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DANTE IN RELATION TO THE SPORTS AND PASTIMES OF HIS AGE.

I.

FROM the outset it must be confessed that Dante is an inadequate exponent of the sports and pastimes of his age. His references are so scanty that they may be considered barely worth collecting. Yet this very scarcity has an interest, because it sets his reader thinking how it was that Dante, who sings and writes of so many sides of Italian life, should almost pass by in silence those amusements which for the majority of his countrymen made life worth living. It is true that contemporary poets provide even less illustrative material than does Dante, but then Cavalcanti, Guinicelli, Cino and the like, in their sonnets, ballads and *canzoni* bearing mainly upon love, would draw upon sport for the merest commonplace of metaphor, the stock-in-trade of love poets throughout all ages. Fazio Uberti in his *Dittamondo* had better opportunities, especially as in Italy sport like everything else had its peculiar local colouring; but he is too severely geographical to be instructive, though he does supply one of the very few references to quintain. A more promising source might seem to be Francesco da Barberino's *Del Reggimento e de' Costumi delle Donne.* He was an exact contemporary of Dante, and his subject is eminently social. But he is unfortunately too prudish and domestic for our purpose. He even warns his lady pupil that a love for balls is a sign of vanity, of the desire for the praise of strangers, and though he allows her to ride abroad during the Quinquagesima, with or without her husband, she must allow no strange gentlemen to annex themselves to her cavalcade. Above all, she is warned, if a nun, to shun peeping from the windows at the games in the square (*finestre e giuochi di piazza*), and it is precisely these games which we are seeking. In years long later Santa Maddalena de' Pazzi was praised for such avoidance in her early youth, although the too liberal Lasca had expressly recommended peeping. It is possible that if the popular sermons of the

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thirteenth and fourteenth centuries at all resemble those of S. Bernardino in the fifteenth, they might repay the sieve. Chroniclers, of course, are a main resource, but save such born gossips as Salimbene, they say little on social amusements, unless they have, as many indeed did have, a direct connection with public municipal events. The last places, perhaps, where details upon sport would be naturally sought, are the Statutes of the several cities, and yet for one important sport, and that the one which most nearly touches Dante, they prove to be the happiest hunting-ground.

Other sources being so defective, it may seem unfair to expect more from Dante than we get. But his own versatility is to blame for our disappointment. If his poetry and prose are storehouses of theology and philosophy, astronomy, history and geography—if we resort to him for the politics, the personalities, the hatreds, the social abuses of his time—if he has a feeling for natural scenery and for certain forms of animal life that few medieval writers possessed, why may we not also turn to him as an Encyclopaedia of Sport?

The forms of sport or amusement for which illustration might be sought fall under several heads: (1) the natural country sports, fishing, fowling and hunting; (2) artificial competitive sports, racing on horse or foot, or in boats; football and other games of ball; jousting, quintain, and the mimic combats common to many Italian towns; (3) non-competitive amusements of a semi-public character, theatricals grave or gay, and the pastimes provided by professional purveyors, who, like modern merry-go-round proprietors, followed the annual cycle of feasts and fairs from town to town; (4) private pastimes, such as singing, dancing, chess, draughts, and the very numerous and obscure games of chance.

The latter two classes must here be lightly treated. The *Paradiso* is resonant with song, and the spirit dancers throng the heavens. But the dancing, at all events, is too supersensuous for historical earthly use: the solitary human touch is that which describes the movement of a lady's feet:—

> Come si volge, con le piante strette
> A terra ed intra sè, donna che balli,
> E piede innanzi piede a pena mette.
> *Purg.* xxviii. 52.

Dante's intimate knowledge of the music of his time is beyond all doubt[1]. The *Convivio* (ii. 14) may be said to contain his theory, and

[1] For a recent work on this subject see *Dante e la Musica* by Arnaldo Bonaventura, Leghorn, 1904, and a review by C. Bellaigue in *Journal des Savants*, May, 1905.

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moreover admirably describes the absorption of all the sensitive faculties in that of sound. This absorption finds its practical illustration in *Purgatorio,* ii. 112, where Dante and his master were so content with the dulcet notes of Casella's song that naught else could affect their minds. And as they stood in rapt attention to the strain, the strain which, as Dante confesses, never after left his ears, stern Cato, as many a tutor since, was forced to chide them for their neglect in not following the steep path before them, which was that of duty.

