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John T. Slattery**

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Title: Dante: "The Central Man of All the World"

Author: John T. Slattery

Release date: November 1, 2005 [EBook #16978]
Most recently updated: December 12, 2020

Language: English

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WORLD" ***

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DANTE:

"THE CENTRAL MAN OF ALL THE WORLD."

**A Course of Lectures Delivered Before the Student Body
of the New York State College for Teachers,
Albany, 1919, 1920**

BY

JOHN T. SLATTERY, Ph.D.

**WITH A PREFACE BY
JOHN H. FINLEY, L.H.D.**

**New York
P. J. Kenedy & Sons**

1920

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Printed in U.S.A.

DEDICATION

THIS MODEST WORK OWES ITS
PUBLICATION TO THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF

PRESIDENT ABRAM R. BRUBACHER

AND

DEAN HARLAN H. HORNER

OF THE STATE COLLEGE FOR TEACHERS, ALBANY, N.Y.

WHERE MANY PLEASANT HOURS WERE PASSED IN
DELIVERING THESE LECTURES. TO THESE FRIENDS
AND TO THE STUDENT-BODY OF THE COLLEGE THE
AUTHOR HAS THE HONOR OF DEDICATING THIS BOOK

PREFACE

I stand as does the reader at the entrance to this book which I have not as yet entered myself. I have before me the journey through the Inferno and Purgatorio, into Paradise, with a new companion. I have made the journey before many times with others, or with Dante and Virgil alone, but I know that I shall enjoy especially the companionship and comment of one with whom I have had such satisfaction of comradeship in our journey as neighbors for a little way across this earth. I invite others, and I hope they may be many, to make this brief journey with us, not because I know specifically what Dr. Slattery will say along the way, but because whatever he says out of his deep and reverent acquaintance with the Divine Comedy will help us all who follow him, whether we are of his particular faith or not, to an appreciation of the meaning of this immortal poem, and make us desire to go again and again in our reading through these spaces of the struggles of human souls.

A world-literary-movement will commemorate in 1921 the six hundredth anniversary of the death of the immortal Dante. That a medievalist should call forth the homage of the twentieth century to the extent of being honored in all civilized lands and by cultured peoples who, for the most part, do not know the language spoken by him, or who do not profess the religion of him who wrote the most religious book of Christianity, is a marvel explainable by the fact that the Divine Comedy is a drama of the soul,—the story of a struggle which every man must make to possess his own spirit against forces that would enslave it. The central interest of the poem is in the individual who may be you or I instead of Dante the subject of the work, and that fact exalts the personal element and gives the spiritual value which we of modern times appreciate as well as did the thirteenth century.

The Divine Comedy is attractive for other reasons. It may appeal to us as it did to Tennyson, because of "its divine intensity," or it may affect us as it did Charles Eliot Norton by "its powerful exposition of moral penalties and rewards," showing that righteousness is inexorable; or it may interest us because of its solid realism, its pure strength of conception, its surpassing beauty, its vivid imaginative power, its perfection of diction "without superfluosity, without defect." Whatever be the reason of our interest in Dante, the study of his Divine Comedy will ever be both a discipline "not so much to elevate our thoughts," says Coleridge, "as to send them down deeper," and a delight calling forth the deepest emotions of our being.

JOHN H. FINLEY.

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DANTE AND HIS TIME

To know Dante we must know the age which produced Christianity's greatest poet, he whom Ruskin calls "the central man of all the world, as representing in perfect balance the imaginative, moral and intellectual faculties, all at their highest." Other writers are not so dependent upon their times for our clear understanding of their books. Dante to be intelligible to the modern

mind, cannot be taken out of the thirteenth century. "Its contemporary history and its contemporary spirit" says Brother Azarias in his Phases of Thought and Criticism, "constitute his clearest and best commentary." Only in the light of this commentary can we hope to know his message and realize its supremacy. And that it is worth while to make the study there can be no doubt upon the part of any seeker of truth and admirer of beauty.

Emerson said: "I think if I were a professor of rhetoric I should use Dante for my text-book. Dante is the rhetorician. He is all wings, pure imagination and he writes like Euclid." James Russell Lowell told his students in answer to the question as to the best course of reading to be followed: "If I may be allowed a personal illustration, it was my own profound admiration for the Divina Commedia of Dante that lured me into what little learning I possess." Gladstone declared: "In the school of Dante I learned a great part of that mental provision ... which has served me to make the journey of human life." It surely must be of inestimable advantage to sit under the instruction of one of the race's master teachers who stimulates one to lofty thinking and deep feeling, leads one into realms of wider knowledge and helps one to know his own age by revealing a mighty past.

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To see that mighty past, to live again with Dante in the thirteenth century is possible only after we have cleared the way with which ignorance and misrepresentation have encumbered the approach. Here, perhaps, more than in any other period of civilization is the dictum true that history is often a conspiracy against the truth. We moderns who are not only obsessed with the theory of evolution, but are dominated by the idea that nothing of permanent value can come from medievalism, arrogantly proclaim that ours is the greatest of centuries because we have not only what all other centuries had, but something else distinctively our own—a vast contribution to the world's progress. This self-complacency makes us forget that whatever truth there may be in the great theory of evolution, certainly the validity of the theory is not confirmed by the intellectual history of the human race. As was said of the Patriarchal Age so we may say of Dante's times "there were giants in those days" which we presume to ignore. Homer, Shakespeare, Dante, indeed stand forth in irrefutable protest against the questionable assertion of evolution that the present is intellectually superior to the past.

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The evolutionary theory prejudices our age against acknowledging the high accomplishments of the past. So to know the truth we must overcome the conspiracy with which so-called history has enveloped the past, especially those generations immediately prior to Dante's. How that ignorance of the history and spirit of that period can blind even a great writer to the wonderful feats inherited from the centuries immediately preceding the thirteenth, is revealed by the assertion of Carlyle that "in Dante ten *silent* centuries found a voice." To state what history now regards as fact, it must be said that while Dante by his giant personality and sublime poetic genius could alone ennoble any epoch he was not "a solitary phenomenon of his time but a worthy culmination of the literary movement which, beginning shortly before 1200, produced down to 1300 such a mass of undying literature" that subsequent generations have found in it their model and inspiration and have never quite equalled its originality and worth.

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In verification of this statement I have only to mention to you the names of the Cid of Spain, the Arthurian Legends of England, the Nibelungen Lied of Germany and the poems of the Meistersingers, the Trouveres and the Troubadours. The authors of these works had been taught to make themselves eternal as Dante says Brunetto Latini taught him. They are proof against the alleged dumbness of the ages just preceding Dante's. Of those times speaks Dr. Ralph Adams Cram, renowned equally for historical study and for architectural ability: "The twelfth was the century of magnificent endeavors and all that was great in its successor is here in embryo not only in art but in philosophy, religion and the conduct of life. The eleventh century is a time of aspiration and vision, of the enunciation of new principles and of the first shock of the contest between the old that was doomed and the new that was destined to unprecedented victories." (The Substance of Gothic, p. 69.)

Let us now make a general survey of Dante's century and then consider the more particular events and circumstances of his environment.

It may be a surprise to you to know that there is a book entitled The Thirteenth, the Greatest of Centuries by Dr. James J. Walsh, in its fifth edition with a sale of 70,000 copies. He indeed is not the only man of letters who signalizes that century for its greatness. To confine the quotations to two writers well known in our day, I find that Fiske in his Beginnings of New England says of the thirteenth century: "It was a wonderful time but after all less memorable as the culmination of medieval empire and medieval church than as the dawning of the new era in which we live today." Frederic Harrison, in his Survey of the Thirteenth Century says, "Of all the epochs of effort after a new life that ... is the most spiritual, the most really constructive and indeed the most truly philosophic. It had great thinkers, great rulers, great teachers, great poets, great artists, great moralists, and great workmen. It could not be called the material age, the devotional age, the political age or the poetic age in any special degree. It was equally poetic, political, industrial, artistic, practical, intellectual and devotional. And these qualities acted on a uniform conception of life with a real symmetry of purpose."

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Ours is an age of thought but of thought finding concrete expression in practical invention and especially in activities in the line of manufacture and commerce. Posterity will probably characterize our age as the Industrial Age, a phrase that will signalize our period both for the development of industries not thought possible a century ago and for the evolution of the industrial worker to a position of striking importance and power. For the first time in the history

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of humanity the workman's status is the subject of international agreement. The League of Nations promises to treat Labor from a humanitarian point of view and so to place it on the broad, firm pathway leading to industrial peace and economical solidarity for the common good. That would seem a necessity in view of the strides of progress in other directions.

Now wireless telegraphy crosses oceans and unites continents. The wireless telephone between ships and shore is in operation. It has been found practicable to transport by submarine a cargo from Bremen to Baltimore. In aircraft the development has been just as wonderful. Less than ten years ago the world's record for long flight by aeroplane was made, with no regard for time, with two stops between Albany and New York. In July, 1919, an aeroplane making no stop covered the distance between New York and Chicago in some six hours. Furthermore an American seaplane, in three stages made the trip from New York to England and then a British Dirigible without making a stop came from England to Long Island in ninety-six hours. "This is the end and the beginning of an age" says the author of *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*. "This is something far greater than the French Revolution or the Reformation and we live in it."

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We indeed consider it the age of "big things." Dynasties fall and republics spring up. When war breaks out it is a World War involving twenty-four nations and causing 7,781,806 deaths (Nelson's Encyclopedia, V. iv, p. 519) and costing \$200,000,000,000. In the first year in which we were at war, our country spent more than had been the cost of conducting the government for 124 years, including the expenses of the Civil and the Spanish-American Wars. Yes, it is an age of things." The Allies in the Champagne offensive of September, 1915, threw 50,000,000 shells into the German lines in three days. Was it one out of sympathy with "big things," one intent on the quiet of the higher life as contrasted with the din of the day, who said that "modern civilization is noise and the more civilization progresses, the greater will be the noise?" In any event the muses who inspired Dante, are almost dumb. Now the captains of industry are the commanding figures of the day and the student, the poet, the philosopher, the statesman have gone into innocuous desuetude. Amy Lowell is preferred to Longfellow: Charlie Chaplin draws bigger crowds than Shakespeare can interest. Trainmen get wages higher than are the salaries of some of our governors. Unskilled labor is paid more than the teachers of our youth receive. The cost of living was never higher in the history of mankind.

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How illuminating to turn from this picture to that of Dante's age. Then in Florence, a bushel of wheat cost about fifteen cents, a carpenter could buy a broad ax for five cents, a saw for three cents, a plane for four cents, a chisel for one cent. The average daily wage of a woolworker was about thirty-six cents. In view of the high purchasing power of money in Dante's age, the fact that he borrowed at least seven hundred and fifty seven and a half golden florins, a debt that was not paid until after his death, leads one to think that he must have been regarded by his contemporaries as prodigal in the use of money. His financial difficulties must have given him an uneasy conscience for he insists repeatedly on the wickedness of prodigality. In fact he makes the abuse of money on the part either of a miser or of a spendthrift a sin against the social order punishable according to the gravity of the offence in Hell or Purgatory.

To return to the matter of prices in Dante's day. In England a goose could be bought for two and a half pence. A stall-fed ox commanded twenty-four shillings while his fellow brought up on grass was sold for sixteen shillings. A fat hog, two years old,—and this is interesting to us who pay seventy-five cents a pound for bacon—a fat hog two years old cost only three shillings four pence and a fat sheep shorn, one shilling and two pence. A gallon of oysters was purchasable for two pence, a dozen of the best soles for three pence. A yard of broadcloth cost only one shilling one pence, a pair of shoes four pence. These figures of English money are taken from an act of Edward III of England who was born seven years after Dante's death. Parliamentary enactment under the same king fixed a table of wages.

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For a day's work at haymaking or weeding of corn, for instance, a woman got one penny. For mowing an acre of grass or threshing a quarter of wheat a man was paid four pence. The reaper received also four pence for his day's labor. Eight hours constituted a working day. The people of the Middle Ages not only had the Saturday half-holiday but they enjoyed release from work on nearly forty vigils of feast days during the year. That they were as well off, e.g. as the unskilled laborer of our day, who demands from four to eight dollars a day as a wage, is evident from the fact that while he has to pay forty cents a pound for mutton, the workman of Edward the Third's day earned enough in four days to buy a whole sheep and a gallon of ale. So plentiful was meat in England that it was the ordinary diet of the poor. A preamble of an act of Parliament of the fourteenth century in specifying beef, pork, mutton and veal declares that these are "the food of the poorer sort." (*The Thirteenth, the Greatest of Centuries*, p. 479.)

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Speaking of live-stock leads to the observation that the people of Dante's time for the most part lived in the country. Cities had not yet become magnets. London is supposed to have had a population of twenty-five thousand, York ten thousand four hundred, Canterbury, four thousand seven hundred, Florence, in the year 1300, according to Villani, a contemporary of Dante, had "ninety thousand enjoying the rights of citizenship. Of rich Grandi, there were fifteen hundred. Strangers passing through the city numbered about two thousand. In the elementary schools were eight thousand to ten thousand children." (*Staley's Guilds of Florence*, p. 555.)

The means of travel and communication, of course, were few and difficult. The roads were bad and dangerous. In France, Germany and Italy there were so many forms of government, dukedoms, baronies, marquisates, signories, city republics, each with its own custom regulations, not to speak of each having its own coinage and language, that travelers encountered obstacles

almost at every step. For the most part, journeys had to be made afoot and a degree of safety was attained only if the traveler joined a large trade caravan, a pilgrimage or a governmental expedition. Night often found the party far from a hospice or inn and so they were obliged for shelter to camp on the highway or in the fields. Necessarily the traveler was subjected to innumerable privations and sufferings.

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I have not been able to get accurate information as to the exact length of time required to make a trip, say from London to Paris—a distance covered the other day by an aeroplane in eighty minutes. But, the "Consuetudines" of the Hereford Cathedral, England, afford us some data upon which to base the conclusion that six weeks were necessary for such a trip, allowing another week for religious purposes. The "Consuetudines" after specifying that no canon of the cathedral was to make more than one pilgrimage beyond the seas in his lifetime, allows the clergyman seven weeks' absence to go abroad to the tomb of St. Denis in the suburbs of Paris, sixteen weeks to Rome and a year to Jerusalem.

A table of time limits between Florence and the principal cities of Europe and the East made by the Florentine Banking houses in Dante's day, showed the number of days required for consignments of specie and goods to reach their destination. Rome was reached in fifteen days, Venice and Naples in twenty days, Flanders in seventy days, England and Constantinople in seventy-five days, Cyprus in ninety days. How long it took Dante to make the trip from Florence to Rome, we do not know but history tells us that he went to the Eternal City in the year 1300. He was indeed a great traveler. During his twenty years' exile, we know that our poet's itinerary led him among other places to Padua, Venice, Ravenna, Paris and there is good reason to believe, as Gladstone contends, that he went for study to Oxford. The regret is permissible that he did not leave us an account of his journeyings. "Had he given us pictures—as he alone could have painted them—of scenes by the wayside and of the courts of which he was an honored guest," says Dr. J.A. Zahm in his *Great Inspirers*, "we should have had the most interesting and the most instructive travel book ever written."

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We cannot but notice one great effect brought about by traveling in those days, especially by pilgrimages and by the Crusades formed in defence of pilgrimages to the Holy Land and that is, that there arose on all sides a desire for liberty and the growth of a spirit of nationality that worked to the destruction of absolute government. The power of the common people began to assert itself. In 1215, England forced from John Lackland the Magna Charta, the foundation of all the liberty of English speaking people even in modern times. The very year in which Dante was born, representatives of the townspeople were admitted as members of the English Parliament. In France, during the thirteenth century, the centralization of power in the hands of the kings went forward with the gradual diminution of the influence of the nobility—a fact operating to the people's advantage.

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In 1222 the nobles forced Andrew II of Hungary to issue the Golden Bull, the instrument which Blackstone later declared turned "anarchy into law." In Germany and Sicily Frederick II published laws giving a larger measure of popular freedom. In Italy, the existence of the city republics—especially those of Florence, Sienna, Pisa—showed how successfully the ferment of liberty had penetrated the mass of the body-politic.

Coming now to regard the characteristics of Dante's age we must say that the first big thing that looms in sight is the fact that this was the golden age of Christian faith. Everywhere the Cross, the symbol of salvation, met the eye. It was the age when men lived in one faith, used one ritual, professed one creed, accepted a common doctrine and moral standard and breathed a common religious atmosphere. Heresy was not wholly absent but it was the exception. Religion regarded then not as an accident or an incident of life but as a benign influence permeating the whole social fabric, not only cared for the widow and orphan and provided for the poor, but it shaped men's thoughts, quickened their sentiments, inspired their work and directed their wills. These men believed in a world beyond the grave as an ever present reality. Hell, Purgatory, Heaven were so near to them that they, so to speak, could touch the invisible world with their hands. To them, as to Dante, "this life was but a shadowy appearance through which the eternal realities of another world were constantly betraying themselves." Of the intensity and universality of faith in that life beyond death, Dante is not the exception but the embodiment. His poem has no such false note of scepticism as we detect in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. Note the words of the modern poet:

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"I falter where I firmly trod
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar stairs
That slope through darkness up to God,
I stretch lame hands of faith and grope
And gather dust and chaff and call
To what I feel is Lord of all
And faintly trust the larger hope."

Not thus does Dante speak. As the voice of his age he begins with faith, continues with faith and leads us to the unveiled vision of God. He both shows us his unwavering adherence to Christian doctrine in that scene in *Paradiso* where he is examined as to his faith by St. Peter and he teaches us that the seen is only a stepping stone into the unseen. It has been said of him in reference to his *Divina Commedia*, "The light of faith guides the poet's steps through the hopeless chambers of Hell with a firmness of conviction that knows no wavering. It bears him

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through the sufferings of Purgatory, believing strongly fits reality: it raises him on the wings of love and contemplation into Heaven's Empyrean, where he really hopes to enjoy bliss far beyond that whereof he says." (Brother Azarias.)

Leading the religious awakening of the thirteenth century and making possible Dante's work at the end of the century were two of the world's greatest exponents of the spiritual life, both signalized in the *Paradiso*. St. Dominic characterized by Dante (*Par.* XII, 56) as "a jealous lover of the Christian faith with mildness toward his disciples but formidable to his foes," founded an order to be "the champions of Faith and the true lights of the world." Even in its early days it gave to the world eminent scholars such as Albertus Magnus and St. Thomas Aquinas, and it has never ceased to number among its members great thinkers, ardent apostles, stern ascetics and profound mystics. In Dante's time it was the only order specially charged with the office of preaching and from its founder's time down to the present day the one who acts as the Pope's Theologian has been taken from the ranks of this order. Besides preaching to all classes of Christian society and evangelizing the heathen, the Dominicans in Dante's day fought against heresy and schism, lectured in the universities, toiled among the poor, activities in which the order is still engaged.

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But perhaps the man whose spiritual influence was greatest in medievalism, if not in all the history of Christianity, was Francis of Assisi, who "all seraphical in order rose a sun upon the world." (*Par.* XI, 37.) Born at Assisi in Umbria in 1182, the son of a wealthy cloth merchant and of Pica, a member of a noble family of Provence, Francis grew up a handsome, gay and gallant youth "the prime favorite among the young nobles of the town, the foremost in every feat of arms, the leader of civil revels, the very king of frolic." A low fever contracted when with his fellow citizens he fought against the Perugians turned his thoughts to the things of eternity. Upon his recovery he determined to devote himself to the service of his fellow man for the honor of God.

His renunciation of the things of this life was dramatic. To swerve him from the new life his father had cited him to appear before the Bishop. Francis, unmoved by the appeal of his father persisted in his resolution. Stripping himself of the clothes he wore, the Bishop covering his nakedness, Francis gave his clothes to his father saying, "Hitherto I have called you Father, henceforth I desire to say only Our Father who art in heaven." Then and there as Dante sings, were solemnized Francis' nuptials with his beloved Spouse, the Lady Poverty, under which name, in the mystical language afterwards so familiar to Francis, "he comprehended the total surrender of all wordly goods, honors and privileges." He went forth and attracted disciples. With these partaking of his zeal and animated by his charity, he labored to make his generation turn from the sordid to the spiritual, diffusing over all the people a tender love of nature and God.

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Among his disciples—great minds of the time—were Thomas of Celano, one of the literary geniuses of the day, the author of the sublime *Dies Irae*—a religious poem chanted to this day at every funeral high mass in the Catholic Church, and frequently sung or played in great opera houses,—Bonaventure, professor of philosophy and theology at the university of Paris, Roger Bacon, the friar, the renowned teacher at Paris and Oxford, Duns Scotus, the subtle doctor. In the Third Order established for those not following the monastic life the membership, in the course of time, embraced among others St. Louis, King of France, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, and Dante.

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He, towards the end of his exile, footsore, weary and discouraged, buffeted by the adverse winds of fortune knocked, a stranger, at the gates of the Franciscan monastery at Lunigiana. "As neither I nor any of the brothers recognized him," writes Brother Hilary, the Prior, "I asked him what he wished. He made no answer but gazed silently upon the columns and galleries of the cloister. Again I asked him what he wished and whom he sought and slowly turning his head and looking around upon the brothers and me, he answered 'Peace.'"

The monks spoke gently to him, ministered with kindly and delicate sympathy to his bodily and spiritual needs. His reticence left him and his reserve melted away. Here the object of loving hospitality, he remained finding means and opportunity for profound study. Before he departed he drew from his bosom a part of the precious manuscript of *Divina Commedia* and trustingly giving it into the hands of the Prior said, "Here, Brother, is a portion of my work which you may not have seen: this remembrance I leave with you: forget me not."

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That he himself was not unforgetful of the sympathy of the simple and warm-hearted followers of St. Francis is evident from the fact that he gloried in his membership of the Third Order, wearing about his body the Franciscan cincture for chastity and it is not unlikely that at Ravenna before he finally closed his eyes upon the turmoil of the world full of vicissitudes, he modestly requested that he be buried in the simple habit of the order and be laid to rest in a tomb attached to their monastery. In any event such was his burial.

For our sympathetic understanding of the supremacy of religion in Dante's day, may I again quote Ralph Adams Cram, whose words on the eleventh century are equally applicable to the era of our Florentine and to his country? Dr. Cram writes: "It is hard for us to think back into such an alien spirit and time as this and so understand how with one-tenth of its present population England could support so vast and varied a religious establishment, used as we are to an age where religion is only a detail for many and for most a negligible factor. We are only too familiar with the community that could barely support one parish church, boasting its one-half dozen religious organizations, all together claiming the adherence of only a minority of the population, but in the Middle Ages, religion was not only the most important and pervasive thing, it was a moral obligation on every man, woman and child, and rejection or even indifference was

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unthinkable. If once we grasp this fact," continues Cram, "we can understand how in the eleventh century, the whole world should cover itself with 'its white robe of churches.'"

The second great fact observable in the times of Dante is that it was an age of inquiry and of efficient craftsmanship. Many of our generation think that Dante's day being so far removed from the age of printing and the spirit of positivism, and being given to the upholding of authority almost as an unexhaustible source of knowledge, was wholly unacquainted with scientific research. Furthermore they declare that education then was almost at its minimum stage. A little study will show that the people of that era were not unacquainted with the scientific spirit and it will also prove that if education did not prevail, in the sense that everybody had an opportunity to read and write—a consummation hardly to be expected—education in the sense of efficiency—education in the etymological sense, i.e. the training of the faculties so that the individual might develop creative self-expression and especially that he might bring out what was best in him, all which meant knowledge highly useful to himself and others—that kind of education was not uncommon.

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To give an idea of the scientific inquiry and sharp observation of mind in those days, I might cite Dante as a master exponent of nature study, and adept of science. Passing over his experiment in optics given in *Paradiso*, given so naturally as to justify the inference that investigation in physics was then not an uncommon mode of gaining knowledge, I call your attention to an observation made by Alexander Von Humboldt, the distinguished scientist, to prove that nothing escaped the eyes of Dante, intent equally upon natural phenomena and the things of the soul. Von Humboldt suggests that the rhetorical figure employed by Dante in his description of the River of Light with its banks of wonderful flowers (*Par.* XXX, 61) is an application of our poet's knowledge of the phosphorescence of the ocean. If you have ever looked down the side of a steamship at night as it ploughed its way forward, and if you have ever observed in the sea the thousand darting lights just below the water line your enjoyable experience will enable you to appreciate the beauty of this passage. I now quote:

"I saw a glory like a stream flow by
In brightness rushing and on either side
Were banks that with spring's wondrous hues might vie
And from that river living sparks did soar
And sank on all sides in the flow'rets bloom
Like precious rubies set in golden ore
Then as if drunk with all the rich perfume
Back to the wondrous torrent did they roll
And as one sank another filled its room."

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Commenting on this passage, Von Humboldt says "It would seem as if this picture had its origin in the poet's recollection of that peculiar and rare phosphorescent condition of the ocean in which luminous points appear to rise from the breaking waves and, spreading themselves over the surface of the waters, convert the liquid plain into a moving sea of stars." This mention of a sea brings to mind the striking fact that Dean Church has pointed out, viz., when Dante speaks of the Mediterranean, he speaks not as a historian or an observer of its storms or its smiles but as a geologist. The Mediterranean is to him: "The greatest *valley* in which water stretcheth." (*Par.* IX, 82.)

So also when he speaks of light he regards it not merely in its beautiful appearances but in its natural laws (*Purg.* XV). And when Dante comes to describe the exact color, say of an apple blossom, his splendid and unequalled power as a scientific observer of Nature and a poet is most evident. Ruskin (*Mod. Painters* III, 226) commenting on the passage: flowers of a color "less than that of roses but more than that of violets" (*Purg.* XXXII, 58) makes this interesting remark: "It certainly would not be possible in words, to come nearer to the *definition* of the exact hue which Dante meant—that of the apple blossom. Had he employed any simpler color phrase, as 'pale pink' or 'violet pink' or any other such combined expression, he still could not have completely got at the delicacy of the hue; he might, perhaps, have indicated its kind, but not its tenderness; but by taking the rose-leaf as the type of the delicate red, and then enfeebling this with the violet gray he gets, as closely as language can carry him to the complete rendering of the vision although it is evidently felt by him to be in its perfect beauty ineffable."

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These examples of Dante's interest in scientific observation prove his fitness to be considered a representative of his age in its love for science. Instead, however, of proposing Dante as a typical example of the experimental inquiry of his age—you may say that he is *sui generis*—I shall call forth other witnesses.

First let Albertus Magnus speak. He was distinguished as a theologian and philosopher and was also renowned as a scientist. In his tenth book after describing all the trees, plants and herbs then known, he says: "All that is here set down is the result of our own observation or has been borrowed from others whom we have known to have written what their personal experience has confirmed, for in these matters, experience alone can give certainty (*experimentum solum certifiat in talibus*)."

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We may be sure that such an investigator showing in his method a prodigious scientific progress was on the line so successfully followed by modern natural philosophy. This conclusion is confirmed by evidence from his other books showing that he did a great deal of experimental work, especially in chemistry. In his treatise *De Mineralibus*, Albertus Magnus keen to observe natural phenomena, enumerates different properties of natural magnets and states some of the

properties commonly attributed to them.

In his book on Botany he treats of the organic structure and physiology of plants so accurately as to draw from Meyer, a botanist of the nineteenth century, this appreciative tribute. "No botanist who lived before Albert can be compared to him unless Theophrastus, with whom he was not acquainted: and after him none has painted nature with such living colors or studied it so profoundly until the time of Conrad Gesner and Cesalpino"—a high compliment indeed for Albertus for leadership in science for three centuries. To quote Von Humboldt again, "I have found in the book of Albertus Magnus, *De Natura Locorum*, considerations on the dependence of temperature concurrently on latitude and elevation and on the effect of different angles of incidence of the sun's rays in heating the ground, which have excited my surprise."

27

Albertus Magnus gains renown also from his distinguished pupil Roger Bacon who, some think, should have the honor of being regarded as the father of inductive science—an honor posterity has conferred upon another of the same family name who lived 300 years later. We, who wear eye-glasses would be willing, I think, to vote the honor to the elder Bacon, because if we do not owe to him the discovery of lenses, we are his debtors for his clarification of the principles of lenses and for his successful efforts in establishing them on a mathematical basis. In any event, he was a pioneer in inductive science.

Before gunpowder is known to have been discovered in the West, the friar Roger Bacon must have made some interesting experiments along the line of explosives, else he could not have made the following remarkable statement as to the property of gunpowder: "One may cause to burst from bronze, thunderbolts more formidable than those produced by nature. A small quantity of prepared matter causes a terrible explosion accompanied by a brilliant light. One may multiply this phenomenon so far as to destroy a city or an army." Anticipating the use of even motor boats and automobiles driven by gasoline, this thirteenth century scientist wrote: "Art can construct instruments of navigation such that the largest vessels governed by a single man will traverse rivers and seas more rapidly than if they were filled with oarsmen. One may also make carriages which, without the aid of any animal, will run with remarkable swiftness." This man whose clarity of vision anticipated those discoveries of the nineteenth century, left three disciples after him,—John of Paris, William of Mara and Gerard Hay—who followed their master's methods, especially of testing by observation and by careful searching of authorities, every proposition that came up for study.

28

Perhaps the most striking argument in favor of the experimental attitude of Dante's century is that afforded by certain facts in the history of medicine of that epoch. Then surgery began to make vast strides. Pagel, regarded in our time as the best informed writer on the history of medicine, has this to say of the surgery in Dante's age. "The stream of literary works on surgery flows richer during this period. While surgeons are far from being able to emancipate themselves from the ruling pathological theories, there is no doubt that in one department, that of manual technics, free observation came to occupy the first place in the effort for scientific progress. Investigation is less hampered and concerns itself with practical things and not with artificial theories. Experimental observation was in this not repressed by an unfortunate and iron-bound appeal to reasoning." (*The Popes and Science*, p. 172.)

29

As to medical practice in the thirteenth century, interesting data are furnished by the Bulletin of Johns Hopkins Hospital and the Journal of the American Medical Association, January, 1908. The former publication gives us remarkable instances of surgical operations and of the treatment of Bright's disease, matters which we might have thought possible only in the nineteenth century; the latter publishes in full the law for the regulation of the practice of medicine issued by Emperor Frederick II in 1240 or 1241. According to that law binding on the two Sicilies, three years of preparatory university work were required before the student could begin the study of medicine. Then he had to devote three years to the study of medicine and finally he had to spend a year under a physician's direction before a license was issued to him. In connection with this high standard of a medical education, the law of Frederick II forbade not only the sale of impure drugs under penalty of confiscation of goods, but also the preparation of them under penalty of death—stern legislation, anticipating by nearly seven centuries the American Pure Drug Law. (*The Popes and Science*, p. 419.)

30

Undoubtedly the experimental demonstration and original observation of Dante's time sprang either from the training or pedagogical methods of the great universities of that period. There were universities at Oxford, Paris, Cologne, Montpellier, Orleans, Angers. Spain had four universities; Italy, ten. The number of students in attendance must amaze us if we think that higher education did not then prevail. Professor Thomas Davidson in his *History of Education*, says: "The number of students reported as having attended some of the universities in those early days almost passes belief, e.g. Oxford is said to have had about 30,000 about the year 1300 and half that number as early as 1224. The numbers attending the University of Paris were still greater. The numbers become less surprising when we remember with what poor accommodations—a bare room and an armful of straw—the students of those days were content and what numbers of them even a single teacher like Abelard could, long before, draw into lonely retreats."

31

That in the twelfth and following centuries there was no lack of enthusiasm for study, notwithstanding the troubled conditions of the times, is very clear. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, education rose in many European states to a height which it had not attained since the days of Seneca and Quintilian.

The curriculum followed by a student in Dante's time embraced the seven liberal arts of the Trivium and the Quadrivium, namely Grammar, Dialectic, Rhetoric, Arithmetic, Music, Geometry and Astrology. The higher education comprised also Physics, Metaphysics, Logic, Ethics, and Theology. Of the cultural effect of the old education, Professor Huxley spoke in the highest praise on the occasion of his inaugural address as rector of Aberdeen University. "I doubt," he said, "if the curriculum of any modern university shows so clear and generous a comprehension of what is meant by culture as the old Trivium and Quadrivium does." (The Thirteenth the Greatest of Centuries, p. 466.)

Speaking of education in those distant days, one thinks of the supreme intellect of medieval life, the giant genius St. Thomas Aquinas, whose philosophy was the food of Dante and became the basis not only of Dante's great poem but of Christian Apologetics down to our own day, when Pope Leo XIII directed that all Catholic seminaries and universities implant the doctrine expounded by Thomas, Angel of the Schools. A philosopher whose breadth and lucidity of mind gave such perennial interest to a system of thought that it is still followed more generally than that of any other school of philosophy—taught in the regular course even at Oxford, Harvard, Columbia—such a philosopher could have left the impress of his genius upon seven succeeding centuries only if his work had been to philosophy what Dante's *Divina Commedia* is to literature.

32

The subject of scholastic philosophy now more or less claims attention here, since the coming to our country of the most distinguished exponent of Neo-scholasticism. Cardinal Mercier before becoming a prince of the Church, held the chair of neo-scholastic philosophy at Louvain where he made his department so distinguished for deep scholarship that pupils came from afar to sit under his instruction or to prepare themselves for a doctorate of philosophy whose requirements at Louvain were perhaps, more exacting than at any other modern university.

In 1889 Bishop John H. Keane engaged in the task of getting together a faculty for the Catholic University at Washington went to Louvain to see Dr. Mercier. "I want you to go to Washington and become head of our school of philosophy," said the visitor. "I am perfectly willing to go, the Pope," answered the Belgian scholar. Bishop Keane went to Rome and presented the matter to Leo XIII. "Better leave him where he is," replied the Pope. "He is more needed in Belgium than in the United States." So it was owing to the wisdom of Pope Leo in keeping the right man in the right place that Belgium's strongest man was held for his country against the evil hour to be a terror to wrongdoers and an inspiration and object of reverence.

33

The World's War revealed Belgium's Primate not only as a great lucid thinker who shattered the subtleties with which the philosophy of might tried to confuse the mind of the world, but also as an undaunted leader who could not be frightened or defeated by all the forces of militarism. To my mind the secret of the dominating influence working upon Cardinal Mercier's character and making him a world-hero came from his training in scholastic philosophy and from his having assimilated the spirit of the thirteenth century.

That period indeed not only trained its people to a high spiritual ideal but gave them golden opportunities to express themselves and to put forth, under the inspiration of religion, the best that was in them. The medium was the guild system which, working from a self-protecting alliance of traders, extended itself to every existing form of industry and commerce and gave "the workman a position of self-respect and independence such as he had never held before and has failed to achieve since" (Cram).

