THE DIVINE COMEDY IN ENGLISH

THE DIVINE COMEDY OF DANTE ALIGHIERI. 1901. Published by J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., Alline House, London, W.C. A volume in the 'Temple Classics'. 348 pages. Text, Italian and English on facing pages (latter divided into prose and verse); with argument at head and notes at end of each canto, notice in outer margin, pp. 2–431; Notes on Dante's Purgatory (by P. H. Wicksteed), pp. 439–440; 'The Chronology of the Purgatorio' by E. E. Alexander, pp. 435–7; note by Walter (Israel Collanén), p. 439; Pymall's Note (by T. H. Toulmin), pp. 451–2; Editorial Note (by H. Collar), pp. 453–4. There is also a collotype reproduction of Dante's 'Revealing the Mount of Purgatory' (from Dante's erotic poem). There are also four diagrams illustrating the poet's journey up Mount Purgatory. The pages of the volume are in a series of separate sections (Central Italy) in the text.

There have been many changes in the English edition; the publishers' chronology shows that the type-page was the same for the thirteenth edition in 1895, and there have been subsequent reprints in 1907, 1941, 1946 and 1951.

Henry Cary (1812–1858) was born in Spitalfields, London, and is a remarkable instance of how a man of ability and determination can triumph over circumstances. Commenced to be a printer at the age of thirteen, he remained at the trade for thirty years, as learner, journeyman and later master. During that time he pursued assiduous studies at the Bethnal Green Working Men's College and then at King's College; he began his academic career as teacher of Italian at Yarmouth Hall in 1833, and eventually was appointed to the chair of Italian at the University of Cambridge in 1819, retiring in 1851.

Undoubtedly the translation of the Purgatorio he made a prose version of the work for the Temple Classics (1901). He also translated Massini's 'Parnaso', and was the author of several other books, mainly dealing with Italian literature.

Some general remarks on the Temple Classics will be found in the article.

Minor Translators

Conclusion
The Purgatorio of Dante Alighieri. 1901. Published by J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., Aldine House, London, W.C. A volume in the 'Temple Classics'. Pott octavo, 442 pages. Text, Italian and English on facing pages (latter divided into prose terzine), with argument at head and notes at end of each canto, rubrics in outer margins, pp. 2-431; Note on Dante's Purgatory (by P. H. Wicksteed), pp. 432-4; 'The Chronology of the Purgatorio' (by P. H. Wicksteed), pp. 435-7; note by Editor (Israel Gollancz), p. 439; Translator's Note (by T. Okey), p. 440; Editorial Note (by H. Oelsner), p. 441; Index to Plates, Tables, etc., p. 442. There is a collotype reproduction of Domenico di Michelino's Dante and the Mount of Purgatory as frontispiece; there are also four diagrams illustrating the poet's journey up the mountain, three smaller diagrams, seven pages of genealogical tables, and two maps (Upper and Central Italy) in the text.

There have been numerous reprints of this edition; the publishers' chronology shows that the type was re-set for the thirteenth edition in 1933, and there have been subsequent reprints in 1937, 1941, 1946 and 1951.

Thomas Okey (1852-1935) was born in Spitalfields, London, and is a remarkable instance of how a man of ability and determination can triumph over circumstances. Apprenticed to a basket-maker at the age of thirteen, he remained at the trade for thirty years, as learner, journeyman and later master. During that time he pursued assiduous studies at the Bethnal Green Working Men's College and then at Birkbeck College; he began his academic career as teacher of Italian at Toynbee Hall in 1892, and eventually was appointed to the chair of Italian at the University of Cambridge in 1919, retiring in 1928. Besides his translation of the Purgatorio he made a prose version of the Vita Nuova for the Temple Classics (1906). He also translated Mazzini's Essays, and was the author of several other books, mainly dealing with Italian literature.

Some general remarks on the Temple Classics will be found in the article on Philip Henry Wicksteed, whose Paradiso was the first part of the Divine Comedy to be published in this series in 1899. The names of the translators do not appear on the title pages of these volumes, this and other information
being given in a note at the end which, in the book now being considered, runs as follows.

The present edition of the Purgatorio, uniform with the Inferno and Paradiso already issued in The Temple Classics, has been edited by Mr H. Oelsner, M.A., Ph.D., who is responsible for the Italian text (based on the editions of Witte, Moore and Casini), and for the notes at the end of each canto. The English version is by Mr Thomas Okey, joint author (with Mr Bolton King) of 'Italy To-day', translator of Mazzini's Essays, etc. The Arguments have been written by the Rev. Philip H. Wicksteed, M.A., who has also contributed the matter on pages 452-457 (uniform with the corresponding papers from his pen at the close of the other two volumes), and by whom most of the diagrams have again been designed.

October 14, 1901

Ira Gollancz

The Translator's Note, which makes clear his method and purpose, is also reproduced for reference.

The translation of the Purgatorio here offered to the public has been undertaken solely to enable the publishers to complete their issue of the Commedia in The Temple Classics. Its aim is to lend a helping hand to those who, already possessing some knowledge of Latin or of a kindred language, may desire to read the poem in the original Italian. It is not intended to compete with, still less to supersede, any existing translation. Some experience in introducing Dante to English students has convinced the writer how essential it is, if interest and enthusiasm are to be maintained, that the text should be studied in Italian. Few are they who begin their author in a translation but who soon decide, either to drop the study, or to learn to read him in the original. The difficulties that beset the reader of the Commedia are not so much philological as exegetical. Of the supreme poets none loses so much by translation as Dante; none so quickly repays a study of the original text. Many passages indeed are clearer in Italian than in English. It will be found that text and translation correspond consistently terzetto for terzetto, but not line for line, and that for greater clearness the text has generally been construed in accord with the English rather than the Italian idiom. Where a literal rendering would convey no meaning a paraphrase (as in XXIX.47) has been hazarded, and the technical equivalent, when thought necessary, given and explained in a note.

The translator is keenly conscious how far he has fallen short of achievement, and will welcome any suggestions for the improvement of his work. He hopes that at least his labours will facilitate the passage of a few pilgrims through the secondo regno, and further in some small way the ever-growing interest in Dante studies in England.

There can be no doubt about the utility of this version. It is accurate, literal, and its convenient format makes it most useful for the student. So
far as its fidelity to the original is concerned, little criticism can be made. There are, of course, some controversial points where one may feel that Okey has made the wrong decision, but we have had the benefit of fifty years more of accumulated scholarship than he had, and of the fresh approach to problems of interpretation which distinguishes twentieth century Italian commentators. Okey was a careful scholar, and frequently where he differs from the majority he justifies his decision in a note. One of his more doubtful stands is IV.12, 'questa è quasi legata, e quella è sciolta', which he renders 'the former is as 'twere bound, the latter free', referring to XXV.54 for another illustration of the use of 'questa' and 'quella' in this way. It is difficult to see why he should render XVII.38-9, 'io son essa che lutto, / madre, alla tua pria ch' all'altrui ruina' by 'I am she that mourn, mother, for thy ruin rather than for another's', since 'pria che' seems more naturally taken as 'before', but the point is of slight importance.

Another rendering that seems wrong is XX.58-9, 'that to my son's head the widowed crown was promoted' for 'ch' alla corona vedova promossa / la testa di mio figlio fu'; etymologically the crown could be 'moved forward' to the son's head, but Dante's grammar is quite explicit. 'The horizon in all its stupendous range' does not seem a happy choice of words for 'in tutte le sue parti immense' (XXVII.70). The rendering of XXXI.28-30:

And what allurements or what advantages were displayed to thee in the aspect of the others, that thou must needs wander before them?

does not seem to convey much to the reader, nor is there any note on the much disputed line 30. XXXII.69 is another controversial line, but Okey's 'be he who he may that can rightly image drowsiness' sounds unconvincing.

We have already, in the article on Wicksteed, discussed the extent to which the new translators brought their work into line with the general tone and language of the existing Carlyle translation. Okey's version is less
highly stylised than Wicksteed's, although it is deliberately archaic. He uses a sprinkling of third singulars in '-th', but much oftener he has the modern form in '-s'. His very frequent use of 'mesemed' with 'methought' as an occasional variant, is sometimes jarring, even where strictly justifiable from the text, e.g. (XII.116-7): 'And meseemed I was exceeding lighter, than meseemed before on the flat.' We have expressions like 'not for that aught else ... gave hindrance' (='non però che altra cosa desso briga', VII.55), or 'Soon as I was with her, as 'twas my duty to be' (='Si com' io fui, com' io doveva, seco', XXXIII.22), where nothing seems to be gained by circumlocution.

Sometimes the choice of words seems of doubtful wisdom. 'When I was parted from gazing at them' (I.28) may be an etymological equivalent of 'Com' io dal loro sguardo fui partito', but is not English. 'I would have peace with God' does not seem to convey the sense behind 'Pace volli con Dio' (XIII.124). In XXVII.9 'more piercing far than ours' stretches unduly the meaning of 'più che la nostra viva'; and in line 81 of the same canto, the use of the English perfect, 'who has leaned upon his staff', is rather pedantic for 'che in su la verga / poggiato s'è'.

Word order, however, is the most disconcerting abnormality of Okey's version. Take for instance I.76, 'The eternal laws by us are not violated'; this is distinctly odd, but it owes its oddness to something which is not in the text, 'Non son dli edditti eterni per noi guasti'. The Italian sentence is natural and expressive, and in reading it an unusual stress is thrown on 'noi'. To obtain the same emphasis in English requires either 'The eternal laws are not violated by us' or, better, 'Not by us are the eternal laws violated' (or possibly 'for' rather than 'by'); Okey's word order tends to obscure the sense. The transposition of lines 144 and 145 of XXXI, found in other translations as well, seems to fly in the face of the text. Okey has
when in the free air thou didst disclose thee, where heaven in its harmony shadows thee forth’, a weak ending; whereas Dante’s last line ‘quando nell’ aere aperto ti solvesti’ is deliberately strong. As for ‘where the body buried lies within which I made shadow’ ( = ‘dov’ è sepolto / lo corpo . . . , III.25-6) this seems to be transposition for its own sake, and ‘the old man venerable’ (II.119) reminds us of the kind of thing produced in the first-year French class.

The iambic rhythm, though present, is much less pronounced in Okey’s version than in Wicksteed’s. He seems to have in places varied his phraseology to get rid of it. If one reads aloud the passage from canto II quoted in the Appendix, it will be noted that frequently a series of blank verse lines is just broken and no more, e.g. lines 31-3.

Having regard to its function, Okey’s version is on the whole a good one, and very readable. One or two good specimens are given below.

As sheep come forth from the pen, in ones, in twos, in threes, and the others stand all timid, casting eye and nose to earth, and what the first one doeth, the others do also, huddling up to her if she stand still, silly and quiet, and know not why, so saw I then the head of that happy flock move to come on, modest in countenance, in movement dignified. (III.79-87)

A bigger opening many a time the peasant hedges up with a little forkful of his thorns, when the grape is darkening, than was the gap by which my leader mounted, and I after him, we two alone, when the troop parted from us.

One can walk at Sanleo and get down to Noli; one can mount Bismantova to its summit, with feet alone; but here a man must fly, I mean with the swift wings and with the plumes of great desire, behind that Leader, who gave me hope, and was a light to me. (IV.19-30)

Every substantial form, which is distinct from matter and is in union with it, has a specific virtue contained within itself which is not perceived save in operation, nor is manifested except by its effects, just as life in a plant by the green leaves. Therefore man knows not whence the understanding of the first cognitions may come, nor the inclination to the prime objects of appetite, which are in you, even as the instinct in bees to make honey; and this prime will admits no desert of praise or blame.
Now in order that to this will every other may be related, innate with you is the virtue which giveth counsel, and ought to guard the threshold of assent.

This is the principle whence is derived the reason of desert in you, according as it garners and winnows good and evil loves.

(XVIII.49-66)

And if her words extended farther I know not, because now before mine eyes was she, who had shut me off from heeding aught else.

Alone she sat upon the bare earth, left there as guardian of the chariot, which I had seen the beast of two forms make fast.

The seven nymphs in a ring made of them a fence about her, with those lights in their hands which are secure from north wind and from south.

'Here shalt thou be short time a forester, and with me everlasting shall be a citizen of that Rome whereof Christ is a Roman. Therefore to profit the world that liveth ill, fix now thine eyes upon the car, and look that thou write what thou seest, when returned yonder.'

(XXXII.91-105)

The arguments and the longer notes at the end of the volume are by Wicksteed, and are on the same lines as those in Paradiso. Okey's notes are rather more numerous and more extensive than Wicksteed's in the Paradiso, occupying some twenty-five pages more than do the latter. His references are more detailed and his explanations fuller. The genealogical tables are valuable; but it is a pity that the diagrams and maps in this and the other volumes of the series could not have been made larger and more distinct. This applies with particular force to the map of Upper and Central Italy on pages 376-7 of Purgatorio; even with a strong magnifying glass it cannot be read without effort and strain, and the maze of lines denoting rivers and streams is most confusing.
JOHN CARPENTER GARNIER


John Carpenter Garnier (1839-1926) was the only son of John Carpenter of Mount Tavy, Tavistock, Devon, and of Lucy Garnier, daughter of the Rev. William and Lady Harriet Garnier of Rokesbury, Wickham, Hants. He inherited both these estates, and when the latter came to him on the death of his uncle in 1864 he assumed the additional surname of Garnier by royal licence. He was educated at Harrow, then at Christ Church, Oxford, where he graduated B.A. in 1860; in 1861 he was a student at Lincoln's Inn, but he does not appear to have continued his legal studies; he received his M.A. from Christ Church in 1864. In 1868 he married Mary Louisa Trefusis, daughter of the nineteenth Baron Clinton. From 1873 to 1884 he represented South Devon in Parliament. For at least several years at the beginning of the century he was resident in London at 33 Queen's Gate Gardens, S.W., from which the preface to his Inferno is dated; when he died at the age of eighty-seven he was residing at his Hampshire seat of Roke'sbury Park. Apart from his translation of Dante there is no record of his having done any literary work; neither the translation nor any similar interests are mentioned in the Times obituary notice.

By the courtesy of the Librarian of the Athenaeum it has been possible to inspect the Hon. William Warren Vernon's personal copy of Garnier's translation, which forms part of his bequest to the library there, and also to peruse some letters preserved along with it. From these it is seen that
on 13th July 1901 the twentieth Baron Clinton sent a copy of the book to Vernon, mentioning that the translator was his brother-in-law. Vernon read the book so far, for he made a number of corrections and comments on the margins of the earlier pages, but these cease about half way through. Evidently he tried to procure a second copy, because there is a letter dated 29th January 1902 sent him by Hatchards regretting that they cannot supply it, since the book is for private circulation only and not on sale. Evidently too Vernon became acquainted with Garnier, for there is some correspondence between them, including an acknowledgment by the latter of the former's expression of sympathy when Lord Clinton died in March 1904. In none of these letters, however, is the translation referred to, nor is Vernon's opinion of it recorded.

Garnier's preface consists of a single sentence:

In this literal translation of the Inferno I have used the Fraticelli Edition, from which I have adapted the Introduction and the Arguments at the beginning of each Canto; and the Notes of which I have freely used.

Inspection in all cases confirms this statement. The translation itself is in prose, each canto being printed as a single long paragraph without any breaks or divisions. One or two misprints were noted, and the punctuation is eccentric. The first nine lines of canto III, the inscription on the gate of hell, are printed as ten, not nine, lines, although they are in prose like the rest.

The translation is described as literal, and it is painfully so; indeed to an extent which often obscures the literal meaning. This is partly due to an attempt to translate the Italian word for word; and partly because sometimes, instead of translating the original, Garnier translates the corresponding explanatory phrases from Fraticelli's notes. Of literary style there is nowhere the slightest trace; and in addition there are quite a few actual
misttranslations, besides some ineptitudes, perhaps sometimes due to mis-
prints. One or two annoying mannerisms obtrude themselves. Garnier nearly
always refers to Virgil as the 'maestro', sometimes quoted, sometimes not,
and variably begun with a small or capital letter; occasionally he rings
the changes by calling him 'Duca'. Explanatory words and phrases, often
taken from Fraticelli's notes, are inserted in the text, after the manner
of Vernon's English renderings in his Readings, e.g. (XXI.34-6):

A sinner (clinging to him) with both his legs loaded his shoulder,
which was pointed and high, and he (the demon) held tight the sinew
of his (the sinner's) foot.

This leads to ambiguity when a phrase from the actual text is placed in
parentheses, as, following Fraticelli's '(Ahì fiera compagnia!)' in
XXII.13-15, Garnier renders:

We went on with the ten demons (oh, what a fierce company!); but
(as the saying goes) 'In church with saints, in tavern with gluttons'.

The Ulysses passage reproduced in the Appendix shows most of Garnier's
foibles, and a comparison with Fraticelli's notes will show how he has
made use of them. Thus his odd rendering of line 132, 'poi che 'ntrati
eravam nell'alto passo', as 'when we had entered the beginning of the
deep ocean' is derived from his editor's footnote: 'vale a dir nell'oceano,
in cui s'entra per lo stretto, che il Poeta chiama l'alto passo.' Had he
conned his source more diligently, however, he might have avoided the very
common error of 'the uninhabited world behind the sun' in line 117, for
Fraticelli notes: 'diretro al Sol, camminando secondo il corso del Sole,
ciocè da oriente in occidente'.

The following are one or two other brief extracts indicative of the
general level of Garnier's work.

The land where I was born is situated on the sea shore, where the
Po descends to have a peaceful course with his tributaries. Love,
which quickly makes itself felt by a gentle heart, caused this one
to be enamoured of a comely form, which from me was taken, and
the manner in which this was done distresses me still. (V.97-102)

'If all my prayers had been heard'; I answered to him; 'you would
not yet have been banished from human nature; for it is fixed in
my mind, and still affects my heart, the dear and good paternal
image of you, when in the world, hour after hour, you taught me
how man renders himself eternal; and how much I value it, it is
right that people should know from my speech, while I live.'
(XV.79-87)

There we arrived, and from thence, in the fosse below, I saw
people plunged in filth, which appeared to have been removed from
cesspools from the world above. (XVIII.112-4)

Then I turned round like a man, to whom the sight seems to come
slowly of that from which he ought to fly, and whom sudden fear
deprives of courage, who, in order to see, does not delay his
departure. (XXI.25-8)

And as one, who dreams of his misfortune, who, while dreaming,
desires to dream, so that he longs that which is, should be
as though it were not; so did I make myself to be, unable to speak;
for I desired to make excuses, and I was excusing myself continu-
ally, and did not think that I was doing so. (XXX.136-141)

The translation is in the same clumsy, laboured and inaccurate strain
throughout, and must be dismissed as completely worthless.
EDWARD CLARKE LOWE


Edward Clarke Lowe (1823-1912) was the seventh son of Samuel Lowe, of Everton, Liverpool. After being educated privately, he went to Lincoln College, Oxford, where he obtained an undistinguished degree in Greats. He took holy orders, but devoted himself to teaching, becoming headmaster of St. John's College, Hurstpierpoint in 1850; he continued in this office till 1873, during which time, in 1860, a doctorate of Divinity was conferred on him at the early age of thirty-seven. In 1873 he became provost of St. Chad's College, Denstone, and Canon of Ely; and from 1891 to 1898 he was provost of St. Nicolas College, Lancing. He wrote the history of the College (1861) and revised it for several subsequent editions; during the period 1866-8 he composed or edited a number of school books, including an edition of George Herbert's The Church Porch and a selection from the Colloquies of Erasmus. He also published several volumes of sermons.

The genesis of Lowe's version of the Divine Comedy is indicated in the interesting dedication which appears in both his volumes.

To the friends who in the winter evenings of 1891-2-3, under the presidency of Alwyne, Bishop of Ely and the Lady Alwyne Compton, met at Ely, in the hall of Alan de Walsingham, (Dante's contemporary),
Edward Clarke Lowe (2)

to help one another in better appreciation of the Divina Commedia, and to a fuller understanding of its mysteries, this English version is submitted by their 'Cheerful Companion' and amanuensis, E.C.L.

College, Ely, Christmas, 1902.

Lord Alwyne Compton, son of the Marquis of Northampton, was Bishop of Ely from 1886 till 1905; his wife, Florence Anderson, was a clergyman's daughter. The glimpse given in the dedication of an intimate Dante study circle is an interesting and attractive one and, as we have noted elsewhere, characteristic of a spirit that was abroad in the last decade of the century.

Whether Lowe had studied Italian or Dante previously cannot be said; but there can be little doubt that the idea of making a new translation took birth from these discussions, and the work probably occupied his leisure time for the next nine years, and may have been brought to its conclusion more rapidly following his resignation from the provostship in 1898. It should be noted that throughout this period he was in his seventies, which is not, however, altogether an unusual age for the enterprise of translating Dante.

Lowe's translation is in blank terzine, and he keeps to strictly deca-syllabic verse, very seldom using a weak ending. He does not bind himself down to a line-for-line rendering, but there is only occasional enjambement between terzine where it does not occur in the original. No translation in English on this principle had appeared for some thirty years when Lowe embarked on his; indeed his only important predecessor was Longfellow.

Johnston's version had appeared in the same year (1867) but only had a private circulation; Pollock's had enjoyed little popularity; Wilkie and Rossetti had confined themselves to the Inferno, and the former was merely a curiosity. While Lowe was at work the Inferno of Lee-Hamilton and the Purgatorio of Samuel Home appeared, both in hendecasyllabic blank verse. It seems likely that
the Ely Cathedral group in the course of their Dante studies would be familiar with some of the earlier translations, and almost certainly with Longfellow's. Lowe may well have made use of it to some extent; but the actual verbal coincidences, though not infrequent, are such as might easily be arrived at independently. There is nothing to suggest that Lowe was indebted to any earlier translator for his language.

Lowe gives no indication as to the text used; here again no doubt such a scholarly group must have been familiar with the results of the vigorous research of the preceding decades and in particular with Moore's *Textual Criticism* which had appeared in 1889. In general Lowe has followed a good text, and there are only one or two readings and interpretations which we have now come to regard as inferior.

The first edition of Lowe's translation was a privately printed one, and probably limited to a small number of copies for distribution to friends. It is likely that the reception given to it by them and by others who saw it encouraged Lowe to have it published. It would seem that the type had been distributed, for it was completely re-set, with line numbers inserted, and in a different format, for its eventual publication in 1904. Even then its circulation was limited; today library copies are not numerous, and no copy has been available on the second-hand market for many years.

The volume is handsomely produced and well bound, but regrettably the imposition is such as to leave absurdly wide head-margins, even for that date. Much worse, however, is the unusually large number of misprints. To the short errata list in the original edition Lowe prefixed a line of apology in Latin for these errors having crept in; no such apology is made at the head of the formidable list of 96 corrections at the end of the 1904 volume; strangely enough the page containing them forms an integral part of the last
signature, and must have been printed before the book was bound. Not only does this list itself contain inaccuracies, but it is far from being complete. There are many other mis-spellings which remain uncorrected. Particularly unsatisfactory are the quotation and parenthesis marks, which are frequently opened without being closed. It seems likely that Lowe, by then over eighty years of age, was not equal to the task of proof-reading, and was ill-served by those to whom he entrusted it. Other internal evidence shows that he was not over-careful, but considering that the compositors had printed and already corrected copy to work from, he might well have expected greater accuracy from them.

The fact is that carelessness is Lowe's besetting weakness, for what is in many ways a good translation is marred by blemishes which a little revision and polishing might have removed. We must, of course, bear in mind his age, and the fact that he probably began his work as a recreation intended only for the perusal of friends. His sobriquet, 'the cheerful companion', suggests a degree of insouciance, which his work confirms. The octosyllabic lines and the Alexandrines strewn throughout the poem are unlikely to be there by design; they were probably left with a view to correction later, and then overlooked, e.g.

They have but poorly learned that art (Inf. X.76)
That crossed the banks down to the pit (Inf. XVIII.17)
Behind the other two, but from respect perchance (Purg. XXVI.17)
Of Indus, where is none who telleth him of Christ (Par. XIX.71)
There is also a quota of totally unscannable lines, which could easily have been improved, e.g.

That this the party was of those caitiffs (Inf. III.62)
The traitress one, who did accuse Joseph (Inf. XXX.97)
The dreadful Giants, whom, when he thunders,  
(Inf. XXXI.44)
Around him the space seemed trampled by throngs  
(Purg. X.79)
By such repentance had not been cancelled  
(Purg. XIII.126)
Jerome hath written you about Angels  
(Par. XXIX.37)

Another irritating feature is the constant occurrence of unintentional rhymes, producing frequent couplets, and even occasional quatrains; these are probably entirely accidental, and should have been eliminated. Thus in Purg. III.105-6 we have:

And one of them began: 'Be who thou may,  
Going with us, turn thy face round this way;  
Think, if thou yonder ever didst see me.'  
To him I turned, and eyed him fixedly . . .

and again in Purg. XVI.7-10:

For open in it could no eye abide;  
Whereon mine escort, ever wise and true,  
Proffered his shoulder, drawing to my side.  
And as a blind man goes behind his guide . . .

Lowe is not very careful in his choice of words; he mingles archaisms with colloquial contractions, producing sometimes a slovenly and sometimes a ludicrous effect, e.g. 'I trow he'd raised himself upon his knees' (Inf. X.54); 'or 'tis not liable / To influence of anything that's change' (Par. VII.71-2). Inf. XXIII.42 is an awkward line at best; Lowe's 'That e'en her smock she barely stays to don', besides being inaccurate, is too much for one's gravity - if he had only put 'scarcely' instead of 'barely'. In addition to frequent use of 'that's', 'I've', 'there'd', etc., he also employs such annoying contractions as 'bove', 'long' and, worst of all, 'p'rhaps', all of which lower a style which they do not suit. At times Lowe can use a colloquialism effectively. 'I'd said my say; so well my say pleased Him' (Lowe is liberal in his allowance of capitals to the apostles and others) may be a trifle inconsequential for the end of Par. XXIV; and 'the gentry of the swamp' over-facetious for the 'fangose genti' of Inf. VII.59; but he
Edward Clarke Lowe (6)

certainly gets the idea of Inf. XXXII.115-7 with

He for the Frenchmen's argent weeps; and thou
Can'st say, 'Him of Duera ones I saw
There, where the sinners in a cold bath sit.'

Cantos XXI and XXII of the Inferno are also done with verve. Like some other translators, Lowe tries his hand at Anglicized names for the demons: Malacoda becomes Tailstinger, Scarmiglione Bullybrawl, and Calcabrina Frostyfoot; his rendering of Malebranche as Bloodyclaws is more lurid than need be.

On the other hand, 'Close by her side, and in the Happy Land' is a rather banal closing line for Par. XXV; 'You taught me how the man eternal grows' is deplorable English for 'm' insegnavate come l'um s'eterna' (Inf. XV.95);

'People we found down there disguised with paint' is a ludicrous translation of 'Là giù trovammo una gente dipinta' (Inf. XXIII.58); and, while one does not mind Matelda being a 'Lady', the last line of Purg. XXVIII, 'Then to the fair Ladye mine eyes returned' jars somewhat.

The actual translation is very accurate. Lowe does not attempt the photographic exactness of Longfellow; he changes Italian idioms to English ones, moves round awkward constructions, and paraphrases slightly when necessary, but he very seldom departs from the meaning of the text. His few mistranslations are venial ones. There are slight inaccuracies like the rendering of Inf. XXVI.103-5 or 'behind the sun' in line 116 of the same passage, given in Appendix I. His rendering of Purg. XIII.92, 's'anima è qui tra voi che sia latina', as 'If soul there be 'mong you of Latin stock' rather spoils Sapia's reply. Par. XII.31-3:

And it began: 'The Love that makes me fair
Stirs me to celebrate the other Chief,
Who nobly spoke my own Chief's eulogy',
is obviously a slip, for the other Chief is Saint Dominic, whereas it was Thomas Aquinas who spoke the eulogy. As times Lowe tends to exaggerations;
Inf. XXV.4, 'Da indi in qua mi fuor le serpi amiche' hardly justifies his expansion to 'From that day unto this have serpents been / To me as friends'; nor does Inf. XXVII.131, 'la fiamma dolorando si partio' warrant the rendering 'The flame moved off with shrieks of agony'. The sense of Mosca's exclamation (Inf. XXVIII.107) is obscured both by wording and punctuation: 'Who said "Alas! What's done is ne'er undone".' These lapses, and a few more like them, are the worst charges that can be made against Lowe under this heading.

Apart from the reservations made, Lowe's translation is a good one. As a piece of literary work, it was quite the best version in blank terzine up to its date of publication; and were it not spoiled by the pervading carelessness referred to, it would still be a strong competitor for first place in this genre. The more poetic passages are respectably done, if at times pedestrian; and except for occasional obscurities the expositions and arguments are clear and well-phrased, capable of being understood without having recourse to the Italian for the explanation of the English. Such passages as Statius on the soul in Purg. XXV and Beatrice on the moon, or the performance of vows, in the early cantos of Paradiso are more readable than are Longfellow's renderings. One is naturally inclined to place Lowe's translation alongside Bodey's, also the work of a man in his seventies, although the latter does not adhere strictly to the ternary structure. Lowe lacks Bodey's preciseness, and in that sense is a little further removed from Dante; but his verse, though often less dignified than Bodey's, flows more freely, and avoids the slightly stilted Latinisation of the latter. Both versions are alike in this, that they do great credit to men who had passed the allotted span of life, and that neither has attained the celebrity that it deserves.

We may now quote a few effective terzine from Lowe's translation:
In truth I found myself upon the brink
Of the sad vale, in whose abyss collects
The thunder roar of wailing infinite. (Inf. IV.7-9)

Just as with paper, ere it catches fire,
A brownish tint creeps on and over it,
And 'tis not yet full black, but the white dies. (Inf. XXV.64-6)

No blast so terrible Orlando blew,
After the dolorous rout upon that day,
When great Charles lost his holy warrior-band. (Inf. XXXI.16-8)

The dawn was driving off the morning breeze,
Which fled before it, so that far away
I recognized the rippling of the sea. (Purg. I.115-7)

Eternal love by malison of such
Is not so lost, that it cannot return,
So long as hope retains but one green leaf. (Purg. III.133-5)

Nature and nurture have endowed it so,
Albeit the guilty head pervert the world,
It only keeps the right, and scorns the wrong. (Purg. VIII.130-2)

There was no necklet and no coronet;
No buskined ladies with their stomachers,
A sight more wondrous than the dames themselves. (Par. XV.100-2)

And as in finding ever new delight
In honest work, a man from day to day
Is conscious that his inner powers advance . . . (Par. XVIII.58-60)

Like to the lark which freely soars in space
With song at first, and then in silence drops,
Content and sated with its last sweet trill . . . (Par. XX.73-5)

I was as one, who of forgotten dream
Feels himself conscious, and ransacks his brain
In vain to call it back to memory. (Par. XXIII.49-51)

This is the principle, and this the spark,
Which after into living fire expands,
And like a star in heaven shines forth in me. (Par. XXIV.145-7)

0 Threefold Light, that, in One single Star
Shining upon their sight, contentest them,
Cast thy bright beams upon our storms below. (Par. XXXI.28-30)

We shall conclude by quoting one or two rather longer passages, which
are well known and in which Lowe has acquitted himself well; some of these
will be useful in comparing him with other translators quoted.
He, Who in wisdom doth all things transcend,
Did make the heavens, and set in each a guide,
So that all parts, each upon each, should shine
By equal distribution of the light.
And likewise for the splendours of the world,
One general minister and guide He gave,
Who, in due permutation, should vain wealth
'Mong nations share, and pass from house to house,
Beyond the wit of man to countercheck;
'Tis thus one nation reigns, and one decays,
According to the sentence passed by her,
Who, as a snake in grass, lies hid from view.
Your wisdom cannot against her contend;
She foresees all things, judges, and maintains
Her rule, as other Deities their own.
Incessant change with her knows no repose;
Necessity keeps her on rapid wing;
So quickly one arrives to claim his turn.

As now across the turbid waves there swept
The crashing of a sound with terror filled,
Whereat did quake the shores on either side;
Not otherwise than when a mighty wind
With rush impetuous 'gainst opposing heats,
Strikes on the grove; and held by no restraint,
Crashes, breaks down, and whirls away the boughs;
Onward it proudly sweeps in clouds of dust,
And from it fly wild beasts, the shepherds too.

When thus I heard him in displeasure speak,
Towards him I turned, so utterly abashed,
That in remembrance haunts me still the shame -
And as is one who dreams of mishap,
And dreaming, wishes it were but a dream,
So that he craves what is, as though 'twere not,
Such was myself, unable to find words,
Wishing to make excuse, and all the while
Excusing, though I thought I did it not.

O the vain glory of all human power,
How shortlived is the green leaf of thy wreath,
Unless an age of grosser taste ensued!
In painting Cimabue used to think
He held the field; Giotto is now the cry,
So that the other's fame is overcast.
One Guido likewise from the other takes
The fame of letters, and perhaps is born
Some one that from the nest shall thrust them both.

The uproar of the world is but a puff
Of wind, which blows now this way, and now that,
Changing its name, its quarter as it shifts.

As while they chew the cud, the gentle goats
Lie still, nimble afore in sauciness
On mountain height, as yet unfilled with food,
All silent in the shade, while glows the sun,
Watched by the shepherd, who upon his staff
Leans, and thus leaning waits on their repose;
And as the herdsman lodges in the field,
Watching all night alongside of his flock
That no wild beast break in to scatter it,
Such were we then ourselves, the three of us,
I like the goat, and shepherds they to me,
Pent in on either side by the high cliff.
Little from thence could be discerned outside;
But in that little I could see the stars,
Brighter and larger shine than is their wont.
Thus pondering, and with gaze fixed thus on them,
Sleep seized on me, sleep that doth oftentimes,
Ere the event occurs, know its report.

Then as the belfry chimes that summon us
At early Prime, when God's own Bride doth rise,
With morning hymn to stir her Spouse's love,
And with alternate stroke the hammer swings,
Sounding ding, ding in notes of music sweet,
Such that the pious soul expands in love,
So did I see the glorious wheel move off,
Voice echoing back in harmony with voice,
And with a sweetness that can ne'er be known,
Save only there, where joy endures for aye.

If all that thus far hath been said of her,
Were now compressed into one eulogy,
'Twould serve but little for the present turn.
The beauty I beheld so far transcends
All measure known to us, that sure I am
Only her Maker can enjoy it all.
Vanquished at this point I confess myself,
More than himself o'er-mastered by his theme
Tragic or Comic Poet ever found;
For as the sun dazzles unsteady sight,
So the remembrance of her gracious smile
Blots out the power of memory itself.
From the first day on which I saw her face
In life below up to its vision now,
The sequence of my verse hath not been checked.
But sequence such, as Poet, henceforth I
Must leave, far, far behind her loveliness,
As every artist at his last is foiled.

O Grace overflowing, in the strength whereof
I dared to penetrate Eternal Light,
So that its vision to the full I drank!
In its Profundity I saw enclosed,
And into one volume bound up with love,
All that through nature is dispersed in leaves:
I think I saw the universal form
Of this entanglement; for saying this,
I feel within a more abundant joy.
A single moment more oblivion brings,
Than five and twenty ages to th' emprize
That startled Neptune with the Argo's shade. (Par. XXXIII. 82-96)

Although Lowe's translation does not appear to have had much publicity,
it was favourably noticed by the Athenaeum (4th February 1905, p. 145),
which described it as being 'sound, scholarly and readable' and 'in the
tradition of Longfellow', remarking that it 'justifies itself better than
any attempt that has come our way for a very long time'. It is a verdict
which we are glad to be able to endorse.

Edward Clarke Lowe (11)
Dante's Inferno and other Translations, by Edward Wilberforce, a Master of the Supreme Court, author of 'Social Life in Munich'. London: Macmillan and Co. Limited; New York: The Macmillan Company. 1903. Crown octavo, pp. x, 284. The Inferno, in terza rima, with arguments and short footnotes, occupies pp. 3-179; other translations are from Goethe, Schiller and Heine.

Dante's Inferno. Translated by Edward Wilberforce, a Master of the Supreme Court, author of 'Social Life in Munich'. Macmillan and Co. Limited, St. Martin's Street, London. 1909. Post octavo, pp. x, 207. No preliminary matter except dedication (to his wife) and detailed contents; English text, printed in terzine but unnumbered, with argument (repeated from contents) at head of each canto, and very brief footnotes, pp. 1-207.

Dante's Purgatorio, etc., as above. pp. viii, 210. Contents and text only, uniform with Inferno.

Dante's Paradiso, etc., as above. pp. viii, 212. Contents and text only, uniform with Inferno.

Edward Wilberforce (1834-1914) was the son of Robert Isaac Wilberforce, Archdeacon of the East Riding of Yorkshire. He was educated at Eton and Trinity College, Oxford; he spent a short time in the navy, then took up law and was called to the bar in 1866. He was for many years a Master of the Supreme Court and is described by the Times in an obituary notice as a lawyer of rare ability and attainments. The Inferno was first published in 1903 as noted above, and reprinted in a uniform edition with the other parts in 1909. His version of Purgatory appears to have been complete when he gave a lecture to the Dante Society in 1905, for he quotes copiously from it, and all the extracts are identical with the volume printed later.

There had been a lull in the appearance of terza rima translations of Dante since the eighties, apart from Urquhart's privately printed Inferno of 1895, when Wilberforce's version appeared. On the other hand translations in blank verse, prose, and experimental metres had been numerous. There is
no sign, however, of any advance in attainment, nor yet of any freshness of approach, in this new attempt, which presumably represents the leisure occupation of an able but aging jurist. Indeed the impression produced by reading through Wilberforce's volumes, and reinforced by a detailed analysis of test passages, is that he is if anything rather less readable than his predecessors.

A perusal of the paper which Wilberforce read to the Dante Society in 1905, entitled 'The Better Waters of Purgatory', makes it doubtful whether his interest in Dante was of the kind likely to make him a competent translator. One wonders also whether the members of the Society, who presumably possessed some prior knowledge of the subject, did not feel that the Master had condescended a little too much in giving them no more than a bare and simple outline of Dante's journey through the second realm, of the kind that one might call a 'talk to beginners'. The lecture consists of a not very well-balanced account of the main incidents only, which must already have been familiar to anyone with the slightest knowledge of the poem, together with some trite commonplaces. No doubt the reason for the invitation to speak to the Society was that Wilberforce was already known as a translator; certainly fully half his paper consists of extracts from his own translation. He has nothing to say that is either interesting or illuminating, and there are some curious gaps, e.g. everything that happens between the end of Hugh Capet's speech in canto XX and the beginning of canto XXVIII is condensed into two sentences. Of literary comment there is little, and that little is disappointing. Wilberforce quotes Milton's lines on Dante's Casella only to remark that 'it would perhaps be hyper-critical to observe that it was not in Purgatory itself that this meeting took place, but in Ante-Purgatory'. The meeting with Sordello receives
three pages because 'it gives Dante occasion for the magnificent invective against Italy and against Florence which is one of the grandest passages in the Purgatory'. Canto IX is dismissed in one sentence, but the sculptures of the first cornice receive three and a half pages, the acrostic of canto XII being first explained and then quoted in full, followed by the only mention in the lecture of any other English translation of Dante:

It is most remarkable that what I once heard called 'the standard translation of Dante' does not make the slightest attempt to reproduce this very striking feature of the original, nor does it even hint in a note at its existence, so that anyone whose knowledge of Dante is derived only from Cary would altogether fail to appreciate the subtle and elaborate art and skill employed by the poet on this passage.

Wilberforce would hardly have relished the remarks of more recent editors on this passage. In quoting the opening of canto VIII he deprecates Macaulay's strictures on Gray's imitation of Dante in the first line of the Elegy, and rather irrelevantly quotes Morley's somewhat pompous description of the latter poem as having given 'to greater multitudes of men more of the exquisite pleasure of poetry than any other single piece in all the glorious treasury of English verse'. The foregoing provides some indication of the literary level of Wilberforce's approach to Dante.

As for his translation, he only adds one more disappointment to the depressing record of English terza rima. In no way does he improve on the efforts of earlier generations; once again we find the awkward constructions and desperate shifts which we have already noticed so often. His rhymes themselves are quite ordinary; he keeps to monosyllabic ones, repeating the same sounds within the canto several times, but not too close together; and he is sparing in his use of archaisms or unusual forms. But he has no conscience at all when he is stuck for a rhyme; he will drag in a completely unsuitable word, or give the sentence a misleading twist, or add a piece of padding, and the result is a most unreadable mixture. The
passages in Appendix I provide numerous examples; examples of the similar expedients strewn thickly throughout are quoted below. Inf. III.106-8 reads:

Then, weeping loud, and all with equal speed,
  Unto that evil shore they took their ways
Which waits each man, God's fear who doth not heed.

The rhyme is dictated by 'seed' in line 104; hence the grotesque substitute for 'tutte quante insieme' and the clumsiness of line 108. The rhymes of the following passage (Inf. V.10-15) are to suit 'confess'd' in line 8 and 'hurled' in line 15:

Sees to which place in Hell is their behest:
Round him so many times his tail is curled
As grades he wills them of descent in quest.
Every before him stands a thronging world,
  Each one in turn draws near the judgment seat;
They speak, they hearken, and are downward hurled.

'Behest' and 'thronging world' strain one's patience, while 'in quest' is quite incomprehensible. One of the most ludicrous expedients is in Inf. X.9 where 'già son levati / tutt' i coperchi, e nessun guardia face' becomes 'already reared on high / Are all the lids, and round no sentries drill'. To rhyme with 'intersects' Inf. XVIII.98-9 is rendered: 'And this sufficing thee to know connects / With that first valley those within it pent', which takes some puzzling out. To rhyme with 'snapt' we have 'd'un peccator li piedi e delle gambe / infino al grosso, e l'altro dentro stava' transformed to 'A sinner's feet and, till they bulk adapt, / His legs' (Inf. XX.23-4). Such old favourites as 'upheave', 'uprear', etc., have to do frequent duty, so that in Purg. IX.144 we have 'When to an organ folk their chant uprear'. Paradise perhaps suffers worst from these shifts; Wilberforce is not the first translator who has 'glued' Beatrice's eyes to the spheres, but it is disconcerting to find her bending them on the poet in Par. I.100-2 'with that expression so resigned / A mother wears
Edward Wilberforce (5)

whose child delirious lies'. In Par. VII.100-2, to rhyme with 'stooped' in
the preceding terzina, we have:

As disobedient high he would have swooped:
And for this reason from the power to do
Himself the satisfaction, man was cooped.

In Par. X.32-3 the sun is 'circling through the spirals, earlier taught /
There to present himself from day to day', to suit 'thought' lower down.

Par. XXV begins 'If e'er by chance the sacred poem's mean / Whereto . . . ',
but what does 'mean' mean? The very end of the poem is spoiled by the
rhyme found for 'stars' (XXXIII.142-5):

Here power failed lofty fantasy, but move
Equal as doth a wheel, its similars
Desire and will now speeded me the Love
Which moves the Sun and all the other stars.

The obscurity of some passages can only be cleared up by consulting
the Italian; in other cases even that fails to provide a clue, e.g.

But after they had made their journey go
Up to the point which that vibration bore
That through their passage could the tongue bestow,
We heard this speech . . .

For all is full 'twixt either boundary
Of roots so venomous, that slow incline
Would culture self to lessen the degree.

Blame, as is wont, in clamour will pursue
The Injured party, but by vengeance proved
He who dispenses it will be, the True.

Once men with swords waged warfare: now instead
Taking from others here and there they fight
Denied to none by the good Father, bread.
Yet thou who but to cancel dost indite,
Think that they live the vine which thou dost waste,
Peter and Paul, who died to train aright.

For all the good on which our wishes dwell
Is gathered there, and aught if we divest
That is defective which doth there excel.

The treatment of the poetry is generally disappointing. Occasionally
we get a good line like 'The thunder-roll of infinite lament' (Inf. IV.9)
or 'All the sad seasons of the lovely bride' (Par. XXXII.128). Something of the effect of the original is preserved in Inf. XIV,28-30:

O'er all the sand in measured fall and slow,
Were stealing down dilated flakes of fire,
As on an Alp when winds are hushed the snow,

although the last line loses both through its construction and through its monosyllables, the latter a common fault in Wilberforce. A few lines further on the effect of 'Tale scendeva l'eternale ardore' is lost, but the other two lines have something of the crackle required:

Thus did its glow the eternal heat depress;
Whence like the tinder underneath the steel
Kindled the sand to double the distress.

The opening of Purgatorio is awkward and pedestrian:

To run o'er better waters hoists her sails
Henceforth, behind her left such cruel deep,
Thy little bark, my genius, to the gales.
And on that second realm my strings I'll sweep,
Where purged the human spirit is from stain,
And worthy grows tow'rd Heaven to climb the steep.

In canto III lines 121-3 are extremely bad:

Horrible were my sins; but that divine
Infinite goodness has a wide embrace,
To succour all who come to her benign.

The opening of canto VIII, despite Wilberforce's expressed admiration, is awkward:

Now was the hour to soft desire which bends
Seafarers, melts with tenderness their hearts:
The day they've bid farewell to cherished friends:
And the new pilgrim pierces with the darts
Of love, if heard the bell from distance, fain
Which seems to weep day's dying, as it parts.

There is similar awkwardness in Pârg. XXX throughout, e.g. lines 49-54:

But Virgil of himself had us bereft,
Virgil my dearest father, Virgil whose
The side to which for safety I had cleft;
Not all that did the ancient mother lose
Availed, that were not stained by tears of woe
My cheeks again, so lately washed with dews.
In the Paradiso Wilberforce is even less successful, e.g. (I.112-4):

Thence they proceed where diverse ports await
O'er the great sea of being, each the boon
Of instinct given that should its sails inflate.

Par. III.121-3 would be excellent if the first line were improved:

Thus she bespake me, then commenced to sing
Ave Maria; vanishing in song
As through deep water drops some heavy thing.

Here the effect of 'come per acqua cupa cosa grave' is well imitated (if it is not merely accidental); this line has been reproduced almost identically (possibly by coincidence) by several later translators. On the other hand Wilberforce has perpetrated perhaps the worst rendering in existence of

Par. XX.10-12:

Seeing that there these living splendours all,
Far brighter shining, songs began to pour
Which from my memory lapsed and had a fall.

In other memorable passages he is definitely poor, e.g. the loss of the verbal effect in Par. XIV.40-2:

To follow fervour will its brightness move,
Fervour to follow sight, so great that grew
Much as it has of grace its worth above,

and a similar failure occurs in Par. XXVIII.67-9:

A greater weal works greater excellence;
A greater frame doth greater weal enclose,
Parts equally complete to evidence.

Worse still is the beginning of Par. XXVII:

'To Father,' from all Paradise was poured,
'To Son, to Holy Spirit, glory!' me
So that inebriate made the sweet accord.
That which I saw a smile appeared to be
Of the universe, through hearing and through sight
Whence entrance found my inebriety.

A few lines further on Saint Peter becomes literally incoherent with rage:

He who usurps on earth my very place,
My very place, my very place, which lain
Void in the presence of God's son is space . . .
To quote for a change some of the more successful lines, we may take Par. XV.13-15:

"'s through the tranquil skies serene and pure
There shoots from time to time a sudden blaze
Moving the eyes which resting were secure . . .

or Par. XXX.121-3:

There near nor far nor add nor take away,
For where God rules with nought to interpose
The law of nature has no binding sway.

Three of the better terzina from Par. XXXIII are given below.

And I who nearer to the end was brought
Of all that was in my desires, fulfilled
The ardour of my longing, as I ought . . . (46-8)

Because my vision, purer as it drew,
Pierced more and more within the radiance
Of that high light which of itself is true. (52-4)

Oh grace abundant, which could make me dare
To fix mine eyes on the eternal light
So much that I consumed my vision there! (82-4)

There are numerous inaccuracies in Wilberforce's rendering, but many of them are probably due to the perpetual distortion of the sense to fit the metre in rather than to misunderstanding of the text. For instance 'che sognando desidera sognare' (Inf. XXX.136-8) is translated 'Who, as he dreams, yet wishes to dream on' which gives the wrong turn to the real sense, i.e. 'who dreaming (but imagining his dream to be real) wishes he were dreaming'; but this is a confusion found in several translators.

The footnotes are short and aim at no more than essential explanations, for which they are adequate. It is a pity, however, that the lines in the text are unnumbered, for the footnotes contain many cross-references by canto and line, which are thus difficult to identify. Although the notes do not enter into controversial matters, they show acquaintance with variant readings and interpretations, and a number of authorities are quoted.
As might be expected the *Athenaeum* reviewer (9th October 1909, p. 422) numbered Wilberforce's translation as one more failure in the attempt to achieve the impossible in English verse. He bestowed some faint praise, and was facetious about the desperate shifts the translator was put to in order to maintain the rhyme scheme, mentioning in particular the word 'unfurled' in Inf. XXVI.115 (quoted in Appendix I). The *Saturday Review* critic (1st May 1909, p. 568) said:

> We have read certain portions with respect, but we cannot say that we are struck with any special happiness or vigour.

He included another remark to which we shall have occasion to recur later:

> We rather admire the fact of a Master of the Supreme Court translating Dante than the translation itself.

It is to be remembered that Wilberforce was approaching seventy when he commenced this work and well over seventy by the time he finished it; he probably no longer had the mental energy to cope with the 'weighty theme' and give it both form and distinctness. Familiar with the meaning of the text, he may well have been unconscious of the inadequacies of his English equivalent; but, as we have seen, his poetic faculty lacked insight. His volumes had little publicity and achieved no popular success; they have not been reprinted.
SIR SAMUEL WALKER GRIFFITH

Draft of a Literal Translation of Dante's Inferno in the original metre.


MCMLIII. Demy octavo, pp. 156. Contains only English text printed and numbered in terzine.


The Divina Commedia of Dante Alighieri, literally translated into English verse in the hendecasyllabic measure of the original Italian, by the Right Honourable Sir Samuel Walker Griffith, G.C.M.G., M.A., Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia. Henry Frowde, Oxford University Press, London, New York, Toronto, and Melbourne. (1912) Crown octavo, pp. vi, 525. Prefatory note, pp. iii-vi; English text printed and numbered in terzine, pp. 1-525. There are no arguments, notes or other explanatory matter. Each of the three cantiche is preceded by a full title page, as if the book had been designed for issue in three volumes, but folios are continuous. The title page to Inferno bears the words 'New Edition Revised'. All extracts are taken from this edition.

Samuel Walker Griffith (1845-1920) was born at Merthyr Tydfil and emigrated to New South Wales with his parents in 1854. He graduated at the University of Sydney, gained a travelling scholarship which enabled him to return to Europe for further study, then, having chosen the law as his profession, he was articled in Brisbane, called to the bar of Queensland in 1867, and appointed Queen's Counsel in 1876. He became a member of the Legislative Assembly in 1871, was appointed Attorney-General in the third Macalister ministry (1874), and held other Government offices in the course of the next five years. From 1879 to 1883 he was leader of the Liberal opposition, and in the latter year he became Premier. From 1890 to 1895 he was head of a coalition ministry, his principal colleague being Millwraith who had previously been his chief rival. In 1893 he retired from politics on his nomination as Chief Justice of Queensland, and during the next few years he
undertook and carried out with amazing thoroughness and efficiency the codification of Queensland's criminal law. In 1903 he became Lord Chief Justice of Australia, a post which he held till his retirement a year before he died. He was recognised as a jurist of exceptional ability, and a great constitutional lawyer; he was also consistently a patron of the arts and a literary student of considerable talent. His services were rewarded with the K.C.M.G. (1889), G.C.M.G. (1895), and a Privy Councillorship (1901).

A special interest attaches to Griffith's translation owing to the fact that he studied Italian in the first place not as a literary pursuit, but because he considered the Italian criminal code to be the best in the world, and desired to master it thoroughly so that the knowledge might assist his codification of Australian law. It may be said here that his translation of Dante bears out his linguistic competence; whatever its faults, there is no misunderstanding of language or meaning. Although his edition contains no notes, and therefore no remarks on variant readings or interpretations, it is evident that he was familiar with current scholarship. That he had some correspondence with Paget Toynbee is evidenced by letters preserved in the Toynbee Collection at the Bodleian Library. After the receipt of the volume of 1903, Toynbee sent him a copy of Tozer's Commentary; and his use of this is demonstrated by changes made in the course of revising the Inferno for the first published edition. Griffith also consulted Toynbee as to the advisability of including notes in his published volume; in the end it was decided to omit these.

Griffith's short prefatory note is mainly a defence of his hendecasyllabic blank verse. Having quoted Dante on the impossibility of preserving the sweetness and harmony of poetry in translation, he points out that a translation of a great poem is necessary and desirable in some form,
and that while 'a paraphrase may be an admirable piece of literature, ... it is not a translation'. Then follows an argument on very similar lines to Lee-Hamilton's. After stressing the difficulty of triple rhyming in English Griffith says:

Rhyme has, however, never been an essential element of poetry and may be omitted without much regret. But when we come to the question of sweetness and harmony, dependent as they are on cadence or rhythm, other considerations arise. One metre may suggest or recall the memory of another, but reproduction means more than this. The cadence should be such that, as he reads, the reader may fancy that he hears the original. The English language will not allow this to any substantial degree in respect of some metres, but the hendecasyllabic metre of the Divina Commedia is not one of them. ... The task, then, is to express the very thought in such words as will reproduce as nearly as possible the very language of the master, and to arrange them in such order as to recall, and reproduce, as far as may be, the harmonious cadence of the original. The task is, no doubt, difficult, but not, I think, so hopeless as to be not worth attempting.

Griffith then mentions that he did not know of Lee-Hamilton's version until his own Inferno was completed, and that he is unaware of anyone having tried the same experiment with regard to the other two cantiche. It is very understandable that in Australia he would not have heard of Home's privately printed Purgatorio, the only other English version with consistently feminine endings at that date.

We have already remarked in dealing with Lee-Hamilton that the idea of English hendecasyllables reproducing Dante's rhythm more accurately than iambic pentameter is a fallacious one. Griffith's larger scale experiment only serves to confirm that judgment. He avoids some of Lee-Hamilton's worst faults, but he produces an equal effect of intolerable monotony. Again and again what would have been a reasonably good line is spoiled by a feminine ending being dragged in. The system used by Longfellow and other blank verse translators permits of frequent feminine endings being used where they happen to suit the sense, whereas Griffith's system precludes the possibility of variation, and keeps one continually sighing for some relief.
Up to a point Griffith fulfils his object of expressing the thought of Dante in approximately similar language, i.e. he translates terzina by terzina without over-running, and the fact that he has no rhyme to provide for saves him for the most part from having to insert padding. Even so, however, the English often remains lame and obscure, as the following lines from Purg. XXI.61-6 illustrate. The Italian reads:

Della mondizia sol voler fa prova,
che, tutta libera 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.

Griffith (whose text, be it noted, had the reading 'tutta libera' as shown above) translates thus:

The will alone affords the proof of cleansing;
Which the soul, wholly free to change environs,
Takes by surprise, and with new will doth aid it.
True, it wills sooner, but that bent restrains it
Which Divine Justice to the will sets counter,
As 'twas in the transgression, in the torment.

This is very nearly Dante's language, but would anyone who did not know the Italian understand it without reading it several times? Translation is not transliteration, and unless the sense be cast in an English idiom it remains obscure. The translator is tempted to forget this, because he is too familiar with the original to take a detached view of the translation. Moreover the slight changes made in the English of the foregoing passage greatly increase the difficulty; e.g. the word 'soul' is transferred from line 63 to 62, and the word 'sets' from line 66 to 65. Longfellow's version does not reproduce Dante's language so accurately, for he used a text containing two almost certainly wrong readings ('volar' for 'voler' in line 63, and 'con tal voglia' for 'contra voglia' in line 65; though he has the slightly better 'tutto libero' in line 62); yet it
succeeds in presenting the general sense of the passage far more lucidly:

Of purity the will alone gives proof,
Which, being wholly free to change its convent,
Takes by surprise the soul, and helps it fly.
First it wills well; but the desire permits not,
Which divine justice with the selfsame will
There was to sin, upon the torment sets.

In addition to his lack of idiomatic fluency, Griffith seems deficient in a sense of style. The following terzine illustrate this.

Now canst thou see, my son, the brief illusion
O' the benefits that to Fortune are committed,
For whose sake human folk each other hustle.
For all the gold that 'neath the moon is lying,
Or ever lay, to set at rest a single
One of these weary souls would not be able. (Inf. VII.61-6)

And he to me: 'My writing is explicit;
And their expectancy is not delusive,
If well with a sound mind it is regarded.
For the high crest of judgment is not lowered
Because love's fire completeth in one moment
What he must satisfy who here hath lodgement.
And in the place where I this point established
Delinquency was not by prayer atoned for,
Because from God the prayer was disunited. (Purg. VI.34-42)

Before that amplitude and height my vision
Lost not its way, but fully comprehended
The quality and measure of that gladness.
There near and far can neither add nor minish:
For, where God rules with nothing intervening
Irrelevant become the laws of Nature. (Par. XXX.118-23)

This formlessness and lack of distinction pervade the whole translation, and the effect is not improved by a sprinkling of archaisms, for the use of which there seems to be no justification. We have such old favourites as 'hight' and 'acyclept', also 'eyne' although there is no rhyme to excuse it; a selection of less popular words like 'besprent' and 'idlesse'; and over frequent use of the contractions 'wi', 'i', 'th', etc. Nor does Griffith seem to have had a very sensitive ear, for he often falls into cacophony which could have been easily avoided, e.g. 'As to a child is done won by an apple (Purg. XXVII.45) or 'fulgid with bright effulgence' (Par. XXX.62).
There are lines too which it is difficult to read as verse, e.g. 'What thou with me wast, and with thee what I was' (Purg. XXIII.116) or 'By a name to make him His whose he was wholly' (Par. XII.69). Other lines are merely ludicrous, like 'And he had made a trumpet of his bowel' (Inf. XI.139) or 'When Mary of her son did take a mouthful' (Purg. XXIII.30).

Griffith's most serious defect is his failure, in spite of the aim stated in the preface, to 'recall the harmonious cadence of the original'. Very seldom do we find any reflection of the poetic quality of the Italian, and this is due in part to the excessive literalness, a feature which always tends to kill rather than recreate the poetry. Take for instance Griffith's almost exact transliteration of Inf. III.1-9:

Through me the road is to the city doleful:
    Through me the road is to the eternal dole:
    Through me the road is 'mong the lost folk leading:
Justice it was that moved my lofty Maker:
    Divine Omnipotence it was that made me,
    Wisdom Supreme, and Love from everlasting:
Before me were not any things created,
    Save things eternal: I endure eternal:
    Leave every hope behind you, ye who enter.

Similarly in Purg. III.133-5 we have:

Eternal Love, for all their malediction,
    Is not so lost as to be past returning,
    So long as hope hath still a point of verdure.

Here the use of two etymological equivalents, which happen to suit Griffith's scansion, weaken the effect because they have a different connotation in English. Compare Bodey's version:

    Not for their curse is the eternal love
    So forfeited that it may not return
    As long as hope bears any leaf of green.

We have already pointed out, in dealing with Lee-Hamilton, the tyranny of the feminine ending, which often involves the use of unsuitable words, and prohibits that of the one which is really wanted. Even so, Griffith does
not manage as well as he might. Compare, for instance, his rendering of Purg. XXX.34-51 with the same extract from Home's hendecasyllabic version given in the appropriate article.

And my own spirit, which had been already
So long a time since in her presence helpless
It had become with awe and trepidation,
Without obtaining from my eyes more knowledge,
Through occult virtue that from her proceeded,
An ancient love's great potency was ware of.
As soon as on my vision smote the virtue
Sublime which had in days of yore transfixed me
Before I had as yet come forth from boyhood,
I turned me to the left with that assurance
With which an infant runs unto his mother,
When he has fear or when he is in trouble,
To say to Virgil: 'Less than a single minim
Of blood is left in me that doth not quiver:
Of the ancient flame well do I know the tokens.'
But Virgil had without our knowing left us
Forlorn of him, Virgil, most sweetest Father,
Virgil, to whom I gave me for my safety.

There are several verbal coincidences, but where they differ Home usually has the advantage, e.g. in 'Felt all the force of ancient love returning' as compared with Griffith's cumbrous line. Home's 'When anything doth frighten or afflict him' is not very striking; but Griffith's 'When he has fear' simply is not English, and the fact that it transliterates 'quando ha paura' in no way justifies it.

As might be expected Griffith's failure is most noticeable in the Paradiso. At times he catches a little of the effect required, e.g. 'Who by the second wind that swept from Suabia / Gendered the third, the end of sovran power' (III.113-20) has the necessary boisterousness, but two lines further on the exigencies of the hendecasyllable give us the hopeless line: 'Even as through deep water a thing heavy'. So again 'And in the manner of sparks most swiftly moving' is on the right lines for 'e come velocissime faville' (VII.7), but in VII.76-8 word order has spoiled the result:
Samuel Walker Griffith (8)

Bemoans it still the wretched Cleopatra,
    Who, taking flight before it, from the adder
    Took to herself a dreadful death and sudden.

Extreme prosiness is found in XXVIII.67-72:

A greater goodness works a greater welfare:
    A greater welfare holds a greater body
If equally it hath its parts perfected:
Therefore this one, which, all in all, sweeps with it
The rest o' the universe, is correspondent
To the sphere which loves the most and knows most fully.

The description of the storm in Purg. V is as good as any sustained passage
noticed in the poem, and lines 112-29 are quoted below to illustrate Griffith
at his best.

