powers in Dante's century with a glance at these three. And inasmuch as their influence though not by any means confined to the Italian peninsula was felt most strongly there, the study will form a natural introduction to that of Dante's Italy.

When Frederic was crowned by Innocent's successor, Honorius III—the Pope who had also given a second and ampler blessing to the schemes of SS. Francis³ and Dominic—he became nominal master of the whole of Central Europe, from the Eider to Cape Spartivento, and from the Riesengebirge to the Rhone. His coronation on St. Cecilia's Day, 1220, was effected under the happiest auguries. There was peace for the moment throughout

¹ Sabatier, *St. Francis*, (Ital. ed. p. 229). Tamassia, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-6.

² *Par.* xi. 106-8.

³ *Ibid.* 97, *sqq.*

the "Roman" world ; a most unusual circumstance.¹ And the removal of the redoubtable Innocent gave the young Emperor the opportunity to govern as well as to reign. True, Scandinavia and Denmark on the north, England, France and Spain on the west, remained outside the sphere of the Emperor's over-lordship ; nor did the latter extend, in practice at least, over the kingdoms of Poland and Hungary on the east. But it embraced all the vast tract that lies behind the coast of modern Germany and Holland, from Pomerania to the mouths of the Scheldt ; having on its western flank the Rhone, the Saón, and the upper waters of the Meuse, while its eastern boundary ran from Dantzic to the Istrian peninsula, passing between Vienna and Pressburg. South of the Alps it embraced the whole of Northern Italy, to the March of Ancona and the Roman Campagna, where it met the Sicilian kingdom. This was the empire itself, which descended to Frederic from his father, and seemed at last to have developed into a hereditary monarchy established in the family of Barbarossa. The Emperor's sway over the German part of it was somewhat vague and shadowy, and the imperial authority had been weakened by years of rivalry and contest, but in the heart of Germany itself Frederic had a firm foothold in the Hohenstaufen possessions of Swabia, Franconia and Alsace.

And though the Emperor's authority in Italy also had been greatly weakened by the rise and growing independence of the communes, backed often by the Popes, —as in the case of the first Lombard League, which was to form precedent later for a new League against Frederic himself—he had here too a stable *point d'appui*.

¹"Cum omni pace Romanorum, quod vix unquam auditum est de aliquo imperatore" (Salimbene).

Where the imperial dominions formerly ended, with the States of the Church, there began another group of ancestral possessions. All the rest of the Italian peninsula, with the fertile island of Sicily at its foot, descended to this favoured prince from his mother Constance, heiress of the Normans who, called in two centuries ago as mercenaries to help the Eastern Empire against the Arab conquerors of Sicily, had received, in the person of Robert Guiscard,¹ the investiture, from Nicolas III, of Apulia and Calabria (1059); under his son Roger had expelled the Moslems from Sicily (1060-90); and finally, under Roger II² (1130) attained the royal title, and added the Abruzzo to their dominions.

We have seen what a menace to the Papacy was involved in this political union of Germany with an Italy which, for the first time since the days of Justinian, owned a single lord. And the extraordinary genius of the man matched the splendour of his opportunity. By birth an

¹ Dante refers (*Inf.* xxviii. 14) to his wars in Apulia, and places his soul (*Par.* xviii. 48) with that of Godfrey of Bouillon, in the Martian heaven of Christian warriors.

² An interesting relic of this king is still preserved among the Imperial Treasures at Vienna. It is a coronation mantle or cope of oriental purple stuff, richly embroidered with Arabesque designs in gold thread, the work of Saracen artists at Palermo. Its border bears the following inscription wrought out in ancient Arabic characters: "Woven at the Royal manufactory, the seat of happiness and honour; where prosperity and perfection, merit and distinction abound; which boasts of progress, glorious good fortune, wonderful splendour, and munificent endowment; which rejoices in the fulfilment of hopes and wishes; where days and nights glide by in continual pleasures without end or change; which is animated by feelings of honour and attachment; in promoting happiness, maintaining prosperity and in encouraging activity. In the capital of Sicily, in the year of the Hegira, 528" (A.D. 1133). Allowing a liberal discount for oriental eloquence, this affords some testimony to the success of the Norman rule.

Italian of the south, he had in his veins a double strain of Teutonic blood, Norman and German. The hardihood and adventurous spirit of the Northman, the practical, calculating, pushing and persevering nature of the German, the poetic and artistic temperament of the Italian¹ combine to produce a personality of mysterious fascination, acclaimed by his contemporaries as a "wonder of the world". His accomplishments were manifold.

An excellent linguist (he was credited with a speaking knowledge of at least five languages, including Greek and Arabic); a lyric poet; a promoter of letters and learning—founder of the "Studio" of Naples (the first university to be established under Royal Charter),² and reviver of the famous medical school of Salerno; an intelligent patron of art—he carried off Niccolò Pisano to work for him immediately after his coronation—all this he was, and much besides. With all his absolutist and tyrannical instincts he was an enlightened legislator, who gave good laws to his kingdom and granted freedom to the serfs of the royal domains. One of the eight stories dealing with Frederic in the *Novellino* collection,³ represents him as giving a soundly Aristotelian response to the ambassador of Prester John, who brought the question: "What is the best thing in the world?"

"Ditemi al signor vostro," replied this prince, whose habits resembled largely those of an Oriental despot, "che la miglior cosa di questo mondo si è *la misura*".

Another story from the same collection⁴ represents

¹ The union of Italian and German natures had no doubt its less admirable side also. "Sotto la simulazione italiana," writes Carducci, "trasparisce più d'una volta in Federico secondo la bestialità tedesca" (*Prose*, p. 296).

² Tout, *Empire and Papacy*, p. 363.

³ No. i. of the *Novelle*,

⁴ No. xx.

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FROM AN OLD PRINT OF 1600

him as putting a problem before his two best lawyers: "Can I justly do whatsoever I list with any of my subjects, simply because I am lord?—*Senz' altra cagione a ciò ch' io sono signore?*"

One of them said "yes," and he rewarded him with a scarlet cap and a palfrey; the other replied:—

"No, for a just law must needs be justly conditioned". This second he rewarded with authority to legislate in the sense of his answer.

But besides all this, Frederic was also a keen sportsman, and more than a dabbler in natural science.

Three of the *Novellino* stories illustrate his passion for falconry. He goes out, we are told, to the chase clad in the "customary habit of green".¹ At the siege of Milan (? 1238) he loses a pet falcon which strays within the walls of the city; and the besieged retain it as a hostage, obdurately refusing all offers of ransom,² as the Bolognese were to do some eleven years later, when they had captured a nobler hostage, *l'aiglon* Enzo.

A third and more characteristic story³ illustrates the way in which the stronger passion of imperial jealousy could overmaster even his love of sport. One day, we read, the emperor set his falcon at a stork; but the bird flew too high and brought to earth a young eagle. This act of *laesa majestas* was too much for Frederic. He called his justiciar and ordered the poor bird to be executed as a regicide! "Con ira chiamò il giustiziare e comandò ch' al falcone fosse tagliato il capo perche avea morto lo suo signore."

But we are not dependent on gossip and tradition for our picture of Frederic as a sportsman. His own book, *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus*, which Manfred completed after his death, unlike the generality of such works in that

¹ No. xix.

² No. xviii.

³ No. lxxiii.

period, is based on a first-hand knowledge of the habits and anatomical structure of the birds, and has been described as "the only remarkable work on ornithology of the Middle Ages".¹

If not scientific in the modern sense—and some of his would-be scientific experiments were, as we shall see presently, neither successful nor creditable—he was at least far in advance of his age.

To this man, apparently, was granted the opportunity of reviving the Holy Roman Empire on a new and stable basis; of establishing it firmly in his family as a hereditary monarchy, and making it truly *Roman* once more, with its actual as well as its nominal centre in Italy.

His outlook was of the widest; his policy, if successful, would have changed the future of Europe: its failure limited his posthumous influence almost exclusively to Italian soil, and even there made it utterly disproportionate to the greatness of his genius. He was vastly ahead of his age, a modern type. Liberal minded, and apparently without deep religious convictions, he made great strides towards that ideal of religious tolerance which even the twentieth century has not achieved except in name. He fraternised with Moslems; and the necessity of possessing forces for whom the papal anathemas would have no terrors, compelled him to utilise that Arab population which he had spent several of the opening years of his reign in reducing to complete subjection, to take Saracen mercenaries into his pay and establish them in one of his cities. He fraternised with Moslems even in those original "crusades" of his, from which he reaped so rich a crop of Papal excommunications. Neander² records a

¹ See Holbrook, *Dante and the Animal Kingdom*, pp. 7, 240-241.

² Vol. vii. 243.

Mohammedan tradition of those days which illustrates picturesquely this trait in Frederic's character. When the Emperor was at Jerusalem the Cadi ordered the temporary discontinuance of a certain proclamation against Christianity that was wont to be pronounced regularly from the minaret of the Mosque of Omar. Frederic asked why, and when told that it was done out of compliment to him he replied :—

“ You have done wrong. Why should you, on my account, be wanting to your duty, your law and your religion ? ”

To use the sword in religious controversy was to him an anachronism ;¹ he would win back access to the holy places by a friendly arrangement.

Half Moslem in his sympathies, he was wholly heretic in the eyes of that generation. His long and at first successful contest with the Papacy, which was really a purely political struggle, forced him, in spite of himself, into the rôle of an enemy of the Church and of Christendom.

Many of his hostile acts were merely wrought in self-defence ; many again, like the disposal of benefices within his dominions, were points which even then admitted of discussion.

His contemptuous hatred of the Roman Curia can hardly be exaggerated, and that his denunciations of its corruption are not based on mere personal *animus* we have the Guelf-born Dante as witness. Certainly the Emperor made no effort to conceal his opinion of the Papal Court. “ It is no mother, but a step-mother,” he writes to our King Henry III in 1228, “ and the root and fountain of all evil ”—

¹ Even his Guelf contemporaries sometimes doubted whether it was after all “ the will of God ” that any more crusades should take place—Salimbene among the number.

“Curia Romana omnium malum radix et origo, non mater-
nos sed actus exercens novercales ex cognitio fructibus suis
certum faciens argumentum”.¹

And again, in the circular letter which he addressed to the Powers of Europe after his formal deposition at the Council of Lyons he ascribes the general blindness to the unnameable iniquities of the Curia, to the “leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees, which is hypocrisy”.²

But history has shown again and again how antagonism to the Papacy and its policy may be consistent with a sincere belief in the essential doctrines and practices of the faith. Dante, again, is an instance in point. In Frederic’s case, however, the most sacred and venerated ordinances of religion shared the ridicule and contempt which he poured upon the Papacy. Matthew Paris records that seeing the pyx carried in procession one day on its way to the communion of a sick person the Emperor exclaimed: “Heu me: quamdiu durabit truffa ista?— Ah me! how long shall this imposture go on?” When all allowance has been made for Guelf misunderstanding and prejudice, we must pronounce him very far from orthodox even according to Reformation standards, though how far he definitely adopted the Epicurean philosophy with its denial of the future life, remains a question. His contemporaries speak of him sometimes as an Epicurean, sometimes as an adherent of Islam. Both of these at once he certainly could not be.

Over Dante the august figure of “Federicus Cæsar” evidently exercised a powerful fascination.

When Dante was born in Florence in the spring of 1265, Frederic had been dead already fifteen years. Five years had passed since the victory of Montaperti had put

¹ Matthew Paris ap. Neander, vol. vii. 239.

² *Ibid.* 248.

Tuscany under the sway of his son Manfred. Dante was scarcely a year old when the fatal day of Benevento (26th February, 1266) brought Manfred's life to a close, and only two years later, with the defeat and execution of the boy Conradin the male line of the house of Hohenstaufen disappeared. Yet these Swabian heroes live for him like his own contemporaries. The stories of their might, their chivalry, their tragic fall must have been imbibed with his mother's milk. It is as though he had seen Manfred "biondo e bello" face to face—"Think," says the latter in ante-purgatory, "Have you ever seen me before?"¹

"Pon mente, se di là mi vedesti unque."

He has tears for the young Conradin, sacrificed to the devouring ambition of the House of Anjou²; the apparition, albeit in Hell, of the hero of Montaperti—though Farinata had died a year before Dante's birth—sends through the poet's veins a thrill of admiring recognition: he sees before his eyes the rout of the Guelf allies and the Arbia torrent crimson with Florentine blood.

In the *Divina Commedia*, Frederic's shadow is thrown across all three kingdoms of the eternal world.

In Paradise, he is the "third blast of Swabia,"³ "the last imperial ruler," offspring of the gentle Constance, torn from the cloister to be mother of kings, whose glory Dante beholds in the heaven of the Moon:—

Quest' è la luce della gran Costanza
 Che del secondo vento di Soave
 Generò il terzo, e l' ultima possanza.⁴

¹ *Purg.* iii. 105.

² *Ibid.* xx. 68.

³ The phrase is remarkable, and it is interesting to note that Innocent III had compared Frederic's father, Henry VI, to the North Wind: "velut rabies Aquilonis" (Migne, *P. L.*, ccxiv. p. 390 *sqq.*). The "first blast" will be Barbarossa.

⁴ *Par.* iii. 118-20.

In Purgatory, Marco Lombardo, from out of the dense and pungent smoke in which he is purging the repented sin of anger laments, in lines already quoted, the ruin and demoralisation brought on Lombardy by the truceless war waged against Frederic by the Papacy.¹

But still more pathetically in this second kingdom does the father come before us indirectly in the son; in that matchless scene where Manfred appears, already on the high road to heaven, and declares that not all the thunders of pontifical excommunication can steel the Divine Heart against a repentant sinner, albeit his term of waiting be lengthened by Holy Church's ban:—

Orribil furon li peccati miei;
Ma la bontà infinita ha sì gran braccia,
Che prende ciò che si rivolge a lei.²

Finally, in the *Inferno*, Frederic himself appears: not, be it noted, as tyrant, or murderer, or fornicator, or betrayer of his intimates, though all these crimes were freely laid to his charge, and though the cruelty of his executions is expressly referred to elsewhere,³ but in the red-hot tombs of the heretics. There, in the weird glow which lights up the proud face of the elder Cavalcanti, and of Farinata degli Uberti who “seemed to hold Hell in utter scorn”—⁴

Come avesse lo inferno in gran dispetto—

there Frederic appears, or rather is announced by his proud liegeman, surely in an awe-struck whisper: ⁵ “With-in here is the second Frederic!”—

Qua dentro è lo secondo Federico.

In view of the other references, the terseness here is eloquent.

¹ *Purg.* xvi. 115-17.

² *Ibid.* iii. 121-23.

³ *Inf.* xxiii. 66.

⁴ *Ibid.* x. 36.

⁵ *Ibid.* 119.

And it is not only in the *Divina Commedia* that the Emperor is named or referred to.

In the fourth book of the *Convivio* his faulty definition of Gentilezza is criticised and found wanting, yet reverently discussed¹ on the ground of "l' eccellentissima autorità della Imperiale Maestà."² In the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*,³ the illustrious heroes "Federicus Cæsar et bene genitus ejus Manfredus" are commended as patrons of Italian vernacular poetry. In the Sixth Epistle,⁴ in which Dante, from exile, warns his countrymen against opposing Henry VII, he bids them not rely on the precedent of 1247 when the besieged Guelfs of Parma surprised Frederic's fortified camp and sacked it during the Emperor's temporary absence. Parma, he seems to say, lived to rue the day when it stretched out its hand against the Lord's Anointed.

There is one work, however, in which there occurs no mention of Frederic's name and no obvious reference to his career. And it is just the one where such reference would be most looked for—the *De Monarchia*, the treatise in which Dante draws out most elaborately his theory of the empire and the papacy. For Dante, we may say, the political aims of Frederic II have no significance; they are but a glorious and pathetic memory. This Emperor himself appears wholly or mainly in two aspects—he is the cultured patron of letters, lending the weight of his Imperial name and example to the cultivation of vernacular poetry: and secondly he is the heretic, suffering, with Farnata, Cavalcante and Cardinal Ottaviano, and more than a thousand others⁵ the penalty of Epicurean atheism.

Dante's insight does not fail him here. These, surely, are the two departments in which Frederic's influence

¹ *Conv.* iv. 10 (p. 308).

² *Ibid.* 3, 65 (p. 298).

³ *V. E.* i. 12 (p. 386).

⁴ *Ep.* vi. 6 (p. 408).

⁵ *Inf.* x. 118-20.

upon posterity showed itself most powerfully for good and ill: literature and scepticism.

His scepticism in the matter of a future life, stimulated, no doubt, if not originated, by an indignant reaction against the Papacy and all its works, seems to have affected his character in a strangely unlovely way. It logically resulted in a reckless and cynical disregard of human life, and this combined with his burning lust of fresh and strange experiences and his unbridled curiosity, to express itself in uncanny forms of atrocity. Salimbene tells stories of him which exhibit a spirit more heartless and capricious than the normal thirst for vengeance, or the purely bestial if not literally insane delight in blood and torture which made Ezzelino da Romano the forerunner of those strange monsters, the Italian tyrants of two centuries later.

Possessed of a personal fascination which attracted to his side devoted servants and enthusiastic admirers, he never could keep his friends—"nullius amicitiam conservare sciebat". "And this was scarcely odd," as Lewis Caroll would have said, "because" . . . in most cases his intimates suffered, sooner or later, a violent death for which the Emperor was directly or indirectly responsible.¹

There was a famous diver named Nicola who, to please the prince, performed prodigies of strength and skill in the dangerous waters of the Messina Strait. After a lengthy performance he declared that he had come to the end of his strength. Frederic, for whom he had already fetched up a gold cup thrown into the depths of the whirlpool, promptly sent him in again to see him drown. Another

¹ Salimbene, sub ann. 1247 (p. 77). Another instance of wanton cruelty is given under 1260 (p. 167). The Emperor spelt his name FEDERICUS, and because a certain notary wrote FREDERICUS he immediately caused the poor man's thumb to be cut off!

story tells of a physiological experiment performed on two of his faithful knights, to whom he first gave an excellent dinner together, and then sent off one for a hard day's hunting and put the other to rest on soft couches. All this that, by a most inhuman act of vivisection, he might compare the results in each case upon the human digestion!

Less cruel, though equally fatal in its results, was the experiment on children related of him, which reads like a *réchauffé* of the $\beta\epsilon\kappa\omicron\varsigma$ story in Herodotus.¹ He put out a number of infants with nurses who were to feed and wash them and supply all their wants, but never to utter a sound. His object was to see what language they would spontaneously speak—Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Arabic, or that of their parents. As a matter of fact, says Salimbene, all the poor babies died: "for infants need smiles and caressing words as much as food".

The scepticism, then, in its fruits, naturally excited the horror of religious-minded people; yet there can be no doubt that the magic of his personal charm tended to commend free-thinking to those who came under his influence, and helped to sow the seeds of that revolt against authority which was, in later days, to revolutionise the average view of the Papacy.

In this way, as in his sheltering of heretic Provençal troubadors in his Sicilian court,² and his steadfast resistance of Papal interference in the affairs of his kingdom, Frederic may almost be regarded as an unconscious precursor of the Reformation. On the intellectual side he was certainly a forerunner of the fifteenth century Renaissance. The recklessness bred of a disbelief in God and

¹ Herod. ii. 2.

² At an earlier period he had been zealous in persecuting heretics.

eternity made common cause with the curiosity of a child of genius. He would probe all things, without fear of God or man or devil. And his superstitious enemies, while they muttered against him the prophecies of Merlin, "the Bard of Anglia," dubbed Michael the Scot, his astrologer and confidant in scientific curiosity, a "wizard".

In truth, the day of strictly scientific interest in Nature had not yet dawned for the mass of men. It was not till the fatal year of Benevento, sixteen years after Frederic's death that Roger Bacon, the Friar of Oxford, presented his *Opus magnum* to Pope Clement IV, and received a rebuff for his pains. Thus Frederic's influence and example in physical research may count for little, though surely not for nothing; but his influence on literature remains. It is not merely that he promoted learned studies by his foundation of the University of Naples and in other ways. He shares, in some sort, with Saint Francis the credit of the first beginnings of that literary Italian which Dante raised to the level of a classical language.

If he took too materialistic a view in his definition of "gentilezza,"¹ as "hereditary wealth *plus* good manners":—

Antica possession d' avere
Con reggimenti belli—

still both he and Manfred after him practised that virtue and immortalised it in their verse. They so encouraged letters by their example and patronage of love songs that they earned, as we have seen, the divine poet's enthusiastic eulogy,² and he records how, up to his own day, all good writing in the vulgar tongue was called, from their court, "Sicilian".

Pier delle Vigne, Frederic's loyal chancellor and friend,

¹ *Conv.* iv. (*Canzone* iii.) 23, 24.

² *V. E.* i. 12; *cf. supra*, p. 87.

victim of "envy, the plague of courts," was among the poets of that brilliant circle. The scant records of this earliest period of Italian literature include a musical canzonetta attributed to him which begins:—

Amor, in cui disio ed ho fidanza.¹

But not less worthy are the lines of indignant loyalty and self-clearing which Dante puts into his mouth in the "Hell of the Suicides":—²

Io son colui che tenni ambo le chiavi
Del cor di Federico, etc. . . .

The sweet-toned singer cannot restrain the torrent of his words,³ he must clear not only his own name but also that of his Master,

. . . Che fu d' onor si degno.⁴

Dante evidently, like Salimbene (who while he quotes the case of Pier as an instance of the Emperor's proverbial faithlessness to his friends, yet acknowledges the Swabian's redeeming points), recognises two sides to Frederic, the monstrous and the noble. If his spirit is found tormented among the heretics in the sixth circle of Hell, his memory is purged at least of the crowning charge of personal treachery in the seventh.

Strange indeed must have been that court at Palermo where men came in from daily acts of organised violence and bloodshed to discuss the meaning of "cortesia" and "gentilezza" and compose languishing songs of love: where the Master himself with countless acts of atrocity on his hands, from the wanton sacrifice of a faithful attendant to the capture of a whole fleet's burden of reverend prelates, could sit down and write off a mild

¹ Carducci, *Primavera e Fiori*, i. 2.

² *Inf.* xiii. 58 sqq.

³ *Ibid.* 55, 56.

⁴ *Ibid.* 75.

ditty in which he compares himself to a little caged bird longing for liberty, to whom "it seems a thousand years" since he parted from his love:—

Farò come l'ausgello
 Quand' altri lo distene
 Che vive ne la spene
 La quale ha ne lo core
 E no more—sperando di campar.¹

If Ezzelino sets the precedent of atrocity for the Italian tyrant of the future—a precedent which his imperial master also comes perilously near;—the Sicilian court of Frederic, to which, as the *Novellino* informs us, "flocked from every part musicians, troubadors, *racconteurs*, artists, jousters, fencers—every wight, in short, who had any marketable talent to display,"² presented a model and an ideal of a more valuable kind, and one which bore brilliant fruit two centuries later when the courts of the great lords of the Renaissance welcomed some of Dante's greatest successors.

Frederic, in some ways so fatally in advance of his contemporaries, so thoroughly a man of the Renaissance that was to be, is in other ways wonderfully typical of his own age, with its contrasts and contradictions, its mixture of chivalry and brutality, of nobility and baseness: above all in the stirrings of its "May-time" life, its gropings after the unattainable, materially and spiritually, its thirst for untried gratifications, alike of passion and of intellect.

¹ Carducci, *Primavera e Fiori*, p. 1.

² *Novella* xvii. which recounts the wonders performed by "tre maestri di nigromanzia" at Frederic's court, begins as follows: "Lo 'mperador Federico fu nobilissimo Signore, e la gente ch' avea bontade venia a lui da tutte parti perchè donava volentieri, e mostrava belli sembianti a chi avesse alcuna speciale bontà. A lui venieno sonatori, trovatori, e belli favellatori, nomini d'arte, giostratori, schermitori, d'ogni maniera gente." On the date of the *Novellino*, see note, p. 55.

Side by side with this strangely fascinating, and at the same time repellent figure, stands the contrasted form of Saint Francis of Assisi, who incarnates, as M. Sabatier says,¹ the Italian spirit of the early thirteenth century, even as Dante incarnates that of a hundred years later.

Saint and sceptic alike reject the crusading method of dealing with the infidel: but while Frederic scandalises his contemporaries by a substitution of worldly-wise diplomacy and negotiation for the sword, Francis takes his life in his hand and passes over sea to convert the Soldan of Egypt,² and finding the field not ripe, returns with unabated zeal to "reap the harvest of his native Italy".

On the literary side, too, the contrast is equally great. Frederic, in intervals of bloodshed, writes pretty and (in their way) polished love-songs; Francis' whole nature quivers with poetry, which fights its way to expression without the help of art or literary training.

From Sicily comes the halting music of Italianised Provençal poetry; from Umbria rises the deep, clear voice of the populace, singing a "New song unto the Lord" in the language and with the cadence of its own immemorial folk-songs.

Again—to carry the contrast into one further field—Francis' instinctive and fraternal love of Nature, springing from a frankly childlike attitude towards the Creator, is a far nobler and more inspiring if less technical forerunner of modern physical research than can be found in the grim and half-superstitious experiments of Frederic and Michael Scot.

In the famous "Hymn of the Sun," which begins:—

Altissimo Signore
Vostre sono le lodi
La gloria e gli onori,

¹ Sabatier, *St. Francis* (Ital. ed.), introd. p. xvi.; cf. Tamassia, *op. cit.* p. 1.

² *Par.* xi. 100 sqq.

this sense of brotherhood with Creation reaches its climax of noble expression; the thread of moral purpose is seized and held fast which gives glory and dignity to sun and moon and stars, to fire and air and water, that

Elemento utilissimo a' mortali
Umile, casta e chiara;

to "Mother Earth"; to wrongs, troubles, and infirmities borne by poor humanity with charity, patience, and gladness, and even to that "death of the body that no man living can escape," for which also he can say "The Lord be praised".

If Frederic represents the May-time in its portentous side—its forceful, masterful, relentless egoism—Francis is typical of its most gracious aspect. Wherever he goes he carries with him sunshine and fresh air and living water. Fresh from the pure fountain of the Gospel precepts, which he interprets with a childlike literalness, he passes along, he and Poverty his bride, beaming with love, and inspiring holy thoughts by his very look.

"La lor concordia," says St. Thomas of "these lovers,"
Francesco e Povertà,¹

La lor concordia e i lor lieti sembianti
Amore e meraviglia e dolce sguardo
Facean esser cagion di pensier santi.

Francis, with his "sons of poverty," succeeds where the House of Swabia fails: he founds a lasting empire. His very limitations help him: in his ignorance of the extent of the evil to be faced he girds himself to an impossible task: in his ignorance of the details of ecclesiastical discipline he is bold to institute startling reforms. His own ideas indeed are overruled from the Vatican.² Meaning

¹ *Par.* xi. 76-78.

² *Cf.* Sabatier, introd. xvii-xix; Tamassia, p. 4.

simply to awaken and revive the Gospel ideal, in the end he finds himself founder of a new Religious Order. But his empire is firmly established—an empire of simplicity and charity, of new intellectual interest, born of a pure enthusiasm and stimulated by international exchange of thought; of fresh artistic impulse inspired by the unsophisticated taste of sheer goodness. He spreads all over Europe a network of centres where high and unworldly ideals shed a salutary influence on the savage world around; his followers build their stately, simple, and spacious churches from Sicily in the South to Britain in the far North.

A new, severe, and dignified taste in architecture is developed, in which the vast stretches of bare wall cry out, and not in vain, for the hand of a Cimabue and a Giotto to adorn them. Writing and illumination receive a new impetus, and so does musical composition. Brother Henry of Pisa and brother Vita of Lucca are cited by Salimbene as exceptionally beautiful singers, but also as composers of new and elaborate tunes to ecclesiastical "cantilenæ" and "sequentia"; while the former sometimes composed both words and music.¹

And while art, in these and other ways, is encouraged and inspired, learning and religion also receive a corresponding stimulus.

Of the early Franciscan contribution to the cause of learning and philosophy something has already been said. "Saint Francis's hatred of book-learning," says Dr. Jessop,² "was the one sentiment that he was never able to inspire among his followers." The sweet reasonableness of his life and doctrine attracted scholars as much as the un-

¹ On the music of the period see below, chap. v. p. 171 *sqq.*

² *Friars*, p. 45.

learned, if not more. One of his first converts at Bologna, as we read in the *Fioretti*, was a Doctor of Laws, and the Franciscan cemetery in that city was enriched century after century with the sepulchres of the most distinguished savants of the time—it was, in fact, the “Westminster Abbey” of Bologna, as was Sta. Croce for the Florentines and the “Frari” to Venice.

It is worthy of note that as early as 1246 the Theological School of the Friars Minor at Bologna¹ had established so high a reputation that on 26th March of that year Innocent IV awarded its students the same privileges as were enjoyed by those of the first University of Paris.

But it is in England above all that Franciscanism is identified with learning and speculation. All Europe flocked to Oxford to sit at the feet of those great Franciscan teachers who had received from Robert Grosseteste so warm a welcome. Very soon the English Franciscans became the most learned body in Christendom, a character which they never lost till the suppression of the monasteries in the sixteenth century swept them out of the land. It was men like Alexander Hales, Roger Bacon and Duns Scotus, who, with their Dominican contemporaries, Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus, “gave to intellectual life that amazing lift into a higher region of thought and speculation and inquiry which prepared the way for greater things by-and-by”.²

And the religious and moral stimulus was as powerful as the intellectual. The growth of the towns, especially in England and the North, but also in Italy itself, had introduced new difficulties into pastoral work, with which

¹ See Rubbiani : *La Chiesa di S. Francesco in Bologna*, pp. 102-3.

² Jessop, *Friars*, p. 40.

the parochial system, so admirably adapted to the needs of country districts, found itself then, as now, scarcely able to cope. The friars had a way of establishing themselves in the slums—their first home in London, for instance, was a spot rejoicing in the name of “Stinking Alley”¹—and were able to supplement with unpaid help the efforts of the parochial clergy. The churches, old and new, become centres of a vigorous spiritual life: the offices are sung with greater care and reverence, and attract the attendance of the laity; the confessionals are frequented by devout souls who had lost confidence in the ministrations of their secular priests. The eucharistic intercessions of the brethren are constantly craved, and enable them to repay an hundredfold the bounty of devout benefactors of the Order whose dying desire is constantly the same—that they may be buried within the Franciscan precincts. And preaching becomes once more a power. The preacher's art, somewhat neglected of late, is lifted to a higher level. Crowds assemble, gentle and simple side by side, to hear the Gospel truths proclaimed by lips of men who obey to the letter the precepts which they preach. Quarrels are made up, tyrants and robbers are converted, whole populations are influenced. It would be scarcely too much to say that to the followers of Saint Francis the middle period of the thirteenth century owed nearly all that was sanest in its many and fantastic religious revivals—those revivals that expressed themselves now in the enthusiasm of “Alleluia” services, now in the fierce fanaticism of flagellant processions, now in the submission of a whole city to the judgment and leadership of a single preacher; even as Florence was to submit itself three centuries later to Savonarola. So great a hold had these mission preachers on the popu-

¹ Jessop, *Friars*, p. 44.

lar imagination, that a very general belief was entertained in their miraculous powers, and some of them had the reputation of being able even to raise the dead.¹

Of the religious characteristics of this period in Italy we give illustrations in a subsequent chapter. Suffice it here to note the potent influence of the Order of Saint Francis and the twin Order of Saint Dominic in purifying and strengthening the religious sense and practice of the time, and bringing religious ideals to bear on political, municipal and private life.

Among the stories of Saint Francis collected by Bonaventura in 1263 and translated into pictorial form in the frescoes of the Upper Church at Assisi by Giotto just before or just after 1300, there are two which symbolise most beautifully the Saint's strengthening influence upon the Church. The first is the vision at Saint Damian's.² Saint Francis kneels in rapt devotion before the image of the crucified in a ruined sanctuary, and from the Cross itself comes a voice to him: "Francis, go and repair My House which as thou seest is falling utterly to ruin". The second is the dream of Innocent III,³ who in a vision saw the Lateran basilica tottering to its fall, and supported on the shoulders of a "little poor man of mean stature and humble aspect".

This latter legend was subsequently appropriated by the Dominicans⁴ who sometimes add, and sometimes substitute their "Patriarch" in depicting the vision.

Another legend—a Dominican one—connected with the founding of the Order brings the twin champions together in a striking manner. This time it is a dream of Saint

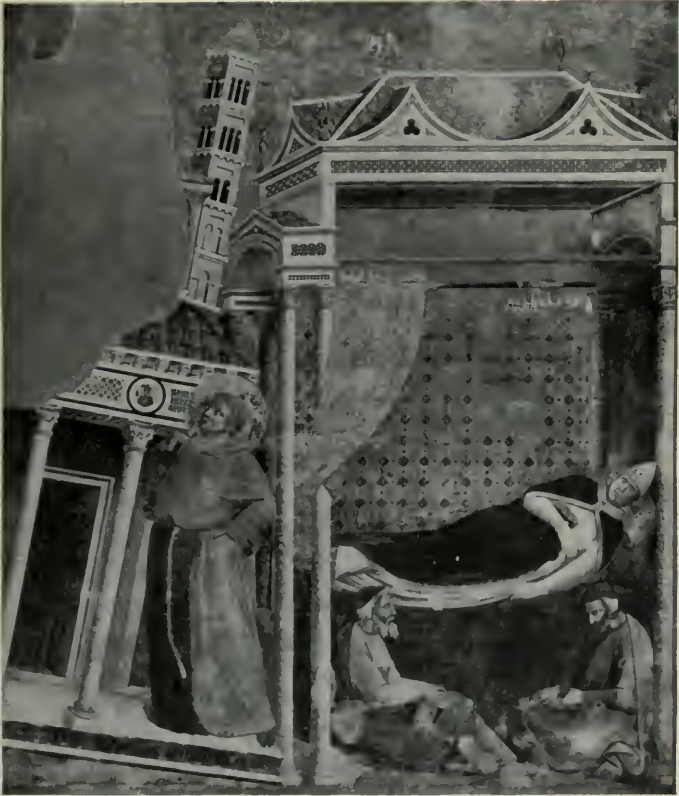
¹ See below.

² See E. Salter, *Franciscan Legends in Italian Art*, p. 75.

³ *Ibid.* p. 77.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 179.

THE HISTORY OF THE
LATERAN PALACE



DREAM OF INNOCENT III: ST. FRANCIS SUPPORTS THE FALLING
LATERAN

UPPER CHURCH, ASSISI. FRESCO BY GIOTTO

Dominic as he kneels in a church in Rome, meditating the initiation of his great movement. He sees Christ in great wrath executing vengeance upon sinners; and the Madonna throws herself at the feet of her Divine Son, imploring mercy with prayers and tears, and protesting that there are two faithful servants ready, who, if sent to preach, will convert the heretics.

In one of these "two servants," Dominic recognises himself. The other remains unknown to him until next day he meets Francis entering the same church, and bound on a like errand—to pray for the success of his movement.¹

Once again the two Saints meet, before the great Cardinal Ugolino, Bishop of Ostia, soon to mount the Throne of Saint Peter as Gregory IX. The Bishop is conferring with them on the subject of promoting their abler followers to prelatial dignity, and both alike beg him to leave them in their present humble state.²

Legend or fact these "meetings" have a true basis and a meaning, as has also that famous interview on the "Hill of the *Incontro*," to which the Florentines still point today. And the beauty of that which they symbolise is immortalised in Andrea della Robbia's magnificent work in the Loggia di S. Paolo. It represents not merely a friendly meeting and mutual welcome of two saintly men, but the harmonious co-operation which marked the first and purest activities of the two Orders. And Dante, too, is fain to represent in noble symbolism this union of hearts, where in the fourth heaven³ he puts the eulogy of Saint

¹ Bianchi-Giovini, *Storia de' Papi*, vi. p. 230.

² "Se volete che siano utili nella chiesa di Dio," pleaded Francis, "lasciateli e conservateli nello stato a cui Dio li ha chiamati" (Sabatier, *S. Francis* [Ital. ed.], p. 228).

³ *Par.* xi. xii.

Francis into the mouth of the Dominican Saint Thomas, and that of Saint Dominic on the lips of Bonaventura, the Franciscan. "Fitting it is," exclaims the latter, "that the names of these two champions of God's host should ever be uttered in one breath." Together they fought on earth succouring the wavering and disheartened army of the Church, guiding wanderers into the way; together now they shine on high, and appear side by side in the Solar Sphere of the Theologians.

Degno è che dove l' un, l' altro s' induca
 Sì che com' elli ad una militaro
 Così la gloria loro insieme luca.
 L'esercito di Cristo, che sì caro
 Costò a riarmar, dietro all' insegna
 Si movea tardo, suspiccioso e raro;
 Quando lo imperador che sempre regna,
 Provvide alla milizia ch' era in forse,
 Per sola grazia, non per esser degna;
 E com' è detto, a sua sposa soccorse
 Con due campioni, al cui fare, al cui dire
 Lo popol disviato si raccorse.¹

Already in Dante's middle life this first golden age was past, and each of the two speakers in Paradise is fain to follow up the eulogy of the rival Order's founder with a lament over the swift decadence of his own Order.²

But of this original harmonious co-operation between the two orders contemporary writers bear ample witness, and not least the Franciscan Salimbene.

He reflects a period when there was as yet no jealousy between the Minors and the Preachers, though friction was not rare already between the Franciscan brethren and the Sisters of Saint Clara.

And the records of the "coming of the Friars" into

¹ *Par.* xii. 34 *sqq.*

² *Par.* xi. 118 *sqq.* for Dominicans; *Par.* xii. 106 *sqq.* for Franciscans.

England tell the same tale. Salimbene recording his travels, mainly in Italy and France, shows the twin orders ready always to succour one another and to offer mutual hospitality. In Bologna the chronicler tells us that the Dominicans were no sooner settled near the gate of S. Procolo than the Franciscans came and made their home outside the Porta Sterii.¹ In England we are told that where the Grey Friars settled the Black Friars were sure to follow, and *vice versa*. When in 1225 the Franciscans first penetrated to Oxford, where they were soon to become so famous, they found the Dominicans already in the field, and were by them hospitably entertained for more than a week.²

By 1226 the two orders were established side by side in every considerable town throughout the land.³

United by common aims they had also common foes and rivals. Both alike had to guard themselves against the suspicion of the old-established monastic Orders, and the natural jealousy of the parochial clergy. By the regular Orders these Friars were inevitably looked upon with disfavour.

During the last two centuries, apart from the Military Orders, the ancient Augustinian and Benedictine organisations had been supplemented by no less than ten new Orders of monks;⁴ and it might well be thought that there was no room for fresh institutions of a similar kind. Hence the outburst of jealousy against the Friars, who quickly showed themselves rival claimants, and successful

¹ M. Griffoni, *Cron.* sub ann. 1219.

² Jessop, *Friars*, p. 39.

³ *Ibid.* p. 49.

⁴ Including the Orders of Camaldoli and Vallombrosa, the Cistercians, the Carthusians, and the Carmelites. The Lateran Council in 1215 had actually decreed that no new Orders should be founded (see Bianchi-Giovini, *op. cit.*, v. p. 236 sqq.).

ones, for popular favour and seignorial bounty. And the very difference of principle and of organisation which was the *raison-d'être* of the new Orders added to jealousy a feeling of suspicion. For while Monachism proper retained the feudal idea—a number of vassal-houses subject to a central monarchic rule—the mendicantism of the Friars exhibited rather the young and vigorous republican spirit of the Italian Communes.

As for parochial jealousy, the complaint of the Apulian clergy to Frederic II, while it is no doubt peculiarly frank and emphatic, may be taken as expressing sentiments which rankled unexpressed under many a priestly cassock outside the Swabian realm. The so-called mendicants, they complain, are taking the very bread out of the mouths of the parochial clergy. The Friars' churches are grand and stately and well cared for, while the old sanctuaries lie neglected in squalor, filth and indigence. The so-called "poor men" are rich, and the clergy, reputed rich, are plunged in poverty.¹

And while the new Orders naturally found common rivals in the monks and the clergy, they combined also to contend against the rank crop of fantastic mendicant organisations, modelled more or less loosely on their own,

¹ Bianchi-Giovini, *op. cit.* p. 241; Salimbene (sub ann. 1250, p. 208 sqq.) gives a formal list of six complaints brought by the secular clergy against the Franciscans: (1) The friars do not preach on the duty of tithing; (2) they usurp the right of hearing confessions; (3) they accept for burial in their precincts people who "belonged" when alive to the parochial clergy; (4) they practically oust the secular clergy from preaching; (5) their conventual masses on great days absorb all the oblations of the faithful; (6) they are great *doniatores* (i.e. "ladies' men"!). The counter-charge against the secular clergy (*ibid.* p. 215, sqq.) is that they are dirty, irreverent, slovenly, spendthrift and licentious. Cf. Rubbiani, *op. cit.* p. 85.

that very soon sprang up and threatened to become too great a burden to the benevolence of the faithful.

Finally they induced Gregory X at the Council of Lyons (1274) to disband the so-called Orders of "Saccati" and "Apostoli," *ne populus Christianus propter multitudinem mendicantium taedio gravaretur*.

Franciscans and Dominicans alike were stalwart supporters of the Papacy, and members of each order occupied the throne of Saint Peter within the century.¹

The famous vision of Pope Innocent III, in which he saw the crumbling Lateran supported on the shoulders of Francis and Dominic,² is significant of this, as well as of the new life they introduced into the Church at large. And it was the aim of Gregory IX, who as Bishop of Ostia had been a great protector and moulder of Franciscanism in its beginnings, to unite the two Orders as far as possible, yoking them together in the service of the Papacy.³ Certain it is that for several generations the Franciscans were entrusted by the Popes with important embassies and missions.

Notable among these are two successive embassies to the Tartar monarchs, with whom, as with sworn foes of the Moslem, the Papacy hoped to establish friendly, at least, if not patronising relations. We have already alluded to the presence of Tartars at Rome during the jubilee

¹ The Dominican Pierre de Champany, a Savoyard, became Pope in 1276 as Innocent V; the Franciscan Girolamo Masci, an Italian from Ascoli and a Ghibelline, was elected in 1288 as Nicolas IV.

² See above, p. 98.

³ This "twist" given to Franciscanism was, according to M. Sabatier, foreign to its original idea. And Francis and Dominic both demurred when Gregory IX conferred with them on the promotion of members of their Orders to the prelacy. See above, p. 99 n., and Sabatier, *S. Francis*, Ital. ed., p. 228.

celebration of 1300. It was some seventy years earlier, in the days of Pope Gregory IX, that the first rumours of the greatness of this strange and terrible people reached Italian ears.

Pouring vast hordes through the "Gates of the Nations"—that fatal gap in Europe's natural fortification which intervenes between the Ural Mountains and the Caucasus—they had found an easy prey awaiting them. The numerous descendants of Saint Vladimir, already notable enough to have allied themselves by marriage with the imperial house of Constantinople, and some of the royal families of the West, had no united front of resistance to offer. Their separate little principalities owned as yet no regular suzerain, though the senior living representative always claimed a certain shadowy precedence; and so they were swallowed up piecemeal. Before the middle of the century these fierce riders and eaters of horseflesh were masters of all Russia; its princes were all subject to tribute. By 1245 the vast empire founded by Genghis Khan—the empire which the enterprising Venetian Marco Polo was to explore a quarter of a century later—stretched from China to the frontiers of Hungary, and bade fair to swallow up Western Christendom entire.

Therefore in 1246 Pope Innocent IV sent the Franciscan Giovanni "de Plano Carpi" to treat with Kuinis Khan, one of the three heirs of the great conqueror. And Salimbene was at Lyons when the ambassador came back in 1249 and presented his report to the Pontiff.

The good frate gave to our chronicler a vivid account of the troubles and difficulties of the journey, and of the pomp and state of the great Khan, to whose presence he could not be admitted unless clad in purple. The reported conversation between the Tartar king and the Pope's emis-

sary is interesting in many ways, and not least as a *naïve* expression of the average Franciscan attitude towards the Papacy and the Empire.

"Who rules the western world?" asked the king.

"There are two," replied Fra Giovanni, "the Pope and the Emperor, and from these two all others derive their lordship."¹

"And of these two, which is the greater?"

"The Pope," was the unhesitating reply.

"Then to the Pope will I address my letter."

Salimbene subjoins the text of the letter signed by "Cuinis Chan, first Emperor; Thaday Chan, second Emperor; and Tujuch Chan, third Emperor;" from which we learn that the embassy was somewhat disappointing. The Tartar Chief demanded, as a basis of alliance, that the Pope should come and do homage to him and give tribute!

Still the Papacy did not give up hope, nor lay the blame of the failure at the Franciscans' door; for twenty-three years later John XXI sent to the Khan of that day

¹ Salimbene, sub ann. 1247: "Duo; Papa, videlicet et Imperator, et ab istis duobus omnes alii habent dominia". When Marco Polo interviewed "Cublay Khan" (Genghis' grandson) some years later, the prince questioned him as one who already knew the outlines of European politics, etc. At parting the Khan gave messages to the chief European sovereigns "à l'Apostolle (the Pope), et au Roy de France, et au Roye d'Engleterre, et au Roy d'Espagne, et aus autres Roys de Cristienté". In his questions, however, he puts the Emperor before the Pope "premiere-ment des Emperours, et comment il maintiennent leur seigneurie et leur terre en justice; et comment il vont en bataille, et de tout leur affaires. Et après leur demanda des Roys et des princes et des autres barons. Et puis leur demanda du Pape et de l'Eglise, et tout le faite de Romme et de toutes les costumes des Latins" (*Le Livre de Marco Polo*, ed. Pauthier, 1865, cap. v. vi.). It was rendered into French from his dictation in 1298.

an embassy of six friars; and further efforts would no doubt have been made by later Popes had not the Tartar Power soon begun to decline, and their armies to recede from the Hungarian borders. Established for centuries in the South-east of Russia, they still exercised for some 250 years a tributary sway over the Muscovite princes, and have left the permanent marks of their heel upon that country, in the backwardness of its social and political development. But never again were they a serious menace to Western Europe: that rôle was to be inherited by the Ottoman Turks.

It was not by the Popes alone that the Brothers Minor were entrusted with important and delicate tasks. Sometimes they were spontaneously invited by cities to settle their internal quarrels or re-organise their tangled administration. Sometimes they were even found leading armies to battle, like brother Clarello, who distinguished himself in the Guelf assault upon Padua, held in the name of the execrated Ezzelino; or the valorous brother Leo of Milan, one of the Alleluia preachers of 1233,¹ who, banner in hand, faced a whole army of imperial forces, crossing the bridge and standing alone, while the host stood hesitating behind him on the other side of the river. Salimbene himself studied *Vegetius on the Art of War*, a strange book of devotions, surely, for a follower of the mild apostle of humility and charity! Yet the true Franciscan influence was in this strange way introduced into the fierce politics of the age. Loyal Guelfs, always on the side of the Church, the fighting friars helped to leaven the Guelf armies with something of a Christian spirit, and to keep within the limits of humanity the general Guelf triumph

¹ See below, chap. iv. p. 51 *sqq.*

which marked the close of the thirteenth century. Again and again they were able to prevent excesses in the sack of captured Ghibelline cities, and to mitigate the severity of conquerors flushed with victory. When Fra Clarello led the assault on Padua, of which we have already spoken, he not only gave his secular brethren an example of courage and resolution, but was able also to bring it about that no excesses were committed by the victors within the walls, so that the whole city, says Salimbene, "was roused to rejoicing and exultation".

The Guelf Lords also individually came under the softening influence of the Friars: for it had become fashionable to substitute Brothers Minor for mere courtiers and jesters in the palaces of Papal Legates, Bishops, and the lay Signori of the Church party.¹ And so they were able to introduce a gentler tone into the management of the household, where, as we shall see, the utmost barbarities were apt to be practised even by prelate-lords.²

What made the beneficent influence of the Friars Minor so strong among all classes and in all departments was the fact that while definitely devoted to a "religious" life, they were in close touch with the ordinary world, and in sympathy alike with gentle and simple. The appeal of their voluntary poverty—which was, by-the-by, original with Saint Francis, and imitated from him by Saint Dominic—won the hearts of all true men; and the "Third Order," consisting of associates living in the world with all the ties of family, and business or professional duties, yet pledged to the spirit of Saint Francis's rule and to sympathy with his aims—formed a close link between these friars and the outside world of secular society. So magnetic was the

¹ Cf. Rubbiani, *op. cit.* pp. 92-106.

² E.g. Philip Archbishop of Ravenna; see below, chap. iv. p. 137.

attraction of this Third Order, which has numbered in its ranks a vast army of great names, from Saint Louis of France, and Giotto and Dante, down to Pope Leo XIII, that towards the middle of the century Pier delle Vigne is reported to have written in alarm to his master, "There is scarcely a man in all Italy who does not belong to it".

It is as a fighter that Saint Dominic is best known—white-hot with zeal against heretics:—

. . . il santo atleta

Benigno ai suoi ed ai nemici crudo.¹

His followers are ever the "Domini Canes" of the Spanish Chapel at Florence—the hounds of the Lord, chasing and worrying souls into orthodoxy.

But, though there can be no doubt that even in that hard age Saint Francis' gentler methods were more convincing, we must beware of judging early Dominicanism by the standards of our own milder era. And if we cannot acquit its founder of a leading part in the fatally unchristian treatment meted out to the Albigensian heretics, we should be wrong in attributing to him the excesses and refined barbarities of the later Inquisition. It is significant that the introduction of the Inquisition into France was granted by Pope Alexander IV at the express wish of the gentle Saint Louis. Moreover Dominic's severity with those whom he regarded as enemies of the faith was matched by the severity of his own life. "Out-labour, out-fast, out-discipline these false teachers" is said to have been his original advice on the Albigensian problem. The fierce uncompromising methods of his sincere zeal are fully recognised by Dante.² He sought of the Holy

¹ *Par.* xii. 56, 57.

² *Ibid.* 91 *sqq.*



"DOMINI CANES": THE TRIUMPH, OF THE DOMINICAN ORDER
SPANISH CHAPEL, S. MARIA NOVELLA, FLORENCE, FRESCO BY SIMONE MARTINI

See not rich preferment, but simply leave to fight, and to fight where the battle was fiercest:—

. . . contro al mondo errante
 Licenza di combatter . . .
 Poi, con dottrina, e con voler insieme
 Con l' officio apostolico si mosse
 Quasi torrente ch' alta vena preme,
 E negli sterpi eretici percosse
 L' impeto suo più vivamente quivi
 Dove le resistenze eran più grosse.

The swift degeneration of his followers is deplored¹—those erring sheep that wander ever farther and farther from their shepherd's side, and still the farther they stray, bring ever less milk to the fold.² But no doubt is expressed of the Christian character of his methods, or of the value of the movement which he initiated.

It is, however, in the field of theological lore that the Dominicans shine brightest. In an age when learning was sought almost exclusively as a means to private advancement—such motives of study exclude from the category of true philosophers, says Dante “Students of Law and Medicine and practically all Religious”³—in such an age Dominic embodies a higher ideal, labouring not for the “meat that perisheth” but for the “True Manna” :—

Non per lo mondo, per cui mo s' affanna
 Diretro ad Ostiense ed a Taddeo,
 Ma per amor della verace manna
 In picciol tempo gran dottor si feo.⁴

¹ *Par.* xi. 124 sqq.

² It is for this reason, perhaps, that in the provincial chapter of the Order held at Florence, 8th September, 1335 (just fourteen years after the poet's death) the younger members were forbidden to read: “*Libellos per illum qui Dante nominatur in vulgari compositos*” (*Bulletino Soc. Dant. Fior.* 1905, p. 41).

³ *Conv.* iii. 11 (p. 287, l. 104 sqq.): “Siccome sono Legisti, Medici, e quasi tuttili Religiosi, che non per sapere studiano, ma per acquistar moneta o dignità”.

⁴ *Par.* xii. 82-85.

And his spirit is reflected in Saint Thomas, the greatest name in all scholasticism, whose hand may be detected almost everywhere in the form and matter of the *Divina Commedia*, even as the heart of Saint Francis palpitates in its spirit.

The "Preaching" Order, fortified thus with lofty ideals of study, did even more perhaps than the Franciscans to revive the art of good preaching. Their mission was primarily to the cultured classes; that of the Brothers Minor to the poor. The latter became a learned body as it were by accident and in spite of themselves. The former were essentially a learned body: their mission was to refute error by means of well-pondered truth. We have seen how even at Oxford, where the Franciscans were to win so swift and lasting a renown, the Dominicans were first in the field. Their first band arrived in England in our opening year of 1221, the year of their founder's death, and were welcomed for their preaching powers by Archbishop Stephen Langton. They reached Oxford itself on the 15th of August in that year, and quickly gathered a band of eager disciples. It was only four and a half years later that the first Franciscans came to find shelter under their roof.¹

In Italy, when towards the end of the century the Franciscans tended to withdraw into their cloisters, in imitation of the mystic and contemplative side of their master's genius, the learning and practical wisdom of the Dominicans took the place earlier filled by the sanctified common sense of the brother Order in leavening municipal life.²

Yet even in the first age Dominicans took the lead in some of the great popular religious revivals. The type of revival called "Alleluia," of which we shall have more

¹ Jessop, *Friars*, p 32.

² Rubbiani, *op. cit.*

to say in the next chapter, is called by the author of the *Cronicon Parmense* "Devocio fratrum Predicatorum". As a matter of fact the movement of 1233 though apparently started by one who was neither Franciscan nor Dominican, owed much of its success, as Salimbene assures us, to the three great Dominicans, John of Bologna, Jacobinus of Reggio, and Bartholomew of Vicenza.

It was John of Bologna (or as the Bolognese chronicler calls him, from his native city, John of Vicenza) whose preaching and miracles did more than anything else to secure the canonisation of the Patriarch of his Order. The chronicler's account of his work at Bologna reads almost like the records of Savonarola's doings in Florence. His influence was so great, and his wisdom inspired such confidence that the Commune was fain to have him sit in the municipal council: and it is related that one day as he was sitting in the council chamber, the sign of the Cross was seen to shine out upon his forehead—symbol, surely, in whatever sense we accept it, of the essentially and severely Christian influence which radiated from such a personality upon the somewhat worldly environment of municipal life. And when he had done his work at Bologna he did not stay on and wreck a great reputation, as a most famous Dominican was to do at Florence. He passed on to other cities, ever as peace-maker, "e fece molte paci di grande importanza" in the various communes of Lombardy.

Another of the three, Jacobinus of Reggio, possessed a conspicuous gift of rousing fervour in his fellow-citizens who had, for the most part, a reputation for aggressive secularity and anti-clericalism.¹ At his instigation the

¹*E.g.* in 1280 they refused to pay tithes, and in consequence the entire population was excommunicated. In revenge the Commune elaborately

“Church of Jesus” was built in Reggio, the labour supplied by fervent amateurs. “Men and women, small and great, knights and common soldiers, *borghesi* and *contadini* vied with one another in carrying stones and sand and mortar. *Et beatus ille qui plus poterat deportare.*” In three years the church was finished.

Another quaint instance is given of the same preacher’s practical power over his hearers. On one occasion a child was born in the crowd during the course of one of his sermons. Jacobinus immediately broke off and asked for help for the mother. At once “a whole ass’ burden” of gifts poured in: one woman offering slippers (*subtelares*), another a shirt (*camisium*), another *vestem*, another *bindam* for the new-born infant; while the men contributed 100 *solidos imperiales*. Here is no stern and gloomy spirit of inquisition, but a power to speak direct from heart to heart, kindling charity and neighbourliness and converting the lessons of theological lore into homeliest practice.

Any one who would draw a picture of Dante’s century will find among its most interesting and characteristic figures those of the Black Friars and the Grey: the men who, when war was the sport of the noble, gave up all earthly ambitions to enlist in the army of Champions of the Faith, and tried to instil into an unruly generation discipline of mind and morals; and those who by milder methods endeavoured to disseminate in the midst of luxury, passion, violence, and misery, the gospel of simplicity, humility, and love, and to teach the down-trodden and the despoiled that it is possible to be glad and happy in suffering.

boycotted the clergy: citizens were forbidden to eat with them, serve them, live in the same house with them, give them food or drink, grind or cook for them, shave them, etc. Salimbene, sub ann. 1280 (p. 279 sq.).

Three sparks were kindled by the doughty hand of Innocent III and from each a devouring flame burst forth:—

*Poca favilla gran fiamma seconda.*¹

Two of them burst upon the poet's eyes, blazing together in the glorious Heaven of the Sun, having kindled a beneficent fire upon earth which has never been wholly extinguished. The third, whose promise, judged by natural gifts, was far the greatest, set Italy ablaze—but with the destructive flame of faction and strife. His place is in the lurid glow of the red-hot sepulchres of Dis. Yet who knows but, with a better chance of self-development and self-expression, in a less embittering environment he might have been found above the other two in the Sixth Heaven, the imperial abode of the world's best and greatest rulers, with Trajan and with Constantine, or at least in the second sphere of beneficent ambition, with Justinian.

¹ *Par. i. 34.*

CHAPTER IV

DANTE'S ITALY

I.—THE STERNER SIDE OF LIFE

IN this century of contrasts—of superstition and scepticism, of refinement and savagery¹—when men lived and wrought so intensely, so robustly, and the tenure of life itself was so uncertain, the peninsula of Italy afforded a spectacle of struggle and of seething life more striking than could be seen elsewhere.

And though in the present chapter we are not concerned with politics so much as with the general characteristics of Italian life in those years, 1221 to 1321, we can scarcely appreciate even the outstanding features of that life without a preliminary glance at the political condition of the peninsula.

Italy was as yet a political unity only in the dreams of genius; in the frustrated designs of Frederic II for an Empire whose centre should be in that sunny land, in the visions of Dante who, convinced of the Divine endowment and commission of the Roman people to rule the world² saw in Italy the “garden of the Empire,” and compared Italy without an Emperor to a desolate widow³ or a riderless horse.⁴

¹ “It was characterised,” says M. Sabatier, “by all the vices except vulgarity, and all the virtues except moderation (*S. Francis*, introd.).

² *Mon.* ii. 6, 7 (p. 356 sq.), cf. below, chap. vii. pp. 238-39.

³ *Purg.* vi. 112 sq.

⁴ *Ibid.* 88 sqq.

Still more modernly do we see Italy pictured in the almost prophetic verses of Dante's younger contemporary, Fazio degli Uberti, who points out the advantage of a hereditary rule over an elective succession—"O figliuol mio"—it is the voice of Old Rome who speaks—

O figliuol mio, da questa crudel guerra
 Tutti insieme verremo a dolce pace,
 Se Italia soggiace
 A un solo re, che 'l mio voler consente !
 Poi quando il ciel ce 'l torrà di terra,
 L'altro non fia chiamato a ben mi piace ;
 Ma, come ogni re face,
 Succederàgli il figlio o il piú parente
 Di che seguirà immantimente,
 Che ogni pensier rio di tirannia
 Al tutto spento fia
 Per la succession perpetuale.

Far different were the facts. Yet was Italy, though in one sense unborn, already more than a "geographical expression". The struggle between Papacy and Empire had more than once lifted a Pope into the position of champion of what might almost be called the cause of Italian patriotism. And as early as 1198, says M. Sabatier, the expression, *profectus et honor Italiae*, is found in Bulls of Innocent III. The various units were bound together by a common tradition of the glories of Old Rome, and by the bond of a language which, however varied (as indeed it is to-day) from dialect to dialect, was yet capable of producing in the *Divina Commedia* a classic that should be recognised as representative and regulative for all future ages. This language, too, though later born to a literary career than its cousins of *oïl* and *oc* in France,¹ could claim to be the most direct lineal descendant of the classic tongue of imperial Rome ; the speech still hallowed by

¹ See below, chap. vii. p. 242 sqq.

the Church's use, and employed by all the learned of the West. But this shadowy, potential unity of thirteenth-century Italy embraces so many units of independent life, so many types of racial tendency and of political constitution, so many stages of development side by side that it forms a sort of microcosm in itself. The great cities of Lombardy and the North are practically independent municipalities, while all the South is united, first under the House of Hohenstaufen (who inherited it from the Norman kings), and then under the Angevins intruded by the Papacy; who, however, lose Sicily to Aragon after the "Silician Vespers" in 1282.

In the midst come the States of the Church, stretching across the whole peninsula astride of the Apennines, from the Po to the Tronto on the Adriatic coast, and from above Corneto to Terracina on the Mediterranean. But many of the great cities of this heterogeneous territory enjoy from time to time a practical independence. Ferrara, Bologna, Faenza, Forlì, Ravenna, make war and peace, form alliances and break them, modify their constitutions and arrange their internal quarrels on their own account. Several of them pass from time to time under the sway of Ghibelline Signori.

Even Pope-ridden Perugia in 1282 rose temporarily in revolt against Martin IV's excommunication of the Comune for its reprisals against Foligno,¹ constructed straw figures of the Pope and selected Cardinals, clothed them in crimson, and solemnly burnt them on the top of a hill.

Farther north and west the cities of Tuscany, Lombardy and the Marca Trevigiana lived independent of the Holy See, though the Pope extended shadowy claims over the former dominions of the Countess Matilda, which, in

¹ Salimbene, sub ann. 1282 (p. 283).

the widest acceptance of the term, included not only all Tuscany with the Communes of Florence, Pisa, Lucca and Arezzo, but also Ferrara, Reggio, Modena and even Mantua. Of these, however, Ferrara alone constantly acknowledged the Papal sovereignty.

Finally in the extreme north-west the dominions of the House of Savoy, sitting astride of the Alps as the Papal dominions of the Apennines, gave as yet, and for many centuries to come, no promise of a centre or nucleus for uniting Italy.

And between the Alps and Sicily existed side by side every variety of rule and governance. The Popes were nominally (and when the turbulent nobles would permit it actually) sovereigns in Rome, and their legates ruled, or at any rate exercised a certain authority, in many of the subject cities. Some of their sumptuary edicts will come before us in the next chapter. The south, from the Abruzzo to Cape Spartivento was a hereditary kingdom, with traditions derived from Norman rule; modified first by the Hohenstaufen, who crushed the independence of the Norman feudal nobility and established a central government and jurisdiction much as the Kings of England and France were doing; and again later by the House of Anjou. The great cities of Tuscany, Romagna and the north were practically independent Communes. They had won their liberty at the battle of Legnano (29th May, 1176), and the defeated Barbarossa had definitely recognised their independence in the Peace of Constance (25th June, 1183). We find them now separated, now leagued in groups, and organised, like the two great maritime powers Genoa and Venice, after some elaborate model of republican constitution, on a more or less exclusive and oligarchical basis.

In the cities of Northern and Central Italy the head of the Government was usually an officer called Podestà, elected by the citizens annually (or, in some cases, every six months) from some noble family of another Commune. He presided in council, administered criminal justice, and originally also commanded the citizen army or militia. Brunetto Latini, in a work which we shall have occasion to mention a little later,¹ gives elaborate instructions in connection with the Podestà's election, reception, entry into office, conduct during office; and the ceremonies of retirement, which included a strict censorship of his year similar to that undergone by the magistrates of ancient Athens: as the result of which he was rewarded or fined by the Commune.

The life of the Podestà was at best anything but a bed of roses; and in some cases, where he had an intractable population to deal with, it might be very much the reverse. This happened more than once, *e.g.*, at Bologna. Thus in 1267,² the Podestà, Carlo Nasimbene, made himself unpopular with the guild of cobblers: in consequence he had his palace set on fire, and was himself driven out of the city. Two years later, Alberto di Fontana of Piacenza is first insulted in the Palace itself by a private citizen—who is obliged to be “rusticated,” with all the members of his family, during the Podestà's term of office—next he has to interfere to prevent bloodshed after a wedding-dance in the house of Ramponi: finally, while he is causing some sentence of condemnation to be read out, the populace assembles in the Piazza below, shouting out “*Moriatur ladro potestas!*” He has to take refuge in the balcony of the palace, and the mob, thirsting for

¹ See below, p. 132.

² Griffoni, sub ann.

his blood, is only kept off by the strong fortress-doors below.

Too young a man obviously could not expect to achieve success. One of the Buondelmonti of Florence was chosen Podestà of Bologna in the year of Dante's death, but he reigned only ten days *quia erat juvenis*—"he was too young, and took sides".¹

But a mature and strong character might do much, and as a matter of fact the Podestà tended early to develop into a more or less permanent autocrat; and to obviate this risk, towards the middle of the thirteenth century many cities elected an additional officer, in a similar way, and subject to similar conditions, much as the modern Italian Government tends to duplicate its *impiegati*, so that one may keep watch on the possible aberrations of his fellow. This officer was called "Capitano del Popolo," and to him was now assigned command of the army.

But already in some cases the work was done,² and the city had fallen, for a longer or shorter period, under the sway of some strong man, forerunner of the later tyrants of the Renaissance. These "Signori" were often representatives of the vague authority of the Empire; as were, for instance, those consolors of Dante's exile the Scaligers of Verona,³ at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Or again, if not exactly "imperial vicars," they had a strong imperial backing and were open enemies of the Church; as Ezzelino da Romano in the first half of the thirteenth century. Occasionally, as in the case of Ugucione della Faggiuola at the beginning of the fourteenth

¹ Griffoni, sub ann. 1321.

² Dante (referring to 1300, A.D.) says: "Le città d'Italia tutte piene Son di tiranni" (*Purg.* vi. 124).

³ See below, chap. ix.

century, the Papacy, for reasons of policy, would receive an originally Ghibelline tyrant into its favour.¹

The communes of Northern and Central Italy, when strictly republican, varied indefinitely in the minor details of their constitution; and when subject to autocratic rule, they naturally varied also, the government taking its complexion from the character of the particular tyrant.

But however great the variety which differentiated one city from another—in its interests, its constitution, the history and the degree of its development—they all had one marked feature in common. In all of them, practically, there was a perennial feud of powerful families, grouped, often more for convenience than from logic or conviction, into the two opposing camps of Papacy and Empire, of Guelf and Ghibelline, “biting and devouring one another” within the close quarters of a mediæval town:—

. . . l'un l'altro si rode
Di quei che un muro ed una fossa serra—²

that intra-mural strife which calls forth from Dante his lament over the Italy of half a century later, when he sees the Mantuan spirits of Virgil and Sordello drawn together irresistibly by the bonds of a common patriotism.

And the same story repeated itself over and over again. The party which for the moment had the advantage exiled its foes, seized their property, and cast them homeless upon the world at large. The exiles flew into the arms of the nearest city of their own political colour, and lived for revenge. The party at first successful would find itself

¹ Two Bulls of Boniface VIII (dated 22nd May, 1302) are still extant, in one of which he absolves Ugucione and his followers for their past hostility, while the other directs the Vicar of Charles of Valois to receive him favourably. In both Ugucione is *dilectus filius noster*.

² *Purg.* vi. 83, 84.

homeless in turn, and whole families nurtured in refinement and luxury, if they escaped savage butchery with torture, would be flung in beggary upon a not too hospitable world, like the poor Ghibelline *fuorusciti* at Forlì in 1282, refugees from half a dozen cities, who when Pope Martin IV bade them peremptorily to leave the place, with their wives and families, replied: "By all means, if you will give us some other place to go to; we must live somewhere!"¹

This in the cities: the country meanwhile was ravaged and desolated by the contending citizen armies, and the once prosperous vineyards and farm lands became the haunt of savage beasts and still more savage men. Robbers—some of them hereditary nobles who had managed so far to hold their fortress homes in independence of the growing power of the Communes, or mere adventurers who had been lucky enough to secure some convenient stronghold as a base of marauding operations—these were a constant terror to travellers, even when peace nominally reigned. The poor *contadino* saw his cattle carried off before his eyes, while his crops, such as escaped the recurring severity of abnormal seasons—those frosts, droughts and floods of which the Chronicles are so full—were constantly liable to be "commandeered" or ruined by contending armies.

The effect of Frederic's wars with the Papacy upon the Emilian district is thus graphically described by Salimbene:—

¹ Pietro Cantinelli gives the message of these exiles of Bologna, Imola, Faenza, Ravenna and Bagnacavallo, presented by their "solemn ambassadors," sent by Guido da Montefeltro to the Pope. It is certainly pathetic. *Nostris de terris et habitationibus nostris inique et contra justitiam dejecti sumus, et ideo placeat summi Pontifici nobis destinari certum locum ubi possumus trahere nostros mansus, et sic abimus civitatem Forlivii* (*Cron. Faent.* sub ann. 1282).

“For many years,” he says, writing of the year 1247, “men could not plough nor sow nor reap nor till the vines nor gather the vintage nor dwell on the farmsteads. . . . Hard by the cities, indeed, men might be seen at work under a guard of soldiers, divided into ‘quarterios,’ according to the gates of the city. Armed men kept watch over the labourers all the day long while the countrymen tilled the fields. This they needs must do by reason of the ‘beruarios’ and ‘latrones’ and ‘praedones,’ who were multiplied exceedingly, and used to seize men and hale them off to prison that they might ransom themselves for money. They carried off also their oxen, and either ate them themselves or sold them. And if their captives refused to give ransom they would hang them up by feet and hands, and draw their teeth, and put toads (*buffones sive rospos*) in their mouths, that they might ransom themselves the more speedily: which thing was to the prisoners more bitter and abominable than any death. More cruel were these men than demons: and in those days a traveller was just as glad to see a man coming along the road as he would have been to see the devil. For one always suspected another that he would seize him and hale him to prison, in order that, as saith the Scripture, ‘a man’s riches’ should be ‘the ransom of his life’ (Prov. xiii.). And the land was reduced to solitude, so that there was none to till it nor to pass through it. For in the days of Frederic, and more especially after that he was deposed from the empire and Parma rebelled and lifted up her heel against him, ‘the highways were unoccupied and the travellers walked through byways’ (Judges, v.).

“And evils were multiplied in the land, and birds and wild beasts were very exceedingly multiplied, as pheasants and partridges and quails, hares and wild goats, deer, buf-

faloes, wild boars and ravenous wolves. For since they found not, after ancient custom, beasts to eat in the farmsteads, little lambs or sheep—for the reason that the farmsteads were utterly destroyed by fire—therefore the wolves assembled in vast numbers around the fosse of each city and uttered great howls for excess of hunger. Nay, they would enter the cities by night and devour men that slept beneath the porticoes or in carts, and women and little children also. Moreover sometimes they forced their way though the walls of the houses, and choked to death babes as they lay in their cots.

“None could believe, unless he had seen,” concludes the Frate, “as I have seen, the horrible things that were done at that time alike by men and by divers kinds of beasts.”

So the vast tract between the Apennines and the Alps—“*il paese ch' Adice e Po riga*”¹—which throughout history has been a proverb of alluring fertility to successive hordes of invaders, and to-day is a smiling garden of prosperous viticulture, became in the first half of the thirteenth century a savage wilderness. This was indeed the outcome in a sense of Frederic's struggle with the Papacy.

But the blame, as we have seen, is not wholly or even mainly Frederic's. If any one pair of shoulders invites the imposition of that burden it is that of the short, swarthy and sturdy Ezzelino III da Romano,² Frederic's son-in-law, who did more than any one man to spread misery and terror as far as his arm could reach, and to set a bane-

¹ *Purg.* xvi. 115.

² Any one who desires to study in detail the atrocities of Ezzelino and Alberico will find the traditions collected in Ottone Brentani's *Ecelino da Romano nella mente del popolo e nella poesia*. Perhaps none of them surpass in cold-blooded brutality the vengeance taken on Alberico and his family by the men of Treviso on 23rd August, 1260 (see Brentani, p. 9 *sqq.*).

ful ideal of atrocity which future tyrants might emulate but could scarcely surpass.

He is undoubtedly the typical monster of cruelty of the Trecento. Chroniclers and Popes and *racconteurs* exhaust their vocabulary of vituperation in endeavouring to plumb the depths of his inhuman depravity, before which the lurid deeds of Nero, Decius, Diocletian, Maximian—nay, even those of Herod and Antiochus pale into insignificance.¹ According to tradition² his mother before his birth dreamed she brought forth a firebrand: the *facello* of Cunizza's narrative in Paradise.³ And if ever dream came true it was this.

Born in 1194 in the little village of Romano in the Veneto, where the ruins of the ancestral castle of his family may still be discerned a little to the north of Bassano,

In quella parte della terra prava
Italica, che siede tra Rialto
E le fontane di Brenta e di Piava,⁴

he rose to great power ere he reached middle life. By 1236 he was master of Treviso, Vicenza and Padua; and in 1258, the year before his death, he added Brescia to his dominions. Son-in-law of the reigning Emperor he was recognised leader of the Ghibellines in North Italy. Ezzelino was hated and feared wherever his influence extended, and not without reason. The things told of him and of

¹ Salimbene, sub ann. 1256; *cf.* Villani, vi. 72.

² Pietro di Dante (see Toynbee, *Dict.* p. 66). A less savoury tradition for which Albertino Mussato, born three years after Ezzelino's death, is responsible, is that which makes the mother disclose to the two brothers, in circumstantial narrative, that their actual father is the fiend: whereupon Ezzelino breaks out into an invocation of his satanic parent which is like a pæan of triumph (Brentani, *Ecelino da Romano*, p. 29).

³ *Par.* ix. 29.

⁴ *Ibid.* 25-27.

his brother Alberico by Salimbene,¹ are many of them too horrible for repetition. The tales about him in the *Novellino* (which always deals somewhat gently with kings and tyrants) illustrate not only the dread he inspired and his utterly irresponsible dealing with human life, but also other and less directly repulsive features of his character.

"It would take too long," says one of these²—*sarebbe gran tela*—"to tell how much 'Messere Azzolino' was feared, and many persons know it." He goes on, however, to relate a single remarkable instance. One day Ezzelino was riding with the Emperor, and the two compared swords, each declaring his own the finest. The Emperor drew his from the scabbard to show it. "Beautiful," said Ezzelino, "but mine is finer still." He then drew forth his own, and simultaneously six hundred followers did the same. Thereupon the Emperor at once gave in, and protested that Ezzelino's was indeed the finer!

The man of whom the Emperor—and such an Emperor!—stood in fear; how could a poor man of the people stand before him? Ezzelino misunderstands a word spoken in dialect: an innocent man must die, even though Ezzelino be informed of his mistake before the sentence is executed.

"Earthen pots," so runs the *Novella*,³ "are called *olle* in Lombardy and the Marches." One day Ezzelino's constables were conducting a certain potter before the judge to act as surety. Ezzelino was in the hall as they passed. "Who is this?" inquired the tyrant.

¹ Salimbene, sub ann. 1250.

² *Il Novellino, ossia Libro di bel parlar gentile*, No. lxx. The subjects of the tales range from about 1190 to 1320 in date, and the stories themselves are probably almost contemporary pieces of gossip.

³ *Nov.* lxix.

“Messere, è un olaro.”

Ezzelino, thinking *olaro* must be equivalent to *ladro*, a thief, exclaims :—

“Then go and hang him !”

Three times he repeats his order to the wondering and protesting officials, and though at last he grasps the harmless connotation of the offending word, he refuses to revoke the sentence. It is too late. “Fecelne inteso, ma non valse; che perchè avea detto tre volte, convenne che fosse impeso.”

Another judgment¹ illustrates in a less murderous fashion that somewhat childish feeling of *amour propre* to which the poor *olaro* fell a victim.

A *villano* complains to Ezzelino that a neighbour has been stealing his cherries. “Impossible,” says the accused, “the orchard is too well hedged; send and see.”

Ezzelino sends and finds it true. He therefore fines the plaintiff for trusting to his thorns more than to his (Ezzelino’s) signoria: the accused he sets free.

One more of these tales is worth repeating, for it illustrates at once the man’s astuteness and his avarice, and suggests that he also possessed that rare gift, a sense of humour.

“Once upon a time Messere Azzolino da Romano made proclamation throughout his dominions, and even beyond, that he desired to make a mighty almsgiving. Let all the poor and indigent, both male and female, assemble in his meadow on a certain day, and he would give them a right good feast and a new gown apiece.”

The news soon spread. The beggars assembled, were duly stripped, newly clothed and feasted. Afterwards they asked for their rags to be restored to them, but in

¹ *Nov.* lxviii.

vain. They were all piled in a heap and burnt, and lo! among the ashes was found a quantity of gold, more than enough to pay for the expenses of the feast . . . "e poi li rimandò con Dio."

Ezzelino was human after all, with all his savage cruelty, a trait which amounted almost to madness in him and his brother Alberico,¹ yet was entirely absent, if we may trust tradition, from their sister, the amorous Cunizza, who devoted herself in earlier life to the alleviation of the miseries caused by her brother's cruelty,² and whose aberrations of another kind were,³ in Dante's eyes, so compensated by her mercy, that he places her, not with Paolo and Francesca in the pitiless wind of Hell,⁴ but in the Heaven of Venus,⁵ side by side with Rahab,⁶ another sinner who had been fain to show mercy at her own life's peril.

In the matter of cruelty the thirteenth century may be matched no doubt by other epochs which have less excuse. Its generations were bred up to war as the normal state of things, and war in those days was a rough school. Even the followers of the gentle Saint Francis sometimes led, as we have seen, the assault upon a Ghibelline town,

¹ It is calculated that Ezzelino alone must have put to death (and usually with torture) a total of at least 55,000 people! (Brentani, *Ecelino*, p. 21).

² Benvenuto describes her as *pia, benigna, misericors, compatiens miseris quos frater crudeliter affligebat*.

³ She left her first husband for an intrigue with Sordello, connived at by Ezzelino. Afterwards she abandoned herself to a knight named Bonio, and after his death married three husbands in succession. When about sixty-two years old, after the deaths of her brothers, she went to Florence, and Dante as a child may have met her in the house of Cavalcante Cavalcanti.

⁴ *Inf.* v. 28 *sqq.*

⁵ *Par.* ix. 13 *sqq.*

⁶ *Par.* ix. 116. *Joshua*, chap. ii.

and studied the art of warfare in the old Roman textbooks. Salimbene says he read and found "very useful," the work *De Re Militari* which Vegetius wrote for the Emperor Theodosius: the same book to which, as will be remembered, Dante makes reference in the second book of his *De Monarchia*.¹ A prelate like Gregory di Montelungo,² Papal Legate in Lombardy in the middle of the century, was skilled alike in the theory and practice of war—"acies et bella ordinare sciebat; simulare et dissimulare optime noverat; cognoscebat quando quiescendum, quando super hostes irruendum". And he put his skill to good account. He it was who held Parma for the Church against all the might of Frederic II, and who one fine morning, when the Emperor had gone hunting, surprised and sacked his formidable walled camp, carried off the imperial regalia³ and a mass of loot and

¹ In *Mon.* ii. 10, he quotes *Veg.* iii. 9, to the effect that all expedients should be tried before resorting to steel or fire (Moore, *Studies in Dante*, i. 297-98).

² Salimbene, sub ann. 1295 (pp. 197, 198).

³ Including the ponderous and priceless "imperial crown" which Salimbene describes a common fellow, nicknamed "Curtus passus," as hawking about the streets of Parma. The lucky finder made his fortune, for the commune gave him 200 *libros imperiales* and a house for the crown, which was laid up in the sacristy of Sta. Maria Maggiore, where Salimbene saw and handled it. He describes it as "magni ponderis et valoris et tota . . . ex auro et lapidibus pretiosis intexta multas habens imagines fabrefactas et elevatas". . . . And he adds: "Grandis erat sicut una olla; nam magis erat pro dignitate et thesauro quam pro capitis ornamentum. Totum enim caput cum facie occultasset nisi remedio alicujus petiæ sublevata stetisset!" The regalia in question clearly did not include the so-called "crown of Charlemagne" (worn certainly by Conrad III, and earlier) or the swords of Charlemagne and St. Maurice, which repose to-day in Maria Theresa's Treasury at Vienna. These were kept in various German fortresses, and are known to have been sent to Aix for the coronation of Henry VII on Jan. 6, 1309. The crown

treasure, and left "not a pebble" remaining of the vaunted "City of Victoria". His astuteness and resourcefulness are well brought out in the tale Salimbene tells of the *ruse* by which he kept up the spirits of the besieged through weary months of waiting when no help came. -

The people had begun to murmur as the days dragged on, and no external aid "contra draconem" was forthcoming. The Legate then invited some of the chief knights to dinner, and arranged that while they were at table a messenger should come clamouring for admission, showing every sign of a long and hasty journey. This messenger (to avoid awkward cross-questionings) he sent off at once to eat and rest, and then, opening the letters which he had brought, read out with well-simulated surprise and delight to the assembled guests "that help was coming speedily". So the thing was done. The knights naturally spread the joyful news throughout the town, and the whole population took fresh heart. "And two of our *frati* who were living in the Legate's house," adds the chronicler, "told me that the letters had been concocted in Gregory's private room the previous evening!"

When disillusionment came, he invented another pleasant *ruse*, and after that another, till at last the help did come, but from within: and the men of Parma, in Dante's phrase, "de Victoria victoriam adepti sunt".¹

But the records of those wars are not usually such pleasant reading. History has no more tragic page than

of which Salimbene speaks must have been one specially made for Frederic, or else a Norman crown inherited from his father. Some such heirlooms are now in the Vienna Treasury, including the coronation robes—alb, dalmatic, stole, girdle, gloves, stockings, shoes, and the great cope or mantle of Roger II described in a previous note (p. 79).

¹ *Ep.* vi. 5 (p. 408).

that which describes the internecine strife in which Pisa and Genoa were engaged in the last quarter of the thirteenth century. In the two years 1283 and 1284 the two maritime rivals fought three bloody battles, from the last of which, the famous battle of Meloria, Pisa never wholly recovered. In the first two battles some 6,000 of their men are said to have been killed or captured; in the third, as many as 10,000. Salimbene, who writes when the news is yet fresh, so that the actual numbers on each side are somewhat conjectural, is full of the tragedy of it. It was indeed a "Divine judgment" upon Pisa; for one of their defeats took place on the very day and month in which, under Frederic's orders some forty years before, they had captured the convoy of prelates on their way to Gregory IX's intended Council at Rome. But the good friar evidently admires the pluck with which they rose again after successive defeats, built a whole fleet of fresh galleys in the course of a few months, and called out all their men from twenty years old to sixty. "Alas!" he cries, "that two such noble cities should destroy one another from ambition and vainglory; as if the sea were not roomy enough—*quasi mare navigantibus non sufficeret!*" The Pisan spirit was savage enough even after its humiliation to earn Dante's hot rebuke:—

Ahi Pisa, vituperio delle genti
Del bel paese là, dove il sì suona!¹

But in ferocity and rancour it found more than its match in Genoa. When the former put on to the galleys all between twenty and sixty years, the latter responded by calling out youths of eighteen and old men of seventy. And after the third victory, when after a slaughter so

¹ *Inf.* xxxiii. 79, 80.

dreadful on both sides that the "very sky seemed to weep for pity"; when the worn-out Pisans, apparently victorious at last, were overwhelmed by a Genoese reserve which had been concealed till the critical moment, and compelled to surrender at discretion; the men of Genoa promptly killed the wounded and carried off all the rest as prisoners to their city, to rot and starve without hope of ransom. "Then was there such weeping in both towns as had never been heard from their foundation. . . . And afterwards many Pisan ladies, fair dames, and noble and rich and powerful," says Salimbene, "trudged on foot to Genoa," to seek and visit their captive husbands, sons, brothers and fathers. When they asked of the jailers permission to visit their loved ones they received for reply a cold refusal, and the news: 'Yesterday thirty died and to-day forty. We cast their bodies into the sea, that is our regular daily treatment for Pisans.'"

Surely heartlessness could no further go! Can we be surprised to find Dante's denunciation of Pisa matched in the same canto by a yet more bitter cry against the Genoese, whose still living bodies he seems to say are wont to be inhabited by incarnate fiends, while their souls freeze in the lowest Hell of all save that reserved for Satan himself and the three arch-traitors?—

Ahi Genovesi, uomini diversi
 D' ogni costume e pien d' ogni magagna
 Perchè non siete voi dal mondo spersi? ¹

Poor Pisan ladies! "They shrieked aloud" in impotent rage and sorrow: and when they arrived home again, half-swooning from grief and exhaustion, "their fair faces lacerated and their hair torn," it was only to find

¹ *Inf.* xxxiii. 151 sqq.

that pestilence had been at work in their absence, to complete the ravages of war.

Of the enormous waste of life, the aimless and capricious infliction of pain, there can be no manner of doubt. Not only were the robbers of the Emilia and the savage mercenaries of Lombardy and Liguria "ingenious inventors of new kinds of torment" (Salimbene gives a gruesome list of seven typically atrocious modes); but the municipalities themselves, in the name of justice, were often guilty of the most inhuman acts.

Some light is thrown on this subject by Brunetto Latini, notary of Florence and Dante's informal instructor, in the last book of his *Trésor*, the volume which he commends so pathetically to the Poet when they meet in the other world: ¹

Siatì raccomandato il mio *Tesoro*
Nel quale io vivo ancora; e più non choggio.

This ninth book is occupied with the duties and rights of a "Signore" or "Podestà," the foreign governor chosen annually by so many Italian cities of that day. Brunetto here recommends that the torture should only be applied in very definite cases and for well-defined purposes. This, however, is theory; and on the next page we have practice. There he has to admit that though even in cases of serious crime the authorities ought to err rather on the side of gentleness and humanity, contemporary officials did not, as a matter of fact, observe this principle, but "*le tormentent au plus fierement que il pueent*".² And Salimbene bears out this statement.

At Reggio in 1287 a poor youth who was merely sus-

¹ *Inf.* xv. 119, 120.

² *Liv.* iii. Pt. II. c. 20.

pected of abetting the escape of some prisoners, was made to sit with his feet upon a pan of live coals, to which the bellows were applied at intervals, while his father was dragged in as an unwilling spectator.

In 1250 the people of Cremona—who themselves were renowned as “*inventores novorum tormentorum*”—had in their grasp a number of Parmese prisoners of war. Partly for vengeance, partly to wring from them the utmost ransom, they loaded the poor men with chains, submitted them to various forms of outrage and ridicule, hung them up by their hands and feet, drew out their teeth “*terribili et horribili modo*,” and—crowning horror, according to the ideas of those days—inserted toads into their mouths.

Occasionally interest, in the case of a noble and powerful victim, or the mildness of the officer concerned, might reduce these tortures to a farce. There is an amusing tale of the official torturing of a noble named Guido de Albereto at Reggio in 1286, when the Podestà was reported to have apologised profusely to the criminal, with whom he was closeted alone. People afterwards doubted whether anything painful had occurred at all; for, though the victim told harrowing tales of what he had gone through, and had himself supported on either hand as he limped down the steps of the Palazzo, he passed immediately into the house of a friend, Rolandino of Canossa, with whom he spent the whole day in feasting and hilarity. Some said he had escaped “on a consideration” “*medicante pecunia cui obediunt omnia*,” and had suffered no more than was involved in sitting on a weighing machine for meal and chatting with the representative of the majesty of Reggio.¹

¹Salimbene, sub ann.

But the terrors of the law—even in its normal judicial punishments in time of peace—were usually serious enough and savage enough. Hints are to be found in Dante; as when in the prophetic description of the end of Corso Donati¹ he describes a man dragged at a horse's tail—"At each step the beast tears faster onward, ever increasing its speed, until it smites him and leaves his corpse hideously mutilated". Again, when the poet is to pass through the ring of fire to reach the earthly Paradise, he shrinks and peers at the flame in fascination of horror, with hands outstretched: "vividly picturing to myself," he says, "human bodies which I had erewhile seen burning".² Finally, in the Hell of the Simoniacs he describes the punishment of "lo perfido assassin," who is buried alive, head downwards, "planted in the earth," and calls back again and again the friar who stands by to confess him, in order to delay, if it be but for a moment, the final stage of his execution.³

These passages, like others in the *Divina Commedia*, receive forcible illustration from the early annals of Bologna,⁴ where a definite confraternity was charged with the "conforteria" of condemned criminals, and elaborate instructions (still extant) provided, from which we learn that the prisoner had the solace of the confessor's company from the dungeon to the block itself during all the tedious ceremonies and processions which were apt to precede a mediæval execution. [At Bologna in the first half of the fourteenth century, and no doubt earlier still, witchcraft,⁵

¹ *Purg.* xxiv. 83 *sqq.*

² *Ibid.* xxvii. 17, 18.

³ *Inf.* xix. 49-51; *cf.* *Purg.* xxvii. 15.

⁴ Frati, *La Vita Privata di Bologna*, pp. 78-89.

⁵ In 1279 one Tixia Tricola was burned alive as a witch: "Eo quia fecerat malias et affecturaverat uxorem [alicujus] ex qua affecturatione ipsa decessit".

heresy, infanticide, and the extreme forms of impurity were punished by burning—the criminal bound alive inside an erection of straw soaked in oil. Those who were convicted of implication in popular tumults—even if unarmed when they were arrested—were condemned to be dragged at the horse's tail. The recognised forms of corporal punishment included, besides decapitation, the removal of eyes, feet, hands, tongue and nose, while blasphemers and various other criminals were liable to scourging. At Bologna delinquent priests, at Venice sodomites, were condemned to the painful punishment of the "gabbia"; shut up naked in a strong iron cage which was suspended by chains to some high tower,¹ they were exposed, sometimes for weeks together, to the fury of the elements and the insulting mockery of the populace. The first mention of this form of punishment at Bologna is the case of a priest that had slain a brother priest who was rival claimant for a certain benefice. He died probably partly of starvation and partly of exposure to the heat of the sun; for his punishment began in June and lasted till death released him forty-eight days later.²

Punishment was often strangely out of proportion to the crime: for instance in 1288 a certain Martino da Polesina, convicted of false accusation, was first flayed, then burned alive. In 1321, the year of Dante's death, a Spanish scholar at Bologna was beheaded for plotting the abduction of a girl who was related to a famous professor; and Romeo de' Pepoli made himself very unpopular by trying to beg off the delinquent.³

In 1261 a band of young men, of noble family but ill-conditioned, raided a number of shops at night. For days

¹ *E.g.*, on the Asinelli Tower in Bologna, at a height of over sixty feet.

² Griffoni, *Cron.* sub ann.

³ *Ibid.* sub ann.

no trace of the culprits could be discovered, but when, by a lucky chance the Podestà caught them, he had one and all hanged. Among them was a scion of the house of Asinelli, the family to which we owe the graceful tower that is one of the chiefest glories of Bologna.

The murder of a gentleman would naturally merit severe punishment; but it is none the less horrible to hear of a poor man being boiled alive for it. This happened, however, in the public piazza in Parma, in the year of grace 1236, when a certain cleric, after being solemnly degraded from all orders and ecclesiastical functions, was *coctus in una calderia*.¹

At Bologna, again, in 1253, a man who had thrown his nephew down a well was rolled naked in a barrel of spikes through the streets to the place of execution, where he was mercifully beheaded.²

Sometimes lynch-law prevailed, and the populace demanded its victims, as in 1311,³ in the same city, when the authorities were forced by the furious demands of the people (who threatened to burn down the Podestà's Palace), to drop down certain Ghibelline captives into their midst, "whom straightway they cruelly slew"; then the boys tore them limb from limb and carried the pieces through the streets. Doubtless the victims occasionally protested, as did Antonio de Bruscolo,⁴ an innocent victim of the end of the century, quaintly protesting that none of his family had ever been hanged, and that he positively refused to mount the ladder!—"quod aliquis de domo sua fuerat suspensus et aliquo modo noluit in super scalam ascendere"—but they were fortunate if their protests, like his, availed even to change the form of their death.

¹ *Cron. Parmens.* sub ann.

² Griffoni, sub ann.

³ *Ibid.* sub ann.

⁴ *Ibid.* sub ann. 1399.

Few, indeed, of the punishments of that age were so humane or so obviously designed to promote the ultimate good of the culprit as that ordained for blasphemy in the somewhat puritanical statutes¹ of Primiero, an earlier draft of which was confirmed by Alessandro Novello, Bishop of Feltre, Dante's "Empio pastor".² For every offence, whether committed during a game or not (was golf then invented?) sixty soldi or a triple "ducking in the Water".

Cruel, indeed, was the treatment that unwary travellers might expect at the hands of robbers, prisoners of war from their captors, convicted criminals from the recognised representatives of justice; members of one faction from those of the other. But that is not all. Within the circle of the household itself atrocities were sometimes committed by masters upon their servants, such as recall the worst features of pagan Roman society. Salimbene tells us gruesome tales of the great Ghibelline, Philip Archbishop of Ravenna, albeit there are sides of the man's character which he evidently admires. A servant forgot to put in the salt when the archbishop was starting for a river expedition to his country seat. The culprit was bound with a cord, flung into the water, and dragged all day long at the tail of the barge. Another member of his household he caused to be tied to a large spit and roasted slowly before the fire, while the rest stood weeping for very pity. A third, whom he accused of "wasting his goods," he threw into a dungeon to be devoured by rats. And these, says the chronicler, are but instances of numerous cruelties exercised by the archbishop on "those who were of his family".³

¹ *Statutes*, bk. i. cap. 11: "Di non bestiemar Iddio, Maria, ne i suoi Santi". See Giulio Rizzoli, *Notizie storiche di Primiero*, 1900.

² *Par.* ix. 53.

³ Salimbene, sub ann. 1250 (p. 205).

In Italy of the thirteenth century men did indeed live fast and fiercely, albeit without the nervous rush of modern life, when the triumphs of applied science have brought our existence to an unexampled pitch of intensity, and the evils of a growing and complex civilisation are enhanced by physical degeneracy.

The physique of the race was, on the average, higher. There is something typical in Dante's glowing panegyric of the glory of youth and health, when the soul

Sua persona adorna di beltate
Con le sue parti accorte.¹

The rougher conditions of living, combined with the absence of sound sanitary or medical knowledge, automatically removed the majority of the weak and sickly ere they had opportunity to propagate their physical defects.

Not that there was wanting that touch of the pathetic, whose function is to evoke in every generation the virtues of pity and compassion. Then, as ever,

Sunt lacrymae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.

But the normal objects of compassion—the beggars who congregate at church doors and pose, one's head upon another's shoulder, "that they may awaken pity in passers-by not by the sound of their words only, but by the sight that pleads as strongly"—

Perchè in altrui pietà tosto si pogna
Non pur per lo sonar delle parole
Ma per la vista che non meno agogna,²

are folk destined by Nature for a strong and lusty life, the victims of fraud or savagery—destitute—"a cui la roba falla"—blinded, crippled, maimed, mutilated as the result

¹ *Conv.* iv. 25 *fin.* (p. 331); *Canzone* iii. l. 127 (p. 295).

² *Purg.* xiii. 64-66.



A FOURTEENTH CENTURY CAVALCADE
CAMPO SANTO, PISA. FRESCO ATTRIBUTED TO ANDREA ORCAGNA

of deliberate torture.¹ The pitiable cases of the Middle Ages were to a vast extent surgical, not medical: victims of an Ezzelino or the like. And the few weak ones who survived—deformed, hunchbacks and other monstrosities—owed to their physical defects not only survival but a tolerable and, in its own way, honourable career at the courts of great lords.

Life, then, was healthy and robust in itself, but terribly risky in its conditions. Powerful, indeed, must be the man who could feel himself safe from the assaults of his neighbours, who could be sure of ending his days in peace, or even of finding his home still standing and his family safe and inviolate on his return from a temporary absence.

An age of blood and iron, an age when life is precarious, and its vicissitudes vast and uncertain, when passions are hot and unrestrained and the healthiness of the average physique tends to make violence all the more masterful—such an age is bound to reflect its spirit upon the face of its religion.

The religion of the thirteenth century at its best is robust, almost reckless: ready to do all, to give up all, to endure all—the religion of Saint Francis and Saint Dominic. Its methods are apt to be, as in Saint Dominic's case, unduly forceful. Its visions of the future life are coloured by the present. The longed-for joys of heaven are all the more vivid, in contrast to the miserable uncertainties of earth. For the desolate exile it is a hope of unfailing comfort

¹“ Il Ventura dice di avere visto passare per Este molti uomini accecati, donne senza mammelle, bimbi abbacinati (*i.e.* blinded, by being forced to gaze at a red-hot basin) ed un infelice al quale mancavano il naso, la lingua, un occhio, una mano ed un piede.” These were the work of Ezzelino, who died when Guglielmo Ventura was eight or nine years old. See Brentani, *Ecelino*, pp. 21, 22.

and delight : homeless through no fault of his own, bereft of

Ogni cosa diletta
Più caramente ;¹

consumed with a passionate nostalgia, he is among those who "seek a country," "a city that hath foundations". The weak, the oppressed and persecuted, look for a future of unending rest and sure protection—"where the wicked cease from troubling". A burning and indignant sense of injustice leads men to brood on the torments that await the oppressor in the other world ; and the tortures of the damned are naturally described in terms of familiar modes of cruelty.

The typical monsters of cruelty, Ezzelino and Alberico, were named "membra diaboli,"² and the torments which they and their like delighted to inflict on their fellow-men formed a natural starting-point for a conception of those eternal pains of hell which the tyrants were in turn to suffer at the hands of the fallen angels.

The traditional eschatological symbols of the Divine vengeance awaiting the wicked, derived, as modern criticism tells us, from the apocalyptic literature of later Judaism, through the inspired imagery of the Christian Apocalypse, were full of meaning for the men of the Middle Ages. Forged of old in the fires of persecution—in the iron furnace of an Antiochus Epiphanes and of a Nero and a Domitian—these weapons took their mediæval shape amid an environment of cruelty as ingenious and intense as any to be found in the famous epochs of antiquity.

¹ *Par.* xvii. 55, 56.

² Salimbene, sub ann. 1250 (pp 179-82). There is probably no idea as yet of attributing his literal parentage to the fiend. See above p. 124 note.

When towards the middle of the thirteenth century Frederic II fell under blow after blow of misfortune, men whispered of the Divine judgment already laying its hand upon him; and when, in 1259, earthly vengeance overtook Ezzelino da Romano, an entire population, that had "trembled before him" every day of their lives, "as a reed shaketh in the water,"¹ felt that nemesis was only just begun. An eternity of torture could not be too much for the man who had burned alive eleven thousand innocent citizens to the accompaniment of songs and military sports; who had literally blotted out all the noblest and most prosperous families in his dominions, sparing neither age nor sex, and subjecting his victims often to outrage far worse than death itself. Dante sees no more than his contemporaries saw when he feasts his eyes upon the tyrant immersed up to his coal-black locks in the boiling blood of Phlegethon.²

He had revelled in warm blood in this life: his taste had been formed for eternity, and his doom should correspond thereto. To him might be applied the famous words of Queen Tomyris to the dead Cyrus:—

Sangue sitisti, ed io di sangue t' empio.³

The symbolic torments of Dante's *Inferno*—sometimes grotesque, sometimes nauseating, always luridly terrible—reflect, in part, a prominent aspect of the Age.

There is behind them, it is true, the purpose of a subtle artist. They are arranged with marvellous ingenuity to correspond with the type of sin punished in each case, and to teach the lesson of the organic unity of sin and doom. They are deliberately meant, in some instances at

¹ Salimbene, sub ann. 1250 (p. 182).

² *Inf.* xii. 109, 110.

³ *Purg.* xii. 57.

least, to pour ridicule—a disdainful and indignant ridicule—upon the futile, monstrous hideousness of sin. But any one who reads the records of that Age—of the years which form the historic background of the *Divina Commedia*, will often find it hard to distinguish between the tortures of the poet's *Inferno*, and those of that hell on earth which human savagery devised for its fellows. The latter are temporal, the former eternal: the latter are mostly capricious, illogical; the former have a divine significance. Therein lies, probably, the only essential difference.

So intensely real was this future world of consolation and torment to the men of the thirteenth century, that they could not but regard a sceptic like Frederic of Swabia—for whom, according to all accounts, the future world was non-existent or negligible—as a monstrous abortion. He is the subject of awful and mysterious prediction by Merlin and the Sibyl, as by Abbot Joachim of Flora.¹ His past is veiled in mystery.² The tidings of his death is barely credible: his future resuscitation to plague posterity is vaguely expected.³

But religion, in general, was a potent force. True, its action upon the headstrong was intermittent, spasmodic, dependent more, perhaps, on a superstitious nervousness natural to the bully, than on any reasoned and permanent influence upon character of the expectation of a Divine Judgment or the realisation of an Eternal World. Superstition was rife. If it was not superstition it was something very like it that led crowds of poor men, women and boys, who had taken the cross for the Holy Land, to expect to cross the Mediterranean dryshod,⁴ as the Israelites of old

¹ Salimbene, sub ann. 1216 and 1250.

² *Ibid.* sub ann. 1229 (p. 16).

³ *Ibid.* sub ann. 1284 (p. 308).

⁴ *Ibid.* sub ann. 1212.

had crossed the Red Sea. But that was at least an open and generous if fanatical form of credulity: there were others less seemly. Divination and necromancy, though regarded as strictly illicit—we have already referred to Dante's "Hell of the Diviners," where the gentle Asdente suffered for his presumption—divination and necromancy were largely resorted to in moments of crisis. Salimbene records how the Lombard Crusaders of the previous generation¹ used to inquire of diviners concerning their affairs at home, and how his own father, conscientiously refusing to do so, was rewarded by finding his home affairs distinctly prosperous on his return.

The good frate himself puts a modified faith in dreams: one of his came true: "et cognovimus quod aliquando vera sunt somnia".² And he admits that "daemones" are occasionally true prophets, though the predictions of "just men" are to be preferred.³ He has a laugh, it is true, at that large class of predictions which are only discovered when they have already been fulfilled.⁴ And he tells an amusing story of the unmasking, in 1284, of the imposture of a pet astrologer and diviner—a man of Brescia—whom the people of Modena had been keeping for some time at great expense to the commune. He was a one-eyed man, and could not risk the loss of his remaining orb. When he promised that "in the third fight Modena should be victorious," they replied:—

¹ Salimbene, sub ann. 1229.

² *Ibid.* p. 141.

³ *Ibid.* sub ann. 1287 (p. 384): Guido de Albereto elicited true predictions from "quemdam indivinum. . . . Per quod patet quod non solum per prophetas praedicuntur futura, verum etiam quandoque per daemones et per homines peccatores sed et melius per justos."

⁴ *Ibid.* sub ann. 1286 (p. 366): *à propos* of Aegidius Bafulus' smiting of the gate of Constantinople on the occasion of the Latin conquest of that city.

“We have been beaten on Monday and on Tuesday. Choose us another day for the third fight: but mind, if we lose the battle, you lose your eye!”

That night the diviner collected his goods and departed without any good-bye and leaving no address; and the Modenese became a laughing-stock to their neighbours.

Witchcraft and necromancy were normal factors in daily life, as are to-day in Southern Italy the superstitions connected with the “evil eye”. We have seen how poor Tixia was burned alive for witchcraft at Bologna. That might have happened in England, not so many centuries ago. But the stories of necromancy current in the thirteenth century are more romantic and less gruesome reading. In the collection called *Il Novellino*¹ we are told how three “maestri di nigromanzia” appeared at the court of Frederic II, clad in the long thick robes of pilgrims. “Which of you three is the master?” asked the Emperor. “I,” answered one of them stepping forward. The Emperor then prayed them to show their art courteously. As they wove their enchantments the weather began to change. And lo! suddenly, a storm of rain—then thunder, lightning, thunderbolts, and hailstones like balls of steel. Frederic’s knights fled hither and thither throughout the palace chambers. Then the weather cleared up. The necromancers craved a guerdon for their pains. “Ask on,” said the Emperor.

“Let the Conte di San Bonifazio² come with us and fight our enemies.” The count was sent with them, arrived in their country, was received with great pomp,

¹ No. xvii.

² The Conti di S. Bonifazio were a noted Ghibelline family; one of them was husband of Cunizza, sister to Ezzelino da Romano.

fought [three pitched battles and liberated the land. He married a wife and begat children. Years passed, till his eldest son was forty and he an old man. Then the necromancers who had left him returned and asked whether he would like to revisit the Emperor. The count demurred : it was useless, the Emperor would be dead long since, and all else changed. Finally he was persuaded, travelled many-days, and arrived at the court to find the Emperor and his barons still being served with the same water that was being poured out for them when he started !

“What news?” said the Emperor.

“Why, I have a wife, and children forty years old. I have fought three pitched battles . . . *il mondo è tutto rivolto : come va questo fatto?*”

“Lo 'mperadore,” the story concludes, “li le fa raccontare con grandissima festa a' baroni ed a' cavalieri.”

Another tale of necromancy is narrated by Salimbene. In this again the chief characters are historical personages and the story serves incidentally to illustrate the serious way in which the Black Art was taken. A poor Tuscan scholar from the district of Pistoja found his way as a boy to far Toledo, consumed with a desire to learn from a competent professor the mysteries of necromancy. A kindly knight found him in the streets of that city, and, learning that he was a fellow-Italian, took him up and introduced him to a recognised teacher, “a deformed old man, who was an efficient master of that art”. It is as matter-of-fact as though he had been apprenticed to a wool merchant or a goldsmith. The story and its sequel both illustrate the ideas of the time. The narrative reads almost like one of Grimm's fairy tales. The necromancer takes the youth into a chamber and gives him a mys-

terious book, saying: "When I have left you, you can study this". Then he goes out, locking the door behind him. As the boy reads he suddenly becomes aware that the room is full of demons of different shapes and sizes, who rush hither and thither in the form of rats and mice, and dogs, and pigs. He is at a loss what to say to them . . . and lo! he finds himself outside, sitting in the street.

The Master comes up and inquires, "What are you doing here, my son?"

He then relates what has happened, and the performance is repeated, only that this time the demons take the form of boys and girls.

Then the necromancer, finding his poor pupil in the street once more, gives him a bit of excellent advice. "You Lombards," he says—it is the foreigner's name for Italians in general¹—"You Lombards are not made for this art. Leave it to us Spaniards, who have more of the ferocity of the demon about us. Do thou, my son, go to Paris and study theology, for in the Church thou shalt yet be great—'in ecclesia Dei adhuc futurus es magnus'."²

The boy, whose name was Philip, followed the genial necromancer's advice, and rose in course of time to be Archbishop of Ravenna and Legate in Lombardy. He is in fact the redoubtable prelate whose harshness to his servants — surely somewhat *similis dæmonibus*? — we have already cited. When Urban IV died at Perugia on 4th October, 1264, Philip, still mindful of the old Spaniard's

¹ So Dante also seemed to imply in *Purg.* xxi. 125, when he says that Guido of Reggio is called "Francescamente, il semplice Lombardo".

² Sub ann. 1250, p. 200: "Vos lombardi non estis pro arte ista, et ideo dimittatis eam nobis hispanis, qui homines feroces et similes dæmonibus sumus. Tu vero fili, vade Parisius et stude in scriptura divina, quia in ecclesia Dei adhuc futurus es magnus".

words "in ecclesia Dei adhuc futurus es magnus," expected to succeed to the Papacy, and was grievously disappointed when the choice fell on the Frenchman, who as Clement IV called in Charles of Anjou, and thus became responsible for the disasters of Benevento and Tagliacozzo and the ruin of the Imperial House of Swabia. How different might have been the course of history, if during those years a Ghibelline like Philip, had been sitting in the chair of St. Peter!

But it is the contemporary estimate of necromancy which is our immediate concern. And surely the mixture of kindly common sense in the story of Philip's experiences at Toledo, only emphasises the estimation in which the Black Art was held; while the easy transition from that to the thought of theological study as an alternative, is typical of the way in which religion and superstition were mingled in men's minds. So we find that prophecies attributed to Merlin¹ "the Bard of Anglia" were freely quoted by theologians of irreproachable orthodoxy, side by side with the predictions of Holy Writ, and the very popular and pointed interpretations of these by the Abbot Joachim of Flora. And the Church's acceptance of an infidel's predictions is defended by the analogy not only of "the Sibyl," but also by that of Balaam and Elihu in the Old Testament, and Caiaphas in the New.²

¹ Sub ann. 1250 (p. 170), Salimbene gives *in extenso*, a long prose prediction of Merlin's "concerning the first and the second Frederic": sub ann. 1248 (p. 309), verses attributed to the same seer, concerning the future of Lombardy, Tuscany, Romagnola and the March.

² Salimbene, sub ann. 1248 (p. 107). The list of prophetic writings interpreted by Asdente is interesting in this connection: "Joachim, Merlin, Methodius, Sibil, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Daniel and Michael Scot" (Salimbene, sub ann. 1282).

There is one little story of Salimbene's that is specially worth quoting here, because it shows superstition rife among the laity—and in a class where one might least have expected it—and rebuked by the priest with a shrewd word of irony.¹

The "fast" French students of Salimbene's day used to suffer much from inflammation of the eyes, consequent on excessive drinking carried on into the small hours of the morning. When the malady was more than ordinarily painful they would go to some priest who had celebrated an early Mass and beg him to anoint their eyes with drops of the water that had been used for the "lavabo". On one occasion some of these "bloods" received an answer which they did not expect: "Alé ke malotta ve don Dé; metti del aighe in les vins, non in less ocli!" A forcible suggestion that they should put water not in their eyes, but in the wine they drank.

Miracles were expected in those days and were believed to have occurred; and who shall say that they were all imaginary? The evidence for the *Stigmata* of Saint Francis is, of course, remarkably strong; and sudden and remarkable faith healings may have occurred then as now under conditions of great nervous excitement and mental exaltation: at the tomb of a saint, or under the mesmeric influence of a great revivalist preacher. Yet if the genuine rewards of faith formed the nucleus of the list, credulity no doubt contributed its quota, and that a large one. Credulity was indeed a factor so constant and reliable that clever impostors were ready to risk much in playing upon it. Salimbene exposes the "trufatoria miracula"² worked

¹ Salimbene, sub ann. 1248 (p. 92).

² Sub ann. 1279 (pp. 275, 276).

in connection with a supposititious saint of Cremona; another of Padua and a third of Ferrara.

The first case is an interesting one because it has also a political bearing. The cult of Albert of Cremona was favoured by the Ghibellines, who hoped for restoration to the cities from which they had been banished, in the general enthusiasm evoked by his relics. The man had been a "brentator" or carrier of wine (and a free drinker of the same, as the chronicler maliciously adds).

His cult was not authorised or recognised by the Holy See, but was pushed, so to speak, by the "drink interest" which reaped a goodly profit in the offerings of the faithful. At Parma, Reggio and Cremona the enthusiasm for the relics of this uncanonised saint reached a high pitch. Its climax—and anti-climax—came when an enormous gathering assembled in the "mother-church" of Parma to venerate the supposed little toe of the deceased Albert's foot which had been brought from Cremona for the purpose.

It was a moment of great triumph for the enemies of the friars, who were twitted with the existence of a modern saint—actually outside their Order!

"Vos creditis," said the votaries of Albert to the Franciscans and Dominicans, "vos creditis quod nullus possit miracula facere nisi sancti vestri, sed bene estis decepti, ut nunc apparet in isto."

But pride was swiftly followed by a fall. In the supreme moment when the supposed relic was placed on the high altar of the great Church, to be kissed by the prelates present, its odour of *garlic*—"odorem allii, seu foetorem"—revealed the imposture, and the thing ended in a fiasco.¹

¹Sub ann. 1279 (p. 276).

But though detected imposture would no doubt give a shock not only to credulity but to faith itself, yet the religious instinct was very potent in its way, and was excited almost to frenzy by such a phenomenon as a solar eclipse or a comet or an earthquake. Dante, like Dino, attaches significance to the fiery cross, which the latter saw with his own eyes standing over Florence in November, 1301, as a presage of the impending calamities.¹ But an eclipse of the sun is to him a merely natural phenomenon, from which astronomical deductions may be drawn.²

To the previous generation such an eclipse was a portent of dreadful meaning. It would throw a whole population on its knees in a moment, and would be the signal for immediate reconciliation of the fiercest feuds. The heads of the government would sometimes take the lead in penitence and confession; as on the occasion of the great eclipse of 3rd June, 1239 (the year of Frederic II's excommunication), when the Podestà of Lucca, cross in hand, headed a procession of monks, friars, and citizens, delivered an eloquent discourse, "de passione Christi," and reconciled in person those who were at variance. Any widespread calamity would give rise to strange and fierce forms of devotion like that of the "Verberatores," predecessors of the later "Flagellantes," who passed in procession through the streets lashing themselves unmercifully: a spectacle which was found more edifying

¹ This was apparently a comet (*cf.* Villani, viii. 48). It is minutely described by Dino (ii. 19) who adds: "Onde la gente che la vide, e io che chiaramente la vidi, potemo comprendere che Iddio era fortemente contro alla nostra città crucciato". Similarly Dante (*Conv.* ii. 14, p. 266): "E in Fiorenza, nel principio della sua distruzione veduta fu nell' aere . . ." etc.