34

A remarkable thing about the guild system was that it established and maintained what we, today, call technical schools for the training of apprentices. But more remarkable was the spirit which animated the system. *Operare est orare* was its principle. As a result of that teaching that labor is practical prayer, that the worker should labor not simply for a wage, but for perfection, men with untiring energy straining for finer and better work came to make the best things their minds could conceive, their taste could plan, their hands could fashion. Bell-making in Dante's day attained such perfection that the form and composition of bells have ever since been imitated. Workers of precious metals produced such wonderful chalices that succeeding generations have never equalled the ancient model. The masonry of medievalism has secrets of construction lost to our age. Mechanical engineering solved without the use of steel girders problems in the structural work of cathedrals, palaces, fortresses and bridges that causes open-eyed astonishment in the twentieth century. Wood carving as seen in many medieval chairs, tables, and choir equipment is of design so exquisite and of finish of detail so artistic that it is the despair of the cabinet makers of our age.

35

The beauty of the thirteenth century needlework made into chasubles, copes, albs, stoles, altar covers,—triumphs of artistic excellence, is seen in the typical example of the Cope of Ascoli for which Mr. Pierpont Morgan about ten years ago, paid sixty thousand dollars. So high a price was paid for this ecclesiastical vestment not because it was an antique but because marvelous expertness in artcraft had given it such value. Be it recorded to the honor of the American millionaire, that he returned the treasure to a church in Italy when he discovered that he had unknowingly bought stolen property.

Of iron-mongery of Dante's time, the author of the Thirteenth the Greatest of Centuries writes as follows: "It is difficult to understand how one of the village blacksmiths of the time made a handsome gate that has been the constant admiration of posterity ever since, or designed high hinges for doors that artists delight to copy, or locks and latches and bolts that are transported to our museums to be looked at with interest not only because they are antiques but for the wonderful combination of the beautiful and the useful which they illustrate. The surprise grows

the greater when we realize that these beautiful objects were made not only in one place or even in a few places, but in nearly every town of any size in England, France, Italy, Germany and Spain at various times during the thirteenth century and that at any time a town of considerably less than ten thousand inhabitants seemed to be able to obtain among its own inhabitants, men who could make such works of art not as copies nor in servile imitation of others, but with original ideas of their own, and make them in such perfection that in many cases they have remained the models for many centuries."

36

That is especially true of the thirteenth century glass windows as seen, for example, in the Cathedrals of York, Lincoln, Westminster, Canterbury, Chartres, Rheims, and in Notre Dame and the Sainte Chapelle, Paris. Modern art with all its boasting cannot begin to make anything comparable to that antique glass made and put in place by faith and love long before Columbus discovered America. There are tiny bits of it in this country as a result of the relic hunting of our soldiers in the World's War. Many of them got a fragment of the shattered glass of Rheims, "petrified color" deep sky blue, ruby, golden green, and sent it home to a sweetheart, a wife or sister to be mounted on a ring or set in a pin.

The donors for the most part of the glass of the thirteenth century Cathedrals, were guilds at that time. For the Cathedral of Chartres e.g. the drapers and the furriers gave five windows, the porters one, the tavern-keepers two, the bakers two.

37

In Dante's time glass-making reached its climax and then the curve began to decline, until in the eighteenth century and in the early part of the nineteenth century glass-making reached its lowest point.

Great as was Dante's day in the efficiency and education promoted by the Guild system—Dante himself was a member of it—the achievement of his era in architecture was the "most notable perhaps because what happened there epitomizes all that was done elsewhere and the nature of what was accomplished is precisely that which informed the whole body of medieval achievement." (The Substance of Gothic, p. 137.)

In the course of the century that gave birth to Dante, architecture rose to a glory never equalled before or after. In France alone between the years of 1180 and 1270 eighty great cathedrals and five hundred abbey houses were constructed. It was in this century that Notre Dame, Paris, arose, "the only un-Greek thing" said R.M. Stevenson, "which unites majesty elegance and awfulness." But it was not alone. Other Notre Dames sprung up in Germany, Italy and Spain. In England also, in that period there were more than twenty cathedrals in the course of construction, some of them in places as small as Wells, whose population never exceeded four thousand.

38

To look today upon Wells with its facade of nearly three hundred statues, one hundred and fifty-three of which are life size or heroic and then to realize that this magnificent poem in stone was composed by villagers unknown to us and unhonored and unsung, is to open our eyes to the wonders accomplished by the foremost age of architecture.

So wonderful are those cathedrals that Ferguson, the standard English authority on Gothic architecture, does not hesitate to say; "If any one man were to devote a lifetime to the study of one of our great cathedrals, assuming it to be complete in all its medieval arrangements—it is questionable whether he would master all its details and fathom all the reasonings and experiments which led to the result before him.

"And when we consider that not only in the great cities alone, but in every convent and in every parish, thoughtful men were trying to excel what had been done and was doing by their predecessors and their fellows, we shall understand what an amount of thought is built into the walls of our churches, castles, colleges and dwelling houses. My own impression is that not one-tenth part of it has been reproduced in all the works written on the subject up to this day and much of it is probably lost never again to be recovered for the instruction and delight of future ages."

39

The irreparable shattering of the greatest of these monuments of the past, occurred in our day. The Cathedral of Rheims, the crowning perfection of architecture having survived "the ravages of wars, the brutishness of revolutions, the smug complacency of restoration which had stripped it of its altars, its shrines and its tombs of unnumbered kings" was the target for two years of German shell and shrapnel and today it stands gaunt and scathed in a circle of ruin. But even in its ruin it shows infinite majesty and if it is left as it is,—and may that be so—for restoration would only vulgarize its incomparable art, Rheims will stand as a monument both to the thirteenth century which had made it the supreme type of the Gothic ideal to raise men's souls to God, and to the twentieth century against whose materialism it was an offence and a protest.

The third characteristic of the age of Dante is its chivalry, which placed woman on the highest pedestal she had ever occupied. In literature that unique influence is seen in a new and an exalted conception of love. Love is now coupled with nobility of life. The troubadours had sung of love as a quality belonging to gentle folk, meaning by that phrase the nobility, and nobility had been defined by the Emperor Frederick II, patron of the troubadours, as a combination of ancestral wealth and fine manners. In the Banquet (bk. IV) Dante rejects that definition and transfers nobility from the social to the moral order holding that "nobility exists where virtue dwells."

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Love, the flowering of this nobility, may be found in the heart of him even lowest in the social

scale provided that he is a virtuous man. It is not an affair solely of gentle blood. It has no pedigree of birth or richness. "In this sense the true lover need not be a *gentleman* but he must be a *gentle man*, loving not by genteel code of caste but by gentle code of character." (J.B. Fletcher: Dante p. 27.)

Thus Dante makes Guido Guinicelli say: "Love and the gentle heart are one and the same thing." And Dante himself in one of his Canzoni writes:

"Let no man predicate
That aught the name of gentleman should have
Even in a king's estate
Except the heart there be a gentle man's."

Love, then, became in literature such a refined emotion that to quote Dante: "it makes ill thought to perish, it drives into foul hearts a deadly chill" and on the other hand it fills indeed the lover with such delicacy of sentiment for his beloved that she is his inspiration to virtue and the Muse who directs his pen. In harmony with "the sweet new style" of sincerity with which Dante treats of love, Thomas Bernart de Ventadorn sings:

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"It is no wonder if I sing better than any other singer, for my heart draws near to Love and I am a better man for Love's command."

Not in literature alone but in actual life did chivalry exalt "the eternal womanly." In Dante's age, to quote the author of Phases of Thought and Criticism, "Knights passed from land to land in search of adventure, vowed to protect and defend the widow and the orphan and the lonely woman at the hazard of their lives: they went about with a prayer on their lips and in their hearts the image of the lady-love whom they had chosen to serve and to whom they had pledged loyalty and fidelity: they strove to be chaste in body and soul and as a tower of strength for the protection of this spirit of chastity, they were taught to venerate the Virgin Mother Mary and cultivate toward her a tender devotion as the purest and holiest ideal of womanhood. This spirit of chivalry is the ruling spirit of Dante's life and the inspiration of some of his sublimest flights."

All these high achievements of Dante's century are all the more notable in view of the fact that war with its horror and destruction was never absent from those times. Every European country was involved often in war and Asia and Africa were not free from its devastation.

42

In such stirring times, Dante was born at Florence. A city of flowers and gay festivities, the home of a cultured pleasure-loving people, it was the frequent scene of feuds and factions handed down from sire to son. The hatred they engendered and the desolation they caused may be understood from the reading of Romeo and Juliet, a tragedy whose scene is laid in Verona in the year 1303 and to the families concerned in which Dante makes allusion in the sixth canto of his Purgatorio. But Verona and Florence were not the only cities involved by the militarism of the age. Especially in northern Italy were strife and bloodshed common. Province, city, town, hamlet and even households were torn by internal dissensions, which only complicated the main conflict of that day, viz., the world struggle for supremacy of pope and emperor.

The imperial party called Ghibellines, composed mainly of aristocrats and their followers, aimed to break down the barriers which kept the German Emperor out of Italy, their object being to have him subjugate the whole country, even the states of the Pope. The papal or popular party, known as Guelfs, had as its purpose the independence of Italy—the freedom and alliance of the great cities of the north of Italy and dependence of the center and southern parts on the Roman See. A few months after Dante's death, the Ghibellines, the imperial party, suffered a defeat by the overthrow of King Manfred from which they never recovered. But in Florence for many years they maintained their struggle.

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To add to the confusion of the Florentines whose sympathy was mostly Guelf—i.e. favorable to the papal or popular cause—the Guelf party of Florence was divided into two factions, the Bianchi and the Neri, the history of whose tumults often leading to blood and mischief may be known by the frequent allusions of our poet. Embroiled by those feuds, Dante is found not only as a prior among the ruling Bianchi but as a soldier under arms at the battle of Campaldino and at the siege of Caprona. Later when the Neri were restored to power, Dante was banished and never again beheld his beloved city. In exile Dante transferred his allegiance to the Ghibellines though he upheld the Guelf view as to the primacy of the Church. Subsequently he tried, but in vain, to form a party independent of Guelf, Ghibelline, Bianchi or Neri.

May I conclude this chapter by giving you another view of Dante's environment? To point out the degeneracy of Florence, Dante becomes a *laudator acti temporis* in a picture of the earlier Florence that has never been equalled.

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"Florence was abiding in peace, sober and modest. She had not necklace or coronal or women with ornamented shoes or girdle which was more to be looked at than the person. Nor yet did the daughter at her birth give fear to her father, for the time and dowry did not outrun measure on this or that side. She had not houses empty of families. I saw Bellencion Berti go girt with leather and bone and his lady come from the mirror with unpainted face. I saw him of the Nerlo and him of the Vecchio satisfied with unlined skin and their ladies with the spindle and the distaff. O! fortunate women, each was sure of her burial place" (Paradiso IV, 97).

But time changed all that. With her population vastly increased in Dante's day and her commerce on all seas and on every road and her banking system controlling the markets of

Europe and the East, Florence had become such a mighty city that Pope Boniface VIII could say to the Florentine embassy who came to Rome to take part in the Jubilee of 1300: "Florence is the greatest of cities. She feeds, clothes, governs us all. Indeed she appears to rule the world. She and her people are, in truth, the fifth element of the universe." (The Guilds of Florence, p. 562.)

Such greatness was attained according to Dante only at the loss of pristine simplicity and virtue. So he apostrophizes his native city: "Rejoice O Florence, since thou art so mighty that thou canst spread thy wings over sea and land and thy name is known throughout Hell." Notorious for crime Florence still kept a big place in her life for religion. There "religion was abused but its beneficial effects continued to be manifest—vice was flagrant but it never lost the sense of shame—men were cruel but their cruelty was followed by sincere regrets—misfortunes were frequent and signal but they were accepted with resignation or with the hope of retrieval or men gloried in them on account of the cause in which they suffered." (Brother Azarias.)

And, meanwhile, side by side with fierce and bloody struggles the creative forces of art and architecture were making marvelous progress before the very eyes of Dante. Niccolo Pisano had finished his Sienna pulpit and with his son was engaged on his immortal works of sculpture. Orcagna had made a wonderful tabernacle for the Florentine church of San Michele, Cimabue had painted the Madonna which is now in the Rucellai chapel. Giotto had completed his work at Assisi and Rome and would soon give to the world the Florentine Campanile. Fra Sisto and Fra Ristoro had built the church Santa Maria Novella at Florence and Arnolfo di Cambio, while Dante was writing sonnets, had begun the duomo or cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore. The stout walls and lofty tower of the Bargello had sprung into beauteous being. Santa Croce destined to be the burial place of illustrious Italians, had been built and remains today one of Florence's greatest churches. St. John's Baptistry, *il mio bel Giovanni*, had received its external facing of marble, and in ten years after Dante's death would get its massive bronze doors which are unparalleled in the world.

The century closed with the opening of the great Jubilee at Rome. March twenty-fifth of the following year, 1300, Dante places as the time for his journey through the realms of the unseen—the story of which is told in the *Divina Commedia*. If sympathy with Dante and his work is not aroused already, perhaps these two quotations may quicken your interest.

Charles Elliot Norton writes: "There are few other works of man, perhaps there is no other, which affords such evidence as the *Divine Comedy*, of uninterrupted consistency of purpose, of sustained vigor of imagination, and of steady force of character controlling alike the vagaries of the poetic temperament, the wavering of human purpose, the fluctuation of human powers, the untowardness of circumstances. From the beginning to the end of his work of many years there is no flagging of energy, no indication of weakness. The shoulders burdened by a task almost too great for mortal strength, never tremble under their load."

And Dr. Frank Crane, a foremost writer of the syndicate press, says "I have put a good deal of hard labor digging into Dante and while I cannot say that I ever got from him any direct usable material, yet I no more regret my hours spent with him than I regret the beautiful landscapes I have seen, the great music I have heard, the wise and noble souls I have met, the wondrous dreams I have had. These are all a part of one's education, of one's equipment for life and perhaps the best part."

DANTE THE MAN

Fifty-five years ago when called on for a poem to celebrate the sixth hundredth anniversary of Dante's birth, Tennyson, feeling his own littleness before "this central man of all the world," wrote:

"King, that has reigned six hundred years and grown
In power and ever growest
I, wearing but the garland of a day,
Cast at thy feet one flower that fades away."

New tributes to the genius of Dante will be offered by our generation, for already great preparations are under way in all parts of Italy and the literary world to commemorate in 1921, the six hundredth anniversary of the death of the author of the greatest of all Christian poems. The question naturally suggests itself: Has not the world moved forward many centuries from Dante's viewpoint and lost interest in many things regarded as truths or at least as burning issues by Dante? Who is now concerned with the Ptolomaic system of astronomy, which is so often the subject of Dante's thought? Who is now interested in the tragic jealousies and injustices suffered by the people of Florence which led to the bitter feuds that helped to make Dante the great poet? Who, in this twentieth century so intent upon making the world safe for democracy, has sympathy with Dante's advocated scheme of a world-wide absolute monarchy as the cure for the ills of the society of his day? Is this generation which sees Italy united as a result of the overthrow of the Papal states, so universally concerned with Papal claims which were matters of vital importance to Dante and his generation? Is our era, which unfortunately looks upon religion

as a negligible factor and not as the animating principle of life, interested in the golden age of faith of which Dante is the embodiment, and his message in which the eternal is the object?

Yet, Dante's following is today larger than ever before; his empire over minds and hearts is more extensive. The moving pictures feature his Inferno; the press issues, even in languages not his own, such a mass of books and articles concerning him that a specialist can hardly keep track of the output. In the universities, especially of Harvard, Cornell and Columbia, not to speak of those in other lands, the courses on Dante attract an unusually large number of students. Outside of the academic atmosphere there are thousands of readers who still find in his writings, a solace in grief, a strength in temptation, a deep sense of reality, permanent though unseen, of the love of God and of His justice. The reasons are not far away.

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"Our poet," says Grandgent "was a many sided genius who has a message for nearly everyone."

Dante's compelling renown among us, is due says Dr. Frank Crane both "to the intrinsic greatness of the man's personality and to the sheer beauty of his craftsmanship."

"The secret of Dante's power" writes James Russell Lowell "is not far to seek. Whoever can express *himself* with the full force of unconscious sincerity will be found to have uttered something ideal and universal."

Whether one or all these reasons are the true explanation of the twentieth century's great interest in Dante, the fact remains, as Tennyson said, that far from being a waning classic, Dante "in power ever grows," and the interest he calls forth constitutes, as James Bryce observed in his Lowell Institute lectures "the literary phenomenon of England and America."

Now to Dante as the man let us turn. To know the fibre of his manhood will help us to appreciate the genius of his art. "It is needful to know Dante as man" wrote Charles Elliot Norton, "in order fully to appreciate him as poet." The thought is expressed in another way by James Russell Lowell: "The man behind the verse is far greater than the verse itself and Dante is not merely a great poet but an influence, part of the soul's resources in time of trouble. From him the soul learns that 'married to the truth she is a mistress but otherwise a slave shut out of all liberty'" (The Banquet). But that knowledge is dependent upon our intimacy with the life and spirit of Dante. In many other cases the knowledge of the life and personality of an author may not be essential to either our enjoyment or our understanding of his work. In the case of Dante "he faces his own mirror and so appears in the mid-foreground of his reflected word." Before looking into that mirror for Dante's picture, let us first recall some of the established facts in his life and then see what manner of man he appeared to those who were his contemporaries or who lived chronologically near him.

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Dante was born in Florence in the year 1265. His father was a notary belonging to an old but decadent Guelph family, his mother, named Bella, was a daughter of Durante Abati, a Ghibelline noble. Whether his own family was regarded among the first families of nobility or not, it is certain that Dante enjoyed the honor of knowing that one of his forebears, Cacciaguida, had been knighted by Emperor Conrad II on the Second Crusade. Precocious Dante must have been, as a boy, with faculties and emotions extraordinarily developed, for in his ninth year, while attending a festal party, he fell in love with a little girl named Beatrice Portinari, eight years old. "Although still a child" to quote Boccaccio his earliest biographer "he received her image into his heart with such affection that from that day forward never so long as he lived, did it depart therefrom." She became the wife of Simone dei Bardi, and died in her twenty-fourth year, the subject of many sonnets from her mystic lover who, if he had never written anything else, would have been entitled, by his book of sonnets, his New Life, to rank as a poet of the first class.

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Two years after the death of Beatrice, Dante married Gemma Donati, a member of an old aristocratic family of Florence and by her had four children. In the period between the death of Beatrice and his marriage he had seen military service, having borne arms as a Guelph at the battle of Campaldino (Purg. V, 91-129) in which the Florentines defeated the Ghibelline league of Arezzo and he took part at the siege of Caprona and was present at its surrender by the Pisans (Inf., XXI, 95.) When he was thirty years old he became a member of the Special Council of the Republic, consisting of eight of the best and most influential citizens and in 1300, at the age of thirty-five, midway in the journey of his life, he was elected one of the six Priors (chief magistrates of his city) for the months of June and July. Shortly after this Dante with three others went to Rome on an embassy to Pope Boniface VIII to get that pontiff's veto to the intervention of Charles de Valois, brother of Philip IV of France, in the affairs of Florence. But there was delay in the transaction of the business and that gave the stranger time to win the city by treachery. When the news reached Dante, he hurried homeward. At Sienna he learned that his house had been pillaged and burned and he himself had been accused of malfeasance in office. Without a trial he was condemned to a heavy fine and to perpetual banishment under penalty that if he returned he would be burned alive. Then began his twenty years' exile—years in which he went sometimes almost begging and at all times even when he was an honored guest in the home of nobility—knowing as only an exile can know "how bitter is the bread of dependence and how steep the stranger's stairs." It was during his exile that Dante completed his immortal Divina Commedia, the child of his thought "cradled into poetry by wrong." Dante never again saw Florence for which he yearned with all the intensity of the Hebrew captives weeping on the rivers of Babylon for a sight of Jerusalem. Death came to free his undaunted soul in the year 1321 while he was a guest at Ravenna of Guido Novello da Polenta, a nephew of Francesca da Rimini. At Ravenna the last seat of Roman arts and letters, in a sepulchre attached to the convent of the Franciscan monks, he was buried with the honors due to a saint and a sage. The inscription on

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his epitaph said to have been composed by him on his deathbed, is paraphrased by Lowell in the following words:

"The rights of Monarchy, the Heavens, the stream of Fire, the Pit
In vision seen, I sang as far as to the Fates seemed fit.
But since my soul, an alien here, hath flown to nobler wars,
And happier now, hath gone to seek its Maker with the stars,
Here am I, Dante, shut, exiled from the ancestral shore
Whom Florence, the fairest of all-least-loving mothers, bore."

Such is the brief outline of the outward life of him of whom Michelangelo declared:

"Ne'er walked the earth a greater man than he."

It will help us to a better understanding of that man if his likeness is impressed upon our memory. The portrait made by his friend Giotto, shows him as a young man perhaps of twenty to twenty-five years, with a face noble, beardless, strong, intelligent and pensive—a face which would not lead one to suspect an appreciation of humor. Yet writers find two distinct forms of that quality—a playfulness in his eclogues and a grotesqueness in certain of his assignments to punishments in Hell. Contrasting with this picture of his early life is the face of his death mask and of the Naples bust, suggesting the lines

58

"How stern of lineament, how grim
The father was of Tuscan song."

Here we see him mature with strength of character in every feature and a seriousness of mien which shows a man with whom one might not take liberties. It was of Dante in mature life that Boccaccio wrote: "Our poet was of moderate height and after reaching maturity was accustomed to walk somewhat bowed with a slow and gentle pace, clad always in such sober dress as befitted his ripe years. His face was long, his nose aquiline and his eyes rather large than small. His jaws were large and his lower lip protruded beyond the upper. His complexion was dark and his expression very melancholy and thoughtful. His manners, whether in public or at home, were wonderful, composed and restrained, and in all ways he was more courteous and civil than any one else."

59

Bruni, on the other hand, who wrote a century later describes Dante as if he had in mind Giotto's fresco of the poet. This is Bruni's word-picture: "He was a man of great refinement, of medium height and a pleasant but deeply serious face. It was remarkable that although he studied incessantly, none would have supposed from his happy manner and youthful way of speaking that he had studied at all." However well these pictures may visualize the poet for us, I cannot help thinking that Dante himself, after the manner of great artists who paint their own pictures, gives us a far better portrait of himself. What we know of him from others is as nothing compared to the revelation he has made of himself in his writings. For, as Dr. Zahm, in his *Great Inspirers*, has said: "Dante, although the most concealing of men was, paradoxical as it may seem, the most self-revealing." The indirect recorder of his own life, he discloses to us an intimate view of his spiritual struggles, of the motives which actuated him, of the passions he experienced, not to speak of the judgments he formed upon all great questions. "So true is this that if it were possible to > meet him, we should feel that he was an intimate friend who had never concealed anything from us—who had discoursed with us on all subjects; science, literature, philosophy, theology, love, poetry, happiness, the world to come and all that of which it most imports us to have accurate knowledge." Let us then see the man as reflected in his writings.

60

First of all he reveals himself as a man profoundly animated by religion. He is not a Huysmanns or a François Coppée, a Brunetiere, a Paul Bourget, forsaking the religious teachings of his youth only to embrace them in mature life. Never for a moment did he deflect from the Catholic doctrine, though his studies led him to the consideration of the most subtle arguments raised against it. He was indeed the defender and champion of faith, having no sympathy for a mind which would lose itself in seeking the solution of the incomprehensible mysteries of religion. So he has Virgil say:

"Insensate he who thinks with mortal ken
To pierce Infinitude which doth enfold
Three persons in one substance. Seek not, then,
O Mortal race, for reasons, but believe
And be content, for had all been seen
No need there was for Mary to conceive.
Men have ye known who thus desired in vain
And whose desires, that might at rest have been,
Now constitute a source of endless pain.
Plato, the Stagerite, and many more
I here allude to. Then his head he bent,
Was silent and a troubled aspect wore."
(Purg., III, 34.)

61

Guided by the wisdom he thus enunciated Dante from youth to death maintained a child-like faith that satisfied his intellect and animated his sentiments. His faith really grew into a passion. His fidelity to the truth of the doctrines of the Church or to the sacred offices of the papacy was

never shaken either by the scandals of clerical life or the opposition of different popes to his political ideals. Frequently he raised his voice in protest yet, notwithstanding his censures against what he considered abuses in the external administration of the Church and the policy of her popes, on his part there was not the least suspicion of unsettled faith or revolutionary design. Strongly convinced of the divinity of the Church, his passionate nature could not help execrating the human element that would weaken her influence. "He teaches that the mystical Vine of the Church still grows and Peter and Paul who died for it, still live. He holds by that Church. He begs Christians not to be moved feather-like by every wind of doctrine. 'You have' he tells them 'the Old Testament and the New. The Pastor of the Church guides you, let this suffice for your salvation'" (Brother Azarias). In his devotional life Dante is just as ardent as he is firm in his adherence to dogma. While all Catholics are held to profess a common creed, each may follow the bent of his disposition and sympathy in pious practices, theologically called devotions. It seems to me that Dante had three such devotions which he practised intensely in his inner life.

62

First, devotion to the sacred Humanity of Christ. In eleven places does he speak at length of Christ's two-fold nature as God and Man; in ten places does he refer to Christ as the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, and wherever Cristo occurs at the end of a line, Dante out of reverence for the Sacred Person does not rhyme with it, but repeats the name itself. The climax of the Purgatorio is the apparition of the Griffin, the symbol of Christ. Further, on the stellar white cross of red-glowing Mars the poet shows the figure of the Redeemer. In the Empyrean Christ is represented in the unveiled glory of His human and divine natures. So teaching the doctrine of the Incarnation most clearly and most ardently Dante seeks to promote this cultus as the soul of the Catholic religion.

63

Dante's second special devotion is to the Blessed Virgin. His Paradiso contains the best treatise on Mariology. The whole Divine Comedy indeed is the poet's loving testimonial of gratitude to the Madonna. It was through Mary that his visionary voyage to the other world was made possible. She rescued him when he was enslaved by sin and sent as his successive guides Virgil, Beatrice and St. Bernard. She of all creatures is proclaimed on every terrace of Purgatory first in virtue and highest in dignity and her example is exhibited as an unflinching source of inspiration to the Souls, to endure suffering cheerfully and to make themselves, like her, the exemplars of goodness in the highest degree. In Paradiso she is seen by the poet in all her unspeakable loveliness and beatitude and as Queen of Angels and of Saints her intercession is favorably invoked that Dante might enjoy the Vision of God himself. In the last canto of the poem her super-eminence and incomparable excellence are sung "with a sweetness of expression, a depth of philosophy and a tenderness of feeling that have never been surpassed in human language."

"Thou Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son,
Humble and high beyond all other creatures,
The limit fixed of the eternal counsel;
Thou art the one who such nobility
To human nature gave that its Creator
Did not disdain to make Himself its creature.
Within thy womb rekindled was the love
By heat of which in the eternal peace,
After such wise, this flower was germinated.
Here unto us thou art a noonday torch
Of charity, and below there among mortals
Thou art the living fountainhead of hope.

64

Lady, thou art so great and so prevailing,
That he who wishes grace nor runs to thee,
His aspirations without wings would fly.
Not only thy benignity gives succor
To him who asketh it, but oftentimes
Forerunneth of its own accord the asking.
In thee compassion is, in thee is pity,
In thee magnificence; in thee unites
Whatever of goodness is in any creature."

The third private devotion of Dante is devotion to the Souls in Purgatory—a pious practice founded upon the scriptural words: "It is a holy and a wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins." Not only does Dante answer the objection raised as to the efficacy of prayer offered for the souls in Purgatory (VI, 28) but in many passages he promises his own prayers and works and seeks to arouse in others on earth a helpful sympathy for those souls. "Truly" he says, "we ought to help them to wash away their stains which they have borne hence, so that, pure and light, they may go forth to the starry spheres," (Purg. VI, 34.)

65

To sum up Dante's attachment to his religion we can truly say not only his life but his great poem radiates the spirit and doctrine of the Church. Hettlinger says of Dante: "In truth he anticipated the most pregnant developments of Catholic doctrine, mastered its subtlest distinctions and treated its hardest problems with almost faultless accuracy. Were all the libraries in the world destroyed and the Sacred Scripture with them, the whole Catholic system of doctrine and morals might be almost reconstructed out of the Divina Commedia."

Intensity, indeed, is the characteristic of Dante's spiritual life. In bringing that quality to his faith and religious practice he was only manifesting the operation of the dominating quality

which regulated his whole life and shaped all his mental and emotional habits. The realm of his thought and feeling was truly the land of the strenuous life. Having once set out to say of Beatrice what had never been said of any woman, Dante applied himself to his prodigious task with a consistency of purpose that was unmoved by persecution and unshaken by time. In all the years that he spent in the composition of the *Divina Commedia* there was no flagging of interest, no indication of weakness. No one ever applied himself with more complete absorption or with greater power of unflinching concentration, just as no one ever felt more deeply the outrageous arrows of fortune or the transcendent supremacy of love. It is precisely because of this intensity that his thoughts and feelings affect us so profoundly six centuries later.

66

Intense in his own life Dante had no sympathy with slackers or the lukewarm whom he characterizes as never having been alive, i.e. of never having awakened to responsibility to take part in good or evil. As a consequence they never contributed anything to society. Because in this life they shifted from one side to another, they are now depicted running perpetually after an aimlessly dodging banner. Here is the description of the punishment of the lukewarm:

"Now sighs, cries, and shrill shrieks rang through the starless air: Whereat at first I began to weep, strange tongues, hurried speech, words of pain, accents of wrath, voices loud and weak, and the sound of hands accompanying them, made a tumult which revolves forever in that air endlessly dark, like sands blowing before a whirlwind. And I, whose head was hooded with horror, exclaimed: 'Master, what is it I hear? What kind of people is it that seems so vanquished by grief? And he replied: 'This is the miserable way followed by the sorry souls of those who lived without infamy and without glory. They are mingled with the mean choir of those angels who were not rebels and were not faithful to God, but were for themselves. Heaven cast them out lest its beauty should be spoiled; and deep Hell will not receive them, because the damned might derive some satisfaction from them.'

67

"'Master,' I said, 'what is so grievous to them which makes them complain so loud?' 'I shall tell thee right briefly' he answered. 'These people have no hope of death and their blind life's so vile that they are envious of any other lot. The world allows no report of them to last: mercy and justice disdain them. Let us not speak of them but look and pass by!' And I, looking, saw a banner which ran circling so swift that it seemed scornful of all rest: and after it there came trailing such a long train of people that I should never have thought death had undone so many. When I had made out one or two of them I saw and recognized the shade of him who, for cowardice, made the great refusal. Forthwith I understood and was convinced that this was the sect of poltroons, obnoxious both to God and to God's enemies. These luckless creatures who never had been really alive, were naked and badly stung by flies and wasps which were there. These insects streaked their faces with blood which, mixed with tears, was caught by disgusting worms at their feet—" (*Inferno* III, 33. Grandgent's translation.) In reading that description of the punishment of the lukewarm, one cannot fail to observe that not one is called by name. Because they "lived without infamy and without glory" their name deserves to be lost forever to the world.

68

Of the renown of Dante's own name our poet has no misgivings. He reveals himself as a man having supreme confidence in his own powers. Boccaccio represents him as saying when he was with his party at the head of the government of the republic of Florence, and when there was question of sending him on an embassy to Rome, "If I go, who stays? And if I stay, who goes?" "As if he alone," is the comment of Boccaccio, "was worth among them all, and as if the others were nothing worth except through him." It is certain that Dante put a high valuation upon his genius, an estimate due, perhaps, to the belief he held, like Napoleon, in the potency of his star. He was born under the constellation of the Gemini and to them in gratitude for his self-recognized talent he gives praise:

"O glorious stars, O light impregnated
With mighty virtue, from which I acknowledge
All of my genius whatso'er it be,
With you was born, and hid himself with you,
He who is father of all mortal life,
When first I tasted of the Tuscan air."
(*Par.* XXII, 112)

69

Certain it is that Dante acted on the counsel which, addressed to himself, he puts into the mouth of his beloved teacher, Brunetto Latini, "Follow thy star and thou canst not miss the glorious port." (*Inf.*, XV, 55.) In *Purgatorio* Dante says: "My name as yet marks no great sound," but he boasts that he will surpass in fame the Guidos, writers of verse: "Perchance some one is already born who will drive both from out the nest." He is so sure that posterity will confer immortality upon his work that he does not hesitate to make himself sixth among the greatest writers of the world. This passage occurs when he enters *Limbus* accompanied by Virgil to whom a group of spirits, Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan, make salutation. (*Inf.*, IV, 76.) Posterity has bestowed greater renown on Dante's name than even he presumed to hope, for it has placed him in the Court of Letters with only one of the writers of antiquity, Homer, and with two subsequent writers, Cervantes and Shakespeare.

70

Naturally we think that a writer who was so positively confident and boastful of his powers must have been given to pride and Dante indeed plainly indicates to us that he was guilty of this. But it was pride, we think, that was honorable and not a vice, a pride of which a lesser light, Lacordaire says, "By the grace of God, I abhor mediocrity." In the dark wood Dante represents the Lion (*Pride*) as preventing him from ascending the mountain—"He seemed to be coming to

me with head upreared and with such raging hunger, that the air appeared to be in fear of him." (Inf., I, 43.)

And that the poet's trepidation was justified he later makes known (Purg. XI, 136) when he expresses the fear that for pride he may be eternally punished. Perhaps it was because Dante recognized the pride of his learning, of his ancestry, of his associations with distinguished personages as his besetting sin that he exercised his skill as a master in showing us profound imagery representing the characteristics of pride. Carved out of the mountain in the first circle of a terrace of Purgatory are scenes illustrative of humility. While looking on these scenes, which seem to live and speak in their beautiful and compelling reality, the poet turns and sees approaching the forms of the proud. On earth they had exalted themselves as if they had the weight of the world on their shoulders, so now they are seen bent under huge burdens of stone, crumpled up in postures of agonizing discomfort. The poet, to let us know that he shares in their punishment, says:

71

"With equal pace as oxen in the yoke,
I, with that laden spirit, journey'd on
Long as the mild instructor suffer'd me."
(Purg. XII-I)

He apostrophizes them, but the words are really an upbraiding of himself for pride.

"O ye proud Christians, wretched weary ones,
Who in the vision of the mind infirm,
Confidence have in your backsliding steps,
Do ye not comprehend that we are worms
Born to bring forth the angelic butterfly
That flieth unto judgment without screen?
Who floats aloft your spirit high in air?
Like are ye unto insects undeveloped
Even as the worm in whom formation fails!
As to sustain a ceiling or a roof
In place of corbel, sometimes a figure
Is seen to join unto its knees its breast
Which makes of the unreal, real anguish
Arise in him who sees it: fashioned thus
Beheld I these, when I had ta'en good heed
True is it, they were more or less bent down
According as they were more or less laden
And he who had most patience on his looks
Weeping did seem to say I can no more."
(Purg. X, 121)

72

Like all great men of undoubted sincerity Dante was intellectually big enough to change his mind when a new view presented itself in condemnation of an earlier judgment. So his "Vernacular Composition" retracts a statement he had made in the New Life where he had held that as amatory poems were addressed to ladies ignorant of Latin, Love should be the only subject the poet ought to present in the vernacular. He learned later and published his new view that there is good precedent for treating in the vulgar tongue not only Love but also Righteousness and War.