That Evil Will which seeketh only evil
    He joined with mind, and moved the fume and tempest
By virtue of the power his nature gave him.
Then, as the day was spent, from Pratomagno
To the great ridge he covered all the valley
With cloud, and made the sky above to lower,
So that the pregnant air was turned to water.
The rain fell, and there came into the trenches
All of it that the earth refused to swallow.
And when in the great streams it came together
Downwards it rushed toward the royal river
So rapidly that nothing could restrain it.

My body, lying frozen at its outlet,
The raging Archian found, and into Arno
Swept it, and loosed the cross upon my bosom
That I had made when the death-pang o'ercame me.
It rolled me by the banks, along the bottom;
Then with its booty covered and begirt me.

One or two minor consequences of Griffith's hendecasyllables may be
mentioned. He does not attempt to reproduce Dante's occasional strong
endings - a rather inconsistent omission where these aim at effect - but
he uses decasyllables for Arnault's speech in Purg. XXVI.140-7. He makes
no attempt to imitate the identical line endings 'Cristo - Cristo - Cristo'
or the triple 'vidi' of Par. XXX, but he renders 'ammenda' in Purg. XX by
'compensation' thrice repeated. The necessity for feminine endings pre-
vents him from terminating each cantica with the word 'stars', and he has
Recourse each time to 'starry heavens'. The Latin of the original is in all cases retained; this inevitably produces rhyme in one or two places, but in others the rhyme is avoided by transposition.

As already mentioned, Griffith seldom mistranslates, and the mistakes noticed are trifling. 'As they returning far off find less lodgement' (Purg. XXVII.109-11) is probably due to a slip or misprint. There is another slip in Inf. X where in line 63 Dante says to Cavalcante: 'Whom, haply, in disdain your Guido hath holden'. But the reply is:

How saidst thou?
That he 'accounted'? Is he not still living?

Evidently line 63 originally contained the word 'accounted' and was later altered, perhaps to avoid repetition of the word which already occurred in line 36, 'As though he Hell in great despite accounted'.

Griffith's translation was unenthusiastically received, and has never been popular. Canon Lonsdale Ragg, writing in The Modern Language Review said:

The first impression created by the hendecasyllables is loss of dignity and solemnity, but the feeling grows that, after all, the majesty of Dante's verse is built up of that common speech and phaseology of everyday persons.

Such a verdict is kind rather than critical. There is a good deal more in Dante's poetry than this sentence suggests.
HENRY FANSHAWE TOZER


Henry Fanshawe Tozer (1829-1916), son of Captain Aaron Tozer, R.N., was educated at Winchester, then at University and Exeter Colleges, Oxford, where he graduated in Greats. He took holy orders, and received an Exeter fellowship in 1850; from 1855 till his retirement in 1893 he held an appointment as tutor. The scope of his scholarship was wide; he travelled extensively in Greece, Turkey and the near east, and wrote authoritatively on the history and geography of these regions. His first book, Researches in the Highlands of Turkey, appeared in 1869, and was followed by many others, dealing with Greece, the Aegean Islands, Armenia, Asia Minor, etc. He also edited several volumes, including an edition of Byron’s Childe Harold and a book of selections from Strabo. For many years he had been interested in Dante, and the leisure of his later life bore fruit in the publication of his well-known English Commentary on the Divine Comedy (1901) and the translation now to be considered.

Tozer introduced his translation in a modest and very brief preface which is quoted below in its entirety.

This prose translation of the Divina Commedia is intended primarily for readers who are not acquainted with Italian, and it is for their sake that the brief footnotes which accompany it have been added. I am in hopes, however, that it may also be found serviceable by students of the original work, and for their guidance the numbers of
the lines of Dante's poem have been introduced in the page-headings. In making this translation my aim has been to render the Poet's meaning as fully and clearly as was in my power without adhering too literally to the words; and at the same time to present the poem in a fairly readable form. A similar task has already been undertaken by capable hands, and certainly I have no wish to challenge comparison with their work; but apology seems hardly necessary for renewing the attempt, because every one may without presumption hope to contribute something towards the more perfect translation of the future. While I have been engaged on this, I have abstained from consulting other English translations; but occasionally words or expressions have been introduced, which I had already borrowed—chiefly from Cary and Longfellow— in my English Commentary on Dante's Divina Commedia. From that work also the notes in the present volume have for the most part been derived. The text which I have followed is Dr Moore's Oxford text of the separate edition of the Divina Commedia (1900).

Tozer's translation brings up the rear of the succession of prose versions which were so numerous from the appearance of Butler's Purgatorio in 1880 right up to the beginning of the new century. After Tozer, except for Wright's Purgatorio, no prose rendering was published in either Britain or America for thirty-five years. This in itself is a strong indication that the vein had been worked to exhaustion for the time being. Norton held the field in America, and was extensively used in Britain as well; Butler and Vernon catered for the needs of the serious student; the Temple Classics edition, handy and inexpensive, had commended itself to readers of every class. Indeed, so completely had the ground been covered, that there hardly seemed to be any justification for another prose translation unless its scope and style were noticeably different from its predecessors.

From the technical point of view Tozer was thoroughly equipped. He was already recognised as an authoritative commentator on Dante's work. His English Commentary contained translations of all the difficult passages for the benefit of the student; it had moreover the added weight of the co-operation and approval of two of the most distinguished British Dantists of the era, Edward Moore and Paget Toynbee. True, it did not escape criticism, for although several sound judges pronounced it almost without qualification
'excellent', other reviewers, notably those of the strongholds of Dante scholarship, the Athenaeum and the Academy (the review in the latter was unsigned) were less eulogistic. No commentator can please all tastes, and it is always possible to find something to cavil at. Some legitimate points were made in the reviews in question, but too much space was devoted to censuring Tozer for not having done something which he was not trying to do. He was accused of keeping to commonplaces, of being unimaginative and unoriginal, of failure to discuss alternative readings and interpretations; but in the preface to the Commentary (unfortunately missing from the three-volume edition) he made it clear that his object was to gather into a concise and convenient form such explanations and information as would enable a student of the Italian to understand the text. He states explicitly that he has no space to discuss variant readings of interpretations as such, except where there is considerable weight of authority on both sides. Nor does he attempt to discuss fully the allegorical significance of the poem, any more than he attempts to provide an appreciation of Dante's merit as a poet. Some remarks on these matters do occur, and in some cases Tozer's outlook does seem unduly restricted. His Commentary, however, fulfilled admirably its main object; it made available to the British student a clear and connected guide to the grammatical structure and vocabulary of the Comedy, together with explanations of its philosophical and historical background; and if it contained, as was alleged, nothing that was new, it at least saved the beginner from wrestling with the poor typography and unfamiliar tongue of the Italian or German editions.

As might be expected, therefore, on the ground of accuracy there can be little complaint against Tozer's prose translation. Here and there we may feel that he has made a wrong choice among the alternatives available,
and has lent his support to a reading since discredited; but these occasions are not frequent. In this respect, however, some of his predecessors had already earned equal credit; and in comparing Tozer's work with theirs we are mainly concerned with matters of style. His aims, as expressed in the preface, were very similar to theirs, except that he lays slightly more stress on the readability of his translation, presumably by those who are unconcerned with the Italian. It is thus noticeable that he often substitutes a conventional English equivalent for the more forceful idiom of the original, with inevitable weakening. One might argue that 'but that which they crave shall not come near their lips' is justified on the grounds of clarity as representing 'ma lunghi fia dal beccu l'erba' (Inf. XV.72); one might even regretfully agree to 'cleansing themselves from the pollutions of the world' instead of 'purgando la caligine del mondo' (Purg. XI.30). When, however, we find that 'the greater is the measure in which God's grace is imparted' stands for 'cresce sovr'essa l'eterno valore' (Purg. XV.72), and 'if I am faint-hearted in advocating the truth' for 's'io al vero son timido amico' (Par. XVII.118), we begin to doubt the advantage of a system of translation which so completely conceals all that is most striking and characteristic in Dante's method of expression. The passages in Appendix I give illustrations of this tendency to banality, and of an associated addiction to polysyllables, of which Par. XXXIII.17-18, 'but oftentimes spontaneously anticipates the asking', is a truly dreadful example. In the same style we get 'when thou enjoyest narrating thy past experiences' for 'quando ti gioverà dicere "I' fui"' (Inf. XVI.84) and 'hath remained as a specimen of the past generation, to reprehend a depraved age' = 'ch'è rimaso della gente spenta, / in rimprovero del secol selvaggio' (Purg. XVI.134-5). A prose translation has, admittedly, severe limitations, but it is depressing to find so many lines
and terzine, memorable for their felicity of expression, become so completely drab and prosaic. So strong a terzina as Inf. XXIV.115-7 is ruined by its ending, 'and as he looks emits sighs' = 'e guardando sospira'; 'ciascun di noi d'un grado fece letto' (Purg. XXVII.73) becomes 'each of us reclined upon a separate stair'; Cleopatra's end is doubly inglorious, for 'dal colubro / la morte prese subitana e atra' (Par. VI.77-8) deteriorates to 'by means of the snake inflicted on herself a dire untimely death'; and perhaps the worst single line of all is Par. XX.12, 'da mia memoria labili e caduci' totally disguised as 'so hard to retain that they have passed away from my memory'. One has to think a moment to recognise Par. XXVIII.67-9 in:

A greater amount of the power produces greater salutary influence; and greater salutary influence is contained in a larger body, if it be equally perfect in all its parts.

Where so much has been sacrificed in the interests, presumably, of clarity, the lyrical portions must fare badly; Par. XIV.57-60 will serve for comparison with other versions in Appendix II:

So long as the festival of Paradise shall last, our love will radiate around us such a vesture. Its brightness will correspond to our fervour, the fervour to our power of sight, and that is in proportion to the grace it hath in addition to its natural gifts. When the glorious saintly flesh hath been resumed, our person will be more acceptable because of its completeness. By this the free gift of light which the Highest Good bestows - light which empowers us to behold Him - will be increased; and thus our vision of Him must increase, and therewith the fervour which is kindled by it, and the brightness wihthal that proceeds therefrom. But, as is the case with a live coal which sends forth flame, yet by the intensity of its brightness so far overpowers it, that it can be still distinctly seen, so this effulgence, which now envelopes us, will be surpassed in the clearness of its aspect by the flesh, which now the earth doth ever hide; nor will that keen light have power to fatigue us, for the organs of the body will avail for every object that can give us pleasure.

On the other hand, when the content of the passage is almost entirely exegetic, Tozer has the advantage over his predecessors, for the changes
he makes in phraseology and construction greatly add to the clarity of the
exposition without giving us much cause to regret the loss of poetic quality.
A good example is Inf. XI.22-66:

Of all wrong dealing which incurs the aversion of Heaven injury is the
object, and every such object distresses men either by violence or
fraud. But inasmuch as fraud is a sin peculiar to man, it is more
displeasing to God, and for this reason the fraudulent hold the lower
place, and are afflicted by greater pain. The first Circle is occupied
wholly by the violent: but seeing that there are three classes of per-
sons to whom violence can be done, it is so arranged as to form three
separate rings. Violence can be done to God, to oneself, and to one's
neighbour — in their persons, I mean, and in their substance, as by
clear argument will be explained to thee. . . . Fraud, a sin which
never fails to touch the conscience, may be employed by a man against
one who trusts him, or against one who doth not repose confidence in
him. The latter form, thou seest, destroys only the natural bond of
love; whence the second Circle is the abode of hypocrisy, flattery and
witchcraft, of falsification, theft and simony, of panders, jobbers
and such-like filth. By the other form both the natural love is
ignored, and that subsequently accruing to it, wherefrom the special
bond of faith proceeds; and consequently in the smallest Circle, where
is the centre of the universe, the throne of Dis, all traitors are
eternally consumed.

Unfortunately for Tozer there are not many passages in the Divine
Comedy where translation at this level can be carried on for more than a
few lines without doing violence to one of Dante's most important qualities,
his capacity to make poetry out of the most unpromising subject matter.
There is, for instance, an air of jaunty malice in the black angel's words
to Guido da Montefeltro (Inf. XXVII.118-20) which is missing in Tozer's
for he that doth not repent cannot be absolved, and repentance cannot
coeexist with the desire to commit the sin, by reason of the contrad-
diction which doth not admit thereof.

Again and again there is just that little difference between text and trans-
lation which has nothing to do with the meaning: compare 'che lume fia
tra 'l vero e lo 'ntelletto' (Purg. VI.45) with 'who will be a light to
reveal the truth to thy mind'; or 'con quanti denti questo amor ti morde'
(Par. XXVI.51) with 'how many reasons compel thee to love God'.

- 519 -
Furthermore Tozer has not confined himself to the attempt to capture the meaning at all costs and let the rest go. He is indeed perpetually conscious that he is missing something, and striving to provide some compensation. As will already have been noticed he sprinkles his diction with a mildly archaic vocabulary; besides the regular use of 'hath' and 'doth', a leavening of such words as 'anon', 'withal', 'methinks', 'ween', 'wis', and so on, we also have inversions and obsolete constructions which are not in keeping with a modern paraphrase. This he renders:

In their flamelets methought the heaven rejoiced: clime of the north, how great thy loss, for that the sight of those is denied thee!  
(Purg. I.25-7)

The moon, belated nigh to midnight, in sight like unto a bucket all afire, caused the stars to appear less numerous.  
(Purg. XVIII.76-8)

Sometimes a short passage is successful in this style, e.g. (Par. XXXIII. 64-6:

Thus before the sun doth snow dissolve; thus before the wind the Sibyl's oracles, inscribed on the flitting leaves, were lost.

These passages are very much mixed up with prosaic ones; we even get the two styles in one line, such as 'envy plies the bellows to excite your regrets' (Purg. XV.51). The result is incongruity and inconsistency of style, which become very trying in sustained passages. While, therefore, Tozer's translation, especially in conjunction with his Commentary, would enable a student to follow accurately Dante's meaning, and would be very valuable in elucidating the more difficult passages, it fails almost completely in providing any hint of the power and beauty of the original.

There is little else to remark on. The borrowings from Longfellow mentioned in the preface are few in number and well chosen, e.g. 'can traverse the illimitable way' (Purg. III.35); 'interdict of partnership'
There are other poetic reminiscences, notably of Milton; e.g. Par. VI.113, 'di buoni spiri che son stati attivi' is rendered 'with those good spirits, who lived laborious days'. The tendency for the words to fall into lines of blank verse is not so noticeable in Tozer as in many other prose translators, although here and there we get three or four consecutive iambic pentameters.

The translation had a lukewarm reception from the reviewers. The Athenaeum (4th February 1905, p. 142) contented itself with the adjectives 'faithful and "safe" . . . a little pedestrian', and had no difficulty in finding quotations to justify the last of these epithets. An unsigned review in the Academy (17th December 1904, pp. 614-5) while describing Tozer's work as a 'good scholarly and literary rendering' found a good deal to criticise adversely, and remarked of one line: 'It is the general drift of Dante's meaning, but is false to his general turn of expression'.

As we have seen the same remark applies to the translation as a whole. The book does not seem to have achieved any degree of popularity. It was never reprinted and second-hand copies are not plentiful.

Marvin Richardson Vincent (1834-1922) was born in the neighbourhood of New York, and was the son and grandson of Methodist ministers. After a classical education at Columbia College, he was professor of Latin at Troy Methodist University (1858-62). Ordained to the Presbyterian ministry in 1863, he was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Troy till 1873; then of the Church of the Covenant, New York till 1887. In the latter year he was appointed Professor of Sacred Literature at Union Theological Seminary, New York, holding that chair till his retirement in 1916. He was an able New Testament scholar, and made numerous contributions towards textual criticism; his Word Studies in the New Testament was published in four volumes during the period 1887-1900.

Vincent's translation was the second American one in blank verse, his only predecessor being Longfellow, nearly forty years earlier. In the interval there had been Norton's prose version, Parsons' rhymed Purgatorio and Wilstach's negligible effort, also in rhyme; although many British renderings had appeared. Vincent had therefore some justification for the opening words of his preface which, with the statement of his aim, are given below.

The last quarter of a century has witnessed such a notable revival of interest in Dante, and so many valuable contributions to the Dante-
literature, that I have been led to believe that there is room for a new Translation and Commentary, in the light of these later contributions. Many of the fruits of these are contained in the Commentary, many more in the Translation.

I have made a literal translation, and have not attempted to produce a smooth and elegant English poem. Such an attempt will inevitably land any translator in florid paraphrase. One who studies the Commedia only through the medium of a translation, must be content with a partial impression of its beauty, grandeur, and power. At the very best, translation is 'disenchantment'; but certainly the spell will not be restored by rhetorical amplifications, by diluting Dante's thought into conventional commonplace, or by emasculating his vigorous diction to meet the demands of conventional propriety. Literal translation will confront its readers with not a few novel, startling, and occasionally disagreeable forms of expression. For these, Dante, and not his translator, must be held responsible.

Further on in the preface Vincent makes a statement that throws some light on the intellectual climate of the turn of the century.

I have long believed that the study of Dante ought to form a part of the curriculum of every theological institution. The department of Church History is compelled to deal largely with the Medieval Church; and the history of Theology cannot pass over Aristotle and the company of the great Scholastic Divines whose methods he inspired, and whose works played so important a part in Dante's literary training. No well-equipped clergyman can afford to be ignorant of these; but in order to know the Middle Ages, it is indispensable to know Dante, who is the exponent not only of their society and their politics, but equally of their ethics, their theology, and their ecclesiasticism.

The preface ends with the words: 'The second part of the work, the Purgatorio, is about ready for the press and will appear in due time'; but in spite of this the continuation was never published. Vincent's Inferno had a rather lukewarm reception, and evidently he or his publishers did not feel encouraged to follow it up with a further instalment.

The bare outline of Vincent's career suffices to show a continuous movement away from the Methodist tradition in which he was born; this was due partly no doubt to personal inclination, partly to classical education, but it is also symptomatic of the tendency of the age. In spite of the fact that narrow orthodoxy and uncompromising fundamentalism remained
characteristics of many American denominations at least till the close of the century, from the end of the Civil War onwards the tide was running towards liberalism, and when the flood came it made short work of the old barriers. It is worth while recalling that Union Seminary, during the thirty years which Vincent spent there, became the recognised stronghold of the progressives; in 1905 it threw off its allegiance to the Presbyterian Church; it came teachers and students from all quarters, including many distinguished scholars from overseas. Yet, however commonplace Vincent's plea for the study of the middle ages may seem to us, even in 1904 to many Presbyterians, not to say Methodists, in the United States, to read the Divine Comedy was tantamount to trafficking with the harlotries of Rome.

Vincent, then, brought to his task an interest born of both literary and historical studies, and the trained mind of a competent classical scholar and theologian; but apart from these general qualifications his specific preparations for the task had been thorough. The acknowledgments in his preface are a genuine evidence of the extent of his reading, signs of which are seen throughout the notes. The works laid under contribution include the texts of Witte, Scartazzini and Moore, supplemented with a good knowledge of their commentaries and essays; the researches of Philalethes, Butler, Vernon, Kraus, Perez, Bassermann, Fay, Tozer, Toynbee; the translations of Cary, Longfellow, Norton and Oelsner. The 120 pages of notes are well done; the remarks on doubtful readings and interpretations show that the language of Dante has been carefully pondered; the cross-references, comparisons and allusions are those of an accomplished scholar. Moreover, although Vincent makes little direct reference in his introductory matter to Dante as a poet, throughout his notes are scattered appreciations of various phrases, similes and passages, which are indicative of sound literary judgment.
There are, however, indications also that Vincent is not altogether at ease with Dante. The long introduction to the notes on canto III is the most important passage of all, showing both the strength and weakness of Vincent’s position.

... The conception of the various punishments as mere arbitrary and brutal forms of vengeance must be summarily dismissed. The punishments are not remote effects of the sins. Dante abolishes the interval between sin and its consequences. He foreshortens, and puts the sin and its punishment together before us, as parts of an organic whole. The punishment is enfolded in the sin — is an integral part of it. He who is under the dominion of any sin, is already in the atmosphere of its punishment. In the present life men do not realise this. It is brought to light in Dante’s Hell.

This is well and effectively put; not doubt it echoes what had already been said more than once, but as a concise statement of ‘realised eschatology’ it is essentially modern in its outlook. After quoting some examples of the correspondence between sin and punishment, he goes on:

There should also be noted here Dante’s personal attitude toward the sins and their victims. In a few instances he exhibits leniency and compassion; but, as a rule, he is indignant, contemptuous, reprobacious, and insulting. With the brutal denunciation of the imprecatory Psalmist, he mingles the sneering sarcasm of a Mephistopheles. He invents the most revolting and humiliating modes of torture. He revels in these. He even applies his own hands to aggravate them. He compasses them with vile language and obscene gestures. He taunts the sufferers with sneers, and describes their punishments with contemptuous images. ... This is not always nor often the result of personal enmity toward the offenders: it is rather the attitude of an Old Testament prophet: ‘Do not I hate them that hate thee? I hate them with perfect hatred.’

Throughout the notes likewise we find similar remarks, e.g. at the end of canto XXI:

This canto and the next are marked by a vein of comicality which is very rare in Dante. He is often enough grotesque, and gives abundant evidence of a grim, sardonic humour, little adapted to provoke laughter. Here, however, there is an element of broad farce. None the less it is farce which heightens the bestial horror of the whole scene. Some one has suggested that it was introduced in order to relieve the strain on the reader’s feelings! That must be a remarkable reader who would say on reading these cantos: ‘For this relief much thanks.’
Against XXIX.82 (‘e si traevan giù l’unghie la scabbia’) he notes: 'The disgusting realism of this picture needs no comment', and three lines lower down (85) he has a note of two words: 'Insulting contempt'. Speaking of Dante's treatment of Alberigo in canto XXXIII he says: 'Comment is needless upon the pitiless brutality which Dante vents upon this wretch. It is in the very spirit of the imprecatory Psalms.'

The comparison between the first passage cited on the preceding page and those following emphasises Vincent's limitations, and recalls the censure of Landor and Leigh Hunt, although Vincent appears to have a grasp of Dante's intention that Hunt never achieved. Vincent's attitude is also an earnest of things to come in America: the puzzled musings of John Jay Chapman, and the vituperation of Burton Rascoe, who, seizes on the very points made in Vincent's notes to brand the Florentine poet as 'cheap, tawdry and dirty'.

Although tribute is often paid in the notes to the beauties of Dante, Vincent betrays some impatience with the more elaborate similes and the astronomical observations. He bestows no praise, for example, on the opening of canto XXIV (‘In quelli parte del giovane anno’) remarking only: 'The following long and elaborate simile is intended simply to point the fact that . . .'; the opening of canto XXVIII (‘Chi potria mai pur con parole sciolte’) is described as (another specimen of Dante's multiplication and elaboration of the details of a comparison, tending to obscure the main point'); while of XXI.124-9 he says: 'Here is one of Dante's technical and rather pedantic descriptions of astronomical phenomena . . . What he means is, in brief, that the moon was setting in the world above.'

His praise of Dante's poetry is, however, judiciously given. In canto IX he refers to the magnificent passage describing the storm (64 ff), and a
little later there is a long note on Dante's angels which are 'unique both in beauty and majesty', introducing a comparison with Milton's, and reminiscent of Hunt on the same subject. In canto VIII he pauses to speak of the impressiveness of the approach to the city of Dis; and in canto XXV he singles out the 'masterly skill' of the similes in lines 61-6.

It is, therefore, all the more regrettable to have to record that the most notable feature of Vincent's translation is the total absence of any spark of poetry. He has, of course, in his preface prepared us in a way for this; but one wonders why he cast it in the form of blank verse at all, and did not have recourse to straightforward prose. The only justification for using a poetic form is to reproduce, in some fashion or other, the poetic quality of the original - if not by direct imitation, then by reconstruction in the native poetic idiom. But Vincent's verse is merely prose divided into lines of ten syllables, with frequent awkward inversions and occasional padding to preserve the mechanical rhythmical structure. He makes little attempt to preserve intact any of the terzine; breaks his lines in the most awkward places; and keeps his diction depressingly flat. Moreover his featureless version is little more than a recension of the strongly established Longfellow-Norton one. We have already seen the relation between these two renderings, whose prestige was great enough to dominate the practice of Dante translation in America for half a century. The following short passage (XXIV.43-51) quoted in all three translations shows how closely interlocked Vincent's rendering is with that of his predecessors.

When I was up
The breath was from my lungs so milked away,
That I could go no farther, but sat down,
As soon as I arrived. The Master said:
'Henceforth behoves thee thus to free thyself
From sloth; for not by sitting upon down,
Nor under coverlets, is fame attained.
Without the which he who consumes his life,
Leaves upon earth such vestige of himself
As smoke in air, and on the water, foam.' (Vincent)

The breath was from my lungs so milked away
When I was up, that I could go no farther,
Nay, I sat down upon my first arrival.
'Now it behoves thee thus to put off sloth,'
My Master said; 'for sitting upon down,
Or under quilt, one cometh not to fame,
Withouten which whoso his life consumes
Such vestige leaveth of himself on earth
As smoke in air or in the water foam.' (Longfellow)

The breath was so milked from my lungs when I was up that I
could go further, nay, sat me down on first arrival. 'Hence-
forth it behoves thee thus to put off sloth,' said the Master,
'for, sitting upon down or under quilts, one comes not to
fame, without which he who consumes his life leaves such
vestige of himself on earth as smoke in air, or the foam
on water. (Norton)

Such parallels as these run through the entire poem; Vincent sometimes
follows Norton, sometimes Longfellow; as a rule he avoids the latter's
Latinised diction, but often has recourse to it for metrical reasons.
Some of the resemblances are doubtless coincidences, some may be uncon-
scious recollections; Vincent obviously knew both translations well and
acknowledged his debt in the preface. He was moreover working in the
same restricted literary tradition, and had no sufficiently distinct aim
to give his work individuality.

Indeed, when Vincent departs from both Longfellow and Norton, the
result is seldom an improvement. One of the reasons that his Inferno
contains about 100 lines more than the original is that he is frequently
over-wordy and makes four or even five lines out of a single terzina,
e.g. XXV.10-12 where

Ahi Pistoia, Pistoia, chè non stanzi
d'incenerarti si che più non duri,
poi che in mal far lo seme tuo avanz?

becomes in Vincent:

- 528 -
Pistoia! ah, Pistoia! Wherefore not
Resolve to turn thyself to ashes, so
That thou mayst last no longer, since the seed
Of which thou wast begot thou dost surpass
In evil-doing?

compared with Longfellow's

Pistoia, ah, Pistoia! why resolve not
To burn thyself to ashes and so perish,
Since in ill-doing thou thy seed excellest?

Vincent is sometimes painfully clumsy, as in XX.73 ff:

There it must needs that all that cannot stay
Within Benaco's lap, together fall,
And it becomes a river, as it flows
Down through green pastures. Soon as starts to flow
The water, Mincio it is called; no more
Benaco, far as to Governo, where
It falls into the Po.

His phraseology is unnecessarily awkward in such lines as:

Pray let us go
Alone, without an escort, if the way
Thou know'st, for for myself I crave it not. (XXI.127-9)

Thou soon wilt be there where thine eye will give the
Answer concerning this, as thou shalt see
The cause that showers the blast. (XXXIII.106-8)

Sometimes he is obscure, as in XXXI.12-15:

a loud horn
I heard resound, so loud that every peal
Of thunder faint it would have made, the which
Guided my eyes, which counter to itself,
Pursued its course, entirely to one place.

At other times he is merely fatuous, e.g. XI.10-12:

Slow it behoves that our descending be,
So that our sense may grow a little used,
First, to the putrid blast; and afterward
It will not matter.

Norton, as the result of progress in Dante study and research, improved on Longfellow by correcting numerous inferior readings and interpretations, and as a rule Vincent follows him. He had, however, given some independent attention to the text; and he departs here and there
from the established rendering. Against III.111, which he translates 'Beats with his oar each one who tries to sit', he has a note defending this old but doubtful interpretation, not very convincingly. In VII.61 he renders 'buffa' by 'gust' (Longfellow, 'farce'; Norton, 'jest'), but his note expresses doubt. He renders XIX.88, 'I non so s'i' mi fui qui troppo folle', as 'I know not if I was too dull', giving in a note Scartazzini's explanation, later rejected by Vandelli in his revision.

There are a few misprints in the book, two of which are serious. In canto IX line 115 of the original is not translated, and the passage reads:

\[\text{Just as at Arles, where Rhone becomes a marsh,}\\ \text{Just as at Pola, near Quarnaro's gulf,}\\ \text{Which shuts in Italy and bathes its bounds,} -\\ \text{So here they did on all sides, save that here}\\ \text{The fashion was more bitter.}\\\]

The line omitted, 'fanno i sepulcri tuati il loco varo', is the key to what all this is about, and its absence leads to confusion. It looks as though the line had been there originally, and had been dropped out in the course of making some alteration, because the line references in the notes, which seem to be accurate everywhere else, are chaotic here. The canto as it stands contains 131 lines, but line 132 is referred to in the notes, so probably we must blame the printer. In canto XXIX three lines, 91-3 of the original, are omitted, again producing confusion. The passage reads:

\[\text{... inform us if there be}\\ \text{Any Italian among those who are}\\ \text{Within here; so forever may thy nails}\\ \text{Suffice thee for this work.' 'I,' said the Guide,}\\ \text{'Am one who with this living man descend}\\ \text{From ledge to ledge, and mean to show him Hell.'}\\\]

One can only feel that Vincent's translation was so much wasted effort, and that he would have done better either to have made it in prose, or confined himself to comment and criticism. His decision, for whatever reason
it was made, not to proceed with the publication of the remainder of the Comedy was a wise one. At the same time, his attitude towards the study of Dante, and his critical remarks, are interesting as a sidelight on the time in which he lived and its intellectual atmosphere, and many of his comments do not lack intrinsic merit.

No information can so far be obtained as to the identity of this lady. Prior to the publication of the above volume, which contains the whole of her so-called translation, she had three smaller selections issued by the same publishers. The first of these appeared in 1896 as Cantos from the Divina Commedia of Dante; it contained Inferno I, IV and Y; Purgatorio I to III and XXVII to XXXIII; Paradise II and VII, with fragments of XXV and XXXIII. In 1897 another edition was published with the title Twenty-Five Cantos from the Divina Commedia of Dante, and in 1899 what is described as a 'second and enlarged edition' contained thirty-nine Cantos. The final volume in 1894 carried the half title Sixty-nine Cantos, although on the cover and title page it is described as Purgatorio and Paradise. In all cases the author's name is given as C. Potter; the style at head of articles rests on the authority of Paget Toynbee who so named her both in Britain's Tribute to Dante and in Dante Studies (both 1921). In the latter book he included dates of birth and death where known, but he gives no dates for the Potter entry. The Athenæum reviewed the 1893 volume and the Academy the 1904 one, and both referred to the translator as Mr Potter. We shall refer to her here as Miss Potter, although there is no certainty that this is correct. Incidentally the 1899 volume of Thirty-nine Cantos is missing from both Toynbee's bibliographies, although there is a copy in the British Museum.

No information can so far be obtained as to the identity of this lady. Prior to the publication of the above volume, which contains the whole of her so-called translation, she had three smaller selections issued by the same publishers. The first of these appeared in 1896 as Cantos from the Divina Commedia of Dante; it contained Inferno I, IV and V; Purgatorio I to III and XXVII to XXXIII; Paradiso II and VII, with fragments of XXV and XXXIII. In 1897 another edition was published with the title Twenty-five Cantos from the Divina Commedia of Dante, and in 1899 what is described as a 'second and enlarged edition' contained Thirty-nine Cantos. The final volume in 1904 carries the half title Sixty-nine Cantos, although on the cover and title page it is described as Purgatorio and Paradiso. In all cases the author's name is given as C. Potter; the style at head of article rests on the authority of Paget Toynbee who so names her both in Britain's Tribute to Dante and in Dante Studies (both 1921). In the latter book he included dates of birth and death where known, but he gives no dates for the Potter entry. The Athenaeum reviewed the 1896 volume and the Academy the 1904 one, and both referred to the translator as Mr Potter. We shall refer to her here as Miss Potter, although there is no certainty that this is correct. Incidentally the 1899 volume of Thirty-nine Cantos is missing from both Toynbee's bibliographies, although there is a copy in the British Museum.
It is doubtful whether these cantos can legitimately be included in a list of English translations of the Divine Comedy, because they are neither translations, nor paraphrases, nor even mistranslations. They might be called misrepresentations of Dante, but that would imply that they possessed some meaning, or were written on some system, which assumptions are not borne out by inspection. For the most part they appear to be sheer nonsense, and although it is difficult to understand why anyone should go to the trouble of composing them and the expense of publishing them if they are nothing more, it seems very unlikely that any key could ever be found to make them intelligible. No help is available from the book itself, which contains no prefatory matter of any kind except the dedication which runs:

Dedicated to those who have desired some more leaves gathered from under a giant tree, these, with some apologies to Dante for the aroma if lost, where nothing can hinder the verdure permanently of a tree as a landmark for all time.

The English of this sentence is an average sample of the kind of grammatical structure found throughout the poem.

The extraordinary arguments prefixed to the cantos only serve to increase the mystification. Here for instance is that to Purg. I.

Dante, entering into Purgatory, recognises the Shade of Cato, whom he addresses in a long and flattering speech. Whereupon Cato, guiding to the seashore, proposes to Dante similar acts to those he first suggested to Cato.

In the text itself Virgil's speech to Cato is transferred to Dante, and Cato's reply is run on to it as a continuation so that it lasts from line 52 to line 108, while lines 112 right on to the end of the canto are printed as a speech by Cato. The whole thing is completely incoherent. The invective of Purg. VI is represented both in argument and text as a speech by Sordello. In Purg. XII the poets are said to 'walk among the
sepulchral monuments of bygone ages'. In the argument to Purg. XVII we learn that:

As they prepare to ascend the Mount the atmosphere clears, and Dante recalls to mind a darker phase of his religion, in the old story of Lavinia's Queen Mother, metamorphosed into a nightingale at Jove's behest, in punishment for the murder of her own son, by mistake for another's, through envy.

In that to Purg. XVIII we are informed that the poets are assailed by a noisy troop of Spirits, who greet them with some goodwill though peculiar; in the next we are told that 'they meet with some miserable Spirits, who decline to direct them further'. The argument to Purg. XXVII runs:

Dante is impeded in his course by the intense brilliance of the Sun, which he hesitates to enter; but is persuaded to pass through. After sleeping in the shadow of a great rock, he has a dream; awaking sees a level country before them, where Virgil takes a final leave.

At the beginning of Par. IV we read with some amazement:

Dante is annoyed to think he has incurred the displeasure of Beatrice in wishing to follow the Nun Picarda. She explains to him the impossibility of following two Guides, which gives her an opportunity for engrafting some new ideas.

There is no mention of Justinian, Par. VI being described as an Interlude and unquoted. Charles Martel's daughter unexpectedly appears in person at the beginning of Par. IX. Dante's interview with Cacciaguida is rather a flop in Miss Potter's version; in the argument to Par. XV we are told that he 'hopes to glean some information of a lost hereditary title: this (i.e. the shade) however disillusion him by relating the lost splendours of Florence'; while at the beginning of Par. XVII we are told that 'Dante, disappointed, fails to see any advantage in the new career predicted for him by Cacciaguida'. The argument to Par. XVIII ends with the strange sentence: 'In the distance he reviews his reviewers', but there is nothing in the text that elucidates this. In Par. XX it is said that 'Dante is interviewed by Ripheus'. In Par. XXI we are told that Dante 'much impressed with the added beauty of Beatrice, desires if possible
she might accompany him to the lower world. Beatrice explains to him her refusal. Incidentally, throughout the Paradiso Dante is often described as being 'much impressed'. In Par. XXV the catechism on hope is given to Saint John, who is said to 'regard Dante doubtfully at first'. The argument to Par. XXVIII may afford some slight hint of the strange bees which buzz in Miss Potter's bonnet.

Dante is doubtful of the success of his mission in the great poem, and has a prophetic insight of its reverses after the two centenaries of its first reception. Afterwards of its variable and then complete success in its seventh centenary and afterwards.

The metre in which the translation is written is a strangely conceived one. The poem consists of quatrains, rhymed a b a b, the first three lines being more or less iambic pentameters, the last usually an Alexandrine but quite often a 'fourteener', reminding us of the Elizabethan 'poulter's measure'. Exceptionally, the first two stanzas of Inf. I have trimeters in the second and fourth lines; this form does not recur.

Grammar, sequence and sense are alike chaotic. The division of speeches is incomprehensible. Probably the reader, after having wrestled with the Francesca episode, given in Appendix I, will feel justified in refusing to read any more. This perverse distortion of Dante's story must have been carried out deliberately; note how lines 100-2 seem to be spoken by Paolo ('brought mine to hers') and 103-5 by Francesca ('fast bound in his unyielding net') although all printed as one speech. The earlier editions read much the same, except that the last stanza is different:

Galeotto was the book of evil plan,
As he who wrote it will have cause to know:
Francesca thus approved as Paul began;
Oblivion took my pity, faint at their tale of woe.

Since almost every quatrain exemplifies Miss Potter's extraordinary ability for perversion it is difficult to know just what to quote. Here,
for instance, is the opening of Purg. IV.

If through sensations of delight or grief
Some newer virtue we can apprehend,
The Soul refreshed finds in it such relief,
No other will can after this in influence blend.

A fallacy will there refute had been; -
That disposition stands in us the higher;
Because a thing to hate so soon as seen
No longer holds its force in Souls that can aspire.

A servant once to this, no longer serves,
When other sounds attract the listening ear, -
In duty bound from other service swerves;
This in a new experience I had gathered here: -

And here is the conclusion of the invective in Purg. VI.

Swift flies the time our memories can take
Of laws in money, custom, office-change;
Which renovated new appearance make: -
And if such be recorded, as of a good exchange,

Within the light of it, - to be implied; -
Seen as a likeness, to be seen likewise
That not for rest, soft feathers only bide, -
But for some direful conflict may in flight arise.

The climbers receive a discouraging welcome from the angel at the begin-
ing of Purg. XXVII.

Forth from the flame God's angel on the brink,
Stood in great joy and sang - 'The pure in heart.' -
With voice above our life - 'Ye saintly, think
Not through this fire ye enter in, till life depart.'

Whilst to that song, not deaf my inward ear,
I thought of him who in the grave had lain. -
As we pressed on, To me, 'Come not thou near':
Wherewith a lifted arm was barred, 'Nor entrance gain.'

The following lines purport to translate Par. II.94-111:

Take then an instance more decided still
In thy experience; showing where your arts
Have been derived, and prove as sure it will
How from one fount alone a wandering streamlet starts.

Three mirrors take; one place beyond the rest,
And turn thy eyes the foremost not to see,
Then pass behind these, and within thy quest,
See light beneficent arising from all three.
Reflects each mirror, - equal in its force
The light so shed: there is no need to stretch
Thy vision, reaching to the farthest source,
Convinced that splendour equal does arise from each.

Or if the subject be the Sun’s warm ray,
Melting from its first colour the cold snow
As this is laid; so mightst thou see the way
That living light has made thy trembling aspect show.

We are presented with many insoluble puzzles. For instance the two terzine (Par. IX.55-60):

Troppo sarebbe larga la bigoncia
che ricevesse il sangue ferrarese,
e stanco chi ’l pesasse a oncia a oncia,
che donorà questo prete cortese
per mostrarsi di parte; e ocati doni
conformi fieno al viver del paese,

are apparently represented in Miss Potter’s version by the quatrain:

Where found - the larger ships might shield the land, -
The Natives from a foreign shore detain
Who of their courtesy bring coin in hand, -
Ensuring peace thereby the longer they remain,

at least the preceding and following quatrains appear to correspond with
the preceding and following terzine. No explanation of this transliteration
presents itself. Only two words appear to correspond with the Italian,
‘larger’ and ‘courtesy’; seemingly ‘bigoncia’ has been interpreted as ‘ship’,
‘sangue’ may have suggested ‘Natives’, and ‘conformi’ ‘ensuring’. Was
‘prete’ taken to mean ‘price’, hence ‘coin’, and was ‘paese’ thought to
mean ‘peace’? But if that were so, Miss Potter could have known no Italian
at all, and there are places, especially in the latter cantos of Purgatorio,
where the general sense seems to be fully understood, however poor the
execution, e.g. the end of Purg. XXVII:

Behold the Sun in front that shows thee light;
Behold the herb, the flowers in wooded dells,
Born solely of the earth; till meets thy sight
Those watchful, beauteous eyes wherein delight then dwells.
Eyes, full of tears, that brought me to thy side;  
Stay if thou wilt, or travel, at thy choice;  
No longer with thee now can I abide,  
No more direct thy way, by sign or guarding voice.

Free as by right, thy own decision made;  
In wisdom now no failure can be thine;  
Henceforth I leave thee, thy own path to take;  
Crowned, and with sceptre from me, make thee sole consign.

We get the same rough correspondence for instance in Par. XXX, 38-42, where obviously 'dolzore' has been taken for 'dolore' in the last line:

Now have we reached unto the fount of Heaven,  
Filled with all light and intellectual love, -  
Love that in true delight is freely given: -  
Delight that every earthly woe can soar above.

Incidentally Miss Potter contracts considerably; the total number of lines in her version is some twenty-five per cent less than in the original, and there are frequent omissions where we are able to trace them.

It may have been observed that the punctuation, reproduced exactly, is often strange. The books are also full of misprints, especially of proper names, which are not even mis-spelt consistently.

The reviewers could not make much of the translation. Of the first volume the Athenaeum (29th August 1896, p. 288) said that it was the worst rendering which has up to now appeared whether from the point of view of understanding the original or of casting it into an English form.

The Academy noticed the final volume (3rd September 1904, p. 162), but the reviewer does not seem to have read very far, for he dismisses it with:

Nor can we commend Mr Potter's version of Dante. The stanza employed seems to us very unfortunate. The translation is diffuse and sadly lacking in poetic quality of expression.
Charles Gordon Wright (1854-1936) was born at Sutton Coldfield, being the son of Josiah Wright. He was educated at Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge (B.A. 1878, M.A. 1881); ordained deacon 1879, priest 1880; and after holding several curacies became vicar of Trumpington (a Trinity living) from 1891 to 1903, when he retired owing to ill health. He was married but had no family. After his retirement he resided at Chichester, and in spite of long periods of illness he lived to be 81. An appreciation by one who knew him well mentions his great interest in Dante, whose works formed his chief recreation. Apart from the translation under discussion his only publication was Stories from the Classics (1907).

Toynbee in Dante Studies (p. 273) records an unpublished translation in blank verse of the whole Comedy by G. Gordon Wright (sic) under date 1906 (the name is correctly given under 1905), but gives no further details. As will be seen from the discussion of Wright’s Purgatorio, it would not be difficult to turn his rhythmic prose into blank verse. A personal friend of Wright’s, who frequently discussed Dante with him, and who described the translator as ‘a charming scholarly man’, remembers the existence of the complete version in manuscript, but is unable to recall any details or to say what became of it. It must therefore now be regarded as lost.

The preface to Wright’s translation is very short, and most of it is contained in the following extract:

This little book does not pretend in any way to add to the knowledge of Dante: it is only an attempt to make him more readable. For those
Charles Gordon Wright (2)

who can follow the Italian there are already numberless translations in verse and prose, but for those who can not or will not, none of these are of much service: neither modern verse, especially when hampered by elaborate rhyme, nor literal prose can reproduce at once the easy grace and the mingled quaintness and sublimity of the original. It is for this reason that the aid of Spenserian English has been sought. Spenser, like Dante, was a great poet: like him, he dealt with a world in part akin to, in part distinct from, the world of his day: his language, as is plain when it is compared with that of his contemporary Shakespeare, was purposely chosen and modulated to give an old-world and romantic setting to his theme: he too was quaint in diction: he too was sublime: he too, though in a far less degree than Dante, was a poet seer and would not have disdained 'to make his undersong'.

Apart from the fact that this statement dismisses the existing translations somewhat lightly, it is unconvincing as a justification for the form chosen. Does he mean to imply that Dante tried 'to give an old-world and romantic setting to his theme'? And why should the reader who has no knowledge of Italian he expected to form a truer notion of Dante by grappling with the archaic vocabulary and syntax of Spenserian English, than if he read a translation in the contemporary idiom? The parallel between Dante and Spenser is a very thin one, and in any case, supposing it were valid, can Spenser's diction be separated from his poetry and made into Spenserian prose?

It is not, however, worth while to answer these questions, for Wright does not seem to have taken his apparent position seriously. His prose is no more Spenserian than Sullivan's is Jacobean; we have already said something about synthetic archaism in connexion with the latter. Wright adopts similar tactics in the sense that he occasionally uses specifically Spenserian words when opportunity offers; that he flavours his pages with a variety of conventional archaisms; and that he has recourse to a few ungrammatical constructions faintly suggestive of Elizabethan style. What Ben Jonson said of Spenser could certainly be applied without qualification both to Wright and Sullivan: 'in affecting the ancients they writ no
language'.

We find indeed in Wright just the sprinkling of Spenserian words we might expect: dreariment, surquedry, lustihood, belamour, astonied - all these and more appear in the first few cantos, along with a large number of 'wights', 'areads', 'ekes' and 'whilomes'. Even so Wright shows commendable restraint. Many of the words are used only once, e.g. 'moniment' makes its only appearance in the first canto; while 'derring do' and 'inwit' are kept in reserve till near the end of the poem. The 'montanaro' of XXVI.88 is a 'highland wight', but he is 'savage', not 'salvage'. 'Yieldeth not to battery' is a trifle odd for 'alle percosse non seconda' (I.105); 'to all things prompt and buxom' (XVIII.20) is certainly Spenserian, but it is doubtful policy to use in their old sense words which have acquired a new one. Words like 'cruddled' and 'crake' are too unfamiliar to have evocative value. Wright overworks some other archaisms: 'cast' = 'purpose' is too frequent; 'gin' and 'gan' irritatingly so; 'do us to wit' and similar expressions likewise; 'quick' = 'alive' or 'living' is misleading in a context like 'look, if thou hast ever seen me quick' (III.105), or 'as round me quick they rolled' (IV.131).

We find also a surfeit of such colourless relics as 'wot', 'ween', etc., particularly exasperating when they are mere padding, as in 'more than his, thou wottest of' (XVII.39), or, still worse, 'yet power to stay it have ye eke, Got wot' (XVIII.72). The same impression of pastiche is conveyed by phrases like 'Certes we living wights ought grant them aid' (XI.34); 'Alack and well a day!' (XII.112); or 'bide me not without a word' (XXIII.54). Annoying also is the frequency of expressions like 'in fear forsaken for to be' (III.19); 'wax anigh to keep prophetic lore' (IX.18); 'waxing for to be a hunter' (XIV.58); 'time faileth for to tell' (XXVI.91).
Before we say more, it is necessary to explain that Wright's language is dominated by a rhythmic as well as a linguistic prepossession, to which, strangely enough, he makes no reference at all in his preface. With very few exceptions the entire translation has been given a deliberate iambic rhythm, causing it to fall naturally into a series of lines of blank verse, with occasional short or broken lines. That this effect is deliberate is abundantly evident from the inversions made to sustain it, the written accents placed on words which must be pronounced other than normally (e.g. 'contrary' in II.4, quoted in Appendix). The following two passages illustrate what is meant, and show also the breaks or interruptions which separate the regular succession of iambic pentameters.

As sheep by ones or twos or threes come from the pen, the others timid stand, downcasting eye and nose; what does the first, eke do the others, huddled up to her, if she stand still, silly and dumb, nor know they why. Thus did the leader of that happy flock advance, modest of face and lordly in his port. When those in front the shadow saw, that broke the light, fall from my right side on the rock, halting their steps they drew them back a space, and all the others, coming after, did the same, unwitting why.

Ere the horizon in its vasty range had waxen to one hue, and night her lordship held entire, for lodging chose we each a step since rather power to climb, than will, the place denied. As goats that wanton skipped upon the hills, ere they were fed, soon as they gin to crop, grow tame and quiet, resting in the shade protected by the herd who leaneth on his staff and watcheth them, and as a shepherd, lodged neath open skies, keeps quiet vigil by his flock all night, lest wild beast scatter it: e'en so we rested, I like goat, like shepherds they, by lofty rock enclosed on either side.

The scansion is often reinforced by a mark of elision, as in 'which ever maketh black th' infernal vale' (I.45); 'Some through their neighbours' downfall hope t' excel' (XVII.115). The diacritical marks are sometimes very strange as in 'As when, a game of dice at an end' (VI.1).

This iambic rhythm forces itself on the attention immediately. It was noted with disapproval by the reviewers; and the experiment has been made of asking several friends to comment on Wright's prose, with the result
that they all asked whether it was meant to be blank verse. The consciousness of the rhythm greatly interfered with the reading of the translation. One cannot help trying to follow it, then when it breaks off, or when there is a short line, making an effort to pick it up again, going back to see whether it should be read in a different way. It is strange that Wright made no mention of it at all in his preface. One is inclined to think that he must have had the notion of producing a blank verse rendering by slight alterations to his so-called prose one. This may have been the nucleus of the blank verse translation mentioned above.

All these peculiarities make Wright's version difficult to read; nor has it any compensating merits. Although generally speaking the translation is accurate, to the extent that Dante's drift is correctly reproduced, it is seldom particularly successful in reproducing either the force or beauty of the original. There is frequent weakening, e.g.

God's justice boweth not, nor fails, though in a moment they, who here abide, have their due paid by others' fire of love, or 'great pity left me wet with tears' (= 'per fli occhi fui di grève dolor munto', XIII.57). There is often compression, amounting to baldness, as when six lines of Italian, XXV.22-7, become:

Remember Meleager, how, the brand consuming, he consum'd was: eke think how in the mirror, as you move, your image likewise moves: so will, what seemeth hard, be plain.

Sometimes the form in which the translation is cast is rather strange, e.g. XXIX.97-9: 'Reader, no rhymes I squander on their forms, nor dare I wanton here: me other care compels'; or XXVIII.144: 'here nectar sweet; who knows not nectar sweet?'. Wright is fond of inserting glosses in his translation, presumably for the benefit of the uninitiated. Thus Adrian V supplies an English translation of his Latin sentence (XIX.99): 'but first "scias quod ego fui successor Petri", know that successor of St Peter erst was I'; but
even more detailed is the version of XXII.4-6: 'them had he blessed called, who righteousness desire, yet said not in the Latin tongue "esuriunt", they hunger, as is writ, but only "sitiunt", they thirst.' Elsewhere, however, Latin phrases are left untranslated.

There are one or two actual mistranslations, but they are probably all mere slips or misprints. Thus in II.45 'più di cento spiriti' is rendered 'souls a thousand more'; in III.58 'da man sinistra' becomes 'on the right'; in V.4-5 'non par che luca / lo raggio da sinistra a quel di sotto' is turned to 'See yonder him below: the light seems on his left to shine'. 'The whetstone, backward rolling, blunts itself' will hardly do for 'rivolge sè contra il taglio la rota' (XXXI.42); nor can the noonday circle be said to take 'different form in different lands' ( = 'che qua e là, come gli aspetti, fassi', XXXIII.105).

Now and again, however, Wright gives us something that possesses distinction. Thus his version of XVIII.34-9 brings out the point well:

Now mayest thou perceive how far the truth is hidden from those folk, who hold that every act of love must needs be worthy praise, because, say they, the fuel of its fires is always good: but, albe good the wax, not all impressions are.

He was found le mot juste in rendering XXVI.77-8: 'the sin, for which of old did Caesar hear "Regina" hooted after him', although it could hardly be called Spenserian. There is something of Dante's effect in 'See him, who moves so slow in front of us: erst rang all Tuscany with his renown, now scarce Siena whispereth his name' (XI.109-11). XIX.61-3 has the proper vigour:

Let that suffice: now nimble spurn the ground: see where th' Eternal King hath set his lure, for ever spinning with the mighty spheres.

Attractive also seems XXXIII.109-14:

... so halted those seven ladies, when there fell a shadow pale, such as beneath green leaves and darksome boughs the Alp casts over
its cool streams. Methought I saw before them, from one spring forthwelling, Tigris and Euphrates flow and part like lingering friends.

The revision of proofs has been far from careful. There are numerous mis-spellings and other obvious misprints, some of which proved puzzling at first reading; and the oddness noticed here and there may be due to similar slips. The quotation marks in particular are frequently misplaced; and since they are double in all cases, confusion arises where one quoted word or passage is contained within another. There are far too many commas, and colons are also lavishly used. The line numbering presents some strange features; both Italian and English are numbered in the outer margin, helpful for purposes of comparison, but unfortunately the latter numerals do not always correspond with the former. The numbering is as a rule in sixes, but strangely sometimes in threes or inines, and in one place a gap of 24 lines occurs in both series of numbers. The printing of prose opposite verse always involved a typographical difficulty, for while the number of lines in the former is fixed, the latter varies in extent. Sometimes Wright's prose comes into six lines less than the Italian, and since in all cases the blank space is at the foot of the page the gaps are rather unsightly.

Little press comment has been traced regarding this translation. The Athenaeum reviewed it unenthusiastically (14th October 1905, pp. 504-5), finding it 'constructed on a somewhat novel, though not wholly commendable, principle' (the iambic scansion, not the Spenserian language is referred to here). "He has not a bad vocabulary," the reviewer thinks, "if he will forget Spenser, as, to do him justice, he generally does . . . . On the whole the translation is sound, but it might have been cast in a less fanciful form." The word 'fanciful' seems an apt one to describe a version which
Charles Gordon Wright (8)

exhibits a number of peculiarities, none of which seem to be justified by any adequate principle of translation.

The Faenza of Dante Alighieri. Translation by F. W. Fraser. Bath: W. W. Smith. 1908. Foolscap octavo, 190 pages. Errata (5 entries) on verso of title page; Introduction, pp. 1-5; acknowledgments, p. 4; English text, printed in tertia, with summarized arguments before and brief notes after each canto (for passages omitted see below), pp. 5-180.

Frances Isabella Fraser remains little more than a name. The short introduction to her Faenza says that she was familiar with Italian from childhood, but does not explain why. She is believed by the Director of the Municipal Libraries at Bath to be identical with a Miss Fraser who lived there at 13 Park Street from 1901 to 1930. The printers can supply no information about her, nor can any mention of her book or of her death be traced by the Bath newspapers. One or two peculiarities in her style, her habit of dropping occasionally into French in her notes, her quaint spellings like 'child-hood', 'land-mark', 'lightening', etc., all go to suggest a continental upbringing. Other idiosyncracies will be noted in the extracts given below.

Miss Fraser's claims for her version are modest; she describes it in the introduction as a 'rough but conscientiousverse rendering, made for her own help by one familiar from childhood with Italian and Italian idiom'. Explaining that her system is the same as Longfellow's, namely blank tercets, she remarks that there is some inevitable identity, adding:

As regards the translation, un-rhymed tercets have a displeasing and monotonous effect, but in retaining the verse of the original (albeit it never so wisely in translation) landmarks are retained, with check on elision and diffuseness. Roughness is bad, but often smoothing is often fatal.

Miss Fraser certainly knew the Comédy well and had studied it. She quotes from many Italian authorities, and gives numerous alternative
FRANCES ISABELLA FRASER

The Paradise of Dante Alighieri. Translation by F. I. Fraser. Bath: S. W. Simms, 1908. Foolscap octavo, 190 pages. Errata (5 entries) on verso of title page; Introduction, pp. 1-3; acknowledgments, p. 4; English text, printed in terzine, with summarised arguments before and brief notes after each canto (for passages omitted see below), pp. 5-190.

Frances Isabella Fraser remains little more than a name. The short introduction to her Paradiso says that she was familiar with Italian from childhood, but does not explain why. She is believed by the Director of the Municipal Libraries at Bath to be identical with a Miss Fraser who lived there at 13 Park Street from 1901 to 1930. The printers can supply no information about her, nor can any mention of her book or of her death be traced in the Bath newspapers. One or two peculiarities in her style, her habit of dropping occasionally into French in her notes, her quaint spellings like 'child-hood', 'land-mark', 'lightening', etc., all go to suggest a continental upbringing. Other idiosyncracies will be noted in the extracts given below.

Miss Fraser's claims for her version are modest; she describes it in the introduction as a 'rough but conscientious verse rendering, made for her own help by one familiar from child-hood with Italian and Italian idioms'. Explaining that her system is the same as Longfellow's, namely blank terzine, she remarks that there is some inevitable identity, adding:

As regards the translation, un-rhymed terzine have a displeasing and monotonous jolt, but in retaining the verse of the original (limp it never so vilely in translation) land-marks are retained, with check on omission and diffuseness. Roughness is bad, but after-smoothing is often fatal.

Miss Fraser certainly knew the Comedy well and had studied it. She quotes from many Italian authorities, and gives numerous alternative
readings and interpretations. Frequently her notes contain lines or terzine to replace those in the text if the variant is preferred; indeed for the much-disputed XXVI.18, 'mi legge Amore o lievemente o forte', she gives the following five versions, the first being that in the text:

of whatsoever writing
Lightly or gravely love doth read to me.

Love, be it gently or strongly, teacheth me.

Easily or hardly, love dictates to me.

Love, be it softly or loudly, readeth me.

Clearly or darkly, love dictates to me.

Miss Fraser's own description of her rendering as 'rough and conscientious' seems quite a fair one; it is the sort of thing that one might do as an exercise to fix the plan and meaning of the original in one's mind. She herself realises the disadvantages of blank terzine; she chooses roughness, not because it is good in itself, but as preferable to over-smoothness, and if her lines limp vilely at times, we have been warned. She does not preserve the integrity of the terzine as Longfellow does, as may be seen in the extracts given, and sometimes has an awkward enjambement, as in XII.46-54:

In that westland where Zephyrus mild springs up
To open forth the earliest leaves wherewith
Is Europe seen to be re-vested, not
Far distant from the beating of the waves
Behind which, in the time of his long course,
The sun from all men somewhat hideth him,
Is situate favour'd Calaroga, under
Protection of the mighty shield, whereon
Subjugant is the lion and subjacent.

The foregoing passage also serves to show that Miss Fraser, if not insensitive to the poetic quality of Dante's lines, at least makes no attempt to reproduce the effect; she has indeed preserved the 'beating of the waves',

- 548 -
Frances Isabella Fraser (3)

but that is really a gift to the translator, and the line, with little variation, has been thus rendered in many other versions. Longfellow, on the other hand, has been moderately successful in retaining something of the manner of Dante here:

Within that region where the sweet west wind
Rises to open the new leaves, wherewith
Europe is seen to clothe herself afresh,
Not far off from the beating of the waves,
Behind which in his long career the sun
Sometimes conceals himself from every man,
Is situate the fortunate Calahorra,
Under protection of the mighty shield
In which the Lion subject is and sovereign.

A poor affair no doubt compared with the original, yet there are several places where Longfellow at least reminds us of it, whereas Miss Fraser is dangerously near cacophony. Admittedly she does not claim to be doing more than supplying a crib, but it is difficult to imagine anyone expending the effort necessary to make an original version of the Paradiso which does not in some measure reflect the intensity of the translator's own poetic experience. So when Miss Fraser writes (XIV.39-41):

As the Love's ardour shall its brightness be,
The ardour as the vision, and that, great
As hath the love more grace beyond its merit,
it is hard to believe that she has ever 'heard' the original properly, otherwise she could not have ruined the effect by transposing the positions of 'ardour' and 'brightness' in the first line. Too often her lines seem to be mere jumbles of words, e.g. (I.76-81):

When the revolving which Thou, being desired,
Dost sempiternise, with the harmony
Thou temperest and distribuest, had caused me
Give heed thereto, so much of heaven methought
Was then alight with the sun's flame that never
River nor rain did spread so wide a lake,
or (XXX.28-33):

- 549 -
From the first day when in this life I look'd
Upon her face, even to that seeing, never
Hath following it been sever'd from my song;
But now my following needs must stay from further
After her beauty poetising, even
As at his utmost every artist must.

The following passage from the final vision, besides showing the same tendencies, cannot be defended on the plea of literality, because in several places it weakens the force and precision of the Italian (XXXIII.82-96):

O most abundant Grace, Whereby I dared
Infix my gaze thorough the Eternal Light
Far as to exhaust mine utmost sight Therein!
I saw that in the depths of It interned
Is, bound with Love all in one volume, that
Which through the universe is spread abroad;
Substance and accident and the custom of them,
As it were fused together on such wise
That That I tell of is all One Sole Light.
The universal Essence of such union
I deem that I beheld, in that I feel
Joy of more large expansion, saying this.
One single point hath wrought me more oblivion
Than ages twenty-five to that emprise
That moved the sea to awe at Argo's shadow.

Although Miss Fraser seldom rises above the pedestrian, there are one or two passages that stand out by comparison from their context. She is certainly better than Longfellow in XVII.40-2:

Howbeit it taketh hence necessity
No more than from the gaze in which 'tis mirror'd
The ship that glideth downward with the stream.

The opening of canto XX is one of the stiffest tests for the translator;

Miss Fraser's version is respectable without being distinguished:

When he who all the world illuminates
Down from our hemisphere descendeth, so
That day on every side consumes away,
The heaven, which only of him is lit before,
Immediately renews itself to sight
In many lights wherein but one resplends.
And this act of the heavens into my mind
Came even as the ensign of the world
And as the world's rulers, in its blessed beak
Was silent, whereas all those living lights, Evermore brightening, canticles began, Passing away and fading from my mind.

The river of light (XXX.61-9) has some good touches:

Then
Beheld. I light in semblance of a river
Bright with all brightness, in between two shores
Adorned with wond'rous blossoming of spring.
From forth this stream issuing came living sparks,
And upon all sides mingling with the flowers,
As it were rubies ring'd about with gold:
And then, as tho' inebriate with their perfumes,
Re-plunged themselves into the wondrous stream,
And whiles one enter'd, one came out therefrom.

