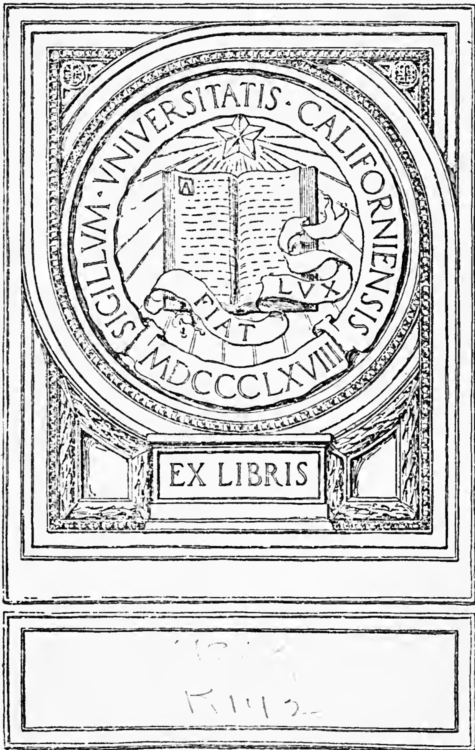
DANTE ALIGHIERI

APOSTLE OF FREEDOM

By

LONSDALE RAGG, B.D.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DANTE ALIGHIERI

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL: Rivingtons, 1898. (' *The Books of the Bible.*')

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[1] THE MOHAMMEDAN GOSPEL OF BARNABAS: Clarendon Press, 1907.

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[1] THINGS SEEN IN VENICE: Seeley, 1913.

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[1] In collaboration with Mrs. Lonsdale Ragg.

INAUGURATION OF DANTE'S STATUE, FLORENCE, 1865.

(See pp. IX., 19 and 165)

DANTE ALIGHIERI
APOSTLE OF FREEDOM

War-Time and Peace-Time Essays

By

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TO THE

DOTTORESSA MARIA MONTESSORI

A TRUE APOSTLE OF FREEDOM

IN THE

EDUCATIONAL SPHERE

Tu m' hai di servo tratto a libertate.
—*Par.* xxxi. 85.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

DANTE, like Shakespere, speaks to every age, and has a word for every crisis in the life of men and nations. Perhaps at no time since he passed into the other world has his spirit been so potent as in these last years, when his Italy has been putting the last touches to the redemption of that territory whose boundaries he sketched in famous phrase.[1]

Scarce were his ashes cold, ere Boccaccio began to expound, from the professorial chair founded by a repentant Florence, the mysteries of his great Poem. Scarcely had Italy awaked from her long sleep of slavery to the foreigner ere she erected in Florence, in the very year in which it became temporary capital of a free nation,[2] a statue of the prophet of Italian liberty and unity.

Some forty-three years later, on the anniversary of the Poet's death, September 14th, 1908, Ravenna was *en fête* with a gathering in which the "Unredeemed" Brethren from Pola, Fiume, Trieste, and the Trentino mingled their vows and gifts with those of the City that was his last refuge and the City that bore him and cast him out. All along, and especially in the crises of her fate, his great spirit has brooded over the Italy he loved,

[1] See esp. *Inf.* ix. 113; xx. 61: "Dante and the Redemption of Italy," p. 15.

[2] 1865: See *ib.* p. 19.

the Italy to whom he bequeathed the splendid instrument of a classical language. To-day, perchance he "sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied."

His many-sided genius reveals new splendours when viewed from fresh angles; and the following Essays, which make no claim to special learning or originality, attempt to approach him from different sides, and so to bring out varied aspects of his greatness. But they all, or nearly all, have one point in common: each sets him forth as an Apostle of Liberty.

Freedom political, intellectual, spiritual—all these ideals are wrought into the "Sacred poem to which Heaven and Earth have set their hand,"[1] and that Poem enshrines, as we have endeavoured to shew, principles of liberty in the Educational Sphere,[2] which our present age is apt to hug to itself as its own discovery. The Essays, in their present form, are all coloured by the atmosphere of the world's great fight for freedom. From some of them, written at the very height of the conflict, a few of the fiercer touches have been removed as "out of tune" in these critical years of would-be reconciliation and reconstruction, when old rancours must perforce be exorcised if we would save civilisation from its post-War perils. If any undue traces of bitterness remain, may Dante shelter them under the ample cloak of his righteous indignation. He, too, spoke hotly—of a Florence and of an Italy whose highest good was ever in his heart.

[1] *Par.* xxv. 1, 2. [2] "Dante and Educational Principles," pp. 83 *sqq.*

The problems and ideals of the Great War are still with us in a new shape, and man's greatest need is individual and corporate "freedom of soul." If these Essays be recognised as reflecting to any extent Dante's great mind on such problems and ideals, the Author will be more than satisfied.

Two of these Essays had been published some years ago in the *Modern Language Review*,[1] and have been slightly retouched: four appeared during the course of the War, in a somewhat briefer form, in the *Anglo-Italian Review* [2]; while the Prologue, product of the so-called days of Peace, was published in the *Guardian* of August 19th, 1921. To the Editors and Publishers concerned the writer hereby accords his acknowledgements and thanks; as also to his friend, Professor Cesare Foligno,[3] for a kindly glance at the MS., and for the suggestion that the critical text of 1921 should be cited.[4] Two of the Essays now see the light for the first time.[5] The longer of these, "Dante and Educational Principles," a paper delivered at University College, London, in the Sexcentenary Series of lectures last year, may perhaps, with the reprinted

[1] Nos. III and VI.

[2] Nos. I, II, IV, and VIII.

[3] Prof. Foligno has, of course, no responsibility for the opinions set forth in this volume.

[4] *Le opere di Dante : testo critico della Società dantescha italiana, etc.* Firenze : R. Bemporad & Figlio. MCMXXI. Cited in the notes as "Bemporad." In the case of quotations from the prose works, an attempt has been made to consult the convenience of English readers by the reference to the paging of Dr. Moore's Oxford Edition as well as to that of the *Testo critico* (Bemporad).

[5] Nos. V and VII.

articles on "Wit and Humour in Dante," and "Dante and Islam," claim, in a manner, to break new ground. But all alike are humbly commended to the patient indulgence of the Dante-reading public.

LONSDALE RAGG.

Holy Cross Day,
1921.

DANTE ALIGHIERI

PROLOGUE

DANTE, APOSTLE OF LOVE

But we all with unveiled face, reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory.

—2 Cor. iii. 18.

These words form the sequel of to-day's Epistle [1] in which the temporary reflection of the Shekinah in Moses's face is contrasted with the permanent and complete illumination of the Spirit. They form the climax of a passage which, full of mystery and splendour, leads us up to those things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard—to that beatific Vision prepared for God's unfeigned lovers, who shall shine with His own likeness because and when they " see Him as He is."

A month from to-day—on the day of the Holy Cross—we shall be celebrating the six hundredth " birthday " into the world beyond of the man whose eagle vision pierced, dazzled but unafraid, into the blazing glory of Paradise—Dante, the pilgrim of the world to come. St. Paul's inspired and inspiring words bring back to mind the swift upward movement of Dante's *Paradiso*, where the spirit mounts from sphere to sphere, from glory to glory, impelled and wafted by the sheer force of Love, till at last, in face of the Triune blessedness, it is plunged

[1] This Sermon was preached in Lincoln Cathedral on Aug. 14th, 1921 (Twelfth Sunday after Trinity).

into an ineffable joy and wonder—ineffable because, as he says, "as it draweth nigh to its ideal, the object of its longing, our intellect sinketh so deep that memory cannot go back upon the track"—

> Perchè, appressando sè al suo disire
> Nostro intelletto si profonda tanto,
> Che dietro la memoria non può ire.[1]

The glory of which we speak—which makes the *Paradiso* a marvel of dazzling, but, so to speak, graduated splendour—is the glory of Love, Divine and human; and it is of Dante, the Apostle of Love, that I would speak to you to-day. In this sexcentenary year all the civilised world is acclaiming him, and it is well that our Christian Churches should echo thanksgiving to Almighty God for this most Christian poet, and for the magnificent bequest that he left, not only to Italian literature, but to the world. The Pope in his encyclical last spring [2] bore eloquent testimony to Dante's loyalty to the Christian heritage, and to the power by which, as a teacher of the Faith, " he being dead, yet speaketh."

He speaks, indeed, with a voice from six hundred years ago, yet not in the remote language of one nurtured in leisure, ease, and comfort, far from the annoyances and disappointments, the worries and anxieties and ugly problems of the rough-and-tumble world we know. On the contrary, the world in which Dante prayed and strove and studied and dreamed and wrote—the world from which comes down to us the serene glory of his Paradise of Love—was astonishingly like our own on its uglier side: a world of religious and political unrest, of clashing interests and ideals, of faction, violence, and cruelty, of individual and corporate predatory self-assertion; a

[1] *Par.* i. 6-8.
[2] See *Osservatore Romano*, May 4th, 1921. And *cf.* Appendix II.

world in which the poet himself, called to "abandon all that man holds most dear"—

> Ogni cosa diletta
> Più caramente [1]—

wrought out his great work as a nameless wanderer, and died in bitter exile. So we may listen to him as to one who has a genuine message for us.

THE POET OF LOVE

Amid all that has been said and written this year about the author of the *Divina Commedia,* there is one note that has rarely, if at all, been struck; yet it is surely, in some sense, the keynote of all his singing. Dante is, from the first and to the last, the poet of Love. "I am one," he says, "who, when Love breathes in me, take note, and that which he dictates within I express"—

> I' mi son un che quando
> Amor mi spira, noto, ed a quel modo
> Ch' e' ditta dentro vo significando.[2]

His first book—the *Vita Nuova*—testifies to this. It represents a new movement in love-poetry.[3] The songs of the Troubadours had been, in their earlier forms, with all their strange beauty, frankly sensual and immoral; and when, after the religious movement of the Albigensian Crusade, a greater strictness had perforce been introduced, they had lost their first warmth and glow and naturalness. The "sweet new style"—*Dolce Stil nuovo* [4]—of Dante and

[1] *Par.* xvii. 55.
[2] *Purg.* xxiv. 52-4.
[3] *Cf.* A. G. Ferrers-Howell, "Dante and the Troubadours," in the Memorial Volume, *Dante, Essays in Commemoration,* 1321-1921; London Univ. Press, 1921.
[4] *Purg.* xxiv. 57.

his circle combined the two requisites of sincere purity and glowing life. The story of the *Vita Nuova* is the story of the precocious passion of a boy of nearly ten years old for a little girl of nine. It passes through its phase of refined sensuousness and self-absorption, but it emerges as a pure mystic love that leads ultimately up to the very Throne of God.

In the vision with which the book closes—the vision of his Beatrice after God has called her to Himself—lies the germ of the greatest poem of Christendom ; the poem which, just because it sings the story of man's freewill in contact with God's redeeming grace, has as its supreme and final theme—Love. We are familiar, no doubt, with the main lines of Dante's vision of the world beyond—of the three kingdoms as he conceived them, of hell, purgatory, and heaven. But I will ask you to be patient if I attempt to sketch for you something of the great contours of each, that we may see together how, for this love-poet, eternal Love dominates and shapes the universe.

His world beyond is conceived in terms partly belonging to the age in which he lived, with its scholastic theology and its Ptolemaic cosmography, partly in terms of the originality of his own genius. Its details and its hard outlines may be largely obsolete ; but its lessons are true and effective. It is because of its essential Christianity that Dante's poetry is so much alive, is more " modern," as the Papal Encyclical put it, than much actually contemporary poetry that is conceived in the spirit of paganism. Dante, for his soul's health—and for the benefit of untold generations—must needs pass through all three kingdoms of the world to come, guided by Virgil, who represents human reason. Descending down and down into the very bowels of the earth he sees the doom of unrepented sin. Then, after a wearying subterranean climb from earth's centre to the antipodes, he emerges at the foot of the lofty

terraced mountain where repentant souls are cleansed and brought back to their primal innocence. At the top of this mountain he finds himself in the earthly paradise, and meets Beatrice, the glorified " lady of his mind," who now represents at once Revelation and Grace ; sees wondrous things, submits to mystic rites, and finally is drawn up side by side with her, by the motive power of Love, from sphere to sphere, up to the Throne of God, where the redeemed worship Him for ever in the form of a mystic white rose. That Love is the motive power in Paradise is obvious. It is the radiant beauty of Beatrice, ever more dazzling as they mount higher, that lifts him up, and the spirits he meets glow one and all with the fire of Divine charity. It is not easy, perhaps, to detect the influence of Love in the dark abyss of the *Inferno*, or in the stern, long discipline of the Mount of Purgation.

But love is written even across the portal of Hell. " Abandon hope all ye that enter here " we all know as its inscription ; but that is but the last line of a nine-line title, and part of that title runs thus—" Divine Power made me, and Highest Wisdom, and Primal Love "—

> Fecemi la divina potestate
> La somma sapienza e 'l primo amore.[1]

This means, of course, the Blessed Trinity, but the last word about the Blessed Trinity is—Love. Love can be stern, and outraged love can draw down, as it were, by the law of being rather than by such vengeful wrath as we humanly attribute to the Most High, an unimaginable ruin and loss upon the outrager. In the stern, grim, cruel, sometimes grotesquely revolting picture Dante draws of the eternal future sinners can deliberately make for themselves, we see but the fruits of Love offered and rejected—the inevitable outcome of their own choice.

[1] *Inf.* iii. 5, 6.

When we enter the second kingdom, and begin to climb the mount which forms the pedestal to Eden, the home of man's innocency, the breath of Love is stronger and its radiance more clear. It reveals itself in the changing beauty of sky and landscape, in the glories of starlight, dawn and sunset and high noon, in the glad brilliance of wild-flowers, in the melody and harmony of music, but, not least, in the very structure and arrangement of Purgatory. Seven terraces ring the mountain round—one above another—separated by rugged cliffs and sheer precipices which Dante needs all his cragsmanship to overcome. And on each terrace one of the seven deadly sins is purged—Pride, Envy, Anger, Sloth, Avarice, Gluttony, Lust. These are arranged on a scheme which brings into relief a great principle—that all our actions, good or evil, are the fruits of Love—right love or wrong—

> Esser convene
> Amor sementa in voi d'ogni virute
> E d' ogne operazion che merta pene.[1]

These sins are all results of Love—excessive or defective, or aimed at the wrong object; and the purgatorial discipline is just the action of the educative Love of God upon willing penitents—straightening, developing, governing, and directing the disordered love that has so marred and stunted the beauty of their souls. The discipline and the humiliation are seen for what they are, and the Divine Love that speaks through them finds a ready and prompt response from souls "happy in the fire," because of the hope of what it can do for them.

> Contenti
> Nel fuoco, perchè speran di venire
> Quando che sia a le beate genti.[2]

> Even as Christ 'for the joy set before Him endured the Cross,'
> So they find in their 'pain' their 'solace.' [3]

[1] *Purg.* xvii. 103-105. [2] *Inf.* i. 118-20. [3] *Purg.* xxiii. 71-74.

When we pass into the third kingdom, up and up through sphere after sphere of the heavens, each more radiant with the light of Love, we feel ourselves "reflecting, as a mirror, the glory of the Lord, transformed into the same image from glory to glory." "One star," indeed, "differeth from another star in glory." There is higher and lower in the abode of bliss, in the "many mansions" of the Father's House. Dante questions one whom he meets in the lower sphere—Piccarda—on earth a playmate of his childhood. "Are you happy? Are you content? Have you no wish to be placed higher still?" Her answer enunciates the basal principle of heaven—"Brother, the quality of our love stilleth our will and maketh us long only for what we have, and giveth us no other thirst. . . . In His Will is our peace"—

> Frate, la nostra volontà quieta
> Virtù di carità, che fa volerne
> Sol quel ch' avemo, e d' altro non ci'asseta.
> . . . .
> E 'n la sua volontade è nostra pace.[1]

Here Love rules imperially, and the image of God's Will is stamped in glory on the souls of those who, "with unveiled face," are granted to feast upon the vision of His glory. Pure in heart, their whole being is full of light. And so, too, the poet, when at last he looked upon God, found his own will and desire moving in perfect harmony with that "Love that moves the sun and the other stars."

> L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle.[2]

So a great lover of Dante, the late Bishop Boyd-Carpenter, summoned up the teaching of the *Paradiso*: "Wouldst thou enter into God's Kingdom, O pilgrim of earth? then love. Wouldst thou share the sweet activities of its citizens? then love. Wouldst thou know Him who

[1] *Par.* iii. 70-72, 85. [2] *Par.* xxxiii. 145.

rules over them and all ? then love. For love opens the Kingdom of Heaven, and love makes the joyousness of its happy services, and none can know the heart of God save through love ; for God is love." [1]

Is it not meet that we should thank God this year for the sublime poet who has drawn for us so splendid a picture of the glory of Love " penetrating the whole universe " ; who has shown us in Love the one motive force in the world, the one constructive principle ? Was there ever a time when the world needed this teaching more than it does to-day ? A true doctrine, if ever there was one. If God is Love, then Love is the only principle of life. " He that abideth in love, abideth in God, and God abideth in him." [2] Real love—not selfish, sensual passion, not sentimental sweetness, not unwise and poisonous indulgence ; but love, wise, strong, straight, and pure, like the love of God ; love patient, self-forgetful, self-giving, like the love of Jesus Christ ; love illuminating, invigorating, recreative, like that of the Holy Ghost. If we could but " reflect " in life and character the " glory " of the Lord ! . . . There is no glory but love.

We must descend from the ethereal splendour of Dante's *Paradiso* into the hard realities of workaday life, even as Peter, John, and James came down from the Mount of Transfiguration to face the shouting, wrangling crowd and the convulsions of the epileptic boy. But though the radiance seems to fade, the glory is still with us, for it is the unfailing Love of Him Who promised to be with us " all the days." Love, then, accompanied them down from the height, unlocked the prison house of afflicted souls, and solved the problems of sin-stricken humanity. And Love, and Love alone, can do the same to-day.

[1] *The Spiritual Message of Dante*, Williams & Norgate, 1914, p. 225.

[2] 1 John iv. 16.

Let us face our bewildering problems with confidence, knowing that the secret of life is ours. Love, the only constructive principle, the only ultimately victorious power. Our enemies in the late war sounded their own doom when they promulgated a gospel of hate. Hate can never build up, only destroy. Alas ! they sowed the seeds of hatred outside the sphere where armies clash, and the devil's doctrine of class-hatred has been disseminated far and wide. If only the eyes of those concerned might be opened to see the mad futility of hate ! There is one force at work in the world that can teach this, that can heal the bleeding wounds of society, untie the knots of the industrial and social and international tangle—the force of Christian Love—yours and mine—a love like that of Him Who came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as ransom for many ; a love that brought Him to die for a world yet steeped in rebellion and sin, and moved Him to lay upon His disciples the injunction " Bless them that curse you." No merely human organisation for philanthropic succour or for peace ; not even a League of Nations, even though, thank God, its power and capacity at last be recognised with a gift of solemn responsibility ; nothing but the steady action of that " love of God " which His grace sheds into Christian hearts, leavening and inspiring such movements, such organisations, can hope for final sucess. But Love, after all, sits enthroned above the water floods, and abideth king for ever. There is no limit to our opportunity for blessing this poor world alike by prayer and by action—blessing our own immediate circle, our civic and Church life, blessing our country, our Empire, and the world's fellowship of Nations—if but our wills are moving in one motion with His—

L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle.

Chapter I

DANTE AND THE REDEMPTION OF ITALY

Sol nel tuo verbo è per noi la luce, o Rivelatore,
Sol nel tuo canto è per noi la forza, o Liberatore,
Sol nella tua melodia è la molt' anni lagrimata pace,
o Consolatore.

—*D'Annunzio.*

La severa immagine del poeta governa tuttavia i fati delle generazioni d' Italia.

—*Mazzini.*

Dante stands forth as the Apostle of Freedom in many spheres—that Freedom for which all the world is now longing: freedom for unhindered self-development of men and nations, freedom of spirit—the true atmosphere of all education. The *Monarchia*, the Epistles, and, most of all, the *Divina Commedia*—that "mystical epos of Man's Free Will"—bear witness to the truth of the word which Virgil speaks of him at the foot of the Mount of Purgation—

Libertà va cercando . . .

This all-pervading spirit of his teaching might perhaps of itself have been sufficient to make his name an inspiration to the heroes and martyrs who struggled for Italy's liberation in the nineteenth century; but it may be worth while to draw attention to certain aspects of his work, which give him a more definite and specific claim to be the Father of Free Italy.

The other day I turned up, after many years of neglect, Karl Witte's Essay on Dante and United Italy. For this

suspicious intercourse with "enemy alien literature" I can plead two extenuating circumstances: first, the absorbing nature of the topic at this moment, and secondly that I approached Witte in an English translation. Another point which might count in my favour is the fact that this particular Essay was written before 1870. That certainly lends to it a special interest; and the interest is rather enhanced than otherwise by the circumstance that Witte prefixed a Prefatory note and added a peroration in 1878.

Karl Witte, who was born in 1800 and died in 1883, represents the old vigorous and admirable type of German scholarship which was in very truth "Stupor Mundi": a blend of genius and conscientious painstaking on the reputation of which the Prussianised Kultur of to-day bases a claim to deference which Europe will more and more hesitate to accord.

How far, for instance, Germany has fallen from her former position as regards Dante Scholarship may be gauged from E. Benvenuti's slashing article in the *Bullettino della Società dantesca italiana* of June, 1914, of which a summary appeared in the *Times* Literary Supplement on March 4th. The article is the first instalment of a review of Dante studies in Germany for the years 1908-1913. It is a record, as the *Times* reviewer remarks, of "monumental ignorance, inaccuracy, arrogance, bad taste, and sheer stupidity . . . hailed with salvoes of approbation by the majority of German critics."

But Karl Witte is a man of other build than these modern Pan-Germanisers who are patriotic enough to attribute to Dante pure German ancestry, and too patriotic by far to soil their hands with the recent works of sound Italian critics, or their minds with the elements of Italian grammar and idiom.

Karl Witte, on the contrary—though he began life as an

Infant Prodigy, matriculating at Leipsic when only nine and a half years old, and reading his Doctor's thesis before he was fourteen—won recognition in Italy and England as well as in Germany as a real force in Dante scholarship: a great pioneer, who made his mistakes, as all pioneers will, but has won the gratitude of all subsequent Dantists.

In the Essay of which I have spoken, written and delivered as a lecture in 1861, Witte notes the fact and investigates the grounds of the constant association of Dante's name with the patriotic aspirations of Young Italy. "It is a fact," he says, "that, during the last half century, a great number of those who aimed at transforming Italy—and not only men of such moderation as Cesare Balbo, Gino Capponi, or Carlo Troya, but also the democratic revolutionaries who would take the world by storm—have hung, and still hang, upon Dante's *Divine Comedy*, with passionate enthusiasm. Ugo Foscolo, who preferred poverty and exile to place and honour under the rule of Austria, devoted the last years of his life exclusively to a great work on the poem; and after Foscolo's death, this new edition of the 'Prophecy of Italy's Future,' as he called the Comedy, was published by no other than Giuseppe Mazzini himself. . . ." If the Italian of the Sixties "were asked whence his countrymen drew their inspiration, he would scarcely hesitate," says Witte, "to name the greatest poet of his fatherland." And again, "the fact that in the days of foreign oppression patriots recognised each other by their love of the immortal poet, and greeted one another, as by a secret password, with the inspiring lines of the Divine Poem, is a symbol of the fact that the roots of this temper of mind"—the temper of national "self-reliance and self-renouncing enthusiasm"—"are to be sought in Dante."

There are three passions, according to Witte, which are (rightly or wrongly) traced back to Dante: (1) a glowing

love for Italy, (2) a hatred of the foreign, and above all of the Teuton yoke, and (3) a hatred of the temporal power of the Pope.

In the first case—and this is the point that more immediately concerns us—Witte holds that the contention is justified. "In hope, in sorrow, in reproof, we see Dante filled," he says, "with the same glowing love for the Fatherland of Italy, a love which he is the first to put into words."

Before Dante, at any rate, Italy was, in Metternich's famous phrase, "nothing but a geographical expression." The Roman poets of the Empire praise her scenery, but their devotion as patriots is to Rome itself. When the Empire broke up, Italy lost her one bond of superficial cohesion, though a shadowy unity emerged now and again under Visigothic and Longobardic domination, and the pressure now of Gothic Arianism, now of Byzantine Iconoclasm, drew Italy's various groups in self defence closer to Papal Rome.

The phenomenon of an apparently independent and united "Kingdom of Italy" (888-961) after the fall of the House of Charlemagne, is, from this point of view, as illusory as those of Odoacer and Theodoric, effecting little or nothing towards the evolution of a national spirit or a national self-consciousness. Dante is, it would seem, the first to see Italy with a patriot's eyes, as being, and as having been for countless ages, a fatherland for whom one might sing—

> Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.

She is "that lowlying Italy" on whose behalf the heroes and heroines of the *Aeneid* shed their blood so freely :

> . . . Quell' umile Italia. . . .
> Per cui morì la vergine Cammilla,
> Eurialo, e Turno, e Niso di ferute.

He loves her passionately, torn as she is by faction, her own worst enemy; and he calls on the representative of the Holy Roman Empire to control her madness and to bring her peace.

The close association of Italian aspiration with the name of Dante which Witte observed in 1861, came forcibly under my own notice nearly fifty years later, when I made a pilgrimage to Ravenna to take part in the "Feste dantesche," on September 13th, 1908. Isidoro del Lungo, perhaps the greatest of Italy's modern Dantists, was to inaugurate the opening of a special Dante wing in the Ravenna library, and to dedicate a beautiful silver lamp—an expiatory offering from the Commune of Florence—to adorn his tomb.

The occasion was nominally a Dantist celebration; but it might with equal truth have been described as an "Irredentist Orgy." For one of the great features of the festival was the arrival of a pilgrim-ship, flying the Italian tricolour, from Trieste, bearing some hundreds of Italian-speaking devotees from "Italia Irredenta"—the "unredeemed" cities which remained under Austrian rule when the rest of Italy threw off the yoke of the foreigner—Trieste itself, and Pola, and Fiume. The people of Ravenna and the visitors to the Festival, spurred on by eloquent "posters" exhibited in the streets at the instance of clubs and societies of every description, and by the proclamation of the Municipality itself, to give the "Fratelli irredenti" a fraternal welcome, poured out towards the quay in their thousands, and escorted the pilgrims through the streets with flags flying and bands playing patriotic airs. Conspicuous in the procession were half a dozen Garibaldini, veterans of the War of Liberation, clad in their red shirts; and emotion rose to a high point when the monument was reached which commemorates those who fell in the struggle for a free and united Italy.

Laughter, tears, embraces and echoing *Evvivas* proclaimed the arrival of the *cortège* at the Municipal Buildings. . . . It was a scene which one will never forget, as the Italians from across the water flung themselves upon their fellow-disciples of Dante, with the romping and vociferous enthusiasm of children just let out of school !

There were, so far as one could judge, from the floods of printed and of spoken eloquence which marked that day, two prominent thoughts in people's minds : two prominent points of contact and association between the thought of the Divino Poeta and the aspirations of Italian patriotism. The first of these is more general, the second more specific. In general, Dante is rightly held to be the true Father of the Italian language and literature—that " bond which unites us to our native place." " Love for our native tongue," says Witte—and he has in mind a passage of Dante's *Convivio*—" is the expression of our love of our native land." For Dante Italy is—

Il bel paese dove il *Si* suona.

" The beauteous land where *si* is uttered " ; and to that land the work of his mind and of his pen lent an added beauty, and wove a spell which should draw together all her scattered elements in the enthusiasm of a common speech and a common literary heritage. That is Dante's first claim to supply the inspiration of a " United Italy."

The second claim is, as we have said, more specific. It is claimed for him that he described, as it were prophetically, the future boundaries of Italy.

In the ninth Canto of the *Inferno* (113-114) he includes the whole of the Istrian peninsula in Italy, describing the broad inlet to the east of it—the bay which stretches northward up to Fiume—as " The Quarnaro which shuts in Italy and bathes her boundaries "—

Sì come a Pola presso del Carnaro,
Che Italia chiude e suoi termini bagna. . . .

Again, in his words about the Lago di Garda in the Twentieth Canto of the *Inferno* (61-63)—

Suso in Italia bella giace un laco
A piè dell' alpe che serra Lamagna
Sovra Tiralli, ch' ha nome Benaco.

"Up in fair Italy there lies a lake afoot the Alp that bars out Germany above Tyrol, that bears the name Benaco:" he seems to include not only the whole of Lake Garda but the Trentino too, "barring out Germany" beyond the great watershed.

At Ravenna, in 1908, one might have been led to suppose that these two passages summed up the main interest of the *Divina Commedia*; but though the utterances are, as a matter of fact incidental, they do point to the fact that the Italy which Dante so passionately loved, and which consciously or unconsciously he did so much to bring into being, was a definite "geographical expression" if it was also something more.

If with Witte we go on to enquire how far Young Italy is justified in fathering upon Dante the passion of "hatred of the foreign, and above all of the Teuton yoke," the question is at once confused by the fact that in Dante's day the authority and prestige of that Holy Roman Empire, of which the Poet was so convinced and so enthusiastic an advocate, was associated with a succession of German princes. Teutons of the Swabian House of Hohenstaufen, albeit Italian born, were "the illustrious heroes Frederic the Caesar and his well-begotten Manfred" whom in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (I. xii. 20; Bemp. p. 330) he extols for their nurture, in the Sicilian Court, of the beginnings of Italian vernacular poetry; Teutons the Rudolf and Albert of Hapsburg, to whom the poet of the *Divine Comedy* looks

in vain for the liberation of Italy from its overwhelming ills; Teuton also Henry of Luxemburg, on whom his hopes were finally fixed, the "Alto Arrigo" of the *Paradiso*—

> . . . Ch' a drizzare Italia
> Verrà in prima ch' ella sia disposta,

for whom he sees a vacant throne prepared in the White Rose of heaven.[1]

These heroes are not for him, however, Germans, *Tedeschi*, but Roman Caesars; and had the sceptre of Empire chanced, then, as afterwards, to have been wielded by other hands, we cannot doubt that a non-Teutonic line of monarchs would have drawn from him a like reverence, a like expectation and a like passionate appeal. Similarly, had the House of Swabia been dissociated from the Roman Imperial tradition and played a *rôle* of overweening and unscrupulous self-aggrandisement like that actually played by Philippe le Bel, Hugh Capet's words in the fifth Cornice of *Purgatory*—so well applied by a recent writer in the *Times* to the Hohenzollern—would have been put into the mouth of an ancestor of the two Frederics, and applied to the House of Hohenstaufen. "I was the root," he says, "of the evil plant whose shadow blights the whole land of Christendom"—[2]

> Io fui radice de la mala pianta,
> Che la terra cristiana tutta aduggia.

There is indeed one passage at least where Dante mentions the German people in a non-political context (*Inf.* xvii. 21), and designates them from the point of view of their national or racial habits. *Tedeschi lurchi*—"Guzzling Germans"—he calls them. How one's heart goes out to him, as one recalls memories of sojourns in Swiss hotels!

[1] *Par.* xxx. 133-7.

[2] *Purg.* xx. 43.

Had poor Dante like experiences or worse to put up with in the days of his wanderings?

Witte, who spontaneously brings forward this word of insight into national character, is delightfully frank about it. "Only in one place," he says, "does he accuse us of a weakness which we would fain repudiate, but it has been laid to the charge of Germany down even to our own day, on so many hands, that we cannot escape the fear that our forefathers at least must have given grounds for the accusation." . . .

This is a poor note on which to end our study of Witte. Yet it is one on which recent events have thrown a portentous illumination. The tendency which we are combating together, Italians and English, with the haughty spirit of Dante on our side, is one which begins in grossness of bodily appetite, and goes all lengths of cruel and brutalising bestiality.

. . . .

It is a relief to turn one's back on this sordid atmosphere and launch out once more into the "better waters" [1] of Italian Patriotism.

I have by me a book which corroborates very strongly —for the sixties at least—Witte's contention that Young Italy consciously draws her patriotic inspiration from Dante. Some years few ago I picked up in Venice a bound copy of the *Giornale del Centenario di Dante Allighieri*, of which the first number was published in Florence on February 10th, 1864, and the 48th on May 31st, 1865. There should by rights have been two more numbers, published after an interval, with Index and Frontispiece. Whether these ever appeared in fact, I have not been able to discover. My copy concludes with Number 48, which describes the Festival, to which the year's publication was

[1] *Purg.* i. 1

planned to lead up—the *Feste Dantesche* held in Piazza Sta Croce, in May, 1865, the six hundredth anniversary of the Poet's birth. In that year Florence became the temporary capital of an Italy free and united, but still barred out from Rome by French bayonets; and she signalised the occasion by welcoming back in spirit her exiled Son to the " Bello ovile," where as a lamb he had slept," [1] when the *Re Galantuomo* himself unveiled the Poet's statue in the Piazza. A quaint woodcut of the ceremony adorns the volume.[2]

The successive numbers of this *Giornale*, with their varied contributions to the study and appreciation of the Poet—contributions drawn from every part of the Peninsula—bear eloquent testimony to the widespread feeling among the Italian patriots of that epoch, that Dante was rightly to be acclaimed *Pater Patriae*.

The articles are of all sorts, from chronological and etymological notes to formal and discursive interpretations and illustrations of Dante's writings and his life, and studies of contemporary political and social problems in the light of his dicta. They would probably repay a fuller investigation than the present writer has had opportunity to apply to them. We will take one or two typical utterances to indicate something of the general tone of the contributors.

" Dante was the first among his contemporaries," says Prof. A. Zoncada,[3] " to rise to the conception of a United Italy "—an Italy united in powers, in purpose, in language, and that in spite of the manifold disuniting influences at work in his day. " Fatto è che

[1] *Par.* xxv. 5.

[2] A pathetic episode connected with this Celebration is related in Appendix I, p. 165.

[3] *Giornale*, p. 215: Art. " Firenze e Italia nel concetto e nel cuore di Dante.'

