DANTE ALIGHIERI

# THE DIVINE COMEDY

THE LONGFELLOW TRANSLATION

# The Divine Comedy

## Dante Alighieri

## Contents:




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## Introductory Note To The Longfellow Translation Of The Divine Comedy.

WHEN Mr. Longfellow made his first visit to Europe in 1826-1829, to qualify himself to teach modern languages and literature in Bowdoin College, he spent a year in Italy. He carried with him some rudimentary knowledge of the Italian language, for after he had been in the country about three weeks, he wrote to his father that he found Italian " very easy to read and not difficult to understand when spoken." He reached Italy at Christmas, and in describing his life in Rome in the midsummer following, he says in Outre Mer: "At midnight, when the crowd is gone, I retire to my chamber, and, poring over the gloomy pages of Dante, or ' Bandello's laughing tale,' protract my nightly vigil till the morning star is in the sky." At the end of the year he could say: " With regard to my proficiency in the Italian, I have only to say that all at the hotel where I lodge took me for an Italian until I told them I was an American."

It was at this time, then, that he made his first acquaintance with a master who was to be dominant in his mind through the rest of his life, and was finally to assume a place in his thought singularly intimate, coming to him indeed as something more than an intellectual companion. While professor in Bowdoin College he wrote an Italian grammar in French for the use of his pupils, but he seems

to have given less attention to Italian than to French and Spanish. In the North American Review for October, 1832, however, he had an article on Italian Language and Dialects, and when he transferred his connection from Bowdoin to Harvard he gave a prominent place to Italian in his academic work. He had a larger range at Cambridge than at Brunswick, and was able to relinquish much of the elementary work to assistants, while he devoted himself to more generous teaching. Thus, shortly after taking his chair he gave a course of lectures on Faust and followed it with one on Dante. His custom in these courses at first was not to write out his lectures, but to read the author in whole or in part in English to his class with a running commentary and illustration. "For his purpose," says Mr. Samuel Longfellow, " he had bound an interleaved copy of the author, the blank pages of which he gradually filled with notes and with translations of noteworthy passages. In this way were written those passages from the Divina Commedia the Celestial Pilot, the Terrestrial Paradise, and the Meeting of Dante and Beatrice which were first printed in Voices of the Night in 1839, and which, twenty-eight years afterwards, with very slight mending, made part of the completed translation." Afterward, he wrote out with care some college lectures upon Dante and the Commedia. Two of these he gave in one of the Mercantile Library Courses in New York in 1840, and afterward printed in the Blue and Gold Edition of his prose works. He made use of the same material, also, when preparing The Poets and Poetry of Europe.

This was the beginning of his long continued work on Dante, and from this time until he set about the preparation of the complete translation of the Divine Comedy there are frequent references in his diaries and journals to a study which had a strong hold upon his imagination. " At home all day, reading Dante," he writes, March 3, 1838. " Closed my

lectures on Dante's Purgatorio, by an analysis of the whole," he writes on the 21st of the same month. "I breathe more freely, now that the appointed task is done. I play the part of an unstrung bow for a while; let the mind lie a while in the rain and sunshine of heaven unvexed by laborious ploughshare." "May 17th, 1838. A hot, summer-like day, which I passed upon a sofa, reading Dante's Inferno" Early in 1840 he went to New York to give his lectures, and it was while anticipating this task that he wrote in his diary:

" January 9, 1840. Read five cantos in Dante's Inferno. I am struck with the prevailing desire of fame everywhere heard. Above the wailings of the damned spirits, the groaning branches of the accursed forest, the hollow roar of the falling Phlegethon, the shrieks, curses, and howlings of despair, resounds the ' silver-snarling ' blast of the trumpet that speaks of fame.' This was the longing in the soul of Dante, finding its expression everywhere. ' See that thou speakest of us to the people ' cry the souls in agony. ' Their fame fama di loro; ' ' leaving behind them horrible dispraise; ' ' that fame of yours vostra nominanza; ' these and the like are phrases constantly recurring, like the theme of an opera, with thousandfold variations. I know of no book so fearfully expressive of human passions as this."

In a letter written in March, 1843, he says: " How different from this gossip is the Divine Dante with which I begin the morning! I write a few lines every day before breakfast. It is the first thing I do, the morning prayer, the keynote of the day. I am delighted to have you take an interest in it. But do not expect too much, for I really have but a few moments to devote to it daily; yet daily a stone, small or great, is laid on the pile." Mr. C. E. Norton, from whose remarks at the annual meeting of the Dante Society, May 16, 1882, this extract is taken, adds that " years passed on, and though Dante was never long absent from his hand, he

did not resume the translation." His college work however included lectures on Dante and more or less instruction in the text, and the recurring academic terms brought fresh opportunity for study and reflection on the great theme. Thus he writes March 1, 1847: " Term begins. Farewell the sweet insouciance of lettered ease, and lounging, pencil in hand, in deep armchairs. Instead thereof, the class and lecture room. This term I have three classes, two in Molière and one in Dante. No college work could possibly be pleasanter; " and three days later, he jots down in his diary: " The first canto of the Inferno is for the most part simply narrative, only here and there a poetic touch. This low tone to use a painter's phrase gives great relief to the poetic passages. It is the plain gold setting of jewels." On the 24th of May, he notes: " Finished the Inferno with my class; and am not sorry. Painful tragedy, called by its author comedy! Full of wonderful pathos, horror, and never ending surprise." Once more, March 6, 1849, he makes the entry: " Work enough upon my hands, with lectures on Dante and the like. Wonderful poet! What a privilege it is to interpret thee to young hearts! "

At last, in 1853, ten years after the first resolution to translate Dante, he took up the work in good earnest. His last important book had been The Golden Legend, published near the close of 1851, and the year or more which had since elapsed had been a somewhat unproductive one. He was wearying of his college work and beginning even to be conscious that the years were slipping from him. " It seems to me," he says at the close of 1852, " that I shall never write anything more." He began to collect odds and ends of his literary work for preservation. It was in this mood that he turned to Dante for fresh inspiration.