In the *Paradiso,* vii. viii. and x., are to be found passages quite modern on the relation between light and sound, and so the reader is taken back again to the *Convivio,* to the parallel between music and the qualities of heat in the planet Mars. The *Commedia* contains almost every variety of music then known: the songs of Casella, of Matilda and Arnaut, the duet of Peter of Aragon and Charles of Provence, the solo and choir in the *Te lucis ante,* the unison of a hundred voices in the *In Exitu Israel.* In the *Agnus Dei,*

> Una parola in tutte era ed un modo
> Sì che parea tra esse ogni concordia.
>
> *Purg.* xvi. 20.

The glory of the *Paradiso* culminates with the *Ave Maria,* which all the company of the Blessed takes up in chorus. Concerted instrumental music was probably unknown to Dante's age, except perhaps as an adjunct of the dance, but he fully appreciated the accompaniment to the voice, as in *Paradiso,* xx. 142:—

> E come a buon cantor buon citarista
> Fa seguitar lo guizzo della corda,
> In che più di piacer lo canto acquista,

and in *Purgatorio,* ix. 140:—

> E *Te Deum laudamus* mi parea
> Udir in voce mista al dolce suono.
> Tale imagine appunto mi rendea
> Ciò ch' io udiva, qual prender si suole
> Quando a cantar con organi si stea.

Thus Dante is a faithful exponent of the highest musical knowledge of his time. And yet to ascertain the place which music held in life of every day, its domestic graces and its social humours, it might be well to turn to an authority less exalted. Salimbene, the friar chronicler of Parma, brings home the realities of music as a pastime in the ordinary Italian home. Examples of this are his few lines on the domestic concert in the courtyard of a noble Pisan house which he visited while begging for his Order, and again, Fra Vita's light, sweet tenor, so

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gladly heard by bishops, archbishops, cardinals and the very Pope—a voice which put to shame the most persistent talker, for at once the phrase of Ecclesiastes went round the room, 'Do not disturb the music.' Very real is this Fra Vita, so courteous about singing that he never refused on the plea of sore throat and cold, and belied the long current verses:—

> Omnibus hoc vitium est cantoribus, inter amicos
> Ut nunquam inducant animos cantare rogati.

Then again there was Fra Henry whose voice was better suited for the chamber than the choir, and who upon a time sang so deliciously, that a certain nun who heard him threw herself out of the window to follow, but could not, because in the fall she broke her leg, so that as Ægidius of Perugia well said, 'It is a great gift not to possess gifts' (*Magna gratia est non habere gratiam*).

Chess, draughts, ninepins, knucklebones, dice and various games of chance wherein money was won and lost, played a large part in Italian life of Dante's day. Chess and draughts were lawful, and might be played in public: Sacchetti has several references to this. But many a man was ruined by dicing. Long before Savonarola religious revivals were marked by the destruction of the devil's playthings. Brunetto Latini warns his readers beyond all things to shun dice: he will have none of the man who throws himself away on that perverting and destructive art. Yet he admits occasional compromise: if you are asked to play as a favour to a friend or a lord, play high, and do not say, 'I cannot' (*i' non posso*); if you lose, look as if it did not cost you anything, and above all do not use bad language. More serious is Orcagna's lament that a hundred tongues could not tell the tale of his troubles and the ruin of his soul, and of all the cause was that foul hazard (*n' è cagione la brutta zara*).

Meanwhile Statutes prohibited name by name the various forms of gambling. Those of Pisa in Dante's time strove at least to save from such profanation the Campo Santo, the Cathedral and its steps. Florentine Statutes were most explicit: 'Nullus in civitate, comitatu vel districtu Florentiae aliquo tempore, etiam ultima die Aprilis et prima die Maii et qualibet die totius anni ad ludum zarae sive zardi cum taxillis' (then follow a number of other varieties) 'ludere audeat nec stare ad videndum ludentes ad aliquem ludum zardi[1].' The penalty was imprisonment, and before release the culprit must 'cum aqua baptisari et aqua totus perfundi.' Such precautions were of course in

[1] *Statuta Populi et Communis Florentiae*, Vol. II. lib. iv. 28.