Dante primo ne' suoi tempi seppe levarsi al concetto d'un Italia unita e concorde d' intenti, di forze, di favella: primo abbraciò nel suo amore tutta intera l' Italia, senza divario di cielo, di usi, di memorie, di legge, di stato, donde appunto risulta il sentimento di nazionalità." Dante's desire for the establishment of an Imperial Court in Italy was, he says, a desire for national and linguistic unity. "Non può essere nazione senza una comune favella, nè comune favella dove nazione non sia. Il perchè voleva Dante stabilito in Italia la sede degli imperatori, unico mezzo, a suo credere, di conseguire l'una e l' altra unità, della lingua, cioè, e della nazione." There may perhaps be a little exaggeration in this statement of the reciprocal relations of nationality and vernacular, but at any rate it fastens on facts. Dante, as we have seen, visualised Italy as one, sighed for her divisions, expostulated with her on her undisciplined factiousness; longed, hoped, and prayed for the speedy advent of a strong unifying force. He also devised for her and bequeathed to her the noble instrument of a classical vernacular; and if it be not strictly true that a nation cannot exist save where there is one national language spoken, yet it is more than half true. Dante doubtless did more in the end for the cause of Italian nationality by his bequest of that splendid vehicle of thought and feeling which the mother-tongue became in his hands, and by his initiation of a glorious literary tradition, than he or any other man could have done by actual utterances, however inspired. The importance of his work for the vernacular is recognised again and again by the epigraphists who in the *Giornale del Centenario* have taken Dante as their theme. "The mother-tongue supplies a bond of nationality which cannot be broken," exclaims Prof. Lorenzo Berardi in his epigraph,[1] "and that bond we owe to Dante."

[1] *Giornale*, p. 344.

DANTE ALLIGHIERI
FU IL PADRE IMMORTALE
DI NOSTRA LINGUA
QUESTA
FU IL VINCOLO NAZIONALE
CHE MAI SI RUPPE.

Father of the language, father of the national spirit, prophetic delineator of the national frontiers.[1] So the Festa of 1865 joins hands with that of 1908, wherein the official document drawn up by Commendatore Guido Biagi to accompany the gifts offered at the Poet's shrine describes the offering communities as—

CONCORDI IN LUI
CHE NEL VERSO IMMORTALE
SEGNAVA I TERMINI AUSPICATI
DELLA PATRIA ITALIANA

. . . .

But these festas are no longer an ideal and a dream ; All-Saint's-tide, 1918, has sounded a note of triumph which resounds, it may be, in the world whither Dante is gone. Since the words above were penned, there has rung out at once the knell of the justly hated Hapsburg autocracy, and the joy-bells of *Italia Redenta !*

The Piave, associated by Dante [2] with the grim thought of a humbled and degenerate Italy, harried by the outrageous violence of Eccelino da Romano and his minions ; associated for us all to-day with nobler memories, as the line of defence where for long months and weary, patriots shed their blood like water to ward off from Italy horrors of brutality before which even Eccelino's record—a byword

[1] A similar chorus of reverent homage to Dante as the good genius of Italy's fortunes, was evoked by the war, in the shape of " Dante e la Guerra," Nos. 6-9 of *Nuovo Convito*, June-Sept., 1917.
[2] *Par.* ix. 27.

in the Middle Age—reads like a little ill-timed horseplay: the Piave and the land behind it—

> . . . Quella parte de la terra. . . .
> Italica che siede tra Rialto
> E le fontane di Brenta e di Piava,

have witnessed wonderful events. That famous river of which D'Annunzio exclaims:[1] "It runs beside the walls and past the doors and through the streets of all the cities of Italy; runs past the threshold of all our dwellings, of all our churches, of all our hospitals. It safeguards from the destroyer all our altars and all our hearths"; it has witnessed a great victorious onrush that has swamped the very memory of Caporetto, just a year, exactly, after that day of disaster.

And the dream of the Ravenna pilgrims of 1908 has come true. Trento and Trieste, "staked out," as it were, by Dante's verse as Italian, proclaimed Italian by race and speech and aspiration, are at last Italian in fact.

Evviva Italia Redenta!

. . . .

POSTSCRIPT.—September, 1921, takes us back once more to Ravenna. Once more the short and narrow street that faces the "little cupola more neat than solemn," is packed with an enthusiastic crowd. Once more the soul of Italy is concentrated in that exiguous space, offering votive gifts at the shrine. But this time the men of the Trentino and of the Dalmatian cities come as "Redeemed Brothers," fused in the general life of the larger Italy. The Army gives a Wreath of bronze and silver, the Communes of Italy a Bell, the city of Rome a bronze Door.

The sexcentenary of Dante's birth in 1865 marked a

[1] "To the Defenders of the Piave: November, 1917, to November, 1918." Art. in *Anglo-Italian Review*, Nov., 1918, p. 244.

great stage in the liberation and unification of Italy; the sexcentenary of his death, a still greater.

May the Poet's best dreams come true, as interpreted by the Prophet Mazzini, and Dante's native land find at last that "peace" which she has been "seeking from world to world"—find it in the fulfilment of her God-given mission to the nations.

II

DANTE AND POLITICAL LIBERTY

Libertà va cercando, ch' è sì cara
Come sa chi per lei vita rifiuta.
—*Purg.* i. 71, 72.

THESE words, it will be remembered, are addressed by Virgil, at the foot of the mountain of Purgatory, to Cato of Utica. Virgil is speaking of Dante, and of his mystical journey through the eternal world. The object of that quest, he says, is Liberty—that liberty which will make him master of himself morally and spiritually, when Virgil himself, at the summit of the Mountain, ere he takes his leave, shall crown him " King and bishop of his own mind and soul." [1]

. . . Te sopra te corono e mitrio.

These moving lines, as D'Ovidio reminds us,[2] have drawn tears from many a patriot of the last century ; they may well form for us a starting-point for the consideration of Dante's attitude towards Political Liberty. True, it is ultimately *spiritual* liberty, liberty of soul, that the Poet " goes seeking " in his pilgrimage, even as it is slavery of soul from which he announces in Paradise [3] that Beatrice has delivered him. " Thou hast drawn me," he says, " out of slavery into freedom . . . thou has given health to my soul "—

Tu m' hai di servo tratto a libertate
. . . .
. . . l' anima mia . . . fatt' hai sana. . . .

[1] *Purg.* xxvii. 142. [2] *Il Purgatorio*, p. 58. [3] *Par.* xxxi. 85-89.

But the conditions of spiritual and of bodily freedom are very close to one another—as many a languishing prisoner of war can testify—interlaced and interwoven if not identical.

> Stone walls do not a prison make,
> Nor iron bars a cage.

It is possible, thank God, for the human spirit to rise superior to the most degrading conditions which inhuman brutality or fiendish hatred can impose. Yet an atmosphere of justice and peace is the right and normal environment for the soul's free growth ; and steady pressure of tyranny and calculated injustice will all but infallibly blunt and stunt the moral growth of its victims, as is witnessed by the universally blighting effect of Turkish rule. Moreover, unless the received political interpretation of the three Beasts of the Dark Wood [1] is wholly unwarranted, Professor D'Ovidio is right in claiming [2] that, in a true if subsidiary sense, Dante's supernatural journey was " a refuge and a remedy " from the troubles in which the Poet found himself immersed in the tangled thicket [3] of an " enslaved Italy," full of tyrants, and of that tyrannous faction-spirit which is the worst enemy of Freedom.[4]

The Italy of his day, like the Florence which cast him out, is a stranger to that Liberty which only Peace can give—a peace for which, on Dante's horizon, no other hope appeared than that of a common subjection to the " Roman Emperor," the divinely appointed guardian of justice among men.[5] Peace is, indeed, so closely linked with freedom that Dante, in one place,[6] speaks of it as the goal of his mystic quest.

> Quella pace, che . . .
> Di mondo in mondo cercar mi si face.

[1] *Inf.* i. 31-34. [2] *Loc. cit.*
[3] Italy is likened by Dante to a wood (*silva*) in *V.E.*, I, xi.
[4] *Purg.* vi. 76-fin. [5] *Purg.* vi. 91 *sqq.*; *Mon.* I, xii. [6] *Purg.* v. 61,

whereas in the First Canto, Virgil has described that goal as liberty—

Libertà va cercando. . . .

We may pause, then, on the context of these lines, wherein Dante's quest of liberty is associated with Cato's suicide. For the difficulty and obscurity of the situation which they raise will plunge us at once into the heart of Dante's Political Theory.

The opening Canto of the *Purgatorio* shews us Cato of Utica, the austere republican who killed himself rather than bow to the rising dominance of Julius Caesar,[1] accorded a place of honour as Overseer of the souls in Ante-Purgatory. His loving wife Marcia is in Limbo; his fellow-republicans Brutus and Cassius are, with Judas Iscariot, in the lowest depths of Hell. There is, moreover, a special place in Hell [2] appointed for suicides, in a gruesome wood made fouler by the Harpies. Yet here is Cato honoured, and, further, held up by Virgil as pattern of the patriot who gives life for liberty! It has been a traditional crux to interpreters of the *Divine Comedy*, to explain and justify Cato's position. To understand the fulness of the difficulty, and at the same time familiarise ourselves with Dante's theory of the ideal government of the world, we shall need to turn to the treatise in which he holds up for the general admiration of mankind that Empire which to Cato was more hateful than death itself.

Next to the *Divina Commedia*, the *De Monarchia*—the "*Monarchia*" as it is more neatly styled in Italy—is,

[1] See *Mon.* II, v. 132 *sqq.*; 159 *sqq.*, quoted below; pp. 355 *sq.*, Oxf. Ed.; p. 379, Bemporad.
[2] *Inf.* xii. 1-21.

in many ways, Dante's most important work. It lacks the charm as well as the literary importance of the *Vita Nuova*, and the autobiographical interest of that and the *Convivio*, but in it Dante develops his political theory, and by it—through Marsiglio da Padova and his *Defensor Pacis* [1]—he influences all subsequent generations.

The "Monarchy" which he expounds therein is not Autocracy as such; it is the traditional suzerainty of the Holy Roman Empire, in which, in spite of its actual failure in history, he sees an ideal centre of unity for Christian civilisation, an ideal Court of Appeal for international quarrels, a divinely ordained curb for personal and national greed and self-assertion, and so an unique guarantee of peace for the world.

The *Monarchia* is comprised in three Books. In the First, Dante sets himself to prove that the office of "Monarch" is necessary to the well-being of the world, developing his theory of "Monarchy" as such. In the Second, which is a long panegyric of the Roman Power, conceived as one and continuous from the days of Aeneas son of Anchises, he points to Rome as a providential instrument in God's hand for the governing of the world and the well-being of mankind. [2] He establishes to his own satisfaction the thesis that the Holy Roman Empire, and it alone, provides the "Monarchy" he is seeking. In the Third he argues that, notwithstanding all that has been said and done by Popes, who (since Gregory VII—and notably in the person of the Poet's contemporary,

[1] *Defensor Pacis* written c. 1324 (three years after Dante's death) to support the claims of the Emperor Lewis IX (of Bavaria) against Pope John XXII, starts, as Dante does, from Aristotle and Holy Scripture, but carries the relentless exposure of papal pretensions much further, and strikes the note of appeal to a General Council which was one of the watchwords of the Reformation.

[2] This theme he took up earlier in the Fourth Treatise of the *Convivio*, chaps. iv. and v.

Boniface VIII)—claimed authority over all earthly potentates, the Secular Authority is, in its own sphere, not derived from, or subject to the Spiritual, but is independent; that the "Roman Prince" derives his authority and his inalienable responsibility direct from God Himself.

This last is the most original part of Dante's treatise, and that of most general importance. For it saps the false temporal pretensions of the Papacy, the rottenness of which Dante was clever enough to discern long before the famous "Donation of Constantine" had been proved a forgery. But this subject need not detain us now. Our interest will be focussed mainly on the theme of the First Book; in a lesser degree on that of the Second, and we shall consider them both in the light of the *Divina Commedia*.

Dante's reverence for the Roman Empire dates probably from his first study of the *Aeneid*, and is bound up with his passionate devotion to Virgil,[1] whom he addresses in the opening Canto of the *Divina Commedia* [2]

> O degli alri poeti onore e lume
> Vagliami il lungo studio e 'l grande amore
> Che m' ha fatto cercar lo tuo volume!

For him, as we have said, the Roman Power is continuous—from Aeneas, through Julius Caesar, and through Charlemagne to his own day. In the Second Book of the *Monarchia* he sets forth first the nobility of its origin, then

[1] *Cf.* especially his quotations from the *Aeneid* in *Conv.* IV, iv. (Bemp., 252) and *Mon.* II, vii. 70 *sqq.* (Bemp., 381); the Divine injunction is taken by Dante, almost as though the *Aeneid* were 'Scripture'!

> Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, momento,
> Hae tibi erunt artes, pacique imponere morem;
> Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos.
> —*Aen.* vi. 852-4.

[2] *Inf.* i. 82.

the attestation of its divine character by "miracles"; he substantiates the claim of the Roman People to rule by the evidence of their "public spirit" and rightness of aim, and their unique faculty for governing; by their success against all competitors for world-empire—the prize sought so keenly by Cyrus, Xerxes, Alexander and the rest was attained by Rome alone. Finally, he adduces Christ Himself as a witness. Did He not choose to be born and to die for the world's salvation under the authority of the Roman Empire?

In the Divine Comedy the theme of Rome's glory receives an equally enthusiastic and a more poetic treatment. Its echoes ring all through the great poem, they become clamant and compelling in the Sixth Canto of the *Paradiso*, where, from the mouth of Justinian, in the Heaven of the world's Workers, flows the story of the majestic flight of that "Uccel di Dio," the Roman Eagle, through the centuries from Aeneas to Charlemagne.[1]

But the atmosphere of serene satisfaction which pervades the *Monarchia* is not maintained here. The opening Paean of triumph gives place to a more mournful note when the great Lawgiver turns to denounce the factions of later times: "the Guelphs striving to Frenchify Italy, the Ghibellines to Germanise it." [2] Bitterly he assails the unworthy partisans of the Empire. The Eagle stands for Justice; let them practise their intrigues under some other standard [3]—

> Faccian li Ghibellin, faccian lor arte
> Sott'altro segno. . . .

Here practice comes to blows with theory. The Roman "Monarchy" was, in Dante's days, a failure. This failure was partly due to negligence of individual occupants of

[1] vi. 34-96.
[2] W. W. Vernon, *Readings on the Paradiso*, Vol. I, p. 199.
[3] *Par.* vi. 103-104.

the throne of the Caesars, like Rudolf and Albert of Hapsburg,[1] partly to the usurping pretensions of the Papacy,[2] partly, again, to the turbulent, anarchic, and self-seeking spirit of cities and states.[3]

It was Dante's misfortune to be born into a world seething with political faction, and into an Italy and a Florence in which the fever of faction was at its hottest.[4] The two most potent influences in Christendom—the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire—were at feud; and half the people of Italy (largely, if the truth must be told, to justify their existing group-enmities) sided with the Papacy, and called themselves "Guelfs," half with the Empire, and called themselves "Ghibellines." It is a mark of Dante's greatness that, unlike most of his contemporaries, he was able to hold the balance true; to realise the immense value of each Authority, the Spiritual and the Temporal, if rightly wielded; to discern the God-given responsibility of each, and their mutual independence.

Exiled himself from Florence by political faction, victim of the ruthless partisan spirit which ruled in his native city, he felt keenly the need of a supreme controlling power, a generally accepted and incorruptible Court of Appeal; and he looked forward to the descent into Italy of the Emperor Henry VII in 1311 as to the return of a Golden Age[5]—of a Peace long wept for, and still delayed:[6]

Della molt' anni lagrimata pace.

Many think that the *Monarchia* was written to celebrate this advent of one to whom he is not afraid to address the sacred words: "*Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi!*"[7]

[1] *Purg.* vii. 94; vi. 97. [2] *Purg.* xvi. 106 *sqq.*; 127 *sqq.*
[3] *Purg.* vi. 76 *sqq.* [4] *Purg.* vi. fin. [5] *Ep.* vii. [6] *Cf. Purg.* x. 35.
[7] *Ep.* vii. 44, p. 410, Oxf. Ed.; p. 427, Bemporad.

Dante's hopes in Henry VII were doomed to disappointment. The disappointment did not shake his faith in the Holy Roman Empire as a panacea for all the temporal ills of a Christendom distracted by individual and national self-seeking and aggression.

If we turn to the First Book of the *Monarchia*, wherein Dante develops his Political Theory, we shall find that, at first reading, the actual person of the Emperor seems essential; just as, at first sight, he seems to rule out Democracy, together with Oligarchy and Tyranny, as a "perverted form of Government."[1] Here we must remember Dante's environment. His personal experience of the chances of freedom and justice in his native city would give him an instinctive bias against a non-monarchial form of government. Whether the system by which Florence ruled itself in the opening years of the fourteenth century is technically to be styled Democracy or Oligarchy, or a compound of the two, it was certainly, in practice, for Dante, a Hydra-headed Tyranny of the worst description. Further, it may be well to realise that *personal* authority was the only type of Suzerainty, the only form in which a paramount and impartial Sway, or a world-wide Court of Appeal had appeared on his mental horizon.

It has been said of Mazzini's Republicanism that it did not rule out "Imperialism" in the sense familiar to British minds, of "The White's Man's Burden." He approved of the British *Raj* in India, and pictured his own free Italy of the future as possibly destined to spread the blessings of her own historic civilisation by a similar rule over pupil-peoples. May it be claimed in like manner for Dante, whose writings so profoundly inspired Mazzini and his fellow patriots of the *Risorgimento*, that though he is in a sense a thorough-going Imperialist, yet his Imperialism is, at bottom, not inconsistent with a

[1] I. xii. 58; Oxf. Ed. p. 347; p. 365, Bemporad.

more modern aspiration for a "World made safe for Democracy," and kept safe by a "League of Nations"?

Dante is Imperialist; but if we enquire of him what is the *raison-d'-être* of Empire, he will answer: "It is the temporal well-being of mankind." This "well-being" consists in the fulfilment of the purpose of man's earthly life; the true and unobstructed self-expression of that personal freedom of choice—that prerogative of self-determination—which God has given to man as His divinest gift: unique and universal endowment of His intelligent creatures—that "Liberty of Will" which is so nobly hymned by Beatrice in the *Paradiso* (v. 19-24)—

Lo maggior don che Dio per sua larghezza
Fesse creando, ed a la sua bontate
Più conformato, e quel ch' e' più apprezza,
Fu de la volontà la libertate,
Di che le creature intelligenti,
E tutte e sole, fuoro e son dotate.

. . . .

In his Political Theory, as in his Mystic Pilgrimage, Dante is the Apostle of Liberty.

Libertà va cercando, ch 'è sì cara,
Come sa chi per lei vita rifiuta.

This noble couplet, which has moved the hearts of countless heroes and martyrs of the *Risorgimento*, even as our English Poetess was moved in '48 at the sound of a child's voice singing beneath her window "O bella Libertà, O bella . . . !"—this couplet bears with it, as we have seen, a reference which has puzzled all the commentators, because it links with Dante's quest of spiritual liberty the deed of Cato of Utica: the suicide by which that intransigeant republican escaped submission to the founder of the Empire. And not only is Cato given an honourable place at the foot of the Mountain of Pur-

gatory, and assured that, at the Great Day, his self-slain body shall be glorified [1]; but in the *Monarchia*,[2] Dante actually quotes with approval Cicero's dictum in the *De Officiis* that for Cato "it was more fitting to die than to look upon the face of a *tyrant!*" There may be other reasons for this strange discrepancy in Dante's scheme; but one is clear. Liberty ranks so high in the Poet's mind that it over-rides all other considerations: its typical votary may win most extraordinary and exceptional treatment!

Well, an essential condition of this all-precious Liberty, this full and unobstructed self-expression and self-determination among nations, is Peace.

Such a peace must needs embrace harmony within the individual life, in the home circle, in smaller local and municipal units, and, finally, harmony between the various nations of Christendom, over all of which, ideally, the mantle of the one Empire would be spread. Such a Christendom, and such an Empire, for Dante, ideally embraces the whole of mankind. This all-embracing character is, in fact, essential to it; and it is important for our purpose to note that this complete world-wide embrace (the antidote to personal ambition) never has been, and is never likely to be, achieved by any *personal* sovereignty.

In this teaching the Monarchic Principle is, on the surface at least, more than an abstraction. It is everywhere personified, though it claims to exclude, as far as may be, the characteristically individual element of greed and self-assertion.[3] To Dante it is self-evident that peace in any of the concentric rings of human life—family, municipal, national, international—can only be

[1] *Purg.* i. 75.
[2] II, v. 158 *sqq.*; Oxf. Ed. II, v. 17; p. 379, Bemporad.
[3] *Cf. Mon.* I, xi. Bemporad, pp. 362-364.

secured by the recognised dominance of a single person in each circle.[1] In illustration of this principle he quotes (from Aristotle) Homer's verse about the Cyclops[2]: "Each of them lays down the law for his own children and wives"; but he ignores the anarchic conclusion of the sentence . . . "and they take no heed of each other."[3] Nor does he follow Aristotle[4] in characterising this as "an uncivilised form of government"; otherwise, he might have adduced the Cyclops rather as an *abuse* of the Monarchic Principle. The fact is, that in each of the concentric circles the principle is only too liable to abuse; and Dante knows it, else he would not have strewn the realms of his *Inferno* with the tormented shades of those who have been guilty of such abuse—have been brutal tyrants in the home, in the city, on the throne. If we would gauge the depth of indignation which such abuse can rouse in Dante, we have only to turn to Hugh Capet's speech in *Purg.* xx. 40-96, where the denunciation of the savagely self-assertive Royal House of France, with its infamous record of oppression, fraud, treachery, murder, and sacrilege, might be applied directly, with scarce a change of phrase, to the Hohenzollerns of to-day.

No doubt the personal guidance—even forceful guidance—may be necessary in early stages, as we have found it necessary among the child-races of Africa. Even the Hohenzollern style of rule, in our day so monstrous an anachronism, might have had its justification in far-back ages. It would perhaps compare favourably with its true antecedents, the Nineveh and Babylon of Old Testament times. "The Mailed Fist" may have its place, ere men have learnt—

[1] *Mon.* I, v.

[2] *Od.* ix. 114-115. θεμιστεύει δὲ ἕκαστος Παίδων ἠδ' ἀλόχων . . .

[3] οὐδ' ἀλλήλων ἀλέγουσιν. [4] *Pol.* i. 2.

> . . . how to fill a breach
> With olive branches—how to quench a lie
> With truth, and smite a foe upon the cheek
> With Christ's most conquering kiss. . . .
> . . . .
> . . . We needed Caesars to assist
> Man's justice, and Napoleons to explain
> God's counsel, when a point was nearly missed
> Until our generations should attain
> Christ's stature nearer. . . .
> —*E. B. Browning* : " *Casa Guidi Windows.*"

But now we are beginning to realise that it is a thing—

> Worth a great nation's finding, to prove weak
> The " glorious arms " of military kings.

Ultimately, it is a Supreme Tribunal that Dante yearns for, albeit he conceives that Tribunal as personified—incarnate in the " Roman Prince " [1] It is impartiality,[2] above all, that Dante looks for ; an impartiality to be guaranteed by that absence of ambition which an undisputed, world-wide supremacy might carry with it, " leaving nothing to be desired." The authority that is free from taint of greed and self-interest, and so from the temptation to use human lives as means for its own ends, will most effectually display that " charity or love which gives vigour to justice." For " Charity, scorning all other things, seeks God and man, and, consequently, the good of man."

Surely such impartiality and such human consideration might be looked for in a representative tribunal at least as hopefully as in a fallible individual like that

[1] It is interesting to note, in this connection, that when Dante, in his work on " The Vulgar Tongue," is seeking a *Literary* Tribunal —a sort of Academy of Letters—he asserts that where there is no Prince, his presence may be supplied by ' the gracious light of reason.' There is no king, he says, in Italy, as there is in Germany, to gather to his court poets and *literati* and form in his own person the centre of a brilliant literary circle ; but the members of such a court—the elements of such a circle—are there, though scattered, and they have a bond of union in the *gratioso lumine rationis.*—*V.E.* I, xviii. fin ; Oxf. p. 389 ; Bemporad, p. 336.

[2] *Mon.* I, xi. 78-110. Oxf., p. 346 ; Bemp., pp. 363 *sq.*

Henry VII, on whom, in life, he built such soaring hopes,[1] and for whom, beyond death, he prepared so high a seat in Heaven? [2]

That it is a *Tribunal* that Dante is really seeking, is clear from the Tenth chapter of the First Book of the *Monarchia.* And it may be permissible to adduce in this connection a note on that chapter by an eminent Dante scholar (to whom not a few of the thoughts in this Essay are indirectly due), written at least ten years before the outbreak of the World-War.

"Nothing," says Mr. Wicksteed, (*ad loc.* p. 149), "could better help the student to distinguish between the substance and the form of the *De Monarchia,* or to free himself from slavery to words, than reflection upon this chapter. He will see that Dante's "imperialism" does not mean the supremacy of one nation over others, but the existence of a supreme law that can hold all national passions in check; so that the development of international law and the establishment of arbitration are its nearest modern equivalents; and the main difficulty is found in the want of any power of compulsion by which the nations can be made to refer their quarrels to the supreme tribunal and accept its awards, whether it sits at Rome or at the Hague." [3]

What shape, we may ask, would Dante's theory of the Temporal and Spiritual Authority have assumed,

[1] *Ep.* vii. [2] *Par.* xxx. 133 *sqq.*

[3] At the last moment before going to press, it is cheering to find this contention (treated more fully by the present writer in an article in the *Anglo-Italian Review,* Dec., 1918), corroborated by Prof. A. J. Grant, who, in an article on "Dante's conception of History" (*History,* Vol. VI, Jan., 1922), speaks thus of the Poet's praise of the Empire: "It is a demand for a world-order resting on laws that are sensible and generally known, and which control the lives of states as well as of individuals. It is little exaggeration to say that it is a plea for a League of Nations; and the *De Monarchia* is not a bad handbook for those who are called upon to speak for the League" (p. 229).

had it seen the light in the Twentieth Century instead of the Fourteenth? How would he shape it now? . . . How, perchance, *does* he shape it now if he looks down from "an eternal place" upon this "little plot" of an earth which has so often been the cockpit of international ferocity—

> L' aiuola che ci fa tanto feroci.[1]

He would see a world that has for generations clean forgotten that Holy Roman Empire which loomed so large in his day, and is just giving the *coup-de-grace* to two unholy Empires that were playing a *rôle* exactly the opposite of that of Dante's ideal Roman Prince, whose chief care is to see that "in areola ista mortalium libere cum pace vivatur;"[2] a world in which a bastard Roman Empire, seeking not peace and freedom for the nations, but living for war, has striven for four long years with all its might to crush the rest of the world under an iron heel.

He would see a world in which the Papacy is no longer paramount in Western Christendom; in which its spiritual claims are largely challenged, and its temporal pretensions reduced to the shadow of a sham. A world in which industrialism and the fruits of applied science have transfigured at once the material and the social landscape. With the passing of German Military Autocracy, the last traces of Feudalism are like to disappear. . . . A world in which the development of national self-consciousness, in its infancy during his lifetime, has increased and multiplied. He would see a world, in short, both inwardly and outwardly utterly different from that for which he legislated in the *Monarchia*, save for the two permanent factors—the identity of human nature, and the continuity of Divine guidance, by Him "qui est omnium spiritualium et temporalium gubernator" (*loc. cit.*)

[1] *Par.* xxii. 151. [2] *Mon.* iii. 16; Oxf., p. 376; Bemp. p. 411.

Would he not acclaim the passion for justice and freedom which has inspired the nations of the *Entente* to pile up their enormous sacrifices in a five years' struggle? Had he compared the conduct of each side—had he compared merely their treatment of prisoners of war—could he have doubted for a moment which side exhibited the princely spirit of Charity "which gives vigour to justice:" *caritas maxime justitiam vigorabit.*[1]

Would he not see in the actions and aims of Italy—"Redeemed Italy"—and her victorious allies, a surer hope for the stable peace of mankind than ever his "Romanus Princeps" could have furnished? Would he not have found his own aspirations for a just and impartial and supra-national Tribunal embodied in that arbitrament which the "League of Nations" carries with it?

Would he not turn to individual nations (in the spirit of *Mon.* i. 5) and say: "See to it that this principle of freedom and justice rules throughout; that the spirit which looks 'only to God and the good of man' [2] inspires all your life-circles: the Home, the City, the Province, the entire Nation. See to it that the brotherly, unselfish, co-operating spirit has sway not only between the members of the various classes and groups and interests of which your nation is composed, but that it dominates also the relations of class to class and group to group? What can better guarantee internal peace in a composite, democratic community, than that each of the elements of which it is composed shall be dominated by a single spirit—the spirit of free fellowship, which is the surest antidote [3] to the anti-social poison of greed and self-assertion?"

Would he not also see that the maintenance of such a spirit demands also a Spiritual Authority, one and forceful?

[1] *Mon.* I, xi; Oxf. p. 345; Bemporad, p. 364.
[2] *Mon.* I, xi., *ut supra.* [3] *Mon.* I, xi.

The "Sun and Moon" of Spiritual and Temporal Authority of the *Monarchia*,[1] which in the *Purgatorio* have become "two Suns," to light men on the earthly and the heavenly path, he would find still essential in a "World made safe for Democracy." In 1300, he found the Spiritual Sun usurping the powers of the Temporal, and so putting them out of gear.[2] The Roman Prelate had annexed the Roman Prince's sword and united it incongruously with his own pastoral staff—

> Soleva Roma, che 'l buon mondo feo
> Due soli aver, che l 'una e l' altra strada
> Facean vedere, e del mondo e di Deo :
> L'un l' altro ha spento ; ed è giunta la spada
> Col pasturale, e l'un con l' altro insieme
> Per viva forza mal convien che vada ;
> Pero che, giunti, l'un l'altro non teme.

To-day he might rather see the Spiritual Sun eclipsed by the Temporal. Religious sanctions will be needed to inspire and elevate the democratic and multi-personal successor of the "Roman Prince" as the guardian of the world's Justice and Freedom. God Himself is the "Living Justice," [3] and He alone can wean human hearts from envy and that to which envy leads—

> . . . Addolcisce la viva giustizia
> In noi l' affetto sì che non si puote
> Torcer già mai ad alcuna nequizia.

And "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty." [4] For Freedom's sake and Justice's sake, Dante would demand some independence still, of the Sword and the

[1] III, iv. init. Oxf., p. 365 ; Bemporad, p. 394. Dante combats and refutes the traditional argument in vogue in his day, which assumed that the creation of sun and moon in Gen. i. had a mystical reference to the Spiritual and Temporal powers respectively and argued that therefore, because the moon derives her *light* from the sun, the Temporal must owe its *authority* to the Spiritual ; but, later in the chapter (Oxf., p. 366 *sq.* ; Bemporad, p. 396), he seems to admit a workable *analogy* between the luminaries and the authorities.

[2] *Purg.* xvi. 106 *sqq.*

[3] *Par.* vi. 121 *sq.*

[4] 2 Cor. iii. 17.

Pastoral Staff. He would demand (to modify Cavour's famous phrase) " a free Church in a league of free States " —a unified Church to match the union of Peoples; a democratic Church to inspire a democratic World, no longer an Ecclesiastical Autocracy, but a Federation (shall we say ?) of free National Churches, parallel to the Temporal Authority of the future—the United States of the World.

A democratic world, indeed, yet an " Empire " too, after all ; gladly submissive to the perfect sway, over Church and State alike, of the King of Kings [1]—

> . . . Quello imperador che là su regna :

A God whose influence, though more resplendently manifest in some spheres than in others, interpenetrates the whole of His universe, as in the magnificent opening words of the *Paradiso*—

> La gloria di colui che tutto move
> Per l' universo penetra, e risplende
> In una parte più, e meno altrove ;

A human world which reflects the peace of that wider creation which " works like a giant and sleeps like a picture "—a peace built on the only sure foundation, namely, the harmonious co-operation of mighty, God-given forces, working together under the hand of God Himself.[2]

With his last breath, as it were, the great Poet reminds us, to look up to the Eternal Love that sways the constellations . . . and the hearts of men [3]—

> L'amor che move il sole e l 'altre stelle.

[1] *Inf.*, i. p. 124.
[2] *Cf. V. E.*, I, vii. 28 ; p. 382, Oxf. ; p. 324, Bemporad. *Ipsum naturantem, qui est Deus.*
[3] *Par.* xxxiii. 145.

III

WIT AND HUMOUR IN DANTE

> Che è ridere, se non una corruscazione della dilettazione dell' anima, cioè un lume apparente di fuori secondo che sta dentro ?
>
> —*Conv.* iii. 8.[1]

FREEDOM of spirit—that freedom wherewith the Truth can make us free—is man's rightful heritage indeed; but a heritage into the full enjoyment of which he often needs must pass through suffering and strenuous struggle. It is not a light, trivial, superficial thing. As Tasso sings—

> . . . In cima all' erto e faticoso colle
> Della virtù riposto è nostro bene.[2]

There is an easy shallowness that apes freedom, and looks like tolerance which is the full recognition of other men's right to Freedom. But the Freedom which Dante "goes seeking" through "an eternal place"—through the horror and murk of Hell, and by the steep ascent of the Mountain of Hope, "l'erto e faticoso colle"—is a stern and noble guerdon, and can only be enjoyed in its fulness by one who has attained to the fulness of an ordered and disciplined humanity. It is deep conviction alone, as Bishop Creighton taught us, that can beget true tolerance; the conviction that the Truth is so sacred and so precious that it were impious to try to force any soul to accept it (even were such a thing conceivable) by external pressure.

