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*The Contrasts in  
Dante*

A LECTURE  
DELIVERED AT THE UNIVERSITY  
ON 24th OCTOBER, 1906

BY THE

HONBLE. WILLIAM WARREN VERNON, M.A.  
*Accademico Corrispondente della Crusca in Italy.*

MANCHESTER  
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
1906

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**Manchester University Lectures, No. 6.**

# **The Contrasts in Dante**



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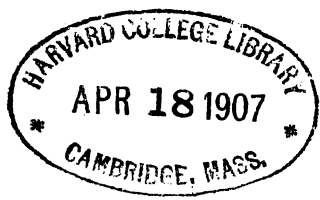
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The Contrasts in the Divina Commedia,  
and especially that between

Count Guido da Montefeltro, the father, lost, } and { Buonconte da Montefeltro, the son, saved,  
(*Inf.* XXVII., 1-132.) } { (*Purg.* V.).

INTRODUCTION.

THERE is no question which students of Dante oftener put to each other than this: "Which do you like best, the *Inferno*, the *Purgatorio*, or the *Paradiso*?"

The enquiry is a very natural one, for what greater contrast can there be than between the dark and hopeless terrors of the *Inferno*, the tender consolations of the *Purgatorio*, and the serene splendours of the *Paradiso*, the very Holy of Holies of the Divine Comedy, where hope is no longer needed, because it has been already realized?

In the *Purgatorio* alone does Hope exist, for be it remembered that Dante's examination on Hope by St. James in the *Paradiso* does not refer to either of the three Kingdoms of the dead, but only to Man living on earth. My answer then to the question would be the counter-question: "When you look at a grand landscape by Cuyp, by Ruysdael, by Rubens, or by Hobbema, which do you most admire, the dark shadows, the brilliant highlights, or the free and spirited middle-tints?" My questioner would of course retort: "How can one separate a complete picture into the various *strata* which go to make up one single and harmonious entirety? In a perfect whole there must of necessity be contrasts; variety, not sameness. In music, discords in one place bring out beauties and harmonies in another." It is this natural law that Dante has evidently wished to follow in the *Divina Commedia*, which is the mighty conception of such a master mind as has rarely been observed in the

whole history of the human race. As we move from the *Inferno* to the *Purgatorio*, and pass on to the *Paradiso*, we read the record of the wandering, the awakening, the disciplining, and the emancipation of a soul.

I find it difficult, if not impossible, to believe that Dante ever sat down to write, first the whole *Inferno*, then the whole *Purgatorio*, and finally the whole *Paradiso*, consecutively one after the other. It is far more likely that when he began to write the first Canto of the *Inferno*, he had already decided, in his symmetrical mind, that there were to be one hundred Cantos in the *Commedia*, thirty-three to each *Cantica*, with Canto I. of the *Inferno* as the Introduction to the entire subject-matter of the Poem.

He had probably composed many hundreds of verses, including the leading passages, before he took the work in hand as a whole, during the last ten years of his life. In this way some of the now disputed readings may have originated in Dante himself; the earlier reading having been composed during the period of preparation, and the variant substituted later on by himself as better expressing the meaning of the passage. A notable instance of this is to be found in *Inf.* XIII., 63, where Pier delle Vigne tells Dante that he so gave up his whole being to the faithful discharge of the duties of his great office of Chancellor to the Emperor Frederick II., that he lost his veins and his pulses (*le vene e i polsi*). But veins and pulses are practically synonymous terms, and the variant (*lo sonno e i polsi*) is considered by Dr. Moore to be by far the preferable reading, as it gives a much more appropriate sense to Pietro's speech. His devotion to his noble office was such as to destroy, not his life (*le vene e i polsi*), but his repose by night, and his strength and mental power by day. Let us suppose then that *le vene e i polsi* may have been composed by Dante during his period of preparation, and *lo sonno e i polsi* substituted by himself later, as better expressing the special point of his narrative.

During the twenty-four hours I have been in Manchester, I have seen another variant, *i sensi e i polsi*, in two magnificent manuscripts, the one in the Rylands Library, and the other at the house of my kind host, Dr. Lloyd Roberts, which belonged to Mr. Hughes.

We may also notice the remarkable way in which at times the number of a Canto in one *Cantica*, corresponds with the number of a Canto in another *Cantica*, when the subjects in both offer a parallel or a contrast. Take, for instance, Canto VI. of the *Inferno*, where Ciaccio censures the inner condition of Florence; Canto VI. of the *Purgatorio*, where Dante declaims against the intestine feuds which rendered Italy powerless in the world; and contrast these with Canto VI. of the *Paradiso*, where the Emperor Justinian extols the glories of the Roman Eagle, which had of yore carried the pre-eminence of Italy over the whole world. Take the darkening of night in Canto II. of the *Inferno*, and contrast it with the lovely dawn in Canto II. of the *Purgatorio*. Take the bad Pope in *Inf.* XIX., and contrast with that passage, the description of the good Pope in *Purg.* XIX.

Take also the following contrasts:—

The Forest of Hell ( <i>Inf.</i> XIII.).	versus	{ The Divine Forest ( <i>Purg.</i> XXVIII.).
The pathetic tale of the impure woman ( <i>Inf.</i> V.).	versus	{ The pathetic tale of the pure and saintly woman ( <i>Par.</i> III.).
The Demon Pilot of Hell ( <i>Inf.</i> III.).	versus	{ The Angel Pilot of Purgatory ( <i>Purg.</i> II.).
The Proud Florentine in Hell ( <i>Inf.</i> X.).	versus	{ The Proud Florentine in Heaven ( <i>Par.</i> XV., <i>et seq.</i> ).

And greatest of all contrasts: that of the two Montefeltros, of which more anon.

Who would venture to affirm that these are mere coincidences of figures and facts, and not designedly a



Every word of his great poem had a set purpose, and must be investigated from the Tuscan point of view, rather than from that of the poorer language of Piedmont and Lombardy. The most homely utensils of domestic furniture in Tuscany were brought in to serve the purpose of his simile. Take one instance,—the familiar *conca*, the well-known earthenware vessel used in every Tuscan household, either for washing clothes, or for storing oil, or as a vase for orange or lemon trees, the conical shape of which serves him to describe the shape of Hell (*Inf.* IX., 16). Take the *rosta*; the wattle-screen used on the Pistojan hills, which guards the chestnut crop in the woods from being swept away by a sudden mountain flood, but which in the Forest of Woe (*Inf.* XIII., 117) is represented as insufficient to withstand the unhappy shades of the Society of Spendthrifts (*Brigata Spendereccia*), the wanton squanderers of their own substance. These are but two instances taken at hazard, the one from the domestic life of the townspeople, the other from that of the peasantry of Dante's ever-remembered, ever-regretted country. In *Inf.* XXIX., 74, he compares the fever-stricken shades of the Falsifiers of Metals, propping themselves one against the other, to a group of saucepans (*tegghe*) standing close together over the fire. This simile is not borrowed from the kitchens of great people. Dante did not write for such as Lucullus and Apicius only, and his comparisons had to be taken from the most common objects. Again, when describing the grievous torment these shades were undergoing from the irritation of skin disease, he likens their frantic efforts to get relief, to the curry-combing of a horse by a groom, or to the scaling of a fish by a cook. The familiar aspect, existing to this day in Italy, of blind beggars sitting on the ground outside the doors of the churches, leaning against each other, comes back to his mind when in *Purg.* XIII., 61—63, he depicts the blinded spirits of the Envious sitting in that very attitude. The *malaria* of the Tuscan Maremma, and the futile attempts (of those days) to cure it by drainage, are



cited, as in another place the insalubrious valley of the Chiana, whose sluggish course found marshes so pestiferous that, in Dante's time, not only had branch hospitals to be established all over the district, but we are told that these became so overcrowded, between July and September, that the sick used to be laid along the sides of the roads. In *Purg.* XXII., 49, the word *rimbeccare*, a term in Italian Tennis (*Pallone*) for "to return the ball" (Fr. *riposter*), may suggest to Dante's readers that he was familiar with the ancient game of *Pallone*, from which Tennis was certainly derived. In *Inf.* XXVI. (opening lines) the fireflies (*luciole*) on a summer night are described with such accuracy as well-nigh to make one believe oneself on a Tuscan hill-side.

The Divine Comedy is *Dante himself*. If there exists a work from which it is impossible to separate for one instant the presence of its author, it is indeed this one. Dante is unceasingly present—he is indeed scarcely absent in a single line—he is at the same time the hero and the chief actor in its scenes. He compels us to feel the full force of his wonderments and of his terrors, of his emotions of pity, as well as his moments of indignation and wrath. It is with him that we undergo the glare of the flames of Hell, with him that we shiver in the icy blasts of Cocytus. Were once his presence removed, in an instant the illusive image, which had kept our hearts and minds in subjection, would vanish likewise. It is among the torments of Hell and the penances of Purgatory that we see Dante in all his humanity. We mark his flight from the wild beasts; his horror on first witnessing the torments of the damned, which caused him twice, during his single night in Hell, to swoon away; his outbursts of rage against some of the most vile and contemptible characters; the rousing of his family pride on hearing his ancestors disparaged; his tender, gentle compassion for the renowned Imperial Chancellor, Pier delle Vigne (like himself the victim of Envy and Calumny); his sympathetic treatment of his old Mentor in science, Brunetto Latini, as well as of

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words of the twenty-seventh Canto, that he, Virgil, has bid this double-horned flame depart; addressing the spirit of Ulysses in the Lombard dialect.

I will take the liberty of reading from my own prose translation:—

Now was the flame pointing straight up and (was) still, through not speaking any more, and already was it moving away from us with the permission of the gentle Poet; when another (flame) that was coming on behind it, made us turn our eyes towards its crest, by reason of a confused sound that was issuing from it.

By *dritta in su* we are to understand that the flame had ceased to wave about (*crollarsi*, XXVI., 86), and was directing its point straight up in the air. By *queta* is meant that it was no longer giving forth a sound (*mormorando*, *Ib.* 85).

The familiar accents of the North Italian tongue have attracted the attention of another shade, who, coming under the arch over which the Poets are leaning, entreats them to pause for a moment and converse with him. Dante compares the confused jumble of sounds within the flame, to the howls of anguish of the Athenian artificer Perillus, who, having invented a brazen bull in which Phalaris, the tyrant of Agrigentum, could roast his condemned prisoners, was informed that he should himself be the first to teach the bull to bellow; and thus was the engineer "hoist with his own petard," Perillus being the first victim of his own invention.

As the Sicilian bull, which had bellowed first with the moaning of him—and that was right—who had fashioned it with his file, bellowed with the voice of the sufferer, with such reality, that notwithstanding it was made of brass, yet did it seem transfixed with agony.

In the brazen bull there was no outlet for the voice, so that the cries of the victim made an inarticulate sound,

and Dante now shows that the voice proceeding from the tormented shade was of the same description:—

“So (here the words of woe, from not having at their commencement any vent or outlet from the fire, changed themselves into its language. But after that they had found their way up through the point, imparting to it that vibration which the tongue (of the imprisoned shade) had imparted to them in their passage (through its lips), we heard say: “O thou to whom I direct my voice, and who wast but now speaking Lombard, saying: ‘Now get thee gone, no longer do I urge thee’: though I may perchance have come a little late, let it not irk thee to stop and talk with me: See it irks not me, and I am burning.”

It was Virgil’s voice that the spirit had heard speaking Lombard. In fact he probably did not know that Virgil had a companion, for in that *mondo cieco* everything was concealed from his view. The difficulty of articulation on the part of these sinners seems to have been somewhat analogous to that of the Suicides in *Inf.* XIII., who had no power of utterance until blood flowing from a wound carried their voices with it.

The shade now continues to call up to Virgil, asking him if he is Italian, because if so, they are fellow-countrymen, he himself being from the Romagna, as to the dissensions in which he asks for news.

“If thou art but now fallen into this blind world from that sweet Latin land, from which I bring all my guilt, tell me if the Romagnoles have peace or war; for I was from that mountain region there between Urbino and the chain from which the Tiber is unlocked (*i.e.*, takes its source).”

Dante calls all Italians south of the Po, *Latini*; and all to the north of it, *Lombardi*. He never once uses the term *Italiani*. Time will not allow of my quoting the references

(*Convivio* IV., 28, 61 *et seq.*; and *Inf.* XXII., 65). The hill country of Montefeltro lies between Urbino and Monte Coronaro in the Apennines, where is the source of the Tiber. The speaker is the former great Ghibelline leader, Count Guido da Montefeltro, one of the most prominent figures in the highly-complicated history of the Italian States in the time of Dante. He died in 1298, and according to some, was buried at Assisi, where, two years before, he had entered the Franciscan Order. Some have wondered why Dante in his earlier work, the *Convivio*, had so extolled a man, whom in this passage he depicts in such black colours. Possibly Dante spoke in Guido's praise before he became acquainted with the infamy of his deceitful counsel to the Pope. Let us take this view, and suppose that Dante was not sorry to bring to light one of the dark deeds that would blacken the memory of his old enemy Boniface VIII. He would seem too to relate with a certain amount of complacency the sins of Count Guido, who, while the ostensible head of the Ghibelline party, was constantly vacillating between the Papal Court and the Empire. No one can read this Canto without perceiving that there is wrath in Dante's soul against the man whose deeds were less those of the lion than of the fox.

In Dante's progress through the *Inferno*, it is noticeable that in any interview with Spirits of antiquity, Virgil is always the spokesman, and in the preceding Canto, when Dante had expressed a wish that he and Virgil should converse with the double-horned flame enclosing the souls of Ulysses and Diomedes, Virgil had given an assent, conditional on being himself the one to address them. He now releases Dante from this imposed silence, and urges him to reply to the shade of Guido da Montefeltro. Dante would appear to have foreseen that he was to be the speaker, and is quite ready. He gives a terrible picture of the dissensions in the various great cities of the Romagna, and of the sufferings they are undergoing at the hands of their respective tyrants. The limits of this lecture will

not admit of our doing more than giving a mere glance at this part of the Canto, *as our subject this evening is not what Dante relates to Count Guido, but what Guido relates to Dante*:—

I was still listening attentively, and bent down (over the bridge), when my Leader touched me on the side, saying: "Speak thou, this is an Italian." And I who had my answer already prepared, without delay began to speak: "O Spirit, that art hidden down there, thy Romagna is not, nor ever was, without war *in the hearts* of her tyrants, but open (war) I recently left there none."