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vain, and even in women a knowledge of games was, as now, regarded as an accomplishment, an asset in the matrimonial market. It tempted, among other attractions, Pino de Gente of Parma in 1285 to lure away his father's *fiancée*. Her name was Beatrix, an Apulian who lived in Ancona, and who 'thesaurum habebat et erat pulchra domina, et alacris, et solatiosa et liberalis et curialis, et de ludo scaccorum et alearum optime noverat.' So Pino married her, though it is true that he afterwards employed a man to smother her with a bolster. Chess, again, is mentioned by Salimbene as on a level with the legal, ecclesiastical and administrative qualifications of Bishop Opizo of Parma, nephew of Innocent IV. 'Hic fuit litteratus homo maxime in jure Canonico et in ecclesiastico officio valde expertus. Et de ludo scaccorum noverat, et clericos seculares multos tenebat sub baculo.' Yet to all such vices and virtues Dante, I think, makes but one reference—that in *Purgatorio*, vi. 1: 'Quando si parte il giuoco della zara.' Here, however, there is no lack of realism in his description of the winner and the loser, the latter going over his throws again and learning experience by misfortune; the former with his train of parasites, one marching in front, another plucking his robe behind, a third jogging his memory at his side, and he, never stopping, listening to this suitor and to that, defending himself from crushing by stretching out a generous hand so that the recipient may lessen the attendant throng. If Dante did not have a throw himself, he at least brought himself within the arm of the law, and incurred the penalty of total perfusion by looking on.

The amusements included in the third class were incidents of the annual feasts in the greater cities, and of the jousting days held on special occasions. The miracle plays or similar performances were an inveterate custom in every town, and might have lent themselves to such a theme as Dante's. It is known that the Florentine company, which in 1304 performed the Day of Judgement with such disastrously premature consequences to the spectators on the Carraia Bridge, was not a travelling but a stock company, and must have in one year or another reckoned Dante among its onlookers. But of such representations there seems to be no trace in the *Commedia*. Every great festival was attended by professional mimes, mountebanks and musicians in their hundreds. They received rewards almost as high as those reputed to fall until lately to their amateur brethren in Anglo-Indian circles. Brunetto Latini preaches against the waste of money on such triflers. Florentine Statutes forbade their entering the Palazzo Pubblico (Vol. II. lib. iii. 106). These *joculatores* comprised street-singers

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of the tales of Roland and Oliver, destined long afterwards to give the death-blow to Dante's popularity, tight-rope dancers, tumblers, jugglers, owners of dogs with a spirit of divination or miraculous insight into character, and performing bears. To the attractions of the latter Dante at least was not blind, for in *Canzone,* xii. 71, is to be found the comparison of the 'Orso quando scherza.' It is possible too that the *bos ephippiatus* and the *porcus balteatus* of the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* may be reminiscences of these rollicking Court-days, for the riding of a caparisoned ox was no uncommon feature, and the pig also at times played a serio-comic part, as when in the *piazza* at Venice twelve pigs were annually beheaded with much ceremonial in lieu of the twelve canons of Aquileia.

Another popular frolic was some form of sport with bulls. This was apparently at Rome a bull-fight proper, but elsewhere it was less developed. At Venice the bull was baited by dogs. At Brescia the animal was let loose by a gang of crapulous butchers among the crowd of worshippers during the most solemn procession of the year, a source of exquisite amusement to the lower classes and of righteous disgust to the sober-minded. A *ludus tauri* was, as early as 1276, subsidised by the city of Perugia, while the nuns of Santa Mustiola in Chiusi were bound to supply the bull. There was of course much cruelty to the bull and some danger to the passers by. To some such scenes Dante perhaps refers in the pathetic lines on the fatal wound of the tethered bull in *Inferno,* xii. 22:—

> Qual è quel toro che si slaccia in quella
> Che ha ricevuto già 'l colpo mortale,
> Che gir non sa, ma qua e là saltella,
> Vid' io lo Minotauro far cotale.
> E quegli accorto gridò: Corre al varco;
> Mentre ch' è in furia è buon che tu ti cale.