The spirit of "Education by Frightfulness" which

[1] Oxf. Ed., p. 282; Bemporad, p. 222.
[2] *Gerusalemme Liberta*, xvii. 63.

devastated the civilised world for five long years cannot, however, be accused of want of conviction. The mission of Teutonic *Kultur* was taken only too seriously. It is no burst of shallow lightheartedness that has driven a whole people—nay, a group of peoples—forth upon this gruesome and devilish crusade. They have shewn themselves, throughout, in deadly earnest.[1]

What is it, then, that has brought forth from the womb of an earnestness that breathes incredible industry and ingenuity and unsurpassed readiness for individual sacrifice, this misbegotten offspring of a cruelly narrow outlook and a ludicrous intolerance ?

The answer proposed by one of our brilliant essayists in the first months of the war was nothing more or less than " the lack of a saving sense of humour." It is only a partial answer, perhaps, but it is surely true as far as it goes. The want of " the power to see ourselves as others see us," the power to put ourselves in another's place and see how our actions would look to him, would affect him, is very close to that tragic blindness—blindness to the fact that others have a like claim with ourselves to just and reverent treatment, a like right to peace and prosperity, to self-government and self-determination. These, who would set the world right by violently upsetting it and forcibly conforming it to their own pattern, have not the grace to see how ugly and ungainly that pattern looks to other eyes. Indeed, self looms so large with them that it fills the entire foreground, and even obliterates all trace of background and middle distance.

Life, as its Creator clearly intended it to be, with all

[1] The best spirits among our late enemies have already begun to reap the reward of their deadly earnestness in a wider and saner point of view : a realisation of variety of national characteristics and an appreciation of them ; a longing to clear away misapprehensions, and "openly to call injustice injustice—to forgive and to expect forgiveness." See an excellent article by Hedwig von Saenger in *Student Movement*, Oct., 1921.

the rich variety and diversity in which alone its unity can find adequate expression, is impossible on such terms. Freedom of self-development and self-expression, which is of the essence of true life, is as likely to flourish in such an atmosphere as is an " open-air " English girl in the atmosphere of a stuffy German Wohnzimmer. Civilisation, under such hegemony, would lose all the beauty of its spontaneity, all the romance and mystery of its movement; its expansive forces would be imprisoned in a minute and deadening code of regulations.

It would be like a " corrected " river flowing evenly between straight banks of enforced concrete, with nothing except its sober, serious, and self-concentrated current to speak of the sinuous, sparkling, effervescent charm, the " careless rapture " of its native motion.

If we are to substantiate our claim for Dante as the many-sided Apostle of Liberty, we must satisfy ourselves that he is at least not devoid of that foundation of the sense of humour which takes a man outside himself, makes possible to him something of a detached and external point of view, enables him, if need be, even to see the ridiculous side of his own earnest efforts.

That Dante is in earnest, no one doubts. But does he, in his earnestness, " take himself so seriously " as to incapacitate himself from doing justice to other points of view ?

Prof. Sannia's work on the humorous element in the *Divine Comedy* [1] marks in some respects an epoch in the study of Dante. Its title may seem audacious, to the verge of irreverence ; but if this is so, the fault lies partly in an age-long neglect of one aspect of the great poet's nature, partly in a difficulty (common to both the Italian language and our own) confronting the critic who would define in

[1] *Il comico, l' umorismo e la satira nella Divina Commedia.* Da Enrico Sannia. 2 vols. Milan, 1909.

appropriate language that subtle element—now gently playful, now fiercely ironical—which redeems Dante's work as a whole from dulness, and makes the *Divine Comedy* in particular one of the most human books ever written.

Whether or not Prof. Sannia has fallen deep into the pit that ensnares most critics who have a hobby and a mission, his pioneer movement is certainly far from futile. We believe that he has largely proved his point, and given us, in consequence, a living Dante in place of the traditional wooden effigy. At any rate his work will have justified itself if it turns the attention of all-too-serious Dante students to a new field, and emphasizes those qualities in the Divine Poet which the sheer sublimity of his work has hitherto tended to obscure.

In the following study we shall not confine ourselves to the limits of the *Divina Commedia*, but gather all we can in so short a space from his other works, and especially from the *Convivio* and the *De Vulgari Eloquentia.*

As a preliminary we shall do well to bestow a glance at least upon Dante's environment from this particular point of view—the temper of the generation in which he lived, and that of his immediate circle, not neglecting such inferences as may be suggested by the tradition of his physiognomy and the evidence of his earliest biographers. For a provisional definition of the subject we may turn to "The Philosopher" from whom Dante and his contemporaries drew directly and indirectly. "Melancholy men of all others are most witty." So said the "Maestro di color che sanno," according to the author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*; and Boccaccio,[1] describing the habitual expression of Dante's face, says it was "always melancholy and thoughtful."

Before we draw the enticing inference that Dante was

[1] *Vita,* s 8.

a paragon of wit, we shall, however, do well to verify our quotation from Aristotle, and to bear in mind the fact that the words "wit" and "witty," like their companions "humour," "humorous," have changed their meaning since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By "Wit and Humour," as applied to Dante, we mean something vague and general, yet sufficiently definite to make our quest practicable. The phrase is intended to cover the playful and fanciful use of the intellect upon literary material, in the broadest sense: from the simplest and most elementary puns and word-plays to the subtlest and most surprising analogies; from the most discursive description of a laughably incongruous situation, to the swift agility of brilliant paradox; from the quiet, genial sally of the man who laughs *with* you while he laughs *at* you, to the biting sarcasm of the satirist, whose keen and often envenomed darts are winged with wrath and indignation. It is this last phase that we shall naturally expect to find most prominent in Dante.

In so far as it is to be expressed by a single Aristotelian word, our subject corresponds most nearly in connotation to the Greek εὐτραπελία, that intellectual elasticity and adroitness which seizes instinctively upon the right subjects on which to vent its fun, and handles them with a sure, artistic touch. It stands midway between the vulgarity of the buffoon (βωμολόχος) and the insensibility to humour of the downright boor (ἄγροικος). Indeed, in one place (*Mag. Mor*, i. 31, 1193) this quality of εὐτραπελία is described by the Philosopher in terms which practically identify it with our own useful phrase, "A sense of humour." "The vulgar buffoon," he says, "deems everybody and everything a legitimate mark for a jest, while the boor has no will to jest himself, and to be jested upon makes him angry. The witty man"—the true humorist, as we may say—"avoids both extremes.

He selects his subjects—and is not a boor. On the one hand he has the capacity of jesting with decency and decorum "—his jokes do not jar on our good taste—" and on the other, he can bear good humouredly jests of which he is himself the butt." [1]

How far Dante would satisfy the second part of this canon, may perhaps be open to discussion. But this is to anticipate. For the moment it behoves us to observe that a somewhat tedious search in the Berlin Index volume for the passage cited in the *Anatomy of Melancholy* reveals the fact that Burton's "witty man" is not εὐτράπελος but εὔστοχος.[2] In other words, what Aristotle attributes to the melancholy temperament is inductive acumen, the qualification of the scientific discoverer, rather than a sense of humour. The two qualities have, however, something in common: the gift of seeing and grasping analogies not obvious to the plain man in his plain moments.[3] So this crumb of comfort may hearten us in our quest, although the path be at first sight as unpromising as were certain stages of the Poet's mystical journey.

If then we elect to follow Aristotle, as Dante followed Virgil (and I feel sure the Divine Poet would approve our

[1] *Mag. Mar.* i, 31, 1193. εὐτραπελία δ' ἐστὶ μεσότης βωμολοχίας καὶ ἀγροικίας. ὅ τε γὰρ βωμολόχος ἐστὶν ὁ πάντα καὶ πᾶν οἰόμενος δεῖν σκώπτειν, ὅ τε ἄγροικος ὁ μήτε σκώπτειν βουλόμενος, μήτε σκωφθῆναι, ἀλλ' ὀργιζόμενος. ὁ δ' εὐτράπελος ἀνὰ μέσον τούτων, ὁ μήτε πάντας καὶ παντῶς σκώπτων, μητ' αὐτὸς ἄγροικος ὤν. ἔσται δ' ὁ εὐτράπελος διττῶς πως λεγόμενος. καὶ γὰρ ὁ δυνάμενος σκῶψαι ἐμμελῶς, καὶ ὃςἂν ὑπομείνη σκωπτόμενος.

[2] *De divinatione per somnum* ii. (464^a 33) οἱ δὲ μελαγχολικοὶ διὰ τὸ σφόδρα, ὥσπερ βάλλοντες πόρρωθεν, εὔστοχοί εἰσιν. *Cf. Eth. Nic.* vi. 10 (1142^b 2), where εὐστοχία is distinguished from βούλευσις as "swift and wordless"; ἄνευ τε γὰρ λόγου καὶ ταχύ τι ἡ εὐστοχία. And a little further on it is said that ἀγχίνοια—"ready wit," "shrewdness," is a kind of εὐστοχία.

[3] *Rhet.* iii. 11, 1412^a. εὐστοχία sees analogies, like Archytas, who says "a διαιτητὴς is like an altar"—for to both the injured flee!

choice of guide), we may draw one more drop of comfort from a passage in the *Endemian Ethics*,[1] in which the Philosopher, discoursing of friendship, notes how unlike characters often pair off together, "as austere people with witty ones (εὐτράπελοι)." May we look for this friendly union of playfulness and austerity within a single personality? in the redoubtable person of Dante Alighieri?

Is it not almost as incongruous, it may be asked, to look for humour in the *Divina Commedia* as it would be to search for jokes in the Bible? We are prepared to maintain that even the intense seriousness of Dante—that sublime and solemn earnestness which can only be compared to the temper of Holy Writ, is not merely compatible with a playful use of the intellect, artistically restrained, but is rendered more complete and effective thereby. And what about Holy Scripture itself? I speak with all reverence.

Hebraists assure us that puns and plays on words are far from rare in the Old Testament; and there are, in the Psalms and the Book of Isaiah,[2] and elsewhere, passages of which the irony, at once keen and sublime, cannot fail to strike the English reader. Would it not be possible also to quote even from the New Testament—from the Gospels—phrases and metaphors in which the deepest and most solemn truths are cast into a form which, for want of a better word, must be described as playful or witty? The picture of the children in the market place discontented with their games; the ironical description of the "blind guides of the blind"; and of the pedants who "strain at a gnat and swallow a camel," the still more terrible irony of the "whited sepulchres"—instances like these show that Truth and Wisdom incar-

[1] *Eth. Eud.* vii. 5, 1240 a 2.
[2] *Cf.* Ps. cxv. 4-8. Esp. Isaiah xliv. and xlvi.

nate did not disdain to use the whip wherewith the old Hebrew Prophets had scourged the idolatrous follies of their contemporaries.[1]

In the light of what has just been said, we may perhaps be justified in doubting whether the most perfect presentation of ideas—or at any rate the most surely effective—does not involve of necessity the use of those faculties with which we are at present concerned. "Without a sense of humour," it is often said, "no man can be a perfect Saint." Surely it is equally true to say that the same quality is essential for a really great man of letters, be he Essayist, Historian or Poet.

One more question before we come to Dante himself. What about the age and place in which the Poet lived? Were the Italians of Dante's time devoid of the spirit of mirth and of the power to express it? Boccaccio and Sacchetti, the *Novellino*, nay, even the Franciscan Legend with its *Jaculatores Domini*, and not least the charming *Fioretti*, cry out with one voice against the unjust imputation. But one single name would be enough to vindicate for the Italy of Dante's elder contemporaries, and for the men who figure largely in Dante's writings, the possession of the sense of humour and the gift of wit. Fra Salimbene of Parma, the immortal gossip, who so dearly loves a joke, and is so ready to pardon other failings in the man who has "a pretty wit." He peoples the world into which Dante Alighieri was born with folk whose joy of laughter and rollicking sense of fun match in their intensity the sternness, cruelty, savagery of those strange days. And to Florence he accords the palm for

[1] A recent writer, H. McLachlan (*St. Luke, the Man and his Work*, Manchester Univ. Press, 1920), has drawn attention to the humorous gift of the third Evangelist, and entitles one of his chapters "Luke the Humorist." See also the present writer's *St. Luke* (Westminster Commentaries, Methuen, 1922, Introduction, pp. xxix. *sq.*).

wit and humour,[1] though not in the strict Aristotelian sense; for Salimbene's Florentines are far from being always seemly and decorous in their jests.

The mirthful spirit that pervades the pages of Salimbene recalls indeed most forcibly a passage of Aristotle to which we have not yet referred, and a definition of *urbanitas* (εὐτραπελία,), which, if slightly mysterious, is the most epigrammatic and the most suggestive of all his utterances on the subject.

"The young," he says in the second book of the *Rhetoric*, "are laughter-loving, and therefore witty, for wittiness is πεπαιδευμένη ὕβρις . . .[2]" How shall we render it? "A disciplined 'cheek,'" an "educated insolence!" The riotous, effervescent self-assertion of the Middle Ages, outcome of abundant vitality, offered splendid raw material for the manufacture of *urbanitas*. The uncontrollable vivacity which vented itself in the field of life sometimes in horseplay or in huge practical jokes; too often in fighting and bloodshed; which vented itself in the field of Art in the fantastically contorted and quaintly humorous subjects of the illuminations with which even sacred MSS. were adorned, and in the carving of grotesque figures in wood or stone—

> Come, per sostentar solaio o tetto
> Per mensola tal volta una figura
> Si vede giugner le ginocchia al petto; [3]

and in the field of literature ranged from sheer profanity and lewdness to the edifying if amusing hagiological tales which meet us everywhere in the pages of Tammassia's work upon St. Francis.[4]

[1] *Cronica Fratris Salimbene de Adam* (Ed. Holder-Egger, Hanover, 1905-1913), pp. 77 *sqq.* "Florentini . . . trufatores maximi sunt."
[2] *Rhet.* ii. 1389 b 10. οἱ νέοι. . . φιλογέλωτες, διὸ καὶ εὐτράπελοι· ἡ γὰρ εὐτραπελία πεπαιδευμένη ὕβρις ἐστίν.
[3] *Purg.* x. 130-3.
[4] Nino Tammassia, *S. Francesco d' Assisi e la sua Leggenda*, Padova, Drucker, 1906. (Eng. Tr. Fisher Unwin, 1910).

That Dante's own literary circle was not innocent of of this πεπαιδευμένη ὕβρις—ὕβρις,, that is, more or less πεπαιδευμένη—a glance at the dainty little collection in Rossetti's volume will show at once.[1] Not to speak of the famous *Tenzone* or "literary wrangle" between Dante and Forese Donati, of which the Poet, it would seem, was afterwards ashamed [2]; a group which included the extravagantly humorous Cecco Angiolieri cannot be described as wanting in the "playful use of the intellect."

"Del resto," says Prof. Sannia, "Dante era un toscano, un fiorentino; che è tutto dire . . . nella facoltà comica e satirica ei fu degno rappresentante della sua stirpe, il più degno e il più alto: il genio comico e satirico fu in lui impronta, eredità etnica." [3]

And though he fails to cross-examine the Friar of Parma—perhaps the most telling of all witnesses on this point—he has much to adduce to the same effect. Most pertinent is his quotation of D'Ancona's remark that the gay songs with which the streets of old Florence rang were not all love-ditties. Popular poetry was one of the forces which ruled the city, "Firenze fu un Comune nel quale la poesia era uno dei pubblici poteri." It cannot fail to be significant that Dante spent the most impressionable years of his life where the *poesia popolare*, by the inspiration of its eulogy and the stimulus of its satire, took the place of our modern newspapers in the formation, guidance and control of effective public opinion. And if the lessons of Florence were not fully learned at the time—if the *Vita Nuova* may be said by the unsympathetic to reveal something of the prig—the rough and tumble of an exiled life in fourteenth century Italy had no mean share of teaching to offer.

[1] D. G. Rossetti, *The Early Italian Poets, etc.*
[2] *Purg.* xxiii. 115 *sqq.* [3] *Op. cit.* pp. 55-6.

We have thus narrowed the field of observation to Dante himself, and are justified in claiming to have established at the outset at least so much as this: that if Dante was humourless, it was not for want of inspiration in his environment, or of material in the human—the *very* human—spirits among whom he moved.

It is not unnatural to ask first of all, whether Dante's physiognomy has anything to tell us on the subject. Two features act emphatically as index of the movements of the unseen spirit—as the Author himself points out in the *Convivio* [1]—the eyes and the mouth, those "Balconi della donna che nello edificio del corpo abita." And though the spirit of pleasantry and humour is apt to reveal itself through these windows chiefly in momentary flashes, the genial temper will usually leave some prominent tokens of its influence more especially about the corners of the mouth. As regards the eye, that most expressive of all our features, no fourteenth century portraiture, however faithful, could hope to reproduce its living flesh. Moreover, the most authentic portrait of Dante is blind, alas, or rather worse than blind: fitted with an execrable false eye by the much-abused Marini. The pose of Dante's mouth might teach us something, if only we could be sure of it. Mr. Holbrook in his recent monograph [2] has confirmed our suspicions about the famous "Death Mask," which at best would naturally have furnished nothing more significant than the smile of peace which so often graces our poor clay, a parting gift from the spirit as it leaves.

The magnificent Naples Bust is seemingly, like the so-called "Death Mask" itself, the creation of some abnormally gifted artist, who derived his inspiration,

[1] *Conv.* III, viii. 70; Oxf., p. 282; Bemporad, p. 222.

[2] *Portraits of Dante from Giotto to Raffael: a critical study, with a concise iconography*, by Richard Thayer Holbrook. London: Philip Lee Warner, 1911.

perhaps indirectly, through the Palatine Miniature (No. 320)[1] from the Bargello portrait to which we have already referred. In vain, therefore, does its splendid physiognomy, completely human, give such promise of a sense of humour as a face in repose can be expected to give. Nor does it matter for our purpose that the "Rittratto brutto" (as the Riccardian picture—attached to MS. 1040—is justly styled by some distinguished Florentines) would suggest the bare possibility rather than the probability of a sense of humour; for that work of Art (if it may be so called), is probably derived, like the famous Torrigiani Mask, from the Naples Bust.

The one probably genuine contemporary portrait, the Bargello Fresco, which a merciful criticism still allows us to attribute to Giotto, is only preserved in the drawings of Kirkup and Faltoni. In these, one window of the soul, the eye, is wanting, and there is considerable difference between the two reproductions of that most essential feature, the mouth; where Kirkup has much more of the conventional "Cupid's Bow."[2] The most that can be said here is what we said of the Naples Bust, that it certainly leaves room for a play of humour, restrained and dignified.

When we pass from portraiture to written record, we have but little material that is really *à propos* in the early biographers of Dante. Boccaccio, after pourtraying his character and features says, "his expression was ever melancholy and thoughtful"—"nella faccia sempre malinconico e pensoso" (*Vita*, § 8), but goes on to describe him as "smiling a little"—"sorridendo alquanto" (*ib.*), when he overheard the gossips of Verona commenting on the crisped hair and darkened complexion of the man

[1] Holbrook, *l.c.* pp. 68-72.
[2] Holbrook, *op. cit.* p. 102 and illustration opposite p. 98.

who "goes down to Hell and returns at will to bring back word of those below." Later on in his biography he draws out with evident relish the power of the poet's sarcastic satire: "with a fine resourcefulness of invention," says Boccaccio (§ 17), "he fixes his fangs on the vices of many yet alive and lashes the vices of many that have passed away"—"con invenzione acerbissima morde le colpe di molti viventi e quelle de' preteriti castiga." And speaking, in an earlier passage, of his courtesy in intercourse with others [1]—"più che alcun altro cortese e civile"—he takes something of the edge off Giovanni Villani's description of a man "somewhat haughty, reserved and disdainful, and after the fashion of a philosopher, careless of graces and not easy in his intercourse with laymen." [2] Yet we feel all the time that Villani's description is, speaking broadly, the more convincing; and are relieved when we realise that it is the outwardly and obviously genial temperament rather than the saving sense of humour that the Florentine historian would deny to his great contemporary.

Next, before we turn to the testimony of Dante's own works, we may refer briefly to the stories told of him; for if none of these be incontrovertibly authentic, and not a few of them be comparatively late in origin, their cumulative evidence should be of some value, at any rate in suggesting what his own countrymen of succeeding generations regarded as compatible with the Poet's temperament.[3]

We may dismiss, if we will, as apocryphal, the tale of Dante's conversation with the fish at the Venetian

[1] *Vita*, § 8. Ne' costumi domestici e publici mirabilmente fu ordinato e composto, e in tutti più che un altro cortese e civile.

[2] *Hist.* ix. 136. Per lo suo sapere fu alquanto presuntuoso e schifo e isdegnoso, e quasi a guisa di filosafo mal grazioso. Non bene sapea conversare co' laici.

[3] *Cf.* Toynbee, *Dante Alighieri*, Methuen, 3rd ed., 1904, p. 176 *sqq.*

Doge's banquet, and of the smearing of his court dress at King Robert's feast, we may reject, perhaps, with more hesitation and regret, Sacchetti's stories of the harmonious but offending blacksmith and the donkey-driver who farced Dante's songs with an interpolated *Arrhi!* We may relinquish the pun on Can Grande's name, while retaining Petrarca's story (of which Michele Savonarola's is possibly a "doublet") wherein Dante administers a deserved rebuke to Can Grande and his court for their preference of a buffoon to a poet. But even the rejected legends add their quota of testimony to the general and traditional belief that the Divino Poeta could unbend, and was capable of making a joke.

And there is a certain residuum—some would say larger, some smaller—of anecdotes that may be believed to contain a nucleus of truth.

There is to me a convincing ring about the comment of the *Anomino Fiorentino* on *Purg.* iv. 106. When Belacqua makes excuses for his laziness on the ground of the Aristotelian dictum that "by repose and quiet mind the mind attains to wisdom," Dante retorts: "Certainly, if repose will make a man wise, you ought to be the wisest man on earth!"

A like readiness of wit, in a moment where all depended on readiness, is evinced in the story of his reply to the Florentine envoy who was sent to Porciano to demand his extradition. "Is Dante Alighieri still at Porciano?" asked the messenger who met the fore-warned exile on the road, in the act of escaping. "When I was there, he was there," was the non-self-committing response: "quand io era, v' era'."[1] The stories told of Dante, if they do not suggest a genial and convivial temperament, do

[1] This is quoted from C. Bruni's excellent *Guida al Casentino*, p. 167. B. does not specify his authorities, but says in a footnote: "Questo aneddoto è così riferito da varii scrittori danteschi."

suggest a ready and caustic wit. But it is time to turn to Dante's own works, and taste for ourselves.

The *Divina Commedia* is the criterion by which most would judge him, and on this we shall spend the bulk of the space at our disposal; but no discussion of this or any other aspect of Dante's literary genius can afford to neglect the field of his minor works, which are, in this particular case, of not a little importance. The *Convivio* (if we may anticipate) supplies us, among other things, with Dante's own idea of what laughter should be; and the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* furnishes a practical illustration of his treatment of a subject like *patois* which lends itself to humorous handling even in a serious treatise.

These three works not only cover a large proportion of Dante's total literary remains, but they are also representative of his three chief styles of writing: Poetry, Italian Prose, and Latin Prose.

In opening the *Divina Commedia* one would venture to issue a further warning on the mistake of limiting the field of observation to the *Inferno*, or of allowing its temper and atmosphere too great a place in our estimate of the characteristics of Dante. Whatever he was to the women of Verona, Alighieri is to us much more than "the man who goes down to Hell and comes up again at will." Yet now and then even educated Italians, if you mention Dante's name, are apt to make it clear that they knew him mainly as the creator of two episodes—*Paolo and Francesca* and *Conte Ugolino*; and there is a real danger among Englishmen—amply illustrated in Dr. Paget Toynbee's *Dante in English Literature*—of laying too much stress on the *Inferno*, even if they do not confine themselves to it.

The humour of the *Inferno* is, of necessity, prevailingly grim; sometimes almost coarsely grotesque. Here we

may see the hand of the subtle artist, and detect a deliberate purpose on Dante's part to pour (as I have said elsewhere) "a disdainful and indignant ridicule upon the futile, monstrous, hideousness of sin."[1] "His fine scorn of sin tempts him to heap upon it all the . . . burden of loathsome grotesqueness that the resources of his imagination can furnish."

Typical of this method is the fierce sport of the scene described in *Inf.* xxii—xxiii, which culminates in the "nuovo ludo"[2] (puzzlingly compared by Dante to the apocryphal Aesopian Fable of the "Frog and the Mouse")[3] in which Ciampolo outwits the Demons and brings them to confusion.[4] We are in mid-Hell, in the fifth *Bolgia* of the eighth circle, *Malebolge*, the place of the *Barattieri*, of those, that is, who have made traffic of justice or of public interests. Dante, who had been falsely accused of this crime, expends all the resources at his command to express his detestation of it, and holds it up at once to ridicule and loathing.

In Purgatory, on the terrace where pride is purged, he seems to acknowledge his appropriate place; but far different is his attitude towards the spot in Hell where his political enemies would fain have placed him.

The whole of these two Cantos and a half is pervaded by an unholy reek of boiling pitch; the appropriate similies are those of frogs immersed to the muzzle in stagnant ditch water[5]; of clawings, flayings, proddings of raw flesh.[6] Here, if anywhere, Dante verges on the vulgar. The names of the Demons are fantastically ridiculous and unpleasantly suggestive; their actions

[1] *Dante and His Italy*, pp. 141, 2.

[2] *Inf.* xxii. 118.

[3] *Inf.* xxiii, 4 *sqq.*

[4] Sannia not inappropriately describes this passage as "il comico populare della D.C." (p. 193).

[5] *Inf.* xxii. 25.

[6] *Inf.* xxii. 41, 57, 60, 72, *cf.* xxi. 55 *sqq.*

and their gestures, their badinage and their horseplay all remind one that the stately pageant of the Middle Ages had its unspeakable and unpresentable side. The Cantos are only redeemed from unreadableness by the fine similes, the lofty poetical touches which Dante, because he was Dante, could not but introduce here and there.

The graphic picture of the Venetian arsenal in full activity,[1] the swiftly drawn but masterly sketches of the wild duck's dive to escape the swooping falcon,[2] of the mother's rescue of her child by night from a flaming house[3]; the vivid reminiscences of Dante's own campaigning days, at Caprona and before Arezzo: these play, like sunlit irridescence on the surface of a noisome pool, where foul creatures sport and gambol in a nightmare fashion.

We must note, however, one point; that Dante never represents himself here as moved to mirth by the fiendish antics he so conscientiously describes. Rather he is pictured as consistently consumed by fear and loathing.[4]

More reprehensible from the point of view of good taste is the Poet's eager attention attracted to the vulgar harlequinade between Master Adam the false-coiner and the Greek Sinon, where the latter strikes the former on his "inflated paunch" till it resounds—

> Come fosse un tamburo.[5]

But Dante is careful to put things right in the sequel, and makes his own blush of shame respond at once to Virgil's chiding—

> . . . Or pur mira
> Ch' è per poco che teco non mi risso ![6]

Less broad in its grim playfulness is the taunt which the

[1] *Inf.* xxi. 7-15. [2] *Inf.* xxii. 130. [3] *Inf.* xxiii. 37.
[4] *Inf.* xxi. 31, 88 *sqq.*, 127 *sqq.*; xxii. 31. [5] *Inf.* xxx. 103.
[6] *Inf.* xxx. 131, 2.

spendthrift Jacomo da Sant' Andrea, hunted and breathless, gasps out at his fellow-sufferer: "Lano, at Toppo's jousts thy legs were not so nimble"—

> Lano, sì non furo accorte
> Le gambe tue a le giostre dal Toppo! [1]

Exquisite in the irony of its situation is in *Inf.* xix, in which Dante, in order to find a place for solemn invective against Boniface VIII,[2] and to assign him, while still alive, his place in Hell, makes Nicholas III mistake the Poet's voice for that of the Pontiff, and exclaim—

> Se' tu già costì ritto,
> Se' tu già costì ritto, Bonifazio?

Whereat Dante represents himself as quite non-plussed and unable to grasp the speaker's meaning!

Nor is the scene itself without a picturesque absurdity that evinces a subtle sense of humour, especially when we remember the over-weening pretensions of Boniface to unearthly dignity. The flaming legs of Simonists kicking to and fro above the surface of the ground wherein the rest of them is buried headforemost; and the neat epigram in which Pope Nicholas describes his plight—

> Su l' avere, e qui me misi in borsa—

"I pursed wealth above, and here—myself." [3]

Bearing in mind the Poet's solemn and deliberate purpose, as we conceive it, to pour scathing ridicule upon that which qualifies man for a place in Hell, we may fairly aver that even in the most critical scenes and episodes he does not transgress the canons of the Master whom he revered. If there is βωμολοχία—unseemly and unrestrained jesting—in his Inferno, it is not Dante's, but the Demons'. Dante, as we have seen, deliberately dis-

[1] *Inf.* xiii. 120 *sqq.*
[2] *Inf.* xix. 52 *sqq.* *Cf.* Boccaccio, *Vita*, § 17.
[3] *Inf.* xix. 72.

sociates himself from it; and the absence of all such extravagance from his description of Paradise and even of Purgatory confirms our inference that the humorous element, even at its grimmest and coarsest, is carefully proportioned to the environment with which he is dealing.

The *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* are marked (like the scene with Nicholas III) by occasional outbursts of political or quasi-political invective, seasoned with stinging satire. In these tirades against Florence or the Papacy Dante is sometimes his own spokesman; sometimes they are put into another mouth.

The concluding verses of *Purg.* vi. will at once come to mind: the famous invective in which he ironically congratulates his native city on her "feverish" energy,[1] shown in the disinterested eagerness of her citizens to take up the lucrative burdens of public office, and in the amazing agility of her legislative activity, beside which the democratic traditions of Ancient Athens—

> Fecero al viver ben un picciol cenno—[2]

the laws passed in October being superseded by the middle of November—

> . . . Che fai tanto sotili
> Provedimenti, che a mezzo novembre
> Non giugne quel che tu d' ottobre fili.

Then there is the scarcely less famous passage in *Par.* xxi,[3] where St. Peter Damian, inveighing against the Roman Curia, describes the fat Cardinals as supported on every side as they go—held up to right and left, and pushed and pulled along—

> Or voglion quinci e quindi chi i rincalzi
> Li moderni pastori, e chi gli meni
> Tanto son gravi! e chi di rietro gli alzi.

And when they ride, covering their palfreys with their

[1] *Purg.* vi. 149 *sqq.* [2] *Purg.* vi. 141. [3] *Par.* xxi. 130 *sqq.*

ample robes, " so that two beasts are moving 'neath one hide "—

Sì che due bestie van sott' una pelle.[1]

Or again, there is Beatrice's tirade in *Par.* xxix.[2] against the farce of unauthorised indulgences, and against the fashions of the contemporary pulpit: the fashion of neglecting the Gospel, and straining after originality, as though Christ's mandate had been: " Go ye into all the world, and preach—frivolities! "

Andate, e predicate al mondo ciance.[3]

The modern preacher's " head is swelled " (if we may so translate *Gonfia il cappuccio*), and he is perfectly content if by his jests and gibes he can raise a laugh, while the fiend sits unseen in the corner of his hood.

This passage is as perennially applicable as any in Dante, and combines the satire of Alexander Pope with the stern earnestness of the author of the *Task*, so aptly compared to it by W. W. Vernon.

Dante no doubt felt a certain appropriateness which justified him in putting these invectives into the mouths of his august *dramatis personae*: but we are apt to hear the ring of *his* voice in each of them. There are, however, other passages in the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso* of which the playfulness belongs to the characters themselves.

In *Purg.* xx. we have two instances given to show that the risible faculties are not extinguished by the pains of purification.

Greedy Midas' dismal surprise when, in answer to his ill-advised prayer, his very food turned to gold and became uneatable, is a legitimate and unfailing cause of laughter—

Per la qual sempre convien che si rida—[4]

[1] *Par.* xxi. 134. [2] *Par.* xxix. 34 *sqq.* [3] *Par.* xxix. 110. [4] *Purg.* xx. 108.

to those who lie fettered face downwards[1] in the terrace of the avaricious. And it is with evident relish that the same souls repeat their last lesson: "Tell us, Crassus, for thou knowest, what is the flavour of gold?"

> Crasso,
> Dilci, che 'l sai: di che sapore è l' oro?[2]

In the next Cantos, xxi. and xxii., the Poet delights us with scenes of a graceful and most appropriate playfulness. First there is the charming episode, *Purg.* xxi. 100 *sqq.*, where Statius, addressing Virgil, whom he does not recognise, says: "What would I have given to have been on earth when the author of the *Aeneid* was alive!" and Dante, in spite of Virgil's unspoken but unmistakable "*Taci!*" betrays the situation by an uncontrollable smile. Then in the next Canto (xxii.), when the puzzled Virgil mistakes the guilt for which Statius is suffering for *avarice*, it is Statius' turn to laugh. The gentle, mirthful grace of the whole scene is enhanced by the pathetic sequel, when Statius explains that it was Virgil who converted him, by his famous fourth Eclogue, to Christianity, like one who, walking himself in darkness, carries a lantern behind his back to illumine the path of those who follow—

> Facesti come quei che va di notte
> Che porta il lume dietro, e sè non giova
> Ma dopo sè fa le persone dotte.[3]

Charming too is the playful irony of the scene in the Earthly Paradise where Matelda gravely discourses to Dante, in presence of Virgil and Statius, about the poets who in days of yore sang of the Golden Age—

> Quelli ch' anticamente poetaro
> L' età del' oro e suo stato felice—[4]

[1] *Purg.* xix. 72, 124.
[2] *Purg.* xx. 116-17.
[3] *Purg.* xxii. 67-9.
[4] *Purg.* xxviii. 139.

and Dante looks round on them and sees them smiling.

> Io mi volsi in dietro allora tutto
> A' miei poeti, e vidi che con riso
> Udito avevan l' ultimo costrutto.[1]

The smiles which wreathe the lips of the denizens of the Heavenly Paradise, like that which gleams in Beatrice's eyes,[2] are something ineffably solemn and sublime: like the *Gloria* chanted in the Starry Heaven, of which the Poet exclaims—

> . . . mi sembiava
> Un riso de l' universo.[3]

But there is a touch of the more distinctively human in the suggestion thrown out in the following Canto that St. Gregory woke up in heaven to the true facts about the Angelic Hierarchy, and "smiled at his own mistake" in departing from the Dionysian scheme.