² *Conv.* ii. 3 (p. 254); *Par.* ii. 80; *cf.* *Par.* xxix. 97-106.

then than it would be to-day.¹ A curious instance of this tendency is related by Salimbene. One, Bernard Bafulo, on entering the Order of Saint Francis was moved to "demonstrate his fervour in wondrous wise". Unknown to the brethren this zealous novice arranged with two men to aid him in his exhibition of piety. He was tied to the tail of a horse, which one of his accomplices mounted and rode through the streets of Parma, while the other followed, belabouring Bernard lustily and shouting "Date latroni! Date latroni!" "Give it the robber!" At the customary rendezvous of polite loafers by the gate of S. Pietro, certain knights were standing, and believing the victim to be a real robber they at once took up the cry and joined in the good work. Thereupon Bernard lifted up his face and mildly answered: "In sooth ye have well said '*Date latroni*,' for hitherto have I lived the life of a robber, against God and my own soul, and so I am worthy to bend before such stripes". He then bade the men proceed, and go forth beyond the gates. "And those who sat under the portico," Salimbene concludes, "when they recognised him, ingemuerunt, et compuncti corde dixerunt; Vere vidimus mirabilia hodie".

Whilst the fiercer devotions made the streets resound in times of calamity and distress, there were sweeter strains to be heard in the comparatively rare intervals of peace. At such times the revival service in the vernacular known by the name of "Alleluia" became very popular throughout the cities of Italy. We have a graphic description of it from the pen of our chronicler, who, as a

¹As to the date of its commencement Salimbene is inconsistent, giving 1250 in one place, in another 1260,

boy of twelve, in 1233¹ watched the originator of this movement at Parma from a convenient perch he had found on the wall of the episcopal palace then building.

The name of this thirteenth century "Salvationist" was Benedictus de Cornetta.² He was an independent monk; not a Franciscan, though friendly with the friars. Good, simple, illiterate as many a modern revivalist, his garb was "like that of John the Baptist".

He had a long black beard, and wore an "Armenian" cap, a long coat down to the feet, dark like sack-cloth, and a girdle of skin. His "toga" was "ad modum guascapi facta" and had a broad red cross before and behind descending from the neck to the feet, "sicut in planetis sacerdotalibus fieri solet". He carried a small trumpet of gilded brass (oricalco) with which he blew blasts at once startling and sweet—"et terribiliter reboabat tuba sua, necnon et dulciter".

The form of his service was simple. He began with the *Gloria Patri* in the vernacular. "Laudato et benedetto et glorificato sia lo Patre," said the leader, and this was taken up by the crowd, in which the high-pitched voices of the boys predominated. "Laudato et benedetto et glorificato sia lo Fijo," and finally: ". . . sia lo Spiritu Sancto".

Then Benedict blew with his trumpet as a signal that the exhortation was to begin. And having "said a few words to the glory of God" he brought the service to a close with a hymn to the Blessed Virgin.

We may imagine the resounding roll of these hymns in the crowded piazza, when an entire city was stirred with the inebriation of religious excitement:—

¹ Salimbene, sub ann.

² *Frater Cornetus* he is called by the *Cronicon Parmense*,

Ave Maria—clemens et pia
 Gratia plena—Virgo serena :
 Dominus tecum—tu mane mecum.
 Tu benedicta in mulieribus
 Quae peperisti pacem hominibus
 Et angelis gloriam.
 Et benedictus fructus ventris tui,
 Qui cohaeredes ut essemus sui
 Nos fecit per gratiam.

The swing and the ring of it is still in the old friar's head as he is writing, just fifty years afterwards, in 1283.

The missionary, he tells us, was followed by a large crowd of boys, many of them bearing boughs and lighted candles. Nor were their elders absent.¹ "Et cantilenas cantabant et laudes divinas milites et pedites, cives et rurales, juvenes et virgines, senes cum junioribus." At Parma each division of the city was represented with the banner of its patron saint, and from the neighbouring villages a great stream poured in of men, women and children with swaying branches and flaming tapers. Morning, noon and evening there was a sermon. Devotional gatherings—"stationes"—were held in the churches and the piazzas, at which vast multitudes "lifted up their hands to heaven praising and blessing God for ever". "They knew not how to cease," says the chronicler—"a divinis laudibus cessare non poterant, ita erant inebriati amore divino . . .". And the "intoxication of Divine Love" did not spend itself in the moment's excitement; it expressed itself practically in an unwonted spirit of kindness, neighbourliness and peace.

Not least among the forces which told against unbridled violence was the eloquent preaching of the friars on the terrors of the Divine Judgment. Their fearless words

¹ So *Cron. Parmense*: "Et omnes ibant post eum cum ramis alborum et candelis accensis".

were enforced by an obvious sincerity against which not even the stoutest hearts were always proof. Salimbene tells a story which illustrates this point most graphically, and indeed gathers up so much that is typical of the romantic aspect of the age that it deserves to be cited at some length.¹ The hero of the tale—if indeed there be not two heroes—is a certain brother Berthold, a German by birth, of whose wonderful and indeed miraculous preaching many stories are related. None could hold an audience as he did—even in a great out-door crowd not a man ever got up and left before he had finished his discourse—except, as we shall see, on one memorable occasion.

His eloquence, so his hearers agreed, had never been matched, from the days of the holy Apostles; but when his subject was the terrors of the Day of Judgment the effect was indescribable. “When he preached,” says Salimbene, “of the Tremendous Judgment every one trembled like the reed in water, and they besought him for the love of God not to speak on that subject, for that it terribly and horribly distressed them to hear him.”

“Travelling once at nightfall with a lay brother, Berthold was seized by the assassins of a certain Castellan and haled off to the castle; and that night he spent there, fettered and ill-housed.

“Now that Castellan had so grievously offended his fellow-citizens that a picture had already been painted up in the Palazzo Comunale, showing what punishment he ought to suffer if he should be captured, *viz.*, the penalty of hanging.²

¹ Salimbene, sub ann. 1284 (p. 375 *sq.*).

² The custom of depicting the punishment of notorious criminals on the walls of public places existed in Bologna from the thirteenth down to the first half of the sixteenth century (Frati, p. 88).

"Next morning about dawn the chief executioner (*magister carnifex*) went to his lord and asked: 'What doth your lordship (*Dominatio vestra!*) command to be done to those *frati* that were brought hither last evening?'

"The Castellan replied: 'Put them away' (*Quod expedit eos*), which is to say, 'Slay them . . .'

"Now the manner of that Castellan and his assassins was to rob some and slay others; others again they used to hale to their castle and cast into prison until money should be given for their ransom. Others they killed outright.

"Brother Berthold was asleep; but his lay companion was awake and engaged in saying his matin office. So he, overhearing the sentence of death passed on them by the Castellan, since there was but a parti-wall between them, began to call out Brother Berthold's name again and again.

"Now when the Castellan caught the name of Brother Berthold, he began to wonder whether the man were that famous preacher of whom such marvellous things were told; and straightway he called back the executioner and bade him do the brethren no hurt, but bring them into his presence.

"When they were led forth he asked them what were their names; whereupon the lay brother answered: 'My name is so and so, and this is Brother Berthold, that famous and gracious preacher by whom God hath wrought so many miracles'.

"Then the Castellan . . . immediately fell at the feet of Brother Berthold and embraced and kissed him; and afterwards he begged him for the love of God that he might hear him preach, for that for a long time he had been desirous to hear from him the word of salvation . . ."

Berthold consented, but only on condition that all the "malefactors" in the castle should also be assembled to listen. Then, as he went apart for silent prayer, the lay brother whispered in his ear: "Know ye, Brother Berthold, that the sentence of death had been passed upon us by that man; wherefore if ever you have preached well on the pains of hell and the glory of paradise, now you will need all your art".

"Hearing this Brother Berthold gave himself up wholly to earnest prayer, and when he turned round again he discoursed so splendidly to the assembled congregation, setting before them the word of salvation, that all were moved to the most bitter weeping. Before he left the place he had heard the confession of each one, and had enjoined them all to depart from that castle, to restore the goods they had stolen, and to live all the rest of their life in constant penitence, that so they might win eternal life.

"The Castellan threw himself at Brother Berthold's feet, and with many tears begged him, for the love of God, to deign to receive him into the Order of the Blessed Francis. And the brother received him, hoping to obtain this boon at the hands of the General Minister. But when he would have followed Berthold the brother forbade him, because of the fury of the people whom he had offended; for they would have heard nought of his conversion."

In the sequel, however, the converted robber was irresistibly attracted by the prospect of hearing another sermon from the same lips, and followed him.

Berthold was preaching to the populace in a river bed—"just like that of the Reno at Bologna"—says Salimbene, and near by were the corpses of robbers hanging on gibbets.

Suddenly a quite unprecedented thing occurred. The

preacher gradually awoke to the fact that his congregation was disappearing, and that in the middle of the sermon ! They were all rushing in one direction. He asked one what it meant, and was told that they had just caught the notorious Castellan, and were going to hang him. Berthold himself ran off immediately, but arrived just too late to save his new convert from the penalties of the law.

When he was cut down from the gallows they found a paper tied round his neck on which were inscribed the words of Wisdom iv. 13 *sq.* : *Consummatus in brevi explevit tempora multa* : " Being made perfect in a little while, he fulfilled long years ; for his soul was pleasing unto the Lord ; therefore hasted he out of the midst of wickedness ".

Then Brother Berthold sent for brethren from the convent in the city who brought a cross and bier and a Franciscan habit ; and Brother Berthold having related the whole story, they clad him in the garb for which he had longed, and " buried him in the place of the Brothers Minor, praising the Lord, who doeth such great things ".

CHAPTER V

DANTE'S ITALY

II.—THE GENTLER SIDE OF LIFE

SO far we have been looking at the sterner side of thirteenth century life: its cruel rigour and hardships, its crude and sombre beliefs. But it was not all a hell on earth. Indeed it is striking to see how the souls in Dante's Hell turn ever wistful eyes to the rough and wrangling life above as the "serene," the "tranquil," the "joyous existence".¹ Verily the Florence of Ciacco's day was no place for a "rest-cure": it was already seething with that envy and malice with which it was soon to overflow.² Yet as he lies prostrate in the circle of the gluttons, shivering and howling under a pitiless storm of rain and hail and snow, he speaks of his gourmand days in Florence as "la vita serena".³

Life has still its joys and solaces, its fresh air and sunshine—that

. . . aer dolce che dal sol s'allegra—⁴

which none but sulky natures fail to welcome. The period, like every other, has its gentler side. The balance of humanity is never wholly lost: "out of the strong" comes "forth sweetness".

Just as in an age of prevailing scepticism or worldliness

¹ *Inf.* vi. 51; xv. 49; xix. 102.

² *Ibid.* vi. 51, 52.

³ *Ibid.* 53.

⁴ *Ibid.* vii. 122.

there is always a hidden substratum of quiet, conscientious piety—Isaiah's "Remnant" — unnoticed, downtrodden, but bearing in itself the seeds of a hopeful future: just as in an era of general superstition and credulity some few minds will sprout up endowed with an almost rationalistic impulse to "prove all things"; so in this thirteenth century saturnalia of violence and passion, when in Carducci's phrase, the Church herself was "married to barbarism," there existed, not only hidden away in humble corners, but also occasionally in prominent positions, sweet and gracious characters living in the world that life for the sake of which many of the more ardent spirits abandoned the world and embraced the "religious" profession.

Woman, in the curiously affected yet not wholly artificial sentiment of the troubadour literature, exists only to be worshipped, hymned, loved at a distance. At the lowest, she is a peg on which to hang well-turned phrases; at the highest, the inspiration of no less a theme than the *Vita Nuova* and the *Divina Commedia*.

Meanwhile in the current doctrine of the Church, with its ascetic and celibate traditions, she tends to be regarded as a snare of the devil. Yet the Church herself, in the cult of the Blessed Virgin and the sainted virgins and matrons of the Calendar, set an example of a lofty estimate of womanhood in certain aspects. Dante in his own great way combines this ecclesiastical ideal with that of the troubadours—and lo! we have the heavenly Beatrice, in one aspect the "lady of his heart"; in another the symbol or personification of the Divine science of theology, leading man up to that beatific vision which she ever enjoys from her throne within the mystic rose.

A third view of woman, the practical, seems really to have held the field in ordinary sober life—that which is

inherited from the ancient world, Greek and Roman, and has perhaps been characteristic of *bourgeois* humanity in all ages. This is the ideal of the *Hausfrau*.

Cacciaguida's description of the sterling Florentine matron of his day reads almost like a passage from Pericles' panegyric where he descants upon the typical virtuous women of Athens.¹

Watch by the cradle and work at the distaff, varied by discourse to the children on the glories of ancient days, formed their daily round. There were no childless wives in Florence of the early twelfth century, and no *grandes toilettes*:—²

L' una vegghiava a studio della culla,
E consolando usava l' idioma
Che prima i padri e le madri trastulla;
L' altra traendo alla rocca la chioma
Favoleggiava colla sua famiglia
De' Troiani, di Fiesole e di Roma.³

The later writers of the Trecento, like Petrarch, managed to hold the troubadours' view of womankind side by side with the depreciatory estimate of the ecclesiastics: ⁴ while others, like Boccaccio, frankly licentious in general feeling, find their ideal of womanly virtue in domestic self-sacrifice and self-effacement. Griselda is the crown of the Decameron.

But the whole point of Cacciaguida's speech lies in the fact that the ladies of Dante's own day were less simple and domesticated; that their life was lived more in public.

¹ Thucydides, bk. ii. 45 *fn.*

² *Par.* xv. 100 *sqq.*; 113 *sq.*

³ *Ibid.* 121-26.

⁴ Compare his idealising of Laura with the extravagant depreciation of women in his letters; *e.g.* *Ep.* xiv. 3: "Foemina . . . verus est diabolus, hostis pacis, fons impatientiae, materia jurgiorum, qua caruisse tranquillitas certa est . . ." (Cited by P. Monnier, *Quattrocento*, p. 65).

And Sacchetti's stories, at the end of the period, together with the sumptuary legislation of the whole century, corroborate this, and suggest that the transition was already begun which should issue in the altered position of woman in the Renaissance.

The woman of the Renaissance was a mighty power in society, man's companion in the intellectual and aesthetic spheres, and sometimes even his instructress. The woman of the thirteenth century has perhaps not arrived at that point. Her place is in the home, but she is already something more than a domestic drudge, and the mere means of propagating the race: still less is she an incarnate fiend or a mere theme for rhymes. She is a positive force in practical life, a fellow-worker with Heaven in making "the crooked straight and the rough places plain".

Many are the gracious ladies, "fair and wise, kind, humble, and pious," whom Salimbene rejoices to meet in his travels from city to city. His own mother, Imelda, is an inspiring type of the older generation: humble, religious, given to fasting and alms, "never was she seen to be angry, never did she smite any of her servants". "It was ever her pleasure to keep through the winter, for the love of God, some poor contadina from the mountains, whom she furnished with food and raiment, albeit she had her own maidens who performed the service of the house."¹

In the next generation we have the charming figure of Donna Mabilia, wife of Azzo of Este, "fair, wise, gentle, generous, courteous, virtuous, humble, patient, a lover of peace, and ever devoted to God. . . . She had a furnace in her palace in a secret place (as I have seen with my own eyes), where she herself was wont to make rose-water and give it to the sick, wherefore the professional

¹ Sub ann. 1229 (p. 22).

physicians and apothecaries bare her no love: but she recked nought of such things, so long as she might succour sick folk and be pleasing in God's sight."¹

Nor was the influence of gentleness and humility wanting even in the sterner sex. The warrior, Rolandino of Canossa, had to judge the case of one of his own followers who had robbed a man of Albinea in time of peace. "Your man has stolen my oxen," said the aggrieved. Rolandino made the culprit restore them at once, and inquired: "Do you want anything more?" "Yes," was the reply, "I want the fellow to give back my coat which he has taken." Rolandino requested the thief to do so, but the latter sullenly refused. "Whereupon the lord Rolandino stripped off his own long robe *opitogium sive guarnazam* and gave it to the victim, saying: 'Here, meseems, is full satisfaction for your coat; now go in peace'.

"Whereat the 'rustic thief' fell blushing at the feet of Rolandino, confessed his fault, and restored the coat to the man whom he had robbed."²

And if woman exercised then, as ever, a softening influence upon the spirit of the age, neither did she fail of her perennial contribution to the outer picturesqueness of its private, public, and festal life.

For we must not suppose that the Italian ladies of the thirteenth century were always immured within the walls of their lords' palaces. If they had less freedom than their great-granddaughters, the liberty they enjoyed would have seemed shocking to the staid dames of Cacciaguida's time, and their *grandes toilettes* were apt to be conspicuous on great occasions, and their persons to contribute beauty, grace, and colour to the landscape.

¹ Sub ann. 1250 (p. 191).

² Sub ann. 1284.

Salimbene was astonished to find no gay ladies to line the streets and greet Saint Louis on his progress through Southern France in 1248. "The Senones," he quaintly remarks, "who under Brennus were so puissant that they conquered Rome, can now send out merely a batch of maidservants to greet the king—mulieres earum pro majori parte pedissequae esse videntur." If the French king, he adds, had been passing through Pisa or Bologna, all the "beauty and fashion" of those cities—"totum flos dominarum"—would have gone forth to greet him.

And the reason, as he sees, is that the nobility and gentlefolk in France lived apart in their country seats, leaving the towns entirely to the *bourgeoisie*; while the masterful Italian communes had for the most part already succeeded in compelling their nobles to become citizens, and live, for a part of the year at least, within the walls.¹

Dress and toilette, then, covered as large a horizon for the belle of the Trecento as for many a modern dame and damozel. And at any rate in the latter half of the thirteenth century the grand lady of the northern Italian cities, not content with the resources of her own district,—like her daughters of to-day for whom the drapers display their enticing rolls of "Stoffe inglesi,"—sought succour from beyond the Alps, and pined for the latest fashions of Paris, or at any rate of France.²

Her lord's apparel indeed, whether he were clad for war or for the chase or for municipal business, was a much gayer and brighter element in the landscape than the sober garb of modern Italian towns. Scarlet and furs and gold were prominent no doubt in life as in burial,³

¹ Sub ann. 1248.

² L. Frati, *La Vita Privata di Bologna*.

³ See a full description of the elaborate laying out of the body of Count Ludovico, "dei Conti Bonifazi di Verona," in Salimbene, sub ann. 1283.

and the long guarnacca made the layman's habit as flowingly picturesque as the modern priest's, without the latter's funereal tone of black.

To-day the male Italian's genius for dress is never seen in cities but on cold days in the draping of the cloak, and perhaps now and again on market days and *festas*, when the contadino—the "montanaro" . . .

Quando rozzo e salvatico s'inurba,¹

mingles his more natural and primitive garb with the ugly sobriety which is the homage that modern Europe pays to London. But in the Middle Ages while colour in Italy, as elsewhere, was more freely employed in male attire, the long gowns already referred to—such as that of which Rolandino made a present to the robbed man—sometimes lined or trimmed with coloured silk or costly furs, and garnished with gold embroidery and silver clasps² offered a great field for the display of the decorative instincts.

But the women were always far in advance of the men, and it is against them that the frequent sumptuary legislation, whether of Church or of State, is constantly directed.

By the close of the thirteenth century, or even sooner, the fashions of an earlier day had given way to greater luxury and ostentation: a development in which graver spirits like Dante and Giovanni Villani saw token of a fatal degeneration of taste and morals. Speaking of the year 1259 and thereabouts—the days of the "Primo Popolo"—Villani observes that the "Florentine women of the better sort wore their foot- and leg-gear without ornament, and were content with a scarlet gown of cloth

¹ *Purg.* xxvi. 69.

² *Cf. e.g.* one stolen in 1316, *ap. Frati, loc. cit.*



MALE COSTUME IN DANTE'S DAY

UPPER CHURCH, ASSISI. ST. FRANCIS' RENUNCIATION, GIOTTO

of Ypres or of camlet, lined with miniver and furnished with a hood which was worn over the head; while the common sort of women were clad in a coarse gown of Cambrai in like manner". And these costumes were part and parcel of a simpler, hardier, more economical and more honest style of living.¹

Dante's "Golden Age" lies in a more remote past. He looks wistfully back to the days of Cacciaguida and Bellincion Berti, when Florence, still within the restricted circle of her ancient walls, enjoyed a sober and chaste tranquillity:—

Fiorenza dentro dalla cerchia antica

Si stava in pace, sobria e pudica.²

The men of those days did not flaunt themselves in elaborate belts with costly buckles of precious metal—bone buckle and leathern girdle were enough for Gualdrada's father:—

Bellincion Berti vid' io andar cinto

Di cuoio e d' osso . . .³

And Bellincion's lady, mother of the fair Gualdrada, and through her ancestress of the great house of the Conti Guidi of Casentino,⁴ matched her lord in simplicity. She used no cosmetics like those later Florentine ladies whose skill in "painting" forms the subject of one of Sacchetti's most humorous sketches:⁵ "I saw," says Cacciaguida:—

Venir dallo specchio

La donna sua senza il viso dipinto.⁶

The women, sober in mien and domesticated in their habits, were not like the "embellished dames"—*donne*

¹ Villani, vi. 69.

² *Par.* xv. 97, 99.

³ *Ibid.* 112, 113.

⁴ See below, chap. ix., and Villani, v. 37.

⁵ No. cxxxvi.

⁶ *Par.* xv. 113, 114.

contigliate—of Dante's own day. There were none of the "pretty chains" hung about their persons, none of the diadems for head-dress, none of those amazing girdles that attracted the eye from the wearer to the thing worn—

che fosse a veder più che la persona.¹

In another passage Dante makes Forese Donati the mouthpiece of his views on the same subject. He puts into Forese's mouth a prediction of ecclesiastical censure on the immodesty of the prevailing feminine fashions: no long time hence (he is speaking in 1300) the extravagantly "low necks" of the Florentine ladies' confections shall be denounced from the pulpit.

Tempo futuro m'è gia nel cospetto
Cui non sarà quest' ora molto antica,
Nel qual sarà in pergamo interdetto
Alle sfacciate donne Fiorentine
L' andar mostrando con le poppe il petto.²

But it was not then that the Church began to fulminate against feminine vanity. Salimbene, under the year 1240—in Villani's "Golden Age" for Florence—gives us a picturesque and humorous account of the distress caused among the ladies of Lombardy, Tuscany and Romagna by the severe sumptuary edicts of the Papal Legate Cardinal Latino. The first prohibition was directed against those long trains which a contemporary rhymer describes as "sweeping the dust"—

E drappi lunghi, ke la polver menna.³

Henceforth the ladies were to be restricted to a modest skirt that should reach the ground with a bare palm's length to spare! When we consider the normal condition of a thirteenth century street, and the effect of trailing

¹ *Par.* xv. 100-102.

² *Purg.* xxiii. 98 sqq.

³ "Patecelus," Salimbene, sub ann. 1240.

thereon a "cubit and a half" of heavy drapery, we shall be inclined to admit that the Cardinal after all, was "on the side of the angels"—or, at any rate, of common sense and hygiene!

But such considerations did not enter into the purview of the actual victims of the Legate's enactments: they were confronted with the dreadful alternative of parting with their trains, "which were more dear to them than all the rest of the dress put together,"¹ or of going unshriven when they went to confession.

The same Cardinal also commanded all women—maidens, wives and widows alike—to wear a veil. They hated it at first, like the former restriction, says Salimbene, but soon turned the law to good account, procuring veils of fine linen and silk interwoven with gold, which set off their pretty faces and made them ten times more fascinating to the eye.² And in the Bolognese records of the next generation we may perhaps see a corroboration of Salimbene's utterance. For we find there³ that the silk veil (falling amply over the shoulders and gathered coquetishly under the chin) is prominent among the articles of female head-dress. From 1294 the Commune forbade such veils to be interwoven with gold thread; and towards the end of the following century special legislation had to be directed against the widows of Bologna, whose veils were not to exceed ten lire in value, while

¹ Salimbene *loc. cit.*: "Nam quaedam mulier familiariter dixit mihi quod plus erat ei kara illa cauda quam totum aliud vestimentum quod induebatur."

² Salimbene, sub ann. 1240: "Nam vela faciebant fieri de bysso et serico auro intexta, cum quibus in decuplum melius apparebant, et magis ad lasciviam videntium oculos attrahebant".

³ See L. Frati, *La Vita Privata di Bologna*. In 1316 a vendor was robbed of sixty-one veils worth sixty lire *bolognini*.

their complete "costume di lusso" was not to cost more than fifty lire, or to be lined with satin, or with ermine or other precious furs.

It is from records of robberies and of sumptuary legislation that we derive most of our detailed knowledge on this subject; yet other sources are not entirely wanting.

From the chronicler of Faenza we glean a positive description of the women's dress in the thirteenth century in his part of the country. "They wore on their heads," says Gregorio Zuccolo,¹ "a chaplet of gold and silver thread; had the neck all bare without any ornament to the point where the bodice (*busto della veste*) begins. The *veste* itself was girt above the flanks with a golden girdle, often adorned with gems. Some had the bodice adorned with gold and the rest of the dress of purple (*paonazza*) or of crimson silk, with open sleeves hanging halfway down the leg and usually reversed over the shoulders, as were also frequently the sleeves of the *chemisette*, which were open, allowing the bare arms to be seen. The arms were artificially whitened, and were adorned with ornamental chains or bracelets (*monile*) of gold."

The close of the thirteenth century was prolific in sumptuary laws. Venice, after a long course of naval successes and consequent mercantile development, had begun to awake to the consciousness of her own great prosperity, and for some time had openly encouraged both private and public magnificence. But in the year 1299² she discovered that things were going too fast, and initiated a series of sumptuary enactments on the ground that the multiplication of expensive ornaments was apt to

¹ Cited by Frati, *op. cit.* pp. 29, 30.

² P. Molmenti: "La Grandezza di Venezia" (in *La Vita Italiana nel Trecento*, p. 360).

be too heavy a drain on the family exchequer—"dannosi alle facultà delli gentilhomeni!"

And the frequent sumptuary edicts issued contemporaneously by the severe Commune of Bologna tell the same tale, while they suggest specifically that towards the end of the century the head-dress was a "burning question,"¹ and the chaplets or "crowns" of which both Dante and Gregorio Zuccolo speak were especially esteemed. These crowns, as they appear in the Statutes of Bologna, were sometimes of beaten gold or silver, sometimes also adorned with pearls. There was also a fashion of wearing nets of woven gold, and of interweaving the tresses with threads of gold and silver; and this latter custom became at one time a source of legitimate revenue to the State, for in 1298 it was enacted that such interwoven threads might be worn in consideration of a definite money payment to the Commune!

The rich robes of purple and crimson silk affected by the ladies of Faenza were matched if not surpassed by those of their Bolognese sisters, among whom the earlier fashion, simple but magnificent, of ample gowns of a single material gathered in at the waist, was supplanted towards the beginning of the fourteenth century by foreign fashions, chiefly introduced from France. In this new style materials of two or more colours were employed, woven or stamped with figures of animals or plants, and adorned with elaborate notchings and embroidery, *intaglio*, lace and fringes, in such wise that the trimming was often worth far more than the dress itself. The cloth trade was already highly developed, and even Ireland² was laid under contribution

¹ Frati refers to statutes of 1289, 1299 and 1301.

² "Saia d' Irlanda" is mentioned in a document of 1324; Frati, *op. cit.* p. 32.

for her famous blue serges; but Paris had already established her age-long tyranny as to the selection and use of materials, a tyranny against which Benvenuto, writing in 1373, inveighs with the utmost bitterness.¹ Miniver, ermine, and various other costly furs were employed as much for ornament as for warmth in winter; and a statute of 1301 forbids a miniver lining to all women in Bologna, save only "the wives of counts, captains and doctors of law".

Rose, ruby and scarlet, deep blue and azure and green, garnished often with a wealth of gold and silver ornaments and buttons, gathered up round slim waists with girdles or belts of silver, gilt or enamelled, from which hung rich purses of silk, silver or gold—a well-dressed crowd of the thirteenth century must have presented a brilliant spectacle to the eye, of which the great painters of the period have left us but a feeble reflection. If we would seek an adequate representation of its brilliancy and glitter, we must look for it in a passage like that in which Dante lavishes all the colours in his paint-box in the attempt to describe the natural carpet of the Flowery Valley in Purgatory.² From Giotto and his contemporaries and successors we may glean indeed something of the grace and dignity of the long flowing robes, and something also of the harmonious variety of the colouring. But that very quaintness and simplicity which gives these painters so much of their charm militates against a realistic representation of the dress of their contemporaries. We must wait for the less ethereal masterpieces

¹ Benvenuto, *Comentum*, vol. ii. pp. 409, 410. He deplores equally the vogue of French fashions in dress and that of the French language in Italy—a "bastard Latin," *sicut experientia docet!*

² *Purg.* vii. 73 sqq.



WOMEN'S DRESS IN DANTE'S DAY

ARENA CAPEL, PADUA. THE MARRIAGE AT CANA, GIOTTO

of a Ghirlandajo and a Gozzoli, or for the sumptuous splendour of the Venetian school, if we are to study in art the exact texture of the contemporary draperies and the minutest detail of jewelled or embroidered ornament.

Yet the evidence alike of frescoes and of sculptured tombs, and not least the more crowded scenes in Giotto's own work, such as may be seen in the Madonna dell' Arena at Padua, and in the Upper and Lower Church at Assisi, corroborates that of the documents, giving us a glowing picture: a picture in which the magnificent attire of the proud ladies is well seconded by the efforts of their poorer sisters who had to be content, as Salimbene records,¹ with "pellibus de variis et scarlato".

Of the gentler arts we hear much of music and singing.² Music, by tradition an essential part of a liberal education—forming, with arithmetic, geography and astronomy, the *Quadrivium*—made considerable strides in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In the period immediately preceding Dante's birth the "Discantus" took the place of the "Diaphonia," representative of harmony in the earlier Middle Ages, and the "Cantus figuratus," with notes of varying length, began to displace the old mechanical "Cantus firmus".

At the same time an elaborate complication of signs and terms and of notation grew up which has made the epoch of the Discantists the despair of modern students of musical theory, even as their recurring dissonances grate on modern ears.

But the fourteenth century witnessed a further develop-

¹ Sub ann. 1250. He is speaking of the Parmese wives of certain poor burghers of S. Donnino.

² On this subject see the important work of A. Bonaventura: *Dante e la Musica* (Livorno: R. Giusti, 1904), chap. i.

ment of no little importance. There is a document still extant in the National Library at Paris—dating from the last years of Dante's lifetime—which contains musical settings for one and two voices to poems, both Latin and French (Mottettes, Lays, Ballads, Rondeaux, Refrains de Chansons, etc.), in which the poliphony has learnt to steer clear of the more excruciating dissonances of the preceding century, and the melody is already far advanced in freedom of rhythm and in sympathy with the words.¹

Among other extant examples of this type of music is an interesting "canto a tre voci," by Johannes Florentinus, of which the manuscript is dated 1375.²

Precious works have also come down to us dealing with the theory of music, which demonstrate that it was studied scientifically and in a new way.

A treatise of Giovanni de Muris, two of his friend, Marchetto da Padova, and three by Philippe de Vitry,³ give practical evidence of the advance in musical theory. Instead of the mutual independence of the different voices whose co-operation in a common aim consisted chiefly in the fact that they were uttered contemporaneously, a real subordination of the individual to the common interests began to appear. Each voice in the poliphony came to be regulated more with a view to what the others were doing, and to be confined within the limits of its own proper register. Thus were laid the foundations of counterpoint as we know it, and the way was opened for modern music.⁴

¹ The *Chansons de Jeannot*; see Bonaventura, *op. cit.* p. 5.

² Roquefort MS.; see Bonaventura, p. 7.

³ De Muris, *Speculum Musicae*; Marchetto, *Lucidarium in Arte Musicae Planæ, Pomerium Artis Musicae Mensurabilis*; De Vitry, *Ars Nova, Ars Perfecta in Musica, Liber Musicalium*; cited by Bonaventura, pp. 4, 6.

⁴ Bonaventura, p. 7.

But the true ancestry of modern music is to be sought as much in the folk-songs of the *contadini* and the lays of the *trovatori* as in the more serious and scientific music of the professors and the ecclesiastics.¹

This more popular style—on which the professional musicians of the day looked down with contempt—the “secular” solo with instrumental accompaniment, familiar in all the courts of the day, was indeed the outgrowth of the ground. But, as we shall see, the tonsure was no effective talisman against its charms. Friars and ecclesiastics were known to alternate the organ with the lute, and the plain song of the choir office with the midnight serenade; and the goodly company of Troubadours numbered at least one bishop among its members!

The Sicilian love-ditties were no doubt, in the main, written, like those of the Provençal troubadours, for a solo voice, with guitar or lute accompaniment. Vocal music, alike in the Church and in the world, was far more advanced than instrumental in Dante's day. This fact is clearly reflected in the poet's writings, where organ and viol and lute and harp appear only as accompanying the human voice.

Dante, whose love for music and musical people is expressly mentioned by Boccaccio, is indeed for us a remarkable exponent of the more serious and refined side of the musical tastes of his time. “In his youth,” says the biographer,² “he delighted exceedingly in music and singing, and was on friendly and familiar terms with all the best singers and musicians of that day—a ciascuno che a que' tempi era ottimo cantatore o sonatore fu amico e ebbe sua usanza.” “And he was led by this passion of his,” Boccaccio continues, “to compose many things which

¹ Bonaventura, p. 7.

² *Vita*, § 8 (ed. Solerti, p. 37).

he caused to be clothed by them in the garb of pleasing and masterly tunes."

In the *Convivio* he has deep and true things to say, albeit in mediæval language, on the nature and inner meaning of music.¹

And the *Divina Commedia* bears witness, in more ways than one, that this passion of his youth remained with him in mature life. In the *Commedia* itself, as has been well pointed out,² Dante produces many of his most striking effects by a skilful use of just those elements which poetry owes to music. "The rhythm of the verse, the disposition of syllables and accents, the succession of vowels and consonants, the mode in which the periods are bound together, the effects of *crescendo* and *diminuendo* . . . the use of the pause . . ." ³ all these play an important part in Dante's art, and combine to produce the essentially musical character of the *Divina Commedia*.

And the great Trilogy as a whole—to which the first canto of the *Inferno* forms the symphony wherein are introduced the three chief personages and three ruling *motifs*, corresponding to the three kingdoms of the other world—may be compared in this aspect to the Trilogy of Richard Wagner.⁴ Each *Cantica* brings us back, at its close, to the underlying theme of *Stelle*—causes us to look upon the stars—the object of all three being to uplift the human soul.⁵ And the special tone and character of

¹ *Conv.* ii. 14, *sub fin.* (p. 266).

² A. Bonaventura, *op. cit.* chap. iv.

³ *Ibid.* p. 42.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 45.

⁵ "Tutte e tre le Cantiche finiscono con questa parola per indicare che il fine di tutto il poema e di ciascuna parte è il medesimo: rimuovere i viventi in questa vita dallo stato della miseria, e guidarli alla felicità" (Casini, *op. cit.* A. Bonaventura, p. 44). Casini is referring to Dante's own words in *Epist.* x. (p. 417): "removere viventes in hac vita de statu miseriae, et perducere ad statum felicitatis".

SIRE GARIN.

CANZONE OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY, WITH MELODY.



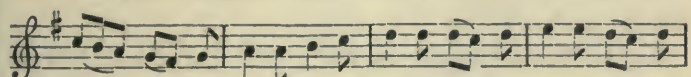
Main se le - - va si-re Ga-rins li dos. S'a de - - -



- - clos son jar - din. Vers le mo - lin De lès les



bos Si vit la ro - sé - - - e D'un pe - tit



piet de pas - sé - e Dit que femme est la pas - sé - e Si tint



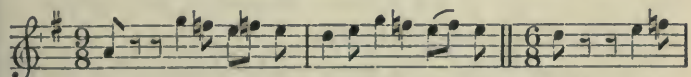
les es - clos Au mou - lin vient les ga - los Si l'a



treu - vé - - e A brief mos l'a si ac - cor - dée



Que par semblant esse - vié - e Canta par son



los " Qui mou - ra m'a - vai - ne, li molins est clos " Lors li



dit Ga-rins A - - bré - e Soyons d'un ac - - cort, car cor



n'est la gent le - vé - e Et le bi - - lain dort. L.R.

(From A. Bonaventura, *Dante e la Musica*.)

each of the three recalls almost spontaneously the work of one of the great masters of music: the *Inferno*, with its groans and crashes and sobs of woe, the symphonies of Beethoven; the *Purgatorio*, the sweet solemnity of Händel; the *Paradiso*, the polyphony of Palestrina, grand, triumphal, religiously severe.¹

A study of the particular passages in the poem in which music is introduced, corroborates the evidence of the whole work. The wearied and disillusioned exile who wrote the *Commedia*, loved music as passionately as ever did the author of the *Vita Nuova*.

In the second Canto of the *Purgatorio* he represents himself as soothed and solaced:—

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita

(and he was writing later still), by Casella's voicing of one of his own canzoni:—

Amor, che nella mente mi ragiona
Cominciò eglor si dolcemente
Che la dolcezza ancor dentro mi suona.²

And the poet's friendship with the lackadaisical Belacqua (of which more anon) according to tradition³ seems to have arisen out of the latter's occupation as "maker of the necks of lutes and of guitars".

The passage which has been cited from the *Purgatorio* is one out of more than a dozen in the *Divina Commedia* alone⁴ in which definite reference is made to music, instrumental or vocal. These are very varied in character,

¹ A. Bonaventura, p. 53. ² *Purg.* ii. 112. ³ *Anonimo Fiorentino*.

⁴ See *Purg.* ii. 106 sqq.; vii. 82; viii. 4-6, 13-15; ix. 143-45; *Par.* xiv. 118-20; xviii. 50, 51; xx. 11, 12, 22-24, 142-44; xxiii. 97-99, 128, 129.

ranging from the melancholy cadence of evening bells
—the “chime heard from afar”

Che paia il giorno pianger che si more—¹

the solemn grandeur of the ancient office-hymns of the Church,² and the “lose and find” (if we may so speak) of the voices of a choir singing *Te Deum* to organ accompaniment in a great church;³ to the rush of melody from the vent-hole of a reed pipe,⁴ the sweet *tintinno* of violin or harp when the melody is drowned in dulcet cords,⁵ and the richness and added charm supplied to the singing of a good vocalist when he is accompanied by a good harper “with the vibration of his strings”.⁶

And throughout the poem—itsself, as we have seen, a vast musical composition—there emerges, in such phrases as

la dolcezza ancor dentro mi suona,⁷

and

mai da me non si partì il diletto,⁸

that suggestion of lingering delight, of haunting sweetness, that bespeaks a certain degree of achievement attained both in the cultivation of musical art and in its appreciation. The same conclusion may be drawn from Salimbene, though indeed the transition from the *Divina Commedia* to the *Chronicle of Parma* is, in this respect, a somewhat rapid descent. The friar of Parma not only gives us specimens of the rollicking drinking-songs of worldly ecclesiastics, like Primasius, the Canon of Cologne, who laments

¹ *Purg.* viii. 5, 6. ² *E.g.* *Purg.* vii. 82; viii. 13; *Par.* xxiii. 128.

³ *Purg.* ix. 143. ⁴ *Par.* xx. 22.

⁵ *Ibid.* xiv. 118; *cf.* *Par.* x. 143, “tintin suonando” etc, and Virgil's *tinnitus* (*Georg.* iv. 64).

⁶ *Par.* xx. 142. ⁷ *Purg.* ii. 114. ⁸ *Par.* xxiii. 128.

Heu! Heu! mundi vita,
 Quare me delectas ita?
 Cum non possis mecum stare
 Quid me cogis te amare?—

Who, accused by his archbishop of lust, playing, and frequenting taverns, frankly admits all three charges in a set of humorous verses in which he declares that he can only write well when he has eaten and drunk well:—

Tales verses facio—quale vinum bibo
 Nihil possum facere—nisi sumpto cibo
 Nihil valent penitus—quae jejunus scribo
 Nasonem, post calicem—carmine praeibo.¹

This exhibits to us one of the less edifying aspects of the contemporary love of song—the reaction, perhaps, from the “Alleluia” tendency, when old and young, gentle and simple “cantilenas cantabant et laudes divinas”. But that there was a widespread taste for fine voices and good singing is clear from Salimbene’s stories of his own instructor, Brother Vita of Lucca.² His voice was not “grossa et sonora” like that of the Fra’s former teacher, Henry, “ita ut totum repletet chorum”: it was a comparatively small voice, “suitable for chamber rather than choir”: but it had a delectable sweetness about it that none could resist.

The “severest” people listened to him gladly—bishops, archbishops, cardinals, the Pope himself. And because of his sweet voice the Archbishop of Ravenna permanently attached him to his household. If any one talked while he was singing “straightway the word of Ecclesiasticus resounded: *Non impediās musicam*”. The man was indeed a second Orpheus. “When he began to sing, the nightingale in the neighbouring bush or hedge gave place to

¹ Sub ann. 1233 (p. 41, sqq.).

² Sub ann. 1247.

him, and listened diligently to his song, nor moved from the spot. After a time she took up her melody, and so warbling in turn they gave forth their sweet and delectable notes." His musical gift covered a multitude of sins, and that in the highest quarters. Again and again he broke his vows, again and again left and rejoined the Franciscan and the Benedictine orders. Gregory IX always forgave him "et propter amorem beati Francisci, et propter dulcedinem cantus sui!"

On one occasion he sang so ravishingly that a nun threw herself out of a window to follow him. She was balked of her purpose because she broke her thigh-bone in the fall.

Finally this Franciscan Orpheus was free from the "customary reproach" of singers—

Omnibus hoc vitium est cantoribus, inter amicos
Ut nunquam inducant animum cantare rogati.

"So courteous was he in the matter of his singing, that he never excused himself on the score of a broken voice, or a cold, or for any other reason, when he was asked to sing."

It is not, however, in monkish singing alone that our friar is interested. Brother Vita, he records, had a mother and sister who were "optimae et delectabiles cantatrices".

This sweet singing was no doubt enforced by a simple instrumental accompaniment.¹ Even princes of the Church were not ashamed of the possession of such accomplishments. A cardinal was once asked alms by a jester who had just been singing. "If thou art fain to get food," he replied, "I will give to thee right willingly for love of God: but for thy singing and playing nought would I give, for I know how to sing and play the viol as well as thou".²

Nor were other recreations wanting to temper the

¹ Salimbene, sub ann. 1247.

² *Ibid.* p. 151.

sternness of life. If cruelty stalked the streets unblushingly, and the executioner performed his grim task with ostentation before the eyes of the gentle and the young, no less demonstrative was the age in its festivities.

“La joie était publique,” says Monnier.¹ The rich celebrated their family *feste* with pageants on which the poor could feast their eyes. The whole community kept holiday at intervals in the piazza and the street. The pious orgies of the “Alleluia” do but express in a definitely religious form the mediæval and modern Italian instinct for *festeggiare* which is ever waiting its opportunity.

A good instance of this widespread rejoicing is recorded in the *Cronicon Parmense*,² whose author was an elder contemporary of Dante. It is the wedding, already alluded to, of Beatrice d’Este of Ferrara with Galeazzo Visconti of Milan, in June, 1300. “All Lombardy rang with it,” says the chronicler. Many cities sent representatives of their noblest families, sumptuously arrayed at the Commune’s expense. Parma and Bologna, Cremona, Bergamo, Reggio and Modena each sent their contingent to Milan or to Ferrara. The Bolognese were accompanied by trumpeters with silver trumpets. And as the various companies passed to and fro between Milan and Ferrara, all Parma was *en fête*—“magnum festum et gaudium fuit et solatium”.

Again, in the same summer, Bologna suddenly burst out into that species of wild rejoicing which Englishmen of the twentieth century know as “*Mafeking*”. The Guelf city went mad with excitement at the news of the victory of Charles of Apulia over Frederic of Aragon. The battle was fought on 14th June, and the news

¹ *Quattrocento*, ch. i.

² *Cron. Parm.* sub ann. 1300.

reached Bologna on the 20th, "and straightway," says an old chronicler,¹ "the Bolognese made exceeding great rejoicing and gladness thereof, more than had ever been made according to the memory of the ancients. In token whereof Messer Pino, the podestà, and Folciero, the Captain of the People, made noise and revelry with all the soldiery of Bologna through the whole city, garland on head. Moreover, each company of the People made singular rejoicing, playing and leaping and dancing, garland on head, through all Bologna. The company of the goldsmiths adorned a comely youth of their craft with a crown of gold on his head and with royal robes, and with companions and grooms, in honour of King Charles; and every goldsmith was adorned with much silver. Another company adorned one of their number after the likeness of Pope Boniface VIII; and many other games and rejoicings were held, which it were tedious to recount."

G. Villani pictures for us in glowing colours some of the pageants which delighted the Florentines of his day: and extant records tell us how at Bologna, Ferrara and Modena, as at Florence, the *Calendimaggio*—May-day—was ushered in with pretty processions of winsome girls escorting through the streets with songs and dances the maiden who for her beauty was chosen "Regina" or "Contessa" di Maggio.

Griffoni records for us how in 1268 one of these little maidens—"Quaedam Contissa de illis quae fiunt die primo maji"—was robbed of the fair purse at her girdle by some rude boys under a portico in Via Saragossa, and how her father in revenge "made for" the boys and wounded one of them. It was in honour of such a May-

¹ M. Griffoni, sub ann. 1300.

Queen that the Bolognese children of later days used to sing :—

Fate onor alla Contessa
 Voi ch' andate per la via
 Ch' acciò ch' ella vista sia
 Qua su in alto l' abbiam messa
 Fate onor alla Contessa!¹

To the thirteenth century is traditionally ascribed the origin of the famous Bolognese festival of the Porchetta, which was celebrated in the great piazza every St. Bartholomew's Day with ever fresh ingenuity of fantastic pageant, and lasted as an institution down to modern times.²

The strenuous sports of chivalry, the tournaments and jousts so popular in Northern Europe were largely an alien importation into Italy; to these Dante has singularly few references in the *Divina Commedia*.³ They were, however, by no means rare in the Italian courts of Dante's day. His silence on this subject is presumably due to a profound dislike of the extravagant expense and frivolous display of the great houses, whose "largess," he declares, made up of the spoils of the weak, of the widow and orphan, is as though one should snatch away the covering of the altar to clothe the robber and his table—with the ecclesiastical symbols still plainly marked upon it.⁴ For a somewhat similar reason, no doubt, the poet passes over in contemptuous silence much of the paraphernalia of an average contemporary Italian *festa*, which

¹ Frati, *op. cit.*; the song belongs to the fifteenth century.

² On the *Porchetta* see *Women-Artists of Bologna*, by Laura M. Ragg, pp. 249, 250.

³ *Inf.* vii. 34-35; xiii. 121; xxii. 6.

⁴ *Conv.* iv. 27 (p. 334), he inveighs especially against the extravagant banquets, ostentatious gifts of horses, arms, robes and money, the wearing of "mirabili vestimenti," and the building of "mirabili edifici".

might have furnished, one would think, not a few apt similes for his *Inferno* at least.

If there is one scanty allusion to masquerading in the *Paradiso*,¹ another to the certainly popular bull-fights and bull-baitings² in his description of the Minotaur,³ and to performing bears in the Twelfth *Canzone*⁴—if we may go further still and see in the "ox caparisoned like a horse," and "belted boar" of the *Eloquentia*,⁵ a reminiscence of these popular frolics, we are forced to fill up the canvas from other sources with its complement of *joculatores*—of mimics, mountebanks, rope-dancers, jugglers, and tumblers—a motley crew familiar in every piazza of Italy, and indeed in every city of Europe on fair days, as were their less humble brethren, the minstrels, *trovatori*, story-tellers, and necromancers at the courts of the great lords.

Of "sport" in our sense of the word Dante's contemporaries had no lack. And though the Poet is clearly neither sportsman nor even horseman by taste or habit, yet the wolf-hunt and the boar-hunt have each its own niche in the *Inferno*, the first in the famous dream of Ugolino,⁶ the second in the gruesome forest of the suicides and spendthrifts.⁷ The chase of the doe finds a passing mention in the *Paradiso*.⁸ A lover of bird-life, his constant allusions to which are as true to nature as

¹ *Par.* xxx. 91 *sqq.*

² *Cf.* Molmenti, *Storia di Venezia nella Vita Privata*, part i. ch. viii. p. 209, for the "casse dei tori"—bull-fights, or rather bull-baitings in Venice.

³ *Inf.* xii. 22 *sqq.*

⁴ "Com' orso quando scherza," *Canz.* xii. 71 (p. 164).

⁵ *V.E.* ii. 3, 80 (p. 391); *cf.* E. Armstrong, *Mod. Lang. Review*, vol. i. p. 178.

⁶ *Inf.* xxxiii. 28 *sqq.*

⁷ *Inf.* xiii. 112 *sqq.*

⁸ *Par.* iv. 6.

they are to art,¹ Dante deprecates the chase of "uccellini"—so characteristic, alas, of modern Italy!—by those who "waste their life" "peering into green foliage".² Yet references to falconry, that sport of kings so fervently and scientifically pursued by Frederic II, are not wanting in the *Commedia*.³

But to return from "sport" to sports; unlike the regular tourneys of Northern Europe, the *hastiludium*, a display of horsemanship and skill in arms, is perhaps an instance of an indigenous Italian sport. Salimbene records with horror how Ezzelino and his soldiers indulged in this sport as an accompaniment to the burning alive of his 11,000 Paduan victims.⁴ A less grim yet not wholly modest exhibition was given by the youths of Parma, who dressed up as maidens and rode about through the town all night long in a kind of mock *hastiludium*.⁵

Races of various kinds, on horseback or on foot, were annual institutions in the various cities. The Bolognese "Porchetta" is thought by some authorities to have been originally a race, though it subsequently developed into a miscellaneous fair and pageant.

So important were the "annual sports" at Florence that Dante represents Cacciaguida as making the race-course his basis of the city's topography. "I was born," he says, "in the place

"Dove si trova pria l'ultimo sesto
Da quel che corre il vostro annual gioco".⁶

¹ There are twenty-three bird-passages in the *Divina Commedia* alone, apart from the reference to the idiosyncrasies of Magpie and Parrot in *Conv.* iii. 7, 100 *sqq.* (p. 280).

² *Purg.* xxiii. 1-3. ³ *Inf.* xxii. 130 *sqq.*; *ibid.* 139; *Par.* xix. 34-36.

⁴ Sub ann. 1250 (p. 182).

⁵ Salimbene, quoted by E. Armstrong *loc. cit.*, pp. 185, 186.

⁶ *Par.* xvi. 40-43.

And the annual foot-race at Verona, wherein nude athletes¹ ran for the prize of a green cloth ("drappo verde") forms material for one of Dante's most graphic similes.²

The "Palio" of Siena, which still survives as a fierce burlesque of a horse-race, and still stimulates undying rivalry between the various "contrade" of the city; the mock-fight which for centuries was enacted on the bridge at Pisa, and was responsible for not a few ruffled tempers and broken heads;³ the "Pallone" of Bologna, and the kindred "Palla a Calcio" of Florence—the mediæval Italian counterpart of our modern football—all these afforded a pleasing excitement in the intervals of more serious struggle. Mock-battle would alternate sometimes very swiftly with the grim reality, even as, three centuries later, the spirited playing of the "Giuoco delle Pugna" in the last agonies of the siege of Siena moved the gallant Montluc to tears of mingled joy and pity.⁴ Venice had, of course, her own characteristic sports, the counterpart of her amphibious life; but she patronised also the more general types of manly amusement. The first mention of her famous *regatta* is found in the year of Boniface's Jubilee, and fifteen years later, in 1315, its date was made the subject of a special decree.⁵ In 1299, a year before the first mention of the regatta, was initiated the *ballestrerius ludus*; a patriotic sport answering to the "tiro a segno" of the modern Italian townships and our

¹ See below, chap. ix.

² *Inf.* xv. 121-24.

³ For an interesting account of these two sports, see Mr Heywood's *Palio and Ponte*.

⁴ E. Gardner, *Story of Siena*, p. 239.

⁵ To take place on the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul's (see Molmenti, *loc. cit.*).

own much-talked of "Rifle clubs," in which the youth of Venice, assembled in the open spaces of their city—more numerous, no doubt, and larger than the *campi* and *campielli* of to-day—learned, in friendly competition, to handle the cross-bow with a skill which told heavily against their foes in war-time. Then Venice, at the end of the thirteenth century, had already her counterpart to the Pisan game of "Ponte" in the *guerra dei pugni*—a battle of fist-cuffs fought at intervals between September and Christmas on a bridge without a parapet. This genial contest, which originated in 1292 and lasted on till the eighteenth century, was responsible for many broken bones and not a few deaths; as was also, though in a less degree, the "Battle of the Bamboos"—*la lotta con le canne*. Nor were the normal sports of chivalry neglected in the Venice of Dante's day. There is record of jousts held in the Piazza in at least three different years of the thirteenth century.¹

There were, moreover, in Dante's Italy plenty of games of a kind less calculated to react for good on mind and body—games of hazard like the perennial "Morra" in which the Roman proletariat has rejoiced for more than twenty centuries. Brunetto Latini warns his readers against dice. . . . But if you do play, as a favour to a friend or a lord, "play high," he says, "and do not protest, I cannot!"²

Dante describes in his inimitable way the break-up of a game of Zara: the despondency of the loser, who picks up the dice, and goes over his throws again; the embarrassing popularity of the winner—

¹ *Viz.*, in 1242, 1253, and 1272. On the whole subject see Molmenti, *loc. cit.* pp. 199-209.

² Cited by E. Armstrong, *Mod. Lang. Review*, vol. i. p. 176.

Quando si parte il giuoco della zara
 Colui che perde si riman dolente
 Ripetendo le volte, e tristo impara,
 Con l'altro se ne va tutta la gente
 Qual va dinanzi, e qual dietro il prende,
 E qual da latogli si reca a mente.
 Ei non s' arresta, e questo e quello intende
 A cui porge le man più non fa pressa ;
 E così dalla calcia si difende.¹

The name of this and of other games of chance recur frequently in the early statutes of Bologna. Many of them were repeatedly banned by the Commune, but their invincible popularity finally prevailed: they became the subject of a definite organisation, and in 1265—the year of Dante's birth—they were licensed to be played in certain authorised places.² At *Primiero Tavole*, *Zonni* and *Morra* were permitted, *Taccili* and *Biscezaria* were prohibited.³ A nobler sport, the ancient game of chess, gladdened the leisure hours of ecclesiastic and layman alike. A good chess-player was thought much of in the days when Salimbene wrote. "To checkmate" was then, as now, a familiar metaphor: "Schaccum mihi induxisti!" was the exclamation of an opponent beaten in argument.⁴ When Frederic II's father and mother were at variance, the chess-players used to say: "If any one should now cry 'Check!' to the King, the Queen would not defend him—Si quis modo diceret scaccum regi, regina non defenderet eum".⁵

Besides chess there were draughts and knuckle-bones,⁶ and kindred pastimes, and simple children's games no doubt abounded then—when did they not, since the far

¹ *Purg.* vi. 1-9.

² *Frati, op. cit.*

³ *Statutes*, bk. i. cap. 12, G. Rizzoli, *op. cit.*

⁴ Sub ann. 1250 (p. 217).

⁵ Salimbene, sub ann. 1250.

⁶ E. Armstrong, in *Mod. Lang. Review*, vol. i. p. 176.

centuries when the toys were used which we find preserved with the mummies of ancient Egypt?