The practice of masquerading at these festivals, also forbidden by the Florentine Statutes, finds one slight reference in *Paradiso,* xxx. 91:

> Poi come gente stata sotto larve
> Che pare altro che prima, se si sveste
> La sembianza non sua in che disparve.

No doubt, moreover, the triumphal car drawn by the Griffin (*Purgatorio,* xxix.), which through Petrarch's *Trionfi* has exercised such an extraordinary influence upon poetry and art, was a glorification of the allegorical chariots which early formed the leading feature of the festival of S. Giovanni at Florence, reaching its artistic climax under the imaginative care of Lorenzo de' Medici.

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A delightful paper by Mr H. F. Tozer illustrates Dante's close knowledge of the art of mountaineering[1]. Yet though in his wandering life he gained much experience in breasting the flanks of Alps or Apennines, it may be doubted whether he regarded them as his playground. Climbing was probably rather a painful necessity than a pastime or a sport. Nor can his line on a man swimming in the Lambro be taken as a proof that he was fond of bathing. It is, however, far more strange that he should show so little feeling for sport proper, for hunting, that is, and fowling, tastes so universal in his age. Almost all Florentine families, noble or bourgeois, had their estates or little farms in the *contado,* where brake and stream made haunts for beast and fowl, where hunting, fowling, and fishing were features of everyday life. Metaphors from these were so imbedded in the national speech that it would be impossible to avoid them. In Dante, therefore, they are necessarily found, but they are not frequent, though most of the characters whom he introduces must have been constant, if not mighty, hunters and fowlers. Of the two hunting scenes one is the dream of Ugolino, wherein he saw Archbishop Ruggieri as a master of hounds chasing the wolf and its cubs with his lean eager dogs (*Inferno,* xxxiii. 28). The other is the graphic description (*Inferno,* xiii. 112) of Lano and Giacomo della Cappella fleeing from the demons. Here is real hunting life—the rush of the boars and the swish of branches as they burst through the barriers of the wood, behind them the forest full of black hounds breaking away from the confinement of the leash, and fixing their teeth in their prey just as it sought shelter in the brushwood. These references are really all, though the dilemma of the dog between two equidistant does in *Paradiso,* iv., may just be mentioned. The theme would be the richer if we could only quote as Dante's the vivid lines in the Vatican MS. ascribed to him by Mario Pelaez (*Rime antiche italiane*):

> Sonar bracchetti e chacciator nizzare
> Lepri levare ed isgridar le genti
> E di guinzagli uscir veltri correnti
> Per belle piaggie volger o' nboccone
> Assai credo
> Ke deggia dilectare
> Libero core
> E van d' intendimenti.

Here is proof of the real hunting spirit, and the making of a true hunting song. This leads forward to the fine dithyramb of Niccolò Soldanieri, *I cacciatori della Volpe,* printed in Perticari's *Difesa di*

[1] See *Modern Language Quarterly*, I. 274 ff.

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Dante (*Opere*, I. 317), and to a very similar fourteenth century poem on stag-hunting of unknown authorship, published by Trucchi, with equally spirited lines on fowling and fishing—the latter curiously modern in character and a rare example. Direct from such parentage spring the verses of Lorenzo de' Medici, *La caccia di falcone*, which are the sunniest reflection of golden sporting days in Tuscany.

Dante's references to fowling are more numerous than those accorded to hunting. 'In vain,' he writes, in *Purgatorio*, xxxi., 'in the sight of full-fledged birds is the net spread or the arrow aimed.' Geryon, in *Inferno* xvii., is compared to the falcon descending sulkily without its prey, while in xxii. is the elaborate comparison of the Navarrese jobber with a duck which plunges as the falcon stoops, and then the fight between the demons in which Alichino fixes his claws, like a sparrow-hawk, in his fellow devil. *Paradiso*, xix., contributes the pretty simile of the falcon, when its hood is withdrawn, moving its head and clapping its wings, pruning itself and showing its readiness for flight. This, however, is rather to be classed with passages illustrating Dante's wonderful feeling for bird life—the lark rising and the rooks, the bird waiting for the dawn, the stork circling round its nest, the low flight of the swallows, and the soaring of the kite. But we must not forget the picture where Dante compares himself as he gazed through the green foliage to the man who wastes his time in pursuit of small birds (*Purgatorio*, xxii.), nor the comparison of the whirling spheres to the falconer's lure, followed by the lines on the falcon looking to earth, then turning at the master's cry, extending itself in flight after its quarry (*Purgatorio*, xix.), nor again the bird netted by the snarer's call (*Inferno*, iii.). These examples suffice to show that the poet, if no keen sportsman, was not untouched by the most picturesque of sports. Yet we could wish for more, and poets contemporary, or earlier, give us more. As instances may be cited the spirited sonnets of Folgore da San Gemignano on hunting and hawking for the months of February, September, and October, and better still, perhaps, those for Friday and Saturday in his sonnets for the week. And even Dante in his love for bird life can hardly outdo the song of the anonymous lady who lost her falcon, the pathos of which is quite Catullian:

Tapina me che amavo uno sparviero,
Amavol' tanto, ch' io me ne moria
A lo richiamo ben m' era maniero
Ed unque troppo pascer no 'l dovía.
Or è montato e salito sí altero
Ed è assiso dentro a un verziero,
E un' altra donna l' averà in balía.

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I sparvier mio ch' io t' avea nodrito
  Sonaglio d' oro ti facea portare
  Perchè nel uccellar fussi più ardito.
Or sei salito siccome lo mare
  Ed ai volto li geti e sei fuggito
  Quando eri fermo nel tuo uccellare.

E. LEVI, *Lirica antica italiana* (1905).

It is noticeable that in these few references to hunting and fowling there is no mention of a horse. This animal apparently did not appeal to Dante. When mentioned at all it is almost always in metaphor, and is then represented as a vicious, troublesome brute. There are no touches, such as might be expected from his love of animal life, on the turn of the head, the prick of the ears, the sleekness of skin, and the grace of movement. The very name occurs perhaps not more than some ten times in the whole of Dante's poetry and prose, and this is extraordinary if the importance of the horse in medieval economy be considered. The three most elaborate passages relate to the fractious character which requires governance. In the celebrated lines on German Albert Italy is the *fiera fella* which has not been tamed by the spur, an idea which is repeated in *Convivio* iv., where the Emperor is figured as the 'Cavalcatore della umana volontà, lo qual cavallo come vada sanza il cavalcatore per lo campo assai è manifesto, e spezialmente nella misera Italia che sanza mezzo alcuno alla sua governazione è rimasa.' So also in *Convivio*, iii. the man is more praiseworthy who curbs a naturally bad character against the impulses of nature, just as he is the finer rider who controls a vicious horse, while in *Convivio*, iv. 26, is found the comparison of appetite to a riderless horse, which, even if it be of noble nature, goes ill without the guidance of the fine rider with rein and spur. Among mere mentions of the horse may be cited from *Convivio*, iv. those who spend ill-gotten gains on banquets, horses and arms; the children who desire first an apple, then a bird, then fine raiment, then a horse, and finally a lady-love; the ecclesiastics whose flowing mantles cover their palfreys so that two beasts jog along under a single skin. We might suspect that Dante never possessed a horse, or even rode one, unless we are to take as fact the line in the *Vita Nuova*, ii.: 'Cavalcando l' altr' ier per un cammino,' or as real regret the cry against 'inopina paupertas,' which 'velut effera persecutrix, equis armisque vacantem, jam suae captivitatis me detrusit in antrum' (Letter ii., to the Counts of Romena).

It may be thought marvellous that there does not seem to be a single reference in all Dante to any of the games of ball for which Italy became famous. Homer has proved that the theme is not unpoetic,

