heaven. Dante's Beatrice is as famous as Petrarch's Laura. There had been such a lady in the flesh, for the child Dante Alighieri, aged nine, fell in love at Florence with Beatrice Portinari, of the same age, and the affection continued until the decease of the latter at the age of twenty-four. Afterwards our poet married Gemma Donati, a "wife of savage temper," whose ferocity probably made him idealisze his lost Beatrice and make her his guide through that region of blessedness in which her spirit dwelt :

> ". . . a cloud of flowers Fell showering. In white veil with olive wreathed, A virgin in my view appeared, beneath Green nantle, robed in hue of living flame: . . . And o'er my spirit moved A hidden virtue from her, at whose touch The power of former love was strong within me."

This charming eidolon of his former love conducted him through Paradise.

The Paradise is less popular than the other two visions, inasmuch as it is too metaphysical for common minds. It is more of argumentative and didactic than of narrative. Nevertheless it contains some passages singularly gorgeous. Unfortunately the ladies who are mentioned as enjoying the delights of heaven are not much known to modern readers. St. Claire, sister Piccarda, the empress Constance, enjoy the reward of purity, as does Cunizza, whose record to a modern mind was not blameless ; Rahab, who is mentioned in scripture, Heb. xi. 31, Eve, Rachel, Sarah, Judith, Rebecca, Ruth, St. Ann, St. Lucia, with other Old and New Testament worthies, and a numberless but nameless "band angelic, disporting in their spheres :"

> "This fair assemblage. Stoles of sunny white How numberless. The city where we dwell Behold how vast, and these our seats so throng'd Few now are wanting here."

In all the three Visions of "The Divine Comedy," amid much complicated and frequently obscure allegory, it is easy to read between the lines that the poet's object is to inculcate the Christian virtues of truth, gentleness, temperance, humility, charity and faith. It is not likely that a new Dante will arise to assign to their respective places the politicians, peculators, agnostics, women of fashion and professional beauties that we know to-day. Where he to do so, the thought would be too appalling "in which circle would he place them ?"

The personalities of a great man, especially if a poet, is usually a subject of interest. Giotto painted the portrait of Dante and his cotemporaries have described him. He was of medium stature, thin, of dark complexion with a beaky nose, black beard hair, and eyes, and a long face with a protruding under lip. He was slow and solemn in his movements, very taciturn, and when he did speak was bitter and sarcastic. On the whole he could not have been a nice person to know. Some allowance may even he made for his "wife of savage temper," for no doubt he must sometimes have exasperated her. Indeed it has been said (with what truth we know not), that poets, even the best of them, are not easy to live with. But this, let us hope, is a libel.

## A QUEER LITTLE ISLAND.

The political relations of England and Germany have recently made the little island of Heligoland not only famous but a place of importance in international politics. Some of the facts about Heligoland, which are found in the "Encyclopædia Britannica," are interesting peculiarly.

the "Encyclopædia Britannica," are interesting peculiarly. Heligoland lies in the North Sea about thirty-six miles from the mouth of the Elbe. There are in reality two islets, one of the sand and one of rock, lying a quarter of a mile apart.

"The Rock Island is nearly triangular in shape surrounded on every side by steep cliffs, the only beach being the sandy spit where the landing-place is situated, near the south-east point. On this islet there are some five hundred houses, divided into a lower town or Unterland, on the spit, and on upper town or Oberland situated on the cliff above, and connected with the lower town by a wooden stair of 190 steps, the only possible mode of com-munication between the two sections. The portion of the flattopped rock not occupied by the houses, the church with graveyard, the Government residences, and place for a battery, comprised a little pasture land, a few cabbage gardens, potato patches, and a powder magazine at the north end of the route. About two hundred sheep tethered to particular spots, feed on the scanty herbage, eked out by potato-peelings and halms, cabbage blades, or any other vegetable refuse, which is carried out to them every morning. From one end of the island to the other runs a foot path, called by the Heligolanders the 'Landwae' or high road, and better known to visitors by the name of 'Kartoffel Allee' (Potato Walk). There is also a lighthouse ; but though a few guns are placed behind a rude earthwork, there are no fortifications except the inaccessible cliffs of the island, and no garrison of any kind unless a few coastguardsmen be considered as such. The greatest length of the island which slopes somewhat from west to east, is five thousand eight hundred and eighty feet, and the greatest breadth eighteen hundred and forty-five feet, the circumference thirteen thousand five hundred feet, its average height one hundred and ninety-eight feet, and the highest point two hundred and fifteen feet. The Dune or Sand Island is little more than a sand-bank covered with scanty herbage, and imperfectly bound together with bent-grass, and carices. It is only about two hundred feet above the sea at its highest point, but the drifting sands and the constant inroads of the sea make the height rather variable. The sea-bathing establishment is situated here ; but, with the exception of the restaurant keepers and waiters, and the attendants who drag the bathing-coaches into the sea, there are no residents. A shelving beach of white sand presents excellent facilities for bathing : every thing is under strict Government surveillance, the boats in which the bathers cross in the morning the hours of bathing, and the tariff being all regulated by law, Approached from the sea, the Rock Island, with its red-tiled houses, perched in a little cluster on the red cliff-'Am Falm,' as it is called -looks very picturesque, and even the narrow brick-paved or sandy lanes of the town are not deficient in a certain degree of quaintness. There are-with the exception of a wheel-barrow or perambulator-no wheeled carriages in the Island, and no horses or other beasts of burden. Even the two cows kept in the Unterland for the use of invalid visitors, and whose milk is sold at the apothecary's shop, are removed at the end of the bathing season to Cuxhaven, the Island not supplying food for both man and beast. Mud is unknown on the streets, the rain only serving to wash their sloping surfaces clean as the scoured flours of: