From thee and the true life thy face can bring.
So in nowise could death be harsh or bad;
But it should seem to me that I had slept,
And was awaken'd with thy summoning.
Yet, sith the hope thereof is a vain thing,
I, in fast fealty,
Can like the Assassin [1] be,
Who, to be subject to his lord in all,
Goes and accepts his death and has no heed:
Even as he doth so could I do indeed.
Nevertheless, this one memorial—
The last, I send thee, for Love orders it.
He, this last once, wills that thus much be writ
In prayer that it may fall 'twixt thee and me
After the manner of
Two birds that feast their love
Even unto anguish, till, if neither quit
The other, one must perish utterly.

PRINZIVALLE DORIA

Canzone

Of his Love, with the Figure of a sudden Storm

Even as the day when it is yet at dawning
Seems mild and kind, being fair to look upon,
While the birds carol underneath their awning
Of leaves, as if they never would have done;
Which on a sudden changes, just at noon,
And the broad light is broken into rain
That stops and comes again;
Even as the traveller, who had held his way
Hopeful and glad because of the bright weather,
Forgetteth then his gladness altogether;
Even so am I, through Love, alas the day!

It plainly is through Love that I am so.
At first, he let me still grow happier
Each day, and made her kindness seem to grow;

[1] Alluding to the Syrian tribe of Assassins, whose chief was the Old Man of the Mountain.

But now he has quite changed her heart in her.
And I, whose hopes throbb'd and were all astir
For times when I should call her mine aloud
And in her pride be proud.
Who is more fair than gems are, ye may say,
Having that fairness which holds hearts in rule;—
I have learnt now to count him but a fool
Who before evening says, A goodly day.

It had been better not to have begun,
Since, having known my error, 'tis too late.
This thing from which I suffer, thou hast done,
Lady: canst thou restore me my first state?
The wound thou gavest canst thou medicate?
Not thou, forsooth: thou hast not any art
To keep death from my heart.
O lady! where is now my life's full meed
Of peace,—mine once, and which thou took'st away?
Surely it cannot now be far from day:
Night is already very long indeed.

The sea is much more beautiful at rest
Than when the tempest tramples over it.
Wherefore, to see the smile which has so bless'd
This heart of mine, deem'st thou these eyes unfit?
There is no maid so lovely, it is writ,
That by such stern unwomanly regard
Her face may not be marr'd.
I therefore pray of thee, my own soul's wife,
That thou remember me who am forgot.
How shall I stand without thee? Art thou not
The pillar of the building of my life?

RUSTICO DI FILIPPO

I. Sonnet

Of the Making of Master Messerin

When God had finish'd Master Messerin,
He really thought it something to have done:
Bird, man, and beast had got a chance in one,
And each felt flatter'd, it was hoped, therein.

For he is like a goose i' the windpipe thin,
And like a cameleopard high i' the loins;
To which, for manhood, you'll be told he joins
Some kinds of flesh-hues and a callow chin.
As to his singing, he affects the crow;
As to his learning, beasts in general;
And sets all square by dressing like a man.
God made him, having nothing else to do;
And proved there is not anything at all
He cannot make, if that's a thing He can.

II. Sonnet

Of the Safety of Messer Fazio [1]

Master Bertuccio, you are call'd to account
That you guard Fazio's life from poison ill:
And every man in Florence tells me still
He has no horse that he can safely mount.
A mighty war-horse worth a thousand pound
Stands in Cremona stabled at his will;
Which for his honour'd person should fulfil
Its use. Nay, sir, I pray you be not found
So poor a steward. For all fame of yours
Is cared for best, believe me, when I say:—
Our Florence gives Bertuccio charge of one
Who rides her own proud spirit like a horse;
Whom Cocciolo himself must needs obey;
And whom she loves best, being her strongest son.

III. Sonnet

Of Messer Ugolino [2]

If any one had anything to say
To the Lord Ugolino, because he's
Not staunch, and never minds his promises,
'Twere hardly courteous, for it is his way.
Courteous it were to say such sayings nay:
As thus: He's true, sir, only takes his ease

[1] I have not been able to trace the Fazio to whom this sonnet refers.
[2] The character here drawn certainly suggests Count Ugolino de' Gherardeschi, though it would seem that Rustico died nearly twenty years before the tragedy of the Tower of Famine.

And don't care merely if it plague or please,
And has good thoughts, no doubt, if they would stay.
Now I know he's so loyal every whit
And altogether worth such a good word
As worst would best and best would worst befit.
He'd love his party with a dear accord
If only he could once quite care for it,
But can't run post for any Law or Lord.

PUCCIARELLO DA FIORENZA

Sonnet

Of Expediency

Pass and let pass,—this counsel I would give,—
And wrap thy cloak what way the wind may blow.
Who cannot raise himself were wise to know
How best, by dint of stooping, he may thrive.
Take for ensample this: when the winds drive
Against it, how the sapling tree bends low,
And, once being prone, abideth even so
Till the hard harsh wind cease to rend and rive.
Wherefore, when thou behold'st thyself abased,
Be blind, deaf, dumb; yet therewith none the less
Note thou in peace what thou shalt hear and see,
Till from such state by Fortune thou be raised.
Then hack, lop, buffet, thrust, and so redress
Thine ill that it may not return on thee.

ALBERTUCCIO DELLA VIOLA

Canzone

Of his Lady dancing

Among the dancers I beheld her dance,
Her who alone is my heart's sustenance.

So, as she danced, I took this wound of her;
Alas! the flower of flowers, she did not fail.

Woe's me! I will be Jew and blasphemer
If the good god of Love do not prevail
To bring me to thy grace, oh! thou most fair.
My lady and my lord! alas for wail!
How many days and how much sufferance?

Oh! would to God that I had never seen
Her face, nor had beheld her dancing so!
Then had I miss'd this wound which is so keen—
Yea, mortal—for I think not to win through
Unless her love be my sweet medicine;
Whereof I am in doubt, alas for woe!
Fearing therein but such a little chance.

She was apparell'd in a Syrian cloth,
My lady:—oh! but she did grace the same,
Gladdening all folk, that they were nowise loth
At sight of her to put their ills from them.
But upon me her power hath had such growth
That nought of joy thenceforth, but a live flame,
Stirs at my heart,—which is her countenance.

Sweet-smelling rose, sweet, sweet to smell and see,
Great solace had she in her eyes for all;
But heavy woe is mine; for upon me
Her eyes, as they were wont, did never fall.
Which thing if it were done advisedly,
I would choose death, that could no more appal,
Not caring for my life's continuance.

TOMMASO BUZZUOLA, DA FAENZA

Sonnet

He is in awe of his Lady

Even as the moon amid the stars doth shed
Her lovelier splendour of exceeding light,—
Even so my lady seems the queen and head
Among all other ladies in my sight.
Her human visage, like an angel's made,
Is glorious even to beauty's perfect height;

And with her simple bearing soft and staid
All secret modesties of soul unite.
I therefore feel a dread in loving her;
Because of thinking on her excellence,
The wisdom and the beauty which she has.
I pray her for the sake of God,—whereas
I am her servant, yet in sore suspense
Have held my peace,—to have me in her care.

NOFFO BONAGUIDA

Sonnet

He is enjoined to pure Love

A spirit of Love, with Love's intelligence,
Maketh his sojourn alway in my breast,
Maintaining me in perfect joy and rest;
Nor could I live an hour, were he gone thence:
Through whom my love hath such full permanence
That thereby other loves seem dispossess'd.
I have no pain, nor am with sighs oppress'd,
So calm is the benignant influence.
Because this spirit of Love, who speaks to me
Of my dear lady's tenderness and worth,
Says: "More than thus to love her seek thou not,
Even as she loves thee in her wedded thought;
But honour her in thy heart delicately:
For this is the most blessed joy on earth."

LIPPO PASCHI DE' BARDI

Sonnet

He solicits a Lady's Favours

Wert thou as prone to yield unto my prayer
The thing, sweet virgin, which I ask of thee,
As to repeat, with all humility,
"Pray you go hence, and of your speech forbear;"—

Then unto joy might I my heart prepare,
Having my fellows in subserviency;
But, for that thou contemn'st and mockest me,
Whether of life or death I take no care;
Because my heart may not assuage its drouth
Nor ever may again rejoice at all
Till the sweet face bend to be felt of man,—
Till tenderly the beautiful soft mouth
I kiss by thy good leave; thenceforth to call
Blessing and triumph Love's extremest ban.

SER PACE, NOTAIO DA FIORENZA

Sonnet

A Return to Love

A fresh content of fresh enamouring
Yields me afresh, at length, the sense of song,
Who had well-nigh forgotten Love so long:
But now my homage he will have me bring.
So that my life is now a joyful thing,
Having new-found desire, elate and strong,
In her to whom all grace and worth belong,
On whom I now attend for ministering.
The countenance remembering, with the limbs,
She was all imaged on my heart at once
Suddenly by a single look at her:
Whom when I now behold, a heat there seems
Within, as of a subtle fire that runs
Unto my heart, and remains burning there.

NICCOLÒ DEGLI ALBIZZI

Prolonged Sonnet

When the Troops were returning from Milan

If you could see, fair brother, how dead beat
The fellows look who come through Rome to-day,—
Black yellow smoke-dried visages,—you'd say

They thought their haste at going all too fleet.
Their empty victual-waggons up the street
  Over the bridge dreadfully sound and sway;
  Their eyes, as hang'd men's, turning the wrong way;
And nothing on their backs, or heads, or feet.
One sees the ribs and all the skeletons
  Of their gaunt horses; and a sorry sight
Are the torn saddles, cramm'd with straw and stones.
  They are ashamed, and march throughout the night;
Stumbling, for hunger, on their marrowbones;
  Like barrels rolling, jolting, in this plight.
Their arms all gone, not even their swords are saved;
And each as silent as a man being shaved.

FRANCESCO DA BARBERINO

I. Blank Verse[1]

A Virgin declares her Beauties

Do not conceive that I shall here recount
All my own beauty: yet I promise you
That you, by what I tell, shall understand
All that befits and that is well to know.

My bosom, which is very softly made,
Of a white even colour without stain,
Bears two fair apples, fragrant, sweetly-savour'd,
Gather'd together from the Tree of Life
The which is in the midst of Paradise.
And these no person ever yet has touch'd;
For out of nurse's and of mother's hands
I was, when God in secret gave them me.
These ere I yield I must know well to whom;
And for that I would not be robb'd of them,
I speak not all the virtue that they have;
Yet thus far speaking:—blessed were the man
Who once should touch them, were it but a little;—
See them I say not, for that might not be.

[1] Extracted from his long treatise, in unrhymed verse and in prose, "Of the Government and Conduct of Women" (*Del Reggimento e dei Costumi delle Donne*).

My girdle, clipping pleasure round about,
Over my clear dress even unto my knees
Hangs down with sweet precision tenderly;
And under it Virginity abides.
Faithful and simple and of plain belief
She is, with her fair garland bright like gold;
And very fearful if she overhears
Speech of herself; the wherefore ye perceive
That I speak soft lest she be made ashamed.

Lo! this is she who hath for company
The Son of God and Mother of the Son;
Lo! this is she who sits with many in heaven;
Lo! this is she with whom are few on earth.

II. Sentenze [1]

Of Sloth against Sin

There is a vice which oft
I've heard men praise; and divers forms it has;
And it is this. Whereas
Some, by their wisdom, lordship, or repute,

When tumults are afoot,
Might stifle them, or at the least allay,—
These certain ones will say,
"The wise man bids thee fly the noise of men."

One says, "Wouldst thou maintain
Worship,—avoid where thou may'st not avail;
And do not breed worse ail
By adding one more voice to strife begun."

Another, with this one,
Avers, "I could but bear a small expense,
Or yield a slight defence."
A third says this, "I could but offer words."

Or one, whose tongue records
Unwillingly his own base heart, will say,

[1] This and the three following pieces are extracted from his "Documents of Love" (*Documenti d'Amore*).

" I'll not be led astray
To bear a hand in others' life or death."

They have it in their teeth!
For unto this each man is pledged and bound:
And this thing shall be found
Enter'd against him at the Judgment Day.

III. Sentenze

Of Sins in Speech

Now these four things, if thou
Consider, are so bad that none are worse.
First,—among counsellors
To thrust thyself, when not call'd absolutely.

And in the other three
Many offend by their own evil wit.
When men in council sit,
One talks because he loves not to be still;

And one to have his will;
And one for nothing else but only show.
These rules were well to know,
First for the first, for the others afterward.

Where many are repair'd
And met together, never go with them
Unless thou'rt call'd by name.
This for the first: now for the other three.

What truly thou dost see
Turn in thy mind, and faithfully report;
And in the plainest sort
Thy wisdom may, proffer thy counselling.

There is another thing
Belongs hereto, the which is on this wise.
If one should ask advice
Of thine for his own need whate'er it be,—

This is my word to thee:—
Deny it if it be not clearly of use;
Or turn to some excuse
That may seem fair, and thou shalt have done well.

IV. Sentenze

Of Importunities and Troublesome Persons

There is a vice prevails
Concerning which I'll set you on your guard;
And other four, which hard
It were (as may be thought) that I should blame.

Some think that still of *them*—
Whate'er is said—some ill speech lies beneath;
And this to them is death:
Whereby we plainly may perceive their sins.

And now let others wince.
One sort there is, who, thinking that they please
(Because no wit's in these),
Where'er you go, will stick to you all day,

And answer (when you say,
"Don't let me tire you out!"), "Oh never mind—
Say nothing of the kind,—
It's quite a pleasure to be where you are!"

A second,—when, as far
As he could follow you, the whole day long
He's sung you his dull song,
And you for courtesy have borne with it,—

Will think you've had a treat.
A third will take his special snug delight,—
Some day you've come in sight
Of some great thought and got it well in view,—

Just then to drop on you.
A fourth, for any insult you've received
Will say he *is so* grieved,
And daily bring the subject up again.

So now I would be fain
To show you your best course at all such times;
And counsel you in rhymes
That you yourself offend not in likewise.

In these four cases lies
This help:—to think upon your own affair,
Just showing here and there
By just a word that you are listening;

And still to the last thing
That's said to you attend in your reply,
And let the rest go by,—
It's quite a chance if he remembers them.

Yet do not, all the same,
Deny your ear to any speech of weight.
But if importunate
The speaker is, and will not be denied,

Just turn the speech aside
When you can find some plausible pretence;
For if you have the sense,
By a quick question or a sudden doubt

You may so put him out
Then he shall not remember where he was;
And by such means you'll pass
Upon your way and be well rid of him.

And now it doth beseem
I give you the advice I promised you.
Before you have to do
With men whom you must meet continually,

Take notice what they be;
And so you shall find readily enough
If you can win their love,
And give yourself for answer Yes or No.

And finding Yes, do so
That still the love between you may increase.
Yet if they be of these
Whom sometimes it is hard to understand,

Let some slight cause be plann'd,
And seem to go,—so you shall learn their will;
And if but one sit still
As 'twere in thought,—then go, unless he call.

Lastly, if insult gall
Your friend, this is the course that you should take.
At first 'tis well you make
As much lament thereof as you think fit,—

Then speak no more of it,
Unless himself should bring it up again;
And then no more refrain
From full discourse, but say his grief is yours.

V. Sentenze

Of Caution

Say, wouldst thou guard thy son,
That sorrow he may shun?
Begin at the beginning
And let him keep from sinning.
Wouldst guard thy house? One door
Make to it, and no more.
Wouldst guard thine orchard-wall?
Be free of fruit to all.

FAZIO DEGLI UBERTI

I. Canzone

His Portrait of his Lady, Angiola of Verona

I look at the crisp golden-threaded hair
Whereof, to thrall my heart, Love twists a net;
Using at times a string of pearls for bait,
And sometimes with a single rose therein.
I look into her eyes which unaware
Through mine own eyes to my heart penetrate;
Their splendour, that is excellently great,

To the sun's radiance seeming near akin,
Yet from herself a sweeter light to win.
So that I, gazing on that lovely one,
Discourse in this wise with my secret thought:—
"Woe's me! why am I not,
Even as my wish, alone with her alone?—
That hair of hers, so heavily uplaid,
To shed down braid by braid,
And make myself two mirrors of her eyes
Within whose light all other glory dies."

I look at the amorous beautiful mouth,
The spacious forehead which her locks enclose,
The small white teeth, the straight and shapely nose,
And the clear brows of a sweet pencilling.
And then the thought within me gains full growth,
Saying, "Be careful that thy glance now goes
Between her lips, red as an open rose,
Quite full of every dear and precious thing:
And listen to her gracious answering,
Born of the gentle mind that in her dwells,
Which from all things can glean the nobler half.
Look thou when she doth laugh
How much her laugh is sweeter than aught else."
Thus evermore my spirit makes avow
Touching her mouth; till now
I would give anything that I possess,
Only to hear her mouth say frankly, "Yes."

I look at her white easy neck, so well
From shoulders and from bosom lifted out;
And at her round cleft chin, which beyond doubt
No fancy in the world could have design'd.
And then, with longing grown more voluble,
"Were it not pleasant now," pursues my thought,
"To have that neck within thy two arms caught
And kiss it till the mark were left behind?"
Then, urgently: "The eyelids of thy mind
Open thou: if such loveliness be given
To sight here,—what of that which she doth hide?
Only the wondrous ride
Of sun and planets through the visible heaven
Tells us that therebeyond is Paradise.

Thus, if thou fix thine eyes,
Of a truth certainly thou must infer
That every earthly joy abides in her."

I look at the large arms, so lithe and round,—
At the hands, which are white and rosy too,—
At the long fingers, clasp'd and woven through,
Bright with the ring which one of them doth wear.
Then my thought whispers: "Were thy body wound
Within those arms, as loving women's do,
In all thy veins were born a life made new
Which thou couldst find no language to declare.
Behold if any picture can compare
With her just limbs, each fit in shape and size,
Or match her angel's colour like a pearl.
She is a gentle girl
To see; yet when it needs, her scorn can rise.
Meek, bashful, and in all things temperate,
Her virtue holds its state;
In whose least act there is that gift express'd
Which of all reverence makes her worthiest."

Soft as a peacock steps she, or as a stork
Straight on herself, taller and statelier:
'Tis a good sight how every limb doth stir
For ever in a womanly sweet way.
"Open thy soul to see God's perfect work
(My thought begins afresh), "and look at her
When with some lady-friend exceeding fair
She bends and mingles arms and locks in play.
Even as all lesser lights vanish away,
When the sun moves, before his dazzling face,
So is this lady brighter than all these.
How should she fail to please,—
Love's self being no more than her loveliness?
In all her ways some beauty springs to view;
All that she loves to do
Tends alway to her honour's single scope;
And only from good deeds she draws her hope."

Song, thou canst surely say, without pretence,
That since the first fair woman ever made,
Not one can have display'd

More power upon all hearts than this one doth;
Because in her are both
Loveliness and the soul's true excellence:—
And yet (woe's me!) is pity absent thence.

II. Extract from the "Dittamondo"[1]

(Lib. iv. Cap. 23)

Of England, and of its Marvels

Now to Great Britain we must make our way,
Unto which kingdom Brutus gave its name
What time he won it from the giants' rule.
'Tis thought at first its name was Albion,
And Anglia, from a damsel afterwards.
The island is so great and rich and fair,
It conquers others that in Europe be,
Even as the sun surpasses other stars.
Many and great sheep-pastures bountifully
Nature has set there, and herein more bless'd,
That they can hold themselves secure from wolves.
Black amber[2] also doth the land enrich
(Whose properties my guide Solinus here
Told me, and how its colour comes to it);

[1] I am quite sorry (after the foregoing love-song, the original of which is not perhaps surpassed by any poem of its class in existence) to endanger the English reader's respect for Fazio by these extracts from the *Dittamondo*, or "Song of the World," in which he will find his own country endowed with some astounding properties. However, there are a few fine characteristic sentences, and the rest is no more absurd than other travellers' tales of that day; while the table of our Norman line of kings is not without some historical interest. It must be remembered that the love-song was the work of Fazio's youth, and the *Dittamondo* that of his old age, when we may suppose his powers to have been no longer at their best. Besides what I have given relating to Great Britain, there is a table of the Saxon dynasty, and some surprising facts about Scotland and Ireland; as well as a curious passage written in French, and purporting to be an account, given by a royal courier, of Edward the Third's invasion of France. I felt half disposed to include these, but was afraid of overloading with such matter a selection made chiefly for the sake of poetic beauty. I should mention that the *Dittamondo*, like Dante's great poem, is written in *terza rima;* but as perfect literality was of primary importance in the above extracts, I have departed for once from my rule of fidelity to the original metre.

[2] The word is *Gagata*, which I find described in Alberti's Dictionary as "A black, solid, hard, and shining bitumen, formed within the earth, and called also black amber." Is this coal?

And pearls are found in great abundance too.
The people are as white and comely-faced
As they of Ethiop land are black and foul.
Many hot springs and limpid fountain-heads
We found about this land, and spacious plains,
And divers beasts that dwell within thick woods.
Plentiful orchards too, and fertile fields
It has, and castle-forts, and cities fair
With palaces and girth of lofty walls.
And proud wide rivers without any fords
We saw, and flesh, and fish, and crops enough.
Justice is strong throughout those provinces.

Now this I saw not; but so strange a thing
It was to hear, and by all men confirm'd,
That it is fit to note it as I heard;—
To wit, there is a certain islet here
Among the rest, where folk are born with tails,
Short, as are found in stags and such-like beasts.[1]

For this I vouch,—that when a child is freed
From swaddling bands, the mother without stay
Passes elsewhere, and 'scapes the care of it.
I put no faith herein; but it is said
Among them, how such marvellous trees are there
That they grow birds, and this is their sole fruit.[2]

Forty times eighty is the circuit ta'en,
With ten times fifteen, if I do not err,
By our miles reckoning its circumference.
Here every metal may be dug; and here
I found the people to be given to God,
Steadfast, and strong, and restive to constraint.
Nor is this strange, when one considereth;

[1] Mediæval Britons would seem really to have been credited with this slight peculiarity. At the siege of Damietta, Cœur-de-Lion's bastard brother is said to have pointed out the prudence of deferring the assault, and to have received for rejoinder from the French crusaders, "See now these faint-hearted English with the tails!" To which the Englishman replied, "You will need stout hearts to keep near our tails when the assault is made."

[2] This is the Barnacle-tree, often described in old books of travels and natural history, and which Sir Thomas Browne classes gravely among his "Vulgar Errors."

For courage, beauty, and large-heartedness,
Were there, as it is said, in ancient days.

North Wales, and Orkney, and the banks of Thames,
Land's End, and Stonehenge,[1] and Northumberland,
I chose with my companion to behold.
We went to London, and I saw the tower
Where Guenevere her honour did defend,
With the Thames river which runs close to it.
I saw the castle which by force was ta'en
With the three shields by gallant Lancelot,
The second year that he did deeds of arms.
I beheld Camelot despoil'd and waste;
And was where one and the other had her birth,
The maids of Corbonek and Astolat.
Also I saw the castle where Geraint
Lay with his Enid; likewise Merlin's stone,
Which for another's love I joy'd to see.
I found the tract where is the pine-tree well
And where of old the knight of the black shield
With weeping and with laughter kept the pass,
What time the pitiless and bitter dwarf
Before Sir Gawaine's eyes discourteously
With many heavy stripes led him away.
I saw the valley which Sir Tristram won
When having slain the giant hand to hand
He set the stranger knights from prison free.
And last I view'd the field, at Salisbury,
Of that great martyrdom which left the world
Empty of honour, valour, and delight.

So, compassing that Island round and round,
I saw and hearken'd many things and more
Which might be fair to tell but which I hide.

[1] The words are "Listenois" and "Strangorre," for which I have substituted Land's End and Stonehenge, being unable to identify them. What follows relates to the Romances of the Round Table. The only allusion here which I cannot trace to the *Mort d'Arthur* is one where "Rech" and "Nida" are spoken of: it seems however that, by a perversion hardly too corrupt for Fazio, these might be the Geraint and Enid whose story occurs in the *Mabinogion*, and has been used by Tennyson in his *Idylls of the King*. Why Fazio should have "joyed to see" Merlin's stone "for another's love" seems inscrutable; unless indeed the words "per amor altrui" are a mere idiom, and Merlin himself is the person meant.

III. Extract from the "Dittamondo"

(Lib. iv. Cap. 25)

Of the Dukes of Normandy, and thence of the Kings of England, from William the First to Edward the Third

Thou well hast heard that Rollo had two sons,
One William Longsword, and the other Richard,
Whom thou now know'st to the marrow, as I do.[1]
Daring and watchful, as a leopard is,
Was William, fair in body and in face,
Ready at all times, never slow to act.
He fought great battles, but at last was slain
By the earl of Flanders; so that in his place
Richard his son was o'er the people set.
And next in order, lit with blessed flame
Of the Holy Spirit, his son follow'd him
Who justly lived 'twixt more and less midway,—
His father's likeness, as in shape in name.
So unto him succeeded as his heir
Robert the Frank, high-counsell'd and august:
And thereon following, I proceed to tell
How William, who was Robert's son, did make
The realm of England his co-heritage.
The same was brave and courteous certainly,
Generous and gracious, humble before God,
Master in war and versed in counsel too.
He with great following came from Normandy
And fought with Harold, and so left him slain,
And took the realm and held it at his will.
Thus did this kingdom change its signiory;
And know that all the kings it since has had
Only from this man take their origin.
Therefore, that thou may'st quite forget its past,
I say this happen'd when, since our Lord's Love,
Some thousand years and sixty were gone by.

[1] The speaker here is the poet's guide Solinus (a historical and geographical writer of the third century), who bears the same relation to him which Virgil bears to Dante in the *Commedia*.

While the fourth Henry ruled as emperor,
This king of England fought in many wars
And wax'd through all in honour and account.
And William Rufus next succeeded him;
Tall, strong, and comely-limb'd, but therewith proud
And grasping, and a killer of his kind.
In body he was like his father much,
But was in nature more his contrary
Than fire and water when they come together;
Yet so far good that he won the fame in arms,
And by himself risk'd many an enterprise
All which he brought with honour to an end.
Also if he were bad, he gat great ill;
For, chasing once the deer within a wood,
And having wander'd from his company,
Him by mischance a servant of his own
Hit with an arrow, that he fell and died.
And after him Henry the First was king,
His brother, but therewith the father's like,
Being well with God and just in peace and war.
Next Stephen, on his death, the kingdom seized,
But with sore strife; of whom thus much be said,
That he was frank and good is told of him.
And after him another Henry reign'd,
Who, when the war in France was waged and done,
Pass'd beyond seas with the first Frederick.
Then Richard came, who, after heavy toil
At sea, was captive made in Germany,
Leaving the Sepulchre to join his host.
Who being dead, full heavy was the wrath
Of John his brother; and so well he took
Revenge, that still a moan is made of it.
This John in kingly largesse and in war
Delighted, when the kingdom fell to him;
Hunting and riding ever in hot haste.

Handsome in body and most poor in heart,
Henry his son and heir succeeded him,
Of whom to speak I count it wretchedness.
Yet there's some good to say of him, I grant;
Because of him was the good Edward born,
Whose valour still is famous in the world.
The same was he who, being without dread

Of the Old Man's Assassins, captured them,
And who repaid the jester if he lied.[1]
The same was he who over seas wrought scathe
So many times to Malekdar, and bent
Unto the Christian rule whole provinces.
He was a giant of his body, and great
And proud to view, and of such strength of soul
As never saddens with adversity.

His reign was long; and when his death befell,
The second Edward mounted to the throne,
Who was of one kind with his grandfather.
I say from what report still says of him,
That he was evil, of base intellect,
And would not be advised by any man.
Conceive, good heart! that how to thatch a roof
With straw,—conceive!—he held himself expert,
And therein constantly would take delight!
By fraud he seized the Earl of Lancaster,
And what he did with him I say not here,
But that he left him neither town nor tower.
And thiswise, step by step, thou may'st perceive
That I to the third Edward have advanced,
Who now lives strong and full of enterprise,
And who already has grown manifest
For the best Christian known of in the world.
Thus I have told, as thou wouldst have me tell,
The race of William even unto the end.

FRANCO SACCHETTI

I. Ballata

His Talk with certain Peasant-girls

"Ye graceful peasant-girls and mountain-maids,
Whence come ye homeward through these evening shades?"

"We come from where the forest skirts the hill;
A very little cottage is our home,

[1] This may either refer to some special incident or merely mean generally that he would not suffer lying even in a jester.

Where with our father and our mother still
We live, and love our life, nor wish to roam.
Back every evening from the field we come
And bring with us our sheep from pasturing there."

"Where, tell me, is the hamlet of your birth,
Whose fruitage is the sweetest by so much?
Ye seem to me as creatures worship-worth,
The shining of your countenance is such.
No gold about your clothes, coarse to the touch,
Nor silver; yet with such an angel's air!

"I think your beauties might make great complaint
Of being thus shown over mount and dell;
Because no city is so excellent
But that your stay therein were honourable.
In very truth, now, does it like ye well
To live so poorly on the hill-side here?"

"Better it liketh one of us, pardiè,
Behind her flock to seek the pasture-stance,
Far better than it liketh one of ye
To ride unto your curtain'd rooms and dance.
We seek no riches neither golden chance
Save wealth of flowers to weave into our hair."

Ballad, if I were now as once I was,
I'd make myself a shepherd on some hill,
And, without telling any one, would pass
Where these girls went, and follow at their will;
And "Mary" and "Martin" we would murmur still,
And I would be for ever where they were.

II. Catch

On a Fine Day

"Be stirring, girls! we ought to have a run:
Look, did you ever see so fine a day?
Fling spindles right away,
And rocks and reels and wools:
Now don't be fools,—
To-day your spinning's done.

Up with you, up with you!" So, one by one,
They caught hands, catch who can,
Then singing, singing, to the river they ran,
They ran, they ran
To the river, the river;
And the merry-go-round
Carries them at a bound
To the mill o'er the river.
"Miller, miller, miller,
Weigh me this lady
And this other. Now, steady!"
"You weigh a hundred, you,
And this one weighs two."
"Why, dear, you do get stout!"
"You think so, dear, no doubt:
Are you in a decline?"
"Keep your temper, and I'll keep mine."
"Come, girls," ("O thank you, miller!")
"We'll go home when you will."
So, as we cross'd the hill,
A clown came in great grief
Crying, "Stop thief! stop thief!
O what a wretch I am!"
"Well, fellow, here's a clatter!
Well, what's the matter?"
"O Lord, O Lord, the wolf has got my lamb!"
Now at that word of woe,
The beauties came and clung about me so
That if wolf had but shown himself, may be
I too had caught a lamb that fled to me.

III. Catch

On a Wet Day

As I walk'd thinking through a little grove,
Some girls that gather'd flowers kept passing me,
Saying, "Look here! look there!" delightedly.
"Oh here it is!" "What's that?" "A lily, love."
"And there are violets!"
"Further for roses! Oh the lovely pets—
The darling beauties! Oh the nasty thorn!
Look here, my hand's all torn!"

"What's that that jumps?" "Oh don't! it's a grass-
hopper!"
"Come run, come run,
Here's bluebells!" "Oh what fun!"
"Not that way! Stop her!"
"Yes, this way!" "Pluck them, then!"
"Oh, I've found mushrooms! Oh look here!" "Oh, I'm
Quite sure that further on we'll get wild thyme."
"Oh we shall stay too long, it's going to rain!
There's lightning, oh there's thunder!"
"Oh shan't we hear the vesper-bell, I wonder?"
"Why, it's not nones, you silly little thing;
And don't you hear the nightingales that sing
Fly away O die away ?"
"I feel so funny! Hush!"
"Why, where? what is it then?" "Ah! in that bush!"
So every girl here knocks it, shakes and shocks it,
Till with the stir they make
Out skurries a great snake.
"O Lord! O me! Alack! Ah me! alack!"
They scream, and then all run and scream again,
And then in heavy drops down comes the rain.

Each running at the other in a fright,
Each trying to get before the other, and crying
And flying, stumbling, tumbling, wrong or right;
One sets her knee
There where her foot should be;
One has her hands and dress
All smother'd up with mud in a fine mess;
And one gets trampled on by two or three.
What's gather'd is let fall
About the wood and not pick'd up at all.
The wreaths of flowers are scatter'd on the ground;
And still as screaming, hustling without rest
They run this way and that and round and round,
She thinks herself in luck who runs the best.

I stood quite still to have a perfect view,
And never noticed till I got wet through.

ANONYMOUS POEMS

I. Sonnet

A Lady laments for her lost Lover, by similitude of a Falcon

Alas for me, who loved a falcon well!
So well I loved him, I was nearly dead:
Ever at my low call he bent his head,
And ate of mine, not much, but all that fell.
Now he has fled, how high I cannot tell,
Much higher now than ever he has fled,
And is in a fair garden housed and fed;
Another lady, alas! shall love him well.
O my own falcon whom I taught and rear'd!
Sweet bells of shining gold I gave to thee
That in the chase thou shouldst not be afeard.
Now thou hast risen like the risen sea,
Broken thy jesses loose, and disappear'd,
As soon as thou wast skill'd in falconry.

II. Ballata

One speaks of the Beginning of his Love

This fairest one of all the stars, whose flame,
For ever lit, my inner spirit fills,
Came to me first one day between the hills.