Readers of the *Fioretti* will remember the allusions there to see-saw, the "giuoco dell' altalena," when "two children have a piece of wood laid across another piece, and each stands on his own end, and they go up and down";¹ and to the childish sport of spinning round and round in one spot till you are too giddy to stand; a sport which Saint Francis imposed one day on Brother Masseo, by way of deciding which of three roads to take.²

Salimbene brings in, by way of allusion, a pastime well known to the modern child. Speaking of temporary reconciliations between the quarrelsome communes of Lombardy, he says: "In the peace-making of the Lombards, however, I have but little confidence. For their peace-making is like the boys' game when they place their hands one above another upon their knees. For when one would fain be winner, he draweth out his hand from below and placeth it atop of the hand of the other, smiting him therewith; and so he thinketh to have the victory."³

As regards more general and public festivities we have already seen how prominent a part was taken by the girls in the May-day ceremonies, and how boys and girls alike were to the fore in Fra Benedetto's "Alleluia" services. But the former, then as now, would often improvise excitements of their own, and that on a fairly large scale. Boy nature is in some things much the same everywhere, and the Italian urchin of the robust Middle Ages seems to have been more like our own than is his successor of the twentieth century. The lads were apt to avenge themselves boisterously upon the objects of their aversion, and

¹ *Vita di fr. Ginepero*, chap. ix.

² *Fior.* chap. ix.

³ Sub ann. 1285 (p. 348).

especially upon misers, whose meanness has always been peculiarly detestable to the generous nature of the young. The misers of Salimbene's day were often warned by their neighbours to "beware of the boys": "Cavete vobis, ne furorem puerorum propter vestram miseriam incurratis".

As in a notable instance at Florence, so at Reggio in 1286 the lads took wild liberties with the corpse of a notorious miser, who had died suddenly, as was believed, of starvation, though his house was full of sacks of fetid meal and mouldy crusts, which he was saving up to sell for their weight in gold in an expected day of famine. With one accord they seized the body, stripped it, bound it by the feet to wooden rings and dragged it through the streets, "no man gainsaying".

By the time they had reached the Hospital of Saint Antony they were well tired of their burden, and anxious to tie it to the tail of an ox cart. The contadino who owned the cart protesting, they belaboured him unmercifully till at length he was of their mind. Thus they escorted their prize in triumphant procession through the Porta di S. Stefano; and when they reached the bridge hurled the corpse down into the torrent-bed. Then they ran down themselves and heaped a great cairn of stones upon it, shouting lustily as they wrought: "Thy avarice perish with thee!—Fames et avaritia tua tecum in infernum descendant cum miseria tua pariter usque in aeternum et ultra!"¹

Any unusual sight in the streets would always attract a crowd of urchins, and in days when the compulsory State "scuola" was as yet undreamed of, their piercing voices would contribute to the general liveliness even more

¹ Sub ann. 1287 (pp. 272, 273).

emphatically than to-day. We can picture the rush of Florentine *bambini* to gaze upon a leopard passing through the city, and their shouts of "Ecco la Lonza!" which was to form the text of a learned discourse on the interpretation of Dante's "Lonza leggiara e presta molto".¹

But a more familiar beast could rouse the boys' attention, especially if an opportunity occurred of turning a serious matter into ridicule. A chronicler records how in 1236, when Frederic II began his invasion of Lombardy, the men of Parma got themselves a new Carroccio to lead them into battle. As the stately banner-car was being drawn through the streets—presumably by a train of fat kine—the boys suddenly started the cry, "Who'll buy milk—*Che to' latté?*"²

This brings us to the humorous side of life, without which even a slight sketch of the period would be incomplete. Dante's own humour is prevailingly grim and severe, and tends towards a terrible irony. One cannot go about this earth light hearted and frivolous after the tremendous experience of a visit to the eternal world. One does not associate lightness with the grave face and solemn gait of the man to whom the gossips of Verona pointed: "See him who goes down to hell and returns at his pleasure, and brings back tidings of those who are below!" . . . "See how his beard is crisped and his colour darkened by the heat and smoke down there!"³ Yet there is, as we shall see, a vein of humour even in Dante: without it he would not be the great man he is.

¹ "Ut mihi narrabat suavissimus Boccatus de Certaldo" (Benvenuto on *Inf.* i: vol. i. p. 35).

² *Cron. Parm.* sub ann. 1236.

³ Boccaccio, *Vita D.* § 8 (ed. Solerti, p. 37); cf. Paget Toynbee, *Life*, p. 148.

Apart from the probably apocryphal story of the pun on Cangrande's name¹—which is as old as the hills, and unworthy of the poet—apart also from the similar repartees attributed to him during his stay at the same Court of Verona, and that of his elaborate and costly rebuke to King Robert, when to teach his host a lesson he is said to have smeared his own new clothes with gravy,² we have various sharp sayings recorded of him which bear the stamp of genuineness. Apropos of the playful passage in the fourth canto of the *Purgatorio*, in which the poet depicts so charmingly the lackadaisical temperament of his friend Belacqua—the incarnation of laziness in Purgatory as he had been on earth—an ancient commentator³ relates the following incident. One day Belacqua quoted Aristotle to the effect that “the mind attains to wisdom by repose and quiet”. “Certainly,” was Dante's prompt rejoinder, “if repose will make a man wise you ought to be the wisest man on earth.”

He could defend himself, too, in a crisis, by his ready wit, if we are to trust tradition. When the Florentine Republic sent an emissary to the castle of Porciano to demand his extradition, he got wind of it, and left the castle. On his way down he met the representative of Florence, who, failing to recognise him, asked whether Dante Alighieri were still at Porciano. “He was there when I was—Quand io v'era, e' v'era”—was the truthful reply, and each pursued his way in peace.

But we are not left to tradition alone, for Dante's spirit is impressed upon his writings. Popularly, in England as in Italy to-day, the author of the *Divina Commedia* is best known as the writer of the *Inferno*. And so if

¹ Paget Toynbee, *Life*, p. 177 sqq.

² *Ibid.* p. 87.

³ *Anonimo Fiorentino*, on *Purg.* iv. 106 sqq.

humour is attributed to him at all, it is apt to be the grim and sometimes fiendish humour of Hell: the fierce sport of the scene where Ciampolo outwits the demons ;¹ the "advantage" ascribed to the region called Tolomea, in that, unlike all other parts of the Pit, it is permitted to receive damned spirits while their bodies are still alive ;² the irony of the grotesque interview with Pope Nicholas III, who mistakes Dante's voice for that of Boniface VIII ;³ the ill-natured playfulness with which one hunted spend-thrift twits another: "Lano, at the jousts of Toppo thy legs were not so nimble as this!"⁴—or the vulgar harlequinade between Simon and Master Adam among the falsifiers, for listening to which Dante brings upon himself the sarcasm of Virgil: "Aye, look thy fill! A little more and I shall quarrel with thee!"⁵

But it is unfair to judge Dante, in this or in any other matter, by the *Inferno* alone; and that not only because such a judgment were based on insufficient data. As we have suggested in another chapter,⁶ Dante's fine scorn of sin tempts him to heap upon it all the ridicule, all the burden of loathsome grotesqueness, that the resources of his imagination can furnish. And all this is concentrated in the *Inferno*.

There is indeed a certain bitterness—and not unnaturally—in many other passages wherein humour lurks. One recalls the scornful irony with which, at the end of the sixth canto of the *Purgatorio*, he congratulates Florence on the patriotic zeal of her citizens and the excellence of her administration; the fierce sarcasm of the tirades against the corruption of the Roman Curia, especially that put

¹ *Inf.* xxii.

³ *Ibid.* xix. 52 *sqq.*

⁵ *Ibid.* xxx.

² *Ibid.* xxxiii. 124 *sqq.*

⁴ *Ibid.* xiii. 120 *sqq.*

⁶ See above, chap. iv. pp. 141-42.

into the mouth of Saint Peter Damian,¹ where he describes the fat cardinals supported on every side as they walk and when they ride covering their palfreys with their sumptuous cloaks "so that two beasts move under one skin"; or those directed against the degeneracy of the monastic orders, as when Saint Benedict exclaims that his Rule remains "but to cause waste of paper".² Similarly Beatrice is made to pour scorn on the farce of unauthorised Indulgences, and on the contemporary pulpit which leaves the Gospel aside to strain after originality and the appearance of learning, as though Christ had said: "Go and preach frivolities to the world . . .!"—the preacher rejoicing if he can raise a laugh by his buffooneries, while the devil squats unseen in a corner of his cowl.³

Rare instances of such bitter humour might be drawn also from Dante's other works; but the sarcasm there is on the whole more playful, perhaps because its context is less political.

There is passion behind that description of a tyrant's showy hospitality as like the feast of a sacrilegious robber who should invite his friends to dine off an altar-cloth with the ecclesiastical symbols still marked upon it.⁴ There is passion too, subtly concealed, in the passage in the *Eloquentia*⁵ where he introduces—merely as an illustrative example of good phrasing—a sentence in which Charles of Valois appears as the "modern Totila," as successful in his destruction of Florence as he is unsuccessful in Sicily—"Ejecta maxima parte florum de sinu tuo, Florentia, nequicquam Trinacriam Totila secundus adivit".

But more playful are his criticisms, in the same work,

¹ *Par.* xxi. 133 sq.

² *Ibid.* xxii. 74, 75.

³ *Ibid.* xxix. 94 sqq.

⁴ *Conv.* iv. 27, 117 sqq.; cf. above, p. 182.

⁵ *V. E.* ii. 6.

of the various Italian dialects.¹ To the Romans, for instance, he assigns that first place which their self-conceit always claims for them, and adjudges them "not to be equalled" . . . in the unutterable depravity of their way of speaking.² Playful again is his picturesque description of those who blindly follow the fashion, and are ready to shout, "Long live death!" "Death to life!" or anything equally absurd if only some one starts the cry: like sheep who, if their leader happens to jump up when crossing a road will all go through the same performance, and if he springs over the edge of a precipice will religiously follow him.³ The crowd in the opening scene of *Sylvie and Bruno* that shouts itself hoarse over the intelligent cry, "Less bread, more taxes!" evidently had its counterpart in Dante's time, as indeed in every other period of history!

Sometimes Dante's humour takes a proverbial form. Those gentry who would fain pose as masters of oratory, and lay the blame of their own failure upon the "*Lingua Volgare*"—the mother-tongue they don't know how to use—are like the incompetent smith who criticises the piece of iron on which he is working, or the bad harper who blames his instrument.⁴

Sometimes his sallies have quite a modern ring, as when he urges that even doctors and lawyers may be expected to give advice now and again without a fee—provided it be unprofessional advice. They have laboured and spent, indeed, in the acquisition of their technical knowledge, but their common sense is God's free gift.⁵ And surely there must be a touch of playful irony in the plea which he urges against the monopoly of the adjective "religious" by the monastic Orders; suggesting that, after all, it is

¹ *V. E.* i. 11 *sqq.* (p. 385 *sqq.*).

² *Ibid.* 11, 6 *sqq.* (p. 385).

³ *Conv.* i. 11, 15-70 (pp. 247, 248).

⁴ *Ibid.* 11, 72 *sqq.* (p. 248).

⁵ *Ibid.* iv. 27, 70 *sqq.* (p. 333).

possible to be religious at heart even in the bonds of matrimony!¹

Humour, according to Dante, is not confined to this earth. The smile, properly understood, is a trait of man as man. He does not shrink from picturing even Aristotle as "having a good laugh";² and if the lost souls in Hell below are not innocent of an occasional grim joke, neither do the purging pains of the Second Kingdom effectually quench the risible faculties. It is with evident relish and enthusiasm that the souls who are doing penance for avarice repeat their appointed lesson, "Tell us, Crassus, for thou knowest, what is the flavour of gold";³ and we are told that the thought of Midas' misery "never fails to raise a smile" on the lips of those penitents who lie fettered face downwards weeping out the curse of greed.⁴ And it is in Purgatory too, or rather in the Earthly Paradise, that Dante rises to his greatest heights of charming playfulness, in the delightful episode where Statius becomes conscious that it is with Virgil he has been talking,⁵ and where Matelda gravely discourses to Dante in the presence of Virgil and Statius about "the Poets who in days of yore sang of the Golden Age".⁶

Nay, in Heaven itself, we are told, Saint Gregory woke up to the true facts about the angelic hierarchy, and "smiled at his own mistake".⁷

¹ *Conv.* iv. 28, 70 *sqq.* (p. 335).

² *Ibid.* 15, 58 *sqq.* (p. 316): "Senza dubbio forte riderebbe Aristotile".

³ *Purg.* xx. 116-17.

⁴ *Ibid.* 106-108.

⁵ *Ibid.* xxi. 100 *sqq.*

⁶ *Ibid.* xxviii. 139 *sqq.*

⁷ *Par.* xxviii. 133-35. The "mistake" according to Dante (who follows in the *Commedia* the order of "Dionysius," *De Coelesti Hierarchia*) is the classification adopted by Saint Gregory in his homily on the subject (*XL Hom. in Evang.* No. xxxiv.). See Toynbee, *Dict. s.v.* "Gerarchia," p. 265.

And there is nothing incongruous in all this, in the light of Dante's own definition of "ridere" as a "flashing of the soul's delight," a "manifestation outwardly of the light that is within". "E che è ridere," he exclaims in the *Convivio*,¹ "se non una corruscazione della dilettazone dell' anima, cioè un lume apparente di fuori secondo che sta dentro?" As such, he goes on, it should correspond to the inner dignity of the soul: a modest laughter restrained and even severe, "with little movement of the arms". And he quotes the treatise of the pseudo-Seneca on the *Four Cardinal Virtues* against the loud guffaw, the laugh that resembles the cackling of a hen—"Lo tuo riso sia senza cacinno, cioè senza schiamazzare come gallina".

The ideal laughter, in fact, is "seen and not heard". Such is the smile of his Lady, which wafts him up, increasing ever in power and brilliancy, from heaven to heaven, till at last it becomes too dazzling for him to bear.² And in this sense he can speak of the *Gloria* chanted in heaven as a smile of the universe:—

mi semiava un riso
Dell' universo.³

Some of Dante's contemporaries—the poets of his circle of whom we shall have occasion to speak at greater length in another chapter—⁴ have left traces of the gift of humour in their extant writings.

Forese Donati, for instance, in that sonnet-quarrel with Dante which has only been rediscovered in comparatively recent years, exhibits—and elicits from his correspondent—a broad, rough humour of a decidedly lower type than that which we find in most of Dante's writings.⁵ Giotto's

¹ *Conv.* iii. 8, 95 *sqq.* (p. 282).

² *Cf. Par.* xxiii. 22, etc.

³ *Par.* xxvii. 4, 5.

⁴ *Chap.* viii.

⁵ See below, chap. viii. pp. 269 *sqq.*)

poem on "Voluntary Poverty" is a fine piece of satire, wanting neither directness, subtilty, nor restraint.¹ Cecco Angiolieri, another of Dante's literary friends, is one of those humorously self-conscious buffoons that poke fun at themselves first of all, and then at their friends. He sings the praises of his rather shrewish lady-love Becchina the shoemaker's daughter, and chronicles his own love-sick moods like any other poet of the "dolce stil nuovo"; but always as one who can say—

I am enamour'd, and yet not so much
But that I'd do without it easily—²

one who is awake to the fact that an "over-dose" of love "is worse than none would be," for—

Too much of love makes idiots, I believe :
I like not any fashion that turns glum
The heart, and makes the visage sick and ill.³

He uses the vocabulary of his more serious friends, and mingles with his buffoonery and cynicism fine flashes of true poetry now and then: but the "pose" is always there, and a laugh up his sleeve.

When I behold Becchina in a rage
Just like a little lad I trembling stand
Whose master tells him to hold out his hand!⁴

There is nature in that, if the simile lacks dignity; and shrewd worldly wisdom in the sonnet which begins:—

Whoever without money is in love
Had better build a gallows and go hang!⁵

Like many of his contemporaries Cecco loved to play on the very edge of the abyss of impiety: witness, for in-

¹ Rossetti's *Early Italian Poets* has a translation of this Canzone ("Temple Classics" ed. pp. 298-300).

² *Early Italian Poets*, No. ii, p. 281. ³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.* No. ix, p. 284.

⁵ *Ibid.* No. xv, p. 288.

stance, the sonnet written *on the occasion of his father's death* :—

Let not the inhabitants of Hell despair
 For one's got out who seemed to be locked in :
 And Cecco's the poor devil that I mean,
 Who thought for ever and ever to be there.
 But the leaf's turned at last, and I declare
 That now my state of glory doth begin ;
 For Messer Angiolieri's slipped his skin,
 Who plagued me, Summer and Winter, many a year.¹

From Cecco to Dante is a far cry. But the age would have been poorer, perhaps, without Cecco's characteristic type. Equally far removed from Dante is the wit and humour reflected in Salimbene's pages. It has usually more of the "schiamazzare come gallina" than would have been acceptable to the author of the *Convivio*.

It reminds one more of the side-splitting sallies of Arienti's days, when people in the best society swayed hither and thither in convulsions, with far from gracious gesture, wiping with fingers or handkerchiefs the tears that rolled down their cheeks "per il dolce dolore sentivano dentro".² Less dignified and less restrained than Dante's playfulness, it probably reflects with greater truthfulness the average spirit of the age.

The rollicking and often coarse poems of worldly ecclesiastics, of the type of Primasius already mentioned, represent a very elementary style of wit; and it must be admitted that a large number of the smart sayings of Dante's contemporaries that have come down to us—

¹ *Early Italian Poets*, No. xix. p. 290. On Cecco see further below, pp. 272, 273.

² "E chi innanzi e chi indietro piegandosi, e chi ponendosi la mano allo stomaco per il dolce dolore sentivano dentro, per il soperchio riso, e molti asciugandosi con le dita e con li fazzoli le venute lagrime alli occhi per la lieta passione del cuore" (Sabbadino degli Arienti, *Le Porretane* [Verona, 1540], p. 7; *ap.* P. Monnier, *Quattrocento*, vol. i. p. 56, note).

especially, perhaps, those of Sacchetti's *Novelle*—would fall under the censure which Dr. Johnson passed on the habit of playing with sacred subjects.

The Italian mind is proverbially less reserved, less obviously reverent in sacred matters than are our northern natures. There has been, it would seem, through all the centuries, a strong residuum of paganism in his Christianity, and something, perhaps, of the temper of Lucian or Aristophanes in his discussion of religious subjects: which appeal to him quite as much on the side of picturesqueness as on that of solemnity and awe.¹

Frederic II was an Italian born and an ardent lover of Italy. He was also a sceptic; and his daring utterances are the less to be wondered at. Yet his very contemporaries regarded as blasphemous his comparison of his own Italian kingdom to the Promised Land of Scripture, when “*insultando Deo dicebat quod non viderat regnum suum quod in Sicilia habebat et in Calabria et Apulia; quia non tantum commendasset promissionis terram*”.²

It reminds one of the still more daring saying attributed by Sacchetti to Maestro Antonio da Ferrara, the poet-aster, who entering the Franciscan Church at Ravenna, removed the lighted candles from before an ancient crucifix, and placed them on Dante's tomb, saying, “*Togli, che tu se' ben più degno di lui!*” and justified himself by a comparison of the “writings of each”. The Holy Scriptures, written by Him who seeth all, tell us but part of the truth, while the writings of a mere limited man like Dante, tell us all about everything.³

¹ The festival of the *Ceri* at Gubbio is a typical instance, among the admitted survivals of Italian paganism, with the Church's cloak very loosely thrown over it.

² Sub ann. 1284 (p. 317).

³ *Nov.* cxxi.

Similar in tone, though less shocking, is the grim repartee of the Ghibelline Guido di Sesso, to his Guelf prisoners who pleaded to be shriven before execution—"No need," he said, "for you holy partisans of the Church—Non habetis necesse confiteri, quia vos estis sancti, cum sitis ex parte ecclesiae, et sic statim ibitis in paradisum." And he hanged them all out of hand.

The Florentines, whose reputation for wit was as great in Salimbene's day¹ as it was in that of Sacchetti—and things could be taken from their lips which would "sound bad" elsewhere—were always ready to scoff at the reputed miracles of revivalist preachers. On hearing that the Dominican John of Vicenza contemplated a visit to Florence they cried out in mock-alarm: "For Heaven's sake don't let him come here! For we have heard that he raises the dead, and we are already so many that our city will scarcely hold us."

The learned Buoncompagni, a Florentine who was a celebrated teacher of grammar and rhetoric in Bologna, wrote a long *rithmus* on the same John of Vicenza, who had on one occasion induced no less a person than the Doge of Venice to join in the "pious orgies" of the Alleluia. It begins as follows:—

Et Johannes johannizat
 Et saltando choreizat
 Multa salta modo salta
 Qui coelarum petis alta :
 Saltat iste, saltat ille
 Resaltant cohortes mille :
 Saltat chorus dominarum
 Saltat Dux Venetiarum.

He was also the perpetrator of a famous practical joke upon the serious citizens of Bologna, which, fortunately,

¹ Sub ann. 1233 (p. 41).

did not bring upon him such summary vengeance as Dante's Griffolino¹ suffered for a similar offence. One day, in emulation of the miracles of John of Vicenza, he announced his intention to give an exhibition of flying. All the city, old and young, male and female, gathered at the hour appointed, at the foot of Sta. Maria (now S. Giovanni) in Monte. Buoncompagni had furnished himself with a pair of wings, and stood on the top of the mount gazing upon the assembled crowd. "And when he and they had gazed upon each other for a long time, he uttered this saying:—

"Ite cum benedictione divina; sufficiat vobis vidisse faciem Buoncompagni."²

In the same vein, but less shocking, is the practical joke which Buoncompagni himself records in his *Rettorica*, a book finished in 1235. He suffered much annoyance, it would seem, from the jealousy of rival teachers, against one of whom, a certain Guglielmo Ortonese, he directed the shaft of his ready wit. He compiled a letter purporting to be written by Ortonese, in which, after liberal denunciation of Buoncompagni, the scholars were invited to come and listen to the writer, in order to learn how under Buoncompagni's leading they had all along been following a false track.

"But when the appointed day arrived," says Buoncompagni in his narrative, "the scholars ran with one accord to the piazza of Santo Stefano, and finding no man there, were fain to return amid the mockery" of those who saw it.³

¹ Cf. *Inf.* xxix. 100 sqq. where the alchemist Griffolino of Arezzo says he was burnt by Albero of Siena, because in jest he had offered to teach him to fly, and failed to do so.

² Sub ann. 1233 (p. 38 sq.).

³ A. Gaudenzi, *ap.* Fr. Cavazza, *Le Scuole dell' antico Studio di Bologna*.

This gifted Florentine seems to have considered the Bolognese "fair game". Yet he was undoubtedly a popular lecturer. Evidently, then as now, the average undergraduate did not mind being "scored off," if the score was genial and good-natured.

Similarly removed, again, from suspicion of irreverence is the retort given by the porter of a Franciscan Convent to the weird brother Geordianus, who when invited to dinner or supper had an irritating way of replying: "Aut veniam, aut non veniam—Either I shall come, or I shall not come". "Is so-and-so in?" he would inquire of the porter at the gate, and the answer was always ready: "Aut est in domo, aut non est—Either he is at home or he is not".¹

Peculiarities of speech and utterance gave rise to laughter among the populace then as now. In 1284 a certain Tobias of Modena received his *congé* as Podestà of Reggio, being "honourably dismissed with his full salary". One of the reasons of his dismissal was a ridiculous impediment in his speech. He could not even "put the question" in a council meeting without raising an audible titter—attempting to say "audivistis quod propositum est," he could only get out "audivistis propoltam". Salimbene's own judgment is that the people who made themselves really ridiculous were those who originally chose the poor man.²

The fun afforded by the odd ways of the lower animals is well illustrated by the stories told of Gregorio di Montelungo's talking crow.³

The bird used to rise in the dead of night and shout out in a provokingly human voice: "Who's for Bologna?"

¹ Sub ann. 1248 (p. 113).

² *Ibid.* 1284 (p. 303).

³ *Ibid.* 1250 (p. 199).

who's for Dojolum? who's for Peolam? Come, come, come, quickly, quickly: get up, get up, come, come, bring your things! . . ."

Travellers arose and packed in haste, and stood for hours on Po-bank looking for a boat which never came, and were astonished because they could find no trace of the deceiver.

The same crow had a pet aversion, in the person of a blind beggar who used to sit bare-legged every day on the bank of the river. The bird vented his spleen by an amiable peck at the poor man's legs, after which he would fly off a little way and proceed to insult his victim, crying: "Now you have it—*Modo habes tu!*"

One day the beggar caught his tormentor a blow with his staff, which broke his wing: on which he in turn cried out: "Modo habes tu; modo habes tu!" The story makes the crow reply (and the *Spectator* might well take note of it)—"Modo habeo ego; modo habeo ego!" The blind man then dismissed him with these words: "Take what thou hast; accept what is thine and begone. Deceivers and crafty ones provoke the anger of God. I have smitten thee once, and there will be no need of a second blow: go to the physician, if perchance he may heal thee, quia insanabilis fractura tua, pessima plaga tua."¹

The sense of humour exhibited in the records of those days is not of the smart and highly developed American type of to-day. It is often, indeed, elementary if not pointless, and according to our standards in doubtful taste. But if it usually takes the form of that somewhat bucolic repartee which forms the gist of so many of Sacchetti's

¹ Salimbene, *loc. cit.*

Novelle, it has not yet assumed the prevailingly coarse and licentious character so prominent both in the *Novelle* and the *Decameron*. It is not all blasphemous, bitter, or impure; it is intensely human and alive; and at its best, as in Dante, it has the restrained charm of true art and feeling.

There is enough at any rate to show that the descendants of the men who, in Lombard architecture, had consecrated the grotesque, could find some solace amid the prevailingly terrible and tragic conditions of life in that "saving grace" of humour—the faculty of appreciating the ridiculous, and of seeing in incongruity a motive not for irritation but for recreation. Such faculty provides a certain alleviation even for those with whom fortune deals most relentlessly.



TORRE DELLA CASTAGNA WITH DANTE'S HOUSE IN FLORENCE
FROM A SKETCH BY THE AUTHOR

CHAPTER VI

DANTE'S FLORENCE

NOWHERE, perhaps, as in Florence do we find so intensely manifested the exuberant life of the Trecento, in its brighter and its darker side, in its many contrasts and inconsistencies, in its irresistible tendency to self-expression in politics, in commerce, in art and literature. Nowhere was there a more elaborate system of wheels within wheels to represent municipal government; nowhere a more absolute triumph of the democratic principle; nowhere was the acquisitive instinct of the merchant and financier more highly developed or more practically and successfully applied; nowhere else has there been an artistic succession including so many men of real genius, from Giotto, the originator of modern painting, to Botticelli; nowhere, in the Trecento or since, has Florence been rivalled on the ground of literature: ever since Dante's day the language spoken in Florence has been the admitted classical tongue of Italy.

It will not then be without interest if we try to picture to ourselves as vividly as possible the Florence of Dante's day—that city of which he says

Io fui nato e cresciuto
Sopra il bel fiume d' Arno alla gran villa.¹

¹ *Inf.* xxiii. 94, 95.

Florence at the opening of the twentieth century bears somewhat the same relation to the city of the Grand Dukes which Dante's Florence bore to that of Cacciaguida's.

We who visit the banks of Arno to-day find a city transformed: eternally fascinating, it is true, yet robbed of much of its ancient charm.

Its stately circuit of fourteenth century walls has all but entirely disappeared, and the suburbs have grown and extended till Fiesole itself—albeit the little town and its importunate *vetturini* and basket sellers still retain for the visitor something of the old rugged and uncouth character,

. . . tiene ancor del monte e del macigno—¹

is almost engulfed in Florence, with which it is connected by that most modern of links, an electric tramway. Many of the old Palazzi in the city below have been converted into hotels; many more have passed into Anglo-Saxon hands, and the Teutonic invasion has changed the whole tone of the place. It is now a cosmopolitan, but above all, an Anglo-American city.

La cittadinanza . . . è or mista,²

says the *Laudator temporis acti*, taking up Dante's phrase, and is characterised by that fatal "confusion delle persone" which according to the poet was ever

Principio . . . del mal della cittade.³

And as we of to-day are apt to sigh for the Florence of a century ago with its unspoilt old-world reminiscences, forgetful alike of the abuses and the restraints of those days, of the tribute of admiration due to the national revival, and of the solid advantages which have accrued

¹ *Inf.* xv. 63.

² *Par.* xvi. 49.

³ *Ibid.* 67-68.

to the city through the Anglo-Saxon invasion; even so Dante in his day looked back with regret over the 150 years that had passed over Florence since the death of his great-great-grandfather Cacciaguida. In a spirit which breathes more of the patriot and the lover than of the mere antiquary, he conjures up the compact little city, with its bare 14,000 inhabitants,¹ nestling on the north side of the Arno, and connected with the other side by one single bridge, the former "Ponte Vecchio";² snugly enclosed within its first circle of fortification, the old wall of 1078—

Fiorenza dentro dalla cerchia antica—³

a home of modesty, of refined simplicity, of piety and sturdy patriotism. He would gladly have sacrificed the commercial prosperity and political importance which the city had attained in the course of the intervening century and a half, for the old patrician nobleness and domestic happiness of his ancestors.

But that day was gone, never to return. Florence, the city of talent *par excellence*, was already launched in its turbulent, yet brilliant, career, its career of irresistible political, commercial and artistic progress.

Dante himself, though by no means typical of contemporary Florence, and indeed out of sympathy with it, could have been produced by no other place; and what is true of Dante, is true also of Guido Cavalcanti, and still more of

¹ Instead of the 70,000 of Dante's own day; see the calculations (based partly on *Par.* xvi. 46-48), in Toynbee's *Dante Dictionary*, p. 241.

² *I.e.* the old Roman (?) bridge, destroyed by the great flood in 1333, twelve years after Dante's death: called by Dante simply "il ponte," *Par.* xvi. 146.

³ *Par.* xv. 97. The *loci classici* for the simplicity of early Florence are, of course, *Par.* xv. 97-136; xvi. 34-154; and Villani, book vi. 71.

Giotto and many of Giotto's followers. The peculiar versatility of the genius of Florence is well brought out by Mr. Berenson in his comparison of the Florentine school of painting—the successors of Dante's Giotto—with the Venetian.¹ "The significance of the Venetian names," he says, "is exhausted with their significance as painters. Not so with the Florentines. Forget that they were painters, they remain great sculptors; forget that they were sculptors, and they still remain architects, poets and even men of science."²

And if Florence is pre-eminently the home of artistic genius, its talents are by no means exhausted therein. In literature its greatness is at least as remarkable, and its genius for commerce alone would almost have justified the title "*il quinto elemento*"³

For Florence, in days when the rest of Europe had not yet outgrown its feudal and chivalrous contempt of commerce, recognised the dignity of labour, and instituted practically by its enactments⁴ a new and revolutionary aristocracy of trade, whereby, for municipal purposes, to have no commercial standing meant—to be nobody.⁵

¹ B. Berenson, *Florentine Painters of the Renaissance* (1903), pp. 1-3.

² This is true, more or less, of the series that begins with Giotto and ends with Michelangelo: notably of the two extremes, and most of all is it true of the versatile Leonardo da Vinci.

³ See above, chap. i. p. 16.

⁴ The celebrated *Ordinamenti di Giustizia* (Jan. 1292-93) made it impossible for any of the so-called "Nobility" to be candidates for the priorate: but even earlier the "practical exercise of a trade or craft was held indispensable". See Villani, *Hist. of Florence* (Eng. ed. 1905), p. 453.

⁵ M. Philippe Monnier (*Quattrocento*, vol. i. p. 8) remarks most strikingly: "Le travail restait la loi sacrée. Personne mieux que Florence n'en comprit la grandeur, et n'en sanctifia le bienfait. Elle l'ennoblit: chez elle, un métier s'appelle un art. Elle l'imposait: pour

It is, then, no idle curiosity that makes us long to conjure up the true lineaments of this Mother of Genius; to realise just how she looked and what she said and felt in the days when she brought forth and nurtured the greatest genius of them all—Dante Alighieri, painter,¹ poet, philosopher, theologian, architect of a complete ideal world, seer, with an insight into heights and depths that is at least akin to the prophetic—the insight of one who can say—

Nel ciel che più della sua luce prende
Fu'io. . . .²

First, then, for the outward form of Dante's Florence. The third circle of walls (replacing the second line of 1173), was begun by Arnolfo di Cambio in 1284, and far advanced towards completion ere Dante left Florence for ever. This ring of fortifications, retouched in places by later hands, survived until the fatal days when Florence became temporary capital of an united Italy. The substitution of featureless boulevards for these walls has done more than anything else, except perhaps the destruction of the Mercato Vecchio, to make mediæval Florence unthinkable.

But if we would revive the city of Dante we must do more than think away the transformation that has followed in the train of the Risorgimento. All the glories of Medicean Florence must disappear, including some of the city's most precious landmarks. The Medici, Strozzi

naitre à le vie civile il faut être né à la vie laborieuse. Les grands et les nobles, s'ils méprisent le commerce, sont du moins contraints à en porter l'étiquette et à s'inscrire dans une corporation. Qui ne travaille pas, n'est pas. Aussi, du haut en bas de l'échelle, chacun travaille."

¹ Cf. *Vita Nuova* xxxv. p. 228, where he says "disegnava un angelo sopra certe tavolette".

² *Par.* i. 4.

and Pitti Palaces, the whole group of San Lorenzo as it now stands, the cloisters of San Marco—adorned though they be with pictured saints and angels that breathe the very spirit of the early Trecento—all these must vanish, and the same is true of many a less known fane. Nay, that central group itself, which, to our eyes, *is* Florence, must be stripped of its most characteristic features. Giotto's campanile was but planned in Dante's life-time, Brunelleschi's dome was not even thought of, and the stately, yet strangely ineffective Cathedral of to-day was represented by a modest little temple of Sta. Reparata. Only the Baptistery remains the same—"il mio bel San Giovanni";¹ "l'antico vostro Battisteo"—² "that great solemn interior, still cool and calm amid the blazing sunshine," with its dim mosaics³ on which Dante's eyes have looked, "remains alone unchanged".⁴ But there, too, we look in vain for the old font, with its marble *pozzetti* like those we see at Pisa, one of which Dante confesses to have broken of deliberate purpose, in order to rescue a child who had fallen in and was like to be suffocated;—

Fatti per loco de'battezzatori;
L'un delli quali, ancor non è molt'anni
Rupp'io per un che dentro vi annegava.⁵

And without, even the Baptistery itself is changed. In Dante's day it was not yet coated with its marble vesture, nor embellished with the wonderful doors of Andrea Pisano and Lorenzo Ghiberti. It stood up "in flint, grey

¹ *Inf.* xix. 17.

² *Par.* xv. 134.

³ Attributed partly to Fra Jacopo (1225); partly to Dante's contemporary, Andrea Tafi.

⁴ Mrs. Oliphant, *Makers of Florence*, p. 6.

⁵ *Inf.* xix. 18-20.

and homely,"¹ amid the tombs which encircled both it and the neighbouring church—tombs where the young bloods of Florence used to frolic at night—² overlooked by the tall houses of the Adimari and (till a little before Dante's birth) by the still taller tower called *Guardamorto*—"watcher of the dead," which the Ghibelline conquerors in vain attempted to hurl upon the Baptistery.³ Besides the Baptistery the only church to which Dante distinctly refers is that of the Badia (situated upon the first wall of 1078), from whose chimes the Florence of Dante's, as of Cacciaguida's, period took her time:—

. . . la cerchia antica
Ond'ella toglie ancora e terza e nona—⁴

but of course many more existed; and indeed we learn from Villani that within three years of Dante's death there were fully a hundred churches and chapels within the walls.⁵

The two city gates which the Poet mentions—the Porta Peruzza,⁶ and his own Porta San Piero,⁷ to which the Corso led, eastward, have long since disappeared. Of the gates we see to-day⁸ two, the Porta Romana and the Porta San Frediano, were erected within a few years of Dante's death.⁹ He never saw them. Three others he must have seen, for the great Arnolfo had begun to construct them ere the Poet was yet twenty years old:¹⁰

¹ Mrs. Oliphant, *loc. cit.*

² Boccaccio, *Decamerone*, vi. 9.

³ Villani, vi. 33: "Ma come piacque a Dio, per reverenza e miracolo del beato Giovanni, la torre ch'era alta 120 braccia . . . rivolsesi e cadde per lo diritto della piazza, onde tutti i Fiorentini si maravigliano, e il popolo ne fu molto allegro".

⁴ *Par.* xv. 97-98.

⁵ Villani, ix. 257 (1324).

⁶ *Par.* xvi. 125-26.

⁷ *Ibid.* 94.

⁸ All of these were added to or altered in 1529.

⁹ S. Frediano in 1324, Romana 1328. ¹⁰ In 1284.

the Porta al Prato—now a mere wreck—the Porta San Gallo, by which the exiled Bianchi and Ghibellines made their abortive attempt to return in the heat of a July day, 1304,¹ and the Porta alla Croce, through which, on a Sunday in the October of 1308, Corso Donati galloped on his last mad ride, fleeing in vain from the vengeance that was to overtake him.²

Of the four bridges on which Dante trod, none remains in its original form. The Ponte Vecchio—the only one which spanned the Arno before the thirteenth century—was guarded in Dante's days by the sinister and weather-worn image of the god Mars,

. . . quella pietra scema
Che guarda il ponte . . .³

at whose feet fell Buondelmonte in that fatal affray in 1215 from which the Florentines dated all their woes.⁴

Bridge and image alike were destroyed by the great flood of 1333. At the same time fell the Ponte alla Carraja⁵ built in 1218, for the sake of the growing industry in silk and wool of the opposite Borgo Ognissanti,⁶ and therefore standing in Dante's lifetime, though he nowhere mentions it.

¹ July 20.—See the graphic account in Villani, viii. 72, and the still more graphic and pathetic description of Dino (who says 21st July), iii. 10. Villari summarises it, *Hist. of Florence*, p. 534 sq. Dante had probably parted from the exiles just before.

² Villani, viii. 96; Dino, iii. 21; cf. *Purg.* xxiv. 82-84.

³ *Par.* xvi. 145.

⁴ Villani, v. 38; Dino Compagni, i. 2; *Inf.* xxviii. 106-8; *Par.* xvi. 136 sqq.

⁵ Villani, v. 42. This was the second bridge, called at first "Ponte Nuovo," to distinguish it from the Ponte Vecchio, "perocchè allora la città di Firenze non avea che due ponti".

⁶ By 1300 the *Oltrarno* rivalled the city proper in size; Dino (i. 1), speaks of the river as dividing the city "quasi per mezzo".

The "Ponte Rubaconte," which leads to the foot of the San Miniato hill,¹ now "Ponte alle Grazie" "is the only existing Florentine bridge," says Mr. Edmund Gardner,² "which could have actually felt the footsteps of the man who was afterwards to tread scatheless through the ways of Hell".³

The clustering groups of towers like those still standing at Gubbio and San Gemignano, which acted as posts of vantage for the noble families and their retainers in the constant faction-fights; these had been robbed already, in many cases, of their upper storeys by the jealousy of the burgher population. But they were far more numerous and striking then than they are now, and the whole city offered something more than the appearance presented to-day by the Borgo SS. Apostoli and the Via Lambertesca on the northern, and by the Via de' Bardi and the Borgo San Jacopo on the southern side of the Arno. Typical towers still remain here and there, such as those associated with the historic names of Buondelmonte and Corso Donati: and there stands to-day in the quaint little Piazza di San Martino the old Torre della Castagna which through all the centuries has kept watch over Dante's birthplace, belonging in his day to the monks of the Badia.⁴

And indeed, though the "Casa di Dante" itself has been hopelessly renovated, the little group of narrow streets round the Chiesa di San Martino, with its memories of the Alighieri, the Donati and the Portinari, is perhaps more vividly reminiscent of Dante's Florence than many a more picturesque or impressive corner of the city.

¹ *Purg.* xii. 100-2.

² *Florence*, p. 340.

³ It was widened, however, in 1874. The fourth bridge, S. Trinità, was entirely rebuilt by Bartolommeo Ammanati in 1567-70.

⁴ Cf. E. Gardner, *Florence*, pp. 37, 38.

Mrs. Oliphant's description of this quarter is among the best things in her book.

"Between this church" of San Martino, she says,¹ "and the old walls of the second circle was the scene of his life—not Florence, but his street and quarter of Florence, among the neighbours who, closely packed together, made part of each other's lives, as only in the tiniest and most primitive of villages neighbours can do nowadays. Each family held together in its cluster of houses, building on new storeys, thrusting forth new chambers as the branches of the tree grew and the name increased in number and strength. The Portinari, the Donati, the Cerchi, inhabited each their palace-colony, their homely fortress, side by side with the Alighieri." None could be so absolutely neighbours, for good or ill, as "the generations which succeeded each other in the same hates and friendships, as in the same names and houses. Thus the boy Durante, Alighieri's son, no doubt knew from his cradle not only Folco Portinari's little Beatrice, but also the young Donati, Forese and Piccarda, and probably that Gemma of whom he leaves no record, although she was his wife. That little corner of the closely inhabited mediæval city was in itself an *imperium in imperio*. . . . The festivities of any one house were for all the neighbourhood, like that which was made in the Casa Portinari in May;² and among the neighbours were those meetings, those talks, seated at the door of the house, and all those details of social life which we find in Boccaccio. . . . No noble matron, no cavalier bearing arms and authority can now be found seated at the *uscio di casa* in kindly talk with the passing neighbours as they cross the street in the cool of the

¹ *Makers of Florence*, chap. i. pp. 11-13.

² Boccaccio, *Vita di Dante*, § 3 (ed. Solerti, p. 16).

evening from Vespers at San Martino, or, fresh from politics and business, from the Palace of the Priors; such close and friendly intercourse exists no longer. But the very sight of the old narrow streets conjures up the scene. The evening so cool and sweet after the hot day; the heavy cornices of the old houses marking out that strip of intense celestial blue above . . . the high tower of the Badia pealing the hour . . . and low down at the doorways, on the projecting stairs in the cortile, what talk of the advance of trade, of the glorious buildings about to be begun which will make the world wonder, of those drivelling Ghibellines, crushed in every foolish town about which had thought to rival Florence! or perhaps, in lower tones, Madonna Bella, Alighieri's young wife, half happy, half afraid, whispering to some young mother of the Portinari, that dream she had before her child was born.¹

“Cheerful, narrow, yet kindly burgher life; narrow, knowing no friendship out of the *vicinato*, yet broader by the very limits of that *vicinato* than our shut-up evenings indoors; and how they could hate each other, those neighbours, when occasion served, more passionately still than they could love!”²

Yet we must not suppose that Dante had nothing to interest him in the more remote quarters of the city—the remotest of which, on this side Arno, was scarce four minutes' walk from his door.

In the days between his boyhood and his exile the city was the scene of many busy and ambitious architectural schemes. His own quarter of San Piero was surrounded by a circle of rising churches and palaces. On the north-west the Dominicans had already begun their Church of

¹ Cf. Boccaccio's *Vita*, § 17 (ed. Solerti, p. 64 sqq.).

² Oliphant, *loc. cit.*

Santa Maria Novella when he was a lad of thirteen years. On the south-east the Franciscan Church of Santa Croce was commenced, contemporaneously with the great Duomo to the north of him: both under the direction of Arnolfo di Cambio, when Dante was barely twenty-nine.

The rising walls of these churches he watched no doubt with interest: especially perhaps the church of his beloved Franciscans. Men still point to the stone which marks the spot where he stood to gaze on the building of the Cathedral; and what is more likely than that Giotto should have consulted his poet-friend about the design for the great campanile, as he consulted him later on, so we are told, on the subjects of his famous frescoes at Padua?

Meanwhile on the south of Dante's quarter in the neighbourhood of the ruined palace of the Uberti—of detested memory in Guelf Florence—was rising, under Arnolfo's direction, the Palazzo de' Signori, now known as Palazzo Vecchio: but the upper stage of the tower, which is now, perhaps, the most striking feature in a general view of Florence, belongs to a later date.

The Old Mercato, ruthlessly swept away by the onset of mediocrity and hygiene in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, is twice mentioned by Dante in the sixteenth canto of the *Paradiso*, once, as the abode, even in the far-off days of Cacciaguida, of the great family of the Caponsacchi,¹ and again as the spot where the *corso*, or route of the annual race run on Saint John Baptist's Day, touched the "last ward,"² *i.e.*, the Sestiere di San Piero. Standing, according to tradition,³ upon the site of the old Roman Capitol of B.C. 70, it was the true centre of the city's life.

But the centre of Dante's own life was, as we have seen,

¹ *Par.* xvi. 121.

² *Ibid.* 42.

³ Villani, viii. 2.

the network of narrow alleys that formed the Sestiere di San Pier Scheraggio; that life's circumference, happily, was not limited even by the boundaries of the visible world.

And though he was to win along the rough road of homelessness a wider and deeper experience of human nature than this little Florence could ever have supplied, yet it was here, in this tiny battleground, this microcosm of San Piero Maggiore, called by its critics "Sesto di Scandali"—

L' aiuola che ci fa tanto feroci,¹

that Dante learned as a youth his first lessons of love and hatred, of admiration and contempt. And when in later life he set himself to weave the wonderful texture of his vision—

Al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra,²

drawing his material from far and near, he did not forget those early vivid experiences.

The souls he meets in Hell and Purgatory and Heaven are, naturally, spirits of those already departed in the year of the vision.³ His living contemporaries he only brings before us indirectly, in the references made to them by departed Florentines—a Ciacco, a Forese, a Cacciaguida. But even so he can show us more than twenty of his fellow-citizens in Hell, distributed as types of nine different forms of sin: men whom he had known as a child, or whose memory was still alive and powerful in the circles wherein his boyish mind received its impressions.

It is not, as some would have us believe, that the pique of

¹ *Par.* xxii. 151.

² *Ibid.* xxv. 2.

³ Thus Guido Cavalcanti, who died at the end of August, 1300, is, in the Easter of that year, "co' vivi ancor congiunto," *Inf.* x. 111.

a disappointed and embittered outcast is ready to consign everything Florentine indiscriminately to the abyss ; still less that he arbitrarily sets his foes in Hell and his friends in Heaven. In Hell itself he makes distinctions. Face to face with Bocca degli Abati, the traitor of Montaperti,¹ his fury overmasters him ; he flies at him like an infuriated woman, and twists and tears out his hair till the poor wretch yells for pain. For Filippo Argenti, who, if we may trust Boccaccio,² was wont in life to treat his fellows even more savagely than Dante dealt with Bocca—for poor mud-stained Filippo, weeping and stretching out grimy hands from the Stygian marsh, the poet has but a hot and pitiless retort.³ But for the gourmand Ciacco—one of Argenti's torments in life, and victim himself of a practical joke at the house of Corso Donati—glutton, but withal a pleasant companion, "eloquente e affabile e di buon sentimento"⁴—for him Dante has tears of pity :⁵—

Ciacco, il tuo affanno

Mi pesa sì che a lagrimar m' invita.

Again, towards Jacopo Rusticucci and his fellow-sufferers :—

Che fur sì degni

he demonstrates that respect which Virgil tells him is their due :—

a costor si vuole esser cortese ;⁶

while when he meets Farinata and Brunetto, we almost forget we are in Hell ; so genuine and reverential a spirit of admiration breathes through every line of the great passage in which he sketches the hero of Montaperti and saviour of Florence, the man who could say :—

¹ *Inf.* xxxii. 97 *sqq.*

² *Decamerone*, ix. 8.

³ *Inf.* viii. 32 *sqq.*

⁴ Boccaccio, *loc. cit.*

⁵ *Inf.* vi. 58.

⁶ *Ibid.* 79 *sqq.* ; xvi. 15.



FARINATA DEGLI UBERTI
SANT' APOLLONIA, FLORENCE. ANDREA DEL CASTAGNO

Fu io sol colà dove sofferto
 Fu per ciascun di torre via Fiorenza,
 Colui che la difesi a viso aperto;¹

so pathetic is the filial love wherewith Dante greets

La cara e buona imagine paterna

of the old Notary, to whom he owed a never-to-be-forgotten debt in intellectual things.²

No, Florence is not consigned indiscriminately to Hell, and though we cannot acquit Dante of a submerged feeling of resentment against Florence—the jealousy and hatred that is but the other side of his passionate outraged love—a resentment that is not merely or meanly personal; yet this resentment, though it bursts out from time to time in floods of bitter and sarcastic vituperation,³ does not lead him to exclude his fellow-citizens from the kingdom of Hope or from that of Blessedness.

No sooner has he emerged upon the shores of the island mountain of Purgatory than he is able to greet Casella,⁴ fresh landed from the Angel's bark, and to win from him a song—one of his own canzoni sung so often by his musician friends in the happy days of their youth—

Amor che nella mente mi ragiona.

And ere he reaches the gate of Purgatory proper, he overtakes another old acquaintance, the lackadaisical Belacqua, in a characteristic attitude of listless repose, and wins from him a fraternal greeting.⁵

But in the sixth cornice of the repentant gluttons a still

¹ *Inf.* x. 91-93.

² *Ibid.* xv. 83.

³ *E.g.* in such passages as *Inf.* vi. 49 sq.; xv. 61 sqq.; xvi. 73 sqq.; xxiv. 144; xxvi. 1 sqq.; *Purg.* vi. 127 sqq.; xvi. 113 sqq.; *Par.* xvi. 49 sqq.

⁴ *Purg.* ii. 76, 118.

⁵ *Ibid.* iv. 106 sqq.

more affecting welcome awaits him,¹ as the emaciated Forese Donati catches sight of him and exclaims: "Qual grazia m' è questa!"—Forese, the playfellow of his youth in the little piazza of San Martino; Forese the sharer of his early literary ambitions, the brother of his great enemy Corso, and cousin of his wife Gemma; the friend whose death he had mourned five years, for whom now he wept mingled tears of sorrow and joy.

La faccia tua, ch' io lagrimai già morta
Mi da di pianger mo non minor doglia.

Come se' tu quassù venuto? ²

With Forese we are already far advanced towards the Earthly Paradise: but higher still, in Heaven itself among the blessed, are to be found Florentine Spirits.

It is to be noticed that Dante's three compatriots who appear in *Paradiso* are all more than compatriots—are, in a sense, his own people. Piccarda Donati, Forese's sister, to whom is accorded that noblest of all verses

E la sua voluntate è nostra pace,³

is, like her brother, an early playmate and a marriage-connection. Cacciaguida, the grand old crusader, is Dante's own ancestor: and highest of all, enthroned in the mystic rose, though stooping through ten heavens to be his guide, sits Beatrice Portinari, another little neighbour in the Sesto,—the transfigured, glorified love of his boyhood. Thus, if Florence is represented in the lowest Hell save that of Lucifer himself, it is also enthroned in the highest Heaven. Bocca and Beatrice represent the extremes of what Florence, for Dante, is capable of producing.

¹ *Purg.* xxiii. 40 sqq.

² *Ibid.* 55 sqq.

³ *Par.* iii. 85.

But it is time we returned to the streets of the mediæval city and peopled them with living figures: those figures which move about with such passionate energy in the pages of Giovanni Villani and Dino Compagni (who both of them shared in the city's life); people who frolic madly and play practical jokes on one another in the *Decamerone* of Boccaccio, or utter smart retorts—as smartness was then estimated—in the *Novelle* of Franco Sacchetti. Lapo Salterello, Dante's fellow-prior and fellow-exile, but no kindred spirit:¹ clever, unscrupulous lawyer, brilliant but corrupt, fearless denouncer of Boniface VIII, but quick to take cover in the house of the Pulci when the storm broke.² Brunetto Latini, the suave and sage old man who had returned in the sixties from a mission in Spain to find himself an outcast through the Ghibelline victory of Montaperti: had spent long years in France, studying and writing his *Trésor*, and now for many years had been the State's most trusted adviser.³ Ciaccio the parasite inviting himself to Corso Donati's house on a *maigre* day in the expectation of lampreys and sturgeon, finding true Lenten fare of pease and fried fish of Arno; then avenging himself by delivering over his deceiver to the tender mercy of Filippo Argenti's iron fists;⁴ Filippo himself, scion of the proud Adimari family, Dante's bitterest foes: haughty, overbearing, childishly fond of displaying his wealth so that he shod his horse with silver: when angry a very hooligan, and a muscular one to boot;⁵ Guido Cavalcanti, the young poet—staunch white Guelf, but married to the great Farinata's daughter: Dante's "first friend," Corso Donati's pet abomination. A man

¹ *Par.* xv. 128.

² *Dino*, ii. 22.

³ See Toynbee, *Dict.* pp. 99-101.

⁴ Boccaccio, *Decam.* ix. 8.

⁵ *Ibid.* and *Comment. on Inf.* viii.

who knew his own worth, and could evade the importunity of Betto Brunelleschi and his boon companions among the tombs of San Giovanni;¹ Corso Donati and Vieri de' Cerchi, the two great party leaders—these and many another become living men for us. And Dante himself is seen pacing the narrow streets in his stately contemplative way, now and then waking up to a passion of irritation as he hears his own songs being murdered by a blacksmith or a donkey-driver. The wondering smith sees hammers, pincers and all his tools hurled one after another into the street: "What the devil are you doing with my tools?" he cries, "you will spoil them!"² "And why do you spoil my songs?"

The donkey-driver innocently slouching along and interspersing Dante's verses with his own *Arri!* "Gee-up!" receives an unexpected thwack between the shoulders.³ Or again we see his indignation wax hot as he meets the young Adimari riding along those narrowest of streets with his feet so wide apart that none can pass; and must squeeze himself, therefore, into a doorway, or return till he find refuge in a side street. A tiresome habit this, of the Adimari, which so gets on the poet's nerves that when he is ostensibly going to plead the man's cause before a magistrate he brings trouble upon him instead, and lays up for himself an unpleasant grudge for future years.⁴ These Adimari are stigmatised by Cacciaguida as a set of braggarts, bullies, cowards and snobs—

L'oltracotata schiatta, che s' indraca
Retro a chi fugge, ed a chi mostra il dente
O ver la borsa com' agnel si placa.⁵

¹ Boccaccio, *Decam.* vi. 9.

² Sacchetti, *Nov.* cxiv.

³ *Ibid.* cxv.

⁴ *Ibid.* cxiv.

⁵ *Par.* xvi. 115-17.

In his day—*i.e.* in the eleventh century—they were already prominent, but of low extraction, and scarce considered fit to intermarry with the Donati.¹ Two of their three branches joined the Bianchi, and Dino makes one of them, Baldinaccio, share Dante's condemnation.² But the Cavicciuli branch took part with the Black faction:³ of whom a certain Boccaccino who had been offended by Dante in early days (perhaps the hero of Sacchetti's story?), obtained possession of the exile's property, and successfully opposed all efforts to effect his return.⁴

In the little Sesto di Porta San Piero there lived side by side a remarkable variety of Guelf families, whose antecedents were very diverse. The Adimari, as we have seen, had been prominent for a couple of centuries, though they still showed traces in their conduct of a boorish origin.

The Alighieri themselves were noble in a sense, for Dante could trace his ancestry back through four generations to one who was knighted on the field of battle, in the Second Crusade, by the Emperor Conrad III.⁵ Cacciaguida's silence about his own ancestry is evidently due to modesty rather than shame;⁶ and Brunetto's⁷ words to Dante imply that the Alighieri were counted to be of that "holy seed of Rome" from which all the more ancient families of Florence were fain to claim their descent. And Dante's noble status is practically proven; for was he not obliged to enrol himself in the books of the "Arte de' Medici e Speciali" in order to qualify for public life?

The Visdomini, their near neighbours, were undoubtedly

¹ *Par.* xvi. 118 sq.

² Dino, *Cron.* ii. 25.

³ Villani, viii. 39.

⁴ So Benvenuto, cited by Toynbee, *Dict.* p. 9 (*s.v.* "Adimari").

⁵ *Par.* xv. 139-44.

⁶ *Ibid.* xvi. 43-45.