Miss Fraser has herself indicated that there are coincidences between her version and Longfellow's. These are certainly numerous and sometimes striking; a detailed examination of the first canto shows about eight terzine where the differences are only in the word order, and quite a few lines showing strong resemblance, e.g. (1-3):

The glory of Him Who moveth everything,
Throughout the universe doth penetrate,
And shines in one part more, in other less.    (Fraser)

The glory of Him who moveth everything
Doth penetrate the universe, and shine
In one part more and in another less.    (Longfellow)

Miss Fraser's variation is often markedly inferior, e.g. (112-4):

By this they move toward ports different
Thro' the great sea of' being, every one
With instinct given to it that shall bear it.    (Fraser)

Hence they move onward unto ports diverse,
O'er the great sea of' being; and each one
With instinct given it which bears it on.    (Longfellow)

There are similar resemblances throughout the poem, but too much need not be made of these. We have already noted more than once that verbal identity often exists where no collusion was possible. Since, however, Miss Fraser specifically mentions Longfellow, she must have been familiar with his
translated, some of the similarities are likely to be unconscious recollections.

Miss Fraser's book is printed with a great array of capital letters, as can be seen from the extracts, and also with a large number of words in small capitals, a feature which has been ignored here. From time to time her footnotes have a playful, almost skittish tone, like her remarks in the preface. In one place she remarks: 'vile jar of d's, but it must serve - word other is there none that will'. In a note on IV.139-42:

Beatrice looked on me with eyes so filled
With sparks of love, eyes so divine, that all
O'ercome, my strength within me turn'd and fled,
And I stood even as lost, with downcast eyes,

she says:

He does not mean that he turned his back on Beatrice. 'Dar le
reni' signifies to turn and fly - not simply to turn away. Cary
has a most ludicrous version of these lines.

What Cary actually writes is:

That, virtue sinking in me, overpowered,
I turned; and downward bent, confused, my sight,

which hardly seems ludicrous. It seems likely that she put Cary by mista-
take for Longfellow; the latter's version does verge on the absurd:

That, overcome my power, I turned my back
And almost lost myself with eyes downcast.

Miss Fraser fails to make it clear that the reading 'diedi' instead of 'diè', which is quite common in early editions and found as late as Frati-
celli and Butler, makes 'I' (understood) and not 'mia virtute' the subject.

In the latter part of her volume Miss Fraser introduces some still more striking eccentricities. To XXIII.106-8 (the words of the Angel of the Annunciation, 'e girerommi, donna del ciel') she adds a note: 'Polite-
tesses pour la S.V. Ça sent trop le blasphème.' In canto XXII she prints
lines 85-115 (Dante's vision of the Virgin) in the original Italian, without
a translation; against lines 85-99 there is a footnote: 'A sincere Roman
only, might translate here' (punctuation sic); and another note to lines
100-15 reads: 'How read, not to say translate, and keep one's countenance?'
In canto XXXIII lines 1-45, i.e. the whole of St. Bernard's prayer and the
two following terzine beginning 'Li occhi da Dio diletti e venerati', are
printed in Italian only, with a note: 'A sincere Roman only might translate
here and be "non biasmo".'

A short and uncomplimentary review appeared in the Athenaeum (13th
March 1909, p. 313), which remarked that the translation was 'neither prose
nor poetry'. The writer takes Miss Fraser to task for criticising other
translators, particularly Cary in her note on IV.139-42 (quoted above);
and points out that she is not always accurate herself. He pokes fun at
the eccentricity of her notes and omissions.

The translation, which was printed privately and probably had only
a small circulation, is little more than a curiosity; as we have seen, it
has scant literary merit, and there are many better cribs available.
AGNES LOUISA MONEY


Agnes Louisa Money (1842-1910) was the seventh of the twelve children of the Rev. James Drummond Money, rector of Sternfield, near Aldeburgh, Suffolk, by his first wife, Charlotte Christiana Noel of the Gainsborough family of that name. She was educated privately. Circumstances brought about a connexion with the famous banking family of Coutts. After the death of her mother Agnes Money's father married again in 1850; the match was one which caused a sensation in the fashionable world of the day, for his bride was Clara Maria Burdett, elder sister of Angela (later Baroness) Burdett-Coutts, daughter of Sir Francis Burdett (of 'Tower of London' fame) and his wife Sophia, who was the youngest daughter of the original Thomas Coutts. It was a family which seemed fated to sensational marriages. Old Tom shocked his daughters (the eldest was a marchioness and the second a baroness) by marrying, a fortnight after the death of his first wife, an actress, Harriot Mellon, to whom, on his death in 1822, he left the whole of his immense wealth. Five years later Harriot married the Duke of St. Albans, twenty-five years her junior; when she died in 1837, having no children by either marriage, she left her fortune, amounting to some £80,000 a year, in liferent to the only one of her relatives whom she could tolerate, Angela Burdett, who was then twenty-three years of age. This laid the foundation of the career of philanthropy which brought about Angela's elevation to the peerage as Baroness Burdett-Coutts.
in 1871. The Baroness, incidentally, maintained the family reputation by marrying at the age of sixty-seven a man forty years her junior. The Coutts fortune was to pass to Angela's male heir, but of all Sir Francis Burdett's family the only one to have issue was Clara Maria, Mrs Money, whose son Francis (later Lord Latymer) was born in 1852. The Moneys now resided at Stodham Park, Hampshire, and Clara's stepdaughter, Agnes Money, although she would have liked to devote herself to other activities, felt it her duty to remain there for many years as her stepmother's companion. Much later Agnes took an interest in her young nieces, the daughters of Lord Latymer. To one of these, the Hon. Mrs Clara Burdett Patterson, I am indebted for much of the contents of this and the following paragraph. She has kindly supplemented the information contained in her book, Angela Burdett-Coutts and the Victorians (1953), by some personal recollections.

Agnes Louisa Money was a woman of considerable ability and of strong religious convictions. She published three small pamphlets, under her initials A.L.M., Thoughts on Holy Communion (1875), Thoughts on Confirmation (1877) and Thoughts for the Sick (1879). She took a great interest in the Girls' Friendly Society, and eventually wrote a History of the Girls' Friendly Society (1897; revised edition 1911). Mrs Patterson has some interesting recollections of her aunt. She recalls, for instance, her solicitude for her nieces' religious instruction during their childhood; she remembers well too how she and her sister went with her to Italy in 1900, when they had their first meeting with the Baroness, who was then at Genoa. The girls spent three weeks in Florence with their aunt, who recommended them to read Ruskin's Mornings in Florence, and also told them where to go and what to see, with the result that they derived the fullest possible enjoyment and benefit from their stay. Moreover, she adds an intriguing touch by remarking
that 'Aunt Agnes had a profile extraordinarily like that of Savonarola'!

Mrs Patterson recollects too her aunt working on the translation of Dante
during her last years; some of it done sitting up in bed while she was
confined by illness. Evidently it had not struck anyone till then that
Miss Money knew much Italian, or that she knew anything about Dante, and
this unexpected undertaking, completed shortly before her death, surprised
them. But surprises were very much the order of the day in the Coutts
family, and perhaps Miss Money had caught the infection.

Miss Money's short preface enters into no questions of the technique
of translation; it only expresses her own conviction of the religious value
of the poem and shows what her main interest in translating it was. She
begins:

Taken as an Allegory of the progress of the human soul from darkness
to light, the Purgatorio seems well fitted to stand alone. It needs
no deep knowledge of the Italian language, nor of Italian history, nor of the theological and philosophical allusions of which the Purga-
torio is full, to understand its meaning. The one thing that it does
require is the knowledge of the weakness and the strength, the conflicts
and the victories, the despairs and the hopes of the human heart,
when the will is being surrendered to God, and the feet have been set
steadfastly upon the 'narrow way'.

The concluding paragraph is:

If in reading the following pages any soul should gain fresh courage
to face the difficulties of the upward path, or to welcome with a
braver heart the fire that purifies, the hope that had emboldened me
to put forth yet another rendering of the Purgatorio will be amply
fulfilled.

The book is 'dedicated by kind permission to the Hon. William Warren Vernon
with gratitude for the help and pleasure received from his Readings on the
Purgatorio'. It also contains an acknowledgment of indebtedness to the
Temple Classics edition with Okey's prose translation. The translation is
in unrhymed terzine corresponding exactly with those of the original, and
all decasyllabic except for a very few instances where the line ends with
a proper name.

Miss Money's translation conveys an immediately favourable impression. It is pleasant to read, clearly expressed, and free from mannerisms. Indeed her only failing under the latter head is a needlessly frequent use of the word 'meseems', possibly through the influence of Okey, with whom it is also a favourite; unfortunately Miss Money quite often goes a step further and gives us a jar by writing 'it meseems'. Apart from this, her eccentricities might be counted on the fingers of one hand. She uses 'radix' for 'root' in XVII.135 and 'accidie' for 'sloth' in XVIII.152; and she has a rather un-English beginning to VIII: "'Twas now the hour that to the sailor turns / his longing homeward'. Only one lame line was noted, viz. 'desiring the food that draws him on' (XIX.66) where we must give 'desiring' four syllables. In IX.67 'without a care' is a somewhat debonair rendering of 'sanza cura', and in XIX.51 her 'who mistress-souls of comfort shall become' is perhaps more literal than judicious. There is a regrettable choice of word in XXI.55-7:

Tremble it may below, or less or more,
but from the wind that in the earth is hid,
I know not why, it never oscillates.

This seems to be making a distinction between 'trembling' and 'oscillating', but Dante uses 'tremare' in both cases, and the distinction is between 'più giù' and 'qua su', the latter of which Miss Money has omitted. Regrettable too is the word which has been used to render 'vivanda' in XXX.143:

Broken would be the high decree of God,
were Lethe crossed, and such a beverage
were tasted, ere the reckoning had been paid . . .

Having mentioned these minor defects, however, we have exhausted the list of Miss Money's transgressions of this kind.

In view of her expressed acknowledgments, one naturally looks to see
what use she has made of Vernon and Okey. In the few cases where their readings or interpretations differ, she usually follows Vernon, e.g. in the passage from canto II given in the Appendix it will be seen that she reads 'per descripto' in line 44 against Okey's 'per inscripto'. She is unconvinced by Okey’s argument as to the use of 'questa' and 'quella' in IV.12, and adopts the more usual reading; she also accepts Vernon's version (given in his Readings without comment) of the dubious XIX.84, although Okey has a note to defend his interpretation. Although in her brief notes she seldom deals with textual problems, it is evident that she was well aware of them and had weighed them carefully. In a note on XXII.58-42, where Statius quotes Virgil on the 'sacra fame dell'oro', she comments on the differences of opinion among commentators, the variant readings 'perche' and 'per chè', and justifies her adoption of Vernon’s view against Okey’s. In two places she follows Okey where he is probably wrong. In XVII.38-9 Lavinia says:

'I am she who mourns / mother, at thine, more than at other's fall', and in XX.58-9 Hugh Capet says: 'to my own son's head the widowed crown / was then promoted'; these two passages are discussed in the article on Okey.

In a very small number of instances she seems to have made a slip for which neither of her authorities can be blamed. In III.66 'e tu ferma la spene, dolce figlio' can hardly bear her interpretation, 'and may thy hope be justified, dear son'. In V.5 she has misunderstood 'di sotto', which goes with 'a quel', i.e. Dante was following Virgil up the hill, for she renders: 'Behold, the sun seems not to shine / upon the left of that one, on the ground.'

It is natural that there should be numerous verbal coincidences between Miss Money’s translation and Okey’s; resemblances to Vernon are much less frequent, for the latter’s translation is deliberately prosaic and
diffuse by reason of incorporating explanations and glosses. Not that she by any means merely versifies Okey, but in many instances she has used his words and phrases, sometimes perhaps unconsciously, or because they occurred to her independently, but no doubt often because they seemed to her adequate and suitable. Three short passages will illustrate the similarities which occur:

As when in gathering up or wheat or tares, the doves, assembled all at their repast, quiet, nor showing forth their wonted pride, if aught appear of which they stand in dread then straightway do they leave their food behind, because by some more urgent care assailed; . . . (Money, II.124-9)

As doves when gathering wheat or tares, all assembled at their repast, quiet and showing not their wonted pride, if aught be seen whereof they have fear, straightway let stay their food, because they are assailed by greater care; . . . (Okey, id.)

And Nature had not only painted there, but from the fragrance of a thousand scents made one, unknown and indefinable.
There, seated on the verdure and the flowers, 'Salve Regina' singing, did I see souls, by the valley hidden from without. (Money, VII.79-84)

Not only had Nature painted there, but of the sweetness of a thousand scents made there one, unknown and indefinable.
There, seated on the grass and on the flowers, singing Salve Regina, saw I souls who because of the valley were not seen from without. (Okey, id.)

Devoutly at the holy feet I fell; mercy I craved that he would ope to me, but first three times upon my breast I smote.
Seven P's upon my forehead he described with the sword's point, and, 'See that thou dost cleanse these wounds, when thou shalt be within,' he said. (Money, IX.109-14)

Devoutly I flung me at the holy feet; for mercy I craved that he would open to me; but first on my breast thrice I smote me.
Seven P's upon my forehead he described with the point of his sword and: 'Do thou wash these wounds when thou art within,' he said. (Okey, id.)

A more interesting question arises as to whether Miss Money made use
of Longfellow’s translation. An examination of Purg. II.1-51 in the Appendix will show that resemblances to the latter are frequent. Throughout the translations there are many lines that are identical, and even whole terzine that vary only slightly. Here are one or two of the most striking.

**Insane is he who hopes that human wit can traverse the illimitable way, wherein One Substance in Three Persons moves.** (Money, III.34-6)

**Insane is he who hopeth that our reason can traverse the illimitable way, Which the one Substance in three Persons follows!** (Longfellow, id.)

**And two of them, in guise of messengers, came running to us and beseeching us: 'Of your condition make us cognisant.'** (Money, V.28-30)

**And two of them, in form of messengers, Ran forth to meet us, and demanded of us, 'Of your condition make us cognisant.'** (Longfellow, id.)

**Him let them honour, it may profit them.** (V.36, identical in both)

**Speak ye and I will do it, by that peace which, following the steps of such a guide, draws me to seek it still from world to world.** (Money, V.61-3)

**Speak ye, and I will do it, by that peace Which, following the feet of such a Guide, From world to world makes itself sought by me.** (Longfellow, id.)

**Like faculty confounded by excess.** (Money, VIII.36)

**As faculty confounded by excess.** (Longfellow, id.)

**We mounted upward through a rifted rock, which undulated to this side and that, like a retreating and advancing wave.** (Money, X.7-9)

**We mounted upward through a rifted rock, Which undulated to this side and that, Even as wave receding and advancing.** (Longfellow, id.)

**Even so one Guido from the other takes the glory of our tongue, and one perchance is born who from the nest will chase them both.** (Money, XI.97-9)

**So has one Guido from the other taken The glory of our tongue, and he perchance Is born, who from the nest shall chase them both.** (Longfellow, id.)
She with her prayers devout and with her sighs
forth from the border of delay hath drawn,
and from the other circles set me free.
So much more pleasing is to God and dear
my little widow, whom I loved so well,
as in good works she stands the more along;...

(Money, XXIII,88-93)

She with her prayers devout and with her sighs
Has drawn me from the coast where one awaits,
And from the other circles set me free.
So much more dear and pleasing is to God
My little widow, whom so much I loved,
As in good works she is the more alone;...

(Longfellow, id.)

With affirmation that compels belief.  (XXVI,105, identical in both)

Such correspondences, and there are many others like them, seems at first
sight too complete for coincidence; but when looked at carefully, something
very similar is likely to be arrived at by anyone who translates on the
same principle. For instance the Italian of V,28-30 is:

E due di loro in forma di messaggi
corsero incontr'a noi, e dimandarne:
'Di vostra condizion fatene saggi'.

In a literal translation the first two lines cannot be much different from
those quoted, although it must be admitted that the use of 'cognisant' is
typically Longfellow. Even more obvious seems the English of XI,97-9:

Così ha tolto l'uno all'altro Guido
la gloria della lingua; e forse è nato
chi l'uno e l'altro caccerà di nido.

We may also note that in several of these passages there is quite a simi-
ilarity between Okey's rendering and Longfellow's; moreover lines very like
Longfellow's are found in other English translations, e.g. 'Like faculty
confounded by excess' is found in at least six, including Vernon's and Okey's.
We have also seen that there are numerous verbal coincidences between
Longfellow and Rossetti, neither of whom could possibly have made use of
the other. On the other hand, apart from the latter instance, the striking
resemblances to Longfellow are all in much later translations; and practically
no similarities of this kind are found in any of those earlier than Longfellow, although here it must be remembered that most of these earlier translators remodelled their material, and the extensive use of more or less literal blank terzine owes its development mainly to Longfellow's example. This matter, and the extent to which Longfellow influenced his successors, is discussed at more length in the articles dealing with him, and with Norton and Henry Johnson.

Here it may be said that Longfellow's translation has undoubtedly been one of the most pervasive influences in the English Dante tradition. His work is inevitably known and studied by other translators; his happier lines have achieved celebrity, have been quoted and borrowed repeatedly; his method of dealing with Dante's terzine has become familiar. It is difficult to believe that Miss Money could have written 'Can traverse the illimitable way' (a line, incidentally, of deserved repute), 'Of your condition make us cognisant', 'Idike faculty confounded by excess', or 'With affirmation that compels belief', without being indebted directly or indirectly to Longfellow; of these four lines only the third could have derived from either Vernon or Okey. She may well have first become acquainted with the Comedy through Longfellow's translation, and while she used Vernon and Okey as working texts, still had the poetical version imprinted on her mind. On the other hand, see the article on Edith Mary Shaw, and her reply to the Athenæum's suggestion that she was indebted to Longfellow.

Whatever her debts may have been to others, Miss Money's version is quite a creditable performance. For one thing, its lucidity is a pleasant change from the contortions of so many other translators. In such difficult passages as the discussion of the sun on the left in canto IV, the philosophical disquisitions of the central cantos, and the dissertations of
Statius later on, she shows herself at home, and makes the reader at home too. The following (XVII.112-120) will serve as an example.

It then remains, if rightly I divide,
that the thing loved must be a neighbour's harm,
and three ways in your clay this love may rise.
There are who through their neighbour's fall have hope
to rise, and only this desire,
that from his greatness he may be brought down.
There are so saddened by the fear to lose
power, favour, honour, fame, should others rise
above them, that the love the contrary.
There are who feel so shamed by injury
it makes them to be greedy for revenge,
and harm for others such much needs contrive.

Although Miss Money's interest is not primarily poetic, and although she does not often reach any notable heights of expression, her handling of canto XXVII is on the whole very good, as the following sample will show (lines 70-93).

And ere in all its vast immensity
the wide horizon of one hue became,
and night in her dominion folded all,
each one of us had made a stair his bed;
for by the Mountain's law we now had lost
not the glad will to climb, but all the power.
Like goats that as they ruminate grow mild,
that erst were obstinate and frolicsome
upon the hill top, ere they had been fed,
quiet in shadow while the sun burns hot,
watched by the shepherd, who upon his staff
is leaning while leaning tendeth them;
and as the herdsman, resting 'neath the sky
beside his quiet flock the whole night long,
watching lest evil beast should scatter it,
such at that time were all the three of us;
I as the goat and as the shepherds they,
by the high rocks closed in on either side.
Little of things beyond could there appear;
but through that little did I see the stars,
clearer and larger far than is their wont.
Gazing on them and ruminating thus,
sleep overtook me; sleep, which many times,
before the actual fact, the tidings knows.

The rest of this canto is on a high level, and Miss Money also acquits herself well in canto XXX, a short extract from which (lines 22-39) is...
As I earwile have seen at dawn of day
the eastern sky adorned with rosy red,
and all the rest serene and beautiful;
and the sun’s face so shaded as it rose,
that by the tempering of the morning mists
for a long while the eye sustained the sight;
thus in the centre of a cloud of flowers,
which by angelic hands were upwards flung
and downwards fell again, within, without,
cinctured with olive o’er a snowy veil
appeared a lady, ’neath a mantle green,
vestured in colour of the living flame.
And now my spirit, o’er which so long a time
had passed wherein it had not been cast down
with awe and trembling by her presence crushed,
er it received more knowledge through the eyes,
by hidden virtue that from her came forth,
ushed of my early love the mighty power.

Miss Money’s notes are brief, but varied and interesting; they give
such explanations as would enable the casual reader to understand allusions
to places, persons and events; some help as to philosophy and theology;
occasional remarks as to difficulties of reading and interpretation, with
references to numerous authorities; and some literary appreciations.
While they necessarily overlap to some extent the notes of Vernon and Okey,
they are not copied from either, and they contain independent matter and
individual judgments. They make it clear that Miss Money was a woman of
vigorous intelligence, wide reading, and genuine culture.

Probably her decision to translate the Purgatorio was a wise one.
Besides being the part of the poem whose subject matter appealed most to her
own religious feelings, its language and expression suited the quiet clarity
of her style, which might hardly have been robust enough for the Inferno
or equal to the verbal flights of the Paradiso. The poem was published in
the year of her death; its composition in her sixties was a fitting climax
to a life of Christian service. No reviews of the book have been traced,
and probably its circulation was limited.


N.B. The arguments and notes are reprinted, by permission, from the Temple Classics edition, and are therefore the work of Wicksteed and Celsner.

Charles Edwin Wheeler (1868-1947) was born at Adelaide, South Australia, where his father was a medical practitioner. Later Dr Wheeler returned to practise in London, where Charles graduated B.Sc. in 1889, and then studied medicine first at Leipzig, then at St. Bartholomew's Medical School, where he graduated M.B., B.S. in 1892, gaining first class honours and the gold medal for forensic medicine; he took his M.D. a year later. After a short spell as general practitioner at Kingston-on-Thames, he became resident medical officer at Nordrach Sanatorium; then, influenced by the work of Almroth Wright, he took up the study of homoeopathic medicine with an enthusiasm which was to be lasting. In 1904 he became resident medical officer at the London Homoeopathic Hospital, with which he remained connected for the rest of his life. He occupied various posts there, carried on a consulting practice, edited the Homoeopathic World for seven years, and held high office in national and international homoeopathic organisations. He was the author of several medical and scientific books, and he translated Hahnemann's Organon for Everyman's Library. He married in 1895 Miss Ethel...
Charles Edwin Wheeler (2)

Arundel, of Court Theatre fame; it was a long and happy partnership, for both survived to celebrate their golden wedding.

Wheeler possessed scientific and medical knowledge and ability of the first order, and he devoted them zealously and unselfishly to the furtherance of that branch of the healing art which he believed to be most in the interests of suffering humanity. In doing so he encountered opposition, misunderstanding and unpopularity, but these neither deterred nor embittered him; he earned the respect and love of a wide circle of colleagues, friends and patients, extending far beyond his professional sphere. His intellectual grasp was remarkable, and the scope of his interests amazing; it embraced literature, drama and music, old and new, British and European alike. Notable was his long friendship with Granville-Barker, and his interest in the work of the Court Theatre; and he was the author of a play, Fools or Knaves, which contained a lively defence of homoeopathy. The tributes paid to him both on the occasion of his seventieth birthday and after his death, collected and printed by his friend and collaborator Dr J. D. Kenyon, impress by reason of their simple sincerity, for they strike a far deeper and more personal note than mere conventional eulogies. A glance at Wheeler's portrait, 'a sembiani che soglion esser testimon del core', confirms that impression, for it shows a face upon which the qualities attributed to him are clearly written.

Such then was the man who, in his forties, in the midst of a very fully occupied life, produced a translation of the Divine Comedy in terza rima. The brief preface, identical in all three volumes and quoted below, says nothing at all of his reason for making the translation; nor has he anything to say of his metre or language or that of other versions. Nor can the notes throw any light on the matter, since they are all reprinted

- 566 -
by permission from the Temple Classics edition. Indeed, the only pronouncement of Wheeler himself is contained in a speech acknowledging a gift presented to him on his seventieth birthday at a gathering of his friends. To embellish the inscription on the gift, Granville-Barker had appositely selected a quotation from Wheeler's Dante, viz. Virgil's last speech (Purg. XXVII. 121-42). In the course of his reply the translator said:

... For those of you who are not perhaps very familiar with the passage of Dante you have just heard - or who do not quite know where it comes - I would say that this passage is, I think, perhaps the finest expression of what one would like human life to be. I am not speaking of the translation. It expresses that state in which a man should be in the fullest command of all his faculties, of every gift that has been given, in which he should feel the fullest command of them, the ability to use them at his will, free from the mist of folly and error. I can imagine no higher ideal for the human being as shaped by this life, but the greatest of the poets could not attain that state until he had been through Hell and Purgatory - he is on the threshold of Heaven.

It seems likely that in Wheeler's devotion to Dante we have the spiritual counterpart of his efforts to restore men to physical and mental health. He believed wholeheartedly that Dante had a message for the modern world, and he desired to do something to ensure its delivery. It is remarkable that he should have had the resolution to carry through so great a task, because it is obvious that his professional activities made his spare time very precious. Only a strong conviction that he was doing something for the benefit of humanity could have influenced him to persevere in such an endeavour.

The preface begins by explaining that through the kindness of the Rev. Philip Wicksteed, the translator has been able to increase the value of his attempt by reproducing the arguments and notes from the Temple Edition of the Divine Comedy, which were the joint work of Wicksteed and Oelane. He goes on:
My debt to the Temple Edition does not end here. Its prose translations (by Mr Carlyle, Mr T. Okey and Mr Wicksteed himself) have been my court of appeal whenever I was in doubt, and have enabled me better to conceal the limitations of my Dante scholarship. Of the many instances where my translation coincides with that given in the Temple Edition, about two-thirds are cases wherein (to the best of my belief) I have independently reached the same rendering. The remaining third are cases wherein I deliberately adopted the Temple version, as being superior to any form of words which had occurred to me, and I make here my most grateful acknowledgment of the help which it has given me.

In the earlier part of his version, Wheeler's object seems to have been to avoid the awkward inversions and forced rhymes of earlier terzina translators by greater freedom in the matter of paraphrase or padding. This freedom gives many passages an unfamiliar appearance, e.g. (Inf.I.52-63):

More heaviness of soul and terror dire
Possessed me than my forces could sustain,
At once I lost the hope of mounting higher,
And like to one, rejoicing o'er his gain,
Who meets his hour and sees his winnings fly,
While every thought renews his grief and pain;
E'en so before the restless beast was I,
That moving tow'rd me, nearer and more near,
Drove down where sunless shadows silent lie.

As aimlessly I roamed that desert drear,
Lo! suddenly a shade, whose voice was grown
Faint, through the lapse of many a silent year.

This is over-smooth and stylistically far removed from Dante; but it is readable enough to make one feel that the experiment has possibilities. Some terzine are even better, e.g. Inf. XXVI.1-12:

Rejoice, O Florence, thou so great in pride,
Beating thy wings over the land and sea,
While throughout Hell thy name spreads far and wide!
Five such among the thieves were found by me,
Thy citizens, whereat shame pierced me through,
And no great honour cometh thence for thee.
But if the dreams that come with dawn be true,
It is not long ere thou wilt have to fear
All that not only Prato longs to do.
'Twould seem delayed though 'twere already here:
Ah! would it were, since come it must! Far more
'Twill weight my heart with every passing year.

This is excellent, and the one departure from Dante's actual words,
'whereat shame pierced me through' = 'onde mi vò'èn vergogna' is the kind of phrase which Dante himself might well have used. Unfortunately, however, the weak, often savourless, paraphrase preponderates, as these examples from a single canto, Inf. III, will show:

And following, a multitude indeed;
Methought so many ne'er by death were swayed,
Or felt his hand of power, for all his greed. (55-7)

Then drew together in a group forlorn,
Lamenting loud, on that wild shore that claims
All those whose hearts no fear of God have worn. (106-8)

The wretched earth uttered a windy groan,
A fiery lightning struck all feelings dead,
What passed around me was to me unknown,
I fell as one whom sleep hath vanquished. (133-6)

There is much pointless padding too; this, as often happens, is mainly induced by the rhyme, e.g.

Whence envy loosed her to our mortal air
(la onde invidia prima dipartilla) (Inf. I.116)

Now ask no more, no more thou shalt receive
( . . . e più non dimandare) (Inf. V.24)

While one soul spake thus of the days that were
(Mentre che l'uno spirto questo dice) (Inf. V.139)

Which pierce the cavern turning from the day
(le quali accolte foran quella grotta) (Inf. XIV.114)

Into his beard he writhed as might a snake
(soffiando nella barba co' soffi) (Inf. XXIII.113)

... thus three there were
He kept in torment worse than any death
(sì che tre ne facca così dolente) (Inf. XXXIV.57)

Quite often too the padding replaces a striking effect which is consequently lost, as when 'che del futuro fia chiusa la porta' (Inf. X.108) becomes 'Then of our knowledge will be rung the knell'; or 'Di sè faceva a sè stesso lucerna' (Inf. XXVIII.124), 'It made itself a lamp in that sad land'.

- 589 -
The pseudo-poetical, so contrary to Dante's manner, often jars: see, for instance, 'the world's long dim road' (Inf. XXVI.99, Appendix I). Guido da Montefeltro's resounding 'senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo' (Inf. XXVII.66) becomes 'no haunting fear / Of evil fame against my speech can strive'; Inf. XXXII.71-2 is rendered 'making for evermore / That icy pass a shuddering memory'; and Inf. XXXIV.133-

My guide and I entered that hidden road
At whose far end the bright world's glory lies.

Wheeler is more sparing of archaisms than some of his predecessors, but a few are 'besprent' here and there: 'erst' is a favourite, and twice 'by my fay' strikes a discordant note.

Nor does Wheeler, in spite of paraphrase and padding, avoid clumsiness and distortion; we have numerous terzine like Inf. XXIX.28-30:

But all absorbed just then thy senses were
By him who once held Altaforte, so
He went away, and thou beheld' st him ne'er.

The exigencies of rhyme are responsible for such phrases as 'long shall their mood be tense' = 'dopo lunga tenzone' (Inf. VI.64); 'And are they made by men?' = 'e chi son quei che il fenno?' (Inf. VIII.9); 'If my desert tow'rd you were small or wide' = 's'io meritai di voi assai o poco' (Inf. XXVI.81); 'Whose wearer once grew leaner more and more' (Inf. XXVII.90); and the ghastly absurdity of Inf. XXVIII.24-5, 'his entrails I espied / Hang down between his legs, which o' er them tripped'. There are a few lame lines, some of which may be due to misprints.

There is no sign throughout Inferno that Wheeler leaned heavily on the Carlyle-Oelsner translation. He might have been saved from occasional error if he had. For instance, he several times renders 'terra' by 'land' where Carlyle correctly has 'town'; he oddly renders Inf. VIII.113 'Nor stood he long these wary ones before', misunderstanding 'con essi guari' - Carlyle
Charles Edwin Wheeler (7)

has 'but he had not long stood with them'. Verbal reminiscences of Carlyle's version are not numerous.

It is otherwise, however, when we come to Wheeler's Purgatorio and Paradiso. The paraphrasing is on a smaller scale; the versification is more pedestrian, with more frequent inversions and forced rhymes; and the identity of words and phrases with those in the versions of Okey and Wicksteed very marked. In nearly all doubtful cases, their readings are followed, and there are occasional inaccuracies which seem to come from a misunderstanding of their translations rather than of the Italian. Purg. XX.53-4 illustrates this. Okey prints the Italian with a superfluous comma:

Quando li regi antichi venner meno
tutti, fuor ch'un, renduto in panni bigi,

and translates: 'When the ancient kings came to an end, all save one given over to grey garments...'. Probably the fact that the English was ambiguous escaped his notice; there is a note, reproduced verbatim in Wheeler's edition, which makes the meaning quite clear. Yet Wheeler renders the lines:

When
The ancient race of kings grew weak, when all,
Save one, grey garments to themselves had ta'en.

Evidently Wheeler took the wrong sense from Okey's version; or if he glanced at the Italian was misled by the comma, and did not notice that 'renduto' was singular. Had he been writing his own notes, his attention would necessarily have been drawn to his mistake.

There are one or two similar aberrations which show that at times Wheeler allowed the process of translation to become a mechanical one.

In Purg. VIII.49-51 he has:

It was the hour when darkened grew the air,
Yet not so dark that 'twixt his eyes and mine,
What erst was hidden, could itself declare.
Okey has much the same with the vital 'but' between 'dark' and 'that'; but Wheeler has not noticed the violence done to the sense by its omission. He had a still more serious lapse of comprehension at Purg. XXII.142, where he wrote:

Mary thought more to make, when she was wed,
   The feast complete and worthy ... 
although the notes contain a cross reference to Purg. XIII.28-30 where the wedding at Cana is referred to. Another mistake of the same kind occurs in Purg. XXXII.76-8:

Peter and James and John ... 
   ... awaked at that command,
By which from deeper slumber they were freed,

where it is evident that the meaning underlying the allusion has been missed.

The following representative passage will give some idea of the verbal correspondence between Wheeler's translation and Okey's (Purg. XXV.37-57).

The perfect blood which by the thirsty vein
   Is never drunk, and so is left behind,
   Like food removed, which has o' the table lain,
Can in the heart informing virtue find
   For all the human members, like that flood
   Which, to become these, through the veins doth wind.
Again refined, it sinks where speech less good
   Than silence is, and thence distils within
   The natural vessel, on another's blood.
There one with the other mingles; one is seen
   Passive, and one full of activities,
Since in a perfect place it did begin.
It first coagulates, then vivifies
   That which, to make its own material,
   It, being joined thereto, solidifies.
The active virtue, (made thus to a soul,
   Such as a plant hath, yet here different,
   Since that on its way is, this has found its goal)
Then works on that it moves, is sentient,
   Like a sea-fungus; then for the powers whose seed
   It is, doth organise development.

Okey's version runs:

Perfect blood, which never is drunk by the thirsty veins, and is left behind, as 'twere food which thou removest from the table,
acquires in the heart a virtue potent to inform all human members, like that blood which flows through the veins to become those. Refined yet again, it descends there whereof to be silent is more seemly than to speak, and thence afterwards distils upon other's blood, in natural vessel. There the one is mingled with the other; one designed to be passive, the other to be active, by reason of the perfect place whence it springs; and, joined thereto, it begins to operate, first coagulating and then giving life to that which it had solidified for its own material. The active virtue having become a soul, like that of a plant, in so far different that the former is on the way, and the latter is already at the goal, then effects so much that now it moves and feels, like a sea-fungus: and then sets about developing organs for the powers whereof it is the germ.

In the Paradiso the verbal similarity is a little less marked; the Wheeler and Wicksteed versions of Par. II.79-96 given below show a typical passage.

Were the first true, the proof would be created
At sun eclipses, by light shining through,
As when by aught else thin it is translated.
This is not so; now must we turn to view
The other one, and false thy thought I'll show,
If I perchance make vain this second too.
If this rare matter not throughout doth go,
Needs must there be a limit furnish'd,
Through which it may not pass; and this will throw
Backward the other's ray discomfited,
Even as colour doth from glass return,
When at its back is hidden store of lead.
Now wilt thou say that darkened we discern
The ray in this place rather than elsewhere,
Because recast from further back; but learn
How from this plea, if thou for proof shouldst care,
Experiment may disentangle thee,
A fount the rivers of your arts should share.

Were the first true, 'twould be revealed in the eclipses of the sun, by the light shining through it, as it doth when hurled on aught else rare.

This is not so; wherefore we have to see what of the other case, and if it chance that I make vain this also, thy thought will be refuted. If it be that this rare matter goeth not throughout, needs must there be a limit, from which its contrary doth intercept its passing on; and thence that other's ray were so cast back, as colour doth return from glass which hideth lead behind it.
Now thou wilt urge that the ray here is darkened rather than in other parts, because here it is reflected from farther back. From this plea experiment may disentangle thee, (if thou wilt make the proof) which is ever the spring of the rivers of your science.

It is not, however, necessary to suppose that Wheeler's statement in his preface is other than sincere. Probably, in the first place, he was more familiar with the Inferno than the other parts, and made only occasional reference to Carlyle while translating it. Being a busy man, it is likely that he had to snatch the opportunity of working on his Comedy at odd moments, perhaps memorising a few terzine and turning them over in his mind during the day; for this purpose the Temple pocket size volumes would be ideal, and he would naturally refer both to the text and the translation, thereby often almost unconsciously reproducing words and phrases from Okey and Wicksteed.

One or two mistranslations, similar to those already mentioned, are to be found in the second and third volumes, but they are not numerous, and some are mere slips.

The principal defect of Wheeler's Purgatorio and Paradiso is that Dante's poetry has almost completely vanished; the passages in Appendix I are typical of his general level. There are occasionally one or two pleasing terzine, but the quality is seldom sustained for more than a few lines. As examples of Wheeler's best we may quote:

Like to the lark that soaring through the sky 
First sings and then is silent, well content 
With the last sweetness that doth satisfy . . . (Par. XX.73-5)

So is the snow unsealed before the sun, 
So as the light leaves drifted down the wind, 
The wisdom of the Sybil was undone. (Par. XXXIII.64-6)

For the rest, the defects already noted in the Inferno are all present, and it would be tedious to multiply instances. The following lines from the Manfred episode in Purg. III are distressingly banal:

\[ \text{XXXIII.67-8} \]
When by two mortal wounds was overthrown
My body, then I yielded me in grief
To Him Whose grace to pardon well is known.
Terrible were my sins, beyond belief,
But goodness infinite hath arms so wide,
It welcomes all who seek it for relief.

No curse of theirs man's spirit overthrows,
Beyond where Love Divine can bid it rise
Whilst hope hath any shoot of green that shows.

Poor likewise is Piccarda's speech (in Appendix I); this passage was severely handled by the reviewer of the book in the Nation (see below). One or two short extracts from the Paradiso will be interesting for comparison with quotations given from other translators.

Still Cleopatra is with grief distraught,
Who, flying from its might which she feared more,
Black death and sudden from the serpent caught. (VI.76-8)

So many jewels all so dear and fair
Are found in Heaven's court, whence I return,
That from that kingdom may be taken ne'er . . . (X.70-2)

Like to our ardour shall its radiance rise,
Our ardour with our vision shall compete,
While grace beyond their worth makes clear our eyes.

The vision then must grow more vigorous,
The ardour kindled thence new worth must claim,
And the ray grow which issues from it thus. (XIV.40-2,49-51)

The greater weal from greater worthiness
Will come, and fills a greater form likewise,
If like perfection all its parts may bless. (XXVIII.67-9)

Within those depths I saw the leaves unite,
By love within a single volume bound,
Now scattered through the universe's height.
Substance and accident, together crowned,
Were blended and as 'twere so close enwrought
That in one single flame they both were found. (XXXIII.85-90)

The merits and defects of Wheeler's translation were very fairly summed up by the Athenaeum reviewer (22nd July 1911, p. 98). After remarking that Wheeler afforded one more demonstration of the impossibility of rendering Dante adequately in English terza rima, he said that the
reader of the new version would find that 'the secret of Dante's greatness will probably remain unrevealed to him'. He conceded that Wheeler had 'remarkable skill in dealing with the difficulties of the rhymes without any undue sacrifice of accuracy', but concluded:

... The verse is often monotonous and, so far as we can discover, it nowhere rises into the regions of real poetry. Consequently he is generally least successful with the greatest passages of the poem, unless it be that in these we are most conscious of the gulf that separates the translation from the original.

The review in the Nation (13th July 1911, pp. 379-80) already referred to expressed a similar opinion, and was critical in particular of the padding used to maintain the rhyme.

It was a gallant effort for a man who was so fully and so usefully otherwise occupied; and allowance must be made for the fact that he was probably unable to give the work the time and the attention it deserved. His energy seems to flag in the later parts of the poem; he may well have found it more of a task and less of a pleasure as he proceeded.
EDITH MARY SHAW

The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri. Translated by E. M. Shaw. London: Constable and Company Ltd., 10 Orange Street, Leicester Square, W.C. 1914. Demy octavo, pp. xx, 384. Translator's preface, pp. vii-viii; Contents (with summary of each canto), pp. ix-xx; English text, printed in continuous blank verse, with no breaks or indentions (there are no arguments and only one footnote in entire book), pp. 3-384.

Edith Mary Shaw (born 1846) remains so far little more than a name. Toynbee must have found out something about her, for he records her date of birth in Dante Studies (1921). We know that she was married, because the book is dedicated to 'my son and faithful critic'. The preface is dated from Hotel Victoria, Crotava, Tenerife, and the letter to the Athenaeum in 1914, quoted later in this article, was written from Andover House, Alderney, Channel Islands. No trace can be found of her residence at the latter address; nor are the publisher's record for the date in question now available. The only other information we have is that contained in her own preface, which is short and will bear quotation in full.

I wish to tell how this translation of the Divina Commedia came to be made. In reading the original, a passage of about fifteen lines rose to my mind in English blank verse, and from this beginning the whole grew to completion without a pause. I have worked hard at finishing and perfecting the verse, but there was no labour in the producing of it. This is my excuse, if excuse it be, for publishing yet another translation to add to the number already existent.

Imagining to myself readers, I would remind them that blank verse, though it is so excellently fitted to our language as to appear indigenous, is as much of Italian origin as terza rima. English is not a rhyming language. I doubt not but that a poet may produce in terza rima a version of the Divina Commedia which shall possess great beauty. Yet such would always remain, to my thinking, a paraphrase and not truly a translation, for it must depend on an incessant introduction of unnecessary words without which the rhymes can never be secured, but which yet cannot fail to destroy the simplicity and conciseness which is the very soul of Dante's verse. Thus evidently felt Cary, to whom I am deeply

- 577 -
indebted, and whom I have endeavoured to imitate in the honesty and
faithfulness with which he renders his original.

Throughout the poem I have kept the Italian pronunciation of
the name of Beatrice.

Incidentally, Mrs Shaw's sex was excusably mistaken by several reviewers,
and she is also referred to as Mr Shaw in King's book on Cary.

The first notable feature of this translation is that it is by far
the most compressed blank verse rendering with the negligible exception
of Hume's Inferno more than a century earlier. Mrs Shaw gets the 14,233
lines of the Divine Comedy into 12,589 of her own, i.e. and average of
some 16 lines less per canto; the actual discrepancies vary from four
lines shorter (Par. XXXIII) to thirty-seven lines shorter (Inf. XXIX).

Several factors contribute to this compression. There are a number of
intentional omissions, notably in Inf. XXVIII-XXX, where Mrs Shaw leaves
out or condenses the more gruesome details of mutilations and diseases.

There are also some evidently accidental omissions; a bad one, for instance,
in the very first canto where two terzine, lines 73-8, in which Virgil
makes his identity known to Dante, are entirely omitted. Virgil's speech
finishes with 'Although his time owned false and fancied gods'; and the
uninitiated reader would be somewhat mystified by Dante's 'Oh! art thou
Virgil?' in the next line. The bulk of the compression is effected by
a consistent reduction in the number of lines; sometimes a whole series
of Dante's terzine are rendered by a corresponding number of English
couplets. Quite often this is done with some ingenuity, so that little
is omitted, e.g. Inf. VII.13-5:

Qua1i dal vento le gonfiate ve1e
caggiono avvolté, poi che l'alber fia1cea,
tal cadde a terra la fiera erude1e,

which becomes:
As the full sails fall flat when breaks the mast,
So with his terror Pluto fell to earth.

Mrs Shaw has succeeded in getting all the fundamental ideas of the first two lines into one of hers, for 'full' applied to 'sails' conveys all that 'dal vento gonfiate' does; but with a perverseness which is only too typical she leaves 'la fiera crudele' out of her second line altogether, and inserts a quite superfluous 'with his terror'; had she written, 'So did the cruel monster fall to earth' she would have got everything in.

All too often, however, the contractions have nothing to commend them, e.g. Par. VI.76-8:

Piangene ancor la trista Cleopatra,
che, fuggendoli innanzi, dal colubro
la morte prese subitana e atra,

loses all its quality in:

And still sad Cleopatra weeps it, she
Who fled, but asked her death from the dark adder.

Mrs Shaw shows in particular a tendency to rush the end of a canto; again and again she spoils the peroration by undue compression. The end of Par. X, where she gets ten lines of Dante into six and a half is rather better than the average:

Now, as the clock that calls
God's spouse, the Church, for love of Him to matins,
Working in all its parts, and ringing sounds
So sweetly that the worthy heart must swell;
So saw I move the glorious wheel, and give
Voice unto voice in concord, and with sweetness,
Known but where joy repeats itself for ever.

Perhaps the worst case of all is the end of Purg. XXI where the saving of one line has ruined the whole effect:

0 splendour of the live eternal light!
Who, though grown pale in shadow of Parnassus
With drinking of his fountains, would not find
His thought inadequate to render thee,
As thou didst stand with corresponding heavens
Around thee, and thy beauty in free air.
Mrs. Shaw has also some occasional expansions, difficult to explain in view of her prevailing opposite tendency. She makes the single line 'Io era tra color che son sospesi' (Inf. I.52) into:

I was among the spirits
Who lie becalmed, and cannot steer for heaven,
Though safe from blasts of hell,

while 'Nè tra l'ultima notte e 'l primo die' (Par. VII.113) becomes:

From the first day to which the sun gave light,
To the last night that closes when he dies,

which is a procedure reminiscent of her earliest predecessor, Henry Boyd.

There is an errata slip at the front of the volume a perusal of which and a reference to the two passages corrected would be sufficient to arouse the suspicions of anyone conversant with the Italian. The first of these passages is the end of Inf. XVI which in the text has the extraordinary reading:

... such a creature as would soar
The stoutest heart, and make it as a diver's
Who frees the anchor...

and the second is Inf. XXVI.138, 'e percosse del legno il primo canto'
which is rendered 'The ship crashed on a rock'. If the translator was capable of blunders like this, it is hardly likely that in over 12,000 lines of verse she would only go wrong twice. This is confirmed by examination: the translation contains scores of elementary mistranslations such as might be made by someone with a sketchy knowledge of Italian guessing at the words and constructions which were unfamiliar. The following brief selection is typical.

There lay a field of grief and stream of pain (Inf. IX.111)
(plena di duolo e di tormento rio)

The Poet turned to me and said...
(Allor mi volsi al poeta, e quei disse) (Inf. XII.113)
Deep, deep, where no one dives
(là ove più non si dismonta) (Inf. XIV.118)

Make that the people talk a little of us
(fa che di noi alla gente favelle) (Inf. XVI.85)

Only to gain the half of its whole circle
(e men d'un mezzo di traverso non ci ha) (Inf. XXX.87)

Whom thou shalt see when we have reached the top
Of this great happy hill that seems to smile
(tu la vedrai di sopra, in su la vetta
di questo monte, ridere e felice) (Purg. VI.47-8)

Like virtue, glorious, dazzling all the sense
(come virtù eh'a troppo si confonda) (Purg. VIII.36)

if it fights
In its first battles 'neath the flag of Heaven
(nelle prime battaglie col ciel dura) (Purg. XVI.76-7)

Thou art beyond the struggles, and the skill
(fuor se' dell'erte vie, fuor se' dell'arte) (Purg. XXVII.132)

With all her choir aid me to conceive
Great things in thought, and set them forth in verse
(m'aiuti col suo coro
forti cose a pensar mettere in versi) (Purg. XXIX.41-2)

This, though it be not kept,
Cannot thereby be cancelled
(Quest'ultima già mai non si cancella
se non servata) (Par. V.46-7)

How I rose up I know not; as a man
Finds he is come, ere thinking of his journey
(ma del salire
non m'accorsi' io, se non omo' uom s'accorge,
anzi 'l primo pensier, del suo venire) (Par. X.34-6)

He answered: 'Say, who made thee sure these were
Such mighty works? He only swore to them
Who wished to prove them.
(Riposto fummi: 'Di, chi t'assicura
che quell'opere fosser? Quel medesmo
che vuol provarsi, non altri, il ti giura') (Par. XXIV.103-5)

In many cases confusion caused by misunderstanding occurs in longer
passages. The long invective in Purg. VI.76 ff. is a tissue of mistranslations, e.g. 'Come, and see now whether we do not love thee' = 'Vieni a
veder la gente quanto s'ama!’ (line 115). Mrs Shaw adds one more to our collection of queer versions of Inf. XXI. 25-8:

I turned me, as a man
Turns back from seeing what will make him flee,
And then is enervate in sudden fear
Lest, having seen it, flight should be denied him.

Reference to the passages in Appendix I will show that in Inf. XXVI she has the prow and stern of the sinking ship the wrong way round; and that she has misunderstood Purg. II. 16, 's' io ancor lo veggia'. The wording of Purg. VI. 22-4 indicates that Mrs Shaw imagined the Lady of Brabant to be one of the penitents surrounding Dante. Philip the Bold and Henry of Navarre seem to have got into Purgatory under false pretences, for VII. 109-11 are translated:

Alike in vicious life,
Father and son-in-law were bane of France:
And thence is the remorse that stabs them now.

Failure to grasp the meaning of the second line has made the English of Purg. XXVII. 64-9 merely confusing:

The way led up between
High rocks, so turned, we met the latest rays
Of the low sun; and we had made but few
Of the steep steps, when down he lay, behind
The rising shadow. I, and my sages, saw
It spread and fade.

The last canto of Paradiso contains numerous mistranslations, e.g. (lines 70-75):

Give to my tongue but power enough to show
One only spark of thine o'erflowing glory,
That I may leave it for the future folk
Who, turning somewhat to my memory,
A little to the ringing of my verse,
May call to mind the more thy victory.

It might be thought that a translation containing such a quota of errors must be entirely worthless; and certainly Mrs Shaw would be a very unsafe guide for anyone trying to understand the Italian. Strangely enough,
however, there are extensive passages which are quite well and accurately translated. Nor are these by any means the easiest ones. Although Mrs Shaw makes a very poor attempt at Virgil's exposition which fills most of Inf. XI, and is very unconvincing in the astronomical discussion of Purg. IV, her rendering of Par. II, dense and rare, experiment and all, is remarkably clear and accurate. Nor is she always unsuccessful in the more poetical passages, although at times she produces lines that are patently absurd, such as Dante's words to Brunetto Latini (Inf. XV.49):

'Up there an earth,' I answered, 'I was living
A quiet life, being barely thirty-five,
or Virgil's address to Cato (Purg. I.53):
Not of myself I came; from heaven
There swam that lovely lady down for whose
Sweet prayers I took this man in company.

Sometimes she achieves original effects which strike one as being genuinely in keeping with Dante's style, although these are not always legitimate in what purports to be a translation, e.g.

Best not to speak the truth which seems a lie,
For shame will come without her herald sin. (Inf. XVI.124-6)

I feel that load already on my back
(che già lo 'noarco di là giù mi pesa) (Purg. XIII.138)

where the gelso blood
Had witched the tree to fruit in red for ever
(allor che 'l gelso diventò vermiglio) (Purg. XXVII.39)

like / A golden mirror to a golden sun
(quale a raggio di sole specchio d'oro) (Par. XVII.123)

The blank verse is likewise very unequal; at times the rhythm is pleasing, but its general level is pedestrian; while quite often one feels that a passage like Inf. XVII.37-42:

My master said: 'Learn all thou canst of this Circle; go now and see their state, but speak Shortly; and I will tell the beast meanwhile To give us place upon his mighty back,
must have escaped the 'finishing' process referred to in the preface. There are a few very lame lines, some of which may be due to misprints, e.g. 'To be the pleasure of the Marquis' (Inf. XVIII.55); 'The cliff and the smooth way are stone-coloured' (Purg. XIII.9). The use of words like 'fire' as disyllables is referred to in a later paragraph.

The following is an interesting passage (Purg. XIX.7-24):

A woman, stammering, came into my dream;  
With eyes aslant, and on a halting foot,  
With faded colour, and with helpless hands,  
I stared at her, and as the sun gives life  
To the chilled limbs on which the night has weighed,  
So did my look unloose her tongue; and soon  
She rose to her fair height; her daunted face,  
As if at will of love, took rosy colour;  
And then, when all her speech was free, she 'gan  
To sing so well that I had found it foil  
To turn attention from the winning sound.  
'I, I am Siren sweet,' she sweetly sang;  
'Who lures the mariners on lonely seas;  
I, I am full to overflow with pleasure:  
I drew Ulysses from his wandering way  
After my song, and he who dwells with me  
Fain will remain, because I rock his dreams.'

There can be no doubt that Mrs Shaw knew what was wanted in this passage; she has even got the alliteration of 'man monche' although, in characteristic fashion, she has missed the meaning of 'com' amor vuol'. Line 20, 'che' marinari in mezzo mar dismago' is particularly well managed; but her 'rock his dreams' is at once too concrete and monosyllabic to round off the song and represent 'si tutto l'appago', apart from the appalling suggestion of a pun which insists on intruding. Par. XIV.37-50 is a competent and well-expressed passage, which will be interesting for comparison with the blank verse renderings quoted in other articles.

For as long as lasts  
The feast of Paradise, so long our love  
Shall lighten up this robe. Its clarity  
Follows the glow of love; that glow, the Vision,  
Which is as full as grace gives strength to see.
And when the body glorious and hallowed,
Reclothes us, then our person all complete
Will shine more gracious: in it will increase
Free light, the gift of the All-highest Good,
Only conditioned by the sight of Him:
Whence it is fit the Vision should increase;
The glow of love increase, from which it kindles;
The ray increase, which flashes from that glow.
But as the coal which feeds the flame, and yet
In its white heat outshines it, and maintains
Its own appearance: so these moving lights
Shall be o'erwhelmed with splendour of that body
Which earth now daily hides. And yet its glory
Shall blind no eyes, for all its perfect organs
Then will be full of strength for all delights.

Although the book is very handsomely produced, and in particular most beautifully bound, there is a regrettably large number of misprints and the punctuation leaves much to be desired. Mrs Shaw probably did not read her proofs very carefully; but she can hardly be held responsible for the running headlines, where it is distressing to read 'Purgarotio' or discover that a page headed 'Canto XXII' is really a part of canto XXXII.

The reviewers were kinder to Mrs Shaw than she deserved, for no one seems to have read her version with sufficient care to detect the numerous mistranslations; indeed one of them quotes some very trivial mistakes as her worst offences in the matter of inaccuracy. A long article in the Nation (11th April 1914, p. 81) dealt mainly with the metre, regretting the lack of correspondence between the movement of the thought and that of the verse, finding the latter to have 'the businesslike, uninteresting trickle of pump water' but summing up the whole as a 'performance respectable enough'. This writer also commented on the rather illogical wording of the preface and the non sequitur in the argument about the use of blank verse. The Athenaeum (28th March 1914, p. 446), on the other hand, opined:

There is a smoothness in the verse which in some passages rises to dignity, and she understands the art of varying the cadence of the sentences so as to avoid stiffness.
As we have remarked, the inequality of the verse is such that many passages could be found to support either of these views. The Athenaeum review contained one of these unfortunate remarks which a critic should shun like the plague. Having noted that Mrs Shaw acknowledged a debt to Cary, the writer added: 'She probably owes as much to Longfellow though she does not expressly admit it.' He also commented on the fact that too often words like 'fire' had to be read as disyllables to make the lines scan. But Mrs Shaw, despite her apparent inconsequence, was on the alert, and in the next issue (4th April 1914, p. 498) there appeared the following letter from her:

May I point out that such lines as Purg. XVIII, p. 195, 'Of burning fire, blotted out the stars' or Purg. IX, p. 160, 'Straight to the inward fire of the moon' are not ten- but nine-syllabled lines, and will gain much by being so read. I am sorry to add that I have not had the advantage of even seeing Longfellow's translation.

There was no retort; although a very obvious one might be made out of the word 'advantage'. Mrs Shaw, however, was in the right; although there are one or two of her lines identical with Longfellow's, this is by no means unusual in blank verse translations, and apart from these occasional coincidences there is nothing to suggest that she had used either Longfellow or Norton. Indeed, although resemblances here and there to other translations occur, in particular three instances where Mrs Shaw has a reading which seems to be peculiar to Butler among her predecessors, a careful comparison indicates that the correspondences are accidental. As to Mrs Shaw's defence of her nine-syllabled lines, not all of them are so easily defended. It would be interesting to know how many syllables she counted in Purg. XXVII.10: 'Of fire, "O aspiring soul," he said, "do ye ..."'.

To sum up, while the glaring defects of Mrs Shaw's translation relegate it to the lower section of the list, one feels that she was not without
ability and that some portions of her work are valuable and interesting.

It is a pity that she worked 'without a pause' - even to consult the dictionary - although of course that would have meant more 'labour in producing it'.

A second edition was issued by the same publishers in 1910.

Henry Johnson (1855-1916) was born at Gardiner, Maine, and educated at Bowdoin, where he graduated in 1874; thereafter he studied at Gottingen and Paris, and received a Ph.D. at Berlin. He was Instructor in Modern Languages at Bowdoin from 1877-91, and Professor from 1891 till his death. Besides literature, his interests included history and art. He published a translation of Verdi's Il Trovatore in 1910; also two volumes of poems, of which his colleague, F. O. M. Sills, writing in the Dictionary of American Biography, says: 'though perhaps at times lacking in clarity, they are classical in spirit, full of vivid phrases, and reflect a deeply spiritual nature'. Johnson also made a translation of the verse portions of the Vita Nuova, which he was still revising at the time of his death; it was published in the Dante Society reprints in 1924.

Johnson was thus by heredity and environment a sharer in the tradition of Longfellow and Norton. Since the latter's prose version had appeared the only other American translations published were the posthumous remains of Parens in rhyme, and the not very successful blank verse Inferno of Vincent. Johnson tells us in his preface that he began work on his translation in 1893, that is, just at the time when Norton's first edition appeared. Reading between the lines of his very modest foreword, it is evident
HENRY JOHNSON


A second edition was issued by the same publishers in 1916.

Henry Johnson (1855-1918) was born at Gardner, Maine, and educated at Bowdoin, where he graduated in 1874; thereafter he studied at Göttingen and Paris, and received a Ph.D. at Berlin. He was Instructor in Modern Languages at Bowdoin from 1877-81, and Professor from 1881 till his death.

Besides literature, his interests included history and art. He published a translation of Heredia's Les Trophées in 1910; also two volumes of poems, of which his colleague, K. C. M. Sills, writing in the Dictionary of American Biography, says: 'though perhaps at times lacking in clarity, they are classical in spirit, full of vivid phrases, and reflect a deeply spiritual nature'. Johnson also made a translation of the verse portions of the Vita Nuova, which he was still revising at the time of his death; it was published in the Dante Society reprints in 1924.

Johnson was thus by heredity and environment a sharer in the tradition of Longfellow and Norton. Since the latter's prose version had appeared the only other American translations published were the posthumous remains of Parsons in rhyme and the not very successful blank verse Inferno of Vincent. Johnson tells us in his preface that he began work on his translation in 1892, that is, just at the time when Norton's first edition appeared. Reading between the lines of his very modest foreword, it is evident...
that, although he did not annotate his book, he devoted a great deal of time to the study of the Comedy, and his choice of readings and interpretations is the fruit of long and careful consideration. He does not enter into any justification of his enterprise, nor give an exposition of his methods; a few sentences from the preface explain his aims and obligations.

The purpose of the present translator has been to render the poem of Dante into modern English, line-for-line. A preface which should attempt to state his complete obligations would look like a bibliography, and would certainly be unsatisfactory in one phase, namely, in the expression of just feelings. Long study of some books which never disappoint, such as Toynbee's Dante Dictionary and Charles Eliot Norton's prose translation of the Divine Comedy, makes a mere mention of their titles almost a personal neglect.

After mentioning the Vernon Readings as an example of other scholarly works which have given him help he goes on:

Since a metrical translation is a work of art as well as a work of science, the translator must avoid, when he is at his task, consultation of previous poetical solutions of the problem. Given the Italian text and sound commentaries, it has seemed merely honourable to rely solely on one's control of the English medium, unaided. That the result should prove the same as another's in very many cases has not caused discouragement. Translation of the Divine Comedy is progressive, yet the time seems not yet come for a variorum, composite version. The English language has after long literary use become sufficiently clarified to furnish the verbal and rhythmical means of embodying any thought. Experiments in imitating foreign excellences have their own interest; yet criticism rejoices that the day of mock-Miltonic lines or like solecisms is past.

Having added some remarks on the impossibility of a translation being more than 'an English re-expression of the original, and with such rhythmical qualities as are pleasing to the English ear', he concludes with acknowledgments to the corporation of Bowdoin and his colleagues for co-operation in his task.

The translation is in the same form as Longfellow's, blank terzine, containing the same number of lines as the original; it is in this sense that the description 'line-for-line' must be taken, and not literally. Johnson does not, however, as we shall see retain the integrity of the
terzine throughout as Longfellow does. Rather strangely, he makes no men-
tion at all of the text he has followed. It is, however, a good one, his
readings and interpretations being for the most part in accordance with the
best modern opinion.

From Johnson's brief remarks in his preface on the theory of trans-
lation he seems to have aimed at combining literal accuracy with a partial
reflection of the poetic quality of the original:

"... The beauty and strength of the Italian language and the charm
of rhyme as used by the poet are not to be enjoyed completely by
those to whom the idiom is not native. An English translator of
the Divine Comedy has at his command, even if he were perfectly in
control of his medium, only the strength and beauty of his own
language. ... Good workmanship asks the favor of no poetical or
other licence, but claims the privilege of occasional expression
of a necessary connoted value, for example, of a 'then' or 'there',
or the use of an ellipsis when the Italian poet has worked thus
economically."