> Onde, sì tosto come li occhi aperse
> In questo ciel, di sè medesmo rise.[4]

The passages we have touched upon in the *Divina Commedia* are those most obviously to the point. Prof. Sannia's Italian mind can discern subtleties of humour in places where the foreigner cannot always hope to follow. But there is one point on which he lays much stress, namely the importance, for our purpose, of observing Dante's attitude towards himself throughout the mystical journey, and especially as he passes through the dismal regions of the First Kingdom. The Dante so graphically depicted to us in the *Divine Comedy* is altogether different from the cold, abstract Dante of tradition. He is an impatiently curious child, in whom the passion of curiosity even conquers fear. And while the pilgrim is depicted to us in very

[1] *Purg.* xxviii. 145. [2] *Par.* xxiii. 22. [3] *Par.* xxvii. 4.
[4] *Par.* xxviii. 137-5.

human guise, and his motions and his attributes described in terms which presuppose not only a remarkable degree of self-knowledge, and a striking power of psychological analysis, but also a very real sense of humour ; the poet who sings of the pilgrim, reveals to us by the way, a whole group of characteristics which claim the humorous gift as their inevitable associate. Such are his broad humanity, his sympathy, his reverence even for the noble damned, his very modern type of tenderness shown by interest in the ways of children, animals, birds, insects, from whose life he loves to draw his similes. " True humour," says Carlyle, " is sensibility in the most catholic and deepest sense." Virgil—the Virgil of history—had this in a pre-eminent degree—and so has his mystic companion of the Eternal World.[1]

Popular tradition has imagined him as a heartless, unfeeling judge, without that indulgence towards human frailty which the gift of humour presupposes : but the entire *Purgatorio* belies this calumny, and not a few episodes in the *Inferno* itself.

To pass from the *Divina Commedia* to the *Convivio* is in any case a drop down. If it is but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous, the sublimity of the *Divina Commedia* should bring us very close to the regions where laughter is generated. The *Convivio*, with all its manifold interest is obviously far below the level on which thought and feeling habitually move in the *Divine Comedy*. Has it therefore less promise in the matter of our quest ?

I venture to think that there is a strain of playfulness underlying a good deal of the argument of this work ; and that even if we can bring ourselves to believe Dante's own solemnly elaborate interpretation of his love-songs to be quite serious in the main.

And apart from this, if we take the *Convivio* with

[1] *Essay on Richter*, cited by Glover, *Virgil*, Methuen, 1920, p. 27.

the utmost seriousness, we may remember for our comfort that πορίζεσθαι τὰ γέλοια[1] is one of the qualifications of Aristotle's εὐτράπελος and the willingness to be laughed at another; and see in Dante (with all reverence) an example of those who, more or less unconsciously provide matter for amusement to posterity. Nay, we may treat him as he treats St. Gregory, and look upon him as laughing now at his own certitude about the ten heavens and the angelic hierarchy, from his place in the mystic rose—or are we to say on the terrace of Pride?

But to return to the *Convivio*. It is here, as we have already suggested, that Dante gives us his description of the ideal nature of Laughter. "Ridere," he says, "è una corruscazione della dilettazione de l' anima."[2] On the Aristotelian principle of the Mean (though his actual reference is not to Aristotle, but to Pseudo-Seneca "On the Four Cardinal Virtues"), he urges that laughter should be moderate and modest, with no violent movement (such as convulses the pages, e.g. of Franco Sacchetti) and no "cackling" noise. Laughter is, in fact—like little children—"best seen and not heard."

From each of the four extant treatises, quotations may be adduced which at any rate show the writer's sympathy with that view of life which fastens on the incongruous and sees in it matter for genial irony or for bitter sarcasm, according to the moral context.

Tratt. I. Chapter xi. opens with a delicious satire on the "sheep-like opinion" of the multitude, which I have elsewhere compared to the charmingly nonsensical scene—"Less Bread, More Taxes!"—with which Lewis Carroll inaugurates his *Sylvie and Bruno*.

The "man in the street," says Dante, is ready to follow any cry that is raised. Thus the populace will be

[1] *Eth. Eud.* iii. 1234ᵃ 17.
[2] *Conv.* III, viii., 95 *sqq.* p. 282, Oxf.; p. 222, Bemporad.

found exclaiming "Viva la lor morte! Muoia la lor vita!—purchè alcuno cominci." They are for all the world like sheep who follow their leader blindly over a high precipice or down a well. He goes on to rail at "a bad workman who blames his tools," the many who "*sempre danno colpa alla materia dell' arte apparecchiata, overo alo strumento; siccome lo mal fabro biasima ferro appresentato a lui.*"[1]

Nor can we fail to find in the next chapter (I, xii.) a touch of the drily humorous spirit; in the passage which Dr. Toynbee in his Anthology entitles *Of Silly Questions.*

"If flames were plainly to be seen issuing from the windows of a house, and a bystander were to enquire whether that house were on fire, and another man to reply that it was, I should find it difficult to decide which of the two was the more ridiculous."[2]

What are we to say of the *Trattato II?* Here, if anywhere, Dante poses as the unconscious humorist; here, if anywhere, in his elaborately solemn disquisition upon arrangement of the heavens and their analogues in the *trivium* and *quadrivium,* he is qualifying himself to play the *rôle* of St. Gregory in the other world! But even here he finds leisure to cast occasionally a satirist's eye on the contemporary world—

l' aiuolo che ci fa tanto feroci;

and the naïveté of his references to it is delightful. They sometimes come in incidentally in the form of similes. In Chapter vii.,[3] for instance, is an illusion to the perennial banishments and sieges with which the factions of Guelf and Ghibelline, Black and White, harassed the cities of

[1] Oxf. Ed. p. 248; Bemporad, p. 165.
[2] Oxf. Ed. p. 249; Bemporad, p. 166; Toynbee, *In the Footprints of Dante,* p. 303.
[3] (vi.) Oxf. Ed. p. 259; Bemporad, p. 183.

the peninsula : " When we speak of ' the city,' " he says, " we are wont to mean those who are in possession of it, not those who are attacking it, albeit the one and the other be citizens." Or again, in Chapter xi.,[1] a reference to the decline of good taste and culture is ingeniously worked into a question of etymology. "*Cortesia*" is equivalent to "*onestade*," and " because in courts of old time virtuous and fair manners were in use (as now the contrary), this word was derived from courts, and " courtesy " was as much as to say " after the usage of courts." If the word had been derived in modern days from the same origin, it could have signified nothing else than *turpezza*."

In *Tratt. III*, as elsewhere, the playfulness is for the most part so spread out that it is difficult to quote. There is, however, a touch of real satire in such passages as that in which Dante twits the lawyers, physicians, and members of religious orders with their disqualification for the reputation of a true philosopher.[2]

" We are not to call him a real philosopher who is a friend of wisdom for profit's sake, as are lawyers, physicians, and almost all the members of the religious orders, who do not study in order to know, but in order to get money or office ; and if any one would give them that which it is their purpose to acquire, they would linger over their study no longer."

Trattato IV is more obviously fruitful. Here again he girds at the lawyers and doctors, suggesting that they might at least give *un*professional advice gratis, and, in another place, ventures timidly to assert that it may be possible " to be religious though married." [3] Again, in Ch. xvi., if *nobile* simply meant *notus*, then the Obelisk of

[1] xi, 60 *sqq.* ; p. 263, Oxf. Ed. ; (x.) p. 190, Bemporad.
[2] xi. 100 *sqq* ; p. 287, Oxf. Ed. ; p. 230, Bemporad.
[3] IV, xxviii. 70 *sqq* ; p. 335, Oxf. Ed. ; p. 311, Bemporad.

St. Peter would be the noblest stone on earth, and Asdente the cobbler (of whom Salimbene gives us so lively a sketch) would be noblest among the citizens of Parma.[1]

Some arguments are so senseless, he says a little earlier, that they deserve to be answered not with a word, but with a knife. "Risponder si vorrebbe non colle parole ma col coltello a tanta bestialità." [2]

Lastly, he has in this treatise the audacity to depict to us the sublimest sage, "il maestro di color che sanno," as indulging in a burst of hypothetical laughter at the idea of a double origin of the human race. "Senza dubbio, forte riderebbe Aristotile"; and, he adds, "those who would divide mankind into two separate species like horses and asses are (with apologies to Aristotle) themselves the asses."[3]

In the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, as we have already hinted, the "idioma incomptum et ineptum" of various localities, alike on the right and on the left of the Apennines, gives play for pleasantry of which does Dante not fail to take advantage. It is with evident relish that he puts on record typical uncouth phrases of each dialect: the Roman *Mezzure quinto dici*, the *Chignamente, frate, sc-tate* of the Marches of Ancona, the Milanese *Mes d' ochiover*, the *Çes fastú* which men of Aquileja and Istria "crudeliter accentuando, eructuant." The feminine softness of the Romagna, and especially of Forli, with its *corada mea*; [4] the more than masculine roughness of the men of Verona, Vicenza, Brescia—all those who say "Magara"; the *nof* and *vif* of Treviso.

In Chapter xi. he has his knife into mediaeval Rome,

[1] IV, xvi. 69; p. 318, Oxf. Ed.; p. 283, Bemporad. Salimbene (*ed. cit.*), pp. 457, 512, 530 *sqq*.
[2] IV, xiv. 105; p. 315, Oxf. Ed.; p. 278, Bemporad.
[3] IV, xv. 135; p. 316, Oxf. Ed.; p. 280, Bemporad.
[4] I, xiv.; p. 387, Oxf. Ed.; pp. 329, 332, Bemporad.

the proud and corrupt. "Sicut ergo Romani se cunctis preponendos extimant, in hac eradicatione sive discerptione non immerito eos aliis preponamus, protestantes eosdem in nulla vulgaris eloquentie ratione fore tangendos." The primacy which the Romans claim in all things may certainly be theirs in this. In our eliminating process they shall be first to be rejected from the candidature to furnish a classical vernacular for all Italy!

Their dialect (he goes on), like their morals, is the most degraded in the whole peninsula, and has spread its corrupting influence into neighbouring districts. It is indeed not worthy to be called a *vulgare* (vernacular), but rather a depraved misuse of speech (*tristiloquium*), and is "italorum vulgarium omnium . . . turpissimum." [1]

At the end of Chapter xiii. he tilts at the Genoese Z—an ugly sound in itself, but one which, if lost or mislaid by defect of memory, would leave the poor people of Genoa without a means of transmitting their thoughts! The loss of this one letter would leave them dumb, or impose on them the necessity of inventing an entirely new mode of speech. "Si per oblivionem Ianuenses ammitterent *z* litteram, vel mutire totaliter eos vel novam reperare oporteret loquelam: est enim *z* maxima pars eorum locutionis: que quidem littera non sine multa rigiditate profertur." [2]

On a different plane is Dante's lamentation in Ch. xii. over the decay of literary culture in Sicily since the glorious days of Frederic and Manfred, which gave the title "Sicilianum" to the work of Dante's predecessors in the vernacular: a passage (to me at least) somewhat obscure, in which Frederic II of Sicily, Charles II of Naples, Azzo Marquis of Este, and John Marquis of Montferrat are accused of blood-thirstiness, treachery and avarice:

[1] p. 385, Oxf. Ed.; p. 329, Bemporad.
[2] *V.E.* I, xiii. *fin.*; p. 387 Oxf. Ed.; p. 331, Bemporad.

"Venite carnifices; venite attriplices; venite avaritiae sectatores. . . ." [1]

Turning to Bk. II we find the same Azzo ironically praised in Chapter vi., in a "copy-book phrase" of which the incidental introduction gives point to the satire: "Laudabilis discretio marchionis Estensis et sua magnificentia preparata cunctis, cunctis illum facit esse dilectum."

More delightful still is a sentence which closely follows, quoted solemnly like the former merely as an example of good phraseology appropriate to a lofty subject, in which Charles of Valois plays the *rôle* of a "second Totila," and his calamitous dealings with Florence (including, presumably, Dante's own banishment) are adduced as a fitting prelude to his futile descent upon Sicily. "Ejecta maxima parte florum de sinu tuo, Florentia, nequicquam Trinacriam Totila secundus adivit." [2]

Earlier in the book there is another humorous touch with which we may conclude our list, at the risk, perchance, of an anti-climax. A passage near the end of Chapter i. recalls, in a curious way, a line from the *Epistles* of Horace.

Dante, having premised that every one should adorn (*exornare*) his verses as far as possible, goes on to point out that there are limits beyond which adornment becomes incongruous and absurd. "We do not speak of an ox caparisoned like a horse or a belted pig as *ornatus*; we laugh at them, and would rather apply the word *deturpatus*." This *bos ephippiatus* most aptly typifies incongruity of adornment. In Horace's well-known line—

Optat ephippia bos piger, optat arare caballus,[3]

[1] "Quid nunc personat tuba novissimi Frederici? quid tintinabulum secundi Caroli? quid cornua Iohannis et Azzonis marchionum potentum? quid aliorum magnatum tibiae? nisi *Venite carnifices, etc.*," p. 386 Oxf. Ed.; p. 330 Bemporad.

[2] *V.E.* II, vi. 42-6; p. 394, Oxf. Ed.; p. 343 *sq.*, Bemporad.

[3] Hor. *Ep.* I., xiv, 43.

the point of the satire is different. It is the Roman poet's favourite theme of universal discontent—each envying another's lot.

In Dante's phrase we may perhaps detect an unconscious or semi-conscious adoption or adaptation of a classical image: parallel, in a humble way, with those splendid thefts from Virgil and Ovid with which he has enriched the *Divina Commedia*: conceptions too unquestionally original in their new form to be classed as mere plagiarisms.

"Cicero hath observed," says the *Spectator* of Nov. 5, 1714,[1] "that a jest is never uttered with a better grace than when it is accompanied with a serious countenance."

If this be true, our quest may perhaps modestly congratulate itself on the avoidance of undue levity. Nor need we take it seriously to heart if we have failed to vindicate for Dante the character of a humorist in the modern sense, and of the American type. The most that our investigation can be said to have proved is that Dante, enbittered as he was by his exile, and emaciated by long and serious study, was not devoid of that sense of humour whereby man is able to wring matter for cheerfulness and mirth out of the most unlikely material, and, going through this vale of misery—"questo aspro diserto"—to "use it for a well." But neither is he the cold abstraction, both less and more than human, which tradition, of a sort, has handed down to us. His works display, for those who care to look for them, a breadth of sympathy, a capacity for observation and discernment, a keenness of interest, an eye for the incongruous, a richness and sureness of self-expression that are guarantees of the possession of the sense of humour.[2] The manifold

[1] No. 616.

[2] Dr. Reid, in an article on "Humour" (*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. VI, p. 272), which had not yet appeared when these lines were written, describing the gift as follows: "Humour is

play of the forces of one of the most picturesque ages of human history found a sympathetic response in Dante's genius, though the sublimity and the restraint of his work has obscured this. This side of his genius is well summed up by Sannia.[1]

"La coscienza lucidissima di sè stesso, l' attitudine all' analisi psicologica, la febbrile curiosità del mondo esterno, naturale ed umano, lo spirito d' osservazione, il senso più squisito dell' arte, la divina serenità, la multiforme impressionabilità dell' artista, il senso del tenero, la pietà umana, il pessimismo furono note spiccatissime, eminenti del suo genio."

invariably associated with alertness and breadth of mind, a keen sense of proportion, and faculties of quick observation and comparison. It involves a certain detachment from, or superiority to, the disturbing experiences of life. It appreciates the whimsicalities and contradictions of life, recognises the existence of what is unexpected or absurd, and extracts joy out of what might be a cause of sadness. . . ."

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 51.

IV

DANTE AND MEDIAEVAL THOUGHT

Vidi 'l maestro di color che sanno
Seder tra filosofica famiglia.
Tutti lo miran, tutti onor li fanno.
—*Inf.* iv. 131-3.

THOSE who were privileged to listen to Mr. Trevelyan's lecture on "Italy's Part in the War," and to see the wonderful slides presented to him by the *Comando Supremo,* will remember the thrill contributed by the last picture—the great statue of Dante at Trento, with the fugitive Austrian soldiers at its base, fleeing, as it were, before his face. Dante, we felt, has at last come to his own; the Trentino is at last indefeasibly—

Suso in Italia bella,

and the "alps above Tiralli" effectively "bar out" the Teuton![1]

Dante's inspiration has indeed brooded over the heroic efforts and struggles of Italy's twentieth century patriots, even as over their forefathers of the Risorgimento. And this living influence of the Divine Poet's genius has been brought before our readers in the first two Essays of this collection.

Perhaps it may not be amiss to follow up those former articles with a complementary study of the Poet—no longer as the inspirer of nineteenth and twentieth century ideals, but as the supreme representative of the thought and feeling of his own century,

[1] *Inf.* xx. 61-3.

the thirteenth. Like Shakespeare, Dante never grows old. There is a quality of universality about his genius, and a broad and deep human appeal in his writing which renders it the proper heritage of every generation. And, haughty and aloof as was his spirit during life, with an aloofness intensified by bitter exile and by the sickness of ever-deferred hope, he was not one of those great ones who are entirely out of touch with their contemporaries, living in an age not yet born. Scarcely had he passed from mortal sight when a chorus of appreciation made itself heard, which, though it has waned in ages of waning taste, has never ceased to sound.

In a very true sense, Dante sums up in himself all that is best in mediaeval thought.

So Mr. Henry Osborne Taylor, in his formidable study of *The Mediaeval Mind*, significantly heads the forty-third and last chapter "The Mediaeval Synthesis: Dante." "There is unity," he affirms, "throughout the diversity of mediaeval life; and Dante is the proof of it."[1] It is pre-eminently as a religious thinker that Dante holds this place, and supplies this synthesis.

Theology as conceived in the thirteenth century was not only the "Queen of Sciences"; the religious conception of knowledge embraced and included all else. To Dante, the theologian-poet, as to Thomas Aquinas, the theologian-philosopher, all knowledge whatsoever was ultimately *one;* its end and purpose, its ground and justification, its key and explanation were to be found in the mystery of the Blessed Trinity-in-Unity.

Theology was not one among many departments of knowledge; it was the sum of knowledge, the key to all problems of the universe. Some of us retain, deep down in our nature, a conviction that, in this point at least, the scholastic theologians were right. While

[1] Vol. II, p. 534.

thankfully accepting the results of the scientific "division of labour," the marvellous practical and theoretical fruits of a free and systematic investigation of phenomena which have transformed our very conception of knowledge and the knowable, we are apt to feel sometimes that the thirteenth century thinkers, with their complete mastery and mapping-out of the comparatively narrow field of the "scibile," were not so liable as ourselves to lose sight of the wood by reason of the multitude of the trees, to lose the idea of an universe in the absorbing interest of its details.

At any rate, it may be accepted as beyond discussion that to the great mediaeval thinkers—to Peter Lombard, to Abelard, to St. Bernard, to St. Bonaventura and Albertus Magnus, to Roger Bacon and Duns Scotus; above all, perhaps, to St. Thomas Aquinas and to Dante, all knowledge is ultimately religious knowledge: just because God is conceived and realised as being the beginning and end and groundwork of all things. This truth underlies the beautiful language of the first canto of *Paradiso*—

> La gloria di colui che tutto move
> Per l' universo penetra e risplende
> In una parte più e meno altrove.

and again—

> . . . Le cose tutte quante
> Hanno ordine tra loro, e questo è forma
> Che 'l universo a Dio fa simigliante.[1]

It also underlies the description of the damned as those who have lost "the Good of the intellect." [2]

> Noi siam venuti al luogo ove io t' ho detto
> Che tu vedrai le genti dolorose
> Ch' hanno perduto il ben de l' intelletto.

This tendency to subsume all knowledge under

[1] *Par.* i. 1 *sqq.*, 103 *sqq.* [2] *Inf.* iii. 16-18.

religious knowledge is indeed one of the most important ways in which Dante is representative of his time. To that we shall revert later on. Now let us turn to consider for a moment some of the elements and sources of mediaeval knowledge as Dante knew and mastered it.

Holy Scripture, the Patristic writings, ancient classical lore, the Graeco-Arabian philosophy and science of which the groundwork was Aristotle—these are the main antecedents of the mediaeval system of knowledge, and they are blended together in characteristic ways, and dissolved, as it were, in a fluid composed of romantic chivalry and other elements of preponderatingly Teutonic and Celtic origin.

(1) The groundwork of all is, of course, Holy Scripture: known and studied exclusively in the Latin Vulgate text, a rather degenerate and corrupt representative of the (in its way) masterly and excellent translation from the Hebrew and Greek made by St. Jerome in the fifth century.

The Bible, as we know quite well to-day,—even those of us who are more than ever convinced of its inspiration—is not a manual of natural science or philosophy, nor even an absolutely infallible guide in matters of history and chronology. Its scientific standpoint is that of the age in which each part was composed, however eternal be the significance and application of its fundamental religious principles.

To the mediaeval mind, however, Scripture was a universal text-book of science. So that countless questions were regarded as foreclosed because the Bible appeared to have pronounced upon them. The scientific mind of the Middle Ages felt itself committed at a hundred points to the rather crude conceptions of the ancient Hebrews, and to a literal interpretation, very often, of figurative and highly poetical expressions.

The disadvantages of this state of things are obvious to us: we must not forget, however, that they were largely modified by the fact that while all knowledge was regarded as ultimately religious knowledge, it is just in its religious principles that the Bible is supreme, and is permanently true.

(2) The interpretation of Scripture in the Middle Ages is largely based on patristic exegesis; on the writings of the really great minds of the third, fourth and fifth centuries, when men like Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, Basil and the Gregories, Chrysostom, Jerome and Augustine, laid the foundations of systematic Christian thought; men steeped in the Holy Scriptures, and bringing to them an intellect furnished with ideas and categories inherited in part from the classical world—from Graeco-Roman literature and philosophy. The most influential of them all, perhaps, upon mediaeval thought were Jerome (through his translation of the Bible) and Augustine, the deepest and most original thinker (with the exception of Origen) among all the "Fathers."

Holy Scripture then, patristically interpreted, is the first and most important element in mediaeval knowledge; and the place it holds in Dante may be roughly estimated by the calculations of Dr. Moore in his *Dante Studies* (Vol. I), where he shows that in his exant works the Poet quotes the Vulgate more than five hundred times.

Dante is representative of the Middle Ages in his reverence for and his use of Holy Scripture, interpreted for the most part by traditions derived from the Christian Fathers.

Scripture itself was mediaevally supplemented by hagiology—the lives and legends of the Saints—nor is this element lacking in Dante.[1]

[1] *Cf.* e.g , the legend of St. Gregory alluded to in *Purg.* x. 75.

(3) But the place of honour, next to Scripture, in Dante, must be assigned, surely, to classical lore—to the mythology and literature of the ancient Graeco-Roman civilisation for which the mediaeval mind had so profound a reverence. Greek philosophy, as represented by Aristotle—

il maestro di color che sanno [1]

is a category by itself, to which we shall turn our attention in a moment. But classical lore in general, as represented by such writers as Virgil (quoted 200 times), Ovid (100), Cicero (50), Lucan (50), Horace (15 ?), Livy (15 ?), finds very definite recognition in Dante's works.

The old Roman Empire was viewed by Dante with a truly religious veneration, as is clear not only from many a passage in the *Divina Commedia* (e.g. *Par.* vi), but from the whole argument of the *De Monarchia.*[2] This veneration, which shed lustre and dignity upon a "Holy Roman Empire" which even in Dante's day had become actually, though not technically, German, is characteristic especially of the Italian mind ; and Dante was Italian as well as mediaeval. The Italians even of to-day are proud to regard themselves as the direct successors of the old Romans of the Republic and of the Caesars : in Dante's time they were prepared to trace their ancestry to the divinely guided companions of Aeneas of Troy.

Rome looms large in the providential ordering of human history : Dante's conception of her sovereign place is drawn from the author of the princely *Aeneid,* whose function in the *Divine Comedy* is guarantee

[1] *Inf.* iv. 131.

[2] See above, pp. 28 *sqq.* and "Dante and A League of Nations," *Anglo-Italian Review,* December, 1918, pp. 327-335.

of the affectionate reverence which Dante bore to him.

But it is not only Roman history, but classical mythology that weaves itself into the texture of Dante's religious thought. If he quotes Virgil some two hundred times, he quotes Ovid about one hundred.

The tendency to mingle together examples from Scripture and from pagan mythology is characteristically mediaeval. In Dante it is a well known feature, most typically represented perhaps in the sculptures, visions and voices of the Purgatorio.

He who is bold enough in *Purg.* xxx. to blend together the Scriptural *Benedictus qui venis* with Virgil's *Manibus o date lilia plenis* is not afraid to invoke the Muses and Apollo (mystically interpreted) as he begins a new *cantica.*[1] He does not hesitate to apostrophise the Saviour of the world in terms which blend the Christian with the antique pagan tradition—[2]

> . . . O Sommo Giove,
> Che fosti in terra per noi crucifisso !

This is well explained by Mr. Taylor. "With Dante," he says,[3] "the pagan antique represented much that was philosophically true, if not veritably divine. In his mind, apparently, the heathen good stood for the Christian good, and the conflict of the heathen deities with Titan monsters[4] symbolised ,if indeed it did not continue to make part of, the Christian struggle against the power of sin."

This principle may be regarded as being, in a way, the mediaeval analogue of our broad modern conceptions derived from a comparative study of religions.

[1] *Purg.* i. 7 *sqq.* ; *Par.* i. 13 *sqq.* ; *cf. Inf.* ii. 7.
[2] *Purg.* vi. 118.
[3] *Mediaeval Mind,* Vol. II, p. 544.
[4] *Inf.* xxxi.

(4) But supreme among the influences derived by the Middle Ages from classical antiquity is the philosophy of Aristotle, which holds the next place to Scripture alike in the "Summa" of Thomas Aquinas, and in the *Divina Commedia* of Dante.

Mediaeval Christianity drew its knowledge of Aristotelian philosophy from Mohammedan sources. The great Arab scientists and philosophers of mediaeval times, represented in the *Commedia* by Avicenna and—

Averroìs che il gran comento feo [1]

(his commentary on Aristotle was translated into Latin about 1250), gave back, in a modified form, to Western Europe, the works of the Philosopher, of which the original Greek was not acquired by them till several centuries later.

This Graeco-Arabian philosophy forms the basis of those constantly recurring, and to many of us rather tiresome, astronomical excursions which form so characteristic a feature of the *Divine Comedy.*

This form of Aristotelianism plays an immense part in the scholastic philosophy; and his deference to it is among Dante's chief claims to be representative of the religious thought and teaching of his day.

In countless other ways the Poet's writings are representative of what was best and highest in contemporary thought: the wide grasp of innumerable topics and details, the encyclopaedic temper, quaintly obvious in the *Convivio* but more worthily embodied in the *Divina Commedia;* the spiritualising of troubadour love, beautifully manifested in the promise of *Vita Nuova* and *Canzoniere,* but more sublimely still in the Beatrice of the *Paradiso;* the blending of religious with political theory so conspicuous in the *Monarchia* and *Commedia;*

[1] *Inf.* iv. 144.

the realistic vividness of conception ; the eye for contrast, which makes Dante's great poem a mirror of the kaleidoscopic life of the Middle Ages.

Among the qualities which made Dante what he was—and is—two would seem to be supreme. First his encyclopaedic knowledge, and secondly the unrivalled power of plastic visualisation, by which he was enabled "to use as a poet what he had acquired as a scholar." [1]

Dante has been described by Eliot Norton as an instance of "the incredible diligence of the Middle Ages." In days when there was no Funk and Wagnalls Company to minister encyclopaedic knowledge by cheap instalments—when everything must be painfully acquired from MSS. and the diligent student ran the risk not only of leanness [2] but of blindness [3] Dante appears, from his extant works, to have known all that was to be known. Dr. Moore's investigations (in *Dante Studies*, Vol. I) go some way towards justifying—if anything can absolutely justify so dogmatic a statement—the perhaps over-enthusiastic words of A. G. Butler :

"Dante was born a student as he was born a poet, and had he never written a single poem, he would still have been famous as the most profound scholar of his time." [4]

But if Dante had finished the *Convivio*, and written nothing else, his vast learning would have been as uninteresting to the average modern mind as is that of Albertus Magnus or Thomas Aquinas. Albertus Magnus with his

[1] *Mediaeval Mind*, Vol. II, p. 541, note.
[2] *Par*. xxv. 3.
[3] *Conv*. III, ix., fin. ; p. 285, Oxf. Ed. ; p. 227, Bemporad.
[4] Croce on the contrary urges with perhaps too great a bias in the other direction, that if Dante were not so great as a Poet, little would be thought of his achievements in other lines : "Se Dante non fosse, com' è, grandissimo poeta, è da presumere che tutte quelle altre cosi perderebbero rilievo."—*Poesia di Dante*, p. 10.

incredible learning and his more than incredible fecundity and voluminousness is unknown to most of us. Thomas Aquinas, though the soundness of his judgment and the depth of his insight have given his writings a permanent place of honour, more especially in the Roman Communion, is little more than a name to the average student even of literature and philosophy.

Albert and Thomas were theologians: so was Dante, but he was a poet as well.[1] Dante is saturated with the entire knowledge of the Middle Ages; he has absorbed and assimilated it, and he gives it out again transfigured—alive! It becomes in his hands an original and immortal contribution to the intellectual, moral and aesthetic heritage of mankind.

From our present study the Divine Poet emerges once more as the "Apostle of Freedom." He handles his subject-matter with the master-touch that makes it *live*, and with the independence of standpoint and sincerity of judgment that draws Catholics to claim him as a Catholic, and Protestants as a Protestant. As a matter of fact he is a loyal Catholic, as was rightly proclaimed by the late lamented Pope Benedict XV in his Encyclical of May, 1921.[2] A Catholic, but above all, a Christian. And, as the Pope also justly remarked, his work and his message are alive to-day—more living than that of many a present-day Poet—just because he is not dependent on mere pagan models and sources, however classical, but is saturated with Christian thought and feeling. For the future lies with Christianity.

In our next Essay we shall endeavour to show how the free spirit of the artist and the theologian merges into that of the Educationist: how the characteristic

[1] "On Dante the Poet," see an admirable lecture delivered before the British Academy on May 4th, 1921, by Professor Cesare Foligno. (Humphrey Milford, 1/6 net). See also Appendix III.

[2] *Osservatore Romano*, May 4th, 1921. See Appendix II.

modern principles of freedom in the educational sphere underlie Dante's thought and writing, and how, in particular, they dominate his scheme of the *Purgatorio*.

V

DANTE AND MODERN EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES

. . . Io sarò tua guida
E trarrotti di qui per loco eterno.
—*Inf.* i. 177 *sq.*

In face of Benedetto Croce's new Book,[1] wherein all the meticulous industry exerted by the typical Dantist upon side-issues of the *Divine Comedy* is held up to scorn, and denounced, like Cromwell's House of Lords, as "useless and dangerous," one hardly dares to labour a point—even if it be so exalted a point as the principles and method of education. But it is the criticism of Dante's Poesy that is Croce's concern: his jealous anxiety is directed against any admixture in that criticism of any irrelevant considerations—allegorical, theological, philosophical, poetical. As we are not attempting a criticism of Dante's Poesy (though none can approach the *Commedia* without falling under the spell of its beauty and passion), we may perhaps hope to evade the fiery darts of the Poet's latest critic.

Croce himself would be the last to deny Dante's extraordinary versatility: only he pleads that if the author of the *Divine Comedy* had not been, "as he is, *grandissimo poeta*," the world would not have noted his other accomplishments.[2] We may therefore perhaps be pardoned if we indulge in something of that "sonorous but empty phraseology"[3] which he attributes to those

[1] *La Poesia di Dante*, Laterza, 1921.
[2] *Id.*, pp. 9, 10. [3] *Id.*, p. 27.

who look for much more than Poetry in the great Poem; and come to the *Commedia* as to a mine of varied treasures reflecting the versatile spirit of one who was not only a sublime poet, but also a man of many-sided knowledge and experience—theological, philosophical, political, practical—and who poured all the wealth of his knowledge and experience into the supreme effort of his genius:

> Il poema sacro
> Al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra.

Before Dante as a boy learnt his lessons of the good friars of Sta. Croce, and in the school of the great lord, Love blossomed out into verse under the sunshine of his "first friend's" encouragement, pored over crabbed manuscripts under the inspiration of the learned Ser Brunetto, and grew up to be an unique exponent of mediaeval lore; that lore, which formed the material out of which he wrought the scheme of his immortal poem had very slowly and gradually come into being. The course of Christian Education had passed through rhythmic vicissitudes of advance and retrogression, of decadence and revival. Sown broadcast over the fields of the Graeco-Roman world by Apostolic hands[1] the seed fructified and gave forth foliage to delight and refresh mankind. In the golden age of the Greek Fathers, when Clement and Origen wrote and taught, when Basil and Gregory at the University of Athens drank in all that the old world had to teach, and transmuted it into something fresh and new by the fertilising power of the New Life that was in them, the Christian Church became, in Harnack's phrase, "the great elementary schoolmistress of the Roman Empire."

[1] *Cf.* Statius' words in *Purg.* xxii. 76—

> Già era 'l mondo tutto quanto pregno
> De la vera credenza, seminata
> Per li messaggi dell' etterno regno.

Then followed a decline. The barbarian invasions kept men fighting, and left no time to muse or think, or write. Dante's hero, Boethius, stands out an almost solitary luminous figure in a world of growing intellectual darkness, of which Gregory of Tours despairingly exclaimed: "Periit studium litterarum." By the middle of the eighth century the lamp was nearly extinguished. To our own Alcuin of York belongs the glory of having preserved the continuum of literary studies which made a Dante possible. His patient and persevering labours at the court of Charles the Great laid the foundations on which was ultimately built—of multifarious material, partly recovered through Arabic sources—the splendid structure of mediaeval scholasticism which forms much of Dante's mental background.