Other examples of his honesty of mind are furnished in the Paradise where he expresses through the mouths of his disembodied teachers views opposed to those he had already advanced in his other works. Thus his theory of the spots on the moon, his statement as to the respective rank of the angelic orders, his assumption that Hebrew was the language of Adam and Eve—all yield to a maturer conception in contradiction to his original views. He is, it is true, sometimes blinded by partisanship or lacking in the historical perspective necessary for a true judgment of his contemporaries—but Dante is naturally so sincere a man that he is eager to be just to every one. Perhaps there is no better instance of the exercise of this quality than in his assigning to the heaven of Jupiter, Constantine, to whose supposed donation of vast territories, then regarded as genuine, Dante ascribes the corruption of the Church.

73

Many readers, whose acquaintance with our poet does not extend beyond the Inferno, see in him only the incarnation of savagery and scorn. They fail to pay tribute to the wonderful power of his friendship or to recognize that his sufferings of adversity and injustice gave birth to deep passion. To them he seems only to place his few friends in Heaven and in Hell to roast all his enemies. It must be at once confessed that there are instances in the Divina Commedia which, taken by themselves, would lead one to so superficial an estimate of the man. In Canto VIII of the Inferno Dante with his guide, Virgil, enters a bark on the Styx and sails across the broad marsh. During the passage a spirit all covered with mud addresses Dante, who recognizes him as Filippo Argenti, a Florentine notorious for his arrogance and brutal violence. "Master," says Dante to Virgil, "I should be glad to see him dipped in this swill ere we quit the lake." And he to me, 'Before the shore comes to thy view thou shalt be satisfied.' A little while after this I saw the muddy people make such a rending of him that even now I praise and thank God for it. Such gloating over suffering surely seems to say to you: Here we have a man of a cruel vindictive nature.

74

Again, in the ice of Caina, the region where traitors are immersed up to their heads, Dante hits

his foot violently against the face of Bocca degli Abati who betrayed the Florentines at the crucial battle of Montaperti. "Weeping it cried out to me: 'Why tramplest thou on me? If thou comest not to increase the vengeance for Montaperti, why dost thou molest me?' I said: 'What art thou who thus reproachest others?' 'Nay who art thou' he answered 'that through the Antenora goest, smiting the cheeks of others, so that if thou wert alive, it were too much.' 'I am alive' was my reply 'and if thou seekest fame, it may be precious to thee, that I put thy name among the other notes.' And he to me. 'The contrary is what I long for, take thyself away!' Then I seized him by the afterscalp and said: 'It will be necessary that thou name thyself or that not a hair remain upon thee here.' Whence he to me: 'Even if thou unhair me I will not tell thee who I am.' I already had his hair coiled on my hand and had plucked off more than one tuft of it, he barking and keeping down his eyes, when another cried, 'What ails thee Bocca?' Having thus learned the sinner's name, the poet releases him, saying: 'accursed traitor I do not want thee to speak, for to thy shame I will bear true tidings'" (Inf., XXXII, 97.) Some may say that it is to Dante's shame that he shows himself so devoid of pity.

75

Another example would seem to confirm this startling view of Dante's character. At the bottom of Hell, eager to learn the identity of a reprobate, a certain Friar Albergo, the poet promises him in return for the desired information to remove the ice from his eyes so that he may have "the poor consolation of grief unchecked."

"Remove the hard veils from my face that I may vent the grief which stuffs my heart, a little ere the weeping freeze again! Wherefore I said to him. 'If thou wouldst have me aid thee, tell me who thou art, and if I do not extricate thee, may I have to go to the bottom of the ice.'" The poet of course knows that he must go thither to continue his journey to Purgatory, but the reprobate soul is unaware of such a course, and believes that the visitor has fortified his promise with a true oath. Both his name and the damning story of his life are soon told by the poor wretch, who then asks Dante for the fulfillment of the promise—the removal of the ice so that sight may be restored even for a minute. "'Open my eyes' he said—but I opened them not, to be rude to him was courtesy" (Inf., XXXIII, 148.) Does not Dante by his own words show himself deep-dyed in hatred and cruelty?

76

"The case against him" says Dinsmore, "is not so bad as the first reading would indicate. Part of the explanation of his apparent cruelty undoubtedly lies in the fact that the poet would teach us that character is influenced by environment. In the circle of wrath, he is wrathful, in the pit of traitors he is false. Then we are to recall that Dante undoubtedly laid to heart Virgil's reproof, when he wept at the sad punishment of the soothsayers: 'Who is more wicked than he who feels compassion at the Divine Judgment.' Passionate love of God, Dante holds, implies passionate hatred of God's enemies. That is a thought expressed by the Psalmist. 'Lord, have I not hated them that hate thee and pined away because of thy enemies? I have hated them with a perfect hatred and they are become enemies to me' (CXXXVIII, 21). So it may be said that Dante has the spirit of the psalmist and seeks to love, as God loves, and to hate as God hates."

Whether that explanation satisfy my readers or not, there is another side to Dante's character that is most attractive. "Dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn," he was a paradox,—gentle and tender. Failure to see this phase of Dante's nature led Frederick Schlegel to declare that Dante's "chief defect is the want of gentle feelings"—a statement that called forth this exclamation from Lord Byron: "Of gentle feelings. And Francesca of Rimini and the father's feelings in Ugolino and Beatrice and the Pia! Why there is a gentleness in Dante above all gentleness when he is tender!"

77

Let us see some examples of this tender quality in our poet. Only one endowed with gentleness and beauty of soul, could have conceived a Purgatory "not hot with sulphurous flames" remarks Dinsmore, "but healing the wounded spirit with the light of shimmering sea, the glories of morning, the perfume of flowers, the touch of angels, the living forms of art and the sweet strains of music."

Only a man of warm-heartedness and delicate susceptibility at the sight of a row of souls, temporarily blinded, would have been touched to such an extent that he would be filled with anxiety lest in looking upon them and silently passing them by who could not return his gaze, he would show them some discourtesy.

"It were a wrong, methought, to pass and look
On others, yet myself, the while unseen,
To my sage counsel therefore did I turn."
(Purg. XIII, 73)

78

Gentleness also reveals itself in lovely lines wherein the poet speaks of the relations of parent and child. He tells us, for instance, how

"An infant seeks his mother's breast
When fear and anguish vex his troubled heart."
(Purg. XXX.)

He recalls how he himself with child-like sorrow stood confessing his sins:

"As little children, dumb with shame's keen smart,
Will listening stand with eyes upon the ground
Owning their faults with penitential heart
So then stood I."

When overcome by the splendor of the heaven Saturn it is as a child he turns to Beatrice for assurance:

"Oppressed with stupor, I unto my guide
Turned like a little child who always runs
For refuge there where he confideth most,
And she, even as a mother who straightway
Gives comfort to her pale and breathless boy
With voice whose wont is to reassure him,
Said to me: 'Knowest thou not thou art in heaven?'"
(Par. XXII, 1)

79

Again, it is the gentle heart of a fond father who speaks in the following lines:

"Awaking late, no little innocent
So sudden plunges towards its mother's breast
With face intent upon its nourishment
As I did bend."
(Par. XXX, 85, Grandgent's trans.)

Another figure of beautiful imagery makes us appreciate Dante's understanding of infantile emotion. He is eager to tell us how bright souls flame upward towards the Virgin Mother and here is the simile:

"And as a babe which stretches either arm
To reach its mother, after it is fed
Showing a heart with sweet affection warm,
Thus every flaming brightness reared its head
And higher, higher straining, by its act
The love it bore to Mary plainly said."
(Par. XXIII, 121 Grandgent's trans.)

Perhaps the most appealing example of Dante's kindly love for children springs from the fact that instead of following the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas, who holds that in heaven the risen bodies of baby children will appear in the aspect of the prime of life, our poet discloses them with the charm of babyhood carolling, as it were, the nursery songs of Heaven. Of those blessed infants he speaks:

80

"Their youth, those little faces plainly tell,
Their childish treble voices tell it, too,
If thou but use thine eyes and listen well."
(Par. XXXII, 46. Grandgent's trans.)

Seeing so many examples of Dante's love for motherhood and children, one naturally wonders why he makes no mention of his own wife and children. But we have only to remember that a nice sense of delicacy may have restrained him from speaking of the sacredness of his family life. In this matter he exhibited the wisdom of the gentleman-Saint, Francis de Sales, who used to say, "Without necessity never speak of yourself well or ill." It was indeed a principle of propriety with our poet that talking about one's self in public is to be avoided as unbecoming unless there is need of self vindication or edification of others. Only once in the Divine Comedy does he mention his own name and at once he apologizes for the intrusion. It is true that the poem is autobiographical but it is that in so far as it concerns matters of universal interest from which the poet may draw the moral that what God has done for him He will do for all men if they will but let Him. That being so it was not necessary for him to exploit his family affairs.

81

Out of the kindly heart of Dante sprang gratitude, one of the strongest virtues of his being. He never wearies in pouring forth thanks to his Maker for the gift of creation and His fatherly care of all beings in the universe. He is filled with unbounded gratitude to the Saviour for having become man and for having suffered and died for our salvation instead of taking an easier way of satisfying divine justice. In his works he mentions the name or the offices of the Holy Ghost eight times. To the Blessed Virgin, the saints and especially to Beatrice for their virtuous example and loving protection he is heartily grateful. His thankful affection is extended to those who showed him kindness particularly during the years of his homeless poverty. To them he offers the only thing he has to give—an undying tribute of praise. Tenderly he makes known his obligations to all those who taught him, both the teachers of his own day and the masters of past ages. But it is to Virgil, his ideal author, the guide whom he has chosen for his journey through Hell and Purgatory, that he offers his most touching tribute of gratitude. The occasion arises when he discovers his beloved Beatrice in the Garden of Eden and turns to Virgil to tell him of his overwhelming joy. But behold! his guide has vanished, his mission fulfilled. And all the joys of the earthly Paradise, originally forfeited by the sin of Eve, cannot compensate the disciple for the loss of his great master. In loneliness he weeps, staining again his face that had been washed clean with dew by Virgil when they emerged from Hell. Is there not genuine pathos in these lines?

82

"Virgil was gone! and we were all bereft!
Virgil my sweetest sire! Virgil who led
My soul to safety, when no hope was left.
Not all our ancient mother forfeited,

All Eden, could prevent my dew cleansed cheek
From changing whiteness to a tearful red."
(Purg. XXX, 45, Grandgent's trans.)

One quality is still necessary to complete the picture which our poet gives of himself. So far we see him as a man of strong faith, of abiding intensity—a man having supreme confidence in himself with resulting pride of life, a man big with splendid sincerity and dowered with deep passion, yet manifesting a gentle, gracious and grateful spirit. So composed, he is a combination of virtues that may inspire and traits that may attract many readers. But this is not the finished picture of the strangely fascinating man who has for six hundred years exercised an irresistible sway over hearts and minds. What feature is lacking? The one which has made him master over willing subjects who love and admire him whether they live in a monarchy or republic, a hovel or a palace, whether they are of his faith or alien to it. Because the world ever loves a lover, and because Dante is *The Lover par excellence* whose love-story is one "to which heaven and earth have put their hand," he stands forth with a hold on humanity that is both enduring and supreme.

83

Love as a passion and a principle of action never left him to his dying day, from the time when he, a boy of nine years of age, became attracted by the sweet little girl Beatrice. "She appeared to me" he says, "clothed in a most noble color, a modest and becoming crimson, and she was girt and adorned in such wise as befitted her very youthful age." If we add to those few lines the brief statements made later in the *New Life* that her hair was light and her complexion a pearl-pink and that when he saw her as a maiden she was dressed in white, we have the only description that Dante ever gave of her personal appearance. It was love at sight. "I truly say that at that instant the spirit of life which dwells in the most secret chamber of the heart, said these words: 'Behold a god stronger than I, who coming shall rule over me.' From that time forward Love lorded it over my soul which had been so speedily wedded to him and he began to exercise over me such control and such lordship, through the power which my imagination gave him, that it behooved me to do completely all his pleasure."

84

If we are disposed to doubt Dante's capability of deep emotion at so tender an age we have only to remember that Cupid's darts pierced at an early age the hearts of others of precocious sensibilities. The love experience of Lord Byron, Victor Hugo, and Canova the sculptor, when they too were only children is a matter of history. This statement we shall the more readily accept if we recall the dictum of Pascal: "The passions are great in proportion as the intelligence is great. In a great soul everything is great." In the light of that principle we must say that if Dante's love attachment in early life runs counter to the experience of mankind, he is, even as a boy, exceptional in the power of imagination and peculiarly sensitive to heart impressions.

His experience as a nine year old boy loving with a depth of increasing emotion a girl with whom there probably had never been any communication except a mere greeting, a love reverential, persisting, even after her marriage to another, continuing through the married life of the poet himself, a love, the story of which is celebrated in matchless verse,—all that is so unique a thing that critics have been led to deny the very existence of Beatrice or to see in the story an allegory which may be interpreted in various ways.

85

Some critics see in Beatrice only the ideal of womanhood; others make her an allegory of conflicting things. Francesco Perez holds that Beatrice is only the figure of Active Intelligence, while Dante Gabriel Rossetti advances the fantastic theory that she is the symbol of the Roman Empire, and love—the anagram of Roma—on Dante's part is only devotion to the imperial cause. According to Scartazzini, Beatrice is the symbol of the Papacy. Gietmann denies the historicity of Beatrice and declares that she typifies the Church. The argument for this theory expressed by a sympathetic reviewer of Gietmann's book, "Beatrice, Geist und Kern der Danteschen Dichtung," follows: "Beatrice is the soul and center of the poet's works, his inspiring genius, the ideal which moulds his life and character. If we consider her as a mere historical personage we must look upon those works as silly and meaningless romances, and on the poet himself as a drivelling day-dreamer."

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"But if we are able to assign to Dante's beloved an appropriate and consistent allegorical character, in keeping with the views of the poet's time, and with the quality of the varied material which goes to build up his poetic structures, his creations will appear not only intelligible and natural, but unfold a treasure of thought and beauty nowhere else to be found, while the poet himself will be shown to be not only one of the greatest masters of thought and imagination, but one of the noblest and loftiest minds to be met with in the history of letters" (John Conway, *Am. Cath. Quar. Review*, April, 1892).

The editor of the *English Quarterly Review* (July, 1896, p. 41) while not denying the real existence of Beatrice argues that she represents Faith, and affirms that the story of Dante's love for her, a love wavering at times, represents the conflict of Faith and Science. You will be interested in seeing, as a curiosity of literature, how that author attempts the translation into allegory of Dante's account of his first meeting with Beatrice.

This is the translation—Dante speaking in the first person says: "At the close of my ninth year I experienced strong impressions of religion. This was the time of my Confirmation and my First Communion. I was filled with reverence for the wondrous truths instilled into my mind by those whom I loved best: and my whole being glowed with the roseate glow of a first love. My feelings were rapturous yet constant; and from that time I date the beginning of a New Life. From that time forward I was so completely under the influence of this divine principle that my soul was, as it were, espoused to heavenly love, and it was in the precepts and ordinances of the Church that

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this passion found its proper satisfaction. Often and often did it lead me to the congregation of the faithful, where I had meetings with my youthful angel and these were so gratifying that all through my boyhood I would frequently go in search of a repetition of those pleasures and I perceived her so noble and admirable in all her bearings, that of her might assuredly be said that saying of Homer: 'She seemed no daughter of mortal man but of God.'"

We need not be surprised that there is such divergence of opinion among critics as to the interpretation of Dante. He himself in *The Banquet* (bk. II, ch. 15), written some years after his *New Life*, tells us that there is a hidden meaning back of the literal interpretation of his words. That is especially true of the *Divine Comedy*, as he writes to Can Grande in explanation of the purpose of the poem. In the *Paradiso* he bids this lacking in power of penetration to pierce the symbolism, to accompany him no longer on his journey through the invisible world.

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"O ye who in some pretty little boat
Eager to listen, have been following
Behind my ship, that singing sails along,
Turn back to look again upon your shores,
Do not put out to sea, lest, peradventure,
In losing me, you might yourselves be lost."
(Par. bk. II, I.)

With obscurity thus acknowledged, is it any wonder that Dante is subjected to prolonged controversy by historical criticism which has not hesitated to cast doubt upon the authorship of the *Iliad* and the *Synoptic Gospels*? In the face of this obscurity it is the opinion of such well known Dantian scholars as D'Ancona, Charles Eliot Norton, John Addington Symonds, Dean Plumtre, Edmund Gardiner, W.W. Vernon, Paget Toynbe, C.H. Grandgent, Jefferson B. Fletcher, James Russell Lowell—that Beatrice is both a real human being and a symbol.

The direct testimony, not to urge the subtle arguments furnished by internal evidence of Dante's works, as to the reality of Beatrice Portinari as the beloved of our poet is offered first by Boccaccio who was acquainted with Dante's daughter Beatrice, a nun who lived near enough to the poet to get information from the Portinari family. Certainly Boccaccio did not hesitate when chosen in 1373 by the Florentines to lecture on Dante, to make the very positive statement that the boy Dante, "received the image of Beatrice Portinari into his heart with such affection that from that day forward as long as he lived it never departed from him." That statement was doubtless made within the hearing of many relatives and friends of the families concerned, the Alighieri, the Portinari, the Bardi. "If the statement was false," argues Dr. Edward Moore, England's foremost Dantian scholar, "it must have been so glaring and palpable that its assertion could only have covered Boccaccio with ridicule." The second authority for the statement that Beatrice Portinari had a real existence and was the object of Dante's love is furnished by Dante's own son Pietro, who wrote a commentary on the *Divine Comedy* nineteen years after his father's demise—a commentary in which he declares "because mention is here first made of Beatrice of whom so much has been said, especially in the third book of the *Paradiso*, it is to be premised that there really was a lady Beatrice by name, greatly distinguished for her beauty and virtues who, in the time of the author, lived in the city of Florence and who was of the house of certain Florentine citizens called the Portinari, of whom the author Dante was a suitor. During the life of the said lady, he was her lover and he wrote many ballads to her honor. After her death in order that he might make her name famous, he, in this his poem, frequently introduced her under the allegory and style of theology."

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The third witness quoted by W.W. Vernon, is Benvenuto da Imola who attended the lectures of Boccaccio and succeeded him as incumbent of the chair of Dantian literature, established by the government of Florence. This Florentine professor whose "commentary on Dante was written only fifty years after the death of the poet, expressly states that this Beatrice (he does not mention her family name) was really and truly a Florentine of great beauty and most honorable reputation. When she was eight years old she so entered into Dante's heart that she never went out from it and he loved her passionately for sixteen years, at which time she died. His love increased with his years: he would follow her where-ever she went and always thought that in her eyes he could behold the summit of human happiness. Dante in his works, at one time, takes Beatrice as a real personage and at another in a mysterious sense as Sacred Theology" (*Readings on Inf.*, I, 61.)

The question now arises: Did Beatrice know of Dante's love and did she reciprocate his passion? Many critics answer in the negative, believing that an affirmative view must premise a guilty love since Beatrice was married to Simone de Bardi and Dante to Gemma Donati. But an opposite view holds that such a deduction overlooks the unique fact that the love of Dante and Beatrice was purely spiritual and mystical. Doctor Zahm says that Dante's passion was "a species of homage to the beloved which was common during the age of the troubadours but which has long since disappeared—a chivalrous devotion to a woman, neither wife nor mistress, by means of which the spirit of man, were he knight or poet, was rendered capable of self-devotion, and of noble deeds and of rising to a higher ideal of life" (*Great Inspirers*, p. 245.)

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In any event we know that it was a most noble, exalting sentiment and if we accept the statement of Bishop de Serravalle, the love was mutual and lasting. This ecclesiastic while attending the council of Florence in 1414 was asked by the Bishops of Bath and Salisbury, England, to make a Latin translation of the *Divine Comedy*. In the preamble to his translation he not only declares that Dante historically and literally loved Beatrice ("*Dantes delexit hanc*

puellam historice et literaliter") but he affirms that the love was reciprocal and that it lasted during the lifetime of Beatrice, ("*Philocaptus fuit de ipsa et ipsa de ipso, qui se invicem dilexerunt quousque vixit ipsa puella*").

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Only by holding such a view can we really appreciate the significance and beauty of that episode in *Purgatorio* depicting the first meeting of the lovers in the invisible world after ten years' separation—a meeting said to be "one of the most touching and beautiful episodes in all literature."

In the Terrestrial Paradise a voice is heard after the sudden departure of Virgil. "Dante" it says "though Virgil leave thee, weep not, weep not yet, for thou must weep for a greater wound. I beheld that Lady who had erst appeared to me under a cloud of flowers cast by angel's hands: and she was gazing at me across the stream ... 'Look at us well. We are, indeed Beatrice. Hast thou then condescended to come to the mountain?' (the mountain of discipline)—Shame weighed down my brow. The ice that had collected about my heart, turned to breath and water and with agony issued from my breast through lips and eyes." Beatrice then proceeds to tell the angels of her love for the poet and of his faithlessness to her. "For some time I sustained him with the sight of my face. Showing to him my youthful eyes I led him toward the right quarter. As soon as I reached the threshold of the second age of man and passed from mortal to eternal life he took himself from me and gave himself to another."

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Beatrice now turns to Dante and rebukes him: "In order the more to shame thee from thine error and to make thee stronger, never did nature and art present to thee a charm equal to that fair form now scattered in earth with which I was enclosed. And if this greatest of charms so forsook thee at my death, what mortal thing should thereafter have led thee to desire it? Verily at the first hour of disappointment over elusive things, thou shouldst have flown up after me who was no longer of them. Thou shouldst not have allowed thy wings to be weighed down to get more wounds, either by a little maid or by any other so short lived vanity." The effect of her rebuke is the overwhelming of his heart with shame and contrition. "So much remorse gnawed at my heart that I fell vanquished and what I then became she knoweth who gave me the cause" (*Purg.* XXXI, 49). He arose forgiven, the memory of his sin removed by the waters of Lethe. Then drinking of the waters of Eunoe he was made fit to ascend to Heaven.

To understand the allusion to his defection and to see the progressive development of his love of Beatrice as a woman, then as a living ideal and finally as an animated symbol—the various transfigurations in which Beatrice appears to him, we must go back to his *New Life*—the book of which Charles Eliot Norton says—"so long as there are lovers in the world and so long as lovers are poets this first and tenderest love-story of modern literature will be read with appreciation and responsive sympathy."

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It is hardly to be supposed that the nine year old lover noted with minute care in his diary, his first meeting of Beatrice Portinari but as he looked back on the event years later he saw that the vision had been the the greatest crisis in his mental, moral and spiritual history. The story begins in the first page of the *New Life*. A real living child familiarly called Bice, the diminutive for Beatrice, enamoured Dante with a real, genuine love. "After that meeting," says the poet, "I in my boyhood often went seeking her and saw her of such noble and praiseworthy deportment that truly of her might be said the word of the poet Homer: 'She seems not the daughter of mortal man but of God.'" Nine years passed and the child, now a maiden, "blooming in her beauty's spring, saluted me with such virtue that it seemed to me that I saw all the bounds of bliss. Since it was the first time her words came to my ears I took in such sweetness that, as it were intoxicated, I turned away from the folk and betaking myself to the solitude of my own chamber I sat myself down to think of this most courteous lady."

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A little later the wrapt expression of his loving eyes as he looks at Beatrice attracts the attention of others and to misdirect them, he feigns love for the lady he calls the screen of truth and writes verses in her honor. On the part of Beatrice there is misunderstanding of the amatory verses he writes at this period and she withholds her greeting. Then, more than ever, he realizes what that salutation meant to him. Deprived of it now, he dwells upon the sweet memory of the salutation: "In the hope of her marvelous salutation there no longer remained to me an enemy, nay, a flame of charity possessed me which made me pardon everyone who had done me wrong." Under the influence of her salutation, Dante tells us that he devised this sonnet:

"So gentle and so gracious doth appear
My lady when she giveth her salute
That every tongue becometh, trembling, mute:
Nor do the eyes to look upon her dare
Although she hears her praises, she doth go
Benignly vested with humility:
And like a thing come down, she seems to be,
From heaven to earth, a miracle to show.
So pleaseth she whoever cometh nigh.
She gives the heart a sweetness through the eyes,
Which none can understand who doth not prove
And from her countenance there seems to move
A spirit, sweet, and in Love's very guise,
Who to the soul, in going sayeth: 'Sigh.'
(Norton's translation.)

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Because she now denies to him the bliss of salutation he says: "I went into a solitary place to bathe the earth with most bitter tears." But this misunderstanding is not his only torment. Almost from his second meeting he fears that his beloved will soon die. His prophetic vision becomes an agonising reality when in 1290 in her twenty-fourth year, the eyes that radiated bliss are closed in death.

So stunned was he by the blow that his life was despaired of. When he recovered it seemed to him that Florence had lost her gaiety and desolate is mourning the loss of his beloved one. Pilgrims passing on their way to Galicia do not appear to share the general grief. To arouse their sympathy in the loss which the city has sustained the heart-broken poet lover devises a sonnet "in which I set forth that which I had said to myself.

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Pilgrims:
If through your will to hear, awhile ye stay,
Truly my heart with sighs declare to me
That ye shall afterwards depart in tears.
Alas her Beatrice now lost hath she.
And all the words that one of her way may say
Have virtue to make weep whoever hears."
(Norton's translation.)

In his great affliction his grieving heart is sustained by his belief in immortality. His vision penetrates the skies and he sees his 'lady of virtue' in glory in the regions of the eternal.

"The gentle lady to my mind had come
Who, for the sake of her exceeding youth,
Had by the Lord most High been ta'en from earth
To that calm heaven where Mary hath her home."

In heaven indeed more than upon earth she enamours the poet. There divested of her mortal veil, to his eyes she

"grew perfectly and spiritually fair,"

leading him to fit himself to put on immortality. The passion of his boyhood has now become the ennobling ideal of his life. Sustaining and stimulating him, saving him from himself, ever leading him upward and onward, his angelicized lady is an abiding presence with him whether he is deep in the contemplation of the study of philosophy and the learning of the ancients, or engaged in the activity of military or political life, or as homeless wayfarer in exile, making his way from place to place. When he falls from grace it is Beatrice who disturbs his peace of mind by "a battle of thoughts." It is the "strong image" of Beatrice who comes to him as he had seen her as a child, raises him from moral obliquity, fills him with the very essence of the spiritual. Then he has a wonderful vision—"a vision in which I saw things which made me resolve to speak no more of this blessed one (Beatrice) until I could more worthily treat of her. And to attain to this I study to the utmost of my power as she truly knows: So that if it shall please Him through whom all things live that my life be prolonged for some years, I hope to say of her what was never said of any woman."

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That promise, involving years of intense study and increasing devotion to his beloved, Dante kept. The Divine Comedy is his matchless monument to her who is the protagonist and muse of his poem and the love of his heart. "Not only has the poet made her" says Norton, "the loveliest and most womanly woman of the Middle Ages at once absolutely real and truly ideal," but he has done what no poet had ever before conceived, thereby achieving something unique in the whole range of literature—he has "imparadised" among the saints and angels his lovely wonder, Beatrice, "that so she spreads even there a light of love which makes the angels glad and even to their subtle minds can bring a certain awe of profound marvelling." He has given to her such a glorious exaltation that after Rachel and Eve she of all women is enthroned in the glowing Rose of Heaven next to the Virgin Mother, "our tainted nature's solitary boast," and so enthroned, Beatrice is at once his beloved and the symbol of revelation, the heavenly light that discloses to mankind both the true end of our being and the realities of Eternity.

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Now with tremulous delight in his heart, admiration on his lips, ecstasy in his soul, he is able to render her perhaps the very purest tribute of praise and gratitude that ever came out of a human soul:

"O Lady, thou in whom my hope is strong
And who, for my salvation, didst endure
In Hell to leave the imprint of thy feet,
Of whatsoever things I have beheld,
As coming from thy power and from thy goodness
I recognize the power and the grace.
Thou from a slave hast brought me unto freedom,
By all those ways, by all the expedients,
Whereby thou hast the power of doing it.
Preserve towards me thy magnificence
So that this soul of mine, which thou hast healed
Pleasing to thee be loosened from the body."

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Norton says: "It is needful to know Dante as a man in order fully to appreciate him as poet."

What manner of man then was he? Redeemed by love, he was, to quote John Addington Symonds, "the greatest, truest, sincerest man of modern Europe."

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DANTE'S INFERNO

At no period of modern times do we find that literature showed an interest more keen in the Hereafter than at the present day. Religion has always used both pen and voice to direct men's thoughts towards eternity, but now it is literature that goes for subject-matter to religion. This change of attitude is due, no doubt, to the fact that several factors in present-day life—factors that literature cannot ignore, have turned popular thought to religion. The World-war has disciplined the character of men by the unspeakable experiences of contact with shot, shell and shrapnel and the result has been that countless numbers have turned to religion for strength and consolation. Countless thousands whose dear ones made the supreme sacrifice for the ideals of patriotism, also find in religion their only solace.

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Those who have not this refuge turn to spiritualism and psychical research in a futile effort to find a satisfactory solution of the problem of the Hereafter. Again and again we see the unrest of the ever-questioning soul depicted in the drama and the literature of the day as it seeks enlightenment on the potentiality of the future life. The stage presents plays based on spiritualistic manifestations or upon supernatural healing or miraculous intervention. Many recent novels have either psychical phenomena for their central interest or plots evolved out of the miraculous in religion. As exponents of psychical research, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, W.T. Stead and Sir Oliver Lodge make an appeal to readers to accept as scientific truths, the psychical manifestations of the unseen world. A typical answer is given to that appeal by a distinguished writer, Doctor Inge, Dean of St. Paul's, London, who declares: "If this kind of after-life were true, this portrayed in the pitiable revival of necromancy in which many desolate hearts have sought spurious satisfaction, it would, indeed, be a melancholy postponement or negation of all we hope and believe about our dead."

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Prescinding from any attempt to discuss the occult phenomena evoked, observed and studied in our day or to treat of the matters involved in the supernatural in the books of the day, one may state as a fact that the whole tendency of present day literature is to show a yearning for light on a subject of fundamental importance to human nature. Far back in the history of the race Job gave voice to the spiritual problems that are today engaging the attention of the world. Some fifteen hundred years ago, St. Augustine proposed to himself the question which so generally concerns the twentieth century: "On what matter of all those things of which thou art ignorant, hast thou the greatest desire for enlightenment?" The great Bishop of Hippo becomes the spokesman of humanity when he answers his own question by proposing another: "Am I immortal or not?" (Soliloquia 2d).

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In the realms of literature no work of man has answered that question with greater vividness of imagery, intensity of concentration, beauty of description—all based in a large measure on the teachings of Christianity—than has Dante in his Divine Comedy. Devised as a love offering to the memory of his beloved Beatrice who in the work is symbolized as Heavenly Light on the things hidden from man, the poem leads the reader through the dark abyss of Hell, the patient abode of Purgatory, the glorious realm of Heaven as if the poet had seen Eternity in reality instead of in imagination. Not only the state and the conditions of the soul after death does he visualize with the precision of Euclid, but as a philosopher and a theologian he proposes for our instruction in the course of the journey many questions of dogmatic and speculative thought affecting the Hereafter. He believes himself called to be not simply a poet to entertain his readers, but a prophet and a preacher with burning fire to deliver a message for man's salvation. So he asks the help of Heaven:

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"O Supreme Light that so high upliftest Thyself from mortal conceptions, re-lend a little to my mind of what Thou didst appear and make my tongue so powerful that it may be able to leave one single spark of Thy glory, for the future people: for by returning to my memory and by sounding a little in these verses, more of Thy victory shall be conceived" (Par. XXXIII, 67).

Comedy is the title which Dante gives to his trilogy and posterity has added the prefix adjective divine. The term comedy however is not used in the modern sense which suggests to us a light laughable drama written in a familiar style. "Comedy" Dante himself explains in his dedication of the poem, "is a certain kind of poetical narrative which differs from all others. It differs from tragedy in its subject matter in this way, that tragedy in the beginning is admirable and quiet, in its ending or catastrophe foul and horrible ... Comedy on the other hand, begins with adverse conditions, but its theme has a happy termination. Likewise they differ in their style of language, for tragedy is lofty and sublime, comedy lowly and humble.

"From this it is evident why the present work is called a comedy, for if we consider the theme in its beginning it is horrible and foul because it is Hell; in its ending fortunate, desirable and joyful because it is Paradise: and if we consider the style of language the style is lowly and humble because it is the vulgar tongue in which even housewives hold converse."

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The theme of the poem Dante himself explains: "The subject of the work literally taken is the state of souls after death; this is the pivotal idea of the poem throughout its entire course. In the allegorical sense the poet treats of the hell of this world through which we are journeying as pilgrims, with the power of meriting and demeriting, and the subject is man, in as much as by his merits and demerits he is subject to divine Justice, remunerative or retributive" (Epis. dedicat. ad Can Grande).

One of the earliest commentators amplifies the poet's statement. Benvenuto da Imola writes: "The matter or subject of this book is the state of the human soul both as connected with the human body and as separated from it. As the state of the whole is threefold, so does the author divide his work into three parts. A soul may be in sin; such a one even while it lives with the body, is morally speaking dead, and hence it is in moral Hell; when separated from the body, if it died incurably obstinate, it is in the actual Hell. Again a soul may be receding from vice: such a one while still in the body is in the moral Purgatory, or in the act of penance in which it purges away its sin; if separated, it is in the actual Purgatory. Yet even while living in the body, a soul is already in a manner in Paradise, for it exists in as great felicity as is possible in this life of misery: separated from the body, it is in the heavenly Paradise where there is true and perfect happiness, where it enjoys the vision of God." (Ozanam, Dante, p. 129.)

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This testimony as to the subject matter of the Divine Comedy is brought forth to offset the statements not infrequently made by expositors who deny or ignore the supernatural that Dante's full thought can be realized even if the reader rejects the poet's spiritual teaching, especially his doctrine of the existence of a real Heaven and a real Hell. It is true that Dante is "such a many-sided genius that he has a message for almost every person." It is likewise true that an allegorical interpretation may be adopted with no belief in the Hereafter and it may open up many fruitful lessons for the reader. That being granted, one may still ask whether one can ignore Dante's doctrine of future rewards and punishment and so get full satisfaction from treating the poet's conception of the Hereafter as a mere allegory.