⁷ *Inf.* xv. 75 sqq.

nobles of old standing. Cacciaguیدا¹ alludes to them as patrons of the See of Florence, and speaks of the eminent position which they had already attained in the eleventh century. Villani informs us that they became partizans of the Neri faction.²

The Pazzi again were a noble family of the Sesto,³ whose names figure largely in the history of Florence, but, whether by accident, or for some reason unknown to us, they are nowhere mentioned by Dante.

Then there were the Cavalcanti,⁴ Guido's family—among the richest and most powerful in the city, considered as noble, though of merchant origin.

But perhaps the noblest and proudest of them all was the Donati,⁵ the family with which Dante's life was most interwoven, for good and ill: the family which numbered amongst its members, Forese and Piccarda, his early friends and playmates, and their cousin Gemma, whom he married in 1295; and then the truculent Corso—"il Barone"⁶ as the citizens nicknamed him—the man who, together with his accomplice Boniface VIII, was pre-eminently responsible for Dante's exile.

Corso Donati and Vieri de' Cerchi, the stout cavaliers who fought side by side at Campaldino, and fought to such good effect, are the two names round which the swirl of party faction revolves.

The Cerchi, prominent members of the same Sesto di San Piero, but scarcely, or grudgingly, recognised as noble, were in their circumstances typically representative of Florence. Like the Medici of later days, they became great in politics largely in virtue of their mercantile emin-

¹ *Par.* xvi, 112 *sqq.*

³ *Ibid.* v. 39; viii. 39.

⁶ *Ibid.* *loc. cit.*

² Villani, viii. 39; *cf.* v. 39.

⁴ *Ibid.* *loc. cit.*

⁶ *Ibid.* viii. 49.

ence. Like the Medici, they had business relations all over Europe, and Giovanni Villani (whose father was a partner in their business and their agent in England) speaks of their company as being "delle maggiori del mondo".¹ Dino² describes the family in similar terms, and dwells on the outward show they made—their fine clothes, numerous retainers, well-filled stables, and generally smart and handsome appearance.

The one offence which the blue-blooded Donati could never forgive these *parvenus* was their purchase of the "Palagio de' Conti"—the old Ravignani Palace, next door to the homes of the Donati and the Pazzi, which had passed into the hands of the Conti Guidi two centuries ago by the marriage of the "good Gualdrada". And not content with thrusting themselves into the midst of their betters, they began at once to transform the old palace and build on to it, like the modern millionaire who has purchased an "ancestral seat"; and to live there in ostentatiously great style, "tenendo gran vita".

But the offence was by no means all on one side. If the Donati—and especially Corso—felt themselves insulted by the brave show of these upstarts, the Cerchi on their part had little reason to be fond of the Donati—and least of all of Corso.

In the first place that worthy, whose aristocratic principles (be it observed) had not prevented him from espousing a Cerchi wife, presumably for the sake of her dowry, was strongly suspected of having poisoned the said wife. Secondly, he had snatched off for his second wife a young heiress—also connected with the Cerchi family—winning by his fine presence and manly graces the consent of the

¹ Villani, viii. 39.

² Dino, i. 20, from which most of the ensuing particulars are taken.

girl's mother, when all the other relatives were strenuously opposed to the match. And when the deed was done the Cerchi, with an ineffectiveness that characterised too much of their activity outside the realm of finance, made a vain attempt to divert the dowry, and so embittered things still further.

Soon afterwards an incident occurred which threw further and graver suspicion upon Corso, though whether justly or unjustly will probably never be known. Certain "young bloods" among the Cerchi, great favourites in the city, were detained, pending the giving of bail, in the Cortile of the Podestà, for some misdemeanour—a little scuffle with the Pazzi. During the period of their detention a "black pudding" of poisonous pork was given to them, which made all who ate of it dangerously ill; and some actually died. Rightly or wrongly Corso was suspected of poisoning, and so the hatred grew day by day.

So strong was the feeling of the Cerchi that they began to draw back from their aristocratic connection; to break with the "Grandi," absent themselves from the reunions of the "Parte Guelfa," and take up again with the democratic ruling classes—that "Popolo grasso" wherefrom they had sprung. Their good nature, humanity and gentleness had already endeared them to the people, for the poorest of whom they were always ready to do a good turn; while their past championship of the cause of the people's hero, Giano della Bella, had won them enduring favour. The Signoria and the chief magistrates, and eminent jurists like Lapo Salterelli, together with the "Popolo minuto"—the lowest and poorest class—all were on their side; and it was open to them, says Dino, to seize the lordship of the city, but they never would consent.

Now comes another landmark in the feud, which also

illustrates the custom of Dante's time. One day there was a gathering of citizens in the Piazza de' Frescobaldi, on the occasion of a lady's funeral. The female relatives and neighbours assembled, as was customary, inside the house of the deceased, the men outside. In the piazza were arranged benches for the knights and doctors to sit upon, and mats made of rushes¹ for the commoners. The Cerchi and Donati commoners were sitting *vis-à-vis* upon their mats, when of a sudden one rose up, presumably to stretch his legs or rearrange his garments. The other group became at once suspicious, rose up in a body and drew their swords; the first group naturally responded—"e vanno alla zuffa". The neutral guests intervened to stop the fight, but could not prevent a great crowd escorting the Cerchi home, and vainly urging them to "seek out" the Donati.²

And now enters a fresh element of strife in the person of Guido Cavalcanti, whose deadly hatred of Corso threw him into the arms of the Cerchi.

Guido had every reason to hate the leaders of the Donati, who had endeavoured to assassinate him while on a pilgrimage to Compostela. On his return to Florence the would-be pilgrim made no secret of his purpose of revenge. And Corso was afraid, the more because many youths were known to have given their word to back up Guido in his enterprise. One day Guido, riding in company with certain of the Cerchi, espied his enemy in the street and spurred against him, taking for granted that his companions would do the like. But they failed

¹ These mats were hired out for such occasions according to fixed regulations; see *Ordinamenti sugli sponsali e mortorii*, cited by Del Lungo on Dino, i. 20.

² "*Ritrovare*," an expressively vague phrase, fraught with endless possibilities of pillage, arson and murder!

him, and missing his aim with the dart that was to have rid Florence of its pest, the assailant found himself in turn assailed and outnumbered. A son of Corso's—half "de' Cerchi" in virtue of his mother—and Cecchino de' Bardi, and others drew upon him, and he was forced to seek safety in flight. His foes, failing to overtake him, threw stones, and at the same time it began to rain stones from upper windows friendly to the Donati, and Guido was wounded in the hand. So the plot thickens and the feud waxes hotter—"Cominciò per questo l'odio multiplicare".

And Corso's tongue—very Chrysostom of sweetness as he could be when it served his purpose—could cut like his sword and bruise like the stones of his friends.

He loved to speak of Messer Vieri—whose astuteness certainly was no match for his own—as "The ass of our Gate of St. Peter". "Has the ass brayed to-day?" he would ask in his pleasant way. And Guido—presumably in allusion to his "stuck up" ways—he nicknamed "The Spiggot"—a "stupid stick". Mischief-makers made it their business to report all insults with the customary exaggeration, in the hope of rousing the Cerchi to a definite outbreak of hostilities. The Cerchi, as before, refused to move, but began to threaten an alliance with Pisa and Arezzo. This causes a panic among the Donati, who however twist it to their own purposes by a diplomatic exaggeration, and proclaim that the Cerchi have made a league with the Ghibelline of Tuscany, and send an embassy to Pope Boniface, begging him to intervene. The Pope sends for Vieri¹ and tries to induce him to make peace with Corso and the Donati, but Vieri, whose disposition leads him to desire nothing less than peace with all men—Vieri, "asino di Porta" though he be, sees

¹ Villani, viii. 39, and *cf.* Levi, *Boniface and Florence*.



DANTE'S QUARTER, WITH CHAPEL OF S. MARTINO, FLORENCE
FROM A SKETCH BY THE AUTHOR



too deeply into the designs of Boniface upon Tuscany to commit himself, and returns to Florence.

Now comes the famous "Calendimaggio" of 1300, which to Villani¹ is parallel to the murder of Buondelmonte in 1215; bringing to a head the division between Blacks and Whites as the former incident had stereotyped the factions of Guelf and Ghibelline within the city.

The May Day ceremonies are described to us by Villani, Boccaccio and Dino.² At the time when Nature keeps festival with her fair skies and flowers and greenery it was the custom of young Florence to disport itself. Bands were formed of comely youths, who attired themselves in new garments, and ensconced themselves in booths of planks, draped in fine silk stuffs which they erected in various parts of the city. And in like manner the ladies and girls passed along the streets and squares dancing in regular order, or in pairs, with instruments of music in their hands and their heads garlanded with flowers. All sorts of games and merry-makings were rounded off with seductive supper-parties. "The devil," says Dino, "finding the young more adapted to his deceptions than their elders," made use, for his purposes, of a band of youths who were supping together in Florence on that May Day. And while the maidens were enjoying themselves in neighbourly dances, these young men, heated, no doubt, with wine, planned to take their frolic in the form of a mounted assault upon the company of the Cerchi. And so it was that the fair season which had witnessed Dante's first flame of passion for the child Beatrice twenty-six years before,³ was to be marred by a street-brawl fraught

¹ Villani, viii. 39.

² *Ibid.* vii. 132; Boccaccio, *Vita*, § 3 (p. 16); Dino, i. 22.

³ *Vita Nuova*, § 11; cf. Boccaccio, *Vita*, § 3 (p. 16).

with dire consequences to him and his friends. In the scuffle Ricoverino de' Cerchi lost his nose—

dopo lunga tenzone
Verrano al sangue¹

and the Cerchi lived for revenge, "aspettando farne gran vendetta".²

Henceforth the city is divided into two openly hostile camps, even the "religiosi" (who usually remained neutral) are forced to take one side or the other.

Boniface meanwhile sends his "peace-maker" Matteo d' Acquasparta, who effects nothing³: to be followed next year by a more redoubtable "paciario," Charles of Valois, who shall effect everything—for the Neri.⁴

But before the Angevin Totila comes to consummate the ruin of the Bianchi, one more sincere attempt is to be made under the auspices of the Moderates, to reduce the distracted city to tranquillity.

On the Vigil of Saint John the Baptist, 23rd June, the Consuls of the Arts are heading the annual procession which bears offerings to the Shrine of the Saint. Suddenly a party of nobles falls upon them and proceeds to maltreat the grave dignitaries of Florence; shouting out, "We are they who discomfited the Ghibellines at Campaldino, and you have deprived us of all the offices and dignities in our own city!"⁵

Such an offence could not pass unpunished. The Priors (of whom Dante was one), deliberated with the "Consiglio de' Savi" (among whom was Dino Compagni), and decided to banish the ringleaders of both factions. Corso and his companions at first refused to submit, and

¹ *Inf.* vi. 64, 65.

² Dino, i. 22.

³ *Ibid.* 21; Villani, viii. 40.

⁴ Dino, ii. 2; Villani, viii. 49.

⁵ Dino, i. 21.

open war almost broke out, but finally they were persuaded to betake themselves to Castel della Pieve, their appointed place of banishment. The Bianchi went off without a word to Sarzana, where Guido Cavalcanti was to contract the fever of which he died.¹

On the 1st of November, 1301, Charles of Valois, degenerate scion of the House that had produced the "buon Luigi," entered Florence.² On the 6th, Corso impudently returned from his banishment, and Charles, who had solemnly sworn to the Podestà to have him hanged,³ looked quietly on while the returned Neri under his leadership enjoyed a perfect orgy of unchecked violence.⁴ For five days and nights the rabble from the opened prisons was let loose upon the city. The houses of the Bianchi were attacked; pillage, arson and murder were the order of the day; and the worst excesses of a victorious army were shamelessly committed.⁵ In vain the Priors called the citizens to arms. At last, in despair, they resigned their office, and a new Priorate of Neri was appointed forthwith. The banishment of Dante and his fellows soon followed, and the victory of the "Blacks" was complete.

Three years later, in the summer of 1304, some of the leading Bianchi returned for a short space to Florence. Benedict XI, with a sincere desire to bring peace, sent Cardinal Niccolò da Prato.⁶ Hopes were high. The "popolo minuto" welcomed their old allies with demonstrations of joy. Many families of secretly Ghibelline tendencies dared to lift up their heads. The arms of

¹ See below, chap. viii. p. 280.

² *Ibid.* 18.

³ Dino, ii. 21 *init.*

⁴ Dino, ii. 9.

⁵ *Ibid.* 20; Villani, viii. 49.

⁶ *Ibid.* iii. 7; Villani, viii. 69.

the Uberti were kissed as though they had been relics of saints. But on the 8th of June the returned exiles lost heart and departed, and the Cardinal, being openly threatened, followed them, leaving the city under an interdict.¹ Then ensued another orgy of violence, which Dino's pen has graphically described.² Shooting began in the Mercato Vecchio, where the Medici make practically their first appearance in history as ringleaders. Then followed arson: and the leaders of the Neri had conspired with the wicked prior of San Piero Scheraggio to demolish utterly all the palaces and houses and shops belonging to the Cavalcanti. Flaming arrows were shot from the Mercato Vecchio into the Calimala. The mass of *ceri* and waxen images, with which the devotion of the faithful had adorned the little chapel of Our Lady in Orto San Michele, acted as so much fuel to the flames; and so a great tract of the city was entirely destroyed—the warehouses of Calimala, all the shops round the Mercato Vecchio, right up to the Mercato Nuovo,—and the area of devastation extended as far as the Ponte Vecchio. The Cavalcanti were stupefied with horror: they had lost absolutely everything. The Podestà and his mounted retainers lined the streets in characteristic inaction, and served to render nugatory all efforts to stay the flames.³

These horrors, and the solemn curse invoked by the "emissary of God's Vicar," were but, says Villani, the beginning of the evils that were to come upon the city for its sins, and an evil augury had already cast its gloom over the devoted city in the catastrophe of the Calendi-

¹ Villani, viii. 69: "Dappoichè volete essere in guerra e in maldizione, e non volete udire nè ubbidire il messo del vicario di Dio, nè avere riposo nè pace tra voi, rimanete colla maldizione di Dio e con quella di Santa Chiesa". These were his parting words.

² Dino, iii. 8.

³ *Ibid.*

maggio that year, when the old Ponte alla Carraia fell, whilst a sort of "miracle-play" was being enacted upon it. The inhabitants of "San Friano" invited "all who desired news of the other world" to assemble on the bridge. And of the crowds that came to gaze on realistic representations of the tortures of Hell, vast numbers were suddenly precipitated into that "other world" in real earnest.¹

Many another lurid picture of those years of turbulence may be found in Compagni's vivid pages, but we are speaking now of a Florence on which Dante had already looked his last: and must hasten on to the final scenes in the career of Corso Donati.

The *coup d'état*, if we may so style it, which, under colour of a Papal reconciliation of both parties, actually gave over the Whites entirely into the power of the Blacks, left Corso without a rival in the city. And in Florence, as Charles of Anjou left it, it might have seemed that the Donati were at last secure of that "Signoria" which the Cerchi threw away when it offered itself to them. But Corso's overbearing spirit was his own chief enemy; gout and increasing age embittered his already uncertain temper, and so sapped his popularity that Messer Rosso della Tosa, one of his former followers, found it easy to form an influential party in opposition to their old leader, a party which managed to secure for itself all the offices of the State. Corso's pretensions soon brought him under suspicion; and in 1308 he was accused (probably justly) by the Signoria of plotting against the Commonwealth, in concert with the Ghibelline leader, Ugucione della Faggionola, whose daughter was the last of his successive brides. The whole process, accusation and condemnation, says

¹ Villani, viii. 70.

Villani, occupied less than an hour¹—so sure were the Priors of their ground, and so anxious to act promptly. The officers of justice found their man characteristically entrenched in his own private fortress in Borgo San Piero Maggiore. He was so well provided with munitions of war and supported by lusty friends and followers that “the battle lasted a great part of the day”.

Corso, anxiously awaiting the promised succours from Ugucione, found at last that they were not coming; burst forth like a beast at bay, and made a desperate rush for the open country. Overtaken by some Catalan cavalry in the pay of the Signoria he endeavoured to use in self-defence the only weapon left to him, that honeyed tongue which both Dino and Villani describe as among his exceptional gifts.² But his eloquent pleadings were in vain. Neither rhetoric nor even large offers of money could avail to make the troopers do more than hesitate. And a few moments' hesitation was of no use to him, since his Ghibelline friends had turned tail. Finally the old man in despair, exhausted with the long battle and arduous flight, his hands and feet all tingling with the sharp pains of his infirmity, fell—with or without intention—from his horse; and as he lay on the ground they stabbed him in the throat. He was carried to die in the neighbouring Vallombrosan Convent of San Salvi, the cloister which had been the immediate goal of his flight.

Such is the narrative as it may be pieced together from the accounts of Dino and Villani. Benvenuto, in the endeavour to reconcile it with Dante's imaginative reference in the *Divina Commedia*, where Corso is described as

A corda d' una bestia tratto,³

¹ Villani, viii. 96.

² Dino, iii. 21; Villani, viii. 96.

³ *Purg.* xxiv. 82.

suggests that in falling (or throwing himself) from his horse, he caught one foot in the stirrup, and received his death-wound while being dragged along the road.¹

But it seems simpler to take Dante's predictive words as figurative; couched, perhaps (according to our interpretation given elsewhere),² in terms of a familiar form of mediæval punishment, but representing the would-be demagogue as dragged down to ruin by the "bestia," which is the popular party whereof he thought himself the master.

So died one of the most remarkable and characteristic figures of Dante's Florence. The combination of noble blood and mien with ignobly crooked and unscrupulous designs, of fair words with truculent behaviour, of honeyed eloquence with a taste for vulgar personalities, is typical of the contradictions of the Florentine nature: and typical also, to a certain extent, of his party. His opponent Vieri is typical, too, of the other party—full of wise schemes, yet always hesitating to put them into execution, failing to strike at the critical moment, never following up a success when achieved. He was a man of humble origin, though of great personal beauty; a "popolano," yet in the eyes of posterity infinitely more of a "gentleman" than his proud rival. Generous, fair-minded, patriotic, full of fine qualities and well furnished with wealth and popularity, he lacked just that element of decision and self-confidence without which no man can be a successful leader.

And the two between them represent (on the political side at any rate) nearly the whole of that microcosm, Florence.

¹ Benvenuto, *ad loc.*

² See chap. iv. p. 134.

CHAPTER VII

DANTE'S LITERARY ANTECEDENTS

THE uniqueness of the Florence of Dante's day—that which won for the Florentines Pope Boniface's sobriquet of "il quinto elemento"—was in nothing more remarkable than in its work for literature. This was truly epoch-making.

Not only did that turbulent merchant-folk find time in the intervals of street-fighting, of exiling their neighbours and being exiled themselves in turn, to build churches and palaces and execute works of painting and sculpture which have been the admiration of all subsequent ages; their harassed city, convulsed so incessantly by outbursts of passion to all appearance unrelievedly sordid and self-seeking, gave birth to a new and beautiful style of Italian literature, alike in prose and in poetry, which has become the classical standard for all time.

Giovanni Villani, strenuous magistrate and statesman, financier and expert in the science of coinage, strengthener of his city's fortifications, resolute but unsuccessful fighter of her battles, is the Father of Italian History. And its Uncle, if we may say so, is Dino Compagni—ardent democratic reformer, Gonfalonier of Justice in 1293, and prior for the second time in the fateful autumn of 1301.¹ Dante

¹ These Priors entered office 15th October, and should have remained till 15th December, but were forced by Charles of Valois and the Neri to



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himself, and his personal friends, Guido Cavalcanti, Lapo Gianni, and Guittoncino of the neighbouring Pistoja—all save Lapo (of whom comparatively little is known) victims at one time or another of ruthless party hatred—form the nucleus of the new school of Italian Poetry; the immortal *Dolce Stil Nuovo*.

But to understand the place held by these latter in the history of Literature, we must retrace our steps, and attempt to trace, however summarily, the course of previous literary development in the peninsula.

And though the ground to be traversed is, of course, well-trodden, and in some ways familiar to all, a swift glance up and down it should help us materially in our attempt to see the *Trecento* through Dante's eyes.

For here again Dante is himself our guide. Just as the *Divina Commedia* supplies us with an effective mirror of the life of the middle ages, and the *Monarchia* reflects the sanest and most thoughtful form of its political theorisings; so in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* we have a glimpse into the principles and antecedents of its literary evolution.

In the first book of that unfinished treatise, Dante leads us back to philosophical presuppositions, and discusses the *raison d'être* of rational speech as the distinguishing mark of mankind (i.-iii.). Then, with the help of such *data* as he had at his command, he attacks the problem of the nature, circumstances and environment of the origin of human speech (iv.-vi.); and starting afresh from the biblical "Confusion of Tongues" (vii.), he passes down to the history of European speech, noting especially the three

resign on 9th November. It is to this fact, as is supposed, that Dino owed his immunity, instead of being forced to share Dante's exile.

most illustrious daughters of the Latin language, *oil*, *oc* and *si* (viii., ix.). Finally he reviews, in a series of chapters that are of inestimable value to the student (x.-xv.), the fourteen principal dialects of the Italian peninsula; in search of that ideal Italian language—the *idioma illustre, cardinale, aulicum et curiale*—which he himself was to be so largely instrumental in forging.

And this treatise, together with certain references in the *Convivio*¹ and a few remarkable passages in the *Commedia*,² throws a great deal of light upon the subject of Dante's own literary antecedents; and so, though the modern scientific study of literature has the advantage of methods unknown to Dante and is conditioned by considerations which for him did not exist, we shall find ourselves constantly referring to him in the course of our quest.

We must go back to old Rome, the Mother of Italian Communes, to whom Florence, Pisa, Mantua and all the rest loved to trace back their origin; ³ that power to which Dante looked back, with the eyes of his Master Virgil, as little less than divine—the empire of which he read in the Golden Legend that Constantine had said that it had its origin in the Fountain of Divine Mercy—*Romanum Imperium de fonte nascitur pietatis*.⁴

That Rome of whom Virgil assured him that Heaven

¹ See especially *Conv.* i. 5 and 6 (p. 241 sq.).

² See especially *Purg.* xi. 97; xxiv. 49-62; xxvi. 92-*fin.*; and *cf.* *V. N.* § 25.

³ Carducci, *Prose*, pp. 283, 289.

⁴ *Mon.* ii. 5, 40-42 (p. 354). Dante quotes from memory; the actual words in Jacopus de Voragine are: "*Dignitas Romani Imperii de fonte nascitur pietatis*". See Toynbee, *Dict.* p. 471.

had entrusted her with "imperio senza fine,"¹ and in whose qualities, displayed in history, he saw the justification of her great mission—² a mission attested, moreover, by miracles vouched for by Virgil, Livy and Lucan—³ was certainly called, as we too can see, by the providence of Him who guides history to effect a double work of unification in the Mediterranean world.⁴

Beyond the political and social fusion of races which her central organisation, backed by her masterly policy, tended to effect, there was a linguistic unification of far-reaching importance.

In the countries of the Levant, indeed, Greek had established itself as the *lingua franca*, a monument to the success of Rome's rival Alexander of Macedon—the "swift athlete" whose career was cut short by the hand of God at the moment when the supremacy of his *coathleta* was seriously threatened.⁵

But in the West the absorbed countries were subjected to a general domination of the *Latinum popolare*, or middle-class Latin speech—the language of the legionaries and

¹ *Conv.* iv. 4, 115-19 (p. 299); cf. *Mon.* ii. 9, 81-111 (p. 359 sq.). There is an obvious reference to *Aen.* i. 278-79:—

*His ego nec metas rerum, nec tempora, pono;
Imperium sine fine dedi.*

² *Conv.* iv. 4, 98-106 (p. 299): "Più dolce natura in signoreggiando, e più forte in sostenendo, e più sottile in acquistando nè fu nè fia . . .".

³ *Mon.* ii. 4; in *Mon.* ii. 12, 13, Dante argues further from Christ's birth and death under Roman dominion a Divine recognition of the Imperial authority.

⁴ This chapter owes a great debt to Francesco Flamini's admirable little *Letteratura Italiana* (Hoepli Bibl. Stud. No. 73).

⁵ *Mon.* ii. 9, 61-80 (p. 359): "'O altitudo divitiarum sapientiae et scientiae Dei,' quis hic te non obstupescere poterit? Nam conantem Alexandrum praepedire in cursu coathletam Romanum, tu, ne sua temeritas prodiret ulterius, de certamine rapuisti."

colonists. Besides Italy itself, Gaul and Spain and Britain, the Alpine valleys of Helvetia, and still further east Pannonia, Dacia and Moesia on the Danube border, fell more or less completely under the sway of this imperial tongue.

As long as political unity was preserved, the racial diversities of the different nations affected the form of the Latin they spoke only to the extent of comparatively slight peculiarities of vocabulary and pronunciation. But when in the fifth and sixth centuries the disorganised colossus fell to pieces, and the political tie was dissolved, then certain tracts, like the British Isles and the German fringe of the empire, became detached, and the speech of the barbarian invaders replaced the Roman :¹ while over a still wider area, even where the use of the mother-tongue had been effectually superseded, the genius of each race made itself felt in those characteristic and ever-growing modifications of the *lingua franca* which Dante's keen eye was not slow to mark ;² modifications that were only seriously checked when vernacular literature became a power to restrain and to stereotype. The new Roman Empire of Charlemagne, though officially Latin, is really a polyglot empire.³

Thus arose the several Romance or Neo-Latin languages—Italian, French and Provençal ; Catalan, Span-

¹ *V. E.* i. 8, 25-35 (p. 383) : " Licet postea per Sclavones, Ungaros, Teutonicos, Saxones, Anglicos et alias nationes fuit per diversa vulgaria derivatum (idioma Romanum) ".

² *Conv.* i. 5, 55 *sqq.* (p. 242) : " Vedemo nelle città d' Italia a cinquanta anni da qua molti vocaboli essere spenti e nati e variati ; onde se 'l piccolo tempo così trasmuta, molto più trasmuta lo maggiore ". Cf. *V. E.* i. 9, 66 *sqq.* (p. 384).

³ Witness the bilingual character of the " Strasbourg Oaths " in the generation after Charlemagne.

ish and Portuguese; the Ladin of the Grisons and the Rumanian speech of the Balkan Peninsula.

Each of these, or of the more important of them, rapidly subdivided itself (as was natural in the local isolation and practical independence of small districts so common in the Middle Ages) into a number of different dialects—like the fourteen which Dante recognises in the Italy of his day—¹ yet in each and all of the Romance languages, beyond the general resemblance of feature and character which is as it were the birthright of the several members of a single family, there remained—and remains to this day—an analogy of grammatical structure which bespeaks a continuity only partly veiled by divergence of pronunciation and of vocabulary.

From the point of view of literary expression, the various Romance languages developed at vastly different rates of speed. The Ladin of the Grisons never got beyond the popular ballad stage ere the invention of printing supervened to arrest for ever its possibilities of a naïve and ingenuous evolution. The three most famous forms in the history of literature are the French, the Provençal (with which Dante classes the Spanish: *i.e.* all South-West Europe, from the Genoese frontier westwards) and the Italian. And the three were distinguished from one another in Dante's day by their distinctive words of affirmation: *Lingue d' oil*, *Lingue d' oc*, and *Lingua di sì*.² Of these three, Dante's own language, in spite of its special merits and beauties which the poet so passionately champions as against the Provençal,³ was the

¹ *V. E.* i. 9-15.

² *Ibid.* 8, 43-45: "Nam alii *oc*, alii *oil*, alii *sì* affirmando loquuntur; ut puta Hispani, Franci et Latini".

³ *Conv.* i. 10 *fn.* and 11 (p. 247): especially is he scornful of those who affect a foreign language in order to "show off".

last to make itself felt in literature. This seems a curious inversion of the natural order, but is, after all, easily explicable.

So great was the dominion of the Latin tradition in Italy, so strong the sense of continuity with ancient Rome, so keen the Italian's feeling of ownership in the classical culture and literature of the golden age of Augustus that the *Lingua Volgare* was practically never used as a written means of communication between Italian and Italian for ages after it had become the common speech of daily life for rich and poor alike. The first complete Italian sentence that remains to us belongs to the middle of the tenth century; and that is an isolated instance.¹

Latin of course remained (as it remains to-day) the language of the Roman Church, even after the vulgar tongue had usurped its sovereignty in literature. It is due, presumably, to this ecclesiastical influence, that the ἐπιτιμικιον which celebrated the victory over Frederic II at Parma, though it had birth as late as 1248, is couched in Latin, not in the *Volgare*.² Latin lingered on also in Dante's time in isolated districts like Sardinia,³ and for many centuries later—thanks largely to the Church's conservative fidelity to it—as the language of the learned; a function for which it was well fitted by its stability, its grammatical perfection, and its capability of expressing scientific and philosophic thought.⁴ Dante remarks that in

¹ A Capuan document of 960 A.D. in which are recorded the spoken words of a witness: "Sao ko kelle terre per kelle fini que ki contene trenta anni le possette parte S. Benedicti" (Flamini, *Letteratura*, p. 2, note).

² Carducci, *Prose*, p. 287.

³ *V. E.* i. 11, 43 (p. 385). The Sardinians, he says, imitate Latin like apes, not having originality to develop a vernacular!

⁴ *Conv.* i. 5, 45 *sqq.* and 6 (p. 242). Latin is rightfully sovereign: (1) *per nobiltà*—it is stable and incorruptible, while dialects change; (2)

his own day it was understood by *letterati* generally, alike in England and in Germany as in Italy itself.¹ But by the end of the thirteenth century it had practically become, even in Italy, the monopoly of ecclesiastics, jurists, and the learned. Even the great "Signori"—unlike Frederic II in the previous generation—were unfamiliar with Latin,² and still more were the ladies of their courts. It is to this fact that Dante, in the romantic vein of the *Vita Nuova*,³ attributes the *début* in literature of the "Lingua Volgare". The first rude attempt, he says, to compose poetry in the vulgar tongue was due to the desire of a poet to make himself understood of a certain lady, "alla quale era malagevole ad intendere i versi latini". And he dates this first attempt about the middle of the twelfth century⁴—the time when Bertrand de Born began to sing.

Italy had a double chain to break ere she could win her literary emancipation from the "dead hand" of Old Rome. For the tyranny of the Latin tongue was founded on the two bases of form and of matter; and the matter of literature reacted on the form. The place taken in Northern Europe by the romances of Arthur, of Charlemagne, and of the still earlier Nibelung heroes—cycles redolent of mediæval feudalistic chivalry—was held in Italy by the legends of ancient Rome. The cycle of Charlemagne had indeed, in the *Chanson de Roland*, found a footing in Italy as early

per virtù—it is adapted to express philosophic thought; (3) *per bellezza*—it is grammatically and syntactically more artistic and harmonious in the proportion of its parts.

¹ *Conv.* i. 6, 58 *sqq.*; 7, 76 *sqq.* (p. 382); *cf.* Carducci, *Prose*, 288.

² *Conv.* i. 9, 36 *sqq.* (p. 246). ³ *V. N.* § 25 (p. 223).

⁴ *Loc. cit.*: "Se volemo cercare in lingua d'Oco e in lingua di sì, noi non troviamo cose dette anzi lo presente tempo (*i.e.* 1292-95) per cento-cinquanta anni". Carducci dates it from 1152; Ogeri del Viennese *Prose*, p. 28).

as the eleventh century. This "fountain of Frankish epic," originating probably in Roland's own country of Brittany, spread swiftly through the whole of France; overflowed into Spain, where it formed the basis of the *cantares de gestas*, and penetrated into the Low Countries, Germany, England, Scandinavia, and even as far as Iceland. Each age and each nation added characteristic touches to the old story; and in the twelfth century it received a new lease of life, being entirely rewritten to suit contemporary taste, with the substitution of rhyme for the original assonance.¹

The *Chanson de Roland*, says M. Gaston Paris, played in the poetry of Western Europe the part which France herself played in the crusades.²

But the opportunities of diffusion and of popularity enjoyed by the epic of Roncevaux were shared by none other of its compeers. Its memory was kept green all through the ages by the grace of Saint James of Compostela. Roncevaux lies not only on the road by which pilgrims from Spain would make their way to Rome, but also—more important still—on the route by which the faithful from every European country flocked, all through the Middle Ages, to that famous shrine of Saint James, the Galician resting-place of the Apostle "who was buried farthest from his native land".³

The pilgrimage that Brunetto Latini effected, and Guido Cavalcanti attempted, was made, as Dante himself implies, by many a devout Italian in the *Trecento*. They had seen with their own eyes the rock cleft by Roland's sword, and the riven horn with which he blew his dying

¹ See Gaston Paris, *Légendes du Moyen Age* (Paris, Hachette, 1903), p. 8.

² *Ibid.* p. 9.

³ *V.N.* § 41 (p 232).

blast; and, in the words which Pulci wrote two centuries later:—

E tutti i peregrin questa novella
Riportan di Galizia ancora espresso
D'aver veduto il sasso e il corno fesso.¹

But even the magic of the *Chanson de Roland* could not avail to overthrow the domination of ancient Rome. The stories of Æneas and Turnus, of the Tarquins and the Horatii, of Marcus Curtius, Regulus and Cincinnatus, of Cato and Julius Cæsar were, as it would seem, indissolubly wedded to the classic form of speech. Even when the matter was less purely classical, as in the case of the legends of early Forlì, the chronicler, Corbelli, claims to have drawn his material from Latin manuscripts at Ravenna; while the Bolognese Nicolo Casola found material for his French poem on Attila from Latin records at Aquileia and Concordia.² From France, already emancipated,³ and not from Italy, came the quasi-classical romances of later Rome and the cycles of Alexander and of the Trojan War.⁴ "Everything," says Dante, "in vernacular prose, whether translated or original, is in French."⁵

¹ Gaston Paris, *op. cit.* p. 11.

² Carducci, *Prose*, 290. The same critic (p. 297) is convinced that a mass of popular Latin literature anterior to 1250 must have perished, remaining only as substratum for the *Volgare* literature of the next age.

³ French epic which had its beginning in Merovingian times, was full-grown by the tenth century (Gaston Paris, *op. cit.* p. 7).

⁴ Compiled *circ.* 1160, by Benoît de Sainte-More, and translated (1270-87) into Latin in twenty-eight books (without acknowledgement) by the Sicilian troubadour Guido delle Colonne (Toynbee, *Dict.* 169-70). See below.

⁵ *V. E.* i. 10, 12-16 (p. 384): "Allegat ergo pro se lingua *oïl* quod . . . quidquid redactum sive inventum est ad vulgare prosaicum suum est: videlicet biblia cum Trojanorum Romanorumque gestis compilata, et Arturi regis ambages pulcherrimae, et quamplures aliae historiae ac doctrinae".

Even Brunetto Latini, the Florentine, wrote his *Trésor* in French.

But a great step towards the literary emancipation of Italy was gained when, through French influence, the Carolingian cycle already represented, as we have seen, by the *Song of Roland* obtained, towards the end of the thirteenth century, a general vogue throughout Northern Italy—though as yet in a “Franco-Venetian,” rather than a pure Italian form—and with it the Arthurian Legends and the *Roman de la Rose*.¹ A still greater advance was made when—still partly under the influence of French and Provençal Troubadours²—Umbria began to raise its voice in indigenous song, inspired into originality by the religious genius of Saint Francis. The celebrated “Cantico del Sole,” to which we have already referred, founded on the type of the Church’s “sequences” forms a starting-point for this kind of literature which was further developed by the Umbrian flagellants³ in their *laudi*; and in the poems—religious and satiric—of Dante’s contemporary Jacopone da Todi,⁴ expresses itself already in classical shape.

¹ Flamini, *Letteratura*, p. 6. On the Church’s relation to this development, see Carducci, *Prose*, pp. 275-81.

² The ubiquitous popular ballad of unrequited love, etc., no doubt also played its part.

³ Dating from about 1260; also called “disciplinati”.

⁴ Fra Jacopone da Todi is a most interesting figure, alike in history and literature, and a virulent enemy of Boniface VIII. Taking part with the Colonna he was captured and imprisoned for five years by the Pope, to whom he addressed two plaintive odes in Umbrian dialect, and finally the satirical one which begins:—

O Papa Bonifazio

Molto hai jocato al mondo ;

in which he accuses the Pontiff and his household of scandalous conduct during the Jubilee. More than 200 poems are attributed to him (including *Stabat Mater*), most of them in Umbrian dialect. The best were written

But the toddling steps of Italy's infant literature were supported at first to a remarkable degree by the strong hand of her more mature sister of Provence. It is in such spirits as Arnaut Daniel, the troubadour of Périgord, that Dante recognises his true poetic ancestry.¹ The chivalrous ideal, as we have seen, invaded Italy from across the Alps and the mountains of Liguria and Savoy; and with it came the love-ditty. For the troubadour-love needed a more keen, subtle and flexible medium of expression than the naïve dialects of the Italian populace could afford.²

The eleventh century witnesses a sort of apotheosis of the Provençal tongue. Vernacular poetry, which had always persisted as a tradition among the lower orders, suddenly found itself welcomed in the courts of the great lords—the beggar-maid became a queen. Love songs became a fashion and a rage. All who had talent for composing or singing them, gentle or simple, were received with open arms at the various courts which they visited in turn, delighting their noble audiences with elaborate and often very artificial presentations of the twin themes of chivalry and love—that troubadour-love which means homage to one's Lady like that of a vassal to his Lord. It is significant, as Dante himself suggests, that the three languages, *oil*, *oc* and *sì*, have but one word for love—*Amor*.

By the end of the twelfth century this art had developed to a high state of perfection, the *gaia scienza* had crossed the Alps in the train of Barbarossa's feudal following,³ and soon after his conversion in 1266. He died, after being set at liberty by Benedict XI, in 1306. His dialogue-poems contain the germ of the religious drama afterwards performed by the confraternities of disciplinati.

¹ *Purg.* xxvi. 115 sqq.; see below, p. 253 sqq.

² Carducci, *Prose*, p. 293.

³ *Ibid.* p. 292. Carducci places the first great troubadour invasion in the days of Frederic I; the second in those of Frederic II.

many of the more eminent *trovatori* of Provence were known, by face or by reputation, in the southern peninsula. Four of these names called for special notice here, if only for the place they hold in Dante's writings. Three of them the Poet meets in the other world: Bertrand de Born among the sowers of discord in Hell; Arnaut Daniel in Purgatory with penitents who in the ring of fire are cleansing themselves from the taint of earthly lust; Folquet of Marseilles, the poet *par excellence* of fervent love, in the Heaven of Venus. Giraut de Borneil, though most famous in his own day, is only noticed in a different way by Dante.¹

Bertrand de Born has a special interest for us, by reason of the part he plays in English history. The sin for which he moves headless in the depths of Malebolge, carrying in his hand "like a lantern" the severed head that cries "Ah me!" is that of sowing discord between our Henry II and "the young king" Henry, his eldest son. This episode in the life of the mediæval Ahithophel² is made much of in the old biographies³ from which, no doubt, Dante drew his notion of Bertrand's character and deserts.

Sappi ch'io son Bertram dal Bornio, quelli
Che diedi al re giovane i mai conforti:
Io feci il padre e il figlio in sè ribelli.⁴

Born about 1140, heir to the lordship of Hautefort near Périgueux, he lived for some fifty or sixty years

¹ For the biographies of these troubadours I am largely indebted to the excellent articles in Dr. Paget Toynbee's *Dante Dictionary*.

² *Inf.* xxviii. 137. On "Il Re Giovane," see p. 54, note 2.

³ Toynbee, *Dict.* p. 83, where passages are quoted.

⁴ *Inf.* xxviii. 134-36.

a strenuous knightly life; a pattern of munificence,¹ but ever a lover of discord, constantly at feud with the neighbouring lords.

He composed many warlike songs, of which some forty remain, and Dante quotes the first line of a historic *sirvente* of his, in which he characteristically celebrates the outbreak of hostilities between Richard Cœur-de-Lion and Philip Augustus:—

No puosc mudar, un chantar non esparjar.²

Bertrand died a Cistercian monk, in a monastery hard by his ancestral castle, in the memorable year 1215—the year of the Lateran Council—and a laconic entry in a monkish diary of that date speaks of the spending of “three soldi” for a wax candle for his tomb.³

Sic transit gloria. . . . Yet the picture Dante draws of the meeting in Hell is a tribute to the impressiveness of this man's personality. He had passed away to his account fifty years before Dante was born, and could only have been known to him from his songs and from the Provençal biographies. But the memory of that headless trunk haunts the Poet ever afterwards:—

Io vidi certo, ed ancor par ch' io 'l veggia.⁴

Giraut de Borneil is in some ways a great contrast to his more celebrated predecessor; but his life is still more remarkably typical of the general movement. Born of

¹ *Con.* iv. 11, 125-30. He is associated with Alfonso VIII of Castile, Saladin, Boniface II Marquis of Montferrat, Raymond V Count of Toulouse, and Galasso da Montefeltro, Guido's first cousin.

² *V.E.* ii. 2 (p. 392).

³ In the diary of a monk of S. Martial in Limoges: “*Octava candela in sepulchro ponitur pro Bertrando de Born; cera tres solidos emptā est*” (Toynbee, *Dict.* p. 82).

⁴ *Inf.* xxviii. 118.

humble parentage,¹ when Bertrand had already reached his prime, at Essideuil near Limoges, he rose by force of his own talents to a high place in public esteem, attaining in his life-time to a greater renown than even Arnaut Daniel. Facile and versatile, he did not suffer his facility to become a snare to him, but by industry attained to a deserved reputation for learning, and won from his contemporaries the title of "Maestre dels Trobadors". He was one of the founders of the new style of poetry, to which he gave a more popular turn than it received at the hands of his more noble-born fellow-minstrels. The old Provençal biography² gives us in a few lines a vivid and attractive picture of his life and character: how he went to school in the winter time "et aprendia letras," and spent the summer passing from court to court, a welcome guest, with his two *chantadors*, who sang for him the songs his fertile brain composed; how he won great riches by his art, but kept nothing for himself, sending home all his gains "a sos paubres parens".

Dante, albeit he repudiates (by the mouth of Guido Guinicelli)³ the popular estimate which placed Giraut above Arnaut Daniel, yet quotes him four times⁴ in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, where he speaks of him with evident appreciation as writing *Canzoni* in the most illustrious style, and instances the one which begins—to our ears, somewhat quaintly—

Si per mon Sobre-Totz no fos. . . .

But—higher honour still—he associates the minstrel of Borneil indirectly with himself—"amicus cini Pistoriensis"—as the "Singer of Rectitude".⁵

¹ About 1175 A.D.

² Toynebe, *Dict.* p. 266.

³ *Purg.* xxvi. 119-20.

⁴ *V.E.* i. 9, 23-25; ii. 2, 88-90; ii. 5, 25-26; ii. 6, 54-55.

⁵ *V.E.* ii. 2, 82 (p. 392).

In the *Convivio* there is also a reference to Giraut's poem, "Los Apleitz"—a reference which was only discovered, or re-discovered some three years ago.¹ Railing at the apparently unjust distribution of the good things of this world, Dante exclaims: "Would that it had pleased Heaven to grant what the man of Provence asked, that 'chi non è reda della bontà perdesse il retaggio dell' avere'!"

This "man of Provence" is none other than Giraut, who in the second stanza of his song declares: "If the father was praised and the son became a villain, it seems to me wrong and a sin that he should have the inheritance"—

E si · l pair fo lauzatz
E · l filhs se fai malvatz
Sembla · m tortz e pechatz
Qu' · aia las heretatz.

Here speaks the true man of the people, to whom "the bustle of courts and knightly service" are indeed "ever a delight"—

Auz mi platz ades chaus
E geus mazaus
E cortz e vassalatges—

Yet the favour of the great cannot close his eyes to worth and unworth, nor refrain his lips from uttering what his eyes have seen.

In Folquet de Marseille² we have a troubadour who may be called Italian-born, and one who lived, as it were, two lives in succession: in the first of which he helped on by his minstrelsy the movement towards intellectual free-

¹ By Prof. F. Torraca; see article by H. J. Chaytor in *Mod. Lang. Review*, vol. i. (Apr. 1906), pp. 222-30.

² *Circ.* 1160-1231.

dom and spontaneous literary expression; while in the second, as Bishop of Toulouse from 1205, he took a prominent part in the reactionary movement known as the Albigensian Crusade.

Born soon after the middle of the twelfth century, son of a rich merchant of Genoa, he rose to great fame as a poet, and spent the first fifteen years of his manhood in pursuit of pleasure in the gayest Courts of Europe, including our Richard's Court in Aquitaine. After the death of his princely patrons he entered the Cistercian order (c. 1205) and eventually became Bishop of Toulouse.

Is it to this forsaking of the world—so unavailing for poor Guido of Montefeltro¹ as for Bertrand de Born²—that he owes his place in Paradise? Whether or no, Folquet alone of the great troubadours is found in the circles of the Blessed, in that Heaven of Venus where the lessons, be it noted, of his lay life before the tonsure,³ find their consummation—

. . . The prize of learning love,⁴

and he perceives that the pure earthly passion was but a stepping-stone to the comprehension of that highest Love,

. . . il bene

Per che il mondo di su quel di giù torna.⁵

Dante quotes but one line of his in the *Eloquentia*, as example of the illustrious style of *Canzone*—

Tan m' abellis l' amoros pensamen.⁶

¹ *Inf.* xxvii. 112 *sqq.*

² *Inf.* xxviii. 118 *sqq.*: Toynbee quotes a contemporary Provençal couplet in which Folquet is described as unrivalled for goodness (*Dict.* p. 245).

³ *Par.* ix. 99: "Infin che si convenne al pelo".

⁴ Browning, *Death in the Desert.*

⁵ *Par.* ix. 108.

⁶ *V.E.* ii. 6, 59 (p. 395).



FRONTISPIECE TO THE PURGATORIO
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It is the Canzone addressed to the three ladies of his love, that triple love to which a reference has been seen in his speech in the *Commedia*.¹

But he pays that song the compliment of adapting it to his own use when he puts eight lines of Provençal verse into the mouth of Arnaut Daniel in Purgatory :—

Tan m' abellis vostre cortes deman
 Qu' ieu no mi puese ni-m voill a vos cobrire.
 Ieu sui Arnaut, que plor e vau cantan :
 Consiros vei la passada folor,
 E vei jauzen lo jorn, qu' esper, denan.
 Ara us prec per aquella valor
 Que vos guida al som d'esta escalina
 Sovenha vos a temps de ma dolor.²

When Arnaut Daniel is introduced upon the scene, Dante's homage knows no bounds: he is ready to modify for him the very language of his great poem,³ putting into his mouth those lines of plaintive, courteous entreaty. Thus he singles out uniquely for special honour in the world of literature one to whom as a man he must needs accord a lower place in the spiritual world than that given to his rival Folquet.

Arnaut was a friend of Bertrand de Born and of Richard

¹ In Par. ix. 97-102 Folco compares his love to that of (1) Dido, (2) Phyllis, and (3) Alcides: it is natural to see in this triple comparison a reference to "las tres dompnas" to whom he presents the canzone in question, and to identify these with his known contemporaneous loves—Adelais, wife of Barral of Marseilles, Laura his sister, and Eudoxia, daughter of the Eastern Emperor and wife of William VIII of Montpellier. See Toynbee, *Dict.* p. 245.

² *Purg.* xxvi. 140-47.

³ The motive alleged by Benvenuto—that Dante wished to "show off"—is surely not satisfactory: "Et videtur quod poeta noster inseruit hic ista verba provincialia ad decorem latinitatis, et ut ostenderet se de omnibus aliquid scivisse" (*Benvenuto*, tom. iv. p. 128).

Cœur-de-Lion, whom he quaintly calls "King of Dover";¹ and he seems to have travelled in France and Spain, and probably in Italy too. His poetic activity covers the last twenty years of the twelfth century, and he stands out in art as the originator of the *Sestina*,² which Dante copied from him, as he himself acknowledges.

For Dante Arnaut is the supreme poet of Love among his own literary predecessors in the "lingua Volgare," as is Cino among his contemporaries. Just as Bertrand de Born is the singer of arms and Giraut de Borneil of rectitude, so Arnaut of love. "Questi," says Guinicelli, pointing away to Arnaut in response to Dante's filial homage to himself:—

Fu miglior fabbro del parlar materno.³

And Petrarch certainly accepts Dante's estimate:—

Fra tutti il primo Arnaldo Daniello
Gran maestro d'amor ch' alla sua terra
Ancor fa onor col suo dir nuovo e bello.⁴

But Arnaut's extant poems—apart from the fact that one of them affords justification for Dante's placing him among the lustful in Purgatory⁵—show a style so elaborate, artificial and obscure, that the modern critic is apt to take the view of the crowd of Dante's time, and give the palm rather to Giraut de Borneil:—

. . . Gli stolti
Che quel di Lemosi credon ch' avanzi.⁶

¹ "Lo Reis de Dovra." One is tempted to regard the phrase as ironical, in relation to a king whose few months spent in England were largely devoted to preparations for departure, were it not that he styles Philip Augustus similarly, "rei d'Estampa"!

² *V.E.* ii. 10, 24-28 (p. 397).

³ *Purg.* xxvi. 117.

⁴ *Trionfo d'Amore*, lv. 40-42.

⁵ See Toynbee, *Dict.* p. 50.

⁶ *Purg.* xxvi. 120.

BALLATA OF ARNAUT DANIEL.

WITH MELODY.

Lo ferm vo - ler quel cor min - tra

Non potges becs es - con - scendre ni un - gla

De lau-sen - gier que perd per mal dir sar-ma

E car nol aus ba - tre abram-ni ab ver - ia

Si vals a frau - lai on non av - ra un - cle

Jau - zi - rai ioi en ver - ze - ro dinz cham - bra L.R.

But though we may find it difficult to appreciate the art of the *trobar clus* which exalted unintelligible obscurity to the dignity of a poetic virtue, we may yet, with M. Gaston Paris,¹ recognise that the effect it had of giving to each single word an exaggerated importance, may have been an essential factor in the evolution of that concise and expressive style which reached its climax in Dante's own masterpiece. And is not the expression which Dante puts into Guido Guinicelli's mouth after all the right one—perfectly, delicately right? Arnaut was pre-eminently a “*fabbro del parlar materno*”: a smith who hammered out his mother-tongue upon the anvil of his wit, and forged thereof an instrument uncouth and quaint perhaps to look at, especially in the earlier stages of its forging, but of lasting worth and value.

Of the four great Troubadours mentioned by Dante in the *Commedia*² whose activity links the twelfth century to the thirteenth, one, Folquet, was Italian born, but spent his life in Provence; another, Arnaut, may possibly have travelled in Italy: but a contemporary of theirs, Rambaldo di Valqueiras (of whom Dante, as it happens, says nothing), actually wrote, about the year 1190, a bilingual dialogue in which a Genoese *Popolana* rejects in her own dialect the advances of the poet made in his native Provençal speech.³ Nor are there wanting precious frag-

¹ In *Romania*, x. 484 sqq. quoted by Toynbee, *Dict.* p. 51.

² Four others are quoted and referred to in the *Eloquentia, vis.*: (1) “Rex Navarrae,” *i.e.* Tebaldo I, 1234-53—see *V. E.* i. 9, 26; ii. 5, 37; 6, 56; (2) “Namericus de Belinoi,” *i.e.* Aimeric de Belenoi, who flourished *circ.* 1250, and was cleric, troubadour and preacher of Crusades—see *V. E.* ii. 6, 62, 63; 12, 22, 23; (3) “Namericus de Peculiano,” *i.e.* Aimeric de Pegulhan; (4) Renaldus de Aquino. The two last are treated of below.

³ Flamini, *Letteratura*, p. 4: “Documento letterario antichissimo del nostro volgare”.

ments to witness that both Tuscany and the district of Belluno could produce poems in dialect during the same decade.¹

In the next generation the troubadour spirit had established itself firmly on Italian soil at the Court of Frederic II, the prince who, as the *Novellino* tells us,² welcomed all that had any talent—"sonatori, trovatori, e belli favellatori, uomini d'arte, giostratori, schermitori, d'ogni maniera gente . . ."

The transition period is personified in the famous Aimeric de Pegulhan, the cloth-merchant's son of Toulouse, who after a successful career at the courts of Castile, Aragon and Toulouse, found his way to Italy, and enjoyed the patronage of Frederic II and of Azzo VI and Azzo VIII of Este (the latter not too favourably pictured by Dante³), sang with pathetic fervour the dirge of the "Valiant King Manfred," with whose death died honour and chivalry from this earth,⁴ and finally met his death, so it is said, as a heretic in Lombardy in the year 1270.

And so the stream of song spread eastwards and southwards, as Carducci has traced it,⁵ from Nice along the Riviera to Genoa and on to the mouth of the Macra and up through the Monferrato to Turin, across the Po to Milan and Pavia, thence to Mantua on the banks of the Mincio, and mounting from Mantua to Friuli, and

¹ See Henri Hauvette, "Sur la littérature italienne" in *Revue de Paris*, 1^{er} Juillet, 1906; who alleges, "un court fragment en dialecte de Belluno (1193)," and "une cantilène, à peine intelligible, d'un jongleur toscan (1197)".

² *Nov.* xvii. already quoted above, chap. iii. p. 92.

³ He is the *figliastro* of *Inf.* xii. 111-112; and held up to opprobrium in *V. E.* i. 12, 36-42 (p. 386).

⁴ Carducci, *Prose*, p. 298.

⁵ *Prose*, p. 294.

descending again to Venice, it crossed the Po once more and passed through Ferrara to Bologna.

And when the Albigensian Crusade against heretics, initiated in 1209—with which, as we have seen, Folquet was concerned in his “regenerate” days—hastened the influx of troubadours into Italy, they found in the free communes and at the courts of various great lords—and especially under the Pope-hating Emperor, a more congenial environment than in their own devastated Provence.

And so in Italy men of culture like Sordello and Alberto Malaspina (c. 1204), ancestor of Dante’s future hosts in the Lunigiana,¹ soon began to imitate and to emulate, with no small success, the works of those invading poets—and that in their own Provençal tongue.

Sordello, Virgil’s fellow-Mantuan,² was an almost exact contemporary of Aimeric. The interest of his name is for the student of Dante, as for the devotee of Robert Browning, unique among troubadours. He, moreover, lived on intimate terms with more than one of the principal men of his time—men who loom large in the pages of Salimbene. Among these were the redoubtable Ezzelino III da Romano, who connived at Sordello’s abduction of his own married sister Cunizza; and Charles of Anjou, who in vain endeavoured to persuade the bard to accompany him to the East on Crusade. He followed the Angevin, however, on his march against Manfred in 1265, and was probably present at the victory of Benevento, if not also at that of Tagliacozzo, and shared the spoils, being awarded several Apulian castles as guerdon of his loyalty.

¹ See below, chap. ix. Carducci estimates that between Alberto and Ferrari, who sang at the Court of Azzo VII (1240-64), there must have been some twenty-five Italian poets who wrote in Provençal (*Prose*, p. 293).

² *Purg.* vi. 72.

Companion of princes¹ on earth, Dante assigns to him in Purgatory the function of pointing out the various princes in the Flowery Valley.²

Sordello, as we have said, abandoned his native tongue and wrote his verses in the Provençal *Langued'oc*, though much of his life was spent in Italy. Even Pier della Caravana, "The Tyrtæus of the Second Lombard League," wrote his war songs in Provençal, as his predecessor, Pier Vidal, had done in an earlier generation, when the Communes must needs be roused to stand up against Henry VI.³ But the custom had meanwhile grown up elsewhere of composing songs in Italian, though on the Provençal model. The natural rendezvous of this movement was that Sicilian Court of Frederic II, where the Emperor himself and his sons Manfred and Enzo set a fashion which was followed by still abler versifiers.

The great chancellor, Pier delle Vigne, to whom is attributed the important step of the invention of the Sonnet; Jacopo da Lentino, Notary of the Court; Messere Rinaldo d'Aquino, kinsman of the "Angelic Doctor," friend and correspondent of Frederic II and afterwards Manfred's Vicar in Bari and Otranto; Guido delle Colonne, Judge in Messina under Manfred—all these have their place in the preparation of the Italian language to be Dante's instrument.⁴ Of Pier we have already spoken at length;

¹ He was intimate with the Kings of Leon and Castile, as well as with those mentioned above.