After Dante's death the same rhythmic alternation of advance and retrogression, of greater and less vitality, may, on the whole, be discerned in the course of educational history; and as our object is to unearth in the *Divine Comedy* some educational principles vaunted as "peculiarly modern," it may be best to dwell for a moment —if still all too superficially—on this second half of the story.

When the impulse of Scholasticism had well-nigh spent itself—and with it the splendid revival at once of practical and of intellectual Christianity which came in with "The Coming of the Friars"—the dawn of the Renaissance was already gleaming in the Eastern sky, and the fall of Constantinople flooded Western Europe with a new interest in, and passion for, Hellenic culture. The birth-throes of the Reformation ushered into the world a "New Learning." In a couple of centuries the fire of this impulse in turn died down, and (in England, at any rate) Education largely fell back, speaking generally—with smaller actions and reactions—into something

like a mere mechanical routine. The Classics became an end, and not a means, and the study of them was divorced from citizenship and from life. The aim and method of the average schoolmaster would almost appear to have degenerated into a grinding of his pupils all alike in the same mill, or a feeding of their diverse digestions all on the same "iron rations": the pedagogue himself innocent alike of an as yet undiscovered psychological method in teaching, and in many cases also failing to realise the paramount importance of the formation of character as the only result worth striving for.

Then came, with Rousseau, the first streaks of the dawn of the "New Teaching," and there followed, in a brightening sky, Pestalozzi and Froebel abroad, and here in England Arnold and Thring and the rest. And this New Teaching, using the present-day opportunities of co-operation and tabulation of experimental results on a large scale, has, by dint of Conferences and Congresses, grown into something of a world-wide unity. Modern Science has thus leavened educational method both in general and in particular. In general, its spirit and principles have been employed to make available for all the investigations of each; in particular, the recent developments of psychology and psycho-physics have given a new impulse and a new direction to child-study, and made possible an elaboration of scientific method and of didactic apparatus such as was not available in any previous age. Here the instinctive methods employed unconsciously by the "born teachers" of all generations have been brought up to the level of consciousness, and systematised and made available, to a large extent, for those in whom the instinctive gift is not so great.

One of the prominent tendencies of the New Teaching is to revert to, and elaborate, that Direct Method in the teaching of Languages which was characteristic of the

"New Learning" in the days of Erasmus and his fellow pioneers. This we shall see foreshadowed in Dante. It is a part of a tendency to make education "paido-centric"; to lay its emphasis on, and find its focus in, the child rather than in the instructor; to make it less of an imposition of the dominant teacher upon a submissive and receptive pupil. The New Teaching requires that "the relative activities of teacher and pupil" should be "reversed." It recognises that pupils need to be "trained in initiative," and "made increasingly responsible for their own education"; that the inertia of many pupils has to be met not by force or browbeating, but "by taking steps to reach indirectly the goal of stimulating their individual activity." [1]

The watchword therefore of the modern teaching is *Liberty*. And this principle of Liberty—the recognition that all education is, at bottom, self-education; and that the teacher's business is to liberate (or make possible the liberation of) the inherent evolutionary forces latent in the pupil—finds its climax in the doctrine of Dante's compatriot and sincere admirer, Madame Montessori. She is also, in a sense, the most modern of the Modernists; for in her method is carried, probably to its highest point, the application of psycho-physical science to education. She represents in some ways—and especially on the individualistic side—the extreme advance of the modern movement; and it is with her system that we shall institute later on a somewhat detailed comparison of the educational principles underlying Dante's *Purgatorio*.

Dante's name is not popularly associated with those

[1] See *The New Teaching*, edited by Prof. John Adams (Hodder and Stoughton, 1918, 10/6), pp. 9, 11. This work came into the writer's hands after the virtual completion of the present essay; but it sums up so compactly the point of view of the modern principles he desired to illustrate, that he has found occasion to refer to it with some frequency.

of the World's Greatest Educators—with Aristotle and Quintilian, with Alcuin and Alfred, with Colet and Erasmus, with Pestalozzi and Froebel and Montessori. He is not claimed as the conscious originator of new didactic method. He has not left us any systematic treatise on Education. Yet many have found in him a mighty Teacher, "who being dead yet speaketh"; and to such it will bring no surprise to find great educational principles embodied in his work.

We may compare and contrast his opportunities with those of his great contemporary, Robert Grosseteste, who as "First Chancellor," if we may call him so, of the University of Oxford, may rank in a sense as a professional Teacher. Such a comparison would surely demonstrate that the permanent influence of the illustrious Bishop of Lincoln upon subsequent generations bears no comparison with that of the Florentine Poet.

Grosseteste may claim a place among the world's Educators not only in virtue of his general influence upon English education at a period when the Oxford Franciscans were about to take the lead in European culture, but also—and more especially—because, in an age when study had become largely a second-hand matter of commenting on someone else's commentary, Robert called men back to a diligent first-hand study of originals; a principle of the utmost importance alike for Education and for Learning.[1]

Dante, too, was a keen, first-hand student; but his place in the history of Education is different from that of Grosseteste. He attained to no such commanding position in ecclesiastical or political life, with the power that official status gives of forcing one's ideas on public

[1] *Cf. The New Teaching*, p. 64, where Prof. J. Adams says of the study of English Literature: "the radical difference between the old teaching and the new is that we have passed from books about books to the books themselves."

notice. His brief tenure of the high office of Prior in his native city of Florence was followed immediately by those years of exile and ignominy in which his best work was done. His sole means of influencing his own and succeeding generations was by his writings. But these writings not only proclaimed him (as all the world admits) the very flower and crown of Mediaeval Education—its justifying product—but also earn him, we would contend, a place among the World's Great Educators, and perhaps we may add, its Educationalists. But first of all we may remind ourselves of Dante's position, as the finest and most typical product of Mediaeval Education. Benedetto Croce[1] is doubtless right in denying him the right to be called a *pioneer* in metaphysics or ethics, in political theory or philological science: in such lines it is vain to attribute to him the same originality which is rightly his in the realm of Poetry. Yet his learning remains encyclopaedic.[2] His amazing erudition is displayed in his Minor Works; in the *Divine Comedy* it is concealed with the most consummate art. In the *Convivio*, where he is, perhaps, most consciously and deliberately (if least successfully) the Teacher, he revels in erudition, and so too in the *Monarchia*. Perhaps the clearest and swiftest demonstration of the vast range of his learning is afforded by a glance through the pages—or even the index—of Dr. Moore's *Studies in Dante* (First Series).

Dante was not a Greek scholar, like Grosseteste, but he had a thorough acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures in the Vulgate, and with a large part of the theological and mystical writings of the Middle Age. He was familiar with all the extant works of Aristotle in two Latin transla-

[1] See *La Poesia di Dante*, pp. 14, 15.

[2] See H. O. Taylor, *The Mediaeval Mind*. Mr. Taylor heads his 43rd and last chapter "The Mediaeval Synthesis: Dante." See Vol. II, p. 534; and *Dante and Mediaeval Thought*, in the present volume, p. 80.

tions. He quotes also, and in some cases very frequently, from Classical and post-classical authors of repute. He has thoroughly mastered the Graeco-Arabian Astronomy of his day: so thoroughly, that, to the despair of some of his humbler votaries, he can toy with its ponderous intricacies as with a plaything! Nor must we forget that his studies were conducted in an age when printing had yet to be invented; so that all his reading must needs be done with rare, costly, cumbrous and eye-wearying manuscripts. Well may he, in the *Paradiso*, describe his labours as "emaciating," and in the *Convivio* allude to a temporary blindness caused by overstrain.[1]

It has been plausibly conjectured that he studied as a boy under the Franciscan Fathers of Sta Croce.[2] The idea that Brunetto Latini (or "Latino") the author of the "Tesoro" (*Livre dou Tresor*) was the regular preceptor of his youth, however just an inference it may seem from the famous passage in the *Inferno*,[3] is disproved by the exigencies of chronology. And, in the end, he must have been largely self-taught, since his visit to the University of Paris, alleged by Boccaccio, is placed towards the end of his life, when most of his extant work was already done.

In his attitude Dante is a traditionalist, but not a blind one; his originality everywhere tends to modify his conservatism. A true son of the thirteenth century, he accepts loyally the traditional authority of Scripture and of Aristotle. He accepts the tradition of the old Roman culture: the "Seven Liberal Arts" of the Trivium and Quadrivium find a place in the scheme of his world and a symbolic significance therein. According

[1] *Par.* xxv. 3; *Conv.* III, ix. 146 *sqq.*; p. 285, Oxf. Ed.; p. 226 *sq.*, Bemporad.

[2] Federzoni, *Vita di Beatrice Portinari*, 2nd Ed., p. 14; and below *Dante and Casentino*, pp. 148 *sq.*

[3] *Inf.* xv. 82-85.

to a well-known passage in the *Convivio*[1] these seven sciences correspond to the seven lowest Heavens.

The mythology of Greece and Rome, on which the minds of our Public School boys are still fed, are caught up into the scheme of the *Divine Comedy* as "didactic material" side by side with scenes from history and from Holy Writ. The Ptolemaic system of the universe is accepted; but Dante uses his own genius freely in the handling of details, adorning the vast framework with a symbolism of his own, and spreading over it a network of intense human interest.[2]

So also in the sphere of Theology, he takes up traditional beliefs and makes them living and concrete, vitalising them by the force of his own originality. In his volume on *Dante and Aquinas*, Mr. Wicksteed has drawn out very strikingly the contrast between the two: between the "layman, poet, and prophet, and the ecclesiastic, theologian, and philosopher." "Aquinas," he says, "regards the whole range of human experiences and activities as the collecting ground for illustrations of Christian truth; Dante regards Christian truth as the interpreting and inspiring force that makes all human life live."[3] This contrast comes out, as we shall see, with special emphasis in the conception of Purgatory, where Aquinas is thinking all along of the formal completion of the sacrament of Penance, while Dante, who, with most daring originality, makes his Mountain of Purgation the pedestal of the Earthly Paradise, is intent on the redressing of man's inner psychological and spiritual balance. Eden itself is to be the immediate goal of penitence. Before this earthly life is superseded by the heavenly, man shall win his way

[1] *Conv.* II, xiv. (xiii.), pp. 265-7, Oxf. Ed.; pp. 193-7, Bemporad.

[2] Benedetto Croce (*op. cit.*) has much to say on the power of Dante's poetic genius to transmute the intractable and unpoetical scholastic and didactic matter. See esp. pp. 67, 161.

[3] *Dante and Aquinas*, p. vii; *cf.* and pp. 226 *sqq.*, and esp. p. 232.

to the primal Garden of Delight, and "experience the frank and full fruition of his nature, as God first made it." [1] He shall have achieved inner balance and self-mastery. Says Virgil, on the threshold of Eden—

> Free, sound and upright is thy will . . . Wherefore over thyself I invest thee with supreme control.[2]
>
> Libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio,
>
> . . . .
>
> Per ch' io te sopra te corono e mitrio.

We may note then, in passing, that Dante, like all the best educators, has his eye on the "formation of character."

Such erudition, originality, insight, give promise that we shall find in Dante a real teacher; and the promise is abundantly fulfilled to those who tread the spacious halls of his School, which is his Poem.

The very language in which the *Divina Commedia* is written is a testimony to the Poet's grasp of the fundamental condition of all teaching—that it should be intelligible! There is a saying of Alcuin's great disciple, Rabanus Maurus, which expresses simply and well this obvious, but oft-forgotten principle. "Teach," he says, "in words that teach; not in words that do not teach." With this principle, surely, in mind—for his purpose in creating the great Poem was a practical one—the strangely haughty and aloof spirit of Dante girds itself to a humble use of the "Vulgar Tongue." When we remember that this magnificent structure of his is the first big effort in the Italian vernacular, and that one of his reasons for calling it a "Comedy" is that "its method of speech is lax and humble, for it is the vernacular speech in which mere women communicate," [3] we cannot but see in this

[1] Wicksteed, *loc. cit.*

[2] *Purg.* xxvii. 140, 142. The English renderings are mainly from Tozer's Translation. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

[3] *Epist.* x. (xiii.), p. 416, Oxf. Ed.; p. 439, Bemporad. "Locutio vulgaris in qua et muliercule communicant."

pioneer work of Italian literature evidence of that discerning sympathy with the needs and capacities of the learner which marks the born teacher. Another mark of the true educator is his practical aim. Dante is not content to "teach the classics *in vacuo*," as our English Public Schools once were: he does not divorce learning from life. In the famous Tenth Epistle he defines the "Moral Sense" of the Poem as "The conversion of the Soul from the grief and misery of sin to the state of grace"; and, again, he describes "the end of the whole" thus: "To remove those living in this life from the state of misery and to lead them to the state of felicity."[1] He has his eye upon life in the highest sense: "Come l'uom s'eterna." To this end he displays to us the unique means provided by Heaven for his own salvation, and allows us in his company to visit the three kingdoms of the Eternal World. He performs for us the office fulfilled by Virgil towards himself—

> . . . I will be thy guide, and will conduct thee hence
> through an eternal place.
>
> . . . Io sarò tua guida
> E trarrotti di qui per loco eterno.[2]

We must see with his eyes to what state of ineffable woe, not Divine Justice merely, but the sinner's own choice will bring him. We must watch with him the Divine process of purgation, the eagerly-accepted suffering of those whose penitent love longs above all things to undo the ruin that sin has wrought—[3]

> . . . Contented in the fire, for that they hope
> In God's good time to reach the blessed folk
>
> . . . Contenti
> Nel foco, perchè speran di venire,
> Quando che sia, a le beate genti. . . .

[1] *Epist.* x. (xiii.) 265 *sqq.*; p. 417, Oxf. Ed.; p. 440, Bemporad.
[2] *Inf.* i. 113 *sq.*
[3] *Inf.* i. 118-120.

and finally he will take us up with him into the Blessed Place itself, to behold "the things which God has prepared for them that unfeignedly love Him."

Here again is the true teacher, adopting the story-telling method of the Teacher of Nazareth:[1] the method of which the usefulness—nay, the indispensableness—was never more appreciated than to-day.

Nor is it merely that the Poet narrates instead of preaching. What he does, he does with the most consummate art.[2] The story that he tells—the pilgrimage on which he goes—is one which both he and we really share; we become his fellow-pilgrims, his intimates, before whom, without the least touch of self-consciousness, he manifests his joy and his despondency, his courage and his cowardice, his native dignity and his occasional lapses therefrom. . . . The narrative reads like a truthful and vivid diary of his actual experiences from the night of Maundy Thursday till Easter Wednesday in the Year of Grace One Thousand and Three Hundred.

It may be claimed for Dante's method of teaching in the *Divina Commedia* that it is in a very real sense a "direct method," and one in which teacher and pupil co-operate as fellow-learners.

The educational quality of the poem is at its highest in the *Purgatorio*, because it is in this realm that the conditions approach most nearly to those of our present life. Like the normal life of a faithful Christian here below, that of the souls in this "Second Realm" is a struggle, but a struggle upwards, inspired and sweetened

[1] See esp. Luke vii. 18-23, where, in answer to a question from the Baptist's disciple, He gives a "demonstration" of Messianic works, and says "Go and describe what you have seen."

[2] Not only in the formally "didactic passages" does he act—in Croce's words, "like a master who knows, and is bent on making it clear to the pupil." *Op. cit.*, p. 121.

by the "sure and certain hope." It is a process of growing transformation into the Divine ideal, of gradual achievement of a perfect union of will with the Will of God, wrought out by means of a providentially ordered discipline eagerly embraced by the penitent.

All this may seem a little vague and elusive. Probably the quality claimed for Dante will be brought into higher relief if we concentrate our attention upon one or two definite points.

In the attempt to emphasise the "modern" character of Dante's educational principles we shall be bold enough to confront him with the very latest of educational methods—that of Dr. Montessori, which originated but a few years ago in Dante's native Italy.

The fundamental principle of Madame Montessori's Method is that of Liberty. Education, she would say, must be a free organic process of development from within. This vital growth may be guarded, nourished, and (within limits) guided. The right kind of atmosphere and of external stimulus is of immense importance; but mechanical pressure, or domineering force, or inappropriate stimulus will only stunt and distort the growth, deaden the life that is calling out for free self-development. All this is not, of course, a new discovery. It was enunciated in other forms by Pestalozzi and by Froebel; it is implied in the words and works of all the greatest educators—of Vittorino da Feltre in the Renaissance, of Quintilian in the early Empire, and of Aristotle himself. But in Montessori the principle of individual freedom acquires a new prominence, and is given a larger scope than ever before; and the principle is coming to its own in many phases and many grades of our present-day education. It is interesting, therefore, to note what a fundamental position it holds in Dante's *Purgatorio*, the central Cantica of what Professor Edmund Gardner

rightly calls "The mystical Epos of the Freedom of Man's Will."

Liberty—that true liberty of soul which is found in perfect conformity to the Will of God—is the end and purpose of the Poet's grim journey. *Libertà va cercando*—"he goes seeking freedom"—says Virgil to Cato at the foot of the Mountain:[1] the freedom which Dante himself, a little later, identifies with inward peace—"That peace which . . . draws me on in pursuit from world to world."[2]

> . . . Quella pace
> Che, dietro a' piedi di sì fatta guida
> Di mondo in mondo cercar mi si face.

It is to the entrance upon this peace and this freedom that Virgil refers in his words quoted above, where on the threshold of the Earthly Paradise he declares the pilgrim to be, at last, "King and Bishop of his own soul"—

> Perch' io te sovra te corono e mitrio.[3]

And, finally, in the heaven of heavens itself Dante pours out his thanks to Beatrice for liberty regained—"Thou has led me forth from bondage into liberty."

> Tu m' hai di servo tratto a libertate.[4]

We have already spoken of the spontaneity of Dante's Penitents; the eager gladness and alacrity with which they embrace the discipline appointed for them, "glad in the Fire": a temper which finds its typical expression in the attitude of the souls who are purging the sin of Lust in literally burning flames. "Certain of them," says the Poet, "made towards me, so far as they could,

[1] *Purg.* i. 71. [2] *Purg.* v. 61 *sqq.* [3] *Purg.* xxvii. 142.
[4] *Par.* xxxi. 85.

ever on their guard not to come forth beyond the range of the burning "—

> Poi verso me, quanto potean farsi,
> Certi si feron, sempre con riguardo
> Di non uscir dove non fosser arsi.[1]

Or, again, on the Terrace of the Gluttonous, where Forese explains to Dante that the voluntary pain of the penitents (which is also their solace) is mystically identified with that of Christ upon the Cross—" For the same desire doth conduct us to the tree, which moved Christ to say with joy: 'Eli,' when by His blood He won our freedom."

> Che quella voglia a li albori ci mena
> Che menò Cristo lieto a dire 'Elì,'
> Quando ne liberò con la sua vena.[2]

And this spontaneity on their part is matched and helped by the atmosphere and environment provided for them. Their movements and occupations are indeed, in one sense, unnatural; but this is because their purpose is the counteraction of that most unnatural of all things, Sin. Here, however, are no frequent warders and task-masters, like the grotesque fiends of the Inferno. The Angel guardians of each of the seven terraces where sins are purged are no more in evidence than is the Teacher in a Montessori School; an unobtrusive, ever-present, never-interfering inspiration to the pupil's own spontaneous development. There is no external voice to bid a spirit move on when its purgation is done. So Statius explains to Dante when describing the impulse of his own upward movement. " Of the cleansing, the will alone gives proof, which fills the soul, all free to change her cloister, and avails her to will. She wills indeed before; but that desire permits it not which Divine justice sets, counter to will, toward the penalty, even as it was toward the sin "—

[1] *Purg.* xxvi. 13. [2] *Purg.* xxiii. 73 *sqq.*

De la mondizia sol voler fa prova,
Che, tutto libero a mutar convento,
L' alma sorprende, e di voler le giova.
Prima vuol ben, ma non lascia il talento
Che divina giustizia, contra voglia,
Come fu al peccar, pone al tormento.[1]

When the soul is ready for another task, it moves on, naturally and spontaneously,—like a Montessori child!

This consideration accounts for a feature of the purgatorial discipline which at first sight would appear quite contrary to the Montessori spirit. On the lower slopes of the Mountain, below the gate of Purgatory proper, the souls whom Dante meets are grouped informally, or encountered individually; but within the gate, on each of the seven terraces where the seven capital sins are successively purged, the souls are engaged in groups on the same task, or similar ones. How is this consistent with free, spontaneous, individual development? Is not this simultaneous occupation at the same lesson more like a Froebel class, or even an old-fashioned Public School form than a Montessori group? The answer, surely, is in the negative. Collective work has indeed its permanent value, and simultaneous movements at intervals, their ample justification. In the *Purgatorio*, as in the Montessori School, the class-system in its extreme and rigid form has been superseded; though scope is given, in certain ways (as in the *revised* Montessori scheme), for the expression of the social instinct.[2] When the pupil is inwardly fit for a move, he "feels it in his

[1] *Purg.* xxi. 61 *sqq.*

[2] Mme. Montessori's earlier utterances were justly criticised for a too thoroughgoing individualism that claimed to have rung the death-knell of the "class system." The individualist attitude and the collective have each a place in the New Teaching, though the former tends to be emphasised most. The characteristic Montessorian expression of the social instinct is the "Silence Game." See *The New Teaching*, pp. 15, 16, 22.

bones"; and then—and not till then—he moves. The task in which he is engaged in company with his fellows holds him just so long as it is needful and appropriate to his own case: the moment of its beginning and that of its ending are entirely independent of the doings of his fellow-learners.

Once more, the Terrace of Purgatory resembles a Montessori group rather than a Kindergarten class in its freedom from obvious direction. There is no attractive, central, dominating figure, like the Froebelian teacher, on whom all eyes are fixed in the spirit of Psalm cxxiii, *Ad te levavi oculos meos.* The grouping of the learners is apparently spontaneous, and different groups are sometimes engaged simultaneously on different tasks.

Again, the School of Purgatory is essentially modern in its emphasis on "expression work," and its abundant supply of "didactic material."

By expression work we mean the endeavour to enforce a lesson, to hasten its assimilation and ensure its retention, by means of some appropriate activity on the part of the learner. This is of course much older than Montessorism, as even our best Sunday school teachers can testify; it can be traced back also beyond Froebel. Its origin is, surely, lost in the prehistoric ages of pedagogy. But it was Froebel in the nineteenth century who first claimed for this factor the importance which it holds in modern education. Yet if we study Dante's *Purgatorio* we shall find expression work on every terrace of the Mountain, from the humble, stooping march of the cornice of Pride to the significant exclamations wherewith the once Lustful, on the uppermost terrace, punctuate the chanting of their hymn, *Summae Deus clementiae.* Purgatory is not for Dante, as for Aquinas, merely penal suffering—"something to be borne." It must be (as Mr.

Wicksteed observes)[1] something active—" something to be and to do "—somewhat more definite, more specific, more varied than mere suffering is needed for the building up of the new life which is to be at home once more in Eden.

As in the Montessori school, so in these mystic " cloisters " the learners are led to concentrate and focus on a single task a number of faculties and senses : eye, ear, voice, memory, attitude, gesture and movement all conspire to enforce the lesson. And this variety of expression work is rendered effective by an abundant supply of didactic material, an apparatus as carefully and scientifically thought out as that of Italy's latest educational leader. One need only instance the famous wall-sculptures[2] and the inlaid pavement[3] of the Terrace of Pride, the description of which forms one of the loveliest passages in this most beautiful poem.

We have spoken of the Angels who preside over these terraces, engaged in the apparently superfluous task of controlling those whose will is bent manfully upon the task before them, lifted as they are for ever above the zone where temptation has any power.[4] What a task, we are inclined to say, for angelic faculties! What a sinecure! Yet the resemblance to the human " Guardian Angel " of the Montessori school is surely too striking to be without significance: and modern educational principles of which the Dottoressa is by no means the exclusive exponent, may help us to realise how—in this as in so many other things—we shall do well to range ourselves " on the side of the Angels." The Montessori

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 234. [2] *Purg.* x. 31 *sqq.* [3] *Purg.* xii. 16 *sqq.*

[4] Very little transpires as to the office and function of those Angels except in the matter of removal of the P's from the forehead of penitents as they mount up to the successive Terraces. In *Purg.* xvi. 142-5, there is a glimpse of their usefulness, where Marco Lombardo is reminded of the boundary of his " beat " by the nearness of the Angel of the Anger-Terrace. " L'Angelo è i'vi ! "

teacher—may we not say the truly modern teacher of whatever type ?—submits to an arduous and exacting course of training—far more arduous and exacting than that which " qualified " previous generations of teachers . . . and all for—what ? To know what *not* to do, what *not* to say ; to be able to practise at the right moment a fully qualified self-restraint, and so allow free scope to the inner forces of expansion in the pupil's personality : an expansion which too heavy a hand, however lovingly laid upon the growing life, might crush or stunt or warp ! A constant presence, inspiring but unobtrusive ; realised but not dominant or over-insistent ; not obviating or unduly curtailing those movements and processes which in education are infinitely more valuable than immediate results . . . yet ever at hand when really needed. . . . Is not this a *rôle* worthy of angelic power and dignity ? Is it not precisely the traditional *rôle* of the Guardian Angel in whose beneficent existence some of us are still childlike enough to believe ?

Surely they were not mere figureheads, those " Birds of God," whose stately grace and beauty Dante delights to portray ? Even so is it with the " Guardian Angels of the Montessori school—with the restrained efficiency and enthusiasm and the carefully calculated use of personal influence of the best teachers of all types and grades : their dignity and essentially angelic quality is apt to be in proportion to their unobtrusiveness. Education is, after all, not " forcible feeding " or " cramming " ; its office is to educe—to draw forth. In Socrates' homely phrase it is a midwife. " Sairey Gamp " was certainly not an angel ; but there are those of her craft who are. More and more this *maieutic* office of the Teacher is realised, and with its realisation Teachers grow less and less like the castigating demons of Inferno—more and more angelic.

Omai vedrai di sì fatti ufficiali.[1]

Another point which brings the *Purgatorio*, in its educational scheme, down to our own days, is the *orderly progression* of its lessons. The tasks set for the penitents are carefully classified and, so to speak, "graded." The very form of the Mountain, with its system of gigantic steps or terraces, signifies as much. It symbolises even more: for education even in the infant stage involves the conquest of external difficulties, and, still more, the arduous conquest of self. The prominence of this "joy of overcoming" is one of the happiest psychological phenomena of a Montessori school. And as relations with our fellows become more complex and responsibilities multiply, this "battle of life" is ever more consciously felt. The New Teaching aims at "breaking the back" of a soul's troubles in the early stage, by inducing a habit of mind to which the appearance of difficulties, instead of depressing, at once suggests victorious effort. In this way the battle of the free will becomes, in a sense, most strenuous at the start, as Marco Lombardo says, "And freewill, which, tho' it hath a hard struggle in its first encounter with the heavenly influences, in the end wins the day completely, if it be well supported."

> E libero voler; che, se fatica
> Ne le prime battaglie col ciel dura
> Poi vince tutto, se ben si notrica.[2]

And the same thought of a gradation, a succession of efforts, each of which, bravely faced, makes those that follow lighter, is symbolised in the shape of the mountain of Purgatory, which in reality would have rather the form of a rounded dome than that of the tall pyramid of the

[1] *Purg.* ii. 30.
[2] *Purg.* xvi. 76-78. For this reference and several others the writer is indebted to an illuminating article on "La Pedagogia in Dante Alighieri," by Sac. Dott. Fernando Cento in *Il VIo Centenario Dantesco*, March, 1916.

customary illustration. Says Virgil, in his comforting way, to Dante, breathless after his first steep climb: "The nature of this eminence is such, that ever at starting from below it is fatiguing, but in proportion as a man mounts, he feels it less; wherefore, when it shall appear to thee so gentle that the ascent is as easy as sailing downward with the stream, then shalt thou be at the end of this path; there mayest thou hope to rest thy weariness."

> . . . Questa montagna è tale
> Che sempre al cominciar di sotto è grave:
> E quant' uom più va su, e men fa male.
> Però, quand' ella ti parrà soave
> Tanto che il su andar ti fia leggero,
> Com' a seconda giù andar per nave,
> Allor sarai al fin d' esto sentiero:
> Quivi di riposar l' affanno aspetta! [1]

There is a moral progression by which man enters gradually and by accumulation into the fulness of self-conquest, and so, of his inheritance of Freedom.

But "grading" also, in the more specific sense, seems to be symbolised in the *Purgatorio*. This principle was not born with Froebel, though its emphatic recognition to-day may be an outcome of his message that each stage of the child-life has its own absolute value and rights.

We are apt to wonder now how people were ever so psychologically impious as to attempt to teach in a single group, by means of the same cut-and-dried phrases, minds at every different stage of growth and of receptiveness; hurling ready-made truths at the devoted heads of pupils like so many tons of explosive bombs shot down from aircraft upon massed enemy battalions! Grading, and the individual point of contact—which, after all, is just Aristotle's time-honoured principle of "beginning from that which we know"—these we recognise to be of the first importance, and that whether we be University professors or Sunday school teachers. And so we are

[1] *Purg*. iv. 88-95.

prepared to appreciate a fourteenth century scheme which is dominated by the principle of graded progress.

We note that the souls which are not yet psychologically fit to begin the regular course of purgation are kept outside, in Antepurgatory, for a longer or shorter term of years, as each has need. The " Infants," so to speak, are graded among themselves, and are not grouped with " Standard I." Within the Gate, the seven terraces are arranged in an order corresponding (not, of course, to a psychological series that would be accepted as it stands to-day, but) to a very carefully-thought-out classification of the seven capital sins ; and until the lesson of a given Terrace is completely mastered, there is no chance of moving up. When, on the other hand, the teaching in that particular grade has been thoroughly grasped and the pupil has nothing more to learn there, no power in heaven or earth—or anywhere else—can keep him back. In Dante's School there are no mistakes in grading, and no wrong removes.

We have spoken of the " atmosphere " of the *Purgatorio* as one of " naturalness," meaning by that, that it is an environment not calculated to hamper or restrict normal and spontaneous development. It is " natural " also in a more literal sense, in that the Poet has seen fit to depart from the almost invariable tradition of his predecessors (who place Purgatory underground, side by side with Hell, and make it scarcely distinguishable therefrom save in the matter of duration) and to furnish his penitents with an " open-air cure."

It is this background of noble scenery, of landscape and skyscape, of slope and scarp, of Flowery Valley and Divine Forest, of star-light and dawn, of sunrise and high noon and sunset—it is this that gives its peculiar beauty to the second *Cantica* of the *Divine Comedy*. But this open-air Purgatory is more than a clever artifice, by which a fine dramatic contrast is produced after the murk and

gloom of the *Inferno*. It is, as we have seen, essential to Dante's conception of the perfect work of penitence in man, that it should draw his footsteps up to the Earthly Paradise, the primal home of Innocence. And so the background of the *Purgatorio*, as it were inevitably, completes the illusion of "naturalness" in the world beyond, and enforces the parallel between the upward struggle of those elect spirits and our own daily pilgrimage in this life. It suggests further, all that the magic phrase "Open Air" means to our modern ears: that healthy out-door life, nurse of the *mens sana in corpore sano*, that life of robust activities in close contact with external Nature of which the prime importance is recognised by all schools of thought in the world of modern education.

Finally (and here we touch upon one of the most beautiful features of Dante's conception), the spiritual atmosphere, in spite of purgatorial framework of the Seven Sins, is not that of the Decalogue, but of the Beatitudes. The Sins themselves are interpreted as disordered Love, and the manifold love which goes up to make a Saint is expressed in sweetest harmony when each successive barrier is passed.[1] Love is the atmosphere, and Love the supreme lesson, the learning whereof continues beyond the grave.

The conception of Love as the universal motive power, expressed at length in *Purg.* xvii. 91 *sqq.*—

> Nè creator nè creatura mai
> Cominciò el, figliuol, fu sanza amore . . .

suggests a comparison of Dante's psychology with that of the most modern school. In an age when (as a glance at Fra Salimbene's pages will demonstrate)—pages written, it must be remembered, for the eye of a Sister of the Order of Sta Clara!—something more than Elizabethan broad-

[1] *Purg.* xii. 110; xv. 38; xvii. 68 etc.

ness of speech was not uncommon, Dante pours out volumes of prose and verse, every line of which may be said to be suitable *pour les jeunes filles*. He would scarcely have subscribed to that domination of the Sex-instinct which is an axiom of the Freudian psychology. In the lines referred to above he more or less adumbrates the doctrine of "Libido"; but it does not occur to him to label that psychic force with so doubtfully reputable a name as "Libido." The noble title "Amor" is for him, as for earlier philosophers, the more appropriate one.

It would, of course, be absurd to credit Dante with the place of a pioneer of the twentieth century psychology of the Unconscious, which had its roots in the Psychical Research of F. W. Myers and his friends, and sprouted up to visible life and growth so recently under the hands of the Viennese Freud and the Switzer Jung. But it would probably not be too much to say, in view of his remarkably intelligent interest in mental processes, and especially in the phenomena of dreams and of the border-land between sleeping and waking, that, given the assets and the advantages of our modern thinkers, he would have taken no mean place among psychologists of the modern type.

From *Inf.* i. 10—Tant 'era pien di sonno—to *Par.* xxxiii. 58, we find this interest displayed; and before we pass on to consider his teaching on the more human aspect of Education, the personal relation between Teacher and Pupil, it may be worth while to direct attention to one or two passages which emphasise this point.

In the 30th Canto of *Inferno*[1] he uses as a simile that significant situation in which the dreamer hopes he is dreaming—

> Qual è colui che suo dannaggio sogna,
> Che sognando desidera sognare . . .

[1] *Inf.* xxx. 136 *sqq.*

In another passage [1] he sketches a case where the wakened dreamer forgets the "dream-cognition," but is still dominated by the "affect"—

> . . . Colui che somniando vede
> Che dopo il sogno la passione impressa
> Rimane, e l' altro a la mente non riede. . . .