I wonder'd very much; but God the Lord
Said, "From Our Virtue, lo! this light is pour'd."
So in a dream it seem'd that I was led
By a great Master to a garden spread
With lilies underfoot and overhead.

III. Ballata

One speaks of his False Lady

When the last greyness dwells throughout the air
And the first star appears,
Appear'd to me a lady very fair.

I seem'd to know her well by her sweet air;
And, gazing, I was hers.
To honour her, I follow'd her: and then. . . .
Ah! what thou givest, God give thee again,
Whenever thou remain'st as I remain.

IV. Ballata

One speaks of his Feigned and Real Love

For no love borne by me,
Neither because I care
To find that thou art fair,—
To give another pain I gaze on thee.

And now, lest such as thought that thou couldst move
My heart, should read this verse,
I will say here, another has my love.
An angel of the spheres
She seems, and I am hers;
Who has more gentleness
And owns a fairer face
Than any woman else,—at least, to me.

Sweeter than any, more in all at ease,
Lighter and lovelier.
Not to disparage thee; for whoso sees
May like thee more than her.
This vest will one prefer
And one another vest.
To me she seems the best,
And I am hers, and let what will be, be.

For no love borne by me,
Neither because I care
To find that thou art fair,—
To give another pain, I gaze on thee.

V. Ballata

Of True and False Singing

A little wild bird sometimes at my ear
Sings his own little verses very clear:
Others sing louder that I do not hear.

For singing loudly is not singing well;
But ever by the song that's soft and low
The master-singer's voice is plain to tell.
Few have it, and yet all are masters now,
And each of them can trill out what he calls
His ballads, canzonets, and madrigals.

The world with masters is so cover'd o'er,
There is no room for pupils any more.

PART II

DANTE AND HIS CIRCLE

I. Dante Alighieri
(*La Vita Nuova*)
II. Guido Cavalcanti
III. Cino da Pistoia
IV. Dante da Maiano
V. Cecco Angiolieri
VI. Guido Orlandi
VII. Bernardo da Bologna
VIII. Gianni Alfani
IX. Dino Compagni
X. Lapo Gianni
XI. Dino Frescobaldi
XII. Giotto di Bondone
XIII. Simone dall' Antella
XIV. Giovanni Quirino

DANTE ALIGHIERI

THE NEW LIFE

(LA VITA NUOVA)

In that part of the book of my memory before the which is little that can be read, there is a rubric, saying, *Incipit Vita Nova.*[1] Under such rubric I find written many things; and among them the words which I purpose to copy into this little book; if not all of them, at the least their substance.

Nine times already since my birth had the heaven of light returned to the selfsame point almost, as concerns its own revolution, when first the glorious Lady of my mind was made manifest to mine eyes; even she who was called Beatrice by many who knew not wherefore.[2] She had already been in this life for so long as that, within her time, the starry heaven had moved towards the Eastern quarter one of the twelve parts of a degree; so that she appeared to me at the beginning of her ninth year almost, and I saw her almost at the end of my ninth year. Her dress, on that day, was of a most noble colour, a subdued and goodly crimson, girdled and adorned in such sort as best suited with her very tender age. At that moment, I say most truly that the spirit of life, which hath its dwelling in the secretest chamber of the heart, began to tremble so violently that the least pulses of my body shook therewith; and in trembling it said these words: *Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi.*[3] At that moment the animate spirit, which dwelleth in the lofty chamber whither all the senses carry their perceptions, was filled with wonder, and speaking more especially unto the spirits of the eyes, said these words: *Apparuit jam beatitudo vestra.*[4] At that moment the natural

[1] "Here beginneth the new life."

[2] In reference to the meaning of the name, "She who confers blessing." We learn from Boccaccio that this first meeting took place at a May Feast, given in the year 1274 by Folco Portinari, father of Beatrice, who ranked among the principal citizens of Florence: to which feast Dante accompanied his father, Alighiero Alighieri.

[3] "Here is a deity stronger than I; who, coming, shall rule over me."

[4] "Your beatitude hath now been made manifest unto you."

spirit, which dwelleth there where our nourishment is administered, began to weep, and in weeping said these words: *Heu miser! quia frequenter impeditus ero deinceps.*[1]

I say that, from that time forward, Love quite governed my soul; which was immediately espoused to him, and with so safe and undisputed a lordship (by virtue of strong imagination), that I had nothing left for it but to do all his bidding continually. He oftentimes commanded me to seek if I might see this youngest of the Angels: wherefore I in my boyhood often went in search of her, and found her so noble and praiseworthy that certainly of her might have been said those words of the poet Homer, "She seemed not to be the daughter of a mortal man, but of God."[2] And albeit her image, that was with me always, was an exultation of Love to subdue me, it was yet of so perfect a quality that it never allowed me to be overruled by Love without the faithful counsel of reason, whensoever such counsel was useful to be heard. But seeing that were I to dwell overmuch on the passions and doings of such early youth, my words might be counted something fabulous, I will therefore put them aside; and passing many things that may be conceived by the pattern of these, I will come to such as are writ in my memory with a better distinctness.

After the lapse of so many days that nine years exactly were completed since the above-written appearance of this most gracious being, on the last of those days it happened that the same wonderful lady appeared to me dressed all in pure white, between two gentle ladies elder than she. And passing through a street, she turned her eyes thither where I stood sorely abashed: and by her unspeakable courtesy, which is now guerdoned in the Great Cycle, she saluted me with so virtuous a bearing that I seemed then and there to behold the very limits of blessedness. The hour of her most sweet salutation was certainly the ninth of that day; and because it was the first time that any words from her reached mine ears, I came into such sweetness that I parted thence as one intoxicated. And betaking me to the loneliness of mine own room, I fell to thinking of this most courteous lady, thinking of whom I was overtaken by a pleasant

[1] "Alas! how often shall I be disturbed from this time forth!"

[2] Οὐδὲ ἐώικει
Ἀνδρός γε θνητοῦ παῖς ἔμμεναι, ἀλλὰ θεοῖο.
(*Iliad*, xxiv. 258.)

slumber, wherein a marvellous vision was presented to me: for there appeared to be in my room a mist of the colour of fire, within the which I discerned the figure of a lord of terrible aspect to such as should gaze upon him, but who seemed therewithal to rejoice inwardly that it was a marvel to see. Speaking he said many things, among the which I could understand but few; and of these, this: *Ego dominus tuus.*[1] In his arms it seemed to me that a person was sleeping, covered only with a blood-coloured cloth; upon whom looking very attentively, I knew that it was the lady of the salutation who had deigned the day before to salute me. And he who held her held also in his hand a thing that was burning in flames; and he said to me, *Vide cor tuum.*[2] But when he had remained with me a little while, I thought that he set himself to awaken her that slept; after the which he made her to eat that thing which flamed in his hand; and she ate as one fearing. Then, having waited again a space, all his joy was turned into most bitter weeping; and as he wept he gathered the lady into his arms, and it seemed to me that he went with her up towards heaven; whereby such a great anguish came upon me that my light slumber could not endure through it, but was suddenly broken. And immediately having considered, I knew that the hour wherein this vision had been made manifest to me was the fourth hour (which is to say, the first of the nine last hours) of the night.

Then, musing on what I had seen, I proposed to relate the same to many poets who were famous in that day: and for that I had myself in some sort the art of discoursing with rhyme, I resolved on making a sonnet, in the which, having saluted all such as are subject unto Love, and entreated them to expound my vision, I should write unto them those things which I had seen in my sleep. And the sonnet I made was this:—

To every heart which the sweet pain doth move,
And unto which these words may now be brought
For true interpretation and kind thought,
Be greeting in our Lord's name, which is Love.
Of those long hours wherein the stars, above,
Wake and keep watch, the third was almost nought
When Love was shown me with such terrors fraught
As may not carelessly be spoken of.

[1] "I am thy master." [2] "Behold thy heart."

He seem'd like one who is full of joy, and had
My heart within his hand, and on his arm
My lady, with a mantle round her, slept;
Whom (having waken'd her) anon he made
To eat that heart; she ate, as fearing harm.
Then he went out; and as he went, he wept.

This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first part I give greeting, and ask an answer: in the second, I signify what thing has to be answered to. The second part commences here: "Of those long hours."

To this sonnet I received many answers, conveying many different opinions; of the which, one was sent by him whom I now call the first among my friends; and it began thus: "Unto my thinking thou beheld'st all worth." [1] And indeed, it was when he learned that I was he who had sent those rhymes to him, that our friendship commenced. But the true meaning of that vision was not then perceived by any one, though it be now evident to the least skilful.

From that night forth, the natural functions of my body began to be vexed and impeded, for I was given up wholly to thinking of this most gracious creature: whereby in short space I became so weak and so reduced that it was irksome to many of my friends to look upon me; while others, being moved by spite, went about to discover what it was my wish should be concealed. Wherefore I (perceiving the drift of their unkindly questions), by Love's will, who directed me according to the counsels of reason, told them how it was Love himself who had thus dealt with me: and I said so, because the thing was so plainly to be discerned in my countenance that there was no longer any means of concealing it. But when they went on to ask, "And by whose help hath Love done this?" I looked in their faces smiling, and spake no word in return.

Now it fell on a day, that this most gracious creature was sitting where words were to be heard of the Queen of Glory; [2] and I was in a place whence mine eyes could behold their beatitude: and betwixt her and me, in a direct line, there sat another lady of a pleasant favour; who looked round at

[1] The friend of whom Dante here speaks was Guido Cavalcanti. For his answer, and those of Cino da Pistoia and Dante da Maiano, see their poems further on.

[2] *i.e.* in a church.

me many times, marvelling at my continued gaze which seemed to have *her* for its object. And many perceived that she thus looked: so that departing thence, I heard it whispered after me, "Look you to what a pass *such a lady* hath brought him;" and in saying this they named her who had been midway between the most gentle Beatrice, and mine eyes. Therefore I was reassured, and knew that for that day my secret had not become manifest. Then immediately it came into my mind that I might make use of this lady as a screen to the truth: and so well did I play my part that the most of those who had hitherto watched and wondered at me, now imagined they had found me out. By her means I kept my secret concealed till some years were gone over; and for my better security, I even made divers rhymes in her honour; whereof I shall here write only as much as concerneth the most gentle Beatrice, which is but a very little. Moreover, about the same time, while this lady was a screen for so much love on my part, I took the resolution to set down the name of this most gracious creature accompanied with many other women's names, and especially with hers whom I spake of. And to this end I put together the names of sixty the most beautiful ladies in that city where God had placed mine own lady; and these names I introduced in an epistle in the form of a *sirvent*, which it is not my intention to transcribe here. Neither should I have said anything of this matter, did I not wish to take note of a certain strange thing, to wit: that having written the list, I found my lady's name would not stand otherwise than ninth in order among the names of these ladies.

Now it so chanced with her by whose means I had thus long time concealed my desire, that it behoved her to leave the city I speak of, and to journey afar: wherefore I, being sorely perplexed at the loss of so excellent a defence, had more trouble than even I could before have supposed. And thinking that if I spoke not somewhat mournfully of her departure, my former counterfeiting would be the more quickly perceived, I determined that I would make a grievous sonnet [1] thereof; the which I will write here, because it hath certain words in it whereof my lady was the immediate cause,

[1] It will be observed that this poem is not what we now call a sonnet. Its structure, however, is analogous to that of the sonnet, being two sextetts followed by two quattrains, instead of two quattrains followed by two triplets. Dante applies the term sonnet to both these forms of composition, and to no other.

as will be plain to him that understands. And the sonnet was this:—

ALL ye that pass along Love's trodden way,
Pause ye awhile and say
If there be any grief like unto mine:
I pray you that you hearken a short space
Patiently, if my case
Be not a piteous marvel and a sign.

Love (never, certes, for my worthless part,
But of his own great heart)
Vouchsafed to me a life so calm and sweet
That oft I heard folk question as I went
What such great gladness meant:—
They spoke of it behind me in the street.

But now that fearless bearing is all gone
Which with Love's hoarded wealth was given me;
Till I am grown to be
So poor that I have dread to think thereon.

And thus it is that I, being like as one
Who is ashamed and hides his poverty,
Without seem full of glee,
And let my heart within travail and moan.

This poem has two principal parts; for, in the first, I mean to call the Faithful of Love in those words of Jeremias the Prophet, "O vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus," *and to pray them to stay and hear me. In the second I tell where Love had placed me, with a meaning other than that which the last part of the poem shows, and I say what I have lost. The second part begins here:* "*Love* (*never, certes*)."

A certain while after the departure of that lady, it pleased the Master of the Angels to call into His glory a damsel, young and of a gentle presence, who had been very lovely in the city I speak of: and I saw her body lying without its soul among many ladies, who held a pitiful weeping. Whereupon, remembering that I had seen her in the company of excellent Beatrice, I could not hinder myself from a few tears; and weeping, I conceived to say somewhat of her death, in

guerdon of having seen her somewhile with my lady; which thing I spake of in the latter end of the verses that I writ in this matter, as he will discern who understands. And I wrote two sonnets, which are these:—

I

WEEP, Lovers, sith Love's very self doth weep,
And sith the cause for weeping is so great;
When now so many dames, of such estate
In worth, show with their eyes a grief so deep:
For Death the churl has laid his leaden sleep
Upon a damsel who was fair of late,
Defacing all our earth should celebrate,—
Yea all save virtue, which the soul doth keep.
Now hearken how much Love did honour her.
I myself saw him in his proper form
Bending above the motionless sweet dead,
And often gazing into Heaven; for there
The soul now sits which when her life was warm
Dwelt with the joyful beauty that is fled.

This first sonnet is divided into three parts. In the first, I call and beseech the Faithful of Love to weep; and I say that their Lord weeps, and that they, hearing the reason why he weeps, shall be more minded to listen to me. In the second, I relate this reason. In the third, I speak of honour done by Love to this Lady. The second part begins here: "When now so many dames;" the third here: "Now hearken."

II

DEATH, alway cruel, Pity's foe in chief,
Mother, who brought forth grief,
Merciless judgment and without appeal!
Since thou alone hast made my heart to feel
This sadness and unweal,
My tongue upbraideth thee without relief.

And now (for I must rid thy name of ruth)
Behoves me speak the truth

Touching thy cruelty and wickedness:
Not that they be not known; but ne'ertheless
I would give hate more stress
With them that feed on love in very sooth.

Out of this world thou hast driven courtesy,
And virtue, dearly prized in womanhood;
And out of youth's gay mood
The lovely lightness is quite gone through thee.

Whom now I mourn, no man shall learn from me
Save by the measures of these praises given.
Whoso deserves not Heaven
May never hope to have her company.[1]

This poem is divided into four parts. In the first I address Death by certain proper names of hers. In the second, speaking to her, I tell the reason why I am moved to denounce her. In the third, I rail against her. In the fourth, I turn to speak to a person undefined, although defined in my own conception. The second part commences here, "Since thou alone;" the third here, "And now (for I must);" the fourth here, "Whoso deserves not."

Some days after the death of this lady, I had occasion to leave the city I speak of, and to go thitherwards where she abode who had formerly been my protection; albeit the end of my journey reached not altogether so far. And notwithstanding that I was visibly in the company of many, the journey was so irksome that I had scarcely sighing enough to ease my heart's heaviness; seeing that as I went, I left my beatitude behind me. Wherefore it came to pass that he who ruled me by virtue of my most gentle lady was made visible to my mind, in the light habit of a traveller, coarsely fashioned. He appeared to me troubled, and looked always on the ground; saving only that sometimes his eyes were

[1] The commentators assert that the last two lines here do not allude to the dead lady, but to Beatrice. This would make the poem very clumsy in construction; yet there must be some covert allusion to Beatrice, as Dante himself intimates. The only form in which I can trace it consists in the implied assertion that such person as *had* enjoyed the dead lady's society was worthy of heaven, and that person was Beatrice. Or indeed the allusion to Beatrice might be in the first poem, where he says that Love "*in forma vera*" (that is, Beatrice) mourned over the corpse; as he afterwards says of Beatrice, "*Quella ha nome Amor.*" Most probably *both* allusions are intended.

turned towards a river which was clear and rapid, and which flowed along the path I was taking. And then I thought that Love called me and said to me these words: "I come from that lady who was so long thy surety; for the matter of whose return, I know that it may not be. Wherefore I have taken that heart which I made thee leave with her, and do bear it unto another lady, who, as she was, shall be thy surety;" (and when he named her, I knew her well). "And of these words I have spoken, if thou shouldst speak any again, let it be in such sort as that none shall perceive thereby that thy love was feigned for her, which thou must now feign for another." And when he had spoken thus, all my imagining was gone suddenly, for it seemed to me that Love became a part of myself: so that, changed as it were in mine aspect, I rode on full of thought the whole of that day, and with heavy sighing. And the day being over, I wrote this sonnet:—

A DAY agone, as I rode sullenly
  Upon a certain path that liked me not,
  I met Love midway while the air was hot,
Clothed lightly as a wayfarer might be.
And for the cheer he show'd, he seem'd to me
  As one who hath lost lordship he had got;
  Advancing tow'rds me full of sorrowful thought,
Bowing his forehead so that none should see.
Then as I went, he call'd me by my name,
  Saying: "I journey since the morn was dim
    Thence where I made thy heart to be: which now
I needs must bear unto another dame."
  Wherewith so much pass'd into me of him
    That he was gone, and I discern'd not how.

This sonnet has three parts. In the first part, I tell how I met Love, and of his aspect. In the second, I tell what he said to me, although not in full, through the fear I had of discovering my secret. In the third, I say how he disappeared. The second part commences here, "Then as I went;" the third here, "Wherewith so much."

On my return, I set myself to seek out that lady whom my master had named to me while I journeyed sighing. And because I would be brief, I will now narrate that in a short while I made her my surety, in such sort that the matter was spoken of by many in terms scarcely courteous; through the

which I had oftenwhiles many troublesome hours. And by this it happened (to wit: by this false and evil rumour which seemed to misfame me of vice) that she who was the destroyer of all evil and the queen of all good, coming where I was, denied me her most sweet salutation, in the which alone was my blessedness.

And here it is fitting for me to depart a little from this present matter, that it may be rightly understood of what surpassing virtue her salutation was to me. To the which end I say that when she appeared in any place, it seemed to me, by the hope of her excellent salutation, that there was no man mine enemy any longer; and such warmth of charity came upon me that most certainly in that moment I would have pardoned whosoever had done me an injury; and if one should then have questioned me concerning any matter, I could only have said unto him "Love," with a countenance clothed in humbleness. And what time she made ready to salute me, the spirit of Love, destroying all other perceptions, thrust forth the feeble spirits of my eyes, saying, "Do homage unto your mistress," and putting itself in their place to obey: so that he who would, might then have beheld Love, beholding the lids of mine eyes shake. And when this most gentle lady gave her salutation, Love, so far from being a medium beclouding mine intolerable beatitude, then bred in me such an overpowering sweetness that my body, being all subjected thereto, remained many times helpless and passive. Whereby it is made manifest that in her salutation alone was there any beatitude for me, which then very often went beyond my endurance.

And now, resuming my discourse, I will go on to relate that when, for the first time, this beatitude was denied me, I became possessed with such grief that parting myself from others, I went into a lonely place to bathe the ground with most bitter tears: and when, by this heat of weeping, I was somewhat relieved, I betook myself to my chamber, where I could lament unheard. And there, having prayed to the Lady of all Mercies, and having said also, "O Love, aid thou thy servant;" I went suddenly asleep like a beaten sobbing child. And in my sleep, towards the middle of it, I seemed to see in the room, seated at my side, a youth in very white raiment, who kept his eyes fixed on me in deep thought. And when he had gazed some time, I thought that he sighed and called to me in these words: "*Fili mi, tempus est ut*

prætermittantur simulata nostra." [1] And thereupon I seemed to know him; for the voice was the same wherewith he had spoken at other times in my sleep. Then looking at him, I perceived that he was weeping piteously, and that he seemed to be waiting for me to speak. Wherefore, taking heart, I began thus: "Why weepest thou, Master of all honour?" And he made answer to me: "*Ego tanquam centrum circuli, cui simili modo se habent circumferentiæ partes: tu autem non sic.*" [2] And thinking upon his words, they seemed to me obscure; so that again compelling myself unto speech, I asked of him: "What thing is this, Master, that thou hast spoken thus darkly?" To the which he made answer in the vulgar tongue: "Demand no more than may be useful to thee." Whereupon I began to discourse with him concerning her salutation which she had denied me; and when I had questioned him of the cause, he said these words: "Our Beatrice hath heard from certain persons, that the lady whom I named to thee while thou journeyedst full of sighs, is sorely disquieted by thy solicitations: and therefore this most gracious creature, who is the enemy of all disquiet, being fearful of such disquiet, refused to salute thee. For the which reason (albeit, in very sooth, thy secret must needs have become known to her by familiar observation) it is my will that thou compose certain things in rhyme, in the which thou shalt set forth how strong a mastership I have obtained over thee, through her; and how thou wast hers even from thy childhood. Also do thou call upon him that knoweth these things to bear witness to them, bidding him to speak with her thereof; the which I, who am he, will do willingly. And thus she shall be made to know thy desire; knowing which, she shall know likewise that they were deceived who spake of thee to her. And so write these things, that they

[1] "My son, it is time for us to lay aside our counterfeiting."

[2] "I am as the centre of a circle, to the which all parts of the circumference bear an equal relation; but with thee it is not thus." This phrase seems to have remained as obscure to commentators as Dante found it at the moment. No one, so far as I know, has even fairly tried to find a meaning for it. To me the following appears a not unlikely one. Love is weeping on Dante's account, and not on his own. He says, "I am the centre of a circle (*Amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle*): therefore all loveable objects, whether in heaven or earth, or any part of the circle's circumference, are equally near to me. Not so thou, who wilt one day lose Beatrice when she goes to heaven." The phrase would thus contain an intimation of the death of Beatrice, accounting for Dante being next told not to inquire the meaning of the speech, "Demand no more than may be useful to thee."

shall seem rather to be spoken by a third person; and not directly by thee to her, which is scarce fitting. After the which, send them, not without me, where she may chance to hear them; but have them fitted with a pleasant music, into the which I will pass whensoever it needeth." With this speech he was away, and my sleep was broken up.

Whereupon, remembering me, I knew that I had beheld this vision during the ninth hour of the day; and I resolved that I would make a ditty, before I left my chamber, according to the words my master had spoken. And this is the ditty that I made:—

Song, 'tis my will that thou do seek out Love,
And go with him where my dear lady is;
That so my cause, the which thy harmonies
Do plead, his better speech may clearly prove.

Thou goest, my Song, in such a courteous kind,
That even companionless
Thou may'st rely on thyself anywhere.
And yet, an' thou wouldst get thee a safe mind,
First unto Love address
Thy steps; whose aid, mayhap, 'twere ill to spare:
Seeing that she to whom thou mak'st thy prayer
Is, as I think, ill-minded unto me,
And that if Love do not companion thee,
Thou'lt have perchance small cheer to tell me of.

With a sweet accent, when thou com'st to her,
Begin thou in these words,
First having craved a gracious audience:
"He who hath sent me as his messenger,
Lady, thus much records,
An' thou but suffer him, in his defence.
Love, who comes with me, by thine influence
Can make this man do as it liketh him:
Wherefore, if this fault *is* or doth but *seem*
Do thou conceive: for his heart cannot move."

Say to her also: "Lady, his poor heart
Is so confirm'd in faith
That all its thoughts are but of serving thee:
'Twas early thine, and could not swerve apart."

Then, if she wavereth,
Bid her ask Love, who knows if these things be.
And in the end, beg of her modestly
To pardon so much boldness: saying too:—
"If thou declare his death to be thy due,
The thing shall come to pass, as doth behove."

Then pray thou of the Master of all ruth,
Before thou leave her there,
That he befriend my cause and plead it well.
"In guerdon of my sweet rhymes and my truth"
(Entreat him) "Stay with her;
Let not the hope of thy poor servant fail;
And if with her thy pleading should prevail,
Let her look on him and give peace to him."
Gentle my Song, if good to thee it seem,
Do this: so worship shall be thine and love.

This ditty is divided into three parts. In the first, I tell it whither to go, and I encourage it, that it may go the more confidently, and I tell it whose company to join if it would go with confidence and without any danger. In the second, I say that which it behoves the ditty to set forth. In the third, I give it leave to start when it pleases, recommending its course to the arms of Fortune. The second part begins here, "With a sweet accent;" the third here, "Gentle my Song." Some might contradict me, and say that they understand not whom I address in the second person, seeing that the ditty is merely the very words I am speaking. And therefore I say that this doubt I intend to solve and clear up in this little book itself, at a more difficult passage, and then let him understand who now doubts, or would now contradict as aforesaid.

After this vision I have recorded, and having written those words which Love had dictated to me, I began to be harassed with many and divers thoughts, by each of which I was sorely tempted; and in especial, there were four among them that left me no rest. The first was this: "Certainly the lordship of Love is good; seeing that it diverts the mind from all mean things." The second was this: "Certainly the lordship of Love is evil; seeing that the more homage his servants pay to him, the more grievous and painful are the torments wherewith he torments them." The third was this: "The name of Love is so sweet in the hearing that it would not seem

possible for its effects to be other than sweet; seeing that the name must needs be like unto the thing named: as it is written: *Nomina sunt consequentia rerum.*" [1] And the fourth was this: "The lady whom Love hath chosen out to govern thee is not as other ladies, whose hearts are easily moved."

And by each one of these thoughts I was so sorely assailed that I was like unto him who doubteth which path to take, and wishing to go, goeth not. And if I bethought myself to seek out some point at the which all these paths might be found to meet, I discerned but one way, and that irked me; to wit, to call upon Pity, and to commend myself unto her. And it was then that, feeling a desire to write somewhat thereof in rhyme, I wrote this sonnet:—

All my thoughts always speak to me of Love,
Yet have between themselves such difference
That while one bids me bow with mind and sense,
A second saith, "Go to: look thou above;"
The third one, hoping, yields me joy enough;
And with the last come tears, I scarce know whence:
All of them craving pity in sore suspense,
Trembling with fears that the heart knoweth of.
And thus, being all unsure which path to take,
Wishing to speak I know not what to say,
And lose myself in amorous wanderings:
Until (my peace with all of them to make),
Unto mine enemy I needs must pray,
My lady Pity, for the help she brings.

This sonnet may be divided into four parts. In the first, I say and propound that all my thoughts are concerning Love. In the second, I say that they are diverse, and I relate their diversity. In the third, I say wherein they all seem to agree. In the fourth, I say that, wishing to speak of Love, I know not from which of these thoughts to take my argument; and that if I would take it from all, I shall have to call upon mine enemy, my Lady Pity. "Lady" I say as in a scornful mode of speech. The second begins here, "Yet have between themselves;" the third, "All of them craving;" the fourth, "And thus."

After this battling with many thoughts, it chanced on a day that my most gracious lady was with a gathering of

[1] "Names are the consequents of things."

ladies in a certain place; to the which I was conducted by a friend of mine; he thinking to do me a great pleasure by showing me the beauty of so many women. Then I, hardly knowing whereunto he conducted me, but trusting in him (who yet was leading his friend to the last verge of life), made question: "To what end are we come among these ladies?" and he answered: "To the end that they may be worthily served." And they were assembled around a gentlewoman who was given in marriage on that day; the custom of the city being that these should bear her company when she sat down for the first time at table in the house of her husband. Therefore I, as was my friend's pleasure, resolved to stay with him and do honour to those ladies.

But as soon as I had thus resolved, I began to feel a faintness and a throbbing at my left side, which soon took possession of my whole body. Whereupon I remember that I covertly leaned my back unto a painting that ran round the walls of that house; and being fearful lest my trembling should be discerned of them, I lifted mine eyes to look on those ladies, and then first perceived among them the excellent Beatrice. And when I perceived her, all my senses were overpowered by the great lordship that Love obtained, finding himself so near unto that most gracious being, until nothing but the spirits of sight remained to me; and even these remained driven out of their own instruments because Love entered in that honoured place of theirs, that so he might the better behold her. And although I was other than at first, I grieved for the spirits so expelled which kept up a sore lament, saying: "If he had not in this wise thrust us forth, we also should behold the marvel of this lady." By this, many of her friends, having discerned my confusion, began to wonder; and together with herself, kept whispering of me and mocking me. Whereupon my friend, who knew not what to conceive, took me by the hands, and drawing me forth from among them, required to know what ailed me. Then, having first held me at quiet for a space until my perceptions were come back to me, I made answer to my friend: "Of a surety I have now set my feet on that point of life, beyond the which he must not pass who would return." [1]

[1] It is difficult not to connect Dante's agony at this wedding-feast with our knowledge that in her twenty-first year Beatrice was wedded to Simone de' Bardi. That she herself was the bride on this occasion might seem out of the question from the fact of its not being in any way so stated; but, on the other hand, Dante's silence throughout the

Afterwards, leaving him, I went back to the room where I had wept before; and again weeping and ashamed, said: "If this lady but knew of my condition, I do not think that she would thus mock at me; nay, I am sure that she must needs feel some pity." And in my weeping I bethought me to write certain words in the which, speaking to her, I should signify the occasion of my disfigurement, telling her also how I knew that she had no knowledge thereof: which, if it were known, I was certain must move others to pity. And then, because I hoped that peradventure it might come into her hearing, I wrote this sonnet.

EVEN as the others mock, thou mockest me;
Not dreaming, noble lady, whence it is
That I am taken with strange semblances,
Seeing thy face which is so fair to see:
For else, compassion would not suffer thee
To grieve my heart with such harsh scoffs as these.
Lo! Love, when thou art present, sits at ease,
And bears his mastership so mightily,
That all my troubled senses he thrusts out,
Sorely tormenting some, and slaying some,
Till none but he is left and has free range
To gaze on thee. This makes my face to change
Into another's; while I stand all dumb,
And hear my senses clamour in their rout.

This sonnet I divide not into parts, because a division is only made to open the meaning of the thing divided: and this, as it is sufficiently manifest through the reasons given, has no need of division. True it is that, amid the words whereby is shown the occasion of this sonnet, dubious words are to be found; namely, when I say that Love kills all my spirits, but that the visual remain in life, only outside of their own instruments. And this difficulty it is impossible for any to solve who is not in equal guise liege unto Love; and, to those who are so, that is manifest which would clear up the dubious words. And therefore it were not well for me to expound this difficulty, inasmuch as my speaking would be either fruitless or else superfluous.

A while after this strange disfigurement, I became pos-

Vita Nuova as regards her marriage (which must have brought deep sorrow even to his ideal love) is so startling, that we might almost be led to conceive in this passage the only intimation of it which he thought fit to give.

sessed with a strong conception which left me but very seldom, and then to return quickly. And it was this: "Seeing that thou comest into such scorn by the companionship of this lady, wherefore seekest thou to behold her? If she should ask thee this thing, what answer couldst thou make unto her? yea, even though thou wert master of all thy faculties, and in no way hindered from answering," Unto the which, another very humble thought said in reply: "If I were master of all my faculties, and in no way hindered from answering, I would tell her that no sooner do I image to myself her marvellous beauty than I am possessed with the desire to behold her, the which is of so great strength that it kills and destroys in my memory all those things which might oppose it; and it is therefore that the great anguish I have endured thereby is yet not enough to restrain me from seeking to behold her." And then, because of these thoughts, I resolved to write somewhat, wherein, having pleaded mine excuse, I should tell her of what I felt in her presence. Whereupon I wrote this sonnet:—

THE thoughts are broken in my memory,
Thou lovely Joy, whene'er I see thy face;
When thou art near me, Love fills up the space,
Often repeating, "If death irk thee, fly."
My face shows my heart's colour, verily,
Which, fainting, seeks for any leaning-place;
Till, in the drunken terror of disgrace,
The very stones seem to be shrieking, "Die!"
It were a grievous sin, if one should not
Strive then to comfort my bewilder'd mind
(Though merely with a simple pitying),
For the great anguish which thy scorn has wrought
In the dead sight o' the eyes grown nearly blind,
Which look for death as for a blessed thing.

This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first, I tell the cause why I abstain not from coming to this lady. In the second, I tell what befalls me through coming to her; and this part begins here, "When thou art near." And also this second part divides into five distinct statements. For, in the first, I say what Love, counselled by Reason, tells me when I am near the lady. In the second, I set forth the state of my heart by the example of the face. In the third, I say how all ground of trust

fails me. In the fourth, I say that he sins who shows not pity of me, which would give me some comfort. In the last, I say why people should take pity: namely, for the piteous look which comes into mine eyes; which piteous look is destroyed, that is, appeareth not unto others, through the jeering of this lady, who draws to the like action those who peradventure would see this piteousness. The second part begins here, "My face shows;" the third, "Till, in the drunken terror;" the fourth, "It were a grievous sin;" the fifth, "For the great anguish."

Thereafter, this sonnet bred in me desire to write down in verse four other things touching my condition, the which things it seemed to me that I had not yet made manifest. The first among these was the grief that possessed me very often, remembering the strangeness which Love wrought in me; the second was, how Love many times assailed me so suddenly and with such strength that I had no other life remaining except a thought which spake of my lady; the third was, how when Love did battle with me in this wise, I would rise up all colourless, if so I might see my lady, conceiving that the sight of her would defend me against the assault of Love, and altogether forgetting that which her presence brought unto me; and the fourth was, how when I saw her, the sight not only defended me not, but took away the little life that remained to me. And I said these four things in a sonnet, which is this:—

At whiles (yea oftentimes) I muse over
The quality of anguish that is mine
Through Love: then pity makes my voice to pine
Saying, "Is any else thus, anywhere?"
Love smiteth me, whose strength is ill to bear;
So that of all my life is left no sign
Except one thought; and that, because 'tis thine,
Leaves not the body but abideth there.
And then if I, whom other aid forsook,
Would aid myself, and innocent of art
Would fain have sight of thee as a last hope,
No sooner do I lift mine eyes to look
Than the blood seems as shaken from my heart,
And all my pulses beat at once and stop.

This sonnet is divided into four parts, four things being

therein narrated ; and as these are set forth above, I only proceed to distinguish the parts by their beginnings. Wherefore I say that the second part begins, " Love smiteth me ; " the third, " And then if I ; " the fourth, " No sooner do I lift."

After I had written these three last sonnets, wherein I spake unto my lady, telling her almost the whole of my condition, it seemed to me that I should be silent, having said enough concerning myself. But albeit I spake not to her again, yet it behoved me afterward to write of another matter, more noble than the foregoing. And for that the occasion of what I then wrote may be found pleasant in the hearing, I will relate it as briefly as I may.

Through the sore change in mine aspect, the secret of my heart was now understood of many. Which thing being thus, there came a day when certain ladies to whom it was well known (they having been with me at divers times in my trouble) were met together for the pleasure of gentle company. And as I was going that way by chance (but I think rather by the will of fortune), I heard one of them call unto me, and she that called was a lady of very sweet speech. And when I had come close up with them, and perceived that they had not among them mine excellent lady, I was reassured; and saluted them, asking of their pleasure. The ladies were many; divers of whom were laughing one to another, while divers gazed at me as though I should speak anon. But when I still spake not, one of them, who before had been talking with another, addressed me by my name, saying, " To what end lovest thou this lady, seeing that thou canst not support her presence? Now tell us this thing, that we may know it: for certainly the end of such a love must be worthy of knowledge." And when she had spoken these words, not she only, but all they that were with her, began to observe me, waiting for my reply. Whereupon, I said thus unto them: " Ladies, the end and aim of my Love was but the salutation of that lady of whom I conceive that ye are speaking; wherein alone I found that beatitude which is the goal of desire. And now that it hath pleased her to deny me this, Love, my Master, of his great goodness, hath placed all my beatitude there where my hope will not fail me." Then those ladies began to talk closely together; and as I have seen snow fall among the rain, so was their talk mingled with sighs. But after a little, that lady who had been the first to address me, addressed me again in these

words: "We pray thee that thou wilt tell us wherein abideth this thy beatitude." And answering, I said but thus much: "In those words that do praise my lady." To the which she rejoined, "If thy speech were true, those words that thou didst write concerning thy condition would have been written with another intent."

Then I, being almost put to shame because of her answer, went out from among them; and as I walked, I said within myself: "Seeing that there is so much beatitude in those words which do praise my lady, wherefore hath my speech of her been different?" And then I resolved that thenceforward I would choose for the theme of my writings only the praise of this most gracious being. But when I had thought exceedingly, it seemed to me that I had taken to myself a theme which was much too lofty, so that I dared not begin; and I remained during several days in the desire of speaking, and the fear of beginning. After which it happened, as I passed one day along a path which lay beside a stream of very clear water, that there came upon me a great desire to say somewhat in rhyme; but when I began thinking how I should say it, methought that to speak of her were unseemly, unless I spoke to other ladies in the second person; which is to say, not to *any* other ladies; but only to such as are so called because they are gentle, let alone for mere womanhood. Whereupon I declare that my tongue spake as though by its own impulse, and said, "Ladies that have intelligence in love." These words I laid up in my mind with great gladness, conceiving to take them as my commencement. Wherefore, having returned to the city I spake of, and considered thereof during certain days, I began a poem with this beginning, constructed in the mode which will be seen below in its division. The poem begins here:—

Ladies that have intelligence in love,
Of mine own lady I would speak with you;
Not that I hope to count her praises through,
But telling what I may, to ease my mind.
And I declare that when I speak thereof
Love sheds such perfect sweetness over me
That if my courage fail'd not, certainly
To him my listeners must be all resign'd.
Wherefore I will not speak in such large kind
That mine own speech should foil me, which were base;

But only will discourse of her high grace
In these poor words, the best that I can find,
With you alone, dear dames and damozels:
'Twere ill to speak thereof with any else.

An Angel, of his blessed knowledge, saith
To God: "Lord, in the world that Thou hast made,
A miracle in action is display'd
By reason of a soul whose splendours fare
Even hither: and since Heaven requireth
Nought saving her, for her it prayeth Thee,
Thy Saints crying aloud continually."
Yet Pity still defends our earthly share
In that sweet soul; God answering thus the prayer:
"My well-belovèd, suffer that in peace
Your hope remain, while so My pleasure is,
There where one dwells who dreads the loss of her;
And who in Hell unto the doom'd shall say,
'I have look'd on that for which God's chosen pray.'"

My lady is desired in the high Heaven:
Wherefore, it now behoveth me to tell,
Saying: Let any maid that would be well
Esteem'd keep with her: for as she goes by,
Into foul hearts a deathly chill is driven
By Love, that makes ill thought to perish there;
While any who endures to gaze on her
Must either be made noble, or else die.
When one deserving to be raised so high
Is found, 'tis then her power attains its proof,
Making his heart strong for his soul's behoof
With the full strength of meek humility.
Also this virtue owns she, by God's will:
Who speaks with her can never come to ill.

Love saith concerning her: "How chanceth it
That flesh, which is of dust, should be thus pure?"
Then, gazing always, he makes oath: "For sure,
This is a creature of God till now unknown."
She hath that paleness of the pearl that's fit
In a fair woman, so much and not more;
She is as high as Nature's skill can soar;
Beauty is tried by her comparison.

Whatever her sweet eyes are turn'd upon,
Spirits of love do issue thence in flame,
Which through their eyes who then may look on them
Pierce to the heart's deep chamber every one.
And in her smile Love's image you may see;
Whence none can gaze upon her steadfastly.

Dear Song, I know thou wilt hold gentle speech
With many ladies, when I send thee forth:
Wherefore (being mindful that thou hadst thy birth
From Love, and art a modest, simple child),
Whomso thou meetest, say thou this to each:
"Give me good speed! To her I wend along
In whose much strength my weakness is made strong."
And if, i' the end, thou wouldst not be beguiled
Of all thy labour, seek not the defiled
And common sort; but rather choose to be
Where man and woman dwell in courtesy.
So to the road thou shalt be reconciled,
And find the lady, and with the lady, Love.
Commend thou me to each, as doth behove.

This poem, that it may be better understood, I will divide more subtly than the others preceding; and therefore I will make three parts of it. The first part is a proem to the words following. The second is the matter treated of. The third is, as it were, a handmaid to the preceding words. The second begins here, "An angel;" the third here, "Dear Song, I know." The first part is divided into four. In the first, I say to whom I mean to speak of my lady, and wherefore I will so speak. In the second, I say what she appears to myself to be when I reflect upon her excellence, and what I would utter if I lost not courage. In the third, I say what it is I purpose to speak, so as not to be impeded by faint-heartedness. In the fourth, repeating to whom I purpose speaking, I tell the reason why I speak to them. The second begins here, "And I declare;" the third here, "Wherefore I will not speak;" the fourth here, "With you alone." Then, when I say "An Angel," I begin treating of this lady: and this part is divided into two. In the first, I tell what is understood of her in heaven. In the second, I tell what is understood of her on earth: here, "My lady is desired." This second part is divided into two; for, in the first, I speak of her as regards the nobleness of her soul: relating

some of her virtues proceeding from her soul; in the second, I speak of her as regards the nobleness of her body, narrating some of her beauties: here, "Love saith concerning her." This second part is divided into two; for, in the first, I speak of certain beauties which belong to the whole person; in the second, I speak of certain beauties which belong to a distinct part of the person: here, "Whatever her sweet eyes." This second part is divided into two; for, in the one, I speak of the eyes, which are the beginning of love; in the second, I speak of the mouth, which is the end of love. And, that every vicious thought may be discarded herefrom, let the reader remember that it is above written that the greeting of this lady, which was an act of her mouth, was the goal of my desires, while I could receive it. Then, when I say, "Dear Song, I know," I add a stanza as it were handmaid to the others, wherein I say what I desire from this my poem. And because this last part is easy to understand, I trouble not myself with more divisions. I say, indeed, that the further to open the meaning of this poem, more minute divisions ought to be used; but nevertheless he who is not of wit enough to understand it by these which have been already made is welcome to leave it alone; for certes I fear I have communicated its sense to too many by these present divisions, if it so happened that many should hear it.

When this song was a little gone abroad, a certain one of my friends, hearing the same, was pleased to question me, that I should tell him what thing love is; it may be, conceiving from the words thus heard a hope of me beyond my desert. Wherefore I, thinking that after such discourse it were well to say somewhat of the nature of Love, and also in accordance with my friend's desire, proposed to myself to write certain words in the which I should treat of this argument. And the sonnet that I then made is this:—

Love and the gentle heart are one same thing,
Even as the wise man [1] in his ditty saith.
Each, of itself, would be such life in death
As rational soul bereft of reasoning.
'Tis Nature makes them when she loves: a king
Love is, whose palace where he sojourneth
Is call'd the Heart; there draws he quiet breath
At first, with brief or longer slumbering.

[1] Guido Guinicelli, in the canzone which begins, "Within the gentle heart Love shelters him." (See *ante*, p. 168.)

Then beauty seen in virtuous womankind
Will make the eyes desire, and through the heart
Send the desiring of the eyes again;
Where often it abides so long enshrined
That Love at length out of his sleep will start.
And women feel the same for worthy men.

This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first, I speak of him according to his power. In the second, I speak of him according as his power translates itself into act. The second part begins here, "Then beauty seen." The first is divided into two. In the first, I say in what subject this power exists. In the second, I say how this subject and this power are produced together, and how the one regards the other, as form does matter. The second begins here, "'Tis Nature." Afterwards when I say, "Then beauty seen in virtuous womankind," I say how this power translates itself into act; and, first, how it so translates itself in a man, then how it so translates itself in a woman: here, "And women feel."

Having treated of love in the foregoing, it appeared to me that I should also say something in praise of my lady, wherein it might be set forth how love manifested itself when produced by her; and how not only she could awaken it where it slept, but where it was not she could marvellously create it. To the which end I wrote another sonnet; and it is this:—

My lady carries love within her eyes;
All that she looks on is made pleasanter;
Upon her path men turn to gaze at her;
He whom she greeteth feels his heart to rise,
And droops his troubled visage, full of sighs,
And of his evil heart is then aware:
Hate loves, and pride becomes a worshipper.
O women, help to praise her in somewise.
Humbleness, and the hope that hopeth well,
By speech of hers into the mind are brought,
And who beholds is blessed oftenwhiles.
The look she hath when she a little smiles
Cannot be said, nor holden in the thought;
'Tis such a new and gracious miracle.

This sonnet has three sections. In the first, I say how this lady brings this power into action by those most noble features,

her eyes: and, in the third, I say this same as to that most noble feature, her mouth. And between these two sections is a little section, which asks, as it were, help for the previous section and the subsequent; and it begins here, "O women, help." The third begins here, "Humbleness." The first is divided into three; for, in the first, I say how she with power makes noble that which she looks upon; and this is as much as to say that she brings Love, in power, thither where he is not. In the second, I say how she brings Love, in act, into the hearts of all those whom she sees. In the third, I tell what she afterwards, with virtue, operates upon their hearts. The second begins, "Upon her path;" the third, "He whom she greeteth." Then, when I say, "O women, help," I intimate to whom it is my intention to speak, calling on women to help me to honour her. Then, when I say, "Humbleness," I say that same which is said in the first part, regarding two acts of her mouth, one whereof is her most sweet speech, and the other her marvellous smile. Only, I say not of this last how it operates upon the hearts of others, because memory cannot retain this smile, nor its operation.

Not many days after this (it being the will of the most High God, who also from Himself put not away death), the father of wonderful Beatrice, going out of this life, passed certainly into glory. Thereby it happened, as of very sooth it might not be otherwise, that this lady was made full of the bitterness of grief: seeing that such a parting is very grievous unto those friends who are left, and that no other friendship is like to that between a good parent and a good child; and furthermore considering that this lady was good in the supreme degree, and her father (as by many it hath been truly averred) of exceeding goodness. And because it is the usage of that city that men meet with men in such a grief, and women with women, certain ladies of her companionship gathered themselves unto Beatrice, where she kept alone in her weeping: and as they passed in and out, I could hear them speak concerning her, how she wept. At length two of them went by me, who said: "Certainly she grieveth in such sort that one might die for pity, beholding her." Then, feeling the tears upon my face, I put up my hands to hide them: and had it not been that I hoped to hear more concerning her (seeing that where I sat, her friends passed continually in and out), I should assuredly have gone thence to be alone, when I felt the tears come. But as I still sat in

that place, certain ladies again passed near me, who were saying among themselves: "Which of us shall be joyful any more, who have listened to this lady in her piteous sorrow?" And there were others who said as they went by me: "He that sitteth here could not weep more if he had beheld her as we have beheld her;" and again: "He is so altered that he seemeth not as himself." And still as the ladies passed to and fro, I could hear them speak after this fashion of her and of me.

Wherefore afterwards, having considered and perceiving that there was herein matter for poesy, I resolved that I would write certain rhymes in the which should be contained all that those ladies had said. And because I would willingly have spoken to them if it had not been for discreetness, I made in my rhymes as though I had spoken and they had answered me. And thereof I wrote two sonnets; in the first of which I addressed them as I would fain have done; and in the second related their answer, using the speech that I had heard from them, as though it had been spoken unto myself. And the sonnets are these:—

I

You that thus wear a modest countenance
With lids weigh'd down by the heart's heaviness,
Whence come you, that among you every face
Appears the same, for its pale troubled glance?
Have you beheld my lady's face, perchance,
Bow'd with the grief that Love makes full of grace?
Say now, "This thing is thus;" as my heart says,
Marking your grave and sorrowful advance.
And if indeed you come from where she sighs
And mourns, may it please you (for his heart's relief)
To tell how it fares with her unto him
Who knows that you have wept, seeing your eyes,
And is so grieved with looking on your grief
That his heart trembles and his sight grows dim.

This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first, I call and ask these ladies whether they come from her, telling them that I think they do, because they return the nobler. In the second, I pray them to tell me of her: and the second begins here, "And if indeed."

II

CANST thou indeed be he that still would sing
Of our dear lady unto none but us?
For though thy voice confirms that it is thus,
Thy visage might another witness bring.
And wherefore is thy grief so sore a thing
That grieving thou mak'st others dolorous?
Hast thou too seen her weep, that thou from us
Canst not conceal thine inward sorrowing?
Nay, leave our woe to us: let us alone:
'Twere sin if one should strive to soothe our woe,
For in her weeping we have heard her speak:
Also her look's so full of her heart's moan
That they who should behold her, looking so,
Must fall aswoon, feeling all life grow weak.

This sonnet has four parts, as the ladies in whose person I reply had four forms of answer. And because these are sufficiently shown above, I stay not to explain the purport of the parts, and therefore I only discriminate them. The second begins here, "And wherefore is thy grief;" the third here, "Nay, leave our woe;" the fourth, "Also her look."

A few days after this, my body became afflicted with a painful infirmity, whereby I suffered bitter anguish for many days, which at last brought me unto such weakness that I could no longer move. And I remember that on the ninth day, being overcome with intolerable pain, a thought came into my mind concerning my lady: but when it had a little nourished this thought, my mind returned to its brooding over mine enfeebled body. And then perceiving how frail a thing life is, even though health keep with it, the matter seemed to me so pitiful that I could not choose but weep; and weeping I said within myself: "Certainly it must sometime come to pass that the very gentle Beatrice will die." Then, feeling bewildered, I closed mine eyes; and my brain began to be in travail as the brain of one frantic, and to have such imaginations as here follow.

And at the first, it seemed to me that I saw certain faces of women with their hair loosened, which called out to me, "Thou shalt surely die;" after the which, other terrible and unknown appearances said unto me, "Thou art dead." At

length, as my phantasy held on in its wanderings, I came to be I knew not where, and to behold a throng of dishevelled ladies wonderfully sad, who kept going hither and thither weeping. Then the sun went out, so that the stars showed themselves and they were of such a colour that I knew they must be weeping; and it seemed to me that the birds fell dead out of the sky, and that there were great earthquakes. With that, while I wondered in my trance, and was filled with a grievous fear, I conceived that a certain friend came unto me and said: "Hast thou not heard? She that was thine excellent lady hath been taken out of life." Then I began to weep very piteously; and not only in mine imagination, but with mine eyes, which were wet with tears. And I seemed to look towards Heaven, and to behold a multitude of angels who were returning upwards, having before them an exceedingly white cloud: and these angels were singing together gloriously, and the words of their song were these; "*Osanna in excelsis:*" and there was no more that I heard. Then my heart that was so full of love said unto me: "It is true that our lady lieth dead:" and it seemed to me that I went to look upon the body wherein that blessed and most noble spirit had had its abiding-place. And so strong was this idle imagining, that it made me to behold my lady in death; whose head certain ladies seemed to be covering with a white veil; and who was so humble of her aspect that it was as though she had said, "I have attained to look on the beginning of peace." And therewithal I came unto such humility by the sight of her, that I cried out upon Death, saying: "Now come unto me, and be not bitter against me any longer: surely, there where thou hast been, thou hast learned gentleness. Wherefore come now unto me who do greatly desire thee: seest thou not that I wear thy colour already?" And when I had seen all those offices performed that are fitting to be done unto the dead, it seemed to me that I went back unto mine own chamber, and looked up towards heaven. And so strong was my phantasy, that I wept again in very truth, and said with my true voice: "O excellent soul! how blessed is he that now looketh upon thee!"

And as I said these words, with a painful anguish of sobbing and another prayer unto Death, a young and gentle lady, who had been standing beside me where I lay, conceiving that I wept and cried out because of the pain of mine

infirmity, was taken with trembling and began to shed tears. Whereby other ladies, who were about the room, becoming aware of my discomfort by reason of the moan that she made (who indeed was of my very near kindred), led her away from where I was, and then set themselves to awaken me, thinking that I dreamed, and saying: "Sleep no longer, and be not disquieted."

Then, by their words, this strong imagination was brought suddenly to an end, at the moment that I was about to say, "O Beatrice! peace be with thee." And already I had said, "O Beatrice!" when, being aroused, I opened mine eyes, and knew that it had been a deception. But albeit I had indeed uttered her name, yet my voice was so broken with sobs, that it was not understood by these ladies; so that in spite of the sore shame that I felt, I turned towards them by Love's counselling. And when they beheld me, they began to say, "He seemeth as one dead," and to whisper among themselves, "Let us strive if we may not comfort him." Whereupon they spake to me many soothing words, and questioned me moreover touching the cause of my fear. Then I, being somewhat reassured, and having perceived that it was a mere phantasy, said unto them, "This thing it was that made me afeard;" and told them of all that I had seen, from the beginning even unto the end, but without once speaking the name of my lady. Also, after I had recovered from my sickness, I bethought me to write these things in rhyme; deeming it a lovely thing to be known. Whereof I wrote this poem:—

A VERY pitiful lady, very young,
  Exceeding rich in human sympathies,
    Stood by, what time I clamour'd upon Death;
And at the wild words wandering on my tongue
  And at the piteous look within mine eyes
    She was affrighted, that sobs choked her breath.
    So by her weeping where I lay beneath,
Some other gentle ladies came to know
My state, and made her go:
  Afterward, bending themselves over me,
  One said, "Awaken thee!"
    And one, "What thing thy sleep disquieteth?"
With that, my soul woke up from its eclipse,
The while my lady's name rose to my lips:

But utter'd in a voice so sob-broken,
So feeble with the agony of tears,
That I alone might hear it in my heart;
And though that look was on my visage then
Which he who is ashamed so plainly wears,
Love made that I through shame held not apart,
But gazed upon them. And my hue was such
That they look'd at each other and thought of death;
Saying under their breath
Most tenderly, "Oh, let us comfort him:"
Then unto me: "What dream
Was thine, that it hath shaken thee so much?"
And when I was a little comforted,
"This, ladies, was the dream I dreamt," I said.

"I was a-thinking how life fails with us
Suddenly after such a little while;
When Love sobb'd in my heart, which is his home.
Whereby my spirit wax'd so dolorous
That in myself I said, with sick recoil:
'Yea, to my lady too this Death must come.'
And therewithal such a bewilderment
Possess'd me, that I shut mine eyes for peace;
And in my brain did cease
Order of thought, and every healthful thing.
Afterwards, wandering
Amid a swarm of doubts that came and went,
Some certain women's faces hurried by,
And shriek'd to me, 'Thou too shalt die, shalt die!'

"Then saw I many broken hinted sights
In the uncertain state I stepp'd into.
Meseem'd to be I know not in what place,
Where ladies through the street, like mournful lights,
Ran with loose hair, and eyes that frighten'd you
By their own terror, and a pale amaze:
The while, little by little, as I thought,
The sun ceased, and the stars began to gather,
And each wept at the other;
And birds dropp'd in mid-flight out of the sky;
And earth shook suddenly;
And I was 'ware of one, hoarse and tired out,

Who ask'd of me: 'Hast thou not heard it said? . . .
Thy lady, she that was so fair, is dead.'

" Then lifting up mine eyes, as the tears came,
I saw the Angels, like a rain of manna,
In a long flight flying back Heavenward;
Having a little cloud in front of them,
After the which they went and said, 'Hosanna!'
And if they had said more, you should have heard.
Then Love spoke thus: 'Now all shall be made clear:
Come and behold our lady where she lies.'
These idle phantasies
Then carried me to see my lady dead:
And standing at her head
Her ladies put a white veil over her;
And with her was such very humbleness
That she appeared to say, 'I am at peace.'

" And I became so humble in my grief,
Seeing in her such deep humility,
That I said: 'Death, I hold thee passing good
Henceforth, and a most gentle sweet relief,
Since my dear love has chosen to dwell with thee:
Pity, not hate, is thine, well understood.
Lo! I do so desire to see thy face
That I am like as one who nears the tomb;
My soul entreats thee, Come.'
Then I departed, having made my moan;
And when I was alone
I said, and cast my eyes to the High Place:
'Blessed is he, fair soul, who meets thy glance!'
. . . Just then you woke me, of your complaisaùnce."

This poem has two parts. In the first, speaking to a person undefined, I tell how I was aroused from a vain phantasy by certain ladies, and how I promised them to tell what it was. In the second, I say how I told them. The second part begins here, " I was a-thinking." The first part divides into two. In the first, I tell that which certain ladies, and which one singly, did and said because of my phantasy, before I had returned into my right senses. In the second, I tell what these ladies said to me after I had left off this wandering: and it begins here, " But

uttered in a voice." Then, when I say, "I was a-thinking," I say how I told them this my imagination; and concerning this I have two parts. In the first, I tell, in order, this imagination. In the second, saying at what time they called me, I covertly thank them: and this part begins here, "Just then you woke me."

After this empty imagining, it happened on a day, as I sat thoughtful, that I was taken with such a strong trembling at the heart, that it could not have been otherwise in the presence of my lady. Whereupon I perceived that there was an appearance of Love beside me, and I seemed to see him coming from my lady; and he said, not aloud but within my heart: "Now take heed that thou bless the day when I entered into thee; for it is fitting that thou shouldst do so." And with that my heart was so full of gladness, that I could hardly believe it to be of very truth mine own heart and not another.

A short while after these words which my heart spoke to me with the tongue of Love, I saw coming towards me a certain lady who was very famous for her beauty, and of whom that friend whom I have already called the first among my friends had long been enamoured. This lady's right name was Joan; but because of her comeliness (or at least it was so imagined) she was called of many *Primavera* (Spring), and went by that name among them. Then looking again, I perceived that the most noble Beatrice followed after her. And when both these ladies had passed by me, it seemed to me that Love spake again in my heart, saying: "She that came first was called Spring, only because of that which was to happen on this day. And it was I myself who caused that name to be given her; seeing that as the Spring cometh first in the year, so should she come first on this day,[1] when Beatrice was to show herself after the vision of her servant. And even if thou go about to consider her right name, it is also as one should say, 'She shall come first;' inasmuch as her name, Joan, is taken from that John who went before the True Light, saying, '*Ego vox clamantis in deserto: Parate viam Domini.*'"[2] And also it seemed to me that he added other words, to wit: "He who should inquire delicately touching

[1] There is a play in the original upon the words *Primavera* (Spring) and *prima verrà* (she shall come first), to which I have given as near an equivalent as I could.

[2] "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord.'"

this matter, could not but call Beatrice by mine own name, which is to say, Love; beholding her so like unto me."

Then I, having thought of this, imagined to write it with rhymes and send it unto my chief friend; but setting aside certain words [1] which seemed proper to be set aside, because I believed that his heart still regarded the beauty of her that was called Spring. And I wrote this sonnet:—

I FELT a spirit of love begin to stir
Within my heart, long time unfelt till then;
And saw Love coming towards me, fair and fain
(That I scarce knew him for his joyful cheer),
Saying, "Be now indeed my worshipper!"
And in his speech he laugh'd and laugh'd again.
Then, while it was his pleasure to remain,
I chanced to look the way he had drawn near,
And saw the Ladies Joan and Beatrice
Approach me, this the other following,
One and a second marvel instantly.
And even as now my memory speaketh this,
Love spake it then: "The first is christen'd Spring;
The second Love, she is so like to me."

This sonnet has many parts: whereof the first tells how I felt awakened within my heart the accustomed tremor, and how it seemed that Love appeared to me joyful from afar. The second says how it appeared to me that Love spake within my heart, and what was his aspect. The third tells how, after he had in such wise been with me a space, I saw and heard certain things. The second part begins here, "Saying, 'Be now;'" the third here, "Then, while it was his pleasure." The third part divides into two. In the first, I say what I saw. In the second, I say what I heard: and it begins here, "Love spake it then."

It might be here objected unto me (and even by one worthy of controversy), that I have spoken of Love as though it were a thing outward and visible: not only a spiritual essence, but as a bodily substance also. The which thing, in absolute truth, is a fallacy; Love not being of itself a

[1] That is (as I understand it), suppressing, from delicacy towards his friend, the words in which Love describes Joan as merely the forerunner of Beatrice. And perhaps in the latter part of this sentence a reproach is gently conveyed to the fickle Guido Cavalcanti, who may already have transferred his homage (though Dante had not then learned it) from Joan to Mandetta. (See his Poems.)

substance, but an accident of substance. Yet that I speak of Love as though it were a thing tangible and even human, appears by three things which I say thereof. And firstly, I say that I perceived Love coming towards me; whereby, seeing that *to come* bespeaks locomotion, and seeing also how philosophy teacheth us that none but a corporeal substance hath locomotion, it seemeth that I speak of Love as of a corporeal substance. And secondly, I say that Love smiled; and thirdly, that Love spake; faculties (and especially the risible faculty) which appear proper unto man: whereby it further seemeth that I speak of Love as of a man. Now that this matter may be explained (as is fitting), it must first be remembered that anciently they who wrote poems of Love wrote not in the vulgar tongue, but rather certain poets in the Latin tongue. I mean, among us, although perchance the same may have been among others, and although likewise, as among the Greeks, they were not writers of spoken language, but men of letters treated of these things.[1] And indeed it is not a great number of years since poetry began to be made in the vulgar tongue; the writing of rhymes in spoken language corresponding to the writing in metre of Latin verse, by a certain analogy. And I say that it is but a little while, because if we examine the language of *oco* and the language of *sì* [2] we shall not find in those tongues any written thing of an earlier date than the last hundred and fifty years. Also the reason why certain of a very mean sort obtained at the first some fame as poets is, that before them no man had written verses in the language of *sì*: and of these, the first was moved to the writing of such verses by the wish to make himself understood of a certain lady, unto whom Latin poetry was difficult. This thing is against such as rhyme concerning other matters than love; that mode of speech having been first used for the expression of love alone.[3]

[1] On reading Dante's treatise *De Vulgari Eloquio*, it will be found that the distinction which he intends here is not between one language, or dialect, and another; but between "vulgar speech" (that is, the language handed down from mother to son without any conscious use of grammar or syntax) and language as regulated by grammarians and the laws of literary composition, and which Dante calls simply "Grammar." A great deal might be said on the bearings of the present passage, but it is no part of my plan to enter on such questions.

[2] *i.e.* the language of Provence and Tuscany.

[3] It strikes me that this curious passage furnishes a reason, hitherto (I believe) overlooked, why Dante put such of his lyrical poems as relate to philosophy into the form of love-poems. He liked writing in Italian rhyme rather than Latin metre; he thought Italian rhyme ought to be

Wherefore, seeing that poets have a licence allowed them that is not allowed unto the writers of prose, and seeing also that they who write in rhyme are simply poets in the vulgar tongue, it becomes fitting and reasonable that a larger licence should be given to these than to other modern writers; and that any metaphor or rhetorical similitude which is permitted unto poets, should also be counted not unseemly in the rhymers of the vulgar tongue. Thus, if we perceive that the former have caused inanimate things to speak as though they had sense and reason, and to discourse one with another; yea, and not only actual things, but such also as have no real existence (seeing that they have made things which are not, to speak; and oftentimes written of those which are merely accidents as though they were substances and things human), it should therefore be permitted to the latter to do the like; which is to say, not inconsiderately, but with such sufficient motive as may afterwards be set forth in prose.

That the Latin poets have done thus, appears through Virgil, where he saith that Juno (to wit, a goddess hostile to the Trojans) spake unto Æolus, master of the Winds; as it is written in the first book of the Æneid, *Æole, namque tibi, etc.;* and that this master of the Winds made reply: *Tuus, o regina, quid optes—Explorare labor, mihi jussa capessere fas est.* And through the same poet, the inanimate thing speaketh unto the animate, in the third book of the Æneid, where it is written: *Dardanidae duri, etc.* With Lucan, the animate thing speaketh to the inanimate; as thus: *Multum, Roma, tamen debes civilibus armis.* In Horace, man is made to speak to his own intelligence as unto another person (and not only hath Horace done this but herein he followeth the excellent Homer), as thus in his Poetics: *Dic mihi, Musa, virum, etc.* Through Ovid, Love speaketh as a human creature, in the beginning of his discourse *De Remediis Amoris;* as thus: *Bella mihi video, bella parantur, ait.* By which ensamples this thing shall be made manifest unto such as may be offended at any part of this my book. And lest some of the common sort should be moved to jeering hereat, I will here add, that neither did these ancient poets speak

confined to love-poems; therefore whatever he wrote (at this age) had to take the form of a love-poem. Thus any poem by Dante not concerning love is later than his twenty-seventh year (1291-92), when he wrote the prose of the *Vita Nuova;* the poetry having been written earlier, at the time of the events referred to.

thus without consideration, nor should they who are makers of rhyme in our day write after the same fashion, having no reason in what they write; for it were a shameful thing if one should rhyme under the semblance of metaphor or rhetorical similitude, and afterwards, being questioned thereof, should be unable to rid his words of such semblance, unto their right understanding. Of whom (to wit, of such as rhyme thus foolishly), myself and the first among my friends do know many.

But returning to the matter of my discourse. This excellent lady, of whom I spake in what hath gone before, came at last into such favour with all men, that when she passed anywhere folk ran to behold her; which thing was a deep joy to me: and when she drew near unto any, so much truth and simpleness entered into his heart, that he dared neither to lift his eyes nor to return her salutation: and unto this, many who have felt it can bear witness. She went along crowned and clothed with humility, showing no whit of pride in all that she heard and saw: and when she had gone by, it was said of many, "This is not a woman, but one of the beautiful angels of Heaven," and there were some that said: "This is surely a miracle; blessed be the Lord, who hath power to work thus marvellously." I say, of very sooth, that she showed herself so gentle and so full of all perfection, that she bred in those who looked upon her a soothing quiet beyond any speech; neither could any look upon her without sighing immediately. These things, and things yet more wonderful, were brought to pass through her miraculous virtue. Wherefore I, considering thereof and wishing to resume the endless tale of her praises, resolved to write somewhat wherein I might dwell on her surpassing influence; to the end that not only they who had beheld her, but others also, might know as much concerning her as words could give to the understanding. And it was then that I wrote this sonnet:—

My lady looks so gentle and so pure
  When yielding salutation by the way,
  That the tongue trembles and has nought to say,
And the eyes, which fain would see, may not endure.
And still, amid the praise she hears secure,
  She walks with humbleness for her array;
  Seeming a creature sent from Heaven to stay

On earth, and show a miracle made sure.
She is so pleasant in the eyes of men
That through the sight the inmost heart doth gain
A sweetness which needs proof to know it by:
And from between her lips there seems to move
A soothing spirit that is full of love,
Saying for ever to the soul, "O sigh!"

This sonnet is so easy to understand, from what is afore narrated, that it needs no division: and therefore, leaving it, I say also that this excellent lady came into such favour with all men, that not only she herself was honoured and commended; but through her companionship, honour and commendation came unto others. Wherefore I, perceiving this and wishing that it should also be made manifest to those that beheld it not, wrote the sonnet here following; wherein is signified the power which her virtue had upon other ladies:—

For certain he hath seen all perfectness
Who among other ladies hath seen mine:
They that go with her humbly should combine
To thank their God for such peculiar grace.
So perfect is the beauty of her face
That it begets in no wise any sign
Of envy, but draws round her a clear line
Of love, and blessed faith, and gentleness.
Merely the sight of her makes all things bow:
Not she herself alone is holier
Than all; but hers, through her, are raised above.
From all her acts such lovely graces flow
That truly one may never think of her
Without a passion of exceeding love.

This sonnet has three parts. In the first, I say in what company this lady appeared most wondrous. In the second, I say how gracious was her society. In the third, I tell of the things which she, with power, worked upon others. The second begins here, "They that go with her;" the third here, "So perfect." This last part divides into three. In the first, I tell what she operated upon women, that is, by their own faculties. In the second, I tell what she operated in them through others. In the third, I say how she not only operated in women, but in

all people; and not only while herself present, but, by memory of her, operated wondrously. The second begins here, "Merely the sight;" the third here, "From all her acts."

Thereafter on a day, I began to consider that which I had said of my lady: to wit, in these two sonnets aforegone: and becoming aware that I had not spoken of her immediate effect on me at that especial time, it seemed to me that I had spoken defectively. Whereupon I resolved to write somewhat of the manner wherein I was then subject to her influence, and of what her influence then was. And conceiving that I should not be able to say these things in the small compass of a sonnet, I began therefore a poem with this beginning:—

Love hath so long possess'd me for his own
  And made his lordship so familiar
That he, who at first irk'd me, is now grown
  Unto my heart as its best secrets are.
  And thus, when he in such sore wise doth mar
My life that all its strength seems gone from it,
Mine inmost being then feels throughly quit
  Of anguish, and all evil keeps afar.
Love also gathers to such power in me
  That my sighs speak, each one a grievous thing,
  Always soliciting
My lady's salutation piteously.
Whenever she beholds me, it is so,
Who is more sweet than any words can show.

. . . . . .
. . . . . .

Quomodo sedet sola civitas plena populo! facta est quasi vidua domina gentium.[1]

I was still occupied with this poem (having composed thereof only the above-written stanza), when the Lord God of justice called my most gracious lady unto Himself, that she might be glorious under the banner of that blessed Queen Mary, whose name had always a deep reverence in the words of holy Beatrice. And because haply it might be found

[1] "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow, she that was great among the nations!"—*Lamentations of Jeremiah*, c. I. v. I.

good that I should say somewhat concerning her departure, I will herein declare what are the reasons which make that I shall not do so.

And the reasons are three. The first is, that such matter belongeth not of right to the present argument, if one consider the opening of this little book. The second is, that even though the present argument required it, my pen doth not suffice to write in a fit manner of this thing. And the third is, that were it both possible and of absolute necessity, it would still be unseemly for me to speak thereof, seeing that thereby it must behove me to speak also mine own praises: a thing that in whosoever doeth it is worthy of blame. For the which reasons, I will leave this matter to be treated of by some other than myself.

Nevertheless, as the number nine, which number hath often had mention in what hath gone before (and not, as it might appear, without reason), seems also to have borne a part in the manner of her death: it is therefore right that I should say somewhat thereof. And for this cause, having first said what was the part it bore herein, I will afterwards point out a reason which made that this number was so closely allied unto my lady.

I say, then, that according to the division of time in Italy, her most noble spirit departed from among us in the first hour of the ninth day of the month; and according to the division of time in Syria, in the ninth month of the year: seeing that Tismim, which with us is October, is there the first month. Also she was taken from among us in that year of our reckoning (to wit, of the years of our Lord) in which the perfect number was nine times multiplied within that century wherein she was born into the world: which is to say, the thirteenth century of Christians.[1]

And touching the reason why this number was so closely allied unto her, it may peradventure be this. According to Ptolemy (and also to the Christian verity), the revolving heavens are nine; and according to the common opinion among astrologers, these nine heavens together have influence

[1] Beatrice Portinari will thus be found to have died during the first hour of the ninth of June 1290. And from what Dante says at the commencement of this work (viz. that she was younger than himself by eight or nine months), it may also be gathered that her age, at the time of her death, was twenty-four years and three months. The "perfect number" mentioned in the present passage is the number ten.

over the earth. Wherefore it would appear that this number was thus allied unto her for the purpose of signifying that, at her birth, all these nine heavens were at perfect unity with each other as to their influence. This is one reason that may be brought: but more narrowly considering, and according to the infallible truth, this number was her own self: that is to say, by similitude. As thus. The number three is the root of the number nine; seeing that without the interposition of any other number, being multiplied merely by itself, it produceth nine, as we manifestly perceive that three times three are nine. Thus, three being of itself the efficient of nine, and the Great Efficient of Miracles being of Himself Three Persons (to wit: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), which, being Three, are also One:—this lady was accompanied by the number nine to the end that men might clearly perceive her to be a nine, that is, a miracle, whose only root is the Holy Trinity. It may be that a more subtile person would find for this thing a reason of greater subtilty: but such is the reason that I find, and that liketh me best.

After this most gracious creature had gone out from among us, the whole city came to be as it were widowed and despoiled of all dignity. Then I, left mourning in this desolate city, wrote unto the principal persons thereof, in an epistle, concerning its condition; taking for my commencement those words of Jeremias: *Quomodo sedet sola civitas! etc.* And I make mention of this, that none may marvel wherefore I set down these words before, in beginning to treat of her death. Also if any should blame me, in that I do not transcribe that epistle whereof I have spoken, I will make it mine excuse that I began this little book with the intent that it should be written altogether in the vulgar tongue; wherefore, seeing that the epistle I speak of is in Latin, it belongeth not to mine undertaking: more especially as I know that my chief friend, for whom I write this book, wished also that the whole of it should be in the vulgar tongue.

When mine eyes had wept for some while, until they were so weary with weeping that I could no longer through them give ease to my sorrow, I bethought me that a few mournful words might stand me instead of tears. And therefore I proposed to make a poem, that weeping I might speak therein of her for whom so much sorrow had destroyed my spirit; and I then began "The eyes that weep."

That this poem may seem to remain the more widowed at its close, I will divide it before writing it; and this method I will observe henceforward. I say that this poor little poem has three parts. The first is a prelude. In the second, I speak of her. In the third, I speak pitifully to the poem. The second begins here, "Beatrice is gone up;" the third here, "Weep, pitiful Song of mine." The first divides into three. In the first, I say what moves me to speak. In the second, I say to whom I mean to speak. In the third, I say of whom I mean to speak. The second begins here, "And because often, thinking;" the third here, "And I will say." Then, when I say, "Beatrice is gone up," I speak of her; and concerning this I have two parts. First, I tell the cause why she was taken away from us: afterwards, I say how one weeps her parting; and this part commences here, "Wonderfully." This part divides into three. In the first, I say who it is that weeps her not. In the second, I say who it is that doth *weep her. In the third, I speak of my condition. The second begins here, "But sighing comes, and grief;" the third, "With sighs." Then, when I say, "Weep, pitiful Song of mine," I speak to this my song, telling it what ladies to go to, and stay with.*

THE eyes that weep for pity of the heart
Have wept so long that their grief languisheth
And they have no more tears to weep withal:
And now, if I would ease me of a part
Of what, little by little, leads to death,
It must be done by speech, or not at all.
And because often, thinking, I recall
How it was pleasant, ere she went afar,
To talk of her with you, kind damozels,
I talk with no one else,
But only with such hearts as women's are.
And I will say,—still sobbing as speech fails,—
That she hath gone to Heaven suddenly,
And hath left Love below, to mourn with me.

Beatrice is gone up into high Heaven,
The kingdom where the angels are at peace;
And lives with them; and to her friends is dead.
Not by the frost of winter was she driven
Away, like others; nor by summer-heats;
But through a perfect gentleness, instead.

For from the lamp of her meek lowlihead
Such an exceeding glory went up hence
That it woke wonder in the Eternal Sire,
Until a sweet desire
Enter'd Him for that lovely excellence,
So that He bade her to Himself aspire:
Counting this weary and most evil place
Unworthy of a thing so full of grace.

Wonderfully out of the beautiful form
Soar'd her clear spirit, waxing glad the while;
And is in its first home, there where it is.
Who speaks thereof, and feels not the tears warm
Upon his face, must have become so vile
As to be dead to all sweet sympathies.
Out upon him! an abject wretch like this
May not imagine anything of her,—
He needs no bitter tears for his relief.
But sighing comes, and grief,
And the desire to find no comforter
(Save only Death, who makes all sorrow brief),
To him who for a while turns in his thought
How she hath been among us, and is not.

With sighs my bosom always laboureth
On thinking, as I do continually,
Of her for whom my heart now breaks apace;
And very often when I think of death,
Such a great inward longing comes to me
That it will change the colour of my face;
And, if the idea settles in its place,
All my limbs shake as with an ague-fit;
Till, starting up in wild bewilderment,
I do become so shent
That I go forth, lest folk misdoubt of it.
Afterward, calling with a sore lament
On Beatrice, I ask, "Canst thou be dead?"
And calling on her, I am comforted.

Grief with its tears, and anguish with its sighs,
Come to me now whene'er I am alone;
So that I think the sight of me gives pain.
And what my life hath been, that living dies,

Since for my lady the New Birth's begun,
I have not any language to explain.
And so, dear ladies, though my heart were fain,
I scarce could tell indeed how I am thus.
All joy is with my bitter life at war;
Yea, I am fallen so far
That all men seem to say, " Go out from us,"
Eyeing my cold white lips, how dead they are.
But she, though I be bow'd unto the dust,
Watches me; and will guerdon me, I trust.

Weep, piteous Song of mine, upon thy way,
To the dames going, and the damozels,
For whom, and for none else,
Thy sisters have made music many a day.
Thou, that art very sad and not as they,
Go dwell thou with them as a mourner dwells.

After I had written this poem, I received the visit of a friend whom I counted as second unto me in the degrees of friendship, and who, moreover, had been united by the nearest kindred to that most gracious creature. And when we had a little spoken together, he began to solicit me that I would write somewhat in memory of a lady who had died; and he disguised his speech, so as to seem to be speaking of another who was but lately dead: wherefore I, perceiving that his speech was of none other than that blessed one herself, told him that it should be done as he required. Then afterwards, having thought thereof, I imagined to give vent in a sonnet to some part of my hidden lamentations: but in such sort that it might seem to be spoken by this friend of mine, to whom I was to give it. And the sonnet saith thus: " Stay now with me," etc.

This sonnet has two parts. In the first, I call the Faithful of Love to hear me. In the second, I relate my miserable condition. The second begins here, " Mark how they force."

Stay now with me, and listen to my sighs,
Ye piteous hearts, as pity bids ye do.
Mark how they force their way out and press through:
If they be once pent up, the whole life dies.
Seeing that now indeed my weary eyes

Oftener refuse than I can tell to you
(Even though my endless grief is ever new),
To weep, and let the smother'd anguish rise.
Also in sighing ye shall hear me call
On her whose blessed presence doth enrich
The only home that well befitteth her:
And ye shall hear a bitter scorn of all
Sent from the inmost of my spirit in speech
That mourns its joy and its joy's minister.

But when I had written this sonnet, bethinking me who he was to whom I was to give it, that it might appear to be his speech, it seemed to me that this was but a poor and barren gift for one of her so near kindred. Wherefore, before giving him this sonnet, I wrote two stanzas of a poem: the first being written in very sooth as though it were spoken by him, but the other being mine own speech, albeit, unto one who should not look closely, they would both seem to be said by the same person. Nevertheless, looking closely, one must perceive that it is not so, inasmuch as one does not call this most gracious creature *his lady*, and the other does, as is manifestly apparent. And I gave the poem and the sonnet unto my friend, saying that I had made them only for him.

The poem begins, "Whatever while," and has two parts. In the first, that is, in the first stanza, this my dear friend, her kinsman, laments. In the second, I lament; that is, in the other stanza, which begins, "For ever." And thus it appears that in this poem two persons lament, of whom one laments as a brother, the other as a servant.

Whatever while the thought comes over me
That I may not again
Behold that lady whom I mourn for now,
About my heart my mind brings constantly
So much of extreme pain
That I say, Soul of mine, why stayest thou?
Truly the anguish, soul, that we must bow
Beneath, until we win out of this life,
Gives me full oft a fear that trembleth:
So that I call on Death
Even as on Sleep one calleth after strife,
Saying, Come unto me. Life showeth grim
And bare; and if one dies, I envy him.

For ever, among all my sighs which burn,
There is a piteous speech
That clamours upon death continually:
Yea, unto him doth my whole spirit turn
Since first his hand did reach
My lady's life with most foul cruelty.
But from the height of woman's fairness, she,
Going up from us with the joy we had,
Grew perfectly and spiritually fair;
That so she spreads even there
A light of Love which makes the Angels glad,
And even unto their subtle minds can bring
A certain awe of profound marvelling.

On that day which fulfilled the year since my lady had been made of the citizens of eternal life, remembering me of her as I sat alone, I betook myself to draw the resemblance of an angel upon certain tablets. And while I did thus, chancing to turn my head, I perceived that some were standing beside me to whom I should have given courteous welcome, and that they were observing what I did: also I learned afterwards that they had been there a while before I perceived them. Perceiving whom, I arose for salutation, and said: "Another was with me."[1]

Afterwards, when they had left me, I set myself again to mine occupation, to wit, to the drawing figures of angels: in doing which, I conceived to write of this matter in rhyme, as for her anniversary, and to address my rhymes unto those who had just left me. It was then that I wrote the sonnet which saith, "That lady:" and as this sonnet hath two commencements, it behoveth me to divide it with both of them here.

I say that, according to the first, this sonnet has three parts. In the first, I say that this lady was then in my memory. In the second, I tell what Love therefore did with me. In the third, I speak of the effects of Love. The second begins here, "Love knowing;" the third here, "Forth went they." This part divides into two. In the one, I say that all my sighs issued speaking. In the other, I say how some spoke certain words different from the others. The second begins here, "And still." In this same manner is it divided with the other beginning,

[1] Thus according to some texts. The majority, however, add the words, "And therefore was I in thought;" but the shorter speech is perhaps the more forcible and pathetic.

save that, in the first part, I tell when this lady had thus come into my mind, and this I say not in the other.

THAT lady of all gentle memories
Had lighted on my soul;—whose new abode
Lies now, as it was well ordain'd of God,
Among the poor in heart, where Mary is.
Love, knowing that dear image to be his,
Woke up within the sick heart sorrow-bow'd,
Unto the sighs which are its weary load,
Saying, "Go forth." And they went forth, I wis;
Forth went they from my breast that throbb'd and ached;
With such a pang as oftentimes will bathe
Mine eyes with tears when I am left alone.
And still those sighs which drew the heaviest breath
Came whispering thus: "O noble intellect!
It is a year to-day that thou art gone."

SECOND COMMENCEMENT

THAT lady of all gentle memories
Had lighted on my soul;—for whose sake flow'd
The tears of Love; in whom the power abode
Which led you to observe while I did this.
Love, knowing that dear image to be his, etc.

Then, having sat for some space sorely in thought because of the time that was now past, I was so filled with dolorous imaginings that it became outwardly manifest in mine altered countenance. Whereupon, feeling this and being in dread lest any should have seen me, I lifted mine eyes to look; and then perceived a young and very beautiful lady, who was gazing upon me from a window with a gaze full of pity, so that the very sum of pity appeared gathered together in her. And seeing that unhappy persons, when they beget compassion in others, are then most moved unto weeping, as though they also felt pity for themselves, it came to pass that mine eyes began to be inclined unto tears. Wherefore, becoming fearful lest I should make manifest mine abject condition, I rose up, and went where I could not be seen of that lady; saying afterwards within myself: "Certainly with her also must abide most noble Love." And with that, I resolved upon writing a sonnet, wherein, speaking unto her,

I should say all that I have just said. And as this sonnet is very evident, I will not divide it.

MINE eyes beheld the blessed pity spring
Into thy countenance immediately
A while agone, when thou beheld'st in me
The sickness only hidden grief can bring;
And then I knew thou wast considering
How abject and forlorn my life must be;
And I became afraid that thou shouldst see
My weeping, and account it a base thing.
Therefore I went out from thee; feeling how
The tears were straightway loosen'd at my heart
Beneath thine eyes' compassionate control.
And afterwards I said within my soul:
"Lo! with this lady dwells the counterpart
Of the same Love who holds we weeping now."

It happened after this, that whensoever I was seen of this lady, she became pale and of a piteous countenance, as though it had been with love; whereby she remembered me many times of my own most noble lady, who was wont to be of a like paleness. And I know that often, when I could not weep nor in any way give ease unto mine anguish, I went to look upon this lady, who seemed to bring the tears into my eyes by the mere sight of her. Of the which thing I bethought me to speak unto her in rhyme, and then made this sonnet: which begins, "Love's pallor," and which is plain without being divided, by its exposition aforesaid.

LOVE'S pallor and the semblance of deep ruth
Were never yet shown forth so perfectly
In any lady's face, chancing to see
Grief's miserable countenance uncouth,
As in thine, lady, they have sprung to soothe,
When in mine anguish thou hast look'd on me;
Until sometimes it seems as if, through thee,
My heart might almost wander from its truth.
Yet so it is, I cannot hold mine eyes
From gazing very often upon thine
In the sore hope to shed those tears they keep;
And at such time, thou mak'st the pent tears rise
Even to the brim, till the eyes waste and pine;
Yet cannot they, while thou art present, weep.

At length, by the constant sight of this lady, mine eyes began to be gladdened overmuch with her company; through which thing many times I had much unrest, and rebuked myself as a base person: also, many times I cursed the unsteadfastness of mine eyes, and said to them inwardly: "Was not your grievous condition of weeping wont one while to make others weep? And will ye now forget this thing because a lady looketh upon you? who so looketh merely in compassion of the grief ye then showed for your own blessed lady. But whatso ye can, that do ye, accursed eyes! many a time will I make you remember it! for never, till death dry you up, should ye make an end of your weeping." And when I had spoken thus unto mine eyes, I was taken again with extreme and grievous sighing. And to the end that this inward strife which I had undergone might not be hidden from all saving the miserable wretch who endured it, I proposed to write a sonnet, and to comprehend in it this horrible condition. And I wrote this which begins, "The very bitter weeping."

The sonnet has two parts. In the first, I speak to my eyes, as my heart spoke within myself. In the second, I remove a difficulty, showing who it is that speaks thus: and this part begins here, "So far." It well might receive other divisions also; but this would be useless, since it is manifest by the preceding exposition.

"The very bitter weeping that ye made
So long a time together, eyes of mine,
Was wont to make the tears of pity shine
In other eyes full oft, as I have said.
But now this thing were scarce rememberèd
If I, on my part, foully would combine
With you, and not recall each ancient sign
Of grief, and her for whom your tears were shed.
It is your fickleness that doth betray
My mind to fears, and makes me tremble thus
What while a lady greets me with her eyes.
Except by death, we must not any way
Forget our lady who is gone from us."
So far doth my heart utter, and then sighs.

The sight of this lady brought me into so unwonted a condition that I often thought of her as of one too dear unto

me; and I began to consider her thus: "This lady is young, beautiful, gentle, and wise: perchance it was Love himself who set her in my path, that so my life might find peace." And there were times when I thought yet more fondly, until my heart consented unto its reasoning. But when it had so consented, my thought would often turn round upon me, as moved by reason, and cause me to say within myself: "What hope is this which would console me after so base a fashion, and which hath taken the place of all other imagining?" Also there was another voice within me, that said: "And wilt thou, having suffered so much tribulation through Love, not escape while yet thou mayest from so much bitterness? Thou must surely know that this thought carries with it the desire of Love, and drew its life from the gentle eyes of that lady who vouchsafed thee so much pity." Wherefore I, having striven sorely and very often with myself, bethought me to say somewhat thereof in rhyme. And seeing that in the battle of doubts, the victory most often remained with such as inclined towards the lady of whom I speak, it seemed to me that I should address this sonnet unto her: in the first line whereof, I call that thought which spake of her a gentle thought, only because it spoke of one who was gentle; being of itself most vile.[1]

In this sonnet I make myself into two, according as my thoughts were divided one from the other. The one part I call Heart, that is, appetite; the other, Soul, that is, reason; and I tell what one saith to the other. And that it is fitting to call the appetite Heart, and the reason Soul, is manifest enough to them to whom I wish this to be open. True it is that, in the preceding sonnet, I take the part of the Heart against the Eyes; and that appears contrary to what I say in the present; and therefore I say that, there also, by the Heart I mean appetite, because yet greater was my desire to remember my most gentle lady than to see this other, although indeed I had some appetite towards her, but it appeared slight: wherefrom it appears that the one statement is not contrary to the other. This sonnet has three parts.

[1] Boccaccio tells us that Dante was married to Gemma Donati about a year after the death of Beatrice. Can Gemma then be "the lady of the window," his love for whom Dante so contemns? Such a passing conjecture (when considered together with the interpretation of this passage in Dante's later work, the *Convito*) would of course imply an admission of what I believe to lie at the heart of all true Dantesque commentary; that is, the existence always of the actual events even where the allegorical superstructure has been raised by Dante himself.

In the first, I begin to say to this lady how my desires turn all towards her. In the second, I say how the Soul, that is the reason, speaks to the Heart, that is, to the appetite. In the third, I say how the latter answers. The second begins here, "And what is this?" the third here, "And the heart answers."

A GENTLE thought there is will often start,
Within my secret self, to speech of thee;
Also of Love it speaks so tenderly
That much in me consents and takes its part.
"And what is this," the soul saith to the heart,
"That cometh thus to comfort thee and me,
And thence where it would dwell, thus potently
Can drive all other thoughts by its strange art?"
And the heart answers: "Be no more at strife
'Twixt doubt and doubt: this is Love's messenger
And speaketh but his words, from him received;
And all the strength it owns and all the life
It draweth from the gentle eyes of her
Who, looking on our grief, hath often grieved."

But against this adversary of reason, there rose up in me on a certain day, about the ninth hour, a strong visible phantasy, wherein I seemed to behold the most gracious Beatrice, habited in that crimson raiment which she had worn when I had first beheld her; also she appeared to me of the same tender age as then. Whereupon I fell into a deep thought of her: and my memory ran back according to the order of time, unto all those matters in the which she had borne a part: and my heart began painfully to repent of the desire by which it had so basely let itself be possessed during so many days, contrary to the constancy of reason.

And then, this evil desire being quite gone from me, all my thoughts turned again unto their excellent Beatrice. And I say most truly that from that hour I thought constantly of her with the whole humbled and ashamed heart; the which became often manifest in sighs, that had among them the name of that most gracious creature, and how she departed from us. Also it would come to pass very often, through the bitter anguish of some one thought, that I forgot both it, and myself, and where I was. By this increase of sighs, my weeping, which before had been somewhat lessened, increased in like manner; so that mine eyes seemed to long

only for tears and to cherish them, and came at last to be circled about with red as though they had suffered martyrdom; neither were they able to look again upon the beauty of any face that might again bring them to shame and evil: from which things it will appear that they were fitly guerdoned for their unsteadfastness. Wherefore I (wishing that mine abandonment of all such evil desires and vain temptations should be certified and made manifest, beyond all doubts which might have been suggested by the rhymes aforewritten) proposed to write a sonnet, wherein I should express this purport. And I then wrote, "Woe's me!"

I said, "Woe's me!" because I was ashamed of the trifling of mine eyes. This sonnet I do not divide, since its purport is manifest enough.

Woe's me! by dint of all these sighs that come
Forth of my heart, its endless grief to prove,
Mine eyes are conquer'd, so that even to move
Their lids for greeting is grown troublesome.
They wept so long that now they are grief's home
And count their tears all laughter far above:
They wept till they are circled now by Love
With a red circle in sign of martyrdom.
These musings, and the sighs they bring from me,
Are grown at last so constant and so sore
That Love swoons in my spirit with faint breath;
Hearing in those sad sounds continually
The most sweet name that my dead lady bore,
With many grievous words touching her death.

About this time, it happened that a great number of persons undertook a pilgrimage, to the end that they might behold that blessed portraiture bequeathed unto us by our Lord Jesus Christ as the image of His beautiful countenance [1]

[1] The Veronica (*Vera icon*, or true image); that is, the napkin with which a woman was said to have wiped our Saviour's face on His way to the cross, and which miraculously retained its likeness. Dante makes mention of it also in the *Commedia* (Parad. xxxi. 103), where he says:—

"Qual è colui, che forse di Croazia
Viene a veder la Veronica nostra,
Che per l'antica fama non si sazia,
Ma dice nel pensier fin che si mostra;
Signor mio Gesù Cristo, Dio verace,
Or fu sì fatta la sembianza vostra?"

(upon which countenance my dear lady now looketh continually). And certain among these pilgrims, who seemed very thoughtful, passed by a path which is well-nigh in the midst of the city where my most gracious lady was born, and abode, and at last died.

Then I, beholding them, said within myself: "These pilgrims seem to be come from very far; and I think they cannot have heard speak of this lady, or know anything concerning her. Their thoughts are not of her, but of other things; it may be, of their friends who are far distant, and whom we, in our turn, know not." And I went on to say: "I know that if they were of a country near unto us, they would in some wise seem disturbed, passing through this city which is so full of grief." And I said also: "If I could speak with them a space, I am certain that I should make them weep before they went forth of this city; for those things that they would hear from me must needs beget weeping in any."

And when the last of them had gone by me, I bethought me to write a sonnet, showing forth mine inward speech; and that it might seem the more pitiful, I made as though I had spoken it indeed unto them. And I wrote this sonnet, which beginneth: "Ye pilgrim-folk." I made use of the word *pilgrim* for its general signification; for "pilgrim" may be understood in two senses, one general, and one special. General, so far as any man may be called a pilgrim who leaveth the place of his birth; whereas, more narrowly speaking, he only is a pilgrim who goeth towards or frowards the House of St. James. For there are three separate denominations proper unto those who undertake journeys to the glory of God. They are called Palmers who go beyond the sea, eastward, whence often they bring palm-branches. And Pilgrims, as I have said, are they who journey unto the holy House of Gallicia; seeing that no other apostle was buried so far from his birthplace as was the blessed Saint James. And there is a third sort who are called Romers; in that they go whither these whom I have called pilgrims went: which is to say, unto Rome.

This sonnet is not divided, because its own words sufficiently declare it.

Ye pilgrim-folk, advancing pensively
As if in thought of distant things, I pray,

Is your own land indeed so far away
As by your aspect it would seem to be,—
That nothing of our grief comes over ye
Though passing through the mournful town midway;
Like unto men that understand to-day
Nothing at all of her great misery?
Yet if ye will but stay, whom I accost,
And listen to my words a little space,
At going ye shall mourn with a loud voice.
It is her Beatrice that she hath lost;
Of whom the least word spoken holds such grace
That men weep hearing it, and have no choice.

A while after these things, two gentle ladies sent unto me, praying that I would bestow upon them certain of these my rhymes. And I (taking into account their worthiness and consideration) resolved that I would write also a new thing, and send it them together with those others, to the end that their wishes might be more honourably fulfilled. Therefore I made a sonnet, which narrates my condition, and which I caused to be conveyed to them, accompanied with the one preceding, and with that other which begins, "Stay now with me and listen to my sighs." And the new sonnet is, "Beyond the sphere."

This sonnet comprises five parts. In the first, I tell whither my thought goeth, naming the place by the name of one of its effects. In the second, I say wherefore it goeth up, and who makes it go thus. In the third, I tell what it saw, namely, a lady honoured. And I then call it a "Pilgrim Spirit," because it goes up spiritually, and like a pilgrim who is out of his known country. In the fourth, I say how the spirit sees her such (that is, in such quality) that I cannot understand her; that is to say, my thought rises into the quality of her in a degree that my intellect cannot comprehend, seeing that our intellect is, towards those blessed souls, like our eye weak against the sun; and this the Philosopher says in the Second of the Metaphysics. In the fifth, I say that, although I cannot see there whither my thought carries me—that is, to her admirable essence—I at least understand this, namely, that it is a thought of my lady, because I often hear her name therein. And, at the end of this fifth part, I say, "Ladies mine," to show that they are ladies to whom I speak. The second part begins, "A new perception;" the third, "When it hath reached;" the fourth, "It sees her

such;" the fifth, "And yet I know." It might be divided yet more nicely, and made yet clearer; but this division may pass, and therefore I stay not to divide it further.

Beyond the sphere which spreads to widest space
Now soars the sigh that my heart sends above:
A new perception born of grieving Love
Guideth it upward the untrodden ways.
When it hath reach'd unto the end, and stays,
It sees a lady round whom splendours move
In homage; till, by the great light thereof
Abash'd, the pilgrim spirit stands at gaze.
It sees her such, that when it tells me this
Which it hath seen, I understand it not,
It hath a speech so subtile and so fine.
And yet I know its voice within my thought
Often remembereth me of Beatrice:
So that I understand it, ladies mine.

After writing this sonnet, it was given unto me to behold a very wonderful vision;[1] wherein I saw things which determined me that I would say nothing further of this most blessed one, until such time as I could discourse more worthily concerning her. And to this end I labour all I can; as she well knoweth. Wherefore 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 unto Him who is the Master of Grace, that my spirit should 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 sæcula benedictus.*[2] *Laus Deo.*

[1] This we may believe to have been the Vision of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, which furnished the triple argument of the *Divina Commedia*. The Latin words ending the *Vita Nuova* are almost identical with those at the close of the letter in which Dante, on concluding the *Paradise*, and accomplishing the hope here expressed, dedicates his great work to Can Grande della Scala.

[2] "Who is blessed throughout all ages."

I.—TO BRUNETTO LATINI

Sonnet

Sent with the Vita Nuova

Master Brunetto, this my little maid
Is come to spend her Easter-tide with you;
Not that she reckons feasting as her due,—
Whose need is hardly to be fed, but read.
Not in a hurry can her sense be weigh'd,
Nor 'mid the jests of any noisy crew:
Ah! and she wants a little coaxing too
Before she'll get into another's head.
But if you do not find her meaning clear,
You've many Brother Alberts hard at hand,
Whose wisdom will respond to any call.
Consult with them and do not laugh at her;
And if she still is hard to understand,
Apply to Master Giano last of all.

II. Sonnet [1]

Of Beatrice de' Portinari, on All Saints' Day

Last All Saints' holy-day, even now gone by,
I met a gathering of damozels:
She that came first, as one doth who excels,
Had Love with her, bearing her company:
A flame burn'd forward through her steadfast eye,
As when in living fire a spirit dwells:
So, gazing with the boldness which prevails
O'er doubt, I saw an angel visibly.
As she pass'd on, she bow'd her mild approof
And salutation to all men of worth.
Lifting the soul to solemn thoughts aloof.
In Heaven itself that lady had her birth,
I think, and is with us for our behoof:
Blessed are they who meet her on the earth.

[1] This and the five following pieces seem so certainly to have been written at the same time as the poetry of the *Vita Nuova*, that it becomes difficult to guess why they were omitted from that work. Other poems in Dante's *Canzoniere* refer in a more general manner to his love for Beatrice, but each among those I have selected bears the impress of some special occasions.

III. Sonnet

To certain Ladies; when Beatrice was lamenting her Father's Death

Whence come you, all of you so sorrowful?
An' it may please you, speak for courtesy.
I fear for my dear lady's sake, lest she
Have made you to return thus fill'd with dule.
O gentle ladies, be not hard to school
In gentleness, but to some pause agree,
And something of my lady say to me,
For with a little my desire is full.
Howbeit it be a heavy thing to hear:
For love now utterly has thrust me forth,
With hand for ever lifted, striking fear.
See if I be not worn unto the earth:
Yea, and my spirit must fail from me here,
If, when you speak, your words are of no worth.

IV. Sonnet

To the same Ladies; with their Answer

"Ye ladies, walking past me piteous-eyed,
Who is the lady that lies prostrate here?
Can this be even she my heart holds dear?
Nay, if it be so, speak, and nothing hide.
Her very aspect seems itself beside,
And all her features of such alter'd cheer
That to my thinking they do not appear
Hers who makes others seem beatified."

"If thou forget to know our lady thus,
Whom grief o'ercomes, we wonder in no wise,
For also the same thing befalleth us.
Yet if thou watch the movement of her eyes,
Of her thou shalt be straightway conscious.
O weep no more! thou art all wan with sighs."

V. Ballata

He will gaze upon Beatrice

Because mine eyes can never have their fill
  Of looking at my lady's lovely face,
  I will so fix my gaze
That I may become bless'd, beholding her.

Even as an angel, up at his great height
Standing amid the light,
  Becometh bless'd by only seeing God:—
So, though I be a simple earthly wight,
Yet none the less I might,
  Beholding her who is my heart's dear load,
  Be bless'd, and in the spirit soar abroad.
Such power abideth in that gracious one;
Albeit felt of none
  Save of him who, desiring, honours her.