" February 1, 1853. In weariness of spirit and despair of writing anything original, I turned again, to-day, to dear old

Dante, and resumed my translation of the Purgatorio where I left it in 1843. I find great delight in the work. It diffused its benediction through the day.

" February 27. Forty-six years old. Finished Dante xxxi.... The college term begins. Farewell the rest, the ease of vacation. I have not been wholly idle; let the completed Purgatorio answer for me."

That Dante's divine poem was never far from his mind during these years is hinted at in many slight ways in his diary. He sees Daniel Webster " with his face of infinite woes," and is reminded of Dante, "though Webster had written no Divina Commedia; " he visits in memory Portland, the city by the sea, where he was born, and the poem My Lost Youth enters his mind, but the refrain is Dante's

Siede la terra dove nato fui
Sulla marina;

*(Sitteth the city wherein I was born*
*Upon the seashore)*

(Inferno, v. 97.)

he writes to Sumner, who is receiving abuse, and sends him some fine lines from Dante for appropriate consolation; a beautiful morning in winter, with its fickle promise of spring, reminds him of Dante's line upon the weather which deceives the blackbirds:

Come fa '1 merlo per poca bonaccia;

*(As did the blackbird at the little sunshine)*

a furious northeaster makes him think of the tempest in the Inferno; and when at Nahant, he sets down in his diary: " After a rainy night, the vapors begin to grow thinner, and a gurgle is heard on the beach. It is the rising tide.

I vapori umidi e spessi
A diradar cominciansi, la spera
Del sol debilmente entra per essi.

*(The vapors humid and condensed*
*Begin to dissipate themselves, the sphere*
*Of the sun feebly enters in among them)*

So sings Dante; and the dead low tide, the slimy shore, and rocks covered with sea-weed, like huge, disheveled heads, suggest the *morta gora* of the eighth canto of the Inferno, and Filippo Argenti *pien di fango* rising out of the water." One night he sees from his window the flush of a great fire in Boston, and the next day he notes: " Translated part of Paradiso xxvii., St. Peter's wrath, and the angry glow of the air, which I thought of last night as I looked from the window."

When this last entry was made he had entered upon a new and absorbing phase of his work. The sonnet which invites the reader as he opens the Inferno is more than a dramatic expression referable to every soul, passing through that delicate porch into the mighty aisles of the Divina Commedia; it is the deep personal utterance of the guide, leaving his burden at the minster gate. When he began to lift his head after the calamity which befell him in the death of his wife, " he felt the need," says his biographer, " of some continuous and tranquil occupation for his thoughts; and after some months he summoned the resolution to take up again the task of translating Dante.... For a time, he translated a canto each day." " All the past week," he

writes, March 18, 1862, " I have been pretty busy upon Dante, quite absorbed; " and again, a week later: "Another week gone. All given to Dante. I have now completed twelve cantos of the Paradiso" In a year he was able to say: "April 16, 1863. Finish the translation of the Inferno. So the whole work is done; the Purgatorio and Paradiso having been finished before. I have written a canto a day, thirty-four days in succession, with many anxieties and interruptions. Now I must make some notes." Again in another year he records: " March 17, 1864. Finished to-day the revision and copying, or rewriting, the translation of the Purgatorio, so as to have it all of one piece with the rest; it having been made at different times, long, long ago, and never revised. Now I have the whole before me, of uniform style and workmanship." A few days after he writes to Mr. George W. Greene: " March 25, 1864. This is a lovely day, as you are well aware. Moreover, it is Good Friday, as you are equally well aware; and leaving aside the deeper meaning of the day, I will tell you something of which I suspect you are not aware. Have you remembered, or noticed, that the days and dates of 1864 correspond with those of the Dantesque 1300? so that in both years Good Friday falls on the 25th of March? Five hundred and sixty-four years ago to-day, Dante descended to the *città dolente*; and to-day, with the first two cantos of the Inferno in my hand, I descended among the printer's devils, the *malebolge* of the University Press. Is it a good omen? I know not. But something urges me on and on and on with this work, and will not let me rest; though I often hear the warning voice from within,

Me degno a ciò nè io nè altri crede.

*(Nor I, nor others, think me worthy of it)*

Did you ever notice the beautiful and endless aspiration so artistically and silently suggested by Dante in closing each part of his poem with the word *stelle*? Did any Italian commentator ever find it out? Among English translators, I believe Cayley was the first to remark it."

These notes and this letter sufficiently intimate the general progress of the work. As to the principles which governed in the translation, the work itself, following the original line for line and almost word for word, is the exemplar which must be studied, and the reader will find it worth his while to compare the final form of certain passages with the tentative first form published in Voices of the Wight, and to be found in the eighth volume of this edition. It was while daily engaged on his work that Mr. Longfellow wrote, May 7, 1864: " In translating Dante, something must be relinquished. Shall it be the beautiful rhyme that blossoms all along the lines like a honeysuckle on a hedge? It must be, in order to retain something more precious than rhyme; namely, fidelity, truth the life, of the hedge itself."

After the Divina Commedia had been translated, it was subjected not only to revision by the author in the quiet of his study, but to the searching criticism of two familiar friends, alike students of Dante, whom Mr. Longfellow was so fortunate as to have within reach. Of their meetings under the lead of the poet, one of them, Mr. Norton, has spoken as follows:

" In 1864 the manuscript was put in the printers' hands, and every Wednesday evening Mr. Lowell and I met in Mr. Longfellow's study to listen while he read a canto of his translation from the proof -sheet. We paused over every doubtful passage, discussed the various readings, considered the true meaning of obscure words and phrases, sought for the most exact equivalent of Dante's expression,

objected, criticised, praised, with a freedom that was made perfect by Mr. Longfellow's absolute sweetness, simplicity, and modesty, and by the entire confidence that existed between us. Witte's text was always before us, and of the early commentators Buti was the one to whom we had most frequent and most serviceable recourse. They were delightful evenings; there could be no pleasanter occupation; the spirits of poetry, of learning, of friendship, were with us. Now and then some other friend or acquaintance it would join us for the hours of study. Almost always one or two guests would come in at ten o'clock, when the work ended, and sit down with us to a supper, with which the evening closed. Mr. Longfellow had a special charm as a host, the charm of social grace and humor, by which his guests were brought into congenial disposition. His delicate and refined taste, his cheerful enjoyment of good things, showed themselves in the arrangement and order of the table, no less than in the talk that went on round about it."

The occasion for special attention to the preparation of the Dante was the approaching sixth centenary of the poet's birth, when Florence was to celebrate the anniversary with unusual observances. Accordingly, without waiting for the completion of the entire work, ten copies of the translation of the Inferno were struck off, of which five were sent to Florence in season for the festival in May, 1865. These copies had a special dedication:

*IN COMMEMORATIONS*
*DEL SECENTESIMO ANNIVERSARIO DELLA NASCITA*
*DI DANTE ALIGHIERI.*

The Inferno was not, however, published in America until the other two parts were ready, and preparation went forward steadily, upon the same plan as at first. The

Wednesday evening meetings were resumed in the fall of 1865, and continued, with some interruptions, until the work was done. " We miss you at the Dante Club," Mr. Longfellow writes to Mr. Greene, January 15, 1866, "which goes singing on its way, though diminished in numbers. Last Wednesday only Charles Norton and myself were present, Lowell being kept at home by a sore throat. Whereupon I sent him the enclosed prescription in Italian; " and in other letters to this friend he discusses points in the translation. On the 28th of the same month, he notes the group then gathered: " Norton, Lowell, Fields, Akers, and Mr. Howells, formerly consul at Venice, poet and prose-writer; a very clever and cultivated young man."

These meetings continued after the completion of the text and served for discussion of the notes. The Notes and Illustrations which form so large a portion of the bulk of the volumes early engaged Mr. Longfellow's attention, and gave him, though involving sedulous labor, a great deal of pleasure. In a letter to Mr. Norton, written in 1859, he says: " Long, long ago, I planned a book to be called ' An Introduction to the Study of Dante.' It was to contain a translation of

1. Boccaccio's Life.
2. The Vita Nuova.
3. The Letter of Fra Hilario.
4. The Vision of Frate Alberico.
5. Schelling on the ' Divina Commedia.'
6. Anecdotes, etc., from the Novellieri.
7. The best things said upon Dante by Carlyle, Macaulay, and others, etc., etc.

"Now I make it all over to you, if you will undertake it. Will you?

"How the birds twitter and sing this *bellissima giornata di primavera*! "

Some of this work Mr. Norton did undertake, and some, as the reader discovers, passed into the furnishing of Mr. Longfellow's copious volumes. The work upon the notes proceeded along with the translation. " To my great surprise," he writes to Mr. Greene, April 20, 1864, " I find the making of Notes to Dante very pleasant work. I wish somebody would pour a barrel of something into the grave of the commentators, as the bridegroom in the old Icelandic tale did into the grave of his friend the toper, to moisten the dry bones. I shall not be able to do that; but something like it, perhaps. I have begun already to light up these footlights of the great Comedy, and am not wholly dissatisfied with the effect. Will the oil hold out? I hope so." His friend was busy with his historical biography of General Nathanael Greene, and it is to this that Mr. Longfellow refers when he writes September 28, 1866: " Your entanglement in the thickets of 1778 is not unlike mine at this moment in the tenth canto of the Paradise, among the innumerable saints. My notes on that canto will amaze you. They are almost as voluminous as the writings of Albertus Magnus, which fill twenty-one volumes folio. However, I have got through, or nearly so; but have found it pretty hard work to compress Thomas Aquinas, St. Francis, and the rest, into their several nutshells." On November 30, 1866, he was able to jot down in his diary: " The south wind whistling through the keyhole, and roaring over the chimney. I have just finished the last note to Dante; eleven in the forenoon," and on the first day of 1867, he could write: " Corrected the last proof-sheets of the Notes to Dante; and the long labor is done. What next?"