² *Purg.* vii. 85 *sqq.* Other troubadours were intimate with Princes, and it has been suggested that the special reason for this office assigned to Sordello is his Elegy on the death of the Provençal baron Blacatz; see references in Toynbee, *Dict.* p. 507.

³ Carducci, *Prose*, p. 286.

⁴ In Carducci's charming little *Primavera e Fiore della Lirica Italiana*, tom. i. pp. 1-10, specimens are given of poems ascribed to Frederic, Pier, Giacomo da Lentino, Rinaldo d'Acquino, Odo delle Colonne, and Enzo.

Jacopo's name is never pronounced by Dante. In the *Eloquentia*¹ his Canzone, "Madonna dir vi voglio," is cited with approval, but nothing is said of its author; in the *Commedia*² he is called simply "il Notaro," as he calls himself indeed in one of his extant songs, which ends:—

Lo vostro amor ch' è caro
Donatelo al Notaro
Che nato è da Lentino.³

Of Rinaldo's poems about a dozen remain. He, too, like Jacopo, is cited by Dante as a writer in the "polished style".

Guido—Chaucer's "Guido de Columpnis"—was a friend of our Edward I, and with other Italian *letterati*⁴ accompanied him to England in 1272. He made a famous translation into Latin of the *Roman de Troie*.⁵ Two of his Sicilian poems are quoted approvingly by Dante in the *Eloquentia*.⁶

In the *Commedia* Jacopo da Lentino is criticised (by the mouth of Bonagiunta) for the *artificiality*⁷ of his style; and a similar blemish attaches to the whole of the Sicilian group. As yet Italian vernacular poetry is still in Provençal leading strings: copious, and to a certain extent facile in utterance, not without pathos and quaint prettiness, it is for the most part uniform and conventional, lacking in true ease and originality. But when Frederic met his death in 1249 a young Bolognese was just growing to manhood who should give a fresh start to Italian

¹ *V. E.* i. 12. (p. 386).

² *Purg.* xxiv. 56.

³ Carducci, *Primavera*, i. p. 5.

⁴ Including the Jurist, Francesco d'Accorso, of Bologna; see above, chap. ii. p. 53.

⁵ See above, p. 245, note 4.

⁶ *V. E.* i. 12, 12, 14 (p. 386).

⁷ *Purg.* xxiv. 56.

poetry, and prepare the way for Dante and the "Dolce stil nuovo".

It is tempting to pass on at once to the last link in the chain, Guido Guinicelli, whom Dante accepts as his own literary father. It remains, however, to speak briefly of one—an exact contemporary of Guido's—who in the *Commedia* is most sharply contrasted with him, Fra Guittone d'Arezzo.

Guittone del Viva, of the Order of the "Fрати Gaudenti" or "Jovial Friars," as the somewhat loosely disciplined "Knights of Saint Mary" were popularly styled,¹ spent much of his life in Florence, where Dante probably met him as a youth, and in 1293 he helped to found the monastery of Sta. Maria degli Angeli in that city. He was very famous in his time, and has too much individuality to be numbered simply among the imitators of Provençal Minstrelsy; but shared with his predecessors the crabbed and artificial style from which Guinicelli was so remarkably free. Guittone marks the transition from the poetry of chivalry to the national or political type, which was to realise itself later in Petrarch. To him also is due the first essay in learned Italian prose.² He was the centre of a considerable circle of Tuscan poets hailing from Siena, Pisa and Lucca. Among his followers was Gallo Pisano; he, and Mino Mocato of Siena and Bonagiunta of Lucca, together with the Florentine Brunetto

¹ *Ordo Militiæ Beatae Mariæ*, initiated in 1261 by some gentlemen of Bologna for furthering the cause of peace among the Communes of Italy. Contemporary accounts attribute its failure to the laxity of its rules, which allowed marriage and most other things. (See quotations in Toynbee, *Dict.* p. 251). Two members of the Order who acted together as Podestà of Florence in 1266 appear among the hypocrites in Hell, *Inf.* xxiii. 104 sqq.

² Carducci, *Prose*, p. 300.

Latini, are included with Guittone in Dante's condemnation of those who write in dialect (what Dante facetiously called "municipale vulgare") instead of employing the *Lingua Curiale*; ¹ while in the oft-cited passages of the *Purgatorio*, the whole school of them is coupled with Jacopo da Lentino as guilty of artificiality of style; ² and a little later on Guittone himself is solemnly deposed from that primacy among vernacular poets which he popularly enjoyed in the eyes of his contemporaries. ³ The former judgment is put into the mouth of one of themselves, Bonagiunta of Lucca, in the cornice of the gluttons: ⁴ in the latter it is Guido Guinicelli who speaks, the harbinger of a new and happier era for Italian poetry.

The meeting between Dante and Guido Guinicelli is one of the most beautiful and moving scenes in literature. There is all the pathos and none of the horror of the earlier meeting with Brunetto on the scorching sands of Hell.

The toilsome climb is nearly ended. Dante and Virgil and Statius have reached the seventh cornice of the mountain, where a ring of flame seems to bar all further progress. A few minutes more and Dante himself, shuddering and cowering on the brink of it like a frightened child, ⁵ is to plunge in at Virgil's whisper of "Beatrice," ⁶ is to feel the scorching, purifying kiss of the flame "more fierce than molten glass". ⁷ Meanwhile he stands outside, watching the strange pageant of moving

¹ *V. E.* i. 13 (p. 386). ² *Purg.* xxiv. 55-60. ³ *Ibid.* 124-26.

⁴ Benvenuto's account of Bonagiunta reminds one forcibly of Salimbene's *Primasius* (see above chap. v. p. 178), with his

"Tales versus facio—quale vinum bibo".

"Bonagiunta," says Benvenuto (t. iv. p. 73), was a "facilis inventor rhythmorum, sed faciliior vinorum."

⁵ *Purg.* xxvii. 16.

⁶ *Ibid.* 36.

⁷ *Ibid.* 49.



THE EARTHLY PARADISE: DANTE, BEATRICE AND STATIUS
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figures in the fire, with its interrupted chanting of *Summæ Deus Clementiæ*,¹ and its hasty greetings "as of ants" upon their busy quest.²

Dante's body casts a shadow athwart the blaze, arousing wonder among the penitent spirits;³ and when Dante in answer to the request of one of them reveals his condition and the purpose of his coming, the spokesman in turn reveals his identity to Dante.⁴ At the name of "Guido Guinizelli" the poet is struck dumb for a while, with sheer emotion, and paces up and down, rapt in thought, feasting his eyes on the form of his literary "father" whom the flames will not permit him to approach: and when he can speak again, it is his very heart that speaks, protesting unreserved devotion.

. . . Tal mi fec' io . . .
 Quand' i' odo nomar sè stesso il padre
 Mio, e degli altri miei miglior, che mai
 Rime d' amore usar dolci e leggiadre:
 E senza udire e dir pensoso andai,
 Lunga fiata rimirando lui,
 Nè per lo foco in là più m' appressai.
 Poichè di riguardar pasciuto fui,
 Tutto m'offersi pronto al suo servizio,
 Con l' affermar che far credere altrui.⁵

Like the unconscious righteous in our Saviour's picture of the Judgment, Guido is fain to disclaim all right to such merit as Dante's affectionate reverence implies—

Dimmi che è cagion per che dimostri
 Nel dire e nel guardare avermi caro?⁶

And Dante replies, "'Tis your sweet lays, which, so long as the modern mode endures, will render precious the very ink in which they are written"—

¹ *Purg.* xxv. 121.

² *Ibid.* xxvi. 31 sqq.

³ *Ibid.* 7 sqq.

⁴ *Ibid.* 92.

⁵ *Ibid.* 96-105.

⁶ *Ibid.* 110-11.

Li dolci detti vostri
 Che, quanto durerà l'uso moderno
 Faranno cari ancora i loro inchiostri.¹

Dante, apparently, had never met Guido in the flesh—he was only eleven years old when the elder poet died. But the Bolognese patrician's fate—for Guido was of the noble family of the Principi, and a cousin on the mother's side of Guido Ghisilieri—added no doubt an extra touch of sympathy to Dante's view of him. Guido was an ardent Ghibelline, Dante a moderate Guelf, but Dante knew what it was to be banished by truculent Guelfs, so he could feel for the grand old man expelled from his native town as a partisan of the unpopular Lambertazzi, after nearly fifty years of honourable citizenship,² and dying in exile at Verona, Dante's own "primo ostello".³ But it is as a poet especially that Dante delights to honour him. In the *Vita Nuova* Guido is "Il Saggio"⁴—the recognised authority on love and "Gentilezza"; in the *Convivio* he is "Quel nobile Guido Guinizelli";⁵ four times he is quoted in the *Eloquentia*, and there he is "Maximus Guido".⁶ Greatest among great, he is centre of an illustrious group that includes his kinsman Guido Ghisilieri, Fabruzzo, of the ill-fated Lambertazzi, and Onesto Bolognese placed by Petrarch⁷ among the most famous singers of love; while Cino da Pistoja⁸ in a sonnet written after Dante's death actually reproaches the

¹ *Purg.* xxvi. 112-14.

² Guido was born *circ.* 1230. In 1270 he was Podestà of Castelfranco: in 1274 came the expulsion.

³ *Par.* xvii. 70.

⁴ *V.N.* § 20 (Sonnet x. 2).

⁵ *Conv.* iv. 20, 67 (p. 322).

⁶ *V.E.* i. 15, 41-42 (p. 388).

⁷ *Trionfo d'Amore*, iv. 35.

⁸ The authenticity of this sonnet is disputed (Gardner in *Early Italian Poets*, p. 333).

author of the *Commedia* for finding no place in it for the meritorious Onesto—

Non fe' molto ad Onesto di Boncima
Ch' era presso ad Arnaldo Daniello.

But this group of Bolognese poets has at least been singled out for special praise by Dante in the *Eloquentia*¹ where he commends them all for their discretion in forsaking the dialect of their district for that *vulgare aulicum et illustre* which it is one of Dante's own chief glories to have perfected.

We cannot do better than close our sketch of Guinicelli by quoting at length that masterpiece of his to which Dante constantly recurs as to the type and example of all a *Canzone* should be, alike in thought and in expression.

In this song especially Guido stands out as "Padre"—

. . . degli altri . . . che mai
Rime d'amor usar dolci e leggiadre,²

and it may help us therefore to realise whence Dante drew something of his own rhythm and cadence, his sweetness and his grace; and whence came the inspiration of that new treatment of the theme of Love, at once sane and ethereal, that makes earthly passion, fervent at once, and pure, a key to the mysteries above—*Quod oculus non vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascendit, quae praeparavit Deus iis qui diligunt eum.*³

The six stanzas of this song⁴ have each of them an individual beauty of its own, and several of them, especially

¹ *V.E.* i. 15, 41-54 (p. 388). ² *Purg.* xxvi. 98, 99. ³ *1 Cor.* ii. 9.

⁴ The text of the *Canzone* is given in Carducci, *Primavera*, tom i. pp. 22-24; Rossetti's beautiful but far from literal translation will be found in Dent's handy reprint of *Early Italian Poets*, pp. 21, 22.

the third and fourth, conclude with a new thought, springing unexpectedly out of the subject—a precious jewel in itself, yet difficult to treat justly in a brief running analysis: but happily the original can speak for itself.

The Poet first plunges us into the familiar environment of Nature—the sunshine and the shade and the song of birds—where he exhibits to us the close relation between Love and the Gentle Heart, Love's true shelter. There is, he would say, a sort of "pre-established harmony" between them—together they spring into being, they were made for one another—nay, their relationship is still more intimate and necessary, even as that of the light to the sun whence it simultaneously issues:—

Al cor gentil ripara sempre amore¹
 Com' a la selva augello in la verdura,
 Né fe' amore avanti gentil core²
 Né gentil core avanti amor natura ;
 Ch' adesso che fu il sole
 Sì tosto lo splendore fue lucente,
 Né fu avanti il sole ;
 E prende amore in gentilezza loco
 Così propriamente
 Como clarore in clarità di foco.

Next astrology and alchemy are laid under contribution—the virtue of precious stones and the stars' influence upon them. As the stone must first be purified by the sun's rays before the star can influence it, so the heart of man must be cleansed—made "gentle"—by Nature, ere the charm of woman can exercise its ennobling virtue.

Foco d' amore in gentil cor s' apprende,³
 Come vertute in pietra preziosa ;⁴
 Ché da la stella valor non discende,
 Avanti 'l sol la faccia gentil cosa.

¹ *Conv.* iv. 20, 68 (p. 322); *V. E.* ii. 5, 42 (p. 394).

² *V. E.* i. 9, 29-30 (p. 383).

³ *Cf. Inf.* v. 100.

⁴ *Conv.* iv. 20, 64-66 (p. 322).

Poi che n' ha tratto fore
 Per sua forza lo sol ciò che li è vile,
 La stella i dà valore :
 Così lo cor, ch' è fatto da natura
 Schietto puro gentile,
 Donna, a guisa di stella, lo inamora.

The atmosphere of Love must be sympathetic. His proud flame shines clear and bright enthroned upon the Gentle Heart, like the joyous flame on the top of a lifted taper. He is at home, like with like, as diamond with iron in the mine. In a low nature Love has no more part than has fire with water, heat with cold.

Amor per tal ragion sta in cor gentile
 Per qual lo foco in cima del doppiero
 Splende a lo suo diletto, chiar, sottile :
 Non li staria altrimenti, tant' è fero.
 Però prava natura
 Rincontra amor como fa l' acqua il foco,
 Caldo, per la freddura.
 Amore in gentil cor prende rivera
 Per suo consimil loco,
 Com' adamàs del ferro in la minera.

An hereditary *ambiente* of "gentility" avails no more to ennoble the ungentle heart that boasts its gentle lineage, than the pure ray of the sun can make the mud it shines upon less vile. Such reflected nobleness is but like the gleam of star upon the wave—the star and its splendour, Heaven holds.

Fere lo sole il fango tutto 'l giorno,
 Vile riman, né 'l sol perde calore :
 Dice om altier " gentil per schiatta torno,"¹
 Lui sembra 'l fango, e 'l sol gentil valore.

¹ Contrast the opinion of Frederic II cited in *Conv.* iv. (*Canzone*, iii. 21 sqq.) and discussed iv. 10 sqq. (p. 308) where *Gentilezza* is defined as

" . . . antica possession d' avere
 Con reggimenti belli".

Ché non de' dare om fede
 Che gentilezza sia for di coraggio
 In degnità di rede :
 Se da virtute non ha gentil core,
 Com' acqua porta raggio,
 E 'l ciel riten le stelle e lo splendore.

And now the Poet assays a daring flight. In Heaven itself, he says, the truth of Love is seen : where God, the true Sun, shines unveiled upon the homage of a perfectly ordered world. Even so should my Lady radiate upon her loyal servant "that truth which in her eyes resplends".

Splende in la intelligenza de lo cielo
 Deo creator, piú ch' a nostri occhi il sole :
 Quella 'ntende 'l suo fattor oltra 'l velo,
 Lo ciel volgendo a lui ubidir tole,
 E consegue al primero
 Del giusto Deo beato compimento :
 Così dar dovria 'l vero
 La bella donna che ne gli occhi splende
 Del suo gentil talento,
 Che mai da lei ubidir non si disprende.

The similitude that has escaped him strikes the Poet with sudden terror at its audacity. He sees himself arraigned before the Throne on the last day, and called to answer for his presumption. And he answers reverent but unafraid : "Lord, when I burst into Heaven for my similitude, I was but seeking Love in his own home".

Donna, Deo mi dirà "che prosumisti" ?
 (Stando l'anima mia a lui davanti) :
 "Lo ciel passasti e fino a me venisti,
 E desti in vano amor me per sembianti ;
 Ch' a me conven la laude
 E a la reina del reame degno
 Per cui cessa ogni fraude".
 Dir li potrò "Tenea d' angel sembianza
 Che fosse del tuo regno :
 Non mi fue fallo, s' eo li posi amanza".





DANTE ABOUT 1300 A.D.

FROM SEYMOUR KIRKUP'S SKETCH TAKEN BEFORE THE 'RESTORATION'
BARGELLO, FLORENCE. FRESCO BY GIOTTO

CHAPTER VIII

DANTE'S LITERARY CIRCLE

SIDE by side with the rivalry of faction which bathed the streets of Florence in blood and ravaged her palaces with fire, there was a gentler rivalry among some of her younger citizens, and one whereof the influence spread far beyond her walls.

It is the rivalry of the pen and the brain, the battle of sonnets in which the new style of Italian vernacular poetry became conscious of its manhood, and, so to speak, won its spurs.

"Dante's Literary Circle," as conceived by Rossetti,¹ comprises more than a dozen names; men who have left, some much, some very little of lyric poetry, to witness to their friendship with Dante or with his closest intimates, Guido Cavalcanti, Lapo Gianni and Cino da Pistoja.

But before we enter the charmed circle of Rossetti, a word or two are due to the playfellow of Dante's youth, who died in 1296, before the majority of the poems in that selection were written. Forese, brother of Piccarda and of the redoubtable Corso, of whom we have already

¹ "Dante and His Circle," part ii. of the *Early Italian Poets*, translated by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and first published in 1861. The references in this chapter are to the pages and numbering of the handy edition in the "Temple Classics," which has the advantage of Mr. E. Gardner's valuable notes.

spoken in a former chapter, was engaged, some five or six years before his death, in a playful literary wrangle with his more eminent neighbour; and the *Tenzzone*, which still exists, has finally won its way to general acceptance as authentic, largely on the strength of a citation of four of its verses by the "Anonimo Fiorentino," a commentator on the *Commedia* who wrote just at the end of the fourteenth or the beginning of the fifteenth century.¹ The *Tenzzone* consists of three sonnets of Dante's with the three replies of Forese, who is called by his nickname "Bicci Novello".² The poems are certainly on a lower level than the rest of Dante's correspondence, recalling most of all that with Cecco Angiolieri, the mad Siennese. "Their style is," as Mr. Tozer remarks, "vituperative, and implies careless living."³

The life of the two intimates, and perhaps also the extensive correspondence of which this group of sonnets is but a fragment,⁴ is no doubt referred to in the significant lines spoken in the Cornice of the Gluttonous in Purgatory, where Dante, genuinely surprised as well as delighted to meet his old companion, whom he believed to have died impenitent, purging himself of his sins in so high a place, suggests that the memory of their mutual relations in the past must still be a source of pain.

Se ti riduci a mente
Qual fosti meco e qual io teco fui
Ancor fia grave il memorar presente.⁵

¹ See Carducci, *Prose*, pp. 53-59; Toynbee, *Dict. s.v.* "Forese" (the former written before the whole six sonnets were discovered).

² Now printed in the *Oxford Dante*, 3rd edition, p. 179 *sqq.*

³ Note in *Translation of the Divina Commedia*, p. 251.

⁴ The "Anonimo Fiorentino," in the passage referred to, says: "et molti sonnetti et cose in rima scrisse l' uno all' altro".

⁵ *Purg.* xxiii. 115-17.

Dante's language in the *Tenzone* itself leads up to the vision of Forese's emaciated form under the Tantalus apple-tree of Purgatory. He declares that "Bicci Novel"¹ has swallowed down so much :—

Giù per la gola tanta roba è messa

that, having nought left, he must needs take to thieving ; and indeed every passer-by that carries a purse avoids him already as a "piuvico ladrone"—a common pick-pocket !

Forese, besides answering some of Dante's taunts, censures him for slackness in avenging the murder of a kinsman ; perhaps that same Geri del Bello, who in the Hell of the Sowers of Discord points a threatening finger at the Poet—whose heart is soft for him and his conscience apparently a little uneasy at the thought of the unaccomplished *vendetta*.²

This correspondence certainly shows neither Forese nor his friend in a very dignified light. It has, however, at least the merit of disclosing to us that Dante was human—a real young man—capable of wasting his wits sometimes on "chaff" ; while its pathetic sequel in the *Purgatorio* tempts us to cry : *O felix culpa !*

And now, as we enter Rossetti's "Circle," there is Simone d' Antella, known only by a single sonnet on the last days of Henry VII : the sonnet which begins

Per quella via che altre forme vanno³

It is a human cry of sorrow, as poignant, in some ways, as must have been Dante's feelings at the time : seeing, however, in Henry's expedition but the lure of a fatal am-

¹ Dante's third sonnet (no. liv. Oxf. Ed.) ; *cf.* also the second (liiii.).

² *Inf.* xxix. 19-36 ; see Carducci, *Prose*, p. 58.

³ Trans. in Rossetti, *E. I. P.* p. 301.

bition, and nothing of that heaven-born mission which colours Dante's view of him.

There are Bernardo da Bologna and Gianni Alfani, who have left but a love-sonnet apiece, addressed to Guido Cavalcanti, whose sympathetic reply to Bernardo is still extant.¹ Then there is Guido Orlandi, whom Rossetti has dubbed the "bore" of the Circle, and Cecco Angiolieri its "scamp": Orlandi "now railing against his political adversaries," the white Guelfs turned Ghibelline—

Color di cener fatti son li Bianchi—²

now "falling foul of his brother-poets Guido Cavalcanti³ and Dante da Majano";⁴ Cecco a genial madman, whom we have already met as cynic and buffoon.⁵

The correspondence of Cecco and Dante is not complete, but it begins with a really gentle criticism on the Angiolieri's part, and goes on to a severe scolding for the haughty sternness of a lost reply of Dante's, in which Cecco describes himself as gad-fly to his brother-poet the ox.⁶ Here again, we are on the level of the *Tenzone* with Forese. But a good deal of Cecco's writing remains altogether. It shows him a writer impartially of love-sonnets and hate-sonnets:⁷ the former addressed to the shoemaker's daughter Becchina from whom Dante's counsel⁸ availed not to loosen his affection; the latter mostly directed upon his father⁹ (on whose death he raises a

¹ Trans. Rossetti, *E. I. P.* pp. 241-43.

² *E. I. P.* p. 293.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 226, 240.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 278.

⁵ See above, ch. v. p. 197-8.

⁶ The sonnet which begins "Dante Allighier, s' io son buon bego-lardo," and ends "ch' io sono il pungiglione e tu se' il bue"; it is reprinted by Carducci, *Prose*, pp. 58, 59.

⁷ *E. I. P.* pp. 280-98.

⁸ Sonn. in *E. I. P.* p. 285:

⁹ *E.g.* Sonn. xii. in *E. I. P.* p. 286: "Il pessimo e il crudel odio ch' io porto".

pæan of triumph!);¹ but blazing out in mock fury against the whole world in the famous utterance

S' i' fosse foco, arderei 'l mondo;
 S' i' fosse vento, lo tempesterei;
 S' i' fosse acqua, io l' annegherei;
 S' i' fosse dio, mandarei in profondo.
 S' i' fosse papa, sare' ancor jocondo,
 Ché tutt' i cristiani imbrigherei;
 S' i' fosse emperor, sa' che farei?
 A tutti mozarei lo capo a tondo.
 S' i' fosse morte, andarei da mio padre;
 S' i' fosse vita, fuggirei da lui;
 Similimente faria da mi' madre.
 S' i' fosse Cecco, com' i' sono e fui
 Torrei le donne piú belle e leggiadre,
 E zoppe e laide lasceriele altrui.

Cecco, according to Boccaccio was a "handsome and well-bred man";² by the witness of his writings he is a humorous and rancorous fellow, but not licentious. And if now and then he verges on impiety, he has done his best to make amends in the penitent sonnet in which he proclaims "no quarter!" to every son who reviles his father—

Chi dice di suo padre altro che onore.³

Then there is Dino Frescobaldi,⁴ that "Dino di Messer Lambertuccio, famous rhymers of Florence," through whom, if Boccaccio is to be trusted,⁵ Dante received back in exile the original draft of the first seven Cantos of the *Inferno*, posted with a pleading letter to Dante's host, Moroello Malaspina.⁶

¹ Sonn. xix. in *E. I. P.* p. 290.

² *Decamerone*, ix. 4.

³ Sonn. xx. in *E. I. P.* p. 291.

⁴ Two sonnets of Frescobaldi's are translated by Rossetti (*E. I. P.* p. 297): the original of the former, "Questa è la giovinetta," appears in Carducci, *Fiori*, p. 55.

⁵ *Vita di Dante*, § 14 (ed. Solerti, p. 56).

⁶ See further, chap. ix. p. 329 *sqq.*

Dante da Majano, an older contemporary of his more famous namesake, had written also in Provençal, thus linking the old style with the new. He is one of those who, like Guido Cavalcanti,¹ made friends with Dante in his eighteenth year, on the basis of his first published sonnet, offering an interpretation of the dream therein described. This reply-sonnet is extant,—

Di ciò che stato sei dimandatore . . .²

as is also a dream-sonnet of Da Majano's own, with Guido Orlandi's answer.³

Dino Compagni, whom we have already met as statesman and chronicler and as author of the *Canzone del Pregio*,⁴ is numbered among the members of this circle in virtue of the sonnet—

Non vi si monta per iscala d' oro,⁵

in which he reproves Guido Cavalcanti for his arrogance in love, with playful allusions to the young noble's personal beauty. A spring-song of Dino's, charming in its freshness and its manifold fragrance of the scents of April and May, appears in Carducci's selection.⁶

Lapo Gianni de' Ricevuti, notary and poet, coupled in a well-known sonnet⁷ with Guido and Dante as of the inner group of intimates, is associated with Dante historically in the Priorate of June, July and August, 1300, and is named by him as one of the four pioneers in the poetic use of the vulgar tongue.⁸

¹ See below, p. 283.

² *E. I. P.* p. 276.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 272, 278. Two other of his sonnets are translated by Rossetti, p. 279.

⁴ See above, chap. ii. p. 76.

⁵ *E. I. P.* p. 244.

⁶ "Al novel tempo e gaio del pascore," *Fiori*, p. 32.

⁷ No. xxxii. in Oxford ed.; see below, p. 284.

⁸ *V. E.* i. 13, 34-37 (p. 387).

Giovanni Quirini, the Venetian, whose correspondence with Dante we now know to have been spread over many years,¹ and whose noble and inspiring estimate of Dante's life-work in the sonnet—

Lode di Dio e della Madre pura,²

elicited from the dying poet a worthy swan-song—

Lo re che merta i suoi servi a ristoro :³

Giovanni Quirini has won the love of posterity, for did he not straightway, after Dante's death, despatch a sonnet to Can Grande della Scala pleading for a speedy publication of the concluding Cantos of the *Paradiso*?⁴

To these names should perhaps be added that of the Bolognese, Giovanni del Virgilio, another correspondent of Dante's declining years; but his writing takes the form of Latin Eclogues,⁵ and so has nothing to do with the "dolce stil nuovo".

There are, however, three names besides that of Dante himself that call for more than a passing notice—Guido Cavalcanti, Cino da Pistoja and Giotto di Bondone.

It would be impossible to deal exhaustively here—even if the writer were competent to do so—with a subject so large and so controversial as that of Dante's *Canzoniere*. Apart from the Italian paraphrases of the seven Penitential Psalms and the metrical Creed, which are certainly not authentic,⁶ there are in all some eighty-seven lyrical

¹ See, e.g. Morpurgo, *Rime inedite di Giovanni Quirini*.

² *E. I. P.* p. 302.

³ Sonnet xxxvii. in Oxford ed.; trans. *E. I. P.* p. 303.

⁴ See Gardner's note, *E. I. P.* p. 336.

⁵ Dante's two Eclogues and Giovanni's Carmen and Eclogue are given in *Oxford Dante*, i. pp. 185-90. On *del Virgilio*, see further, below, ch. x. p. 340 *sqq.*

⁶ Dr. Moore prints these in the Oxford edition (pp. 193-202), but does not even suggest that they are Dante's (see Pref. to ed. i. p. iii).

pieces attributed to him, all of which appear in the Oxford edition of his works. Of these, thirty-nine (eleven *Canzoni*, one *Ballata*, twenty-five *Sonnetti* and two *Sestine*) are above suspicion; for Dante himself has interwoven them, or left unmistakable reference to them, in his undisputed works—the *Vita Nuova*, the *Convivio* and the *Eloquentia*.

Of the rest, at least a dozen more are satisfactorily attested by the authority of early commentators or in some other way; so that we can say we possess at any rate more than fifty of the Poet's songs.¹ Of the remaining three dozen some are quite and some almost certainly spurious; concerning others we must needs suspend our judgment pending the arrival of further evidence. In any case we can hardly doubt that more than that number may have been lost too, with the rest of his papers, at the moment of his exile; and among them (we need scarcely regret it!) the major part of his correspondence with Forese.

Even apart from the great *Commedia*, the poems that Dante has left us would go far to justify his high reputation. Many of the sonnets of the *Vita Nuova* are of surpassing charm, but perhaps it is in his *Canzoni* that he reaches the highest level. To name but a few: the

Amor che nella mente mi ragiona,²

which he has himself immortalised in the *Convivio* and the *Commedia*, "the supreme hymn," as it has been

¹ The following may probably be accepted as undoubtedly genuine: *Canzoni* i-x. xix.; *Ballate* i. vi. viii. x.; *Sonnetti* i-xxvi. xxxii. xxxix. lii-liv.; *Sestine* i-iii.

² *Canz.* vii.

called of Dante's "mystical worship";¹ and then the songs of real passion:—

Così nel mio parlar voglio esser aspro,²

Petrarch's favourite—and Carducci's—showing the fierceness of love "terrible as an army with banners";³ the poem on Love and Winter:—

Io son venuto al punto della rota;⁴

and the Mountain Song:—

Amor dacchè convien pur che mi doglia,⁵

redolent of the Casentino.

With these should be classed the beautiful Sestina:—

Al poco giorno ed al gran cerchio d'ombra,⁶

with its wonderful description of his sylvan lady-love, and of the play of light and shade in the winter-bound valley.

Finally there is the didactic *Canzone* which forms the text of the fourth book of the *Convivio*, with its delicately beautiful description of the development of the noble soul through the four successive stages of human life, reaching a serene climax in the last years when the spirit "re-weds itself to God":—

Poi nella quarta parte della vita
A Dio si rimarita,
Contemplando la fine che l'aspetta
E benedice li tempi passati.⁷

In Dante's lyrics we may see reflected—if not exactly according to the lines of Witte's famous "trilogy"⁸—the

¹ E. Gardner, *Dante* in "Temple Primers," where (pp. 53-59) there is an excellent little summary of the *Canzoniere*.

² *Canz.* xii.

³ *Canticles*, vi. 4.

⁴ *Canz.* xv.

⁵ *Ibid.* xi. see below, chap. ix. p. 311.

⁶ *Sest.* i. see below, chap. ix. p. 312.

⁷ *Canz.* viii. 136-39.

⁸ For a recent discussion of this subject see *Il Traviamento intellettuale di Dante Alighieri secondo il Witte e lo Scartazzini*, Pier Angelo Menzio, 1903.

development of the Poet's soul. We can see him passing from the chivalrous love of the troubadour type, yet coloured with a tinge of high mysticism that is Dante's own—the love with which the *Vita Nuova* opens—on through the intermediate stages of actual sexual passion (which seems undoubtedly to have intervened after the death of Beatrice),¹ on to the phase in which penitence for that downward step constrains him to allegorise the poetic expressions of his human passion—the phase afterwards developed in the *Convivio*, which is thus a sort of offshoot of the penultimate part of the *Vita Nuova*.² Philosophy is thus accepted as his true love, till finally, at the end of the *Vita Nuova*, in an undescribed vision of Beatrice, which has the effect if not the form of the later vision in the Earthly Paradise,³ he comes to himself again, on a higher plane, and chivalry and passion and philosophy all become servants of theological truth . . . and lo! the *Divina Commedia* is conceived!

“Wherefore,” he writes after the final Vision of the *Vita Nuova*, “if it be His pleasure through whom is the life of all things, that my life continue with me a few years, it is my hope that I shall yet write concerning her what hath not before been written of any woman. After the which, may it seem good to Him who is the Master of Grace, that my spirit shall go hence to behold the glory of its lady; to wit, of that blessed Beatrice, who now gazeth continually on his countenance *qui est per omnia saecula benedictus*.”⁴

¹ See *Vita Nuova*, § xxxvi. *sqq.*

² Cf. *Conv.* i. 2, ii. 13; Carducci, *Prose*, 143, says of the *Convivio* in this respect: “è come un episodio della *Vita Nuova*”. On the *Vita Nuova* as covering all the stages of Dante's development, see the fine passage in Carducci, pp. 141-43.

³ *Purg.* xxx. xxxi. ⁴*V. N. fin.* translated by Rossetti (*E. I. P.* p. 207).

Guido Cavalcanti, Dante's "first friend," comes before us in close association with the *Vita Nuova*.¹ The friendship, as we shall see, is linked with its first sonnet, and the whole book was dedicated to Guido.

Nobly born and nobly connected, Guido's inherited nobility was matched with conspicuous personal beauty and refinement of soul. His father was Cavalcante, of the ancient, rich and powerful Guelf family of that name—at that time among the wealthiest and most influential in Florence²—his mother, probably, of the illustrious stock of the Conti Guidi. He was married, for political reasons (betrothed in 1267, in one of those moments of temporary reconciliation between Guelf and Ghibelline houses³), to Beatrice degli Uberti, daughter of the great Farinata. And the picture drawn of him by Villani and Dino Compagni,⁴ and confirmed by hints in other contemporary writings, suggests that he was not entirely innocent of that haughty and disdainful attitude which his father-in-law displays so magnificently in the Hell of the Heresiarchs. In days when nobility was at a discount in Florence Guido persisted in preserving the old estimate, and looked down on the vulgar with undisguised contempt. And in his partisan and personal enmities he was similarly frank and open.

¹ "Quegli ch' io chiamo primo de' miei amici" (*V. N.* § iii. 98, 99; *cf. V. N.* § xxiv. 19; § xxxi. 22; § xxxiv. 3, 4).

² Villani, viii. 71: "I Cavalcanti erano delle più possenti case e di gente e di possessioni e d' avere di Firenze".

³ *Ibid.* vii. 15.

⁴ *Ibid.* viii. 42: "Era troppo tenero e stizzoso" (touchy and easily provoked); Dino, i. 20: "sdegnoso e solitario". Boccaccio (*Dec.* vi. 9) says nothing of this trait; but see further the sonnets addressed to Guido by Orlandi and by Dino, and that attributed to Cino (*E. I. P.* p. 273). The famous "sdegno" of *Inf.* x. 63, is perhaps scarcely in point.

Called, like Dante, to share the counsels of Florence,¹ he espoused the side of the "Whites". Fierce in his uncompromising enmity to Corso Donati, he nearly fell a victim, as we have seen,² to Corso's murderous designs, and was signally unsuccessful in his attempt at retaliation. But it is characteristic of the two men, that while Corso assails with the secret weapon of the assassin, Guido spurs at his enemy in the open street.

His wealth and social position combined with his keen partisanship marked Guido off for banishment, when, in 1300, it was decided, for the sake of peace, to exile temporarily the leaders of both factions.³

And here ensues one of the most tragic incidents of Dante's life; an incident, surely, which helped to develop or to confirm in him that rigid sense of justice, that iron soul of impartiality which distinguishes his distribution of the departed in the Three Kingdoms of the world to come. Dante, as Prior on that fatal 24th of June, must needs approve the banishment of Guido among the rest.

Guido departs to his appointed place of exile, the unwholesome district of Sarzana. It is but for a few weeks, but he returns home only to die—"tornonne malato Guido Cavalcanti, onde morió".⁴ And so before Dante's three months' priorate is over, his "first friend" lies buried in the ancient cemetery of Sta. Reparata; and Dante has been the unwilling instrument of his friend's death.

The wound is too terrible to be displayed before the world; it can only be hinted, in the dramatic foreboding woven into the scene—where Dante, in the spring of that same year, meets Guido's father in the Inferno, and so

¹ In 1284 he was a member of the "Grand Council," together with Brunetto Latini and Dino Compagni.

² See above, chap. vi. p. 227-28.

³ *Ibid.* p. 231.

⁴ Villani, viii. 42.

speaks as to raise the question in Cavalcante's mind whether his son is still among the living.¹ And Dante's tardy "Yes," delivered through a third person, has in it an ominous ring of "No!"²

There remains as a pathetic record of Guido's days at Sarzana, a beautiful ballata, uttered with "bewilder'd voice and weak," which mirrors his feelings as the fever grew upon him, till his "life was almost sped" and he lost all hope of a return to Tuscany:—

Perch' io no spero di tornar giammai
 Ballatetta, in Toscana,
 Va tu, leggera e piana
 Dritt' a la donna mia
 Che per sua cortesia
 Ti farà molto onore

.
 Tu senti, ballatetta che la morte
 Mi stringe sì che vita m' abbandona

.
 Tu, voce sbigottita e deboletta
 Ch' esci piangendo de lo cor dolente
 Coll' anima, e con questa ballatetta
 Va ragionando della strutta mente.³

.

This fiery spirit, in many ways more typical than was Dante of the Florence of 1300 A.D. is, like Dante, in his literary achievement, a true son of that Mother of Genius. He shares, it is true, Dante's un-Florentine solitude of soul. The references in Villani and Boccaccio⁴ to his philosophic leanings and his tendency to abstraction, give an impression of an aloofness from his fellows not entirely

¹ *Inf.* x. 63-69.

² *Ibid.* 109 *sqq.*

³ The text is given by Carducci, *Fiori*, pp. 29-31; Rossetti's translation in *E. I. P.* p. 253.

⁴ Villani, viii. 42; Boccaccio, *Dec.* vi. 9.

explained by pride of birth or natural haughtiness of disposition. How far his extant poems reflect this trait may be matter for discussion. Rossetti sees in him a tendency to mingle "the perversity of a logician" with his "amorous poetry". Perhaps this applies more especially to the sententious *Canzoni* on Fortune, Poverty and Death,¹ which after all are probably not Guido's. There is no doubt, however, of the authorship of the analysis of the nature of Love,

Donna mi prega, perch' io voglio dire,

which Dante cites twice over as the work of "Guido of Florence".²

But there are other poems, again, like the charming *ballata* of the "Shepherd Maid,"³ and the dialogue on his love for Mandetta,⁴ which are just sweet and graceful examples of the lyrical spirit.

Dante's estimate of Guido is very high: coloured, it may be, all unconsciously, by friendship and by the pathetic remembrances of the year of Jubilee. He is cited again and again in the *Eloquentia*⁵ as prominent among the founders of the new school of Poetry. There can be no doubt of the purity of his style, that achievement which has won for him such signal praise from the greatest of his contemporaries. Dante, who almost worships the memory of Guinicelli, can yet say of Cavalcanti:—

Ha tolto l' uno all' altro Guido
La gloria della lingua.⁶

¹ *E. I. P.* p. 253 *sqq.*

² *V. E.* ii. 12, 17 and 63 (pp. 398, 399).

³ Text in Carducci, *Fiori*, p. 25; trans. *E. I. P.* p. 248.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 26; trans. *E. I. P.* p. 228.

⁵ *E.g. V. E.* i. 13; ii. 6; ii. 12.

⁶ *Par.* x. 97, 98.

And for us Guido Cavalcanti is no mere name, representing in an impersonal way a given point in the evolution of Italian poetry. He is a living character, and one full of interest. The man who could sing so sweetly of love, yet showed himself the best hater in all turbulent Florence; the man who was sometimes lost in deep abstraction, yet ready at a moment's notice to flash out his sword, and wield it to good purpose; the man who with all his moods and his unsociable temper, won yet from his contemporaries the admiration which is the meed of a singularly courteous and accomplished gentleman;¹ the haughty, disdainful, solitary spirit that could attract the enthusiastic and enduring affection of an unsociable soul like Dante!

And after all it is his relation to Dante that gives him for us his supreme interest. When in the early days of the *Vita Nuova*, Dante wrote his sonnet—

A ciascun alma presa e gentil core,²

the poem which introduced the boy of eighteen at once into the best literary circle of his day; he won, as a reward, one of the greatest boons a man can desire—a noble and inspiring friendship. For among the many who answered the enigma of that sonnet and sent him an interpretation of his mysterious dream was Guido Cavalcanti. The responsive sonnet—

Vedesti al mio parere ogni valore—³

breathes a spirit of encouragement and comfort: it is the elder poet taking the younger by the hand and bidding

¹ Cf. Dino, i. 20: "uno giovane gentile e . . . cortese". Boccaccio, *Dec.* vi. 9: "fu egli leggiadrissimo e costumato e parlante uomo molto, e ogni cosa che far volle e a gentile uom pertinente seppe meglio che altro uom fare . . .".

² *V. N.* § iii. 77 *sqq.*

³ Trans. by Rossetti, *E. I. P.* p. 222.

him be of good cheer! "E questo," says Dante, "fu quasi il principio dell' amistà tra lui e me".¹ "*Quasi*," because, as we already know, the two had all along been near neighbours in the Sesto di San Piero, and must have known something of one another, albeit the Cavalcanti moved in rather higher circles, so to speak, than the Alighieri.

And can we doubt but that the friendship thus cemented was a real inspiration to them both? Can we doubt that the sonnets which passed between them in the seventeen years that followed, served to keep alive in each breast a high literary ideal, amid the distressful interruptions of noisy politics? When municipal wrangles and factional horseplay made practical life well-nigh unbearable, the mind had still an avenue of escape. Dante could hoist the sails of his enchanted barque and be wafted away with Guido and Lapo, each accompanied by the "lady of his mind," over the tranquil waters of Love:—²

Guido, vorrei che tu e Lapo ed io
 Fossimo presi per incantamento
 E messi ad un vascel ch' ad ogni vento
 Per mare andasse a voler vostro e mio.

.

Or they could discuss together Lapo's love affairs, shake their wise heads, and preen themselves on the lofty and honourable style of their own devotion.³ Or again, in more serious mood, the elder would rebuke the younger for his backsliding after the death of Beatrice,⁴ and spur him, with the prick of loving censure, to higher things; in words of which we have, no doubt, an echo in the famous

¹ *V. N.* § iii. *fn.*

² *Sonn.* xxxii. (Oxf. ed.).

³ Nos. x., xi. in Rossetti (*E. I. P.* p. 232 *sq.*)

⁴ No. xx. in Rossetti (*E. I. P.* p. 247).

scene in the Earthly Paradise where Beatrice administers her rebuke and Dante hangs his head and weeps before her like a penitent child.¹ Whatever the nature of Dante's much disputed lapse, the friendship of Guido's pure and lofty spirit was as a messenger of Heaven to lift him up.

Thus the warm words with which Guido's name is garlanded in the *Vita Nuova* and the *Eloquentia* are seen to have a deeper meaning. The friendship of Guido was no mere pleasant intercourse on the basis of literary congeniality—in literary things, indeed, the two might have growingly diverse tastes²—but the friendship remained a real, strong, human thing; the bond that can be closer than brotherhood, the brave love that is ready even to wound if thereby it may render lasting help.

The next name in the literary circle is that of one who presents in many ways a strong contrast alike to Guido and to Dante. Guittoncino di Ser Francesco de' Sinibuldi da Pistoja, jurist and poet, born in that city in the year 1270, some fifteen years after Cavalcanti, shares with Guido the place of honour next to Dante himself. That

¹ *Purg.* xxx., xxxi.

² Guido, *e.g.* certainly did not share the passionate admiration for Virgil which characterised Dante's mind at the period when he conceived and wrote the *Divina Commedia*: a devotion reflected not only in individual passages like *Inf.* i. 76 *sqq.* but in the symbolic position of Virgil and in the constant attitude of discipleship which the Dante of the *D. C.* adopts. The much-disputed *sdegno di Guido* (*Inf.* x. 63) has been very variously interpreted. Perhaps the most probable interpretations are the two that suggest a literary divergence: either (a) that Guido "despised" Virgil (as Rossetti holds) because he was extremely anxious that Latin should give place to the vernacular (*cf.* *V. N.* §xxx. 21); or else (b) that he objected to the allegorising method which Dante took up in the *Convivio*, a method closely associated with Virgil in the most learned circles of the day (Chistoni, *Seconda Fase del Pensiero dantesco*, p. 86).

this is Dante's own estimate of Cino is clear from the abundant references in the *Eloquentia*, where Dante habitually speaks of himself as "Cino's friend".¹

One potent bond of sympathy between them lay in the common lot of exile. Dante writes to his "amicus carissimus," "Exulanti Pistoriensi Florentinus exul immeritus".² Cino, if we are to follow the common tradition,³ was, like Dante, a White Guelf with decided Ghibelline leanings, and was exiled from Pistoja five years after Dante had been cast out of Florence, in 1307, the memorable year of the advent of Henry VII, in the preparations for whose reception at Rome three years later he took an official share. On Henry's death, though he could create no Paradise wherein to enthrone that

alto Arrigo ch' a drizzare Italia
Verrà in prima ch'ella sia disposta,⁴

he composed a eulogistic elegy in which he described the young Emperor as a paragon of virtue—

Colui in cui virtute
Com' in suo proprio loco dimorava.⁵

A political exile like Dante, he spent the years of his wandering, unlike his more illustrious friend, in prosperous exercise of his profession: lecturing at Treviso in 1318, and after Dante's death successively at Siena, Florence, Perugia and Naples. In 1314 he had received from Bologna, at his doctorate, the laurel which (as the cor-

¹ *E.g.* *V.E.* i. 10, 28-31; 17, 18-26; ii. 2, 82, 83, 92; 5, 48; 6, 71.

² *Epistle*, iv.

³ Disputed by Gardner (*E. I. P.* p. 333) who says Cino was a *Black* till the coming of Henry VII, when he turned Ghibelline; and that he was exiled in 1301 and restored in 1307.

⁴ *Par.* xxx. 137-38.

⁵ Cited by Toynbee, *Dict. s.v.* "Cino," p. 162.



CINO DA PISTOJA AND HIS PUPILS
DUOMO, PISTOJA. CINO'S TOMB, CARVED BY CELLINO DI NESO

responsiveness of Giovanni del Virgilio shows¹) the learned city sought in vain to bestow upon Dante.

Finally, more fortunate than the Florentine poet, Cino was permitted to end his days in his native city, where his tomb is one of the glories of the Duomo. That sepulchre, the work of an eminent Sieneese, depicts him in the act of lecturing to nine pupils among whom is Francesco Petrarca.²

The vicissitudes of life had bound together the kindred souls of Dante and Cino, but the first and strongest bond was that sympathy of mind and taste in virtue of which Cino ranks as among the leaders of the "dolce stil nuovo".

Cino is said to have been among those who in 1283 replied to Dante's dream-sonnet, but this seems unlikely, as he would then be but thirteen years old. The answering sonnet traditionally attributed to him is more probably by some other of the "many" who, according to Dante, sent replies.³ The friendship, however, seems to have begun some time before Dante's banishment, and the literary correspondence to have spread over a number of years.

One of Cino's poems, written in reply to a sonnet of Dante's from his place of exile, deserves the lasting approbation of posterity, for in it he urges Dante to continue his great poem, and so redeem the pledge given at the end of the *Vita Nuova*.

¹ *Oxford Dante*, p. 185. Cav. G. Livi, director of the Archives at Bologna, has discovered a curious contemporary sketch on the margin of a document about the date of Dante's death, which seems to represent "Bologna Grassa" offering a laurel wreath to the Poet, who kneels to receive it. The scribe (and artist) is Ser Ugucione Bambaglioli, relative of Graziolo, one of the first commentators on Dante.

² See illustration.

³ Prof. Federzone would attribute it to Terrino di Castelfiorentino.

Beloved, O my brother, sorrow-worn,
 Even in that lady's name who is thy goal
 Sing on, till thou redeem thy plighted word! ¹

Many of the poems collected by Rossetti as belonging to this correspondence are of doubtful authorship; but if one of the celebrated sonnets in which the *Divina Commedia* is criticised ² can no longer be attributed to Cino, the beautiful Canzone is certainly his, in which he laments with Dante for the death of Beatrice. That poem, which begins:—

Avvenga ch' io non aggia più per tempo,

is coupled by Dante with his own

Amor che nella mente mi ragiona,

as typical of the most excellent form of Canzone.³

And further, a hitherto unnoticed correspondence between Dante and Cino has recently been brought to light, the subject of which is a young maiden "dressed in green," probably identical with the subject of Dante's passion poems, "Al poco giorno," and its companions.⁴

To Dante Cino is not only a pioneer of poetry in the vulgar tongue,⁵ a model of pure style, who, like Guido Cavalcanti and Lapo Gianni, had the insight to reject the "Tuscan dialect";⁶ he is, besides, the Poet of Love *par excellence*, as Dante himself of Rectitude.⁷ His love for

¹ From the sonnet, "Dante, io non odo in qual albergo suoni," trans. by Rossetti, *E. I. P.* p. 218.

² xi. and xii. in Rossetti's collection (p. 274).

³ *V. E.* ii. 6, 70-73 (p. 395). The Canzone is translated by Rossetti (*E. I. P.* p. 265).

⁴ Giulio Salvadori, "Nuove rime di Dante," in *Nuova Antologia*, 1st Dec. 1904.

⁵ *V. E.* i. 10, 28-31 (p. 384).

⁶ *Ibid.* 13, 33-39 (p. 387).

⁷ *Ibid.* ii. 2, 82, 83 (p. 392).

Selvaggia ; the tears shed over her tomb on the "blessed mount" of Sambuca by the prosperous professional man who had long since married comfortably and become the father of five children,¹ have inspired a recent spirited caricature on the theme of the "love" of that period and circle,² to which some little colour, perhaps, is given by Dante's own censure in the sonnet,

Io mi credea del tutto esser partito
Da queste vostre rime, Messer Cino,³

in which he rebukes Cino for fickleness in love. But similar rebukes were freely administered within the circle, as Rossetti has pointed out—"to Guido Cavalcanti by Dino . . . to Dante by Guido," who had formerly confided to Dante his "doubts of Lapo Gianni". And after all, it is not so much a question of faithfulness and loyalty in love, as of the conception of love itself.

The fact is that an age like the present when the marital ideal (in spite of strong contrary tendencies) has happily vindicated its true place, and ideal love is no longer separated in idea from marriage, nor romance regarded as inconsistent with practical domesticity, is apt to find itself baffled in the presence of the troubadour's passion. We of this day find something artificial and unreal in an erotic attachment entirely innocent of any desire for the appointed material seal of love: "And they shall be one flesh".

But the seriousness of that poetic love and its grandeur

¹ Poems on Selvaggia, Nos. iv-vii. in Rossetti (*E. I. P.* pp. 268-72); the lament over her grave, No. viii. (p. 270). The text of this, together with two other of Cino's poems not selected by Rossetti, will be found in Carducci, *Fiori*, pp. 57-60.

² Maurice Hewlett, *Little Novels of Italy*.

³ Sonn. xxxiv. (Oxf. ed).

are vindicated for ever in the *Vita Nuova* and its outcome, the *Divina Commedia*. And in the light of the *Vita Nuova* the sentiments of Cino and his fellows—which should be compared not so much with our circle of ideas as with those of their Provençal predecessors—may win even from us some degree of tolerance.

Posterity is perhaps less ready than was “Cino’s friend” to place the Pistojesse lawyer on a level with the author of the *Commedia*. Prosperity, it may be, stood in the way of his ever becoming a second Dante. Such is obviously Rossetti’s thought, when he delivers his summary estimate of the man. “Messer Cino de’ Sinibuldi,” he says, “was a prosperous man of whom we have ample records, from the details of his examinations as a student to the inventory of his effects after death, and the curious items of his funeral expenses. Of his claims as a poet it may be said that he filled creditably the interval which elapsed between the death of Dante and the full blaze of Petrarch’s success.”

It may seem somewhat strange, perhaps, to find the name of the painter Giotto in a chapter on Dante’s literary circle. Yet of their early friendship there can be no doubt; and Giotto, if primarily an artist, was many other things besides, and can claim a place among the poets of the New Style in virtue of the single extant Canzone on “Voluntary Poverty”—

Molti son quei che lodan povertade.¹

This poem bears out the testimony of Giotto’s contemporaries to his wit and shrewd common sense.² It is with

¹ See Rossetti’s translation, *E. I. P.* p. 298 *sqq.*

² Sacchetti’s two stories about him illustrate his wit and pleasant companionship (lxxv), and his humorous contempt for all “humbugs” (lxiii).

reason supposed by Rossetti to have been written as a sort of safety-valve for the painter's true feeling whilst he was engaged in the church at Assisi, painting the fresco which represents the mystic marriage of Saint Francis with the Lady Poverty.

Giotto expresses here a profound and undisguised contempt for the hypocrisy of much of the professed "voluntary poverty" of his day; draws a philosophical distinction between poverty self-chosen and that involuntary poverty which is fraught with strong temptations; confesses to an appreciation of the good things of this life, commending avoidance of extremes, somewhat after the Wise Man's, "Give me neither poverty nor riches".¹

With true ethical insight he suggests that man's eternal weal depends not on externals but on character, and puts forth a reverent plea for a common-sense interpretation of our Saviour's utterances concerning poverty, and the significance of His example Who for our sakes became poor. If the other stanzas are light and satirical for the most part, the fourth, in which he touches on sacred ground, rises to a high level of dignity and seriousness.

Giotto's name bridges over the gap between Dante's life in Florence and his years of exile: between the days when the familiar portrait of the poet of the *Vita Nuova* was painted by the "coetaneo ed amico suo grandissimo,"² and the two knelt, as we have pictured them, side by side in Roman sanctuaries at the Jubilee:³ and those later years when at Padua⁴ and perhaps elsewhere, the living presence of his old comrade brightened the gloom of the exile's spirit, while the strong and chastened imagination

¹ Prov. xxx. 8.

² Vasari, *Life of Giotto*.

³ See above, chap. i. p. 19.

⁴ See below, p. 294, and chap. ix. p. 301.

of the poet of Heaven and Hell supplied the artist with congenial fancies for his frescoes in the Madonna dell' Arena.

With Cino Dante corresponded after his banishment—"exulanti . . . exul immeritus"—but with Giotto he had the joy of living intercourse.

Giotto (*i.e.* "Angellotto" or "Ambrogiotto") di Bondone was born near the village of Vespignano, fourteen miles from Florence, a year after Dante, in 1266. His age was thus just the same as that of Beatrice. The stories of his childhood and the facts and details of his life-work are too well known to call for exhaustive repetition. It is forbidden to us now to see, with Vasari, the untaught shepherd's son, in the pastures of the Mugello, sketching by the light of nature such life-like images of his sheep as to win at once the admiration and the love of the great Florentine master of painting. But we may still think of Giotto as a lad of humblest origin, rising by force of his own genius to the highest place in the artistic world of his day; quickly outstripping his own master Cimabue, so that in the year 1300, when he had barely reached middle life, it could be said of him—

Credette Cimabue nella pittura
Tener lo campo, ed ora ha Giotto il grido,
Si che la fama di colui è oscura.¹

And the work that he has left behind him—his frescoes at Assisi, at Rome, at Florence, Padua, Ravenna and elsewhere²—defaced as they often are by the ravages of time, or, still worse, by the ravages of the restorer—attest

¹ *Purg.* xi. 94-96.

² The *Anonimo Fiorentino* mentions works of his at Naples and at Bologna.

the power of the man of whom Poliziano wrote at the great Lorenzo's bidding:—

Ille ego sum per quem pictura extincta revixit.¹

If we are inclined to regard as exaggerated Boccaccio's attribution to him of a power of realistic representation which "deceived the senses" and "made men think real that which was painted,"² Vasari at any rate is vindicated by the quality and character of the actual work that remains in his contention that with Giotto dawns a new era of life and naturalness³ in art.

And neither Boccaccio nor Vasari seem extravagant when we compare their eulogies with those of one of his most recent critics.⁴ Giotto's appreciation of "tactile values"; the judgment with which he sacrifices prettiness and colour and even realistic detail consistently to this; his masterly handling of light and shade; his startling achievement of the effects of form and movement; his success in making his representations *live* for us, and that in spite of ignorance of anatomy—all this makes Giotto in Mr. Berenson's eyes the first of the great personalities in Florentine painting, and gives him his "claim to everlasting appreciation as an artist".