VI. Canzone

He beseeches Death for the Life of Beatrice

Death, since I find not one with whom to grieve,
  Nor whom this grief of mine may move to tears,
    Whereso I be or whitherso I turn:
Since it is thou who in my soul wilt leave
    No single joy, but chill'st it with just fears
      And makest it in fruitless hopes to burn:
      Since thou, Death, and thou only, canst discern
Wealth to my life, or want, at thy free choice:—
It is to thee that I lift up my voice,
  Bowing my face that's like a face just dead.
I come to thee, as to one pitying,
In grief for that sweet rest which nought can bring
  Again, if thou but once be entered
Into her life whom my heart cherishes
Even as the only portal of its peace.—

Death, how most sweet the peace is that thy grace
Can grant to me, and that I pray thee for,
Thou easily mayst know by a sure sign,
If in mine eyes thou look a little space
And read in them the hidden dread they store,—
If upon all thou look which proves me thine,
Since the fear only maketh me to pine
After this sort,—what will mine anguish be
When her eyes close, of dreadful verity,
In whose light is the light of mine own eyes?
But now I know that thou wouldst have my life
As hers, and joy'st thee in my fruitless strife.
Yet I do think this which I feel implies
That soon, when I would die to flee from pain,
I shall find none by whom I may be slain.

Death, if indeed thou smite this gentle one,
Whose outward worth but tells the intellect
How wondrous is the miracle within—
Thou biddest Virtue rise up and begone,
Thou dost away with Mercy's best effect,
Thou spoil'st the mansion of God's sojourning;
Yea, unto naught her beauty thou dost bring
Which is above all other beauties, even
In so much as befitteth one whom Heaven
Sent upon earth in token of its own.
Thou dost break through the perfect trust which hath
Been alway her companion in Love's path:
The light once darken'd which was hers alone,
Love needs must say to them he ruleth o'er,
"I have lost the noble banner that I bore."

Death, have some pity then for all the ill
Which cannot choose but happen if she die,
And which will be the sorest ever known.
Slacken the string, if so it be thy will,
That the sharp arrow leave it not,—thereby
Sparing her life, which if it flies is flown.
O Death, for God's sake, be some pity shown!
Restrain within thyself, even at its height,
The cruel wrath which moveth thee to smite
Her in whom God hath set so much of grace.

Show now some ruth if 'tis a thing thou hast!
I seem to see Heaven's gate, that is shut fast,
  Open, and angels filling all the space
About me,—come to fetch her soul whose laud
Is sung by saints and angels before God.

Song, thou must surely see how fine a thread
  This is that my last hope is holden by,
    And what I should be brought to without her.
Therefore for thy plain speech and lowlihead
  Make thou no pause; but go immediately
    (Knowing thyself for my heart's minister),
    And with that very meek and piteous air
Thou hast, stand up before the face of Death,
To wrench away the bar that prisoneth
  And win unto the place of the good fruit.
And if indeed thou shake by thy soft voice
Death's mortal purpose,—haste thee and rejoice
  Our lady with the issue of thy suit.
So yet awhile our earthly nights and days
Shall keep the blessed spirit that I praise.

VII. Sonnet

On the 9th of June 1290

Upon a day, came Sorrow in to me,
  Saying, "I've come to stay with thee awhile;"
  And I perceived that she had usher'd Bile
And Pain into my house for company.
Wherefore I said, "Go forth,—away with thee!"
  But like a Greek she answer'd, full of guile,
  And went on arguing in an easy style.
Then, looking, I saw Love come silently,
Habited in black raiment, smooth and new,
  Having a black hat set upon his hair;
And certainly the tears he shed were true.
  So that I ask'd, "What ails thee, trifler?"
Answering he said: "A grief to be gone through;
  For our own lady's dying, brother dear."

VIII.—TO CINO DA PISTOIA

Sonnet

He rebukes Cino for Fickleness

I THOUGHT to be for ever separate,
Fair Master Cino, from these rhymes of yours;
Since further from the coast, another course,
My vessel now must journey with her freight,[1]
Yet still, because I hear men name your state
As his whom every lure doth straight beguile,
I pray you lend a very little while
Unto my voice your ear grown obdurate.
The man after this measure amorous,
Who still at his own will is bound and loosed,
How slightly Love him wounds is lightly known.
If on this wise your heart in homage bows,
I pray you for God's sake it be disused,
So that the deed and the sweet words be one.

CINO DA PISTOIA TO DANTE ALIGHIERI

Sonnet

He answers Dante, confessing his unsteadfast Heart

DANTE, since I from my own native place
In heavy exile have turn'd wanderer,
Far distant from the purest joy which e'er
Had issued from the Fount of joy and grace,
I have gone weeping through the world's dull space,
And me proud Death, as one too mean, doth spare;
Yet meeting Love, Death's neighbour, I declare
That still his arrows hold my heart in chase.
Nor from his pitiless aim can I get free,
Nor from the hope which comforts my weak will,

[1] This might seem to suggest that the present sonnet was written about the same time as the close of the *Vita Nuova*, and that an allusion may also here be intended to the first conception of Dante's great work.

Though no true aid exists which I could share.
One pleasure ever binds and looses me;
That so, by one same Beauty lured, I still
Delight in many women here and there.

IX.—TO CINO DA PISTOIA

Sonnet

Written in Exile

Because I find not whom to speak withal
Anent that lord whose I am as thou art,
Behoves that in thine ear I tell some part
Of this whereof I gladly would say all.
And deem thou nothing else occasional
Of my long silence while I kept apart,
Except this place, so guilty at the heart
That the right has not who will give it stall.
Love comes not here to any woman's face,
Nor any man here for his sake will sigh,
For unto such "thou fool" were straightway said.
Ah! Master Cino, how the time turns base,
And mocks at us, and on our rhymes says fie,
Since truth has been thus thinly harvested.

CINO DA PISTOIA TO DANTE ALIGHIERI

Sonnet

He answers the foregoing Sonnet, and prays Dante, in the name of Beatrice, to continue his great Poem

I know not, Dante, in what refuge dwells
The truth, which with all men is out of mind;
For long ago it left this place behind,
Till in its stead at last God's thunder swells.
Yet if our shifting life too clearly tells
That here the truth has no reward assign'd,—
'Twas God, remember, taught it to mankind,
And even among the fiends preach'd nothing else.

Then, though the kingdoms of the earth be torn,
Where'er thou set thy feet, from Truth's control,
Yet unto me thy friend this prayer accord:—
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]

X. Sonnet

Of Beauty and Duty

Two ladies to the summit of my mind
Have clomb, to hold an argument of love.
The one has wisdom with her from above,
For every noblest virtue well design'd:
The other, beauty's tempting power refined
And the high charm of perfect grace approve:
And I, as my sweet Master's will doth move,
At feet of both their favours am reclined.
Beauty and Duty in my soul keep strife,
At question if the heart such course can take
And 'twixt two ladies hold its love complete.
The fount of gentle speech yields answer meet,
That Beauty may be loved for gladness' sake,
And Duty in the lofty ends of life.

XI. Sestina

Of the Lady Pietra degli Scrovigni

To the dim light and the large circle of shade
I have clomb, and to the whitening of the hills
There where we see no colour in the grass.
Natheless my longing loses not its green,
It has so taken root in the hard stone
Which talks and hears as though it were a lady.

Utterly frozen is this youthful lady
Even as the snow that lies within the shade;
For she is no more moved than is a stone

[1] That is, the pledge given at the end of the *Vita Nuova*. This may perhaps have been written in the early days of Dante's exile, before his resumption of the interrupted *Commedia*.

By the sweet season which makes warm the hills
And alters them afresh from white to green,
Covering their sides again with flowers and grass.

When on her hair she sets a crown of grass
The thought has no more room for other lady;
Because she weaves the yellow with the green
So well that Love sits down there in the shade,—
Love who has shut me in among low hills
Faster than between walls of granite-stone.

She is more bright than is a precious stone;
The wound she gives may not be heal'd with grass:
I therefore have fled far o'er plains and hills
For refuge from so dangerous a lady;
But from her sunshine nothing can give shade,—
Not any hill, nor wall, nor summer-green.

A while ago, I saw her dress'd in green,—
So fair, she might have waken'd in a stone
This love which I do feel even for her shade;
And therefore, as one woos a graceful lady,
I wooed her in a field that was all grass
Girdled about with very lofty hills.

Yet shall the streams turn back and climb the hills
Before Love's flame in this damp wood and green
Burn, as it burns within a youthful lady,
For my sake, who would sleep away in stone
My life, or feed like beasts upon the grass,
Only to see her garments cast a shade.

How dark soe'er the hills throw out their shade,
Under her summer-green the beautiful lady
Covers it, like a stone cover'd in grass.

XII. Sonnet

To the Lady Pietra degli Scrovigni

My curse be on the day when first I saw
The brightness in those treacherous eyes of thine,—

The hour when from my heart thou cam'st to draw
My soul away, that both might fail and pine—
My curse be on the skill that smooth'd each line
Of my vain songs,—the music and just law
Of art, by which it was my dear design
That the whole world should yield thee love and awe.
Yea, let me curse mine own obduracy,
Which firmly holds what doth itself confound—
To wit, thy fair perverted face of scorn:
For whose sake Love is oftentimes forsworn
So that men mock at him; but most at me
Who would hold fortune's wheel and turn it round.

GUIDO CAVALCANTI

I.—TO DANTE ALIGHIERI

SONNET

He interprets Dante's Dream, related in the first Sonnet of the Vita Nuova

UNTO my thinking, thou beheld'st all worth,
All joy, as much of good as man may know,
If thou wert in his power who here below
Is honour's righteous lord throughout this earth.
Where evil dies, even there he has his birth,
Whose justice out of pity's self doth grow.
Softly to sleeping persons he will go,
And, with no pain to them, their hearts draw forth.
Thy heart he took, as knowing well, alas!
That Death had claim'd thy lady for her prey:
In fear whereof, he fed her with thy heart.
But when he seem'd in sorrow to depart,
Sweet was thy dream; for by that sign, I say,
Surely the opposite shall come to pass.[1]

[1] This may refer to the belief that, towards morning, dreams go by contraries.

II. Sonnet

To his Lady Joan, of Florence

Flowers hast thou in thyself, and foliage,
And what is good, and what is glad to see;
The sun is not so bright as thy visage;
All is stark naught when one hath look'd on thee;
There is not such a beautiful personage
Anywhere on the green earth verily;
If one fear love, thy bearing sweet and sage
Comforteth him, and no more fear hath he.
Thy lady friends and maidens ministering
Are all, for love of thee, much to my taste:
And much I pray them that in everything
They honour thee even as thou meritest,
And have thee in their gentle harbouring:
Because among them all thou art the best.

III. Sonnet

He compares all Things with his Lady, and finds them wanting

Beauty in woman; the high will's decree;
Fair knighthood arm'd for manly exercise;
The pleasant song of birds; love's soft replies;
The strength of rapid ships upon the sea;
The serene air when light begins to be;
The white snow, without wind that falls and lies;
Fields of all flower; the place where waters rise;
Silver and gold; azure in jewellery:—
Weigh'd against these, the sweet and quiet worth
Which my dear lady cherishes at heart
Might seem a little matter to be shown;
Being truly, over these, as much apart
As the whole heaven is greater than this earth.
All good to kindred natures cleaveth soon.

IV. Sonnet

A Rapture concerning his Lady

Who is she coming, whom all gaze upon,
Who makes the air all tremulous with light,
And at whose side is Love himself? that none
Dare speak, but each man's sighs are infinite.

Ah me! how she looks round from left to right,
Let Love discourse: I may not speak thereon.
Lady she seems of such high benison
As makes all others graceless in men's sight.
The honour which is hers cannot be said;
To whom are subject all things virtuous,
While all things beauteous own her deity.
Ne'er was the mind of man so nobly led
Nor yet was such redemption granted us
That we should ever know her perfectly.

V. Ballata

Of his Lady among other Ladies

With other women I beheld my love;
Not that the rest were women to mine eyes,
Who only as her shadows seem'd to move.

I do not praise her more than with the truth,
Nor blame I these if it be rightly read.

But while I speak, a thought I may not soothe
Says to my senses: "Soon shall ye be dead,
If for my sake your tears ye will not shed."

And then the eyes yield passage, at that thought,
To the heart's weeping, which forgets her not.

VI.—TO GUIDO ORLANDI

Sonnet

Of a consecrated Image resembling his Lady

Guido, an image of my lady dwells
At San Michele in Orto, consecrate
And duly worshipp'd. Fair in holy state
She listens to the tale each sinner tells:
And among them that come to her, who ails
The most, on him the most doth blessing wait.

She bids the fiend men's bodies abdicate;
Over the curse of blindness she prevails,
And heals sick languors in the public squares.
A multitude adores her reverently:
Before her face two burning tapers are;
Her voice is utter'd upon paths afar.
Yet through the Lesser Brethren's [1] jealousy
She is named idol, not being one of theirs.

GUIDO ORLANDI TO GUIDO CAVALCANTI

Madrigal

In answer to the foregoing Sonnet

If thou hadst offer'd, friend, to blessed Mary
A pious voluntary,
As thus: "Fair rose, in holy garden set:"
Thou then hadst found a true similitude:
Because all truth and good
Are hers, who was the mansion and the gate
Wherein abode our High Salvation,
Conceived in her, a Son,
Even by the angel's greeting whom she met.
Be thou assured that if one cry to her,
Confessing, "I did err,"
For death she gives him life; for she is great.

Ah! how may'st thou be counsell'd to implead
With God thine own misdeed,
And not another's? Ponder what thou art;
And humbly lay to heart
That Publican who wept his proper need.
The Lesser Brethren cherish the divine
Scripture and church-doctrine;
Being appointed keepers of the faith
Whose preaching succoureth:
For what they preach is our best medicine.

[1] The Franciscans, in profession of deeper poverty and humility than belonged to other Orders, called themselves *Fratres minores*.

VII. Sonnet

Of the Eyes of a certain Mandetta, of Thoulouse, which resemble those of his Lady Joan, of Florence

A certain youthful lady in Thoulouse,
Gentle and fair, of cheerful modesty,
Is in her eyes, with such exact degree,
Of likeness unto mine own lady, whose
I am, that through the heart she doth abuse
The soul to sweet desire. It goes from me
To her; yet, fearing, saith not who is she
That of a truth its essence thus subdues.
This lady looks on it with the sweet eyes
Whose glance did erst the wounds of Love anoint
Through its true lady's eyes which are as they.
Then to the heart returns it, full of sighs,
Wounded to death by a sharp arrow's point
Wherewith this lady speeds it on its way.

VIII. Ballata

He reveals, in a Dialogue, his increasing Love for Mandetta

Being in thought of love, I chanced to see
Two youthful damozels.
One sang: "Our life inhales
All love continually."

Their aspect was so utterly serene,
So courteous, of such quiet nobleness,
That I said to them: "Yours, I well may ween,
'Tis of all virtue to unlock the place.
Ah! damozels, do not account him base
Whom thus his wound subdues:
Since I was at Thoulouse,
My heart is dead in me."

They turn'd their eyes upon me in so much
As to perceive how wounded was my heart;
While, of the spirits born of tears, one such
Had been begotten through the constant smart.

Then seeing me, abash'd, to turn apart,
One of them said, and laugh'd:
"Love, look you, by his craft
Holds this man thoroughly."

But with grave sweetness, after a brief while,
She who at first had laugh'd on me replied,
Saying: "This lady, who by Love's great guile
Her countenance in thy heart has glorified,
Look'd thee so deep within the eyes, Love sigh'd
And was awaken'd there.
If it seem ill to bear,
In him thy hope must be."

The second piteous maiden, of all ruth,
Fashion'd for sport in Love's own image, said:
"This stroke, whereof thy heart bears trace in sooth,
From eyes of too much pùissance was shed,
Whence in thy heart such brightness enterèd,
Thou may'st not look thereon.
Say, of those eyes that shone
Canst thou remember thee?"

Then said I, yielding answer therewithal
Unto this virgin's difficult behest:
"A lady of Thoulouse, whom Love doth call
Mandetta, sweetly kirtled and enlaced,
I do remember to my sore unrest.
Yea, by her eyes indeed
My life has been decreed
To death inevitably."

Go, Ballad, to the city, even Thoulouse,
And softly entering the Dauràde,[1] look round
And softly call, that so there may be found
Some lady who for compleasaunce may choose
To show thee her who can my life confuse.
And if she yield thee way,
Lift thou thy voice and say:
"For grace I come to thee."

[1] The ancient church of the Daurade still exists at Thoulouse. It was so called from the golden effect of the mosaics adorning it.

DANTE ALIGHIERI TO GUIDO CAVALCANTI

SONNET

He imagines a pleasant Voyage for Guido, Lapo Gianni, and himself, with their three Ladies

GUIDO, I wish that Lapo, thou, and I,
Could be by spells convey'd, as it were now,
Upon a barque, with all the winds that blow
Across all seas at our good will to hie.
So no mischance nor temper of the sky
Should mar our course with spite or cruel slip;
But we, observing old companionship,
To be companions still should long thereby.
And Lady Joan, and Lady Beatrice,
And her the thirtieth on my roll, with us
Should our good wizard set, o'er seas to move
And not to talk of anything but love:
And they three ever to be well at ease
As we should be, I think, if this were thus.

IX.—TO DANTE ALIGHIERI

SONNET

Guido answers the foregoing Sonnet, speaking with shame of his changed Love

IF I were still that man, worthy to love,
Of whom I have but the remembrance now,
Or if the lady bore another brow,
To hear this thing might bring me joy thereof.
But thou, who in Love's proper court dost move,
Even there where hope is born of grace—see how
My very soul within me is brought low:
For a swift archer, whom his feats approve,
Now bends the bow, which Love to him did yield,
In such mere sport against me, it would seem
As though he held his lordship for a jest.
Then hear the marvel which is sorriest:—
My sorely wounded soul forgiveth him,
Yet knows that in his act her strength is kill'd.

X.—TO DANTE ALIGHIERI

Sonnet

He reports, in a feigned Vision, the successful Issue of Lapo Gianni's Love

Dante, a sigh that rose from the heart's core
Assail'd me, while I slumber'd, suddenly;
So that I woke o' the instant, fearing sore
Lest it came thither in Love's company:
Till, turning, I beheld the servitor
Of lady Lagia: "Help me," so said he,
"O help me, Pity." Though he said no more,
So much of Pity's essence enter'd me,
That I was ware of Love, those shafts he wields
A-whetting, and preferr'd the mourner's quest
To him, who straightway answer'd on this wise:
"Go tell my servant that the lady yields,
And that I hold her now at his behest:
If he believe not, let him note her eyes."

XI.—TO DANTE ALIGHIERI

Sonnet

He mistrusts the Love of Lapo Gianni

I pray thee, Dante, shouldst thou meet with Love
In any place where Lapo then may be,
That there thou fail not to mark heedfully
If Love with lover's name that man approve;
If to our Master's will his lady move
Aright, and if himself show fealty:
For ofttimes, by ill custom, ye may see
This sort profess the semblance of true love.
Thou know'st that in the court where Love holds sway,
A law subsists, that no man who is vile
Can service yield to a lost woman there.
If suffering aught avail the sufferer,
Thou straightway shalt discern our lofty style,
Which needs the badge of honour must display.

XII. Sonnet

On the Detection of a false Friend [1]

Love and the lady Lagia, Guido and I,
Unto a certain lord are bounden all,
Who has released us—know ye from whose thrall?
Yet I'll not speak, but let the matter die:
Since now these three no more are held thereby,
Who in such homage at his feet did fall
That I myself was not more whimsical,
In him conceiving godship from on high.
Let Love be thank'd the first, who first discern'd
The truth; and that wise lady afterward,
Who in fit time took back her heart again;
And Guido next, from worship wholly turn'd;
And I, as he. But if ye have not heard,
I shall not tell how much I loved him then.

XIII. Sonnet

He speaks of a third Love of his

O thou that often hast within thine eyes
A Love who holds three shafts—know thou from me
That this my sonnet would commend to thee
(Come from afar) a soul in heavy sighs,
Which even by Love's sharp arrow wounded lies.
Twice did the Syrian archer shoot, and he
Now bends his bow the third time, cunningly,
That, thou being here, he wound me in no wise.
Because the soul would quicken at the core
Thereby, which now is near to utter death,
From those two shafts, a triple wound that yield.
The first gives pleasure, yet disquieteth;
And with the second is the longing for
The mighty gladness by the third fulfill'd.

[1] I should think, from the mention of lady Lagia, that this might refer again to Lapo Gianni, who seems (one knows not why) to have fallen into disgrace with his friends. The Guido mentioned is probably Guido Orlandi.

XIV. Ballata

Of a continual Death in Love

Though thou, indeed, hast quite forgotten ruth,
Its steadfast truth my heart abandons not;
But still its thought yields service in good part
To that hard heart in thee.

Alas! who hears believes not I am so.
Yet who can know? of very surety, none.
From Love is won a spirit, in some wise,
Which dies perpetually:

And, when at length in that strange ecstasy
The heavy sigh will start,
There rains upon my heart
A love so pure and fine,
That I say: "Lady, I am wholly thine." [1]

XV. Sonnet

To a Friend who does not pity his Love

If I entreat this lady that all grace
Seem not unto her heart an enemy,
Foolish and evil thou declarest me,
And desperate in idle stubbornness.
Whence is such cruel judgment thine, whose face,
To him that looks thereon, professeth thee
Faithful, and wise, and of all courtesy,
And made after the way of gentleness.
Alas! my soul within my heart doth find
Sighs, and its grief by weeping doth enhance,
That, drown'd in bitter tears, those sighs depart:
And then there seems a presence in the mind,
As of a lady's thoughtful countenance
Come to behold the death of the poor heart.

[1] I may take this opportunity of mentioning that, in every case where an abrupt change of metre occurs in one of my translations, it is so also in the original poem.

XVI. Ballata

He perceives that his highest Love is gone from him

Through this my strong and new misadventure,
All now is lost to me
Which most was sweet in Love's supremacy.

So much of life is dead in its control,
That she, my pleasant lady of all grace,
Is gone out of the devastated soul:
I see her not, nor do I know her place;
Nor even enough of virtue with me stays
To understand, ah me!
The flower of her exceeding purity.

Because there comes—to kill that gentle thought
With saying that I shall not see her more—
This constant pain wherewith I am distraught,
Which is a burning torment very sore,
Wherein I know not whom I should implore.
Thrice thank'd the Master be
Who turns the grinding wheel of misery!

Full of great anguish in a place of fear
The spirit of my heart lies sorrowing,
Through Fortune's bitter craft. She lured it here,
And gave it o'er to Death, and barb'd the sting;
She wrought that hope which was a treacherous thing;
In Time, which dies from me,
She made me lose mine hour of ecstasy.

For ye, perturb'd and fearful words of mine,
Whither it like yourselves, even thither go;
But always burthen'd with shame's troublous sign,
And on my lady's name still calling low:
For me, I must abide in such deep woe
That all who look shall see
Death's shadow on my face assuredly.

XVII. Sonnet

Of his Pain from a new Love

Why from the danger did not mine eyes start,—
  Why not become even blind,—ere through my sight
  Within my soul thou ever couldst alight
To say: "Dost thou not hear me in thy heart?"
New torment then, the old torment's counterpart,
  Fill'd me at once with such a sore affright,
  That, Lady, lady (I said), destroy not quite
Mine eyes and me! O help us where thou art!
Thou hast so left mine eyes that Love is fain—
  Even Love himself—with pity uncontroll'd
    To bend above them, weeping for their loss:
Saying: If any man feel heavy pain,
  This man's more painful heart let him behold:
    Death has it in her hand, cut like a cross.[1]

GUIDO ORLANDI TO GUIDO CAVALCANTI

Prolonged Sonnet

He finds fault with the Conceits of the foregoing Sonnet

Friend, well I know thou knowest well to bear
  Thy sword's-point, that it pierce the close-lock'd mail:
  And like a bird to flit from perch to pale:
And out of difficult ways to find the air:
Largely to take and generously to share:
  Thrice to secure advantage: to regale
  Greatly the great, and over lands prevail.
In all thou art, one only fault is there:
For still among the wise of wit thou say'st
  That Love himself doth weep for thine estate;
    And yet, no eyes no tears: lo now, thy whim!

[1] Death (*la* Morte), being feminine in Italian, is naturally personified as a female. I have endeavoured to bear this in mind throughout my translations, but possibly some instances might be found in which habit has prevailed, and I have made Death masculine.

Soft, rather say: This is not held in haste;
But bitter are the hours and passionate,
To him that loves, and love is not for him.
For me (by usage strengthen'd to forbear
From carnal love), I fall not in such snare.

GIANNI ALFANI TO GUIDO CAVALCANTI

Sonnet

On the part of a Lady of Pisa

Guido, that Gianni who, a day agone,
Sought thee, now greets thee (ay and thou may'st laugh!)
On that same Pisan beauty's sweet behalf
Who can deal love-wounds even as thou hast done.
She ask'd me whether thy goodwill were prone
For service unto Love who troubles her,
If she to thee in suchwise should repair
That, save by him and Gualtier, 'twere not known:—
For thus her kindred of ill augury
Should lack the means wherefrom there might be plann'd
Worse harm than lying speech that smites afar.
I told her that thou hast continually
A goodly sheaf of arrows to thy hand,
Which well should stead her in such gentle war.

BERNARDO DA BOLOGNA TO GUIDO CAVALCANTI

Sonnet

He writes to Guido, telling him of the Love which a certain Pinella showed on seeing him

Unto that lowly lovely maid, I wis,
So poignant in the heart was thy salute,
That she changed countenance, remaining mute.
Wherefore I ask'd: "Pinella, how is this?
Hast heard of Guido? know'st thou who he is?"
She answer'd, "Yea;" then paused, irresolute;
But I saw well how the love-wounds acute
Were widen'd, and the star which Love calls his
Fill'd her with gentle brightness perfectly.
"But, friend, an't please thee, I would have it told,"

She said, " how I am known to him through thee.
Yet since, scarce seen, I knew his name of old,—
Even as the riddle is read, so must it be.
Oh! send him love of mine a thousand-fold! "

XVIII.—TO BERNARDO DA BOLOGNA

Sonnet

Guido answers, commending Pinella, and saying that the Love he can offer her is already shared by many noble Ladies

The fountain-head that is so bright to see
Gains as it runs in virtue and in sheen,
Friend Bernard; and for her who spoke with thee,
Even such the flow of her young life has been.
So that when Love discourses secretly
Of things the fairest he has ever seen,
He says there is no fairer thing than she,
A lowly maid as lovely as a queen.
And for that I am troubled, thinking of
That sigh wherein I burn upon the waves
Which drift her heart,—poor barque, so ill bested!—
Unto Pinella a great river of love
I send, that's full of sirens, and whose slaves
Are beautiful and richly habited.

DINO COMPAGNI TO GUIDO CAVALCANTI

Sonnet

He reproves Guido for his Arrogance in Love

No man may mount upon a golden stair,
Guido my master, to Love's palace-sill:
No key of gold will fit the lock that's there,
Nor heart there enter without pure goodwill.
Not if he miss one courteous duty, dare
A lover hope he should his love fulfil;
But to his lady must make meek repair,
Reaping with husbandry her favours still.
And thou but know'st of Love (I think) his name,
Youth holds thy reason in extremities:

Only on thine own face thou turn'st thine eyes;
Fairer than Absalom's account'st the same;
And think'st, as rosy moths are drawn by flame,
To draw the women from their balconies.[1]

XIX.—TO GUIDO ORLANDI

SONNET

In praise of Guido Orlandi's Lady

A LADY in whom love is manifest—
That love which perfect honour doth adorn—
Hath ta'en the living heart out of thy breast,
Which in her keeping to new life is born:
For there by such sweet power it is possest
As even is felt of Indian unicorn:[2]
And all its virtue now, with fierce unrest,
Unto thy soul makes difficult return.
For this thy lady is virtue's minister
In suchwise that no fault there is to show,
Save that God made her mortal on this ground.
And even herein His wisdom shall be found;
For only thus our intellect could know
That heavenly beauty which resembles her.

GUIDO ORLANDI TO GUIDO CAVALCANTI

SONNET

He answers the foregoing Sonnet, declaring himself his lady's Champion

To sound of trumpet rather than of horn,
I in Love's name would hold a battle-play
Of gentlemen in arms on Easter Day;
And, sailing without oar or wind, be borne

[1] It is curious to find these poets perpetually rating one another for the want of constancy in love. Guido is rebuked, as above, by Dino Compagni; Cino da Pistoia by Dante (p. 316); and Dante by Guido (p. 335), who formerly, as we have seen (p. 327), had confided to him his doubts of Lapo Gianni.

[2] In old representations, the unicorn is often seen with his head in a lady's lap.

Unto my joyful beauty; all that morn
To ride round her, in her cause seeking fray
Of arms with all but thee, friend, who dost say
The truth of her, and whom all truths adorn.
And still I pray Our Lady's grace above
Most reverently, that she whom my thoughts bear
In sweet remembrance own her Lord supreme.
Holding her honour dear, as doth behove,—
In God who therewithal sustaineth her
Let her abide, and not depart from Him.

XX.—TO DANTE ALIGHIERI

Sonnet

He rebukes Dante for his way of Life, after the Death of Beatrice [1]

I come to thee by daytime constantly,
But in thy thoughts too much of baseness find:
Greatly it grieves me for thy gentle mind,
And for thy many virtues gone from thee.
It was thy wont to shun much company,
Unto all sorry concourse ill inclined:
And still thy speech of me, heartfelt and kind,
Had made me treasure up thy poetry.
But now I dare not, for thine abject life,
Make manifest that I approve thy rhymes;
Nor come I in such sort that thou may'st know.
Ah! prythee read this sonnet many times:
So shall that evil one who bred this strife
Be thrust from thy dishonour'd soul and go.

XXI. Ballata

Concerning a Shepherd-maid

Within a copse I met a shepherd-maid,
More fair, I said, than any star to see.

[1] This interesting sonnet must refer to the same period of Dante's life regarding which he has made Beatrice address him in words of noble reproach when he meets her in Eden (*Purg.*, c. xxx.).

She came with waving tresses pale and bright,
With rosy cheer, and loving eyes of flame,
Guiding the lambs beneath her wand aright.
Her naked feet still had the dews on them,
As, singing like a lover, so she came;
Joyful, and fashion'd for all ecstasy.

I greeted her at once, and question made
What escort had she through the woods in spring?
But with soft accents she replied and said
That she was all alone there, wandering;
Moreover: "Do you know, when the birds sing,
My heart's desire is for a mate," said she.

While she was telling me this wish of hers,
The birds were all in song throughout the wood.
"Even now then," said my thought, "the time recurs,
With mine own longing to assuage her mood."
And so, in her sweet favour's name, I sued
That she would kiss there and embrace with me.

She took my hand to her with amorous will,
And answer'd that she gave me all her heart,
And drew me where the leaf is fresh and still,
Where spring the wood-flowers in the shade apart.
And on that day, by Joy's enchanted art,
There Love in very presence seem'd to be.

XXII. Sonnet

Of an ill-favoured Lady

Just look, Manetto, at that wry-mouth'd minx;
Merely take notice what a wretch it is;
How well contrived in her deformities,
How beastly favour'd when she scowls and blinks.
Why, with a hood on (if one only thinks)
Or muffle of prim veils and scapularies,—
And set together, on a day like this,
Some pretty lady with the odious sphinx;—

Why, then thy sins could hardly have such weight,
Nor thou be so subdued from Love's attack,
Nor so possess'd in Melancholy's sway,
But that perforce thy peril must be great
Of laughing till the very heart-strings crack:
Either thou'dst die, or thou must run away.

XXIII. Sonnet

To a newly enriched Man; reminding him of the Wants of the Poor

As thou wert loth to see, before thy feet,
The dear broad coin roll all thy hill-slope down,
Till, 'twixt the cracks of the hard glebe, some clown
Should find, rub oft, and scarcely render it;—
Tell me, I charge thee, if by generous heat
Or clutching frost the fruits of earth be grown,
And by what wind the blight is o'er them strown,
And with what gloom the tempest is replete.
Moreover (an' it please thee), when at morn
Thou hear'st the voice of the poor husbandman,
And those loud herds, his other family,—
I feel quite sure that if Bettina's born
With a kind heart, she does the best she can
To wheedle some of thy new wealth from thee.[1]

XXIV.—TO POPE BONIFACE VIII

Sonnet

After the Pope's Interdict, when the great Houses were leaving Florence

Nero, thus much for tidings in thine ear.
They of the Buondelmonti quake with dread,
Nor by all Florence may be comforted,
Noting in thee the lion's ravenous cheer;
Who more than any dragon giv'st them fear,

[1] The original is very obscure. Bettina being the same name as Becchina, it suggests itself as possible that the person addressed may be Cecco Angiolieri after he inherited his father's property.

In ancient evil stubbornly array'd;
Neither by bridge nor bulwark to be stay'd,
But only by King Pharaoh's sepulchre.
O in what monstrous sin dost thou engage,—
All these which are of loftiest blood to drive
Away, that none dare pause but all take wing!
Yet sooth it is, thou might'st redeem the pledge
Even yet, and save thy naked soul alive,
Wert thou but patient in the bargaining.

XXV. Ballata

In Exile at Sarzana

Because I think not ever to return,
Ballad, to Tuscany,—
Go therefore thou for me
Straight to my lady's face,
Who, of her noble grace,
Shall show thee courtesy.