The question was asked, no doubt, in a hopeful and exhilarated mood rather than with dejection, but the labor

now concluded had not always been an inspiring one; the toil of revision had sometimes weighed upon his spirits. " How I am weary," he writes, April 14, 1865, " of correcting and weighing and criticizing my translation! It takes more time than it did to make it; " and one can readily believe this when one notes that in the first work of translating, thirty-four cantos were done in as many consecutive days. The mechanical execution of the book was another trial to his spirit. " The printers get on slowly with the Dante, which puts me quite in despair. The task seems endless; but will, nevertheless, come to an end some time or other." The three volumes were finally published in May, 1867, in quarto, and as later editions were printed, slight alterations were occasionally made. In 1870, the three volumes were published in smaller form, and the sheets passing under Mr. Longfellow's hands received occasional revision as regards text, and correction as regards notes. His private copy bears a few proposed changes of still later date. The text of the present edition is that of the edition of 1870, with these unpublished corrections incorporated, while the foot-note readings are those of the quarto edition of 1867.

" During subsequent years," Mr. Norton says, "Mr. Longfellow still kept up his interest in Dantesque studies. He frequently used to propose the renewal of our Dantean meetings, urging me to translate the Convito, that it might form the subject of our discourse. I engaged to do the prose, if he would pledge himself to doing the difficult Canzoni. He smiled, and postponed the task."

The meetings were not resumed, but there sprang up in the winter of 1880-1881 the Dante Society, of which Mr. Longfellow was the first president, and this society in its fourth annual report, rendered May 19, 1885, printed an appendix containing the notes made from time to time by Mr. Longfellow during the later years of his life, after the

publication of his translation in 1867. In a prefatory note to this appendix the editor, Mr. Norton, says: "He proposed to revise at some time the whole book, both text and comment, and these notes were to be inserted in their respective places. He was fond, as his comment shows, of recording similarities of thought and expression between Dante and other poets; and the notes now printed are of interest in the illustration they afford of the range of his reading, and of the dwelling of his thought, year after year, upon the ' *poema sacrato*.'

## Dante Alighieri – His life and works

By Edmund G. Gardner

Dante Alighieri was an Italian poet, born at Florence, 1265 and died at Ravenna, Italy, 14 September, 1321. His own statement in the "Paradiso" (xxii, 112-117) that he was born when the sun was in Gemini, fixes his birthday between 18 May and 17 June.

He was the son of Alighiero di Bellincione Alighieri, a notary belonging to an ancient but decadent Guelph family, by his first wife, Bella, who was possibly a daughter of Durante di Scolaio Abati, a Ghibelline noble. A few months after the poet's birth, the victory of Charles of Anjou over King Manfred at Benevento (26 February, 1266) ended the power of the empire in Italy, placed a French dynasty upon the throne of Naples, and secured the predominance of the Guelphs in Tuscany. Dante thus grew up amidst the triumphs of the Florentine democracy, in which he took some share fighting in the front rank of the Guelph cavalry

at the battle of Campaldino (11 June, 1289), when the Tuscan Ghibellines were defeated by the forces of the Guelph league, of which Florence was the head. This victory was followed by a reformation of the Florentine constitution, associated with the name of Giano della Bella, a great-hearted noble who had joined the people. By the Ordinances of Justice (1293) all nobles and magnates were more strictly excluded from the government, and subjected to severe penalties for offences against plebeians. To take any part in public life, it was necessary to be enrolled in one or other of the "Arts" (the guilds in which the burghers and artisans were banded together), and accordingly Dante matriculated in the guild of physicians and apothecaries. On 6 July, 1295, he spoke in the General Council of the Commune in favour of some modification in the Ordinances of Justice after which his name is frequently found recorded as speaking or voting in the various councils of the republic.

Already Dante had written his first book, the "Vita Nuova", or "New Life", an exquisite medley of lyrical verse and poetic prose, telling the story of his love for Beatrice, whom he had first seen at the end of his ninth year. Beatrice, who was probably the daughter of Folco Portinari, and wife of Simone de' Bardi, died in June, 1290, and the "Vita Nuova" was completed about the year 1294. Dante's love for her was purely spiritual and mystical, the *amor amicitiae* defined by St. Thomas Aquinas: "That which is loved in love of friendship is loved simply and for its own sake". Its resemblance to the chivalrous worship that the troubadours offered to married women is merely superficial. The book is dedicated to the Florentine poet, Guido Cavalcanti, whom Dante calls "the first of my friends", and ends with the promise of writing concerning Beatrice "what has never before been written of any woman".

At the beginning of 1300 the papal jubilee was proclaimed by Boniface VIII. It is doubtful whether Dante was among the pilgrims who flocked to Rome. Florence was in a disastrous condition, the ruling Guelph party having split into two factions, known as *Bianchi* and *Neri*, "Whites" and "Blacks", which were led by Vieri de' Cerchi and Corso Donati, respectively. Roughly speaking, the *Bianchi* were the constitutional party, supporting the burgher government and the Ordinances of Justice; the *Neri*, at once more turbulent and more aristocratic, relied on the support of the populace, and were strengthened by the favour of the pope, who disliked and mistrusted the recent developments of the democratic policy of the republic. The discovery of a plot on the part of certain Florentines in the papal service (18 April) and a collision between the two factions, in which blood was shed (1 May), brought things to a crisis. On 7 May Dante was sent on an unimportant embassy to San Gemignano. Shortly after his return he was elected one of the six priors who for two months, together with the *gonfaloniere*, formed the *Signoria*, the chief magistracy of the republic. His term of office was from 15 June to 15 August. Together with his colleagues. he confirmed the anti-Papal measures of his predecessors, banished the leaders of both factions, and offered such opposition to the papal legate, Cardinal Matteo d'Acquasparta, that the latter returned to Rome and laid Florence under an interdict. Guido Cavalcanti had been among the exiled *Bianchi*; having contracted a fatal illness at Sarzana, he was allowed, together with the rest of his faction, to return to Florence, where he died at the end of August. This, however, was after Dante's term of office had ended. Enraged at this partial treatment, Corso Donati, in understanding with his adherents in Florence, appealed to the pope, who decided to send a French prince, Charles of Valois, with an armed force, as peacemaker. We find Dante,

