

the careful
will be more
er, according
e and experi-
ante and his
d or ridiculed
and that the
distinguished
en the readi-
of the mighty

e to deal with
sources, its lar-
s plan. It is
secutive parts
Purgatorio, and

est work of its
essors on the
and Dante
haps the reg-
e whole learn-
e difficulty in
which he drew
y Scriptures,
first of these
the Christian
pecially Virgil
lf acquainted
id which con-
by "Eneas" to
probably also
n translation
or a series of
considered in a
Eloquence; but
according to
the first line

to condemn
what such a
ow much we
media is con-
out, which if
east made his
cial attention
is not only a
but it is the
ingenuity and
s only place
This opin-
ne Athenian
ined. Three
e consists of
e and three
e rhyme he
e stanzas.
of the Tere-
imen in Dor-
a very coarse
cept that he
dables instead

had half-
st dell,
ond all seem-
ed to tell
ear, and com-
s that seem
little more.

Cary's work
e is accor-

panied by very full and helpful notes. Cayley's, which is in the metre of the original, is much thought of by some. Wright's is very good. Plumptre's is often very happy, although in places he is hampered by the necessities of rhyme; but his notes, both in matter and manner, are beyond all praise. Dr. Carlyle's *Inferno* in prose is admirable and Mr. Butler's *Paradiso* and *Purgatorio* are said to be equally good.

The poem consists of three parts (*Cantiche*), each containing thirty-three cantos, but there is one prefatory canto in the *Inferno*, which has thus thirty-four, so that the whole number amounts to one hundred.

With respect to the date of the composition of the *Commedia*—a question much contested—there is an essential agreement on all important points. The idea of the poem was conceived not later than 1300, when he was thirty-five years of age. This is clear from the first line just quoted. Moreover, it is confirmed by what we have seen of the close of the *Vita Nuova*, which was completed about that time.

Boccaccio said that Dante had completed seven cantos before he was banished from Florence in 1302, and there is a tradition that the *Inferno* was finished in 1308. If so, portions may have been added subsequently. At any rate, there is an allusion to the death of Clement V. (*Inf.* xix. 80), which took place in 1314.

It is generally believed that about this time he gave the final touches to the first of the three poems. The *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* were written between the death of Henry VII. (1313) and Dante's death (1321) chiefly at Ravenna and Verona, and they seem to have been completed just before his death.

It has been truly said that the *Divina Commedia* is a theology and the work of a great theologian. If it sets forth the various states of man, it shows man always as the creature of God and in relation to Him. To Dante, as to all greater thinkers, this world is but "the time-vesture of the Eternal." Thus he represents S. Thomas Aquinas as telling that the source of all excellence was in God. Whatever virtue was in the side of Adam, from which Eve was taken, or in the side of Christ, pierced for our salvation, was of God (*Paradiso* xiii., 34 ff.).

All evil is in separation from good. All blessedness and good in union with Him and knowledge of Him; and only as our hearts and eyes are purged is that knowledge possible. The creature can find satisfaction only in the Creator, who is the source of light and blessedness. Of man's thirst for truth and of its satisfaction in God he speaks in *Par.* iv., 119; *Purg.* xvi., 86. Because of these mistakes we must be led and guided until we find our good in God (*Par.* xxvi., 19).

The poem is in some senses both literal and allegorical. It may be said to be literal in the sense of representing the current theological opinions of the day, which were almost certainly accepted by Dante without question. But he certainly means far more than this. He sets before us the reality of God's government of men and the world, the prevalence of law, the spiritual education of man under the grace of God. First comes the *Inferno*, with its awful pictures of the consequences of unrepented sin, next the *Purgatorio*, illustrating the prominence by which men are cleansed from sin and made meet for the fellowship of God, and finally the *Paradiso* shows us the blessed in light and glory.

A word or two may here be said as to the symbolical meaning of the persons introduced. Beatrice represents divine revelation and co-operating grace. Virgil is human wisdom, acting rightly and legitimately. Lucia, S. Lucy, is illuminating grace. Cato represents the highest form of merely human righteousness. Other explanations will be given in the proper place. The application of the poem is wide and varied. It refers to the moral, the religious, the social and the political condition of mankind and of the age to which Dante belonged. It is a difficult book to read and has been charged with obscurity. But its obscurity is not that of a confused mind, it arises from his use of imagery and the remarkable terseness of his style.

If we would understand the plan of the poem we should put ourselves under the guidance of the author, especially by mastering the first two cantos of the *Inferno*. The following remarks are made on the supposition that the reader has beside him Cary's translation. If he wishes for help in studying the Italian, he will find that best in Longfellow's version, or in the prose rendering of Dr. Carlyle.