The great Florentines, says the same writer, "exploited all the arts in the endeavour to express themselves". Giotto was no exception. He is the designer of the

¹ Cited in Toynbee's *Dict. s.v.* "Giotto," p. 276; where passages also from Boccaccio, Vasari, etc. are quoted.

² *Decamerone*, vi. 5.

³ *Cf.* Villani, xi. 12, who says "Giotto" is "quegli che più trasse ogni figura e atti al naturale".

⁴ B. Berenson, *Florentine Painters of the Renaissance*, pp. 3-19.

famous Campanile.¹ He was renowned as architect and sculptor, reputed as wit and versifier; but he was above all a painter.

So Dante too—himself, as we have seen, not without a taste for painting—Dante, a skilled logician, dialectician, theologian and many things besides, is above all a poet.

Giotto and Dante together represent the highest, in art, of which the Trecento was capable. As we see them in that summer of 1306, working away in the cool chapel newly erected by the Scrovegno family just three years before; as we watch the white walls clothing themselves, the painter's brush reacting to the stimulus of the poet's imagination, while the Paduan sun outside bakes everything and hot air vibrates above the ruins of the neighbouring "Arena"—the glare without becomes unreal; reality is concentrated within those four walls.

What Giotto accomplishes with his pencil, opening a new world before men's wondering gaze, and making it so live that, in Mr. Berenson's words,² "we realise his representation more quickly and more completely than the things themselves"; even so does Dante with his pen. The "tactile values," if we may so speak of Dante's work, and of the personages whom we see as Dante leads us through his "Three Kingdoms" are even more powerful and convincing than the figures in Giotto's frescoes. In Paradise he floods us with light, and fills us with awed

¹ The foundation of the Campanile was laid (and laid full deep), with episcopal benediction in the presence of the whole clergy, the Priors and other magistrates on 18th July, 1334. Less than eighteen months later Giotto was buried (8th January, 1336) in the neighbouring church with every honour (Villani, xi. 12).

² Berenson, *op. cit.* p. 19.

amazement ; in Purgatory he claims our sympathy for la Pia in five short words :—

Siena mi fe, disfecemi Maremma ;¹

in Hell he wrings our hearts and stirs our abhorrence with a touch of masterly realism :—

La qual fa del non ver, vera rancura
Nascere a chi la vede.²

¹ *Purg.* v. 134.

² *Ibid.* x. 133, 134.

CHAPTER IX

DANTE'S HOSTS

IT was the lot of Dante, in common with not a few of his literary friends, to taste the bitterness of exile. Guido Guinicelli himself, to whom Dante, as we have seen, does homage as to his true literary father

. . . il padre
Mio, e degli altri miei miglior, che mai
Rime d'amor usar dolci e leggiadre¹—

Guido Guinicelli died in exile at Parma, victim of Guef fury against the Bolognese Lambertazzi.

And though the first efflorescence of the *dolce stil nuovo* dates from the period when Dante and Guido and Lapo were happy together in the "enchanted bark of love" in a Florence on which the cruellest storms had not yet burst; yet Dante's best work was certainly accomplished after the gates of Florence had been for ever closed to him, and some at least of his most interesting literary friendships—as that of Quirini of Venice, and that of Giovanni di Virgilio of Bologna, date from the period of his exile.

What that exile meant to Dante, he never intended his readers to forget. It echoes in the pathetic language of the prophecy put into the mouth of Cacciaguida, who predicts for his descendant the cruel wrench of sundered home-ties—

¹ *Purg.* xxvi. 97-99.



BATTLEFIELD OF CAMPALDINO, WITH CASTLE OF POPPI, CASENTINO

FROM A SKETCH BY THE AUTHOR

Tu lascerai ogni cosa diletta
 Più caramente, e questo è quello strale
 Che l'arco dell' esilio pria saetta;¹

the irritating humiliation of constant dependence upon the bounty of others—

Tu proverai sì come sa di sale
 Lo pane altrui, e come è duro calle
 Lo scendere e il salir per l'altrui scale.²

And last, but most revolting burden of all, he must learn that "misery makes us acquainted with strange bed-fellows"—

E quel che più ti graverà le spalle
 Sarà la compagnia malvagia e scempia
 Con la qual tu cadrai in questa valle.³

Equally pathetic and even more explicit is the famous passage in the *Convivio* where he describes himself as wandering through the length and breadth of Italy, a homeless vagabond, victim of the "unjust penalty of exile and poverty". The passage is familiar, but demands quotation here:—

"Poichè fu piacere de' cittadini della bellissima e famosissima figlia di Roma, Fiorenza, di gettarmi fuori del suo dolcissimo seno (nel quale nato e nudrito fui fino al colmo della mia vita, e nel quale, con buona pace di quelli, desidero con tutto cuore di riposare l'animo stanco, e terminare il tempo che mi è dato), per le parti quasi tutte, alle quali questa lingua si stende, peregrino, quasi mendicando, sono andato . . ." ⁴

"Peregrino, quasi mendicando": what a discipline for the sensitive, haughty spirit! Something of the echo of it rings in his sympathetic description of the great Siense

¹ *Par.* xvii. 55-57.

² *Ibid.* 58-60.

³ *Ibid.* 61-63.

⁴ *Conv.* i. 3, 15 *sqq.* (p. 240).

Provenzano, humiliating himself at the climax of his splendour to beg alms in the Campo for the ransom of a captive friend. But Provenzano, who

Ogni vergogna deposta . . .

Si condusse a tremar per ogni vena,¹

had at least the consolation that he was begging for another and not for himself.

Yet surely in Dante's affliction we can discern the touch of a Hand supremely loving and supremely wise, and in Dante's loss posterity's great gain. To it we owe his masterpiece, that work of fine gold, "purified seven times in the fire".

It was grief—the loss of his first love—which beat out of him, as he tells us at the close of the *Vita Nuova*, the first vague conception of the *Divina Commedia*—the yearning to say, and the consciousness of power to say, of "that blessed one," "quello che mai non fu detto d'alcuna".² And it was not merely hard study that was needed: that exhausting mental discipline to which he more than once refers: the long hours spent in poring over his beloved manuscript of Virgil,³ and searching for the treasures hidden amongst its pages; the cold, the hunger, the sleepless nights passed in cult of the Muses⁴; the baffling dimness of eyes inflamed with over-use,⁵ the actual emaciation, which was the mark impressed upon his body by the vastness of his intellectual enterprise. Study was needed, indeed, for such a work, that should be, among other things, a compendium of the scientific and theological lore of the Age—but mere study was not enough—

¹ *Purg.* xi. 135, 138.

² *V.N. fin.* ³ *Inf.* i. 83 sq.

⁴ *Purg.* xxix. 37 sq.

⁵ *Conv.* iii. 9, 147 sq. (p. 285).

. . . Il poema sacro

Al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra ¹

demanded a wide and widening experience; a personal experience of the deepest kind, such as sorrow and disappointment alone can give, a broad and first-hand knowledge of human nature. For the Poem was to be no mere compendium; it was to be an allegory of the pilgrimage of the human soul—a picture of man “as by the use he makes of his free will, showing himself worthy or unworthy, he wins from divine Justice reward or punishment”.²

And so Dante must needs see life: not merely in the confined though brilliant and versatile environment of his native city—not merely as an official visitor on embassies to neighbouring States, as San Gemignano, or to the Papal Court at Rome; nor even solely as a student of Laws or Theology at Bologna or Paris. He must be a student of the varied moods of Nature, as he needs to be who is forced to wander homeless under sun and stars and through storms of rain and snow: a student at close quarters (as the homeless is apt to be) of human life in its beauty and its ugliness. The petty meannesses, the sordid and selfish wranglings of the motley group of fellow-exiles; the irritating idiosyncrasies of fellow-guests in hospice or in great lord's palace—these too have their part to play in his ultimate education. And not less essential is the other side, the outstretched hand of spontaneous generosity, the sympathy and munificence of wealthy and powerful *Signori*, like the Conti Guidi, the Malaspina, the Scaligeri and the Polenta; and the courtesy and gentleness of their ladies.

No sketch of Dante's Italy would be complete that

¹ *Par.* xxv. 1, 2.

² *Epist.* x. 9, 173 sqq. (p. 416).

ignored the consolers of his exile, who, over and above the gratitude that every loyal Dantist owes to them, stand out as types and representatives of the leading great families of the period, and thus help us to complete our picture of the time.

Who was Dante's host at Siena, whither he sped straight from Rome, as Leonardo Bruni tells us,¹ on hearing of the sentence of his condemnation? Who gave him hospitality at Arezzo, whither he repaired soon after, with the mass of his fellow-exiles, only to separate himself from them in disgust a couple of years later? No hint comes to us, except the negative suggestion of the passage which speaks of Verona (whither he seems to have passed from Arezzo in 1304) as his "primo ostello".²

At Bologna, again, as at Paris, we have no record of a personal welcome, and must think of the poet as hiring some poor mean lodging with the scanty resources at his command, or as dependent, perchance, on the hospitality of his friends the Friars. At Lucca he lived most likely under the protection of the great Ghibelline chief, Ugucione della Faggiuola, who obtained mastery of that city the year after the Emperor Henry's death;³ but we know not what roof sheltered the exile, only that the charms and the kindness of a young maiden, Gentucca,⁴ left with him, throughout his after years, a pleasant memory of the city of Santa Zita.

¹ *Vita di Dante* (ed. Solerti, p. 203). Is this the occasion of Boccaccio's story of the manuscript in the apothecary's shop (Bocc. *Vita di Dante*, § 8, p. 38, Solerti), when the poet's mind was so concentrated on the book that he stood leaning on the bench outside from noon till vespers, and never heard or saw anything of a great festival that was going on all round him? (The story is translated in Toynbee's *Life*, p. 151.)

² *Par.* xvii. 70.

³ See below, p. 316.

⁴ *Purg.* xxiv. 43-45.



"DANTE'S HOUSE" AT PADUA, WITH THE "TOMB OF ANTENOR"
FROM A SKETCH BY THE AUTHOR

But of four of his hosts the names remain to us, and there remain also of each of them some records which may help us to picture, more or less vividly, the environment of the poet's life in these resting-places on his weary pilgrimage.

With the Scaligeri of Verona he found what he has called his "first refuge,"¹ in July, 1304, in the days of Bartolommeo, and remained there and in the neighbourhood under the protection of Alboino till 1306, when we find him signing a document at Padua² on 27th August. From Padua he passed south-west across the great plain and over the ridge of Apennine to the Lunigiana early in the autumn of that year: 27th October finding him already enjoying the hospitality of the Malaspina family. After this stay in the Val di Magra we must probably place the journey to Paris and the North, where he seems to have penetrated as far as the shores that face our white cliffs, even if he did not, as Giovanni di Serravalle asserts, come and study "in Oxoniis in regno Angliae".³ Henry VII's descent into Italy drew him back, and he spent the spring of 1311 (and probably the previous winter) in the Casentino with the Conti Guidi, who had doubtless harboured him also during some part of the first months of his exile. His last refuge was with the Polenta family at Ravenna, whither, after a second visit to Verona, where Can Grande now ruled in place of his brother Alboino, the poet bent his steps in 1317 or 1318. And at Ravenna he passed away, on Holy Cross Day, 1321.

¹ *Par.* xvii. 70.

² Here he met Giotto (see above, p. 294). The house in which he dwelt at Padua is still shown to visitors, near to the ancient sepulchre that passed in the Middle Ages for the tomb of the Trojan Antenor. For the document see reference in Toynbee, *Dict. s.v.* "Dante," p. 192.

³ Solerti's edition of the *Lives*, p. 95.

For us the Guidi and the Casentino call for first mention. The spot is nearest to the poet's home and witnessed his youthful prowess, and the Signori were friends of his youth and, doubtless, amongst the earliest consolers of his exile.

The Casentino, or "Valley Enclosed,"¹ is a green fertile tract hidden away amid the sterile slopes of Apennine, some twenty-five miles to the north-east of Florence. It is the upper valley of the Arno, which rises at the valley's head, high up on the side of Monte Falterona, and flows nearly due southwards, amid green vineyards and cornlands and rich meadows, past a succession of ruined castles and hill-towns. To right and left the lofty ridges pay their tribute of sparkling water to the main stream, by means of those brooks so graphically described in the well-known lines:—

Li ruscelletti che da' verdi colli
Del Casentin discendon giuso in Arno
Facendo i lor canali freddi e molli.²

The hills themselves are studded with famous sanctuaries. On the east, Camaldoli, the monastery of reformed Benedictines, whose founder, San Romualdo, Dante sees among the contemplative spirits in Heaven,³ and above it the "Hermitage" to which allusion is made in the fifth canto of *Purgatory*.⁴ Farther south and east, and higher up still, stands La Verna, that—

Crudo sasso intra Tevere ed Arno⁵

endeared to our own age as to Dante's by its Franciscan memories. And immediately opposite this, just over the

¹ Ella Noyes, *The Casentino and Its Story*, p. 1. The book puts together very well many of the valley's associations with Dante; as does also Signor Beni's excellent *Guida al Casentino*.

² *Inf.* xxx. 64-66.

³ *Par.* xxii. 49.

⁴ *Purg.* v. 98.

⁵ *Par.* xi. 106.

western ridge, lies Vallombrosa, the foundation of the Florentine, San Giovanni Gualberto, who had retired to these wooded solitudes in 1015 from the uncongenial laxity of the cloister of San Miniato: a saint whose famous act of mercy might well have been inscribed in Dante's *Purgatory*: when on that Good Friday more than two centuries past, he had forgiven his father's murderer, having him in his power, and the imaged Christ stooped to embrace him in token of sympathy.

The line of finely-placed castles which form so striking a feature of the Casentino has an added interest for us in that each of the three—Porciano, Romena and Poppi—claims to have harboured the homeless poet at different periods during his exile.

The powerful family of the Conti Guidi—called in Florence “i conti,” *par excellence*—¹ had been dominant in the district for several centuries past. Six or seven of them Dante mentions by name (though not always, it must be confessed, with approbation), and in the *Divina Commedia* alone the family is named no less than nine times over.

Tegrino the Lombard, Count Palatine of Tuscany, traditional founder of the family, who wooed and won the fair Engelrada, Countess of Modigliana, had lived his life ere the tenth century was half over: and many of his descendants made themselves known and feared during the 300 years that followed. During the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries they were indeed “one of the richest and most powerful families of Italy”.² Their

¹ Dino Compagni, ii. 20.

² See the summary account of the family cited from Latham (Dante's *Letters*, pp. 38 sqq.) by Toynbee, *Dict. s.v.* “Guidi, Conti” p. 294.

central seats were in the Casentino, but they possessed also castles and dominions eastward of the main ridge of Apennine in Romagna, at Bagno and Montegranelli, at Dovadola and Modigliana.¹

Ghibellines for the most part, and owing the security of their possessions in part to the favour of the Emperors from Barbarossa downwards, whom they served manfully with their swords, they are yet found on the side of Gregory VII and the Countess Matilda at the end of the eleventh century; and some of them in the thirteenth century—especially the Romena branch—showed decided Guelf leanings.

Famous among the earlier Guidi is Tegrimo Bevisangue, the Lombard's grandson: sole survivor, like Josiah of old, of a wholesale family massacre. His grim surname, it is said, was earned by his practice of licking from his trusty sword-blade the blood of those who had slain his parents, as the *vendetta* proceeded on its deadly course.

But the first point of special interest for the Dante student is reached towards the end of the twelfth century, with the marriage of Tegrimo's eighth descendant, Guidoguerra IV, called "il vecchio," with the "good Gualdrada" de' Ravignani.² There are, no doubt, historical improbabilities connected with the romantic story told by Villani and Boccaccio of the girl who refused to be kissed by an Emperor, and was for reward given the hand of his noble follower, Count Guido, and the Casentino as her dowry. There may be, as has been suggested, some confusion between the names of Gualdrada and Engelrada.³ But

¹ The district of the Acquacheta-Montone described in *Inf.* xvi. 97.

² *Inf.* xvi. 37, *cf.* *Par.* xvi., 97-99. The traditional story of the marriage is related by Villani, v. 37.

³ Noyes, *Casentino*, p. 28.

the marriage of Guido Vecchio with Bellincion Berti's daughter, marks at any rate a fresh bond between the Conti Guidi and Florence itself.

His grandsons and great-grandsons are Dante's contemporaries.

Guido Novello, Lord of Battifolle and of Poppi, who died in 1293, is nowhere mentioned by Dante, but figures largely—more conspicuously than creditably—in scenes familiar to the poet.

Head of the Tuscan Ghibellines at Montaperti,¹ he became Manfred's vicar in Florence during the years of Ghibelline domination that ensued; a domination which ended with Guido's pusillanimous flight² on the 11th of November, 1266, eighteen months after Dante's birth; when his place was taken by his Guelf cousin Guidoguerra, who entered as vicar of Charles of Anjou. He fled once more from the field of Campaldino, and has a third point of connection with Dante in that he married a daughter of Count Ugolino della Gherardesca of Pisa, the tragedy of whose inhuman death Dante has immortalised in his *Inferno*.³

Guidoguerra⁴ of Dovadola, again, figures largely—and more valiantly than his cousin—in the struggles of the times. A zealous Guelf, he had distinguished himself in that cause as early as 1250. His counsels, if followed, would have averted the disaster of Montaperti. The

¹ Fought on 4th September, 1260.

² He took fright at a rising caused by his unpopularity, demanded the keys of the city gate, and fled to Prato. Next day, cured of his panic, he tried to return by force. But it was less difficult to keep him out than it would have been to expel him (Villani, vii. 14).

³ *Inf.* xxxiii.

⁴ See Toynbee, *Dict. s.v.* "Guido Guerra" (pp. 296, 297), where many of the details given below are collected.

victory of Benevento, by which Charles of Anjou reversed that calamity in 1266, was largely due to the support of Guidoguerra and his Tuscans; and it was but natural that Charles should appoint Guido his vicar in Tuscany. This office the gallant Count held, together with that of Podestà in Florence, for six years, and dying without male issue in 1272, left his patrimony to the city which he had served so well according to his lights.¹

A true scion of that rude stock whereof he was the fifth to win the significant *sobriquet* of "Guerra," he is praised for his skill in war, his hardihood and fearless venturesomeness, which again and again achieved an unlikely success. This, and the largeness of his schemes and ideas, were the admiration of his fellows, among whom his knightly courtesy and happy disposition made him a favourite.²

Dante, constrained by his judicial conscience to place this great man in the unenviable surroundings of the Hell of the Sodomites takes care to associate Guido with a band to whom

Si vuol esser cortese ;³

and puts into the mouth of Jacopo Rusticucci a terse and pointed appreciation at once of his valour and his wisdom :—

Guido Guerra ebbe nome, ed in sua vita
Fece col senno assai e con la spada.⁴

Alessandro, Guido, and their brother Aghinolfo,⁵ of Romagna, great-grandsons of the "good Gualdrada," make

¹ Filippi Villani, cited by Toynbee, *loc. cit.*

² F. Villani, *ut supra*. ³ *Inf.* xvi. 15.

⁴ *Ibid.* 38, 39. So Benvenuto, on *Inf.* xvi. 34 *sqq.* says *both* his names were most appropriate, "quia . . . bene guidavit et fuit magnus guerriger".

⁵ He died early in 1300, and is probably the one alluded to in *Inf.* xxx. 79, as "already in hell".

but a poor figure in the *Divina Commedia*, counterfeiting the gold florins of Florence, to the lasting shame and perdition of their tool Maestro Adamo.¹

But if the first and second epistles are genuine, Alessandro at least appears in a more favourable light. It is in his name as captain of the White party² that Dante addresses the first letter to Nicholas, Bishop of Ostia, in 1304. It is again to his nephews Uberto and Guido of Romena that the formal letter³ of condolence is addressed on the occasion of their uncle's death; a letter in which after enlarging upon the mental and practical qualities of the deceased Count, the writer augurs for him a place in the heaven "whence his spirit sprang," where he shall exchange the court of the Roman Emperor on earth for the company of the Princes of the blessed in Jerusalem above.

This letter, if genuine, would be all the more interesting for the author's quaintly expressed excuse for not attending the obsequies of his benefactor: "owing to the unexpected poverty" which exile has imposed, leaving him devoid of horse and arms wherewith to make a decent show.

Federico Novello, murdered young, in 1289, by a Guelf

¹ *Inf.* xxx. 73 *sqq.* Recent documentary evidence seems to show that we can claim "Maestro Adamo of Brescia" as of English origin. He is supposed to have learnt his trick through having been employed by the Florentines as an artist when they first coined gold florins in 1252, when a Brescian was Podestà (Villani, vi. 53).

² Leonardo Bruni, *Vita di Dante* (ed. Solerti, p. 103), says Dante's first common action with the other exiles was in a meeting at Gorgonza, where "crearono loro capitano generale il conte Alessandro da Romena, e fero no dodici consiglieri, del numero dei quali fu Dante". He is generally identified with the A.C.A. ("Alexander capitaneus") of the title of *Epp.* i. ii.

³ *Epist.* ii. *Oxford Dante*, p. 404.

hand at Bibbiena, who meets Dante in Ante-Purgatory, his hands outstretched in supplication,¹ was son of Guido Novello of Battifolle and his Gherardesca wife. He may have figured among the poet's opponents on the field of Campaldino.

For when Dante, the exile, found refuge with the Guidi in their Casentino homes, it was not into an unfamiliar country that he came. Twelve years before he left Florence for ever, he had ridden with the gallant cavaliers of Guelf Florence over the bleak Consuma Pass and down into the green valley to meet a Ghibelline force advancing from Arezzo under the warrior-bishop of that town. The verdant slopes and rushing torrents, the vineyards and cornfields; the tall shivering poplars lining the banks of Arno; the hill of Poppi straight ahead of him, crowned with its frowning castle; the sacred height of La Verna beyond, away to the left, visible from time to time through the dust-clouds of the battle—these and his own first fears and subsequent exultation² as the Ghibelline onset threatened to overwhelm him and his comrades, but was finally rolled back by the combined intrepidity of Vieri de' Cerchi and Corso Donati . . . a hundred memories must have crowded upon him as he revisited the scenes of his old campaign, and prayed, perchance, in the Chapel of Certomondo, the convent founded by a Ghibelline Count in

¹ *Purg.* vi. 17.

² Leonardo Bruni, *Vita* (ed. Solerti, p. 100), preserves a fragment of one of Dante's lost letters, in which the Poet speaks of the fight (of which he also sketched a plan, Leonardi, p. 99): "la battaglia di Campaldino . . . dove mi trovai non fanciullo nell' armi, dove ebbi temenza molta, e nella fine allegrezza grandissima per li vari casi di quella battaglia". Descriptions of the battle are given by Villani (vii. 131); by Dino Compagni, who notes the prowess of Vieri and Corso (i. 10) and by Leonardo (p. 99).



MEETING OF ARNO AND ARCHIANO, CASENTINO
FROM A SKETCH BY THE AUTHOR

thanksgiving for Montaperti and destined by tragic irony of circumstances to witness so signal a Ghibelline defeat.¹

From the castle of Poppi the sheltered exile might view at leisure the entire battlefield, lying like a huge jousting-ground between Poppi and the Castle of Romena to the north-east; while a southward glance from the same point of vantage would open to him the lower valley as far as Bibbiena beneath whose hill the Archiano joins the stream of Arno. We may picture him, then, writing in this castle of Poppi the wonderful story of Buonconte's flight and death;² the blind rush of the wounded man, bursting through the line of poplars and brushwood only to find himself caught in a trap between the two streams; the pools of blood which marked his track across the plain; the last plunge of his now lifeless body into the torrent, hands crossed upon his breast and the saving cry of "Mary!" upon his dying lips. And then the storm at sunset, transforming Archiano into a roaring torrent, and swirling the corpse down the stream of Arno. This fifth Canto of the *Purgatory* was surely written in Casentino; and so also the equally famous thirty-third of the *Inferno*—written when Dante was a guest of Ugolino's daughter.

Sacchetti tells a story³ of this wife of Guidoguerra which connects together the two names of Ugolino and Buonconte, and at the same time illustrates the typical repartee of the period—acidulated by years of faction and *vendetta*. It is early spring, and two of the Guidi ladies are walking together in the cornfields below the castle hill—fields which to-day also are green at that season

¹ In the official notice of the battle posted up in Florence, says Leonardo (p. 99), the words were: "Sconfitti e' Ghibellini a Certomondo".

² *Purg.* v. 85 sqq.

³ *Nov.* clxxix.

with promise of an extraordinarily bounteous crop. One of the ladies is daughter of Ugolino, the victim of the "Tower of Hunger"; the other, of him whom Dante has pictured—

Fuggendo a piedi e sanguinando il piano.¹

"What a potent manure," says the Pisan lady, "is Ghibelline blood! The harvest will be magnificent!"

"Yes," replies the daughter of Buonconte—"for those who are allowed to eat it!"

It was in the autumn of 1310—the year when so much was hoped—that Dante, as guest of Guido Novello of Battifolle, revisited these familiar scenes, and penned three of his extant epistles.²

But it is probable that still earlier, in the thirty months that passed before he reached his "primo ostello" at Verona, he had found shelter in the neighbouring castles of Porciano and Romena. For Porciano, on the southern slope of Falterona, was in constant communication with the Guidi Castle of S. Godenzo, where it is said that on the 8th of June, 1302, Dante, with other leaders of the exiled Bianchi, signed a contract of alliance with the Ubaldini.³

In this castle, with which is associated the humorous story already related in a previous chapter,⁴ he may have written, after a Pisgah-view from the summit of Falterona (in which, however, he represents not Moses, but rather Balak's ideal of Balaam!), the wonderful description of

¹ *Purg.* v. 99.

² *Epist.* v., vi., vii.: the two last are dated "in finibus Tusciae sub fontem Sarni".

³ The Ubaldini demanded security that the Bianchi if successful would indemnify them for their expenses and losses in the attempt: the document in which this security is given names "Dante Aleghieri" as participating in the stipulation. See Del Lungo's note on Dino, ii. 29, and Noyes, *Casentino*, p. 194.

⁴ See above, chap. v. p. 191.

the Arno's course; though the bitter pun in which he speaks of the inhabitants as *porci*, sits ill on the mouth of a guest, and seems rather to favour the legend that he was once a prisoner there.

At Romena, with whose occupants, as we have seen, the first and second Epistle show him on terms of familiarity, he wrote, some think, the description of the "nobile castello"¹ of the virtuous heathen; and found ready to his hand the ideas of the concentric circles of seven walls, and of the green courtyard where the heroes of old time pace to and fro in grave converse.

Romena certainly is the background of that vivid scene in Hell where poor parched Maestro Adamo casts back a yearning eye of imagination upon the cool waters of Fonte Branda² and the rushing rivulets that sing round Pratovecchio. Here also Dante may have rested in that same initial year of his exile, or at any rate some time during the interval between his sentence and the first visit to Verona.

Dante's movements are proverbially obscure, but it is at least possible that he may have passed from the Luni-giana—perhaps in 1307, or soon after—into the Casentino and tarried there awhile before his visit to Paris and the north. It is possible that there, in middle life, the lonely wanderer was smitten with passion for a maiden who inspired the beautiful and pathetic "Mountain Song,"

Amor, dacchè convien pur ch' io mi doglia.³

¹ *Inf.* iv. 106 sqq.

² *Ibid.* xxx. 78. No one who has visited Romena and observed the proximity of the Fonte Branda in Casentino, and drunk of its waters (not now "dried up" as Toynbee, *Dict.* p. 96), is likely to identify Adamo's fountain with the more celebrated Fonte Branda of Siena. Yet commentators continue to do so.

³ *Canzone* xi.: see also above, chap. viii: p. 277.

And to this same lady¹ may also be addressed the so-called *rime pietrose*, which, to whatever date they may be attributed, ring of the stony brooks and bare hill-sides—of a winter spent in the “Valley Enclosed” which the poet seems actually to describe in the verse of the exquisite Sestina, *Al poco giorno* :

E chiuso intorno d'altissimi Colli.²

To Poppi, however, he seems certainly to have come in the spring of 1311, fresh from the coronation of Henry VII at Milan. His lips had paid their homage to the sacred foot ; his heart had whispered : “Behold the Lamb of God !”³ His facile pen had urged the Princes and Peoples of Italy to accord to the deliverer a welcome worthy of his sacred mission.⁴ Full of high hopes of vindication for himself and his fellow-exiles, and of a golden age for Italy and Europe ; there he waited long weeks in suspense, and when it became clear that Florence would remain obdurate, his pent-up feelings burst forth in the terrible letter “to the most wicked Florentines within the city,”⁵ in which he invokes upon them all the terrors of Heaven’s vengeance.

A fortnight later, on April 16th, he writes his famous epistle to Henry himself,⁶ who is still lingering over the fatal siege of Cremona, urging him to come speedily and crush the viper Florence.

These letters probably cost him his exclusion from Aguglione’s Decree of Amnesty which was issued on the 2nd of September in that year.⁷

¹ Noyes, *Casentino*, p. 214 sqq.

² *Sestina*, i. 30.

³ *Epist.* vii.

⁴ *Ibid.* v.

⁵ *Ibid.* vi. (title).

⁶ *Ibid.* vii.

⁷ This document, the “Riforma di Messer Baldo d’ Aguglione, in which Dante Alighieri is expressly excluded by name, as a “Ghibelline,” is still extant. It is printed in full by Del Lungo (“Dell’ Esilio di

In the spring of 1312, Dante seems to have paid a visit to Pisa, returning, perhaps, to the Casentino afterwards. For in the March of that year occurred the famous meeting recorded in Petrarch's letters; when, once in a lifetime, the father of Italian Poetry and the future father of the classical revival met face to face. Dante and Ser Petracca were present with other Florentine exiles, assembled to greet the Emperor at Pisa; and Ser Petracca had with him his little boy, to whom Dante was pointed out as the most famous poet of the imperial cause.

The lean, dark form, the haughty brows and drawn features gave the boy of eight an impression awe-inspiring rather than attractive. Ten years of sorrow and heart-sickness had added a dozen years to the Alighieri's life: at forty-seven he seemed a contemporary of Ser Petracca's.¹

On 24th August, 1313, Henry died at Buonconvento. The disappearance of this gallant and chivalrous figure, such a *beau idéal* of knightly courtesy and imperial graciousness, brave, wise, kind, devout, and withal the object of such illimitable hopes, called forth, as we have seen, a chorus of plaintive eulogy from the poets of the "dolce stil nuovo". And the feeling was not confined to a single political party.

To Dino Compagni his coming was as that of an "angel of God,"² and the description of the magnificent impartiality with which he began his work as peacemaker

Dante," pp. 109-44) and extracts are given by Toynbee (*Dict. s.v. "Aguglione,"* p. 15.)

¹ This account is taken from Carducci, *Prose*, pp. 225 *sqq.* Petrarch himself states in his *Epistola ad posteros* that he was at Pisa in his eighth year (ed. Solerti, p. 243).

² Dino, iii. 24: ". . . e venne giù, descendendo di terra in terra, mettendo pace come fusse uno agnolo di Dio."

is one of the most moving things in Dino's remarkable book.¹ Villani, anti-Ghibelline as he is by tradition and conviction, is full of praises of Henry's personal character, and of marvel at the tragic end of hopes and expectations so widely aroused by his advent.²

What Dante felt we may read between the lines of the *De Monarchia* which voices his ideal of the empire. We may read it further in the mass of august titles enthusiastically accorded to Henry in the fifth, sixth and seventh Epistles.

The young hero is greeted as "bridegroom of Italy and solace of the world,"³ "king of the world and minister of God". His person is "most holy,"⁴ and Dante will not withhold from him titles suggestive of that Divinity whose vicegerent he is upon earth. The Emperor is not only "another Moses,"⁵ he is "our Sun,"⁶ the "Sun of Peace,"⁷ nay, he is or represents the "Lamb of God."⁸ In the seventh canto of the *Purgatorio*⁹ he has been prophetically indicated as one who shall come to heal the wounds of Italy neglected by Rudolf of Hapsburg; while even in the thirtieth of the *Paradiso*—written, as we must believe, after the hopes had been crushed—the "coming regenerator" is named by the predictive voice of Beatrice, but named as one for whom the times are not yet ripe:—

. . . l'alto Enrico ch' a drizzare Italia
Verrà in prima ch' ella sia disposta.¹⁰

The news of his death—popularly attributed to poison administered in the Sacred Host—was the signal for an

¹ See book iii. chaps. 24-42; especially the account of his entrance into Milan, chap. 26.

² Villani, ix. 53.

³ *Epist.* v. 2.

⁴ *Ibid.* vii. title.

⁵ *Ibid.* vi.

⁶ *Ibid.* vii. 2.

⁷ *Ibid.* v. 1.

⁸ *Ibid.* vii. 2.

⁹ *Purg.* vii. 96.

¹⁰ *Par.* xxx. 137, 138.

outburst of jubilation among the Guelfs. The event, according to the Signoria of Florence,¹ was "a merciful interposition of Divine providence on behalf of the loyal children of the Church"; that Church, by the way, which had first called in Henry for its own ends, and then, under pressure from the bully Philip of France, had deserted him and turned against him.²

But while the "scelestissimi Florentini intrinseci" were exchanging Herod-and-Pilate congratulations with their Guelf neighbours over this "great and fortunate event," Dante's great heart was well-nigh broken. For him the chains of exile were more firmly rivetted than ever—had he not, by his fiery pen, cut off his own avenue of retreat?—for his beloved Italy the hope of regeneration was indefinitely postponed. He must content himself with lifting the dead warrior to a high seat in the mystic Rose of Paradise,³ and devoting his own eight remaining years to the perfecting of his great Poem. In the tomb of Henry of Luxembourg in the Campo Santo at Pisa, where the young emperor sleeps a restless sleep in the noble cloisters of that most Ghibelline of cities, lie buried the hopes of Dante, and of many another, for the speedy regeneration of Italy.

But the ideal itself could not perish with the person of its first embodiment: and when "high Henry" was wafted to his seat in the mystic Rose, Dante fixed his hopes for the Imperial Cause on a younger man, Can Grande della Scala, who since 1311 had been Imperial Vicar in the north of Italy, and on his brother Alboino's death in

¹ See the letter addressed by the Signoria to their allies, quoted by Toynbee (*Dict. s.v. "Arrigo,"* p. 54).

² *Par.* xvii. 81; xxx. 139.

³ *Ibid.* xxx. 133 *sqq.*

the October of that year, had become sole lord of Verona.

Dante had made the acquaintance of Can Grande when the young prince was but fifteen years old, at the court of his brothers Bartolommeo and Alboino; and under Cane's roof he was to spend some of his later years, ere he passed on, about 1317, to his last refuge at Ravenna.

Meanwhile, from what haunt we know not—perhaps from the Casentino still?—the Poet addressed on 20th April, 1314, his splendid letter to the Italian Cardinals,¹ urging them to replace the deceased Clement V (for whom, as we know, he had already prepared a snug little nest in his *Inferno*) by a Pope of Italian blood; and to restore the Papacy from Avignon to Rome.

On 14th June of that year began the two years' dominion in Lucca of the famous Ghibelline captain Ugucione della Faggiuola, and Dante was probably with him there.

In the August of the following year Ugucione won his great victory at Montecatini over the Guelfs of Tuscany and Naples; in reference to which Giovanni del Virgilio wrote afterwards from Bologna, to Dante at Ravenna, urging him to sing "how the ploughman had crushed the Lilies" of Guelf Florence:—

Dic, age, quos flores, quae lilia fregit arator.²

But the Lilies, if crushed by Ugucione's ploughshare, were not dead yet, as the *fuorusciti* learned to their cost, when on the 6th of November next following King Robert's Vicar in Florence renewed the sentence of

¹ *Epist.* viii.

² *Ecl.* Carmen 27, (p. 185).

death against Dante and his sons, with others, as "Ghibellines and rebels".¹

Dante, however, seems to have (mistakenly) thought himself included in the amnesty published towards the close of 1316; a document by which return was permitted to certain of the exiles on the degrading conditions of a fine and a public penance.² And the proposition called forth the scornful letter "To a Florentine friend".³ If no worthier path leads back to Florence, then will Dante enter Florence never more! The sun and stars are everywhere open to his gaze, in every place is meditation possible . . . nor will bread be lacking!

Meanwhile Ugucione's brief period of prosperity is over. He has lost Pisa and Lucca, and is fain to seek service with the same Can Grande under whose roof Dante has already found a shelter. So now Dante

At the same guest-table far'd
Where keen Uguccio wiped his beard.⁴

If we are right in identifying Can Grande with the "Veltro" of the *Inferno* and the "Cinque-cento dieci e cinque" of the *Purgatorio*, it would be difficult indeed to estimate the hopes which this young warrior inspired.⁵

¹ See the document quoted by Toynbee, *Dict. s.v.* "Dante," p. 193. The inclusion of Dante's sons in the condemnation has led to the inference that Pietro and Jacopo may have been with their father in Lucca.

² See Toynbee, *loc. cit.*

³ *Epist.* ix. A critical text of this letter (which is one of the few remaining weak points in the third Oxford edition), will be found in the *Bulletino* of the Florence Dante Soc. New Series, No. xii. p. 121, sqq. (May-June, 1905).

⁴ D. G. Rossetti, *Dante at Verona*.

⁵ "Veltro," *Inf.* i. 101-11; "DXV," *Purg.* xxxiii. 43, 44. On these much discussed problems see Toynbee, *Dict. ss.vv.* "Veltro" and "DXV". They are fully treated also in Vernon's *Readings*, and in most commentaries.

And though the legend cannot be true in which the dying "Augustus" is made to entrust his whole empire to the Scaliger—cannot be true because we know that Cane only accompanied Henry as far as Genoa, and was not present at Buonconvento—yet the tradition embodied in these early *Rithmi* is some index of the way in which Can Grande was popularly regarded.¹

And we are not, after all, left to legend or to uncertain identifications. There is a third passage in the *Divina Commedia* in which the reference is indisputable.²

Born on 9th March, 1291, Cane was but nine years old at the ideal date of the Vision; and Dante, though writing, no doubt, at a later period, is forced by dramatic propriety to cast his eulogies into the form of prophecy. The lad's birth—so runs the prediction put into Cacciaguida's mouth—under the influence of the planet Mars marks him off as destined for great achievements; superior to temptations of avarice, and indifferent to hardship and fatigue, he shall render signal service to the Imperial cause, shall make himself a glorious name even in the mouths of his enemies, and shall leave his mark upon a changed Italy.

History corroborates the Poet's words. From the moment when, on the death of Alboino, Cane became sole Lord of Verona, his military activity blazed out in a most astonishing manner. Year by year—often month by month—he won fresh laurels. Brescia, Vicenza, Padua, Cremona, Parma, Reggio, Mantua, Treviso in succession felt the weight of his "mailed fist," and most of them more than once. It was clearly an unification of Italy at which he aimed. And the dominions left to his

¹ *Rithmi de obitu Henrici VII*, cited by Alethea Wiel, *Story of Verona*, p. 81.

² *Par.* xvii. 76-93.

nephews when he was cut off in mid-career comprised a large proportion of "Alta Italia". From Lucca south of the Apennines to Feltre, Belluno and Ceneda on the extreme north-east, nearly a dozen important cities owned the sway of the Scaliger.¹ A chorus of praise has been echoed down from the young Scaliger's contemporaries, with but a single dissonant and dissentient voice.

The Veronese Chronicler² describes with enthusiasm Can Grande's tall and beautiful figure, his nobility and courtesy of demeanour, and the grace of fair speech which matched his martial prowess. Boccaccio³ waxes eloquent over the astonishing success of his career, and the splendour of his court, which he describes as rivalling that of the Second Frederic. The Guelf Villani, whilst enlarging likewise on Cane's power and riches—unparalleled in Lombardy since the days of grim Ezzelino—⁴ frankly recognises in the Ghibelline leader a "Signore dabbene".⁵

The Chronicler of Reggio⁶—himself an exile, and one of Cane's guests—has left a glowing description of the elaborate hospitality shown to the banished men: the careful assignment to each one of a special apartment suited to his taste and condition, wherein each had his own servants and his private table; the appropriate devices with which the several apartments were decorated: Victory for soldiers, Hope for exiles, the Muses for poets, Mercury for artists, Paradise for preachers; the pictures on the walls representing the vicissitudes of Fortune; the provision (not always appreciated!) of musicians,

¹ Toynbee's summary (*Dict.* p. 116), and G. Rizzoli, *Primiero*, p. 6.

² Quoted by Toynbee, *loc. cit.*

³ *Decamerone*, i. 7.

⁴ Villani, x. 140.

⁵ *Ibid.* xi. 95.

⁶ Sagacio Muzzio Gazzata, quoted by Wiel (p. 74 sq.) from Arrivabene's *Comento Storico*, and by Toynbee (p. 116) from *Sismondi*.

jugglers, and jesters to amuse the guests; finally, the signal honour, paid to some, of invitation to the high table of the lord himself, an honour shared by Guido da Castello, "the simple Lombard," and the poet Dante Alighieri.

The one dissentient voice is that of Albertino Mussato, one of Can Grande's prisoners of war, whose picture of the young tyrant's harshness is tempered, however, by the added reflection that he was "desirous to be thought more ruthless than he really was".¹ Yet Albertino Mussato, we are told, "was often visited in prison by his victor, who knew how to honour his genius and the integrity of his character".²

To most of us "Dante at Verona" suggests a gloomy picture, if not exactly one drawn in the harsh colours of Mussato's sketch. It recalls the time of fair hopes succeeded by stern disillusionment; of a life growing daily more and more uncongenial, until—

. . . The day came, after a space,
When Dante felt assured that there
The sunshine must lie sicklier
Even than in any other place
Save only Florence. When that day
Had come, he rose and went his way.

He went and turned not. From his shoes
It may be that he shook the dust,
As every righteous dealer must
Once and again, ere life can close :
And unaccomplished destiny
Struck cold his forehead, it may be.

¹ Quoted by Toynbee (*loc. cit.*) ". . . necnon habitu gestuque immanior videri malens quam sua valuisset exercere severitas".

² Biadego, quoted by Wiel, p. 73.

No book keeps record how the Prince
 Sunned himself, out of Dante's reach,
 Nor how the Jester stank in speech :
 While courtiers used to cringe and wince,
 Poets and harlots, all the throng,
 Let loose their scandal and their song.

No book keeps record if the seat
 Which Dante held at his host's board
 Were sat in next by clerk or lord—
 If leman lolled with dainty feet
 At ease, or hostage brooded there,
 Or priest lacked silence for his prayer.

Eat and wash hands, Can Grande ; scarce
 We know their deeds now, hands which fed
 Our Dante with that bitter bread ;
 And thou the watch-dog of those stairs
 Which of all paths his feet knew well
 Were steeper found than Heaven or Hell.

Rossetti has indeed woven together with rare skill the scattered hints and legends of this time, from the graver incidents which can claim to be considered as historical, down to the improbable story of the collected bones to which reference has been made in a former chapter.¹

Verona itself has left comparatively few marks upon Dante's work, though the neighbouring rivers and mountains have impressed their features on more than a few passages of the *Divina Commedia*.

Chronology alone renders improbable the suggestion (if it is not too bold to speak of it even as a suggestion) of Benvenuto, that the ruins of the Roman Arena in that city gave to Dante the idea of the structure of his *Inferno*,²

¹ See above, chap. v.

² Benvenuto on *Inf.* v. (vol. i. p. 185) says : " Ad quod notandum quod Infernus fingitur ab autore esse locus rotundus distinctus per gradus et circulos, qui incipit ab amplo, et continuo gradatim arctatur usque ad centrum, sicut theatrum sive harena Veronae, licet harena magis habet figuram ovalem quam speralem ".

though it is, indeed, just possible that even the skeleton of the poem may have been modified or remodelled when Dante took up his task again after his visit to the Lunigiana. But even so, the whole conception of Hell is too vast and alpine and abysmal to be suggestive of, or, one would think, suggested by, any artificial work of man. It conjures up of itself the grand mountain scenery—the giant walls and towers and precipices—of the Trentino and the Primiero Dolomites: the ranges that rise up to the north of Verona.

And really, if we are to look for an objective archetype for the scheme of Dante's *Inferno*, we might do worse than turn to the celebrated "Buso di Giazso," that weird natural abyss between the heights of Galbana and Malèra in the Monti Lessini, which is thus described by an eye-witness:¹ "It is a deep natural pit, 75 feet in diameter and 240 in depth. At its bottom lies a mass of eternal ice. Its internal structure is characterised by extremely marked and prominent circular stratifications which have the appearance of great rings of rock placed one upon another. One would say that Dante had taken from this 'tristo buco' the idea of his *Inferno*, and from these huge natural steps the notion of those circles, the last of which actually contains

"l' ombre dolenti nella ghiaccia."

And our own Douglas Freshfield² is inclined to see the archetype of the structure of the Mountain of Purgatory in the characteristic features of the same district: the lofty meadows surmounting precipitous walls of rock, only to

¹ A. Cita, Quoted by Brentani, *Dante Alpinista*, p. 9.

² "The Mountains of Dante," *Alpine Journal*, vol. x. (1882), cited by Brentani (*op. cit.* p. 9).

be approached by steep and narrow paths, and the valleys lifted up upon the mountain side.¹

Still more remarkable in this connection is the Ponte di Vejo in the same Lessini Veronesi. The Ponte di Vejo is a natural arch of red ammonitic rock—of a greater span than the Ponte di Rialto at Venice—that stands astride a little gorge which runs into the Valpantena. Already in 1766 this arch had been noted as a probable archetype of the great natural bridges which connect the successive circles of Dante's Malebolge—rock-ridges starting from the base of the precipice which span the terrible ravines as a castle's drawbridge spans the moat.²

But Dante has left us no room for doubt as to his personal knowledge and observation of the district round Verona. One recalls at once the masterly outline-sketch of the castle of the Da Romano in the neighbouring Marca Trevigiana—

In quella parte della terra prava
 Italica che siede intra Rialto
 E le fontane di Brenta e di Piava
 Si leva un colle, e surge, ma non molt' alto . . .³

Nor shall we forget the elaborate description of the point on the western shore of Lake Garda where meet the three dioceses of Trent, Brescia and Verona ;⁴ nor the simile drawn from those embankments which the Paduans have constructed along the Brenta as a protection against the floods which ensue when snows melt in the Carinthian Alps.⁵ And then—most convincing of all—we have the actual employment, in illustration of the topography of Hell, of the "Slavini di Marco" in Trentino, on the uttermost fringe of the Scaliger dominions.⁶

¹ Cf. *Purg.* vii. 65, 66.

² *Inf.* xviii. 10-18.

³ *Par.* ix. 25 sqq.

⁴ *Inf.* xx. 67 sqq.

⁵ *Ibid.* xv. 7.

⁶ *Ibid.* xii. 4 sqq.

But if the region round Verona has furnished various illustrations for Dante's poem the city itself supplies but one. The *Divina Commedia* reflects no details of the court life of the Scaligers, unless indeed the "bitter bread" and "steep stairs" of Cacciaguida's prophecy are to be counted as such.¹ The glories of the city's past history seem, curiously enough, to have awakened no echoes in the Poet's heart. Italy and Rome—the Rome of Virgil—were so completely identified in his mind that the days of Gothic and Lombard domination assumed, apparently, the form of an irrelevant and meaningless interruption. "Dietrich von Bern" is nothing to Dante.

Yet considering the brilliancy of the attempt which marked the close of the fifth century and the dawn of the sixth to unify Italy and found a strong kingdom on Roman lines, it seems strange that neither the legendary associations of Verona nor the monuments of Ravenna have availed to bring the name of Theodoric to the lips which dictated the *Monarchia*.

Beyond the casual reference to Verona in the title of the Tenth Epistle; the succinct and formal allusion to its greatness in the *Quaestio*;² the remark that its dialect differs from that of neighbouring Milan,³ and the strictures passed on the same dialect in common with those of Brescia, Vicenza and Padua,⁴ there are but two references to the city in the whole of Dante's writings.

We have already alluded in a former chapter to the foot-race for the "drappo verde".⁵ Dante may have witnessed this contest three or four times among the guests of Can Grande, or in the earlier days of Alboino. It was

¹ *Par.* xvii. 58-60.

² *A. T.* xxiv. 6 (p. 431): "incllyta urbs".

³ *V. E.* i. 9, 38 (p. 383).

⁴ *V. E.* i. 14, 25 *sqq.*; *cf.* 15, 11 (p. 387).

⁵ See above, chap. v.; *Inf.* xv. 122.

run on the first Sunday in Lent each year, to commemorate a victory won in 1207; and the competitors, says Boccaccio,¹ were stark naked, so that for reasons of modesty a high standard of speed was demanded of all who would take part therein. This is the solitary illustration that Verona has furnished to the *Commedia*. But there is one other reference to Verona, and that an important one.

In a passage² which exhibits the severe impartiality of Dante's judgments, and may perhaps account in part for a temporary estrangement between him and Can Grande, Verona appears in the person of the twelfth-century Abbot of San Zeno.³ The spirit reproaches Cane's father, Alberto della Scala, for his intrusion of his own illegitimate son into the Abbot's place.

Dante was certainly not afraid to speak his mind about the family doings of his hosts, nor to hint that their father should rue his egregious and revolting nepotism in the flames of Hell. Giuseppe, Cane's base-born and deformed half-brother—

mal del corpo intero

E della mente peggio, e che mal nacque—⁴

ruled for twenty-three years⁵ over the famous monastery which was wont to lodge the Emperors on their journeys between Germany and Rome; and he was still living when Dante paid his earlier visit to Verona. The only remaining relic of the convent, save the great church, is the tall square tower close by, now crowned with characteristic mediæval battlements.

This incident may mark, as we have said, a phase in

¹ Quoted by Toynbee, *Dict. s.v.* "Verona" (p. 553).

² *Purg.* xviii. 118 sqq.

³ Gherardo II who died in 1187.

⁴ *Purg.* xviii. 124, 125.

⁵ From 1291 to 1314.

the estrangement between Dante and his host. But that estrangement was but temporary. If the outraged poet

rose and went his way,

shaking the dust of Verona from his feet, it was to return in kindly mood the year before his death and deliver a lecture on the 13th of February in the "Chapel of the glorious Helena," under the auspices of the "victorious Lord, Lord Can Grande della Scala, Vicar of the Holy Roman Empire".¹

The friendship and mutual esteem were deep enough and strong enough to bear the strain. The glowing verses in the *Divina Commedia* were not struck out, nor modified: the *Paradiso* which enshrines them—the culmination of the Poet's life-work on which he had spent his very self—is dedicated to the Lord of Verona in that precious Tenth Epistle from which we learn the author's own estimate of the inner meaning of his mighty poem.

And so Dante shakes the dust of Verona from off his feet and takes the road again, turning his back on the great Alps, leaving away on his left the smiling slopes of the Monte Berici, skirting the fair Euganean hills where Petrarch was to spend his declining years in a well-earned peace, traversing the interminable plain of the Po, to find at last a more congenial hospice with Guido da Polenta at Ravenna.

But, before we follow him to his last refuge, we must glance at the goal of his earlier departure from Verona, when, at the summons of his friends the Malaspina, he left the court of the "Gran Lombardo's" renowned but less noble brother Alboino—a man, as he remarks, not worthy to be named in the same breath with that "simple

¹ A. T. xxiv. (p. 431).

Lombard" Guido da Castello, afterwards Cane's honoured guest.¹

The "prealpi" of Verona are exchanged for the marble cliffs of Carrara, where the chain of Apennine links itself with the long line of the Ligurian Mountains.

The Alpine scenery of this district also has left its mark upon the *Divina Commedia*. The country that lies between Lerici, by Magra's mouth, and Turbia, far westward along the "Riviera di ponente," is to Dante a proverb of precipitousness, and affords an illustration of the arduous ascents that those souls must make who would fit themselves for Heaven.²

The district of Lunigiana to which Dante now turns his steps, derives its name from the ancient Etruscan city of Luni, cited by the Poet as famous for its association with the soothsayer Aruns,³ and once again as a typical instance of the swift decay of a once prosperous centre of population.⁴

This decadence, which was doubtless hastened by the Arab devastation of the city some three centuries before Dante wrote, has left us to-day but little of mediæval Luni—only the relics of the old Roman theatre and circus near the mouths of the Magra, due south of Sarzana, its supplanter in fame and prosperity. To picturesque Sarzana—hallowed for Dante by its memories of the last

¹ In an interesting passage in the *Convivio* (iv. 16, 65 sqq. p. 318) Alboino is mentioned together with Asdente of Parma as an instance to prove that true nobility is not identical with popular fame and notoriety. "Se ciò fosse, quelle cose che più fossero nominate e conosciute in loro genere, più sarebbono in loro genere nobili . . . e Albuino della Scala sarebbe più nobile che Guido da Castello di Reggio . . . che . . . è falsissima."

² *Purg.* iii. 49.

³ *Inf.* xx. 47.

⁴ *Par.* xvi. 73. Urbisaglia is coupled with Luni as an instance of decadence within living memory, while Chiusi and Sinigaglia are said to be following quickly on the downward path.

days of his "first friend"—the Bishop's See was transferred from Luni after the Arab invasion: and here it was that on 6th October, 1301, Dante witnessed the document which supplies one of the few absolutely certain dates of his time of exile.¹

Sarzana is known to most of us by its connection with Lorenzo the Magnificent, but it has an earlier claim to interest, besides that of Dante's presence, as the last resting-place of the famous Ghibelline leader Castruccio Castracane, on whom, towards the end of Dante's life, fell the mantle of Uguccone della Faggiuola. He lies buried in the Church of San Francesco.

Higher up the valley of the Magra, a torrent twice named in the *Divina Commedia*,² and picturesquely described by Villani,³—the stream which marks the frontiers of Tuscany, Genoa and Piacenza—eight miles below Pontremoli lies Filattiera, whence Gherardino, Bishop of Luni, took his name. Gherardino was himself a scion of the house of Malaspina and a distant cousin of Dante's hosts, the two branches of the family meeting in Oberto Obizzo "the great," four generations back. Dante's praise of this Bishop of Luni in his letter to the Italian Cardinals⁴ is perhaps ironical, for Gherardino made himself conspicuous by his refusal to submit to Henry VII, by whom he was consequently deprived of his temporalities; and it was only after Henry's death that he partially recovered them, by the help of Castruccio.⁵ An added interest rests for us on the Bishopric of Luni in the fact that the pur-

¹Toynbee, *Dict. s.v.* "Dante," p. 192.

²*Inf.* xxiv. 145; *Purg.* viii. 116.

³Villani, i. 43.

⁴*Epist.* viii. 7 (p. 412).

⁵Latham, *Dante's Letters*, pp. 168, 169, quoted by Toynbee, *s.v.* "Lunensis," pp. 348, 349.



FOSDINUOVO, LUNIGIANA
CASTLE OF THE MALASPINA



CASTELNUOVO, VALDIMACRA
WHERE DANTE MET THE BISHOP OF LUNI

pose of Dante's visit in 1306 was to "act as procurator for the Malaspina in their negotiations for peace" with Gherardino's predecessor as is shown by the document of which we have spoken—a document in which the Poet's name is mentioned.

From that precious scroll we learn that in Sarzana, on the morning of 6th October, 1306, *ante missam*, Franceschino Malaspina, Marquis of Mulazzo, by deed of the Notary Giovanni di Parente di Stupio, constituted "Dante Alighieri di Firenze" his "special procurator and ambassador for the confirming of peace and perpetual concord" with Antonio da Camilla, Bishop and Count of Luni: and that three hours afterwards, in the palace of the Count-Bishop, Castelnuovo di Magra¹—of which the great tower, recently restored, still stands up proudly amid the green slopes of vine and olive,—affords from its summit a magnificent view of Lerici and the Gulf of Spezia—in *hora tertia*, the kiss of peace was exchanged between the Prelate and the Procurator of the Malaspina.²

The Malaspina family were no upstarts like the house of Scala. Franceschino and Moroello III, Dante's hosts in 1306, could boast at least three centuries and seven generations of noble and distinguished ancestry. Oberto Obizzo I, the founder of the family, lived within 100 years of the first Tegrino, from whom the Conti Guidi date the greatness of their house.

Like the Guidi, the Malaspina had been mainly Ghibel-

¹ See illustration.