Thou seekest her in charge of many sighs,
Full of much grief and of exceeding fear.
But have good heed thou come not to the eyes
Of such as are sworn foes to gentle cheer:
For, certes, if this thing should chance,—from her
Thou then couldst only look
For scorn, and such rebuke
As needs must bring me pain;—
Yea, after death again
Tears and fresh agony.

Surely thou knowest, Ballad, how that Death
Assails me, till my life is almost sped:
Thou knowest how my heart still travaileth
Through the sore pangs which in my soul are bred:—
My body being now so nearly dead,
It cannot suffer more.
Then, going, I implore
That this my soul thou take
(Nay, do so for my sake),
When my heart sets it free.

Ah! ballad, unto thy dear offices
I do commend my soul, thus trembling;
That thou may'st lead it, for pure piteousness,
Even to that lady's presence whom I sing.
Ah! ballad, say thou to her, sorrowing,
Whereso thou meet her then:—
"This thy poor handmaiden
Is come, nor will be gone,
Being parted now from one
Who served Love painfully."

Thou also, thou bewilder'd voice and weak
That goest forth in tears from my grieved heart,
Shalt, with my soul and with this ballad, speak
Of my dead mind, when thou dost hence depart,
Unto that lady (piteous as thou art!)
Who is so calm and bright,
It shall be deep delight
To feel her presence there.
And thou, Soul, worship her
Still in her purity.

XXVI. Canzone [1]

A Song of Fortune

Lo! I am she who makes the wheel to turn;
Lo! I am she who gives and takes away;
Blamed idly, day by day,
In all mine acts by you, ye humankind,
For whoso smites his visage and doth mourn,
What time he renders back my gifts to me,
Learns then that I decree
No state which mine own arrows may not find.
Who clomb must fall:—this bear ye well in mind,
Nor say, because he fell, I did him wrong.
Yet mine is a vain song:
For truly ye may find out wisdom when
King Arthur's resting-place is found of men.

[1] This and the three following canzoni are only to be found in the later collections of Guido Cavalcanti's poems. I have included them on account of their interest if really his, and especially for the beauty of the last among them; but must confess to some doubts of their authenticity.

Ye make great marvel and astonishment
What time ye see the sluggard lifted up
And the just man to drop,
And ye complain on God and on my sway.
O humankind, ye sin in your complaint:
For He, that Lord who made the world to live,
Lets me not take or give
By mine own act, but as He wills I may.
Yet is the mind of man so castaway,
That it discerns not the supreme behest.
Alas! ye wretchedest,
And chide ye at God also? Shall not He
Judge between good and evil righteously?

Ah! had ye knowledge how God evermore,
With agonies of soul and grievous heats,
As on an anvil beats
On them that in this earth hold high estate,—
Ye would choose little rather than much store,
And solitude than spacious palaces;
Such is the sore disease
Of anguish that on all their days doth wait.
Behold if they be not unfortunate,
When oft the father dares not trust the son!
O wealth, with thee is won
A worm to gnaw for ever on his soul
Whose abject life is laid in thy control!

If also ye take note what piteous death
They ofttimes make, whose hoards were manifold,
Who cities had and gold
And multitudes of men beneath their hand;
Then he among you that most angereth
Shall bless me saying, "Lo! I worship thee
That I was not as he
Whose death is thus accurst throughout the land."
But now your living souls are held in band
Of avarice, shutting you from the true light
Which shows how sad and slight
Are this world's treasured riches and array
That still change hands a hundred times a day.

For me,—could envy enter in my sphere,
Which of all human taint is clean and quit,—
I well might harbour it.
When I behold the peasant at his toil.
Guiding his team, untroubled, free from fear,
He leaves his perfect furrow as he goes,
And gives his field repose
From thorns and tares and weeds that vex the soil:
Thereto he labours, and without turmoil
Entrusts his work to God, content if so
Such guerdon from it grow
That in that year his family shall live:
Nor care nor thought to other things will give.

But now ye may no more have speech of me,
For this mine office craves continual use:
Ye therefore deeply muse
Upon those things which ye have heard the while:
Yea, and even yet remember heedfully
How this my wheel a motion hath so fleet,
That in an eyelid's beat
Him whom it raised it maketh low and vile.
None was, nor is, nor shall be of such guile,
Who could, or can, or shall, I say, at length
Prevail against my strength.
But still those men that are my questioners
In bitter torment own their hearts perverse.

Song, that wast made to carry high intent
Dissembled in the garb of humbleness,—
With fair and open face
To Master Thomas let thy course be bent.
Say that a great thing scarcely may be pent
In little room: yet always pray that he
Commend us, thee and me,
To them that are more apt in lofty speech:
For truly one must learn ere he can teach.

XXVII. Canzone

A Song against Poverty

O poverty, by thee the soul is wrapp'd
With hate, with envy, dolefulness, and doubt.
Even so be thou cast out,
And even so he that speaks thee otherwise.
I name thee now, because my mood is apt
To curse thee, bride of every lost estate,
Through whom are desolate
On earth all honourable things and wise.
Within thy power, each blessed condition dies:
By thee, men's minds with sore mistrust are made
Fantastic and afraid:—
Thou, hated worse than Death, by just accord,
And with the loathing of all hearts abhorr'd.

Yea, rightly art thou hated worse than Death,
For he at length is long'd for in the breast.
But not with thee, wild beast,
Was ever aught found beautiful or good.
For life is all that man can lose by death,
Not fame, and the fair summits of applause;
His glory shall not pause,
But live in men's perpetual gratitude.
While he who on thy naked sill has stood,
Though of great heart and worthy everso,
He shall be counted low.
Then let the man thou troublest never hope
To spread his wings in any lofty scope.

Hereby my mind is laden with a fear,
And I will take some thought to shelter me.
For this I plainly see:—
Through thee, to fraud the honest man is led;
To tyranny the just lord turneth here,
And the magnanimous soul to avarice.
Of every bitter vice
Thou, to my thinking, art the fount and head.
From thee no light in any wise is shed,

Who bringest to the paths of dusky hell.
I therefore see full well,
That death, the dungeon, sickness, and old age,
Weigh'd against thee, are blessed heritage.

And what though many a goodly hypocrite,
Lifting to thee his veritable prayer,
Call God to witness there
How this thy burden moved not Him to wrath
Why, who may call (of them that muse aright)
Him poor, who of the whole can say, 'Tis Mine?
Methinks I well divine
That want, to such, should seem an easy path.
God, who made all things, all things had and hath;
Nor any tongue may say that He was poor,
What while He did endure
For man's best succour among men to dwell:
Since to have all, with Him, was possible.

Song, thou shalt wend upon thy journey now:
And, if thou meet with folk who rail at thee,
Saying that poverty
Is not even sharper than thy words allow,—
Unto such brawlers briefly answer thou,
To tell them they are hypocrites; and then
Say mildly, once again,
That I, who am nearly in a beggar's case,
Might not presume to sing my proper praise.

XXVIII. Canzone

He laments the Presumption and Incontinence of his Youth

The devastating flame of that fierce plague,
The foe of virtue, fed with others' peace
More than itself foresees,
Being still shut in to gnaw its own desire;
Its strength not weaken'd, nor its hues more vague,
For all the benison that virtue sheds,
But which for ever spreads
To be a living curse that shall not tire:
Or yet again, that other idle fire

Which flickers with all change as winds may please:
One whichsoe'er of these
At length has hidden the true path from me
Which twice man may not see,
And quench'd the intelligence of joy, till now
All solace but abides in perfect woe.

Alas! the more my painful spirit grieves,
The more confused with miserable strife
Is that delicious life
Which sighing it recalls perpetually:
But its worst anguish, whence it still receives
More pain than death, is sent, to yield the sting
Of perfect suffering,
By him who is my lord and governs me:
Who holds all gracious truth in fealty,
Being nursed in those four sisters' fond caress
Through whom comes happiness.
He now has left me; and I draw my breath
Wound in the arms of Death,
Desirous of her: she is cried upon
In all the prayers my heart puts up alone.

How fierce aforetime and how absolute
That wheel of flame which turn'd within my head,
May never quite be said,
Because there are not words to speak the whole.
It slew my hope whereof I lack the fruit,
And stung the blood within my living flesh
To be an intricate mesh
Of pain beyond endurance or control;
Withdrawing me from God, who gave my soul
To know the sign where honour has its seat
From honour's counterfeit.
So in its longing my heart finds not hope,
Nor knows what door to ope;
Since, parting me from God, this foe took thought
To shut those paths wherein He may be sought.

My second enemy, thrice arm'd in guile,
As wise and cunning to mine overthrow
As her smooth face doth show,
With yet more shameless strength holds mastery.
My spirit, naked of its light and vile,

Is lit by her with her own deadly gleam,
Which makes all anguish seem
As nothing to her scourges that I see.
O thou the body of grace, abide with me
As thou wert once in the once joyful time;
And though thou hate my crime,
Fill not my life with torture to the end;
But in thy mercy, bend
My steps, and for thine honour, back again;
Till finding joy through thee, I bless my pain.

Since that first frantic devil without faith
Fell, in thy name, upon the stairs that mount
Unto the limpid fount
Of thine intelligence,—withhold not now
Thy grace, nor spare my second foe from death.
For lo! on this my soul has set her trust;
And failing this, thou must
Prove false to truth and honour, seest thou!
Then, saving light and throne of strength, allow
My prayer, and vanquish both my foes at last;
That so I be not cast
Into that woe wherein I fear to end.
Yet if it is ordain'd
That I must die ere this be perfected,—
Ah! yield me comfort after I am dead.

Ye unadornèd words obscure of sense,
Go weeping, and these sighs along with ye,
And bear mine agony
(Not to be told by words, being too intense),
To His intelligence
Who moved by virtue shall fulfil my breath
In human life or compensating death.

XXIX. Canzone

A Dispute with Death

"O sluggish, hard, ingrate, what doest thou?
Poor sinner, folded round with heavy sin,
Whose life to find out joy alone is bent.
I call thee, and thou fall'st to deafness now;

And, deeming that my path whereby to win
Thy seat is lost, there sitt'st thee down content,
And hold'st me to thy will subservient.
But I into thy heart have crept disguised:
Among thy senses and thy sins I went,
By roads thou didst not guess, unrecognised.
Tears will not now suffice to bid me go,
Nor countenance abased, nor words of woe."

Now, when I heard the sudden dreadful voice
Wake thus within to cruel utterance,
Whereby the very heart of hearts did fail,
My spirit might not any more rejoice,
But fell from its courageous pride at once,
And turn'd to fly, where flight may not avail.
Then slowly 'gan some strength to re-inhale
The trembling life which heard that whisper speak,
And had conceived the sense with sore travail
Till in the mouth it murmur'd, very weak,
Saying: "Youth, wealth, and beauty, these have I:
O Death! remit thy claim,—I would not die."

Small sign of pity in that aspect dwells
Which then had scatter'd all my life abroad
Till there was comfort with no single sense:
And yet almost in piteous syllables,
When I had ceased to speak, this answer flow'd:
"Behold what path is spread before thee hence:
Thy life has all but a day's permanence.
And is it for the sake of youth there seems
In loss of human years such sore offence?
Nay, look unto the end of youthful dreams.
What present glory does thy hope possess,
That shall not yield ashes and bitterness?"

But, when I look'd on Death made visible,
From my heart's sojourn brought before mine eyes,
And holding in her hand my grievous sin,
I seem'd to see my countenance, that fell,
Shake like a shadow: my heart utter'd cries,
And my soul wept the curse that lay therein.
Then Death: "Thus much thine urgent prayer shall win:—

I grant thee the brief interval of youth
At natural pity's strong soliciting."
And I (because I knew that moment's ruth
But left my life to groan for a frail space)
Fell in the dust upon my weeping face.

So, when she saw me thus abash'd and dumb,
In loftier words she weigh'd her argument,
That new and strange it was to hear her speak;
Saying: "The path thy fears withhold thee from
Is thy best path. To folly be not shent,
Nor shrink from me because thy flesh is weak.
Thou seest how man is sore confused, and eke
How ruinous Chance makes havoc of his life,
And grief is in the joys that he doth seek;
Nor ever pauses the perpetual strife
'Twixt fear and rage; until beneath the sun
His perfect anguish be fulfill'd and done."

"O Death! thou art so dark and difficult,
That never human creature might attain
By his own will to pierce thy secret sense;
Because, foreshadowing thy dread result,
He may not put his trust in heart or brain,
Nor power avails him, nor intelligence.
Behold how cruelly thou takest hence
These forms so beautiful and dignified,
And chain'st them in thy shadow chill and dense,
And forcest them in narrow graves to hide;
With pitiless hate subduing still to thee
The strength of man and woman's delicacy."

"Not for thy fear the less I come at last,
For this thy tremor, for thy painful sweat.
Take therefore thought to leave (for lo! I call):
Kinsfolk and comrades, all thou didst hold fast,—
Thy father and thy mother,—to forget
All these thy brethren, sisters, children, all.
Cast sight and hearing from thee; let hope fall;
Leave every sense and thy whole intellect,
These things wherein thy life made festival:
For I have wrought thee to such strange effect
That thou hast no more power to dwell with these
As living man. Let pass thy soul in peace."

Yea, Lord. O thou, the Builder of the spheres,
Who, making me, didst shape me, of thy grace,
In thine own image and high counterpart;
Do thou subdue my spirit, long perverse,
To weep within thy will a certain space,
Ere yet thy thunder come to rive my heart.
Set in my hand some sign of what thou art,
Lord God, and suffer me to seek out Christ,—
Weeping, to seek him in thy ways apart;
Until my sorrow have at length sufficed
In some accepted instant to atone
For sins of thought, for stubborn evil done.

Dishevell'd and in tears, go, song of mine,
To break the hardness of the heart of man:
Say how his life began
From dust, and in that dust doth sink supine:
Yet, say, the unerring spirit of grief shall guide
His soul, being purified,
To seek its Maker at the heavenly shrine.

CINO DA PISTOIA

I.—TO DANTE ALIGHIERI

Sonnet

He interprets Dante's Dream, related in the first Sonnet of the Vita Nuova

Each lover's longing leads him naturally
Unto his lady's heart his heart to show;
And this it is that Love would have thee know
By the strange vision which he sent to thee.
With thy heart therefore, flaming outwardly,
In humble guise he fed thy lady so,
Who long had lain in slumber, from all woe
Folded within a mantle silently.

Also, in coming, Love might not repress
His joy, to yield thee thy desire achieved,
Whence heart should unto heart true service bring.
But understanding the great love-sickness
Which in thy lady's bosom was conceived,
He pitied her, and wept in vanishing.

II.—TO DANTE ALIGHIERI

Canzone

On the Death of Beatrice Portinari

Albeit my prayers have not so long delay'd,
But craved for thee, ere this, that Pity and Love
Which only bring our heavy life some rest;
Yet is not now the time so much o'erstay'd
But that these words of mine which tow'rds thee move
Must find thee still with spirit dispossess'd,
And say to thee: "In Heaven she now is bless'd
Even as the blessed name men call'd her by;
While thou dost ever cry,
'Alas! the blessing of mine eyes is flown!'"
Behold, these words set down
Are needed still, for still thou sorrowest.
Then hearken; I would yield advisedly
Some comfort: Stay these sighs: give ear to me.

We know for certain that in this blind world
Each man's subsistence is of grief and pain,
Still trail'd by fortune through all bitterness:
At last the flesh within a shroud is furl'd,
And unto Heaven's rejoicing doth attain
The joyful soul made free of earthly stress.
Then wherefore sighs thy heart in abjectness
Which for her triumph should exult aloud?
For He the Lord our God
Hath call'd her, hearkening what her Angel said,
To have Heaven perfected.
Each saint for a new thing beholds her face,
And she the face of our Redemption sees,
Discoursing with immortal substances.

Why now do pangs of torment clutch thy heart
Which with thy love should make thee overjoy'd,
As him whose intellect hath pass'd the skies?
Behold, the spirits of thy life depart
Daily to Heaven with her, they so are buoy'd
With their desire, and Love so bids them rise.
O God! and thou, a man whom God made wise,
To nurse a charge of care, and love the same!
I tell thee in His Name
From sin of sighing grief to hold thy breath,
Nor let thy heart to death,
Nor harbour death's resemblance in thine eyes.
God hath her with Himself eternally,
Yet she inhabits every hour with thee.

Be comforted, Love cries, be comforted!
Devotion pleads, Peace, for the love of God!
O yield thyself to prayers so full of grace;
And make thee naked now of this dull weed
Which 'neath thy foot were better to be trod;
For man through grief despairs and ends his days.
How ever shouldst thou see the lovely face
If any desperate death should once be thine?
From justice so condign
Withdraw thyself even now; that in the end
Thy heart may not offend
Against thy soul, which in the holy place,
In Heaven, still hopes to see her and to be
Within her arms. Let this hope comfort thee.

Look thou into the pleasure wherein dwells
Thy lovely lady who is in Heaven crown'd,
Who is herself thy hope in Heaven, the while
To make thy memory hallow'd, she avails;
Being a soul within the deep Heaven bound,
A face on thy heart painted, to beguile
Thy heart of grief which else should turn it vile.
Even as she seem'd a wonder here below,
On high she seemeth so,—
Yea, better known, is there more wondrous yet.
And even as she was met
First by the angels with sweet song and smile,
Thy spirit bears her back upon the wing,
Which often in those ways is journeying.

Of thee she entertains the blessed throngs,
And says to them: "While yet my body thrave
On earth, I gat much honour which he gave,
Commending me in his commended songs."
Also she asks alway of God our Lord
To give thee peace according to His word.

III.—TO DANTE ALIGHIERI

Sonnet

He conceives of some Compensation in Death[1]

Dante, whenever this thing happeneth,—
That Love's desire is quite bereft of Hope
(Seeking in vain at ladies' eyes some scope
Of joy, through what the heart for ever saith),—
I ask thee, can amends be made by Death?
Is such sad pass the last extremity?—
Or may the soul that never fear'd to die
Then in another body draw new breath?
Lo! thus it is through her who governs all
Below,—that I, who enter'd at her door,
Now at her dreadful window must fare forth.
Yea, and I think through her it doth befall
That even ere yet the road is travell'd o'er
My bones are weary and life is nothing worth.

IV. Madrigal

To his Lady Selvaggia Vergiolesi; likening his Love to a search for Gold

I am all bent to glean the golden ore
Little by little from the river-bed;
Hoping the day to see
When Crœsus shall be conquer'd in my store.
Therefore, still sifting where the sands are spread,
I labour patiently:

[1] Among Dante's Epistles, there is a Latin letter to Cino, which I should judge was written in reply to this sonnet.

Till, thus intent on this thing and no more,—
If to a vein of silver I were led,
It scarce could gladden me.
And, seeing that no joy's so warm i' the core
As this whereby the heart is comforted
And the desire set free,—
Therefore thy bitter love is still my scope,
Lady, from whom it is my life's sore theme
More painfully to sift the grains of hope
Than gold out of that stream.

V. Sonnet

To Love, in great Bitterness

O Love, O thou that, for my fealty,
Only in torment dost thy power employ,
Give me, for God's sake, something of thy joy,
That I may learn what good there is in thee.
Yea, for, if thou art glad with grieving me,
Surely my very life thou shalt destroy
When thou renew'st my pain, because the joy
Must then be wept for with the misery.
He that had never sense of good, nor sight,
Esteems his ill estate but natural,
Which so is lightlier borne: his case is mine.
But, if thou wouldst uplift me for a sign,
Bidding me drain the curse and know it all,
I must a little taste its opposite.

VI. Sonnet

Death is not without but within him

This fairest lady, who, as well I wot,
Found entrance by her beauty to my soul,
Pierced through mine eyes my heart, which erst was whole,
Sorely, yet makes as though she knew it not;
Nay, turns upon me now, to anger wrought,
Dealing me harshness for my pain's best dole,
And is so changed by her own wrath's control,

That I go thence, in my distracted thought
Content to die; and, mourning, cry abroad
On Death, as upon one afar from me;
But Death makes answer from within my heart.
Then, hearing her so hard at hand to be,
I do commend my spirit unto God;
Saying to her too, "Ease and peace thou art."

VII. Sonnet

A Trance of Love

Vanquish'd and weary was my soul in me,
And my heart gasp'd after its much lament,
When sleep at length the painful languor sent.
And, as I slept (and wept incessantly),—
Through the keen fixedness of memory
Which I had cherish'd ere my tears were spent,
I pass'd to a new trance of wonderment;
Wherein a visible spirit I could see,
Which caught me up, and bore me to a place
Where my most gentle lady was alone;
And still before us a fire seem'd to move,
Out of the which methought there came a moan,
Uttering, "Grace, a little season, grace!
I am of one that hath the wings of Love."

VIII. Sonnet

Of the grave of Selvaggia, on the Monte della Sambuca

I was upon the high and blessed mound,
And kiss'd, long worshipping, the stones and grass,
There on the hard stones prostrate, where, alas!
That pure one laid her forehead in the ground.
Then were the springs of gladness seal'd and bound,
The day that unto Death's most bitter pass
My sick heart's lady turn'd her feet, who was
Already in her gracious life renown'd.
So in that place I spake to Love, and cried:
"O sweet my god, I am one whom Death may claim

Hence to be his; for lo! my heart lies here."
Anon, because my Master lent no ear,
Departing, still I call'd Selvaggia's name.
So with my moan I left the mountain-side.

IX. Canzone

His Lament for Selvaggia

Ay me, alas! the beautiful bright hair
That shed reflected gold
O'er the green growths on either side the way;
Ay me! the lovely look, open and fair,
Which my heart's core doth hold
With all else of that best-remember'd day;
Ay me! the face made gay
With joy that Love confers;
Ay me! that smile of hers
Where whiteness as of snow was visible
Among the roses at all seasons red!
Ay me! and was this well,
O Death, to let me live when she is dead?

Ay me! the calm, erect, dignified walk;
Ay me! the sweet salute,—
The thoughtful mind,—the wit discreetly worn;
Ay me! the clearness of her noble talk,
Which made the good take root
In me, and for the evil woke my scorn;
Ay me! the longing born
Of so much loveliness,—
The hope, whose eager stress
Made other hopes fall back to let it pass,
Even till my load of love grew light thereby!
These thou hast broken, as glass,
O Death, who makest me, alive, to die!

Ay me! Lady, the lady of all worth;—
Saint, for whose single shrine
All other shrines I left, even as Love will'd;—
Ay me! what precious stone in the whole earth,
For that pure fame of thine
Worthy the marble statue's base to yield?
Ay me! fair vase fulfill'd

With more than this world's good,—
By cruel chance and rude
  Cast out upon the steep path of the mountains
Where Death has shut thee in between hard stones!
  Ay me! two languid fountains
Of weeping are these eyes, which joy disowns.

Ay me, sharp Death! till what I ask is done
  And my whole life is ended utterly,—
Answer—must I weep on
  Even thus, and never cease to moan Ay me?

X.—TO GUIDO CAVALCANTI

Sonnet

He owes nothing to Guido as a Poet

What rhymes are thine which I have ta'en from thee,
  Thou Guido, that thou ever say'st I thieve? [1]
    'Tis true, fine fancies gladly I receive,
But when was aught found beautiful in thee?
Nay, I have search'd my pages diligently,
  And tell the truth, and lie not, by your leave.
  From whose rich store my web of songs I weave
Love knoweth well, well knowing them and me.
No artist I,—all men may gather it;
  Nor do I work in ignorance of pride,
  (Though the world reach alone the coarser sense);
But am a certain man of humble wit
  Who journeys with his sorrow at his side,
    For a heart's sake, alas! that is gone hence.

XI. Sonnet

He impugns the verdicts of Dante's Commedia

This book of Dante's, very sooth to say,
  Is just a poet's lovely heresy,
  Which by a lure as sweet as sweet can be
Draws other men's concerns beneath its sway;

[1] I have not examined Cino's poetry with special reference to this accusation; but there is a canzone of his in which he speaks of having conceived an affection for another lady from her resemblance to Selvaggia. Perhaps Guido considered this as a sort of plagiarism *de facto* on his own change of love through Mandetta's likeness to Giovanna.

While, among stars' and comets' dazzling play,
It beats the right down, lets the wrong go free,
Shows some abased, and others in great glee,
Much as with lovers is Love's ancient way.
Therefore his vain decrees, wherein he lied,
Fixing folks' nearness to the Fiend their foe,
Must be like empty nutshells flung aside.
Yet through the rash false witness set to grow,
French and Italian vengeance on such pride
May fall, like Antony's on Cicero.

XII. Sonnet

He condemns Dante for not naming, in the Commedia, his friend Onesto di Boncima, and his Lady Selvaggia

Among the faults we in that book descry
Which has crown'd Dante lord of rhyme and thought,
Are two so grave that some attaint is brought
Unto the greatness of his soul thereby.
One is, that holding with Sordello high
Discourse, and with the rest who sang and taught,
He of Onesto di Boncima [1] nought
Has said, who was to Arnauld Daniel [2] nigh.
The other is, that when he says he came
To see, at summit of the sacred stair,
His Beatrice among the heavenly signs,—
He, looking in the bosom of Abraham,
Saw not that highest of all women there
Who join'd Mount Sion to the Apennines.[3]

[1] Between this poet and Cino various friendly sonnets were interchanged, which may be found in the Italian collections. There is also one sonnet by Onesto to Cino, with his answer, both of which are far from being affectionate or respectful. They are very obscure, however, and not specially interesting.

[2] The Provençal poet, mentioned in C. xxvi. of the *Purgatory*.

[3] That is, sanctified the Apennines by her burial on the Monte della Sambuca.

DANTE DA MAIANO

I.—TO DANTE ALIGHIERI

SONNET

He interprets Dante Alighieri's Dream, related in the first Sonnet of the Vita Nuova

OF that wherein thou art a questioner
Considering, I make answer briefly thus,
Good friend, in wit but little prosperous:
And from my words the truth thou shalt infer,—
So hearken to thy dream's interpreter.
If, sound of frame, thou soundly canst discuss
In reason,—then, to expel this overplus
Of vapours which hath made thy speech to err,
See that thou lave and purge thy stomach soon.
But if thou art afflicted with disease,
Know that I count it mere delirium.
Thus of my thought I write thee back the sum:
Nor my conclusions can be changed from these
Till to the leech thy water I have shown.

II. SONNET

He craves interpreting of a Dream of his

THOU that art wise, let wisdom minister
Unto my dream, that it be understood.
To wit: A lady, of her body fair,
And whom my heart approves in womanhood,
Bestow'd on me a wreath of flowers, fair-hued
And green in leaf, with gentle loving air:
After the which, meseem'd I was stark nude
Save for a smock of hers that I did wear.
Whereat, good friend, my courage gat such growth
That to mine arms I took her tenderly:
With no rebuke the beauty laugh'd unloth,
And as she laugh'd I kiss'd continually.
I say no more, for that I pledged mine oath,
And that my mother, who is dead, was by.

GUIDO ORLANDI TO DANTE DA MAIANO

Sonnet

He interprets the Dream [1] *related in the foregoing Sonnet*

On the last words of what you write to me
I give you my opinion at the first.
To see the dead must prove corruption nursed
Within you, by your heart's own vanity.
The soul should bend the flesh to its decree:
Then rule it, friend, as fish by line amerced.
As to the smock, your lady's gift, the worst
Of words were not too bad for speech so free.
It is a thing unseemly to declare
The love of gracious dame or damozel,
And therewith for excuse to say, I dream'd.
Tell us no more of this, but think who seem'd
To call you: mother came to whip you well.
Love close, and of Love's joy you'll have your share.

III. Sonnet

To his Lady Nina, of Sicily

So greatly thy great pleasaunce pleasured me,
Gentle my lady, from the first of all,
That counting every other blessing small
I gave myself up wholly to know thee:
And since I was made thine, thy courtesy
And worth, more than of earth, celestial,
I learn'd, and from its freedom did enthrall
My heart, the servant of thy grace to be.

[1] There exist no fewer than six answers by different poets, interpreting Dante da Maiano's dream. I have chosen Guido Orlandi's, much the most matter of fact of the six, because it is diverting to find the writer again in his antagonistic mood. Among the five remaining answers, in all of which the vision is treated as a very mysterious matter, one is attributed to Dante Alighieri, but seems so doubtful that I have not translated it. Indeed it would do the greater Dante, if he really wrote it, little credit as a lucid interpreter of dreams; though it might have some interest, as giving him (when compared with the sonnet at page 357) a decided advantage over his lesser namesake in point of courtesy.

Wherefore I pray thee, joyful countenance,
Humbly, that it incense or irk thee not,
If I, being thine, do wait upon thy glance.
More to solicit, I am all afraid:
Yet, lady, twofold is the gift, we wot,
Given to the needy unsolicited.

IV. Sonnet

He thanks his Lady for the Joy he has had from her

Wonderful countenance and royal neck,
I have not found your beauty's parallel;
Nor at her birth might any yet prevail
The likeness of these features to partake.
Wisdom is theirs, and mildness: for whose sake
All grace seems stol'n, such perfect grace to swell;
Fashion'd of God beyond delight to dwell
Exalted. And herein my pride I take
Who of this garden have possession,
So that all worth subsists for my behoof
And bears itself according to my will.
Lady, in thee such pleasaunce hath its fill
That whoso is content to rest thereon
Knows not of grief, and holds all pain aloof.

CECCO ANGIOLIERI, DA SIENA

I.—TO DANTE ALIGHIERI

Sonnet

On the last Sonnet of the Vita Nuova

Dante Alighieri, Cecco, your good friend
And servant, gives you greeting as his lord,
And prays you for the sake of Love's accord
(Love being the Master before whom you bend),
That you will pardon him if he offend,

Even as your gentle heart can well afford.
All that he wants to say is just one word
Which partly chides your sonnet at the end.
For where the measure changes, first you say
You do not understand the gentle speech
A spirit made touching your Beatrice:
And next you tell your ladies how, straightway,
You understand it. Wherefore (look you) each
Of these your words the other's sense denies.

II. Sonnet

He will not be too deeply in Love

I am enamour'd, and yet not so much
But that I'd do without it easily;
And my own mind thinks all the more of me
That Love has not quite penn'd me in his hutch.
Enough if for his sake I dance and touch
The lute, and serve his servants cheerfully:
An overdose is worse than none would be:
Love is no lord of mine, I'm proud to vouch.
So let no woman who is born conceive
That I'll be her liege slave, as I see some,
Be she as fair and dainty as she will.
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.

III. Sonnet

Of Love in Men and Devils

The man who feels not, more or less, somewhat
Of love in all the years his life goes round
Should be denied a grave in holy ground
Except with usurers who will bate no groat:
Nor he himself should count himself a jot
Less wretched than the meanest beggar found.
Also the man who in Love's robe is gown'd
May say that Fortune smiles upon his lot.
Seeing how love has such nobility
That if it enter'd in the lord of Hell

'Twould rule him more than his fire's ancient sting;
He should be glorified to eternity,
And all his life be always glad and well
As is a wanton woman in the spring.

IV. Sonnet

Of Love, in honour of his mistress Becchina

Whatever good is naturally done
Is born of Love as fruit is born of flower:
By Love all good is brought to its full power:
Yea, Love does more than this; for he finds none
So coarse but from his touch some grace is won
And the poor wretch is alter'd in an hour.
So let it be decreed that Death devour
The beast who says that Love's a thing to shun.
A man's just worth the good that he can hold,
And where no love is found, no good is there;
On that there's nothing that I would not stake,
So now, my Sonnet, go as you are told
To lovers and their sweethearts everywhere,
And say I made you for Becchina's sake.

V. Sonnet

Of Becchina, the Shoemaker's Daughter

Why, if Becchina's heart were diamond,
And all the other parts of her were steel,
As cold to love as snows when they congeal
In lands to which the sun may not get round;
And if her father were a giant crown'd
And not a donkey born to stitching shoes;
Or I were but an ass myself;—to use
Such harshness, scarce could to her praise redound.
Yet if she'd only for a minute hear,
And I could speak if only pretty well,
I'd let her know that I'm her happiness;
That I'm her life should also be made clear,
With other things that I've no need to tell;
And then I feel quite sure she'd answer Yes.

VI. Sonnet

To Messer Angiolieri, his Father

If I'd a sack of florins, and all new
(Pack'd tight together, freshly-coin'd and fine),
And Arcidosso and Montegiovi mine,[1]
And quite a glut of eagle-pieces too,—
It were but as three farthings to my view
Without Becchina. Why then all these plots
To whip me, daddy? Now for instance, what's
The sin of all the Saracens to you?
For I protest (or may I be struck dead!)
My love's so firmly planted in its place,
Whipping nor hanging now could change the grain.
And if you want my reason on this head,
It is that whoso looks her in the face,
Though he were old, gets back his youth again.

VII. Sonnet

Of the 20th June 1291

I'm full of everything I do not want
And have not that wherein I should find ease;
For alway till Becchina brings me peace
The heavy heart I bear must toil and pant.
That so all written paper would prove scant
(Though in its space the Bible you might squeeze),
To say how like the flames of furnaces
I burn, remembering what she used to grant.
Because the stars are fewer in heaven's span
Than all those kisses wherewith I kept tune
All in an instant (I who now have none!)
Upon her mouth (I and no other man!)
So sweetly on the twentieth day of June
In the new year twelve-hundred-ninety-one.

[1] Perhaps the names of his father's estates.