The allegory presupposes that sin inevitably brings its own penalty. But in this life virtue does not always bear its own reward nor is evil always followed by retribution. Dante as the prophet and the preacher of Christianity would have us understand, as Benvenuto da Imola points out, that if the moral law is not vindicated in this life it will be in the Hereafter, for our acts make our eternity. So the poet holds that while this life according as it shows the soul in sin, in repentance or in virtue may be considered allegorically Hell, Purgatory or Heaven, before the Last Judgment a real Hell, a real Purgatory, a real Heaven is the abode of disembodied spirits according to their demerits or merits and after the Last Judgment, Purgatory no longer existing, souls will be in eternal suffering in Hell or in unending joy in Heaven.

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It is not to be expected that any reader will believe that Dante's Hell is a photograph of reality. It is a Hell largely fashioned by poetic visions and political theories, peopled in a great measure by those who stand in opposition to the poet's theory of government. It is not, as is sometimes asserted, a place to which the poet consigns his personal enemies. As Dinsmore says: "Dante had too much greatness in his soul and too much pride (it may be) to make revenge a personal matter: he had nothing but contempt for his own enemies and never except in the case of Boniface VIII ... did he place a single one of them in the Inferno, not even his judge Cante Gabriella."

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Though largely colored by his political theories Dante's Hell is also a theological conception based on the teaching of the Catholic Church that Hell exists as a place or state of punishment for the rebel angels and for man dying impenitent, that is, for man in whom sin has become so humanized that death finds him not simply in the act or habit of sin but so transformed that in the striking words of Bossuet, "he is man made sin." Dante fully accepted that doctrine which had been the constant tradition and faith of the Church and had been reaffirmed in the second ecumenical Council of Lyons held when Dante was a boy, nine years of age.

It is not unlikely with his precocity for knowledge and sentiment at that age that he was deeply impressed with the history of that council especially as its legislation also dealt with the Crusades, the union of Churches, the reform of the Church, the appointment of a king of the Romans and an emperor—matters of vital importance to him later. He must have recalled that Council also with special interest, for two of his ideal personages, Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure met their death, one on his way to the Council, the other while actually attending its sessions.

In any event Dante firmly believed the doctrine of the Hereafter "that they that have done good shall go into life everlasting and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire." He held that the punishment of the damned is two-fold. The greater punishment, called the pain of loss, consists in the loss of the Beatific Vision, a suffering so great that the genius of St. Augustine can hardly translate it in human language. "To be separated from God," he says, "is a torment as great as the very greatness of God." The other pain of the reprobate consists in the torment of fire so frequently mentioned in Holy Writ. "According to the greater number of theologians the term fire denotes a material and so a real fire ... (but) there have never been wanting theologians who interpret the scriptural term fire metaphorically as denoting an incorporeal fire and thus far the Church has not censured their opinion" (Cath. Encyclo., VIII, 211.)

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While the pain of loss and the pain of sense constitute the very essence of the punishment of Hell, theologians teach that there are other sufferings called accidental. The reprobate never experience v.g. the least real pleasure nor are they ever free from the hideous presence of one

another. After the Last Judgment the lost souls will also be tormented by union with their bodies, a union bringing about a fresh increase of punishment. On this subject, for our information Dante addresses Virgil his guide through Hell: "Master, will these torments after the great sentence increase or diminish?" Virgil explains that they will become worse because when the soul is united again to the body there will be perfection of being and the resulting sensitiveness will be the more intense.

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"Return unto thy science," answers Virgil, "which wills that as a thing more perfect is the more it feels of pleasure and of pain." (Inf., VI, 40.)

Dante also holds that only by way of exception is there any escape from Hell once a soul is condemned. Following a legend commonly believed in the Middle Ages that in answer to the prayers of Pope Gregory the Great, the soul of the Emperor Trajan was delivered from Hell, Dante assumes that God who could not save Trajan against his will, allowed his soul to "come back to its bones" and while thus united to use its will for salvation. So regenerated Trajan is placed by Dante, in the Heaven of Jupiter (Par. XX 40, 7). Referring to this incident the Catholic Encyclopedia says: "In itself it is no rejection of Catholic dogma to suppose that God might at times by way of exception, liberate a soul from Hell. Thus some argued from a false interpretation of I Peter III, 19 seq. that Christ freed several damned souls on the occasion of His descent into Hell. Others were led by untrustworthy stories into the belief that the prayers of Gregory the Great rescued the Emperor Trajan from Hell but now theologians are unanimous in teaching that such exceptions never take place and never have taken place" (VIII, 209.)

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As to the location of Hell it is the poet Dante and not Dante the theologian, as we shall see later, who gives definite place and boundaries to Hell. He knows that on this subject the Church has decided nothing, holding to the statement of St. Augustine: "It is my opinion that the nature of hell-fire and the location of Hell are known to no man unless the Holy Ghost made it known to him by a special revelation."

Dante makes his Hell big enough to hold the majority of mankind. He thinks that the elect will be comparatively few—just numerous enough to fill those places in heaven forfeited by the rebel angels who formed according to his conjecture, about a tenth of the angelical host. That their places in Heaven are already nearly filled leaving little room for future generations Dante makes known in the words of Beatrice:

"Behold our City's circuit, oh how vast
Behold our benches now so full that few
Are they who are henceforth lacking here."
(Par. XXX, 130.)

114

His theory of restrictive salvation, it may be noted, is not in accord with the teaching of the Church which holds that to every man God gives grace sufficient for salvation. That is true even as affecting the heathen and those living in place or in time far removed from the Cross. St. Thomas Aquinas expresses this doctrine of the Church when he writes: "If anyone who is born in a barbaric nation does what lieth in him, God will reveal what is necessary for salvation, either by internal inspiration or by a teacher."

The farcical element is not wanting in the Inferno, a fact proving that our poet, in furnishing the episodes, not superior to his age which demanded especially in the religious plays presented in the public square the sight of the discomfiture of the devil in scenes provoking the audience to laughter. The best example of such farcicality occurs in the eighth circle, fifth bolgia, where officials, traffickers in public offices, or unjust stewards are immersed in boiling pitch. From time to time when the fiends are not alert the reprobate here come to the surface for a breathing or cooling spell, like dolphins on the approach of a storm darting in the air and diving back again or like frogs with their muzzles alone exposed and their bodies covered by the water, resting on the banks of a stream into which they drop at the first approach of danger.

Getting in this way momentary relief from suffering a grafter named Ciampolo, a former retainer of King Thibaut II of Navarre, lingered too long and was deftly hooked by Graffiacane amid the savage exultations of the other fiends, who proceed to maltreat the unfortunate wretch. The hideous confusion of attacks by the demons is stopped long enough for the poet to learn his history, and also what is more interesting to Dante, the names of two Italians, Friar Gomita and Michel Zanche who are likewise suffering in the boiling pitch. Ciampolo, to save himself from further maltreatment and to escape from his captors, now has recourse to stratagem. He promises that if they consent to withdraw out of sight he will whistle a signal that will be recognized only by his hapless comrades; the two Italians and five others will then come to the surface for cool air. The fiends may then have not one, but seven to rend! The crafty plan succeeds. The demons withdraw behind the crags and then Ciampolo plunges deeply into the boiling pitch. Two devils, endeavoring to swoop down upon him now beyond their reach, fall upon each other in brutal fury, while the rest of the troop hurry to the opposite shore to rescue the belimed pair. Here is Dante's description of the farce:

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"As dolphins, when with the arch of the back; they make sign to mariners that they may prepare to save their ship: so now and then, to ease the punishment, some sinner showed his back and hid in less time than it lightens. And as at the edge of the water of a ditch, the frogs stand only with their muzzles out, so that they hide their feet and other bulk: thus stood on every hand the sinners; but as Barbariccia approached, they instantly retired beneath the seething. I saw, and my heart still shudders thereat, one linger so, as it will happen that one frog remains

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while the other spouts away; and Graffiancane, who was nearest to him, hooked his pitchy locks and haled him up, so that to me he seemed an otter.

"I already knew the name of every one, so well I noted them as they were chosen, and when they called each other, listened how. 'O Rubicante, see thou plant thy clutches on him, and flay him!' shouted together all the accursed crew. And I: 'Master, learn if thou canst, who is that piteous wight, fallen into the hands of his adversaries.' My Guide drew close to (his side) and asked him whence he came; and he replied: 'I was born in the kingdom of Navarre. My mother placed me as servant of a lord; for she had borne me to a ribald master of himself and of his substance. Then I was domestic with the good King Thibault; here I set myself to doing barratry, of which I render reckoning in this heat.' And Ciriatto, from whose mouth on either side came forth a tusk as from a hog, made him feel how one of them did rip. Amongst evil cats the mouse had come; but Barbariccia locked him in his arms, and said: 'Stand off whilst I enforke him!' And turning his face to my Master: 'Ask on,' he said, 'if thou wouldst learn more from him, before some other undo him.'

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"The Guide therefore: 'Now say, of the other sinners knowest thou any that is a Latian, beneath the pitch?' And he: 'I parted just now from one who was a neighbour of theirs (on the other side); would I still were covered with him, for I should not fear claw nor hook!' And Libicocco cried: 'Too much have we endured,' and with the hook seized his arm and mangling carried off a part of brawn. Draghignazzo, he too, wished to have a catch at the legs below; whereat their decurion wheeled around with evil aspect. When they were somewhat pacified, my Guide, without delay, asked him that still kept gazing on his wound: 'Who was he, from whom thou sayest that thou madest an ill departure to come ashore?' And he answered: 'It was Friar Gomita, he of Gallura, vessel of every fraud, who had his master's enemies in hand, and did so to them that they all praise him for it: money took he for himself, and dismissed them smoothly, as he says; and in his other offices besides, he was no petty but a sovereign barrator. With him keeps company Don Michel Zanche of Logodoros; and in speaking of Sardinia the tongues of them do not feel weary. Oh me! see that other grinning; I would say more; but fear he is preparing to claw my scurf.' And their great Marshal, turning to Farfarello, who rolled his eyes to strike, said: 'Off with thee, villainous bird!' 'If you wish to see or hear Tuscans or Lombards,' the frightened sinner then resumed, 'I will make them come. But let the (evil claws hold back) a little, that they may not fear their vengeance; and I, sitting in this same place, for one that I am, will make seven come, on whistling, as is our wont to do, when any of us gets out.'

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"O Reader, thou shalt hear new sport! All turned their eyes toward the other side, he first who had been most unripe for doing it. The Navarrese chose well his time; planted his soles upon the ground, and in an instant leapt and from their purpose freed himself. Thereat each was stung (with guilt); but he most who had been the cause of the mistake; he therefore started forth, and shouted: 'Thou'rt caught!' But little it availed (him); for wings could not outspeed the terror; the sinner went under; and he, flying, raised up his breast: not otherwise the duck suddenly dives down, when the falcon approaches, and he returns up angry and defeated.

"Calcabrina, furious at the trick, kept flying after him, desirous that the sinner might escape, to have a quarrel. And, when the barrator had disappeared, he turned his talons on his fellow, and was clutched with him above the ditch. But the other was indeed a sparrowhawk to claw him well; and both dropt down into the middle of the boiling pond. The heat at once unclutched them; but rise they could not, their wings were so beglued. Barbariccia with the rest lamenting, made four of them fly over to the other coast with all their drags; and most rapidly on this side, on that, they descended to the stand; they stretched their hooks towards the limed pair, who were already scalded within the crust; and we left them thus embroiled." (XXII, 19.)

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The grotesque, also, plays a part in the Inferno appearing not only in the demons taken from classical legend and deformed into caricatures, but also in the punishment of crimes, v.g. simony and malfeasance in public office, regarded by our poet as malicious in themselves and grotesque in their perversity.

Readers who regard the grotesque as a repelling element in the Inferno may be surprised to learn that Ruskin considers this feature of Dante's writings an expression of the highest human genius. The great English critic writes:

"I believe that there is no test of greatness in nations, periods, nor men more sure than the development, among them or in them of a noble grotesque, and no test of comparative smallness or limitation, of one kind or another, more sure than the absence of grotesque invention or incapability of understanding it. I think that the central man of all the world, as representing in perfect balance and imaginative, moral and intellectual faculties, all at their highest is Dante; and in him the grotesque reaches at once the most distinct and the most noble development to which it was ever brought in the human mind. Of the grotesqueness of our own Shakespeare I need hardly speak, nor of its intolerableness to his French critics; nor of that of Æschylus and Homer, as opposed to the lower Greek writers; and so I believe it will be found, at all periods, in all minds of the first order."

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Dante's doctrine of punishment presupposes certain primary truths which the Church proclaims today as she did in Dante's day. According to the Florentine's creed, man must answer to God for his moral life because he has free will. He cannot excuse his evil deed on the ground of necessity. Even in the face of planetary influence and of temptation from within, by his evil inclinations, and from without by solicitation of other agents man has still such discernment between good and evil and such power to make choice freely, that moral judgment with him is

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free. "Who hath been tried thereby and made perfect," says Holy Writ, "he shall have glory everlasting. He that could have transgressed, and hath not transgressed and could do evil things, and hath not done them." (Eccli., XXXI, 10.)

Against this doctrine of free will the sociology, the philosophy and the medical science of the present day contend with a theory which minimizes man's accountability for sin if it does not wholly excuse him as the victim of heredity, environment or society. Literature also, as reflected not only in the Greek tragedies but in the writings of authors from Shakespeare to Shaw portray the evil doer as the victim of fate or determinism.

Against all such theories and views Dante appears as the fearless, uncompromising champion of the doctrine of the greatness of man in the exercise of the divine gift of Free Will. His own life, showing how he had won victory over the forces of poverty and persecution, is symbolic of the glorious truth he would teach; viz., that man, endowed with free will and animated with the grace of God, is master of his destiny and cannot be defeated even by principalities and powers. So he tells us, "And free will which if it endure fatigue in the first battles with the heavens, afterwards if it be well nurtured, conquers everything." (Purg., XVI, 76.) He makes Beatrice testify to the supremacy of the will: "The greatest gift which God in His bounty bestowed in creating and that which He prizes most, was the freedom of will with which the creatures that have intelligence—they all and they alone—were endowed." (Cf. Purg., XVIII, 66-73.)

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But such a distinctive endowment may be the the curse of man if he fails to use it rightly. Like Job, Dante insists that life is a warfare. Victory is possible only by the right exercise of the will enlightened by God. Defeat is sure if the will embraces sin. To Dante sin is not a mere vulgarity or the violation of a social convention or "a soft infirmity of the blood." "Very hateful to his fervid heart and sincere mind," says James Russell Lowell, "would have been the modern theory which deals with sin as involuntary error." To Dante sin is the greatest evil of the world—not only because it is the source of all other evils, but because it is at once the denaturing of man—the damned are characterized as "the woeful people who have lost the good of the understanding" (Inf., III, 18), and it is also a defiance of God. Sin, then, is Atheism—a rejection of God, with a conviction that pleasure or happiness can be attained outside of God, independent of God and in opposition to God. Apart from the inspired writers of Holy Writ it is doubtful whether any other writer ever had such an awful sense of sin and such a vivid vision of sin and its consequences as Dante has given to the world in a picture which has burned terror into the thought of man.

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To show us that life is a warfare against sin, Dante gives us several striking pictures of temptation and heavenly deliverance from evil. At the very beginning of the Divine Comedy, we see his ascent to the mountain of the Lord barred by Lust, Pride and Avarice represented by a leopard, a lion, and a wolf. He is victorious over those enemies of his salvation because Reason (Virgil) and Beatrice (Revelation) come to his aid. Temptation is also exhibited in Ante-Purgatorio and that is the more remarkable because both as a theologian and a poet Dante holds that the present life is the end of man's probation and that as a consequence, temptation is not to be encountered in the next life. Why it is put forth in Ante-Purgatorio is explained by the theory that our poet here nods, that he means, not the actual Purgatory of disembodied spirits, but moral Purgatory, *i.e.*, the present life wherein man, striving upward, is attacked by temptation to keep him from the end for which God created him.

Showing temptation in Ante-Purgatorio, the poet gives us a picture of souls protected by two angels against the serpent. Here is the scene:

"Now was the hour that wakens fond desire
In men at sea, and melts their thoughtful heart
Who in the morn have bid sweet friends farewell,
And pilgrim newly on his road with love
Thrills, if he hear the vesper bell from far,
That seems to mourn for the expiring day":
A band of souls approach:
"I saw that gentle band silently next
Look up, as if in expectation held,
Pale and in lowly guise; and, from on high,
I saw, forth issuing descend beneath,
Two angels, with two flame-illuminated swords,
Broken and mutilated of their points.
Green as the tender leaves but newly born,
Their vesture was, the which, by wings as green
Beaten, they drew behind them, fann'd in air.
A little over us one took his stand;
The other lighted on the opposing hill;
So that the troop were in the midst contain'd.
But in their visages the dazzled eye
Was lost, as faculty that by too much
Is overpower'd. 'From Mary's bosom both
Are come,' exclaimed Sordello, 'as a guard
Over the vale, 'gainst him, who hither tends,
The serpent.' Whence, not knowing by which path
He came, I turn'd me round; and closely press'd,
All frozen, to my leader's trusted side."

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"While yet he spoke, Sordello to himself
 Drew him, and cried: 'Lo there our enemy!'
 And with his hand pointed that way to look
 Along the side, where barrier none arose
 Around the little vale, a serpent lay,
 Such haply as gave Eve the bitter food.
 Between the grass and flowers, the evil snake
 Came on, reverting oft his lifted head;
 And, as a beast that smooths its polish'd coat.
 Licking his back. I saw not, nor can tell,
 How those celestial falcons from their seat
 Moved, but in motion each one well described.
 Hearing the air cut by their verdant plumes,
 The serpent fled; and, to their stations, back
 The angels up return'd with equal flight."
 (Purg., VIII.)

A third picture of temptation is furnished by the episode of one of the Sirens who appears first repulsive and then seems to the poet sweet and alluring. Only when Virgil discloses her hideous nature does Dante see how easily he might have fallen a victim to her wiles. He tells us that in his sleep there appeared to him a woman with stammering utterance, squinting eyes, deformed hands. "I gazed at her, and as the sun restores the cold limbs made heavy by night, thus my look loosened her tongue, then straightened her all out in a little while and colored her wan face as love demands. When her speech was thus unbound she began to sing so that I could hardly have turned my attention from her. 'I am,' she sang, 'I am sweet Siren who bewitch sailors by mid-sea, so full am I of charm to hear. By my song I turned Ulysses from his wandering way. And whosoever abides with me seldom departs, so wholly do I satisfy him.' Her lips were not yet closed when a lady, swift and holy, appeared at my side to confound the other. 'O Virgil, Virgil, who is this?' she said proudly; and he advanced with his eyes fixed only on this modest woman." Virgil (Reason called by Conscience) comes to the rescue of the entranced poet and reveals the Siren in all her foul ugliness. At that Dante awakes from his dream more than ever convinced of the evil of sin and its hideousness. (Purg., XIX, 9.)

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Our poet, as we said, is firmly convinced that sin will be punished in Hell. But where is Hell? Popular tradition attributing an infernal connection with volcanic phenomena and moved by those passages in Holy Scripture which describe Hell as a place to which the reprobate descend, locates Hell in the interior of the earth. Dante not only follows this tradition for his Hell, but he does what no other writer before or after him ever did—he constructs a Hell with such rare architectural skill that the awful structure stands forth in startling reality, visualized easily as to form an atmosphere, and with a finish of detail that is amazing. Covered by a crust of earth it is situated under Jerusalem and extends in funnel shape to the very center of the earth.

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How it got this shape is told by the poet. When Lucifer was hurled from Heaven by the justice of God, he kept falling until he reached the center of earth, whence further motion downward was impossible. At the approach of Lucifer the earth is represented as recoiling and so making the cavity of Hell. The earth dislodged by the cataclysm was forced through an opening, a kind of nozzle of the funnel of Hell, to the antipodes and it there emerged, forming a mountain, which became the site of the Garden of Eden and Purgatory. The phenomenon made land in the northern and water in the southern hemisphere. Here is the description:

"Upon this side he fell down out of heaven
 And all the land, that whilom here emerged
 For fear of him made of the sea a veil
 And came to our hemisphere; and peradventure
 To flee from him, what on this side
 Left the place vacant here and back recoiled."
 (Inf., XXXIV, 121.)

The material structure of the Inferno is a series of nine concentric circles—darkness brooding over the whole region,—with ledges, chasms, pits, swamps and rivers. The rivers, though different in name and aspect, appear to be one and the same stream winding its way through the various circles. We see it first as the boundary of Hell proper and it is known as the Acheron. It comes again to view in the fourth circle and is called the Styx. In the seventh circle, second round, it emerges as the red blood stream of Phlegethon. In the very depths of Hell it forms the frozen lake of Cocytus. The circles of Hell, distant from one another, decrease in circumference as descent is made—the top circle being the widest. Galileo estimates that Dante's Hell is about 4,000 miles in depth and as many in breadth at its widest diameter. Its opening is near the forest at the Fauces Averni, near Cuma, Italy, where Virgil places the site of the entrance of his Inferno.

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Dante's Hell in its moral aspect is Aristotelian. Sins are divided into three great classes, incontinence, bestiality and malice. Incontinence is punished in the five upper circles; bestiality and malice in the City of Dis, lower Hell. More particularly stated, Dante's scheme of punishment in the underworld, not considering the vestibule of Hell, where neutrals are confined, is as follows: 1, Limbo; 2, The Circle of Lust; 3, Gluttony; 4, Avarice and Prodigality; 5, Anger, Rage and Fury; 6, Unbelief and Heresy; 7, Violence; 8, Fraud; 9, Treason.

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In regard to this plan of punishment three things are to be noted: (a) Though generally following the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas, here Dante, in his conception of Limbo, differs from his master. Our poet's Limbo, wherein are the souls of unbaptized children and others who died stained with original sin, but without personal grievous guilt, is a much more severe abode than that of the Angelic Doctor. The latter teaches that Limbo is a place or a state, not merely of exemption from suffering and sorrow, but of perfect natural happiness unbroken even by a knowledge of a higher, a supernatural destiny that has never been given. Dante's Limbo, on the other hand, represents the souls in sadness brought about by their constant desire and hope never realizable, of seeing God. They suffer no pain of sense, but they are baffled in their endless yearning for the Beatific Vision. To quote Dante:

"There, in so far as I had power to hear,
Were lamentations none, but only sighs
That tremulous made the everlasting air.
And this arose from sorrow without torment,
Which the crowds had, that many were and great,
Of infants and of women and of men.
To me the Master good: 'Thou dost not ask
What spirits these may be, which thou beholdest?
Now will I have thee know, ere thou go farther,
That they sinned not; and if they merit had,
'T is not enough, because they had not baptism,
Which is the portal of the Faith thou holdest;
And if they were before Christianity,
In the right manner they adored not God;
And among such as these am I myself.
For such defects, and not for other guilt,
Lost are we, and are only so far punished,
That without hope we live on in desire."
(IV, 25.)

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(b) Our poet represents a soul as punished but for one sin, though it may be guilt-dyed by its having broken all the commandments. Even so, it is placed in one particular circle wherein a certain sin is punished and we are not told that it passes to other circles. In explanation of this we have only to remember that Dante, for our instruction, is showing us object lessons of evil, types of certain sins. Judas, for example, whose name is synonymous with traitor, is exhibited as suffering in the ninth circle, the circle of treason, the poet taking no notice of other sins, v.g., sacrilege, avarice, suicide, of which the fallen apostle may have been guilty. Furthermore, Dante as a master psychologist and moralist would teach us the lesson that the evil doer may come to damnation through one sin if that acquires such an ascendancy over his will as to become a capital sin or predominant passion of his life. Then the besetting passion is the father of an innumerable progeny of evil. This is seen (Purg., XX, 103) in the case of Pygmalion, whose predominant passion, avarice, made him a traitor, a thief and a parricide.

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(c) Let us not be surprised that Dante is so lenient in the punishment of carnal sinners. He assigns a lighter punishment to the unchaste than to the unjust. Back of his plan is a sound theological doctrine. Guilt is to be estimated not simply from the gravity of the matter prohibited to conscience and the knowledge that one has of the evil, but more especially from the malice displayed by the will in its voluntary choosing and embracing the evil. Now impurity, it is held, is often a sin of impulse. It springs from concupiscence, a common human inclination, wrong only when there is inordinateness. Then though a man freely consents to the temptation and thereby commits a grievous sin, his will generally is not overcast with perversion or affected with malice. That being so, Dante in assigning punishment for sins against the virtue of purity is moved by the thought that such sins deserve a milder punishment in Hell, because they may be oftener surprises than infidelities.

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To make known the nature of the particular sin he depicts Dante shows us the evil in various phases. First of all it is personified in repulsive demons, the guardians of the circles of Hell. At the very entrance, sits, symbolizing the evil conscience, the sinners' judge "Minos horrific and grins. The ill-born spirit comes before him, confesses all and that sin-discerner (Minos) sees what place in Hell is for it, and with his tail makes as many circles round himself as the degrees he will have it descend." (Inf., V, 2.) In the circle of Gluttony, the sin is symbolized by the three-headed monster Cerberus, "who clutches the spirits, flays and piecemeal rends them."

Plutus, the ancient god of riches—"a cursed wolf"—commands the circle of Avarice. Phlegyas, who in fury set fire to Apollo's temple, is head of the circle of Anger. Symbolizing remorse, the three Furies, in the semblance of women girt with green water snakes, with snakes for hair, and the Gorgon Medusa, representing the heart-hardening effect of sensual pleasures, are found on the fire-glowing towers of the City of Dis, Inner Hell. In the seventh circle presides Minotaur, half-man, half-bull, the symbol of bloodthirsty violence and brutal lust.

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Fraud is typified by Geryon, having the face of an honest man and the body of a dragon. Further down giants are seen, emblematic of the enormity of crime. At the very lowest point of Hell is Lucifer, "emperor of the Realm of Sorrow." A gigantic monster, he is imprisoned in ice formed from rivers which freeze by the movements of his bat-like wings flapping in vain efforts to raise himself. To him, as to the source of all evil, flow back all the streams of guilt. As he sinned against the Tri-une God, he is represented with three faces, one crimson, another between white

and yellow, and the third black. (XXXIV, 55.)

Not only by such terrible monsters, but by the environment of the condemned sinner, does our poet reveal the hideousness of sin. To mention only the three great divisions of Hell, the abodes of incontinence, bestiality and malice, we find in murky gloom the incontinent whose sin had darkened their understanding. In the City of Dis, red with fire, are the violent and the bestial, who in this life had burned either with consuming rage or unnatural passion; in the frozen circle of malice are those whose sins had congealed human sympathy and love into cold, calculating destruction of trust reposed in them.

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But it is principally by depicting the intellectual, the moral and the physical sufferings of the damned that Dante would teach us the nature of sin. To depict physical sufferings the poet was under the necessity of creating provisional bodies for his damned. Without such a poetic device the souls of the reprobate before the resurrection of their bodies cannot be conceived to suffer physically, since they lack the senses and organs of pain. So Dante pictures the damned united to forms shadowy yet real, palpable and visible. They sometimes lose the human semblance and assume more sinister shapes, grovelling as hideous serpents, bleeding and wailing from shrubs and trees, or bubbling in a slushing stream.

In such forms the souls are seen in punishment fitting their sin, on the principle that "by what things a man sinneth by the same he is tormented." (Wisdom XI, 17.) The unchaste because they allowed their reason to be subjected to the hot blasts of passion are now driven by "a hellish storm which never rests; whirling and smiting, it vexes them." (Inf., V, 31.) The gluttonous howl like dogs as hail and rain and snow beat down upon them and Cerberus attacks and rends them. The misers and spendthrifts to whom money was king, now are occupied in rolling huge stones in opposite directions. The wrathful, all muddy and naked, assail and tear one another.

The sullen are fixed in slime and gurgle a dismal chant. The materialist and the heretic, whose existence, Dante holds, was only a living death, are confined in blazing tombs. Murderers and tyrants are immersed in boiling blood.

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With poetic justice, suicides are represented as stunted trees lacerated by the beaks of foul harpies. The violent lie supine on a plain of dry and dense sand, upon which descend flakes of fire like "snow in the Alps, without a wind." Usurers—should we call them profiteers?—suffer also from a rain of fire and carry about their necks money bags stamped with armorial designs. Thieves, to remind them of their sneaking trade, are repeatedly transformed from men into snakes, hissing and creeping. Hypocrites march in slow procession with faces painted and with leaden cloaks all glittering with gold on the outside. With such realism does Dante declare the nature of sin and its inevitable consequences.

Let us now accompany Dante through the Underworld. The scene opens at dawn in a dark and tangled wood. Dante, the type of humanity, is unable to ascend the Hill of the Lord, as we said before, because his way is barred successively by a leopard, a lion and a wolf, representing the passions of life. Virgil (Reason), sent by Beatrice (Revelation), offers to conduct the poet by another road. It is a way which leads through Hell and Purgatory. Through the heavens Beatrice herself will be the guide. Descending through the earth the two poets come to the Vestibule of Hell. On the gate appears this inscription:

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"Through me you pass into the city of woe
Through me you pass into eternal pain
Through me among the people lost for aye
Justice, the founder of my fabric, moved
To rear me was the task of Power divine,
Supremest wisdom and primeval Love
Before me things create were none, save things
Eternal, and eternal I endure.
All hope abandon, ye who enter here."

It may be said in passing that in these nine lines Dante attains an effect for which Milton, with all his heavy description of the gateway of Hell, labors in vain. Contrast with the Florentine's the words of the author of *Paradise Lost*:

"Hell bounds high reaching to the horrid roof
And thrice three fold the gates: three folds were brass,
Three iron, three of adamant rock.
Impenetrable, impaled with circling fire,
Yet unconsumed. Before the gate there sat
On either side a formidable shape," etc.

Not by gigantic images which only astonish the reader, but by words which burn into the brain and leave him dismayed, does our poet drive home his thought.

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Passing through a crowd of neutrals the poets come to the river Acheron, where assemble those who die in mortal sin, to be ferried over by the demon Charon. He refuses passage to Dante: "By other ways, by other ferries, shalt thou pass over, a lighter boat must carry thee." (Inf., III, 91.) An earthquake occurs, accompanied with wind and lightning, and Dante falls into a state of insensibility. Upon coming to consciousness he finds himself on the brink of the Abyss, whence the poets enter Limbo. Here Christ descended, Virgil says, and "drew from us the shade of our first parent, of Abel, his son; that of Noah, of Moses, the lawgiver, the obedient; patriarch

Abraham and King David; Israel, with his father, and with his sons and with Rachel, for whom he wrought much, and many others and made them blessed." (Inf., IV, 55.)

In the second circle, where carnal sinners are punished, Dante sees, among others, Semiramis, Dido, Cleopatra, Helen, Achilles, Paris. The poet's attention is suddenly attracted by two spirits, who prove to be Francesca da Rimini and her lover, Paolo, murdered by her husband when Dante was twenty-four years old. The scandal of their illicit love and the penalty they paid by their lives must have been so generally known that Dante, though attached to her family by the memory of hospitality received from her nephew, Guido Novello da Polenta, the lord of Ravenna, is dominated by the necessity of declaring in Francesca and Paolo the operation of the unalterable law which rules the terrible consequences of crime unforgiven by Heaven. Was it gratitude for kindness extended to him, an exile, by the Lord of Ravenna, or was it the memory of association with the brother of Francesca, at the battle of Campaldino, that led our poet to treat the whole episode of the fatal liaison with such tender sympathy for the unfortunate lady that he hoped to rehabilitate her memory? In any event, the poet represents himself as gracious and benign when addressing Francesca, and she, moved by his friendly attitude, tells the story of her intrigue, in lines justly regarded as the most beautiful ever written in verse. The reader will not fail to observe that the fatal denouement is only hinted, not told—the line, "that day we read no more," making what is admitted to be the finest ellipsis in all the literature of the world.

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"Then turning, I to them, my speech address'd
And thus began: 'Francesca! Your sad fate
Even to tears my grief and pity moves.
But tell me, in the time of your sweet sighs,
By what and how Love granted that ye knew
Your yet uncertain wishes.' She replied:
'No greater grief than to remember days
Of joy, when misery is at hand. Yet so eagerly
If thou art bent to know the primal root
From whence our love gat being, I will do
As one who weeps and tells his tale. One day
For our delight, we read of Lancelot,
How him love thrall'd. Alone we were, and no
Suspicion near us. Oft times by that reading
Our eyes were drawn together, and the hue
Fled from our alter'd cheek. But at one point
Alone we fell. When of that smile, we read,
The wish'd smile so rapturously kiss'd
By one so deep in love, then he who ne'er
From me shall separate, at once my lips
All trembling kiss'd. The book and writer both
Were love's purveyors. In its leaves that day
We read no more.' While thus one spirit spake,
The other wail'd so sorely, that heart-struck
I through compassion fainting, seem'd not far
From death, and like a corse fell to the ground."

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In the next circle where, with faces to the ground, the gluttons suffer in a ceaseless storm, the shade of Ciaccio, the Florentine, sits up as he recognizes a fellow-citizen:

"He said to me: "Thy City which is filled
With envy, like a sack that overflows,
Once held me in its tranquil life, well skilled
In dainties, and a glutton, and by those
Who dwelt there Ciaccio called, but now the blows
Of this fierce rain avenge my wasteful sin.
Sad as I am, full many another knows
For a like crime like penalty within
This circle', and more word he spake not." (VI, 49.)

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In the fourth circle the poet sees the souls of the prodigal and avaricious rolling heavy stones, against each other with mutual recriminations:

"Almighty Justice! in what store thou heap'st
New pains, new troubles, as I here beheld,
Wherefore doth fault of ours bring us to this?
E'en as a billow, on Charybdis rising
Against encountered billow dashing breaks;
Such is the dance this wretched race must lead
Whom more than elsewhere numerous here I found."
(VII, 19.)

The next is the circle of the wrathful and the sullen. Following is the circle of the materialists and heretics, all covered with burning sepulchres:

"Soon as I was within, I cast around
My eyes and saw extend on either hand
A spacious plain, that echoed to the sound

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Of grief and torment sore; as o'er the land
 At Aries where Rhone's vast waters stagnant stand
 Or Pola, near Quarnero Bay, that bounds
 And bathes the line of Italy, expand
 Plains rough and heaving with supulchral mounds,
 'Tis thus the plain, wherein I stood, with tombs abounds,
 Save that the buried were more grimly treated.
 For twixt the graves were scattered tongues of fire
 By which to such a pitch the place was heated
 That iron could no fiercer flame require
 For art to mould it: lamentation dire
 Issued from each unlidded vault, and seemed
 The voice of those in torment."

From one of these fiery tombs, the Florentine freethinker, the haughty Farinata, rises "with breast and brow erect, as holding Hell in great contempt," and tells Dante that the souls of the lost have no knowledge concerning things that are actually passing on earth, though they know the past and see the future. He foretells the duration of the poet's exile and boasts that he himself saved Florence from being razed to the ground.