There were at that time at least two rival factions in every city of the Romagna, which province became the prey of a number of petty local tyrants.

In the description that follows here, of the arms of the reigning princes of Ravenna, Forlì, and Rimini, Dante has evidently intended to draw a marked distinction. The Eagle of the Da Polenta covers Ravenna and Cervia under its feathers, as a bird does its own brood, implying that the rule of the Da Polenta was a paternal and beneficent government, whereas by the rapacious claws of the Ordelaffi lion at Forlì, and by the pitiless fangs of the Malatesta mastiff at Rimini, a detestable tyranny is plainly indicated.

The city (*la terra*) which not long since endured the protracted struggle (*i.e.*, siege), and of the Frenchmen made a gory pile, still finds itself under the Green Paws.

The arms of the Ordelaffi were a Lion, *Vert*, on a field, *Or*. After a long siege (*lunga prova*) which the City of Forlì sustained against an army principally of Frenchmen under the leadership of the Comte Jean de Apia, sent by Pope Martin IV., Count Guido da Montefeltro led the enemy into a craftily-devised trap and defeated them with tremendous slaughter (*sanguinoso mucchio*). One of the meanings of *terra* in the Middle Ages was

"*città, castel murato.*" Virgil uses *terrae* in the Aeneid in the sense of "fortified towns." The late Sir James Lacaita told me ten years ago, that in the South of Italy one fellow-citizen will say to another about the chief town in their district (*capoluogo* in Italian and *chef-lieu* in French) "Andiamo alla terra," meaning, "let us go to the city." The error of rendering *terra* as "land" is entirely due to certain English translators, who are by far greater culprits than those of any other nationality. One of them actually translates the two first lines of *Inf. X.*, "By a secret path, between *the wall of the land* and the torments," instead of "By a retired path between the wall of the city (of Dis) and the torments."

The old Mastiff of Verrucchio, and the young one, who wrought the ill-usage on Montagna, there, where they have been wont, make an auger of their teeth.

The city of Rimini was at that time groaning under the tyranny of the two Malatesta, father and son, called Mastiffs (Mastini) on account of their ferocity, and notably so as recently exercised upon Messer Montagna de' Parcitati, a young man of noble family, the head of the Ghibelline faction in Rimini, and whom they put to a cruel death. Their castle was Verrucchio. The elder of the two was the father of Gianciotto and Paolo, the husband and the brother-in-law of the hapless Francesca da Rimini. Another reason perhaps for their being styled mastiffs was because there was a dog displayed upon their coat-of-arms.

Dante next mentions the cities of Faenza, Imola, and Cesena, the two first under the dominion of Maghinardo de' Pagani di Susinana, (whose arms were a Lion, *Azure*, upon a field, *Argent*), while the latter city, Cesena, was having alternate experience of tyranny and freedom.

The cities of Lamone and Santerno the young lion on the white lair (*lit. nest*) governs, who changes sides from the summer to the winter.

Maghinardo de' Pagani was a Guelph in Tuscany, and a Ghibelline in Romagna. Faenza was situated on the river Lamone, Imola on the Santerno, and Cesena on the Savio.

And that (city, Cesena), whose flank the Savio washes, lives between tyranny and freedom, even as it is situated between the plain and the mountain.

Dante concludes by asking the shade of Guido to tell him who he *is*, addressing him with *tu*. Up to this point Dante has not known to whom he is speaking, and as soon as Guido has finished the sad tale which he is now about to relate in answer to Dante's question, the flame in which he is enveloped sweeps him away, thereby preventing the change to the (then) more respectful *voi*, which Dante would undoubtedly have made on finding himself in the presence of a Ghibelline leader and statesman of such exalted dignity and renown.

"Now I pray thee to tell us who thou art: be not more unyielding than another has been (to thee), so may thy name maintain its front in the world."

Time will not allow me to enlarge, as I should have liked, upon the respective uses of *tu* and *voi* in Dante's time as compared with the custom of the present day. In mediæval times *tu* was the ordinary mode of address from one individual to another, irrespective of sex or age; while *voi* was used in addressing personages of superior rank or dignity as a mark of respect. At the present day *voi* is nearly universal in South Italy and Sicily; but the ordinary address in other parts of Italy, and especially in Tuscany and Rome, is the third person *Lei*. The use of *tu* at the present day is confined to extreme intimacy, and from superiors to inferiors. Its uses are complicated, and would require to be explained at length. It will be noticed that Dante has asked Guido to tell him who he *is*, but Guido in his answer only tells Dante who he *was*.

"Io fui uom d'arme, e poi fui cordelliero."





- Che mi rimise nelle prime colpe;  
 E, come e quare voglio che m'intenda.  
 Mentre ch'io forma fui d'ossa e di polpe,  
 Che la madre mi diè, l'opere mie  
 Non furon leonine, ma di volpe. 75
- Gli accorgimenti e le coperte vie  
 Io seppi tutte; e sì menai lor arte,  
 Ch'al fine della terra il suono uscie.  
 Quando mi vidi giunto in quella parte  
 Di mia etade, ove ciascun dovrebbe 80  
 Calar le vele e raccoglièr le sarte,  
 Ciò che pria mi piaceva, allor m'increbbe,  
 E pentuto e confesso mi rendei;  
 Ah! miser lasso! e giovato sarebbe.
- Lo Principe de' nuovi Farisei, 85  
 Avendo guerra presso a Laterano,  
 E non con Saracin, nè con Giudei;  
 Chè ciascun suo nimico era Cristiano,  
 E nessuno era stato a vincer Aciri,  
 Nè mercatante in terra di Soldano; 90
- Nè sommo officio, nè ordini sacri  
 Guardò in sè, nè in me quel capestro  
 Che solea far li suoi cinti più macri.  
 Ma come Constantin chiese Silvestro  
 Dentro Siratti a guarir della lebbre, 95  
 Così mi chiese questi per maestro  
 A guarir della sua superba febbre:  
 Domandommi consiglio, ed io tacetti,  
 Perchè le sue parole parver ebbre.
- E poi mi disse: 'Tuo cor non sospetti: 100  
 Finor t'assolvo, e tu m'insegna fare  
 Sì come Penestrino in terra getti.  
 Lo ciel poss'io serrare e disserrare,  
 Come tu sai; però son due le chiavi,  
 Che il mio antecessor non ebbe care.' 105
- Allor mi pinser gli argomenti gravi  
 Là've il tacer mi fu avviso il peggio,  
 E dissi: 'Padre, da che tu mi lavi

- Di quel peccato, ov'io mo cader deggio,  
 Lunga promessa con l'attender corto                    110  
 Ti farà trionfar nell'alto seggio.'
- Francesco venne poi, com'io fui morto  
 Per me; ma un de'neri Cherubini  
 Gli disse: ' Non portar, non mi far torto.  
 Venir se ne dee giù tra'miei meschini,                    115  
 Perchè diede il consiglio frodolente,  
 Dal quale in qua stato gli sono a'crini;  
 Ch'assolver non si può chi non si pente,  
 Nè pentere e volere insieme puossi,  
 Per la contradizion che nol consente.'                    120
- O me dolente! come mi riscossi,  
 Quando mi prese, dicendomi: ' Forse  
 Tu non pensavi ch'io loico fossi.'
- A Minòs mi portò: e quegli attorse  
 Otto volte la coda al dosso duro,                    125  
 E, poi che per gran rabbia la si morse,  
 Disse: ' Questi è dei rei del foco furo: '\*  
 Perch'io là dove vedi son perduto,  
 E sì vestito andando mi rancuro."
- Quand'egli ebbe il suo dir così compiuto,                    130  
 La fiamma dolorando si partío  
 Torcendo e dibattendo il corno acuto.