As might be expected, therefore, his degree of literality is distinctly
lower than Longfellow's; a detailed examination of a number of test pas-
sages confirms this impression. In spite of this Johnson stands well up
the list of blank verse translators in respect of literal accuracy. He
takes occasional advantage of the possibilities of his medium in the
matter of overrunning the sense of lines or terzine, no doubt with a view
to avoiding the dangerous monotony of end-stopped lines; but he does so
with restraint, and never by more than a word or two, recovering the line
division of the original quickly without being 'out of phase' for several
verses like some translators. Examples of this will be noticed on refer-
ence to the Appendices; the following short extracts are typical of John-
son's style in this connexion.

Honor and light of other poets, now
May the long study and great love avail me,
Which made me search thy volume; for thou art
My Master and my Author; thou alone
Art he from whom that fair style has been taken,
Which has done honor to my name. Behold
The beast, because of which I turned about;
Grant me thy help, O famous Sage, from her,
Because she makes my veins and pulses tremble. (Inf. I.82-90)

But as one does, who looks and then esteems
One man beyond the rest, so did I him
Of Lucca, who appeared most to desire
To know me. He was murmuring, and I heard
What seemed 'Gentucca', where he felt the wound
Of justice, that so plucks them. Then I said:
'O soul, ... ' (Purg. XXIV.34-40)

If by the brief, fond words she spoke with smiles
I was divested of my first doubt, now
I was the more entangled with a new
Within me, and I said: 'Already I
Rested content from wondering much, but now
I wonder how bodies as light as these
I can transcend.' (Par. I.94-9)

A disconcerting feature of Johnson's blank verse is that he fails to
avoid frequent rhyming of consecutive or neighbouring lines, which pro-
duces an unwanted and undesirable effect. Several bad examples will be
found in Appendix I: Inf. XXVI.91-2, 'more - before'; 94-6, 'piety -
Penelope'; 100-2, 'sea - company - me', with 'sea' again in line 105;
Purg. II.24-5, 'still - until'; 38-41, 'bright - sight - light'. This
fault is as frequent as these examples indicate, and occurs several times
in almost every canto.

Before going further it must be pointed out that Johnson's trans-
ation is so much a continuation of the New England tradition that it is
impossible to discuss it without reference to Longfellow and Norton. One
reviewer remarked on the fact that many lines in Johnson were identical or
almost so with Longfellow's, but thought they were 'undesigned coincidences'.
Johnston himself specifically stated that he had not, while at his task,
consulted 'previous poetical solutions', and there is no reason to doubt the
sincerity of this statement. He did, however, make it clear that he was
Henry Johnson (5)

very familiar with Norton's 'prose solution'; and even if he did not consult Longfellow he must have been acquainted with his version and may well have been unconsciously influenced by it. We have already seen how closely Norton follows Longfellow, and how often Norton's prose falls naturally into iambic lines. Again and again we find that Johnson minimizes incorporates Norton's actual words, and quite frequently these in turn are identical with Longfellow's or nearly so. In even more cases, the words are the same, but in a different order. The general resemblance will be evident from the passages in Appendix I, but the similarities are often more striking than these indicate. Reference to the extracts give in Appendix II, which is designed to show the relationship between the New England writers, will make the matter clearer.

If we consider in particular the passages from Inf. XXVII, Purg. XIX and Par. XIV, we shall probably find that Johnson's versions are generally accurate and pleasant to read, and certainly smoother than Longfellow's; but they cannot be considered so good a reflection of Dante's qualities as the earlier translator provides. The passage from Inf. XXVII is rhetoric rather than poetry, but it is very capable rhetoric; its strongest terzine,

\[E^1\] mastin vecchio e \[E^1\] nuovo da Verrucchio, che fecer di Montagna il mal governo, là dove soglion fan de' denti succhio,\]

is strongly rendered by Longfellow, with a happy word choice in the third line which enabled him to retain the alliteration (a point about which he is consistently careful). Compared with this, Johnson's 'former', 'gave ill treatment' and the whole of the third line (for which he seems to be indebted to Norton) are weaker. In the Purgatorio passage the witchery of the siren is hard to reproduce, and Longfellow has perhaps been over-ingenious in his transliteration of 'che' marinari in mezzo mar dismago',
another line where Johnson is identical with Norton. Surely, however, Johnson has crashed badly with the climax: 'e qual meco si ausa, / rado sen parte; si tutto l'appago.' The mangle of 'grows', 'goes', 'so', and the unfortunate word 'familiar' have broken the spell, already weakened by 'pleasure to be heard' as compared with 'pleasantness to hear'. The Paradiso passage shows Johnson at his best, although his debt to his predecessors is as great as ever; but the simile of the coal, perhaps due to some misprint which has also caused the lame line, is much less telling than Longfellow's.

Nor is Johnson always smooth and elegant. He does not altogether avoid the cumbrous latinity of Longfellow. He emulates him by rendering Inf. I.14 by 'the place where to its termination came / the valley'; and his version of Inf. XXXI.16-18 is:

After the dolorous rout, when Charlemagne
Had lost the consecrated multitude,
Roland gave not so terrible a blast.

Sometimes he seems to be employing, in Langdon's phrase, 'scissors to indifferent prose', e.g.

Oft in Bologna I heard men assign
The devil vices many, among which
I heard that he tells lies, and is their father (Inf. XXIII.142-4)

The curb must be of a contrasting sound,
And to my mind, I think that thou wilt hear
It ere thou reach the Pass of Pardoning (Purg. XIII.40-2)

There is frequent awkwardness, sometimes causing obscurity, or amounting to cacophony, as in:

A gentle Lady is in heaven, who feels
Such pity of the hindrance, unto which
I send thee, that stern judgment on high breaks. (Inf. II.94-6)

... may it not
Offend you that I stick to talk a while. (Inf. XIII.56-7)

Because I sighed not well till the end of it.
(perch' io indugiai al fine i buon sospi) (Purg. IV.132)

But their delight will be to be urged on (Purg. XII.126)
When Mary stuck her beak into her son (Purg. XXIII.30)

Neither unripe nor yet mature my limbs
Wore not left yonder, but are here with me (Purg. XXVI.55-6)

The wonted spring of streams of human arts (Par. II.95)

...but to signify
The one of heaven of the least ascent
(ma per far segno
della celestíal c'ha men salita) (Par. IV.38-9)

Because in such wise that cross flashed forth Christ (Par. XIV.104)
Nor did He lie before as if inert;
For not before nor afterwards went on
The moving o'er the waters' face by God (Par. XXIX.19-21)

The pronoun 'it' causes Johnson a lot of trouble, e.g. (Purg. XVI.82-6):

But if the present world has gone astray,
Within you is the cause: seek it within,
And I will now be a true spy of it.
It issued from His hand, - who loves it ere
It has its being, - and is playful, like
A little maiden with her tears and smiles,
The soul, in ignorant simplicity . . .

There are frequent instances where, as above, the noun to which 'it'
refers is changed without warning; there is a particularly bad confusion
extending through many terzine in Par. VII.76 ff.

Many of the above lines are better rendered by Longfellow or Norton.
The kind of unnecessary deterioration which often occurs in Johnson can
be seen in Purg. XIII.91-3 which he renders:

Tell me, - 'twere gracious and dear to me, -
If here among you be a Latin soul;
Perchance 'twere good for it, if I knew that,

compared with Longfellow's

Tell me, for dear 'twill be to me and gracious,
If any soul among you here is Latian,
And 'twill perchance be good for him I learn it.

Longfellow's rendering of 'Mora, mora!' (Par. VIII.75) as 'Death, death!' is not very good, but at least he gets the exclamation at the end of the
terzina, whereas Johnson makes an inept rearrangement:

If evil governing, which always strikes
The hearts of subject peoples, had not moved
Palermo to cry out: 'Die, die!' and if
My brother . . .

Progressive deterioration of meaning is also noticed in Johnson. Long-fellow (with one of his rare lapses into rhyme) rendered Par. XXIX.133-5:

And if thou notest that which is revealed
By Daniel, thou wilt see that in his thousands
Number determinate is kept concealed.

This conveys the meaning correctly; but Norton obscured it by writing: 'in his thousands a determinate number is concealed.' Johnson goes a step further and renders:

And if thou note that which has been revealed
By Daniel, thou wilt see that he hides
A fixed number in his myriads,

which might easily be taken to mean just the opposite of what is intended.

A similar case occurs in Par. XXII.94-6, where Norton has:

Truly, Jordan turned back, and the sea fleeing when God willed,
were more marvellous to behold than to see succor here.

This is correct, but Johnson changes it to:

Truly would be the Jordan driven back
And the sea fleeing when God willed it so,
More wonderful to view than succor here.

In these cases, and in others like them, it looks as though Johnson had misunderstood Norton rather than Dante, which goes to support the evidence that he leaned very heavily on his predecessor. In both instances, consideration of Dante's meaning would have avoided the slip; in the latter it seems obvious that Johnson mistook 'were more marvellous' in Norton for a subjunctive and substituted 'would be'; but the point is that the Old Testament miracles had already happened - 'più fu . . . mirabile'.

Although Johnson is in the main accurate, he has a few lapses, and
they are all in places where both Longfellow and Norton are correct; in a few cases they may be due to misprints. Many of them are trivial, but they are evidence of a regrettable tendency to fail in fixing the meaning of a phrase in its context, e.g. Johnson makes the error, found only in earlier translators, of rendering 'com' e' dicea' in Purg. VI.21 as 'men said', whereas the point surely is that an averment by a soul in a state of grace must be true. In Purg. XIV.117, 'io riconobbi i miei non falsi errori', Johnson's 'I recognised my wanderings not false' spoils the oxymoron. 'Finds not enough the hundred miles it courses' misses the intention of 'e cento miglia di corso nol sazia' in Purg. XIV.18 through the unnecessary transposition of subject and object. In the same way in Par. II.34-6 Johnson has:

Within itself had the eternal pearl
    Received us, as in water is received
    A ray of light, remaining still as one,

where by changing the active 'com' acqua recepe' into the passive, he makes 'permanendo unita' appear to qualify 'ray' instead of 'water'.

Johnson maintains a respectable level throughout, but notable passages are not frequent. His version of Inf. VI.94-9 is quite good:

My Leader said: 'No more shall he rise up
    This side the sound of the angelic trump.
    When on that day the hostile power shall come
    Each one shall find again the woful tomb,
    Shall take again his flesh and wonted shape,
    Shall hear what thunders on forevermore.'

There is an effort to secure verbal effect in the description of the rain of fire (Inf. XIV.28 ff):

O'er the whole waste of sand, falling slowly,
Were raining down dilated flakes of fire,
As those of snow on alps without a wind.

So was descending the eternal heat;
With which the sand was kindled, as the tinder
Beneath the steel, for doubling of the pain.
Johnson's translation, published during the first World War, received less attention than it might otherwise have done. Kenneth MacKenzie, writing in the Yale Review (April 1916) considered its publication 'an event of real significance for scholarship and literature', and thought it was 'the best in blank verse' ever made in English. Grandgent likewise praised it; his remarks are quoted in the article on Langdon. The Times Literary Supplement (29th June 1916) was more reserved in its compliments. It found Johnson 'a faithful interpreter as well as a careful translator' who 'if he has not drunk deep, has at least tasted the Pierian spring'. The reviewer thought Johnson an improvement on the monotony of Longfellow, whose version he obviously disliked, but the passage he quotes from both by way of comparison (Purg. XXX.49-57) is by no means a convincing proof. He remarks that Johnson has not only improved on Longfellow in these lines, but has corrected his blunder. This evidently refers to Longfellow's 'cheeks now purified with dew', an interpretation now discredited, but supported by weighty authority in those days, so that if he blundered it was in good company.

On the whole Johnson's translation cannot be considered really important, and after its initial success did not hold the market. The success was indeed more apparent than real, for according to Dr La Piana the first edition which sold out so quickly was of 750 copies only, and the second and last of 1,000. Longfellow's blank terzine may be neither prose nor poetry, but they are often an intelligent imitation of Dante, and attempts to improve on them usually lose that feature without any corresponding gain. The attempt to impart life and variety leads to weakening, for it breaks up the ternary structure, and thereby deprives the medium of its only possible qualification for the purpose. Moreover Johnson's debt to his predecessors is so great that his work can be considered as only partly original, and considerable portions of it have the appearance of being a version of Norton, rather than of Dante, in blank terzine.

Edward Joshua Edwardes (1852-1917) was the sixth son of a doctor, Thomas Edwardes, of Llansantffraid, Montgomeryshire. He followed his father's profession, and received his medical education at St. Mary's Hospital, London, entering the medical school there in 1871, and distinguishing himself by winning two scholarships. He graduated L.S.A. in 1875, M.B.Lond. in 1876, M.D.Lond. and M.R.C.P. in 1882, and L.R.C.S.Edin. in 1887. For some years he joined his father, then had a practice of his own at Llanfyllin in Montgomeryshire. Finally he settled in London where he held various appointments. He was an authority on vaccination, and was associated with Mrs Garrett Anderson in the foundation and management of the Imperial Vaccination League. He published two books on the subject, as well as contributing articles to periodicals. His interests were very wide. He was a competent mathematician, and he devoted some of his leisure time to writing a text-book, Elements of Plane Geometry, which was published in 1906. He had a natural talent for languages, and translated Oertel's Therapeutics of Circulatory Derangements. During his latter years Dante was his main interest; and Paget Toynbee records (Dante Studies, 1921, p. 277) that in addition to his published Inferno he left completed manuscripts of the other two cantiques. These, however, do not appear to have been preserved. Edwardes is the only Welshman among our seventy-six translators of Dante.
Edwardes' Inferno, issued in paper covers and with an unusual imprint, appeared in a single edition, which was probably small, and had little publicity. His preface is short and reads as under:

In my opinion the poem can be more faithfully translated in blank verse than in prose; because inversions and other liberties are allowed in verse that are not allowed in prose. But the verses should be divided into tercets, because the original is so divided, and as a rule the end of a tercet is the end of a sentence in the original. The aim of my translation is to help the student to enjoy the poem in the original; therefore it is as literally exact as possible, without any attempt at fine writing. During twenty years, I have devoted much labour at intervals to this exactness and to the study of Dante literature; it has been a labour of love.

From his notes, many of which deal with readings and meanings, it is evident that Edwardes had indeed studied Dante carefully, and the making of the translation was probably, like his book on geometry, a means of occupying his leisure. The wording of his preface suggests that his poetic faculty was not strong; it is difficult to tell just why he thought that 'inversions and other liberties' were desirable. The later sentences suggest that he aimed, like Longfellow, at making a photographic reproduction, but although he certainly has numerous inversions, they do not seem to be directed at making the text more intelligible; many of them occur where the Italian is quite straightforward. The following is his rendering of XXVII.40-54, which may be compared with the versions of the same passage by Longfellow and others in Appendix II.

Ravenna stands, as it hath stood long years; the Eagle of Polenta broodeth there so that he covers Cervia with his wings.
The city that endured the long essay eras while, and of the French made bloody heap, again is found beneath the Talons Green.
The old Verruchio mastiff and the young, who of Montagna made ill governance, make of their teeth an auger in their went.
The towns Santerno and Lamone are ruled by the young Lion of the snowy hair, who summer 'tween and winter changes sides. And she whose flank is by the Savio laved, e'en as she lieth 'twixt the plain and hill so lives she tyranny and freedom 'tween.

There is a prevailing awkwardness here, characteristic of Edwardes, which seems due to lack of skill in manipulating words and phrases and inability to secure the cadence necessary to verse. Particularly strange are the two lines corresponding to the Italian:

che muta parte dalla state al verno (51)
tra tirannia si vive e stato #franco (54)

Time and again we come on lines and terzine which a little more care could easily have improved; but at his best Edwardes does not succeed at being better than pedestrian.

There is frequent weakening of Dante's forcefulness. The following is Edwardes' version of Francesca's speech at V,100-7:

Love, that of noble heart is quickly seized
took this one, owing to the lovely form
that then I lost; - the world still blameth me.
Love, who the loved one ne'er from loving spares,
so strongly seized on me at his delight
that, as thou sest, e'en now he leaves me not.
Love to the same death led us both, but him
who in life extinguished us, Caina awaits.

This is well below the average level attained by English translators in the passage; moreover its wording makes it a very doubtful aid to the comprehension of the Italian. Sometimes there is an effort at effect, as in XIV,28-30, 37-9:
The change of word order in the last terzina shows failure to realise what should be emphasised; this is a common failing in Edwardes, e.g. XXXI.16-18 where once again a transposition spoils the climax:

Roland blew note to terrible a blast
after that sad discomfiture what time
Charlemagne lost the sacred company.

Too often also he replaces a vivid expression with a very ordinary one; for instance 'con tal vergogna,/ ch’ancor per la memoria mi si gira' (XXX. 134-5) becomes 'with such shame / as still comes over me in recollecting it'.

Some lines from the Ugolino episode in canto XXXIII will show clearly Edwardes' limitations where metrical and linguistic skill are concerned.

This one appeared to me a chief and lord
hunting the wolf and whelps upon that hill;
for which the Pisans cannot Lucca see.

With gaunt and eager hounds well exercised
he, with Gualandi and Sismondi, and
Lanfranchi had put himself in front, and seemed
to me tired out the father and the sons
after short course, and it appeared to me
I saw their flanks rent open by keen fangs.
As soon as I awoke before the dawn
I heard my children weeping in their sleep,
that were along with me, and asking bread.
Right cruel are thou if thou griev'st not now
in thinking what my heart foreboded then,
and if thou weep'st not, when dost ever weep?
Now were they awaake, and now the hour drew nigh
when food was wont to appear, and each of them
was hesitating, owing to his dreams:
and I heard close the outlet from below
of that dread tower and thereupon I gazed
silent, upon the faces of my sons.
I wept not, I was petrified within;
they wept, and then my Anselmuccio said: -
Father, thou lookest so, what aileth thee?

The story closes lamely at line 75 with 'stronger was grief than hunger afterwards'.

To give examples of rather better passages, Edwardes' versions of XXIV.46-54 and XXV.58-66 are now quoted:
Behoves that now thou drive away all sloth
- the Master said - for we attain not fame, on down reclining, nor 'neath canopies; fame, without which whoever spends his life leaves of himself such trace upon the earth as smoke in air, or foam upon the wave. Then rouse thee, and thy panting overcome, with the spirit that in every struggle wins, unless it is abased by body gross.

Was never ivy fastened to a tree so closely as that monster horrible entwined his own amongst the other's limbs. There stuck they to each other, as if made of heated wax, and intermixed their hues, and neither seemed what he was formerly: e'en as a brownish hue proceeds along the paper upwards, just before the flame, for dies the white, and yet it is not yet black.

There are numerous resemblances throughout the translation to other versions in blank terzine, but we are now well aware that this is inevitable, and there is nothing to suggest that Edwardes was directly indebted to any of his predecessors. Indeed he quite often uses entirely different phrasing and construction from any earlier translator; unfortunately these individual touches are seldom improvements.

Although Edwardes, as we have seen from the examples quoted, often fails to seize the salient features of the original, and although, as in the lines quoted from Francesca's speech he transliterates somewhat ineptly, his version does not contain any major mistranslations arising from failure to understand the meaning of the Italian. His Introduction and notes indicate that he was genuinely familiar with the Comedy and with the results of contemporary study and research.

No press notices of this translation have been found, and it is almost completely unknown. Copies of the book are scarce; so far as can be ascertained none is available in any British lending library.


Courtney Langdon (1861-1924) was born at Rome, where his father, William Chauncy Langdon, was founder and first rector of the American Episcopal Church; his Christian name came from his mother, Hannah Agnes Courtney. The family returned to America the year after his birth, but were abroad again during most of his schooldays, being resident in Florence from 1867 to 1873 and in Geneva from 1873 to 1875. In 1876 they settled at Cambridge, Massachusetts, where Courtney's father became rector of Christ Church. The young man, therefore, when he went to Harvard already had three mother tongues. He graduated in 1881, and occupied several educational posts at Lehigh, Baltimore and Cornell, eventually becoming first Assistant and then Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, and holding the latter post from 1898 onwards. He was a popular professor and lecturer, his subjects including Homer.
Courtney Langdon (2)

Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Molière, Milton and Browning. He was also an admirer of Rostand whose Chantecler he translated, but it remained unpublished. His last work was a translation of Ferrero's Roman Historians.

In the preface to his Inferno Langdon says that his translation is the result of over twenty years' work, and he states quite plainly that it was undertaken and continued with the object of meeting a need, which did not seem to be adequately met by the well known translations of Cary, Longfellow, Norton, or others more recent; it, therefore, frankly aimed at being in every possible way an improvement on its rivals old and new.

The old rivals are then briefly dealt with. The pioneer work of Cary can no longer be regarded as adequate. Longfellow is 'painfully accurate' and over-Latinised.

... He was also betrayed into infelicities of construction and rhythm peculiarly surprising in such a poet as the author of the incomparable Dante Sonnets, a betrayal which has found explanation in the state of his mind and heart during the prosecution of the work. This, consequently, remains as an instance of a great translation which, not intended to be prose, ought not to have been thought of as poetry. After using it for two or three years, I gave it up, in spite of its many happy lines, and valuable notes, because I found that I could not read it aloud with continuous pleasure either to myself or to my hearers.

Norton's prose version is referred to as 'excellent', but 'only prose'.

Moreover

... it was composed under the strange conviction, expressed in the preface, that 'to preserve in its integrity what [of the thought and sentiment embodied in the verse] may thus be transferred, prose is a better medium than verse'. Admitting, however, that for the harmonious blending of meaning and music in the original, a new harmony might, indeed, be substituted, Mr Norton unfortunately added: 'but the difference is fatal', and in giving up the creation of a new harmony himself, he lent the great authority of his name to the suggestion that any such attempt by others would prove futile.

Norton's crime would seem to be that he deprecated Langdon's effort before it was made! The terza rima versions of 'Dean Plumptre and others' are easily dismissed as, at best, brilliant tours de force; the rhymed trans-
lations of Parsons and Shadwell are interesting but 'their rhymes and meters would seem to have been indulged in at too great a cost to the poem's thought, flow and tone'.

There follows a plea for the use of blank verse, containing numerous arguments already familiar, but introduced by words which betray to some extent the fundamental weakness of Langdon's whole position:

The transference of a poem from one tongue to another is capable of success in direct proportion to the degree in which the human and spiritual element in the original predominates over the artistry, however excellent, of the verse-form in which that element is embodied; the Divine Comedy, for example, differing vitally in this respect from such a poem as Poe's Raven, which owes relatively too much to the charm of its meter and syllables to lend itself to a successful translation. It is, therefore, possible for the indwelling spirit of a supremely great poem to reclothe itself fittingly, and yet retain its essential identity, because in such a case the spirit, and not the clothing, is paramountly the thing; being that which originally made itself a body, it can make itself another, whatever the former's perfection.

Eventually we reach the well-known conclusion that Dante would use blank verse if he were writing his poem in English now. The blank verse must not, however, indulge in too much liberty or licence, nor deteriorate into 'vers libres'; nor yet can 'a blank verse line be made by applying scissors to indifferent prose'. There follows a long statement of aims: 'accurate and sympathetic reproduction of its author's thoughts and moods, good English, and good verse'. It is interesting to note that

... several temptations to make Dante say something in my translation in a given place that was truer, stronger, more beautiful, or more refined, than what was strictly warranted by the words he there used and by their context, have been sternly, though at times regretfully, resisted.

It is also explained that while as a general rule each three consecutive lines of blank verse match the Italian terzina facing them, in a few cases a line less has been needed in English; where this occurs, to keep in step with the original, a single line of the translation is broken and printed.
as two. To do Langdon justice, this device is used very sparingly. A project which was never carried out is also referred to:

In the hope of publishing before long a fourth volume containing a running commentary on the poem, all notes have been omitted from the pages of the translation, what seemed indispensable being inserted in the Interpretative Analysis, which will explain itself.

That the Interpretative Analysis was by no means left to explain itself we shall see presently; it will be better, however, to deal with the translation first. The prefaces and the analyses in the subsequent volumes continue to develop Langdon's standpoint so far as exegesis is concerned, but he has little more to say about the actual translation, save that in the second volume he inserted a four-page 'Note on blank verse' enlarging on the technique of its composition, without saying anything very original.

His Italian text, he tells us, is that of Vandelli's 1914 edition, 'with such changes in individual words, spelling, and punctuation as, in my judgment, seemed warranted in themselves, and justified by having been adopted by one or more of such accredited Italian editors of the poem as Torraca, Casini, Passerini, or, in some instances, by our American Dantist, Dr Grandgent'. Some of these changes drew the fire of critics, such as the revival of the discredited 'che sugger dette a Nino e fu sua sposa' in Inf. V.59, which he defends as being 'more Dante-like' than 'succedette'.

The first thing that strikes the reader is that, despite what Langdon has to say of Longfellow and Norton, he remains firmly rooted in the New England tradition. Again and again he uses the identical words of Norton, the identical lines of Longfellow, and to illustrate this three passages from Langdon are given in Appendix II side by side with the corresponding renderings by his predecessors. On examining these, we find that Langdon has smoothed away one or two awkwardnesses, but has hardly on the whole improved on Longfellow; in many places he is weaker and further from his
original. Indeed, many of the remarks already made about Johnson's version apply here also. Why should the woman in the dream be a 'Female' even in America? The witchery of the Siren has been diluted: 'who in mid-ocean mariners bewitches' is a bad rearrangement, and 'who gets used to me' worse than Johnson's 'who with me grows familiar'. The breaking up of the lines in the passage from the Paradiso is no doubt meant to avoid monotony, but it destroys the pattern. The terzina beginning 'When with our glorious and perfected flesh' is markedly inferior to either Johnson or Longfellow; the stresses of the second line and the enjambement at the end of it, 'greater / pleasure', are very awkward. Something of the same kind will be found in the passages given in Appendix I, particularly that from Par. III. It may also be remarked that Langdon quite frequently has lines of eight or twelve syllables; these are not intentional, for he corrects a number of them in his errata, but many others have passed unnoticed. One of the latter is strangely enough Par. III.85, in spite of the fact that he devotes a long note to it and prints the words 'His Will is our Peace' in capitals to mark its importance. He also has a note on the use of the word 'in-wills' in line 84, which he justifies although it is not in the dictionary; but he does not mention that Norton used it before him - it has in fact been used by many translators in this passage.

The very pronounced resemblance between Langdon's and Longfellow's translations is probably the result of several factors. Part of it is doubtless due, consciously or unconsciously, to familiarity with the versions of Longfellow and Norton. It is quite natural that Langdon, having on his own statement made use of them for teaching and reading aloud, would often associate the words he had used in explanations to students with the corresponding words of the original. One might even feel sometimes that he has gone out of his way.
to avoid identity with Longfellow, and perhaps even written an inferior line on that account. This brings us to a second and very important consideration, on which we have already dwelt, namely that a striking measure of similarity was inevitable, apart altogether from conscious or unconscious imitation, in the circumstances. We have seen that writers so far apart as Rossetti and Longfellow show resemblances, occasional but striking, where neither had any knowledge whatever of the other's work: that is to say that where a man of letters, unhampered by the need for rhyming, is turning Dante's lines into blank terzine, with the desire of producing a close verbal correspondence, he will often arrive at the same result as another man of similar aims and attainments. If this is so in general, it must obtain to a still greater degree when the writers share a common background and culture, to some extent isolated and restricted, as was that of New England. In the quest for rhyme, as results amply prove, translators will diverge widely in their solutions, although even there, as is pointed out elsewhere, the obviousness of one particular solution will sometimes produce widespread likenesses. Where, however, it is a matter of replacing each three-line unit of Italian with approximately the same number of English syllables in a form so flexible as blank verse, and with the object of providing a faithful reflection of the manner and matter of the original, in an idiom which is well-established, we have the paradox that the very freedom of the medium restricts rather than increases the choice available. The liberties which could be justified by the tyranny of rhyme are not permissible; indeed many a time the English equivalent is almost a foregone conclusion. Here a familiarity with one's predecessors, combined with a laudable resolve not to plagiarise, may well be a serious handicap, and lead to a rejection of the best answer because someone else has already given it. Total ignorance of one's predecessors is
most desirable, and it will have been observed that many prefaces to translations contain a statement that the writer has refrained from looking at other versions. Unfortunately few people arrive at the stage of becoming translators of a poem like the Divine Comedy without already having some acquaintance with the work of their predecessors, and it is quite impossible to eradicate that knowledge. Object lessons in the danger of setting similarities down to imitation are frequent in these essays; but in the case of the New England blank terzine tradition, as observed in the successive translations of Longfellow, Vincent, Johnson and Langdon, and further strengthened by the rhythmic prose of Norton, the connexion is too obvious to call for the exercise of such caution. By the very nature of their cultural relationship and their common purpose they could not fail to produce a series of variations on their earliest ancestor, and a realisation that the vein was rapidly becoming exhausted was probably a main cause of the discontinuance of the attempt after 1921.

Langdon is generally accurate, though not quite so literally as Longfellow; as can be seen from the examples given he departs oftener from the original construction and in doing so sometimes weakens. At times this departure seems rather perverse, as in Inf. XIII.4-6:

No green leaves there, but leaves of gloomy hue;
no smooth and straight, but gnarled and twisted, twigs;
nor was there any fruit, but poison-thorns,
where not only is the anaphora of 'Non frondi . . . non rami . . . non pomi . . .' lost, but the repetition of 'leaves' in the first line and the position of 'twigs' in the second make the effect unnecessarily awkward. Other mistakes seem to be merely unnoticed slips, e.g. Purg. X.59-60, where 'a' due miei sensi / faceva dir l'un "No", l'altro "Si, canta"! is rendered 'made one of my two senses / say "No", and the other one say "Yes, they
Courtney Langdon (8)

sing". Stranger still is Par. XXII.115-6 where 'Con voi nasceva e
s'ascondeva vosco / quagli... ' becomes 'with you was born, and in your
midst was hiding / he... ', where there does not seem to be the slightest
reason for departing from the obvious meaning of 'was rising and setting with
you' (i.e. 'in your company'). Inf. XXIII.119-20 seems to have been misread,
for 'ed è mestier ch' ei senta / qualunque passa, com' ei pesa, pria' is
translated 'he is forced to be the first / to feel how much whoever passes
weighs'. In other cases Langdon produces at first sight an appearance of
mistranslation resulting from ambiguous phrasing, e.g. Inf. XXV.136-8:

The soul which had become a savage beast
flees hissing through the trench; the other spits
behind him as he talks,

which gives one the impression of a strange technique of expectoration.

Equally startling was the effect produced on first reading Purg. XXI.73-5:

He thus addressed us; and, since one in drink
delights, according as his thirst is great,
I cannot say how much he did me good,

which conjures up an immediate picture of an intoxicated man.

In spite of Langdon's protestations in his Introduction, there are a
good many passages which might well have been made by 'applying scissors to
indifferent prose', and some lines that tend to the ridiculous. We have,
for instance, complete flatness as in Inf. III.58-66:

When some I'd recognised, I saw and knew
the shade of him who through his cowardice
the great Refusal made. I understood
immediately, and was assured that this
the band of cowards was, who both to God
displeasing are, and to His enemies.
These wretched souls, who never were alive,
were naked, and were sorely spurred to action
by means of wasps and hornets that were there.

Nor does the following (Par. XVII.106-20) seem to preserve the vigour of
the Italian:
I clearly see, my father, how toward me a time spurs on, to deal me such a blow as heaviest is to him who gives least heed to it; 'tis, therefore, well that I should so with foresight arm myself, that if the place which is to me most dear be taken from me, I lose not the rest by these my verses. Downward through the world whose bitterness is endless, and around the Mount, from whose fair top my Lady's eyes have lifted me, and afterward through Heaven from light to light, things have I heard which, if repeated, will for many have the taste of bitter herbs; and yet, if I'm to truth a timid friend, I fear lest life I lose with those who shall of this age speak as ancient.

On the other hand there seems to be exaggerated literality in some lines like Inf. VII.72, 'I'd have thee swallow now my thought of her' = 'Or vo' che tu mia sentenza ne imbocche'. An occasional slang expression is introduced, but while this suits the Malebranche or the counterfeiters of the tenth bolgia, the rendering of Inf. IX.96-9,

Your Cerberus, if ye remember well, still sports for this a hairless chin and neck, hardly seems to suit the 'parole sante' of the delivering angel. Manfred's words in Purg. III.130, 'Or le bagna la pioggia e move il vento' are non-chalantly turned to 'Bathed by the rain, the wind now blows them round'.

There are some oddities like:

It showed, moreover, that hard pavement did (Purg. XII.49)

Those who in reasoning attained the bottom (Purg. XVIII.67)

Say ... why ye hold up your backs (Purg. XIX.94)

To keep them covered up when going out. (Purg. XXIII.104)

Langdon's punctuation is at times eccentric, but his most remarkable performance is Purg. XXX.73 where 'Guardaci ben! Ben sem, ben sem Beatrice!' is rendered 'Look at us well, for we, indeed, are, we, indeed, are Beatrice!' which must be a record for comma frequency. In spite of his animadversions

- 611 -
regarding Latinisation, Langdon is by no means free from it, so that we get lines like 'in this mirific and angelic temple' (Par. XXVIII.53). As a rule he refrains from archaism, but he fluctuates between '-s' and '-th' forms for the third singular present indicative, and has such puzzling phrases as 'if she that diist reply' (Purg. XIII.104). Unwanted rhymes are not altogether avoided; one or two are changed in the errata, but there are a good many others, e.g. in Purg. XIII.152-4 we have the three consecutive line endings 'waste - quest - invest'.

There are quite a number of respectable passages, although often those that impress most favourably in the course of reading turn out to be largely echoes of Longfellow and Norton. The effect if Inf. XIV.28-30 is well caught:

Down on the whole great waste of sand there rained with gentle fall dilated flakes of fire, like flakes of snow that fall on windless Alpa.

So also with Inf. XXXI.16-18:

After the woeful rout, when Charlemagne the holy army of his knights had lost, Roland blew not so terrible a blast.

On the whole Langdon's Paradiso reads better than the earlier cantiche. The opening of canto XXI is good, and though it reflects Longfellow it improves on him:

And now mine eyes upon my Lady's face were fixed again, and therewithall my mind, which from all other objects had withdrawn. Now was she smiling then; but: 'Should I smile,' she said, addressing me, 'like Sémelé wouldst thou become, when she to ashes turned; because my beauty, which along the stairs of this eternal palace brighter burns, as thou hast seen, the higher we ascend, is so resplendent that thy mortal strength at its effulgence, were it not restrained, would be as is a bough which lightning rends.'
Courtney Langdon (11)

The following, Par. XXIII.25-33, is also good, and more original:

As, when in cloudless skies the moon is full,
Trivia among those nymphs eternal smiles,
who deck with light the whole expanse of heaven;
so I, above a thousand thousand lamps,
beheld a Sun which kindled one and all,
as our sun kindles all the stars on high;
and through the living light the Shining Substance
was so transparent, and so brightly shone
upon my face, that I endured it not.

To sum up, Langdon's translation is on the whole satisfactory in a
modest way, but far from possessing the qualities required to justify the
claim in his preface. It was variously judged, noticeably more favourably
in America than in Britain. Grandgent found both Johnson and Langdon
'schoarly and both so good that a comparison seems ungracious'. He thought
the latter more uneven; 'Langdon flashes brighter at his brightest and burns
duller at his dullest'. Louis How, in the preface to his own Purgatorio,
praised Langdon highly, saying that he had made an 'excellent rendering'
and was 'really a poet'; but he added that Langdon had refused the double
challenge of 'Dante's extreme formality of structure and his extraordinary
formality of language'. J. E. C. Montmorency devoted three articles to
Langdon in the Contemporary Review (September 1918, pp. 350-2; March 1921,
pp. 423-6; November 1921, pp. 706-7); he thought blank verse unsuitable
'unless written by a poet of Milton's calibre', opining that Langdon was
'not a great poet but has an appreciation of great poetry', but found his
version 'somewhat pleasing . . . capable of giving to the reader some con-
ception of the original poem'. The Times Literary Supplement (15th June
1918, p. 273) contented itself with trouncing the Inferno:

Mr Langdon's high hopes and aims as a translator . . . have unhappily
failed of fulfilment,

and after numerous criticisms of language, text and notes, concluded:
We cannot honestly say, then, that in our opinion this new translation justifies its existence.

Langdon's poetic rank is indicated by the quality of the verses which he placed at the beginning of each volume, a sample of which will be given presently. He himself, however, pinned his faith as much to his 'Interpretative Analysis' as to his translation, and it was the scale of the latter which swelled the volumes, particularly the second and third, to their truly monumental proportions, giving the work a somewhat pretentious appearance, or at least awakening expectations that an edition of Dante on such a scale, sponsored by two famous university presses, would have exceptional value. From the bibliographical details at the head of this article it will be seen that the bulk of the notes increased rapidly with each volume: 57 pages in the first, 111 in the second, 162 in the third. The so-called analysis actually consists of a line-by-line commentary, containing the usual explanatory notes supplemented by those developing the translator's own theory as to the meaning and value of the poem. Typographically it has a rather depressing appearance, for not only is it printed in smallish type, but the whole of the notes for each canto are run on, with no divisions or paragraphs of any kind, some cantos requiring as much as eight pages. The line references, mixed up with the wording, are difficult to find, and are often liable to be confused with a numerical reference at the end of the preceding sentence.

We have already noted Langdon on dangerous ground in talking about the 'degree in which the human and spiritual element in the original predominates over the artistry, however excellent'. The four-page introduction to the first instalment of the analysis contains more hastily expressed generalisations, which were readily attacked and demolished by his critics. We have no space here to enter into Langdon's theories or
to quote them at length, but a few of his leading points may be briefly indicated. He thinks 'linguistic, historical and geographical notes' a necessary evil, and expresses his dislike of 'genealogically-minded scholars'; at one point he says that the interpretation of the Paradiso calls 'rather for the daring imagination of a child, than for the timid, though entrenched, learning of a scholar'. Further, he is convinced that his methods are in some degree original.

Those who shall have read at all carefully the strictly interpretative parts of my notes to the Inferno and its sister canticles... will probably have seen that my object differs from that mainly aimed at by interpreters of the Divine Comedy, in that it attempts to liberate Dante's spiritual teaching from the seal of his ultra theological and ecclesiastical friends, and save it from the silence of the poem's ultra philological and historical admirers.... Since I am undertaking to find out what the poem can mean, or could consistently be shown to mean, to those who are living now, I have not concerned myself especially with what it must have seemed to mean six hundred years ago.... Furthermore, being interested in the Divine Comedy only incidentally as a philological and historical document, and only secondarily as a work of art worthy of being studied for its architectural structure, and its linguistic and literary qualities - all of which were intended by Dante to serve merely as alluring and retaining means to a far higher end - my constant aim has been to study and teach it as one of the greatest monuments of Man's creative spirit and of his intuition into the moral and spiritual laws of eternal reality.

There is a great deal more in this strain; and in introducing the last instalment Langdon remarks that his notes 'will more and more largely depend upon the unsupported imagination of the annotator' and that the reader 'may at any moment find himself thrown entirely upon his own intuitional experience and creative vision', whatever that may mean. The preface to the Purgatorio contains some extraordinary statements:

Though I have no ecclesiastical or theological prepossessions, I nevertheless hold firmly to the belief that the world is essentially spiritual in its fundamental nature, by which I mean that it partakes of the nature of what each of us knows intuitively as consciousness. ... Assuming, therefore, this attitude toward such supreme spiritually human, and poetically creative geniuses as Jesus, Dante and Shakespeare are generally conceded to be in their several kinds and

- 615 -
degrees (without prejudice, of course, to Jesus' special claims), how can one help realising that, since these seers were forced to express themselves through the best current intellectual ideas and literary forms afforded by their day and land, those ideas and forms ought not to be allowed, when no longer expressive, to keep men from seeing the light they were intended to reveal.

Setting aside the numerous other questions begged by this passage, Langdon seems consistently to forget that the poet derives his title from his ability to express his ideas, not from his possession of them. When Dante wrote:

Orribil furon li peccati miei;  
ma la Bonta Infinita ha si gran braccia,  
che prende cib che si rivolge a lei,

he was repeating something which had been said thousands of times. Langdon devotes a page and a half of notes to Manfred's speech in Purg. III.112-45, of which his remarks on the above terzina may be taken as a specimen:

Through the mouth of Manfred Dante here gives utterance to one of the sublimest creative appreciations of the unlimited nature of Divine Love in all religious literature. Nothing stands, or can ever stand between the human soul and its real happiness but its own will. To hold that all hope of reconciliation is limited to the finite life of the body is, it would seem, what no really believing 'believer' could accept, and is apparently opposed to what Dante is in this canto trying unorthodoxly to teach, in conflict with the tenacious orthodox 'letter that killeth'. Hope, a spiritual function, can only end with the death of the spirit, which is by its very nature immortal. . . . 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out' (John VI.37), a spiritually, not a temporally, conditioned promise, whose validity can be only intuitively authenticated.

What makes Dante's terzina memorable is that he was able to express in three lines all and more than Langdon can say in ten times that amount of prose; it is not a text to be expounded and expanded into a sermon. Incidentally, had the commentator paid a little more attention to the scholars he affects to despise, he would have known that, far from being unorthodox, Dante was giving poetic form to a sentence from Aquinas' Summa. Elsewhere (in a note to Par. IV.40) Langdon uses the same phrase again:
Taking the projection for the truth is why 'the letter killeth', as it is so constantly, though unconsciously, allowed to do. Parables are useful, provided they are expounded.

But the poem or the parable is the truth, or at least the nearest we can get to the truth with our mortal equipment. To turn it into an abstract statement in general terms is not to exalt it to some purer kind of truth, or to make it more 'spiritual' as Langdon is fond of saying. The parable of the Good Samaritan does not owe its form to the fact that Jesus was forced to express himself in that way because he had the misfortune to live nineteen hundred years ago; probably a dozen of those who heard it could have written as fair an exposition of the 'spiritual truth' involved as any modern thinker with his increased vocabulary and enlarged knowledge. The parable is not a 'projection' as distinct from the 'truth' itself, but a concrete embodiment of that truth, as the man who asked the question, 'Who is my neighbour?' recognised at once without needing to have it expounded.

The notes themselves are a hotch-potch of polysyllables and superlatives, pseudo-philosophy and 'uplift', anecdote and illustration, with a leavening of American slang and wisecracks. Christ is spoken of as 'the moral and spiritual Record-holder of the race'; while 'lo montanaro' of Purg. XXVI.68 is said to be a picture of the 'eternal hayseed'. In the notes on Par. VII, dealing with the Redemption, the translator apologises for Dante's having 'had to make the best of the intellectual material he had at hand'; here and elsewhere we feel that Dante would express his disapproval of Langdon's religious notions with considerable emphasis.

The events of the Great War serve to illustrate the principle of vicarious suffering; but the translator's favourite quarry for examples is American academic life. Of his numerous analogies one will suffice. Against Purg.
Courtney Langdon (16)

XXI.59, where Statius is describing the ascent of the purified soul when conscious that its purgation is completed, and the shout of 'Gloria in excelsis' which bursts from the lips of its fellow-sufferers, we read that 'a homely illustration of this custom' is to be found among the students at Brown University.

When engaged in a final examination they stamp for a moment their permitted applause, when the first one, feeling that he has written enough to pass, rises without waiting for the rest, hands in his paper, and leaves the hall. Similia similibus illustrantur.

It is evident that this is meant quite seriously, though if isolated from its context it might pass for a piece of ingenious burlesque, in which the phrase 'feeling that he has written enough to pass' is the master-stroke.

A long note on the discussion as to prayers for the dead in Purg. VI contains the speculation that since

prayer in behalf of others is the expression of the sincere interest of love ... if it reach them, even by ways unknown to science, by prayer-rays, for example, or otherwise, may influence them...

and there are other psychic excursions of the same kind. On the 'momentary effulgence' of Justinian (Par. V.133) there is the comment:

So, at times, is the humanity of Jesus outshone by his divinity for those who have eyes to see; and so likewise, in their measure, is it with Dante and Shakespeare and with all spiritually great men, of whom one is led to think as spirits, rather than as men, or as the mere authors of books.

Full justice is done to 'Pure Womanhood and Motherhood', reaching a climax in Par. XXXIII where, following an impassioned eulogy of 'das Ewig-Weibliche', inspired by the prayer to the Virgin, we read:

In the light of the above suggestions, which, if warranted, impose upon women, a 'Noblesse oblige', of their own (punctuation sic), all that immediately follows in this peerless tribute to womanhood, which incidentally throws unmistakable light upon Dante's feelings toward his own mother, wife, daughters and women in general, may be left to the reader's meditation.
It is to be feared that Langdon had overlooked the frequent discrepancy between the tributes of poets to womanhood and their relations with women. Although he succeeds in extracting abundant moral edification from most cantos, he is occasionally surprisingly silent; for instance he dismisses Inf. XV in less than a page, deriving nothing from the Brunetto Latini episode but a proof of Dante's 'impartiality'. Some of Langdon's notes read as entertainingly as Lifemanship, although one can hardly suppose that their author would have relished the comparison had he lived to be a contemporary of Mr Stepden Potter.

It may seem unfair to conclude by inflicting on the reader the text of the poem which Langdon prefixed to his Paradiso, but it gives a very fair indication of his literary limitations; moreover he himself deliberately challenges the scrutiny of these verses in the preface which follows them.

If I may refer to a poem which I owe to Dante, what of the meaning of the verses I have set before this preface? I wrote them as an imaginative means of suggesting what I feel is the Paradiso's supreme teaching, namely, the ultimate oneness of all spirit, and the infinitely close relation between the consciousness of man and the supra-consciousness of God. . . . As to whether they exactly express Dante's thought, I cannot tell, as I cannot ask him yet; if, therefore, they have any value, it will be that of throwing a little light on what Dante's poem can mean, not to ultra historical Dantists who insist that 'Dante was wholly of his time', but to those who will contribute their own loving imagination and spiritual experience to the elucidation of truth germs which make him 'not of an age, but for all time'.

Here is the poem.

The Trinity of Love

When Life had withdrawn me from all but my God,
And the birth pangs of dying had ceased,
'Where now is the world, Lord,' I asked, as I sighed,
'And the light of the sun, and the starlight, which vied
With its glory, when I was released?'

'Asleep in my dreamland,' God said with a smile
Which lighted my soul's new sky,
'The real world is only where thou and I are;  
The earth is but space, and but sun-time each star  
To such as are thou and I.' -

'Where, then, are my fellows and loved ones,' I asked,  
'The dead I had hoped to see,  
And the living I left, when to Thee I was sped?' -

'Thy loved ones are dreams in my dreamland,' God said,  
'And real for thee only in Me;

'Hence all are here with thee, each separate soul  
As deathless, as each was dear.  
Look into My heart, and thy living thou'lt find;  
Or call, and thy dead will awake in My mind.  

Enough that we two are here!'  

'But why, though ashamed, am I feeling no dread,  
Now that here I am with Thee alone?  
That I was a sinner I know but too well,  
And that this is Thy Heaven. But what of the Hell,  
Where the guilty are said to atone?' -

'A sin-born delusion,' God said, as He sighed,  
'A fear born of blindness and night;  
For Love, even now, is atoning in Me  
For all that thy world-life made sinful in thee,  
Ere death tore its veil from My Light.' -

'But what, then, am I, whom our Oneness can thus  
Both humble and glorify?' -  

'A realised dream!' from the Silence above  
Whispered He who is Lover and Loved One and Love,  
'For lo! There is no One but I!'  

The irreverent reader may amuse himself by wondering if Dante's verdict has now been given.
The Inferno of Dante, with text and translation by Eleanor Vinton Murray. Boston: privately printed. 1920. Foolscap quarto, pp. viii, 393. Preface, pp. v-viii; Italian and English texts, on facing pages, printed and numbered in terzine, with brief summary at head of each canto, pp. 2-393; there are no notes or other explanatory matter.

This is a very handsomely produced volume, printed in leaded twelve-point type, with ample margins, on thick antique laid paper with uncut foredge and bottom edge, quarter bound in heavy boards.

Practically nothing has been ascertained regarding this translator's identity. Toynbee records her translation, but gives no date of birth. Although the Librarian of Congress has been kind enough to prosecute inquiries, all he has ascertained is that she was resident in Boston in 1920, and later lived in Pomfret, Connecticut, where as recently as 1940 she was a member of a committee which published an anthology of verse by local residents under the title Box 73. She is referred to by contemporaries as Miss Murray.

Her Inferno was the first American version of a complete cantica of the Divine Comedy in terza rima to be printed; and although issued privately copies found their way into libraries and reviews appeared in literary periodicals. There are one or two library copies in Britain, although the British Museum does not possess one. When Miss Murray's book appeared in 1920, although the American blank verse and prose tradition was well established through the work of Longfellow and Norton and their followers, only selections had been published in terza rima, e.g. by Peabody, Pyne, Grandgent and Miss Hammond (all discussed elsewhere). By the date in question there were ten complete Comedies and five Infernos by British translators in terza rima. Of these two only had appeared during the preceding twenty-five years; in both countries prose, blank verse and experimental

- 621 -
versions had for a generation superseded efforts in the metre of the original. From 1920 onwards the emphasis was on terza rima again, especially in America.

This reaction in favour of a prosodic scheme which would reproduce faithfully that of the original was part of a world-wide trend towards the reassertion of the importance of the formal element in poetry. Although there were notable exceptions, the previous century had on the whole laid the stress on content rather than on form. We have seen how in Britain the Victorian translators emphasised the moral and intellectual value of the Comedy. With Torraca's first edition of the Comedy in 1905 it was evident that a new spirit was abroad; by the end of the first War it was in full swing - Croce, Pound, Eliot and others were bent on establishing Dante's supremacy as a poet first and foremost. It is noticeable that many of the new translations were little burdened by notes or explanatory matter; quite a few were entirely unannotated. This was only partly due to the fact that translators were tired of duplicating what had been done so often before, and was readily accessible to those interested; Eliot's pronouncement is typical of the new attitude.

I do not counsel anyone to postpone the study of Italian grammar until he has read Dante, but certainly there is an immense amount of knowledge which, until one has read some of his poetry with intense pleasure - that is, with as keen pleasure as one is capable of getting from any poetry - is positively undesirable. . . . It is a test (a positive test, I do not assert that it is always valid negatively), that genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood.

Miss Murray's preface begins with the frank admission of the impossibility of translating poetry, and goes on to enumerate, very fairly, the difficulties of turning Italian terza rima into corresponding English. She finds, however, that the alternatives, such as blank verse and prose,
are unsatisfactory; no matter how correct and scholarly the version may be, the beauty of form has been lost. She goes on:

It is just here that a plea may be made for the rhymed version. By its means one may hope to offset some of the inevitable inadequacies of translation, to gain some grace, some music, and it is possible that some exquisite lyrical passage may find an echo in the English rhyme which the blank verse fails to awaken and of which the more arid prose gives not even a suggestion. . . . The present translation has been attempted by way of experiment in this field, and if, in the eyes of some of those who know the standards for such a work, it should appear not wholly to have failed, the labor expended upon it will seem to have been well worth while.

Her translation, which uses masculine rhymes throughout, has its phrases and sentences for the most part coterminous with Dante's; occasionally there is overlapping at the end of a terzina which is not in the original. The choice of rhyming words strikes one as being rather ordinary. Miss Murray keeps as a rule to the commoner English sounds, and does not hesitate to repeat the same set of rhyming syllables at short intervals. As rhymes they are usually correct; she does not indulge in near-rhymes or assonances, although she sometimes rhymes identical words used in different senses.

In order to reproduce the meaning within the metrical framework, however, she is driven to the same desperate shifts as marred the work of her predecessors. Admittedly she is sparing in her use of archaisms but, as we have already noted, such restraint does not make the appearance of an occasional 'God wot!' at the end of a line any more palatable. Nor does she indulge in colloquialisms; but she uses a good many words and phrases which are too prosaic for their context, giving a flat, and sometimes a fatuous effect. Thus 'Because the plan which I at first thought good / I found myself now loth to entertain' (II.41-2) is merely bad prose; but 'And in that tour, for which thou giv'st him grace' (II.25) or 'The fourth day came and Gaddo did succumb' (XXXIII.67) are journalese. An emphatically wrong word gives one a jar now and then, e.g. 'and there was
Eleanor Vinton Murray (4)

corporate' for 'e fu sensibilmente' (II.15) or 'in that band astute' for 'fra cotanto senso' (IV.102). Still stranger is Pierre de la Vigne's 'In discourse light will I some things make plain' = 'Perch' io un poco a ragionar m'inveschi' (XIII.57). Similarly 'Ah! Constantine, what outrages did start' (XIX.115) is a bad beginning to a famous apostrophe.

That bugbear of translators, XXXIII.42, becomes 'To snatch and don a simple shift discreet'. XXIX.103-5 reads:

That in the upper world, your honored name
May never fade from memory of man
But be through many suns a living name

If this is meant to be sarcastic, it is going a little further than the text warrants. On the other hand there is a frequent use of pseudo-poetical language equally unwarranted by the Italian, and this consorts ill with its prosaic surroundings. So in I.58-60:

So had this restless beast my peace undone
Which coming toward me, pushed me back to seek
The dismal precincts of the silent sun.

The same sort of undesired ornament occurs in XX.2, 'to weave the tissues of the twentieth lay'; in XXVII.30, 'And the ridge whence Tiber's golden waves expand'; and at the very close of the poem (XXXIV.136-9):

He first, then I, till saw I in the gloom,
Through a round opening, as through prison bars,
Heaven's lovely harvest fields, and, from our tomb,
We issued forth again to see the stars.

A very obtrusive feature of Miss Murray's translation is the padding to which she frequently resorts in order to obtain a suitable rhyme, for this is often unsuitable and out of character. Thus I.9, 'dirò dell'altra cose ch' io v'ho scorte' becomes 'I will speak of other things there seen of yore', and the same addition is made in I.69, 'And both were Mantuans in the days of yore'. This phrase, which should be avoided like the plague, is unfortunately so tempting for rhyming purposes that Miss Murray keeps
repeating it at intervals throughout. Similar objectionable line endings are illustrated by XIX.72, 'I pursed / My wealth above and here myself, I swear'; XXI.24, 'Drew me to him from where I stood, unwise'; and we even get three of these trivial additions to the text in consecutive lines (XXVIII.68-71):

... Outside all crimson, as I can avow,
He said: 'Thou whom guilt dooms not, as I note,
Whom I first saw in Italy, I know,
Save too great likeness should a fraud promote ... ',

where the last line will serve as an example of the strange constructions to which Miss Murray is driven by her rhymes. The more elaborate additions made here and there are equally reprehensible. Thus V.106, 'Amor condusse noi ad una morte', is rendered 'Love led us in one death to endless night'; while XXXI.18 is unjustifiable in every way:

Orlando blew not with such rending force
When was the holy quest of Charlemagne
Once put to rout, o'erthrowing man and horse.

Sometimes the additions are merely absurd, e.g. in XVIII.86-7 we learn that Jason 'by valor and by wit / Obtained the Colchean's ram and was not slain'; and in XXII.102-3 Ciampolo says 'And I will bring, while still I tarry here, / For one that I am, seven more who have died'. An example of the price paid for one good line (XXV.90) is seen below in the two absurd rhymes for 'sleep' which have been dragged in:

On one he stabbed the part from which we take
Our primal nourishment, then, with a sweep,
Outstretched before him fell, a line to make.
The stabbed one mutely watched and, breathing deep,
Stood motionless and yawned, as will the man
Who is assailed by fever or by sleep.

The exigencies of rhyme demand not merely padding, but also the use of unsuitable words and phrases and those inversions with which we are only too familiar. Line 15 of the first canto, where 'che m'avea di paura il cor
compunto' becomes 'Which had transfixed my heart in fear's embrace' might well deter one from reading further; certainly the reader who perseveres will have many similar shocks. It is hard to know how anyone who has read the line 'Cerbero, fiera crudele et diversa' (VI.13) could turn it into 'Here Cerberus, noxious beast of fierce renown', but the quest of rhyme is an absorbing pursuit. We have already noted that in translating terza rima two terzine must always be considered together; the new rhyme in the central line of one must be selected with regard to the whole structure of the next. Again and again Miss Murray appears to have neglected this foresight; for instance in reading the following six lines (VII.61-6) we can only conclude that, having decided on 'care' for the end of line 62, she misdirected her ingenuity to finding at all costs two rhyming words for lines 64 and 66.

Canst see, my son, the brief and empty play
Of goods committed unto Fortune's care
On which account men are to strive a prey.
For all the gold that 'neath the moon lies bare,
Or ever did, could for these souls of'erspent
One single moment's respite not prepare.

This kind of thing is deplorably frequent, but examples need not be multiplied.

There are some other oddities. We have cacophonous lines like 'When was to make them cross the bridge their aim' (XVIII.30), clumsy and obscure phraseology like (XII.1-3):

The place we reached for climbing down the wall
Was rugged, and through more we there descried
Was such that every eye it would appal;
lines with a superfluity of syllables, e.g. 'I will tell thee why I came, what I heard as well' (II.50). Others provoke a smile, like 'And I with horror bound about my hair' (III.31).

In spite of the inaccuracy with which many lines are reproduced, Miss Murray's failures are mainly those of reproduction rather than of compre-
hension. Some of the mistranslations are probably slips. For instance she reverses the geography of XIV, 10-12:

Wreath-like, about the woful wood it lay
As did the wood about the dismal fosse;
Upön its edge then paused we to survey.

An extraordinary error for which the printers are to blame occurs at the end of canto VII. Although the Italian and English texts are printed facing each other and in exact alignment, three lines, 127-9, are omitted from the English; coming on a short page the difference in the depth of the print strikes the eye at once, and it is very strange that it was not detected; the rhymes show that the canto was originally complete.

Miss Murray's translation can only be regarded as one more failure to render Dante in English terza rima. Dr La Piana (D.A.P., pp. 170-1) says:

This version, in terza rima, is neither better nor worse than the many others from which the translator borrowed passages and phrases with only slight modifications of her own. Following Grandgent's text and interpretation, she strove to be accurate, but as a whole her translation lacks poetical inspiration and smoothness of rhythm.

A comparison of Miss Murray's work with that of her predecessors does not bear out the implied accusation of the first sentence. The resemblances noted are neither frequent nor striking enough to indicate that she was to any extent directly indebted to other versions. The Spectator (15th November 1920) praised her rather faintly, and thought her versions 'pleasant to read', but perhaps the reviewer did not read very much. Her return to terza rima may have been a consequence of the renewed interest in Dante's poetry, but her translation belongs essentially to the old school, and gives no hint of the improved standards soon to be achieved by the new generation of writers in terza rima.
La Divina Commedia. The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri. A line-for-line translation in the rime-form of the original, by Melville Best Anderson, 8 x 5½ in., pp. xiv, 449. 'By way of Introduction', pp. iii-x; Contents, pp. xi-xiii; English text, printed in terzine, unnumbered, with subject matter indicated in headings of cantos, running headlines of right-hand pages, and rubrics, pp. 1-449; there are a number of line reproductions of the armorial shields of Florentine families in the text.

This volume was issued simultaneously (a) in America with the imprint of the World Book Company, Yonkers-on-Hydon, N.Y., and (b) in Britain with the imprint of George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., London, Calcutta, Sydney. The book is undated, but the year of publication was 1921. A second (de luxe) edition in 4 volumes, containing additional essays, was published in 1929.

The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri. The Italian text with a translation in terza-rima verse by Melville B. Anderson. Oxford University Press. 3 volumes. 6 by 3½ in.


These volumes form Nos. 392-4 of the World's Classics series, in which they were first included in 1932. There have been several subsequent impressions, and they are still in print. This edition was revised by the author, who states that several hundred lines (possibly a tenth of the whole) have been recast. The quotations in this article and in Appendix I are taken from this edition.

Melville Best Anderson (1851-1933) was of Scottish descent on both sides through his father, the Rev. Edward C. Anderson, and his mother, Helen Best. He was born at Kalamazoo, Michigan, where his father, who was a specialist in oriental languages, occupied a chair in the College; later the family moved to Oregon where the elder Anderson became President of McMinnville
College. At the age of eighteen Melville made the long journey to Cornell University where, however, pecuniary considerations prevented him from completing his course, and he took a post as a teacher. In this occupation he proved immediately successful, and very soon he repaired the defects in his education, visiting Europe, and studying at Göttingen and at the Sorbonne. In 1877 he became professor of modern languages at Butler University, and thence he progressed through several other chairs until in 1891 his former colleague at Cornell, David Starr Jordan, brought him to Stanford University in California as professor of English, where he remained till his retirement in 1910. During these years he made a name for himself by literary work of various kinds: articles in the Chicago Dial, numerous translations from the French (Saint-Pierre, Hugo, Simon, Sorel, Remusat, etc.), and books both edited and original. His interest in Dante, dating from his early studies, was quickened by membership of a vigorous Dante circle at Stanford; by 1900 he had begun the translation that was to occupy the rest of his life. For many years after his retirement his home was in Italy, and he became thoroughly familiar with the geography and history of the Divine Comedy. One of his minor exploits demands special attention. In 1916, while resident near Florence, he was angry at the continued neutrality of the United States and impatient of the attitude of colleagues in America towards the European struggle with which he was so closely in touch. He composed a pamphlet which he caused to be printed at Florence with the title *The Great Refusal: A War Poem*, and to be sold on behalf of the French Wounded Emergency Fund. This little book is really a collection of poems, mostly in the *In Memoriam* stanza, directed in turn against all neutrals from Woodrow Wilson to Romain Rolland. As the title suggests, these are deeply influenced by the author's study of Dante, and the vigour of their
invective reminds us of the latter's more vitriolic passages. There are some
skilful strokes and some felicitous lines; one of the poems, in sonnet form,
is quoted below by way of example.