Ere he quits the Terrace of Accidie, Dante falls asleep, and here he describes [2] in vivid and picturesque language the process of going to sleep, when thought follows thought in more or less inconsequent fashion—

> Novo pensiero dentro a me si mise
> Del qual più altri nacquero, e diversi;
> E tanto d'un in altro vaneggiai,
> Che gli occhi per vaghezza ricopersi,
> E 'l pensamento in sogno trasmutai.

At the opening of the next Canto [3] comes the dream—dream of the two symbolic Ladies—and the awakening. The dreamer is apparently roused by the intensity of a dream-stench; but his awakening is due as a matter of fact to the arresting voice of Virgil, whose person is projected into the "manifest content" of the dream a few lines earlier,[4] in the cry of the "Donna Santa"—

> O Virgilio, o Virgilio, chi è questa?

"Three times," says Dante's Guide, "have I called you. Get up, and come along!"

> . . . Il buon maestro, "Almen tre
> Voci t' ho messe," dicea, "Surgi e viene!"

In the last Canto of *Purgatory* proper [5] we have another picture of a going to sleep and an awaking. The sleepiness has been induced by a sort of natural self-hypnotism, the poet's gaze steadily fixed on a few bright stars seen through

[1] *Par.* xxxiii. 58 *sqq.* [2] *Purg.* xviii. 141. [3] *Purg.* xix. 1 *sqq.*
[4] *Purg.* xix. 28. [5] *Purg.* xxvii. 88 *sqq.*

the confined opening between the cliffs as he lies on the rocky stair.

> Poco potea parer lì del di fori;
> Ma, per quel poco, vedev' io le stelle
> Di lor solere e più chiare e maggiori
> Sì ruminando e sì mirando in quelle,
> Mi prese il sonno; il sonno che sovente,
> Anzi che 'l fatto sia, sa le novelle.

This time the awakening is not sudden or violent.[1] After the altogether lovely dream of Lia—the sublimation of Dante's desire, suggested, or coloured, by the natural anticipations of one on the threshold of the earthly Paradise—he wakes up quite naturally, his sleep "breaking from him" with the breaking dawn.[2]

> Le tenebre fuggian da tutti lati
> E il sonno mio con esse; ond' io leva' mi.

Dante's analysis of Dreams was naturally relative to the knowledge and tendency of his day. The presaging quality of Dreams—

> . . . Il sonno che sovente
> Anzi che 'l fatto sia, sa le novelle;

like the proverbial belief that the truest dreams are those that come before dawn—

> . . . Presso al mattin del ver si sogna[3]

is not for him the fruit of scientific psycho-analysis; but rather the unscientific or quasi-scientific deduction of untold generations of men on whom the dreams that "came true" left a far deeper impress than the large majority that proved fallacious.

Dante was, however, a real psychologist of his own time and date, as many qualities of his thought and interest

[1] As in the case last quoted, or e.g. in *Purg.* xvii. 40 *sqq.*: *Come si frange il sonno, etc.*, where the sleep is broken by the sudden striking of a light upon the sleeper's eyes.
[2] *Purg.* xxvii. 112.
[3] *Inf.* xxvi. 7.

testify; and his discerning interest in the dream-consciousness supplies a definite link between the thinkers of the Trecento and our modern Masters.

. . . .

III

It must not, however, be supposed that the somewhat specialised comparison of Dante's purgatorial scheme with the Montessori Method sketched above [1] by any means exhausts the educational principles of the *Purgatorio*; still less that it covers the whole area of such principles enshrined in the *Divine Comedy*. The old-fashioned relation between Master and Pupil has still something to be said for it. The personal element cannot be eliminated, however great may be the need—especially in certain stages of self-restraint and self-effacement. This personal relation, in its permanently important aspects, is beautifully figured in the relation between Dante as learner and Virgil, Beatrice, and Statius as teachers.

Benedetto Croce[2] draws attention to the frequent *Intramesse didascaliche* which mark the XXIst and following Cantos of the *Purgatorio*—notably the discourse of Statius on "generation" in *Purg.* xxv. "This poetry," he says, "breathes throughout the spirit of the Master who knows, and desires to make clear the idea he is expounding; who stoops down towards the pupil to embrace him and lift him up towards the Truth." [3] Beatrice, again, as Croce points out,[4] taking Virgil's place in the journey through the skies, is like an elder sister patiently schooling her younger brother.

[1] See pp. 95 *sqq.* [2] p. 120 *sq.*
[3] p. 121. He goes on: "Perciò i concetti esposti vi si rives d'immagini corpulenti e fulgidissimi." [4] Croce, p. 135.

She helps him to overcome his prejudices, to solve his problems, to conquer his doubts ; now turning upon him the eye of a fond mother nursing a delirious child,[1] now laughing him out of his "childish notions," the charm of her resplendent beauty and the illumination of her smile giving just that touch of romance to their relations that suggests the final stage of the transfiguration of the half-earthly love of the *Vita Nuova* into something wholly celestial. But the type of this relation between Master and Pupil is most surely and most prominently drawn in that which subsists all through the first two cantiche between Virgil and Dante.[2] "Mia scuola," Virgil calls this relation in the beautiful scene with Statius ;[3] and a striking feature of this "School," recurring in the same Canto[4] and elsewhere, is the close, intimate, easy and even playful mutual understanding between Teacher and Pupil. To this point we shall return ; but first a word may be said on the sterner aspect of Education, from the pupils' point of view.

Granted that the "Primrose Path" is the only appropriate one for infant steps to toddle on ; that path itself has its ups and downs—slight gradients from the adult point of view, but for the infant involving a demand for real effort and adventure. And the end of man—our human Good—lies above the zone where primroses bloom, on the heights : as Tasso sings—

> . . . In cima all' erto e faticoso colle
> Della virtù è riposto il nostro bene.[5]

Let us glance, then, at what Dante has to say about the sterner side of Education—the necessary sacrifices that must be made for Liberty—and about the respon-

[1] *Par.* i. 100.
[2] Strictly, from *Inf.* i. 112 to *Purg.* xxvii. 142 ; Virgil disappears, *Purg.* xxx. 49.
[3] *Purg.* xxi. 33.
[4] *Purg.* xxi. 103 ; *cf.* i. 125 ; xix. 85 *sqq.*, etc.
[5] *Gerus. Lib.* xvii. 63.

sibilities of the teacher in his relation to the pupil whom he would guide up to freedom of mind and soul.

To the former we have already referred above (p. 102) in connection with the Montessori principle of the joyous facing of difficulties. The hard initial battle [1] is symbolically represented by the place which the *Inferno* holds in Dante's quest of Liberty. For him indeed the "prime battaglie" are the hardest. No essential routine or inevitable drudgery which beset the path of learning can match in sheer distastefulness the weary horror of that first part of the Poet's journey, of which his self-pitying anticipations are recorded in the lovely and pathetic opening lines of the second canto: "The day was departing, and the darkened air was relieving from their labours the animals on earth, and I was preparing all alone to sustain the struggle alike of the journey and of my piteous thoughts."

> Lo giorno se n' andava, e l' aere bruno
> Toglieva gli animai che sono in terra
> Dalle fatiche loro; e io sol uno
> M' apparecchiava a sostener la guerra
> Sì del cammino e sì della pietate.[2]

The youthful scholar, in his quest for knowledge and truth and the freedom that is truth's guerdon, has not, as a rule, to face this literal isolation in drudgery and painfulness. For him the social instinct and the companionship of fellow-victims, not to say the healthy stimulus of friendly rivalry and competition, are present to lighten his burden and sweeten his lot. Yet each, after all, has to tackle the drudgery and the difficulties for himself. There is no Royal Road. The Master may spur him on with the vision of the "gladsome mountain which is the origin and source of all joy."

> Dilettoso monte
> Ch' è principio e cagion di tutta gioia;

[1] *Purg.* xvi. 77. [2] *Inf.* ii. 1-5.

may encourage him to face the flames by the thought of the welcoming smile of Beatrice on the other side: "as you tempt a child with an apple!" "Mark you, my son, this barrier separates thee from Beatrice."

> Or vedi, figlio:
> Tra Beatrice e te è questo muro;[1]

but, none the less, the grim journey has to be undertaken, the distasteful plunge to be made. It is largely the Teacher's attitude and example that make this effort possible; that evoke the manly spirit in the pupil, and encourage him to persevere in face of difficulties.

All this is recognised by the best modern theory and practice. "The New Teaching," says Professor Adams,[2] "does not seek to free the pupils from effort"—we have seen that this is really the case, even in its extremest form of Montessorianism, with its individualistic charter of Child-liberty—"not . . . to free the pupils from effort, but to encourage them to strenuous work"; it "does not seek to get rid of drudgery, but to make it tolerable by giving it a meaning, and shewing its relation to the whole learning process in school, and to the whole process of living in the world." This is exactly Virgil's attitude towards Dante. He is, first of all, alert to cheer and encourage him in moments of special difficulty. He encourages Dante both by example and by precept to mount the grisly back of the monster Geryon, their sole means of descent into the Abyss[3]; and later, when the flame has to be faced before entering the Earthly Paradise,[4] he reminds him of the success of that past experiment of faith, much in the manner of the noble self-encouragement of that Homeric hero, who, known to Dante only

[1] *Inf.* i. 77-78; *Purg.* xxvii. 35-36. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 37.
[3] *Inf.* xvii. 79 *sqq.* [4] *Purg.* xxvii. 22 *sqq.*

at second-hand, yet captured his imagination. "Be of good cheer, my heart, we have suffered worse things ere this."

τέτλαθι δὴ κραδίη, καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο ποτ' ἔτλης.[1]

Or again, when at the foot of the mountain Dante is dismayed at its steepness, the Master explains: "It is ever easier as you ascend."[2] When Dante is frightened as the Mountain trembles (*Purg.* xx. 135) Virgil interposes with a call to confidence—

Non dubbiar mentr' io ti guido

But Virgil not only encourages; he explains. From time to time he pauses with the double object of giving his companion a breathing-space and of enheartening him by an exposition of the end and purpose of the drudgery—of the whole scheme, of which the experience they are now undergoing is an integral and necessary part. Thus he expounds to his disciple the topography of Hell when they have passed within the rampart of the City of Dis, and before they begin the steep and terrible descent, and encounter the Minotaur.[3] Again, after the uncomfortable ordeal of the suffocating fumes on the Terrace of Wrath, he diverts his pupil's attention with a sketch of the order and inner meaning of the purgatorial terraces, and explains how Sin, in all its deadly forms, is just "disordered Love."[4] And we may note in passing how this postponement of the explanation and the detailed scheme till the movement of learning is well on its course, is itself typical of the New Teaching,[5]

[1] Homer, *Od.* xx. 18. Dante, *Inf.* xxvi. 56 *sqq.*; *Purg.* xix. 22; *Par.* xxvii. 83.
[2] *Purg.* iv. 89 *sqq.*
[3] *Inf.* xi. 10-66; xii. init.
[4] *Purg.* xvii. 88-139.
[5] *Cf. The New Teaching*, p. 40, where Prof. Adams remarks, "The postponing of grammar studies to a comparatively late stage in school life is one of the most striking recognitions of the elementary psychological truths that underlie the principles of teaching."

and grounded on sound psychological principles. Virgil supplies, indeed, in the first Canto of the *Inferno*, a summary forecast of the journey, but does not sit down at the beginning and burden his Pupil's mind with an elaboration of details. Nor can we leave the lecture on "Disordered Love" of *Purg*. xvii. without drawing attention to the ideal relations of Teacher and Pupil depicted in the following Canto, and especially to the masterly way in which Virgil suggests ever fresh problems to Dante's mind and draws him on with an increasing "thirst to know."[1]

The liberty which Education "goes seeking," and in which its nobler forms live and move as in a bracing atmosphere, demands some sacrifice alike from Teacher and from Pupil. From the Pupil, especially in its earlier middle stages, it demands a degree of submissiveness and docility, and courage and perseverance to face distasteful drudgery; from the Teacher, that self-restraint of which we have already spoken—yet not mere self-effacement. Like the Divine Master, he must "begin to do and to teach."[2] He must be a fellow-pilgrim, sharing the toils of the road, and over the roughest places a leader, even as Virgil volunteers to go first where the grim descent begins into the "cieco mondo": "I will go first and thou shalt follow me."

Io sarò primo, e tu sarai secondo.[3]

As fellow-pilgrim, he will not hesitate to let the Pupil witness something of his distress. The Master girds himself to the descent pallid with sympathetic suffering—*tutto smorto*[4]—nor does he hide the tokens of shame and confusion when he becomes conscious that he has been

[1] *Purg*. xviii. esp. 40-43.
[2] Acts i. 1.
[3] *Inf*. iv. 13-15; *cf*. *Inf*. xvii. 79 (above), and *Purg*. xxvii. 46.
[4] *Inf*. iv. 14.

a party to an unwarranted delay.[1] And we note the effect of this frankness on the Pupil—an enhancement of loyal admiration for the Master ; and, for his own conscience, a more delicate perception of moral values : " He appeared to me self-reproached. O noble, stainless, conscience, how bitter to thy taste is a trifling fault ! "

> El mi parea da se stesso rimorso ;
> O dignitosa coscienza e netta,
> Come t' è picciol fallo amaro morso !

Even so pleads the spirit of the New Teaching.[2] Let not the Teacher " put on airs of omniscience and solemnity. He must be a part of the gay company ; he must not mind " giving himself away," he must be a human being, not a wooden stick ; gladly must he learn, and then he will gladly teach." Thus Virgil moves in Dante's company as a fellow-learner, not omniscient, not infallible ; ever ready to confess with frankness his own limitations, and to own up to his mistakes. In this spirit he apologises to Pier delle Vigne [3] for the inconsiderate act to which he was forced owing to his inability to convince Dante through the medium of his own verses. In the same spirit he gives place to Nessus when a description is needed of Nessus' own region of the Inferno, reversing his *dictum* about the original descent : " Regard him (Nessus) as thy prime authority, and me as secondary."

> Questi ti sia or primo, e io secondo.[4]

In like manner he gives way to Statius when an explanation is wanted of the emaciation of spirits no longer subject to bodily hunger,[5] and leads Dante to expect from Beatrice the completion of his own careful but yet not fully satisfying exposition of a heavenly matter : " And if this argument of mine doth not appease thy

[1] *Purg.* iii. 7-9. [2] *New Teaching*, p. 153 (Dr. Rouse).
[3] *Inf.* xiii, 28 *sqq.* ; *Aen.* iii. 22 *sqq.*
[4] *Inf.* xii. 114. [5] *Purg.* xxv. 25 *sqq.*

cravings thou wilt see Beatrice, and she will fully relieve thee of this and every other desire."

> E se la mia ragion non ti disfama
> Vedrai Beatrice, ed ella pienamente
> Ti torrà questa e ciascun altra brama.[1]

Dante in his portrait of Virgil reminds us that the quest of Truth demands "truth in the inward parts," that a humble and limpid sincerity is essential. Finally, he shews us this humility transfigured into a Divine self-effacement, where the elder Poet hands over his disciple entirely into his own guidance and that of Beatrice, in humble acknowledgement of his own limitations.[2] This act of self-effacement has indeed been in his mind from the first. When the time shall come for Dante's ascent to the realms of the *beate genti*, "a spirit more worthy than I shall be appointed thereto, with whom I will leave thee at my departure; for that Potentate who reigns in heaven above, because I was rebellious against His law, wills not that any by my guidance should enter His city."

> Anima fia a ciò più di me degna;
> Con lei ti lascerò nel mio partire;
> Chè quello imperador che là su regna
> Perch' io fu' ribellante a la sua legge
> Non vuol che 'n sua città per me si vegna.[3]

And so Virgil's work is done, and the Teacher shews himself sublimest in the last act. "The hardest lesson," says the apostle of the New Teaching, "for a clever teacher to learn, is to let a clever pupil be clever in his own way," nor "has a teacher been really successful" until "he has, by skilful preparation, enabled his pupil to do without him." [4] This final self-effacement of the Teacher, with its corollary, the achievement of self-

[1] *Purg.* xv. 76-78. *Cf. Purg.* xviii. 46-48.
[2] *Purg.* xxvii. 139 *sqq.* [3] *Inf.* i. 122 *sqq.*
[4] *The New Teaching*, pp. 20, 26 (Prof. Adams).

mastery and self-determination in the Pupil—the achievement of that *liberty of soul* which is the supreme aim of the pilgrimage—is best described in Virgil's matchless words of farewell, which we may now quote in their fulness. His " skilful preparation " has all led up to this . . . to make itself dispensable ! " By force of wit and skill I have conducted thee hither ; henceforward let thine own pleasure be thy guide ; from both the steep and the narrow ways thou art now free. . . . No longer await either word or sign from me ; free, sound, and upright is thy will, and it would be amiss not to do its bidding ; wherefore over thyself I invest thee with supreme control."

Tratto t' ho qui con ingegno e con arte ;
Lo tuo piacere omai prendi per duce ;
Fuor sei de l' erte vie, fuor sei de l' arte.

. . . .

Non aspettar mio dir più, nè mio cenno,
Libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio
E fallo fora non far a suo senno :
Perch' io te sovra te corono e mitrio.[1]

[1] *Purg*. xxvii. 139-142.

VI

DANTE AND ISLAM

(*As represented by* " THE GOSPEL OF BARNABAS ")

E solo in parte vidi il Saladino.
—*Inf.* iv. 129.

THE aim of these Essays has been to present Dante in different aspects as the Apostle of Freedom : a man endowed with those profound convictions on which alone true tolerance can be built, a man whose deep and passionate earnestness is tempered and balanced by a saving sense of humour. The substantiation of this claim may perhaps justify us in carrying the reader into a remote by-way of Italian literature ; in asking him to note points of contact and of contrast which emerge when the Poet is confronted, so to speak, with a document which we may be sure he never saw,[1] but which yet seems to bear, here and there, strange marks of the impress of his thoughts and of his phraseology. If the comparison of the two writers should seem at first sight gratuitous and far-fetched, it may yet succeed in throwing light on Dante's genius and temper from an unfamiliar angle.

The Clarendon Press published in 1907 an *Editio princeps* of the Mohammedan *Gospel of Barnabas* from an unique MS. of the latter half of the sixteenth century

[1] There is some reason (see below, pp. 121 *sqq.*) for attributing to a common origin some of the points of resemblance which are noted in the body of this Essay. Professor Foligno, however, like Dr. Parodi (see below, pp. 133 *sq.*) is convinced of the fallaciousness of all arguments hitherto adduced in favour of direct contact of Dante with Moslem sources—and, in particular, of the reasoning of Professor Asín (p. 133).

in the Imperial Library at Vienna.[1] This document—apart from its theological and dogmatic importance—should prove to be of considerable interest to students of Italian literature, as well on account of its grammatical and orthographic peculiarities, as for the positive literary merits which not infrequently relieve a style in general somewhat rough and bald.

The task of preparing for the press a translation of this remarkable document could not fail to bring before one's mind certain points of contact with Dante, more especially as the curious archaic Italian in which the "Gospel" is written lends itself, in a certain measure, to verbal coincidences and quasi-coincidences with passages in the Poet's writings. The points of contact which will be adduced in the present paper are none the less interesting because the date of the original *Gospel of Barnabas* still remains to a certain extent an open question, and with it also the nature of the relations, direct or indirect, that may have subsisted between its compiler and the author of the *Divina Commedia.*[2]

But first a word is due about the character and scope of this very apocryphal Gospel. The MS., as we have already suggested, is of comparatively recent date. Paper, binding, and orthography all combine with the script to place it—not, as its eighteenth century critics supposed, in the fifteenth century, or earlier, but—in the latter half of the sixteenth century.[3] It is, however, of course possible that the Vienna Codex may be a copy of an earlier MS.; and, curiously enough, one of the strongest arguments for this earlier original arises, as we shall shortly see, out of an apparent reference to the

[1] *The Gospel of Barnabas.* Edited and translated from the Italian MS. in the Imperial Library at Vienna by Lonsdale and Laura Ragg. Oxford: 1907.

[2] On this subject, see below, pp.

[3] See Introduction to Oxford Ed., pp. xiii. *sq.* and xliii.

famous Jubilee of 1300 A.D. which looms so large in Dante's life and writings.

The book is a frankly Mohammedan Gospel, giving a full, but garbled, story of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, from a Moslem point of view. It claims to have been written by Saint Barnabas (who figures in it as one of the Twelve—to the exclusion of poor Saint Thomas!) at the injunction of his Master, for the express purpose of combating the errors taught by Saint Paul and others. These errors are summed up under three heads: (1) the doctrine that Jesus is Son of God, (2) the rejection of Circumcision, and (3) the permission to eat unclean meats. Of these three errors the first is regarded as of the greatest importance; and not only is the Gospel narrative contorted and expurgated to suit the writer's purpose, but Christ Himself is made repeatedly to deny his own Divinity and even his Messiahship, and to predict the advent of Mohammed, the "Messenger of God."

About two-thirds of the material is derived, without question, from our four Canonical Gospels, of which a decidedly unscientific "harmony" forms the framework of Barnabas' narrative; the remaining third, which takes the form of discourses put into the mouth of Christ, is purely oriental in character, and largely an elaboration of germs or hints to be found in the Koran or in Jewish tradition. It is on this section of the book that the Dantist's interest will be concentrated.

The brief words of awful solemnity in which the Gospels speak of the doom of the lost are supplemented in Barnabas by elaborate descriptions of infernal torments which, whencesoever ultimately derived, are expressed in terms which exhibit remarkable coincidences with the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* of Dante. Mohammed's two favourite themes were, the final Judgment and the horrors of Hell

on the one hand, and, on the other, the delights of Paradise. And the second theme is treated in Barnabas almost as fully as the first. The Paradise of Barnabas has perhaps little in common with the Earthly Paradise of Dante, and still less with the Celestial; but it gives our author scope for an excursion into the realms of astronomy, whereby he finds himself (perhaps unconsciously), at the end of his journey, much nearer to Dante's scheme of the Ten Heavens than to the normal tradition of the Jews and Arabs.

It will be convenient to deal first with this teaching on Paradise, secondly with the *Inferno* of Barnabas, and thirdly with certain verbal and other points of contact between Barnabas and Dante; concluding with some more general considerations regarding the tone and colouring of the "Gospel."

It would be strange if the Paradise of Barnabas had not some features in common with Dante's. Man's dreams of an ideal resting-place, whether past or future, have a tendency to express themselves in terms of greensward and flowers and luscious fruits, cool streams and sunshine tempered by refreshing shade. The name "Paradise" itself means "park" or "plaisance" as we know, and though Barnabas is not conspicuously happy when he poses as an etymologist,[1] the connotation of the word was too securely established alike in Moslem and in Christian tradition to admit of much variation. Paradise, of course, has two different meanings in Dante, and the same is true of its use in Barnabas; but inasmuch as the distinction in the latter is not expressly marked, it will be convenient for our purpose to group together the conceptions of the Earthly and the Celestial Paradise.

[1] As for instance in his definition of the word "Pharisee," "*farisseo propio uolle dire cercha DIO nella linggua di chanaam*" (*Barnabas*, 157^b^).

In Barnabas, as in Dante, the name is applied to the scene of man's creation—

> il loco
> Fatto per proprio dell' umana spece,[1]

and of his temptation, fall and expulsion.[2] In both again it is used also of the eternal home of God, the good angels and redeemed mankind.[3] Speaking generally, the main features of the Paradise of Barnabas resemble more closely those of Dante's Earthly Paradise; while its position in the scheme of the universe corresponds rather to that of the Celestial Paradise of Dante. Thus the four perfumed rivers[4] of this "Gospel," though derived, almost certainly, from the Koran, correspond, in a sense, to the miraculously clear and limpid stream which arrested the poet's progress[5]; while its profusion of flowers and fruits[6] recall the scene portrayed in Virgil's parting words—

> . . . l' erbetta, i fiori e li arbuscelli,[7]

and—

> La gran varïazion de' freschi mai.[8]

which drew Dante's wondering eyes across the stream to where Matelda tripped singing through the painted meadow—

> Cantando ed iscegliendo fior da fiore
> Ond' era pinta tutta la sua via.[9]

Again, a somewhat terse definition of Paradise in Barnabas reminds one of a still shorter phrase of Dante's. The author of the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* describes the home which man forfeited by his first sin as "delitiarum patria[10]"

[1] *Par.* i. 56-7. *Cf. Barn.* 40a, *sq.*
[2] *Purg.* xxviii. 94, etc., *cf. Barn.* 41b–43b.
[3] *Barn.* 189a, *cf.* (for angels) Canz. iv. 24, 25, *Par.* xx. 102.
[4] *Barn.* 189a, *Koran*, Surah xlvii. The *original* source is perhaps Gen. ii. 10 *sqq.*
[5] *Purg.* xxviii. 25 *sqq.*
[6] *Barn.* 187a, 189a.
[7] *Purg.* xxvii. 134.
[8] *Purg.* xxviii. 36.
[9] *Purg.* xxviii. 41, 42.
[10] *V.E.* i. 7, 10-11. Oxf. p. 382; Bamp. p. 324.

while for Barnabas, "Il parradisso he chassa doue DIO chonsserva le sui delitie [1]"; or, as he puts it further on "DIO ha chreato il parradisso per chassa delle sui delitie." [2]

But the heavenly Paradise of the Empyrean is also described by Dante in material phrase as "God's garden." "Questo giardino" [3] is the name by which Saint Bernard designates the Mystic Rose, as he unveils its mysteries to Dante; and already in the Eighth Heaven Beatrice had essayed to divert the Poet's gaze from her own loveliness—

> . . . al bel giardino
> Che sotto i raggi di Cristo s' infiora.[4]

Here we may note that in Barnabas [5] GOD (not Christ, of course) is the sun of Paradise, while Mohammed is its moon.

But there is another passage in the *Paradiso*, where Dante himself is speaking in answer to Saint John's catechizing: a passage which may well detain us a little longer. Here Paradise is described in so many words as the "Garden of the Eternal Gardener"—

> Le fronde onde s' infronda tutto l' orto
> De l' ortolano etterno, am' io cotanto,
> Quanto da lui a lor di bene è porto.[6]

Is it fanciful to see a subtle resemblance—in thought, perhaps, more than in phrase (though Dante's symbolic meaning is wanting)—in Barnabas' description of Paradise as a place "doue . . . ogni chossa he *frutuossa, di fruti proportionati ha cholui che lo ha choltiuato*?" [7]

There emerge, at any rate, from both passages, the thought of the Divine Gardener . . . and of a *proportion* for which He is in some way responsible. But perhaps a more striking coincidence—if coincidence it be—is that

[1] 185a. [2] 185b. [3] *Par.* xxxi. 97; xxxii. 39.
[4] *Par.* xxiii. 71, 72. [5] 190a. [6] *Par.* xxvi. 64-66. [7] 185b.

between the answer given to a problem raised by Saint Bartholomew in Barnabas and the assurance vouchsafed by Piccarda [1] in resolution of Dante's difficulty concerning degrees of glory in Heaven.

"O Master," says Bartholomew,[2] "shall the glory of Paradise be equal for every man? If it be equal, it will not be just, and if it be unequal, the lesser will envy the greater." Jesus answers: "Non sera equaile perche DIO he iusto he ogniuno si chontentera perche hiuui non he inuidia," and again, There shall be "tutta una gloria sebene sara ha chi piu ha chi meno. Non portera alloro inuidia ueruna." So, when Dante questions the beatified Piccarda, in her earth-shadowed sphere—

> Desiderate voi più alto loco . . . ? [3]

the spirit replies, in words which, though more beautiful and more profound, are inevitably called up by the passage of Barnabas just quoted—

> Sì che, come noi sem di soglia in soglia
> Per questo regno, a tutto il regno piace
> Com' allo re ch' a suo voler ne invoglia:
> En' la sua voluntade è nostra pace.[4]

Turning now to the geographical or rather astronomical aspect of the subject, we find in Barnabas a definite divergence from the doctrine of the *Koran*, and adoption of a Ptolemaic scheme closely resembling that of Dante's *Paradiso*. There are nine heavens, not counting Paradise, *i.e.* ten heavens in all. "Noue sono li cielli li quali sono distanti luno dal altro chome he distante il primo cielo dala terra. Il quale he lontano dalla terra cinquecento

[1] *Par.* iii. 70 *sqq.* [2] *Barn.* 189b. [3] *Par.* iii. 65.

[4] *Par.* iii, 82-85. A reviewer of the Oxford Edition (*Guardian*, Aug. 21st, 1907) points out a further significant resemblance between *Par.* xxxi. 7 *sqq.* and *Barn.* 56b, where it is said of the angels that, "chome appe uenirano intorno per circuito dello nontio di DIO."

hanni di strada."[1] In the "five hundred years' journey" there is a reminiscence of Jewish tradition: but the seven heavens of the Talmud and of the *Koran* have become ten. And though these heavens are not definitely stated to be arranged, like Dante's, as a series of concentric spheres with earth as the centre, they form a graduated series, in which each is to the next as a "punto di ago,"[2] or as a grain of sand.[3] The planets, again, have their place in the scheme. They are not, apparently, identified with the several "cieli," as in Dante's arrangement, but are "set between" or "amongst" them: "li cielli fra li qualli stano li pianeti."[4]

The point of resemblance is to be found in a graduated series of ten (and not seven) heavens, characterised by an ascending scale of magnitude, and culminating in the Paradise of the Blessed.

The resemblances are indeed striking; but though 'Barnabas is vastly superior to previous Moslem writers in the richness of his conception of Heaven,' (they in common with their Christian contemporaries shewing much more spontaneity and exuberance of fancy in describing the torments of Hell), Dante excels markedly in the glowing wealth of his picture of Paradise—its radiance, its variety, its peace, its activity, its all-pervading love.[5]

So far, it may be said, the suggested points of contact between Barnabas and Dante have been somewhat vague and hypothetical. They may, perhaps, be adequately accounted for on the basis of a common tradition—the practically universal tradition of a Garden-Paradise, and the Aristotelo-Ptolemaic scheme of astronomy

[1] *Barn.* 111a, *cf.* 190b. [2] 111a. [3] iii,b 190h. [4] 190b.

[5] *Cf.* E. Blochet, *Les sources orientales de la Divine Comédie*, Paris, 1901, p. 193: "Ce qui distingue surtout la *Divine Comédie* de toutes les autres formes de la Legende de l' Ascension, ce qui la rende même supérieure aux livres religieux de toutes les epoques et de tous les pays, c'est que le poête a su décrire aussi completement le bonheur éternel du Paradis que les tortures infinies du Malebolge."

common to all the civilised West, whether Christian or Mohammedan, till the days of Copernicus and Galileo. But in the Inferno of Barnabas we may discover more definite and more convincing resemblances to features and passages of the *Divina Commedia*.

Islam, except in its later developments,[1] has no place for a Purgatory. There is no mention of a Purgatorio in the Koran or in this "Gospel," though Barnabas gives even the Faithful a probationary residence of torment in Hell, varying from Mohammed's own brief term of "the twinkling of an eye" to a duration of 70,000 years![2] But the Barnaban arrangement of Hell itself furnishes an almost exact parallel to the scheme of Dante's Purgatorio. The framework of the arrangement is that of the seven capital sins. Hell is divided[3] into seven circles or "centri" wherein are punished respectively (1) lo irachondo, (2) il gollosso, (3) lo acidiosso, (4) il lusuriosso, (5) lo hauaro, (6) lo inuidiosso, (7) il superbo. The order of the sins differs considerably from that adopted by Dante, and indeed is not repeated in any of the typical arrangements given in Dr. Moore's well-known Table;[4] coming nearest to that of Aquinas. In common, however, with Dante's arrangement it has the juxtaposition of Pride and Envy and their position at the lower end of the series: a point which is perhaps the more significant in that Barnabas approaches his Inferno from the bottom (not, as one would have expected, from the top), beginning with "il piu basso centro" of Pride. There is another point also, in which the Inferno of Barnabas resembles both the Inferno and the Purgatorio of Dante—the principle which runs through all its torments "per quae peccat quis . . . per haec et torquetur." The proud shall be "trampled under-foot of Satan and his devils,"[5] the

[1] E.g. in the Motalizite Sect (see *Encycl. Brit.* vol. xvi, p. 592).
[2] 149^b *sqq.* [3] 146^b–149^a. [4] *Studies in Dante,* Series II. [5] 146^b.

envious shall be tormented with the delusion that even in that joyless realm "ogniuno prendi allegrezza del suo malle he si dolgia che lui non habia peggio";[1] the slothful shall labour at tasks like that of Sisyphus,[2] and the gluttonous be tantalised with elusive dainties.[3] Nor can we fail to notice here how in the story of the serpent's doom[4] there comes out the idea of all pollutions of human sin—especially repented sin—streaming back eventually to Satan: the conception which underlies the system of Dante's rivers of Hell, including the "ruscelletto" that trickles down from Purgatory.[5]

There is a vivid description in *Barnabas* of the "Harrowing of Hell" at the coming of God's Messenger, which though it has nothing in common with the account of the Saviour's Descent as related by Virgil in Limbo, is strongly suggestive of a later scene where at the advent of the much-debated "Messo del ciel,"[6] who comes to open the gates of Dis, both banks of the Styx tremble, and more than a thousand "anime distrutte" fly headlong like frogs before a water-snake.[7] "Onde tremera," says Barnabas, "lo infferno alla sua pressenzza[8] . . . quando elgi ui andera tutti li diauoli stridendo cercherano di asscondersi sotto le ardente brasse dicendo luno allo altro: scampa scampa che elgi uiene machometo nosstro innimicho."[9]

While the general atmosphere of Hell in *Barnabas*, with its "neui he giazi intollerabili,"[10] its torturing fiends, its biting serpents, its Sisyphus-labours and Tantalus-pains, its harpies, its burning filth and nameless horrors, has the same "reek" as that of Dante's Inferno, there are passages which present an almost verbal parallel. In his description of the cries of the lost, Barnabas

[1] 147ᵃ. [2] 148ᵃ. [3] 148ᵇ. [4] 43ᵃ.
[5] *Inf.* xiv. 85 *sqq.*; xxxiv. 130. [6] *Inf.* ix. 85.
[7] *Inf.* ix. 66 and 76 *sqq.* [8] 149ᵇ. [9] 150ᵃ.
[10] *Barn.* 113ᵃ, *cf. Inf.* xxxii. 22 *sqq.*

says: "malladirano . . . il loro padre he madre he il loro chreatore." Who can but recall Dante's words about the dismal spirits assembled on the bank of Acheron, who—

Bestemmiavano Dio e lor parenti ?[1]

This brings us to the subject of actual verbal coincidences, of which we must confess we have found but two, though a more systematic investigation might well yield a much larger number.