After that the flame had roared for a while in its peculiar way, it moved the sharp point to and fro, and then breathed forth in such wise: "If I thought that my answer were addressed to one who would ever return to the world, this flame should remain without further quiverings (*i.e.*, should speak no more): but inasmuch as none ever returned alive from this depth (meaning this *Borgia*)—if I hear the truth—without fear of infamy I answer thee. I was a man of arms, and

\* *furo*: Compare *furto* in *Inf.* xxvi 41, where *furto* signifies the thing "stolen away from sight," "hidden"; as in Racine's *Athalie*, Act 1, sc. 2, where the High Priest, Jehoiada, (Joad) tells Princess Jehosheba (*Josabet*) that the time is come to reveal the existence of the young King Joash, whom she has so fortunately hidden away from the vengeance of Athallah. He speaks of the King as her "happy theft:"

"Les temps sont accomplis, Princesse, il faut parler,  
 Et votre heureux larcin ne peut plus se cacher."

afterwards I was a Cordelier (*i.e.*, a Grey Friar girded with the cord of St. Francis), trusting thus cinctured to make amends, and assuredly my trust was on its way to fulfilment, had it not been for the Great Priest (Pope Boniface VIII.), whom may evil seize, who put me back into my former errors; and how, and why, I wish thee to hear from me."

He says his trust was *in process of being* fulfilled, giving the force of the imperfect tense. It is like a passage at the beginning of the *Iliad* (I., 5), where Homer says that the will of Jove *was being* accomplished ("Διὸς δὲ τελειέτο βουλή"). In this exordium Guido has given Dante a brief summary of what he has got to tell him. He was first a warrior, then a penitent, then a monk; he had reached a state of salvation, was thrown back into sin, and by the Pope; he is now going to relate how it all came about, and in what manner the sin was caused (*come e quare*). He first deals with the *quare*, *i.e.*, the "why." Why did the Pope turn specially to *him* for counsel? Because of his world-renowned craft.

While I was the form of bones and flesh that my mother gave me (*i.e.*, when I was alive), my deeds were not those of the lion, but of the fox. The subtle wiles and the covert ways, I knew them all; and so applied their art, that to the far end of the earth the sound went forth. When I saw myself come to that period of my age, when everyone ought to lower the sails and gather in the tackle (*i.e.*, give oneself up to God), that which before had pleased me, then gave me remorse, and after repentance and confession I dedicated myself (to God by becoming a friar). Ah! hapless me! and it would have availed!

The late Professor and philologist Nannucci told my father (Lord Vernon), being his Secretary at the time, that *rendersi*, by itself, means "to become a monk,"

"*farsi frate*," and is derived from the Provençal *se rendre*, with the same meaning. In the fourth book of the *Convivio*, cap. 24, Dante assigns four ages to the life of a man, namely:—

(a) Adolescence	}	from birth
<i>Adolescenza</i>		till 25 years old.
(b) Youth	}	till 45 years old.
<i>Gioventute</i>		
(c) Old Age	}	till 70 years old.
<i>Senettute</i>		
and (d) Senility	}	after 70 till death.
<i>Senio</i>		

Guido here means that he had reached the fourth period of his life, Senility or Decrepitude. In *Convivio*, IV., cap. 28, there are continual allusions to the metaphor of an aged man lowering his sails that he may enter the Heavenly Port.

Guido now tells Dante the strange combination of events which brought him into the counsels of Boniface. Martin IV. was dead, and the timid Celestine V. had given way to Boniface VIII., who now sat upon the Papal Throne. His election had been opposed by the Cardinals Giacomo and Pietro Colonna, and the new Pope's wrath culminated in a fierce civil war, in which he proclaimed a Crusade against them. He succeeded in depriving them of all their possessions, with the exception of the mountain stronghold of Palestrina (the mediæval name for which was Penestrino, from the ancient name Praenestē). Being baffled in his attempts to take it by force, the Pope suddenly bethought him of the well-known cunning and strategy of the Franciscan Friar, who had been the most astute statesman and military leader of his day, and we shall hear how he sought him out, and partly by persuasion and partly by intimidation, obtained from him the counsel he required.

The Prince of the modern Pharisees, having war near the Lateran, and not with Saracens nor with Jews; for every enemy of *his* was Christian, and none had been to conquer Acre, nor to traffick in the Soldan's territory. Neither his exalted office, nor his Holy Orders did he regard in himself, nor in me that cord which used to render those begirt with it more emaciated.

The palaces of the Colonna with whom the Pope was at war, were near the Lateran; and the war itself was not a holy Crusade for the cause of religion, but one for Pope Boniface's own personal interests. The old Commentators believed that Count Guido's repentance had been, up to a certain time, very real. He conformed most rigidly to the rule of the Minor Friars, donning their garb, and begging his bread publicly in the streets of Ancona. It is related that on one occasion he was riding on an ass into the city of Fano, and near the gate of that town a number of asses began to bray, and the bystanders to laugh. Whereupon the Count, for all that he was a Friar, lost his temper, and said: "There was a time when I have been round Fano with more hundreds of mounted men-at-arms than there are asses here," and he spoke the truth; for as long as it had been in his power, he had always been a standing menace to Romagna.

Guido compares the Pope's application to him for counsel to the legend that the Emperor Constantine once sought out Pope Sylvester in the caverns under Mount Soracte to cure him of his leprosy.

But as Constantine besought Sylvester within Soracte to cure him of the leprosy, so did he (Boniface) beseech me as a physician to cure him of the fever of his arrogance (*i.e.*, to gratify his heated desire to be revenged upon the Colonna); he asked of me counsel, and I kept silence, because his words seemed drunken.

The word *Maestro*, in its primary sense, means an expert

in anything, whether trade, or science, or handicraft. Buti and many of the old Commentators interpret it here as "*medico*," (a doctor), and in the *Decameron* Boccaccio uses it continually in that sense.

To remove Guido's scruples, the Pope promised him absolution beforehand for any sin he might commit.

And then he said to me: "Let not thy heart misgive thee: from this moment I absolve thee, and do thou teach me so to contrive that I may hurl down Palestrina to the ground. I have the power, as thou knowest, both to close and to open Heaven; for which purpose two are the keys (committed to me) which my predecessor held not dear."

Guido goes on to relate how he yielded to the Pope's persuasions, which moreover, he hints, were of so cogent and authoritative a nature, that it would probably have cost him his life or his liberty to have resisted them.