In Vision

Now sits Columbia upon the throne
Where Freedom placed her; at her bidding stand
Many who call her Mother; on either hand
A thousand leagues of ocean tempest-blowed,
Once quitted she her father's house alone,
Orphaned and disinherited and banned;
Then went a-questing through a liberal land,
Till, finding friends, she came into her own.
In vision, haply baseless, haply true,
I seem to see the bastard offspring scourged
By the grieved Mother to that Limbo of rue
Where multitudes, with shadowy banner whirled,
Fleet with the ghost of him, by Dante dirged,
Who made the Great Refusal in the world.

In the preceding essay we have taken stock of the position which Dante
translation had reached in Britain and America in the year 1920, and have
seen that a new era was beginning. To Anderson belongs the credit of having
inaugurated it in a worthy fashion. A few paragraphs from the Introduction
to his 1921 edition are quoted below; it seems a pity that, presumably through
lack of space, this does not appear in the World's Classics edition.

With respect to the choice of the English triple rime, I will frankly
admit that the late Professor Charles Eliot Norton very strongly,
although very kindly, advised me against it. Certainly there was little
to encourage one in the results attained by those who had previously
attempted to render the Poem in this form. To argue that because no
one had succeeded with terza rima in English, failure was necessarily
a foregone conclusion, seemed to me a plain begging of the question.
There was encouragement in the fact that Rossetti had succeeded beauti-
fully in his translations of the minor poems in the original rime-forms,
and that he, as well as Byron, had nobly rendered in triple rime the
story of Francesca. In fact, the arguments against the attempt to
translate Dante in the corresponding English meter were much on a plane
with those raised against the attempts at the conquest of the Poles
and of the Air. Twenty-one years ago, when I began this delightful
labour, those conquests were still to make.

Twenty-one years is doubtless a long period to look forward to.
Looking back, however, the time seems only too short, and I do not regret
one hour of it. Should a friendly critic perchance admonish me that I ought to have tarried longer in Jericho, I should be inclined to agree with him. Parsons, a true poet, is said to have given a very much longer time to his brilliant experiment, leaving it after all only half done. Of the shortcomings of the present version I am, of course, more painfully aware than any one else can be. But I do think that in certain passages I have justified the choice of the triple rime as the form in which the translator can come nearest to the spirit and power of the great original. There were moments when I felt near the Master;—when he seemed to take the pen out of my hand and show me how the lines should read in English. Moments of happy, stimulating illusion, such as come to the translator as the supreme reward of fidelity!

To judge by much recent comment, Dante seems to be popularly known as the poet of the Inferno. In fact, persons who ought to know better have fallen into the loose habit of referring to the Divine Comedy as Dante's Inferno. The Inferno has perhaps a hundred readers, where the Purgatorio has a score and the Paradiso one or two. Yet the two latter Cantiche contain passages transcending in beauty and in moral significance anything in the Inferno. And to speak of my translation, inasmuch as I naturally gained in mastery of my difficult instrument as I proceeded, I believe my rendering of the Paradiso to be both technically and poetically superior to my rendering of the Inferno. I should be sorry, therefore, if any disappointed reader should lay down my version without looking at some of the later cantos.

The Introduction concludes with commendation of the work of Dean Church, Lowell, Longfellow, Grandgent, Tozer, Gardner and Toynbee, with special praise for Norton's prose version and a touching personal tribute to that much-loved Dantist, for, says Anderson,

although believing me to be just another 'Childe Roland' at the Dark Tower, he gave me unstinted assistance, as his notes on the manuscript of some of my earlier cantos bear witness.

It can be seen, therefore, that the new translator from the West, besides being the founder of a new tradition, was also a glad sharer in the old one, and forms a link between the Dante cult of New England and that of the whole English-speaking world of to-day.

In 1932 Anderson's translation was published in London by the Oxford University Press as three volumes in the convenient World's Classics series, and for this purpose it was considerably revised. The first volume contains a tribute to Paget Toynbee, who died in that year before the new edition was.
published. It was to Toynbee's recommendation, said Anderson, that the inclusion of his version in the World's Classics was due, and he had also given much help in the preparation of the books and of the Italian text now included, which was taken from the Oxford Dante, edited by Moore and Toynbee.

The superiority of Anderson's translation to any previous attempt in terza rima was quickly recognised. On both sides of the Atlantic competent judges hailed it as not merely better, but a great deal better, than those of his predecessors. Perhaps the best compliment paid him, and one which he must have appreciated, was that of the *Times Literary Supplement* (20th April 1922) when, commenting on Norton's remarks quoted from Anderson's preface above, the reviewer said: 'Norton would have been the first to congratulate him on the success of the attempt.' The article described the new version as

a modern translation of Dante which we are not afraid of recommending to the cultivated English reader. . . . Anderson has a style of his own . . . there is something about it that actually suggests the original.

Another good review was that by Edmund G. Gardner in the *Modern Language Review* (Vol. 18, 1923, p. 356). He calls the translation 'accurate, readable and not monotonous', remarking that

Anderson sacrifices precise meaning or pads less often than we should have feared. . . . It needs only a little revision to make it perhaps the best of its kind that we have in English.

Charles Hall Graddgent, who had strangely expressed an earlier admiration for Plumptre's translation, writing in *Italica* (Vol. 3, 1926, p. 22) said:

Anderson, the Californian, deserves to supersede him (Plumptre), excelling as he does in ease, smoothness and happy phrasing. And, in spite of the great stress of rhymes, one rarely catches him taking greater liberties than do the recent users of blank verse.

The book was reviewed in the *Giornale dantesco* (Vol. 26, 1923, pp. 176-82) by Eugenio Masucci, who was also appreciative, although critical of certain weaknesses, mentioning in particular the replacement of affirmative
by negative statements in strong lines, e.g. 'Then hunger did what sorrow could not do' (Inf. XXXIII. 75). Many years later Professor Lacy Lockert, in the preface to his own version of the Inferno (1931), wrote:

By far the best terza rima version of the Divine Comedy which has yet appeared is that of Melville Best Anderson. Indeed, I doubt whether any considerable improvement upon his (save in respect to a certain coldness of temper which it possesses in sharp contrast to the burning intensity of the original) would be humanly practicable with no greater licence of rhyme than he allows himself.

Commenting on this passage, again after many years, Dr La Piana writes (Dante's American Pilgrimage, p. 172, 1948):

That the burning intensity of the original sometimes falls by several degrees in Anderson's as well as in all good translations is perhaps inevitable. The tyranny of the triple rhyme in English may be partly responsible for the loss of intensity. Whatever its shortcomings, however, the reader of Anderson's version will find that it gives a larger measure of that 'genuine satisfaction' which Grandgent required of a good translation than most of the others. It contains more passages wherein absolute fidelity to the original and exquisite English poetical form go hand in hand with no apparent effort and no distortions.

When in 1935 the Times Literary Supplement (25th May, pp. 353-4) had occasion to deal with the new renderings of Dante by Binyon and Bickersteth and the essays of J. J. Chapman and T. S. Eliot in a front page article, Anderson's translation had recently appeared in the World's Classics edition, and once again it received honourable mention among its later rivals.

Examining Anderson's translation to-day, with so many other later rivals for comparison, it can still be given a high rank. Apart from its intrinsic merit, which will be considered presently, its historical importance in the annals of Dante translation is very great. Until it appeared, critics had every justification for asserting, as they exposed ruthlessly the shortcomings of each new version, that English terza rima was an impossibility and that its practitioners were wasting their time.
Anderson achieved a measure of success which, set against the failures of his predecessors, was veritably brilliant; and this of itself certainly stimulated others to attempt a still further improvement.

We have already seen that Anderson has no claim to be a poet in his own right, nor does his translation suggest that he might have been one had he tried. Occasionally his failures are distressing, and it would not be difficult to make a collection of a hundred or two of damning lines. Indeed there is some evidence that his ear was defective, and that he lacked insight into the methods whereby words and phrases are combined into distinctively poetical form. But the important point is that most previous translations would provide a thousand bad lines to Anderson's hundred. The secret of his comparative success seems undoubtedly to be that, in addition to a genuine knowledge, appreciation and love of Dante, he had one at least of the attributes of genius, 'an infinite capacity for taking pains'. We have seen in earlier articles, and shall see again in later ones, translators boasting of the speed with which they carried out their work, but Anderson's boast was the very opposite. The question as to whether twenty-one years devoted to the translation of the Divine Comedy is leisure well or ill spent is touched on elsewhere; what matters for the moment is Anderson's realisation that if the task was to be performed at all time must not be grudged. The methods of the past had resulted in mere monstrosities, tissues of padding and distortion, forced rhymes and forced meanings. Even to begin to do justice to Dante, it was essential that every terzina should be pondered, both in itself and in its relation to what preceded and followed; the facile solution, the base substitute must be ruthlessly rejected.

Naturally one tends to select Haselfoot as a standard of comparison.
He spent fifteen years on his version in its first form and a further ten on its revision for the second edition; we have seen that his attempt was an improvement on previous ones, mainly because he took more trouble. By any method of measurement that can be devised, Anderson is very much better than Haselfoot. The test passages and the random sample (the use of which is explained in the Introduction) show this clearly, and the impression gained from general reading in both confirms it. In all the test passages Anderson is one or two classes better than Haselfoot, while in the random sample Haselfoot scores higher than Anderson in only six of the hundred terzine examined. Put another way, the objective tests indicate that Anderson surpasses Haselfoot by a greater margin than the latter does Plumptre, and also that Anderson is rather better than Sibbald, whose advantage over Haselfoot in the Inferno has already been demonstrated. We must conclude that Anderson's industry was more concentrated than Haselfoot's, and also that his sense of fitness was more reliable.

The coldness complained of by Lockert, or what has been termed hardness by other critics, is probably in the main due to the labour bestowed on fitting Dante's exact meaning to the metrical scheme by industry and patience rather than by inspiration. Anderson is much more conscientious in this respect than many translators, but this very fact militates against spontaneity. Here, for instance, is his version of Dante's speech to Brunetto Latini (Inf. XV.79-87):

'If all my prayer had found accomplishment,' replied I to him, 'not yet would you be from human nature placed in banishment:
For I have held in loving memory your kind paternal image, and now yearn for you, who in the world instructed me
From hour to hour how man becomes eterne:
and while I am alive, it is but right men in my words my gratitude discern.'
Here the meaning has been closely and accurately reproduced, and at the same time awkwardness has been avoided: Haselfoot's rendering of this passage is mere doggerel by comparison. But for all that it is no more than a piece of oratory, a set speech, whereas Dante's words in the original are a passionate outburst of gratitude and affection, full of the 'burning intensity' already mentioned. When we are concerned with what is really a set speech, Anderson's method is more successful, as when Dante addresses Conrad Malaspina (Purg. VIII, 121-32):

Oh, cried I, 'through your land I never wended,

but where in Europe dwells one so forlorn

as never to have heard their fame commended?

Renown and honour that your house adorn

proclaim the land, proclaim her every lord,

so that he knows who never reached that bourn.

And by my pilgrim hope I give my word

your honoured kindred do not strip away

the virtue of the purse and of the sword.

Chartered by custom and by nature, they,

though the bad leader warp the world aside,

alone go straight, and scorn the evil way.'

With the vivid and colloquial Anderson is equally at home, e.g. the end of Inf. XXIX.

Then to the Poet I: 'What people were ever so vain as are the Siensese?

Certainly not the French, by very far!' The other leper, hearing words like these,

spoke up: 'Except me Stricca, resolute for temperance in spending, if you please;

And Niccolò, the first to institute the costly application of the clove within the garden where such seed takes root;

Except the club where Caccia d'Ascian strove to squander his great wood and vinery, and Abbagliato his vast wit to prove.

But that thou know who thus doth second thee against the Siensese, now sharpen so thine eye that well my face responds, and see!

I am the shadow of Capocchio who did by alchemy false metals shape;

and, if I well desory thee, thou shouldst know the curious skill that made me Nature's ape.'
As might be expected Anderson deals skilfully with invective; his renderings of the well-known diatribes are energetic and effective. The following example is interesting (Par. XXIX.109-26):

Christ did not say to his first congregation:
'Preach to the world with idle utterance',
but laid for their behoof the true foundation;
And that had from their lips such resonance,
that, to enkindle faith, their battle quest,
the Gospel formed their buckler and their lance.
Now preachers sally forth to break a jest,
buffoons who, as they may provoke a grin,
puff out their cowls and reckon not of the rest;
But could the people see what bird of sin
is nestling in the hood-tail, they would guess
what kind of pardon they are trusting in;
Whence in the world so waxeth foolishness
that, seeking not approof of any sign,
men jump at promise of indulgences.
Hereby St. Anthony makes fat his swine,
and others also, far more swine than they,
paying their scot with counterfeited coin.

Observe how Anderson's ingenuity has even gone beyond the original by linking up the buckler and lance of the Gospel with the absurdity of those who 'sally forth to break a jest'. He is sparing in his use of colloquialisms, but sometimes gets in an effective one, e.g. Inf. VII.90 where 'sí spesso vien chi vicenda consegue' is rendered 'with frequent turns of luck at fast and loose'. He is less happy with 'upon so far a cruise' in Purg. II.33 (quoted in Appendix I) or the opening of Par. XXX, 'When, eastward ho! six thousand miles perchance / noon blazes'. Sometimes a bold transposition gives Dante's meaning a spice of native wit, e.g. in Par. V.41-3 where 'chê non fa scienza, / senza lo ritenere, avere inteso' becomes 'it is the very vice / of wit to lose what has been understood'. Anderson's version of Par. VIII.16-18 is, however, rather too clever:

And as in flame we see the sparkles waver,
or as within a voice a voice discern,
one holding note, one shaking out a quaver.
Anderson is successful with many of Dante's strong effects. His version of Inf. IV.9, 'which gathers roar of wailing infinite' = 'che tuono accoglie d'infiniti guai' has been admired by several critics. In Inf. V.46-51 there is good use of onomatopoeia:

And as the pilgrim cranes from zone to zone
draw out their aery file and chant the dirge,
so saw I, and I heard them making moan,
Shadows who on that storm-blast whirl and surge:
whence I: 'Who, Master, are those tempest-flung,
round whom the black air whistles like a scourge?'

Or, to take a passage from near the end of the poem (Par. XXIII.97-102):

Whatever melody is sweet hereunder
most wooingly to wake the heart's desire,
would seem a cloud-bank rended by the thunder
Compared to the resounding of that lyre
engarlanding the Sapphire beauteous
whose holy azure tints the Heaven of Fire.

In quite another vein, Anderson is graphic in Inf. XXI.67-9:

With such a tempest and as furiously
as when dogs rush upon a beggar man,
who, where he halts, cuts very short his plea,

and in Inf. XXIV.115-7:

Who, when he rises, looks around, with eyes
wholly bewildered by the mighty throes
which he has undergone, and looking sighs.

He has a good attempt at the difficult terzina in Purg. XI.109-11:

With him who little road doth occupy
before me, rang all Tuscany of yore,
though few for him now in Siena sigh . . .

Another difficult terzina well handled is Purg. XXVII.70-2:

And ere within one dim circumference
the wide horizon mingled sea and shore,
and Night held sway with all her influence . . .

More than once he turns a direct reminiscence to good account, e.g.

Purg. XXIX.52-7:
Aloft was flaming now the fair array,
far brighter than the Moon who lamps the skies
at midnight in her monthly course midway.

Thereon I turned about with wild surmise
 to the good Virgil, who thereto replied
with like amazement in his startled eyes.

A similar feature adds to the tenderness of the closing lines of Par. VI:

Four daughters, Queens, had Raymond Berenger,
and he who crowned them was no citizen
but Romeo, a lowly pilgrim.
By crooked counsel moved, the Master then
calls to account the servant just, who clears
his credit - seven and five for every ten.
Then he departed poor and sticken in years;
but if the world could know the heart he bore
begging his bread and eating it with tears,
Much as it praises, it would praise him more.

There are good passages in the Cacciaguida cantos, e.g. Par. XV.118-28:

0 happy women! each yet in advance
sure of her burial, and none beguiled
of comfort in her bed because of France.
One, keeping watch above her cradled child,
would soothe it with the babbling idiom
wherein the mothers and the mothers smiled;
And one, the thread from distaff drawing home,
gathered her brood and narrated fables now
came Trojans to Fiesolë and Rome.

There is a neat rendering of Par. XXVIII.4-9:

As one whose eye has in a mirror caught
the image of a torch behind him, long
before he has it or in sight or thought,
And turns to verify if right or wrong
the mirror speak, and finds it to agree
with truth, as chimes the metre with the song . . .

A few lines further on (25-31) the sequence of the swiftly revolving
circles has the needful vigour:

So distant round the Point a circle whirled
of fire so swift its motion had outpaced
that which goes quickest around the world;
Round this another circle swept in haste,
round that a third, a fourth the third enwound,
the fourth a fifth, and that a sixth embraced . . .

Another pleasantly turned terzina is Par. XXXI.45-5:
And as the wayworn pilgrim grows serene
gazing around the temple of his vow,
and muses how he shall describe the scene . . .

Anderson's version of the final vision in the last canto is certainly
'several degrees below the burning intensity of the original', but con-
tains some good lines, e.g. 73-5:

For by some glimpses caught by memory,
and by some echo in these rhymes, perchance
better shall be conceived thy victory.

There are many such good extracts that might be made from Anderson's
version, but space forbids more than the quotation of one or two further
eamples of sustained excellence. The storm of Inf. IX.64-72 is good:

And now there came the troubled waters o'er
a crashing clangour of a fearful kind,
whereat were trembling yon and hither shore:
Not otherwise it was than when the wind,
by dint of adverse heats grown wild and high,
tosses the forest boughs, and unconfined
Shatters, and dashes down, and sweeps them by:
superbly whirls along in dust and gloom,
making the wild beasts and the shepherds fly.

Anderson's version of Purg. XV.46-75 is specially interesting, since he
accompanies it with one of his characteristic notes, which are not the
least attractive feature of his volumes:

Lines 46-75. This seems to me one of the most sweetly consoling
passages in the Poem, foretelling a region where the earthly pil-
grim may find wealth of a nature to be increased, rather than
diminished by sharing. In Dante's time the chief end of man
appeared to be to prepare to emigrate from this world where we
are slaves of avarice and where Envy works the bellows for our
sighs. But as the Heavens, which then seemed so near, recede
before our advance like the desert mirage, we begin to feel the
need of realising on this side of the dark waters values incom-
mensurable, subject to no shrinkage like our peau de chagrin, and
capable of being bequeathed to coming generations exempt from any
devastating inheritance-tax.

His rendering of lines 64-75 runs:

And he: 'Because thou centrest thy mind
only on earthly things, thy inward sight
is, in the plenitude of brightness, blind.
That inexpressible and infinite
boon up above there, so to love outflows,
as to a lucid body runs the light.

Much as it finds of ardour, it bestows;
so that, however spreads the flame of love,
above it the Eternal Bounty grows.

And the more people set their hearts above,
the more love well there, and more love is wrought,
and mirrors each to each the bliss thereof.

From the early cantos of the Paradiso II.1-15 is worth quoting:

O ye who in your little bark till now,
eager for listening, have made your way
behind my vessel with the singing prow,

Turn to your native shore while yet ye may:
do not put out to sea, lest haply there
by losing me, ye should remain astray.

None ever coursed the water where I fare:
Minerva breathes, Apollo pilots me,
and all nine Muses point me to the Bear.

Ye other few, with neck stretched yearningly
for bread of angels whereon ye are fain
to live while here, nor ever sated be,
Your ship may well put out upon the main,
following close upon my wake before
the salt-sea water returns smooth again.

One of the best passages in the later cantos of Paradiso is XXX.16-33:

Could what is said of her as far as this
all in one single act of praise conclude,
it would but serve the present turn amiss.

The beauty that I saw doth so elude
our measure, that its Maker, I surely deem,
alone can taste its full beatitude.

I yield me vanquished at this pass supreme;
comic or tragic poet overborne
was never thus by crisis of his theme.
For, as to dazzled sight the sun of morn,
so doth her sweet remembered smile erase
my memory, of its very self forlorn.

From the first day when I beheld her face
in this life, even until the present viewing,
my song yet never faltered on her trace;
But now I must give over from pursuing
her beauty in these cadences of mine,
like every artist tasked beyond his doing.

It may be added that Anderson usually does his best to preserve
Dante's brief vivid metaphors, e.g. 'Now let my judgment of her be thy
food' (= 'or vo' che tu mia sentenza ne imbocche', Inf. VII.72); 'For
sight of him I have not hungry gone' ( = 'già di già veder costui non son digiuno', Inf. XVIII.42; 'letting them scratch who have an itching hide' ( = 'e lascia pur grattar dov' è la rogna', Par. XVII.129).

Anderson has, it must be admitted, his failures. Here and there the forced rhyme jars, or the unwanted piece of padding offends, e.g. (Inf. XXIV.69-72):

he held and seemingly
Holds God in scorn, and gives contempt to view:
but, as I said to him, his spiteful mood
is for his breast adornment very due.

So also in Purg. IX.75-8:

We reached a point, as we were drawing nigh,
whence what first seemed a wall that had incurred
a fissure, now threw open to the eye
A door, and steps beneath, first, second, third,
for access to it, all diverse of hue,
and a Gatekeeper who yet spoke no word.

There are some very prosaic lines, e.g. describing the Siren (Purg. XIX.10-15) we have:

I gazed at her: as from the sun streams heat
into the limbs made chilly by the night,
even so my gazing served to liberate
Her tongue, and erelong wholly set her right,
and with the pallor of her features blent
the flushes that to love are requisite.

There is occasional cacophony: why did Anderson leave in Par. XXXIII such a line as 87: 'what is throughout the universe dispersed'? The rhymes themselves are often approximate: he makes much use of such combinations as 'fierce - appears', 'hands - dance', 'not - out - shut'. He also uses double rhymes very freely, and when a cluster of these occurs it has a monotonous effect (see Par. XXXIII.1-6 in Appendix I). There are worse patches in several places, e.g. Par. III.101 ff has five consecutive sets. We dispose elsewhere of the argument that such rhymes form a more accurate
reproduction of Dante's measure than our normal single ones. Anderson also overworks some words: we get very tired of 'benedight' ('maledight' occurs too but less frequently), of 'yon' (adverb) and of 'rue' (verb or noun), all of which he finds useful rhyme words. He has some mild archaisms which do not suit his general style, e.g. 'distent', 'idleasse', 'tëen', 'drowsihood', etc.

There are some disappointments, e.g. the opening of the Ugolino episode, Inf. XXXIII.1-3:

That sinner lifted from the foul repast
his mouth up, wiping it upon the hair
behind the head whereon I looked aghast,

and a similar piece of padding, 'let me tell his sin', disfigures line 15.

Anderson remarks in a note to Purg. V.130-6 that 'perfect lines, such as these in the liquid Italian, are of course untranslatable', but surely he could have done a little better than he has by La Pia:

'Ah, when thou turnest to an earthly goal,
and shalt have rested from thy weary way,' -
the second ceasing, followed a third soul, -
Remember me, who am Pia, when thou pray;
Siena made me, by Maremma undone:
he knows who ringed me, ringless till that day,
Espousing me with gem and benison.'

Piccarda does not fare much better; indeed Par. III is one of Anderson's least rewarding cantos, as the extract in Appendix I will show. She refers in line 26 to 'this exhibition of thy childish mind'; in lines 55-7 she says:

And this low-seeming lot which we inherit
is given us because we did our vow
make in some manner void, or did defer it
(providing rhymes to 'Holy Spirit' in line 53). The tempestuous vigour of her conclusion is lost in 118-20:

This is the radiance of Constance great,
who to the Second Blast of Swabia
bore the Third Puissance, and ultimate,
while her disappearance in lines 121-3 is equally inept:

So spake she, and in chant began to say
Ave Maria, and chanting from me stole
as through deep water sinks a weight away.

Anderson makes about as bad a job of Par. XIV.28-33 as any of his fore-
Runners:

That ever-living One and Two and Three,
reigning in Three Two One beyond all date,
unbounded and all-bounding Trinity,
Did each among those spirits celebrate
three times, with such melodious utterance
as were fit meed for merit passing great.

He misses the point and the effect in Par. XX.73-5:

Like to the lark that in the morning beam
upsoars, first singing and thereafter still,
rapt with the sweetness of her song supreme.

Perhaps as bad as anything in the whole poem is the rendering of Par.

XXVIII.67-9 ('Maggior bontà vuol far maggior salute', etc.):

Superior good wills weal superior,
and if like perfect organs it dispose,
holds larger body weal in larger store.

Anderson is seldom actually fatuous, but there are one or two notable
infelicities. A reader wrote in the margin opposite his version of Purg.
II.45, 'a hundred and more spirits sat thereon' the question 'Where? on
his face?', the significance of which will be seen by looking at the pas-
sage in Appendix I. Worst of all, however, is the original version of
Par. XI.82-4:

0 wealth untold, good fruitful of increase!
Giles bares his feet, Sylvester his behind
the Bridegroom, such the Bride's peculiar grace.

A saving comma was inserted between 'his' and 'behind' in the revised
edition.

Anderson's accuracy is almost beyond reproach. He had studied the
poem thoroughly, and his notes show that he was familiar with the various
readings and interpretations. No mistranslation of any consequence has been observed in the whole poem.

Although they lie beyond the scope of our discussion, a word must be spared for Anderson's notes which, as has been already indicated, give an added pleasure to his version, although they may at times be a trifle irrelevant. We have quoted one of his more serious comments; his sense of humour is seldom long absent, and he has frequent whimsical touches. On the mention of Bonturo in Inf. XXI.41 he observes: 'as who should say - all grafters except Boss Tweed'. His note on Friar Catalano's remarks about the Devil remind us of Sibbald's; Anderson says: 'Friar Catalano was born of Guelph family at Bologna and no doubt educated at the university there. He is making game of Virgil.' Anderson often pokes fun himself; on Purg. XXII. 142-4 he writes:

Mary's words, 'They have no wine', cited in canto XIII as an example of affectionate thought for others, are here referred to as an example of temperance. Times change! An American Sanhedrin might to-day pronounce such incitements contrary to the Constitution.

Everywhere there is evidence of wide reading and of deep literary culture. The running headlines, indicating the main subject of each page, are in themselves of interest, although this is a feature that is normally dangerous and liable to lead to fatuity. Some of Anderson's are ordinary enough, but he takes many opportunities of enlivening them. The first page of Inf. XXIV is 'A stiff climb', while Inf. XXIX ends with 'Vanity Fair in Siena'. Purg. IV contains 'A Lesson in Geography'; Hugh Capet's speech in Purg. XX is 'A Sweeping Historical Survey'; the third page of Purg. XXII is 'Good Company in Limbo'. In Paradiso he is necessarily more restrained: the explanation of the Point and the circles in canto XXVIII is headed 'Relativity', and the translator's ingenuity fitly culminates in his using for the first page of canto XXX the line 'Da questo passo vinto mi concedo'.

Henry John Hooper (1844-1923) remains unidentified. Toynbee records the year of his birth (Dante Studies, 1921, p. 278), and the fact, also given in Hooper's preface, that he had completed a translation of the Purgatorio in manuscript by 1916, but that it was 'not yet published'. Hooper was personally acquainted with Toynbee, for he makes acknowledgment in his preface of help and advice received and permission to quote in his notes matter from Toynbee's Dante Dictionary; he also acknowledges help from Thomas Okey, so he evidently moved in scholarly circles. The manuscript of Purgatorio seems to be lost; it was not among those preserved by Toynbee. The date of Hooper's death is supplied by his publishers.

Unfortunately they had lost touch with him for some time, and did not learn of it till several years afterwards. They have given me what information they could, suggesting that a clue might be found in the Haywards Heath district of Sussex, but in spite of help from several residents there, nothing has been discovered. The translation of Inferno had a poor reception, so that Hooper was probably discouraged from proceeding with a further volume.

Hooper's claims for the metre he employed are sweeping ones, as can be seen from the following extract from his preface.

The writer's excuse for adding yet another to the already long list of English translations of the Divine Comedy, or parts of it, is that never before, as far as he can ascertain, has a rendering been attempted in the same metrical form; and that, whatever other merits
his version of the Inferno here presented may be found to possess, it will have at least the freshness of novelty to recommend it. His aim has been to make the great poem live again with intelligent dramatic interest for the English reader, and after a series of experiments extending over many years, he has found his purpose best served by adopting a form of verse, which, while closely resembling in syllabic content the terza rima measure of the original, preserves its peculiar rhythmic cadence at the expense of rhyme, gaining thereby - for purposes of translation - even more than it loses, in the facility it offers for closeness of rendering, combined with naturalness and force of expression. How far the writer has succeeded remains to be seen. And, lest this attempt of his should offend conventional taste in matters poetic, it were well to remember that what Lessing says of the tragic or epic poet applies equally to his translator: 'The unpardonable fault is to leave us cold; if he interests us, he may do what he likes with the little mechanical rules'. To this simple test the writer is willing to submit his present experiment.

Hooper's acknowledgments to the two authorities already mentioned may also be quoted.

To Dr Toynbee the writer would here gratefully acknowledge his indebtedness for permission to quote . . . in the notes accompanying the present work, and also for much valuable advice kindly given from time to time, chiefly in connection with the writer's work upon the Purgatorio (the first of the three canticas to be completed) and tending to the improvement of what Dr Toynbee has been pleased to characterise as a successful experiment, and well worthy of publication. He is also indebted to Professor T. Okey, of Cambridge University, not alone for appreciation freely extended, and valued advice given when sought, but for his kindly undertaking to look through the present work, preparatory to its completion, for the press, to whose wise and careful revision of the same is due the fact that it sees the light with fewer blemishes and inaccuracies than might have been the case, lacking so useful a service.

Acknowledgment is also made of the help afforded by Carlyle's Inferno and Longfellow's Comedy.

Hooper's metre is described by Toynbee as 'amphiambics'; it is what we would have called in our schooldays 'amphibrachic tetrameter'. He maintains his somewhat monotonous scansion with great regularity, and with hardly any variation of the position of the four accents or of the number of unaccented syllables. By way of example we quote the inscription on the gate of Hell (III.1–9).
Through me is the way to the Dolorous City;
Through me is the way to the Pain aye enduring;
Through me to the dreary abode of Lost People;
First moved was my Maker exalted, by Justice;
By Power Divine was my Fabric created;
High Wisdom and Primeval Love, my Foundation.
Before me, created things were not - but only
Eternal Realities; yea, and Eternal
I last; hence abandon all Hope, who here enter.

Apart from the sentences already quoted, Hooper gives no explanation as to why he thought that this rollicking metre was suitable for representing Dante. Its monotonous jog-trot becomes intolerable after a few lines, let alone cantos, and provides one of the most unreadable renderings of the Inferno ever perpetrated. The need for alternating two unaccented and one accented syllable and the feminine ending, restrict vocabulary considerably, and involve the frequent introduction of phrases like the 'Eternal Realities' above. We have already seen in dealing with Lee-Hamilton and Griffiths how cramping the unvaried succession of feminine endings is, and how it weakens the word-choice in a language like English; this difficulty is increased several times over in Hooper's metre. He has to snatch at any form of words that will satisfy the scansion, which produces dreadfully prosaic lines like XXIV.46-8:

'Now rid thee of Sloth,' said my Master, 'for surely
On down, or 'neath quilt, to be sitting or lying,
Is no way conducive to Fame or Distinction.'

Inevitably the accent cannot always be kept in the right place, but when it falls wrongly the result, instead of giving variety, is merely clumsy, e.g. XXXI.16-18:

When, after the dolourous route (sic) that he suffered,
Charlemagne, in his holy emprise had been worsted,
Not even so terribly Roland's horn sounded.

There is little appearance of any effort to use words poetically; many lines are simply prose arranged so as to scan mechanically, e.g. (VI.1-3):
On gaining the use of my senses, which into Abeyance had fallen, before the two kinsfolk's Great sorrow, that wholly confused me with sadness . . .

This sometimes gives a most bizarre effect in serious passages. Dante asks Francesca (V.118-20):

But say, at the time when between you were passing
Sweet sighs, by what sign, and in what special way, did
Love give you to know of your half-confessed wishes?

In the course of her reply (lines 127-38) she tells him:

One day we of Lancelot read for our pleasure,
How Love's tender passion enthralled him, no others
Were by, and we read without fear or suspicion;
Again and again in the course of our reading,
Our eyes in mute sympathy met, and our faces
Changed colour; but one crucial moment o'ercame us;
'Twas when we had read how the sweet smiling lips of
The lady, were kissed by so ardent a lover -
That he (who shall never from me be divided)
Kissed mine - all a tremble; the story, as also
The one who indited it, was Galeotto,
That day - sooth to say - we therein read no farther.

Similarly in the Ugolino passage we have (XXXIII.34-9):

When but a short course had been run, quite exhausted
Seemed Sire and Sons, who methought were by savage
Teeth tore in the flanks, and most cruelly mangled.
When I - ere day dawned - had awakened, my children
(Who shared my confinement, and sobbed in their slumbers)
Were crying for bread in a pitiful manner.

Even when Hooper is obviously writing for effect he makes little of it,
e.g. (IX.64-72):

And now there came over the dark disturbed waters,
A loud crashing sound, both prolonged and alarming,
Which made either shore of the lakelet to tremble.
'Twas like to the sound of a hurricane, driven
By force of heats adverse contending for mastery,
Which smiting the forest exposed to its fury,
Doth rend, and demolish, and scatter the branches;
Dust laden in front it moves proudly defiant,
And puts to swift flight all the beasts and the herdsmen.

Although Hooper's translation is printed in terzine, quite often
one of Dante's triplets is represented by a couplet only. Three such
couplets occur in the Ulysses passage, reproduced in Appendix I, and the method of printing them is shown there. This of course upsets the line numbering and causes some confusion; we have retained the line numbers of the original in this extract. It will also be observed that Hooper is generous with capital letters, whose significance it is not always easy to see, and he is also somewhat eccentric in his punctuation.

No one, so far as can be ascertained, ever said anything in favour of this translation, which can only be regarded as a curiosity. What Toynbee and Okey thought of it is not recorded; thanks probably partly at least to them it seems to be free from mistranslations, although there are numerous inexactitudes. The *Times Literary Supplement* (5th January 1922) dismissed it briefly as 'an odd setting of the Inferno to a merry measure'. The latter description is apt, and the most successful passage noticed is the opening of canto XXII where Dante is burlesquing. We may conclude by quoting the first five terzine.

I, horseman have seen ere now, shifting their quarters;  
The charge just commencing; or holding their muster;  
At times making good their escape by retreating,  
Seen I - O men of Arezzo - your country  
O'er run by light footmen; the foraging inroad;  
The tournament's shock; and the jousts in contention;  
With sound, now of bells, now a flourish of trumpets;  
With beating of drums, and loud Castle alarums;  
Or other expedients, native and foreign;  
But ne'er to so strange a wind-instrument, saw I  
Foot soldiers or cavalry move into action;  
Nor vessel, by star, or land beacon, so guided.  
We, with the ten Demons escorting, marched onward.  
Ah, hideous crew! but as saith the old adage,  
"With Saints in the Church, and with Sots in the Tavern."
DAVID JAMES MACKENZIE


David James MacKenzie (1855-1925) was born near Elgin, educated at Aberdeen and Edinburgh Universities, and admitted to the Faculty of Advocates in 1879. He held various offices as Sheriff-Substitute: Caithness, Orkney and Zetland (1885); Wick (1891); Kilmarnock (1902); Lanarkshire (1914); he retired from the latter post in 1920, and died at Elgin five years later. He had a lifelong interest in literature and although his time was mainly occupied with legal matters he left some memorials of his recreational activities. Of these the earliest is a play, The Bachelor of Florence, which he wrote for performance by the Edinburgh University Union in 1885; it had a successful presentation, and some of the actors were students who later became well known in other ways. The piece is a comedy in racy prose, in the Elizabethan or Jacobean manner; it was printed in pamphlet form and a copy is preserved in the Library of Edinburgh University. While at Wick, MacKenzie gave a number of literary lectures to local cultural organisations (a form of entertainment once popular but regrettably infrequent in our day), and these were printed at Wick in 1900 under the title By-ways among Books. After MacKenzie went to Lanarkshire he made new literary contacts; among these was Mr Adam L. Gowans, well known for the outstanding quality of the books which his firm, Gowans and Gray (unhappily no longer in existence), published at almost philanthropic prices. Mr Gowans was impressed with
the quality of MacKenzie's occasional verse, and published a selection, entitled Poems, in 1920. Mr Gowans also liked MacKenzie's Inferno, which he read in manuscript about the same time; the other two cantiche were mostly written in the years following MacKenzie's retirement. Dr Willcock, who superintended the posthumous publication of the Comedy in 1927, says in his preface that the translation was 'left in a form ready for publication' and that 'it now appears exactly as it left his (the translator's) hands'. He also confirms MacKenzie's intentions, as previously expressed to Mr Gowans:

He was desirous to give an English reader unacquainted with Italian a vivid impression of the qualities and beauties of the great poem, and so chose a metre and a scheme of rhymes closely corresponding to those of the original.

In the early 1920s Mr Gowans thought, from the portions of the work he had read, that it admirably fulfilled this intention, and that it was as good as or better than any previous English effort in terza rima. At that time, of course, Haselfoot was the yardstick by which such enterprises were measured, for Anderson's new version was hardly known in Britain. By the time MacKenzie died, Mr Gowans was probably no longer able to undertake the publication of the book; it was eventually published by Longmans in 1927, at the desire of the translator's widow, the printing being carried out at the Glasgow University Press. (I am able to speak of Mr Gowans' connexion with the matter through private information, having a distant family connexion with him, and having actually been shown some of MacKenzie's manuscript by him over thirty years ago.)

MacKenzie's earliest venture, The Bachelor of Florence, gives evidence of ingenuity and ability in the use of words. The 1900 volume of lectures is rather disappointing, displaying little originality of thought in spite of occasional recklessness. One of the contributions deals with Italian
poetry, and in the paragraph (less than a page) devoted to Dante we are astonished to learn that

notwithstanding his deathless passion for the dead, Dante was foolish enough to marry a wife - Gemma de' Donati. This Gemma was a lady of temper. She led the poet a miserable life.

As to Dante's Comedy, he goes on to say that to-day it would be an unpardonable offence for him to people that region with gentlemen and ladies recently deceased towards whom he bore a grudge. . . . Another fault, which is more purely a literary one, mars the Purgatorio in particular. This is the extreme abstraction and subtlety of the thought in many passages.

This suggests that MacKenzie had as yet little acquaintance with the Paradiso. He left no further written record of his views on Dante, but he must have formed a juster estimate of the Comedy by the time he began to translate it twenty years later. The book of poems published in 1920 is a pleasant surprise, and justifies Mr Gowans' favourable opinion; it is far above the level one normally expects in a sexagenarian's first volume of verse. MacKenzie's muse is somewhat imitative; the influence of Tennyson in particular (whom he had already praised in his lectures) and of some other poets is obvious; but he shows what is all too rare in amateur versifiers - a capacity for using language to create concrete pictures, and an appreciation of the communicative function of poetry. There are several translations, among them two sonnets from the Vita Nuova; but as a specimen the following rendering of Catullus' Carmen XI, 'Furi et Aureli, comites Catulli', has been chosen as representing his best work.

O Furius and Aurelius, friends of mine,
Whether to India's lonely bounds I roam,
Where orient Ocean beats the long shore-line
With thundering foam,

Or to Hyroanian, soft Arabian,
Scythian or Parthian, quiver-armed, I flee,
Or linger where the seven-mouthed Nile makes wan
The deep blue sea,
Or if I mount the frowning Alps, and view
The mighty tracks of Caeser, or where smiles
The Gallic Rhine, or, further, reach unto
Bleak British Isles,
O you who thus would follow me where'er
Heaven wills, one thing I ask, though small it be,
Tell my sweetheart to live and love, nor care
Longer for me.

Let her forget my love, for, in an hour
Killed by her sin, that love has vanished now
Like to the Autumn meadow's last sweet flower
Crushed by the plough.

MacKenzie has got the real sound of 'litus ut longe resonante Eoa / tunditur unda', the right accent for 'Caesaris visens monimenta magni', the right sigh at the end, and it was a wise instinct that omitted the fifth stanza of the original. There is no need to suppose that because he transposed some of the adjectives that he thought that 'magni' qualified 'monimenta' or that 'ultimi' went with 'flos'; indeed it is most unlikely, for though he is careless sometimes in rendering Dante, he was better grounded in Latin than in Italian. What matters is that he has got the spirit of the piece; rather more than can be said for a much more pretentious modern translator of Dante who informs us, in all seriousness, in one of his notes that Virgil, in the opening lines of the Aeneid, refers to 'the lofty walls of Rome'!

Turning from these poems to his Dante, one regrets that MacKenzie did not translate Horace or Catullus instead. The short song or occasional piece seems to suit him; the sustained vigour of the Comedy is beyond his grasp. He is continually in trouble over the third rhyme; sometimes he resorts to the familiar shifts of his predecessors, grasping at some totally unsuitable word because it contains the needed sound, or inserting a few words of tasteless padding; sometimes he alters the original to suit his
requirements, with disastrous weakening or distortion. Sometimes he strives for effect and gets the wrong kind, or produces a line of pseudo-Tennyson. His faults are all too clearly shown by the passages in Appendix I; the extracts from Inf. XXVI and Purg. II show him by no means at his best. A few other examples follow.

The opening of Inf. II is exceptionally poor, and combines all the faults just mentioned.

The day wore onward, and the darkling air soothed all the mortal souls on earth that were save mine alone: for then I seemed to fare Ready for conflict, an adventurer, that journey long, and all its pitifulness, I shall relate, and memory shall not err.

O Muses, aid my genius to express the things which you, O Memory, have seen: my humble tale in all your glory dress.

Sometimes MacKenzie shows himself conscious of the poetic qualities of the original and endeavours to capture them; at others he seems quite oblivious of them, as an extract from Purg. III.118 ff shows:

When I had undergone
  two mortal wounds, my soul, in tears, I gave to Him from whose free grace is pardon won. My crimes were horrible, but, keen to save, the arms of Infinite Goodness reach so wide, they gather in all who forgiveness crave.

Their curse shall never keep us from the dream of deathless love's return, while in man's heart and mind hope's tender leaves still verdant seem.

There is an equally bad flop a little further on (Purg. VI.37-9):

The lofty heights of judgment feel no strain though love's own warmth the just desire fulfil of all the shades who in this place remain.

It will be noted that in the struggle for rhyme the translator often parts company with his text. Some of the alterations are strange.

All gold beneath the Moon were one to take, and all that has been - none of those could save his wearied spirit or his life remake. (Inf. VII.64-6)
Whys of itself its life shone out, and thus were two in one and one in two, how so he knows alone whose laws are marvellous.

(Inf. XXVIII.124-6)

Why not stay here? What is your journey worth?

( = deh, perché vai? deh, perché non t’arresti?)

(Purg. V.51)

O happy they who know what place is meant to be their burial and who do not weep for husbands all whose time in France is spent.

(Par. XV.118-20)

At times MacKenzie's methods produce deep obscurity or even chaos. In the description of 'one-way traffic' (Inf. XVIII.28-33) he leaves out the essential point altogether:

As Romans, when they gather at the day of Jubilee, upon the bridge delayed, are bid to move in order, so that they Who go towards Saint Peter's are all made to face the Castle, the returning tide looking to Mount Giordano are arrayed.

The expositions of Virgil and Statius in Purgatorio, and such parts of Paradiso as Beatrice's explanation of the moon-spots or the commutation of vows are very woolly. Cacciaguida's words in Par. XVII.37-42 need some unravelling:

Contingency, which all confined must be within the page of your material, is not inscribed upon eternity.

Nor does it take necessity at all from this more than a tall ship outward bound wins from the image that her sails let fall.

Even more awkward is the rendering of Par. XXIV.103-5:

'But what authority,' 'twas answered, 'shows that such things were? For that alone which tells the fact, must thus the truth of it disclose.'

There are some exceedingly prosaic lines. Inf. IV.24, 'to the First Circle of that awful place' is paralleled by Par. II.25, 'I saw myself conveyed to a strange place'. Inf. IV.52-4 reads:

New to this dread realm I was, when He a visit paid whose Power ever wreathed with Victory is.
In Inf. X.85 'lo strazio e 'l grande scempio' become 'the horrid tragedy', and the river of light in Par. XXX.87 is 'the stream that runs for our improvement's sake'.

On the other hand unwanted ornament intrudes here and there, e.g. in the simile of Inf. III.112-4:

As leaf falls after leaf, in Autumn sere,
and the bare boughs see, on the windswept floor
the ravished treasures of the fading year.

The sounding line incorporated in Inf. II.19-21,

No wonder that from that empyreal dome
this father should, through time, be chosen to sway
the imperial splendours of magnanimous Rome,
is defensible as a direct reminiscence of the Aeneid. Similarly, even if we cannot approve of the interpretation, in Par. XII.49-51 the sound of the waves and the wide expanse of the sea are well portrayed:

Not far from where there falls the thundering tide,
behind whose far-flung reaches even the sun does from the eyes of men his splendour hide.

The professional lawyer makes only a few appearances. The word 'resile', which we do not recall noticing in any other translation, occurs too frequently. Par. V.14-15 is quite reasonably rendered 'can / secure the soul from any legal plea'; but Par. XXVI.93, 'a cui ciascuna sposa e figlia e nuro' is decidedly weakened by the forensic phraseology of 'unto whom / all daughters trace their primal geniture'. Some other words offend by over-employment, e.g. 'awful', which had lost most of its evocative value long before MacKenzie's time, and 'wander' which is often used when quite inapplicable to the purposeful movements of Dante.

There are some careless or slovenly rhymes: too many words ending in disyllabic '-tion' are coupled with 'one', etc., and even included with 'shown' and 'shone' for companions. In the seventeen lines from Purg.
IX.35-51 nine have the same rhyme, including the word 'be' three times, 'sea' twice and 'see' once. In eight lines, Purg. XX.53-60, we find the rhyming words 'one - alone - grown - won - renown - down'. It is possible, however, that some of these blemishes would have been eliminated had the translator been able to make a final revision.

MacKenzie so often changes the original for the sake of smoothness, metre or rhyme, that he must be described as wanting in accuracy. There are also quite a few genuine mistranslations, including some very careless ones. Such are: 'they hope for nought that may beyond it lie' = 'che nvidiosi son d'ogni altra sorte' (Inf. III.48); 'terrible vistas opened to our tread' = 'tal, ch'ogni vista ne sarebbe schiva' (Inf. XII.5); 'had fate seen fit my brief life to extend' (Inf. XV.58) - a new outrage done to a line that has often been mishandled; and numerous others of the same kind. MacKenzie is not at home with astronomical passages; see for instance the inaccuracy of Purg. II.1-6 in Appendix I. He falls into several common errors, e.g. he spoils one pleasantry by rendering Inf. XXXIII.117 'may I beneath the deepest ice remain', and in the terzina following fails to grasp the point of a second. In Inf. VI.37-9 he represents Ciacco as rising and going to meet the poets; and in Purg. XIII.136-8 he represents Dante as afraid of a return to hell, whereas the obvious reference is to the first terrace of Purgatory. Purg. XXVI.76-8 is rendered:

Those, who have left us, that iniquity
incurred, for which even Caesar triumphing
was shouted at for his effeminacy;

but this is probably undue delicacy rather than misunderstanding. In Par. XVII.73-5 the rendering,

Who upon you with such benignity
shall look, that deed and asking, which are slow
in others, quick between you two shall be,

seems due to actual misreading of the sense.
There are, however, a sufficient number of good passages in MacKenzie's version to make one wish that he had begun it earlier and been able to revise it further. In many cases a slight alteration would greatly improve sound and sense. An examination of test passages, and an analysis of the random sample, place MacKenzie's translation much on the same level as Haselfoot's; but it is noticeable that MacKenzie tends to improve as he goes on, whereas Haselfoot's Paradiso shows a falling off. It must be admitted that MacKenzie produces lines as awkward as anything in Haselfoot, e.g. 'And on poor Icarus' loins wings would not stay' (Inf. XVII.110), but it is mainly his unfortunate inaccuracy that loses him marks. On the whole MacKenzie is happier in his turns of expression than Haselfoot, and the contrast between their renderings of Par. VI.124-6 is typical of many other terzine:

As mingled voices make one harmony clear beneath, our seats of life are mingled so that they make music in each turning sphere. (MacKenzie)

Voices diverse make up sweet notes' refrain; So, in our life, seats differing in site Among these wheels sweet harmony maintain. (Haselfoot)

One comes across many terzine in MacKenzie that are eminently quotable. His rearrangement of Inf. XXI.25-8 has the requisite vigour:

I turned as one keen to be satisfied at sight of what he has more need to flee, by which once seen, he is so horrified That terror conquers curiosity!

He manages the difficult Purg. IV.10-12 competently and clearly:

For that which notes this passing seems to be other than is the undivided soul: one is in fetters, and the other free.

Among some good pieces of invective may be noted (Purg. VI.124-6):

For all the towns of Italy now share the glut of tyrants, each intriguing boor is treated as a new Marcellus there.
In quite another vein the following (Purg. VII.73-8) is also good:

Gold and fine silver, cloths of crimson sheen
and silken white, bright indigo, the glow
that blazes from the splintered emerald's green,
All were out-measured, as the less will show
beneath the greater, by the grass and flowers
that shone within that little vale below.

So also Purg. XVII.40-2:

Then, as sleep breaks, when sudden brightness burns
upon our eyelids closed, and, as it dies,
quivers a moment ere our sense returns.

The following are good terzine from the Paradiso:

So round Latona's daughter there may meet
a circle, when the impregnate air retains
the woven threads that form her girdle's pleat. (X.67-9)

Yet if to truth a timid friend I grow,
my life may yet be forfeit among those
whom these years shall be as long ago. (XVIII.118-20)

Who ponders on the mighty theme that lies
upon this human shoulder, will not hold
its trembling aught for censure or surprise. (XXIII.64-6)

See, now, the height, and the profuseness prove
of that Eternal Worth, which o'er and o'er
upon so many mirrors from above
Breaks, yet remains unbroken as before. (XXIX.142-5)

Although MacKenzie's translation is unequal, it is easier to select
sustained passages of merit from it than from Haselfoot's, particularly in
the Purgatorio and Paradiso. The closing cantos of the former, and the
central and final cantos of the latter contain some good work. The end
of the poem is decidedly better than Haselfoot's; a few terzine from the
last canto are given below.

As one who, dreaming, has his mind all lit
with passion, which remains when dreams have gone,
and no more visions through his fancy flit,
So am I, for the glory, that then shone
upon me almost all is faded now,-
I feel its sweetness at my heart alone.
So does the burning Sun unseal the snow,
so, on the light wind, wandering through the trees,
the records of the Sybil's wisdom go.
0 Highest Light, lifted o'er all degrees
of mortal thought, give to my mind again
some fragment of that moment's ecstasies!
And give my tongue the power to explain
even but a spark of all that glorious Ray
so that with those to come it may remain!
For such awakening of my memory may,
even in the feeble murmur of this song,
more of thy glorious victory display.

Some eccentricities of typography and punctuation may have been noticed.

In the actual print the second and third lines of each terzine begin with a small letter even if they start a new sentence, an effect which is confusing. Comas are very plentiful, yet often omitted where essential. It is a pity that, having gone to the trouble of giving the pages running headlines, the publishers did not incorporate canto numerals in these; their absence makes the book awkward for quick reference.

The Times Literary Supplement (15th December 1927, p. 954) gave MacKenzie's translation a short but pleasant review, pointing out both good and bad points, and adding: 'It is no criticism of Mr MacKenzie's work to say that he has failed, since everybody has failed.' By the time the same periodical made a survey of modern renderings in terza rima in a front page article five years later, MacKenzie had been forgotten. His effort was a gallant one for a man of sixty-five, and we must remember that it was not fully revised. Even if he had lived to polish it further, however, it is unlikely that the result would have taken rank with the better versions of the period. MacKenzie's grasp of Dante was fundamentally weak, and his poetic talent was suited for slighter things.
SYDNEY FOWLER WRIGHT


Sydney Fowler Wright (born 1874) is the son of Stephen Wright, who was an accountant in Birmingham, and in due course Sydney succeeded to the family business, which he conducted successfully for over thirty years, at the end of which time, having established himself as an author, he disposed of his practice and devoted himself to literature. At eighty years of age Mr Wright's vigour remains unabated, and when I visited him at his home in Sunningdale last summer he was immersed in numerous literary projects which he hopes to be able to carry through.

His output has been as varied as it is prodigious; it occupies eight folios in the Reading Room Catalogue of the British Museum. One of his earliest interests was the Empire Poetry League, and he edited for many years its magazine, Poetry and the Play, in which his Purgatorio first appeared, canto by canto. A writer of distinguished poetry himself, he was also generous in his encouragement of younger poets who had difficulty in securing publications. The firm of Fowler Wright Ltd., which carried on business in London during the twenties and thirties was 'founded to assist authors in the publication of verses of a sufficiently high literary standard', and its lists during that period bear testimony to the scale on which its aims were carried out. In 1927 Mr Wright branched out in another
Sydney Fowler Wright (2)

direction: his first novel, The Deluge, based on the rather fanciful notion of a second Flood, this time in the midlands of England, had a phenomenal sale, and was quickly followed by others, among which some readers may recall another best seller, The Island of Captain Sparrow (1928). In quite another vein was Police and Public (1929) dealing with a notorious case of the day, and enjoying a succès de scandale. Other books included a translation of Dumas' Marguerite de Valois, a Life of Sir Walter Scott, and a remarkable Prelude in Prague, published in 1935 with the sub-title 'A story of the war of 1938'. In addition to all this there is a long series of scientific thrillers and crime stories, some of which are published under the pseudonym of Sydney Fowler, and known to a wide public who have no idea of their favourite author's versatility. Mr Wright has also completed a vast epic poem, The Song of Arthur, embodying the whole Arthurian legend to which he has devoted much study, which he hopes may one day reach print.

His interest in Dante began in the early twenties, and his decision to make a translation was partly due to his dissatisfaction with the verse translations already in existence. By 1928 he had completed the whole Comedy; some cantos were published in his magazine; and the Inferno was issued by his own firm in that year, in a beautifully printed and bound edition. When he retired from publishing some years later, Mr Wright had found no opportunity to issue the two other cantiche, nor did other publishers evince any interest, in spite of the praise bestowed by many reviewers on the Inferno. In the present year, however, the Purgatorio has appeared in book form, necessarily more modest than its predecessor but none the less tastefully produced, with a well-known Edinburgh imprint. Mr Wright has kindly lent me the manuscript of his Paradiso, but since this is unrevised I have confined my remarks on it to quotations of one
or two of the best passages, and the two extracts in Appendix I. Generally speaking the third cantica is very similar in conception and execution to the two discussed here.

In the preface to the Inferno, the essential points of which are repeated in that to the Purgatorio, Mr Wright explains his views. He finds that when all that is possible has been said in support of any existing translation, it remains a fact that there is no English rendering of the Divine Comedy, even including the tepid competence of Cary, which has won a genuine popularity.

He opines that the form of the original 'cannot be successfully imitated in English', but feels that the translation must be in metre: 'A great poem must have beauty both of form and of content'. He feels that Dante, had he written in English, would not have used terza rima, but would have adopted the decasyllabic line, 'the finest and most flexible of which our language is capable'. As to whether these decasyllables should be rhymed or not he confesses to some doubt.

My decision (which must be justified, if at all, by result) was to introduce rhyme with an irregular freedom, but to endeavour to reach a quality of verse which would be so far independent of this subordinate feature that its irregularity, or even occasional absence, would be unobtrusive to the reader's mind.

As to the treatment of the sense he goes on:

Having selected a form in which I hoped to be able to move with sufficient freedom, and which, in English, is best adapted to the spirit of the poem, I had to face the larger questions of formal and spiritual fidelity. In regard to these I recognise two primary obligations: first, I regard it as inexcusable to introduce any word or phrase which discolours the meaning of the original, or deviates from it; second, I am bound to present the substance of the poem with such verbal beauty as I am capable of constructing, even though an adjective be omitted or added in the process, or some non-essential order of narration be changed to obtain it. This last freedom is not merely a translator's right, it is a clear duty, because the directness and vigour of the original cannot be reproduced by any verbal literality, and it is of the first importance that he should inspire the poem with a new vitality.

Mr Wright's version is the only example of its kind in English,
Sydney Fowler Wright (4)

except for some fragments, all the rhymed translation being either in terza rima or some direct imitation of it, or else in regular stanzas. From the purely metrical point of view there is a resemblance to Lycidas, except that Mr Wright employs decasyllabic lines only, and his style is about as far removed from Milton's as can be imagined. The idea is, on the face of it, a good one. The irregularity of the recurring rhymes allows the translator reasonable freedom and relieves him from the need of forced meanings and inversions, giving at the same time the needed effect of continuity which closed stanzas lack. It should also be possible to use the occasional unrhymed lines mentioned in the preface without their being unduly noticeable, since the rhyme pattern should not be decided enough to arouse expectation in the reader, yet sufficiently pronounced to make the chiming of sound with sound a pleasant feature of the poem as a whole. So indeed it works out in some sections; here, for instance, is the passage corresponding to Inf. VII.73-96:

Transcendent Wisdom, when the spheres He built
Gave each a guide to rule it: more nor less
Their light distributes. For the earth he gave
Like guide to rule its splendours. As we know
The heavenly lights move round us, and is split
Light here, and darkness yonder, so doth she
From man to man, from race and kindred take
Alternate wealth, or yield it. None may save
The spoil that she depriveth: none may flee
The bounty that she wills. No human wits
May hinder, nor may human lore reject
Her choice, that like a hidden snake is set
To reach the feet unheeding. Where she sits
In judgment, she resolves, and whom she wills
Is havened, chased by petulant storms, or wrecked
Remedeless. Races cease, and men forget
They were. Slaves rise to rule their lords. She fills
And empties, godlike in her mood. No pause
Her changes leave, so many are those who call
About her gates, so many she dowers, and all
Revile her after, and would crucify
If words could reach her, but she heeds nor hears,
Who dwells beyond the noise of human laws
In the blest silence of the Primal Spheres.
Here the second and fourth lines rhyme with lines in the preceding passage; 
'take' at the end of the seventh line has no rhyme till four lines after 
the end of the passage, while 'crucify' in the fourth last line has no rhyme 
at all. The presence of an occasional couplet serves to remind us of the 
rhyme, while 'hears - Spheres' provides a definite rhyming end to the verse 
paragraph. It will be noted that all trace of the ternary structure has 
vanished, and this is typical of Mr Wright's version throughout. Having 
adopted a metre and style of his own, he rearranges his material to suit 
it, avoiding all compromise with the Italian terzina.

It is not, however, easy to keep up such a manipulation of the rhyme 
for long without planning very carefully the apparent lack of plan, and 
it is very easy to diverge into something quite different. If the extract 
from Purg. II in Appendix I is referred to, where 51 lines of the original 
are compressed into 42\frac{1}{2} of translation, it will be found that the passage 
opens with five heroic couplets, and about half way through there is a 
succession of seven couplets. At times these couplets are skilfully 
handled, e.g.

a flying boat, that cleared
The waves so lightly that it scarce displaced
A ripple on the shining path it traced,

or, in Inf. XXVI, also reproduced in the Appendix,

Five times the bright bowl of the moon had filled,
Five times through heaven its silver light had spilled .

But when we find such a passage as Inf. XXXII.22 ff:

Then I looked, and lo!
No ground I trod, but all the space below
Was glass transparent. Not the underflow
Of Austrian Danube from the weight of snow
Such roof divides. Not Don, alone that lies
Beneath the silence of the frozen skies
Such mantle wears. Sclavonia's lonely height
Sydney Fowler Wright (6)

Had fallen here, or Lucca's mountain white,
And had not cracked it. As the frogs at night
Sit croaking, with their heads above the stream,
While on the bank the gleaner rests, adream ...

and so on for another nine couplets, we begin to feel that Mr Wright was
in a hurry, and had forgotten the resolve in which he began. If we thought
for a moment that the repetition 'lo - below - flow - snow' was made with
the intention of piling up weight, the unpleasant jar as 'As the frogs at
night', where clearly a new rhyme was called for, would undeceive us.
Worse still is the following (Purg. XXIII.55 ff):

But mine own impatience said:
'Not greatlier when I wept to see thee dead
My sorrow shook me, than I weep to see
Thy face so altered, In God's name, to me
Reveal thy torture. My much marvelling
Forbids that speech to other use I bring
Until thou showest me this.'

And he to me:
'The eternal counsel wills it. Its decree
Gives virtue to the water and the tree
To emaciate thus. All this lean folk you see,
Who weep at once and sing, so expiate
Their gluttonous days.'

This sort of jumble occurs from time to time with disastrous effect.

Mr Wright takes a very liberal view with regard to his undertaking
not 'to introduce any word or phrase which discolours the meaning of the
original, or deviates from it'. One critic bestowed high praise on the
opening of Inf V:

Most like the spirals of a pointed shell,
But separate each, go downward, hell from hell,
The ninefold circles of the damned; but each
Smaller, concentrate in its greater pain,
Than that which overhangs it.

Those who reach
The second whorl, on entering, learn their bane
Where Minos, hideous, sits and snarls. He hears,
Decides, and as he girds himself, they go.

The reader who graduates from this version to the Italian may be some-
what surprised to discover that it runs:
Mr Wright's reply to a protest would doubtless be (a) that the shell-like construction of the abyss is implied in the words 'che men luogo cinghia'; (b) that the simile of the shell is a useful gloss, making clear to the reader just what the arrangement of the circles is; and (c) that the other departures from the exact phraseology of the Italian are not deviations, but really just another way of conveying the same information. No exception can be taken either to the simile or its expression; it is, in fact, well done and aids comprehension. We can even imagine that some readers, after sampling the Italian, might say that they prefer the translation; and indeed Mr Wright quite frankly offers it as a substitute for the original rather than as a bridge to it, remarking in his preface that 'those who can read him (Dante) in the medieval Italian must be a very small and still decreasing minority'. This is not to suggest that the translator has any thought so to speak of 'improving on Dante'; he shows himself well aware of the poetic stature of the text for those who can cope with it. But realising that with the majority it is a case of either reading in English or not reading at all, he conceives it to be part of his duty to transform rather than translate for the benefit of the public he has in mind.