Barnabas' recurring characterisation of the idols of the heathen as "dei falsi he bugiardi"[2] is surely too remarkable to be without significance, and is enforced and supported by the occurrence of another cadence of the same canto of the *Inferno* in the phrase "rabbiosa fame," which in Barnabas, however, applies not to the symbolic lion of the *Divina Commedia*,[3] but to the torments of the Lost.

There remains one more point to be adduced—an incidental and a somewhat subtle one which makes, not so much for a relation between Dante's writings and the *Gospel of Barnabas* as for a relation of contemporaneity between the two writers. The inference which it would suggest is so definite and precise, that it is only fair to remark that there are puzzlingly contradictory arguments to be drawn from the language and style of Barnabas.

Our point, then, is as follows. Barnabas puts into the mouth of our Lord, as we have observed above, numerous predictions of the future advent of Mohammed as "Messiah" and "Messenger of GOD." In one of these a "Jubilee" is spoken of as recurring every hundred years: "il iubileo . . . che hora uiene ogni cento hanni."[4] The

[1] *Barn.* 63ᵃ: Dante, *Inf.* iii. 103.

[2] In 23ᵃ, 81ᵃ, 225ᵇ. It is characteristic of the MS. that the three passages furnish as many different spellings of the last word: *bugiari*, *bugiardi* and *buggiardi* ! *Cf. Inf.* i. 72.

[3] *Inf.* i. 47; *Barn.* 62ᵇ.

[4] 85ᵇ and 87ᵃ.

writer or compiler here, as often, fails to throw himself back into the Palestine of the first century, in which, as his very considerable knowledge of the Old Testament [1] should have reminded him, the Hebrew Jubilee of fifty years would have been in force. Whence, then, comes this Jubilee? He cannot have derived it from the *Koran*. We are almost forced to the conclusion that the "hora" of the passage quoted is a literal "now" and refers to a contemporary institution—to the Jubilee as conceived of at the moment when the lines were penned; and that, the Jubilee of Western Christendom. This carries us back beyond the twenty-five years' Jubilee of modern times—beyond the year when Clement VI, for his own ends, instituted a Jubilee of fifty years after the Hebrew model; and would give us as our *terminus ad quem* the year 1349. For the upper limit—the *terminus a quo* of the original Barnabas we must turn to the famous Jubilee of 1300, the ideal date of Dante's pilgrimage. For though the Bull [2] by which that Jubilee was promulgated alleged antecedent tradition, and the contemporary chroniclers naturally followed suit,[3] there seems to be no sufficient historical evidence for a precedent. Thus, between the years 1300 and 1350—and, apparently, only during that period—it would have been possible to speak of the centennial Jubilee as an established institution. If this be so, the writing of this passage in *Barnabas* is relegated to the years in which the *Divina Commedia* took its final shape, or those just after the poet's death in 1321 when the poem so swiftly took its place among the classics of the world's literature.

[1] A little earlier (76^{b}) he has what seems to be a quotation from memory of Lev. xxvi. 11, 12; the Law of the Jubile is to be found, of course, in the chapter immediately preceding.

[2] *Antiquorum habet* (Coqueline, iii. 94).

[3] E.g. Cron. Astense (Muratori, *R. S. I.*, tom. xi. p. 192): Jacobus Cardinalis (in Raynald, tom. iv. sub an. 1300): Villani, viii. 36.

The foregoing sketch does not pretend to be exhaustive;[1] it does not even claim to have proved anything of a substantial nature: but it may perhaps suggest to some more competent mind a line of study which has at least the merit of freshness, and it may serve to introduce to those who are not acquainted with it, a document of no ordinary interest and of no little beauty.

It is sometimes stated that Dante places Mohammed not among pagans nor among heretics but with the schismatics: as though he shared the optimistic view of some of his contemporaries, that the Moslems were but an extreme form of Christian "sect."

But Dante distributes his pagans without prejudice throughout the successive circles, from the "Nobile Castello" in Limbo[2] to the central seat of infamy in the Giudecca; and, as a matter of fact, a pagan, Curio, is partner of Mohammed's doom in the penultimate "bolgia" of Malebolge. Obviously "scisma" must not be taken too technically from Mohammed's lips, supplemented as it is by the more general phrase "seminator di scandalo."[3] The "schism" of which the False Prophet is guilty is rather that introduction of discord and strife into the civilised world which makes "Macometto cieco" in the eighteenth canzone a personification of the factious spirit of Florence.

Yet if it had fallen to Dante's lot to judge the Founder of Islam by the spirit of this Mohammedan Gospel, he might have shared that milder and more optimistic view of Mohammedanism which, according to a recent writer,[4] inspired Saint Francis when he set out upon his Egyptian

[1] Another point that might have been adduced is the counsel "habbandonare il perchè," *Barn.* 95^{b}; *cf. Purg.* iii. 37.

[2] *Inf.* iv. 67 *sqq.* Here, standing apart, but near the heroes and heroines of ancient Rome, Dante places the Moslem champion Saladin (*ib.* 129).

[3] *Inf.* xxviii. 35.

[4] Prof. N. Tamassia, *S. Francesco d' Assisi e la sua Leggenda*, p. 88.

mission. For here he would have found, side by side with the inevitable denial of our Lord's Divinity, an attribution to him not only of the Gospel miracles, but of others beside. He would have found deep teachings on prayer and fasting and almsgiving; on humility, penitence[1] and self-discipline; on meditation and mystic love. He would have found an asceticism in some ways as extravagant as any to be discovered in mediaeval legend, yet tempered with saving humour and common sense; a tolerant and charitable spirit which rivals even that of the "Cristo d' Italia," and "a succession of noble and beautiful thoughts concerning love of God, union with God, and God as Himself the final reward of faithful service, which it would be difficult to match in any literature."[2]

. . . .

Eleven years after the above lines were written, there appeared in Madrid a study of Dante's relations with Mohammedan Eschatology,[3] which may possibly prove to hold the key to some of the problems raised by the *Gospel of Barnabas.* The learned Spanish Professor of Arabic is by no means the first to explore the field of possible Oriental sources for the Divine Comedy. Since Ozanam wrote his *La Philosophie Chrétienne avant Dante,* a number of writers—D'Ancona, D'Ovidio and others in Italy, and Vossler in Germany—have busied themselves with this subject; and in 1901, M. Blochet[4] brought

[1] Including (38^{b}) a striking statement of the impossibility of penitence (and therefore of absolution) to one meditating fresh sin: *cf.* Dante, *Inf.* xxvii. 118 *sq.*

[2] Introduction to Oxford Edition, p. xxxiv.

[3] *La Escatologia musulmana en la "Divina Commedia."* Discorso leido en el acto de su recepción, par D. Miguel Asín Palacios . . . Madrid, Estanislao Maestre, 1919.

[4] *Les sources Orientales de la Divina Comédie.* Paris, E. Blochet. Paris, Maisonneuve, 1901.

both the general idea of the Unearthly Pilgrimage and some of its details into what looks like a derivative relationship with the two great Oriental Ascension-myths: the very ancient Mazdean story of Arda-Viraf, of Persian origin, and the secondary legend of Mohammed's one-night journey through the heavens, founded on a short and obscure passage in the *Koran* [1] and known as the *Miradj*. Together with other researchers in the same field, M. Blochet brings in also Sinbad the Sailor, the Voyage of St. Brendan, and all the family of the Quest of the Fortunate Isles; working up the pedigree right back to the Hesperides of the Hellenic myths—themselves descended from an ancestry more ancient still, and of origin further East. He suggests the many possible channels of transmission of oriental lore to Western Europe, and in particular to Ireland [2] by the more easterly "Amber Route" which archaeology shews to have passed from Mesopotamia over the Caucasus and through Russia to the Baltic. He points again to the openings made by the Crusades, and singles out the work of Dante's Venetian contemporary, Marin Sanudo, *Liber secretorum fidelium crucis*,[3] as evincing such a mastery of the entire "Eastern Question" as would imply a very exact knowledge of the Moslem religion and its legends. He points also to Paget Toynbee's demonstration of Dante's indebtedness in no less than ten passages of the *Vita Nuova* and *Convivio*, to the Moslem astronomer Djaafer-ibn-Mohammed-

[1] *Koran*, chap. xvii. (xv.) init. "Praise be unto him who transported his servant by night, from the sacred temple of Mecca to the further temple of Jerusalem, the circuit of which we have blessed, that we might shew him some of our signs; for God is he who heareth and seeth." (Sale's translation). On this passage a most elaborate story was built up by subsequent legend-makers.

[2] Ireland is undoubtedly the focus in Europe of legends *Persian* in origin. Appropriate to our subject are not only the St. Brendan Legend, but also the Purgatory of St. Patrick and the Descent of St. Paul. Blochet, *op. cit.*, p. 117 *sqq.*

[3] *Ib.* p. 161.

el-Balkhi, known to the mediaeval West by the less cumbrous name of Alfraganus.[1]

New ground has, however, undoubtedly been opened up by Dr. Asín. In his Inaugural Lecture he makes claims which, no doubt, will be fiercely combated, and in the end largely discounted. Dr. Parodi in his important notice of this book[2] points out that Asín's contention is two-fold, and one half of it, at least, unprovable. The Spanish Orientalist claims to have proved (1) that the Western legends of the World Beyond are derived from Arab (and ultimately from Persian) sources, (2) that Dante was acquainted with specific Moslem sources, and used them freely.

For the first of these contentions, which was, in substance Blochet's,[3] he has brought—so Parodi admits—fresh and varied evidence; and this part of the claim may now be regarded as largely substantiated. The second claim: that Dante actually knew, and drew from, the Moslem legend "is" says the Italian reviewer, "and will remain, I fear, incapable of demonstration."[4] Yet he admits that the parallels adduced between the Moslem Hell and Dante's Inferno, and still more between the *Miradj* and the *Paradiso*, are such as to arouse perplexity and astonishment in a mind hostile to, or unconvinced by, the theory of the learned Spaniard. The parallels he interprets[5] as remarkable instances of the similar working of human imagination on similar topics, all over the world. Whether such a hypothesis meets all the facts may still be an open question. But there can be no question whatever that if Dante, who certainly owes the biggest

[1] *Ib.* p. 172.

[2] *Bulletino della Società dantesca italiana,* Nov. Ser., fasc. 4, (Dec., 1919), pp. 163-181.

[3] See above, p. 131, note 4.

[4] *Bulletino ut supra,* p. 166.

[5] *Bulletino ut supra,* esp. p. 181. Ma il meglio sarà contentarsi di meditare sull' affinità delle menti umane e sulla verosimiglianza che cause simili producano, in luoghi diversi, effetti non troppo dissimili.

debt to his "true precursor," Virgil, be indebted also to the *Miradj* or other Mohammedan legend,[1] he has more than repaid his debt in the splendid originality with which he has bent and transformed such material to his own higher purposes: a use which implies masterly assimilation and adaption, and amounts to creative work.

Yet we would venture to plead for an open mind, even on the subject of Asín's second contention, and venture to ask whether the *Gospel of Barnabas* does not contribute some little additional force to the Spanish professor's argument? When all deductions have been made, has he not gone far towards proving that Dante was more definitely indebted to Moslem thought and legend than has been hitherto believed; and in particular that he may have drawn, directly or indirectly, from Mohammedan sources the architectonic idea of "Hell," and other parts of his scheme of which the affinity with "Barnabas" has been noted in the preceding pages? If so, we may with some probability attribute to those same sources the occasional striking identity of phraseology which we have observed—regarding them as, in some sense, sources both for Dante and for "Barnabas"; though in some cases it is difficult to believe that the so-called "Barnabas" is not quoting Dante from memory.

The man who placed the Moslem Captain Saladin and the Moslem Philosophers Averroes and Avicenna in the same region of the other world as his own dear master Virgil[2]; who placed the condemned Averroist, Sigieri of Brabant, in the Fourth Heaven as companion of the recognised Doctors of the Church, and put an eulogy of him into the mouth of his opponent Thomas Aquinas,[3]

[1] Dr. Parodi's view would probably be like that of Gherardo de' Rossi about the vision of Alberic, which he quotes on p. 163: that the *Miradj* "possa aver all' Omero italiano suggerito l' idea della *Commedia* come un pezzo di marmo potrebbe somministrare ad uno scultore l' idea d' una statua." [2] *Inf.* iv. 129, 143-4. [3] *Par.* x. 136-8.

would surely not be willing to borrow from Moslem sources ideas and materials for his mighty building—

> al quale ha posta mano e cielo e terra.[1]

That suitable material was in existence (though in the Arabic language) has been abundantly proved. From the various mediaeval forms of the Mohammedan legend of the Prophet's visit to the other world, Professor Asín draws numerous and striking parallels to the *Divina Commedia.* The topography of Hell, with its most infamous of sinners in the lowest pit, the scheme of the Heavens, which, like Dante's, follows the Ptolemaic system of concentric spheres, and many more detailed analogies. He finds the closest affinity in a writer of the same century, Ibn Arabi, a Spanish thinker, who died twenty-five years before Dante was born. By this Arabi the legend—which may have formed the basis of much of the eschatology of "Barnabas"—was presented together with a mystical and allegorical interpretation, such as Dante himself suggests for his own work in the Epistle to Can Grande.[2] Dante's noble contemporary, Raymond Lull, seems to have known this book of Arabi's in the original. Dante was not, like Raymond, an Arabic scholar, but he may well have become, by oral means, acquainted with something of its substance.

The court of Alfonso X of Seville, into which Dante's Brunetto plunged in the abortive embassy of 1260, was a hive of Moslem learning and speculation. And though Brunetto's visit was but short (and from this point Dr. Parodi does not fail to draw full capital), he was not the only Florentine who found his way to Seville.[3] Commercial

[1] *Par.* xxv. 2.

[2] *Ep.* x. (Oxford Ed.), xiii. (Bemporad), 87 *sqq.* See Sir T. W. Arnold, "Dante and Islam," *Contemp. Review,* Aug., 1921, to which the present writer owes most of the substance of this paragraph and what follows.

[3] Arnold, p. 205-6.

relations between Tuscany and Seville were alive in Dante's day; and the intercourse of trade brings with it a measure of intellectual commerce. The Papal Court to which the Poet paid his fatal visit as Florentine Ambassador must still have held fresh memories of St. Peter Pascual, who was conversant with the Mohammedan legends of Hell and Paradise; and in Ricoldo of Montecroce Dante had an illustrious fellow-townsman who was notably learned in Moslem lore,[1] though missionary travels kept the good Dominican away from Florence during the years of the Poet's residence, and he only returned as Prior of Sta. Maria Novella in 1301, the year of Dante's exile, and died the year before his death, in 1320.

Altogether, there seems good reason to believe that Mohammedan materials, if not actual Mohammedan sources, were accessible to Dante, and that with large-hearted tolerance he was content to use them, and so to give them an immortality which they could not otherwise have achieved.

Thus we may conjecture a definite relation between "Barnabas" and the *Divine Comedy*: not through a debt of either to other (unless it be of "Barnabas" to Dante), but through a measure of common ancestry.

[1] *Ib.* p. 206-7.

VII

DANTE AND THE CASENTINO

> Li ruscelletti che de' verdi colli
> Del Casentin discendon giuso in Arno.
> —*Inf.* xxx. 64 *sq.*

THE "Apostle of Freedom" must needs be a patriot among his own people; and patriotism involves readiness to fight for the community. Dante's temperament—like that of scores of our young poets and artists who have fought and fallen in the Great War—was not naturally at home in the practice of arms. Yet he took his place and "did his bit" as a valiant Guelf of Florence in the battle of Campaldino; and so the Casentino valley still speaks to us to-day of a thirteenth century "Student in Arms." It speaks to us, again, of an exiled patriot, who went, "seeking freedom," "through well-nigh all the regions in which" the Italian "tongue was spoken," [1] and in the early days of his lifelong banishment found shelter from his foes with the hospitable Conti Guidi, and a comforting atmosphere of appreciation and respect as antidote to the *piaga della fortuna* and the *dolorosa povertà* of an outcast.

The Valley has also for us, as it had already for Dante, hallowed associations redolent of that "freedom of spirit" which comes to a simple and austere life lived for highest ideals. St. Francis, whose name still lingers in the Casentino, was, in a true sense, an "Apostle of Freedom" too. So perhaps no apology is needed for associating with the other essays in this volume a narrative of a visit paid

[1] *Conv.* I, iii.; Oxf. Ed., p. 240; Bemporad, p. 151 *sq.*

to the scenes so familiar both to St. Francis and to Dante. Since the words above were written, Italy has herself officially set her seal upon the thought contained in them.

"This could be no ordinary centenary," writes Lina Waterfield (of the Sexcentenary celebrations of Sept., 1921). "Italy had won the boundaries Dante desired her to possess, and in honouring him she celebrated her victory of complete liberation. The official visits . . . to the castles of the Casentino . . . and to the battlefield of Campaldino, where he fought for 'Libertas' in 1289, were all undertaken in the spirit of exalted patriotism. Sometimes the poet was forgotten, or rather merged in the spirit of 'Italianità,' when the rafters of the mediaeval banqueting hall of Poppi rang to the cries of 'Viva Fiume'! September 16th was spent in the Casentino. Next day all Florence turned out to see the pageant of victorious Florentines returning from Campaldino, perhaps the most decisive battle ever fought in Tuscany, for it broke the power of the Ghibelline nobles. 'Evviva la Libertà!'"

Meanwhile, at Ravenna, a great band of Franciscan Tertiaries had paid their homage at the Poet's tomb.

And now for the record of a pre-war pilgrimage to the Casentino.

From Pontassieve, the third station on the railway line between Florence and Arezzo, a drive of some four hours will take you into the heart of the Casentino; into a country well worth a visit for its own wild and delicate beauty, but rendered immeasurably more interesting by its thronging memories of Dante.

The Casentino is the valley of the Upper Arno, whose course from its source on Monte Falterona is sketched by the poet in those strangely bitter lines put into the mouth of Rinier da Calboli in Purgatory,[1] while its

[1] *Purg.* xiv. 16 *sqq.*

trickling tributary streams, bathing the verdant slopes, are vividly described in a single *terzina* by poor parched Adamo in Hell—

> Li ruscelletti che de' verdi colli
> Del Casentin discendon giuso in Arno
> Facendo i lor canali freddi e molli.[1]

We are in the country of the famous Conti Guidi, that stalwart family who so successfully maintained their feudal sway amid an environment of burgher republicanism; the clan of strong men who, for more than four centuries at least, were masters of this fertile district which stretches from the slopes of Falterona southward to the walls of Arezzo—that city of "curs" from which Arno "turns aside its nose in scorn."[2]

The offspring of the romance[3] of Guido Vecchio and "la buona Gualdrada,"[4] this grim four-branched family—the Guidi of Porciano, of Romena, of Battìfolle and of Dovandola—they have left their lasting mark upon the country. Three of their castles remain, castles in which Dante was harboured in the earlier years of his exile. Porciano—playfully referred to, surely, in the "brutti porci" of Riniero?[5]—and Romena both in picturesque ruin; Poppi (Arnolfo's first draft, as it is said, for the similar Palazzo Vecchio at Florence) repaired throughout the centuries, since Count Francesco handed it over in 1440 to Neri Capponi, representative of the Florentine Republic.

We are in the country of Campaldino, the battle where Dante fought, and Corso Donati and Vieri de' Cerchi, soon to be leaders of opposing factions in their native town, performed prodigies of valour side by side: the battle where on St. Barnabas' Day in 1289 the Guelf

[1] *Inf.* xxx. 64 *sqq.* [2] *Purg.* xiv. 46 *sqq.* [3] *Villani,* v. 37.
[4] *Inf.* xvi. 37. [5] *Purg.* xiv. 43.

party decisively reversed the humiliation of twenty-nine years before, and that under the very walls of the Convent of Certomondo, founded by the Guidi two years after Montaperti, in thanksgiving for that bloody victory—

> Lo strazio e 'l grande scempio
> Che fece l' Arbia colorata in rosso.[1]

We are in the country of St. Francis of Assisi, Dante's great religious ideal; for a morning's drive or walk up the steep road from Bibbiena brings us right up to the foot of the " Rude crag betwixt Tiber and Arno " [2] which all Christendom reveres.

In taking the old road over the Consuma Pass from Pontassieve, we are following in the tracks of the Florentine host as it marched forth in June, 1289. After much discussion as to the best route, as Villani and Dino Campagni tell us,[3] they wisely decided to take this steeper and more perilous but shorter path. A short way beyond Pontassieve they would have left the Val d' Arno, to strike the river again but a few miles from its source. They left it flowing north towards Florence; they would find it again running southwards in the direction of Arezzo.

As Dante rode up from the valley with his comrades, his eyes so quick to detect the characteristic features and moods of Nature would note the growing severity of the landscape—in his day perhaps less marked than now, when feckless generations of short-sighted inhabitants have denuded the hills of their timber. As the road wound up the steep he would glance now north, now south, and perhaps occasionally back to the west. Northwards he would see towering up the mass of Monte Morello, the bare heap of a mountain that rises above his native city. Besides it his eye would light upon the

[1] *Inf.* x. 85. [2] *Par.* xi. 106. [3] *Vill.* vii. 131; *Dino,* i. 9.

small but conspicuous wooded hill of Monte Senario, on which, nearly sixty years before, the sainted founders of the Servite Order had established themselves: Florentines all of good family, and one a scion of that famous house of the Amidei whose quarrel with the Buondelmonti in 1215 had already begun to bear fruit of internal discord in the city—the first drops of the storm that was to sweep poor Dante into exile. Westward, beyond the Arno, the hill of the "Incontro" would catch his eye, the traditional site of the meeting between Saint Francis and Saint Dominic which has provided an inspiring theme for so many artists; while on the south his view would be bounded by the thickly wooded ridge of Vallombrosa, where San Giovanni Gualberto had gathered more than two centuries before (in 1015) a band of followers for whom the discipline of San Miniato had grown too lax. Almost at the watershed of the Consuma range, he would observe the track upon the right—only a few years ago (1905) converted into a *strada carrozzabile*—by which one might pass on horseback or on foot from Vallombrosa to Consuma, and so into the Casentino. Halting, perhaps, for a few moments in the village of Consuma—probably not very different then from what it is to-day, a collection of charcoal-burners' dwellings—then trotting down the other side, past the hamlet of Ponticelli, swerving to the right over the shoulder of a ridge, they passed the ancient little hostelry of Casaccia, and stopped, so tradition asserts, for rest and refreshment in the bleakly situated Badiola, which crouches in the midst of a windswept group of unhappy trees, on an outlying hillock to the left of the road, looking down on the Casentino itself.

Resuming their downward journey with lighter hearts, yet some of them no doubt a little fluttered already by the anticipation of an encounter (as Dante confesses

to have been on the morning of the battle),[1] they would ride past the ill-omened mound which still gives to a neighbouring hamlet, the grim name of Ommorto or *Omo Morto*, the spot where Adamo of Brescia [2] was burned alive (as some think only a year before—1288) for counterfeiting the coinage of Florence at the instigation of the Conti Guidi of Romena. And but a little way further on that same Castle of Romena would burst upon their view—the fortress with the seven-fold circle of defensive walls which were to suggest to the poet, in his sojourn of some fourteen years later, the *nobile castello* [3] of Limbo, wherein the spirits of the just and illustrious pagans lived their diggnified life—*senza martiri*,[4] but also *senza speme.*[5]

The ruins that can be visited to-day shew but the vague outlines of its former grandeur ; yet one may see the green-carpeted *cortile* where the great spirits walked to and fro *sopra il verde smalto*,[6] and fragments at least of the very walls within whose shelter the poet probably elaborated this and much else of the Inferno : and within the outer circle of defences, the famous Fonte Branda [7] whose cool waters were recalled to mind by poor Adamo in his torment—waters sipped to-day by the devout Dantist pilgrim almost as though it were indeed a holy well.[8]

We hear of no assault made upon the Castle in passing. Probably the place was too strong and the work before the Guelf Army needed haste. On the other hand the

[1] Leonardo Bruni Vita di Dantē. Dove mi trovai non fanciullo nelle armi, e dove ebbi temenza molta. . . .

[2] *Inf.* xxx. 37 *sqq.* Perhaps of English extraction : in a document at Ravenna he is described as " de Anglia."

[3] *Inf.* iv. 106 *sqq.* [4] *Inf.* iv. 48. [5] *Inf.* iv. 42.

[6] *Inf.* iv. 118. [7] *Inf.* xxx. 78.

[8] It is strange to find even in so recent a work as Mr. Tozer's Prose Translation of the *Divine Comedy*, reference still made to the fountain of the name in *Siena.* The context is all in favour of a spring near Romena.

force within, thinned to strengthen the Ghibelline host below, was no doubt too weak to attempt an effective onslaught upon the cavalcade; though, as Dino implies, the Florentines were passing through awkward country, wherein "if they had been found of the foe, they had received no small damage."[1]

The armies faced one another in the valley's bottom, on that level stretch of alluvial land which lies to the north of the rock on which stands the Castle and the town of Poppi. North and south the field was commanded by a Guidi fortress; it stretched like a vast "lizza" or tilting-ground between Poppi and Romena.

The corn would be well advanced on that eleventh of June: not so rich a promise, perhaps as that on which the daughter of Ugolino della Gherardesca afterwards commented so bitingly to the daughter of Buonconte, when the ground had been fertilised with torrents of Ghibelline blood.[2] Perchance the approaching harvest may have been already ruined by the devastating march of the Aretines. But the general features of the country would have lost none of their charm. The graceful, whispering poplars and willows surely then as now lined Arno's banks, recalling to some of the elder warriors the poplars of Montaperti, fringing the Biena, Malena and Arbia—the tall trees that still whisper shudderingly of the day when their three streams ran red.

The vine-festoons—if then as now, and as in the Medicean days, the valley was garlanded with vineyards—would still be in fresh verdure, and would form an effective setting for the gay colours of a mediaeval armament. Dante and his companions would indeed have as fair a scene to fight in as poet or artist turned soldier could wish; albeit the day was cloudy, presaging a night of storm.[3] Immediately behind the gaily decked arena stood

[1] *Dino*, i. 10. [2] *Sacchetti*, Nov. clxxix. [3] *Purg*. v. 116 *sqq*.

the bold grey mass of Poppi, and beyond this again the more distant background of hills, flanked on the left by La Verna with its hallowed and inspiring memories.

And what a glorious prospect of the whole field of battle had the ladies of the Guidi household from the casements of that castle whose walls are still adorned with fragments of *affreschi,* which Dante's eyes must have seen! All the pomp and pageantry of the war visible from a place of security, a veritable eagle's nest. And beyond the battle a clear view across to Romena, Falterona and the sources of Arno; with a peep, perhaps, of the castle of Porciano—the northernmost stronghold of the clan since the practical demolition, after Montaperti, of the neighbouring Castel Castagnajo.

Here in their own country they would have every confidence of success. They would rejoice in the brave show of chivalry, the gorgeous armour caparisons and banners—a spectacle of the meeting of the two best-appointed hosts that the countryside had ever witnessed.[1] They would watch with triumph the first irresistible charge of the Aretine cavalry, which drove Dante and his fellows back in confusion upon their infantry, and they would feel the victory already won.

They would mark with wonder and horror the unaccountable retreat of Count Guido Novello, who was to have delivered a flank attack with his hundred and fifty horse, remembering perchance with scorn that it was his untimely flight which, twenty-three years before, had brought to a premature end the Ghibelline domination in Florence.[2]

They would note the sudden move of Corso Donati and his Pistojesi, whose charge upon the Aretine flank was the beginning of the end. Then came the wholesale slaughter and pursuit, wherein unnerved warriors,

[1] *Villani,* vii. 130-131. [2] *Villani,* vii. 13-14.

forgetful of everything but the fear of death, streamed in flight past Poppi and down the valley towards Bibbiena. One of these hunted knights they may have observed in the earlier stages of his flight; for the name and figure of Buonconte di Montefeltro[1] would be well known to them. But if their eyes were sharp and keen enough to catch a glimpse of him as he passed, it was but a glimpse. His end none saw or knew till Dante met the dead count's spirit in Purgatory; though the scene of it, as there described, may well be the faithful reminiscence of the Poet's own impression as he galloped with the pursuers towards Bibbiena.

The spot where Arno and Archiano meet is dear to every student of Dante, though comparatively few are privileged to see it with their eyes. And when you see it, it is just a confluence of two mountain-streams, flanked by heaps of grey water-worn stones, and fringed by tall poplars and brushwood—this in the flat bottom of a fertile and well cultivated valley. But the rushing water has a voice unlike the sound of ordinary streams: the grey piles of pebbles and boulders, the tall whispering poplars and the bushes at their feet casting a dark line of shade along the river's brim—these have something pathetic, tragic, funereal in their aspect.

One seems to see Buonconte[2] staggering to the brink, bursting his way blindly through the hedge of trees and bushes, while his life-blood ebbs out from the wounded throat, and leaves a crimson track upon the plain—see him fall senseless, with just an instinctive crossing of the arms and an inaudible invocation of the name of Mary, that was to baulk the fiend of his prey. Then night falls, and the mountain tops "from Pratomagno to the main ridge" of Apennine, and all the valley between, are swathed in storm-clouds, and the *fossati* are filled with

[1] *Purg.* v. 85-129.

[2] *Purg.* v. 97 *sqq.*

drenching rain. The Archiano dashes down its steep course from "above the hermitage" of Camaldoli (whose founder, St. Romoald, has his place with St. Benedict in Paradise),[1] a roaring, foaming torrent, and swirls the corpse down the stream of Arno, unlocking the arms by force from that cross upon the breast which had served the soul so well—

> Sciolse al mio petto la croce
> Ch' i' fe' di me quando 'l doler mi vinse,[2]

and engulfs the body, soon to be covered with spoils of the river-bed.

It is but a short walk down the steep lane from Bibbiena and through the meadows to the *imboccatura*, and the inhabitants of the hill-town may well have witnessed from their walls many a like tragedy on that day, as breathless Ghibellines at their last gasp found themselves caught in the trap—pulled up suddenly by Arno or Archiano, and overtaken ere their bewildered brains could decide what course to follow.

Far different memories from those of the northward plain cling to that bold wooded peak which rises on the east of Bibbiena. The pilgrimage to La Verna from that town is one of the most delightful that can be imagined. After the first steep descent—for Bibbiena stands on the top of a hill almost precipitous on every side—one mounts again, passing through groves of tender spring green, the beautiful green of young oaks, with rich, yellow-red soil as a foil to it; and then down a second time past Campi into the fair valley of the Corsalone, with its long rows of poplars like those of Campaldino and Montaperti. After that it is all one long ascent, and for the most part a steep one. The lane winds up through sparse woods again, mainly of small oaks, and is bordered, in

[1] *Par.* xxii. 49. [2] *Purg.* v. 126 *sq.*

spring, by garlands of primroses and violets. For a time one loses sight of the goal (which had been visible from Bibbiena, and again from above Campi), though the view opens out wonderfully upon the left, up the Arno valley past Poppi to Falterona. Then at last, after an hour or so of steady climbing, the bold wooded cliff heaves in sight again, and one distinguishes the buildings of the monastery perched high up on the edge of a vast precipice. Another hour will bring us to its foot. As he toils up to this sanctuary even the most devoted Dantist cannot but have in mind, besides the eleventh Canto of *Paradiso*, certain passages also of the *Fioretti*.

Every holy spot, almost, is marked by a chapel, wherein man's handiwork obscures—and dare we say mars?—while it exalts, the memories of the past. It is all so unlike what Saint Francis saw when he rode up on his donkey from the other side to take possession of Orlando's gift of the 'divoto monte.' Yet one cannot stand without emotion before the commonplace chapel that marks the spot where the little birds came to welcome him: "con cantare e con battere l' ali," making "grandissima festa e allegrezza," settling on his head and shoulders and arms and in his bosom.[1] And when one has entered the portal, one is fain to see not only the Chapel of the Stigmata, with the very spot marked out for honour where in 1221 the Saint—

> Da Cristo preso l' ultimo sigillo
> Che le sue membra due anni portarno,[2]

and the "*sasso spicco*"—that weird rent in the rocks concerning which Saint Francis believed himself to have divine revelation, that it was the result of the earthquake at the crucifixion: "quando, secondo che dice il Vangelista, le pietre si spezzarono."[3] This, too, is an inevitable

[1] Fioretti: Prima considerazione delle sacre sante stimate.
[2] *Par.* xi. 107-8. [3] Fioretti: seconda considerazione.

object of the Dantist's pilgrimage, for he regards it as extremely probable that the idea of the cloven rocks in the twelfth of *Inferno* [1] came to Dante from La Verna and Franciscan lore. But there are other spots untouched by Dante, yet hallowed by memories of the "poverello di Cristo." Such is the hollow *grembo* in the cliff-side where the rock received the Saint into her maternal bosom, yielding "like molten wax" to the impress of his form,[2] when the fiend would have hurled him down the precipice. Such, again, is the grotto where his hermit-bed is shewn,[3] wherein he passed the first Lent of his sojourn at La Verna; and such, too, is the stone, self-consecrate, and so used without further benediction as an altar top, whereon, so legend says, the Redeemer often-times stood and conversed familiarly with his poor servant "face to face as a man speaketh unto his friend." [4]

Dante rests under the shadow of Saint Francis—not at La Verna, indeed, but at Ravenna. The Campanile of the Franciscan church stands sentry over his tomb. It is known that he was buried in the Franciscan habit: and it has been justly conjectured that his association with the Order was no mere thing of sentiment. One of the earliest commentators on the *Divina Commedia* [5] asserts that for a time he actually joined the Order, to whose girdle of cord he seems to refer,[6] as worn formerly by him as a safeguard against youthful lusts—

> Io avea una corda intorno cinta
> E con essa pensai alcuna volta
> Prender la lonza a la pelle dipinta.