Then did his weighty arguments impel me to that point where to be silent seemed to me to be the worst counsel, and I said: "Father, since thou dost cleanse me from that sin into which I now must fall (this is my advice), *Long promise with short (i.e., only partial) keeping will make thee triumph on the High Seat.*"

There is a terrible irony in these words, when one thinks of the last vindictive humiliations that Boniface himself underwent at the hands of Sciarra di Colonna, and which moved even Dante to pity his fallen foe. We are left to infer that Guido deluded himself into a false security from the absolution given to him beforehand, and that he lived on in this delusion for the remaining year of his life as in a dream, from which he was rudely awakened by the reality of finding that the Fiend had triumphed over St. Francis in the contention for his soul. If he had not been fully persuaded of the efficacy of the Pope's absolution, he would have obtained it anew after due contrition and penitence.

Francis came for me afterwards, as soon as I was dead, but one of the black Cherubim (interposing) said to him: "Bear him not away; defraud me not. He has got to come down among my minions, because he gave the fraudulent counsel, from which time I have been (clutching) at his hair. For he who does not repent cannot be absolved, nor is it possible to repent and to will at the same time, by reason of the contradiction which allows it not." Ah wretched me! how I re-awakened (*i.e.*, how my eyes were suddenly opened) when he seized me, saying to me: "Thou didst not imagine perchance that I was a logician!"

Observe the force of the fiendish dialectic! No one can be absolved from a sin unless he has repented of it. Guido could not assuredly repent by anticipation of the sin which he had the will in his soul to commit; therefore the absolution was null and void, and he died in sin. Man repents of what he would not willingly have done; but to repent of a trespass, and to will to trespass, is the same time as repenting and not repenting at the same time; which involves a contradiction.

There is little more for Guido to tell Dante. The Demon's action is exceedingly prompt, and the routine of Dante's Hell has little variation, except that even in Minos the enormity of Guido's crime would seem to have aroused especial indignation.

"To Minos he bore me: and *he* round his stubborn back eight times did coil his tail, and then when from great fury he had bitten it, said: 'This is one of the sinners of the thievish fire (*i.e.*, the flame which conceals its prey)': wherefore I, where thou seest, am lost, and going thus attired, I bemoan me."

Guido's story is now told. He has no wish to be recalled to memory, and as he utters his last mournful words, he hurries away, whereupon the Poets pass on to the top of the bridge that overhangs the next *Bolgia*.



When he had thus completed his tale, the flame in anguish speeded away, twisting and flapping its sharp horn.

Benvenuto da Imola thinks the chief cause of Guido's anguish was the thought of how little all his wisdom and cunning had availed him.

Among the lost souls in Hell, some have entreated Dante to mention their names on earth, as, for instance, Ciaccio, in *Inf.* VI.; *Pier delle Vigne*, Canto XIII.; Brunetto Latini, Canto XV.; and the three noble Florentines in Canto XVI.; but the fallen great man, to whose grievous tale Dante has been listening, has no wish to be remembered, nor, having died apparently in the odour of sanctity, desires that his reputation should be tarnished by it being recorded that Dante had seen him in nearly the lowest depths of Hell.

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## THE SECOND PART.

Buonconte da Montefeltro.

## Purgatorio V.

WHILE Dante, in company with Virgil, is clambering up the rocky heights of Ante-Purgatory, by a path so exceedingly steep that it reminds him of the precipitous cliffs that overhang Noli on the Corniche Road between Nice and Genoa, his attention is arrested by the exclamations of a group of spirits, who, at the sight of his shadow, are struck with wonder and amazement. Dante is by no means displeased at the notice he is attracting, but Virgil reproves him for giving heed to such a light wind as the praises of the populace. How does he know that he merits it?

Dante neither resents Virgil's reproof, nor makes any endeavour to excuse his fault, but reverently amends it.

It is at this point that the Poets encounter another group of spirits who, as they advance, devoutly sing the *Miserere*. They come along the hill-side, on the level, but not ascending it, which their penance for the nonce forbids them to do. These are they who died violent deaths, and deferred repentance till their last hour.

Again, we have the same outspoken expression of wonder on the part of the spirits at the evidence, afforded by Dante's shadow, of his being alive; and two of them issuing from the band, rush forward to question him. One of these is Jacopo del Cassero (whose conversation with Dante we shall not discuss to-day), the other is Buonconte da Montefeltro. What so greatly excites their wonder is the fact that Dante alone, among all that are present, has not deferred his repentance either until his old age, or until his death. They ask Dante to make them cognizant of his condition. Virgil replies, and tells them that if from their having noticed Dante's shadow they stood still, they are correct in assuming that his body is very flesh. Let them do him honour, and it may be of

value to them. The two messenger spirits, on hearing Virgil's words, dart away, and Dante compares the rapidity with which they return to him with the whole band, to the flash of a falling star. Virgil forbids Dante to stop, but tells him he may listen to the spirits as he walks on. He evidently wishes to put a check on any undue delay, as Dante had expended a good deal of time in his long interview with King Manfred. The spirits, however, are cruelly disappointed by Virgil's prohibition, and having failed to detain Dante, they appeal to his sympathy by relating their violent deaths, and their tardy repentance at the last hour. They ask him to look and see if he recognises any of them, in order that he may bear tidings of them when he returns to the world.

Dante confesses that their faces are all unknown to him, but he solemnly assures them that on his return to the world he will comply with their petitions. The spirits are much moved by this assurance, and it would seem that at this point three of them step forth from the rest, and in turn make known their identity, and request Dante's good offices with their friends on earth. Of the first of these, Jacopo del Cassero of Fano, who had been Podestà of Bologna in 1296, it is beside our purpose to speak to-day. The other two are Buonconte da Montefeltro and Pia (born of the Tolomei) of Siena.

Buonconte da Montefeltro was the eldest son of his famous father, Count Guido. He commanded the Ghibelline forces at the battle of Campaldino, in 1289, in which battle Dante, when 24 years of age, had been one of the combatants in the Guelph army, where he fought side by side with Bernardino da Polenta, brother of Francesca da Rimini, and from him Dante probably first heard the story of his unhappy sister's fate. The Guelph army, under Amerigo da Narbona, consisted of the Guelph citizens, who, having been banished from Arezzo, had formed a league with the Guelph states of Florence, Bologna, Lucca and Pistoja; while the army of Arezzo, under Buonconte da Montefeltro, represented the Ghibel-

lines. Dr. Moore (*Dante and his early Biographers*) remarks that although the battle as a whole was a decisive victory for the Guelph forces, in the part of it where Dante was fighting on horseback in the very front rank, the Aretines were successful, the Florentine cavalry being disastrously routed, and Dante very narrowly escaped with his life. Benvenuto da Imola asserts that by this victory not only was the arrogance of the people of Arezzo subdued, but, besides that, the power of the whole Ghibelline party was greatly attenuated.