in 1301, prominent among the ruling *Bianchi* in Florence. On 19 June, in the Council of the Hundred, he returned his famous answer, *Nihil fiat*, to the proposed grant of soldiers to the pope, which the Cardinal of Acquasparta had demanded by letter. After 28 September he is lost sight of. He is said to have been sent on a mission to the pope at the beginning of October, but this is disputed. On 1 November Charles of Valois entered Florence with his troops, and restored the *Neri* to power. Corso Donati and his friends returned in triumph, and were fully revenged on their opponents. Dante was one of the first victims. On a trumped-up charge of hostility to the Church and corrupt practices, he was sentenced (27 January, 1302), together with four others, to a heavy fine and perpetual exclusion from office. On 10 March, together with fifteen others, he was further condemned, as contumacious, to be burned to death, should he ever come into the power of the Commune. At the beginning of April the whole of the White faction were driven out of Florence.

A few years before his exile Dante had married Gemma di Manetto Donati, a distant kinswoman of Corso, by whom he had four children. He never saw his wife again; but his sons, Pietro and Jacopo, and one of his daughters, Beatrice, joined him in later years. At first, he made common cause with his fellow-exiles at Siena, Arezzo, and Forli, in attempting to win his way back to Florence with the aid of Ghibelline arms. Dante's name occurs in a document of 8 June, 1302 among the exiled *Bianchi* who at San Godenzo in the Apennines were forming an alliance with the Ubaldini to make war upon the Florentine Republic; but, in a similar agreement signed at Bologna on 18 June, 1303, he no longer appears among them. Between these two dates he had made his resolution to form a party by himself (Par., xvii, 61-68), and had sought refuge in the hospitality of Bartolommeo della Scala, the lord of Verona, where he first

saw Can Grande della Scala, Bartolommeo's younger brother, then a boy of fourteen years, who became the hero of his later days.

Dante now withdrew from all active participation in politics. In one of his odes written at this time, the "Canzone of the Three Ladies" (Canz. xx), he finds himself visited in his banishment by Justice and her spiritual children, outcasts even as he, and declares that, since such are his companions in misfortune, he counts his exile an honour. His literary work at this epoch centres round his *rime*, or lyrical poems, more particularly round a series of fourteen *canzoni* or odes, amatory in form, but partly allegorical and didactic in meaning, a splendid group of poems which connect the "Vita Nuova" with the "Divina Commedia". Early in 1304 he seems to have gone to Bologna. Here he began, but left unfinished, a Latin treatise, "De Vulgari Eloquentia", in which he attempts to discover the ideal Italian language, the noblest form of the vernacular, and then to show how it should be employed in the composition of lyrical poetry. Even in its unfinished state it is a most illuminating book to all who wish to understand the metrical form of the Italian *canzone*. On 10 March, 1306, the Florentine exiles were expelled from Bologna. In August we find Dante at Padua, and some weeks later in Lunigiana, where, on 6 October he acted as the representative of the Marquess Franceschino Malaspina in making peace between his family and the Bishop of Luni. About this time (1306-08) he began the "Convivio", or "Banquet" in Italian prose, a kind of popularization of Scholastic philosophy in the form of a commentary upon his fourteen odes already mentioned. Only four of the fifteen projected treatises were actually written, an introduction and three commentaries. In allegorical fashion they tell us how Dante became the lover of Philosophy, that mystical lady whose soul is love and

whose body is wisdom, she "whose true abode is in the most secret place of the Divine Mind".

All certain traces of Dante are now lost for some years. He is said to have gone to Paris some time between 1307 and 1309, but this is open to question. In November, 1308, Henry of Luxemburg was elected emperor as Henry VII. In him Dante saw a possible healer of the wounds of Italy, a renovator of Christendom, a new "Lamb of God" (the expression is the poet's) who would take away the sins of the world. This drew him back again into the tempestuous sea of politics and the life of action. It was probably in 1309, in anticipation of the emperor's coming to Italy, that Dante wrote his famous work on the monarchy, "De Monarchiâ", in three books. Fearing lest he "should one day be convicted of the charge of the buried talent", and desirous of "keeping vigil for the good of the world", he proceeds successively to show that such a single supreme temporal monarchy as the empire is necessary for the well-being of the world, that the Roman people acquired universal sovereign sway by Divine right, and that the authority of the emperor is not dependent upon the pope, but descends upon him directly from the fountain of universal authority which is God. Man is ordained for two ends: blessedness of this life, which consists in the exercise of his natural powers and is figured in the terrestrial paradise; blessedness of life eternal, which consists in the fruition of the Divine aspect in the celestial paradise to which man's natural powers cannot ascend without the aid of the Divine light. To these two ends man must come by diverse means: "For to the first we attain by the teachings of philosophy, following them by acting in accordance with the moral and intellectual virtues. To the second by spiritual teachings, which transcend human reason, as we follow them by acting according to the theological virtues." But, although these ends and means are made plain to us

by human reason and by revelation, men in their cupidity would reject them, were not they restrained by bit and rein. "Wherefore man had need of a twofold directive power according to his twofold end, to wit, the Supreme Pontiff, to lead the human race in accordance with things revealed, to eternal life; and the Emperor, to direct the human race to temporal felicity in accordance with the teachings of philosophy." It is therefore the special duty of the emperor to establish freedom and peace "on this threshing floor of mortality". Mr. Wicksteed (whose translation is quoted) aptly notes that in the, "De Monarchiâ" "we first find in its full maturity the general conception of the nature of man, of government, and of human destiny, which was afterwards transfigured, without being transformed, into the framework of the Sacred Poem".