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but Dante's Beatrice was no Nausicaa. It is difficult, however, to find an honest test of Dante's deficiencies, because his contemporaries are equally silent. Statutes forbid the playing of ball against this or that monastery wall, but there is no evidence to show the stage of evolution which the game had reached. A century later there are frequent references, and by yet another century differentiation had produced numerous forms. Rinuccini mentions several kinds of fives or racquets played along the blind walls of Florence. Only gradually had the great triad of Italian ball-games, *calcio, pallone,* and *palla maglia,* emerged. Mr Heywood in his recent book, *Palio and Ponte,* states his belief that *calcio* and *pallone,* utterly distinct as they became, were developed from a common simple type into the highly elaborate games of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This might account for several peculiarities in the two games. The wall on one side of the ground or court remained a feature in both. In Italian football the whole end of the ground was, as in the Winchester game, the goal, while in *pallone* the most successful stroke is one that clears the back line—which may possibly have kinship with the 'shy' in the Eton wall-game. In both *calcio* and *pallone* the ball was bounced into the ground by a neutral, as in the old English game of 'hurling.' Moreover the ball in *calcio* was known by the names *pallone, palla grossa, palla gonfiata*—our balloon or wind-ball. That now used in *pallone* is quite unlike those of tennis or racquets, for it is made of leather, distended by pneumatic pressure, and is of considerable size, some fifteen inches in diameter. Again *pallone* in the fifteenth century was not played, as now, by three a side, but by considerable numbers, and speed was highly valued. In *calcio* apparently the ball might be 'dribbled,' carried, and above all, hit with the fist. Venice, however, peculiar in this as in all else, is said to have played a strict 'Association' game, the use of hands and arms being disallowed. It is certain that *calcio* was an old game in Italy, and that is all that can be said of early days. S. Bernardino advised ladies to withdraw from the windows when it was played, not as might be prudishly recommended now, because the players wore shorts, but because they did not. In Dante's own city football has quite an interesting history. S. Antonino broke his arm at it, 'dum luderet ludo pilae inflatae quae dicitur palla grossa fregerat sibi bracchium.' Young Piero de' Medici shocked graver opinion by playing it in the streets when he should have been attending to affairs of state, and this contributed to his fall. A few years later ill-starred Filippo Strozzi, one of the leading young bloods of the day, describes a game at Naples, twenty-three a side, grey and rose stripes

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against yellow and white, in which Antonio Gondi broke his ankle. Filippo's sons were later taken up by the police for playing a disorderly game through the streets of Florence on Christmas Eve, in the course of which they spoiled a large quantity of Christmas goods displayed for show, and finally kicked the muddy ball against a choleric member of the Ministry of Justice. Their half-brother, the afterwards celebrated Leone Strozzi, made an ineffectual attempt to rescue them from the constables. During the siege of Florence in 1527 the youth played twenty-five a side in full costume on the Piazza Sta Croce, with a band on an adjoining house to call the enemy's attention to their bravado. A parallel to this was a game of *pallone* which two bands of young men played at Siena during the siege of 1555 for two hours or more, while the French officers looking on, 'si stupivano delle nostre pazzie.' This was followed by a game of *pugna* at which Monluc nearly wept for joy to see such spirit, but of this sport more hereafter.

Football then was no mere vulgar amusement, and in comparatively early times stood high in Florentine affections, though Alamanno Rinuccini states that in the middle of the seventeenth century it was only played by boys, whereas he could remember bearded men taking part therein[1]. The farther it went back, the rougher it probably was, resembling the games still played at Dorking or Derby or Corfe Castle on Shrove Tuesday, and doubtless the *rageries de grosses pelotes* of Dante's own age in London, against which Edward II. in 1314 legislated with small effect[2]. Yet of all this Dante is completely silent! Surely a writer who descanted upon Hell without a solitary mention of football can scarcely be acquitted of wasted opportunity.

Even more violent and perhaps more picturesque than football were the mimic combats of immemorial antiquity in several Italian cities[3]. These were battles deliberately fought on stated festivals between different quarters of a town. The combatants commonly used staves or else their shields as offensive weapons, while the light-armed were employed as stone-throwers. The defensive armour was often elaborately composed of wicker and padding, but casualties were invariable, and fatal accidents not uncommon. The battle of the Bridge of Pisa

[1] Bologna, still the chief centre of *pallone*, can boast respectable antiquity for its 'wall-game.' *ludus pallæ coreæ ad spondam muri*, which was always played along a particular line of houses. This is incidentally mentioned in a law-suit of 1435, while on August 5, 1580, Giovanni Bentivoglio patronised a match of Greens versus Yellows, fifty a side. Just a century later football was forbidden, as provoking quarrels and fights among the gentry. (L. Frati, *La Vita privata di Bologna dal secolo xiii. al xvii.* 1900.)

[2] Quoted by Mr Shearman in his *History of Football*.

[3] On this subject little can be added to Mr Heywood's admirable account in his *Palio and Ponte*.

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was the most celebrated survival of this game. In Dante's time this was played, not on the bridge, but in the piazza, and he must probably have seen it, for it was a usual day out for Florentine holiday-makers, at least for blind beggars and their dogs. Ungratefully enough when Pisa was forced to surrender in 1406, the Florentines even disarmed these innocent, if brutal, athletes of their clubs and shields. The revival of the sport, and its transference from the piazza to the bridge, has been attributed to Lorenzo de' Medici, who did his utmost to quicken Pisa into new social and economic life. The game was also played at Gubbio, at Orvieto, where it was known as *Prelium de lapidibus* and lasted from All Saints Day to the beginning of Lent, and at Perugia, where it was singularly persistent under the name of *Battaglia de' Sassi*. Here in 1372, writes Mr Heywood, the Papal Vicar strove to suppress it, and this was actually effected by S. Bernardino, though only for a time. It is noticeable that the first game of the year was played on the feast of the local saint, S. Ercolano, at government expense. At Perugia, and probably elsewhere, it became an incident in the serious fight between Guelfs and Ghibellines. This was natural enough, because the two factions here, as at Brescia and elsewhere, predominated in separate quarters.

At Bologna a similar game, the *ludus graticulorum*, in which one party was armed with sticks and the other with baskets of eggs as missiles, was prohibited as early as 1306. The Sienese Statutes of 1309–10 mention this combat under the name of *Elmora*, and documentary evidence of its existence goes back to 1253. A peculiarly bloodthirsty fight took place in Dante's age, in 1318. The custom was apparently continued without much interruption, for a game was played in honour of Charles V. in 1536, while another delighted the French garrison in the last agonies of the siege. At Florence the game was very old, but few details are known of it. The Statutes of 1415 (Book IV. 39) strenuously forbid citizens, of whatever condition, either to play at, or be spectators of, the *bellum de mazzis*, or to join in the stone-throwing which accompanied it. But survivals are found in the organised stone-throwing by boys, especially at certain seasons. Even Savonarola only succeeded in suppressing them for a season, by substituting raids on their neighbours' fineries. The custom was not confined to Tuscany and Umbria. At Venice two districts long fought each other on the bridges, originally with stout bamboos, and since 1292 with sticks[1]. One of these combats was held in honour of

[1] P. Molmenti, *Storia di Venezia nella Vita privata* (ed. 1905), I. 204.

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Henry III.'s passage through the town on his way from Poland to France.

Salimbene mentions as a landmark the open ground outside the gates, where the fight was habitually held at Parma. By far the most elaborate of the early accounts is that contained in the *De Laudibus Paviae*, written about 1330; this describes in some detail the *Battiolae* between North and South, which lasted from New Year's Day to Lent[1]. Yet of these games once so common, and so frequently mentioned alike in law and history, I have found no mention in Dante, nor, indeed, in any *litterae humaniores* at all contemporary. The absence of all reference is the stranger, as these combats were closely connected with the chief religious festivals of the city, often with that of the patron Saint: they were frequently subsidised by the municipal government, and the opening game of the season was as integral a part of the festival as the procession and the offerings of tapers and *palii* on the part of subject communes and feudatory nobles. And when the festival was over, these games were continued for some months, so that they formed no inconsiderable a feature in medieval Italian life.

Far otherwise is it with the more aristocratic jousts and tournaments, and the graceful evolutions on horseback included under the term *hastiludia*. Every Italian dynasty on occasion of a marriage, a birth, or some social or political event, held a *Corte bandita* to which were invited nobles from all parts of Italy, and invariably associated with this *Corte* was the ceremony of conferring knighthood. Even the republics—Florence, for instance, and in Dante's day—held similar festivals, though there were not the same frequent occasions provided by birth or marriage: in republican Italy the wives and daughters of temporary presidents did not pose as princesses. Chief among the entertainments were of course the tournament and joust. It is needless to say that these were not characteristically Italian. An early case is mentioned at Bologna in 1147, when it is stated that the sport was introduced from Saxony. It is certain that the fashion was greatly stimulated in the second half of the thirteenth century by Charles of Anjou. More specifically Italian, perhaps, were the *hastiludia*, a phrase which sometimes comprised the others, but more strictly connoted the display of horsemanship and skill in handling arms, recalling the celebrated scene in Virgil, and known to much later times as Troy game. The *hastiludia* occasionally degenerated into buffoonery, as when at Parma the young gentry, dressed as women, skirmished on

[1] Muratori, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, xi. 22.