VIII. Sonnet

In absence from Becchina

My heart's so heavy with a hundred things
That I feel dead a hundred times a day:
Yet death would be the least of sufferings,
For life's all suffering save what's slept away:
Though even in sleep there is no dream but brings
From dream-land such dull torture as it may.
And yet one moment would pluck out these stings,
If for one moment she were mine to-day
Who gives my heart the anguish that it has.
Each thought that seeks my heart for its abode
Becomes a wan and sorrow-stricken guest:
Sorrow has brought me to so sad a pass
That men look sad to meet me on the road;
Nor any road is mine that leads to rest.

IX. Sonnet

Of Becchina in a rage

When I behold Becchina in a rage,
Just like a little lad I trembling stand
Whose master tells him to hold out his hand:
Had I a lion's heart, the sight would wage
Such war against it, that in that sad stage
I'd wish my birth might never have been plann'd,
And curse the day and hour that I was bann'd
With such a plague for my life's heritage.
Yet even if I should sell me to the Fiend,
I must so manage matters in some way
That for her rage I may not care a fig;
Or else from death I cannot long be screen'd.
So I'll not blink the fact, but plainly say
It's time I got my valour to grow big.

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(Pack'd tight together, freshly-coin'd and fine),
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From dream-land such dull torture as it may.
And yet one moment would pluck out these stings,
If for one moment she were mine to-day
Who gives my heart the anguish that it has.
Each thought that seeks my heart for its abode
Becomes a wan and sorrow-stricken guest:
Sorrow has brought me to so sad a pass
That men look sad to meet me on the road;
Nor any road is mine that leads to rest.

IX. Sonnet

Of Becchina in a rage

When I behold Becchina in a rage,
Just like a little lad I trembling stand
Whose master tells him to hold out his hand:
Had I a lion's heart, the sight would wage
Such war against it, that in that sad stage
I'd wish my birth might never have been plann'd,
And curse the day and hour that I was bann'd
With such a plague for my life's heritage.
Yet even if I should sell me to the Fiend,
I must so manage matters in some way
That for her rage I may not care a fig;
Or else from death I cannot long be screen'd.
So I'll not blink the fact, but plainly say
It's time I got my valour to grow big.

X. Sonnet

He rails against Dante, who had censured his homage to Becchina

Dante Alighieri in Becchina's praise
Won't have me sing, and bears him like my lord.
He's but a pinchbeck florin, on my word;
Sugar he seems, but salt's in all his ways;
He looks like wheaten bread, who's bread of maize;
He's but a sty, though like a tower in height;
A falcon, till you find that he's a kite;
Call him a cock!—a hen's more like his case.
Go now to Florence, Sonnet of my own,
And there with dames and maids hold pretty parles,
And say that all he is doth only seem.
And I meanwhile will make him better known
Unto the Count of Provence, good King Charles;
And in this way we'll singe his skin for him.

XI. Sonnet

Of his four Tormentors

I'm caught, like any thrush the nets surprise,
By Daddy and Becchina, Mammy and Love.
As to my father, let thus much suffice,—
Each day he damns me, and each hour thereof:
Becchina wants so much of all that's nice,
Not Mahomet himself could yield enough:
And Love still sets me doting in a trice
On trulls who'd seem the Ghetto's proper stuff.
My mother don't do much because she can't,
But I may count it just as good as done,
Knowing the way and not the will's her want.
To-day I tried a kiss with her—just one—
To see if I could make her sulks avaunt;
She said, "The devil rip you up, my son!"

XII. Sonnet

Concerning his Father

The dreadful and the desperate hate I bear
My father (to my praise, not to my shame)
Will make him live more than Methusalem;
Of this I've long ago been made aware.
Now tell me, Nature, if my hate's not fair.
A glass of some thin wine not worth a name
One day I begg'd (he has whole butts o' the same),
And he had almost kill'd me, I declare.
"Good Lord, if I had ask'd for vernage-wine!"
Said I; for if he'd spit into my face
I wish'd to see for reasons of my own.
Now say that I mayn't hate this plague of mine!
Why, if you knew what I know of his ways,
You'd tell me that I ought to knock him down.[1]

XIII. Sonnet

Of all he would do

If I were fire, I'd burn the world away;
If I were wind, I'd turn my storms thereon;
If I were water, I'd soon let it drown;
If I were God, I'd sink it from the day;
If I were Pope, I'd never feel quite gay
Until there was no peace beneath the sun;
If I were Emperor, what would I have done?—
I'd lop men's heads all round in my own way.
If I were Death, I'd look my father up;
If I were Life, I'd run away from him;
And treat my mother to like calls and runs.
If I were Cecco (and that's all my hope),
I'd pick the nicest girls to suit my whim,
And other folk should get the ugly ones.

[1] I have thought it necessary to soften one or two expressions in this sonnet.

XIV. Sonnet

He is past all Help

For a thing done, repentance is no good,
Nor to say after, Thus would I have done:
In life, what's left behind is vainly rued;
So let a man get used his hurt to shun;
For on his legs he hardly may be stood
Again, if once his fall be well begun.
But to show wisdom's what I never could;
So where I itch I scratch now, and all's one.
I'm down, and cannot rise in any way;
For not a creature of my nearest kin
Would hold me out a hand that I could reach.
I pray you do not mock at what I say;
For so my love's good grace may I not win
If ever sonnet held so true a speech.

XV. Sonnet

Of why he is unhanged

Whoever without money is in love
Had better build a gallows and go hang;
He dies not once, but oftener feels the pang
Than he who was cast down from Heaven above.
And certes, for my sins, it's plain enough,
If Love's alive on earth, that he's myself,
Who would not be so cursed with want of pelf
If others paid my proper dues thereof.
Then why am I not hang'd by my own hands?
I answer: for this empty narrow chink
Of hope;—that I've a father old and rich,
And that if once he dies I'll get his lands;
And die he must, when the sea's dry, I think.
Meanwhile God keeps him whole and me i' the ditch.

XVI. Sonnet

Of why he would be a Scullion

I am so out of love through poverty
That if I see my mistress in the street
I hardly can be certain whom I meet,
And of her name do scarce remember me.
Also my courage it has made to be
So cold, that if I suffer'd some foul cheat
Even from the meanest wretch that one could beat,
Save for the sin I think he should go free.
Ay, and it plays me a still nastier trick;
For, meeting some who erewhile with me took
Delight, I seem to them a roaring fire.
So here's a truth whereat I need not stick:—
That if one could turn scullion to a cook,
It were a thing to which one might aspire.

XVII. Sonnet

He argues his case with Death

Gramercy, Death, as you've my love to win,
Just be impartial in your next assault;
And that you may not find yourself in fault,
Whate'er you do, be quick now and begin.
As oft may I be pounded flat and thin
As in Grosseto there are grains of salt,
If now to kill us both you be not call'd,—
Both me and him who sticks so in his skin.
Or better still, look here; for if I'm slain
Alone,—his wealth, it's true, I'll never have,
Yet death is life to one who lives in pain:
But if you only kill Saldagno's knave,
I'm left in Siena (don't you see your gain?)
Like a rich man who's made a galley-slave.[1]

[1] He means, perhaps, that he should be more than ever tormented by his creditors.

XVIII. Sonnet

Of Becchina, and of her Husband

I would like better in the grace to be
Of the dear mistress whom I bear in mind
(As once I was) than I should like to find
A stream that wash'd up gold continually:
Because no language could report of me
The joys that round my heart would then be twined,
Who now, without her love, do seem resign'd
To death that bends my life to its decree.
And one thing makes the matter still more sad:
For all the while I know the fault's my own,
That on her husband I take no revenge,
Who's worse to her than is to me my dad.
God send grief has not pull'd my courage down,
That hearing this I laugh; for it seems strange.

XIX. Sonnet

On the Death of his Father

Let not the inhabitants of Hell despair,
For one's got out who seem'd to be lock'd in;
And Cecco's the poor devil that I mean,
Who thought for ever and ever to be there.
But the leaf's turn'd at last, and I declare
That now my state of glory doth begin;
For Messer Angiolieri's slipp'd his skin,
Who plagued me, Summer and Winter, many a year.
Make haste to Cecco, sonnet, with a will,
To him who no more at the Abbey dwells;
Tell him that Brother Henry's half dried up.[1]
He'll never more be down-at-mouth, but fill
His beak at his own beck,[2] till his life swells
To more than Enoch's or Elijah's scope.

[1] It would almost seem as if Cecco, in his poverty, had at last taken refuge in a religious house under the name of Brother Henry (*Frate Arrigo*), and as if he here meant that Brother Henry was now decayed, so to speak, through the resuscitation of Cecco.

[2] In the original words, "Ma di tal cibo imbecchi lo suo becco," a play upon the name of Becchina seems intended, which I have conveyed as well as I could.

XX. Sonnet

He would slay all who hate their Fathers

Who utters of his father aught but praise,
'Twere well to cut his tongue out of his mouth;
Because the Deadly Sins are seven, yet doth
No one provoke such ire as this must raise.
Were I a priest, or monk in anyways,
Unto the Pope my first respects were paid,
Saying, "Holy Father, let a just crusade
Scourge each man who his sire's good name gainsays."
And if by chance a handful of such rogues
At any time should come into our clutch,
I'd have them cook'd and eaten then and there,
If not by men, at least by wolves and dogs.
The Lord forgive me! for I fear me much
Some words of mine were rather foul than fair.

XXI.—TO DANTE ALIGHIERI

Sonnet

He writes to Dante, then in exile at Verona, defying him as no better than himself

Dante Alighieri, if I jest and lie,
You in such lists might run a tilt with me;
I get my dinner, you your supper, free;
And if I bite the fat, you suck the fry;
I shear the cloth and you the teazle ply;
If I've a strut, who's prouder than you are?—
If I'm foul-mouth'd, you're not particular;
And you're turn'd Lombard, even if Roman I.
So that, 'fore Heaven! if either of us flings
Much dirt at the other, he must be a fool:
For lack of luck and wit we do these things.
Yet if you want more lessons at my school,
Just say so, and you'll find the next touch stings;
For, Dante, I'm the goad and you're the bull.

GUIDO ORLANDI [1]

SONNET

Against the "White" Ghibellines

Now of the hue of ashes are the Whites;
And they go following now after the kind
Of creatures we call crabs, which, as some find,
Will only seek their natural food o' nights.
All day they hide; their flesh has such sore frights
Lest death be come for them on every wind,
Lest now the Lion's [2] wrath be so inclined
That they may never set their sin to rights.
Guelf were they once, and now are Ghibelline:
Nothing but rebels henceforth be they named,—
State-foes, as are the Uberti, every one.
Behold, against the Whites all men must sign
Some judgment whence no pardon can be claim'd
Excepting they were offer'd to Saint John.[3]

LAPO GIANNI

I. MADRIGAL

What Love shall provide for him

LOVE, I demand to have my lady in fee.

Fine balm let Arno be;
The walls of Florence all of silver rear'd,
And crystal pavements in the public way.

[1] Several other pieces by this author, addressed to Guido Cavalcanti and Dante da Maiano, will be found among their poems.

[2] *i.e.* Florence.

[3] That is, presented at the high altar on the feast-day of St. John the Baptist; a ceremony attending the release of criminals, a certain number of whom were annually pardoned on that day in Florence. This was the disgraceful condition annexed to that recall to Florence which Dante received when in exile at the court of Verona; which others accepted, but which was refused by him in a memorable epistle still preserved.

With castles make me fear'd,
Till every Latin soul have own'd my sway.

Be the world peaceful; safe throughout each path;
No neighbour to breed wrath;
The air, Summer and Winter, temperate.

A thousand dames and damsels richly clad
Upon my choice to wait,
Singing by day and night to make me glad.

Let me have fruitful gardens of great girth
Fill'd with the strife of birds,
With water-springs, and beasts that house i' the earth.

Let me seem Solomon for lore of words,
Samson for strength, for beauty Absalom.

Knights as my serfs be given;
And as I will, let music go and come;
Till at the last thou bring me into Heaven.

II. Ballata

A Message in charge for his Lady Lagia

Ballad, since Love himself hath fashion'd thee
Within my mind where he doth make abode,
Hie thee to her who through mine eyes bestow'd
Her blessing on my heart, which stays with me.

Since thou wast born a handmaiden of Love,
With every grace thou shouldst be perfected,
And everywhere seem gentle, wise, and sweet.
And for that thine aspèct gives sign thereof,
I do not tell thee, "Thus much must be said:"—
Hoping, if thou inheritest my wit,
And com'st on her when speech may ill befit,
That thou wilt say no words of any kind:
But when her ear is graciously inclined,
Address her without dread submissively.

Afterward, when thy courteous speech is done
(Ended with fair obeisance and salute
To that chief forehead of serenest good),
Wait thou the answer which, in heavenly tone,
Shall haply stir between her lips, nigh mute
For gentleness and virtuous womanhood.
And mark that, if my homage please her mood,
No rose shall be incarnate in her cheek,
But her soft eyes shall seem subdued and meek,
And almost pale her face for delicacy.

For, when at last thine amorous discourse
Shall have possess'd her spirit with that fear
Of thoughtful recollection which in love
Comes first,—then say thou that my heart implores
Only without an end to honour her,
Till by God's will my living soul remove:
That I take counsel oftentimes with Love;
For he first made my hope thus strong and rife,
Through whom my heart, my mind, and all my life,
Are given in bondage to her signiory.

Then shalt thou find the blessed refuge girt
I' the circle of her arms, where pity and grace
Have sojourn, with all human excellence:
Then shalt thou feel her gentleness exert
Its rule (unless, alack! she deem thee base):
Then shalt thou know her sweet intelligence;
Then shalt thou see—O marvel most intense!—
What thing the beauty of the angels is,
And what are the miraculous harmonies
Whereon Love rears the heights of sovereignty.

Move, Ballad, so that none take note of thee,
Until thou set thy footsteps in Love's road.
Having arrived, speak with thy visage bow'd,
And bring no false doubt back, or jealousy.

DINO FRESCOBALDI

I. Sonnet

Of what his Lady is

This is the damsel by whom love is brought
To enter at his eyes that looks on her;
This is the righteous maid, the comforter,
Whom every virtue honours unbesought.
Love, journeying with her, unto smiles is wrought,
Showing the glory which surrounds her there;
Who, when a lowly heart prefers its prayer,
Can make that its transgression come to nought.
And, when she giveth greeting, by Love's rule,
With sweet reserve she somewhat lifts her eyes,
Bestowing that desire which speaks to us.
Alone on what is noble looks she thus,
Its opposite rejecting in like wise,
This pitiful young maiden beautiful.

II. Sonnet

Of the Star of his Love

That star the highest seen in heaven's expanse
Not yet forsakes me with its lovely light:
It gave me her who from her heaven's pure height
Gives all the grace mine intellect demands.
Thence a new arrow of strength is in my hands
Which bears good will whereso it may alight;
So barb'd, that no man's body or soul its flight
Has wounded yet, nor shall wound any man's.
Glad am I therefore that her grace should fall
Not otherwise than thus; whose rich increase
Is such a power as evil cannot dim.
My sins within an instant perish'd all
When I inhaled the light of so much peace.
And this Love knows; for I have told it him.

GIOTTO DI BONDONE

Canzone

Of the Doctrine of Voluntary Poverty

Many there are, praisers of Poverty;
The which as man's best state is register'd
When by free choice preferr'd,
With strict observance having nothing here.
For this they find certain authority
Wrought of an over-nice interpreting.
Now as concerns such thing,
A hard extreme it doth to me appear,
Which to commend I fear,
For seldom are extremes without some vice.
Let every edifice,
Of work or word, secure foundation find;
Against the potent wind,
And all things perilous, so well prepared,
That it need no correction afterward.

Of poverty which is against the will,
It never can be doubted that therein
Lies broad the way to sin.
For oftentimes it makes the judge unjust;
In dames and damsels doth their honour kill;
And begets violence and villainies,
And theft and wicked lies,
And casts a good man from his fellows' trust.
And for a little dust
Of gold that lacks, wit seems a lacking too.
If once the coat give view
Of the bare back, farewell all dignity.
Each therefore strives that he
Should by no means admit her to his sight,
Who, only thought on, makes his face turn white.

Of poverty which seems by choice elect,
I may pronounce from plain experience,—
Not of mine own pretence,—
That 'tis observed or unobserved at will.

Nor its observance asks our full respect:
For no discernment, nor integrity,
Nor lore of life, nor plea
Of virtue, can her cold regard instil.
I call it shame and ill
To name as virtue that which stifles good.
I call it grossly rude,
On a thing bestial to make consequent
Virtue's inspired advènt
To understanding hearts acceptable:
For the most wise most love with her to dwell.

Here may'st thou find some issue of demur:
For lo! our Lord commendeth poverty.
Nay, what His meaning be
Search well: His words are wonderfully deep,
Oft doubly sensed, asking interpreter.
The state for each most saving, is His will
For each. Thine eyes unseal,
And look within, the inmost truth to reap.
Behold what concord keep
His holy words with His most holy life.
In Him the power was rife
Which to all things apportions time and place.
On earth He chose such case;
And why? 'Twas His to point a higher life.

But here, on earth, our senses show us still
How they who preach this thing are least at peace,
And evermore increase
Much thought how from this thing they should escape.
For if one such a lofty station fill,
He shall assert his strength like a wild wolf,
Or daily mask himself
Afresh, until his will be brought to shape;
Ay, and so wear the cape
That direst wolf shall seem like sweetest lamb
Beneath the constant sham.
Hence, by their art, this doctrine plagues the world:
And hence, till they be hurl'd
From where they sit in high hypocrisy,
No corner of the world seems safe to me.

Go, Song, to some sworn owls that we have known,
And on their folly bring them to reflect:
But if they be stiff-neck'd,
Belabour them until their heads are down.

SIMONE DALL' ANTELLA

Prolonged Sonnet

In the last Days of the Emperor Henry VII.

Along the road all shapes must travel by,
How swiftly, to my thinking, now doth fare
The wanderer who built his watchtower there
Where wind is torn with wind continually!
Lo! from the world and its dull pain to fly,
Unto such pinnacle did he repair,
And of her presence was not made aware,
Whose face, that looks like Peace, is Death's own lie.
Alas, Ambition, thou his enemy,
Who lurest the poor wanderer on his way,
But never bring'st him where his rest may be,—
O leave him now, for he is gone astray
Himself out of his very self through thee,
Till now the broken stems his feet betray,
And caught with boughs before and boughs behind,
Deep in thy tangled wood he sinks entwined.

GIOVANNI QUIRINO

TO DANTE ALIGHIERI

Sonnet

He commends the work of Dante's life, then drawing to its close; and deplores his own deficiencies

Glory to God and to God's Mother chaste,
Dear friend, is all the labour of thy days:
Thou art as he who evermore uplays
That heavenly wealth which the worm cannot waste:

So shalt thou render back with interest
The precious talent given thee by God's grace:
While I, for my part, follow in their ways
Who by the cares of this world are possess'd.
For as the shadow of the earth doth make
The moon's globe dark, when so she is debarr'd
From the bright rays which lit her in the sky,—
So now, since thou my sun didst me forsake
(Being distant from me), I grow dull and hard,
Even as a beast of Epicurus' sty.

DANTE ALIGHIERI

TO GIOVANNI QUIRINO

SONNET

He answers the foregoing Sonnet; saying what he feels at the approach of Death

THE King by whose rich grace His servants be
With plenty beyond measure set to dwell
Ordains that I my bitter wrath dispel
And lift mine eyes to the great consistory;
Till, noting how in glorious quires agree
The citizens of that fair citadel,
To the Creator I His creature swell
Their song, and all their love possesses me.
So, when I contemplate the great reward
To which our God has call'd the Christian seed,
I long for nothing else but only this.
And then my soul is grieved in thy regard,
Dear friend, who reck'st not of thy nearest need,
Renouncing for slight joys the perfect bliss.

APPENDIX TO PART II

Giovanni Boccaccio

Several of the little-known sonnets of Boccaccio have reference to Dante, but, being written in the generation which followed his, do not belong to the body of my second division. I therefore place three of them here, together with a few more specimens from the same poet.

There is nothing which gives Boccaccio a greater claim to our regard than the enthusiastic reverence with which he loved to dwell on the *Commedia* and on the memory of Dante, who died when he was seven years old. This is amply proved by his Life of the Poet and Commentary on the Poem, as well as by other passages in his writings both in prose and poetry. I cannot pretend to have achieved a knowledge of his (both to writer and reader) more arduous poetical undertakings, the *Teseide*, the *Ninfale Fiesolano*, etc.: and indeed these belong to that class of works regarding which most men can feel equally certain that they never did read them and that they never will. However, the use which Chaucer has made of the *Teseide* and *Filostrato* might alone induce us to regard them with interest.

The first of the three following sonnets relates to Boccaccio's public reading and elucidation of Dante, which took place at Florence, by a decree of the state, in 1373. The second sonnet shows how the greatest minds of the generation which immediately succeeded Dante already paid unhesitating tribute to his political as well as poetical greatness. In the third sonnet, it is interesting to note the personal love and confidence with which Boccaccio could address the spirit of his mighty master, unknown to him in the flesh.

I

To one who had censured his public Exposition of Dante

If Dante mourns, there wheresoe'er he be,
That such high fancies of a soul so proud
Should be laid open to the vulgar crowd
(As, touching my Discourse, I'm told by thee),

This were my grievous pain; and certainly
My proper blame should not be disavow'd;
Though hereof somewhat, I declare aloud,
Were due to others, not alone to me.
False hopes, true poverty, and therewithal
The blinded judgment of a host of friends,
And their entreaties, made that I did thus.
But of all this there is no gain at all
Unto the thankless souls with whose base ends
Nothing agrees that's great or generous.

II

Inscription for a Portrait of Dante

DANTE ALIGHIERI, a dark oracle
Of wisdom and of art, I am; whose mind
Has to my country such great gifts assign'd
That men account my powers a miracle.
My lofty fancy pass'd as low as Hell,
As high as Heaven, secure and unconfined;
And in my noble book doth every kind
Of earthly lore and heavenly doctrine dwell.
Renownèd Florence was my mother,—nay,
Stepmother unto me her piteous son,
Through sin of cursed slander's tongue and tooth.
Ravenna sheltered me so cast away;
My body is with her,—my soul with One
For whom no envy can make dim the truth.

III

To Dante in Paradise, after Fiammetta's death

DANTE, if thou within the sphere of Love,
As I believe, remain'st contemplating
Beautiful Beatrice, whom thou didst sing
Erewhile, and so wast drawn to her above;—
Unless from false life true life thee remove
So far that Love's forgotten, let me bring
One prayer before thee: for an easy thing
This were, to thee whom I do ask it of.

I know that where all joy doth most abound
In the third Heaven, my own Fiammetta sees
The grief which I have borne since she is dead.
O pray her (if mine image be not drown'd
In Lethe) that her prayers may never cease
Until I reach her and am comforted.

I add three further examples of Boccaccio's poetry, chosen for their beauty alone. Two of these relate to Maria d'Aquino, the lady whom, in his writings, he calls Fiammetta.

The last has a playful charm very characteristic of the author of the *Decameron;* while its beauty of colour (to our modern minds, privileged to review the whole pageant of Italian Art) might recall the painted pastorals of Giorgione.

IV

Of Fiammetta singing

Love steer'd my course, while yet the sun rode high,
On Scylla's waters to a myrtle-grove:
The heaven was still and the sea did not move;
Yet now and then a little breeze went by
Stirring the tops of trees against the sky:
And then I heard a song as glad as love,
So sweet that never yet the like thereof
Was heard in any mortal company.
"A nymph, a goddess, or an angel sings
Unto herself, within this chosen place,
Of ancient loves;" so said I at that sound.
And there my lady, 'mid the shadowings
Of myrtle-trees, 'mid flowers and grassy space,
Singing I saw, with others who sat round.

V

Of his last sight of Fiammetta

Round her red garland and her golden hair
I saw a fire about Fiammetta's head;
Thence to a little cloud I watch'd it fade,
Than silver or than gold more brightly fair;

And like a pearl that a gold ring doth bear,
Even so an angel sat therein, who sped
Alone and glorious throughout heaven, array'd
In sapphires and in gold that lit the air.
Then I rejoiced as hoping happy things,
Who rather should have then discern'd how God
Had haste to make my lady all his own,
Even as it came to pass. And with these stings
Of sorrow, and with life's most weary load
I dwell, who fain would be where she is gone.

VI

Of three Girls and of their Talk

By a clear well, within a little field
Full of green grass and flowers of every hue,
Sat three young girls, relating (as I knew)
Their loves. And each had twined a bough to shield
Her lovely face; and the green leaves did yield
The golden hair their shadow; while the two
Sweet colours mingled, both blown lightly through
With a soft wind for ever stirr'd and still'd.
After a little while one of them said
(I heard her), "Think! If, ere the next hour struck,
Each of our lovers should come here to-day,
Think you that we should fly or feel afraid?"
To whom the others answer'd, "From such luck
A girl would be a fool to run away."

INDEX OF FIRST LINES

ROSSETTI'S POEMS

TRANSLATIONS

[1 Pp. 386, 390. I have given the first lines of the Italian in the readings adopted by Rossetti. But it should be noted that the first line of Folgore's sonnet, on p. 217, should be *Sonetto mio a Niccolò di Nisi* (the name of the head of the *brigata*), and the right reading of that on p. 216 is *E di Novembre a Petriuolo al bagno* (a reference to the baths of Petriuolo near Siena).—EDITOR.]

EDITORIAL NOTES

SINCE Rossetti wrote his beautiful book, which stands as a landmark in the history of literary relations between England and Italy, much more has become known concerning the "Early Italian Poets" and their work, as also with respect to the events of Dante's own life. The result naturally is that, while the translations (which, in the case of many of those ascribed to poets "chiefly before Dante," have been glorified to such an extent in their passage through Rossetti's mind as to be as much his as the authors' to whom they are assigned) retain their wonderful and imperishable beauty, the prose introductions no longer correspond to the present state of our knowledge of the subject, and are to a large extent out of date. Instead of supplementing them by long notes and corrections, which would inevitably seem ungracious and irreverent to the memory of the great poet from whose work so many of us drew our first knowledge of the lyrical poetry of early Italy, I have thought it better to omit these introductions altogether, incorporating the more important and valuable passages in the form of quotations in the notes. I have, of course, scrupulously preserved his ascriptions and headings to the poems themselves, merely indicating in the notes where they no longer correspond to the results of more recent investigations and studies. I have likewise ventured to omit, for similar reasons, the first Appendix to the Second Part, that dealt with the sonnets interchanged between Dante and Forese Donati. Although Rossetti may undoubtedly be regarded as a pioneer in not rejecting this correspondence as apocryphal, nevertheless, after the remarkable researches of Isidoro del Lungo (*Dante ne' Tempi di Dante*, Bologna, 1888), his account and version of these sonnets have no longer sufficient value to make them worth retention, and the translator himself, from his description of them as "the very filmiest of all the will-o'-the-wisps which have beset me in making this book," would probably have been the first to admit that they had no importance for their own sake.

At the end of his Preface, Rossetti gave the following "list of the works which have chiefly contributed to the materials of the present volume":—

"I. *Poeti del primo secolo della Lingua Italiana.* 2 vol. (Firenze. 1816.)
II. *Raccolta di Rime antiche Toscane.* 4 vol. (Palermo. 1817.)
III. *Manuale della Letteratura del primo Secolo, del Prof.* V. Nannucci. 3 vol. (Firenze. 1843.)
IV. *Poesie Italiane inedite di dugento autori: raccolte da* Francesco Trucchi. 4 vol. (Prato. 1846.)
V. *Opere Minori di Dante. Edizione di* P. I. Fraticelli. (Firenze. 1843, etc.)
VI. *Rime di Guido Cavalcanti; raccolte da* A. Cicciaporci. (Firenze. 1813.)
VII. *Vita e Poesie di Messer Cino da Pistoia. Edizione di* S. Ciampi. (Pisa. 1813.)
VIII. *Documenti d'Amore; di Francesco da Barberino. Annotati da* F. Ubaldini. (Roma. 1640.)
IX. *Del Reggimento e dei Costumi delle Donne; di Francesco da Barberino.* (Roma. 1815.)
X. *Il Dittamondo di Fazio degli Uberti.* (Milano. 1826.)"

For the benefit of the latter-day reader, I may add the following:—

E. Monaci, *Crestomazia Italiana dei primi secoli.* (Città di Castello. 1889.)
T. Casini, *Le Rime dei Poeti Bolognesi del secolo xiii.* (Bologna. 1881.)
G. Carducci, *Rime di Messer Cino da Pistoia e d'altri del secolo xiv.* (Florence. 1862.)
P. Ercole, *Guido Cavalcanti e le sue Rime.* (Livorno. 1885.)
R. Renier, *Liriche edite ed inedite di Fazio degli Uberti.* (Florence. 1883.)
G. Navone, *Le Rime di Folgore da San Gemignano e di Cene da la Chitarra d'Arezzo.* (Bologna. 1880.)
G. Bertacchi, *Le Rime di Dante da Maiano.* (Bergamo. 1896.)
F. Pellegrini, *Le Rime di Fra Guittone d'Arezzo.* (Bologna. 1901.)
A. Parducci, *I Rimatori Lucchesi del secolo xiii.* (Bergamo. 1905.)
A. F. Massèra, *I Sonetti di Cecco Angiolieri.* (Bologna. 1906.)
A. J. Butler, *The Forerunners of Dante.* (Oxford. 1910.)

For a bibliography of editions and works upon the early Italian poets, the English reader is referred to Dr. Hermann Oelsner, *The History of Early Italian Literature to the Death of Dante, translated from the German of Adolfo Gaspary* (London, 1901); and, for Dante and the poets mentioned by him, to Dr. Paget Toynbee, *A Dictionary of the Proper Names and Notable Matters in the Works of Dante* (Oxford, 1898).

EDMUND G. GARDNER.

PART I

P. 155. This Sicilian dialogue (*contrasto*) between Lover and Lady was formerly thought to be one of the earliest extant Italian poems, and was ascribed to the last quarter of the twelfth century. Modern critics date it some fifty years later at least. The name of its author is doubtful. Dante quotes it anonymously in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (i. 12), as an example of the language of Sicily.

P. 163. This canzone likewise used to be assigned to the last quarter of the twelfth century, and was considered the first example of a regular Italian canzone or ode. As a matter of fact, Folcacchiero de' Folcacchieri wrote about the year 1250.

P. 165. "This speech," wrote Rossetti, "occurs in a long poem on Divine love, half ecstatic, half scholastic, and hardly appreciable now." The poem (which appears to be more probably by Jacopone da Todi, who died in 1306, than by St. Francis) begins thus:—

Amor, de caritate
Perchè m' hai sì ferito?
Lo cor tutt' ho partito
Et arde per amore.

P. 166. It seems certain that Frederick II. (died 1250) wrote poetry; but the authenticity of this and the other pieces ascribed to him is highly questionable. The same remark applies to his son, King Enzo, who died in captivity at Bologna in 1272. Rossetti wrote that this poem "has great passionate beauty; yet I believe that an allegorical interpretation may here probably be admissible; and that the lady of the poem may be the Empire, or perhaps the Church herself, held in bondage by the Pope."

P. 168. Guido Guinicelli, or Guinizelli, belonged to the family of the Principi, Ghibellines of Bologna, with whom he was exiled from his native city in 1274. He died a few years afterwards. Guido was the greatest Italian poet before Dante, who hails him as his father in

the poetic art (*Purg.*, xxvi. 97-99), and whose admiration for him was unbounded (*Convivio*, iv. 20; *De Vulgari Eloquentia, passim*; *Vita Nuova*, § 20). The influence of his canzone (ii.), "Of the Gentle Heart," can be traced throughout the *Vita Nuova*. It is quoted by Dante many times (*V.N.*, § 20; *Conv.*, iv. 20; *De V.E.*, i. 9, ii. 5. Cf. *Inf.*, v. 100). The other canzone (iv.) translated by Rossetti is also quoted in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (ii. 6).

P. 173. Both these poets belong to the first half of the thirteenth century. Nothing is known about them.

P. 175. Rinaldo d'Aquino was an Apulian poet connected with the Court of Frederick II. and King Manfred, and takes place in the Sicilian School. There were several members of the family of the Counts of Aquino (to which St. Thomas Aquinas belonged) who bore the name of Rinaldo; but Dr. Paget Toynbee, in his *Dante Dictionary*, holds that the poet "is probably identical with the Rinaldo d'Aquino who, in 1257, was King Manfred's viceroy in the province of Otranto and Bari." He is quoted by Dante (*De V.E.*, i. 12; ii. 5).

P. 178. Jacopo da Lentino, "the Notary," was one of the chief poets of the Sicilian School in the first half of the thirteenth century. One of his canzoni (which is extant, but is not among those here translated) is quoted anonymously with praise by Dante (*De V.E.*, i. 12), but in the *Divina Commedia* he is somewhat disparaged in comparison with the poets of "the sweet new style" (*Purg.*, xxiv. 55-60).

P. 185. Mazzeo (Matteo) di Ricco of Messina is a later poet of the Sicilian School, contemporaneous with Fra Guittone, but of whom nothing is known with certainty save the name.

P. 189. Pannuccio dal Bagno is one of a group of poets who flourished at Pisa, about the middle of the thirteenth century or a little later, and were closely associated with the Sicilians.