The emperor arrived in Italy in September, 1310. Dante had already announced this new sunrise for the nations in an enthusiastic letter to the princes and peoples of Italy (Epist. v). He paid homage to Henry in Milan, early in 1311, and was much gratified by his reception. He then passed into the Casentino, probably on some imperial mission. Thence, on 31 March, he wrote to the Florentine Government (Epist. vi), "the most wicked Florentines within", denouncing them in unmeasured language for their opposition to the emperor, and, on 16 April, to Henry (Epist. vii), rebuking him for his delay, urging him to proceed at once against the rebellious city, "this dire plague which is named Florence". By a decree of 2 September (the reform of Baldo d'Aguglione), Dante is included in the list of those who are permanently excepted from all amnesty and grace by the commune of Florence. In the spring of 1312 he seems to have gone with the other exiles to join the emperor at Pisa, and it was there that Petrarch, then a child in his eighth year, saw his great predecessor for the only time. Reverence for his fatherland,

Leonardo Bruni tells us, kept Dante from accompanying the imperial army that vainly besieged Florence in September and October; nor do we know what became of him in the disintegration of his party on the emperor's death in the following August, 1313. A vague tradition makes him take refuge in the convent of Santa Croce di Fonte Avellana near Gubbio. It was possibly from thence that, after the death of Clement V, in 1314, he wrote his noble letter to the Italian cardinals (Epist. viii), crying aloud with the voice of Jeremias, urging them to restore the papacy to Rome.

A little later, Dante was at Lucca under the protection of Uguccione della Faggiuola, a Ghibelline soldier who had temporarily made himself lord of that city. Probably in consequence of his association with Uguccione the Florentines renewed the sentence of death against the poet (6 Nov. 1315), his two sons being included in the condemnation. In 1316 several decrees of amnesty were passed, and (although Dante was undoubtedly excluded under a provision of 2 June) some attempt was made to get it extended to him. The poet's answer was his famous letter to an unnamed Florentine friend (Epist. ix), absolutely refusing to return to his country under shameful conditions. He now went again to Verona, where he found his ideal of knightly manhood realized in Can Grande della Scala, who was ruling a large portion of Eastern Lombardy as imperial vicar, and in whom he doubtless saw a possible future deliverer of Italy. It is a plausible theory, dating from the fifteenth century, that identifies Can Grande with the "Veltro", or greyhound, the hero whose advent is prophesied at the beginning of the "Inferno", who is to effectuate the imperial ideals of the "De Monarchiâ", and succeed where Henry of Luxemburg had failed.

In 1317 (according to the more probable chronology) Dante settled at Ravenna, at the invitation of Guido Novello da

Polenta. Here he completed the "Divina Commedia". From Ravenna he wrote the striking letter to Can Grande (Epist. x), dedicating the "Paradiso" to him, commenting upon its first canto, and explaining the intention and allegorical meaning of the whole poem. A letter in verse (1319) from Giovanni del Virgilio, a lecturer in Latin at the University of Bologna, remonstrating with him for treating such lofty themes in the vernacular, inviting him to come and receive the laurel crown in that City, led Dante to compose his first "Eclogue" a delightful poem in pastoral Latin hexameters, full of human kindness and gentle humour. In it Dante expresses his unalterable resolution to receive the laurel from Florence alone, and proposes to win his correspondent to an appreciation of vernacular poetry by the gift of ten cantos of the "Paradiso". A second "Eclogue" was sent to Giovanni after Dante's death, but it is doubtful whether it was really composed by the poet. This correspondence shows that in 1319 the "Inferno" and "Purgatorio" were already generally known while the "Paradiso" was still unfinished. This was now sent in installments to Can Grande, as completed, between 1319 and 1321. If the "Quaestio de Aqua et Terra" is authentic, Dante was at Verona on 20 January, 1320, where he delivered a discourse on the relative position of earth and water on the surface of the globe; but, although the authenticity of this treatise has recently found strenuous defenders, it must still be regarded as doubtful. In July, 1321, Dante went on an embassy from Guido da Polenta to Venice. Two months later he died, at Ravenna, on the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, and was buried in the church of San Francesco in that city. The whole of the "Divina Commedia" had been published, with the exception of the last thirteen cantos of the "Paradiso", which were afterwards discovered by his son Jacopo and forwarded by him to Can Grande.