"When all decreed that Florence should be laid
 in ruin I alone with fearless face defended her."
 (X, 91.)

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In the seventh circle Virgil leads Dante to the river of blood, "in which boils every one who by violence injures others." Centaurs, half horses and half men, are there. "Around the fosse they go by thousands, piercing with their arrows whatever spirit wrenches itself out of the blood farther than its guilt has allotted for it." (XII, 73.) With characteristic realism the poet describes Chiron, one of the leaders of the Centaurs, pushing back with an arrow his beard as he prepares to speak:

"Chiron took an arrow, and with the notch put back his beard upon his jaws. When he had uncovered his great mouth, he said to his companions: 'Have ye perceived that the one behind (Dante) moves what he touches? The feet of the dead are not wont to do so.'" (XII, 76.)

In the third round of Circle VII Dante meets his friend Brunetto Latini, punished for unnatural offences.

"I remembered him and toward his face
 My hand inclining, answered: Ser Brunetto!
 And are ye here? He thus to me: 'My son!
 Oh let it not displease thee, if Brunetto
 Latini but a little space with thee
 Turn back, and leave his fellows to proceed.'
 I thus to him replied: 'Much as I can,
 I thereto pray thee: and if thou be willing
 That I here seat me with thee, I consent:
 His leave with whom I journey, first obtain'd.'
 'O Son,' said he, 'whoever of this throng
 One instant stops, lies then a hundred years,
 No fan to ventilate him, when the fire
 Smitest sorest. Pass thou therefore on. I close
 Will at thy garments walk and then rejoin
 My troupe, who go mourning their endless doom.'"

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"Were all my wish fulfill'd," I straight replied,
 Thou from the confines of man's nature yet
 Hadst not been driven forth; for in my mind
 Is fix'd, and now strikes full upon my heart,
 The dear, benign, paternal image, such
 As thine was, when so lately thou didst teach me
 The way for man to win eternity:
 And how I prized the lesson, it behoves,
 That, long as life endures, my tongue should speak.
 (XV, 28.)

The eighth circle is known as Malebolge, Evil Pouches, of which there are ten. Here are punished differently panders, seducers, flatterers, simonists, magicians, cheats, hypocrites, thieves, evil-counsellors, forgers.

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In the ninth circle, the abode of traitors, which comprises four divisions, named respectively after Cain (Caina), Antenor of Troy (Antenora), Ptolemy of Jericho (Tolomea), and Judas Iscariot (Giudecca), Dante sees in the second division, Antenora, the shade of the traitor Ugolino imprisoned in ice with his enemy, Archbishop Ruggieri, by whom he was betrayed. Ugolino, with his two sons and two grandsons, were locked in the Tower of Famine at Pisa, the key of the

prison was thrown into the river and the prisoners began their term of starvation ending in death. The story of the imprisonment and the death of the five prisoners is one of the most tragic recitals in the domain of literature. In the passage I quote, Ugolino is relating his feelings when he finds himself imprisoned with his sons and grandsons in the Tower of Famine.

"When I awoke before the morn, that day,
I heard my little sons, who shared my cell,
For bread, even in their slumber, moaning pray;
Hard art thou, if unmoved thou hearest me tell
The message that my heart had guessed too well!
If this thou feel not, what can make thee feel?
And when we all were risen, the hour befell
At which was brought to us the morning meal,
Yet each one doubted sore what might their dreams reveal.

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And as the locking of the gate I heard
Beneath that terrible tower, I gazed alone
Into my children's faces, without a word.
I wept not, for within I turned to stone;
But saw that they were weeping every one;
'Twas then my darling little Anselm cried:
'You look so, father! Say, what have they done?'
Still not a tear I shed, nor word replied
That day, nor till that night in next day's dawning died.

And as there shot into this prison drear
A little sunbeam, by whose light I caught
My look upon four faces mirrored clear;
Both of my hands I bit, by grief o'erwrought.
Then suddenly they rose as if they thought
I did it hungering; 'Less our misery,'
They cried, 'Should'st thou on us feed, who are nought
But creatures vested in our flesh by thee:
Then strip away the weeds that still thine own must be.'

It calmed me to make them feel less their fate;
Two days we spent in silence all forlorn;
Earth, Earth, oh wherefore wert thou obdurate,
And would'st not open! On the following morn
Gaddo, before my face, from life was torn!
'Can you not help me, father?' first he cried,
And perished; then, I saw the younger born,
Three, one by one, fall ere the sixth day sped—
Plainly as you see me, and this accursed head.

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'Already blind, I fondly grope my way
To them, and for three days their names I call
After their death; then famine found its prey
And did what sorrow could not.' This was all
He said."

(XXXIII, 35.)

And now we come with the poets to the lowest depths of Hell, where we see imprisoned in ice Lucifer, huge and hideous. As we gaze on mankind's enemy, an archangel fallen and punished for sin, the words of Isaias come to mind: "How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, who did'st rise in the morning! How art thou fallen to the earth, that did'st wound the nations. And thou saidst within thy heart, 'I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God—I will be like the most High. But yet thou shalt be brought down to Hell, into the very depth of the pit.'" (Is., XIV, 12.)

Let us see how Dante puts Lucifer "into the very depth of the pit."

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"The lamentable kingdom's emperor
Issued from out the ice with half his breast;
And with a giant more do I compare
Than with his arms do giants; therefore see
How great must be that whole which corresponds
Unto a part so fashioned. If he was
As beautiful as he is ugly now,
And raised his brows against his Maker, sure
All sorrowfulness must proceed from him.
Ah! how great marvel unto me it seemed
When I beheld three faces to his head!
The one before, and that was vermeil-hue;
Two were the others which adjoined to this,
Over the midst of either shoulder, and

They made the joining where the crown is placed.
 And between white and yellow seemed the right;
 The left was such an one to be beheld
 As come from there wherein the Nile is sunk.
 There issued under each two mighty wings,
 Such as 'twas fitting for so great a bird:
 I never saw the sails of shipping such.
 They had not feathers, but the mode thereof
 Was like a bat's; and these he fluttered so
 That from him there was moved a threefold wind:
 Cocytus all was frozen over hence.
 With six eyes wept he, and three chins along
 The weeping trickled, and a bloody foam.
 At every mouth he shattered with his teeth
 A sinner, in the manner of a brake,
 So that he thus made woful three of them.
 The biting for the foremost one was nought
 Unto the scratching, for at times the spine
 Remained of all the skin completely stripped.
 'That soul above which has most punishment
 Is,' said my lord, 'Judas Iscariot,
 Who has his head within, and outside plies
 His legs. O' the other two, whose head is down,
 Brutus is he who from the black head hangs;
 See how he writhes, and does not speak a word:
 The other's Cassius, who appears, so gaunt,'"
 (XXXIV, 28-67)

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Now that the lesson is learned that the wages of sin is death, that sin will find a man out and bring him to the judgment of God, the gracious guide can release his companion from his awful contemplation.

"Now it is time for us to go," says Virgil, "for we have seen all." By a secret path leading to Purgatory the pilgrims make their way through the darkness, guided by the encouraging murmur of running water. It is a streamlet of discarded sin, flowing constantly from Purgatory, whence wickedness is washed down to its original Satanic source.

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"By that hidden way
 My guide and I did enter, to return
 To the fair world; and heedless of repose
 We climb'd, he first, I following his steps,
 Till on our view the beautiful lights of Heaven
 Dawn'd through a circular opening in the cave
 Thence issuing we again beheld the stars."

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DANTE'S PURGATORIO

Purgatory, as a doctrine, is peculiar to the Catholic Church; Purgatory, as a discipline from sin to virtue, is a practice followed by a large portion of humanity. The latter fact explains why so many who reject the dogma, still love and admire Dante's Purgatorio, which, while it teaches the doctrine of the intermediate state, also serves as an allegory, the most helpful and beautiful allegory, perhaps, in the literature of the world. In the opinion of Dean Stanley, it is the most religious book he ever read. It makes a peculiar appeal to the modern mind because, as Grandgent says: "It's theme is betterment, release from sin and preparation for Heaven" ... (and) "its atmosphere is rightly one of hope and progress."

Dinsmore declares: "Purgatory as a place may not exist in our system of thought, but life is a cleansing process if we take its hardships in a proper spirit." In another place he asserts: "In pondering the way of life by which this high priest of the Middle Ages (Dante) proclaims that men attain perfect liberty, we cannot but remark the stress he lays upon a principle which has well-nigh faded from the Protestant mind. It is that of expiation—(and) expiation is no musty dogma of the schoolmen, but a living truth.... Dante placed more emphasis on the human side of the problem than we, and for this reason he deserves attentive study, having portrayed most powerfully some truths which our age, so eager to break from the narrowness of the past, has overlooked."

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In agreement with this statement of the learned Congregational divine is William T. Harris,

former United States Commissioner of Education, who observes in his "Spiritual Sense of the Divina Commedia," that if Purgatory is absent from the Protestant creed, the thought of which Purgatory in this life is the symbol, is not uncommon in non-Catholic literature. His exact words are: "If Protestantism has omitted Purgatory from its religion, certainly Protestant literature has taken it up and absorbed it entire," and for proof he points to the moral, among other books, of *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Marble Faun*, *Adam Bede* and *Romola*, all showing

"That men may rise on stepping stones
Of their dead selves to higher things."

Dante, the theologian, makes his allegory grow out of the doctrine of Purgatory. According to the teaching of the Catholic Church, temporal punishment is connected with sin. Even when the guilt of sin is forgiven, the justice of God in most cases calls for amends by means of the temporal punishment of the sinner. Holy Writ gives us instances of the operation of this law. Adam, though brought out of his disobedience (*Wisdom X, 2*) was condemned "to eat bread in the sweat of his face" (*Gen. III, 19*) to his dying day. Moses and Aaron were forgiven for their sin of incredulity, but they were punished by being deprived of the glory of entering "the Land of Promise." (*Num., XX, 12.*) To King David, perfectly contrite, the prophet Nathan announces in the name of God, the forgiveness of the guilt of adultery and murder, yet he must suffer for his sin. "Nathan said to David: 'The Lord also hath taken away thy sin. Thou shalt not die. Nevertheless, because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme for this thing, the child shall die,' and it came to pass on the seventh day that the child died" (*II Kings XII, 13.*)

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From these instances it is evident that when God forgives the guilt of sins and the eternal punishment due to such of them as are mortal, He does not remove the temporal punishment which must be satisfied in this life or in the life to come. That is true, the Church teaches, even of unrepented venial sin with its debt of temporal punishment. While venial sin does not destroy the supernatural life of the soul and while, therefore, it is not said to be punishable in Hell, still it is sin in the sight of Him "whose eyes are too pure to behold evil." (*Hab., I, 13.*) Now the Church has ever held that into Heaven "there shall not enter anything defiled." (*Apoc., XXI, 27.*) Likewise, she has taught that Hell is the eternal punishment of souls whose grievous guilt has not been forgiven. It follows, therefore, according to her teachings, that there must be a middle state for the cleansing of unrepented venial sins and for the satisfaction of sins already forgiven but not wholly expiated.

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This state or place is called Purgatory, the belief in the existence of which is confirmed by the practice of praying for the dead, a practice based on the teachings of the Old and of the New Testament. In the second book of *Maccabees* (*XII, 43, 46*) we read that Judas, the general of the Hebrew army, "sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection. (For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead.) And because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness had great grace laid up for them. It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from sins."

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This doctrine presupposes that the dead for whom prayer is profitable are neither in Heaven, the abode of the elect, nor in Hell, from which release is not possible, but in a state of purification, lasting for a time. The New Testament alludes to that state. Christ declares: "And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come." (*Matt., XII, 32.*) These words imply that there is a future state in which some sins are purged away, while there is another state (Hell) in which the punishment is eternal. The words of St. Paul: "If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire" (*1 Cor., III, 15*), are interpreted to mean the existence of a middle state in which unforgiven venial sins and the temporal punishment due to sin will be burnt away and the soul thus purified will attain eternal life.

To state the doctrine of the Church briefly, let it be said that the Church has defined that there is a Purgatory and that the souls in Purgatory are helped by the suffrages of the faithful.

Out of facts so general, Dante the poet, has created a Purgatory wholly unique in the realms of literature, and amazingly definite as to place, form, atmosphere, inhabitants and their activities. In the southern hemisphere, at the very antipodes of Jerusalem, out of an ocean on which there is no other land (according to Dante's system of cosmography) springs the island of Purgatory, redolent with flowers, lovely with music, peace keeping pace with penance over all the region. Not a flat, unbroken plain is this island, but a mountain whose shores are washed by the ocean, from which the earth forced from the interior by Lucifer's fall, rises in a truncated conical structure. While its coast and the land below the terraces are within the zone of air, its heights extend into the sphere of fire and its crown is the Garden of Eden. The lowest part of the mountain called Ante-Purgatorio is the abode of the procrastinators and the excommunicated who put off their repentance to the end and now must suffer a proportionate delay before they are permitted to begin their ascent, their work of purification.

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Purification begins only after the soul passes into Purgatory proper. At the entrance is St. Peter's gate, guarded by an angel, who, with his sword inscribes on the brow of the penitent seven times the letter P, the first letter of the word Peccatum, signifying sin. These seven P's, outward signs of inward evil, represent the seven capital sins, the P's of which are removed in succession by an angel as penance is done for each sin on its corresponding terrace. The seven

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terraces which run around the mountain, rise in succession with lessening circuit as ascent is made, their width being about seventeen or eighteen feet. Connecting each terrace and cut out of solid rock is a narrow stairway, guarded by an angel. The steps of each successive stairway become less steep as each terrace is attained. Crowning the mountain is the Garden of Eden, lonely and deserted since Adam and Eve, after six hours of occupancy, were forced from its confines. Its herbage is still luxuriant, its flowers endless and fragrant, its trees, melodious with birds, rustle with the balmy wind, its waters serve to irrigate the garden as well as to help the soul. These waters, the rivers Lethe and Eunoe, are produced from heavenly sources and have miraculous powers. The former removes the memory of sin; the latter restores the recollection of virtuous deeds, a poetical way of expressing the Catholic dogma, that with the revival of grace in the heart of the converted sinner comes back the merit that had been acquired by moral acts.

The problem which Dante sets out to solve in his Purgatory is this: Assuming that the sinner has been baptized, how can he break his shackles and attain to the liberty of the children of God? The literal narrative of Dante's Purgatory presupposing that the soul at the hour of death is in the state of grace, now shows us that soul working towards perfection by way of expiation for unforgiven venial sin and for the temporal punishment due to sin. It is the only way by which it can again attain its pristine dignity. "And to his dignity he never returns," says Dante, "unless where sin makes void, he fill up for evil pleasures just penalties."

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The rule holds good, also, for salvation in this world. The thin veil of allegory enables us to penetrate Dante's teaching that this life also is a Purgatory, and here, too, we may cast off the defilement of sin by means of repentance and expiation. But first the soul must be girt with the rush of humility, and have perfect contrition represented by its being washed with the dew, the moisture that descends from Heaven. To Virgil (Reason guided by Heaven) says Cato (the symbol of Liberty), "Go, then, and see that thou gird this man with a smooth rush and that thou wash his face (with dew) so that thou efface from it all foulness, for it would not be fitting to go into the presence of the first Minister, who is of those of Paradise, with eyes dimmed by any mist." (1, 95.)

But even if the soul, by perfect contrition, is freed from its guilt of mortal sin, it must according to the mind of Christ, who instituted the sacrament of Penance for the remission of sin, submit to the power of the keys committed to the priesthood and that will be the more necessary if its contrition is imperfect. While perfect contrition without the sacrament of Penance may remit sin, if the supernatural motive of sorrow is not the love of God, but a motive less worthy, *e.g.*, fear of punishment, forgiveness is to be obtained only by the worthy reception of Penance. In other words, the penitent must confess his sin to a duly authorized priest, express his contrition, accept the penance enjoined by the confessor for the satisfaction of sin and be absolved by virtue of the words of Christ: "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."

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All this is most beautifully expressed by Dante in his description of the Gate of St. Peter and its angelic keeper:

"The lowest stair was marble white, so smooth
And polish'd that therein my mirror'd form
Distinct I saw. The next of hue more dark
Than sablest grain, a rough and singed block,
Cracked lengthwise and across. The third, that lay
Massy above, seemed prophery, that flam'd
Red as the life-blood spouting from a vein.
On this God's angel either foot sustain'd,
Upon the threshold seated, which appear'd
A rock of diamond. Up the trinal steps
My leader cheerly drew me. 'Ask,' said he,
'With humble heart, that he unbar the bolt.'
Piously at his holy feet devolv'd
I cast me, praying him for pity's sake
That he would open to me: but first fell
Thrice on my bosom prostrate. Seven times
The letter, that denotes the inward stain,
He on my forehead with the blunted point
Of the drawn sword inscrib'd. And 'Look,' he cried,
'When enter'd, that thou wash these scars away.'
Ashes, or earth ta'en dry out of the ground,
Were of one colour with the robe he wore.
From underneath that vestment forth he drew
Two keys of metal twain: the one was gold,
Its fellow silver. With the pallid first,
And next the burnish'd, he so ply'd the gate,
As to content me well. 'Whenever one
Faieth of these, that in the keyhole straight
It turn not, to this alley then expect
Access in vain.' Such were the words he spake,
'One is more precious; but the other needs
Skill and sagacity, large share of each,
Ere its good task to disengage the knot

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Be worthily perform'd. From Peter these
I hold, of him instructed, that I err
Rather in opening than in keeping fast,
So but the suppliant at my feet implore.'
Then of that hallow'd gate he thrust the door,
Exclaiming, 'Enter, but this warning hear:
He forth again departs who looks behind.'
(IX, 75.)

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The allegory back of these words is put forth in clear language by Maria F. Rossetti. "We need hardly to be told" she writes in her *Shadow of Dante* (pp. 112-13) "that the Gate of St. Peter is the Tribunal of Penance. The triple stair stands revealed as candid Confession mirroring the whole man, mournful Contrition breaking the hard heart of the gazer on the Cross, Love all aflame offering up in Satisfaction the lifeblood of body, soul, and spirit:—the adamantine threshold-seat as the priceless merits of Christ the Door, Christ the Rock, Christ the sure Foundation and the precious Corner-Stone. In the Angel of the Gate, as in the Gospel Angel of Bethesda, is discerned the Confessor; in the dazzling radiance of his countenance, the exceeding glory of the ministration of righteousness; in the penitential robe, the sympathetic meekness whereby, restoring one overtaken in a fault, he considers himself lest he also be tempted; in the sword, the wholesome severity of his discipline; in the golden key, his divine authority; in the silver, the discernment of spirits whereby he denies absolution to the impenitent, the learning and discretion whereby he directs the penitent."

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Dante's plan of Purgatorial punishment makes no distinction between the punishment put forth for unforgiven venial sin and that due in satisfaction for the violation of the moral order by one whose guilt has been remitted. Both partake of the same penalty. Is that because the poet thinks that if forgiveness is finally won by sorrow and suffering, expiation for the offence is still to be made? Or does he hold that the seven capital sins entailing temporal punishment either operate effectively in every soul, or exist at least radically according to the principle voiced by Hamilton Wright Mabie: "The man who slowly builds Heaven with him, has constantly the terrible knowledge that he has only to put his hand forth in another direction in order to build Hell?"

In any event Dante, who shows in Hell how men are made sin eternally, in Purgatory exhibits the sinful disposition more or less under the control of the will, yet of such a nature that only the grace of God held the soul back from the Abyss. It must be purged of all tendency to evil so as to be made "pure and ready to mount to the stars." (XXXIII, 140.) The purgation is seen in process in a threefold manner according to Dante. A material punishment is inflicted to mortify the evil passion and to incite the soul to virtue; the soul meditates upon the capital sin and its opposite virtue, moved to abhorrence of the evil and to admiration of the good by examples drawn from sacred and profane history; vocal prayer is addressed to God and it brings forth grace to purify and strengthen the soul. Hard in the beginning is this work of repentance, but it becomes easy as the habit of virtue is formed.

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"The mountain is such, that ever
At the beginning down below, 'tis tiresome
And aye the more one climbs, the less it hurts."
(IV, 90.)

As purification from each capital sin is effected, the soul experiences the removal of a heavy burden and the consequent enjoyment of new liberty, Dante, purified from pride, asks Virgil: "Master, say what heavy thing has been lifted from me, that scarce any toil is perceived by me in journeying." He answered "When the P's which have remained still nearly extinguished on thy face, shall like the one be wholly rased out, thy feet shall be so vanquished by goodwill, that not only will they feel it no toil, but it shall be a delight to them to be urged upward." (XII, 118).

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Mention was made of the material punishment of the souls in Purgatory. Unlike the retributive penalties inflicted in Hell, this punishment is reformatory, confirming the penitent in good habits of thought and deed. The proud here realize the irrevocable sentence "everyone who exalteth himself shall be humbled." They creep round with huge burdens of stone bowing them down to the very dust and so abased their hearts are turned to humility.

The envious sing the praises of generosity while their eyes, the seat of their sins, are tortured by sutures of wire shutting out the light.

The slothful cannot be restrained in their hurry forward, the leaders, shouting with tears, examples of diligence, a pair in the rear crying out instances of sloth.

Penitents expiating the sins of avarice and prodigality lie prostrate and motionless bound hand and foot, with their faces to the ground, murmuring the words of the psalmist: "My soul hath cleaved to the pavement" (Ps., 118, 25.) During the day they eulogize the liberal; during the night they denounce instances of avarice.

The gluttonous suffer so much from hunger and thirst that they are reduced to a state of pitiable emaciation. All the while hungering for righteousness, they glory in crucifying the old Adam in them.

The unchaste purify their passion in hot flames while other penitents sing the loveliness of chastity and proclaim many examples of that virtue.

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Through this purification by suffering, the spirits not only submit willingly but they exhibit real contentment if not actual love of the chastisement imposed upon them. The unchaste not only heedfully keep within the flames but gladly endure the fire because they are convinced "with such treatment and with such diet must the last wound be healed" (XXV, 136). And most beautiful and enlightening of all, one of the souls tells Dante that the same impulse which brought Christ gladly to the agony of the Cross throws them upon their sufferings. Forese, speaking for the gluttonous, says that the mood in which they accept the penitential pains is one of submission as well as of solace. "And not only once, while circling this road, is our pain renewed. I say pain and ought to say solace, for that desire leads us to the tree which led glad Christ to say, 'Eli,' when He made us free with his blood." (XXIII, 71). The avaricious confess "so long as it shall be the pleasure of the just Lord, so long shall we lie here motionless and outstretched" (XIX, 125). Among the envious, Guida del Duca prays Dante to continue his journey instead of stopping to interrogate him, for he himself "delights far more to weep than to talk" (XIV, 125). The slothful in their eagerness not to interrupt their diligence in penance, by their conversing with Virgil, entreat him not to ascribe this attitude to discourtesy, "We are so filled with desire to speed on" they tell the poets "that stay we cannot, therefore forgive if thou hold our penance for rudeness." (XVIII, 115).

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By such instances and by many others does our poet show the contented spirit prevailing in Purgatory. He makes it, indeed, a realm whose very atmosphere is one of peace, because the will of God is done there even in the midst of suffering. The greeting there is "My brothers, may God give us peace" (XXI, 13). The penitents pray for a far greater measure of peace: "Voices I heard and every one appeared to supplicate for peace and misericord the Lamb of God who takes away our sins" (XVI, 15). When the wrathful finish their penance an angel says to them, "Blessed are the peacemakers who are without ill anger" (XVII, 68).

The waters of Purgatory are called "the waters of peace which are the souls diffused from the eternal fountain" (XVI, 133). Dante addresses the souls as certain of gaining the unending peace of Paradise. "O Souls, sure in the possession whenever it may be of a state of peace" (XXVI, 54). And when the day of release comes on which a soul attains perfect peace, the whole mountain of Purgatory literally thrills with joy and every voice is raised to join the harmonious concert of the angelic hymn first sung at Bethlehem, *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*. In this way does the poet teach us the lesson that both Purgatory proper and the penitential discipline of life give us a peace wholly in contrast with the uproar of sin whether heard in the halls of conscience or in the eternal Hereafter. "How different are those openings from those in Hell," he says, "for here we enter through songs and down there through fierce wailings" (XII, 112).

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Although our poet, imbued with the Catholic doctrine, teaches that intercessory prayer helps the soul to shorten its term in Purgatory—a doctrine bound up with the doctrine of the Communion of Saints—it must never be forgotten that Dante is a Catholic preacher when he insists that personal effort aided by God's grace, is the thing of supreme importance in the matter of salvation and purification. Neither lip-sorrow nor the sacraments themselves unless accompanied by true sorrow and repentance, can profit the soul. "He cannot be absolved who doth not first repent, nor can he repent the sin and will it at the same time, for this were contradiction to which reason cannot assent" (Inf., XXVII, 118.) Prayer can help the soul struggling in life or in Purgatory proper, but the assistance derived from prayer can never do away with the necessity of personal penance. "Conquer thy panting with the soul that conquers every battle if with its heavy body it sinks not down."

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Let us now hear how Dante sings "of that second realm in which the human soul is purified and becomes worthy to ascend to Heaven" (I, 5). Coming out of the blackness of Hell just before dawn on Easter Sunday, Virgil and Dante are entranced at the beautiful scene before them. Through a cloudless sky of that deep blue for which the sapphire is noted, shines Venus, the morning star; in the south appear four wonderful stars of still greater brilliancy, seen before only by our first parents.

"Sweet sheen of oriental sapphire hue
That, mantling in the aspect calm and bright
Of the pure air, to the primal circle grew,
Began afresh to give my eyes delight
Soon as I issued from the deathful air
That had cast sadness o'er my mind and sight,
The beauteous planet that for love takes care
Was making the East laugh through all its span,
Veiling the Fish, that in its escort were
Turned to the right, I set my mind to scan
The other pole; and four stars met my gaze
Ne'er seen before, except by primal man
Heaven seemed rejoicing in their flaming rays."

The two poets looking to the north see Cato the Warder of Purgatory, his face illuminated by the four stars, typical of the cardinal virtues, Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance. Is Dante's selection of Cato, the pagan suicide, as the guardian of Christian Purgatory, to be taken as an example of the broadmindedness of the poet who believes "so wide arms hath goodness infinite, that it receives all who turn to it?" Or is it an instance showing how the leaven of the old Roman spirit in the poet—a spirit which justifies suicide, prevails with his profession of Christianity which condemns the taking of one's life? Whatever be the answer "Cato's taking his

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own life rather than renounce liberty is symbolical of the soul, destroying all selfishness that it may attain the light and freedom of spiritual life." In the poem Cato is represented as challenging the poets as if they were fugitives from Hell. When he is told that it is by divine decree that the pilgrims are making the journey, he bids Virgil cleanse Dante with dew and gird him with a rush and he concludes by saying: "then be not this way your return, the sun which now is rising, will show you how to take the turned at an easier ascent"—words whose spiritual sense would seem to be that once the soul has turned to virtue, it must never go back to sin and in its upward path to perfection it will be guided by the rays of divine grace (the sun) whose enlightenment will make the ascent easier.

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While lingering on the shore, undecided which way to turn, the poets see a great marvel. Over the water dancing with sunlight comes a white boat propelled by the white wings of an angel called the Divine Bird, red with flame and bringing from the banks of the Tiber, the bosom of the Church, over a hundred souls to begin their term in Purgatory. In Charon's bark the reprobate souls fill the air with their imprecations; in the angel-steered boat the spirits coming to Purgatory devoutly chant: "When Israel went out of Egypt," the psalm so fittingly descriptive of their own liberation from guilt and their coming into peace. Here is the description of the scene:

"And lo! as when, upon the approach of morning,
Through the gross vapours Mars grown fiery red
Down in the West upon the ocean floor,
Appeared to me—may I again behold it!—
A light along the sea so swiftly coming,
Its motion by no flight of wing is equalled;
From which when I a little had withdrawn
Mine eyes, that I might question my Conductor,
Again I saw it brighter grown and larger.
Then on each side of it appeared to me
I knew not what of white, and underneath it
Little by little there came forth another.
My Master yet had uttered not a word
While the first whiteness into wings unfolded;
But when he clearly recognized the pilot,
He cried: 'Make haste, make haste to bow the knee!
Behold the Angel of God! fold thou thy hands!
Henceforward shalt thou see such officers!
See how he scorneth human arguments,
So that nor oar he wants, nor other sail
Than his own wings, between so distant shores.
See how he holds them pointed up to heaven,
Fanning the air with the eternal pinions,
That do not mount themselves like mortal hair!'
Then as still nearer and more near us came
The Bird Divine, more radiant he appeared,
So that near by the eye could not endure him,
But down I cast it; and he came to shore
With a small vessel, very swift and light,
So that the water swallowed naught thereof.
Upon the stern stood the Celestial Pilot;
Beatitude seemed written in his face,
And more than a hundred spirits sat within."
(II, 13.)

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And now occurs a touching episode which shows how deep and rich is friendship in Dante's heart. One of the shades recognizing him, steps forward with a look so full of affection to embrace him that the poet is moved to do likewise. Amazement ensues on both sides. The spirit finds Dante alive in the flesh and he in turn on account of the impalpability of the shade clasps only empty air. But there is mutual recognition. Dante asks his newly-found friend Casella, the musician, to sing as he used to do when his sweet voice soothed the troubled heart of the poet and banished his cares. "May it please thee therewith to solace awhile my soul that with its mortal form, journeying here, is sore distressed." Casella's answer is as loving as it is surprising. He sings one of Dante's canzoni and the whole party listen with intent delight finally broken by the chiding words of Cato:

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"What is this ye laggard spirits?
What negligence, what standing still is this?
Run to the mountain to strip off the slough
That lets not God be manifest to you."
(II, 117.)

At the foot of the mountain the poets meet a troop of spirits who, though excommunicated, died contrite. For their delay in submitting to the Church for absolution they must wait thirty times as long as the period of their excommunication. One of them, King Manfred, Chief of the Ghibellines, son of Emperor Frederick II, tells of his last moment conversion and also how the Bishop of Cosenza at the word of Pope Clement IV, enforcing the penalty of excommunication against the corpse of the king, had it removed from the Papal realm and thrown into the river

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In narrating how a Christian may be saved even if he died under the ban of the Church, Dante is only expressing what every Catholic knows as to the effect of excommunication. This ecclesiastical censure incurred by a contumacious member of the Church, a censure entailing forfeiture of all rights and privileges common to a Christian, such as the right to the sacraments,—a right restored through the confessor, however, whenever there is danger of death—the right to public service and prayers, the right to jurisdiction, and to benefices, the right to the canonical forum, to social intercourse and to Christian burial, this censure of excommunication does not in the mind of the Church carry with it exclusion from Purgatory or Heaven.

According to a principle of canon law applied to censures, *Ecclesia de internis non judicat*, the Church in the matter of crime does not concern itself with interior dispositions, excommunication far from being a sentence of damnation in the next world, is a penalty pertaining to the external forum of the Church in this life. Even if the penalty follows the corpse so far as to exclude it from Christian burial, even here the purpose of the Church is not to pronounce a verdict of the loss of the contumacious soul in the Hereafter, but to stigmatize among the living, the memory of the person and so to inspire in them a hatred of the evil condemned and a respect for law. The story of Manfred now follows:

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"And one of them began: 'Whoe'er thou art,
 Thus going turn thine eyes, consider well
 If e'er thou saw me in the other world'
 I turned me tow'rds him, and looked at him closely;
 Blond was he, beautiful, and of noble aspect,
 But one of his eyebrows had a blow divided.
 When with humility I had disclaimed
 E'er having seen him, 'Now behold,' he said.
 And showed me high upon his breast a wound.
 Then said he with a smile: 'I am Manfredi,
 The grandson of the Empress Costanza;
 Therefore, when thou returnest, I beseech thee
 Go to my daughter beautiful, the mother
 Of Sicily's honor and of Aragon's,
 And the truth tell her, if aught else be told.
 After I had my body lacerated
 By these two mortal stabs, I gave myself
 Weeping to Him, who willingly doth pardon.
 Horrible my iniquities had been;
 But Infinite Goodness hath such ample arms,
 That it receives whatever turns to it,
 Had but Cosenza's pastor, who in chase
 Of me was sent by Clement at that time,
 In God read understandingly this page,
 The bones of my dead body still would be
 At the bridge-head, near unto Benevento,
 Under the safeguard of the heavy cairn.
 Now the rain bathes and moveth them the wind,
 Beyond the realm, almost beside the Verde,
 Where he transported them with tapers quenched.
 By malison of theirs is not so lost
 Eternal Love, that it cannot return,
 So long as hope has anything of green.'"
 (III, 105.)

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Following the directions given by Manfred and his companions our travelers continue their way upward until they reach a broad ledge cut out in the side of the mountain. While resting here Dante sees a spirit whom he recognizes as Balaqua, a maker of musical instruments, whose laziness was a byword in Florence. Our poet who knew the man intimately had often upbraided him for his indolence. It is said that to excuse himself in the days of his mortal life, Balaqua quoted a line of Aristotle: "By sitting down and resting the soul is rendered wise," to which Dante retorted: "Certainly if one becomes wise by sitting down none was ever so wise as thou." Now in Purgatory there is amused indulgence upon Dante's part as he addresses his former fellow citizen "sitting and clasping his knees, holding his face down between them, lazier than if sloth were his very sister" (IV, 10).

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"His sluggish attitude and his curt words
 A little unto laughter moved my lips
 Then I began: 'Balaqua I grieve not
 For thee henceforth; but tell me wherefore seated
 In this place art thou? Waitest thou an escort?
 Or has thy usual habit seized upon thee?'
 And he: 'O brother, what's the use of climbing?
 Since to my torment would not let me go
 The angel of the Lord who sitteth at the gate.
 First heaven must needs so long revolve me round

Outside thereof, as in my life it did,
Since the good sighs I to the end postponed,
Unless e'er that some prayer may bring me aid
Which rises from a heart that lives in grace."
(IV, 120.)

Unless assisted by the prayer of the sinless faithful upon earth, Balaqua and his class must stay in Outer-Purgatory, each for a term equal to the period of his natural life. The third and the fourth classes in Outer-Purgatory, viz., those who died of violence, deferring their repentance to the last hour, and kings and princes who because of temporal concerns of state put off their conversion to the last—all those also must remain in Outer-Purgatory for a period equal to that of their lives upon earth, unless the time be shortened by intercessory prayer. It is to be noted that the souls of the violently slain press so closely and so insistently about Dante in their eagerness to obtain his good offices in favor of prayerful intercession for them by their friends upon earth that he has great difficulty in getting away from these souls. He succeeds by making promises to execute their desires—comparing his difficulty of advancing to the trouble a winner at dice experiences when bystanders crowd about him in obstructive congratulations and make his way impracticable until he gives some of his winnings to this one, and some to that one.