P. 191. "Of this poet there seems nothing to be learnt; but he deserves special notice as possessing rather more poetic individuality than usual, and also as furnishing the only instance, among Dante's predecessors, of a poem (and a very beautiful one) written on a lady's death" (*Rossetti*). It has recently been shown by Francesco Torraca (*Studi su la Lirica Italiana del Duecento*. Bologna, 1902) that this Giacomino Pugliese is probably to be identified with Giacomo da Morra, an Apulian noble who was Podestà of Treviso in the name of the Emperor in 1239, and was successively imperial vicar in Spoleto and the March of Ancona, but who, in the last years of Frederick's life, deserted his cause for that of Pope Innocent IV.

P. 194. Fra Guittone d'Arezzo, Guittone del Viva, 1230-1294, was a member of the order of Frati Gaudenti, or Cavalieri di Maria, and the head of a school of Italian poetry. "He seems to have enjoyed a greater literary reputation than almost any writer of his day; but certainly his poems, of which many have been preserved, cannot be said to possess merit of a prominent kind; and Dante shows by various allusions that he considered them much over-rated. The sonnet I have given is somewhat remarkable, from Petrarch's having transplanted its last line into his *Trionfi d'Amore* (cap. iii.). Guittone is the author of a series of Italian letters to various eminent persons, which are the earliest known epistolary writings in the language" (*Rossetti*). This sonnet is now regarded as not by Fra Guittone. For Dante's view of Guittone, cf. *Purg.*, xxiv. 55-60, xxvi. 124-126; *De V.E.*, i. 13, ii. 6.

P. 197. Bonaggiunta Orbicciani degli Overardi da Lucca, notary and poet of Lucca, died some time between 1296 and 1300. He is placed in the circle of the Gluttonous in the *Purgatorio* (xxiv. 19, 20, 34-63), where he hails Dante as the author of the canzone, *Donne ch' avete intelletto d'Amore*.

Pp. 201-208. Onesto di Boncima (of Bologna) and Terino da Castel Fiorentino (in the Valdelsa) were friends and correspondents of Cino da Pistoia, but were both men of an older generation. A canzone by Onesto is quoted, and he himself highly praised as a poet, in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (i. 15). It is disputed whether Cino or Terino is the author of the sonnet (p. 348) sent to Dante in answer to the first sonnet of the *Vita Nuova*. Meo Abbracciavacca, Simbuono Giudice, Masolino da Todi, Maestro Migliore, Dello da Signa (whose poem is not, strictly speaking, a ballata), belong to the latter half of the thirteenth century.

P. 209. Folgore da San Gemignano must be regarded as a contemporary rather than a predecessor of Dante, as these two sonnets to the Guelf faction show. Absolutely nothing is known of his life. He must have been a furious Guelf, for in an extraordinary sonnet (not among those translated here) beginning *Eo non ti lodo, Dio, e non ti adoro*, he hurls his defiance at God Himself for having suffered Uguccione and the Ghibellines to be victorious at Montecatini (1315). There has been much discussion as to whether the "blithe and lordly fellowship" of the twelve sonnets on the Months is the same as the *brigata* referred to by Dante in *Inferno*, xxix., and whether the Niccolò praised in the first and last of these sonnets is the Niccolò (Salimbeni or Buonsignori) whom Dante mentions as having "first discovered the rich usage of the clove"; but the question seems now settled in the affirmative. There is an excellent study of Folgore in J. Addington Symonds' *Sketches and Studies in Italy and Greece*, vol. iii.

P. 211, l. 15. The true reading is: *che paiono figlioli del re Priano*, "who seem sons of King Priam"; *i.e.* they surpass the Arthurian knights and equal the Trojans.

P. 217. In this second series the scene shifts from Siena to Florence. The Carlo di Messer Guerra Cavicciuoli, to whom it is addressed, served the Republic of San Gemignano as condottiere in a war against Volterra in 1308.

P. 221. Guido delle Colonne was writing in 1270 and still living after 1288. He wrote the *Historia Trojana*, which was translated into Middle-English, and visited England in the train of Edward I. on the latter's return from the Crusades. He is mentioned with praise by Chaucer in the *House of Fame* (iii. 379) and by Dante in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, who quotes the opening line of this canzone twice (i. 12, ii. 5). Guido is generally known as the Judge of Messina (called so by Dante in the *De V.E.*), from the office he held in the latter part of his life.

Pp. 222-228. Nothing is known of Pier Moronelli, Ciuncio, or Carnino. Ruggieri d' Amici, a Calabrian noble, was put to death by Frederick II. in 1246; Prinzivalle Doria, a Genoese in the service of Manfred, was drowned in 1264.

P. 229. Rustico di Filippo was a Florentine and died about 1270. "The writings of this Tuscan poet (called also Rustico Barbuto) show signs of more vigour and versatility than was common in his day, and he probably began writing in Italian verse even before many of those already mentioned. In his old age, he, though a Ghibelline, received the dedication of the *Tesoretto* from the Guelf Brunetto Latini, who there pays him unqualified homage for surpassing worth in peace and war. It is strange that more should not be known regarding this doubtless remarkable man. His compositions have sometimes much humour, and on the whole convey the impression of an active and energetic nature."—*Rossetti*.

The person to whom the *Tesoretto* is thus dedicated is probably either King Alfonso X. of Castile or the Florentine Guelf noble, Guido Guerra, who shares Brunetto's fate in the *Inferno*. There is a confusion with the *Favoletto*, a poetical epistle addressed by Brunetto to Rustico.

P. 232. Tommaso Bucciola, or Buzzuola, usually simply styled

Tommaso da Faenza, is recorded by Dante (*De V.E.*, i. 14) as having rejected the dialect of Faenza for a more ideal and courtly Italian. He was a contemporary of Dante's youth, and engaged in poetical correspondence with Dante da Maiano.

Pp. 233, 234. These poets, of whom practically nothing is known, flourished in the second half of the thirteenth century.

P. 235. Francesco da Barberino, born of a noble family in the Valdelsa in 1264, died in Florence during the Plague of 1348. "Of the two works which Barberino has left, one bears the title of *Documenti d'Amore*, literally 'Documents of Love,' but perhaps more properly rendered as 'Laws of Courtesy;' while the other is called *Del Reggimento e dei Costumi delle Donne*, 'Of the Government and Conduct of Women.' They may be described, in the main, as manuals of good breeding, or social chivalry, the one for men and the other for women. Mixed with vagueness, tediousness, and not seldom with artless absurdity, they contain much simple wisdom, much curious record of manners, and (as my specimens show) occasional poetic sweetness or power, though these last are far from being their most prominent merits. The first-named treatise, however, has much more of such qualities than the second; and contains, moreover, passages of homely humour which startle by their truth as if written yesterday. At the same time, the second book is quite as well worth reading, for the sake of its authoritative minuteness in matters which ladies, nowadays, would probably consider their own undisputed region; and also for the quaint gravity of certain surprising prose anecdotes of real life, with which it is interspersed."—*Rossetti.*

P. 240. Fazio degli Uberti, the great-grandson of Farinata (*Inferno*, x.), was born in exile at Pisa in the first decade of the fourteenth century. He passed most of his youth at the courts of various despots in Lombardy, and the latter part of his life in travelling. He wrote love-poems for a certain Angiola of Verona and for Ghidola Malaspina, and superb political lyrics giving expression to the new patriotic Ghibellinism of Italy. He died after 1368. The canzone here translated has sometimes (obviously erroneously) been ascribed to Dante:—

"This contested canzone is well worth fighting for; and the victor would deserve to receive his prize at the hands of a peerless Queen of Beauty, for never was beauty better described. I believe we may decide that the triumph belongs by right to Fazio.

"An exile by inheritance, Fazio seems to have acquired restless tastes; and in the latter years of his life (which was prolonged to old age) he travelled over a great part of Europe, and composed his long poem entitled *Il Dittamondo*—'The Song of the World,' or, more exactly, 'Words of the World.' This work, though by no means contemptible in point of execution, certainly falls far short of its conception, which is a grand one; the topics of which it treats in great measure—geography and natural history—rendering it in those days the native home of all credulities and monstrosities. In scheme it was intended as an earthly parallel to Dante's Sacred Poem, doing for this world what he did for the other. At Fazio's death it remained unfinished, but I should think by very little; the plan of the work seeming in the main accomplished. The whole earth (or rather all that was then known of it) is traversed—its surface and its history—ending with the Holy Land, and thus bringing Man's world as near as may be to God's; that is, to the point at which Dante's office begins. No conception could well be nobler, or worthier even now of being dealt with by a great master. To the work of such a man, Fazio's work might afford such first materials as have usually been furnished beforehand to the greatest poets by some unconscious steward."—*Rossetti.*

P. 248. Franco Sacchetti "is the earliest Italian poet," writes Rossetti, "with whom playfulness is the chief characteristic; for even with Boccaccio, in his poetry, this is hardly the case." Franco di Benci Sacchetti, born about 1330 of a noble Florentine Guelf family, devoted himself to commerce, played a not unimportant part in the politics of the Republic, and died in 1400. He was a man of spotless character and intense patriotism. His writings include poems like those here translated, written for music, patriotic and other canzoni, a collection of three hundred *novelle*, and evangelical sermons. His poetry is the last lyrical utterance of the Florentine *Trecento*, as he himself seemed to recognise in his well-known lament on the death of Boccaccio.

PART II

"It may be noted here how necessary a knowledge of the *Vita Nuova* is to the full comprehension of the part borne by Beatrice in the *Commedia*. Moreover, it is only from the perusal of its earliest and then undivulged self-communings that we can divine the whole bitterness of wrong to such a soul as Dante's, its poignant sense of abandonment, or its deep and jealous refuge in memory. Above all, it is here that we find the first manifestations of that wisdom of obedience, that natural breath of duty, which afterwards, in the *Commedia*, lifted up a mighty voice for warning and testimony. Throughout the *Vita Nuova* there is a strain like the first falling murmur which reaches the ear in some remote meadow, and prepares us to look upon the sea.

"Boccaccio, in his *Life of Dante*, tells us that the great poet, in later life, was ashamed of this work of his youth. Such a statement hardly seems reconcilable with the allusions to it made or implied in the *Commedia*; but it is true that the *Vita Nuova* is a book which only youth could have produced, and which must chiefly remain sacred to the young; to each of whom the figure of Beatrice, less lifelike than lovelike, will seem the friend of his own heart."—*Rossetti.*

P. 258. Dante, who certainly could not read Homer in the original, found this quotation cited in a Latin translation of Aristotle (*Nic. Eth.*, Bk. VII.).

Pp. 262, 263. These compositions are what the Italians call double sonnets. Their rhyme-arrangement in the original is A a B A a B: A a B A a B; C D d C, D C c D, and A a B B b A: A a B B b A; C D d C, C D d C, respectively.

P. 268. This poem is a *Ballata*, a species of composition invented by the Tuscans in the thirteenth century, and also called the *canzone a ballo*, as distinguished from the *canzone distesa*, the true canzone or ode.

P. 290, n. 1. "Grammar," with Dante, is merely a technical term for "Latin."

P. 291. The more usual reading of the line from Lucan, *Phars.* i. 44, is: *Multum Roma tamen debet civilibus armis.* Dr. Moore has pointed out that Dante's *buono Omero*, which Rossetti renders "the excellent Homer," is a reminiscence of Horace (*Ars Poetica*, l. 359), *bonus dormitat Homerus.*

P. 295. We should probably read *Arabia* for *Italy* in line 23: "*Io dico che, secondo l'usanza d'Arabia, l'anima sua nobilissima si partì nella prima ora del nono giorno del mese.*" The real date of Beatrice's death, as Dr. Moore has shown, was June 8th.

P. 305, n. This suggestion about Gemma finds no favour with Dante scholars to-day.

P. 307. "About this time, it happened." The right reading of this passage is: "After this tribulation, it happened (in that season when many people go to behold that blessed image which Jesus Christ left to us as example of His most beauteous face, which my Lady sees in glory) that some pilgrims were passing." The reading *molta gente va*, instead of *andava*, shows that Dante refers to one of the ordinary pilgrimages at the times when the Veronica was exhibited to the faithful, and not to any special occasion like that of the Jubilee.

P. 310. The most probable date for the completion of the *Vita Nuova* is between 1292 and 1295. This wonderful vision has probably no connection with the year of Jubilee, and can, at the most, only be taken as some dim foretaste of that supreme ecstatic pilgrimage which, in after years, Dante assigned to the last year of the thirteenth century.

P. 310, n. 1. For "concluding," it would perhaps be better to read "beginning," as the letter appears to have accompanied only a first instalment of the *Paradiso*.

P. 311. The *Messer Brunetto* of this sonnet is not Brunetto Latini, but Betto Brunelleschi, the leader of the gay fellowship who desired the company of Guido Cavalcanti in Boccaccio's well-known novella (*Decameron*, vi. 9). If the sonnet is really by Dante, the "little maid" probably refers to one of his philosophical canzoni.

Pp. 311, 312 (Sonnets ii., iii., iv.). *Oxford Dante*, Sonetti xxix., xli., li.

P. 313. This ballata (*Oxford Dante*, ix.) is more probably by Cino da Pistoia.

P. 313. This very beautiful canzone (*Oxford Dante*, Canz. xvii.) is now known to be an imitation of Dante by a later Florentine poet, Jacopo Cecchi.

P. 315. Sonnet vii. is spurious.

Pp. 316, 317, 318 (Sonnets viii., ix., x.). *Oxford Dante*, Sonetti xxxiv., xlvi., xxx.

P. 318. This sestina (*Oxford Dante*, Sestina I.; *De V.E.*, ii. 10, 13) is an example of a curious group of Dantesque canzoni playing upon the word *pietra*, or stone. If they were inspired by a lady named Pietra (which has been maintained, but is open to question), she was not Pietra degli Scrovigni, who was probably not born when these poems were written.

P. 319. This fine sonnet (*Oxford Dante*, xxxiii.), to which in a later edition Rossetti gave the title, "A Curse for a Fruitless Love," is probably by Cino da Pistoia.

P. 320. Guido Cavalcanti, whom Dante calls "the first of my friends," and to whom the *Vita Nuova* was dedicated, was born in the fifties of the thirteenth century. His father, Cavalcante Cavalcanti, is placed by the divine poet in Hell among the Epicureans and Sceptics (*Inferno*, x.), by the side of Farinata degli Uberti, to whose daughter, Beatrice, Guido was betrothed in 1267, in one of the vain attempts to bring about a reconciliation between the rival parties. The Cavalcanti were Guelfs. When the Guelfs split into Bianchi and Neri, Whites and Blacks, Guido adhered to the former, and was a deadly enemy of Corso Donati, who tried to have him assassinated on a pilgrimage which he took to Compostela, in which, however, he turned back after reaching Toulouse. Guido was among the factious magnates who were put under bounds in June 1300, when Dante was one of the Priors; he contracted malarial fever at Sarzana and returned to Florence in August, after Dante's term of office was over, only to die at the end of the month. There is a whole literature to discuss the meaning of Dante's statement that Guido "perchance held Virgil in disdain" (*Inferno*, x. 63) and the precise interpretation of the elder poet's rebuke to Dante for his mode of life after the death of Beatrice

(present edition, p. 335). In his verse he first celebrates his love for a fair Florentine, Giovanna, called Primavera because of her comeliness (*V.N.*, § 24, present edition, pp. 288, 289; a ballata in her honour, undoubtedly by Cavalcanti, is in the *Oxford Dante*, Ballata iv., *Fresca rosa novella*); afterwards a Mandetta whom he saw at Toulouse. His best modern editor will only admit two canzoni—a famous one on the philosophy of love, *Donna me prega perch' eo voglio dire* (in answer to a sonnet by Guido Orlandi), and another decidedly more poetical, *Io non pensava che lo cor giammai* (the former is cited by Dante, *De V.E.*, ii. 12, but neither is translated by Rossetti)—thirteen ballate and thirty-eight sonnets as authentic. One of the best-known stories of the *Decameron* (vi. 9) represents him wandering among the tombs near the Baptistery, absorbed in philosophic speculation, pleasantly evading the endeavours of Messer Betto Brunelleschi and his gay companions to engage him with sport and banter. Of his contemporaries, Dino Compagni describes him as " full of courage and courtesy, but disdainful, solitary, and devoted to study," and Giovanni Villani calls him " a man, as in philosophy, so in many things, deeply versed; but therewithal too fastidious and prone to take offence."

" He seems to have been in all things of that fitful and vehement nature which would impress others always strongly, but often in opposite ways. Self-reliant pride gave its colour to all his moods, making his exploits as a soldier frequently abortive through the headstrong ardour of partisanship, and causing the perversity of a logician to prevail in much of his amorous poetry. The writings of his contemporaries, as well as his own, tend to show him rash in war, fickle in love, and presumptuous in belief; but also, by the same concurrent testimony, he was distinguished by great personal beauty, high accomplishments of all kinds, and daring nobility of soul. Not unworthy, for all the weakness of his strength, to have been the object of Dante's early emulation, the first friend of his youth, and his precursor and fellow-labourer in the creation of Italian Poetry."—*Rossetti.*

Pp. 322, 323. The devotion to the miraculous Madonna of San Michele in Orto began in 1292, and was at first opposed by the Franciscans and Dominicans. Guido Cavalcanti strikes only at the former, but Guido Orlandi in his answer, which is a double sonnet and not a madrigal, defends both orders. The Italian text ends:—

> Li frẹ Minori sanno la divina
> iscrittura latina,
> e de la fede son difenditori
> li bon Predicatori;
> lor predicanza è nostra medicina:

" The Friars Minor know the divine Latin Scripture; and the good Preachers are the defenders of the Faith; their preaching is our medicine."

P. 326 (Dante's sonnet). According to the right reading of the Italian text, there is no mention of Beatrice in this sonnet (*Oxford Dante*, xxxii.). Lines 9-10 should run: *E monna Vanna e monna Lagia poi, con quella ch' è sul numero del trenta.* The three ladies are thus Vanna, Lagia, and " her the thirtieth on my roll," who is evidently not Lagia (as hitherto supposed), but the first of the two ladies of whom Dante made a screen to hide his love for Beatrice—the sonnet being one of the " divers rhymes " in honour of this lady that he tells us he made for his better security, to keep his secret concealed.

P. 327 (Sonnet xi.). The Italian of line 11 of this sonnet is *a donna che là denïro sia renduta*, where *renduta* has the meaning of " consecrated " rather than " lost."

P. 329 (xiv.). This composition is not, strictly speaking, a ballata, but an isolated stanza of a canzone.

P. 333. Dino Compagni, the author of the famous Chronicle of Florence, in which both Guido Cavalcanti and himself figure, wrote a few lyrics, and *L'intelligenza*, an allegorical poem in *nona rima*, is also ascribed to him. After his vain attempts in office and out of office to allay the factions, Dino, in the triumph of the Blacks, escaped proscription by pleading a law whereby those citizens who had served in the Signoria were exempt from prosecution for twelve months after they had left office. He died in 1324.

P. 337 (Sonnet xxiii.). In the later editions of *Dante and his Circle*, Rossetti ascribes this sonnet to Cecco Angiolieri. It seems, however, fairly certain that his original attribution of it to Guido Cavalcanti is the right one. The name "Bettina" can hardly be identified with "Becchina," and the sonnet is a humorous address to a town friend who has just taken a place in the country.

P. 337. Sonnet xxiv. is addressed not to Boniface VIII., but to Guido's kinsman, Nero Cavalcanti, who, in 1292, was leading the Cavalcanti in a feud against the Buondelmonti. Rossetti may surely be excused for this curious misunderstanding of the poem, when even Guido's best Italian editor confesses himself unable to trace the allusion contained in the last three lines!

Pp. 339-345. These four canzoni are no longer ascribed by Italian scholars to Guido Cavalcanti. No. xxvi. is perhaps by Menghino Mezzano of Ravenna; No. xxvii. is doubtfully attributed to Fazio degli Uberti; the authorship of Nos. xxviii. and xxix. is unknown, but they are certainly of a later epoch than Guido's.

P. 348. As already mentioned, it is doubtful whether Cino da Pistoia or Terino da Castel Fiorentino wrote this sonnet.

To Dante's friendship with Cino da Pistoia (who is not mentioned anywhere in the *Divina Commedia*) the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* is the literary monument, where the divine poet refers to himself, without a name, simply as the friend of Cino (*De V.E.*, i. 10, i. 17; ii. 2, ii. 5, ii. 6). He couples Cino's canzone here translated (p. 349) on the death of Beatrice with the second canzone of the *Convivio*, *Amor che nella mente mi ragiona*, the "amorous song" which Casella sings on the shores of Purgatory (*De V.E.*, ii. 6; *Purg.* ii. 112). The authenticity of the Latin letter, apparently addressed by Dante to Cino (*Epist.* iv.), has been questioned, but it is probably genuine. Cino, or Guittoncino, de' Sinibuldi was equally famous as a poet and as a writer and lecturer on jurisprudence. He was born at Pistoia about 1270, and died in 1326 or 1327. He married Margherita degli Ughi, who bore him five children; the Selvaggia of most of his love-poems is supposed to be Selvaggia de' Vergiolesi, the daughter of Filippo de' Vergiolesi, one of the leaders of the Whites in Pistoia, and to have died in exile on the Monte della Sambuca in the Apennines. In spite of the old tradition to the contrary (still very often repeated), recent research has shown that Cino himself was a Black Guelf, was exiled from Pistoia in 1301, and returned in 1307, when he was much employed by the triumphant Blacks. On the advent of Henry of Luxemburg, the poet appears to have thrown in his lot with the Ghibellines, and he bewailed the Emperor's death in two noble canzoni. But to the end of his life he enjoyed fame and prosperity in his native city, and in others where he taught and lectured. He lived long enough to be lamented in a sonnet by Petrarch, by whom and by Boccaccio he is highly praised as a poet. He lies buried in a tomb by the Sienese sculptor, Cellino di Nese (on which he is represented lecturing, surrounded by his pupils), in the Duomo of Pistoia. "Messer Cino de' Sinibuldi," writes Rossetti, "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."

P. 355. Sonnet xi. is not by Cino.

P. 357. Dante da Maiano was an older contemporary of Dante Alighieri, and wrote also in Provençal. Save the legend of his love for Nina of Sicily, whom he never saw, practically nothing is known of him, though the sonnets attributed to him are now recognised as authentic.

"Most literary circles have their prodigal, or what in modern phrase might be called their 'scamp'; and among our Danteans this place is indisputably filled by Cecco Angiolieri, of Siena. Nearly all his sonnets (and no other pieces by him have been preserved) relate either to an unnatural hatred of his father, or to an infatuated love for the daughter of a shoemaker, a certan married Becchina. It would appear that Cecco was probably enamoured of her before her marriage as well as afterwards, and we may surmise that his rancour against his father may have been partly dependent, in the first instance, on the disagreements arising from such a connection. However, from an amusing and lifelike story in the *Decameron* (*Gior.* ix. Nov. 4) we learn that on one occasion Cecco's father paid him six months' allowance in advance, in order that he might proceed to the Marca d'Ancona and join the suite of a Papal Legate who was his patron; which looks, after all, as if the father had some care of his graceless son. The story goes on to relate how Cecco (whom Boccaccio describes as a handsome and well-bred man) was induced to take with him as his servant a fellow-gamester, with whom he had formed an intimacy purely on account of the hatred which each of the two bore his own father, though in other respects they had but little in common. The result was that this fellow, during the journey, while Cecco was asleep at Buonconvento, took all his money and lost it at the gaming-table, and afterwards managed by an adroit trick to get possession of his horse and clothes, leaving him nothing but his shirt. Cecco then, ashamed to return to Siena, made his way, in a borrowed suit and mounted on his servant's sorry hack, to Corsignano, where he had relations; and there he stayed till his father once more (surely much to his credit) made him a remittance of money. Boccaccio seems to say in conclusion, that Cecco ultimately had his revenge on the thief.

"Many both of Cecco's love-sonnets and hate-sonnets are very repulsive from their display of powers perverted often to base uses; while it is impossible not to feel some pity for the indications they contain of self-sought poverty, unhappiness, and natural bent to ruin. Altogether they have too much curious individuality to allow of their being omitted here. Their humour is sometimes strong, if not well chosen; their passion always forcible from its evident reality: nor indeed is the sonnet which stands fourth among my translations devoid of a certain delicacy. This quality is also to be discerned in other pieces which I have not included, as having less personal interest; but it must be confessed that for the most part the sentiments expressed in Cecco's poetry are either impious or licentious. Most of the sonnets of his which are in print are here given; the selections concluding with an extraordinary one in which he proposes a sort of murderous crusade against all those who hate their fathers. This I have placed last (exclusive of the sonnet to Dante in exile) in order to give the writer the benefit of the possibility that it was written last, and really expressed a still rather blood-thirsty contrition; belonging at best, I fear, to the content of self-indulgence when he came to enjoy his

father's inheritance. But most likely it is to be received as the expression of impudence alone, unless perhaps of hypocrisy."—*Rossetti.*

The first sonnet (x.), on p. 364, is not really an attack of any kind upon Dante. The right reading of the opening lines is: *Lassar vo' lo trovare di Bichina, Dante Alighieri, e dir del Mariscalco :* "I will leave off my singing of Becchina, Dante Alighieri, and tell of the Marshal." It is against this marshal—Diego della Ratta, who commanded the Catalan mercenaries in Florence in the name of the King of Naples, and whose unsavoury amours are recorded by Boccaccio (*Decameron*, vi. 3)—that the whole satire of the sonnet is directed, though it is not quite clear why Cecco chose Dante as his confidant in the matter, unless he knew that the latter was even then engaged upon the *Inferno*.

"Leaving to his fate (whatever that may have been) the Scamp of Dante's Circle, I must risk the charge of a confirmed taste for slang by describing Guido Orlandi as its Bore. No other word could present him so fully. Very few pieces of his exist besides the five I have given. In one of these (p. 370), he rails against his political adversaries; in three (pp. 323, 331, 358), falls foul of his brother poets; and in the remaining one (p. 334), seems somewhat appeased (I think) by a judicious morsel of flattery. I have already referred to a sonnet of his which is said to have led to the composition of Guido Cavalcanti's Canzone on the Nature of Love. He has another sonnet beginning, 'Per troppa sottiglianza il fil si rompe,' in which he is certainly enjoying a fling at somebody, and I suspect at Cavalcanti in rejoinder to the very poem which he himself had instigated. If so, this stamps him a master-critic of the deepest initiation. Of his life nothing is recorded; but no wish perhaps need be felt to know much of him, as one would probably have dropped his acquaintance. We may be obliged to him, however, for his character of Guido Cavalcanti (at p. 331), which is boldly and vividly drawn."—*Rossetti.*

P. 370 (Lapo Gianni). This poem is, strictly speaking, not a madrigal, but a prolonged double sonnet, having in the Italian the structure A a B B b A, A a B B b A, C d D D, D d D C, E E.

Lapo Gianni de' Ricevuti was a Florentine notary, who was associated politically with Dante during his priorate. He died in 1328. In the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (i. 13), Dante links Lapo with Guido Cavalcanti, another Florentine (*i.e.* himself), and Cino da Pistoia, as the only Tuscan poets who understand the excellence of the vernacular. The beauty of the two pieces that Rossetti has here translated needs no comment.

P. 373. According to the remarkable story told by Boccaccio, it was through Dino Frescobaldi that Dante in exile recovered the MS. which he had left behind him at Florence: the MS. which *may* have been that of the first seven cantos of the *Inferno* in an earlier version. "Beyond this great fact of Dino's life," writes Rossetti, "which, perhaps, hardly occupied a day of it, there is no news to be gleaned of him." Boccaccio calls him, "Dino di Messer Lambertuccio, in those days a most famous Florentine poet in rhyme" (*Vita di Dante*, § 14).

P. 374. There seems no reasonable doubt that Giotto (1276-1336), the great Florentine painter, sculptor, and architect, was a personal friend of Dante's, and the famous portrait of the poet is now generally accepted as really from his hand: "The reader will not need to be reminded of Giotto's portrait of the youthful Dante, painted in the Bargello at Florence, then the chapel of the Podestà. This is the author of the *Vita Nuova*. That other portrait shown us in the posthumous mask—a face dead in exile after the death of hope—should front the first page of the Sacred Poem to which heaven and earth had

set their hands; but which might never bring him back to Florence, though it had made him haggard for many years."—*Rossetti.*

Rossetti suggests that this canzone on the doctrine of voluntary poverty—the only extant poem by Giotto—was "written as a sort of safety-valve for the painter's true feelings," while engaged upon the fresco at Assisi of the mystical marriage of St. Francis with Poverty. "At any rate, it affords another proof of the strong common-sense and turn for humour which all accounts attribute to Giotto."

P. 376 (Simone dall' Antella). "This one sonnet is all we know of its author, besides his name."—*Rossetti.*

Pp. 376. 377. *Oxford Dante*, Sonnet xxxvii. "For me Quirino's sonnet has great value; as Dante's answer to it enables me to wind up this series with the name of its great chief: and, indeed, with what would almost seem to have been his last utterance in poetry, at that supreme juncture when he—

'Slaked in his heart the fervour of desire,'

as at last he neared the very home—

'Of Love which sways the sun and all the stars.'" [1]

—*Rossetti.*

Since Rossetti wrote, a number of other poems by Giovanni Quirino have been brought to light, and his relations with Dante are at present being closely studied by Italian scholars. He was a Venetian poet and scholar, who appears to have been in correspondence with Dante at intervals throughout the latter's life. After Dante's death, he wrote a sonnet in defence of his memory against the attacks of Cecco d'Ascoli, and another to Can Grande della Scala, urging him to make no delay in having the concluding cantos of the *Paradiso* published.

[1] The last line of the *Paradiso* (Cayley's translation).

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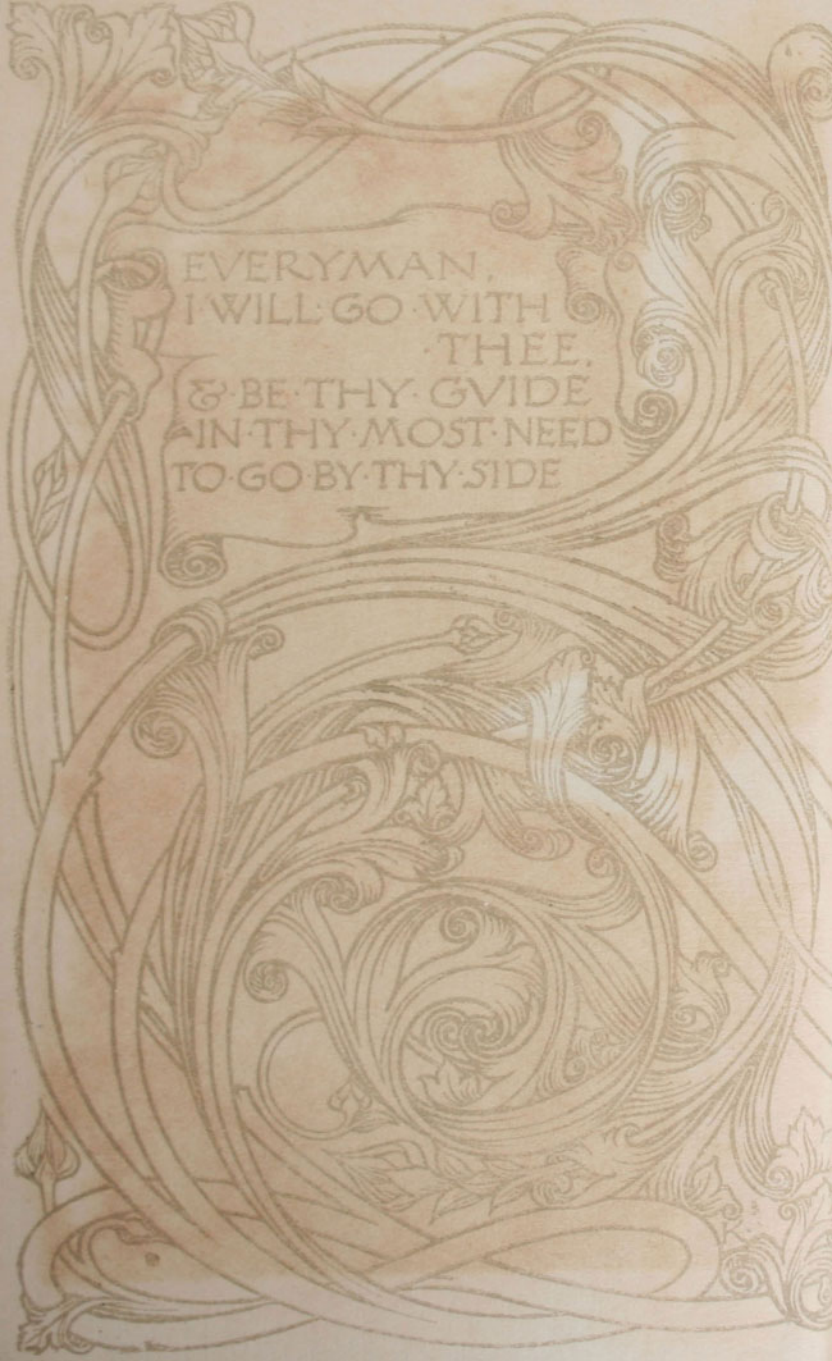
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