The "Divina Commedia" is an allegory of human life, in the form of a vision of the world beyond the grave, written avowedly with the object of converting a corrupt society to righteousness: "to remove those living in this life from the state of misery, and lead them to the state of felicity". It is composed of a hundred cantos, written in the measure known as *terza rima*, with its normally hendecasyllabic lines and closely linked rhymes, which Dante so modified from the popular poetry of his day that it may be regarded as his own invention. He is relating, nearly twenty years after the event, a vision which was granted to him (for his own salvation when leading a sinful life) during the year of jubilee, 1300, in which for seven days (beginning on the morning of Good Friday) he passed through hell, purgatory, and paradise, spoke with the souls in each realm, and heard what the Providence of God had in store for himself and to world. The framework of the poem presents the dual scheme of the "De Monarchiâ" transfigured. Virgil, representing human philosophy acting in accordance with the moral and intellectual virtues, guides Dante by the light of natural reason from the dark wood of alienation from God (where the beasts of lust pride, and avarice drive man back from ascending the Mountain of the Lord), through hell and purgatory to the earthly paradise, the state of temporal felicity, when spiritual liberty has been regained by the purgatorial pains. Beatrice, representing Divine philosophy illuminated by revelation, leads him thence, up through the nine moving heavens of intellectual preparation, into the true paradise, the spaceless and timeless empyrean, in which the blessedness of eternal life is found in the fruition of the sight of God. There her place is taken by St. Bernard, type of the loving contemplation in which the eternal life of the soul consists, who commends him to the Blessed Virgin, at whose intercession he obtains a foretaste of the Beatific Vision, the poem closing with all powers of knowing and loving fulfilled and consumed in the

union of the understanding with the Divine Essence, the will made one with the Divine Will, "the Love that moves the sun and the other stars".

The sacred poem, the last book of the Middle Ages, sums up the knowledge and intellectual attainment of the centuries that passed between the fall of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the Renaissance; it gives a complete picture of Catholicism in the thirteenth century in Italy. In the "Inferno", Dante's style is chiefly influenced by Virgil, and, in a lesser degree, by Lucan. The heir in poetry of the great achievement of St. Albertus Magnus and St. Thomas Aquinas in christianizing Aristotle, his ethical scheme and metaphysics are mainly Aristotelean while his machinery is still that of popular medieval tradition. It is doubtful whether he had direct acquaintance with any other account of a visit to the spirit world, save that in the sixth book of the "Æneid". But over all this vast field his dramatic sense played at will, picturing human nature in its essentials, laying bare the secrets of the heart with a hand as sure as that of Shakespeare. Himself the victim of persecution and injustice, burning with zeal for the reformation and renovation of the world, Dante's impartiality is, in the main, sublime. He is the man (to adopt his own phrase) to whom Truth appeals from her immutable throne, as such, he relentlessly condemns the "dear and kind paternal image" of Brunetto Latini to hell, though from him he had learned "how man makes himself eternal" while he places Constantine, to whose donation he ascribes the corruption of the Church and the ruin of the world in paradise. The pity and terror of certain episodes in the "Inferno" - the fruitless magnanimity of Farinata degli Uberti, the fatal love of Francesca da Rimini, the fall of Guido da Montefeltro, the doom of Count Ugolino - reach the utmost heights of tragedy.

The "Purgatorio", perhaps the most artistically perfect of the three canticles, owes less to the beauty of the separate episodes. Dante's conception of purgatory as a lofty mountain, rising out of the ocean in the southern hemisphere, and leading up to the Garden of Eden, the necessary preparation for winning back the earthly paradise, and with it all the prerogatives lost by man at the fall of Adam, seems peculiar to him; nor do we find elsewhere the purifying process carried on beneath the sun and stars, with the beauty of transfigured nature only eclipsed by the splendour of the angelic custodians of the seven terraces. The meeting with Beatrice on the banks of Lethe, with Dante's personal confession of an unworthy past, completes the story of the "Vita Nuova" after the bitter experiences and disillusions of a lifetime.

The essence of Dante's philosophy is that all virtues and all vices proceed from love. The "Purgatorio" shows how love is to be set in order, the "Paradiso" shows how it is rendered perfect in successive stages of illumination, until it attains to union with the Divine Love. The whole structure and spiritual arrangement of Dante's paradise, in which groups of saints make a temporary appearance in the lower spheres in token of the "many mansions", is closely dependent upon the teachings of the Pseudo-Dionysius and St. Bernard concerning the different offices of the nine orders of angels. It is doubtful whether he knew the "Celestial Hierarchy" of Dionysius at first hand, in the translation of Scotus Erigena; but St. Bernard's "De Consideratione" certainly influenced him profoundly. Dante's debt to the Fathers and Doctors of the Church has not yet been investigated with the fullness of research that has been devoted to elucidating his knowledge of the classical writers. His theology is mainly that of St. Thomas Aquinas, though he occasionally (as when treating of primal matter and of the nature of the celestial intelligences)

departs from the teaching of the Angelical Doctor. On particular points, the influence of St. Gregory, St. Isidore, St. Anselm, and St. Bonaventure may be traced; that of Boethius is marked and deep throughout. His mysticism is professedly based upon St. Augustine, St. Bernard, and Richard of St. Victor, while in many places it curiously anticipates that of St. John of the Cross. Mr. Wicksteed speaks of "many instances in which Dante gives a spiritual turn to the physical speculations of the Greeks". Even in the "Paradiso" the authority of Aristotle is, next to that of the Scriptures, supreme; and it is noteworthy that, when questioned by St. John upon charity, Dante appeals first of all to the Stagirite (in the "Metaphysics") as showing us the cause for loving God for Himself and above all things (Par., xxvi, 37-39). The harmonious fusion of the loftiest mysticism with direct transcripts from nature and the homely circumstance of daily life, all handled with poetic passion and the most consummate art, gives the "Divina Commedia" its unique character. The closing canto is the crown of the whole work sense and music are wedded in perfect harmony; the most profound mystery of faith is there set forth in supreme song with a vivid clearness and illuminating precision that can never be surpassed.