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"When from their game of dice men separate
He who hath lost remains in sadness fix'd,
Revolving in his mind what luckless throws
He cast; but meanwhile all the company
Go with the other; one before him runs,
And one behind his mantle twitches, one
Fast by his side bids him remember him,
He stops not, and each one to whom his hand
Is stretch'd, well knows he bids him stand aside,
And thus he from the crowd defends himself.
E'en such was I in that close-crowding throng;
And turning so my face around to all,
And promising, I 'scaped from it with pains."
(VI, 1.)

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Higher up the mountain occurs a touching instance of love of country. Virgil draws near a spirit "praying that it would show us the best ascent"; and that spirit answered not his demand but of our country and of our life did ask us. And the sweet Leader (Virgil) began "Mantua ..." And the shade all rapt in self leaped toward him saying, "O Mantuan, I am Sordello of thy city. And one embraced the other" (VI, 67). This episode gives to Dante the opportunity to contrast on the one hand the love of those two fellow citizens drawn together by no other bond than affection for their native place and on the other hand hatred with which living contemporaries rend one another.

"Ah Italy, thou slave, that gentle spirit was thus quick, merely at the sweet name of his city, to give greeting there to his fellow citizen and now in thee thy living abide not without war and one doth rend the other of those that one wall and one foss shuts in" (VI, 79).

As night approaches Sordello leads the poets to the angelically protected Flowery Valley wherein are found the souls of those rulers who were negligent of the spiritual life. Many of them were once old enemies but now they not only sing together but live in harmony, united also in paying tributes to the worth of some reigning monarchs or in expressing denunciation at the degeneracy of others. Here in the Valley of the Princes, while sleeping on the grass and among the flowers, Dante has a strange dream indicative of a near episode in his journey. He sees an eagle in the sky with wings wide open and intent upon swooping

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"Then wheeling somewhat more, it seemed to me
Terrible as the lightning he descended
And snatched me upward even to the (sphere of) fire
Therein it seemed that he and I were burning,
And the imagined fire did scorch me so
That of necessity my sleep was broken."
(IX, 28.)

He awakes to find himself actually transported up the perpendicular wall to the entrance Gate of Purgatory. Virgil interprets the dream, pointing out that the eagle represents Lucia (Illuminating Grace) who has carried the poet to St. Peter's Gate.

"Thou hast at length arrived at Purgatory;
See there the cliff that closeth it around;
See there the entrance, where it seems disjointed.
While at dawn, which doth precede the day,
When inwardly thy spirit was asleep
Upon the flowers that deck the land below,
There came a Lady and said: 'I am Lucia;
Let me take this one up, who is asleep;
So will I make his journey easier for him.'
Sordello and the other noble shapes
Remained; she took thee, and, as day grew bright,

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Upward she came, and I upon her footprints.
She laid thee here; and first her beauteous eyes
That open entrance pointed out to me;
Then she and sleep together went away."
(IX, 49.)

The poet, as we said before, cannot enter Purgatory until he mounts the three steps of confession, contrition and satisfaction. Moreover, he must receive absolution from the angel-keeper, typical of the priestly confessor, and he must have seven P's branded upon his forehead. When this is done the angel opens the gate and Dante enters to the sound of a thunder-peal from the organ of Heaven, and of voices expressing the joy of Heaven upon the sinner's doing penance.

Dante's description, which now follows, of the lovely art displayed on the terrace of Pride leads to the reflection that he must have been a matchless master of visual instruction or at least the representative of his times, which, before the age of printing, taught the people by means of pictures painted upon canvas, burnt in glass or chiseled in stone. Certain it is that the people of Dante's day from seeing the productions of art knew the Bible and sacred and profane history so well as to amaze subsequent generations taught from the printed page. Be that as it may, the power and beauty of Dante's pictures on the terraces of Purgatory show his consummate knowledge of a principle of psychology very much operative in our day, a principle which makes character by educating the will far better than any other pedagogical method. *Verba movent, exempla trahunt*, is a principle which Dante illustrates on every terrace of Purgatory.

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On the terrace of Pride the penitent sees examples of humility carved of white marble out of the mountain side like Thorwaldsen's Lion, at Lucerne, Switzerland. Their reality is so compelling that, "not only Polycletus (the great Greek sculptor) but Nature there would be put to shame." First to meet the penitent's eyes is the scene of the Annunciation—the angel Gabriel saluting the Blessed Virgin and unfolding to her God's plan of making her the Mother of His Son for the salvation of mankind. In humility she gives her consent in the words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word." That is the attitude in which she is represented in sculpture, says Dante, an attitude "imprinting those words as expressly as a figure is stamped in wax" (X, 44). Near that work of art David stands forth in marble, dancing before the Ark of the Covenant. Trajan, the Roman emperor, is also seen, interrupting affairs of state to grant a poor woman a favor. Not only of humility but also of pride are examples given. Looking down on the pavement over which they slowly walk with their heavy burdens, the proud have before their eyes the sculptured punishment of pride as committed by Satan, Briareus, the Giants, Nimrod, Niobe, Saul and others. Meditating on the loveliness of humility and the hatefulness of pride, as suggested by those examples and bearing with prayer the heavy weights imposed upon them for their humiliation and penance, the proud experience a transformation of disposition wholly alien to them in the days of their mortality. Among the souls in this first terrace is Oderisi, who attained such renown as an illuminator of manuscripts and a painter of miniatures that he boasted that no one could surpass him. Now he not only is conscious of his former blatant pride, but in proof of his change of heart he gives full credit for superiority to his former pupil and subsequent rival, Franco Bolognese;

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"O," asked I him, "art thou not Oderisi,
Agobbio's honor and honor of that art
Which is in Paris called illuminating?
'Brother,' said he, 'more laughing are the leaves
Touched by the brush of Franco Bolognese.
All his the honor now, and mine in part,
In sooth I had not been so courteous
While I was living, for the great desire
Of excellence on which my heart was bent.'"
(XI, 79.)

Dante sees here another spirit, Provenzano Salvani. His rapid advance from Outer Purgatory to Purgatory was due to the merit of a self-humiliating act performed in favor of a friend. This friend had been taken prisoner by King Charles of Anjou and was held for ransom of a thousand florins of gold, the threat being made that if the amount was not raised within a month he would be put to death. It speaks well for the tender friendship of Salvani that he put aside all his pride and arrogance while he took his place in the market square to beg alms with which to liberate his friend. Dante relates the incident in the following words; "When he was living in highest glory, in the market place of Sienna he stationed himself of his own free will and put away all shame and there to deliver his friend from the pains he was suffering in Charles' prison, he brought himself to tremble in every vein" (XI, 133).

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As the poets enter the terrace of Envy aerial voices proclaim examples of Brotherly Love. First are heard the words of the Blessed Virgin:—"They have no wine," words in favor of those who were in need at the marriage feast, which led Christ to perform his first miracle. Then as an example of exposing one's self to death for the sake of another, the incident is recalled of the pagan Pylades feigning himself to be Orestes to save the latter from death. The voice saying, "Love those from whom ye have had evil," is an exhortation to the heroic act of charity of returning good for evil. In contrast with those counsels of charity, other voices call out direct warnings against envy.

On this terrace is neither beauty nor art but envy's own color. A livid hue is the whole

landscape. Of this color also are the garments of the suffering souls. They are depicted one leaning against the other in mutual love and for mutual support, like beggars sitting at the entrance of a church to which crowds go for the gaining of an Indulgence. Pitiably is the scene, for the envious in expiation for their sin, which entered their soul through its windows, the eyes, are deprived of sight, their lids being fastened by a wire suture such as is used for the taming of a hawk. Dante says of them:

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"I saw,
Shadows with garments dark as was the rock;
And when we pass'd a little forth, I heard
A crying, 'Blessed Mary! pray for us,
Michael and Peter! all ye saintly host!'
I do not think there walks on earth this day
Man so remorseless, that he had not yearn'd
With pity at the sight that next I saw.
Mine eyes a load of sorrow teem'd, when now
I stood so near them, that their semblance
Came clearly to my view. Of sackcloth vile
Their covering seem'd; and, on his shoulder, one
Did stay another, leaning; and all lean'd
Against the cliff. E'en thus the blind and poor,
Near the confessionals, to crave an alms,
Stand, each his head upon his fellow's sunk;
So most to stir compassion, not by sound
Of words alone, but that which moves not less,
The sight of misery. And as never beam
Of noonday visiteth the eyeless man,
E'en so was heaven a niggard unto these
Of this fair light: for, through the orbs of all,
A thread of wire, impiercing, knits them up,
As for the taming of a haggard hawk."
(Canto, XIII, 42.)

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As the poets continue their way over the second terrace Virgil explains an obscure phrase uttered by Guido del Duca, a soul punished for the sin of envy. That spirit speaking to Dante reproached mankind for setting its heart upon material things; "The heavens are calling to you and wheel around you, displaying unto you their eternal beauties and your eye gazes only on earth." Envy is consequently engendered because as the spirit says: "Mankind sets its heart there where exclusion of partnership is necessary." (XV, 43). "What meant the spirit from Romagna by mentioning exclusion and partnership?" asks Dante. Virgil proceeds to tell him that companionship in earthly possessions is not possible, for the more of any material thing a person has, the less of it remains for others. Hence envy arises from the very nature of the object which excludes partnership. On the other hand the more of the spiritual life one has, the more others participate in knowledge, peace and love, and this is especially true of the angels and the elect. The greater their number, the greater is the sum total of grace bestowed by God and the more each spirit shares his love with others. "The more spirits there on high yonder who love, the more there are to love perfectly and the more do they love each other and as a mirror one reflects back to the other" (XV, 75).

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This doctrine is expounded until the poets reach the third terrace, where wrath is punished. Here Dante represents himself as having a vision wherein he beholds examples of meekness and patience. First he sees the Finding of the Boy Christ in the temple and hears Mary's gentle complaint. Then follows the scene of Pisistratus refusing to condemn a youth for insulting his daughter. The third picture is that of the stoning of St. Stephen.

"Then suddenly I seem'd
By an ecstatic vision wrapt away:
And in a temple saw, methought, a crowd
Of many persons; and at the entrance stood
A dame, whose sweet demeanor did express
Another's love, who said, 'Child! why hast thou
Dealt with us thus? Behold thy sire and I
Sorrowing have sought thee;' and so held her peace;
And straight the vision fled. A female next
Appear'd before me, down whose visage coursed
Those waters, that grief forces out from one
By deep resentment stung who seem'd to say:
'If thou, Pisistratus, be lord indeed
Over this city, named with such debate
Of adverse gods, and whence each science sparkles,
Avenge thee of those arms, whose bold embrace
Hath clasp'd our daughter;' and to her, me seem'd,
Benign and meek, with visage undisturb'd,
Her sovereign spake: 'How shall we those requite
Who wish us evil, if we thus condemn
The man that loves us?' After that I saw

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A multitude, in fury burning, slay
With stones a stripling youth, and shout amain
'Destroy, destroy'; and him I saw, who bow'd
Heavy with death unto the ground, yet made
His eyes, unfolded upward, gates to heaven,
Praying forgiveness of the Almighty Sire,
Amidst that cruel conflict, on his foes,
With looks that win compassion to their aim."
(Canto, XV, 84.)

The wrathful are punished by being enveloped in a dense pungent smoke, emblematic of the stifling caused by angry passions.

"Darkness of hell, and of a night deprived
Of every planet under a poor sky,
As much as may be tenebrous with cloud,
Ne'er made unto my sight so thick a veil,
> As did that smoke which there enveloped us,
Nor to the feeling of so rough a texture;
For not an eye it suffered to stay open;
Whereat mine escort, faithful and sagacious,
Drew near to me and offered me his shoulder.
E'en as a blind man goes behind his guide,
Lest he should wander, or should strike against
Aught that may harm or peradventure kill him,
So went I through the bitter and foul air,
Listening unto my Leader, who said only,
'Look that from me thou be not separated.'
Voices I heard, and every one appeared
To supplicate for peace and misericord
The Lamb of God who takes away our sins.
Still *Agnus Dei* their exordium was;
One word there was in all, and metre one,
So that all harmony appeared among them.
'Master,' I said, 'are spirits those I hear?'
And he to me: 'Thou apprehendest truly,
And they the knot of anger go unloosing.'
(Canto, XVI, 1.)

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Soon after this our poet hears one of the spirits of the wrathful, discoursing on the degeneracy of human life and sees in a second series of visions, historic instances of wrath and its punishment. He is awakened from his trance by the shining light and the glad summons of the Angel of meekness, who is at the stair leading to the next terrace.

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"This is a spirit divine who in the way
Of going up directs us without asking
And who with his own light himself conceals.

Accord we our feet, to such inviting
Let us make haste to mount ere it grow dark;
For then we could not till the day return."
(XVII, 55.)

Lightened of the third P the poet passes from the circle of the wrathful up the fourth stairway. Here he takes the opportunity to engage Virgil in conversation regarding love as the seed of the capital sins. These sins, it may be remarked in passing, are not always mortal sins, though many Dantian editors make the mistake of so classifying them. It is to be observed that on all the stairways of Purgatory there is a conference between the two poets on things likely to be of interest to Dante, in the matter of his salvation. At the end of the present conference Dante falls into slumber, from which he is aroused by the racing activity of the souls of the slothful, shouting instances of zeal and energy.

Sloth is defined by St. Thomas Aquinas as sadness and torpor in the face of some spiritual good which one has to achieve, and a preacher of our day modernizes that definition to mean, the "don't-care-feeling" in the presence of duty. The sin is unlisted in modern treatises on Ethics, the writers of which see in its symptoms only indications of melancholia, neurasthenia or pellagra. But according to the scholastic classification still followed in this matter by the Catholic Church, sloth is to be considered as a specific vice opposed to the great commandment to love God with our whole heart.

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So Dante estimates it in his scheme of punishment, representing the souls crying out in their diligence, "Haste, haste, let no time be lost through little love." These souls are condemned to rush round and round at the topmost speed, those in front proclaiming instances of alacrity, viz., how the Blessed Virgin hastened to the hill country to visit Elizabeth and how Julius Caesar

hurried to subdue Lerida. Those in the rear recall examples of sloth, viz., how the Israelites through wandering in the desert lost the Promised Land, and how the Trojans who dallied in Sicily gave themselves up to a life inglorious. Dante's slothful souls are startlingly swift in their action. One of them, the Abbot Zeno giving directions for ascent to Virgil and reprobating the sins of his successors in the monastery is out of hearing as soon as he speaks: "If more be said or if he was silent I know not, so far already had he raced beyond us" (XVIII, 127).

The reader will not fail to note that the terrace of the slothful is the only circle of Purgatory where there is no request for intercessory prayer and that Dante here never speaks to any of those souls. Is that because the poet wishes us to understand that his own sentiment is that they do not deserve to be prayed for who neglected through sloth to pray for themselves and that his own silence in their presence is indicative of his disregard for souls so stained?

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To foreshow the sins to be treated on the three upper terraces, where are punished those who yielded to the sins of the body, Dante represents himself as tempted by a Siren. She is described as ugly and repulsive and then becoming, under the gaze of the beholder, fair and alluringly attractive—a description, perhaps, unconsciously reproduced by Pope when he wrote:

"Vice is a monster of so frightful mien
As to be hated needs but to be seen.
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

Saved from the Siren by a noble lady (perhaps Lucia, Illuminating Grace) and Virgil, the poet is brooding upon the dream which has brought to his senses the pleasures of the world, when his guide admonishes him how salvation from sin's seduction is to be had—viz., by using worldly things as things to be trodden under foot, while the mind is raised to Heaven, God's lure to draw it upward.

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"Didst thou behold, that old enchantress
Who sole above us henceforth is lamented?
Didst thou behold how man is free from her?
Suffice it thee, and smite earth with thy heels,
Thine eyes lift upward to the lure, that whirls
The Eternal King with revolutions vast."
(XIX, 58.)

On the fifth terrace our poets find the shades of the avaricious and the prodigals. They lie face to the ground, bound hand and foot, recalling during the night instances of avarice and during the day proclaiming the praise of liberality, as manifested in the Blessed Virgin, the pagan Fabricius and St. Nicholas. The latter is identified in the United States and some other countries, with the popular Santa Claus. Dante says of St. Nicholas that "the spirit went on to speak of the bounty which Nicholas gave to the maidens, to lead their youth to honor" (XX, 32). The allusion is to the legend that this Bishop of Myra secretly threw at different times into the windows of the home of three destitute maidens, bags of gold sufficient to provide them with dowries without which they would have been forced by poverty to a life of shame.

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In therealm of the avaricious and the prodigals, Dante addresses one of the repentent souls: "Spirit, who thou wast and why ye have your backs turned upward, tell me" (XX, 94).

The answer of the shade of Pope Adrian IV, who died thirty-nine days after his election to the supreme pontificate without having been crowned, is one of the fine passages of the poem.

"And he to me: 'Why Heaven makes us turn our backs to it, thou shalt learn: but first know that I was the successor of Peter. Between Siesti and Chiaveri there rushes down a fair river and from its name the title of my race takes its proudest distinction. For one month and a little more I experienced how heavily the great mantle weighs on him who keeps it out of the mire, so much so that all the other burdens seem but feathers. My conversion alas! was tardy; but when I had become the Roman pastor then I discovered how false life is. In it I found that the heart had no repose nor was it possible to rise higher in that life; wherefore the desire for this (immortal life) was kindled in me. Up to that time, I was a wretched soul and severed from God, wholly given up to Avarice. Now as thou seest I am punished for it here. What is the effect of Avarice is here made manifest in the purgation of the converted souls, and the mountain has no more bitter penalty, as our eyes fixed on earthly things, were not lifted up on high, even so has justice sunk them to the ground in this place. Even as Avarice quenched our love for every good, wherefore our works were lost, so justice doth hold us fast, bound and seized by feet and hands; and so long as it shall be the pleasure of the just Lord, so long shall we lie here motionless and outstretched.'" (XIX, 97.)

197

At this point occurs one of those delightful surprises full of realism, that Dante uses from time to time to heighten the reader's interest. The poet has just learned that the spirit before him is Pope Adrian IV. At once Dante falls on his knees to pay homage to the high office of the Roman Pontiff, and he is about to say according to the conjecture of Benvenuto "Holy Father, I entreat your holiness to excuse my natural ignorance, for I was not aware of your being Pope." But the spirit bids the poet arise, telling him that in the spirit world the dignities and relations of this life are abolished.

"I on my knees had fallen and wished to speak;
But even as I began and he was aware,

Only by listening, of my reverence,
 'What cause,' he said, 'has downward bent thee thus?'
 And I told him: 'For your dignity,
 Standing, my conscience stung me with remorse.'
 'Straighten thy legs, and upward raise thee, brother,'
 He answered, 'Err not, fellow servant am I
 With thee and with the others to one power
 If e'er that holy, evangelic sound
 Which sayeth *neque nubent*, thou hast heard
 Well canst thou see why in this wise I speak."
 (XIX, 127.)

198

In this part of Purgatory Dante treats his readers to two other instances of surprise. The first case which also makes use of the dramatic quality of suspense, postponing the explanation to the following canto in order to prolong the eager expectation of the reader, narrates the occurrence of a wonderful phenomenon, the shaking of the mountain of Purgatory, accompanied by a harmonious outburst of joyful thanksgiving.

"We were striving to surmount the way so far as was permitted to our power when I felt the mountain quake like a thing which is falling; whereupon a chill gripped me, as is wont to grip him who is given to death. Of a surety Delos was not shaken so violently ere Latona made her nest therein to give birth to heaven's two eyes. Then began on all sides a shout, such that the Master drew toward me saying: 'Fear not while I do guide thee.' *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* all were saying, by what I understood from those near by, whose cry could be heard. Motionless we stood and in suspense, like the shepherds who first heard that hymn, until the quaking ceased and it was ended. Then we took up again our holy way, looking at the shades, that lay on the ground already returned to their wonted plaint. No ignorance, if my memory err not in this, did ever with so great assault give me yearning for knowledge, I then seemed to have while pondering: nor by reason of our haste was I bold to ask; nor of myself could I see aught there; thus I went on timid and pensive."

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His curiosity is satisfied in an unexpected way. "The natural thirst which never is sated, save with the water whereof the poor Samaritan woman asked the grace, was burning within me—and lo, even as Luke writes to us that Christ appeared to the two who were on the way, already risen from the mouth of the tomb, a shade appeared to us saying: 'My brothers God give you peace.' Quickly we turned us and Virgil gave back to him the sign that is fitting thereto. Then began, 'May the true court that binds me in eternal exile, bring thee peace to the council of the blest.' 'How,' said he, and meantime we met sturdily, 'If ye are shades that God deigns not above, who hath escorted you so far by his stairs'? And my Teacher: 'If thou lookest at the marks which this man bears and which the angel outlines clearly wilt thou see 'tis meet he reign with the good.... Wherefore I was brought from Hell's wide jaws to guide him and I will guide him onward, so far as my school can lead him. But tell us, if thou knowest, why the mount gave before such quakings and wherefore all seemed to shout with one voice down to its soft base.'"

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It was the very question Dante had been yearning to utter.

"Thus, by asking did he thread the very needle of my desire and with the pope alone my thirst was made less fasting."

The spirit, Statius by name, who has just obtained his release from Purgatorial confinement to ascend to Heaven, states that the earthquake was not due to natural causes, such as strong dry vapors producing wind, but was caused by spiritual elements operative upon a soul's completing the penance and term assigned.

"It quakes here when some soul feeleth herself cleansed, so that she may rise up or set forth, to mount on high, and such a shout follows her. Of the cleansing the will alone gives proof, which fills the soul, all free to change her cloister, and avails her to will.... And I who have lain under this torment five hundred years and more, only now felt free will for a better threshold. Therefore didst thou feel the earthquake and hear the pious spirits about the mount give praises to the Lord."

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This Statius was a Roman poet who died in the year 96. His term in Purgatory therefore has lasted a little more than eleven centuries. The next longest period mentioned by Dante is that of Duke Hugh Capet who has been in Purgatory over 350 years with his purification still incomplete. Statius by Dante's poetic invention is represented first as saved through the influence of Virgil's poems and then is shown to be a Christian, having been led to embrace Christianity both from the heroic example of the martyrs and from his meditation on Virgil's prophecy of the Cumæan Sibyl interpreted in the Middle Ages to refer to Christ. In the *Divina Commedia* Statius pays a glowing tribute to the *Æneid* and its author, wholly ignorant that he is addressing Virgil himself. "Of the *Æneid* I speak which was a mother to me and was to me a nurse in poesy ... and to have lived yonder when Virgil was alive, I would consent to one sun more than I need perform." Dante is all a quiver to surprise Statius with the information that Virgil is at hand, "but Virgil turned to

"But the power which wills
 Bears not supreme control: laughter and tears
 Follow so closely on the passion prompts them,
 They wait not for the motions of the will
 In nature most sincere. I did but smile,
 As one who winks; and thereupon the shade
 Broke off, and peer'd into mine eyes, where best
 Our looks interpret. 'So to good event
 Mayst thou conduct such great emprize,' he cried,
 'Say, why across thy visage beam'd, but now,
 The lightning of a smile.' On either part
 Now am I straiten'd; one conjures me speak,
 The other to silence binds me; whence a sigh
 I utter, and the sigh is heard. 'Speak on,'
 The teacher cried 'and do not fear to speak:
 But tell him what so earnestly he asks.'
 Whereon I thus: 'Perchance, O ancient spirit
 Thou marvel'st at my smiling. There is room
 For yet more wonder. He, who guides my ken
 On high, he is that Mantuan, led by whom
 Thou didst presume of men and gods to sing.
 If other cause thou deem'dst for which I smiled,
 Leave it as not the true one: and believe
 Those words, thou spakest of him, indeed the cause.'
 Now down he bent to embrace my teacher's feet;
 But he forbade him: 'Brother! do it not:
 Thou art a shadow, and behold'st a shade.'
 He, rising, answer'd thus: 'Now hast thou proved
 The force and ardor of the love I bear thee,
 When I forget we are but things of air,
 And, as a substance, treat an empty shade.'"
 (XXI, 106.)

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On the sixth terrace Dante with five P's removed, accompanied by Virgil sees the souls of those who sinned by gluttony. They are an emaciated crowd obliged to pass and repass before a fruit-laden tree bedewed with clear water from a fountain, without being able to satisfy their hunger or quench their thirst. Voices from this tree proclaim examples of temperance; voices from another tree equally tantalizing, declare examples of gluttony.

"People I saw beneath it (the tree) lift their hands
 And cry I know not what towards the leaves,
 Like little children eager and deluded,
 Who pray, and he they pray to doth not answer
 But, to make very keen their appetite
 Holds their desire aloft and hides it not.
 Then they departed as if undeceived."
 (XXIV, 106.)

Here Dante recognizes among the gaunt attenuated figures of the penitents, Forese Donati, his intimate friend and kinsman of his wife Gemma. Our poet was surprised to find him so soon after his death on one of the terraces of Purgatory, the assumption being that because of his delay of conversion to the end of his life Forese would be in Outer Purgatory for a term equal in duration to the length of his life on earth. But the reason he had come so quickly to Purgatory is to be found in the efficacy of the prayers of his widow for the repose of his soul.

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"Then answered he: 'That now I wander reaping
 The bitter sweat of all this punishment
 My Nella gained for me, her vigil keeping
 In prayer devout and infinite lament.
 Thus, here, beyond that shore of waiting sent,
 I landed, from the lower circles freed.
 And that more dear to God omnipotent
 Lives on my little widow, is the meed
 Of the lone life she spends in many a saintly deed.'"
 (XXXIII, 85.)

Before ascending to the seventh and last terrace Dante describes how the angel of abstinence removed the sixth P.

"And as the harbinger of early dawn,
 The air of May doth move and breathe out fragrance
 Impregnate all with herbage and with flowers,
 So did I feel a breeze strike in the midst
 My front, and felt the moving of the plumes
 That breathed around an odor of ambrosia;

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And heard it said; Blessed are they whom grace
So much illumines that the love of taste
Excites not in their breasts too great desire,
Hungering at all times so far as is just."
(XXIV, 145.)

And now our penitent as he reaches the seventh terrace, where sins against the virtue of purity are expiated, enters upon the last stage of his purification. Here the spirits pass and repass through the midst of intensely hot flames, proclaiming examples of chastity. It is worthy of note that this terrace is the only place in Dante's Purgatory where fire is the punitive agent—a conception of our poet all the more remarkable because it runs counter to the view commonly held by the churchmen in the West, including St. Augustine, St. Gregory the Great, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, who teach that fire is the cleansing element of all Purgatory. That indeed is only a theological opinion. The Church itself, as the Greeks were assured at the Council of Florence, has never put forth any dogmatic decree on the subject.

Bidden by the angel to enter the fire, Dante draws back paralysed with fear. Scenes of burning at the stake come with horror to his mind. He probably recalls also that Florence had condemned him to be burned alive. So, for the first time in Purgatory he recoils at the penance he must perform. Impassionately Virgil exhorts him. The stubborn pupil yields only at the utterance of Beatrice's name. For love of her he will endure the flame.

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"The Mantuan spake: 'My son,
Here torment thou mayst feel, but canst not death.
Remember thee, remember thee, if I
Safe e'en on Geryon brought thee; now I come
More near to God, wilt thou not trust me now?
Of this be sure; though in its womb that flame
A thousand years contain'd thee, from thy head
No hair should perish. If thou doubt my truth,
Approach; and with thy hands thy vesture's hem
Stretch forth, and for thyself confirm belief.
Lay now all fear, oh! lay all fear aside.
Turn hither, and come onward undismay'd.'
I still, though conscience urged, no step advanced.
When still he saw me fix'd and obstinate,
Somewhat disturb'd he cried: 'Mark now, my son,
From Beatrice thou art by this wall
Divided.' As at Thisbe's name the eye
Of Pyramus was open'd (when life ebb'd
Fast from his veins) and took one parting glance,
While vermeil dyed the mulberry; thus I turned
To my sage guide, relenting, when I heard
The name that springs for ever in my breast.
He shook his forehead; and, 'How long,' he said,
'Linger we now'? then smiled, as one would smile
Upon a child that eyes the fruit and yields.
Into the fire before me then he walk'd;
And Statius, who erewhile no little space
Had parted us, he pray'd to come behind,
I would have cast me into molten glass
To cool me, when I entered; so intense
Raged the conflagrant mass. The sire beloved,
To comfort me, as he proceeded, still
Of Beatrice talk'd. 'Her eyes,' saith he,
'E'en now I seem to view.' From the other side
A voice, that sang did guide us; and the voice
Following, with heedful ear, we issued forth,
There where the path led upward. 'Come,' we heard,
'Come blessed of my Father.'"
(Canto, XXVII, 20.)

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On emerging from the fire and on the very threshold of the Garden of Eden, Dante is addressed by Virgil, no longer competent to guide him higher. The Mantuan in touching words tells his disciple that having passed through Purgatory he needs no other guide than his own will, upright and sound, until he passes under the tutelage of Beatrice.

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"The temporal fire and the eternal
Son, thou hast seen, and to a place art come
Where of myself no farther I discern.
By intellect and art I here have brought thee;
Take thine own pleasure for thy guide henceforth;
Beyond the steep ways and the narrow art thou.
Expect no more or word or sign from me;
Free and upright and sound is thy free will,
And error were it not to do its bidding

Thee o'er thyself I therefore crown and mitre."
(XXVII, 127.)

Brother Azarias gives us the mystical sense of this passage. "The soul has conquered; therefore Virgil leaves the poet free from the dominion of his passions; more than free, a king crowned triumphant over himself; more than a king, a mitred priest, ruling the cloister of his heart, his thoughts and his affections and mediator and intercessor before Divine Mercy for himself and those commending themselves to his prayers."

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So crowned and mitred over himself Dante now enters the Garden of Eden.

"Here did the parents of mankind dwell in innocence; here is there perpetual spring and every fruit."

In the forest of Eden is a pure stream with two currents, Lethe and Eunoe, "the first has the power of all past sins the memory to erase, the other can restore remembrance of good deeds and pious days." On the banks of this stream the poet sees Matilda, who represents the Active Life.

"There appeared to me a lady all alone who went along singing and selecting from among the flowers wherewith all her path was enamelled" ... suddenly "the lady turned completely round towards me, saying, 'My Brother, look and listen'" (XXIX, 15). A solemn chant is heard, a wonderful light is seen. It is a pageant representing the return of mankind to Eden through membership in the Church.

First come, shedding heavenly light, the seven mystical candlesticks, symbolic of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost or the seven sacraments of the Church. Next follow twenty-four ancients representing the books of the Old Testament. Then are seen the four prophetic animals symbolizing the four Evangelists. Christ drawing a chariot representing the Church, the central figure of the pageant, advances under the form of the fabulous griffin, half eagle and half lion, typifying the two-fold nature of our Lord. On the right side of the chariot, dancing are three nymphs, the theological virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity. On the left side are four other nymphs—the cardinal virtues, Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance. Next come two old men, dignified and grave, St. Paul and St. Luke, who are followed by four others representing other books of the New Testament viz., the Epistles of St. James, St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude. The rear guard is an aged Solitary symbolic of the Apocalypse.

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"And when the chariot was opposite to me" writes Dante, "a clap of thunder was heard; and those worthy folk seemed to have their further march forbidden, and halted there with the first ensign" (XXIX, 153).

What is the meaning of this symbolic procession so common to Dante's day, so alien to ours? We have already said that it is a dramatic representation of the human race finding happiness, finding its Eden in its membership in the Church. But it, also, is a symbolic lesson for the individual. Dante, the type of humanity having done penance for his sins, is about to be received through the sacrament of penance into the soul of the Church i.e. into the full communion of grace. It is fitting, therefore, that the Church should advance to meet him, the repentant sinner, and should reveal itself to him before receiving him into its bosom.

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If objection be made that Dante already has been absolved from sin and in Purgatory has made expiation for his offences, the answer is given by Ozanam; "At the term of the expiatory course, as at its beginning, to quit it as well as to enter upon it, we must render submission to a religious authority and fulfill the conditions without which God does not treat with us—confession for oblivion, fears for consolation and shame for definitive rehabilitation." When the pageant comes to a halt the participants group themselves about the Griffin and the Chariot, by that act declaring that the goal and object of their desires are centered in Christ and His Church. Then one of the company by divine command calls aloud three times to a heavenly being, the spouse of the Church, to appear and the cry is repeated by the whole company. From the Chariot arise, as will arise the dead from their graves, a hundred angels scattering flowers over and around the Chariot and also raising their voices in the call for the Heavenly Bride. They first sing the words of the Canticle of Palm Sunday. *Benedictus qui venis* (Blessed art thou who comest) and then the beautiful line from the Aeneid: *Manibus o date lilia plenis* (Oh! give lilies with full hands). Then comes from the clouds through the midst of the flowers showering down again within and without the Chariot, arrayed in the colors of the three theological virtues, the object of the invocation.

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"Crowned with olive over a white veil a Lady appeared to me, vested in hue of living flame under a green mantle." It is Beatrice, Dante's beloved, now apotheosized in the personification of Revelation. What other poet ever dreamed of so glorifying his beloved that for her coming the natural virtues prepare the way, the supernatural virtues, as handmaids accompany her to assist us to the understanding of her doctrine, the angels sing her laudation and she herself in the role both of unveiler of the Scriptures of the Prophets and the Apostles and the mystical Bride of the Canticles is worthy to be called "O Light, O Glory of the human race?"

Dante before seeing her face, recognizes her by some mysterious instinct of love, recognizes her after a lapse according to fiction of ten years, but in reality of twenty-four years since her death.

To Virgil, Dante turns to tell the joyous news but Virgil has gone and tears course down the

face of his disciple.

"Dante," says Beatrice, "weep not that Virgil leaves thee, nay weep thou not yet, for thou wilt have to weep for another wound." Awed by her appearance, he is taken back by her greeting. The mere thought of her loveliness uplifted him in the world. The hope of seeing her carried him through the horrors of Hell and the penance of Purgatory. Crowned and mitred over himself he came to Eden to meet her. And she has only reproaches for him. Particularly to the angels does she tell the story of his defection from the high ideals which she inspired in him. "This man was such in his new life potentially that every good talent would have made wondrous increase in him —(but) so low sank he that all means for his salvation were already short save showing him the lost people. For this I visited the portal of the dead and to him who has guided him up hither, weeping my prayers were borne. God's high decree would be broken if Lethe were passed and such viands were tasted, without some sort of penitence that may shed tears."

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To her lover she turns for confirmation of the truth of her words: "Say, say if this is true; to such accusation thy confession must be joined."

"Confusion and fear together mingled, drove forth from my mouth a 'Yea,'" a monosyllable of confession which showed the depth of his shame.