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horseback through the town the whole night long, their faces covered with whitened masks. This, however, Salimbene, though no prude, regarded as indelicate, and, indeed, the men of Parma, as he tells us, spent all their time and substance on variety entertainers, actors, and the like. More frequently these evolutions were performed in compliment, as when in 1282 the Bolognese knights manœuvred round the *carroccio* of Parma on the *piazza* of Cremona, thinking to do the Parmesans a pleasure.

Most chroniclers have references to these high festivals, the most celebrated of which in Dante's time was given in honour of the marriage of Beatrice d' Este to Galeazzo Visconti. Dante regarded this as a *mésalliance* for the widowed lady, but her late husband, the Judge of Gallura, could not have bettered this splendid festival, the sensation of the day, the talk of all Italy. So deeply imbedded in the thought and language of upper-class Italy were the ceremony of knighthood and the feats of arms connected with it, that even in the lightest love poetry metaphors from the lists are frequent. For the nearest approach to actual description recourse must again be had to Folgore da San Gemignano in his verses on May, thus translated by Rossetti:

> I give you horses for your games in May,
> And all of them well train'd unto the course,—
> Each docile, swift, erect, a goodly horse;
> With armour on their chests, and bells at play
> Between their brows, and pennons fair and gay;
> Fine nets and housings meet for warriors,
> Emblazon'd with the shields ye claim for yours,
> Gules, argent, or, all dizzy at noon-day.
> And spears shall split, and fruit go flying up
> In merry counterchange for wreaths that drop
> From balconies and casements far above;
> And tender damsels with young men and youths
> Shall kiss together on the cheeks and mouths;
> And every day be glad with joyful love.

Probably every gentleman that Dante knew, and most of his acquaintances in *Inferno, Purgatorio* and *Paradiso,* belonged to this class, must have taken part in these contests or displays. Yet his references are few. The most distinct which I can recall is in *Inferno,* xxii. 9, a curious passage, because it seems to confound real acts of war in the territory of hostile Arezzo with the *ferir torneamenti e correr giostra*, which were their mimic representatives. In *Inferno,* vii. 34–5, the shock of the avaricious and the prodigal is a metaphor taken from the lists:—

> Poi si volgea ciascun, quand' era giunto,
> Per lo suo mezzo cerchio, all' altra giostra.

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Aquarone in his *Dante in Siena* believes that the *giostre del Toppo*, which are thrown in Lano's teeth, contain a reference to the tournaments of the *brigata spendeveccia* in Siena, extravagance in which led to Lano's self-sought death at Piere al Toppo. A passage in *Convivio* iv. 27, supplies a hint that Dante disapproved of the extravagance of these despots' Court-days, wherein the money wrung from the poor is squandered on banquets, gifts of horses, arms, raiment and largess—a passage recalled a little later by Coluccio Salutati's reproof to Petrarch for his presence at Violante Visconti's wedding-feast in the midst of a starving Lombardy, a reproof emphasised by its conclusion that the gout from which the poet was suffering served him right.

It may be due to this indignation with the abuses of his age, from this want of sympathy with its pleasures, that Dante fails to leave any impression of Court life, to which, after all, he was no stranger. No dynasty was more lavish in its Court-days than that of Scala, and even that of Polenta did not shrink from wasting the substance of others in the glorification of itself. The whole works of Dante, poetic or prosaic, give no such picture of a great Italian Court as the single short phonographic description of the hum and buzz, the jangle and the babel of the palace of Can Grande, in the *Bisbidis* of Dante's friend, Manuel the Jew[1].

EDWARD ARMSTRONG.

[1] Mario Pelaez, *Rime antiche italiane.* (*Collezione di opere inedite o rare*, edited by G. Carducci, 1895.)

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