We will now read the text of Buonconte's conversation with Dante:—

- Poi disse un altro; “ Deh, se quel disio 85  
 Si compia che ti tragge all'alto monte,  
 Con buona pietate aiuta il mio.
- Io fui di Montefeltro, io son Buonconte;  
 Giovanna, o altri non ha di me cura;  
 Perch'io vo tra costor con bassa fronte.” 90
- Ed io a lui: “ Qual forza, o qual ventura  
 Ti travìo si fuor di Campaldino,  
 Che non si seppe mai tua sepoltura?”—
- “ Oh,—“ rispos'egli,—“ appiè del Casentino 95  
 Traversa un'acqua che ha nome l'Archiano,  
 Che sopra l'Ermo nasce in Apennino.
- Dove il vocabol suo diventa vano  
 Arriva'io forato nella gola,  
 Fuggendo a piede e sanguinando il piano.
- Quivi perdei la vista, e la parola 100  
 Nel nome di Maria finii, e quivi  
 Caddi, e rimase la mia carne sola.
- Io dirò il vero, e tu il ridi' tra i vivi;  
 L'Angel di Dio mi prese, e quel d'inferno  
 Gridava: “ O tu del ciel, perchè mi privi? 105
- Tu te ne porti di costui l'eterno  
 Per una lagrimetta che il mi toglie;  
 Ma io farò dell'altro altro governo.”—
- Ben sai come nell'aere si raccoglie

- Quell'umido vapor che in acqua riede,  
Tosto che sale dove il freddo il coglie. 110
- Giunse quel mal voler, che pur mal chiede,  
Con l'intelletto, e mosse il fummo e il vento  
Per la virtù che sua natura diede.
- Indi la valle, come il dì fu spento, 115  
Da Pratomagno al gran giogo coperse  
Di nebbia, e il ciel di sopra fece intento
- Si, che il pregno aere in acqua si converse :  
La pioggia cadde, ed ai fossati venne  
Di lei ciò che la terra non sofferse : 120
- E come a'rivi grandi si convenne,  
Vèr lo fiume real tanto veloce  
Si ruinò, che nulla la ritenne.
- Lo corpo mio gelato in sulla foce  
Trovò l'Archian rubesto; e quel sospinse 125  
Nell'Arno, e sciolse al mio petto la croce
- Ch'io fei di me quando il dolor mi vinse :  
Voltommi per le ripe e per lo fondo,  
Poi di sua preda mi coperse e cinse."


Buonconte tells Dante his name, at the same time complaining of the apathy of his wife and his kindred, who seemingly had as yet done nothing to extricate him from his detention in Ante-Purgatory. His desire is that Dante should go to Urbino, and get prayers and masses offered up for his soul, in order that thereby he may be allowed to enter the gates of Purgatory, and after due purgation obtain further permission to win his way up to Paradise. It was by such intercessions that Dante's great personal friend, Forese de 'Donati (in *Purgatorio* XXIII., 85, *et seq.*) tells Dante that his wife Nella "with her overflowing tears, brought him to drink the sweet wormwood of these torments."

Buonconte continues:—

"I was a Montefeltro, I am Buonconte: Neither Giovanna nor others give heed to me; therefore must I go among these spirits with downcast brow."

It was known that Buonconte had fallen in the battle of Campaldino, but as his body had never been identified among the slain, Dante, anxious to ascertain the true facts, represents himself as seeking the information from Buonconte himself.

And I to him: "What force or what chance caused thee to stray so far from Campaldino, that thy place of sepulture never was known?"



Buonconte, in reply, gives Dante circumstantial details as to the manner and place of his death, and how his soul was saved at the last moment by the powers of good prevailing over the powers of evil; and it is *at this special point* that we see, strongly accentuated, the contrast between the fate of two members of the same family. The father, Count Guido, as we have read above, was carried away by a Devil out of the very hands of St. Francis himself for a single speech of evil counsel which annulled all the fruits of his penitence. We now hear of a similar contest between the Angel and the Devil for the spirit of the son, where a single sigh uttered to the Virgin Mary, and the arms folded into the sign of the Cross upon the dying warrior's breast decides the contest in favour of the Angel, leaving the Devil to wreak his disappointment and wrath upon the dead body.

"Oh," answered he, "at the foot of the Casentino there takes its course a stream that is named the Archiano, which rises above the Hermitage (*i.e.*, Camaldoli) in the Apennines. There, where its name comes to an end (*i.e.*, at the point, two miles from Campaldino, where the Archiano flows into the Arno) I arrived, pierced through the throat, fleeing away on foot, and staining the plain with my blood. There my sight failed me, and I ended my power of utterance with the name of Mary, and there I sank down, and my flesh alone was left. I will speak the truth, and do thou report it again among the living; the Angel of

God took me, and the one from Hell exclaimed: 'O thou from Heaven, why dost thou rob me? Thou bearest away the eternal portion of him for one small tear that snatches him from me? I will, however, deal in another fashion with the other (*i.e.*, with the mortal portion).'

And now Dante, in order to relate how the Devil raised a tempest which filled the rivers to overflowing, so that they should sweep away and conceal the body of Buonconte, gives a description of the formation of rain, and makes Buonconte show how the Fiend used his diabolical intelligence to adapt the elements to his evil purposes.

Thou knowest well how there gets collected in the atmosphere that humid vapour which is re-converted into water, so soon as it rises up to where the cold condenses into rain. He (the Devil) joined that malign will, which desires naught but ill, to his demoniacal intelligence, and stirred up the smoky mist and the wind, by that power which his (angelic) nature imparted to him. Then as soon as the day was spent, he covered with mist the (whole) valley from Pratomagno to the great mountain chain (*i.e.*, the Apennines), and made the sky above to be so compressed, that the charged air was converted into water: down poured the rain, and what of it the earth could not absorb ran into the water-courses; and as it joined with the mighty torrents, it rushed headlong towards the kingly river (the Arno) with such impetuosity that nothing could check its course. The impetuous Archiano found my frozen body near its outfall, and swept it into the Arno, and loosened from my breast the Cross that I had made of myself (by folding my arms across my breast) when the death-agony overcame me: it (the Arno) rolled me along its banks, and over its bottom, after which it covered and entangled me with its spoils (*i.e.*, with the mud, gravel, weeds and branches which were being swept along by the swollen current).

The old Commentator Benvenuto da Imola launches out into a burst of admiration at the beauty of the above passage, in which Dante represents himself as having been ignorant of the place where Buonconte was buried, but puts the revelation of the mystery into that warrior's own mouth, and begs his readers to consider with what art the Poet has elevated a subject which was, in itself, humble and of no great importance.

We have now brought to a conclusion the striking contrast between the death-scene of Guido, the father, and Buonconte, the son, noticing the dissimilarity in the subsequent fate of each; and here my Lecture would end, were it not that the last seven lines of the Canto contain an episode which, some think, surpasses in beauty any in the *Commedia*, and I have ventured to include it in our subject.

We mentioned above that seemingly *three* spirits had stepped forward out of the band. The narrative of Jacopo del Cassero we omitted; we have given full consideration to that of Buonconte da Montefeltro; and now we find that the third spirit of the three makes her petition to Dante. This is Pia, generally reported to have been of the Tolomei family of Siena, a statement which is supported by Benvenuto and the *Anonimo Fiorentino*. This Pia must not be confused with Pia Guastelloni, widow of Baldo Tolomei, who was still living in 1318. The name of her husband was Paganello (shortened into Nello) de'Pannocchieschi, lord of the Castle of la Pietra, nine miles to the east of Massa Marittima. He was Podestà of Volterra in 1277 and of Lucca in 1313. He was alive, and made a will, in 1318. It is said that Nello wanted to get rid of Pia in order that he might be free to marry the beautiful Margherita degli Aldobrandeschi, the widow of Guy de Montfort. According to some, he caused his retainers to hurl her out of a window of his castle in the Maremma down the tremendous precipice below. Another account says that Nello simply waited until the pestilential air of the district, so fatal to life, should destroy her.