Such an aim would, in the first place, fully justify the inclusion of many glosses or amplifications in the poem which perform the function of notes. Mr Wright is probably wise to avoid footnotes altogether - for what have footnotes to do with poetry? In the Inferno he relegates his few notes, all of which are explanatory on broad lines, and do not refer to
places, persons or allusions, to the end of the book; in the Purgatorio he omits them altogether. To keep his reader on the right lines, however, he provides him with hints from time to time. Thus Inf. XXI.46, 'Quel s'attuffò, e tornò su convolto' becomes 'The sinner sank, and rose convulsed, and writhed, / Arching his back as one who prays', thus giving point to the taunts of the demons. Virgil's surprise at the sight of Caiaphas (Inf. XXIII.124-6) is related to its cause by the addition of the words: 'But had not suffered when he passed that way / Beforetime'. Vanni Fucci's declaration in Inf. XXIV.139, 'e falsamente già fu apposto altrui' is expanded to:

My sin
Was this, that having robbed the sacristy
I spake not, while Rampino tortured lay,
And della Nona died, a guilt to pay
Which was not theirs.

In Purg. IX the cracks on the second step (line 99) are given their significance by the addition of the words 'the sacred sign', and the seven P's of line 112 has likewise an addition 'the mortal sins to tell'. Mr Wright is likewise willing to anticipate the 'neque nubent' of Purg. XIX.137 proving a stumbling-block, but goes perhaps rather a long way round to circumvent it:

'Released
From folly, brother, let them rise,' he said,
'For earthly difference counts not with the dead.
God's values are not of the mind of man.
What image and inscription have we here?

He also considers that a clean-shaven age will not find it too easy to follow Dante's

e quando per la barba il viso chiese,
ben cognobbi il velen dell'argomento

in Purg. XXXI.74-5, so he makes doubly sure, first by rendering 'fanciulli' in line 64 by 'beardless boys', and second by translating lines 74-5:
Well I read
The word, the poison of her argument,
That I no boyhood's sins must there repent,
But that my bearded years had seen me fail.

Mr Wright cannot resist an occasional embellishment, similar to his 'pointed shell'; thus he describes the pits of the Simoniacs of Inf. XIX as being like the holes 'where the martins nest'; while 'degna più d'esser fitta in gelatina' (Inf. XXXII.60) becomes 'more worthy of the frozen pie / In which they serve us'. So 'come fé il merlo per poca bonaccia' (Purg. XIII.123) is graphically expanded to:

as the merle
Mocked the wind-routed cloud, while the next shower
Came upward from the sea,

and the awkward opening of Purg. XV is delightfully simplified to:

Of the sun's sphere, which sways in passing by
Like a child's hoop that's trundled through the sky,
So much before the fall of evening lay
As from the third hour to the break of day.

The desire for clarity is also responsible for some omissions, e.g. most of Purg. XXI.40-5, the qualification of 'sitiunt' in Purg. XXII.6, and the reference to 'OMO' in Purg. XXIII.32. Similarly the controversial 'tra Feltro e Feltro' of Inf. I.105 and the enigmatic 'Questi ti sia or primo, e io secondo' of Inf. XII.114 are both dropped out. It is less easy to see why the simile of Inf. II.37-42 is also omitted and replaced by:

'Here I stayed / My steps amid the darkness'. The wisdom of correcting Dante by making Statius proclaim himself a Neapolitan in Purg. XXI.89 is more doubtful; for Hugh Capet is still a 'butcher's son' in the previous canto, and Beatrice still promises that 'facts will be the Naiades' in Purg. XXXIII.

But the habit of paraphrasing, once developed, becomes tyrannous.

The passage from Inf. VII, quoted earlier in this article, and the
extracts given in Appendix I, will make it clear that Mr Wright tampers with his text in many ways that can hardly be justified on the ground of clarification or even, in the sense already suggested, modernisation. Is there, for instance, any valid reason for rendering Francesca's words as:

There is no greater woe
In all Hell's depths than cometh when those who fell
Look back on Eden?

Surely the change weakens rather than fortifies the poignancy of an exclamation which is that of the living Dante rather than of the dead Francesca.

Here is Mr Wright's rendering of Inf. V.97-107:

Ravenna, on that shore
Where Po finds rest for all his streams, we knew;
And there love conquered. Love, in gentle heart
So quick to take dominion, overthrew
Him with my own fair body, and overbore
Me with delight to please him. Love, which gives
No pardon to the loved, so strongly in me
Was empired, that its rule, as here ye see,
Endureth, nor the bitter blast contrives
To part us. Love to one death led us. The mode
Afflicts me, shrinking, still. The place of Cain
Awaits our slayer.

Frankly, every change here seems to be for the worse; and if the object of the translation is to convey something of the kind of poetry that Dante wrote, this rather seems designed to obscure it. Or to take an example of a different kind, Purg. XXVII.88-90:

Poco parer potea li del di fori;
ma, per quel poco, vedea io le stelle
di lor solere e più chiare e maggiori,

which is rendered:

Little they left for sight, but clear and far
A narrow heaven I watched, where star by star
The luminous night's procession passed above.

The essential idea of nearness to heaven has vanished, and one suspects that it did so to make room for the last line, a good one in itself, but
not Dante. At the end of the canto Virgil's last speech is well rendered, but the concluding four lines,

Non aspettar mio dir piú nè mio cenno:
libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio,
e falso fora non fare a suo senno:
per ch' io te sovra te corono e mitrio,

which become

Wait my word no more.
Self-conquered, crowned and mitred dost thou stand
As master of thyself. Sound, righteous, free,
Thy judgment only now thy guide should be,

through being unnecessarily transposed, and the 'per ch' io . . . te mitrio' being changed to the second person, miss completely the climax of the Italian.

There is from time to time a straining for effect foreign to Dante's style. Inf. IV.111, 'giugnemmo in prato di fresca verdura' is expanded to:

Of coolest green
Stretched the wide lawns we midmost found, for there
Intolerant of itself, was Hell made fair
To accord with its containing.

If some passages are reminiscent momentarily of Milton, with whom as we have said Mr Wright has few affinities, many more suggest later styles. We find that of Tennyson for instance reflected in the somewhat fanciful rendering of Inf. XIV.94-102:

Far out in ocean lies an island waste
Whose king, when once the early world was chaste,
Ruled all men. In the midst a mountain lies,
Ida, that once was fair to stormless skies,
Peace of still nights and languorous noons it had,
With murmuring leaves and falling waters glad.
(Cybele there the Heavenly Child concealed);
Now lies it barer than a salted field,
Than some outdated use more desolate,
Abandoned, naked, in the change of fate.

The closing couplet here harks back to the eighteenth century, of whose manner Mr Wright gives numerous examples. Inf. XXII, which is, doubtless
intentionally, entirely in couplets, catches the manner of Dr Johnson
rather than that of Pope, e.g. lines 46-54:

Close stepped my Guide, at which the fiends controlled
Parted and stilled, and half reluctant hold
They loosed, the while he asked what sinful name
Men spake on earth that there to torture came.
And while the fiends their horrid trade delayed,
The wretch, ere yet his quivering pelt was flayed,
Gave answer. 'Fathered by a waster wild,
Born in Navarre, my mother sold her child,
Constrained by hunger, to a lord's employ;
Then to King Thibault, (yet himself a boy),
My fawning service passed. By bribe and cheat
I bought the lease of this unending heat.'

There are many renderings, neat rather than apt, in this style, e.g. Inf.
XXVIII.126, 'com' esser può, quei sa che si governa' = 'What God ordains /
The wise man marvels, and the fool explains'. Occasionally Mr Wright
seems to stoop a little lower for his models. The following passage
represents Inf. II.70-2:

      Downward far,
    From Heaven to Heaven I sank, from star to star,
      To find thee, and to point his rescuing way.

This may be intended to be Miltonic, but it is rather in the style of
Kipling's Tomlinson.

So far as accuracy is concerned, Mr Wright reproduces the general
drift of Dante, but it is very difficult to check the details, owing to
the freedom with which matter is paraphrased and rearranged. For instance
the equivalent of Inf. II.88-90 is:

      There is no fear nor any hurt in Hell,
      Except that it be powerful.

It is hard to know what this means, and all we can say is that the English
fails to translate Dante, not that it actually mistranslates him. If we
take the well-known lines beginning 'Allor mi dolsi' (Inf. XXVI.19-24)
we find them greatly expanded and altered in the translation:
Grief were it to gaze, and still that grief to me
Comes sharply, as my thoughts reluctant draw
Their wells of memory for the thing I saw.
With pain I speak, for if the holier law
Myself I hold, by any kindly star,
Or Power supernal, guided safely through
The world's stretched snares, I would not boast nor tell
As one who triumphs, that these depths of Hell
Contain such fruitage of our kind.

Something of this kind is no doubt implicit in Dante's words, but the
English version fails to bring out the essential content, namely that
Dante regards the occupants of the eighth bolgia very differently from
those of the preceding ones, and is appalled at the thought of the uses
to which genius can be perverted. Again, the three lines (Purg. XVII.121-3),
ed è chi per ingiuria par ch'aonti,
si che si fa della vendetta ghiotto,
e tal convien che il male altrui impronti,
are rendered:

Last, is he whose shame
Makes him of reputations emulous,
Avid for retribution on the name
Beyond its worth exalted.

Here once more we have the basic notion changed, so that the terzina no
longer defines the sin of anger as distinguished from those of pride and
envy in the two preceding.

In a few places there seem to be direct mistranslations. Mr Wright
shows considerable ingenuity with colloquial passages, and it is surprising
to find him confusing the issue by rendering Inf. XXXIII.114-6 by

Then tell us who thou art, and whence thy doom,
And he should well deserve the frozen tomb
Who did not aid thee.

He seems to have failed to grasp the meaning of Purg. VIII.120, for he
renders it:

To those who dwell
In that dear vale, my love, now purified,
Is constant ever,
whereas it is the former misdirection of his love that is now about to be purified. Purg. XX.2-3 reads:

Back from the stream I drew a sponge unfilled.
To please my Guide I let my pleasure end . . .

but 'per piacerli!' refers to Adrian, not to Virgil. In Purg. XXV.109 'We came / To where the path ascends' is obviously wrong; they had reached the top of the ascent and come to the level cornice. There are a dozen or so slips of the same kind, one or two of which may be misprints.

Archaisms are sparingly and generally tastefully used, but pseudo-poetical forms like 'anear', 'anigh!' are over frequent in the Inferno; they seem to have been dropped in the Purgatorio. There is unnecessary confusion through the indifferent use of the second person singular and plural even in the same sentence, e.g. (Purg. XXXI.49-50):

Never yet
Did art or loving beauty round thee set
A lure more lovely than you found to be
Mine own fair members . . .

A strange feature is that the name 'Beatrice' throughout has to be accented on the second syllable for scansion.

To sum up, we may say that Mr Wright has produced a well-executed and readable English poem, free for the most part from translatese, and conveying on the whole the narrative of Dante's Comedy and its leading ideas. On the other hand he fails completely to convey any but the merest hint of Dante's style and poetic qualities. The beauties of the poem are almost invariably the translator's own, and while they are not unworthy of the purpose, the reader acquainted with the original will find his recognition of the resemblances much obscured by the continual consciousness of the gulf that separates Mr Wright's verse from Dante's.

Two short passages from the manuscript of Mr Wright's Paradiso are
reproduced in Appendix I. In Piccarda's speech from canto III, it will be noted that he reinforces the underlying meaning by the addition of 'Love itself were vain / If envy could corrupt it'. His liking for the vivid and graphic can be seen in the expository passages, e.g. V.58-63 where the last sentence is 'un corollario per grazia':

And such surrender, for his after-peace
He yet may count as folly, if no more
He yield than he recover. Six to four
Should be the basis of that bargaining.
It follows that if man shall consecrate
So much to God that it the scale shall tip
Against whatever else of worth he bring;
There can be no redemption. Can he try
A trade for that he hath no means to buy?

Mr Wright's methods will again be recognised in VII.112-20:

Not since the first day dawned, until I shall fall
The shades of the last night across the sky,
Nay, nor thenceforward, any deed of all
Shall match with this in height of majesty.
God needs must choose the method most divine,
Equal to this. For our redemption He
Bent to the burden of humanity.

One can have too much of a good thing, however, and the following expansion of X.70-5 is overdone:

The courts of Heaven, from whence returned am I,
Jewels of such dear value beautify
As may not be to this dark air conveyed,
They have a beauty none may bear away,
A glory not to weeping eyes displayed,
Such was their song. And though from Heaven I come
Who saw that wonder, and that song who heard,
I may not utter one revealing word.
Ye who for beauty in that mart would trade,
Wing your ascension there - or ask the dumb.

There is one of Mr Wright's best touches in XII.49-51:

not far from where
The interminable waves on the long shore
Roll in, and break, and roll for evermore,
In from that limitless immensity
Where the sun finds no land, but meets the sea . . .
His transformation is often a skilful one, as in XVII.37-42:

Left and right
A scene extends, beyond the bounded might
One sees within the mirror. So to me
Stretches the long-dead past's immensity,
And so the future in clear sight extends.
Not therefore must you call contingency
Predestined more than the ship that lends
Its moving shadow to the stream.

Mr Wright uses four lines to render XX.73-5; the first three are so good that the last might well have been omitted:

As for a while the soaring lark will sing,
And then be silent in its height, as though
Content the sweetness of its song to know,
Still by the pleasure of remembering . . .

A little further on, in line 99, the wrong word is used when 'e, vinta, vince con sua beninanza' is rendered 'Frustrated by its own benignity'.

In his rendering of XXIII.49-69 Mr Wright scores a triumph; he has certainly thrown discretion to the winds, and forgotten that he is translating, but the 'burning intensity' is there beyond all mistaking.

I fared thereat as one whose mind doth go
Back to the threshold of a dream forgot,
And beats upon the doors, and enters not,
And may not enter, though that memory breed
Intolerable desire, and aching need.
No roadstead for a homing barque was here:
No helm for helmsman's hand who spares to steer
In dreadful, marvellous ways. But who shall weigh
The ponderous theme my feeble shoulders stay,
He shall not blame, that trembling steps and weak
Support it, stumbling to the goal I seek.

There are other good passages, especially the praise of Beatrice in canto XXX, but there is nothing else quite of the quality just quoted. The final vision seems a trifle flat; Mr Wright is too anxious to rationalise it, e.g. XXXIII.82-90:

O grace abundant, which supplied my sight
With strength to face the everlasting Light,
To comprehend and be consumed therein;
Which gave me power in that profundity
All things created through all space to see  
Gathered by Love to form a single gain,  
Like pages scattered, lost, but once akin,  
Regathered, in one ordered book to be,  
All incident, all accident, and all  
The crossing chances which to men befall,  
All varying substance and perverse event,  
Were here made perfect, in one brightness blent.

The translation of the Inferno had a good press; at the time of writing no reviews of the Purgatorio have yet appeared. Of the former the \textit{Times Literary Supplement} (6th June 1929, p. 451) said:

Whether it be public interest he asks for or critical approval he surely deserves attention. It is refreshing to come across a translator who acknowledges all the difficulties of his task. ... Genuinely admirable ... is its faithfulness to the spirit, through all its apparent disregard to the letter, of the original.

The \textit{New Statesman} (9th February 1929, p. 578) thought that he had 'done it on the whole very well'.

Mr Wright's version lacks a little of Dante's directness, but it is not wanting in fidelity to Dante's thought, or in majesty, or in the beauties of light and shade. It is better poetry than that of Cary.

Professor C. H. Herford, writing in the \textit{Manchester Guardian}, was also eulogistic, and considered that the new version will give pleasure only grudgingly yielded by the work of men who have spent the toil of years on reproducing the terza rima - and it has not availed them.

The last remark raises the main issue, really not touched on by the reviewers, as to just what we do want from a translation of Dante. Does there exist a public possessing sufficient poetic taste and appreciation to relish Mr Fowler Wright's translation but unable to tackle the Italian more directly? The hard facts of sales records suggest that this class to-day is definitely 'a decreasing minority'. 


The copy inspected, by courtesy of the Library of Congress, contained the three above volumes rather awkwardly bound into one in a publisher's binding case. There are a large number of blank leaves between the successive parts, and plates which seem to have been intended as frontispieces have been incorrectly inserted so that they fall on the recto side and face blank pages.

Albert R. Bandini (born 1882) is a native of Florence. After ordination to the Roman Catholic priesthood he came to America in 1907 and acquired American citizenship in 1916. He held various charges, and has been resident in California since 1915. He retired in 1946 and now lives in Carmel, in the same state. He is the author of various books, articles and essays.

It may be as well first to give Father Bandini's own words from his preface to Inferno as to the aim and scope of his translation.

A new translation of Dante may be considered simply an individual tour-de-force having a limited appeal to the public in general and even to the students of Dante. The fact that this is made by an Italian, a Florentine, by birth, may stir a certain curiosity not unmixed, however, with added suspicion. Of course, if I did not feel that this translation, the first volume of which is now published, is a little better than other of the same kind I would not have any justification in presenting it to the public; but, on the other hand, such a feeling might be only induced by presumption.
As I consider the finished volume, I am more poignantly aware of its deficiencies: awkward constructions here and there, some obsolete words, rhymes far from perfect—occasionally—some deviations from the sense of the original text; and above all, the failure, frequently enough, in rendering the Dantesque precision and intensity. I may demur to such charges by stating that these are inevitable shortcomings in a work of this kind; whether they destroy altogether the value of the work—if it has to be said—I leave to others to say.

After mentioning that he has hardly consulted other translations, and has only rarely used suggestions from other students, he concludes:

... and finally all the work on the Inferno has been done in little less than two years, amidst many other occupations. I hope, if God give me strength, to finish the Comedia (sic) in the same relative time.

The other two prefaces are still briefer, making a few remarks on the atmosphere of each part and the relationship between them. That to the Purgatorio adds:

The Notes which follow each canto will be found sufficient for a literal understanding of the text; for the inner meaning of the Poem, critical works will have to be consulted.

That to the Paradiso concludes:

I am very glad that with the publishing of this volume I am keeping well within the time limit hopefully expressed in the preface to the Inferno though I quite understand that the establishing of a record-time has little to do with the worth of a translation.

The reader is liable, before coming to grips with the translation at all, to be irritated by its actual physical presentation, and therefore all the less inclined to be tolerant. The books are, in every way, poorly produced. There are ample margins, but the space is badly distributed. The spacing of the words throughout the verse is too wide, being an 'en' instead of the usual 'thick' space; but worse still, very frequently a double space is inserted between two words for no reason at all, giving the lines an untidy disjointed appearance. Errors in leading and indentation are frequent enough to try the reader's patience. The printer does not seem to have had any ligatures in his fount, and combinations of 'ff' and 'fl' are unsightly.
Tiny superior figures have been used for the line numbers, so that one is constantly imitating Dante's 'vecchio sartor nella cruna'. Misprints are plentiful, and only a small proportion are included in the errata. Several times 'ryhme' appears for 'rhyme' and 'wordly' for 'worldly'; small words are often wrong, e.g. 'by' appears for 'be', 'it' for 'is'. In other places some sort of misprint may be inferred from the fact that the line does not make sense, or reads lamely. Apostrophes are used in strange ways; the words spelt 'see'st', 'gave'st' are evidently to be pronounced as disyllables. The word 'round' = 'around' is often preceded by an apostrophe, but here and elsewhere a turned comma is sometimes used instead. Throughout the book double quotes are used, even for speeches within speeches, except for a few instances which are single quoted; sometimes the closing quotation marks are missing; in several cases the marks are in the wrong place. Punctuation is chaotic; there is a liberal sprinkling of commas, semi-colons, colons and dashes (the latter is the commonest and strangely used at times); quite often they are superfluous, whereas they are missing where they should be. Sometimes five or six consecutive lines are printed without so much as a comma. Even the errata page has not escaped the general inaccuracy - it contains two wrong line references! On two plates in Purgatorio the legends have been interchanged: the picture showing the proud staggering under their weights is referred to canto XXII, and that showing Dante following Virgil and Statius to canto XI.

All this makes one feel that Father Bandini must have been too busy trying to keep his time-schedule to devote much time to proof-reading. Nor does he seem to have been any more diligent in the polishing of his verses: how could he if between about 1928 and 1931, 'amidst many other occupations', he had to find the three thousand odd sets of rhymes necessary for
Purgatorio and Paradiso? We certainly find all the defects he promises us in his preface, except that they are not merely 'here and there' but quite literally everywhere. We may perhaps charitably ascribe some of the awkwardnesses to the fact that he is not writing in his native language; but it is he himself who challenges comparison with previous translators.

It is therefore a depressing task to embark on an examination of Father Bandini's translation, and we shall try to justify our strictures as briefly as possible. So far as form is concerned, it is in terza rima, and follows rigorously the metrical form and divisions of the original. The translator takes considerable liberties with his rhymes; such sets as 'once - glance - lands', 'crew - slough - due', 'use - issues - induce', 'lends - sense' are common. Two failures to rhyme are corrected in the errata, but there are others undetected. Some effort has been made to avoid repeating the same rhyming sound too often, and also to give variety; but the ingenuity devoted to this is misapplied to the extent that often the sense is twisted or obscured to work in the rhymes. Thus, having used 'nurse' at the end of Inf. XII.71, for the next terzina he has:

Thousands of them add to that foss a curse:
Quickly are the spirits by their arrows speared
If they move out from where they should be immerse.

This gives us such a piece of ruinous padding as (Par. XX.10-12):

For all these lights which did so lively shine,
Shining yet more, such songs gave forth in choir
That slip and fade away from memory's shrine.

This kind of thing runs right through the whole poem, and every canto would furnish several examples.

Although most of Father Bandini's lines have the requisite ten syllables or their equivalent, they are wofully deficient in rhythm or cadence. There are obviously defective ones, where a misprint is suspected, such as:
'While sordid shame did his semblance dye' (Inf. XXIV.132); some have too many syllables, as 'And he: "No outrage done by him may I deplore"' (Purg. II.94); some are simply awkward, e.g. 'As when by the hillside first him I view' (Inf. XXIV.21); some are cacophonously monosyllabic, like 'My breath had been out of my lungs so wrung' (Inf. XXIV.43).

Apart from the contortions dictated by rhyme, there is a general tendency to be content with clumsy and often inaccurate expressions. One has no reason to suppose that Father Bandini did not fully understand and appreciate his text, but he failed for the most part in writing tolerable or comprehensible English. The Ulysses episode in Appendix I affords ample illustration: padding for rhyme, 'as well you know', in line 91, with 'mi diparti' awkwardly transferred to line 100; 'the joy hoped for' and 'awerved' in lines 96-7 are due to forced rhyme; the sense of 'a divenir del mondo esperto' in line 98 is replaced by a spineless piece of padding; while line 102 is appalling; lines 103-5 are little better; an inspection of the atlas might have avoided the fatuity of lines 110-11; Ulysses' speech does not gain by having the cart before the horse; 'always further on' is a wretched conclusion to the speech in line 120; 'sermon' in line 121 is an etymological equivalent greatly favoured by Father Bandini to represent any kind of speech or expression; 'the goal yet unattained' is another piece of bad padding; line 126 defies the skill of the best reader; lines 136-8 are clumsy, and the 'whirlwind coming from the lee' is a meteorological curiosity worthy of investigation. But almost any passage of equal length from Father Bandini would provide equal opportunity for caustic analysis.

Dante's meaning sometimes receives a severe twist; the following (Inf. XI.61-3) seems to brand him with Dadaism:
O ye who have sound reason for your guide,
Now for the shrouded doctrine closely look
Which these strange sounding rimes are meant to hide.

The morality of Inf. XVI.124 seems dubious:

When truth and lies of equal semblance seem,
Truth speaking should be e'er by men abhorred
Last, guiltless, they may lose common esteem.

Cacciaguida's geometry is rusty in Par. XVII.13-15:

Dear stem of mine, whom this high state imubes
With power (like that of earthly minds which see
No triangle can have two sides obtuse) . . .

A bad howler (detected in time for inclusion in the errata) occurs in Purg. XXI.97 where Statius says: 'I mean thy Poem', thereby completely ruining the point of the rest of the canto.

Sheer clumsiness, slovenliness and infelicity are so common that we need only give a few representative examples:

His arms outstretched, after in his mind
He had some counsel weighed and had his eyes
Well gauged the ruin, he grasped me behind. (Inf. XXIV.22-4)

The Holy Portal's door then oped he jarred. (Purg. IX.130)

Pray beauteous lady whom the rays illume
Of Heav'n - if from thy traits I well conceive,
Which witness to the heart 'tis fair assume -
May it please thee to move ahead thy feet. (Purg. XXVIII.43-6)

As bird who clings, amidst the loved fronds,
To his dear birdlet's nest, all through the night
Beneath whose cloak each worldly thing absconds. (Par. XXIII.1-3)

But at this pass myself 'whelmed I perceive;
Ne'er comic bard or tragic strove to rise
- With less effect - up to his narrative. (Par. XXX.22-4)

Bandini's vocabulary is a varied one, as he himself indicates in his preface, but he is singularly free from colloquialisms and Americanisms.

Indeed the only noticeable example is in Purg. V.106-8 where the black angel announces:
Albert R. Bandini (7)

Of him the eternal gain'st thou for thy side
Because one tear my sign on him did blot,
But I shall give the other a hard ride.

Archaisms are common; for a foreigner, Bandini seems to have combed the ancient language well, although he does not always use the words correctly. We find an abundance of the 'distent', 'dispeit' and 'retrorse' class; also forms like 'dove' = 'dived'. In Inf. XVII.39 we have 'Which in front of good lord strengthens wassail!' Among other odd words 'effund' is frequent, as is 'Seigneur' = 'Lord' in all its senses, and likewise 'enceinte'. 'Of this ilk' occurs once; 'ken', 'kenned', often also 'gest' or 'gaste' = 'deed'. Wrong grammatical forms are used for the sake of the rhyme, e.g. 'Kindly his hand in mine he thereon lay' (Inf. XXXI.28); 'Lest thou Lavinia lose, thyself hast slain' (Purg. XVII.37). We get clumsy word groups such as 'cogitations unreclused' (Purg. XV.108); and several times the 'purging realm' or 'purging enclose' is referred to. And the following, however correct etymologically, sounds awful:

And was his mind so filled - soon as create -
With lively virtue that, ere seeing light,
He moved his mother to vaticinate. (Purg. XII.58-60)

Here and there are some good lines, but it is rare to find a sustained passage of more than a line or two. Father Bandini's conclusion to Purg. XXXI is well handled:

O splendour of the living light eterne!
Whoever did beneath Parnassus' shade
Grow pale, or of its wells the taste did learn,
Whose mind would not feel dull and heavy-weighed
If he should try to limn thy aspect there
Where heaven's harmonies around thee played,
Bright as thou didst appear in that bright air.

The following lines (Par. XVI.76-81) are above his usual standard:

And hearing how the families decay
Shall not seem thing of hard or novel sort
Since even cities are corruption's prey.
Of all your things, some time, Death makes his sport -
As of yourselves - but some appear immune
For they last long - and your own lives are short.

There is even one place where Father Bandini might be said to have improved
(in the best sense) on the original, viz. Purg. XXI.73-5:

... since one whose thirst is saltiest
The greatest pleasure in the draught enjoys,
How I was gladdened o'cannot be expressed.

It seems a pity that Father Bandini laid such stress on his time-
schedule. His energy and ingenuity must have been very great to accom-
plish so great a task in so short a time; his knowledge of Dante appears
to have been thoroughly adequate; his Introduction, with the sub-title
'Dante's Message to the Moderns', is well worth reading, and shows a true
appreciation of his author's significance. His occasional successes, and
the irritating frequency with which one notices that a little alteration
could turn a failure into a respectable line or terzina, suggest that in
ten or fifteen years instead of three he might have produced a very credit-
able translation.

As it was his work was coldly received, unenthusiastically reviewed,
and has never attained any popularity.

Charles Lacy Lockert (born 1888) is a native of Clarksville, Tennessee, and was educated at the Southwestern Presbyterian University, where he graduated A.B. in 1907 and A.M. in 1909. After further studies he was awarded a doctorate of philosophy by Princeton University for a thesis on Massinger and Field's The Fatal Dowry (1916), and during the next ten years he was Assistant Professor of English at Kenyon College; since 1925 he has devoted himself to literary work. In addition to his Dante, he has published two volumes of verse translations from the French, viz. The Best Plays of Racine (1936), containing Andromaque, Britannicus, Phèdre and Athalie rendered in heroic couplets, and The Chief Plays of Corneille (1952) in which Le Cid, Horace, Cinna, Polyeucte, Rodogune and Nicomâde are translated in blank verse.

The translator's preface to the Inferno sets forth quite clearly the principles on which the version is constructed. Professor Lockert is dissatisfied with his predecessors and intends to improve on them. Blank verse, he says, 'can give little idea of the intricately rhymed original, and prose can give little idea of any poetry whatsoever'. The translation must therefore be in terza rima but previous renderings 'have been in the main unsatisfactory'. Having stated the difficulties he goes on:

But I do believe that it is possible to render Dante into terza rima with lines of a higher average of excellence, so that the translation
is better as a whole than any existent in blank verse, and with a
fair percentage of individual lines and passages not infrequently
even superior to all previous renderings of them.

The method of achieving this result is then announced to be the very simple
one of increased rhyming licence. Professor Lockert considers Anderson's
to be by far the best terza rima version so far published.

Indeed I doubt whether any considerable improvement upon his . . . would be humanly practicable with no greater licence of rhyme
than he allows himself. But just such greater licence - at times
the most extreme - is in my opinion entirely legitimate in a terza
rima translation; for with the additional latitude of phrasing thus
gained, hitherto unexploited possibilities of rendering are created,
while at the same time the effect of the verse is not seriously im-
paired.

The familiar argument that English not only tolerates less perfect rhymes
than Italian but also benefits from less 'clash of recurrent sounds' is put
forward, then a statement of the liberties taken: partial and imperfect
rhymes, assonance, rhymes on an unaccented word or syllable, eye-rhymes.
Such licence, says the translator, is vindicated by the illustrious prac-
tice of D. G. Rossetti in his fragment of Inf. V and of such translators
of Faust as Bayard Taylor and Latham. To the rhyming licence are joined
others: the meaning has been rendered literally or paraphrased, the terzine
kept intact or overrun, on the basis of choosing the least evil, bearing
in mind that 'a good English translation must first of all be good English,
conformative to English usage and pleasing to the English ear'.

Professor Lockert was evidently familiar with many English translations
of the Inferno before he began his own; and he seems to have been endowed
with a memory which tended to preserve many of these renderings. He has
not hesitated, he tells us,
to use the language of previous prose or blank verse translations;
indeed, I have at times deliberately appropriated whole lines -
have even been at some pains to preserve them intact - when their
felicity has made them definitive renderings (e.g. 'All hope abandon,
ye who enter here'); for I believe that to fit them into the terza rima is a task and achievement arduous enough to be properly considered legitimate and independent work.

He has avoided indebtedness to rhymed versions, except for a few borrowings from Flumtre and Byron in two passages done earlier than the rest, and two lines (IV.8-9) where

an accidental acquaintance with Anderson's splendid lines so impressed them on my mind as to obstruct my own efforts. In no other instance did I ever read a word of Mr Anderson's translation before completing my own, so any other parallels... are purely fortuitous and simply show that two people have independently solved the same problem in the same way.

There is one other notable borrowing; Professor Lockert has taken over complete the last 31 lines of canto V from Dante Gabriel Rossetti, a fact to which attention is drawn both in the preface and in a footnote: 'emulation here would be presumptuous and futile.' In the Introduction Anderson's version is again praised; indeed the translator has attempted the Inferno partly because he feels that 'there is no version of it in our language as well done as Melville Best Anderson's rendering of the other two parts', and he quotes Anderson's own remarks on having improved as he proceeded. Then he adds:

I should as soon think of trying to rival Rossetti's translations as to vie with Mr Anderson's rendering of cantos I, IX and XII of the Purgatorio or cantos XXII and XXXI of the Paradiso - especially these last two; they are definite achievements, not to be improved on.

There is, however, another reason for Professor Lockert having chosen the Inferno: 'because (let the truth be plainly told) it is a greater poem than the rest'. He devotes a couple of pages to arguments in support of this thesis - the arguments are, in our opinion, as unconvincing as the conclusion is unfortunate. Incidentally, the proofs do not seem to have been read with much attention: twice he gives a wrong reference to the invective against Florence in Purg. VI, placing it first in canto IV and then in canto V, and he also refers to 'the thirsty Capocchio's vision
of the water springs of the Casentine. This digression on the superiority of the Inferno rather serves to indicate the author's own limitations than to strengthen the force of the comparison. The short biographical and historical outline in the Introduction is well done; but it is followed by a discussion of Dante's poetic qualities, a comparison of his gifts with those of the great classical writers and some of the moderns, and a summing-up of his position in world literature which is rather ambitious for its context and the space available and sometimes hardly sound theoretically. Professor Lockert, as we might expect, places the narrative faculty first among Dante's gifts, and he also stresses his picturesqueness and his intensity, most of his examples being drawn from the Inferno.

The translation itself is disappointing. Professor Lockert certainly makes full use of the rhyming licence he claims, e.g. we have 'Mantua - pure', 'toward - crowd', 'distinguish - marsh', 'therewith - lieth - beneath', 'near - sir - fire', 'greater - Gualdrada - Guerra'. Some passages might at first sight be taken for blank verse, e.g. at X.31 ff we have the succession of rhymes: 'there - from - sheer - form - countenance - scorn - hands - between - sense - eyen - disdain - thine - fain - showed - then - stood - yond - abroad - returned - him - learned - chin'. The rhymes are further helped out by archaisms, e.g. (XII.28-30):

Thus we pursued our downward way, upon
The dumpage of those stones, which from the weight
Unwonted, often moved beneath my shoon,
while expediends like 'I wot', 'I ween', 'adown', 'anear' and 'anigh' are too frequent. We also get awkward phrases introduced for the purposes of rhyme; 'chose' = 'chosen' appears more than once; XVI.76-8 is typical of many terzine:

Thus I exclaimed aloud with lifted face.
The three, who found their answer in my cry,
Glances exchanged, as hearing truth express.

Overrunning of terzine to assist rhyming is also frequent. There liberties
might none the less be tolerated and even approved if their use enabled
the translator to reproduce Dante more faithfully than his predecessors,
but neither in the matter of accuracy nor style does he seem to be a whit
better. We are obliged to label the greater part of this version 'trans-
latese', by which we mean that it is no more than a mechanical transliter-
atation which neither captures the tone of the original, nor substitutes for
it a comparable English style. In the course of the Introduction he quotes,
as an example of Dante's 'terse, restrained, yet vibrant intensity of
compact statement', Inf. II.1-9 in the following prose version, presumably
his own:

The day was departing, and the dusky air was taking from their
labours the living things that are on earth; and I, all alone,
was preparing to sustain the struggle, both of the journey and
of the pity, which memory, that errs not, shall relate.

This is well put, and does succeed in conveying something of the quality
he is emphasising, but in the text itself we read:

Day was departing, and the dusky air
Was taking all things on the earth that are,
Each from his labours. I alone prepare
That I may undergo the double war
Of the long road and sights thereon so sad,
Which memory shall relate, that doth not err.

These two terzine are probably no worse than those of a dozen earlier
translators, but put alongside Professor Lockert's own prose they seem
to contradict his initial assertion that terza rima must be resorted to
because 'prose can give little idea of any poetry whatsoever'. Or com-
pare the following terzine, in which full liberty of rhyme is taken, with
that by Anderson (given in the article dealing with him) in whom Lockert
complains of 'a certain coldness of temper' (V.46-51):

And as the cranes go chanting their sad lay,
Making in air a long line of themselves,
Thus by that steep commotion on their way
I saw the shades borne, uttering their wails;
Wherefore I said: 'Master, who are these folk
Whom this dark tempest so doth scourge with ills?'

And what are we to say of a terzina like XVI.112-4:

Then, turning to the right hand, cast it he
Forth at some distance, nor the edge anigh,
Into the chasm's black profundity

Or XX.64-72 which is typical of the general style:

'Twixt Garda and Val Camonica, I wot,
More than a thousand springs bathe Appennino;
And in that lake their waters rest. A spot
Is in its midst which pastors of the Trentino,
Of Brescia, and Verona, all, no doubt,
Alike would bless if they should thither go.
Peschiera's fortress, beautiful and stout,
Brescians and Bergamese to hold at bay,
Stands where the shore is lowest round about.

Nor does Professor Lockert fare any better with the more colloquial or racy passages, as the following extract (XXII.43-69) shows:

'Master, discover if thou canst who is
That luckless wretch,' I cried, 'who thus forlorn
Is in the clutches of his enemies,'

My guide drew near and asked of him, ere torn,
His origin, and thus did he accord
An answer: 'In Navarre was I born,
My mother placed me servant to a lord,
For she had borne me to a ribald sire,
Who both himself and all his means destroned. (sic)
Later I served in good King Thibault's hire;
I set me there to practise barratry,
For which I pay the reckoning in this fire.'

Here Ciriatto, from whose mouth rose high
On either side a tusk as of a boar,
Made him to feel how one is ripped thereby.
Of evil cats the mouse was in the power;
But Barbariccia arms about him cast,
And cried: 'Off! While I hold him thus, give o'er!'
Then, having round unto my master faced:
'If thou desirest aught more from him to know,
Ask it forthwith, ere some one lay him waste.'

'Of the other sinners,' spake my leader now,
'Say if thou wittest of any Italian there
Beneath the tar.' And he: 'Not long ago
I left one who to such was neighbour near,
Would that his covering I still had worn,
For then I should nor claw nor grapple fear.'

- 692 -
In the Appendix, in addition to the Ulysses passage, we give an extract from the Ugolino passage in canto XXXIII, which is a good example of all the faults complained of. One might suppose that the translator was 'on his toes' here, for in a footnote he quotes Landor to the effect that lines 46-75 are 'unequalled by any other continuous thirty in the whole dominions of poetry'.

There are, of course, some better passages than those quoted. Professor Lockert's rendering of VI.94-9 is majestic:

And said my guide to me: 'He nevermore
Shall rouse, until the angel's trumpet sounds;
But when in glory cometh the adverse Power,
Each shall revisit his sad grave, the bounds
Of mortal flesh take on again, and hear
That which to all eternity resounds.'

His version of XXVI.19-24 is pleasing:

I sorrowed then and sorrow now again
When unto what I saw is turned my thought,
And curb my genius with a tighter rein
Lest it should run where virtue guides it not;
So that I may not cheat myself if grace
Of star or better thing that gift hath brought.

Such terzine are, however, very much swamped in the general mediocrity.

A glance at Professor Lockert's translations of French classical drama indicate that similar deficiencies exist there. Although he uses the same rhyming liberties already mentioned for the couplets of Racine, he seems to miss the incisive snap of such lines as Phèdre's

 Ils s'aiment! Par quel charmé ont-ils trompé mes yeux?
Comment se sont-ils vus? depuis quand? dans quels lieux?
Tu le savais: pourquoi me laissais-tu séduire?
De leur furtive ardeur ne pouvais-tu m'instruire?
Les a-t-on vus souvent se parler, se chercher?
Dans le fond des forêts allaient-ils se cacher?

in his rendering:

They love! they love! Oh, they have dimmed mine eyes
By what device of magic? How have they met?
How long and where? Thou knowest it. Why, why let
Me be deceived? Of their hid sighs couldst not
Thou tell me? Oft they have been seen, I wot,
Seeking each other, or talking. Did they go
Into the forest depths to hide? No, No!

Our gravity may be a little strained to-day if we hear the famous soliloquy
from the first act of Le Cid declaimed at the Comédie Française; but it
would surely break down altogether at Professor Lockert's version:

Pierced to my bosom's core am I
By an unlooked-for dagger's mortal thrust;
Hapless avenger of a quarrel most just,
And wretched victim of Fate's cruelty,
I stand bewildered, and my soul, thus brought
Low, can find help in naught.
So near at last to love's dear recompense,
And learn — ah God, what pain! —
Of insult to my father: the offence
Was done him by the father of Chimene.

His blank verse, where he is freed from the tyranny of rhyme, is much
better, although it does not in the least reproduce Corneille's style.

Thus when Cinna defies Augustus:

C'est là d'un beau dessein l'illustre et seule cause;
Et, puisqu'à vos rigueurs la trahison m'expose,
N'attendez point de moi d'infâmes repentirs,
D'inutiles regrets, ni de honteux soupirs.
Le sort vous est propice autant qu'il m'est contraire:
Je sais ce qu'il j'ai fait, et ce qu'il vous faut faire;
Vous devez un exemple à la postérité,
Et mon trépas importe à votre sûreté.

the four couplets have a nicely calculated phrasing, rising to the climax
of the sixth line, and then falling to the calm logic of despair. The

English version runs:

That is the honorable and only cause
Of our great purpose: and now that treachery
Exposes me to thy relentless wrath,
Look not for base repentance, vain regrets,
Or shameful sighs from me. Fate is to thee
As kind as it is cruel to me. I know
What I have done: I know what thou must do.
Thou needs must make of me a dread example.
My death is necessary to thy safety.
This has a genuinely Shakespearian ring in parts, and the sense is skilfully worded, but the effect is quite different from that of the French.

Lockert's Inferno was received without enthusiasm by the critics. Dr La Piana dismisses him in a single sentence: 'Unfortunately his theory is not supported by the results of his version.' The Times Literary Supplement (3rd September 1931), summed up concisely the faults alike of translation and introduction, finding them

in view of their author's unconcealed resolution to excel, a little disconcerting in their technical amateurishness as well as in the strange blend of learning and ingenuousness which he displays both in his criticism and in his aesthetics. . . . Mr Lockert is, musically, a beginner.

It is pleasant to record that Professor Lockert, both in his Inferno and in the reviews of later translations which he wrote for Modern Language Notes, is generous in his judgments of his rivals. We have already quoted the high praise which he accorded to Anderson; his views regarding Fletcher, Binyon and Professor Bickersteth will be found in the appropriate articles. In the high praise which he accorded to the last of these, he took the opportunity of repeating his earlier commendation of Anderson's version.
Jefferson Butler Fletcher (1865-1946) was born in Chicago; he graduated A.B. in 1887 and A.M. two years later at Harvard. He taught English and Comparative Literature at Harvard from 1890 till 1904, becoming Assistant Professor in 1902. From 1904 till his retirement in 1939 he was Professor of Comparative Literature at Columbia University. He served in the American Expeditionary Force during 1917-18. His publications include The Religion of Beauty in Women (1911), Dante (1916), Symbolism of the Divine Comedy (1931) and Literature of the Italian Renaissance (1934).

The year 1931 saw the appearance of Lacy Lockert's Inferno, Bandini's Paradiso and Fletcher's complete Comedy; and one overworked British reviewer remarked that if the perfect translation did not come from America it would not be for want of trying. Fletcher's version differed from the other two, and from all previous English translations, in its metrical form, which left the middle line of each terzina unrhymed (except in the antepenultimate line of each canto), so that only one pair of rhymes need be found for each three lines, and there is no rhyme linkage between successive terzine. In his Introduction Fletcher, having enumerated the defects of previous translations, and the inadequacy of all the types of blank verse so far tried, sets out the difficulties of terza rima in English, citing Saintsbury's views by way of support. Fletcher mentions that he thinks that...
Grandgent in his selections had 'gone far towards achieving the impossible' but doubted whether such a tour de force could be carried through the whole poem. Having added that he feels the most serious objection to English terza rima to be the fact that so many rhymes fatigue the ear 'like a kettle drum going all the time', he concludes that the omission of the middle rhyme is a good way of removing this defect and at the same time simplifying the task.

And the surprising thing is - if I may judge by my own very imperfect ear - the difference in effect, for English, is not so great as might be expected. I do not so much miss the linking rhymes. I do miss agreeably the cloying excess of rhyme. Of course this is a personal matter and not to be argued. But even if it be denied, and a translation of the poem in rhymed but unlinked tercets be admitted only as a compromise, it seems to me a decent one. It can be relatively faithful to the text - and to English. It does fairly reproduce the movement of Dante's verse.

Fletcher was probably unaware that he had predecessors; had he known of the experiments of August Wilhelm Schlegel almost 150 years earlier, he would almost certainly have quoted the German poet's opinion:

In unserer Sprache war es unmöglich, diese dreifachen Reime beizuhalten und treu zu übersetzen; allein der Wohlklang litt auch dadurch, daß ich den mittleren Vers ohne Reim ließ, weniger, als er im Italienischen dadurch verlieren würde.

In the translations of various passages which he published during the last decade of the eighteenth century, some 1700 lines in all, Schlegel used this system, the rhymes being feminine and the unrhymed endings masculine, e.g. (Inf. I.1-6):

Als ich die Bahn des Lebens halb vollendet,
Fand ich in einem dunkeln Walde mich,
Weil ich vom graden Weg mich abgewendet.
Es fällt mir hart zu sagen, wie der wilde
Verwachs'ne, rauhe Wald beschaffen war,
Denn noch erschrickt mein Geist vor seinem Bilde.

Some other German translators followed suit, notably Schlegel's friend Adolf Wagner, uncle of the composer. In his earliest experiments, before
1843, Thomas William Parsons had also tried this form, but discarded it as unsuitable. The only fragment extant is the beginning of Paradiso I, which was printed in the edition of 1893; oddly enough Parsons reverses Schlegel's formula, using masculine rhymes and feminine unrhymed endings:

The glory of Him who moveth all He made  
Shines through the universe with piercing splendour  
In one part more, and elsewhere less displayed.  
Up in that heaven that most receives His light  
I was; and saw things that no mortal being  
Coming down thence, could tell, or knows to write,  
Because our intellect approaching so  
Towards its desire, to such a height is carried  
That back the memory hath not power to go.

Nor, as we shall see, did Fletcher lack a successor, for Thomas Weston Ramsey (evidently himself unaware of Fletcher's previous use of it) adopted the same metrical device for his Paradiso.

The arguments in favour of this simplification are powerful ones. The almost insuperable difficulty of finding triple rhymes in English, of interlacing them in such a complicated manner that one must always be thinking out several terzine at a time, and of combining the exigencies of rhyme and metre with a faithful rendering of the text, had long been notorious. The number of bad terza rima renderings was already very large, and was increasing; the degree of success achieved by Anderson fell far short of the ideal. Some form of compromise was implicit in every translation; something must be surrendered; and the proposal to drop the middle rhyme was not unreasonable. To the obvious objection that the linking of the terzine is one of the most characteristic features of the original the retort might well be made that if it is a feature that must be purchased at the expense of inversion and contortion the decision must be in favour of being 'relatively faithful to the text - and to English'. The experiment was certainly worth making.
It cannot be denied that at times the absence of the link is very noticeable; but it is probably mainly so to those who already know the original. One misses the correspondence in sound, because one has the sound of the Italian in mind. There is also a vaguely unsatisfying feeling for another reason. The unrhymed line gives Fletcher opportunities to use words for which no rhyme would normally be available; but as one reads a line ending with, say, 'threaten' or 'Burden', on instinctively wonders what kindred sound is going to be its partner, before remembering that it is to remain without one. One could, however, probably adjust one's ear to this within a few cantos; other poets have introduced unrhymed lines successfully, and one does not notice the want in, for instance, FitzGerald's *Omar* or Tennyson's *The Daisy* and similar poems.

In judging the success of the translation as a whole, and especially in comparing it with others, one must try to assess how far the increased freedom gained by dropping the rhyme has been turned to good account. The device cannot be employed legitimately merely to make the translator's task easier, or enable him to do his work more quickly; it must be justified by the extent to which the liberty taken has permitted improvements in clarity or poetic quality which full terza rima would have hindered.

At this point it seems fitting to quote the views of two contemporary American scholars, the significance of which is borne out by an analysis of Fletcher's version in greater detail. Professor Lacy Lockert, himself, as we have seen, an advocate of increased licence in matters of rhyme for such purposes, reviewed Fletcher's Comedy in *Modern Language Notes* (Vol. 47, 1932, pp. 481-2). He found that the 'actual performance unquestionably ranks high among the translations of the entire Comedy' and thought it 'comparable only with that of Anderson'. He goes on:
Jefferson Butler Fletcher (5)

Fletcher's Inferno is a little the better of the two, though less well done than the subsequent sections of either; in the Purgatorio the honours are doubtful; Anderson's Paradiso is distinctly the better. ... Anderson's terza rima, read in larger units, reveals a lyric quality, and his finest passages attain a poetic height, which Fletcher never quite achieves.

Dr La Piana (Dante's American Pilgrimage, pp. 174-5) writes:

Although the mutilated terza rima used by Fletcher did not receive an enthusiastic response, the version had the merit of being, in considerable measure, really new. In his introduction Fletcher mentions his indebtedness to Longfellow, Johnson, Norton, and Grandgent 'for occasional phrases adopted' from their versions. As a rule, however, he departs from the phraseology adopted by previous translators and expresses the meaning of the original in a new English form.

Another and perhaps more important merit of Fletcher's version is that it contains a minimum of the additions, substitutions, and transpositions which detract from previous rhymed versions, Anderson's included. To the reader who is familiar with the original, a comparison between Fletcher's version of the beginning of St. Bernard's prayer to the Virgin Mary in the last canto of the Paradiso and Anderson's rendering of the same lines will serve as an excellent example of Fletcher's method and its results.

The passages in question will be found in Appendix I.

An examination of the two translations, by whatever method, endorses Professor Lockert's coupling of them as the two best terza rima efforts to date. Whether one judges them from general reading, from the close comparison of test passages, or from the assessment of a random sample, they are found to be approximately in the same class and well ahead of all predecessors. We can only say 'approximately' because the methods used for an objective assessment are necessarily affected by many variables and personal elements; but although such tests could not be used to establish Fletcher as superior to Anderson or vice versa, the fact that they place them close together and well above Haselfoot affords a reliable confirmation of Professor Lockert's opinion.

In making these comparisons, however, apart from such effect as the absence of rhyme linage may have had on the impression gained from continuous
Jefferson Butler Fletcher (6)

reading, we have not 'penalised' Fletcher in any way when appraising the
test passages or the random sample: in other words, he has been given the
full benefit of his immense advantage over Anderson in having much less
onerous technical difficulties to surmount. It is this advantage, of course,
which enables him to achieve the minimum of additions and inversions to which
Dr La Piana refers. Just here lies the weakness of his result. By whatever
means we judge him, we give him the benefit of the greater directness and
fidelity which freedom from the trammels of terza rima enabled him to
realise; so that, if in other respects his work had been of the same stan-
dard as Anderson's, we should expect to find him not in the same class but
a good deal higher. It is evident, therefore, that there are in Fletcher's
version features whose inferiority to some degree cancels out the absence
of distortions.

We know that Anderson spent twenty-one years over his translation,
and that he was still revising it when he died some dozen years later.
We have no record of the time Fletcher spent, but internal evidence suggests
that it was a great deal less. He appears to have succumbed to the tem-
tation already hinted at, of often using the easier technique to simplify
the process rather than to improve the result. The paradox is common in
art and in other things:

Oui, l'œuvre sort plus belle
D'une forme au travail
Rebelle.

The hard task is often done better than the easy one. There is also
Fletcher's remark in his Introduction about 'my own very imperfect ear'.
Just how seriously this is meant we do not know, but there is some ground
for believing it to be true; one often wonders if Fletcher had really
'heard' the lines he was translating. There is, moreover, a certain
awkwardness in the handling of words and phrases at times, indicating that
Jefferson Butler Fletcher (7)

Fletcher did not possess the necessary technical ability for writing verse, in spite of his obviously high ability to appreciate it. In these two last respects Anderson is likewise deficient, so that on the whole Fletcher's failure to improve materially on the attainment of Anderson must be referred to a lower degree of conscientiousness and application. A few examples are now given to show the characteristics of Fletcher's work.

There is frequent weakening which suggests over-ready acceptance of an easy rhyme, e.g. in the Francesca episode we find in Inf. V.100 'Love, who on gentle heart at once attends' rhyming with 'offends' in line 102; followed by 'Love, who none loved not loving will allow' rhyming with 'e'en now' in lines 103-5. A little later (lines 133-6) we have:

   When we had read there how the longed-for smile
   Was kissed by such a lover, this one then,
   Who parts not from me this eternal while,
   Kissed me upon my mouth all tremblingly.

   The clamant need here is to get line 135, 'questi, che mai da me non fia divisa', right first, because the strength of the passage is concentrated in it; actually it has become a mere appendage to 'smile'. In the next canto at Inf. VI.28-30 we have:

   As is the dog that, barking, begs a bone,
   And quiets as he bites the proffered bait,
   And to devour it strives and strains alone.

   Here the quite gratuitous bone has been introduced for the rhyme - but Cerberus is not the kind of dog who sits up and begs for his food. In Inf. XIV there is a fairly good rendering of lines 28-30:

   Over the interminable sand, with slow
   Fall, fire was raining in dilated flakes,
   Like those of snow on alps when no winds blow,

   but in the second part of the description, lines 37-9, runs:

   Such were the heats eternal that here fell,
   Kindling the very sands, as tinder steel,
   To make the torment so twice terrible.
The first of these lines is such an inept equivalent for 'Tale scendeva l'etternale ardore' that the attempt at onomatopoeia and the alliteration that follow are lost. The extreme slovenliness of some passages suggests undue haste, e.g. (Inf. XXIX.40-5):

When we were well above that cloister, last
In Malebolge, where before our gaze
All the lay brothers visibly were massed,
Shriekings assailed me, and the sound of tears,
Which were as arrows all so barbed with grief
That with both hands I had to close my ears...

A little thought could surely have avoided both 'visibly were massed' and 'the sound of tears'. Sometimes the forced rhymes are ridiculous, e.g. (Purg. IV.88-90):

'Such is this hill,' said he, 'that though the start
Down yonder at its base is ever hard,
The higher one climbs, the less it tries the heart.'

Even more infelicitous is the beginning of the famous invective (Purg. VI.76-8):

Ah, slavish Italy, guesthouse of rue,
Ship without steersman in the stress of storm,
Of provinces not mistress, but of stew;
in spite of the striving for effect in the middle line. One would expect a better effort to make clear Statius' vital explanation in Purg. XXI.59-66:

It trembles here above but when some soul,
Feeling itself made clean, rises, or starts
To mount; and such shouts follow to extol.
Such cleansedness the will alone attests,
Which summons up the soul, all free to change
Her cloister, and with volition her invests.
So was willed ever; but the inclination
Which, counter to that will, was drawn to sin,
Bars, - by high justice drawn to expiation.

That Fletcher can do much better with complicated passages is evident from his competent handling of the astronomy of Purg. IV. We get sheer clumsiness in lines like 'Forth issued where must climb those upward bound' (Purg.XXVII.57) or 'On heaven Beatrice, I on her, held watch' (Par. II.22). There are
a great many passages that we might brand as 'translatese', e.g. Par. XVI.58-63:

Had been that gentry which of all hath run
The most awry no stepdame unto Caesar,
But gracious, as a mother to her son,
One who for money-changing and for trade
Turned Florentine were sent to Semifonte,
Where his grandfather used to beg his bread.

This sort of thing ruins the effect of a terzina like Par. XXX.7-9:

And as advanceeth farther forth the dearest
Handmaiden of the sun, so doth the heaven
Upclose light after light unto the clearest.

The effect of a hastily grasped rhyme word is bad in Par. XXIV.25-7:

Wherefore the pen skips, and I write it not,
Since our imagination for such folds
- Much more our speech - is of a tint too hot,

and even worse in Par. XXX.88-90:

And when the arches of my eyebrows drank
Thereof, suddenly, as it seemed to me,
The length of it into a roundness shrank,

where in the context the last word should have been avoided at all costs.

Most translators are obliged at times by the exigencies of rhyme to
use enjambement at the end of terzine which should be self-contained.

Fletcher's simplification should have enabled him to avoid this, but we
find it frequently in most unfortunate places, e.g.

It and the others moved then to their dance,
And veiled themselves, like swiftly flying sparks,
In distance. And in timid hesitance,
I said . . .

Light intellectual and full of love,
Love of true good and full of joy, a joy
Transcending every sweetness. Here above . . .

There are numerous passages in Fletcher's translation which show
that he could do much better. Here for instance are some lines from
Inf. III (22-30 and 106-120):
Here sighs and clamors and shrill wailings burst
Loud echoing upon the starless air;
Whereby to weeping was I moved at first.
Uncouth tongues, utterances horrible,
Words of despondency and tones of wrath,
High voices and hoarse, and sound of hands as well,
Made up a tumult, which so swirling goes
For ever in that air of timeless murk
As sand in deserts when a whirlwind blows.

Then were they herded in a huddled crowd,
Bitterly weeping, to the evil shore
That waits for every man who fears not God.
Charon the demon with the eyes of coal,
Beckoning, garners them together there;
Beats with his oar each backward-hanging soul.
As in the passing of the autumn's breath
Fall one by one the leaves, until the bough
Sees all its spoils upon the ground beneath,
So did the evil seed of Adam fall,
Down dropping, one by one, from off that shore
At signal, as the falcon to its call.
So they set out upon the dusky tide,
And before yonder they have disembarked,
Yet a new host assembles on this side.

An extract from Virgil's speech on Fortune illustrates Dr La Piana's remark as to Fletcher's ability to find a new English form for many passages (Inf. VII.73-90):

He that by all-transcendent wisdom made
The heavens, and gave them those who should so guide
That each part's glory is to each part rayed,
And light in equal distribution rained,
Likewise unto the glories of the world
A guide and general minister ordained,
Who these vain goods from time to time transmits
From folk to folk, from one to other blood,
Past all impediment of human wits.
So may one race prevail, another pass,
Both in obedience to her decree
Who hides, as hides the serpent in the grass.
Your knowledge cannot counterweigh her odds;
She makes provision, judges, and maintains
Her governance, as theirs the other gods.
Respite ever her permutations spurn;
Necessity compels her to be swift,
So fast he comes who follows up his turn.

Sometimes Fletcher can be almost painfully vivid, as in Inf. XIX.49-51:
I stood there like the friar that must shrive
The base assassin who, when he is fixed,
Recalls him - to be a moment more alive.

He can be graphic and colloquial, and he makes the most of the demons in
Inf. XXI and XXII, e.g. lines 133-41 of the latter:

Now Calcabrina, angry at the jape,
Was flying close behind, and glad to pick
A quarrel, hoped the sinner might escape;
And seeing that the sharper had got off,
He straightway turned his talons on his mate,
And grappled with him right above the trough.
But the other was a hawk full grown, no fear,
To use his claws as well; and both plumped down
Into the middle of the boiling mere.

In another vein are such competent terzine as these from Purg. IV
(31-3 and 40-2):

Up through the riven rock we made our way;
Cliffs hemmed us in on either side; the ground
Beneath called feet and hands both into play.

Surpassing sight, the summit pierced the skies,
And steeper was the sloping flank than line
Which between center and mid-quadrant lies.

Later in the canto the Belacqua incident is well done, e.g. (127-35):

And he: 'Brother, what boots the going higher?
The Bird of God that sitteth at the gate
Would not admit me to the cleansing fire.
First round me here outside needs must the sky
Revolve as many times as in my life,
Since to the last I left the saving sigh,
Unless before then help by prayer be given,
Which rises from a heart that lives in grace.
None other serves; for 'tis unheard in heaven.'

In Purg. XI there are several good passages, e.g. (73-8 and 109-11):

And harkening, I bowed my face, and one
Among them - not the one that spoke before -
Twisted himself under the hampering stone;
And saw, and knew me well, and cried aloud,
Keeping his eyes with difficulty fixed
Upon me, going at their level, bowed.

All Tuscany resounded with his fame
Who makes so little way in front of me;
Scarce in Siena now is breathed his name.
The following is a pleasant version of Purg. XXV.10-15:

And as a little stork, that lifts its wing
In eagerness to fly, and ventures not
To quit the nest, and droops it fluttering,
So, ardent first with will to ask, then weak,
Was I, yet coming to the act at last
Which he performs who is about to speak.

Lines 118-20 of Par. III have the required tempestuousness and contrast well with the difficult terzina which follows:

'And this of mighty Constance is the light,
Who to the second blast of Swabia
Conceived the third, and last, imperial might.'

Having thus spoken, she began to sing
Ave Maria, and vanished as she sang,
As down through watery depths a weighty thing.

Fletcher's version of Par. VI.61-78 is one of the best renderings noted of this passage:

What then it did, when from Ravenna's shore
It leapt the Rubicon, was of such flight
That after it nor tongue nor pen could soar.
Over towards Spain it wheeled the serried ranks,
Then towards Durazzo; and Pharsalia smote
So that the pain was felt on Nile's hot banks.
Antandros, Simois - whence first it flew -
It saw again, and there where Hector lies;
And - ill for Ptolemy - shook itself anew.
Next swooped it down on Juba lightning-fast;
And wheeled about thereafter to your west,
Hearing resound there Pompey's clarion blast.
For what it did by the next following Chief
Brutus with Cassius barks in hell; and both
Modena and Perugia came to grief;
And ever Cleopatra sorroweth,
Who, wretched, fleeing from before its wrath,
Took from the adder sudden and black death.