² Dante represented on that occasion the Marquises of Mulazzo, of Giovagallo and of Villafranca. See article "Con Dante in Lunigiana," in *Corriere della Sera*, 10th October, 1906. This article, by Dino Mantovani, promises a volume of essays on *Dante e la Lunigiana*, as a monument of the sixth centenary of Dante's visit.

lines and "imperialists" since the days when the said Oberto drew his sword for Henry IV in 1084. They had, however, taken sides with the Countess Matilda in her championship of Pope Gregory VII, and like the Guidi again, they numbered individual Guelfs among their ancestry. Manfredi Malaspina, Moroello's father, of whom Dante, strangely, says nothing, had led the Guelfs of Lucca at the fatal field of Montaperti, and thus had the distinction of opposing Guido Novello on one of the few great occasions when the latter did not take refuge in flight!

Besides the reference to the Bishop in the Eighth Epistle, no fewer than five members of the Malaspina family are named or referred to in the *Divina Commedia*.

In the Valley of the Princes in Purgatory, Dante meets Currado II,¹ first cousin of Franceschino and of Moroello, who died about 1294. He alludes to his more famous name-sake, Currado I, "l'Antico,"² a son-in-law of Frederic II, and hero of one of Boccaccio's romances.

The younger Currado is purging (or on the way to purge) no uglier sin than that of too great love to his own people, and he inquires with affectionate eagerness for news of his beloved "Valdimacra."³

Dante replies with his famous eulogy of the House of Malaspina, renowned alike for their valour and their munificence:—

Del pregio della borsa e della spada—

whose praises are acclaimed so heartily, alike by gentle and simple, that their fame has spread far beyond the

¹ *Purg.* viii. 65.

² *Ibid.* 119.

³ *Ibid.* 115 *sqq.* His love for his family seems to have been proverbial, and Benvenuto records how, dying childless, he divided all his property among his relatives, earnestly exhorting them to live in peace and concord. See Toynbee, *Dict. s.v.* "Malaspina, Currado," p. 353.

limits of the ancestral territory.¹ The passage concludes with a prophetic allusion to Franceschino, Currado's nephew, who by his hospitality in years to come shall confirm the Poet in his "cortese opinione".²

Moroello III and Alagia his wife are the other two members of the family whom Dante has immortalised. Alagia, of the distinguished family de' Fieschi of Genoa, is eulogised by her uncle, Pope Adrian V, in the touching scene in the fifth cornice of Purgatory. She is, he says, the only virtuous member of his degenerate house—the only one whose prayers can avail to help his labouring soul:—

Questa sola di là m' è rimasa.³

Her husband, grandson of "l'Antico" and first cousin of Currado II, is one of the Guelf exceptions in the family, following the tradition of his father, the combatant at Montaperti. At Arezzo, at Bologna, and at Milan, in succession, he was winning renown on the Guelf side in the closing years of the thirteenth century, and from the year of Dante's banishment and onwards he was constantly in arms on behalf of the "Neri" of Tuscany.⁴ A sinister activity this, from the point of view of Dante, who alludes to it somewhat mysteriously in a well-known passage. Moroello is the mist drawn up by the planet Mars from the Valdimagra, a mist shrouded in turbid clouds, that shall burst full soon in furious tempest on the devoted heads of the White Guelfs.⁵

But love is a "very flame of the Lord," stronger even than death, and the ties of friendship proved stronger

¹ *Purg.* viii. 121-29. ² *Ibid.* 133 *sqq.* ³ *Ibid.* xix. 142-45.

⁴ Toynbee, *Dict.* s.v. "Malaspina, Moroello," p. 354.

⁵ *Inf.* xxiv. 145 *sqq.* The allusion is to his defeat of the Bianchi at Pistoja in 1302.

than the estranging influences of political faction. When Moroello was at the height of his warlike activity (if we may trust tradition), Dante, the "White" exile, suspected and accused of Ghibellinism, could find a shelter under his roof.

It is a great thing to shelter an outcast and show pity on him: especially if that outcast be a factor of some importance on your enemies' side. But it was far more than this that Moroello did for Dante. A true befriending is the welcome that with tactful insight thinks to nurse and cherish the outcast's wounded self-respect by the imposition of honourable and dignified responsibilities.

What wonder, then, if Dante exhibits a unique feeling of admiration and affection for that noble House which had stretched out to him the right hand of fellowship in the day of his distress!

It was during this visit, according to Boccaccio¹—supported in his main facts, though not in details, by Benvenuto—that Dante received back at the hands of his host the original draft of the nucleus of his great poem—the first seven Cantos of the *Inferno*. They had been left behind, with everything else, in Florence when he was exiled, and discovered together with various sonnets and *Canzoni* by his wife Gemma in her search for legal documents among his papers, which had been hurriedly concealed in certain strong-boxes when the blow fell. And with the manuscript, says Boccaccio, came a fervent letter to the Marquis Moroello from Dino Frescobaldi, urging him to persuade Dante to continue so great a work. And so, at the urgent plea of his host, Dante was induced to proceed, beginning the eighth Canto with the significantly unusual phrase:

¹ Comento on *Inf.* viii. 1, and *Vita*, § 14 (p. 56, ed. Solerti). Benvenuto on *Inf.* viii. i. (Toynbee, *loc. cit.*).

“Io dico seguitando”. And for this good advice of the Malaspina Dante was so grateful, says Benvenuto, that he never could say anything good enough of the family.

This story, if true, should win for the Malaspina, as also for Frescobaldi, the lasting gratitude of posterity. Whether the incident should be placed during the visit of 1306 (when Dante, so far as we know, was guest of Franceschino rather than of Moroello) or on an earlier occasion, is not quite certain.

Another picturesque story which, though formerly doubted is now gaining credence¹, has for its date the year 1308.

The celebrated “Letter of Frate Ilario to Uguccione della Faggiuola” describes a visit of Dante’s to the Camaldolese Monastery of Santa Croce del Corvo in the Lunigiana.

A mysterious pilgrim knocks at the door of the monastery, and when asked what he wants, answers “Peace!” Then, entering into conversation with the Frate he draws a book from his bosom. The book is the *Inferno*; and the writer begs that it may be consigned to Uguccione. If the Ghibelline chief has a wish to see the other two parts of the poem, he will find them respectively in the hands of Moroello Malaspina and King Frederic of Sicily.

There are obvious difficulties about the story, notably the early date assigned to the completed *Divina Commedia*. If the tale be substantially true, the reference must be to an early draft of the poem of which much was re-written in succeeding years.

Here we might well leave Dante, the poor pilgrim scorched by the flames of war and faction, homeless, hounded by necessity from place to place, craving peace;

¹ See Toynbee, *Life*, p. 120, note 1.

and craving it at the door of those white-robed monks of Camaldoli whose central house in the Casentino had long been associated for him with home-like memories ; whose remote nest here in the mountains of Carrara might seem to offer a perfect refuge from the din and turmoil of fratricidal strife of which Italy was full.

But the Poet's final resting-place is far from the Valdimgra. Nearly two hundred miles of mountain peaks and ridges separate him from the ancient city of Justinian and Theodoric where his body lies waiting for the Resurrection :—

La vesta che al gran dì sarà sì chiara.¹

¹ *Purg.* i. 75.





PORTRAIT OF DANTE (FIFTEENTH CENTURY)

FROM MS. IN RICCARDIAN LIBRARY, FLORENCE

CHAPTER X

DANTE'S LAST REFUGE

RAVENNA is a city by itself. Nature and history have combined to impress on it a character quite unique. The receding sea has taken away its prosperity and left it stagnant for centuries. The surrounding swamps have protected its monuments from the successive waves of barbarian devastation that have robbed Bologna and the neighbouring cities of every vestige of fifth and sixth and seventh century civilisation.

When the pusillanimous Honorius in 404 sought a place of safety, the more remote and inaccessible the better, for the seat of his Imperial Court, he chose Ravenna, and he chose well. And in doing so he provided an enchanted palace in which the life of the two centuries following, suddenly arrested as by a magician's wand, should stand still, spellbound, for countless generations, turned into mosaic, and waiting for a disenchantment that has never come.

So it is that we have in Ravenna to-day the most vivid picture that exists anywhere of the days of Gallia Placidia, of Theodoric and of Justinian.

Ravenna was already an ancient place when Augustus opened up its seaway and made it the headquarters of his Adriatic fleet; but it took more than thirteen cen-

turies longer to prepare the city to be Dante's last refuge.

The associations of the great Octavian, Virgil's friend and master, were much indeed, but they must give way to those of Justinian, the hero of the Sixth Canto of *Paradiso*—Justinian who has blotted out from Dante's mind the memory of the Ostrogothic kingdom as effectually as Justinian's artists obliterated from the mosaics of S. Apollinare Nuovo the pictured records of Theodoric's triumphs. So Ravenna, who preserved and handed on to Bologna the great lawgiver's work the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, to be a potent instrument in the development of free communal life in mediæval Italy, has preserved also for Dante and for us the Lawgiver himself.

But the memories, however vivid, of a long-dead Justinian are not enough. Ravenna must become mediæval, habitable by a man of the Middle Ages; it must embrace the right political colour, yet stand somewhat aloof from the turmoil of struggle; it must fall under the dominion of a lord like-minded with the Poet, with one whose "stairs" will not be "too steep" nor his "bread too salt"—one who will provide for him not only a safe but a congenial home.

Ravenna has touches also to supply to his great poem—not merely imperial touches of Justinian's sway: a place where Dante, face to face with Pope Agapetus' convert,¹ can dream of Church and Empire each at peace with the other, each content to fulfil its own divinely-appointed mission; of an imperial eagle that is no party badge, as the Ghibellines were apt to make it,² but a symbol, as it

¹The tradition that Pope Agapetus converted Justinian from the Monophysite heresy is reproduced in *Par.* vi. 13-18.

²*Ibid.* 103 *sqq.*

had been in "High Henry's" hands, of just rule and kingly impartiality.¹ Pathetic touches of mediæval tragedy, Nature-touches of forest trees and flowers and singing birds, such as only mediæval Ravenna could fully furnish—these also were to be contributed.

And so after a prolonged period of ecclesiastical government, which lasted from the middle of the eighth century, when Pepin expelled the Lombards, till the early years of the thirteenth, Ravenna suffered the fate of its neighbours, and fell under the lordship of a single family.

From 1218 to 1275 the city was dominated by the Traversari, a family for whom Salimbene had a warm admiration, and whose fall he deeply regretted. Their influence survived the eight years of the Emperor Frederic's occupation of the city (1240-1248), but after nearly half a century of rule they were supplanted.

In 1275, Guido I, son of Lamberto da Polenta was elected "Capitano del Popolo," and from that year dates the predominance of the Polenta family in Ravenna—a predominance which endured, with a single brief interruption, till 1441. They took their name from a castle (first mentioned in a document of 1047)² near Bertinoro on the spurs of Apennine, a few miles south of Forlì.

Guido "Vecchio" lived on till 1317, and was practically lord of Ravenna all that time.

In the year of Jubilee, when in answer to the request of the shade of Guido da Montefeltro, Dante gives us a

¹ Cf. Dino, iii. 26, who says of Henry VII: "Parte guelfa o ghibellina non volea udire ricordare" . . . "La volontà dello Imperadore era giustissima, perchè ciascuno amava, ciascuno onorava, come suoi uomini".

² The name *Pulenta*, applied to the district, occurs in 975; applied to the family, in 1167. (See G. Lattoni in the *Avvenire d'Italia*, 16 June, 1905.)

glimpse of the condition of the Romagna at that time, the "Eagle of Polenta" has already been brooding many years over Ravenna, and "now covers Cervia with its wings"—

Ravenna sta come stata è molti anni :

L' aquila da Polenta là si cova

Si che Cervia ricopre co' suoi vanni.¹

At that moment Guido's son Lamberto was Podestà of Ravenna, and another son Ostasio, Podestà of Cervia, a place on the coast about twelve miles south-east of Ravenna, small in size, but important in connection with the salt trade.

It was Lamberto's nephew and successor that should be Dante's host: the "Iolas" of the Eclogues,² himself a man of real culture and refinement, and a poet to boot, or at any rate no mean versifier. Thus is concluded the long preparation of Ravenna to be Dante's "Ultimo Rifugio".

Boccaccio³ makes Dante pass across the mountains from Tuscany into Romagna immediately after the disappointment of Henry's death, and seems to place at this point his retirement to Ravenna: a scheme which it is very difficult to fit in with other accepted facts of the Poet's wanderings, and especially with his sojourn at the Court of Can Grande. The order which we have adopted finds more general favour, and we may safely picture him as passing from Lucca to Verona and from Verona to Ravenna.

But though Boccaccio's chronology may be defective here, we cannot doubt but that the substance of the narrative is correct. And on one point the biographer lays particular stress, namely that the invitation came spon-

¹ *Inf.* xxvii. 31 sqq.

² *Ecl. Responsiva*, 80 (p. 188); *Ecl.* ii. 95 (p. 190).

³ *Vita*, § 5 (ed. Solerti, p 29).

taneously from Guido: the lord of Ravenna did not wait to be asked but "begged as a special favour of Dante that which he knew that Dante was fain to ask of him".¹

A good augury this for their future relations, and one borne out by all we can learn concerning the last years of the Poet's life. Loved and honoured by all around him, his society cultivated by the learned and his advice eagerly sought by those who were desirous of perfecting themselves in the art of vernacular poetry; surrounded at last by members of his own family—not only his two sons Pietro and Jacopo, who had been associated with him in the Florentine condemnation, but his daughter Beatrice also, a voluntary exile for her father's sake—² Dante might well have felt some foretaste of that peace which he had sought in vain at the door of the Convento del Corvo. But no: the old wound was still rankling that he had borne with him all over Italy and beyond. The gentle courtesy of Guido and the loving ministrations of Beatrice could assuage something of the daily bitterness—they could treat the symptoms, as it were, with some measure of success; but the disease lay too deep-seated. His life, as far as happiness and contentment were concerned, was poisoned by the ingratitude of his whilom fellow-citizens, the cruel separation from Florence.³ *Populi mi*, he moaned, *quid feci tibi?* "O my People, what have I done to thee?"⁴

¹ "Richiedendo di spezial grazia a Dante quello ch'egli sapeva che Dante a lui dovea domandare" (Bocc. *Vita*, § 5, ed. Solerti, p. 29).

² Cf. Carducci, *Prose*, pp. 191, 192.

³ Cf. Boccaccio, *Vita*, § 6 (ed. Solerti p. 30): "Abitò adunque Dante in Ravenna, tolta via ogni speranza di ritornare mai in Firenze, come che tolto non fusse il disio".

⁴ Beginning of the lost letter mentioned by Leonardo Bruni, *Vita* (ed. Solerti, p. 103). The words are from Micah vi. 3, and form part of the Holy Week "Reproaches".

The Eclogues¹ belong to this period of Dante's life, and throw much light upon it. At first sight they seem curiously artificial and stilted, with their classical "Arcadian" furniture of names and scenery—classical, with an uncouth touch of mediævalism which gives them their characteristic interest. But this poetical correspondence with Giovanni del Virgilio, when rightly interpreted, is full of passion and of pathos. Dante and his surroundings are alive in it, and its atmosphere is infused as it were with a sunset glow that sheds a glory and a dignity upon the poet's last years.

The young professor at Bologna who by reason of his conspicuous devotion to the Roman poet had acquired the surname of "del Virgilio," heard that a fellow devotee had come to settle in neighbouring Ravenna—no less a person than the writer of the *Inferno* (already known and admired throughout the literary circles of Italy): the man who had taken Virgil as his guide through the world to come.² Forthwith he despatched to him a letter in Latin hexameters, couched in terms of respectful admiration, but remonstrating with Dante for rejecting the language and the manner of Virgil, and suggesting some contemporary subjects for Virgilian treatment. And then, "come to Bologna," he concludes, "and receive the laurel crown," or at least vouchsafe me an answer.³

Dante's answer is the first Eclogue, and Del Virgilio replies again in similar strain. In Carducci's phrase, they "put the whole family of Arcadia into the field".⁴ Italy becomes pastoral Sicily, Ravenna Pelorus with its dewy meads; Bologna, blackest of Guelf cities, "that knows not

¹ Cf. Carducci, *Prose*, p. 150 sqq.

² Cf. *Inf.* i. 70 sqq. especially 130-36.

³ *Carmen*, fin. (p. 186).

⁴ Carducci, *Prose*, p. 153.

the gods," is the dangerous cave of Polyphemus ; Florence is the coy and obdurate Phyllis ; Del Virgilio himself becomes Mopsus, and Dante benign old Tityrus, Guido da Polenta is Iolas ; Ser Dino Perini, a fellow exile from Florence at the Court of Ravenna, assumes the name of Melibœus, while Alpheusibœus is another of Dante's fellow-guests.¹ The first Eclogue shows us Dante still hoping against hope. When the *Paradiso* is finished then surely the hard heart of Florence will be softened, the aged poet will be welcomed, and his white locks be crowned in the city of his baptism ;² meanwhile he will send Giovanni a present of ten unpublished cantos of his poem, hoping by the gift of these "ten un milked ewes" to soften *his* heart, and convince him of the dignity and the possibilities of the vernacular.³ The second Eclogue, in reply to one from Bologna, was delayed and only forwarded to its destination after Dante's death. In it we see that a change has come. The pathos is still there, but the hope is already transfigured. He expects no longer an earthly crown, but one which is even now being prepared on high for his "illustrious head" :—

Hoc illustre caput cui jam frondator in alta
Virgine perpetuas festinat cernere frondes.⁴

Carducci, in a wonderfully eloquent and imaginative passage, based largely on the Eclogues and on Boccaccio's biography, has conjured up for us a vivid picture of Dante's daily life in that grave and tranquil retirement.⁵ The morning hours given willingly to his host, if perchance for

¹ Fiducio de' Milotti, a learned physician of Certaldo (*cf.* Carducci. *loc. cit.*).

² *Ecl.* i. 42-44 (p. 186) ; *cf.* *Par.* xxv. *init.*

³ *Ecl.* i. 58-64 (p. 187). ⁴ *Ibid.* ii. 86, 87 (p. 190).

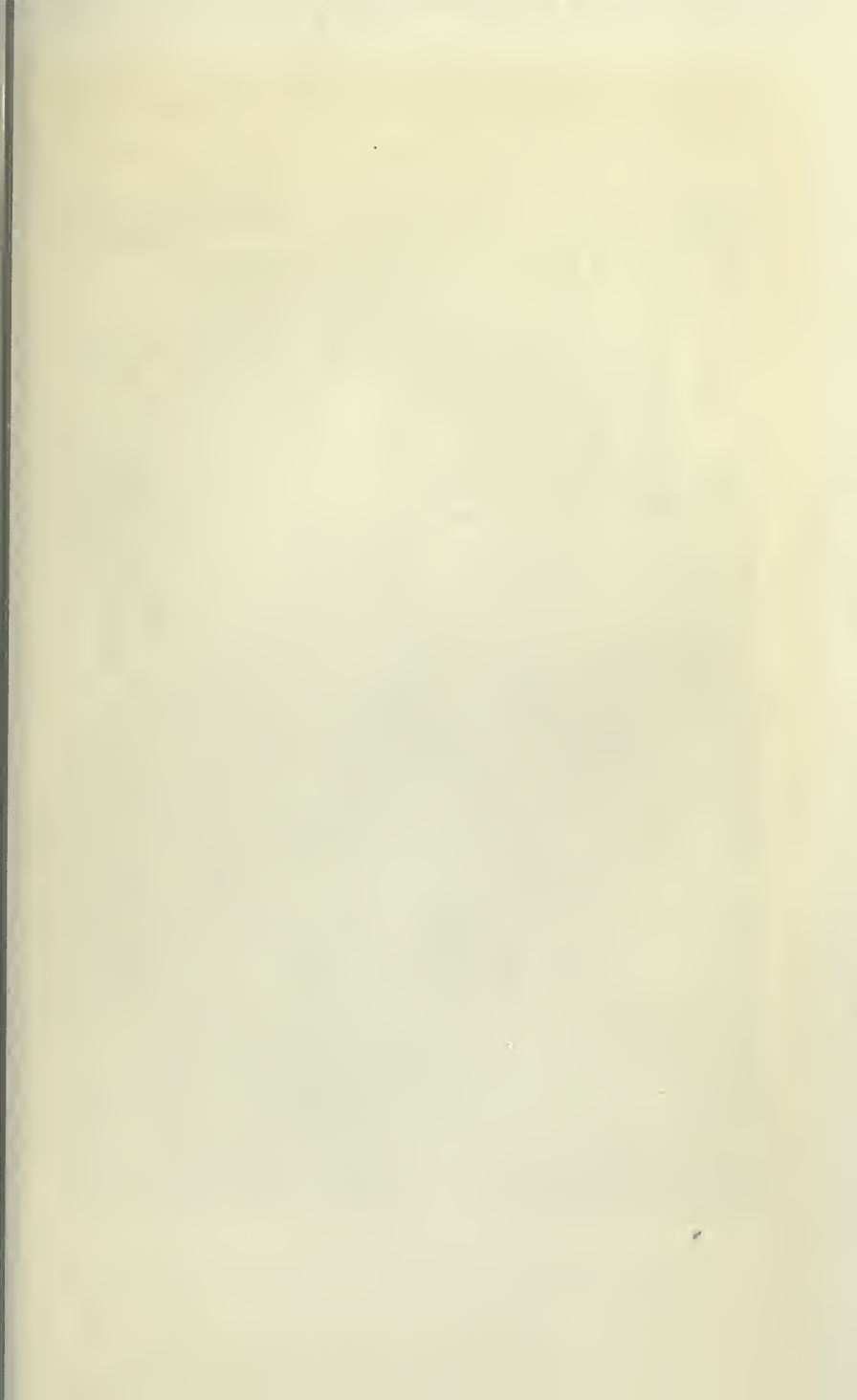
⁵ Carducci, *Prose*, pp. 154-56.

some question of state Guido had need of "the pen of a ready writer;" or spent in dictating to his son Jacopo one of the final cantos of the unfinished *Paradiso*. The frugal meal in his own apartment, prepared by Beatrice's filial hands, and afterwards a gentle romp with Piero's children, that made the grandfather, for a few moments, younger than he had ever been before, and inspired him with some of the finest similes of child-life that adorn the *Commedia*. In the afternoon, discourses on the vulgar tongue with young Romagnol versifiers—discourses in which, perhaps, the *Eloquentia* took shape. And later, when the fierce heat of the day was over, walks and talks with his more intimate friends, Perini and the fellow-exiles; and the pathetic thoughts that will force themselves to utterance in the witching hour of sunset "that softens the heart"¹—memories of Fiesole flooded in rosy glow, of the evening lights on Arno, of the voice of church bells, and all the familiar sounds of Florence. And his companion bends his head and murmurs: "We are growing old!"

But there yet remains to be written a poem on "Dante at Ravenna," on the lines of Rossetti's "Dante at Verona". Such a poem would breathe the same unsatisfied longings, the same sickness of hope deferred: a sadness mellowed, indeed, and purified and refined by further suffering, but more rather than less intense.

The divine discontent would have for its background at Ravenna no longer the uncongenial frivolity and shallowness and too frequent vulgarity, which burnt the poet's refined sensitiveness with the sting of a personal insult; but an environment in which all conspired to soothe his wounded spirit with the balm of a genuine and well-merited

¹ Cf. *Purg.* viii. *init.*



appreciation. And the impression would be emphasised, perhaps, by the short visit to Verona in the last winter of his life,¹ when old mixed memories would be inevitably revived though Ravenna's appreciative homage should win him now universal deference in the scene of his former humiliation.

But all in vain. We should see him reject Bologna's offered laurels, not only or chiefly from fear to trust himself into the hands of political adversaries,² but because such honours had no attraction to the heart on which the single word "Firenze" was engraved. Our picture would show us a Dante whose firm-set mouth and scornful brow still acknowledged the brave words of indignation uttered in 1316: "What! can I not everywhere gaze upon the sun and the stars?"³—while the lines of pain and the wistful eyes belie the scorn and reiterate the unextinguishable cry of longing for a welcome back to "the fair fold where as a lamb he slept".⁴ Has he not for this probed the depths of Hell and scaled the heights of Heaven? Has he not for this spent himself in years of exhausting study?⁵ "Only wait," he writes to his Bolognese friend, "till the last *Cantica* is finished: then the hard heart of Florence must be melted!"

In the poem we have conceived we should see him still at work on his "poema sacro,"⁶ working, perhaps, sometimes at that feverish rate of speed which comes as a well-nigh irresistible temptation to the labourer who sees in sight the end of a long task. And as he turned to it from

¹ When he delivered his discourse known as "Quaestio de Aqua et Terra," on 13th February, 1320; see above, chap. ix. p. 326.

² This is, of course, what he means by making Bologna the Cyclops' cave, and describing it as "rura ignara deorum" (*Ecl.* i. 41).

³ *Epist.* ix. 4 (p. 414).

⁴ *Par.* xxv. 5.

⁵ *Ibid.* 2, 3.

⁶ *Ibid.* 1.

other thoughts and occupations we should be conscious of a brighter and more reposeful look : a testimony that

The labour we delight in physics pain.

We should see, perchance, Giotto and Dante together again,¹ as in Padua a dozen years before, each drawing fresh inspiration from each.

We should see the old memories of Francesca's tragedy revived and the master-piece of pathos² retouched and brought to perfection, as the Poet lives in the sunshine of her nephew's kindness, and hears from day to day the news of neighbouring Rimini, where a brother³ of her lover and of her husband and murderer is still in power.

We should see him move contemplatively from one to another of Ravenna's matchless monuments: see him lost in reverie as his eyes are caught by the inscrutable oriental gaze of the contemporary picture of Justinian in S. Vitale. He wakes from his dream, and lo! the sixth Canto of the *Paradiso* is born;⁴ the triumphant progress of the Roman eagle has "issued" once more "from Ravenna,"⁵ grave, dignified, solemn, yet vitally energetic, with all the colour and movement of those mosaic processions of S. Apollinare on which Dante's eyes must often have rested.

We should see him again pacing the pine-woods of Classe in the early morning breeze, while the boughs chant a mysterious refrain to the songs of birds whose

¹ There are frescoes of Giotto's still visible in the Church of S. Giovanni Evangelista at Ravenna.

² *Inf.* v. 73-*fin.*

³ Either Malatestino (1312-17) or his youngest brother, Pandolfo I (1317-26).

⁴ Cf. Sonnino's interesting Essay "Il Canto VI del Paradiso," in *Nuova Antologia*, 1st Mar. 1905.

⁵ *Par.* vi. 61, "Quel che fe' poi ch' egli uscì di Ravenna".

chorus welcomes the dawn. Dark waters flow silently amid the enamelled richness of flowers at his feet—a real pre-Raphaelite carpet of blossoms . . . and behold the forest of the Earthly Paradise is before him,¹ and a new gem is added to the well-nigh completed Second Cantica of his Poem.

We should see him in another mood crossing the gaunt marsh-meadows to kneel in penitence in the Sanctuary of Sta. Maria in Porto Fuori, where the great Saint Peter Damian had known himself as “Peter the Sinner” in the “House of Our Lady on the Adriatic Shore”.²

Thus he prepares his soul for “the hour that cometh to every man . . . when having humbly and devoutly received every Sacrament according to the Christian religion, and having been reconciled to God by contrition for everything committed by him against the Divine Will” he shall render up his spirit into the Saviour’s hands on the Day of the Exaltation of Holy Cross.³

Dante met his death worthily, in a mission on behalf of his friend and benefactor. In the last year of his life he took up again the functions of an ambassador which he had exercised more than once towards the end of his career in Florence.⁴ On this occasion he went as representative of Guido da Polenta to treat with the Doge of Venice. Ravenna and her neighbours had constant cause of friction with Venice who was determined to be master of the Adriatic and its trade. And no doubt the possession of Cervia by the Polenta family was a special grievance

¹ *Purg.* xxviii. *init.* Cf. an Essay by Panzacchi in *Nuova Antologia*, 1st Nov. 1904.

² *Par.* xxi. 121-23. ³ Boccaccio, *Vita*, § 6 (ed. Solerti, p. 30).

⁴ See above, chap. i. (p. 39) for his Embassy at Rome in 1300: on 7th May, 1299, he had been ambassador at San Gemignano (*cf.* p. 213).

to the Venetians, one of whose cherished aims at this period was to secure and retain a monopoly of the salt-trade. In this particular case it is possible that Ravenna may have been in the wrong. The dispute had arisen about the massacre of some Venetian sailors in an affray. But, right or wrong, the embassy was coldly received by Giovanni Soranzo and his counsellors, and Dante was doomed to suffer once more—and for the last time—the bitter sense of ineffectiveness. Soranzo, who in middle life had led Venetian fleets and armies to victory, was already seventy-one years old when elected to the ducal dignity in 1311; when Dante saw him he must have passed his eightieth year. We know that his city prospered under his rule: that he reconciled her to the Church, after a period of interdict, and that he recovered her province of Dalmatia. We know that he protected and developed her manufactures and her commerce: that in his time her silks rose to a supreme place in the Levantine trade, and her Murano glass outshone the best products of Germany; that her arsenal was extended, and her various islands furnished with windmills. We know too that while the Doge's life was thus serene and prosperous, the father's heart was starved and pinched—his daughter pining in an imprisonment from which he was powerless to release her.¹ But we know him best as the man who browbeat Dante.

Let us try to picture the Venice which Dante visited. It differed, of course, in many respects, from the city with which we are familiar. It rejoiced in the same unique beauty of position and atmosphere; it was, then as now,

¹Crawford, *Gleanings from Venetian History*, ch. x. (vol. i. pp. 292-94).

"a city always just putting out to sea". But the mainmast of this portentous ship, the great Campanile which, till a few years ago, dominated every comprehensive view of the city, bore still the less imposing form which it was to retain till the reconstruction of 1329.

The general appearance of the town was far more impressive than it had been a century or so earlier, before the great era of conquest, when noble Venetian families were still content to dwell in huts thatched with straw.¹ Brick and stone palaces and churches were comparatively abundant: yet many or most of the features which we have come to regard as essential to Venice were absent.

The Campanile of S. Barnaba and that of S. Samuele were already standing—they tell us that themselves, by their style—and the fourteenth century church of Santo Stefano may have been in course of construction; but the glorious piles of the Frari and SS. Giovanni e Paolo were not begun till some ten years later,² though Dante may have visited the older church on whose site the Frari was to be built.

The 300 graceful stone and marble bridges which for centuries have spanned the lesser canals were represented, if at all, by a few wooden ones, more or less on the system with which Carpaccio's and Bellini's pictures have made us familiar—with inclined planes of planks, innocent of steps, and so suitable for the passage of those horses and beasts of burden which are now never to be seen nearer than Mestre or the Lido.

The Canalazzo could be crossed by boat alone—by the

¹ P. Molmenti: *La Grandezza di Venezia*, p. 346 (in the collection of essays "La Vita Italiana nel Trecento").

² SS. Giovanni e Paolo was begun in 1333; Sta. Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in 1330.

primitive and scarce recognisable ancestor of the modern gondola—for the present Rialto bridge rose only in 1588, and its wooden predecessor, figured in one of Carpaccio's pictures, was not dreamed of in Dante's day.

The general aspect of the Grand Canal and of the "Bacino di S. Marco" must have been very different. S. Giorgio Maggiore was not yet.¹ The glories of the "Punta della Salute"—the great dome and graceful pinnacles,² the dignified Patriarchal Seminary with its touch of green garden, and all "fined off to a point" by the decent and well-proportioned buildings of the Dogana—all these things were non-existent, and the Punta very likely presented the aspect of a picturesque mud-bank or a "squero".

It was partly loss and partly gain. If the Ducal Palace (as we know it)³ and the Ca' d' Oro, and the Salute, and the Redentore, and three-score more of Venice's architectural treasures were still unbuilt, the uglier features of the modern city were likewise lacking. The Giudecca, to-day (if it may be whispered?) a little squalid with all its picturesqueness, and invaded more than a little by palaces of industry, was then, no doubt, a mass of greenery. The monstrous group of factories and warehouses which has grown up in the congenial atmosphere of the railway station—these were then as unimaginable as the stark lines of telegraph and telephone poles which now disfigure the lagoon: as unimaginable as the railway itself, as the iron bridges (those triumphs of modern science!) and the bustling self-importance and destructive wash of the convenient little "Vaporetti". And the shipping of those days, picturesque, no doubt, beyond description, in its ag-

¹ Palladio began it in 1560.

² Sta. Maria della Salute was erected by Longhena in 1631-82.

³ The bulk of it in its present form was finished near the middle of the fifteenth century.

gregation of the mediæval craft of all nations, ran no risk of dwarfing by its proportions the palaces and churches, as do the modern "monsters of the deep"; while the everlasting clang and rattle of donkey-engine and steam crane had a more tolerable predecessor in the quaint cries and postures of the mariners as they laded or unladed their goods by the help of more primitive mechanism.

The central group of buildings which for us is Venice *par excellence*, was then represented by the Church alone, with its more modest attendant Campanile, and the two granite columns of the Piazzetta, which marked the place of public execution—a spot where just thirty-three years later the ill-starred Marino Falieri was to make his state-landing as Doge, misguided by the fog.

The piazza was narrower—just the width of the great church's façade.¹ It was, moreover, a green meadow, with a small canal running across it, two-thirds of the distance between S. Marco and the opposite side, and beyond the stream stood a little church. And the meadow—a real "campo," such as all the little squares of Venice must once have been if etymology is to be trusted—was flanked on either side by quaint Byzantine buildings, beside which the façade and domes of S. Marco rose to their fullest value; not dwarfed, as now, by their surroundings.

The church itself was essentially the same, without its uttermost fringe of Gothic adornments, and of course without the more modern amongst its mosaics. But it was *our* S. Marco even then, down to the very *Quadriga*, the renowned bronze horses² which Enrico Dandolo

¹ The buildings would have been practically flush with the present line of lamp-posts on each side.

² Supposed to have adorned in succession the Arch of Nero and that of Trajan, and to have been transported to "New Rome" by Constantine the Great.

had brought from Constantinople more than a century before.

That unique blending of east and west, of mediæval and pre-mediæval art, and classic marble and sculpture, the treasure-house of the greatest ecclesiastical marauders whom the world has ever seen, was to Dante, perhaps, something besides. In its general effect it is like a blending into one great temple of all the scattered glories of Ravenna, without, indeed, their individual interest, but with just an added gleam of gold, an added touch of mystery and beauty.

The Venice which Dante visited was already a great and prosperous city. She had her 190,000 inhabitants, her 38,000 sailors, 16,000 workmen employed at the Arsenal alone, and a fleet of some 3,300 ships scattered over all the world's waterways.¹ At the close of the thirteenth century, under the Doge Pietro Gradenigo,² she had limited the membership in her Great Council to certain specified families, and thus given to the republic that aristocratic and oligarchical type which was one of the main factors in its future success. And some ten years later—just ten years earlier than Dante's visit³—the unsuccessful conspiracy of the democrats under Bajamonte Tiepolo had resulted in a closer rivetting of the oligarchic fetters, by the creation of the famous "Council of Ten".

This proud, self-confident, aristocratic city was already conscious of her power, and conscious of an ambition which far outran her present attainment. To her neighbours she was a type of successful egoism, ready to take every possible advantage of the weak. If within her own charmed

¹ Molmenti, *op. cit.* p. 359.

² Reigned 1289-1311: the so-called "Serrata del Maggior Consiglio".

³ 1310.

circle she could exhibit the open-handed, pleasure-loving graces of an Antonio or a Bassanio ; to her less successful rivals without she was apt to display the less attractive features of a close-fisted Shylock.

This is Salimbene's character of the Venetians : " Covetous, tenacious, superstitious, they would wish to subdue all the world to themselves if they could. They treat the merchants who visit them barbarously, selling to them at extravagant prices, and laying huge duties on imported goods. Every vessel that puts into their port is forced to discharge its cargo there, willy-nilly, even though the sailors have merely sought shelter in her harbour from stress of weather. If the merchants protest, the Venetians point out to them that their ship was guided thither by Divine Providence—and to that there is no answer!"¹

He dwells with great bitterness on the high-handed dealings of Venice with Ravenna in the thirteenth century, dealings which affected materially the trade and prosperity of the cities of Romagna, of Bologna also and her neighbours, and even of Milan, whose chief outlet eastward was the Po.²

We shall be prepared, then, to find the envoy of Guido da Polenta somewhat coldly received by the Doge. And the one rather humorous story that has come down to us concerning this visit of Dante illustrates this point, while it serves also to suggest that the quinquagenarian exile whose life was so soon to ebb away had still some spirit in him, and was capable of a playful sally of fourteenth

¹ Salimbene, sub ann. 1269: "Et dicunt quod ex voluntate divina processit quo navis illa declinavit ad eos, cui contrarium non est".

² Salimbene, sub ann. 1269. They have closed the road, he says, between Lombardy and Romagna for corn, wine, oil, fish, meat, salt, figs, eggs, cheese and fruit.

century sarcasm even in the depressing atmosphere of a mission foredoomed to failure.

"Dante of Florence," so runs the tale,¹ "being once on a mission in Venice, was invited to dinner by the Doge upon a fast-day. In front of the envoys of the other princes, who were of greater account than the Polenta, lord of Ravenna, and were served before Dante, were placed the largest fish, while in front of Dante were placed the smallest. This difference of treatment nettled Dante, who took up one of the little fish in his hand and held it to his ear, as though expecting it to say something.

"The Doge, observing this, asked him what his strange behaviour meant. To which Dante replied: 'As I knew that the father of this fish met his death in these waters, I was asking him news of his father'.

"'Well,' said the Doge, 'and what did he answer?'

"Dante replied: 'He told me that he and his companions were too little to remember much about him; but that I might learn what I wanted from the older fish, who would be able to give me the news I asked for.'

"Thereupon," the story concludes, "the Doge at once ordered Dante to be served with a fine large fish."

He could respond, then, to a sally, this Doge, and make a trifling personal concession; but in the actual matter of the mission he was as immovable as Venice itself. For the Doge *is* Venice. For generations the Republic has been steadily increasing his outward pomp and diminishing his personal initiative. But apart from the limitations of his constitutional position, Giovanni Soranzo in his long reign of sixteen years (1312-28) seems to have been truly representative of the stage which Venice had then reached: the moment of national consolidation that

¹ Quoted from *Papanti* by Toynbee, *Life*, pp. 190, 191.

followed upon the great victories of the former century.¹ Of his personal appearance we know practically nothing. The Venetian State records are, in any case, proverbially impersonal, but the archives of that period are wanting. The poets who in 1316 hymn the birth of a cub to the Doge's lioness,² have nothing relevant to say about Soranzo himself. We have no contemporary picture of the face of the man who browbeat Dante, except the conventional portraiture of his ducat in the Museo Civico, and of a "bulla plumbea"—a leaden seal in the Archivio.³ But we know that the background and accessories of Dante's interview must have been imposing. For Venice was now awake to the appropriateness of pomp and grandeur in her State ceremonial. When under Pietro Ziani (1205-29) a hundred years before, their ambitions kindled and their horizon enlarged by foreign conquest, the Venetians had debated the question of a removal *en masse* to Constantinople as a more worthy and convenient centre,⁴ the decision to remain faithful to their lagoons and mud islands involved a complete transformation of Venice. And if the modest dwellings of their forefathers were judged no longer fit for the richest merchants in Europe—if stone and marble palaces must be built to house the princely families of the Venetian aristocracy, still more urgent was the need they felt to deck the majesty of the Republic

¹ P. Molmenti, *op. cit.* p. 347.

² Monticolo, *Poesie latine del Principio del sec. xiv.* (*Propugnatore*, New Series, Vol. III. ii. p. 244). The lioness was a present from King Frederic of Aragon; the poem, in Latin, was written by a preaching friar, and Albertino Mussato penned a reply to it. [I owe this note and reference to the kindness of Mr. Horatio Brown.]

³ Reproduced by Molmenti, *Storia di Venezia*, etc. Pt. I. cap. viii. p. 172.

⁴ Daniele Barbaro, quoted by Molmenti, *Grandezza di Venezia*, pp. 348, 349.

with proportionate splendour. Only a year before Dante's visit it had been decreed that the Doge's crimson velvet cap should be adorned with a circlet of gold, and his shoulders, on great occasions, draped in a mantle of ermine with golden buttons.¹

But if we know little of the Doge's part in the audience, we have still less to guide us in picturing Dante's part; unless indeed the apocryphal "Letter of Dante to Guido da Polenta" is based after all on some authentic tradition.

In that letter we are told how the ambassador began to address the Doge in Latin, and was bidden at once to change the language of his speech or else find an interpreter, and how when he subsided into Italian—that Italian which was already classical upon his lips—the Venetian magnates had still a great difficulty in understanding him!² Perhaps if the author of the *Eloquentia* had condescended to address his audience in the despised but mellifluous dialect of the Lagoons the issue might have been different!

But the fact remains that Venice, for whatever cause, was unkind to Dante. She had given him indeed a pleasant and inspiring friendship in his correspondent, Giovanni Quirini, her one poet of the day; but for Dante himself she had nothing but frowns. What wonder then that the single picture in which he has chosen to immortalise her name should be an illustration of the lurid and sinister activities of Hell!

A state visit, perhaps, of the ambassadors to the Arsenal, and a talk with his *cicerone* as to the different aspect presented by the place in winter time,³ gave him his oppor-

¹ Molmenti, *Grandezza di Venezia*, p. 360. ² *Ibid.* p. 353.

³ The fact that this extremely graphic picture, which certainly reads like that of an eye-witness, is drawn in winter, whereas Dante's Embassy

tunity of adding one final touch to the all-but completed *Inferno*. And so, as he retired to his lodgings after the day's ceremonies were over, he sat down and penned the celebrated lines with which the twenty-first Canto begins. Venice for him means smoke and flame and boiling pitch and a noise of hammering. His lines are murky with the fumes of the ugly black liquid, redolent of its scent, resonant with its ominous bubbling, while in this atmosphere "wondrous dark" grotesque figures are dimly discerned, busy with heaven knows what unsavoury tasks!

Ristemmo, per veder l' altra fessura
 Di Malebolge, egli altri pianti vani ;
 E vidila mirabilmente oscura.
 Quale nell' Arzanà de' Viniziani
 Bolle l'inverno la tenace pece.¹
 Etc., etc.

And so Dante left the city of the lagoons and started on his homeward journey—his last journey as it proved to be. Denied, we are told, by the vindictive Venetians, the opportunity of a passage by sea he must needs thread his way to Ravenna amongst the stagnant pools and pestilential swamps of the coast. And there he fell a victim to a malignant fever and returned to Ravenna to die.

Ravenna, "generale sepolcro di santissimi corpi—vast sepulchre of holy bodies," "bathed in the blood of countless martyrs, whose remains she treasures," together with those of "mighty emperors and men of high renown," rejoices, says Boccaccio,² at her God-given privilege to be was in the height of summer, tempts one to posit an earlier visit. The biographers and commentators are silent on the subject; but from Padua, *e.g.*, in the winter of 1305-6 a flying visit would have been possible. Such an hypothesis solves at the same time the difficulty of so late an addition to the *Inferno*.

¹ *Inf.* xxi. 4 sqq.

² *Vita*, § 7 (ed. Solerti, p. 35).

the "perpetual guardian" of Dante's ashes. Guido da Polenta, who buried his poet friend with every solemnity, and himself pronounced the funeral oration, had planned for him a splendid monument. But within the year Guido himself had to retire from Ravenna to escape his cousin Ostasio's machinations, and died not long afterwards at Bologna: and so the magnificent sepulchre was never built.¹ The adventurous history of his tomb and the long contest for his bones, in which repentant Florence fought (and fought in vain, as Boccaccio had foretold²), fought by fair means and by foul for possession of the mortal remains of him—her chiefest glory—whom she spurned from her gates while he lived—all this forms a story by itself.³

The shrine to which the devotee of Dante turns his pilgrim steps is that restored by Bembo in 1483, and it rests within the quaint and characteristic mausoleum erected three centuries later by Cardinal Gonzaga.⁴ The grim home of the Polenta stands at guard on the opposite angle of the narrow street, and the stately campanile of the neighbouring Franciscan church in which he was originally buried, vested in the habit of the Order he loved, keeps watch over his last resting-place.

But Dante's life beyond the tomb, says one of his greatest modern exponents, is more potent and more glorious than that which closed on Holy Cross Day, 1321, —there remains "quella seconda vita dell' Allighieri oltre la tomba, tanto più efficace e gloriosa della prima".⁵ And

¹ Boccaccio, *Vita*, § 6 (ed. Solerti, p. 30).

² *Ibid.* § 7 (p. 35), "Raddomandalo: Io son certo ch' egli non ti fia renduto".

³ It is well told in Toynbee's little *Life*, pp. 137 sqq.

⁴ In 1780.

⁵ Carducci, *Prose*, p. 145.



DANTE'S TOMB AT RAVENNA, WITH THE CAMPANILE OF THE
FRANCISCAN CHURCH

FROM A SKETCH BY THE AUTHOR

to observe this "second life" of which Carducci speaks we have no need to follow the Poet's tracks once more to the mountain of the antipodes and peer into the faces of those stooping sinners that creep along singing their *Pater Noster* and purging their repented pride.¹ Nor need we watch him enter a second time the ring of flame which guards the Earthly Paradise from souls who retain still the taint of impurity—see him enter it this time without a shudder² save that of a longing to be absolutely pure—till finally, in Boccaccio's words, his soul be received into the "arms of his most noble Beatrice, with whom united in the vision of Him who is the highest Good, freed from the miseries of this present life he now lives most joyously in that whereof the felicity expects no end".³ No; this "more efficacious life" is that of his abiding influence, an influence that made itself felt from the very first,⁴ and is still as strong to-day, an influence which has spread far beyond the limits of his own weary wanderings.

It begins with a reconciliation of Guelf and Ghibelline, such as all the eloquence of the living Dante was powerless to effect, when poets of every political colour mingled their tears upon his tomb;⁵ when the charmed circle of a common sorrow was enlarged to embrace not only Guelf and Ghibelline, but Christian and Hebrew side by side. "Weep then," writes Bosone d'Agubbio, "weep, Jew

¹ *Purg.* x.-xii.

² *Ibid.* xxvii. *init.* Dante's consciousness of failure in this respect seems to be hinted at in lines 17 *sqq.*; see further chap. viii. (pp. 3, 12, 21, 22) and *cf.* *Purg.* xxiii. 115 *sqq.*; xxx. 127 *sqq.*

³ *Vita*, §6 (ed. Solerti, pp. 30, 31).

⁴ *Cf.* Carducci, *Prose*, p. 191: "Ancora ne eran calde le ceneri; e le edizioni le esposizioni i compendi del poema moltiplicavano come d'opera antica".

⁵ Boccaccio, *Vita*, §6 (ed. Solerti, pp. 31, 32).

Emanuel, for thine own sore loss!" And the Jew replies: "Well may Christian and Jew weep together, and sit each one on the seat of mourning!"

E bene può pianger cristiano e giudeo
E ciaschedun seder in tristo scanno.¹

In the presence of real greatness even grave differences between man and man sink into insignificance.

And what Dante has done directly for Italian literature—is he not in a real sense its father?—and what he has done indirectly for the unity and political freedom of Italy;² what he has done and is doing and will do as long as human culture lasts to bind distant minds together in a common devotion, to broaden and deepen the convictions and inspire the ideals of minds far removed from him in time and circumstance and nationality—of all this the ages bear witness.

A token of the swift change that passed over Florence's estimate of him may be found in Villani's tribute to his old neighbour, written perhaps or sketched in the year of Dante's death and inserted in its place in his *Chronicle*. Enthusiastic is the Guelf historian's testimony to the exile's supremacy in "every science," as poet, philosopher, rhetorician, public speaker—"with the most polished and beautiful style that ever was in our language up to his own time and beyond".³ But still more eloquent is the

¹ Carducci, *Prose*, pp. 159-63.

² Without, of course, attributing to Dante by anachronism the conception of a united Italy on modern "Risorgimento" lines, the immense inspiration of his verses not only on the leaders of the movement but on their predecessors, who kept the idea of "Italy" alive, is undeniable. And the possession of that important factor, a common literary language, is largely due to the author of the *Eloquentia* and the *Commedia*.

³ Villani, ix. 136.

fact that ere her outcast had been more than half a century in his tomb, Florence established within her walls a lectureship on his *Commedia*, and chose Giovanni Boccaccio to be the first occupant of that chair.¹

¹The first lecture was delivered on 23rd October, 1373, in the Church of the Badia; see Paget Toynbee, "Boccaccio's Commentary on the Divina Commedia," in *Mod. Lang. Review*, vol. ii. pp. 100-1.

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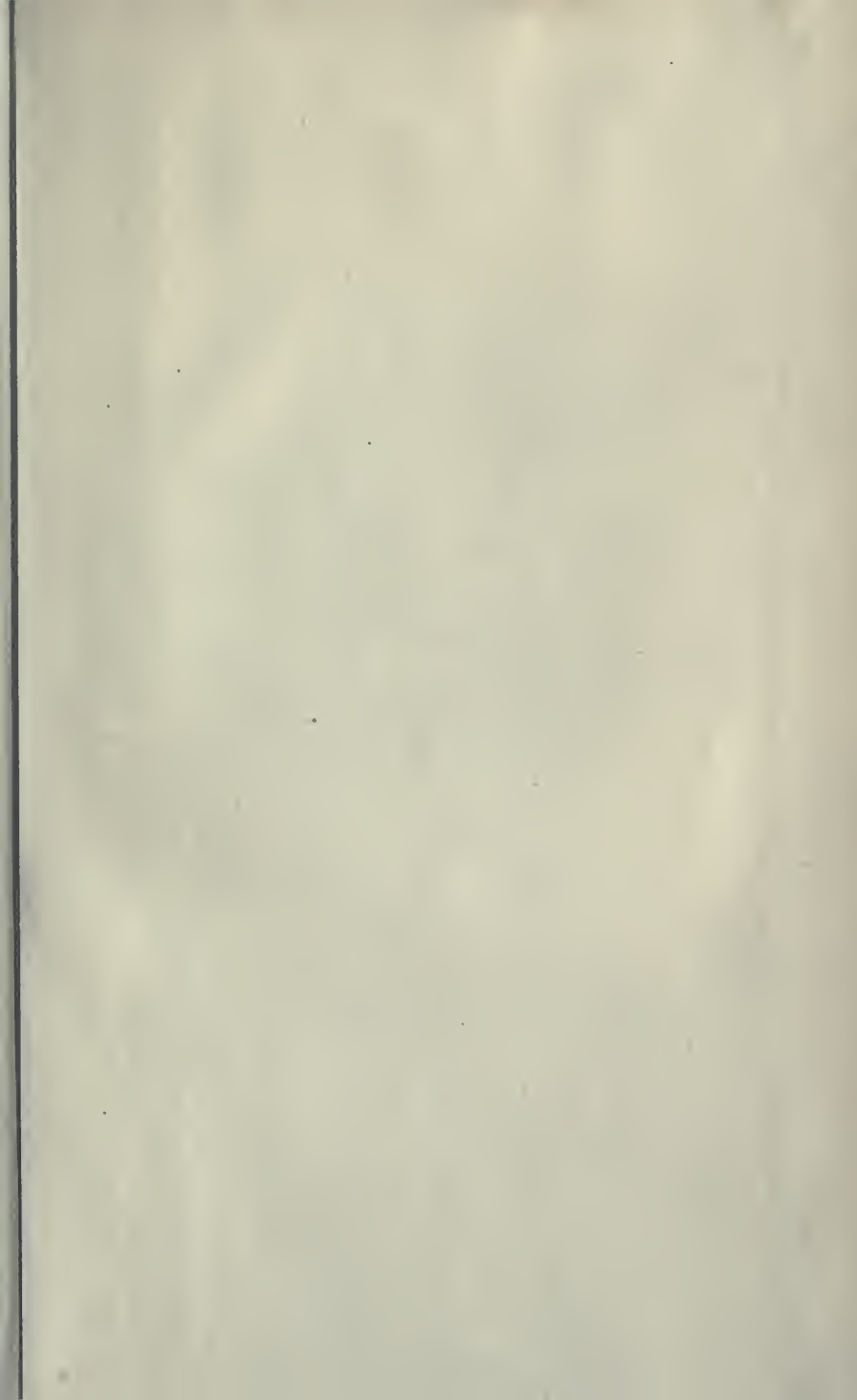
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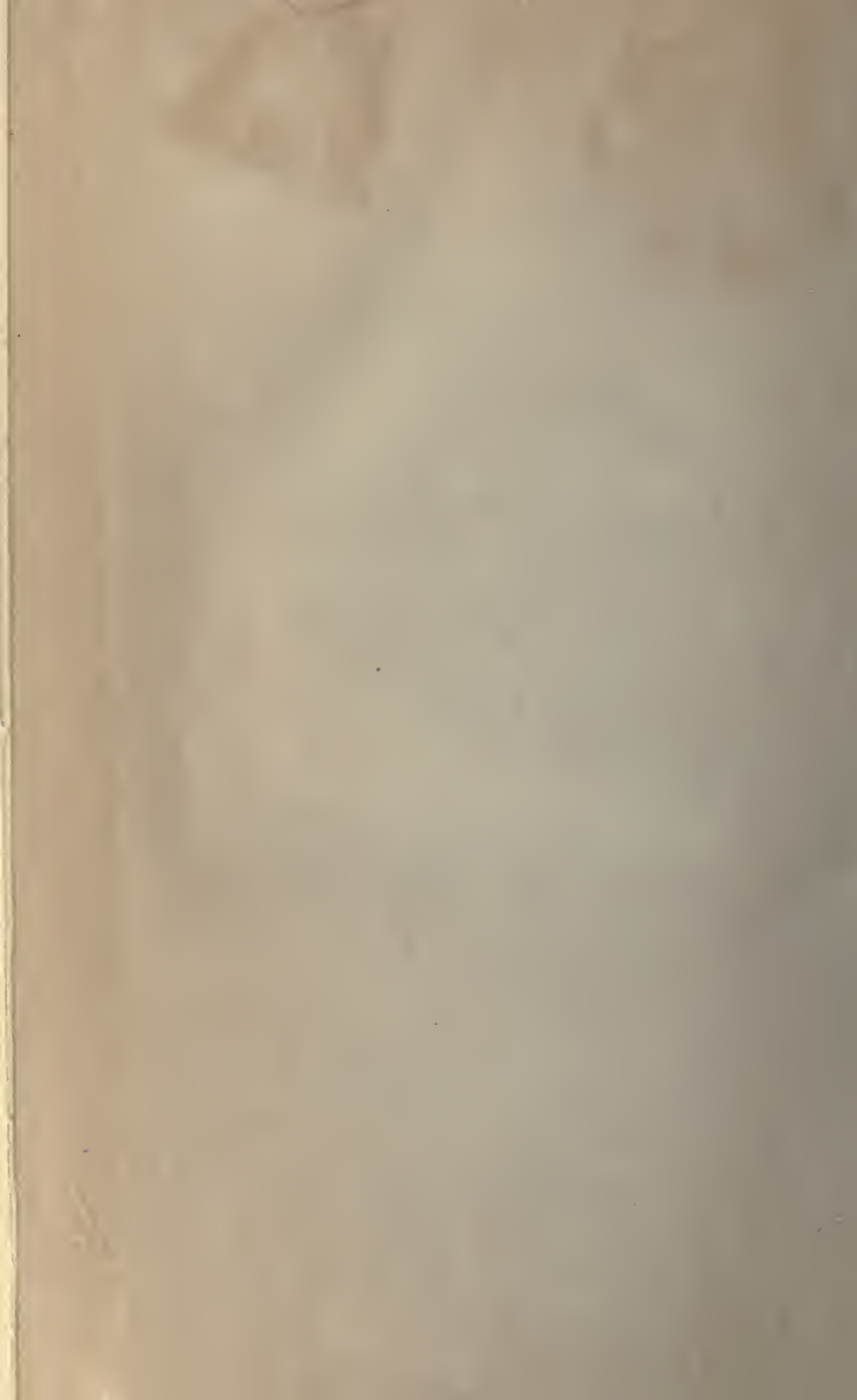
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