But Dante has not chosen in her case to lift the veil that hangs over her mysterious fate, as he has done in the case of Buonconte da Montefeltro.

Pia tells her sad story in a few simple sentences, but so clearly and so tersely, that the passage has always been reputed to be one of those that demonstrates to the fullest extent Dante's marvellous power of condensed narrative.

“ Deh, quando tu sarai tornato al mondo,                    130  
     E riposato della lunga via,  
     Seguitò il terzo spirito al secondo,  
 “ Ricorditi di me, che son la Pia :  
     Siena mi fe', disfecemi Maremma :  
     Salsi colui che innanellata, pria                    135  
     Disposando, m'avea con la sua gemma.”

“ Ah, when thou shalt have returned to the world, and rested thyself from the long journey,” the third spirit followed on to the second, “ Remember me who am Pia : Siena made me, Maremma unmade me ; that man, my husband, knows it, who, first plighting troth, had wedded me with his ring.”

Some read *disposata*, but whichever reading be adopted, the passage is an exceedingly difficult one to translate correctly. Construe it thus : “ *Salsi colui*, he knows it, *che* who *pria disposando* first plighting troth, *innanellata m'avea* had wedded me *con la sua gemma* with his ring.” Jacopo del Cassero wishes to be remembered by the people of Fano ; Buonconte by his wife, the Countess Giovanna ; but Pia has no name in her domestic sanctuary, and can only rely on the compassionate feelings of Dante. Observe, too, the womanly tenderness as well as the high-bred politeness of Pia, who only begs Dante to think of her on earth, *after* that he shall be able to do so without inconvenience to himself. Neither of the male spirits had made any such reservation in their eager requests that Dante would urge their friends to pray for them.

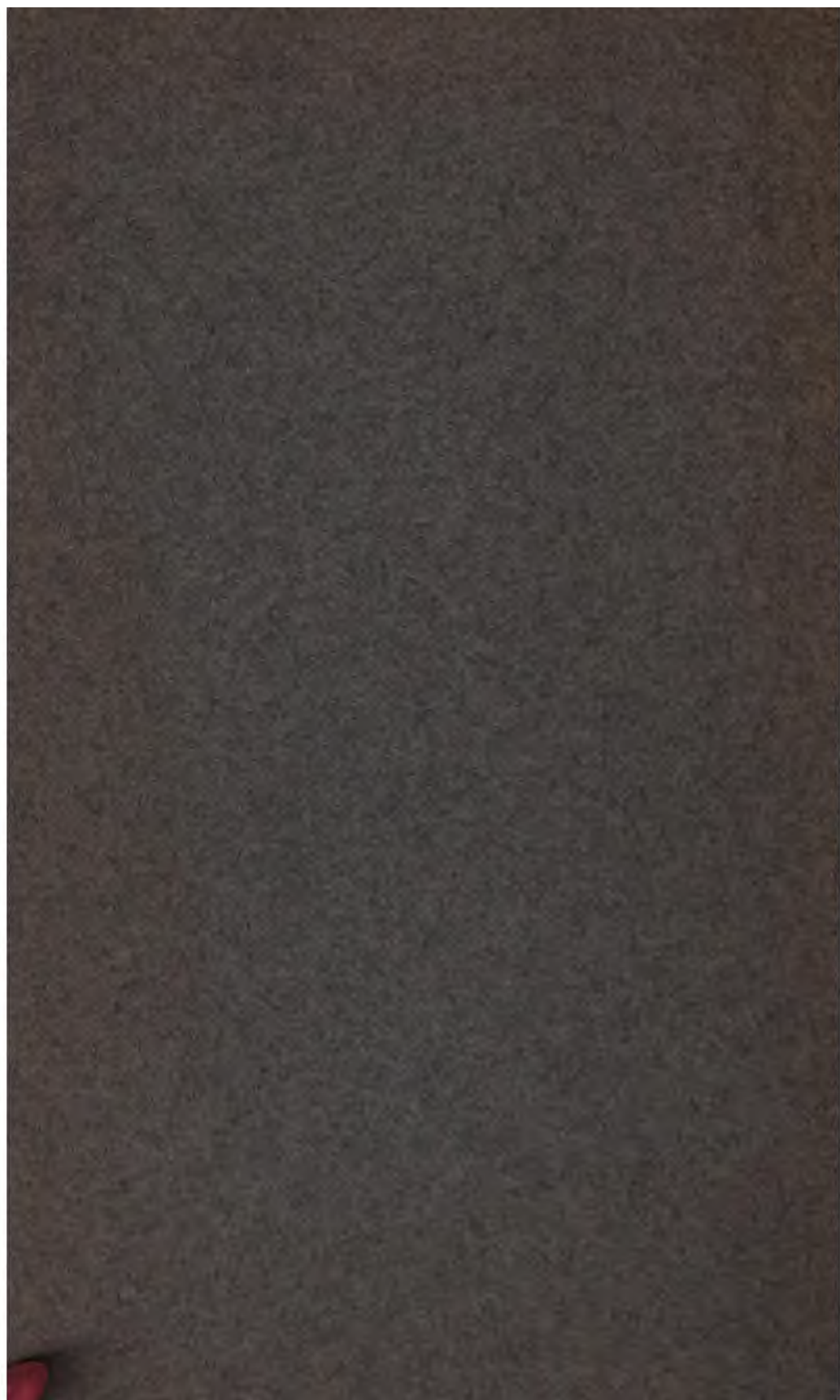
I am anxious to add to this lecture an expression of my