Dante's vehement denunciation of the ecclesiastical corruption of his times, and his condemnation of most of the contemporary popes (including the canonized Celestine V) to hell have led to some questioning as to the poet's attitude towards the Church. Even in the fourteenth century attempts were made to find heresy in the "Divina Commedia", and the "De Monarchiâ" was burned at Bologna by order of a papal legate. In more recent times Dante has been hailed as a precursor of the Reformation. His theological position as an orthodox Catholic has been amply and repeatedly vindicated, recently and most notably by Dr. Moore, who declares that "there is no trace in his

writings of doubt or dissatisfaction respecting any part of the teaching of the Church in matters of doctrine authoritatively laid down". A strenuous opponent of the political aims of the popes of his own day, the beautiful episodes of Casella and Manfred in the "Purgatorio", no less than the closing chapter of the "De Monarchiâ" itself, bear witness to Dante's reverence for the spiritual power of the papacy, which he accepts as of Divine origin. Not the least striking testimony to his orthodoxy is the part played by the Blessed Virgin in the sacred poem from the beginning to the end. It is, as it were, the working out in inspired poetry of the sentence of Richard of St. Victor: "Through Mary not only is the light of grace given to man on earth but even the vision of God vouchsafed to souls in Heaven."

Our earliest account of the life and works of Dante is contained in a chapter in the "Croniche Fiorentine" of Giovanni Villani (d. 1348), who speaks of the poet as "our neighbour". There are six commentaries extant on the "Divina Commedia", in whole or in part, composed within ten years of the poet's death. Three of these by Graziolo de' Bambaglioli, then chancellor of the commune of Bologna; an unidentified Florentine known as Selmi's Anonimo, and Fra Guido da Pisa, a Carmelite extend to the "Inferno" alone; those by Jacopo Alighieri, the poet's second son, Jacopo della Lana of Bologna, and the author of the "Ottimo Commento" deal with the entire poem. Graziolo appears as the first defender of Dante's orthodoxy (then fiercely assailed in Bologna); the author of the "Ottimo" (plausibly identified with a Florentine notary and poet, Andrea Lancia) professes to have actually spoken with Dante, and gives us various interesting details concerning his life. About 1340 Dante's elder son, Pietro Alighieri, set himself to elucidate his father's work; two versions of his Latin commentary have been preserved, the later containing

additions which (if really his) are of considerable importance. Some time after 1348, Giovanni Boccaccio wrote the first formal life of Dante, the "Trattatello in laude di Dante", the authority of which once much derided, has been largely rehabilitated by more recent research. His commentary on the "Inferno" is the substance of lectures delivered at Florence in 1373. A few years later came the commentaries of Benvenuto da Imola and Francesco Buti, which were originally delivered as lectures at Bologna and Pisa respectively. Benvenuto's is a living book, full of humour and actuality as well as learning. The little "Life" by Leonardo Bruni (d. 1444), the famous chancellor of the Florentine Republic, which supplements Boccaccio's work with fresh information and quotes letters of the poet other than those which are now known and the slighter notice by Filippo Villani (c. 1404), who is the first commentator who refers in explicit terms to the "Letter to Can Grande", bring the first age of Dante interpretation to an appropriate close. The title of father of modern Dante scholarship unquestionably belongs to Karl Witte (1800-83), whose labours set students of the nineteenth century on the right path both in interpretation and in textual research. More recently, mainly through the influence of G.A. Scartazzini (d. 1901), a wave of excessive scepticism swept over the field, by which the traditional events of Dante's life were regarded as little better than fables and the majority of his letters and even some of his minor works were declared to be spurious. This has now happily abated. The most pressing needs of Dante scholarship today are more textual study of the "Divina Commedia", a closer and more thorough acquaintance with every aspect of the minor works and a fuller investigation of Dante's position with regard to the great philosophies of the Middle Ages; such as will justify or restate the pregnant opening of the epitaph that Giovanni del Virgilio composed for his tomb: *Theologus Dantes, nullius dogmatis expers quod foveat*

*claro philosophia sinu* ("Dante the theologian, skilled in every branch of knowledge that philosophy may cherish in her illustrious bosom").

Dante may be said to have made Italian poetry, and to have stamped the mark of his lofty and commanding personality upon all modern literature. It can even be claimed that his works have had a direct share in shaping the aspirations and destinies of his native country. His influence upon English literature begins with the poetry of Chaucer, who hails him worthily in the "Monkes Tale", and refers his readers to him as "the grete poete of Itaille that highte Dant". Eclipsed for a while in Tudor times by the greater popularity of Petrarch, he was afterwards ignored or contemned from the Restoration until the end of the eighteenth century. The first complete translation of the "Divina Commedia" into English, the work of an Irishman, Henry Boyd, was published in 1802 (that of the "Inferno" having been issued in 1785). Dante came again into his heritage among us with the great flood of noble poetry that the beginning of the nineteenth century witnessed. The eloquent tributes rendered to him by Shelley (in "Epipsychidion", the "Triumph of Life", and "A Defence of Poetry") and by Byron (especially in the "Prophecy of Dante") as after them by Browning and Tennyson, need not be repeated here. Through Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites, he has been a fruitful influence in art no less than in letters. In the interpretation and criticism of Dante, English-speaking scholars at present stand second only to the Italians.

Never, perhaps, has Dante's fame stood so high as at the present day, when he is universally recognized as ranking with Homer, Æschylus, Sophocles, and Shakespeare, among the few supreme poets of the world. It has been well observed that his inspiration resembles that of the Hebrew