But it is the sight of the superhuman beauty of Beatrice which completes his contrition and resuscitates his love so as to fit him to pass through the waters of the Lethe.

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"My eyes beheld Beatrice, turned toward the animal (the Griffin) that is One Person only (Christ) in twofold nature (i.e. God and man). Under her veil and on the far side of the stream she seemed to me to surpass more her ancient self, than she surpassed the others here when she was with us. So much remorse gnawed at my heart that I fell vanquished and what I then became she knoweth who gave me the cause." (XXXI, 82.)

When he recovers consciousness he finds his immersion in the Lethe in progress by Matilda. Then he is led to Beatrice by the four nymphs (the cardinal virtues) and at the request of the three nymphs who typify the theological virtues she smiles upon him.

"The fair lady (Matilda) dipped me where I must needs swallow of the water, then drew me forth and led me, bathed, within the dance of the four fair ones, and each did cover me with her arm. 'Here we are nymphs and in heaven are stars. Ere Beatrice descended to the world, we were ordained for her handmaids: we will lead thee to her eyes: but the three on the other side who deeper gaze will sharpen thine eyes to the joyous light that is within.'"

Beholding the glorified beauty of Beatrice wholly inexpressible, Dante is in such rapture that he is oblivious of everything else.

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"Mine eyes with such an eager coveting
Were bent to rid them of their ten years' thirst
No other sense was waking; and e'en they
Were fenced on either side from heed of aught:
So tangled, in its custom'd toils, that smile
Of saintly brightness drew it to itself."

When our poet comes out of his rapture, the Chariot and the mystical company are moving to a tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which according to a beautiful tradition has become the Cross of Christ, the tree of salvation. To that tree is attached the Chariot which Christ (the Griffin) now leaves to enter Heaven again with the ancients and the angels. Beatrice remains with the seven nymphs to guard the Chariot (the Church). Up to this point the picture of the Church has been one of peace and happiness. Now with prophetic eye the poet beholds the tribulations which the Church will suffer from without and within. The description of the vision and the explanation of the symbolism are so well set forth by Ozanam that I quote his words unable to improve upon them, as I also share his view as to the unwarranted severity here of Dante's censures of the Church.

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"An eagle falls like lightning upon the tree, from which he tears the bark, and upon the car, which bends beneath his weight. Then comes a fox which finds its way within, and then a portion is torn off by a dragon that issues from the gaping earth. Thus far it is easy to recognize the persecutions of the Roman emperors which so harried the Church, the heresies by which it was desolated, and the schisms by which it was torn. Soon, the eagle reappeared, less menacing but not less dangerous; he shook his plumes above the sacred car, which speedily underwent a monstrous transformation. From divers parts of it arose seven heads armed with ten horns; a courtesan was seated in the midst; a giant stood at her side, exchanging with her impure caresses which he interrupted to scourge her cruelly. Then, cutting loose the metamorphosed car, he bears it away, and is lost with it in the depths of the forest.

"Is not this again the Church, enriched, by the gifts of princes who have become her protectors, sadly marred in appearance, sundry of her members defiled by the taint of the seven capital sins, and herself ruled over by unworthy pontiffs? Is not this the court of Rome, exchanging criminal flatteries with the temporal power, which flatteries are to be followed by cruel injuries, when the Holy See, torn from the foot of the cross of the Vatican, is transferred to a distant land, on the banks of a foreign river? But these ills will not be without end nor without retribution. The tree that lost and that saved the world cannot be touched with impunity, and if the Church has been made militant here below, it is with the liability of suffering from passing reverses, but also with

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the assurance of final victory."

Dante's own eternal victory is now assured, Beatrice directs Matilda to lead him to the Eunoe, whose waters will regenerate him and fit him to ascend to Paradise. "Behold, Eunoe which gushes forth yonder, lead him thereto and as thou art wont, revive in him again his fainting powers."

The poem closes with an address to the reader:

"If, Reader, I possessed a longer space
For writing it, I yet would sing in part
Of the sweet draught that ne'er would satiate me;
But inasmuch as full are all the leaves
Made ready for this second canticle,
The curb of art no farther lets me go.
From the most holy water I returned
Regenerate, in the manner of new trees
That are renewed with a new foliage,
Pure and disposed to mount unto the stars."
(Purg., XXXIII, 136.)

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DANTE'S PARADISO

Of Dante's trilogy the Paradiso is truly his "medieval miracle of song," the supreme achievement of his genius. Here the poetry of the sublime reaches its highest point—the summit on which Dante is a lonely and unchallenged figure. "No uninspired hand," says Cardinal Manning, "has ever written thoughts so high in words, so resplendent, as the last stanza of the Divina Commedia." It was said of St. Thomas: "*Post Summam Thomæ nihil restat nisi lumen gloriæ.*" It may be said of Dante: "*Post Dantis Paradisum nihil restat nisi visio Dei.*" ("After Dante's Paradiso nothing remains but the vision of God.")

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Shelley's tribute to the supremacy of Dante's Heaven is no less beautiful: "Dante's apotheosis of Beatrice and the gradations of his own love and her loveliness by which, as by steps, he feigns himself to have ascended to the throne of the Supreme Cause, is the most glorious imagination of modern poetry."

Ruskin says: "Every line of the Paradiso is full of the most exquisite and spiritual expressions of Christian truths and the poem is only less read than the Inferno because it requires far greater attention and perhaps, for its full enjoyment, a holier heart."

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That Dante's Inferno is more popular reading than his Paradiso is due to the fact that evil and its consequences offer to the artist richer material for dramatic fascination and to the reader more lively interest in characters intensely human, than does the less sensational story of the Elects finding peace and happiness in a realm transcending the experiences of human nature. Dante's Purgatorio also finds a wider circle of readers because his penitents, suffering, struggling and aspiring, like people upon earth, have more human traits and exhibit more human interest than the saints confirmed in grace against human weakness.

Another reason for lesser interest manifested in this part of the Divina Commedia is the difficulty and obscurity of the Paradiso. It is not easy reading, because it requires study, repetition, concentration, meditation, qualities absent from the art of reading as it prevails today. If we ever have time to look at a book, the habit of skimming with inattentive rapidity so urges us onward that we find ourselves flitting from page to page, from chapter to chapter, panting and uninstructed. And if we belong to the bookless majority who have no time to read, we rush to the moving picture theatre to get our mental pabulum—often a season's best seller—boiled down, served in rapid-fire order and bolted in the twinkling of an eye. For all such Dante's Paradiso is an intellectual as well as a spiritual impossibility and the poet begs such not to follow him on his voyage to the eternal kingdom.

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"Oh ye who in some pretty little boat
Eager to listen, have been following
Behind my ship, that singing sails along,
Turn back to look again upon your shores;
In losing me, you might yourselves be lost.
The sea I sail has never yet been passed.
Minerva breathes, and pilots me Apollo,
And Muses nine point out to me the Bears.
Ye other few, who have the neck uplifted
Betimes to th' bread of Angels upon which
One liveth here and grows not sated by it,
Well may you launch upon the deep salt-sea
Your vessel, keeping still my wake before you

Upon the water that grows smooth again.
Those glorious ones who unto Colchos passed
Were not so wonder-struck as you shall be,
When Jason they beheld a ploughman made."
(II, 1.)

The song which Dante sings in the Paradiso is the eternal happiness of man in vision, love and enjoyment united to his Creator. In preparation for this final consummation the poet, as he ascends to the Empyrean, gives a most beautiful epitome of the principal mysteries of religion and of some of the tenets of scholastic philosophy, treating especially the Fall of Man, Predestination, Free Will, the Redemption, the Immortality of the Soul and the theory of Human Knowledge. Allegorically considered, the poem is a veil, under which we see the ideal life of man upon earth, exercising virtue and gaining virtue's rewards.

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To exhibit man's supreme, happiness in the next life, the Christian poet, insisting that his purpose is the inculcation of truth, both to save and to adorn the soul, must base his theme upon the doctrines of the Church. The definition of some of those dogmas Dante anticipated. All may be summed up in the following statement:

"It is of Catholic faith that the souls of the blessed see God directly and face to face and this vision is Supernatural; that there are degrees of this vision, corresponding to the merits of the elect; that to see God in His Essence, the intellect is supernaturally perfected; that the Beatific Vision is not deferred to the Day of Judgment, but is possessed at once after death but the Just, in whom there is no stain of sin or who have no temporal punishment to be expiated; and, furthermore, that all human beings at the end of the world will arise with their own bodies."

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How will the poet bring home those incomprehensible truths to his readers? He has to treat a subject wholly transcendent and supernatural. Though his vision be celestial, his language must be terrestrial. He must visualize states of the soul which are alien to the eyes of the body and translate into terms of the senses things which are wholly non-sensuous. Dante is aware that no poet ever essayed that feat before: "The sea I sail has never yet been passed." (1, 8.) He knows, also, that shoals and rocks, seemingly impassable and a sea which may engulf his genius, are before him. "It is no coastwise voyage for a little barque, this sea through which the intrepid prow goes cleaving nor for a pilot who would spare himself." (XXIII, 67.)

And yet he will attempt the impossible, he will endeavor to sing not of the scenes but of the states of suprasensible spiritual joys—joys which Bishop Norris says "are without example, above experience and beyond imagination, for which the whole creation wants a comparison, we an apprehension and even the word of God, a revelation." Conscious of all that, Dante confesses the impotency of speech, the inadequacy of memory, the helplessness of imagination for the task to which he sets himself. He tells us that the sublime songs of the elect "have lapsed and fallen out of my memory"—"that to represent and transhumanize in words impossible were." (I, 71.)

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"And what was the sun wherein I entered,
Apparent, not by color, but by light
I, though I call on genius, art and practice
Cannot so tell that it could be imagined."
(X, 41.)

So by the very nature of the subject visualization can be only partial—only "the shadow of the blessed realm," can be shown. But what human nature can do, even if its feat seems solitary and unique, Dante has accomplished in a failure which constitutes the most wonderful achievement in the domain of the sublime in literature, an achievement leaving us with a sense of his own ineffable bliss and of the inexpressible joys of the Elect—an achievement which came to pass, say some readers, because his poem is an account of a supernatural vision—and Dante hints that he thinks he was so favored, or because it is a work to which both heaven and earth have set their hand, showing him, as Emerson observes, "all imagination," or, as James Russell Lowell says, "The highest spiritual nature which has expressed itself in rhythmical form."

227

There are two methods of representing man's supreme happiness, relative and absolute: one is to depict nature at her best, untouched by sin, and to show man free from every defect and blemish, in the full perfection of his being. Naturally the imagery in this case is the imagery born of finite human experiences. The other method describes, as we said, not scenes of happiness but transcendent conditions of the soul as it is brought into ultimate communion with Supreme Goodness—the finite possessing and enjoying the Infinite. Here the human mind, let us repeat it, finds earthly images powerless to translate its thought, for it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive the glory of the spiritual world. These two methods Dante follows successively.

His Eden on the summit of Purgatory is literally the earthly Paradise of Adam and Eve. It is pictured in moving imagery as man's "native country of delights," a "lofty garden" of ineffable loveliness, high above all the physical and moral disturbances of earth, its waters, its winds, its flowers and its music all coming from supernatural sources, its bliss springing from the perfect harmony of man's animal, intellectual and spiritual powers in full and perfect accord with reason. It is Paradise Regained by man's climbing the mountain of Purgatory, and its significance is understood if we remember that Dante would teach us that the present life can be made dual, a life worth while in itself, full of service and godliness as well as a preparation for the unending life of Heaven.

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For Dante there must be, also, the Celestial Paradise where man's supernatural destiny will be realized in joys which the eye has not seen and in music which the ear has not heard. His Paradiso has been called the Ten Heavens, but in reality there is in his plan only one Heaven, the Empyrean, the abode of the angels, of the blessed spirits and of God. It is high above the planets and the stars, beyond time and space. The Church has never answered the question: Where is Heaven? Theologians, however, have put forth various opinions. "Some say," writes Father Hontheim, that "Heaven is everywhere, as God is everywhere, the blessed being free to move freely in every part of the universe while still remaining with God and seeing Him everywhere." Others hold that Heaven is "a special place with definite limits. Naturally this place is held to exist, not within the earth, but in accordance with the expressions of Scripture, 'without and beyond its limits.'" (Cath. Encycl., VII, 170.)

According to Dante's conception, Heaven, being non-spatial and non-temporal, is not a place but a state of spiritual life. As an aid in depicting that state he makes use of a unique literary device. He poetically creates nine Heavens, the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the Fixed Stars, the Primum Mobile or First Movement. These, according to the Ptolemaic system which our poet follows, are concentric with the earth, around which as their center they revolve, while the earth remains fixed and motionless. The motion of each of these nine spheres, originally coming from the Primum Mobile, is communicated to it by the love of the angelic guardians, a literal application of the common saying that "love makes the world go around."

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As a poetic fiction necessary for him to enter finally the true Heaven Dante is required to pass through these nine spheres, the fiction being used by him as an artist to declare the glories of the heavens and as a teacher to inculcate doctrines for the instruction and edification of mankind. In each of the nine Heavens groups of the blessed are represented as coming to meet him "as he returns to God as to the port whence (he) set out when (he) first entered upon the sea of this life."

This peerless rhetorical figure is explained in the Banquet, where he says: "As his fellow-citizens come forth to meet him who returns from a long journey even before he enters the gates of his city; so to the noble soul come forth the citizens of the eternal Life." This apparition of the blessed spirits to greet the mystic traveller as he mounts from sphere to sphere has several advantages: "it peoples with hosts of spirits, the immense lonely spaces through which the journey lies"; it affords the poet the opportunity of asking them "many things which have great utility and delight"; it finally gives him a sensible sign of the degree of beatitude which they possess in that realm of many mansions where each is rewarded according to his merit and capacity, the capacity of each spirit being in proportion to its degree of knowledge and love. This is stressed by the poet's representing the apparitions first as faint yet beautiful outlines of human features, then as ascent is made to the other Heavens, the spirits make themselves known by increasing manifestations of light so dazzling finally that the splendor would blind Dante if his vision were not divinely adapted to its supernatural needs.

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The inequalities of bliss are also symbolized by the sphere in which the spirits appear to him; those in the sphere of the moon, e.g., are less favored than those in the Heaven of Mercury. The inequality of merit, and therefore of reward, is also declared by the difference in both the quickness of the spirits' movement and their clearness of vision into the essence of God. The Empyrean, it is worth while repeating, is the only true Paradise, the nine Heavens being only myths or poetic devices. If spirits are seen there, they have come forth only from the Empyrean and will quickly return there after preparing the poet for the eternal Light of Light.

231

The materials out of which Dante constructs his Paradiso are not, as we are already aware, fantastic images such as he employed for the first two parts of the Divina Commedia, but are things of the spirit, viz., knowledge, beauty, faith, love, joy; and he is aided in making visible those invisible entities of the spiritual life by such intangible things as sound, motion and light.

Light, indeed, is one of the leading elements in the Paradiso. The poem begins with a reference to the light of God's glory, and its last line speaks of "the Love which moves the Sun and the other stars." And between this beginning and this end in thirty-three cantiche light is represented not only by degrees of increasing intensity and variety of unlocked for movements but as surrounding the spirits, living flames, and constituting, symbolically, the beatitude of Heaven.

Dean Church, in his classic essay on Dante, has a beautiful paragraph that here calls for quotation: "Light in general is his special and chosen source of poetic beauty. No poet that we know has shown such singular sensibility to its varied appearances.... Light everywhere—in the sky and earth and sea—in the stars, the flames, the lamp, the gems—broken in the water, reflected from the mirror, transmitted through the glass, or colored through the edge of the fractured emerald—dimmed in the mist. The halo, the deep water—streaming through the rent cloud, glowing in the coal, quivering in the lightning, flashing in the topaz and the ruby, veiled behind the pure alabaster, mellowed and clouding itself in the pearl—light contrasted with shadow, shading off and copying itself in the double rainbow like voice and echo—light seen within light—light from every source and in all its shapes illuminates, irradiates, gives glory to the Commedia.... And when he (Dante) rises beyond the regions of earthly day, light, simple and unalloyed, unshadowed and eternal, lifts the creations of his thought above all affinity to time and matter; light never fails him, as the expression of the gradations of bliss; never reappears the same, never refuses the new shapes of his invention, never becomes confused or dim, though it is seldom thrown into distinct figure and still more seldom colored."

232

In making light such a central feature of Heaven and symbolically in identifying light with God and the angels and the blessed, Dante is only expressing—but expressing beautifully and supremely—the thought which pagan oracles proclaimed and Holy Writ and the Church made known. From the earliest ages the sun which vivifies and illuminates the world was regarded by many nations as the symbol of the Deity—and by still other nations it was adored. The psalmist, addressing God, says: "Thou art clothed with light as with a garment." (Ps., CIII, 2.) St. Paul declares that the Lord of Lords "inhabiteth light inaccessible." (1 Tim., VI, 16.) The Seer of Patmos tells us that the heavenly Jerusalem has no need of the light of the sun and the moon to shine upon it, "for the glory of God hath enlightened it and the Lamb is the lamp thereof." (Apoc., XX, 23.) "I am the light of the world," declares Christ, and with that revelation ringing in his ears the Beloved Disciple does not hesitate to say: "and this is the declaration which we have heard—that God is light." (I John, I, 5.) In narrating his vision of Heaven, Ezechial compares the light emanating from and enveloping the Deity, to fire. "I saw the likeness as of the appearance of fire, as the appearance of brightness." (XXIV, 17.) Moses on the mountain saw the Lord in the midst of fire, and on another mountain Christ, "the brightness of his Father's glory was transfigured before his apostles and his face did shine as the Sun and his garments became shining or glittering." (Matt., XVII, 2.) Small wonder then that the Nicaean creed declares that Christ is "God of God, Light of light." Not only with God, but with His saints is the idea of visible light intimately associated. The prophet Daniel tells us that "They that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that instruct many unto justice, as stars to all eternity." (XII, 3.) And it is Christ Himself who says: "Then shall the just shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father." (Matt., XIII, 43.)

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In using such a subtle, dazzling element as light so generally and in such countless varieties throughout his *Paradiso*, Dante is exposed to the danger of palling his readers with brightness and making them lose interest in things glorious and supernal. But the genius of the man saves the artist. By a conception of matchless beauty he binds the light of heaven to the human, making the smile in the eye of his beloved guide, Beatrice, express his own personal heaven, in the light that enters his mind and the ardor which quickens his heart. As he mounts with her the stairway of the heavens leading to the Eternal Palace and his motion is brought about simply by his gazing into her eyes, she makes known to him by her increasing brightness both his own mounting knowledge and his ascent nearer the Empyrean.

As Dante represents the increase of light and love deepening and expanding in him as he rises empyreanward all by the loved smile of his beloved Beatrice, it is well that we bear in mind the significance of the symbolism as expounded by the poet in his *Banquet*. (III, 15.) Beatrice being Revelation or Wisdom made known to the world, "in her face appear things that tell of the pleasures of Paradise and ... the place wherein this appears is in her eyes and her smile. And here it should be known that the eyes of Wisdom are the two demonstrations by which is seen the truth most certainly; and her smile is her persuasion by which is shown forth the interior light of Wisdom under some veil; and in these two things is felt the highest pleasure of beatitude, which is the greatest good of Paradise."

235

Beatrice—Revealed Truth—remains the poet's guide until he comes to behold the Beatific Vision. Then, no longer needed, she withdraws in favor of the contemplative St. Bernard as guide, just as Virgil had withdrawn when he was powerless and when Beatrice was needed.

The question here presents itself: In what does Dante place the happiness of Heaven? Does he paint such a Heaven that it shows principally the rectifications of the inequalities of this life—a Heaven of such happiness, e.g., that the poor will love poverty or be resigned to it in the hope of possessing the riches of this Eternity? Is Dante's Heaven one in which happiness is so alluring that innocence will gladly submit to calumny and faith will lovingly welcome the sword or stake, in the certain confidence of gaining unending glory or bliss? The *Paradiso* does reward poverty, crown innocence, glorify martyrdom, but it was never intended to be an account of what takes place in the real Heaven, or to be a description of the particular acts of goodness which win Heaven for the soul, or a rapturous picture appealing to the emotions of the believer and alluring him from earth.

236

Does Dante place the happiness of Heaven in the bliss and glorification of family reunion?

He is too good a theologian to place the essential happiness of Heaven merely in the joy of family reunion. He does not ignore that feature of eternity, but he does not stress it, because temperamentally he is moved less by sentiment of family and ties of friendship than by his curiosity for knowledge, by his yearnings to behold Eternal Wisdom. Only once does he mention Heaven as the state of reunion of families and friends, and that is when he comments upon the action of the twenty-three spirits in the Heaven of the Sun, in expressing their agreement with Soloman's discourse as to the participation which the human body will have, after the Resurrection in the glories of Paradise:

"So ready and so cordial an Amen
Follow'd from either choir, as plainly spoke
Desire of their dead bodies; yet perchance
Not for themselves, but for their kindred dear,
Mothers and sires and those whom best they loved,
Ere they were made imperishable flames."
(XIV, 65.)

237

For Dante, Heaven must be the beatitude of the intellect and that primarily by the intellect's

having an intuition full of joy in the Divine Essence, and secondly by its possessing full light on all those vexatious problems and mysteries which baffle us in this life.

"Well I perceive that never sated is
Our intellect unless Truth illumines it,
Beyond which nothing true expands itself.
It rests therein, as wild beast in his lair
When it attains it and it can attain it."
(IV, 125.)

In insisting upon the power of the mind to know the truth and to find perfect happiness in the supernatural act of beholding God face to face, Dante is not in agreement with Pragmatism, Hegelianism and the "new Realist" theory—all which make truth elusive to the mind; but he is in full accord with the teaching of the Catholic Church, which defends the rights of reason holding, e.g., that "by the natural light of reason God can be known with certainty, by means of created things" (Vatican Council), and proclaiming that "all the saints in Heaven have seen and do see the Divine Essence by direct intuition and face to face in such wise that nothing created intervenes as an object of vision; ... that the Divine Essence presents itself to their immediate gaze, unveiled, clearly and openly; that in this vision they enjoy the Divine Essence, and in virtue of this vision and this enjoyment they are truly blessed and possess eternal life and eternal rest." (Benedict XII, Cath. Encycl., VII, 171.)

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It is interesting to see how Dante's Master, St. Thomas Aquinas, demonstrates the proposition that the beatitude of man consists in the vision of the Divine Essence. With his usual lucidity of thought he writes: "The last and perfect happiness of man cannot be otherwise than in the vision of the Divine Essence. In evidence of this statement two points are to be considered: first, that man is not perfectly happy so long as there remains anything for him to desire and seek; secondly, that the perfection of every power is determined by the nature of its object. Now the object of the intellect is the essence of a thing; hence the intellect attains to perfection so far as it knows the Essence of what is before it. And therefore, when a man knows an effect and knows that it has a cause, there is in him an outstanding natural desire of knowing the essence of the cause. If, therefore, a human intellect knows the essence of a created effect without knowing aught of God beyond the fact of His existence, the perfection of that intellect does not yet adequately reach the First Cause, but the intellect has an outstanding natural desire of searching into the said Cause; hence it is not yet perfectly happy. For perfect happiness, therefore, it is necessary that the intellect shall reach as far as the very essence of the First Cause." (Rickaby, Aquinas Ethicus I, 2 q., 3 a, 8.)

239

This masterly exposition is after all only the philosophical development of what every Catholic child learns from one of the first questions of the little Catechism: "Why did God make you? God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this life, and to be happy with Him forever in the next." With the satisfaction of the intellect's boundless yearning for knowledge attained by intuition of the Essence of God, a consummation that will somewhat deify us—"Who shall be made like to him, because we shall see him as he is" (I John, III, 2.), the happiness of man will be primarily intellectual, being as Dante beautifully says: "Light intellectual full of love, love of the true good, full of joy, joy that transcendeth all sweetness." (XXX, 40.)

His Heaven, then, is no Nirvana, for each spirit will for eternity have its individuality, and its activity will be unremitting in seeing God face to face—a vision that will cause the spirit increasing wonder in an act that will have no flagging nor satiety. "What, after all, is Heaven," says Bulwer Lytton, "but a transition from dim guesses to the fullness of wisdom, from ignorance to knowledge, but knowledge of what order?" To that exclamation of the nineteenth century writer the medieval seer answers with conviction that the *summum bonum* is to be found only in the intellect's attaining Truth.

240

Let us now join Dante in his mystic journey to the Heavenly Kingdom. We left him after three days and three nights in Purgatory, standing with Beatrice on the summit of the mountain in the Earthly Paradise, where he remained six hours. At noon he begins his ascent through space, a feat accomplished by Beatrice's looking up to the Heavens and by Dante's fixing his eyes upon her. At once his human nature is supposed to take on agility, the supernatural quality which makes the body independent of space, and he begins to rise with incomprehensible velocity. Though they are travelling without conscious movement at the rate of 84,000 miles a second, there is time for Dante's mind to operate in desire to know how he can ascend counter to gravitation and for Beatrice to discourse upon the law—Dante's invention—of universal (material and spiritual) gravitation.

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"The newness of the sound and the great light
Kindled in me a longing for their cause
Never before with such acuteness felt.
And she began: "Thou makest thyself so dull
With false imagining, that thou sees not
What thou wouldst see if thou hadst shaken it off.
Thou are not upon earth as thou believest;
But lightning, fleeing its appropriate site,
Ne'er ran as thou, who thitherward returnest."
(I, 88.)

She explains the order established by Providence by force of which created beings seek their

natural habitat, earthly things being attracted downward, spiritual entities being drawn upward irresistibly if they do not oppose this innate inclination to good. "It is as natural for a man purged of all evil to ascend to God," she declares, "as it is for a stream from a mountain height to fall into a valley."

Very shortly after this, the first stage of the celestial journey is reached. "Direct thy mind to God in gratitude," she said, "who hath united us with the first star." "Me seemed a cloud enveloped us, shining dense, firm and polished like a diamond smitten by the sun. Within itself the eternal pearl received us, as water doth receive a ray of light, though still itself unleft." This is the Heaven of the Moon, the planet farthest removed from the Empyrean and therefore the sphere where not only motion but also beatitude are least in the heavenly bodies. The sphere of the Moon, indeed with those of Mercury and of Venus, is held by Dante's cosmography to be within the shadow cast by the earth. Consequently, the spirits in those three lowest Heavens are represented as less perfect than those in the higher spheres, because in the moral sense the shadow of earth fell upon their lives making them imperfect through inconstancy, vain glory or unlawful love.

242

In the Heaven of the Moon a long disquisition is carried on by Beatrice in explanation of Dante's question as to why there are spots on the moon. It is very likely that this matter of apparent irrelevance in the heavenly realms is introduced here at the very first stage of the ascent to give the poet the opportunity of proclaiming that the first thing one must learn in his passage heavenward—even if this is to be understood in an allegorical sense—is that the laws of the laboratory are not the *rationale* of the heavenly world and that to employ them to explain the supernal is to violate the very science of these laws, in an application of scope to which in their very nature they protest. This point of seeing natural causes for the unexplainable phenomenon of Heaven and especially of relying upon the testimony of the senses is soon brought out by Beatrice reproving Dante for thinking that the spirits whom he now sees are only reflections of the human face:

243

"Marvel thou not," she said to me, "because
I smile at this thy puerile conceit,
Since on the truth it trusts not yet its foot,
But turns thee, as 'tis wont, on emptiness.
True substances are these which thou beholdest,
Here relegate for breaking of some vow.
Therefore speak with them, listen and believe."
(III, 25.)

So directed, the poet gazes again upon the faint forms appearing like reflections seen in a plate of glass or in a dark, shallow pool. These, the first spirits he meets, are apparitions in human form. In the other spheres all that he will see of the souls will be the light which envelopes them and which seemingly is identified with them, but here he sees beautiful women divinely glorious even in their dim outline, who as nuns had violated their vow of perpetual chastity. In the Inferno the poet, to lead the reprobate soul to speak to him, promised earthly fame; in Purgatorio there was the offer of intercessory prayer, here in the first Heaven there is only an appeal to the charity which inflames the spirit. All eagerness, Dante now addresses the spirit, who appears most desirous to converse with him. This is Piccarda, kinswoman of his wife and sister of his friend Forese (Purg. XXIII, 40), a Poor Clare nun, who was compelled by her brother, Corse, to leave her convent and marry Rossellino della Tosa in the expectation that the marriage would promote a political alliance. So sacrificed, the young virgin sister of lofty ideals and delicate spiritual sensibility, experienced unhappiness, the intensity of which is revealed by the ellipsis contained in the magic line: "And God doth know what my life became." Dante addresses Piccarda:

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"O well-created spirit, who in the rays
Of life eternal dost the sweetness taste
Which being untasted ne'er is comprehended,
Grateful 'twill be to me, if thou content me
Both with thy name and with your destiny.'
Whereat, she promptly and with laughing eyes:
'Our charity doth never shut the doors
Against a just desire, except as she
Who wills that all her court be like herself.
I was a virgin sister in the world;
And if thy mind doth contemplate me well,
The being more fair will not conceal me from thee,
But thou shalt recognize I am Piccarda,
Who, stationed here among these other blessed,
Myself am blessed in the lowest sphere.
All our affections, that alone inflamed
Are in the pleasure of the Holy Ghost,
Rejoice at being of his order formed;
And this allotment, which appears so low,
Therefore is given us, because our vows
Have been neglected and in some part void.'
Whence I to her: 'In your miraculous aspects

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There shines I know not what of the divine,
Which doth transform you from our first conceptions.
Therefore I was not swift in my remembrance;
But what thou tellest me now aids me so,
That the refiguring is easier to me."
(III, 37.)

Dante, you recall, had found the souls in Purgatory contented with their lot, though they were enduring great suffering; in Heaven he is eager to learn in the very beginning whether the Elect are satisfied with the decree which awards to them happiness in unequal measure. So he asks Piccarda whether she and the other spirits in this lowest sphere are not eager for a higher place. The answer is one of the most touching and beautiful passages in the poem, summing up in language of radiant gladness the law of Heaven that in "God's will is our peace," words which Gladstone says "appear to have an unexpressible majesty of truth about them, to be almost as if they were spoken from the very mouth of God."

246

"But tell me, ye who in this place are happy,
Are you desirous of a higher place,
To see more or to make yourselves more friends?'
First, with those other shades, she smiled a little;
Thereafter answered me so full of gladness,
She seemed to burn in the first fire of love:
'Brother, our will is quieted by virtue
Of charity, that makes us wish alone
For what we have, nor gives us thirst for more.
If to be more exalted we aspired,
Discordant would our aspirations be
Unto the will of Him who here secludes us;
Which thou shalt see finds no place in these circles,
If being in charity is needful here,
And if thou lookest well into its nature;
Nay 'tis essential to this blest existence
To keep itself within the will divine,
Whereby our very wishes are made one;
So that, as we are station above station
Throughout this realm, to all the realm 'tis pleasing,
As to the King, who makes His will our will.
And His will is our peace; this is the sea
To which is moving onward whatsoever
It doth create, and all that nature makes.'
Then it was clear to me how everywhere
In Heaven is Paradise, although the grace
Of good supreme there rain not in one measure."
(III, 64.)

247

Piccarda then tells the moving story of her life, how as a girl she entered the order of St. Clare, only to be torn from the nunnery and given into marriage.

"A perfect life and merit high in Heaven
A lady o'er us," said she, "by whose rule
Down in your world they vest and veil themselves,
That until death they may both watch and sleep
Beside that Spouse who every vow accepts
Which charity conformeth to his pleasure.
To follow her, in girlhood from the world
I fled, and in her habit shut myself,
And pledged me to the pathway of her sect.
Then men accustomed unto evil more
Than unto good, from the sweet cloister tore me;
God knows what afterward my life became."
(III, 97.)

248

Certain questions interesting to a seeker of truth grow out of Piccarda's statement and these Beatrice proceeds to solve for the edification of Dante. The first question asks whether in the assignment to the lowest sphere of souls who violated their vows, there is divine Justice; the second concerns Plato's teaching that souls really come from the stars and return thither; the third is about the loss of merit through coercion of the will, as exemplified in the case of Piccarda. The solution of these difficulties need not detain us if only we remember Dante's view that "the theories maintained by him in the Heaven of the Moon are intended to manifest," as Gardner and Scartazzini point out, "the moral freedom of man and to show that no external thing can interfere with the soul that is bent upon attaining the end for which God has destined it."

To the next Heaven, the sphere of Mercury, Beatrice and Dante soar more swiftly than an arrow attains its mark while the bow is still vibrating. Increasing in loveliness as she ascends, Beatrice, in the second realm, radiates such splendor that Mercury itself, apart from its own light, gains such glory from her that it seems to glitter or smile from very gladness.

"My lady there so joyful I beheld
 As unto the brightness of that heaven she entered
 More luminous thereat the planet grew,
 And if the star itself was changed and smiled
 What became I who by my nature am
 Exceeding mutable in every guise?"
 (V, 97.)

Greeting the travellers, more than a thousand spirits joyfully exclaim: "Lo, one who shall increase our loves!" The Saints in Mercury thus testify to their delight that one (Dante) has come to be the fresh object of their love, just as it is said that "there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance." (Luke XV, 10.) These splendors in Mercury are the souls of those in whose virtue there was the alloy of ambition and vainglory—a combination, according to Dante, which makes "the rays of true love less vividly mount upwards." The poet is addressed by a spirit who bids him ask any question he will and Beatrice confirms the invitation. "Speak, speak with confidence and trust them even as gods." All eagerness for knowledge, Dante inquires of the friendly splendor who he is and why he is in this particular Heaven.

The story told by the spirit of Emperor Justinian is a brief sketch of his own life, with reference to his conversion from heresy by Pope Agapetus, to the victories of his general, Belisarius, and to his own great work of the codification of the Roman law. He then traces the history of Rome from the time of Æneas to the thirteenth century, bent upon showing that the Roman Empire, as a world-power over governments and peoples, is divine in its institution and providentially protected in its course. Two facts are adduced in crowning proof of this audacious statement, viz., Christ's choosing to be born and to be registered as a subject of Cæsar and His crucifixion under Tiberius, acting through Pontius Pilate as the divinely constituted instrument of eternal justice exercised by the Heavenly Father against His Son, at once the victim of sin and its atonement.

250

Dante enlarges on this point in his *Monarchia*. "If the Roman Empire did not exist by right, the sin of Adam was not punished in Christ.... If, therefore, Christ had not suffered by the sentence of a regular judge, the penalty would not have been properly punished; and none could be a regular judge who had not jurisdiction over all mankind, for all mankind was punished in the flesh of Christ, who 'hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows,' as said the prophet Isaias. And if the Roman Empire had not existed by right, Tiberius Cæsar, whose vicar was Pontius Pilate, would not have had jurisdiction over all mankind." To us both the argument and its conclusion are wholly indefensible. It seems indeed a mockery and a blasphemy to attribute to such a monster as Tiberius Cæsar glory because Christ was crucified in his reign. Dante's words, however, as spoken by Justinian, leave no room for doubt that the poet was convinced that all the ancient celebrity of Rome was insignificant as compared to the glory that would come to it because it would carry out the crucifixion of Christ.

251

"But what the standard that has made me speak
 Achieved before, and after should achieve
 Throughout the mortal realm that lies beneath,
 Becometh in appearance mean and dim
 If in the hand of the third Cæsar seen
 With an eye unclouded and affection pure
 Because the living Justice that inspires me
 Granted it, in the hand of him I speak of
 The glory of doing vengeance for its wrath."
 (VI, 82.)

Shining among the splendors of Mercury is a spirit who, though he was not a lawmaker like Justinian, attained earthly renown by arranging the marriages of four Kings. Known by the name of Romeo, a word meaning a pilgrim of Rome, this man came a stranger to the Court of Raymond Berenger, Court of Provence, multiplied the income without lessening the grandeur of his master and brought about the marriages to royalty of the four daughters of the household—Margaret to St. Louis of France, Eleanor to Henry III of England, Sanzia to Richard, Earl of Cornwall (brother of Henry III), elected King of the Romans, Beatrice to Charles of Anjou, later by Papal investiture, King of Naples. Charged by jealous barons with having wasted his master's goods, Romeo established his innocence and then departed as he came, on a mule and with a pilgrim's staff. From affluence he goes a-begging and this is so much like Dante's own case that the poet's sympathy goes out to the calumniated man, and he says with touching simplicity:

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"If the world could know the heart he had
 In begging bit by bit his livelihood,
 Though much it laud him, it would laud him more."
 (VI, 140.)

Justinian's words as to the crucifixion of Christ suggest to Dante this question: Why was man's redemption effected by the death of Christ upon the Cross rather than by some other mode? Investing the argumentative propositions of St. Thomas with poetic beauty, Dante shows that while God might have freely pardoned man without exacting any satisfaction, on the hypothesis that He had chosen to restore mankind to His favor and at the same time to require full satisfaction as a condition of pardon and deliverance, there was only one way for the accomplishment of this reconciliation and that was by the atonement of One who was both God

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and Man. For sin, inasmuch as it is an act against the Infinite Being, requires a satisfaction of infinite value. Man being finite is incapable of adequately making such satisfaction. But the Word was made flesh that by His atonement on the Cross Mercy would be declared and Justice would be satisfied.

"Your nature, when it sinned in its totality in its first seed, from these dignities, even as from Paradise, was parted; nor might they be recovered, if thou look right keenly, by any way save passing one or the other of these fords: either that God, of his sole courtesy, should have remitted; or that man should of himself have given satisfaction for his folly. Man had not power, within his own boundaries, even to render satisfaction, since he might not go in humbleness by after-obedience so deep down as in disobedience he had framed to exalt himself on high; and this is the cause why from the power to render satisfaction by himself man was shut off. Wherefore needs must God with his own ways reinstate man in his unmaimed life, I mean with one way or with both the two. But because the doer's deed is the more gracious the more it doth present us of the heart's goodness whence it issued, the divine Goodness which doth stamp the world, deigned to proceed on all his ways to lift you up again; nor between the last night and the first day was, nor shall be, so lofty and august a progress made on one or on the other, for more generous was God in giving of himself to make man able to uplift himself again, than had he only of himself granted remission; and all other modes fell short of justice, except the Son of God had humbled him to become flesh." (VII, 85.)

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From Mercury to Venus the ascent has been so rapid that Dante is unaware that he has reached the third Heaven until he sees the greater loveliness of Beatrice represented by her greater radiance. As ascent is made heavenward it will also be found that the spirits are seen not as human faces, as was the case in the Heaven of the Moon, but as lights increasing in intensity and manifesting a movement of greater speed to the accompaniment of diverse music. It is necessary to keep in mind this plan of the poet lest thinking the lovely lights, and lovely sounds and lovely movements are only terms descriptive of physical, though impalpable phenomena, we lose the deep and beautiful symbolism that is the magic secret of the seraphic poesy of the Paradiso. Of the brilliancy and movement of the spirits of the Sphere of Venus—spirits who in this life failed in Christian ideals because of their amours, Dante says, and his description is that of an expert musician distinguishing between the singing of one who sustains the main-theme and that of other voices rising and falling in subordination to the principal melody:

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"And as within a flame a spark is seen,
And as within a voice discerned,
When one is steadfast, and one comes and goes,
Within that light beheld I other lamps
Move in a circle, speeding more and less,
Methinks in a measure of their inward vision.
From a cold cloud descended never winds,
Or visible or not, so rapidly
They would not laggard and impeded seem
To any one who had those lights divine
Seen come towards us, leaving the gyration
Begun at first in the high Seraphim.
And behind those that most in front appeared
Sounded 'Osanna!' so that never since
To hear again was I without desire.
Then unto us more nearly one approached,
And it alone began: 'We all are ready
Unto thy pleasure, that thou joy in us.
We turn around with the celestial Princes,
One gyre and one gyration and one thirst,
To whom thou in the world didst say,
'Ye who, intelligent, the third heaven are moving;
And are so full of love, to pleasure thee
A little quiet will not be less sweet.'
(VIII, 16.)

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The speaker discloses himself to be Charles Martel, once titular King of Hungary, who on the occasion of a nineteen days' visit to Florence, formed an intimate friendship with the poet. For the latter's edification the spirit expounds the problem: Why from the same parents, children grow up different in disposition, talent and career, a problem just as interesting to the twentieth as the thirteenth century. We account for the difference according to the principles of variation, heredity and environment, but to stellar influence intent upon securing the fulfillment of the law of individuality, was the difference attributed by the medieval mind, which regarded the stars and planets not as soulless spheres, but as orbs palpitating with the life of angelic intelligences and radiating their influence upon the people of the earth.

Hence it was held that the Heavens affected the diversity of the characters of children who otherwise would be cut out the exact pattern of their parents. "The begotten nature would ever take a course like its begetters, did not divine provision overrule." (VIII, 136.) The necessity for diversity in man's life is deduced from the fact that in society men are providentially destined for different vocations. "Wherefore is one born Solon (a legislator), another Xerxes (a soldier), another Melchisedech (a priest), and the man who soaring through the welkin lost his son."

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(Daedalus, the typical mechanic.) But stellar influence always controlled by man's free will is often ignored, especially when we put into the sanctuary one who should be on the battle field and when we gave a throne to him whose right place is in the pulpit.

"And if the world below would fix its mind
On the foundation which is laid by nature,
Pursuing that, 't would have the people good.
But you into religion wrench aside
Him who was born to gird him with the sword,
And make a king of him who is for sermons;
Therefore your footsteps wander from the road."
(VIII, 142.)

The next four spheres being beyond the earth's shadow are for spirits whose virtue was undimmed by human infirmity and whose place in eternal life is consequently one of greater vision and bliss. In the first of these higher spheres, the Sphere of the Sun, the fourth Heaven, Dante sees the spirits of great theologians and others who loved wisdom—great teachers of men. Around him and Beatrice, as their center, twelve of them appear in one circle and twelve in another, while behind those dazzling splendors of spirits are other vivid lights probably representing authors whom the poet had not read or comprehended or symbolizing the men of science, the lovers of wisdom, who in the future by their discoveries would add to our knowledge of truth. As one of the basic truths of Revelation is the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, here in the Heaven of the Doctors the dogma is made prominent by special frequency of reference and symbolism. The Creation, as an act of the Three Divine Persons, is mentioned in lines of exquisite grace:

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"Looking into His Son with all the Love
Which each of them eternally breathes forth
The primal and unutterable Power
Whate'er before the mind or eye revolves
With so much order made, there can be none
Who thus beholds, without enjoying it."
(X, 1.)

Not only by thought, but by dancing, is the same truth expressed: "those burning suns round about us whirled themselves three times." (X, 76.) Again in song they proclaim the mystery of the Holy Trinity:

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"The One and Two and Three who ever liveth
And reigneth ever in Three and Two and One
Not circumscribed and all circumscribing
Three several times was chanted by each one
Among those spirits, with such melody
That for all merit it were just reward."
(XIV, 27.)

In this Heaven we hear the eulogy of St. Francis of Assisi pronounced by a Dominican and the praises of St. Dominic sung by a Franciscan—consummate art that is an indirect invitation to the two orders of monks upon earth to avoid jealousy and to practice mutual respect. It has been said that these narratives give us the essence of what constitutes true biography, viz., a picture of the spiritual element in man drawn in such words as ever to command the understanding and elicit the respect of the reader of every period. The first speaker is St. Thomas Aquinas, and his reference to the mystical marriage of St. Francis and Lady Poverty will be the better understood if we have before the mind's eye Giotto's painting which hangs over the tomb of the founder of the Franciscans. The figures in the pictures are described by Gardiner (Ten Heavens, p. 113): Christ, standing upon a rock, unites St. Francis to his chosen bride, who is haggard and careworn, clothed in ragged and patched garments, barefooted and girded with a cord. Roses and lilies spring up behind her and encircle her head; she wears the aureole and has wings, though weak; but thorns and briars are around her feet. Hope and Love are her bridesmaids; Hope clothed in green with uplifted hand and Love with flame-colored flowers and holding a burning heart. A dog is barking at the Bride and boys are assaulting her with sticks and stones, but all around are bands of angelic witnesses, their flowing raiment and mighty wings glowing with rainbow hues. In these days when money seems the ideal of thousands, Poverty, whose mystical appeal is so glowingly painted, still speaks to great numbers of men and women who give up material comforts and ease to embrace as monks and nuns the state of voluntary poverty. Let us now hear how St. Thomas recounts the life and work of St. Francis of Assisi:

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"He was not yet much distant from his rising,
When his good influence 'gan to bless the earth.
A dame, to whom one openeth pleasure's gate
More than to death, was 'gainst his father's will,
His stripling choice; and he did make her his,
Before the spiritual court, by nuptial bonds,
And in his father's sight: from day to day,
Then loved her more devoutly. She, bereaved
Of her first husband, slighted and obscure,
Thousand and hundred years and more, remain'd

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Without a single suitor, till he came.
 There concord and glad looks, wonder and love,
 And sweet regard gave birth to holy thoughts,
 So much that venerable Bernard first
 Did bare his feet, and, in pursuit of peace
 So heavenly, ran, yet deem'd his footing slow.
 O hidden riches! O prolific good!
 Egidius bares him next, and next Sylvester,
 And follow, both, the bridegroom: so the bride
 Can please them. Thenceforth goes he on his way
 The father and the master, with his spouse,
 And with that family, whom now the cord
 Girt humbly: nor did abjectness of heart
 Weigh down his eyelids, for that he was son
 Of Pietro Bernardone, and by men
 In wondrous sort despised. But royally
 His hard intention he to Innocent
 Set forth; and, from him, first received the seal
 On his religion. Then, when numerous flock'd
 The tribe of lowly ones, that traced *his* steps,
 Whose marvelous life deservedly were sung
 In heights empyreal; through Honorius' hand
 A second crown, to deck their Guardian's virtues,
 Was by the eternal Spirit inwreathed: and when
 He had, through thirst of martyrdom, stood up
 In the proud Soldan's presence, and there preach'd
 Christ and his followers, but found the race
 Unripen'd for conversion; back once more
 He hasted (not to intermit his toil),
 And reap'd Ausonian lands. On the hard rock,
 'Twixt Arno and the Tiber, he from Christ
 Took the last signet, which his limbs two years
 Did carry. Then, the season come that he,
 Who to such good had destined him, was pleased
 To advance him to the meed, which he had earn'd
 By his self-humbling; to his brotherhood,
 As their just heritage, he gave in charge
 His dearest lady: and enjoin'd their love
 And faith to her; and, from her bosom, will'd
 His goodly spirit should move forth, returning
 To its appointed kingdom; nor would have
 His body laid upon another bier."

(XI, 55.)

At the conclusion of this discourse the spirits in both circles, arranged like the concentric circles of a double rainbow, express their joy by a gyrating dance and song.

If St. Francis was "a sun upon the world," St. Dominic is shown by the next speaker, St. Bonaventure, to be "a splendor of cherubic delight." "In happy Callaroga was born the passionate lover of the Christian faith, the holy champion, gentle to his own, and without mercy to his enemies. As soon as his soul had been created it was so replete with energy that, within his mother's womb, it made her a prophetess. When the pledges for his baptism had been given at the sacred font, and he and Faith had become one, dowering each other with salvation, the lady who had given assent for him, beheld in her sleep the wonderful fruit which would one day come of him, and of his heirs. He was named Dominic. I speak of him as the husbandman whom Christ chose to assist Him with His garden. Of a truth did he seem Christ's messenger and friend, for the very first inclination which he manifested was to follow the first percept which Christ gave. Not for the world, love of which at present makes men toil, but for love of the true manna, did he, in short while, become a mighty teacher, such that he set about pruning the vineyard of the church, which soon runs wild if the vinedresser be negligent.

"From the Papal chair which, in former days, was more generous to the righteous poor, not because it has grown degenerate in itself, but because of the degeneracy of him who sits upon it, Dominic begged not to be allowed to dispense to the poor only two or three where six was due, nor sought the first vacant benefice, the tithes of which belong to God's poor. He begged rather for leave to fight against the erring world in behalf of the seed of true faith, four and twenty plants of which encircle you. Then, armed with doctrine and firm determination, together with the sanction of the Papacy, he issued forth like a torrent from on high, and on heretics his onslaught smote with greatest force where was most resistance. Afterward, from him there burst forth various streams by which the Catholic garden is watered so that the plants in it are becoming vigorous." (XII, 48.)

Transported into the Heaven of Mars Dante is made aware of his ascent thither only by the glow of the ruddy planet, so different from the white sheen of the sun. At once he beholds a spectacle far more marvelous than the circles of dancing lights he has just seen. It fills him with such wonder and bliss that he falls into an ecstasy and only after that does he look into the eyes

of Beatrice, now more lovely than ever. What is the new marvel? A starry cross traversing the sphere—a cross, the arms and body of which, each like a Milky Way, are made up of dazzling lights of the souls of those who laid down their lives for the Faith. On the Cross is flashed the blood red image of the Crucified, likewise formed by glowing stars, the souls of Christian warriors. Not stationary do the splendors remain, but through the glittering mass they dart to and fro like notes in a sunbeam that finds its way through a shutter or screen. With eyes amazed the poet now hears such a wondrous melody that he says: "I was so much enamoured therewith that up to this point there had not been anything which bound me with fetters of such delight." (XIV, 128.)

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The names of some of the spirits forming the Stellar Cross are made known to the poet—Joshua and Judas Maccabaeus, the intrepid heroes of the Old Testament, the Christian Knights, Charlemagne and Orlando the Paladin, William of Aquitaine and Rainouart, Godfrey de Bouillon, conqueror of Jerusalem, Robert Guiscard, military executor of Pope Hildebrande.

Darting along the arm of the Stellar Cross and coming to its foot is a splendor who greets Dante with warm affection. This is the spirit of his great-great-grandfather, Cacciaguida, who sings the glory of ancient Florence the better to describe the deterioration of the city in Dante's day and to censure its people for their civil feuds, corruption and opposition to the Imperial Eagle. Then at Dante's request the crusader spirit interprets for his descendant the various predictions made to the latter during his passage through Hell and Purgatory. Evil days will come upon him (it must be remembered that this prophecy by Cacciaguida is supposed to occur a year or two before Dante's exile), he will be exiled from Florence and will become a homeless wanderer.

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Let him, however, write his poem and declare his vision, no matter if offense will be taken by the high ones of the earth. He, having a prophet's work to do, must speak with all the boldness of a prophet without fear or dissimulation. The words, while assuring the poet of the sweetness of everlasting fame, bring to his mind, also, the bitterness of the injustice of his exile and suffering, and apparently he harbors the thought of vengeance upon his enemies. Beatrice, however, checks his resentment, assuring him that she, so near to God, will assist him—a most beautiful passage showing the relations between her and the poet, whether the words are taken literally as exhibiting her as his intercessor before the throne of the Most High, or allegorically considered as declaring that Revealed Truth takes from man the desire of vengeance and places his case in the hands of Him who has said: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." For Dante's spiritual perfection his lovely guide bids him not simply look into her eyes (allegorically meaning not merely to contemplate theological truth) but follow the example of men sturdy of faith and valiant of deed. The passage here follows:

"Now was alone rejoicing in its word
That soul beatified, and I was tasting
My own, the bitter tempering with the sweet,
And the Lady who to God was leading me
Said: 'Change thy thought; consider that I am
Near unto Him who every wrong disburdens.'
Unto the loving accents of my comfort
I turned me round, and then what love I saw
Within those holy eyes I here relinquish
Not only that my language I distrust,
But that my mind cannot return so far
Above itself, unless another guide it.
Thus much upon that point can I repeat.
That, her again beholding, my affection
From every other longing was released.
While the eternal pleasure, which direct
Rayed upon Beatrice, from her fair face
Contented me with its reflected aspect,
Conquering me with the radiance of a smile
She said to me, "Turn thee about and listen;
Not in mine eyes alone is Paradise.
Here are blessed spirits that below, ere yet
They came to Heaven, were of such great renown
That every Muse therewith would affluent be
Therefore look thou upon the cross' horns."
(XVIII, 4.)

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Now rising to Jupiter, where appear the spirits of those who upon earth in a signal manner loved and rightly administered justice, Dante is again made aware of his uplifting by the increased beauty of Beatrice, by the new light different from that of ruddy Mars, which envelopes him and by the perception of his own increase of virtue and power. Here the poet has recourse to a most ingenious system of symbols to give variety to his descriptions and doctrine, and so to sustain the interest of the reader. Many hundreds of the souls of the just appear as golden lights and so group themselves as to spell against the glowing white background of the light of the planet, the maxim from the Book of Wisdom: "*Diligite justitiam qui judicatis terram*" (Love justice ye who judge the earth.) Then fade away all the letters except the last one, the M of terram, M, symbol of Monarchy, and that M stands out in general outline somewhat like the Florentine lily, the

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armorial sign of Florence. And now other golden lights come from the Empyrean and transform the M into the figure of an eagle, the bird of Jove, with outstretched wings. But the marvel is only partly revealed, for soon the Eagle speaks and its voice, though made up of a thousand voices of the Just, comes forth a single sound, like a single heat that comes from many brands or the one odor that is exhaled from many flowers.

What a startling spectacle it must have been to the mind of the thirteenth century, used to candles as the ordinary means of illumination, to have visualized before it the blessed spirits in the light of Heaven, dancing, whirling, circling in perfect harmony and making more formal designs to express their bliss by the rapidity of their rhythmical movements! Even though exquisitely quaint as the picture may appear to us, it has been executed so reverently that criticism has rarely if ever attacked this conception of our poet. With light as his principal material to make known to us the joys of Heaven, he has to paint everything in high light, using no shadows and he solves his artistic problem by the variety of his "splendors" and by the deep symbolism of their action. His nine Heavens are not meant to be a picture true to reality of what the Souls in Heaven are doing. These nine Heavens, as we said before, are only myths to which from the Empyrean come forth the Elect in condescension to Dante's sense-bound faculties, in order to symbolize certain truths. So in this sixth sphere the poet would teach us that the Heaven of Jupiter represents justice on earth and on the screen of this sphere he would put forth by means of the Imperial Eagle the arguments he has already advanced in his *Monarchia* that the Roman Empire is divine in its origin—that only from such an institution can human justice proceed from civil government. He represents unity coming from the Roman Empire by his showing to us the unison with which all the splendors of the Eagle speak in a voice blended as one sound—clearly also an allegory for the Guelf forces to become an integral part of the Universal Monarchy.

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Justice is the quality which this Heaven symbolizes and the Eagle reads in Dante's mind a doubt against the operation of justice and proceeds to dispel it.

"For saidst thou: 'Born a man is on the shore
Of Indus, and is none who there can speak
Of Christ, nor who can read, nor who can write;
And all his inclinations and his actions
Are good, so far as human reason sees,
Without a sin in life or in discourse:
He dieth unbaptized and without faith;
Where is this justice that condemneth him?
Where is his fault, if he do not believe?'"
(XIX, 70.)

The question is answered both directly and indirectly. The exclusion of the virtuous pagan from Heaven is assumed to be an act of injustice "but who art thou who wouldst set upon the seat to judge at a thousand miles away with the short sight that carries but a span?" (XIX, 79.) As our very idea of justice comes from God all just and all wise, that thought ought to assure us that not even the virtuous heathen will be excluded from Heaven. Faith indeed is required for salvation, but many having faith will be condemned, while many seemingly without it will be admitted into Heaven.

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"But look thou, many crying are, 'Christ, Christ!'
Who at the judgment will be far less near
To him than some shall be who knew not Christ.
Such Christians shall the Ethiop condemn
When the two companies shall be divided,
The one forever rich, the other poor."
(XIX, 106.)

The indirect answer to Dante's objection as to the exclusion of the virtuous heathen from Heaven is given by the poet speaking through the beak of the Eagle and showing in this Heaven as one of the lights of the Eagle itself, the soul of Rhipeus mentioned by Æneas "as above all others the most just among the Trojans and the strictest observer of right." "So now," says Benvenuto, the fourteenth century lecturer on Dante, "our author fitly introduces a pagan infidel in the person of Rhipeus, of whose salvation there would seem the very slightest chance of all; by reason of the time, so many centuries before the advent of Christ; by reason of the place, for he was of Troy where exceeding pride was then paramount; by reason of the sect, for he was a pagan and gentile, not a Jew. Briefly then our author wishes us to gather from this fiction—this conclusion,—that even such a pagan of whose salvation no one hoped, is capable of salvation."

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In the Heaven of Saturn, Beatrice tells the poet that she does not smile out of regard for his human vision not powerful enough to sustain her excess of beauty. The lovely symphonies of Paradise are also silent for the same reason. This in effect is a poetical way of saying that the bliss and glory in Saturn are greater than any beatitude in the lower spheres.

This seventh Heaven is the Heaven where appear saints distinguished for contemplation, the principle representatives being St. Peter Damian and St. Benedict. The latter wrote a treatise in which he likened the rule of his order to a ladder having twelve rungs by means of which the mystic might mount to Heaven. The second rung in that ladder is silence. If Dante was familiar with the Benedictine treatise, the significance of silence in Saturn is at once suggested. The figure of a ladder is a very common one in mystical theology, which borrows the conception from

the experience of Jacob (Gen. XXVIII, 12). "And he saw in his sleep a ladder standing upon the earth and the top thereof touching heaven, the angels also of God ascending and descending." To symbolize the truth that Heaven is to be reached through the Church by means of the contemplation of eternal things Dante now shows us the Golden Ladder, down which gleam so many radiant spirits that it seems as if all the stars of Heaven are approaching.

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"Colored like gold, on which the sunshine gleams,
A stairway I beheld to such a height
Uplifted, that mine eye pursued it not.
Likewise beheld I down the steps descending
So many splendors, that I thought each light
That in the heaven appears was there diffused."
(XXI, 28.)

In the Heaven of the Fixed Stars the triumph of Christ gladdens the wondering eyes of the poet:

"Behold the hosts of Christ's triumphal march and all the fruit harvested by the rolling of these spheres."

At these words of Beatrice Dante turns and beholds all the saints seen in the other spheres and many other spirits gathered round the God-man to praise Him for the Redemption and Atonement. Christ here reveals Himself in the form of a gorgeous Sun surrounded by those countless spirits, appearing as lights or flowers. Apparently the poet gets just a momentary glimpse of the glorified humanity of the Saviour. The direct rays of the divine splendor cannot long be endured, so, in condescension to Dante's weakness of vision, a cloudy screen permits the poet to sustain the Vision now irradiating its light on the living, spiritual flowers.

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"Saw I, above the myriad of lamps,
A sun that one and all of them enkindled,
E'en as our own doth the supernal sights,
And through the living light transparent shone
The lucent substance so intensely clear
Into my sight, that I sustained it not.
'O Beatrice, thou gentle guide and dear!'
To me she said: 'What overmasters thee
A virtue is from which naught shields itself.
There are the wisdom and the omnipotence
That ope the thoroughfares 'twixt heaven and earth
For which there erst had been so long a yearning.'
(XXIII, 28.)

After Christ withdraws to the Empyrean the poet finds that he has been so much strengthened and enlightened by the Vision that increased power of sight is given to him again to behold the smile of his guide. She says to him:

"Open thine eyes and look at what I am
Thou has beheld such things, that strong enough
Hast thou become to tolerate my smile."
(XXIII, 46.)

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He continues in ecstasy to gaze upon her surpassing beauty until she bids him look upon the "meadow of flowers," the angels and saints:

"Why doth my face so much enamor thee,
That to the garden fair thou turnest not,
Which under the rays of Christ is blossoming?
There is the Rose in which the Word Divine
Became incarnate; there the lilies are
By whose perfume the good way was discovered."
(XXIII, 70.)

The lilies are the apostles, the Rose the Blessed Virgin Mary. "Mary," says Cardinal Newman, "is the most beautiful flower that ever was seen in the spiritual world. She is the Queen of spiritual flowers and therefore she is called Rose, for the rose is fitly called of all flowers that most beautiful." Dante says: "The name of the fair flower that I e'er invoke morning and night utterly enthralled my soul to gaze upon the greater fire." Now with joy the poet sees the coronation by the spirits of Mary, Mystical Rose, and then his eyes follow her as she mounts to the Empyrean in the wake of her divine Son while the gleaming saints sing her praises in the *Regina Coeli*.

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The eight Heavens through which the poet has come, have been so many stages of preparation for the final vision of Paradise. His eyes have been gradually gaining strength by gazing upon miracles of light and beauty and by seeing truth embodied in many representative forms to fit him finally to see God in His Essence. Before that consummation, however, one more preparatory vision is necessary. The poet must first see the symbolic image of God. "What!" you may exclaim, "will Dante be audacious enough to attempt to picture the Invisible Himself? Granted that 'he is all wings and pure imagination' can he hope to image the Incomprehensible Being 'who only hath immortality and inhabiteth light inaccessible, whom no man hath seen nor can see?' (I Tim. VI,

16). Will he not defeat his purpose by employing a symbol circumscribing Him who is beyond circumscription?" But the genius of Dante does not fail him in his daring undertaking, and this is the more remarkable because instead of selecting as a symbol something infinitely large, he chooses something atomically small. In the ninth Heaven surrounded by the nine orders of pure spirits God is represented "as an indivisible atomic Point radiating light and symbolizing the unity of the Divinity as a fitting prelude to the more intimate vision of the Blessed Trinity which will be vouchsafed in the Empyrean." "A Point I saw that darted light so sharp no lid unclosing may bear up against its keenness. On that Point depend the heavens and the whole of nature" (XXXVIII, 16).

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On the appropriateness of this symbol Ozanam makes this interesting comment: "God reveals Himself as necessarily indivisible and consequently incapable of having ascribed to Him the abstraction of quantity and quality by which we know creatures: indefinable, because every definition is an analysis which decomposes the subject defined; incomparable because there are no terms to institute a comparison; so that one may say, giving the words an oblique meaning, that He is infinitely little, that He is nothing. But on the other hand, that which is without extension, moves without resistance; that which is not to be grasped, cannot be contained; that which can be enclosed within no limits, either actual or logical is by that very fact limitless. The infinitely little is then also the infinitely great and we may say that it is all." The indivisible atomic Point of intensest light as a symbol of God is indeed a sublime conception of faith and genius that appeals equally to the child, the philosopher and the mystic.

The supreme thing still necessary for the consummation of Dante's pilgrimage is the Beatific Vision of God. That occurs in the Empyrean where symbol gives way to reality, where the Elect are seen no longer in forms veiled in light but in the glorified semblance of their earthly bodies, where contemplation gives direct vision of God in His essence. How will the poet, while still in the flesh, endure this vision of the Infinite, Incomprehensible Eternal God? Prepared as he has been by the experiences of the nine Heavens, he has still further need of supernatural assistance. That is now given to him by means of a flash wrapping him in a garment of light, which blinds him and then illuminates his sight and intellect and enables him to see a more complete foreshadowing of truth dissolving into Divine Wisdom.

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The spectacle he now beholds, perhaps suggested to the poet by the passage from the Apocalypse (XXII, 1). "And he showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb,"—the spectacle which now presents itself is that of a river of light flowing between two banks of flowers and vivid with darting sparks. The river represents illuminating grace, the sparks angels, the flowers saints. This river of light wherein are reflected the Elect, as verdure and flowers on a hillside are mirrored in a limpid stream at its foot, is poetically represented as having the effect of a sacrament. It bestows grace and that grace called *lumen gloriae*, light of glory, endowing the soul with a faculty beyond its natural needs or merits, so disposes the soul that it becomes deiform and is rendered capable of immediate intuition of the Divine Essence.

279

"There is a light above, which visible
Makes the Creator unto every creature
Who only in beholding Him, has peace."
(XXX, 100.)

Beatrice tells Dante that he must drink his fill of the stupendous splendor by gazing intently on the river of pure light, so that he may be able to contemplate the whole unveiled glory and then see God directly.

As Dante gazes on the illuminating stream it undergoes a marvelous transformation, taking the form of a Rose the center of which is a sea of radiance.

"And even as the penthouse of mine eyelids
Drank of it, it forthwith appeared to me
Out of its length to be transformed to round.
Then as a folk who have been under masks
Seem other than before, if they divest
The semblance not their own they disappeared in,
Thus into greater pomp were changed for me
The flowerets and the sparks, so that I saw
Both of the Courts of Heaven made manifest."
(XXX, 87.)

280

The two courts of Heaven, angels and saints, are made manifest in the Rose which spreads out like a vast amphitheatre the lowest circle of which is wider than the circumference of the sun. Above the center of the Rose as the Point of light, is God in all His glory and love, adored in blissful raptures by the saints who form the petals of the heavenly flower. Angels with faces aflame, in white garments and with golden wings fly down to the petals as bees to flowers, bringing God's blessings to the saints and fly back to God as bees to their hive, carrying the adoration of the Elect.

Beatrice leads the poet into the center of the Heavenly Rose.

"Into the yellow of the Rose Eternal
That spreads, and multiplies, and breathes an odor

Of praise unto the ever-vernal Sun,
As one who silent is and fain would speak,
Me Beatrice drew on, and said: 'Behold
Of the white stoles how vast the convent is!
Behold how vast the circuit of our city!
Behold our seats so filled to overflowing,
That here henceforward are few people wanting!'"
(XXX, 124.)

281

While Dante gazes on the supernatural spectacle Beatrice slips away to take her place the third seat below the throne of the Blessed Virgin. As his guide she has led him to the highest Heaven and has instructed him in all that concerns God and His attributes. Her mission as Revelation or Divine Science being finished, she withdraws and sends St. Bernard to bring the poet into intimate union with the Godhead.

"The general form of Paradise already
My glance had comprehended as a whole,
In no part hitherto remaining fixed,
And round I turned me with rekindled wish
My lady to interrogate of things
Concerning which my mind was in suspense.
One thing I meant, another answered me;
I thought I should see Beatrice, and saw
An Old Man habited like the glorious people.
O'er flowing was he in his eyes and cheeks
With joy benign, in attitude of pity
As to a tender father is becoming.
And 'She, where is she?' instantly I said;
Whence he: 'To put an end to thy desire,
Me Beatrice hath sent from mine own place.
And if thou lookest up to the third round
Of the first rank, again shalt thou behold her
Upon the throne her merits have assigned her.'
Without reply I lifted up mine eyes,
And saw her, as she made herself a crown
Reflecting from herself the eternal rays.
Not from that region which the highest thunders
Is any mortal eye so far removed,
In whatsoever sea it deepest sinks,
As there from Beatrice my sight; but this
Was nothing unto me; because her image
Descended not to me by medium blurred."
(XXXI, 52.)

282

St. Bernard, the mystic, celebrating the Blessed Virgin's praises in a marvelous outburst of song, unsurpassed for lyrical beauty, beseeches her intercession that Dante may see God face to face.

"Now doth this man, who from the lowest depth
Of the universe as far as here has seen
One after one the spiritual lives,
Supplicate thee through grace for so much power
That with his eyes he may uplift himself
Higher towards the uttermost salvation.
And I, who never burned for my own seeing
More than I do for his, all of my prayers
Proffer to thee, and pray they come not short,
That thou wouldst scatter from him every cloud
Of his mortality so with thy prayers,
That the Chief Pleasure be to him displayed.
Still farther do I pray thee, Queen, who canst
Whate'er thou wilt, that sound thou mayst preserve
After so great a vision his affections.
Let thy protection conquer human movements;
See Beatrice and all the blessed ones
My prayers to second clasp their hands to thee!
The eyes beloved and revered of God,
Fastened upon the speaker, showed to us
How grateful unto her are prayers devout;
Then unto the Eternal Light they turned,
On which it is not credible could be
By any creature bent an eye so clear."
(XXXIII, 22.)

283

The prayer is granted. "My vision becoming undimmed, more and more entered the beam of light which in itself is Truth." (XXXIII, 52.) The veil is removed. He gazes into the limitless depths

of the Divinity. He enjoys the Beatific Vision.

First he sees by immediate intuition the Divine Essence in its creative power, the exemplar of all substances, modes and accidents united in harmony and love; then he beholds the Creator Himself and all the divine perfections and all the eternal plans of God. Clear to the poet now is the truth of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity unveiled in circles of light like rainbows of green, white and red of equal circumference, the Second being as it were the splendor of the First and the Third emanating from the two others. Unravell'd also is the mystery of the two natures human and divine, in the divine person of Christ seen in human form in the second luminous circle. But the Vision is so far above the poet's memory to retain or his speech to express that he cannot find words to make intelligible the splendor he beholds or the rapture he experiences.

284

"Oh grace abounding, wherein I presumed to fix my look on the eternal light so long that I consumed my sight thereon! Within its depths I saw ingathered, bound by love in one volume, the scattered leaves of all the universe; substance and accidents and their relations, as though together fused, after such fashion that what I tell of is one simple flame.

"In the profound and shining being of the deep light appeared to me three circles, of three colours and one magnitude; one by the second as Iris by Iris seemed reflected, and the third seemed a fire breathed equally from one and from the other. Oh, but how scant the utterance, and how faint, to my conceit! and it, to what I saw, is such that it sufficeth not to call it little. O light eternal who only in thyself abidest, only thyself dost understand, and to thyself, self-understood, self-understanding, turnest love and smiling! That circling which appeared in thee to be conceived as a reflected light, by mine eyes scanned some little, in itself, of its own colour, seemed to be painted with our effigy, and thereat my sight was all committed to it.

285

"To the high fantasy here power failed; but already my desire and will were rolled—even as a wheel that moveth equally—by the Love that moves the sun and the other stars." (XXXIII, 82.)

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DANTE: "THE CENTRAL MAN OF ALL THE WORLD" ***

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