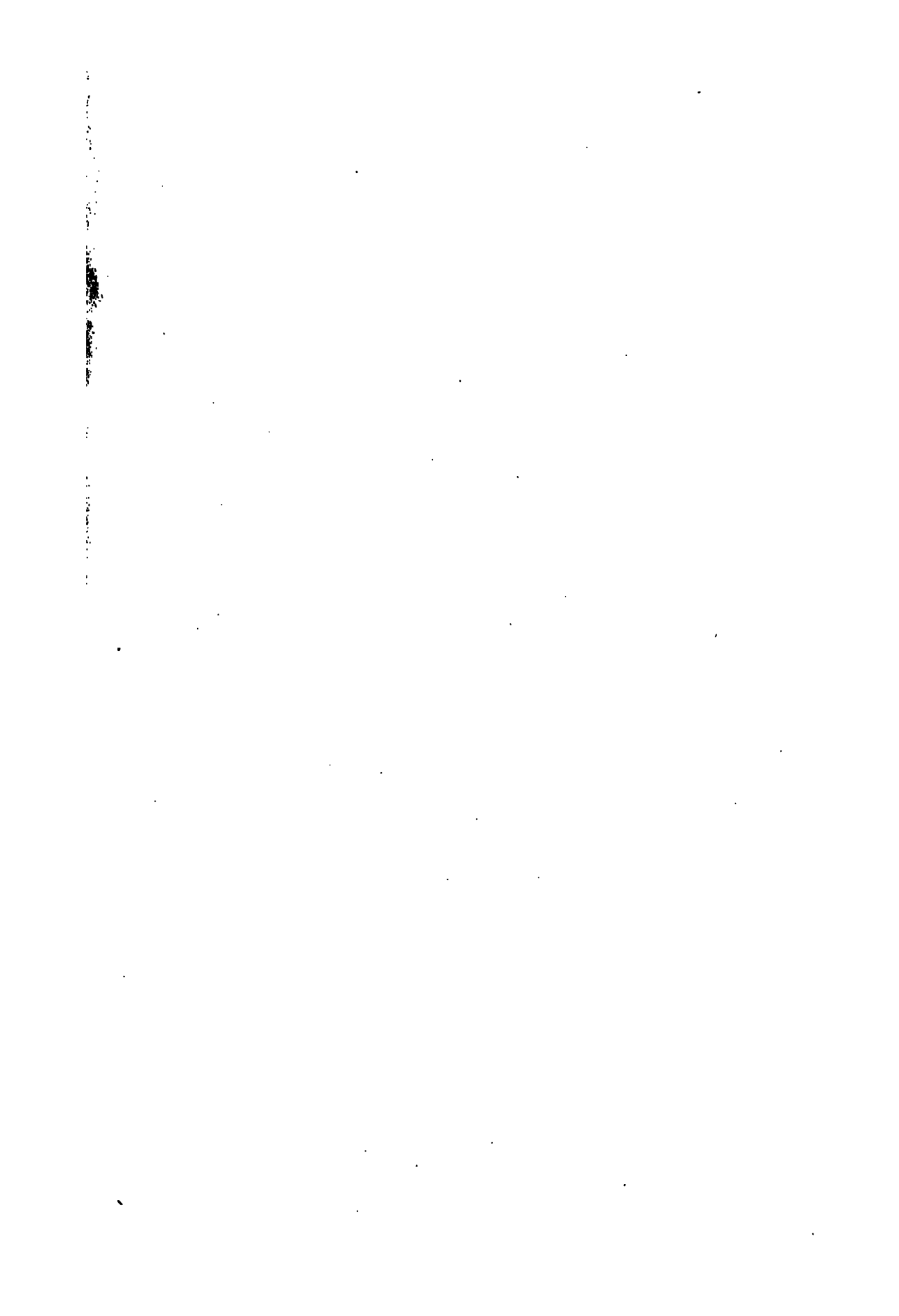
deep sense of the honour which the Council of the Manchester Dante Society have done me by inviting me to deliver the first lecture out of the many which I trust that they will listen to in the future.

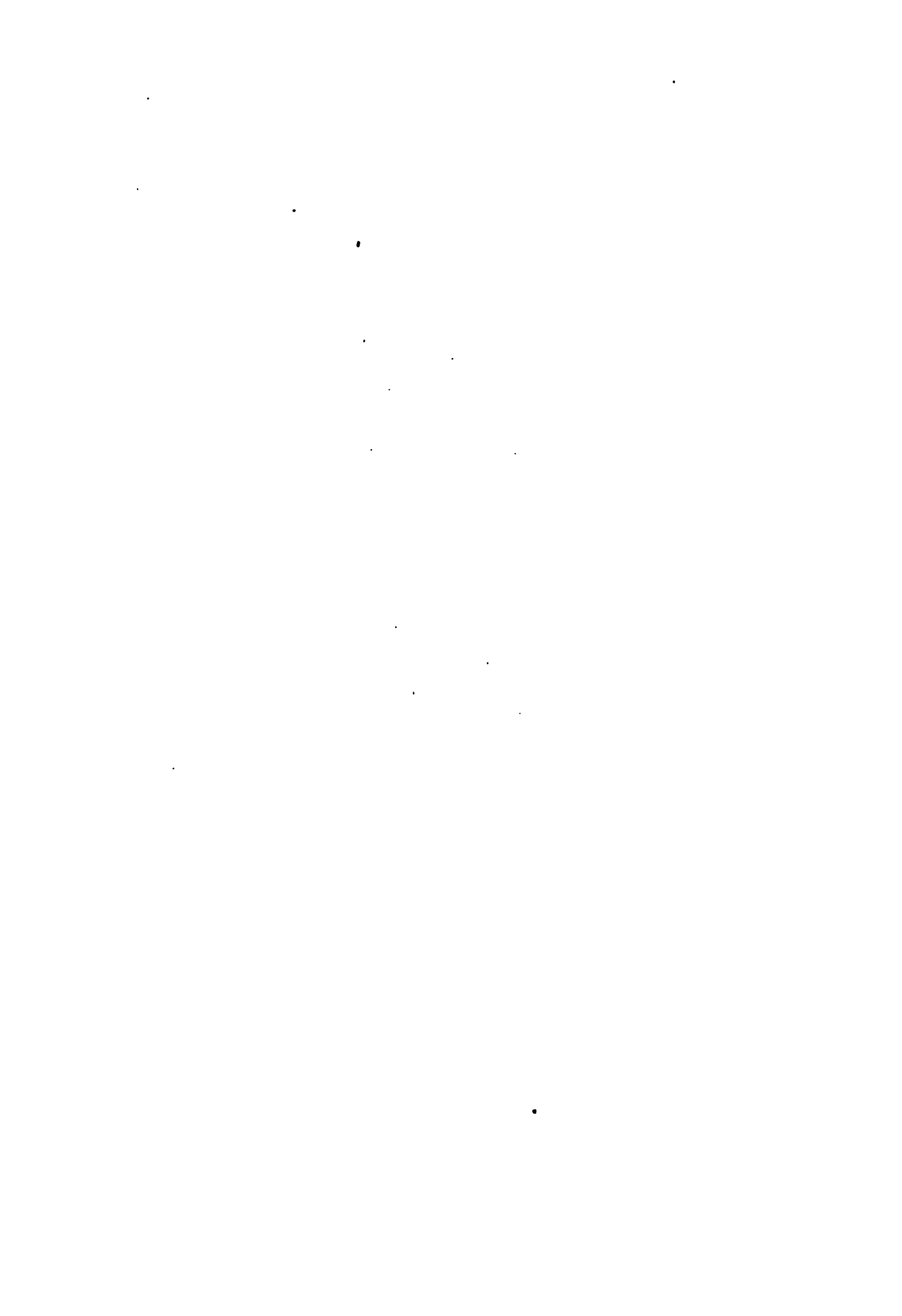
In a conversation which I was privileged to have this morning with the Dean of Manchester, the Right Rev. Bishop Welldon, he cordially agreed with me in the strong conviction that in the cultured city of Manchester,—which I may be permitted to term the Athens of North England, as Edinburgh is said to be of North Britain,—there ought not only to be a Dante Society, but also a good and a permanent one—one that should be attended by those who really study Dante, and not only by audiences assembled to listen to an interesting discourse. Really to know Dante is to love him—but the study of him without such love is but an arid pursuit, and one doomed to disappointment.











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