

"Podesta, or whatsoever they call it, of Florence, well accepted
"among neighbours and the world had wanted one of the most
"notable words ever spoken or sung." It is not smug prosperity,
but misery, exile, suffering that makes poets, philosophers, and
saints.

Note, further, if you will, how this same life of exile emphasised,
brought into sharp relief, Dante's unutterable loneliness. Yet, here again,
he is but as the rest of us. *Singulariter sum ego, donec transeam.* So, the Psalmist. Isolation is of the essence of
individuality. "The heart", says the Wise Man, "knoweth its own
"bitterness", and once awakened to that consciousness,

"Nor poppy, nor mandragora, ,,
"Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,
Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep,
"Thou knewest yesterday."

Dante, it would seem, awakened early to such consciousness,
and, therefore, for him, there was neither rest nor peace. His life,
in short, was a more bitter Purgatory, a fiercer Hell than any he
has pictured. But it was from that very fact that he drew his
inspiration.

Thenceforth he walked *per vias duras*; or, to use his own
words: "How hard is the path, *come è duro calle*". Nor was he
one to hide his wretchedness, his misery, under the cloak of an
assumed good humour, to pretend to a inconvenience he did not feel.
"By degrees", writes Carlyle, it became evident to him that he
had no longer any resting-place, or hope of benefit, in this earth."
That, one takes it, is a wholesome knowledge to attain to; know-
ledge wherefrom resignation, at least, may be derived, if not peace;
"I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."
So St. Paul; who learned, later, that "the sufferings of this present
time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be
revealed in us." Dante, one hopes and prays, learned both before
his pilgrimage was finished.

To quote Carlyle, again. "The deeper, naturally, would the
"Eternal World impress itself on him; the awful reality over which,
"after all, this Time-World, with its Florences and banishments,
"only flutters as an unreal shadow. Florence thou shalt never see:
"but Hell and Purgatory and Heaven thou shalt surely see! What
"is Florence and the world and life altogether? ETERNITY:
"thither, of a truth, not elsewhere, art thou and all things bound!