Another excellent passage is Par. XIV.112-25:

So here we see the little motes that go
Now level, now aslant, some short some long,
All changing aspect ever, swift and slow,
Dancing along the ray whereby that shade
Sometimes is streaked which for their shelter men
With native wit and practised art have made.
As harp or viol strung in harmony
Of many strings still makes a dulcet chime
To one who catches not the melody,
So through the Cross from all that radiant throng
There rose a swelling strain, which left me wrapt,
Yet without understanding of the song.

There is also a good version of Par. XXIII. 97-102:

The sweetest melody men ever sing
On earth, the most alluring to the soul,
Would seem a riven cloud's harsh thundering,
If measured by the music of that lyre
With which was crowned the Sapphire beautiful,
By which serenest heaven is made sapphire.

The following lines comprise the most successful portion of Fletcher's final canto, and compare favourably with other translations (46-66):

And I, who to the end of all desires
Was now approaching, quenched, as I needs must
Even of my desire the inner fires.
Smilingly, Bernard beckoned unto me
To look on high; but I of mine own self
Already was as he would have me be;
Because my sight, that pure and purer grew,
Deeper and deeper entered through the ray
Of the high Light which in itself is true.
Thenceforward was my vision mightier
Than speech of ours, which failleth at such sight,
And faileth memory at such barrier.
Such as he is who seeth in a dream,
And the dream goeth, and the mood impressed
Bideth, nor more may memory redeem,
Even such an I; for almost faileth me
The vision, yet the sweetness born of it
Distilleth in my heart perpetually.
So under sunray is unsealed the frost;
So on the wind in scattered fragile leaves
The wisdom of the Sibyl once was lost.

In his Introduction Fletcher records thanks due to other translators 'especially to Longfellow, Norton, Johnson and Grandgent, for occasional phrases adopted'. Some of these may have been noticed by the reader; they are not sufficiently frequent to constitute a striking feature. Fletcher, although nurtured in the New England tradition from his college days onward, was for the most part verbally independent of it. For the purpose of comparison his version of Par. XIV. is included in Appendix II. As a
Jefferson Butler Fletcher (14)

rule Fletcher prefers everyday expressions, but it will be noticed that he has borrowed the really fine line, one of Johnson's few improvements on Longfellow, 'Wherefore whatever of gratuitous light', which has a genuinely Miltonic ring. In some passages Longfellow and Norton are followed fairly closely; the opening of Purg. XIX has also been included in Appendix II to show this. There are fewer verbal coincidences with Anderson, and in many cases they may well have been arrived at independently. Fletcher also acknowledges help from Harry Morgan Ayres, whose own prose translation did not appear till nearly twenty years later. In this connexion one is inclined to ascribe to Ayres' suggestion Fletcher's rendering of Inf. XVI.45, 'More than aught else, a cold wife caused my shame' ( = 'la fiera moglie più ch'altrò mi noce'). Ayres himself renders 'fiera' as 'reluctant', and no doubt before long Signora Rusticucci will be labelled as 'frigid'.

The Times Literary Supplement, which noticed Fletcher's Comedy very briefly (13th October 1932, p. 738), was much less favourable in its opinion than the American critics. While granting that he has 'the merit of keeping close to the original throughout', the reviewer felt that Fletcher lacked 'any secure grasp of the technique of verse' and only produced a readable piece 'now and again'. No remark was made as to the success or otherwise of his simplified rhyming system.

As Fletcher himself remarked in his Introduction, in the end approval or disapproval of any translation is a personal matter. One friend who read some of the test passages singled out Fletcher as the best imitation of Dante he had read in rhyme, but several others passed him over as merely mediocre. Probably he does not seem quite so flat to American readers, because the literary language beyond the Atlantic is rather more everyday than ours. To sum up, it seems fair to place Fletcher's among the better rhymed trans-
lations, with the proviso that more time and care should have been devoted to it in order to get full value for the opportunities offered by the dropping of the third rhyme. As to the latter feature, plausible as are the arguments for its omission, its importance in Dante's scheme must make us very conscious of its absence; while for those who do not know the original the defective form of the terza rima must necessarily convey less of the character of the original than a form which reproduces Dante's metrical scheme completely.
The Paradiso of Dante Alighieri, with a translation into English triple rhyme and a brief introduction by Geoffrey L. Bickersteth. Cambridge: at the University Press. 1932. 8 by 5 in., pp. xxxiii, 299 and table at end. Preface, pp. vii-viii; Contents, p. ix; Introduction, pp. xi-xxxiii; Italian and English texts, printed in terzine, on facing pages (no arguments or notes), pp. 2-299; table of arrangement of Paradise, two facing pages at end.

Geoffrey Langdale Bickersteth (born 1884) is the second son of the Rev. Samuel Bickersteth, D.D. He was educated at Charterhouse, then at Christ Church, Oxford, where he took a second class in Greats, afterwards studying philology at Munich and Heidelberg. He was Senior Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Glasgow from 1919 till 1938, since when he has been Regius (Chalmers) Professor of English Literature at the University of Aberdeen. Among his published works are Carducci (selected poems with verse translations, 1913), The Poems of Leopardi (with a very full introduction, also verse translation and notes, 1923), Form, Tome and Rhythm in Italian Poetry (1934), The Golden World of King Lear (1947) and Dante's Virgil (1951). In 1934 his Herford Memorial Lecture to the Manchester Dante Society, 'On Translating Dante', was published in pamphlet form by Sherratt and Hughes.

Professor Bickersteth is therefore a practised artist in translation, and one, moreover, who has given considerable thought to the principles underlying the art. His versions of Carducci and Leopardi, with their scholarly accompaniments, received high praise from competent authorities. Before we discuss his Dante, the reader might like to have brief specimens of these earlier works. From Carducci we shall take the well-known sonnet, Il Bove.

- 711 -
I love thee, holy ox: a soothing sense
Of power and peace thou lodgest in my heart.
How solemn, like a monument, thou art,
Watching the pastures fertile and immense!
Or 'neath the yoke with calmness how intense
Dost thou to man's quick toil thine aid impart?
He shouts and goads thee: patient of the smart;
Thine eyes, slow turning, claim more reverence.
From thy broad nostrils, black and moist, doth rise
Thy breath in fragrant incense: like a psalm
Swells on the air thy lowing's joyful strain.
Austerely sweet are thy grave emerald eyes,
And in their depths is mirrored, wide and calm,
All the divine green silence of the plain.

The sestet here particularly impresses; one feels that later Professor Bickersteth would have done better than 'calmness how intense' and 'claim more reverence' in the octet. A stanza from 'Ad Angello Mai' is a good example of his Leopardi.

Whither have fled our light-winged phantasies
Of unknown regions haunted
By unknown denizens or of the inn
Where stars are lodged by day, the far enchanted
Chouch of the young Aurora and that unseen
Sleep of the largest planet through the night?
Lo, they have all clean vanished;
Pent in a narrow map the globe is charted;
All things are uniform: discovery
Shows but a widening blank. Comes truth to light,
And thou art straightway banished,
Belov'd imagining: our minds are parted
From thee forever; now no longer lie
The years enthralled beneath thy potent spell;
Fled is the charm that soothed our woes so well.

Professor Bickersteth's preface acknowledges indebtedness to the translations of Cary, Norton, Tozer and Wicksteed, from whom he has occasionally borrowed, as well as to the critical work of de Sanctis and Vossler. His introduction explains that the translation is primarily intended for the reader with whom the third and greatest cantica of the Divine Comedy counts (outside the Bible) as the supreme expression in literature of the Christian faith, and, secondly,
is specially addressed to those whom the Paradiso fascinates and delights as the supreme achievement of the poet's art.

He amplifies this in terms of actual practice:

Therefore, on the technical side, my aim has been twofold: at once to render the verbal meaning of the Italian with fidelity (which is not the same as absolute literalness) and to write to Dante's melody - that is, of all the wealth of meaning which derives from the varied rhythm, tones and cadences of the Italian verses, to echo so much as my ear and command of English idiom and skill in versification would allow.

After a discussion of the technical features of Dante's own verse, Professor Bickersteth tackles the objections to terza rima in English, and disposes of the familiar complaints, concluding that:

The real difficulty of writing Dantesque terza rima in English is not to find the rhymes but to imitate Dante in his artistic use of them.

He distinguishes three such characteristic uses: to link the stanzas into a continuous pattern, to emphasise and clarify the subject matter, and to contribute towards the musical effect or cadence of the poem. Having given some examples he adds:

These are all features of Dante's style which the reader, without even glancing at the original Italian, should be able to gather from a competent translation of it or, indeed, of any one of its terzine; for in style each terzina is the whole poem in miniature. Nor can there be any question but that the translator, in seeking to reproduce them in English, will be immensely aided by using Dante's own metre.

The translation, then, is in terza rima, made in the conviction that the best and most useful translation is one which approximates as nearly as possible in every respect to the original, with the proviso that fidelity rather than literal accuracy is desirable so far as the meaning is concerned, and that some measure of licence in the matter of rhyming sounds is permissible, e.g. eye-rhymes and other slightly imperfect ones, and the repetition of the same rhyming sounds and reasonable intervals.
He uses masculine syllables for the rhymes in the main, with a sparing and judicious admixture of feminine ones; unlike Binyon, he does not rhyme on unaccented syllables.

As an indication of Professor Bickersteth's method and degree of success we quote his version of a difficult passage (XX.1-12) followed by those of Anderson, Binyon and Fletcher. For convenience of reference these extracts have been placed in Appendix II. All four renderings have some points in their favour, and every one might benefit Rx by borrowing from one of the others; but most readers will probably agree, after examination and comparison with the Italian in each case, that Professor Bickersteth's earns the maximum number of points. He has fewer awkwardnesses and more successes than any of the others, a more natural rhythmical flow, and a livelier suggestion of the poetic quality of the original. Any translator working on this passage must do so with line 12 in mind, and it is noticeable that all three versions in terza rima use the rhyme word 'fade' for this, the preceding rhymes involving some improvisation; among these Professor Bickersteth's make fewest concessions, and fully justify the imperfect 'shed-fade'. In line 12 itself he again seems to come nearest capturing the admittedly impregnable, for 'lapse' has just too many consonants, while 'fleeting, fled' just misses the sense of 'caduti'. Incidentally, if a proof were wanted that the quality of translation has definitely improved in our own time, the fact that four such independent versions as those quoted were published within a few years of each other should provide it, especially if they are set against the pick of the older school of terza rima translators. To enforce the contrast, Haselfoot's version of the same passage is included in Appendix II.
One or two varied passages in which Professor Bickersteth has been notably successful are now quoted. By giving the first line of II.106-11 a slight twist to adapt it to our modern way of looking at things, he provides a good version of these two terzine:

Now even as some snow-encumbered wold,
when warm beams strike it, doth dismantled lie
of that which lately made it white and cold,
so thee, dismantled in thy mind, will I
inform with light so lively it shall shine
before thee sparkling like a star on high.

Well-handled too is XV.13-18, the structure of which makes it none too easy to translate clearly:

As through the pure and tranquil evening skies
there shoots at times a sudden trail of light,
stirring to movement the late listless eyes,
which well might be a star that takes to flight,
save that from where it first was kindled none
is missing, and it quickly fades from sight.

Satirical passages are rendered with vigour, e.g. (XXI.130-5):

Now on both sides our bloated men of God
need one to prop them, one to lift their train,
one to precede them with a verger’s rod.
Their mantles drape their palfreys, so that then
two beasts pace onwards 'neath a single hide:
oh patience what a load dost thou sustain!

The diatribe of XXIX is also well done; lines 112-26 are quoted here:

Ay, and so loudly from their lips it pealed,
that of the Gospel, when they went to war
to light the faith, they made both lance and shield.
The preacher now provides himself with store
of quips and gibes, and so a laugh be stirred,
the hood puffs out, and he demands no more;
but in its angle nestles such a bird
that, if the vulgar saw it, they would see
the value of the pardon thus conferred.
Hence comes it that on earth such fools there be,
that, without evidence to test it by,
to every promise they would rush with glee.
Battens on this the pig, your Tantony,
and others too, pigs of far baser sort,
paying with money never stamped of die.
In connexion with this last passage, one can see the disadvantage of the
eye-rhyme of words ending in long and short '-y', in spite of its frequent
usage by the best poets. Words in short '-y' rhyme legitimately with those
in '-ee', and in the last two terzine of the passage just quoted the use
of the interlaced sets, 'see - be - glee', 'by - Tantony - die' obscures
and disturbs the rhyme pattern.

To continue, there is a vivid rendering of the metaphor in XXIV.25-7:

Therefore my pen describes them not, but skips;
since for such folds no poet's thought could e'er
limn colours fine enough, far less his lips.

In canto XXIII lines 25-33 stand out:

As on a calm and full-mooned summer night
Trivia smiles mid her immortal train
of nymphs who spangle heaven from depth to height,
outshining myriad lamps beheld I then
one sun who kindled each and all, as ours
kindles the stars that throng his high domain;
and through the rays, poured down in living showers,
the radiant substance, blazing on me, tried
my mortal vision far beyond its powers.

Likewise lines 49-54:

I was like one who, eager to revive
some long-forgotten dream, with all his wit
strives to recall it, yet doth vainly strive,
when I this invitation heard, so meet
for largest thanks, that it shall aye be found
traced in the volume where my past is writ.

Many translators have wrestled with XXX.40-2, and inevitably 'the mortal
shoulder trembles'. Professor Bickersteth's is commendable:

Light of the understanding, full of love;
love of true goodness, full of ecstasy;
ecstasy sweet all other sweets above.

This selection may fitly close with lines 55-66 of the final canto:

Henceforth my vision far transcends what rhyme
could trace in words, and memory in despair
must yield to heights itstrives in vain to climb.
As one who sees in dream, remains aware,
when the dream's gone, of all it made him feel,
while all he saw is lost beyond repair;
even such am I: my vision fails, until
it all but ceases, yet my heart is awed
by its sweet effluence which pervades me still.
Thus melts the imprinted snow by sunshine thawed;
thus was the wisdom of the Sibyl, writ
on frail leaves, to the breezes cast abroad.

To show that Professor Bickersteth can deal competently with less rewarding passages, we quote a few lines of a notoriously difficult canto (II.64-78):

In the eighth heaven displayed, past numbering,
are lights, which differ visibly in size
as in the colour of the beams they fling.
Did this from rare and dense alone arise,
one virtue only would in all be found
in greater, less and equal quantities.
Virtues that differ needs must have their ground
in formal causes, all of which save one
would be annulled, suppose thy reasoning sound.
Besides, if rarity produced that dun
effect whose cause thou'ldst fain investigate,
either, right through, this orb in part would run
short of its matter, or as lean and fat
are interchanged in bodies, so would this
the leaves within its volume alternate.

Another difficult section well done is XXIX.15-30:

Not for himself a greater good to gain,
which may not be, but that the beams thereof
might, in resplendence, make his splendour plain,
shrined in his own eternity, above
all time, all limits, as it pleased him, shone
unfolded in new loves the eternal love.
Nor before lay he, as with nothing done;
for ere God moved upon these waters, know
that of 'before' and 'after' there was none.
Simple and mixed did form and matter go
forth to a being which had no defect,
like arrows three from a three-corded bow.
And as, if ye a beam of light project
on crystal, glass or amber, all takes fire
at once, nor stage therein may ye detect,
so the threefold creation from its sire
into existence leapt, with no degrees
in its beginning, but flashed forth entire.
These lines are distinctly better than the corresponding ones of Binyon's and Fletcher's translations, but are very similar to those of Anderson's version; for instance lines 16-18 of the latter read:

Beyond all limits, and all time above
as pleased Him, in His own eternity,
unfolded in new loves the Eternal Love.

Professor Bickersteth was, however, entirely unacquainted with Anderson's translation when he made his own, so that it is simply one of these resemblances on which we have already had frequent occasion to remark.

It must be admitted that Professor Bickersteth is not free from faults: both those which characterise terza rima translations in general, and those individual weaknesses which we all display. At times, for instance, he gives us what is mere translatese, e.g. 'Because the matter to its call stays mute' (I.129), or a clumsy concession to the needs of rhyme like XV.124-6:

Another to the youngsters bidden come
and gather round her spinning wheel would tell
tales of the Trojans, Fiesole and Rome.

Most of these faults are slight; and indeed the only reason that we mention them is that the high standard of the rest makes noticeable blemishes which would be passed over unremarked in an inferior version.

The same effect results from occasional archaisms. The fact that Professor Bickersteth gets along very well without them for ninety-nine lines in every hundred makes their odd use jarring, so that when 'hight' or 'ywis' or 'I wean' are brought in for the sake of the rhyme, instead of being hardened to them as we would be when reading the nineteenth century poetasters, we shudder. That is why in the final canto, after reading the lines already quoted, we are more disappointed than perhaps we should be with lines 73-8:
For, by returning somewhat to my mind
and sounding faintly in these verses, thou
wilt make men to thy victory less blind.
Bewildered would mine eyes have been, I trow,
by the keen living ray, whose utmost brunt
they suffered, had they turned them from it now.

And likewise in lines 94-6:

One instant dims my vision more, I wis,
than Argo's voyage, which made old Neptune stare,
is dimmed by five and twenty centuries.

It is even more surprising to find in line 133 what we feel must be a slip
or misprint, since the translator is not guilty of slovenliness: 'As
geometrical who tries all he can / to square the circle'.

We regret for similar reasons the occasional clichés and pseudo-
poetry scattered here and there. We might hardly be surprised to find
the line 'had with a second sun the welkin crowned' (I.63) in a trans-
lation of last century; but it is to be feared that the Oxford Dictionary
is somewhat behind the times when it still describes the word as 'poetical'.

Surprising too is VI.136, 'E poi il mosser le parole biece', rendered
'Then at a wicked plot did he connive'. Of the same kind is padding like
that in XXII.16-18:

The sword of God, save in their view alone
who wish or fear his advent, is not slack,
nor yet in haste, to strike the wicked down,

and similarly in XXX.61-3:

And I saw light which flowed, as flows a river,
blazing between two banks all gay with spring,
but fairer spring than poet dreamed of ever.

This tendency makes some otherwise good passages less pleasing than we
might have hoped, e.g. the opening of canto XXIII:

Even as the bird, who in some sheltered bower
broods on the nest of her loved progeny
the long night through, while darkness hath its hour,
It must be emphasised again, however, that some terzine which we deprecate in Professor Bickersteth's version would seem gems if we met them in the translations of the 1880s. Although the professor has elsewhere expressed some admiration of Swinburne, the only direct reminiscence noticed is at XII.25, 'alike of flame that flashed and song that soared'.

A perceptive reviewer remarked that Professor Bickersteth's rendering of III.121-3 was a trifle casual:

Thus she addressed me and, beginning straight to sing the Ave, passed in song away, as through deep water sinks a heavy weight, the full Ave Maria being essential to the effect. A still more striking example occurs at XXVI.67-9:

A song most sweet, soon as my words were ended, made the whole heaven resound, and with the rest my lady's voice in the ter sanctus blended, because here the translator seems to be deliberately refusing his own medicine, the concluding 'Santo, santo, santo!' being very like the 'il luogo mio' of XXVII.22-3 on the frequently misplaced emphasis of which by translators he remarks in his Introduction. One might say the same of 'Veronica' in XXXI.104, where he renders:

Like unto one who chance a Croat by race, drawn by the ancient legend, comes to see our vera icon of the sacred face.

Professor Bickersteth's accuracy is, as one would expect, of the highest order. The only place where he differs from what seems the best established interpretation is at XXI.115, where he takes an extreme view of Saint Peter Damian's austerity:

that, save for olive juice, with viands none, lightly would I endure both heat and cold, contented in those things I mused upon.

Apart from these few defects, typical of a much more limited number
of lines than in most other versions, Professor Bickersteth's translation is
a masterly piece of work, undertaken with the fullest preparation, and
executed with great skill and industry. He seems to have reduced to a
minimum the inversions and distortions which we associate with terza rima
renderings in English, partly through his patience in the ordering of words
and phrases, partly through his ingenuity in rearranging or varying them
without departing either from the meaning of spirit of the original - a
faculty which springs from his intimate and affectionate knowledge of Dante
as well as from a natural gift for this kind of work. All methods of exam-
ination - the general impression gained from reading, the analysis of test
passages, and the results from the random sample - place this translation
among the very best. Further, Professor Bickersteth's claims to have
written specially for two types of reader, already quoted from his Intro-
duction, are fully justified by his achievement. Although he nowhere tries
to preach us a sermon, we are conscious from the tone alike of Introduction
and poem that the foundation of his success is his underlying spiritual
kinship with Dante - the fact that he not only admires Dante's poetry but
values Dante's ideals.

The Times Literary Supplement referred twice to Professor Bickersteth's
Paradiso in the year following its publication. Reviewing it (19th January
1933, p. 37) one writer found that it had 'charm and unwearying fluency of
pace' but thought the 'sense of awe' lacking; he considered it most credit-
able that a 'work so beautiful and graceful has been accomplished and on so
large a scale'. On the publication of Binyon's Inferno, a front page article
was devoted to recent translations of the Divine Comedy (25th May 1933,
pp. 353-4), including Anderson's which had just been added to the World's
Classics series. The remark is made there that
Bickersteth and Binyon are both more practised executants than Anderson, but with their greater skill goes a greater sophistication which weakens them in their delivery of the essential impact of the narrative.

This verdict is correct up to a point: it is probable that the English reader with no special knowledge of Dante or Italian poetry or medieval theology would get more out of Anderson's version than from either of the others.

But the impression of greater sophistication is partly due to the fact that the two later translators devoted more attention to technical excellence than Anderson did; and there is definitely strength in their weakness so far as the more discriminating class of reader whom Professor Bickersteth had in mind is concerned, for such will derive an added pleasure from the skilful manipulation of the verse and language. Incidentally, having from time to time remarked on the physical presentation of the versions discussed, we cannot conclude without complimenting the famous press concerned on the production of this volume which in every respect - typography, accuracy, machining, paper and binding - maintains their traditional standards.

Professor Bickersteth spent some five or six years over the translation of the Paradiso. He has spent still longer over the remainder of the Comedy, and has now completed the Purgatorio and most of the Inferno. He has allowed me to peruse these manuscripts, but since they are still unrevised I shall not attempt to discuss them, but have taken advantage of his permission to make extracts. His renderings of Inf. XXVI.91-142 and Purg. II.1-51 are reproduced in Appendix I, with the proviso that they are still subject to alteration. While no arrangements have yet been made for publication, it is hoped that before long they will be available in print.
LAURENCE BINION


Note. - The Italian text is that of the Testo Critico, edited by Vandelli, 1932 edition. All three volumes were reprinted without alteration in 1952.

Robert Laurence Binyon (1869-1943) was born at Lancaster, and was the second son of the Rev. F. Binyon. He dropped his first Christian name from the time he began to publish verse. He was educated at St. Paul's School and Trinity College, Oxford, where he distinguished himself by winning the Newdigate Prize in 1890. In 1893 he joined the staff of the British Museum, becoming assistant keeper of prints and drawings in 1909, and holding that post for over twenty years. He specialised in oriental art, spending some time in the Far East, and he became one of the foremost authorities in the world on this subject. He was responsible for building up a magnificent collection at the Museum, as well as compiling a monumental catalogue; and he published several books on art which are recognised as standard works. In 1933 he was President of the English Association, and in the same year spent a winter as Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry at Harvard; later (1940) he occupied the Byron chair at the University of Athens.
His first volume of verse appeared in 1894, consisting mainly of short pieces, and this was followed by many others, including a number of plays in verse. His name became and remains a household word on account of one stanza in 'For the Fallen' which, at the close of the first War, provided the ideal 'cenotaph piece'. His finest work is probably contained in the two long irregular odes, The Sirens and The Idols, which appeared in 1927-8, the former being originally suggested by the first transatlantic flight, and the latter attacking the false gods of the modern world.

It is notable that Longfellow and Binyon are the only two considerable poets who have translated the Divine Comedy; from no others of the same stature have we more than fragments. Both are (for quite different reasons) on the border line which separates major from minor poets, nor is this the place to attempt a decision as to their correct classification. We may remark in passing, however, that whereas Longfellow's original verse remained quite uninfluenced by his study of Dante, the signs of such influence are very evident in Binyon. His first translation from the Divine Comedy, Inf. XXVI.52-142, appeared under the title 'The Last Voyage of Ulysses' in the volume of Essays in Commemoration sponsored by the Sexcentenary Committee in 1921. To this he refers in the preface to his Inferno in 1933.

Some twelve years ago the fancy took me to see what I could make of some short piece of Dante's terza rima in English. I chose what was my favourite episode in the Inferno, the Death of Ulysses, and translated a part of that twenty-sixth canto. The work fascinated by its difficulty; and I went on to make some more versions from time to time, not only from the Inferno, but the Purgatorio and Paradiso as well. . . . Almost to my surprise, I found one day that I had finished the Inferno.

In 1928 a selection of episodes from the Comedy in Binyon's translation appeared in Benn's Augustan Poets; in 1931 a more extensive selection was included in his Collected Poems, viz. Inf. I to X, XXVI, XXXIII; Purg. I,
II, XXVIII to XXX; Par. XXX, XXXIII. These cantos are almost identical with those in the completed volumes of the Comedy published later; a few words are altered, and sometimes a new reading or interpretation introduced, but there is no large-scale revision, and the fragment of 1921 differs little from the same passage in the Inferno of 1933. It is interesting to note that the preface to Purgatorio acknowledges the benefit of 'a great number of careful criticisms by Mr Ezra Pound' (of which more later), and that to the Paradiso pays tribute to help given by Mr T. S. Eliot in revising the concluding cantos.

The translation of Dante was thus a task which occupied Binyon's leisure over a period of fully twenty years; he began it in his early fifties, and it only finished with his life at over seventy. In these years, which were also those of his poetic maturity, the value of his study of Dante was evident. He began by being somewhat timidly traditional, and he was always diffuse; but during the 1920s his best work showed some tightening, a firmer grasp, greater precision and intensity. The influence both of Dante and of contemporaries can be distinctly traced. Binyon possessed from the beginning the poet's joy in words and their use; much earlier, for instance, he had written these lines in 'Sirmione':

So beautiful in this most tender gloom
Ten thousand thousand stars through height on height
Burn over us, how breathless and how bright!
Some wild, some fevered, some august and large,
Royal and blazing like a hero's targe,
Some faint and secret, from abysses brought,
Lone as an incommunicable thought -
They throng, they reign, they droop, they bloom, they glow
Upon our gaze, and as we gaze they grow
In patience and in glory, till the mind
Is brimmed and to all other being blind;
They hang, they fall towards us, spears of fire,
Piercing us through with joy and with desire.

Here we have something of both Shelley and Wordsworth, but contrast it
with the description of 'a starr'd, a still mid-night' in the prelude to The Idols twenty years later:

Yet even in this her ante-room I felt,
Near me, that void
Without foundation, roof, or bound, or end,
Where the eyes fast from their food, the heavenly light,
The untallied senses falter, being denied,
The mind into itself is pressed, is penned,
Even memoried glories of experience melt
Into one mapless, eyeless, elemental Night.

It was so near
That like a swimmer toiled in a full-streaming tide
Drawing him unawares down the unsounded seas,
My soul sank into fear.

In The Sirens he wrote of an experience 'as if all immensity sought for a home in the mind', and the ode concludes with lines that still have the accent of Shelley, but in which the tone of Dante is likewise felt:

0 earth for ever mingled with unearthliness
Because the eternal with the brief is twined!
Wonder of breath that is momentary and tremulous
Suffices him who breathes eternal mind.
Vision that dawns beyond knowledge shall deliver him
From all that flattered, threatened, foiled, betrayed.
Lo, having nothing, he is free of all the universe,
And where light is, he enters unafraid.

In the preface to the Inferno, Binyon sets forth his aims and principles of translation.

In making this version, the aim has been to produce what could be read with pleasure as an English poem. At the same time I have kept as close to the original as I could, and have tried to communicate not only the sense of the words but something of Dante's tone, and of his rhythm, through which in great measure that tone is conveyed. A melodious smoothness is not the characteristic of Dante's verse, so much as an extraordinary fullness and volume. This results both from the pregnant style and from the abundance of elisions natural in a language where many words end in a vowel; Dante is able to compress into a line many more syllables than the scansion requires. The English language does not offer such frequent occasions for elision, and Swinburne, I think, is the only one of our poets who has deliberately exploited the device in order to give a special character of sonorous fullness to his blank verse; but in some degree the effects produced by Dante can be imitated in English, and are attempted here.
Chiefly in order to enlarge the narrow repertory of English rhymes, I have occasionally rhymed on an unaccented syllable, e.g. canto I, line 2, 'That I had strayed into a dark forest'. . . . It is not intended here that the accent should be transferred, in reading, to the final syllable; the normal speech-pronunciation of all words, throughout the version, is intended. . . .

It was inevitable that Binyon, himself a poet, should, in rewriting the Divine Comedy as an English poem, combine something of his own style with that of Dante. The two styles are to some extent in conflict, for not only does Binyon's method demand more space for its deployment than Dante normally allows, but he has rather a larger than average share of that indefinable vagueness which is so much a part of the English genius and distinguishes English poetry so sharply from that of the Latin tongues. Binyon possessed both the skill and sensitivity to reproduce with success something of Dante's manner, but very often it is his own manner which imposes itself on Dante's material. The fifth canto of the Inferno contains good examples of this tension, which runs through the whole translation. Lines 46-51, for instance, are admirable:

And as the cranes in long line streak the sky
And in procession chant their mournful call,
So saw I come with sound of wailing by
The shadows fluttering in the tempest's brawl.
Whereat, 'O Master, who are these,' I said,
'On whom the black winds with their scourges fall?'

The English equivalents found for the Italian words reproduce with great exactness in the new language the effect of the original. In lines 70-2, the prelude of the Francesca incident, we are conscious of the wrong note:

After that I had heard my Teacher name
Each lady of old, lost with her lovely knight,
My thoughts were mazed, such pity upon me came.

The word 'lovely' might pass muster as padding if he were translating Ariosto; here it merely gives an air of frivolity to something which is starkly sad. Incidentally, although many commentators explain 'smarrito'
Laurence Binyon (6)

here as equivalent to 'bewildered', such an interpretation seems to miss
the point; Torraca, Barbì and Rivalta all connect it with the idiom
'smarrire i sensi' and pointing forward to the 'io venni men' of line 141,
which gives a much more satisfying meaning. We now quote the celebrated
lines 100-7:

Love, that in gentle heart so soon awakes,
Took him with this fair body, which from me
Was torn: the way and wound of it yet aches.

Love, that to no loved one remits its fee,
Took me with joy of him, so deep in-wrought,
Even now it hath not left me, as thou dost see.

Love led us both to one death. He that sought
And spilt our life - Cain's place awaits him now.

No doubt it was desirable to get away from the line 'Snatches from me in
a way that still offends' which, with variations, had been the stock in
trade of more than half the previous translators in terza rima; 'offende'
means something different from 'offends'. Ford's 'rankles' and Sibbald's
'irks' are nearer the meaning. Binyon's 'the way and wound of it yet
aches' is out of keeping with the direct simplicity of Francesca's lan-
guage, just as 'with joy of him, so deep in-wrought' is too precious for
'del costui piacer si forte'. The same tendency will be noticed in the
passages quoted in Appendix I, e.g. 'Swift as he came, he sped, and
straight was lost' (Purg. II.51); 'Broached the hard issue we were sworn
to know' (Inf. XXVI.132). The former, by the insertion of a piece of
padding, gives quite a different effect from that intended; the latter,
a good enough line in itself, is in the style of Tennyson's Ulysses rather
than Dante's. Dante's last speech to Cacciaguida (Par. XVII,118-20) ends:

And if to truth I am a flinching friend,
I fear to lose life among those to whom
This world will be an old world, come to its end.

The last line, with its wistful sigh of weariness, is at variance with
Laurence Binyon (7)

the tone of 'che questo tempo chiameranno antico'. So too Ugolino loses his fierce energy in (Inf. XXXIII.26-7):

When evil dream revealed what peril faced
My feet, and how I stood close on the brink,
which incidentally, is one of Binyon's worst departures from the literal sense. Even less apt are lines 71-3 following: 'They drew, / Between the fifth and sixth day, their last sigh', probably to be classed as the unfortunate result of grasping for rhymes.

Binyon can be prosaic too. 'That the hard law she hath chosen to restrain' is banal for 'sì che duro giudicio là su frange' (Inf. II.96); three lines further on 'I entrust him to thee; and do thou the rest' is jarring. 'For him who knows most lost hours most displease' is cumbrous and cacophonous for the proverbial snap of Virgil's 'ch'è perder tempo a chi più sa più spiace' (Purg. III.78). Par. V.56-60 seems on the other hand a trifle slick for the context:

Let him hold all exchange as folly's tricks,
Unless the thing that's taken up include
The thing laid down, as four's contained in six.

The search for rhymes seems responsible for a very weak rendering of Purg. XX.139-41:

Motionless stood we in suspended mood,
Like to the shepherds who first heard that chant,
Until the trembling ceased and naught ensued,

and for that of Par. X.70-3:

Many a jewel beautiful and rare
Is in the court of Heaven from which I come,
Such that they may not be transferred elsewhere.
Such was the song those lights sang in their home.

The last three words are sheer padding, and complete the ruin begun with 'transferred elsewhere'. The following is Binyon's version of Purg. XV. 64-75, a passage already quoted many times in these essays; it is quite
well done, save for the word 'improve' which, just at the climax of the Italian, is exasperating.

And he to me: 'Because thou still dost pin
Merely upon terrestrial things thy wit,
From very light thou drawest darkness in.
The Good ineffable and infinite
That is on high so runneth unto love
As a beam comes to a body that is bright.
So much it gives as warmth it findeth of,
So that, how far so-ever love be poured,
The eternal goodness doth its best improve.
And the more people on high have that accord,
The more to love well are there, and more love is,
And mirror-like 'tis given and restored.

It will already have been noticed that Binyon makes frequent use of the elision to which he refers in the preface as enabling him to imitate to some extent the metrical effects of Dante. The use of the term suggests a prosodic misapprehension not confined to Binyon. Elision is, according to the Oxford Dictionary, 'the action of dropping out or suppressing, e.g. a letter or syllable', and is familiar to us in a great variety of languages ancient and modern. It is, however, a phenomenon that simply does not exist in the English language except in certain recognised expressions, where it is usually indicated by an apostrophe, as in 'thou'lt', etc. The Italian line 'che, come vedi, ancor non m'abbandona' is metrical correct because the final 'i' of 'vedi' is elided before the initial vowel of 'ancorä', thus giving the required count of eleven syllables. Binyon's equivalent, 'Even now it hath not left me, as thou dost see', is also metrical correct, but not because the 'e' of 'me' is elided before 'as'. English prosody is regulated neither by the number of syllables nor by division into 'feet', but is accentual, and the distribution of the accents and the number of unaccented syllables which fill up the intervals between them is a matter of Sprachgefühl and not of rule. In spite of the timeless
energy with which Saintsbury kept asserting this, and his lifelong efforts to get would-be prosodists to understand that the principle of equivalence or substitution is the very life-blood of English poetry, there are still metrists who insist on referring it to a system of scansion entirely foreign to the genius of the tongue. The fact is that iambic pentameter, if we must call it that, is almost impossible in English without the relief provided by such substitution. If Binyon's line must be scanned, then the scansion must be:

Even now / it hath / not left / me, as thou / dost see,
but this is a mere schoolroom device. We cannot debate the matter more fully here, but refer to Saintsbury's History of English Prosody, Vol. III, Appendix I, 'What is a foot?' where the redoubtable professor seems to emerge completely victorious from his scuffle with the prosodists.

In Binyon's ordinary poetic practice he makes full use of equivalence, but in his Dante he seems to pursue the will-o'-the-wisp of elision with some pertinacity; for although now and again he writes lines like 'Substance and accidents, and their modes, became', where the extrametrical syllable cannot be accounted for by elision, in the divine Comedy he perversely restricts himself for the most part to cases where such a syllable precedes or follows an open one. Perversely, because there is no need for such a restriction, nor do such lines as a rule do much towards reproducing Dante's metre. Nor, whatever be his theory, can we imagine that Binyon expected us to read, for instance,

Where Po descends to (hi)s peace, and with him takes
All th(e) other streams that follow (hi)m down the land.

The elision theory, in fact, accomplishes nothing positive, but appears to be responsible for numerous lame lines, which can be scanned but cannot be read, such as: 'So the dust of th(e) earth was made worth(y) of
Laurence Binyon (10)

"yore", which can hardly be said to have any metrical relation to 'Cosi fu fatta già la terra dagna' (Par. XIII.82).

Binyon's good effects, and there are many of them, are secured not so much by direct imitation of Dante, but by his ability to pick and place words, though unfortunately the need to force a rhyme overtakes him, as we have seen, at awkward moments. Thus we have (Inf. VII.55-66):

For ever at one another must they butt.
These from the grave shall rise up with fists tight,
Those others with their very hair close-cut.
Ill-giving, ill- hoarding, lost for them the light
Of the bright world, and in this scuffling caught.
I beautify no words to tell their plight.
Now, my son, see to what a mock are brought
The goods of Fortune's keeping, and how soon!
Though to possess them still is all man's thought.
For all the gold that is beneath the moon,
Or ever was, never could buy repose
For one of those souls, faint to have that boon.

No doubt the rhyme 'soon - moon' was tempting, but the last line spoils a very good sequence, losing both the emphasis and the sound of the weary long-drawn 'non potrebbe farne posare una'. There is a striking example of this in Inf. XXV.13-15:

Through all the sombre corridors of hell
No spirit so insolent against God I found,
Not him ev'n who at Thebes from the wall fell,
where the magnificent first line is bought at the heavy cost of the third.

Many descriptions are well rendered, e.g. (Inf. XVII.10-18):

His face was as a just man's, and expressed
The mildness that its outward aspect feigned;
Like to a serpent's trunk was all the rest.
He had two paws, up to the armpits maned
With hair; the neck and breast and either flank
Were freaked with knots and little rings ingrained.

Many well-known terzine are attractively done; here are a few.
I came into a place of all light dumb
That bellows like a storm in the sea-deep
When the thwart winds that strike, it roar and hum.

The abysmal tempest that can never sleep
Snatches the spirits and headlong hurries them,
Beats and besets them with its whirling sweep.

When Charlemagne by dolorous overthrow
Had lost his army and sacred enterprise,
No note so terrible did Roland blow.

Listening I stoop my face down to his head;
And one of them twisted himself about,
(Not he who spoke) beneath what on him weighed
And saw me and knew me and was calling out,
Straining his neck to keep me in his eye,
Who, all bent down, went with them foot by foot.

Thus spoke she to me, and then began to sing
Ave Maria, and singing disappeared,
As through deep water sinks a heavy thing.

Thy cry shall come with the wind's vehemence
That strikes full on the loftiest peaks alone;
Honour not small shall be thy recompense.

As fire is from the fettering cloud unbound,
Expanding till it needs must overflow,
And, against nature, rushes to the ground . . .

From the highest sky which rolls the thunder down
No mortal eye is stationed so remote,
Though in the deepest of the seas it drown . . .

One of Binyon's most notable triumphs is his rendering of Purg. III.124-6,
which, one feels, would have delighted Dante himself:

And if Cosenza's pastor, who in chase
Of me was sent by Clement, had but once
Read well in God the rubric of his grace . . .

Among the competently handled passages in the Paradiso the following
(XXVI, 64-78) impressed on reading:
'I love the leaves wherewith is all enleaved
The Eternal Gardener's garden, great and least,
In the measure of the good from Him received.'

A marvellous sweet singing, when I ceased,
Through heaven resounded; and my Lady too
Cried 'Holy, Holy, Holy', with the rest;
And as a sharp light breaketh sleep in two,
    The visual spirit running forth to meet
Splendour that thrills the membranes through and through,
And he who has been awaked recoils from it,
    Dazed by that suddenness, which makes him quail
Till reasoning come to succour his defeat,
So from mine eyes did Beatrice every scale
    Remove with her own ray, so luminous
That over a thousand miles it might prevail.

Binyon makes very frequent use of unaccented rhyming syllables, as
mentioned in his preface. This feature will be disliked by many readers,
especially where the weak rhyme comes where we should normally expect a
strong ending in the last line of the terzina, e.g. (Inf. XII.112-4):

'. . . Was quenched by his own son's unnatural wound.'
I turned to the poet, and he made reply:
'Take him now for the first, and me second.'

Weaker still are such combinations as (Purg. I.19-24):

The planet that promoteth Love was there,
    Making all the East to laugh and be joyful,
And veiled Fishes that escorted her.
I turned to the right and contemplated all
    The other pole; and four stars o'er me came,
Never yet seen save by the first people.

Binyon uses no feminine rhymes, but he takes considerable liberties with
his monosyllabic ones, e.g. 'disappeared - powered - desired', 'suppose -
was - espouse'; the same applies to the unaccented syllables; we find
'stemother - baretere - hire', 'companioned - underground', 'visible -
circle - feel'. Some licence must be allowed to a translator in triple
rhyme, and Professor Lacy Lockert, as we have seen, pleaded eloquently for
a high degree of tolerance in rhyming; but the combination of unaccented
syllables and very imperfect rhymes greatly weakens the metrical pattern
in places. Binyon also repeats his rhymes at very short intervals; in
Purg. II, for instance, the same set of rhymes is repeated without any
break at all, and then occurs a third and a fourth time within the next
Laurence Binyon (13)

thirty lines. As has been noted in several places the rhymes are sometimes very forced.

Binyon's accuracy is commendable. There are few slips, and of these some are probably merely misprints, so that it is not worth while to enumerate them.

The attitude of the critics to Binyon's translation was for the most part respectful without being enthusiastic. The New Statesman (23rd July 1933, pp. 110-11) showed some asperity in dealing with the Inferno (over the signature of W. J. Turner). The opening lines of the poem are described as 'about as unlike Dante as could be', and the summing up says: 'Mr Binyon's work is that of a cultivated man of letters rather than that of a poet.'

Professor Lacy Lockert, writing in Modern Language Notes (January 1935, pp. 68-9) thinks Binyon 'too easily satisfied'. The version renders not a few passages deftly, and contains some really notable lines; but a large part of it is undistinguished, and in general it lacks finish.

The Times Literary Supplement, in a front page article devoted to recent Dante translations (25th May 1933, pp. 553-4), remarks:

Bickersteth and Binyon are both more practised executants than Anderson. But with their greater skill goes a greater sophistication which weakens them in their delivery of the essential impact of the narrative.

There was also some criticism of Binyon's use of elision. The review of the Purgatorio in the same weekly (24th December 1938, p. 817) finds an improvement in the second volume, but still considers 'no translation of Dante so readable as Cary'. The Paradiso was dealt with on 18th December 1943 (p. 609):

A remarkable tour de force. The outstanding merit of Binyon's rendering is its scholarly exactitude. For all the difficulties of rhyme, practically every word is translated, and very often
Laurence Binyon (14)

even the convolutions and transpositions of Dante are really followed. . . . A photographic likeness, but the glory and passion of supreme poetry are missing. . . . A most scrupulous and honourable translation, composed with everything that scholarship, poetic taste, and reverence for the master can give; but it is not more.

Meantime the New Statesman had made amends. Stephen Spender (14th January 1938, pp. 56-7) wrote of Binyon's Purgatorio:

Mr Laurence Binyon deserves the greatest gratitude and admiration for this translation. . . . It gives a true impression of some of the greatest merits of the original - clarity, accuracy of expression, above all in a kind of translucency in imagery and the perfect conciseness of thought.

Dr La Piana, writing many years later (Dante's American Pilgrimage, p. 186) says:

Many think that Binyon's excellent work, as a whole, is preferable to Anderson's translation. A close comparison of the two leaves little doubt that Binyon's version is more evenly accurate in rendering clearly the meaning of the text, and more evenly successful in the choice of rhymes, thus securing a steadier flow of the terzina than does any other version of the Divine Comedy. Yet, while admitting that the new English translation taken as a whole gives more 'genuine satisfaction' than the American one, the reader is forced to admit that Anderson's version again and again 'flashes brighter at its brightest'.

The most sensational notice of Binyon's translation was Mr Ezra Pound's review of the Inferno in the Criterion (April 1934), reprinted in Polite Essays (1937). The two poets had been acquainted for many years, and had common interests in such subjects as oriental art; but with the publication of the Inferno began a correspondence which was carried on for several years, part of which is reproduced in The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941 (ed. D. D. Paige, 1951). The review and the letters are in Mr Pound's characteristic vein. The former recalls 'Binyon's sad youth, poisoned in the cradle by the abominable dogbiscuit of Milton's rhetoric', but finds that 'Dante has cured him'. Later he says:

'I do not expect to see another version as good as Binyon's, I can tell a
great extent risk being unjust to forty translators whose work I haven't seen.' While chafing at times at Binyon's inversions and forced rhymes, he emphasises that the translation of poetry must in the nature of things be a choice of evils and, to quote one of the letters, 'I think you have in every (almost every) case chosen the lesser evil in dilemma'. In the review he writes:

Before flying to the conclusion that certain things are 'against the rules' . . . let the neophyte consider that a man cannot be in New York and Pekin at the same moment . . . . Various alternatives are offered at every juncture, but let the neophyte try half a dozen before deciding that Binyon has sacrificed the greater virtue for the less in a given case.

Binyon sent Mr Pound the page proofs of Purgatorio in 1938, and these were returned with numerous notes which can be found in the volume of letters referred to. Examination of the translation as printed shows that Binyon adopted roughly half of them. Most were directed at getting rid of weak words, periphrases and banalities; Mr Pound is especially impatient of the latter and punctuates his remarks with such expressions as 'damn the "doth"'. Many of his criticisms are penetrating and have resulted in the strengthening of the lines concerned. He commends especially the closing lines of canto XXVII which, it is interesting to note, are printed as the sole sample of Binyon in the recently published Faber Book of Twentieth Century Verse.

We may sum up by adopting an attitude midway between the extremes quoted. We have shown the dangers of the 'greater sophistication' of which the T.L.S. reviewer speaks, and have demonstrated that Binyon does have 'flashes' as well as Anderson. Of the relative merits of this and other new translations in terza rima we shall say something later. Binyon's translation sold slowly at first; now, after being out of print for several years, it is available again in a second impression dated 1952.


Louis How (1873-1947) was born at St. Louis, Missouri; he graduated in arts at Harvard in 1895 and saw active service during the Spanish-American War in 1898. His long life was devoted to authorship; he seems to have lived for long periods in Europe, and he was familiar with several languages. His books are numerous and, besides poetry and novels, they include various translations, e.g. the Sonnets of Etienne de la Boetie and Montaigne's Essay on Friendship from the French; the Life of Lazarillo de Tormes and Pio Baroja's Caesar or Nothing from the Spanish. His translation of the Divine Comedy occupied him for many years. The Inferno was originally printed in 1920, evidently for private circulation. I have been unable to trace a copy of this book, and indeed had great difficulty in obtaining copies of the published edition which were eventually supplied for examination through the kindness of the Library of Congress, and it is the latter which are described at the head of this article and used as a basis for the discussion contained in it.

It is pleasant to be able to commend strongly the format and typo-
graphy of these three volumes. They are tastefully set and beautifully printed on antique paper with deckled foredge, strongly bound in sober black, but each volume distinguished by a label of different colour, which is repeated in the device on the title page. An unfortunate deficiency in the first volume is corrected in the two later ones; the former has canto numerals as running headlines on all pages, in the latter the name of the cantica appears on each left-hand page. Spacing and indentation are correct and uniform, and the line numerals are readily readable.

The short preface to the first volume sets forth How's intention:

My object has been to convey some adumbration of the interest and charm of the Inferno; to make a readable version of a great classic that is eminently readable; with the aim of stirring somebody to take up the original. . . .

Although I have taken much time and pains to make this rendering as true as form will permit, close accuracy should not be expected. Whoever, knowing no Italian, wishes to find out precisely what Dante said, can turn to a faithful prose translation in Vernon's Readings. But after all, Dante did write in rhymed verse; and whoever wishes to feel to some extent the same poetical effect that Dante makes on Italians, does better to choose a translation in terza rima. If it is sometimes a bit obscure or a bit clumsy, let him consider that the original is so frequently both as to require, for Italian readers desiring to grasp every detail, very elaborate explanations.

I call mine an American version, but have made no effort to tie myself to the colloquial usage of these States. I have used an eclectic language. Like my great original, I have not eschewed either obsolete words, neologisms, coinings, dialect, foreign phrases, or slang. Nor have I avoided jumbles of tenses, false syntax, anacolutha. Any word that served Dante's purpose suited his taste. . . . I have also frequently employed rime riche; have rhymed on conjunctions and unaccented syllables; have pronounced such words as wind, again, were, one way in one set of rhymes and a different way in another. . . . I have resorted to inversions, have been driven to building a feminine rhyme out of two words, though without going to the lengths Dante himself went; I have made the metre of some lines depend on elisions left to the shrewd and amiable reader; and have been forced by certain proper names to throw the rhythm of other lines on my reader's charity.

This preface certainly takes the bull by the horns. As Dr La Piana remarks:

'After reading How's blithe confession of numerous literary sins, one
expects the worst. In reality, however, the Divine Comedy in its new American dress is less shocking than one would suppose.

The postscript to the first preface includes the sentence: 'Torraca improves vastly with acquaintance'; How had remarked in the earlier part that Torraca was 'tremendously clever but audacious'. The acquaintance became a personal one as well. The Purgatory was dedicated to Torraca, and his help acknowledged in the preface; while in the preface to Heaven we read: 'Again I must express my immeasurable gratitude to Torraca, whose edition is always my guide, and his indulgence my lasting comfort.' Throughout the translation there are frequent signs of this influence; e.g. in Inf. X.61-3 How interprets 'cui Guido vostro ebe a diadagno' as referring to Beatrice:

He, waiting there, was sent to guide my feet,
Perhaps to one your Guido held in scorn,

a reading revived and recommended by Torraca. In Purg. X.28-30 he accepts Torraca's interpretation of the much disputed 'quella ripa intorno, / che dritto di salita aveva manco', although he expresses it awkwardly:

Up there our feet had not begun to wend,
When I observed this brink around - quite lorn
Of any steepness in an upward trend -
Was marble . . .

Sometimes too what seems at first to be padding proves to be a reflection of Torraca's footnotes, e.g. Inf. XIII.85, 'Yes, he's living still; and if, poor wight, / I'm sent to show him . . . ', where Torraca comments: 'Poi (Virgilio) procura d'inspirargli compassione per quel povero suo compagno'; and there are numerous other passages where How's momentary departure from the text can be accounted for in the same way. He does not, however, follow Torraca in everything, for he frequently rejects the latter's interpretation; e.g. in his rather neat turning of Purg. XXXI.28-30:
What comforts, what advantages were shown
Upon the others' brows, that thou shouldst shape
Thy walks before their balconies alone?

where Torraca finds that this reading 'non dà all'antitesi il rilievo che
dovrebbe avere'. In Purg. XXXIII.36, which he renders 'God's vengeance
fears no bully's yoke', How specifically mentions in the preface that 'to
solve the crux of line 36 in the last canto, I have accepted the suggestion
of Guerri, the reference for which Mr Grandgent gives in his comment on
that line', being apparently less attracted by Torraca's 'specie di corazza
chiamata . . . iuppa'. In his not very happy version of Par. XXXIII.94-6,

One instant would more memory embargo
Than five-and-twenty centuries do that quest,
When Neptune wondered at the shadowing Argo,

How follows a traditional line of interpretation, supported by Vandelli
and Momigiano, whereas Torraca argues: 'Un punto sole di avversione mi
pare più lungo de' veinticinque secoli passati', etc. How makes references
in his prefaces, short as they are, to his obligations in a variety of
directions: Moore, Vernon, Scartazzini, Camerini, Grandgent, Del Lungo,
okey, Norton, Haselfoot, Wicksteed and Carlyle are all mentioned as having
been helpful.

It is evident that How, in addition to the advantage of long resi-
dence in Italy and thorough knowledge of the Italian language, devoted great
energy and ability to his task, and did not spare himself in the matter of
study and research. One seldom feels that he is anything but in complete
command of his text, although he frequently departs from Dante's precise
words, sometimes omitting, sometimes adding. The changes he makes are
deliberate ones, as he warns us in his prefaces; but his handling is con-
fident, with none of the looseness which often makes us suspect a trans-
lator of not being too sure of the meaning himself. Even such an initially
disconcerting terzina as Purg. VII.31-3,

There dwell I with the little innocents
Bit by death's tooth ere they were helped elude
That human sin whereof no man repents,
is simply an attempt to amplify and clarify for the lay reader the notion implicit in the relation between baptism and original sin. How's scholarship was completely adequate for his undertaking; we have now to consider the literary value of his translation.

Since How himself has given such a comprehensive list of metrical and linguistic faults in his preface, it would be superfluous to make an inventory of lame lines and bad rhymes; although, as Dr La Piana says, these turn out to be less frequent and less shocking than expected. His rhymes on the whole are reasonably good, well varied, sometimes ingenious; he does not overwork the more obvious ones. His rhythm is for the most part pedestrian and undistinguished, but does not make such persistent demands on the 'reader's charity' as say Bandini's. Still one is acutely conscious from time to time of the struggle to work in the rhymes; here there is very frequent awkwardness and clumsiness, sometimes regrettable padding or distortion. In the extract from Inf. XXVI given in Appendix I the first terzina is padded out to rhyme with 'Before Aeneas christened it with smoke'; in line 102 'unburied' is unacceptable; the series of rhymes in lines 103-11 is unusually bad for How; 'thrill' in line 112 is out of character; line 120, 'But keen on virtue's quest, with minds of worth', is ruined for the sake of the rhyme; 'shone before' in line 127 is awkward; 'swim' in line 132 might pass here, but How uses it too often elsewhere with disastrous effect; 'for so was Someone bound' in line 141 is clumsy.

In the extract from Purg. II, the exigencies of rhyme are less noticeable, although 'profoundly stirred' in line 27 strikes a wrong note.
There is another discordant effect in lines 49-51:

They tumbled out — as soon as he had traced
The sign of holy cross — upon the beach;
And he went off, as he had come, in haste.

There is a suggestion of bustle, might one say characteristically American?, here that contrasts ill with the scene. Nothing is done hastily, however swift it may be, in Dante’s other world, and a little further on we read of 'la fretta / che l'onestade, ad ogni atto, dismaga'.

The most notable feature of How's translation is the vocabulary, an ominous indication of which is given in the preface, and the reader's reaction to this 'eclectic language' is likely to determine his attitude towards the whole performance. The only other translation of Dante comparable with How's in this respect is Miss Sayers'. Both use the same extreme range: archaisms and learned words jostling neologisms and slang, the former version being, of course, more distinctively American in its colloquialisms. It is difficult for the British reader to know just how far some of these American expressions may have ceased to be regarded as slang, or even colloquialisms, beyond the Atlantic; but many of them can definitely be classed as non-literary in America, except where they are spoken in dialogue by an appropriate character. How, like many another translator, justifies his liberties in the selection of words by referring to Dante's own vocabulary; but, in the first place, How's startling words occur in many contexts where Dante's never do; and in the second, current literary usage imposes on the writer of twentieth-century English poetry certain restrictions which cannot operate when a language is in the formative stage, as Dante's Italian was. There are places where How's word-choice is excellent; indeed his rendering of Par. XVIII.153-6 is positively brilliant:

- 743 -
Thou well mayst say: 'So strong an urge is mine
Toward him who chose a solitude, whom feet
Dancing dragged martyr, that I must decline
Acquaintanceship with Paul and Fisher Pete.'

It was a happy inspiration on How's part to transfer the nickname from Paul to Peter; the effect is just what Dante wanted, and Bickersteth's 'disdain / all truck with either fisherman or Poll', which must be seen to be understood, is tame in comparison. But the case is different when we find 'Oh padre suo veramente Felice!' (Par. XII.79) rendered 'O truly Felix father of that kid!' Here Bonaventura is speaking in all seriousness, and must be translated with dignity. A defence of his language here is implied in How's preface, where he refers to 'nicknames for extremely dignified people' used in Par. XII.110 and XVIII.136; but there is a great difference between the two. The former line, 'di oui Tomma / dinanzi al mio venir fu si cortese', which How translates 'whereof Tom told, / Before I came, in phrases so polite', has no sting in its tail like the latter; 'Polo' is avowedly a nickname, but there is no evidence that 'Tomma' is.

It can readily be seen that the Inferno offers better opportunities for the effective use of such colloquialisms than do the other two parts; but though How seizes some of them, he lets others slip rather disappointingly. Capaneus cries (Inf. XIV.51-60):

... What I was alive, I am being dead.
Though Jove wore out his smith, from whom he took,
Insane with rage the pointed thunderbolt
Wherewith that final morning I was strook;
Or though he wore out all in turn, who molt
At Mongibello's forge, the crew complete,
And called: 'Good Vulcan, help!' - the senile dolt, -
As on the day of Phlegra's great defeat;
And shot me with the might of all his quiver:
His vengeance upon me would not be sweet.

'The senile dolt!' even though not in the text is a good touch, whether
one refers it to Jove or Vulcan; but the rest of the passage lacks vigour to set it off; one feels, indeed, that we owe the forceful parenthesis to the necessity of a rhyme for 'thunderbolt', and that the use of 'molt' almost cancels what is gained. There is another good touch in Inf. XXXIII.118-20:

'I am the Brother Alberig',
He of the fruit, - poor picking,' he replied;
'Since here a date is given me for a fig.'

But a little earlier in Inf. XXXII.91-3:

'I am alive,' said I; 'And he who dotes
On fame, can find me serve him in a platter:
'I'll put thy name among my other notes',
The slang phrase has no justification save to provide a rhyme for
'matter - flatter' in the next terzina.

One naturally turns to Inf. XXI and XXII to see what How has made of the Malebranche. Certainly he has let himself go over their names; it is interesting to compare his inventions with those of Miss Sayers. The list in full (order as they occur in the text) is: Dragglecaudal, Rufflebristle, Hellrider, Treadthehoarfrost, Dogawful, Frizzlewhiskers, Libidevil (presumably pronounced Lie-bi-devil), Dragondag, Curlytush, Puppyscratcher, Scurvyfellow, Robthehell. On the whole, however, their sayings and doings are disappointing. In XXI.100-5 we have:

Their forks presented: 'Shall I make him dance?'
They said to one another. 'Prick his rump,'
They answered; 'Make him lively with a lance.'
But then the fiend that should have held the stump,
Wheeled round and said, in manner rather starch:
'Here, Rufflebristle, drop it, drop it plump.'

Even if we can penetrate the relation of 'that should have held the stump' to 'che tenea sermone / col duca mio', and can imagine starchness as a suitable quality in Malacoda, we feel that we owe the colloquial
forms mainly to the fact that rhymes were needed for 'rump' and for 'Sixth Arch' in line 108. Virgil assures Dante (XXI.65): 'I've had a hand before in such a rag', but 'O thou that readest, new the sport revealed!' (XXII.118) is typical of the rather featureless archaisms which How mingles with his slang. Ciampolo supplies the most vigorous colloquial passage (80-93):

'An arrant cheat,"
He answered; 'Fra Comita was his name,
Gallura-born, a vessel of deceit,
Who had his master's enemies in hand
And won their praises by his conduct neat.
Cash paid, they said; he says, you understand.
And in his other jobs, his sly intrigue,
His swindling, was not picayune but grand.
With him Don Michel Zanche is in league,
From Logodoro; on Sardinian blab
Their tongues keep wagging on without fatigue.
Oh me, look there; he grinds his teeth! He'll stab!
I've more to say, but fear a friend like that
Is ripening his plans to scratch my scab.'

Perhaps the most startling lines in the Inferno are XVIII.127-36:

And he thereon, with punches of his nut:
'My flatteries immersed me in this place,
Whereof my tongue could never get a glut.'
And next my Leader said: 'Protrude thy face
A little farther over from the crest,
And let thy vision manage to embrace
That dirty and dishevelled household pest,
Whose scratching gives her stercoanal nails employ,
Who squats and then stands up to get a rest.
That's Thais, whore, who when her fancy-boy
Inquired: "Have I then great thanks from thee?"
Said: "Nay, stupendous! Let's no more annoy
Our eye with such things. Let them sated be.'

The word 'trip' occurs with jarring frequency: Virgil informs Dante (IX.22)
'Tis true I made a former trip to Hell'; later in the same canto (100) the angel 'turned to start again his nasty trip'; and so on. IV.145-7 would no doubt sound natural in America:

I cannot speak at length of all the men,
Because my lengthy subject cries halloo,
And facts are often greater than my pen.
In Purgatorio and Paradiso slang or something like it occurs quite as often as in Inferno. In Purg. XXIV.16 Forese says:

Considering how
Our diet milks away our every mug,
The mentioning of names they here allow,

and later (line 86): 'Faster and faster, till it knocks him cold.' In XVI.70 we have: 'If that were true, away free-will would go / Leaving you stranded.' Leah (Purg. XXVII.100) begins her speech: 'Whoever has the question in his teeth', a turn of phrase that might be paralleled elsewhere in the Divine Comedy, but seems out of place here. In Purg. XXX.124-9 Beatrice, whose speech up to that point has been decorous, says:

Soon as I trod the threshold that forelies
Our second age, and changed my life, this cuss
Removes himself from me, to others flies.
When I arose from flesh to spirit, and thus
The beauty and the virtue in me grew,
I was less dear to him, less glamorous.

In Par. IV.118 Dante addresses his 'gââmour-girl' as '0 you First Lover's sweetheart; deity. In the next canto she lays down the rule for the commutation of a vow thus (lines 58-60):

And let him hold a change but fiddlesticks,
Unless in what is taken up what's laid
Down, be contained as four goes into six.

In XXX.22-4 we have:

I'll say that - more than ever was, at some
Point, comic poet or tragic by his theme,
Stumped - I at this pass quite am overcome.