Well, then, Dante tells us that, at the age of thirty-five, he found himself in a rough and savage wood, having lost the path. This is true of himself, lost in sin and unbelief, or it may refer to mankind at large. He could hardly say how he had come into that condition. Reaching the foot of a mountain, he sees the rays of the sun gilding the heights of a mountain and sets forth to reach it. Here is evidently the effort of the soul to escape from sin and ignorance and to reach the heights of truth and holiness.

Three beasts intercept his path—a panther, a lion and a she-wolf. There is here a probable reference to Jeremiah v., 6. The three great classes of sin are represented (1 S. John ii., 16.) The panther represents lust, the lion pride and the she-wolf avarice. But in their political meaning they are thought to represent Florence, France and the Papal Court—the three great impediments to righteous imperial government.

We see this in what Virgil says to Dante about the greyhound; for whether the direct reference here may be to the Emperor or another, it is almost certain that the power which is to drive the she-wolf back to hell is the legitimate imperial authority, with perhaps a reference to Can Grande (great dog).

While Dante is in this state of terror and obstruction, there appears to him one whose voice is weak and hoarse. This is Virgil, the representative of human reason and conscience, but not like the "gentle lady" in the *Vita Nuova*, who was human philosophy in its independence, an influence from which Dante had turned away. Here is human wisdom doing its proper work under the guidance of divine grace.

Virgil tells Dante that he had been sent by a Lady, Beatrice, who had told him how it was that she had been sent upon that errand. A Lady in heaven was the originator of the mission. This lady is explained by Cary and Longfellow to mean the divine mercy, and doubtless they are right; but when Scartazzini Hettinger, Plumptre and others declare that in the first meaning the Blessed Virgin is intended, we are constrained to agree with them. She then represents the divine mercy and prevenient Grace. She, pitying the wandering

Dante, sends Lucia, S. Lucy, the representative of Illuminating Grace, who goes to Beatrice and reproaches her with the neglect of one who had loved her so well. Here, as often, we meet the union of the real to the ideal. Here, upon Beatrice, representing cooperating Grace, goes forth and sends Virgil to Dante's assistance.

Dante at first hesitates and trembles at the prospect set before him of visiting in succession the terrible abodes of the lost, the cleansing fires of those undergoing purification, and the abodes of bliss. At last he plucks up courage, and they go forth on their way. Thus we come to the gate of Hell.

WILLIAM CLARK.

PARIS LETTER.

Paris has put her heart and soul into the Franco-Russian reception. Citizens who truly represent the country look intensely happy and feel more so. They want no parchment deed of alliance; they say that it is impossible that Russia could doubt our sincerity and esteem for her. She has accepted the French bride, a *marriage d'inclination*, as well as a *marriage d'raison*. The union of heads, hearts, and perhaps of interests has relieved France of that terrible night-mare which weighed upon her—that of being alone in the world, for in this age even co-operation must be applied to diplomacy. People, after all, commence to think that the bloated armaments are the best safe-guard of peace, and that national pride and the ambition to be in the first line will become an aim for the foremost nations as is the desire to be first in industry, commerce, science etc., etc. In any case England, being free from European alliances, can exercise a decidedly controlling influence in the softening of international asperities and the pruning down of attempts to kindle continental war. No change by the Russian visit to Toulon will affect the role of England in the Mediterranean; but if Russia has "come to stay" the case will be changed. Cannot the Czar arrange that his little squadron on its way back to Kronstadt for winter quarters pay a visit to Portsmouth? What is Madame Olga Novikoff about? Surely "O.K." are magic letters, and imply success in advance. The Mayor of Portsmouth would present the regulation loaf and quantity of salt to Admiral Avellan, not on a silver, but on a gold salver. That casting anchor in British waters would do more to convert the timid and the cynical to a belief in the trend of the world to peace on earth and good-will towards men than all the honeysuckle yarns of international friendships and elegant extracts from the Sermon on the Mount, and as the Czar is a just man, loves peace, does not want Constantinople, all the Pamir and the whole of Herat, why not think of a visit of his warships to Portsmouth?

I never remember Paris looking so pretty and so smilingly gay as on the present occasion. The display of flags is very general, especially so in the quarters where artisans and trading people live, move, and have their being. Deduction made for the dressing of taverns and shops, the ornamentation of private windows is blossoming into "fair." But it is only right to record that there are numerous blanks, and these chiefly in the well-to-do parts of the city. The zenith of the diplomatic wedding will be when the people in its thousands will descend into the streets