And a living Dantist has recently put forth the suggestion that this connection with the Franciscans began with his

[1] *Inf.* xii. 1-45. [2] *Fioretti*: *loc. cit.* [3] *loc. cit.*
[4] *Ex.* xxxiii. 11. [5] Buti, on *Inf.* xvi. 106. *Purg.* xxx. 42.
[6] *Inf.* xvi. 106. For further "Franciscan" references see Paget Toynbee, *Life of Dante* (last Ed.) p. 72 n.

boyish studies. Between his ninth and his eighteenth year, when, according to the *Vita Nuova*, a something unnamed kept him apart from the lady of his heart, he was, so it is thought, living under strict rule, studying as a pupil under the good friars of Santa Croce,[1] and laying the foundations at once of that theological lore which amazes us to-day, and of that lofty ideal of virtue of which he sings—

> . . . già m' avea trafitto
> Prima ch' io fuor di puerizia fosse.[2]

But apart from all conjecture, ancient or modern, the Poet's admiration of Saint Francis is so obvious and his appreciation of him so just and true, that none can read the eleventh canto of *Paradiso* without feeling that a Dantist's pilgrimage to the Casentino culminates not in the memories of Campaldino or of the meeting of the waters; not even in the personal reminiscences of the Poet's exile suggested by the modern tablet on the ruined walls of Romena, but rather at La Verna—

> Nel crudo sasso intra Tevere ed Arno

where the re-discoverer of Christ for the Middle Ages—

> Da Cristo preso l' ultimo sigillo
> Che le sue membra due anni portarno.[3]

. . . .

Valour, and sincerity, and simplicity. The Casentino of Dante and St. Francis recalls to us the golden principles which alone make life worth living now. Patriotism, keen and fervid as that whose echoes rang just now thro' the ancient hall at Poppi: but "Patriotism is not enough."

Readiness to lay down one's life for a Cause: that is the temper which has saved civilisation from utter shipwreck: but is it securely saved?

[1] *Federzoni, Vita di Beatrice Portinari*, 2nd Ed., p. 14.
[2] *Purg.* xxx. 41 *sq.* [3] *Par.* xi. 106-108.

Purity of purpose, sincerity in speech and conduct—*sancta simplicitas*—ready to cast away earthly privilege, to face joyfully the call to "low living and high thinking," and to find freedom in fewness of material possessions and richness of moral and spiritual endowment—that is the temper eagerly embraced by Francis and his followers, loyally accepted by Dante, exile and pilgrim; and it is the only temper which can adapt itself to live happily in a denuded world: the temper which, when saturated with the passion of loving service as was that of "Christ's Poor Man" may hope, Franciscan-wise, to heal the world's wounds, to assuage its quarrels, and to build up better and more strongly that which has been broken down.

BEATI MITES; QUONIAM IPSI POSSIDEBUNT TERRAM.
BEATI PACIFICI: QUONIAM FILII DEI VOCABUNTUR.

VIII

THE LAST CRUSADE

Pero ch' me venia " Resurgi e Vinci."
—*Par.* xiv. 125.

It is a far cry from Dante Alighieri to Torquato Tasso: from thirteenth-century Florence to seventeenth-century Ferrara. Yet Tasso is, poetically, a direct descendant of the great Florentine, down the line of Petrarca and Ariosto. His Italian represents the utmost legitimate development of Dante's language, beyond which lies decadence. The purity, if not the exuberance, of his style and the grandeur of his epic treatment flows direct from the fountain-head of *Italianità*—the *Divine Comedy*; and the great poem has left its clear impress now and again upon the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, in haunting phrases.

Thus the " fierce Circassian," in Canto x. 56 of the *Gerusalemme*, assumes the attitude of Sordello in *Purg.* vi. 66—

A guisa di leon quando si posa;

and two Cantos further on (x. 59) we have a reminiscence of *Purg.* iii. 9, the dignity of Virgil's sensitive conscience, when Armida's dupes stand abashed before Gottofredo—

Vergognando tenean basse le fronti
Ch' era al cor piccol fallo amaro morso.

Dante and Tasso alike wrote for all time, and wrote in circumstances of personal straitness and distress: each gave to the world his best, out of the treasure of a bleeding heart; and if Tasso's work cannot compare for grandeur of conception with Dante's immortal epic

of the spiritual liberty of Man, yet it too has Liberty for its theme, and a background ideal and spiritual.

Contemporary critics dealt with Tasso more cruelly than ever any dared to deal with Dante; yet Tasso has outlived his critics. And the sympathy and admiration bestowed on him by his English contemporaries, and notably by Edmund Spencer, was well bestowed, and forms a link in that long chain of intellectual sympathy between England and Italy which we trust to see strengthened year by year.

Tasso's great poem may therefore not inappropriately supply an epilogue to those studies of his greater predecessor which are associated in different ways with the horrors and splendours of the great World War.

In a recent article in the *Anglo-Italian Review*,[1] an organ whose special aim has been to foster and develop that intellectual sympathy between England and Italy of which we have spoken above, Sir Sidney Lee draws our attention to the *Gerusalemme Liberata*.

"There is some special appropriateness," he says, "at the moment in recalling attention to Tasso's association with English poetry—with that manifestation of English genius whence Great Britain derives no inconspicuous part of her renown. For Tasso made his chief bid for immortality as the poetic chronicler of the First Crusade whereby the City of Jerusalem was first wrested from the Moslem sway and restored to Christian rule. The army which achieved the hardly won victory was drawn from the chivalry of all Western Europe; but the chief command was in French hands, and Godfrey of Bouillon, a nobleman of France, is the hero of Tasso's epic. The Italian poet credits the French generalissimo with every moral and military virtue. His courage goes hand in hand with a dignified caution. He is pious,

[1] Vol. II, p. 18, (Sept., 1918). *Tasso and Shakespeare's England.*

humane, far-seeing in counsel, resolute in action, modest in bearing. The stirring military adventures which Tasso narrates with abundance of romantic embellishment and magical episode end on a strikingly subdued note. The last stanza of the long poem shows Godfrey with his aides-de-camp, just after the last strenuous resistance of the enemy had been overcome, reverently walking in the light of the setting sun through the captured city. Without pausing to change their war-stained habiliments, Godfrey and his companions enter the Holy Sepulchre, and there, hanging up their arms, they offer on their knees humble prayer."

General Allenby's ever-memorable entry through the Golden Gate, on foot, into a Jerusalem freed from an even more blighting and desolating tyranny than that of the eleventh century, may well form a starting-point for a comparison of the great movement of the First Crusade with a still greater movement of to-day.

We might, indeed, concentrate our attention upon the history itself, rather than upon the Poet's imaginative presentment of it at a distance of nearly five centuries; for Tasso was further removed from Godfrey and his contemporaries than we are from him. We might dwell on the fruitful analogies between the two Crusades—that earliest of all, and this last and greatest. We might note the curious resemblances and the curious differences, and see our own World-War prefigured in that old-time adventure which, like our own linked together representatives of almost all the European nations in one great league for an ideal, impelling them to give up all that the individual life holds dear, to forego all material hopes and prospects, for the sake of a Cause that offered as immediate guerdon little but danger and extreme discomfort, wounds and death, or worse than death.

We might point to striking coincidences in detail,

as, for instance, the original costly and disastrous attempt upon Nicaea—like our tragedy of Gallipoli in the same region—and the part there played by the treachery of a Greek King, a perfidy which, even when the place was won, robbed the Crusaders of the fruits of their victory. We might adduce the importance of the help rendered in each case by the allied flotilla, and the timely aid given in Palestine of old, as in Europe to-day, by the " handy-man " of the Marine forces. Or again we might consider the fruits and consequences of the old Crusades, and see the promise of them on a larger scale to-day ; the first-fruits already harvested even in the midst of the struggle —the widening of insular minds, the growth of international comradeship, the manifold educational potencies of an experience that involves at once the intellectual stimulus of foreign travel, the moral inspiration of strenuous, exacting and self-reliant effort in entirely new conditions, the spiritual stimulus of a daily and hourly converse with Death.

If the Crusades did so much to educate Europe in olden days, what may not the World-War achieve, if followed by a " brotherly covenant " and a League of Peoples ?

But our present aim is a rather different one ; following the lead given by Sir Sidney Lee to try, so far as we may, to look at our own times through Tasso's eyes ; to search and see if the *Gerusalemme Liberata* has not a direct word to speak to our own generation.

. . . .

Does Tasso's own generous use of fancy make such an attempt too fanciful ? We are dealing with hard, stern facts—the hardest and sternest that any generation has ever had to face ; Tasso's theme had the mellowing light of intervening centuries playing upon it, and his

treatment is frankly imaginative. He opens his Poem (i. 2) with an apology to the Muse for his fanciful embroidering of the historical material—

> . . . Tu perdona
> S' intesso fregi al ver, s' adorno in parte
> D' altri diletti, che de' tuoi, le carte.

Sometimes his imagination works simply on a gorgeous description, as when he depicts for us the pageant of the rival armies: the Crusading host reviewed by Godfrey beneath the walls of Tortosa (i. 36 *sqq.*), and the Egyptian army by the King of Egypt (xvii. 9 *sqq.*) in the frontier town of Gaza, famous—as our own troops realised to their cost in the early stages of the Palestinian campaign—for its "Immensi solitudini d' arena," (xvii. 1).

Marvellous as are these descriptions, and more full of colour—be it conceded—than any modern massing of khaki-clad armed men, Tasso would have had greatly vaster, if not more varied, groups to depict on our Eastern-European front when the Russian army was still a factor, and vaster still in these last months on the West. And for picturesqueness and glamour, our Oriental battlefields and movements of troops offer scenes which would run even Tasso's gorgeous pages very close. Take for instance the picture, drawn by the Australian official correspondent, of the entry of the allied troops into Damascus on the first days of October, 1918—

> "Past applauding multitudes . . . rode the dashing Australian Light Horsemen, followed by brilliant cavalry from the Indian Highlands, then by Yeomanry from the English Shires, black-skinned French Colonials from North Africa on their barb stallions, sturdy New Zealand machine-gunners and batteries from England and Scotland." These, with the "swarthy Hedjaz Arabs beautifully mounted on

> black and white horses and on camels . . . formed a magnificent demonstration of the might of the British and allied forces."

How well this would look in Tasso's sonorous verse!

But the characteristic products of Tasso's fancy are more imaginative than these, outrageously imaginative, one might call them, though they have, withal, a dramatic appropriateness, since he is treading on Moslem soil, and his magicians and fair women, his bejewelled halls beneath the river-bed, his enchanted forest and spellbound island-mountain give us the true savour of the Arabian Nights.

But was it ever so true as it is to-day that "truth is stranger than fiction?" Was ever enchanted forest more repellent in its horrors than some of those stricken woods on our Western Front? If it had fallen to Tasso to describe in his verse our modern air-fighting, would it not have afforded his genius far more scope than was offered even by the wonderful description of the journey of the enchanted boat in which the two paladins sail out along the coast of Africa and between the Pillars of Hercules into the great Ocean to rescue Rinaldo (xv. 6 *sqq.*)? Or Ismeno's magic car, mist-swathed, and leaving no track upon the sand? When, in his first Canto (i. 14,15), he depicts the Angel Gabriel cutting his way through winds and clouds, hovering over Lebanon, and then swooping down upon Tortosa—

> Pria sul Libano monte ei si ritenne
> E si librò su l' adeguate penne,
> E ver le piazze di Tortosa poi
> Drizzò precipitando il volo in giuso . . .

might it not have been, almost, a literal description of a flight of his own compatriot and fellow-poet Gabriele d' Annunzio?

Again, one of the most characteristic of the *fregi* with which Tasso adorns the chroniclers' story is found in the

prominence of his heroines. Doubtless we owe this largely to the brilliant originality of the Italian ladies of the Renaissance, in which the House of Este, under his patron Alfonso, was *facile princeps*; just as the poet's exuberance of fancy and occasionally melodramatic touch reflects the eager, playful, pleasure-loving, fanciful, and histrionic tone of his favourite Court of Ferrara. His heroines certainly stand forth in dazzling prominence. Clorinda, the fair Amazon, is a fighting man to all intents, with a man's mien, a man's directness, a man's sense of fair play, added to the charm of a beautiful, high-born Lady. Armida, matchless in her witchery, is a doughty warrior too; but also, by turns, languishing lover and ruthless, Circe-like enchantress. Erminia, disinherited Princess, gracious, tender, shy and sensitive, is yet bold to face all things—even the sight and touch of blood—if so she may help and tend the man who, in the day of her calamity, saved her from shame.

Fanciful figures: yet Clorinda and Armida (in her warrior-rôle) have not been without their parallels on the Russian front. And the fair Erminia might stand for us as the prototype of the gently nurtured girl of our time who has found herself and her true *métier* in the self-sacrificing toils of Red Cross work. Of the knowledge of healing herbs, says Tasso (vi. 67)—

> Arte, che, per usanza, in quel paese
> Nelle figlie de' re par che si serbe;

And indeed the tendance of the wounded is essentially a royal task in any country; and one in which not a few royal princesses have shewn themselves versed in our day. Erminia, when at last she finds her love, tends him right royally (xix. 111 *sqq.*), but her address to the exhausted Tancred evinces also something peculiarly modern. What could be more in the professional Red Cross style than her injunction: "You shall know all you ask in

good time; now you must be obedient and hold your tongue, and try to get some sleep" (xix. 114)?—

> Saprai, rispose, il tutto: or (tel comando
> come medica tua), taci, e riposa.

But are Tasso's heroines after all so wonderful? To-day is the day of Women. They have proved and established in National Service their claim to the National Franchise and to a place in the National Legislature, and, what is more, their claim to be man's companion and competitor in countless fields of activity. For a large part of the last century we had a woman on the throne: the present century may yet see a woman actually leading the king's government. It is their War as well as ours; and now the victory is won, their part in it—without which victory had been unattainable—shall have full recognition. Apart from the noble work of the Red Cross Sisters and helpers, from the valour of the girl-chauffeurs and others who have sought and found a place as near as possible to the firing line, we have thousands of maidens and young matrons ready to risk comeliness and health and their whole physical future in the pestilent atmosphere of munition shops; thousands more who have donned the King's uniform as "Waac's" and "Wrens" and "Penguins." How few and far between, in comparison, are the Women in Tasso's scheme! How sorely his imagination would have been taxed, yet withal how congenially, had it fallen to him to describe the manifold activities—and the undiminished charms—of our twentieth century girlhood! Erminia is in some ways more of a Victorian type; but, if the fight is recognised as being fought elsewhere than in the actual front line, Clorinda is with us everywhere; strengthening the hands and inspiring the hearts of her compatriots, striking the chill of fear into the foe, and the dart of cupid into the susceptible hero at her side.

Armida, in Tasso's scheme, bridges the gap between the seen and the unseen, between women's work and the work of the Angels—good Angels, and bad. This brings us to another of Tasso's *fregi*, and one of his most imaginative "embroideries": I mean his elaborate description of the part played in the drama of the Crusade by the heavenly hosts and the hosts of the infernal regions. To the latter, surely, and especially to the magnificent picture of Satan's Council of War (iv. 1-19), Milton must probably owe more than we ordinarily recognise. Among the most splendid passages of the Poem are, on the other hand, the descriptions of the counter-activities of the heavenly armies: God's sending forth of Gabriel (i. 7), the Court of the Most High (ix. 55 *sqq.*), Michael's scornful, single-handed rout of the massed battalions of Hell (ix. 63-5). But mythological as is the tone in which these events are narrated, and mythical as the whole conception might have seemed to a more materialistic generation than our own, we shall be ready to recognise that all this strain in the *Gerusalemme Liberata* is, after all, based, in a sense, on hard fact. It is, in fact, the Poet's recognition of the paramount spiritual impulse which drove those hordes of Crusaders across a dangerous Europe into a still more dangerous Asia: his consciousness that the war they were waging was, in our present-day phrase, a "Spiritual War." Have we not too our still warm and throbbing legend of the "Angels at Mons" and of the "White Companion"? Have not our own soldiers each his Guardian Angel, his "Defensor celeste" (vii. 84)? Whether Angel forms were seen at Mons or not, those of us who believe in their existence at all, believe that they were there, and not there only; but their force is everywhere joined to ours as often as we are really fighting "for God and the Right."

One further point, as regards angelic agency—this

time the evil angels. Tasso, like Dante in his classic episode of Buonconte (*Purg.* v. 109 *sqq.*), attributes to the fiends a certain control over the weather (vii. 115 *sqq.*) Many of us would like to share this conviction with him when we think of the repeated occasions in which our well-planned offensives in the West have been wrecked by the sudden break-up of a fine spell. And to the intervention of St. Michael, on the contrary, we would blithely ascribe that most opportune change of wind in the early morning of the day when we first played with gas at Loos.

The spiritual motive of the Crusades is finely typified in the character of Godfrey, who like our own loved Lord Roberts, initiated every fresh plan with prayer ; whose incorruptible soul saw nothing of the material openings that a Crusade might offer—openings that were the very *raison-d'-être* of crusading to the shrewd merchants of Venice in later years—Godfrey, to whom was unthinkable the mere notion of such bargaining and traffic as Frederic of Swabia was to employ a century later. " We are not out for gain," he says to Altamoro of Samarcand, " we are not traders, but Crusaders."

> Che della vita altrui prezzo non cerco ;
> Guerreggio an Asia, non cambio o merco.
>
> . . . .

We should like to picture Tasso weaving into his stately verse, descriptions of submarine warfare, of the advance of the tanks, of an artillery barrage on a fifty-mile front : and we could find in *Gerusalemme Liberata* a starting-point for most of these. But space permits us only two more points.

The Hun-spirit, and the glory of our Boy-heroes, are both depicted in Tasso's magic tapestry : the one succinctly and sternly, the other more diffusely and with all the glamour of his genius.

The brutal measures devised—some of them not put into practice—by the Sultan against the subject Christian population of Jerusalem, and all the other infidel horrors of oppression and cruelty which Tasso evidently puts forth as the *ne plus ultra* of bygone barbarism, have been matched and exceeded by those wreaked upon Christian populations by the modern Turk with the connivance of his Teutonic ally; matched and exceeded by the votaries of the "good German God" themselves, upon defenceless civil populations of invaded districts, and equally defenceless prisoners of war. But the spirit of "Frightfulness" itself is sharply sketched with a single stroke of the pen in the description of one of the leaders of the Egyptian army (vii. 22): "no true knight, but a fierce, murderous robber."

> Albiazar ch' è fiero
> Omicida ladron, non cavaliero.

But now that victory is won, and those horrors (save for the deep wounds of Europe) seem an evil dream, we fain would forget the unforgettable, lest we retard the work of reconciliation.

Let us finish on a happier note, with Rinaldo—Rinaldo who, as Spenser says in his Prefatory Letter to the *Faëry Queen*, represents "the Vertues of a private man," even as Godfrey those of a good governour.

Rinaldo's very existence is, doubtless, largely due to "dynastic reasons": to the necessity of flattering, that is, the House of Este; yet he concentrates in himself all the elements of the perfect knight, the pattern of chivalry, as conceived by Tasso. If the desire to please a paltron, Alfonso d' Este, brought Rinaldo into the world, did not a similar motive assist at the birth of Virgil's *Pius Aeneas?* Both Aeneas and Rinaldo are strong enough to "stand on their own feet."

Rinaldo is in many ways the true type of our modern

Boy-heroes—yes, our heroes, and those of the other side—as well as of mediaeval chivalry. Unable to rest at home when war is raging across the world, he dashes off, while still under sixteen years of age, by paths known only to himself, and " joins up " in Palestine.

> Allor (ne pur tre lustri avea forniti)
> Fuggì soletto, e corse strade ignote.
> Varcò l' Egeo, passò di Greca i liti,
> Giunse nel campo in region remote
> Nobilissima fuga, e che l' imiti
> Ben degna alcun magnanima nipote.
> Tre anni son ch' è in guerra : e intempestiva
> Molle piuma del mento appena usciva.

Many a lad of this generation has indeed imitated his " noble flight " ; has seen three years of war—and what a war !—ere his face first felt the touch of the razor. They have sped forth from the fields, from the mines and mills, and from luxurious homes where too much softness was in danger of undermining their manhood. They have " climbed the steep ascent " of the Hill of Valour—they have, in fact, heard and responded to a call like that which came to Rinaldo after he had lain spell-bound in Armida's Garden, (xvii. 61)—

> Signor, non sotto l' ombra in piaggia molle
> Tra fonti e fior, tra ninfe e tra sirene
> Ma in cima all' erto e faticoso colle
> Della virtù è riposto il nostro bene.

" They in a short time have fulfilled a long time." For them the fruits of manhood have followed hard upon the bloom of youth. In them soft gentleness is conjoined with royalty of mien and soldierly bearing. In battle, Mars ; in face, Eros ; the cynosure of a world's admiring eyes—Behold Rinaldo !

> Dolcemente feroce alzar vedresti
> La regal fronte, e in lui mirar sol tutti.
> L' età precorse, e la speranza ; e presti
> Pareano i fior, quando n' usciro i frutti :
> Se 'l miri fulminar nell' arme avvolto,
> Marte lo stimi : Amor, se scopre il volto.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

ANTONIO MASCHIO AND THE CELEBRATION OF 1865

THE Dante Celebrations of the last fifty-six years—the years that mark the duration of the Poet's life—have always had about them, as was meet, a touch of fervid Italian patriotism. For Dante is in a true sense "Pater Patriae." The sexcentenary of his birth in 1865 coincided with the new dignity of Florence as temporary capital of a largely united and independent Italy. It was celebrated by the unveiling of Dante's statue by Victor Emmanuel, protagonist of the New Italy in the chief Piazza of his new Capital, and it was celebrated with military as well as civic honours.

The Celebration of 1921, on the sexcentenary of the Poet's death, was marked again with patriotic fervour. The troops who had redeemed "Italia irredenta" in the Great War offered a wreath of bronze and silver at his shrine in Ravenna; and shouts of "Viva l' Italia! Viva Fiume!" echoed in the Banqueting Hall of the castle of Poppi in Casentino, where Dante had been a guest of the Conti Guidi, and in sight of which he had fought as a young man in defence of his native city. The patriotic cries had now a new note of triumph about them, because Dante's prophetic envisaging of Italy as "one, and to be loved" and his incidental marking out of her true boundaries had at last been verified.[1]

Between these two, on September 14th, 1908, Ravenna, his "last refuge," was the scene of a most enthusiastic

[1] *Inf.* i. 104 *sqq.* *Inf.* ix. 133 *sqq.* and xx. 59 *sqq.* (See above, pp. 13 *sq*).

ceremony, to which flocked representatives of the as yet unredeemed Italian fringe, and men of Trent and Trieste and Gorizia and Pola and Fiume claimed Dante as the prophet of their own "italianità" and of their proximate liberation from the foreign yoke.

There is a little-known incident connected with the first of these Celebrations—that of 1865—which is worth recording, if only for its simple pathos. The story of an attempt at Dante-worship that was motived rather by personal loyalty than by patriotic ardour, yet was baulked by the barrier set up by a foreign domination between a true-hearted Italian and his goal.

Antonio Maschio [1] was close upon forty years old when the news came to him in his humble Venetian dwelling that Italy was going to celebrate her greatest Poet in his native City of Florence.

He was a simple gondolier, son of a small pork-butcher on the island of Murano. In the year '48, so notable in the annals of Italy's fight for freedom, he picked up some stray sheets of paper in a tobacconist's shop, on which were printed Cantos xiii. and xiv. of the *Inferno*. He took them home and read and re-read them: From that day he took Dante as his Master, and devoted all his spare moments to the study of the *Divina Commedia*. He lived to see, as he conceived, Dante's prophecy of the "Veltro" —the great Liberator—fulfilled in 1871; when Victor Emmanuel entered Rome, and before he died he was in correspondence with some of the greatest Dante scholars in Italy and abroad.

Far advanced in his Dante studies in 1865, and over head and ears in love with the great Poet, he dared to brave the Austrian frontier guards—for Venetia was

[1] The facts about Maschio are drawn from an article in the *Strenna per l' anno.* 1897, of the Venetian *Educatorio Rachitici, "Regina Margherita,"* by Signor Giuseppe Bianchini.

still Austrian territory—setting out on foot for Florence to keep tryst with his Maestro " duca, signore e Masetro." Before the middle of March he packed up in two great bundles all the Dante material he had collected and evolved, put a favourite " Dantino " in his pocket and started with his precious burden on the adventurous pilgrimage. He passed the first line of guards, posing as a wine-seller from Chioggia. His great obstacle was the river Po, running high and with current all too swift. Moreover it was night, and no boat was to be found. It was but human to shrink back, but the love of Dante conquered his fear. Did he recall the passage where Dante, shrinking from the wall of flame, hears Virgil's appeal: " Senti figlio, Fra Beatrice e te è questo muro " ? [1] Dauntless he flung himself into the chill waters and struck out for the farther shore. In a life and death struggle with the current he lost his precious bundles, and landed more dead than alive, with nothing in his pocket but the little volume of the *Divina Commedia ;* and he afterwards declared that Dante had saved his disciple from drowning that night, even as in his earthly life he had saved a child in the Baptistery at Florence.[2] Next morning the hapless man fell into the hands of the Sindaco of La Mesola, who handed him over to the police, and he suffered a month's durance in an Austrian prison, after which he was ignominiously sent back to his native town.

It was a famous gathering on that 14th of May in the broad space before the church of Santa Croce ; and many learned and ingenious speeches marked the occasion. But the Festival was the poorer by the enforced absence of one who had risked his life to be there : Antonio Maschio, " il Gondolier Dantista."

[1] *Purg.* xxvii. 25. [2] *Inf.* xix. 16, *sqq.*

APPENDIX II

DANTE AND THE POPE

INTERESTING on several grounds is the Encyclical of His Holiness Benedict XV, published in the *Osservatore Romano* of May 4th last, in which he commends to all Catholic teachers and students the study of the works of Italy's greatest Poet. He seems to admit that a certain constraint lay upon him in the matter, that the successor of St. Peter could not afford to be silent while all the civilised world was sending up a chorus of praise. That indeed, it would befit him to propose himself as Choragus: "Jamvero tam mirifico quasi choro bonorum omnium non solum non deesse Nos decet, sed quodammodo praeesse." Yet the eulogy which he utters, if here and there it suggests a touch of patronising, is, on the whole so spontaneous and sincere in tone, that one is inclined to forgive the half-evasion with which he manipulates the awkward fact of Dante's fierce invective—"perquam acerbe et contumeliose"—directed against the Holy Father's illustrious predecessors. First of all he suggests for Dante the excuse of a harassed and embittered spirit, misled by the poison of malicious tale-bearers; and next, with an appearance of candour which it would be discourteous to discount, he asks, Who denies that there were in those days; there were faults even in the ordained clergy—"Quis neget nonnulla eo tempore fuisse in hominibus sacri ordinis haud probanda?" . . . a somewhat general statement which might or might not include the Infallible. For the rest, Dante is praised as a true-hearted Catholic—as indeed he was—and as an extraordinarily

effective teacher of the Catholic Faith. The spirit and purpose of the *Divine Comedy*—the aim, as set forth in the famous tenth Epistle [1]—and the Poet's treatment of his subject in his pictures of Hell, Paradise and Purgatory, all come in for hearty commendation. His ever-living treatment of an ever-living theme is rightly characterised as strikingly modern compared with the revived Paganism of some modern poets. The teaching power of his spiritual ideas outsteps the bounds of the archaic Ptolemaic system in which they are framed. True to the teaching of his great master Aquinas, he attracts moderns to that teaching by the sublimity of his poetic genius. The Pope claims to know personally unbelievers who have been converted to the Faith by the study of Dante.

This emphasis on Dante's importance as a religious teacher is interesting in view of Benedetto Croce's recent critique, in which he dismisses the theological aspect of Dante as irrelevant. In this connection it is worth noting that a distinguished Friar has been lecturing in Rome on Dante's theology, and directly attacking Croce for his depreciation of the same.

We have thus two Benedicts disputing over the spirit of Dante, even as the Archangel and another disputed over the body of Moses—Benedict the Pope and Benedict the Philosopher, Critic and Minister of Education. That the latter has the greater name in the realm of literary criticism, we cannot doubt. His best friends go far to claim for him infallibility in that line. The infallible claims of the former are confined to the region of Faith and Morals; but if Dante could be called in as arbitrator he would probably decide in favour of the Pope, pronouncing with regard to his own religious teaching that it was meant to count, and does count. It is, however, with no animus against the other Benedict in his official capacity

[1] *Thirteenth* in the *Testo Critico* of 1921 (Bemporad).

that His Holiness proceeds—making an excellent point, which most of us would applaud—to note the absurdity of a State system of secularised Education which tries to banish the Name and the thought of God from the schools, and at the same time hold up the *Divina Commedia* as an indispensable instrument of culture. Italian priests of to-day are ready to defend the present Minister of Public Instruction as one who, whatever his personal views may be, has endeavoured to mete out evenhanded justice even to " denominational " Education.

APPENDIX III

DANTE THE POET

Benedetto Croce's[1] contention is, of course, fundamentally true, that Dante is first and last a Poet, and that it is the magnetism of his poetic genius that attracts interest to all the varied subjects which he touches. If he had not been a Poet, these essays would never have been written; and the writer hopes that the poetic quality of his hero will have been felt as a background all through the book. His lyrical power is the driving force of his many-sided message. To the struggling patriot, whether of 1848 or of 1918, he is a Tyrtaeus; to the artist in poetry, a Horace (although he never saw the *Ars Poetica*); to the lover, a Christian Anacreon; to the religious devotee, a Psalmist and Prophet in one; to the student of human nature in its detail and its large epic aspect, a Homer and a Virgil; in every aspect a supreme poet. The very magnetism of his lyrical appeal will, however, continue to keep countless disciples busy, in the future as in the past, exploring the by-ways and investigating the by-products of his genius; gloating over his obscurities, and glorying in everything, big or little, that Dante has touched. Those "questioni dantesche" on the more puerile of which Croce rightly pours his scorn,[2] will emerge to the end of the chapter—a lush growth of mingled flowers and weeds witnessing to the extraordinary fertility of the soil.

And we may go on to ask, what, exactly, is the value,

[1] Benedetto Croce, *La Poesia di Dante.* Bari: Laterza, 1921, p. 10.
[2] *Ib.* pp. 63, 197 *sqq.*

or the nature of that "lyrical quality" which Croce justly exalts if it is entirely divorced from its content, its subject-matter?

True, Beauty has a value of its own, as Dante himself saw. In theory, indeed, he makes Poetry a humble gilding of the didactic pill, on the Horatian principle of *miscere utile dulci*; a beauteous fiction for a moral purpose—"una verita ascosa sotto bella menzogna"[1] a "clumsy device," as Professor Foligno puts it, "to rivet the attention of readers while the lessons of virtue and truth were expounded."[2] In practice, however, the author of the *Convivio* "spoke as Love dictated"[3]—nay, even in the *Convivio* itself (as Prof. Foligno points out), in the *envoi* of the first Canzone,[4] he bids his poetry, if its argument prove unintelligible, take heart of grace and draw attention to its own sheer beauty—

> Allor ti priego che ti ricomforte,
> Dicendo lor, diletta mia novella.
> "Ponete mente almen com' io son bella!"

But lyrical form cannot exist as a mere abstraction. It must needs express itself in words that have a meaning—in "subject-matter." The Poet sings of what is in his heart, and sings—

> . . . A quel modo
> Ch' e' ditta dentro;

he sings because he *must*. And Dante has this irresistible impulse of the artist to express himself. He tells us in the XIXth chapter of the *Vita Nuova* the story of the birth of his canzone, "Donne ch' avete intelletto d' amore," the famous song by which Bonagiunta knew him in Purgatory.[5] First, a great desire for utterance, then a pondering over the appropriate mode, and finally, "I

[1] Foligno, *Dante, the Poet*. [2] Foligno, p. 15. [3] *Purg.* xxiv. 52-54.
[4] Oxford Ed., p. 251; Bemporad, p. 171.
[5] *Purg.* xxiv. 51. [1] Foligno, p. 8.

declare," he says, "my tongue spake as though by its own impulse and said—

Donne ch' avete intelletto d' amore.[1]

That is the artistic impulse to create, and represents, indeed, the sum total of his "Message" as conceived by many an artist. But Dante took his message and his mission seriously; and unless we recognise as a factor in his poetry this sense of responsibility for the gift, and for the use of it—in however exalted a sense—as the handmaid of Religion, we surely misconceive him. He is essentially (not accidentally) didactic, prophetic, a conscious and purposeful inspirer of his own generation and of those to come.

From the point of view of purely aesthetic criticism his "Theological Romance," his "Epic of man's freewill," with its massive architectural framework and its recurring theological, philosophical, political and otherwise didactic passages may be entirely secondary—may be, in fact, so much awkward and obstructive material which the poet only reduces to order and dominates by force of titanic genius.[2]

Dante certainly rises superior in fact to the contemporary theory of the Art of Poetry which he repeats in the *Convivio* and the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*.[3] It is this which makes his verse to be, as we have called it, the driving power of his message. But this homage to the traditional theory is not mere lip-service. Supreme poet as he is, he deliberately makes his sublime verse the instrument of spiritual teaching. And in so doing only renders it the more sublime.

[1] *V.N.*, xix. *ad init.* (Oxf. Ed., p. 215; Bemporad, p. 21).
[2] Croce, *Poesia di Dante*, p. 67.
[3] *V.E.*, II, iv. *sub init.* (Oxf. Ed., p. 393; Bemporad, p. 341; *cf.* Foligno, p. 8.)

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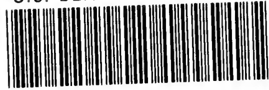
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