The archaisms promised in the preface are plentiful; quite a few have already appeared in the passages quoted. Such words as 'prole', 'cark', 'messeemâd', 'sans', 'acquist', 'tort', 'anent' are common; also, to suit rhyme, 'mo' (= more), 'trey' (= three), 'ee' (= eye), etc. 'I wean' (sic) occurs once. There are provincialisms like 'ken', 'bide', and in
Purg. XV.128-9 rather surprisingly:

... the thoughts in thee that spring
Would not be hidden from me, though but wee.

Of the neologisms the most striking is in Par. XXXII.142-4:

We'll bend our eyes on the First Love, that through
His brilliance thou may pierce, a Himward eyer,
So far as it is possible to do,

which is hardly an improvement on the 'guardando verso lui' of the original. There are also learned words and Latinisms where they would be better avoided, e.g. 'Phenomena that have the look of lies' (Inf. XVI.124); 'Mary's parturition' (Purg. III.38); 'We are levitated to the seventh light' (Par. XXI.13); 'that book that parades the preterite' (Par. XXIII.54); 'umbriferous prefaces' (Par. XXX.78). There is a neat touch in Inf. XXXII.115-7 to reproduce the reference to 'l'argento de' Franceschi':

... who weeps about the claim
He thinks he had upon argent français.
'Duera', thou canst say, 'I also saw,
Down there below where sinners are frappés.'

The rendering of Purg. XI.105, 'Ere thou hadst outgrown "penny-bank" and "bwead"', is also apt.

How says in his preface that 'close accuracy should not be expected', and we have seen that he often departs from the letter of the text. He also takes advantage of the other liberties in the matter of rhyme and vocabulary which he mentions. Having given himself this degree of licence, we might expect him to produce a translation that would in other respects read fluently. But he warns us that we must also expect awkwardness and inversion, and such are indeed abundant. The following are a few short passages typical of what is found throughout the poem.
Thy heart is hardened if it does not weep
With what my heart foresaw, to think about.
Or, tears for what occasions dost thou keep?

And said: 'O Father, we should suffer less
If thou wouldst feed on us. Let thee, who'st clad
Us woefully in flesh, remove that dress.'

Whence I: 'My sight so much renews its use
In thy light, master, that discernment's clear
Of all thy reasonings marshal or educe.
But I entreat thee, gentle father dear,
Explain me love: how good deeds and the kind
Opposed thou ascrib' st to one source, make appear.'

Over her cradle watching we'd find one,
Soothing with baby talk her little gnome,
Such as gives parents' selves the greatest fun.

To such a peaceable, to such a fair
Civic existence, to such trusted-in
Citizenry, to abode so sweetly rare,
Mary gave me, invoked with howling din.
And I at once, in your old Baptistery,
Christian and Cacciaguida did begin.

One of the worst crashes in the poem is How's version of the opening of Par. XX, of which lines 7-12 read:

This sky-behaviour in my mind rewoke,
When the world's standard, and its leaders' too,
Now through its blessed beak no longer spoke;
By reason that all those live lights, which grew
Far brighter, began singing songs, impressed
On slippery memory and since fallen through.

Slovenly constructions are frequent, like 'though the distance thou art
come's immense' (Inf. XIV.125) or (Purg. XXX.94-6):

But hearing the sweet modulations float
From their compassion, more than if, 'Why art
Thou wrecking him, lady?' 'd left their throat.

There are other passages which seem merely ludicrous:

As when a mother, waked by noises, sees
A mass of burning flame that fills the place,
And snatches up her little son and flees,
So careless of herself in care for him,
She does not stay for even her chemise.

- 749 -
Louis How (13)

Ptolomea has this advantage, which we love,
That hitherwards a soul oft comes its ways
Ere Atropos has given it a shove.  
(Inf. XXXIII.124-6)

He moved toward me; I moved toward him. How fine,
My nice Judge Nin; what a delightful thrill
To see thou wast not where the guilty pine!  
(Purg. VIII.52-4)

Some examples have been given where How's rendering is effective and
his colloquialisms admirable. The following are one or two of the best
passages noted, but they are in the conventional style for the most part
rather than in How's characteristic manner.

And now there came across the turbid lake
The uproar of a tumult full of dread,
That caused the shore on either side to shake.
Not otherwise, when mighty winds are sped,
Impetuous from diverse heats, they cry,
Demolish woods, and forging full ahead,
Beat down, rend off the branches, toss them high;
With dust ahead, stalks pride that will not swerve,
And makes the wild beasts and the shepherds fly.  
(Inf. IX.64-72)

Within the year's first youth, when Sol his locks
Doth temper, in Aquarius's prime;
When nights diminish toward the equinox;
When earth is white with pictures which the rime
Has drawn to represent her sister snow,
Although her brush wears out in little time:
The peasant, who has seen his fodder low,
Arises and looks out, beholds the ground
All whitened, and he smites his thigh a blow;
And goes back to the house and stamps around,
Poor puzzled wretch, and scolds, and never stays;
But goes outside again, and hope is found
Because the earth is different to his gaze
In such a little while; he takes his crook
And forth he drives his flock of sheep to graze.  
(Inf. XXIV.1-15)

Who ends his life without it, when he flees
Leaves vestiges on earth of such a kind
As smoke in air and spindrift on the seas.  
(Inf. XXIV.49-51)

Like goats grown quiet while they ruminate,
Which skipped so frisk and agile, to and fro
Upon the peaks, a while before they ate,
Hushed in the shade, out of the sun's fierce glow,
Watched by their leaning shepherd, as he bends
Over his crook, and keeps them, leaning so.  
(Purg. XXVII.76-81)
Louis How (14)

Whatever melody is sweetest found
   Down here, and draws the soul to it alone,
   Would seem cracked clouds whence thunder-crashes sound,
   Comparing it unto that lyre's soft tone
   Crowning the lovely sapphire, whence the sky
   Ensapphires when it has serenest grown.  (Par. XXIII.97-102)

The quotability of How's version deteriorates as the Comedy proceeds, and

the Paradiso in particular offers few striking passages.

In conclusion it must be said that in spite of the innovations he has
introduced and the freedom he has allowed himself How has not produced a
successful translation, nor inaugurated a style which might be followed and
developed by others. It is full of the all too familiar periphrases and dis-
tortions, nor can the plea in the preface that 'If it is sometimes a bit
obscure or a bit clumsy, let him (the reader) consider that the original is
frequently both' be admitted in extenuation. Much of the awkwardness we
have complained of is superimposed on the original, and is in no sense a
reflection of its diction or construction. Could the reader of the extracts
given, say for instance Par. XX.12, glean from How's 'impressed / On slippery
memory and since fallen through' any notion of Dante's 'da mia memoria
labili e caduci'? It is to be feared that here and elsewhere, in How's
language, 'he wouldn't have a clue'.

- 751 -
RALPH THOMAS BODEY

The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri, Translated by R. T. Bodey, M.A.

Note. - The edition consisted of 200 numbered copies, and contains the dedication: 'To the dear memory of my Wife and of our only son Alan Ralph Bodey, Scholar of Caius College, Cambridge, Lieutenant 7th Battn. The King's Regiment (Liverpool), born June 23rd 1895, killed in action France June 28th 1916.'

Ralph Thomas Bodey (1863-1952) spent his life in the service of education. He had a brilliant academic career, being Senior Royal Exhibitioner and twice Royal Scholar at the Royal School of Mines, London; in 1882 he went to Trinity College, Oxford, as Millard Scholar in Natural Science, in which subject he graduated with first class honours in 1886. He was appointed chief science master at the Liverpool College in 1890; in 1903 he became an inspector of schools under the Liverpool Education Committee; and from 1920 till his retirement in 1926 he was assistant director of education there. Soon after this he went to live in Bath, where he died at the advanced age of eighty-nine. He seems to have had few intimate friends; he is spoken of as rather shy and aloof, extremely modest and reserved regarding his own attainments. So far as his official career was concerned, linguistic knowledge played only a small part; but his learning seems to have been as wide as it was unobtrusive. The dedication quoted above is witness to a deep personal grief quietly borne; during the first World War he took an active part in the Civil Defence Guard, and after his son's death he was for some months engaged full time on
coastal defence. It was typical of a man of considerable ability and unostentatious nature that after long thought and years of patient work he eventually published this memorial volume, which forms a genuine addition to British Dante scholarship. In a brief preface he tells us that the translation was begun at Florence in the spring of 1930, adding that 'throughout I have endeavoured to express the content of the great poem as faithfully as might be, without any embroidery of my own'. Remarking that he has relegated the notes to the end of the volume he says:

Dante, like Shakespeare, is often more plain to grasp when speaking for himself, than when proclaimed by an assiduous crowd of interpreters; and his great figure as Poet is too often obscured by excessive Dantism, as that of Saint Paul by overmuch Paulinism. It will be seen therefore that the making of this translation was more or less his full-time occupation for some eight years, and this is borne out by the care and accuracy of his work.

The translation is in blank verse, printed continuously; it does not follow the terzine of the original exactly, although there are long passages where it reproduces Dante almost line for line. Some cantos make a few lines more, usually only two or three, one with eight more being exceptional; more than half make a line or two less. The total number of lines is 14,107 against Dante's 14,233. The proofs have been carefully revised, and only one or two slight misprints were noted. Punctuation is correct and consistent, and quotation marks are correctly placed. The three explanatory sections which precede the notes on the cantos are clear, concise and well-informed, giving just the information that a reader with no special knowledge would want to appreciate the poem. The notes themselves are short but full of accurate data; they contain ample evidence of the author's wide reading and interests. As might be expected, his
explanations of scientific matters, such as Dante's astronomy, as admirably lucid; and he has shrewd remarks on philosophy and philology. For the most part he avoids controversial issues, and gives the conventional account of such cruxes as the 'veltro' of Inf. 101 without discussion.

As to the translation itself, it is pleasant to be able to quote, with the fullest agreement, the short but satisfying review which appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement* (16th July 1938) - a tribute, one feels, which would, in its kindly brevity, be very much to the mind of the translator.

... There are many versions of Dante, and not all are as easily readable as this version. Mr Bodey has preferred blank verse to the difficulties of terza rima, thereby winning probably a freedom and a directness at once. His verse is such that it can be read and understood with ease; ... and his language is modern. At the end he contributes some desirable notes, but they are not overdone. ... Swift and unimpeded access, in fact, to Dante is what the reader will get from this version, the style of which is sustained enough to carry the necessary dignity.

It is indeed a translation that can be thoroughly recommended to anyone who desires either to become acquainted with the Comedy solely through English, or to obtain help in following the Italian. It is of a high standard of literal accuracy throughout, and though it could not be described as highly poetical, it is very successful in conveying the general tone and atmosphere, and scattered through it are many lines and phrases worthy of their original. It will perhaps be felt that Bodey's style, at once masculine and nervous, is at its best in the Inferno; but the later sections of the poem fall only a little short of the earlier, and are remarkably well done for a man in his seventies.

Before doing justice to his many good qualities, a few criticisms of Bodey's style may be made. His worst fault is a tendency to Latinisation; sometimes he uses the English cognate of the Italian word, where
the connotation is different, e.g. he almost always renders 'ammirare' by 'admire', which might puzzle readers not etymologically minded, or writes lines like 'contrived appropriate to the race of men' = 'fatto per proprio dell' Humana specie' (Par. I.57). More often, he uses learned words where simpler or more familiar ones would have served his purpose better, for instance (Inf. II.13-15),

Thou sayst that Silvius' father, vestured still
Correctly, went to th' eternal place,
Percipient with all his faculties,
where in any case the last rather cumbersome line probably does not express what Dante meant by 'e fu sensibilmente'. This leads to such extravagances as 'excrement / That seemed to be of human origin' (Inf. XVIII.117); 'My mimicy of nature was adroit' (Inf. XXIX.139); 'Methinks I saw the all-embracing form / Of this intrinsication' (Par. XXXIII.91-2). But his Latin words are at times used effectively as in Inf. VI.94-9:

He wakes not more
Until the sound of the angelic trump;
For when the Hostile Power shall come, each one
Shall seek his dismal grave once more; resume
His former flesh and corporal form; shall hear
What everlastingly reverberates.

There are a number of lame lines. It is difficult to see any reason for such as:

Not from thy conversion, but from the gift
One is that false she, Joseph's accuser
It alone goes straight, the bad road scorning

Lines of nine syllables are sometimes used for deliberate effect:

Ah, Justice Divine! who may amass
I am Beatrice, I am indeed

Rhyme has been allowed to slip in occasionally with a disconcerting effect, as in Inf. I.54-5:
Ralph Thomas Bodey (5)

I lost all hope of reaching to the height,
And like a man who wins with keen delight . . .

A bad example of this occurs in Inf. V.75-8 where three out of four consecutive lines rhyme: 'me - see - love - thee'. The only mistranslations or misinterpretations noted are trivial ones not worth recording.

Bodey shows himself conscious of Dante's verbal effects, though he does not always reproduce them successfully. One may be startled at first reading by 'So fell, and fell, and fell th' eternal heat' (Inf. XIV.37), but it can readily be seen that he is trying to catch the torrid power of 'tale scendeva l'eternale ardore'; a similar device is used in Inf. XXIX.3: 'they only longed to pause, and weep, and weep'. There is an excellent choice of word and rhythm in Purg. XXVIII.19-21:

Like that which grows and gathers from branch to branch
Throughout the pinewood on Chiassi's shore,
When Aeolus lets the Sirocco loose,

although it is just a trifle energetic for 'tal qual di ramo in ramo si raccoglie'. Two of the famous terzine of Par. XX (10-12 and 73-5) may be quoted to show that Bodey has perception of what is to be aimed at:

Because those living luminaries all
Began, with far more lustrous shining, songs
Elusive, fleeting from my memory.

And like a lark, that ranges through the air
At first in song, and then falls silent, cloyed
With the last sweetness than appeases her.

The conclusion of Par. X is well managed:

Then like the clock, that calls us at the hour
When rises up the Spouse of God, to sing
Her matin song, and wake her Husband's love,
As each part urges on and draws the next,
Sounding tin tin in such a mellow tone,
That the well-ordered spirit swells with love;
Thus I beheld that glorious wheel revolve,
Voice answering to voice, in tempering
And sweetness such as never can be known
Except where joy unendingly endures.

- 756 -
It is worth while quoting a few more sustained passages of the poem to supplement the extracts in Appendix I. First, here are four from the earlier cantos of the Inferno, to show Bodey's skill in reproducing the varying effects.

As go the starlings in the winter time
Sailing along, wing-borne, in broad full flocks;
Such were the evil spirits in that blast,
Which leads them here, and there, downward, aloft;
Nor hope e'er comforts them of rest, nor hope
Of penalty relaxed. And as the cranes,
Forming themselves in long and ordered lines,
Go uttering their call, cleaving the air;
So I beheld the wailing shadows come,
Borne on that turmoil . . . .

In the third circle am I now, of rain
Eternal and accursed, heavy, cold,
And changeless in its norm and character.
Coarse hail, discoloured water, mixed with snow,
Came pouring downward through the dusky air;
The earth on which they fall is foul to smell.
Cerberus, monstrous beast and cruel, barks
In manner of a dog through his three throats,
Over the people who are here submerged.
Red are his eyes, his greasy beard is black,
His belly broad, his paws furnished with claws,
Wherewith he grasps the spirits, flays them, rends.

Each on each will butt
Eternally; these from the tomb will rise
With tight-shut fist, and those with shortened hair.
Their evil-giving, evil-husbanding
Have lost them the bright world, appointed them
This tussle; what that is no words can gloze.
Now, son, mayst see how brief the mockery
Of those good things entrusted unto Fortune,
For which the human race disordered grows.
For all the gold that is or ever was
Beneath the moon could never bring to rest,
Of all these wearied souls, a single one.

We running that dead water on our course,
One set himself before us, full of filth,
And said: - 'Who art thou, coming here so soon?'
'Although I come,' I said, 'I do not stay.
But who are thou, become so hideous?'
And he: - 'Thou seest, I am one who weeps.'
And I to him: - 'In weeping and in woe
Remain, accurséd spirit! Thee I know,'
Although thou'rt now become so wholly foul.'
Then he reached out both hands towards the boat;
Whereon my watchful master thrust him off,
And 'Get thee gone', he said, 'with the other dogs.' (Inf. VIII.31-42)

The appearance of the angel in canto IX, the Farinata episode, and the circles of the Violent all contain very quotable passages, but we pass on to one of the most dramatic scenes of Malebolge where Bodey renders in sharp detail a passage which too many translators have left woolly:

Then round I turned like one in haste to see
What he should shun, appalled by sudden fear,
Yet staying not departure to observe;
And saw a swarthy devil come behind,
Running at speed along the stony ridge.
Ah, what a savage aspect did he wear!
How cruel in his bearing did he seem,
With wings outspread, and light upon his feet!
Over his shoulder, which was sharp and high,
He bore a sinner by both haunches held,
Clutching him by the sinew of the foot. (Inf. XXI.25-36)

With that other bugbear of so many translators, the simile in Inf. XXX. 138-41, Bodey is likewise successful:

And like a man who dreams of his own harm,
Who dreaming wishes that it were a dream,
So that he omerves what is as though 'twere not,
So then did I, incapable of speech,
Wish to excuse myself, and all the while
Excused myself nor thought that so I did.

Another simile well rendered is that of the sheep in Purg. III.79-87:

As from their fold the sheep come out, by one,
By two, by three, while timid stand the rest,
With eye and nose downbent toward the ground;
And what the first does, that the others do,
Crowding against her if she do but check,
Simple and mild, nor know the reason why:
So then I saw move onward to advance
The leading souls of that fair-fortuned flock,
Modest in feature and composed in gait.

From many other good passages in the Purgatorio we select one from the closing scenes (XXX.22-54):
Time was that I have seen at break of day
The East all roseate, the rest of heaven
Decked with calm loveliness, and the sun's face
So shaded rise that, tempered by the haze,
The eye endured it long; so, in a cloud
Of flowers that rose from hands angelical,
And backward fell again within, without;
Appeared to me a Lady, olive-crowned
Above a veil of white, mantled in green,
Robed in the colour of the living flame.
And then my spirit, that so long a time
Had quailed not in her presence, brow'd, awed,
Waited no further warrant of the eyes,
But felt through secret power that from her flowed
The mighty potency of ancient love.
Immediately that on my vision struck
That lofty virtue, which so long ago,
Ere boyhood's days were closed, had pierced me through,
Leftward I turned to Virgil, in that trust
Wereth with an infant to its mother runs
When troubled or afraid, to say to him:
'Remains in me no single drop of blood
That is not quivering; well do I know
The symptoms of the ancient flame.' But Virgil
Had left us, of himself bereaved us; Virgil,
My most sweet father; Virgil, unto whom
I had surrendered me for mine own weal;
Nor whatsoever the ancient mother lost
Availed to stay my cheeks, cleansed with the dew,
From being darkened with the tears I shed.

Bodey's Paradiso is a creditable performance, though perhaps a little
below the level of the other parts. It opens well (I.1-12):

Glory of Him who everything doth move
Pervades the universe, and shines the more
Resplendent in one region, less elsewhere.
I was within that Heaven where most His light
Is lavished; one descended thence lacks wit,
Lacks power to tell again the things I saw;
Because our intellect, as it draws near
To that it longs for, is so deep engulfed
That memory cannot retrace the path.
So much however of the holy Realm
As in my recollection I could store
Shall now become the burden of my Song.

Piccarda's speech in canto III (see Appendix I) is well done. The Caccia-
guida cantos are also good, but here we shall quote Dante's Credo (XXIV.
130-47) which is boldly and well executed.

- 759 -
I in one God believe,
Sole and eterne, who moves the whole of Heaven
With love and with desire, Himself unmoved.
For such belief not only have I proofs
Both physical and metaphysical,
But those imparted me by truth showered hence
Through Moses, through the Prophets and the Psalms,
Through the Evangel, and through you who wrote
After the fiery Spirit made you saints.
And I believe in Persons Three, eterne,
One essence deeming them, so One and Three,
As to admit of use with are and is.
Of the profound condition and divine
That I refer to now, repeatedly
The Gospel teaching has confirmed my mind.
This is the origin; this is the spark
Which grows thereafter to a lively flame,
And glitters in me like a star in heaven.

To conclude this summary of a translation which is all too little known
in proportion to its merits, here are a few of the best lines from the
final vision of Paradiso XXXIII.

And I, who now was drawing near the term
Of every wish, fulfilled befittingly
The flaming eagerness of my desire.

Like one who in a dream beholds, and then,
When flown the dream, the impressed feeling stays,
The rest returning not to memory,
Thus I; for vision almost dies, yet still
Within my heart distils the sweet it bore.
So in the sunshine is the snow unsealed;
So at the stirring of the wind was lost
The Sibyl's word upon the weightless leaves.

O lofty Light, that dost so far outsoar
All mortal thoughts, restore unto my mind
Some little fragment of what Thou didst seem,
And charge my tongue with such a mighty power,
That I may leave to people yet unborn
One single spark of Thy most glorious light;
For through restoring somewhat to my mind,
Through ringing though but faintly in these lines,
They shall more fully grasp Thy victory.
The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri with translation and comment by John D. Sinclair. London: John Lane The Bodley Head. 3 volumes, 8 x 4 1/2 in.

I. Inferno. 1939. pp. 432. Preface, pp. 9-12; Contents, pp. 13-15; Dante's Hell, p. 17; The System of Dante's Hell, p. 19; Italian and English texts on facing pages, with brief indication of subject matter and head, short numbered notes and a comment (2 to 6 pages) at end of each canto, pp. 22-432.

II. Purgatorio. 1939. pp. 446. Contents, pp. 9-12; Dante's Purgatory, p. 15; The System of Dante's Purgatory, p. 15; Italian and English texts (as above), pp. 18-446.

III. Paradiso. 1946. pp. 504. Preface, pp. 7-8; Contents, pp. 9-12; Dante's Paradise, p. 15; The System of Dante's Paradise, p. 15; Italian and English texts (as above), pp. 18-492; Index of Persons and Places, pp. 493-504.

A second edition, with slight revisions, was published in 1948; and in the same year an American edition was published in New York by the Oxford University Press.

John Dickson Sinclair (1865-1951) was the fifth child of Alexander Sinclair, later a Glasgow magistrate. He was educated at private schools, then at the University of Glasgow, where he graduated with honours in Philosophy. He decided to become a minister, and after three years at the United Presbyterian Theological Hall and a summer session at Marburg University, he was ordained and inducted to a charge in what from 1900 onwards was the United Free Church of Scotland. This was at Cluny East, Aberdeenshire, where he remained till 1910; then he was called to Luncarty, Perthshire, leaving there in 1913 in response to a call from the Wellesley Square Church in Calcutta. In 1918 he was appointed to the English staff in the Scottish Church College in Calcutta, occupying that post till his retirement in 1927; thereafter he resided in Edinburgh. In 1949 he received a doctorate of laws from Aberdeen University in recognition of his work on Dante.
The translation of the Divine Comedy, the first volumes of which were published when the author was nearly seventy-five, and the last when he was over eighty, were quite literally his life-work - the product of his leisure during his active years, and his full-time occupation thereafter. Although physically frail and somewhat hampered by deafness, he was mentally alert till the end, and was busily engaged in supervising a Braille transcript of his translation undertaken by the National Library for the Blind just before his death, which took place suddenly while he was on holiday.

I had the privilege of a brief personal acquaintance with him, and some correspondence, during the last few months of his life, and some of the information given below is drawn from his conversation.

Sinclair was first attracted to Dante in his student days at the Theological Hall; the Divine Comedy was fashionable as a subject for discussion, and sermons were drawn from it. He read Wicksteed's Six Sermons which, originally published in 1879, reached a third edition in 1892; and, already familiar with French and German and well grounded in the classics, he quickly learned enough Italian to tackle the original. He became acquainted with a number of the English translations, and found none of them satisfactory. When Wicksteed's appeared in 1899 he was disappointed with it, and thought the style inferior to that of the short passages in the earlier volume. As he studied and pondered, the idea grew on him of making a new prose translation, one which should avoid the pitfalls into which he thought his predecessors had fallen. Later, in his preface, he said that his aim was that 'of combining a close rendering of the Italian with the requirements of a credible English', the last adjective implying the criticism of his forerunners which he never expressed publicly. Meantime the sequence of prose translations of the Comedy had fallen off. In the twenty-
five years from 1880 to 1905 there had been four complete Comedies, two
Infernos, three Purgatorios and one Paradiso in prose; except for a few
books of selections there were no more till Sinclair's was published in
1939, although during that period no fewer than twelve complete Comedies,
five Infernos, one Purgatorio and two Paradisos appeared in various kinds
of verse. The only other prose translation since Sinclair's is the very
recent (posthumous) Comedy of Harry Morgan Ayres, an American scholar.

Sinclair's choice of prose for his translation was not made merely
because he thought that a new prose version was needed. He intended his
work to be much more than a translation, and although in his preface he
said that 'the translation of the Divine Comedy into English prose seems,
on the face of it, a singularly gratuitous form of failure' he also con-
sidered it to be the only possible form. The nature of his interest in
the Comedy and of his conviction as to its significance appears in the
third paragraph of the preface, which deals with his commentary.

One of his (Dante's) most distinguishing qualities - in his imagery,
his epithets, his choice of *dramatis personae*, his mythological and
historical illustrations, his astronomical way of telling the time
of day or night, his frequent harping on words, phrases, and ideas,
his curious verbal devices, his varying moods as a pilgrim - is the
quality of relevancy, that is, to the moral and spiritual matter in
hand, and that these features as they come are not merely decorative,
they are integral and are to be so interpreted. Their relevancy is
their meaning.

It will be seen that here, in one sense, Sinclair was in the vanguard of
contemporary thought, because in the last twenty years the relevancy of
much that was formerly regarded as subordinate, if not actually decor-
ative, in the Comedy has been reasserted and re-established in scholar-
ship and criticism. On the other hand he was somewhat insensitive to
another trend of the age: the rediscovery of Dante's poetry, heralded by
Torraca and Croce, and rejoiced in by so many of the new critical writers
with an enthusiasm perhaps to some extent unbalanced in its reaction against nineteenth century values.

In order, then, that the relevancy of every portion of the poem might be fully demonstrated, it was essential that it should be rendered with meticulous accuracy such as is only possible in prose. Dante's meaning must be made clear, without any of the concessions to metrical form inevitable in a verse translation. That, however, was in itself insufficient for the non-specialist reader unacquainted with the minutiae of medieval thought and unaccustomed to the 'extraordinary fullness' of Dante's expression. Nor would a succession of explanatory notes dealing with persons, places and allusions form an adequate complement to the text. These are matters of detail, whereas relevancy involves a continual relating of each part to the whole. Therefore each canto (or in some cases a pair of connected cantos) is followed by a 'Note', varying in extent from two to six pages, and these notes unite to make a progressive commentary on the whole poem, in the course of which the complete design is always kept in mind, and the contribution made to it by each part clearly and cogently set forth. It will be remembered that Wicksteed had something of the kind in view when he rewrote the arguments for the Temple edition of the Comedy; but Sinclair's plan was more comprehensive and farther-reaching.

Although in the course of our discussion we have restricted ourselves in the main to considering translations, and have only referred to explanatory matter as it were in parentheses, these notes of Sinclair's are at once so essential a part of his whole scheme and of such intrinsic value as to merit more than a passing mention. A theologian by training and inclination, and at the same time a scholar with a wide range of accomplishment and remarkable width of reading in many languages, he worked out his com-
mentary with a thoroughness that is reminiscent of Dante himself. He had mastered almost everything that had been written on the subject; he mentions some of these authorities in the preface, and it is a formidable list. In his notes he quotes them repeatedly, sometimes at length, translating their words competently from various languages. Although the framework of the plan is his own, he almost invariably enforces his points with an apt quotation, and in so doing also provides the reader with a summary of much of the best that has been written on the Comedy. He is familiar with De Sanctis, Torraca and Croce, with Spoerri and Vossler, Garàner and Grandgent, but equally ready to bring forward helpful observations from the early commentators, or to summon the fathers and the schoolmen to his aid. Moreover, just when we are beginning to think that he is over-stressing one aspect of the subject, or confining himself too rigidly to an interpretation on certain lines, he switches to another aspect, and gives us some apt comment on textual criticism or poetic technique, or finds a parallel to Dante's thought in the work of some other writer; and by the time we have finished we not only know a great deal more about Dante than we did before, but have gained a lot of other valuable information as well. It should be added, however, that Sinclair does not pretend to any notable originality of thought in his comment, nor did he claim to be himself in the van of medieval scholarship; his work is to a large extent a digest of previous writing, skilfully selected and combined in order to present a view of the Divine Comedy to which his own study and conviction had led him.

So far as the translation itself is concerned, Sinclair undoubtedly realised his two aims of 'combining a close rendering of the Italian with the requirements of a credible English', as his preface happily puts it. That he had punctiliously weighed his text word by word is obvious, and
right up to the last he was still pondering some passages about which he felt uncertain, and seeking the opinions of others regarding them. He had a natural interest in the correct use of language; he was, for instance, a stickler for a proper discrimination between the relatives 'which' and 'that'; and he never adopted a word or phrase lightly. A prose translation is inevitably a compromise; a balance must be held between being over-literal on one hand and digressing into paraphrase on the other. The need for providing a faithful reflection of the Italian may often make it impossible to use such natural English as would be used in an original composition; the attainment of a 'credible' English is in itself something of a feat. This has the unavoidable effect of cooling quite considerably the 'burning intensity' of Dante, and it is easy to show by quotation that a prose version lacks variety, passion, majesty, and so forth; that it is, in short, what its nature would lead us to expect, prosaic.

For the purpose of illustration, we shall first deal with the three passages reproduced in Appendix II, for easy comparison with the work of the other translators included there (from Inf. XXVII, Purg. XIX and Par. XIV). The verbal resemblances between Sinclair and Norton are striking, not only in these extracts but throughout the entire translation. An examination of them shows, however, that they are in the main due to a wise word choice on the part of both translators; Norton, of course, being much aided by Longfellow's work from which he borrowed freely. Often, though not always, Sinclair is clearer and more modern in his idiom than Norton, preferring the more usual word; he has almost entirely got rid of the occasional inversion and odd expression which keeps cropping up in his predecessor. On the other hand Sinclair is often, though again not always, rather more prosaic than Norton, inclined to choose a commonplace expression
rather than a striking one where the former seems adequate to express the plain meaning. This tendency can be seen in numerous small differences, particularly in the extract from Purg. XIX. For instance Norton, copying straight from Longfellow, renders line 21 'so full am I of pleasantness to hear', whereas Sinclair has 'so great delight it is to hear me'.

This brings us to a slight weakness in Sinclair's translation at which we have already hinted: he tends to neglect the sheer technical accomplishment of Dante's verse, partly because he is preoccupied with the meaning, and partly because his own poetic faculty was not strong. Sinclair was impatient, for example, of all attempts to translate the Comedy into verse; indeed his attitude was not unlike that of Norton in his old age as recorded by Anderson. The reason for this was partly that he felt that a metrical version would necessarily involve distortions of the exact meaning, the preservation of which he held to be of paramount importance; partly that he was fundamentally unsympathetic towards the view of Dante as a poet first and foremost taken by say Croce or Eliot. In this connexion he confided to me that he could make nothing of Eliot's poetry, or indeed of contemporary poetry in general. Although he makes occasional remarks about Dante's poetic gifts, particularly in the note on Purg. XXIV and the 'dolce stil Novo', these observations are always general, and in very few cases does he single out any line or terzina for praise, nor is he, when he does so, specific. It would appear therefore that Sinclair's feeling for poetry as such was not strong, and there are some passages which support this assumption. A good example is Purg. XV where lines 64-75 is read:

And he to me: 'Because thou still settest thy mind on earthly things thou gatherest darkness from the very light. That infinite and unspeakable good which is there above speeds to love as a sunbeam comes to a bright body; so much it gives of itself as it finds of ardour, so that the more charity extends the more does the eternal goodness...'

- 767 -
increase upon it, and the more souls that are enamoured there above the more there are to be rightly loved and the more love there is and like a mirror the one returns it to the other.

In one of the shortest notes in the volume (it occupies little more than a page) Sinclair deals with the whole discussion of 'divieto e consorte' in a few lines; a notable contrast to Anderson's treatment of the same passage quoted earlier. The following extract, Par. XXX.16-33, affords a further illustration.

If all that is said of her up to this were gathered in one meed of praise, it would be little to serve this turn; the beauty I saw not only surpasses our measure, but I surely believe that only its Maker has all the joy of it. I own myself beaten at this pass more than ever comic or tragic poet was baffled by a point in his theme; for, like the sun in the most wavering sight, the remembrance of the sweet smile deprives my mind of its very self. From the first day I saw her face in this life until this sight the pursuit in my song has not been cut off; but now must my pursuit cease from following longer after her beauty in my verse, as with every artist at his limit.

In spite of its clarity there seems to be less feeling for the language of the original here than we should expect. It is interesting to note that Sinclair mentioned to me that he had derived great pleasure from reading Momigliano's commentary (published in 1945). Had he been able to benefit earlier from such a method of approach it might have helped his rendering of some passages.

Apart from this minor defect, which is not a serious blemish in a prose translation, and certainly does not interfere with the successful accomplishment of the translator's purpose, one can give almost unqualified praise to Sinclair's version. In particular the more difficult expository passages are admirably lucid; with Sinclair's guidance the 'cibo rigido' of such cantos as Purg. XXV and Par. II to V becomes more easily digestible. There are no archaisms, periphrases, or unfamiliar constructions to be coped with, and a minimum of technical language, even in the more compli-
cated of the notes. A few varied passages are quoted to illustrate Sinclair's general level of achievement.

While I was gazing fixedly down there, my Leader, saying: 'Beware, beware!', drew me to him from where I stood; then I turned like one that is eager to see what he must escape and is unmanned with sudden fear and while looking does not stay his flight, and I saw behind us a black devil come running up the ridge. Ah, how savage was his aspect and how fierce he seemed to me in his action, with open wings and light on his feet! His shoulder, which was sharp and high, was laden with both thighs of a sinner and he held him clutched by the tendons of his feet. He spoke from our bridge: 'You Malebranche, here is one of the Ancients of Santa Zita; put him under, while I go back for more to that city, which is well stocked with them. Every man there is a barrator, all but Bonturo; there No is made for cash.'

(Inf. XXI, 22-42)

The way went straight up through the rock in such a direction that I cut off before me the rays of the sun, which was now low, and we had gained only a few steps when both I and my sages perceived by the disappearance of the shadow that the sun had set behind us; and before the horizon, in all its vast expanse, had taken one aspect and light held all her domains each of us made his bed of a step, for the nature of the mountain took from us the power rather than the desire of climbing farther. As goats that have been quick and wanton on the heights before they fed mildly chewing the cud, silent in the shade while the sun is burning, watched by the shepherd who leans on his staff and tends them while he leans - and as the herdsman who lodges in the open passes the night beside his quiet flock, watching lest a beast should scatter them; such were we then all three, I like a goat and they like shepherds, shut in on the one side and the other by the high rock. Little outside could be seen there, but by that little I saw the stars both bigger and brighter than their wont.

(Purg. XXVII, 64-90)

From that moment my vision was greater than our speech, which fails at such a sight, and memory too fails at such excess. Like him that sees in a dream and after the dream the passion wrought by it remains and the rest returns not to his mind, such am I; for my vision almost wholly fades, and still there drops within my heart the sweetness that was born of it. Thus the snow loses its imprint in the sun; thus in the wind on the light leaves the Sibyl's oracle was lost. O Light Supreme that art so far exalted above mortal conceiving, grant to my mind again a little of what thou appearedst and give my tongue such power that it may leave but a gleam of thy glory to the people yet to come; for by returning somewhat to my memory and by sounding a little in these lines the better conceived will be thy victory.

(Par. XXXIII, 55-75)
So far as Sinclair's accuracy is concerned, he is practically irreproachable. He was thoroughly acquainted with the text, and although he does not discuss as a rule variant readings and interpretations, he had considered them all carefully and made his choice, as he points out in the preface.

One or two slips noticed may be due to misprints. He makes the odd mistake, already found in C. G. Wright's version, of putting 'a thousand spirits' in Purg. II,45 instead of 'a hundred'. In Par. XXX,62 he prints 'fulvido' in the Italian but translates the variant 'fluvido' by 'pouring'.

Sinclair's translation had a good press. The Times Literary Supplement (8th July 1939, p. 410) reviewing the first two volumes considered that

. . . His work may be safely recommended as combining a good text, a faithful rendering in good readable English, brief explanatory notes at the end of each canto, and also at the end of each canto a page or two of very helpful comment, drawn from a thorough study of the best sources. . . . The comments fully justify Mr Sinclair's preface. They are the most distinctive feature of his work and make it well worth the attention of English readers who would read the Divine Comedy with understanding.

The review of the Paradiso (3rd May 1947, p. 212) repeated and reinforced the favourable judgment of the comment, but thought that

. . . if he had possessed a greater power of musical expression in his own natural style, the prose version might have been a little less pedestrian than it sometimes appears.

The Modern Language Review did not notice the first two volumes, but a handsome appreciation of the Paradiso by Professor R. Weiss appeared in Vol. 43, 1948, p. 424, giving high praise to both translation and comment, although the latter portions are rather misleadingly referred to as 'introductions to each canto'. A discordant note was sounded in the New Statesman (22nd July 1939) by Mr Stephen Spender, who found it difficult to see what purpose is served by Mr Sinclair's new prose translation which is not already better done by the others (e.g. the Temple Classics and Binyon).
We have already seen that Mr Spender reversed the unfavourable opinion of a previous New Statesman reviewer on Binyon's translation; and his verdict doubtless reflects a personal predilection for a poetical rather than a philosophical approach to Dante, which is in some ways the antithesis of Sinclair's attitude. The new translation was welcomed by writers of several religious denominations in such magazines as Blackfriars, The Guardian and The Methodist Times.

Of great interest is the review of Sinclair's Comedy by Sergio Baldi which appeared in Studi Danteschi, Vol. 29, 1950, pp. 223-5. His praise of the translation uses very similar phraseology to that of the T.L.S. already quoted, and his remarks about the commentary support what we have already said; the relevant paragraphs are quoted below:

Quest'opera merita certamente l'elogio di chiunque abbia a cuore le sorti della cultura italiana in Inghilterra e in America. La traduzione è fedele e corretta, nei limiti del possibile anche letterale, e quindi validissimo aiuto al testo a fronte (che in una traduzione in versi, o soltanto libera, non avrebbe senso). La fatica del traduttore si rivolge, dunque, a chi abbia una certa conoscenza della nostra lingua e con questa sua conoscenza non perfetta voglia accingersi alla lettura di Dante: a costui quest'opera offre un buonissimo testo, una traduzione accurata, qualche nota storica e, in appendice ad ogni canto, un breve ma denso saggio di interpretazione. Il tutto è stato condotto con acume e perizia di filologo, d'interpretazione e di critico. . . .

Il commento che segue ogni canto è, per noi, la parte più interessante; ed è là che il Sinclair mostra più evidentemente 'il lungo studio e 'il grande amore' che gli hanno fatto leggere con ogni cura gli studi danteschi fondamentali; ed è là che mostra, soprattutto, il suo fine senso di equilibrio il quale lo ha tenuto ugualmente lontano dall'estreme conseguenze del filologismo e dell'estetismo. In queste pagine, a dir il vero un poco antologiche, si condensa il succo della critica dantesca moderna italiana ed inglese; e proprio per questa ragione l'opera del Sinclair sarebbe assai utile anche nella biblioteca di uno studioso italiano.

Among American opinions may be mentioned that of Professor La Piana who supplemented her earlier study with an article on 'New Translations into English of the Divine Comedy' in Italica (Vol. 27, 1950, pp. 294-301).
She compares Sinclair's version with those of Norton and Wicksteed, finding it 'closest to the original and at the same time perfectly clear', and that it 'can be safely recommended to Dante students in preference to the older ones of the same type'.

In the preface to the Paradiso Sinclair acknowledged valuable help received from Professor G. L. Bickersteth, and also his appreciation of Charles Williams's The Figure of Beatrice. He was particularly gratified by the personal tributes sent him by these two writers on the publication of the first two volumes. The former wrote:

Your translations of the Hell and Purgatory strike me as the best thing of the kind so far accomplished in English. . . . I cannot imagine how the task you set yourself could have been better done. Long as I have studied Dante, there is no page in your commentary on which I do not find you providing me with enlightenment or stimulating my imagination and thought.

Williams wrote more briefly, remarking: 'I have always had the greatest respect and admiration for your translation'.
THOMAS GODDARD BERGIN


Bergin, Thomas Goddard (born 1904), son of Thomas Joseph Bergin and Irvinea Goddard, is a graduate of Yale, where he also took his Ph.D. in 1929. His first appointment was in the Italian Department at Yale; from 1930 to 1935 he was Associate Professor of Spanish and Italian at Western Reserve University; then followed six years as Professor of Romance Languages at the New York State College for Teachers. In 1941 he was appointed Professor of Romance Languages at Cornell, but from 1943 to 1946 his career was interrupted by war service, during which he gained the bronze star, the Order of the Crown of Italy, and the O.B.E. In 1948 he became Professor of Italian at Yale University. He is the editor of several educational books and the author of various translations from French and Spanish.

Professor Bergin's renderings of Dante are published in a series called 'Crofts' Classics', which aims at providing readable translations at low prices, and is issued in paper covers. To some extent the series resembles our 'Penguin Classics', although it must be remarked that the typography, lay-out and production of the American volumes are much
inferior to those of the British. In his short Introduction to the Inferno Professor Bergin explains that the limited extent permitted has necessitated certain "space-saving devices"; these will be referred to presently. Of his principles of translation he speaks briefly:

The present translation has been made especially for this series. The aim throughout has been readability. Clarity and simplicity of style are only two of Dante's attributes, but they are surely the qualities to be sought for in a translation which at best can hope principally to give the substance of the original. If here and there some gleam of the majesty or beauty of Dante's lines shines through the veil of translation, the translator will be more than satisfied. But clarity remains the goal and to it have been deliberately sacrificed both slavish literalness and any attempt at ornate phraseology.

The translation itself is constructed on a somewhat novel plan. The bulk of it is in continuous blank verse, often line for line, sometimes contracted, less frequently expanded, and making on the whole a few lines less than the original. One canto, Inf. XI, is translated throughout in prose: 'it is a canto of exposition,' says Professor Bergin, 'and such a version seems not unreasonable.' Seven passages in the Inferno and nineteen in the Purgatorio are omitted altogether and replaced by prose summaries; these are:

Inf. IV.121-51; VI.64-91; XVI.28-105; XX.57-end; XXVII.33-57; XXX.85-end; XXXI.91-end.

Purg. III.10-78; IV.1-96; V.64-84; VI.13-60; VII.85-138; XII.25-72; XIII.1-21; XIV.28-66, 97-126; XV.112-45; XVI.115-45; XVII.78-139; XVIII.1-75; XIX.52-96; XXIII.94-117; XXIII.94-133; XXIV.13-42; XXV.1-108; XXVIII.85-148.

Three passages in Inferno and one in Purgatorio are, on the other hand, translated in rhymed verse, viz.

Inf. V.88-107 (4 quatrains and 1 sextain, rhymed alternately), 121-38 (3 quatrains and 1 couplet) - these are Francesca's two speeches; the connecting link (108-20) is in blank verse.

Inf. XIII.55-78, 93-108 (terza rima) - Pier delle Vigne's speeches.

Inf. XXVI.91-142 (rhymed couplets) - the narrative of Ulysses which is reproduced in Appendix I.

Purg. III.106-45 (terza rima) - Manfred's speech.

- 774 -
No mention or explanation of the use of rhyme in these passages is given anywhere in the book, although a note on canto XIII comments on the 'artificial style, full of verbal conceits' of delle Vigne's speeches.

The reader familiar with the Commedia is unlikely to be favourably disposed towards a translation containing such a mixture of styles, so obviously intended for popular consumption, and issued in a form physically unattractive or at least certainly not 'a pleasure to handle'. It is greatly to Professor Bergin's credit that the quality of his work overcomes in some degree these obstacles, and more than one potential critic has been conciliated, if not disarmed, before laying down the books.

Before going further two points should be explained. Professor Bergin has actually translated the Divine Comedy in full, but as is well known it is difficult to get such translations published. His work was accepted for Crofts' Classics with the proviso that it must be cut to come into a total extent of 128 pages, and he was therefore forced to let it appear meantime in a mutilated form, in the hope that, if it becomes sufficiently well known and acceptable, it may ultimately be published in a complete and better produced edition. Incidentally, something seems to have gone wrong with the printers' cast-off of Purgatorio, and more passages have been summarised than was necessary; in the event it turned out that the text could have occupied seven pages more - a rather galling discovery to make when it was too late to take advantage of it.

The second point is that Professor Bergin's Purgatorio did not reach me until this manuscript was almost completed. This article had already been written based on the Inferno only; and that is the reason why it contains fewer references to our extracts from the second cantica, for these had to be added as an afterthought. Incidentally, Professor Bergin's
Paradiso is now completed and in the publishers' hands; he has kindly sent me the manuscript of one canto, extracts from which are given at the end of this article.

The favourable impression created by Professor Bergin's translations is entirely due to the success of the blank verse passages, with which we shall deal before commenting on the others. His style is lucid, and therefore satisfies his first objective of clarity. It is also for the most part free from meretricious adornment and from the taint of archaism or pseudo-poetry, and may be said to go a long way towards meeting the second requirement of simplicity. It embodies, moreover, a third quality which he does not mention, a nervous vigour that is often closely akin to that of Dante himself, and it is here, rather than in any notable stylistic resemblance, that its merit lies. At his best, Professor Bergin's verse reads less like a translation than almost any other rendering of Dante. It is true that to obtain this effect he does not hesitate to depart from literal accuracy, to replace one expression or figure of speech with another, or transpose the order of the ideas, or even to add something of his own. Yet, with a few exceptions, he expresses Dante's meaning with a high degree of fidelity, so that the ordinary reader, with no previous knowledge, would undoubtedly gain from the translation a very fair idea of the original poem. As an example of what is meant we quote Inf. XXIV.79-105:

So we descended from the bridgehead where
It joined the barrier to the eighth ravine;
Here lay the ditch before me, all too clear.
Herein my eyes beheld a serpents' nest;
So thick in number, so bizarre in form
Its reptile denizens that to recall
Their aspect drains my very veins of blood.
Let Libya vaunt no more its dreadful sands,
For though they teem with adders and black asps
And cenchres and two-headed amphibones.
Yet never did their vast extent embrace -
Nay, though there to be added Ethiop's waste
And all the desert of Arabia -
So vast and varied serpent brood as here
Writhed, hissed and crawled before my frightened eyes.
Amidst their venomous menace fear-struck folk,
Naked and helpless, ran and sought in vain
For path of flight or healing heliotrope.
Their hands were bound behind their backs by snakes
Twisting in knots and boring through their loins
With head and tail to join again in front.
Lo, even as we watched, a serpent sprang
At one who stood close by us and transfixed
His quivering throat where neck and shoulders meet;
And quicker than the pen writes i or o
He blazed in flames and burned and fell consumed,
A heap of crumbling ashes to the ground,
And from the ashes grew again the shape
To form the man that had stood there before.

This is by no means literal, but it transposes, into effective English,
the gruesome picture which Dante has painted. The variations and additions are essentially right: we feel, for instance, that 'quivering' is the adjective Dante might have chosen for 'throat' if he had had room for it.

The 'desert of Arabia' fits the English better than 'the Red Sea' would;
the two lines that follow, though almost entirely padding, and perhaps a trifle rhetorical, are convincing. At the very beginning of the extract
the line 'Here lay the ditch before me, all too clear' = 'e poi mi fu la bolgia manifesta' hits just the right note; as Momigliana says:

Una pausa; e poi lo spettacolo della bolgia (62 sgg.), reso tanto più evidente e presente da quella pausa. Da questo sguardo in avanti la visione si snoda con una prodigiosa facilità e una prodigiosa chiarezza.

To quote another example in a quite different style, here is Professor Bergin's rendering of Purg. XI.82-117:

'Brother,' said he, 'more brightly smiles the page
Fresh from the brush of Franco Bolognese:
His now the honor - mine only in part.
I'd not have shown such courtesy, in truth,
While yet I lived, because of my great zeal
To excel all, whereon my heart was bent.

- 777 -
'Tis for such pride that here the fee is paid,
Nor hither had I come, if I had not,
Still capable of sin, turned me to God.
O idle glory of our human powers,
How short a time its verdant sheen endures
Unless succeeded by a grosser age!
In painting Cimabue thought to hold
The field, and now his fame is quite obscured
While everywhere men cry up Giotto's name.
One Guido too has from another stripped
The glory of our tongue, and one now lives
Perhaps who shall dislodge both from the nest.
The world's report is but a gust of wind,
Shifting now here now there and changing name
According to the quarter whence it blows.
What greater reputation will you win,
Sloughing off aged skin, than had you died
Before you left behind the hobby horse,
When once a thousand years have passed? - and these
Against the eternal are a shorter span
Than an eye-blink to heaven's slowest gyre.
He who takes up so little of the path
Before me, was on every Tuscan tongue
And now Siena scarcely breathes his name,
Though he was Lord there when in hapless rout
The rabble of the Florentines was crushed, -
So haughty then and since become so vile!
All your renown is as the hue of grass,
Which comes and goes and withers 'neath the power
That brought it green and tender from the earth.'

Not every passage is so happy as those quoted. Occasionally the fanciful intrudes, e.g. Inf. I.39-40,

"those same stars
That were his escort when in dawn of life
God's love gave motion to these creatures fair,

or Inf. XIV.94-9:

An olden land under Time's hand decayed,
That men call Crete, lies sea-girt and remote.  
Once, in the innocence of human dawn,
Her kings held sway.  Thereon Mount Ida high
Uprises, murmurous once with leaves and bathed
With purling springs, but desolate now and bare.

This decoction of Swinburne and Tennyson does not accord with Dante's tone. 'When once again I stand before my Lord / I'll sing your praises to him' (II.73-4) is a trifle fulsome, and 'Driving its prisoners to
dreadful groans' (Inf. V.3) merely banal. There is occasional stiffness as in 'Where human breast and equine frame conjoined' (Inf. XII.84), and 'The tomb of him who stirred his plangent shank' (Inf. XIX.45) is below standard. 'And huddled close behind a thicket-clump' is weak for 'dâ sè e d'un cespuglio fece un groppo' (Inf. XIII.123); while 'Clutching the hair a hand bore on the head' (Inf. XXVIII.121 = 'e '1 capo tronco tenea per le chiome') is one of the few lines which are obscure to the point of having to be read twice. The ending of Purg. IX is rather weak:

What I heard there produced a similar
Effect to that familiar to our ears:
When voices chant while organ notes resound
So the words are sometimes clear and sometimes faint.

Another weak ending is that of Purg. XXXI which seems to trouble the majority of translators. Professor Bergin renders:

O glory of eternal living light,
Who, though he had waxed pale beneath the shade
Of High Parnassus or drunk of its well
Would not appear as one with memory dulled
Trying to render you as you appeared
When you revealed yourself in the free air,
Uncovered save for the harmonious spheres?

It is strange that so many versions transpose these last two lines, for it is obvious that 'quando nell' aere aperto ti solvesti' is the climax.

Colloquialisms and Americanisms are used with discretion, and are often effective. It is disconcerting for us, though no doubt inevitable, to find the heretics enclosed in 'glowing caskets'; and perhaps 'Now here in this black mulch we curse our luck' is a little inconsequent for 'or ci attristiam nella belletta negra' (Inf. VII.124). On the other hand Inf. XXII.22-4:

Even as the steer who shakes his rope aside
As the axe falls and, dying on his feet,
No longer walks but random leaps and bounds,
Thomas Goddard Bergin (8)

has just the right overtone in the familiar phrase. To transform 'Quel folletto' (= Gianni Schicchi, XXX.33) into 'that pixillated gnome' is a good touch. One feels sorry that the dialogue with Griffolino and Capocchio had to be summarised in prose. In Purgatorio the conversational forms like 'Have no fear while I'm your guide' sound too casual; perhaps the worst occurrence is at XXXI.133-5 which reads:

'Turn Beatrice, turn your sacred eyes,'
Such was their song, 'upon your liegeman here,
So many steps he's taken to see you.'
The reader might like to have some specimens of well-handled terzine and notable passages; a selection is given below.

For all the gold there is or ever was
Beneath the moon could buy no mite of rest
For any one of these exhausted souls. (Inf. VII.64-6)

While yet he spake, across the turbid stream
A crashing sound was heard so ominous
That shudders shook the shadowed riverbanks,
Alike to when a wind impetuous,
Whipped to a fury by conflicting heats,
Falls on the forest and without restraint
Uproots great trunks and bears the branches off,
And, dust encircled, sweeps on in its pride,
Driving before it shepherds and their flocks. (Inf. IX.65-75)

On every soul
Descending with an even gentle fall,
Even as mountain snow in windless air,
Rained down diluted flakes of living flame.

So here the blazing balls poured ever down
Kindling the sand beneath; the grains were sparks
As flint gives under steel. So from beneath
As from above the guilty souls were seared.
Their frenzied hands in ceaseless flickering
Danced over their scorched substance, beating off
The fiery sparks continually renewed. (Inf. XIV.28 ff)

I stopped and spied a pair whose urgency
To be with us was written on their brows,
But haste was hindered by the narrow path
And weary burden of the weight they bore. (Inf. XXIII.82-4)
The winding brooks that from the fresh green hills
Of Casentino down to Arno run,
So sweetly trickling on their cooling course,
Are still before my eyes and not in vain,
For their remembered image parches me
More than this ill that wastes my face of flesh. (Inf. XXX.64-9)

Brave Roland on the field of Roncesvalles
When Charlemagne's knightly company was lost
Blew not a blast more terrible to hear. (Inf. XXXI.16-18)

How chilled and weak, O reader, I became,
Ask me not here for I could not transcribe
However faintly half the fear I felt.
I lived no longer, neither did I die;
Imagine, if your fancy may avail,
What state was mine, a living death in life. (Inf. XXXIV.22-7)

The second shade was silent. Then a third
Spoke, saying: 'When you are once more returned
Into the world and after your long road
Have taken your repose, remember me;
Pia am I; Siena gave me life,
Maremma death, as well he knows who first
Betrothed me, then espoused me with his ring.' (Purg. V.150-6)

So praying for fair harmony of soul
For them and for us too, beneath the load,
Like to a sleep-borne incubus, those souls
With varied anguish plodded on around
The first cliff terrace, weary with the weight,
Purging the sooty traces of our world. (Purg. XI.25-30)

I turned to them and: 'Folk assured,' I said,
'Of looking on the lofty Light above
Which is the sole concern of your desire,
As grace may shortly dissipate the scum
That clogs your conscience, so that memory's stream
May flow through it untroubled, tell me now
('Twill be a kindly act I shall hold dear)
If here amongst you be a Latin soul;
Perhaps my learning it may profit him.'
'O brother, all of us are citizens
Of a true city; what you mean is one
Who as a pilgrim dwelt in Italy.' (Purg. XIII.85-96)

Because again your fix
Your mind upon terrestrial things alone,
You garner darkness from the light of truth.
That Good ineffable and infinite
Which is on high so runs to love as runs
To lucent body every beam of light.
In measure to the ardor that it finds
It gives itself, whence, howsoever wide
As charity may reach, yet far beyond
The everlasting Goodness waxes still.
Wherefore the greater be the number there,
The more to love and more of love itself,
Each, like a mirror, giving back to each.  (Purg. XV.64-75)

'I am,' 'twas thus she sang, 'the Siren sweet
And I beguile the sailors on the main;
So charged with sweetness are my notes to hear,
I turned Ulysses from his wandering course
With melody, and whose dwells with me
Finds full content and rarely leaves my side.'  (Purg. XIX.19-24)

You were as one who, walking in the night,
Carries the lamp behind him, serving not
Himself but teaching those who follow him.  (Purg. XXII.67-9)

The sun was holding the meridian arc
Which in accordance with the watcher flits
Hither and yon, when, even as one halts
Who heads a company and serves as guide,
If he beholds aught new or trace thereof,
The seven ladies stopped hard on the edge
Of a faint shadow, like to those we see
The mountains cast o'er their chill-flowing streams
Beneath green foliage and darkling boughs.
I thought I saw Euphrates and the Tigris
In front of them pour from a mountainside
And, lingering like friends, divide and part.  (Purg. XXXIII.103-14)

One or two characteristic faults will be noticed in these passages, but
their quality on the whole is very creditable.

The rendering of canto XI of the Inferno in prose seems, as the
translator says, 'not unreasonable'. Momigliano, after doing his best
Thomas Goddard Bergin (11)

for Virgil's exposition of the plan of Inferno, has to conclude that it is 'poesia inferiore'. Of the prose summaries most readers would excuse the enumeration of the spirits in Limbo, Ciacco's speeches, and some of the omissions in Purgatorio like Statius' speech in canto XXV. For others there can be nothing but regret. We would certainly like to have Professor Bergin's version of the episode of Iacopo Rusticucci and his friends with its noble peroration, and the missing parts of Inf. XXIX and XXX, and we can ill spare some of the passages omitted from the Purgatorio.

The rhymed portions, in spite of the care bestowed on them, are the weakest part of Professor Bergin's translation. His version of Inf. V.100-5,

Love that lays firmest hold on gentle heart
Kindled a spark within my lover's breast
For my fair person that was reft apart
From me so cruelly that it grieves me yet,
Love that where given calls forth love again
Turned me to loving him, nor does it let
Even eternity divide us twain,

is like water to wine when set beside 'Amor, ch'al cor gentil ratto s'apprende', and the poignant strength has likewise gone from lines 121-38, concluding:

Then he whose love lives on here 'midst the dead
Sought my lips all a-tremble with the bliss.
Our Gallehaut was that ancient minstrel's lay,
And therein did we read no more that day.

There might be some point in using terza rima for Pier delle Vigne's speech, if the terzine corresponded with Dante's, but they are both a line 'out of phase' almost from the start, and have no special quality to commend them. The Ulysses passage (see Appendix I) is more competent, though there are one or two bad lapses, such as 'And with such zeal the
enterprise they 'spoused'; but the result achieved hardly warrants such a departure from Dante's style; the Ugolino passage, left in blank verse, is much better. Manfred's speech, in true terza rima is the most successful, but inevitably the old defects of inversion and forced rhymes make their appearance. The following is the rendering of lines 121-35:

> Blackened though my soul was with sins most base
> Yet Goodness infinite with its vast sweep
> Stands ready every suppliant to embrace.
> Had but the shepherd of Cosenza's sheep,
> Set on by Clement then to hunt me down,
> Read well God's writ, then would my bones still sleep
> Under the bridge by Benevento town,
> Beneath the monument of stones interr'd.
> They lie now past the frontier of the Crown
> Beside the Verde, drenched by rain and stirred
> With motion of the blast, for thither he
> With unlit tapers bid them be transferred.
> Yet not so much may curse of theirs decree
> As to bar us from Love Eternal's path
> If hope still bears a gleam of verdancy.

I have had some correspondence with Professor Bergin on the subject of the use of rhyme, and he inclines to the view that it would have been better to have kept to blank verse throughout.

He has given me permission to quote from the manuscript of Paradiso, canto XXX, although it is possible that this does not represent the final form. Here are lines 16-33:

> If all that has been said of her so far
> Were put together in one eulogy
> It would be paltry for this moment's need.
> The beauty that I saw transcends compare
> Nor merely amongst us, for He alone,
> I think, who made it, can enjoy it all.
> I own to such defeat here as no bard
> Either of comic or of tragic muse
> Has suffered at the challenge of his theme.
> For as the sun affects a trembling eye
> So does remembrance of that gentle smile
> Deprive my memory of its very self.
> From the first day whereon I saw her face
> In this our life, up to that sight of her
My song has followed after her unhindered;  
Henceforth my muse abandons the pursuit,  
Striving no more to limn her loveliness,  
As at his utmost every artist stops.

Lines 97-114 read:

Splendor of God through whom I there did see  
The lofty triumph of the realm of truth  
Give me the power to tell how I could see!  
There is a light up yonder, making visible  
The Creator to that creature which alone  
Can find his peace in looking upon Him;  
In figure of a circle it extends  
So vast that its circumference would be  
Too wide a girdle for the very sun.  
All of its splendor flows from one ray glancing  
Off the high pole of the first moving sphere  
Which thence derives its power and its life,  
And as a cliff gives its own image back  
From water at the base, as 'twere to look upon  
Its own rich mantle of green shrubs and flowers,  
So, high above the light and all around  
In row on mirrored row I saw arrayed  
All of mankind which has returned up there.

Professor Bergin's translation seems to be almost unknown in Britain;  
this is partly the publishers' fault, because great difficulty was experienced in persuading them to execute anything but a bulk order, which they can hardly expect until they supply some single copies. Dr La Piana,  
reviewing Inferno in Italica (Vol. 27, 1950, p. 301) writes:

It must be recognised that Professor Bergin, within the limits of the method of his choice, has made a modern translation of the Inferno which is both readable and generally clear. Additions, omissions, and periphrases notwithstanding, the translator does not seem to have altered in any considerable way the essential meaning of Dante's lines.

A review of Purgatorio in Classic Features (27th September 1953) describes it as 'a genuine re-creation, the product of authentic scholarship happily linked with genuine poetic feeling'.
Dante Alighieri. The Divine Comedy: The Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso. A New Translation into English Blank Verse by Lawrence Grant White, with illustrations by Gustave Doré. New York: Pantheon Books. MONXLVIII. 10½ x 8 in., pp. xiv, 188. Dedication (to Margaret Ward Chandler), p. v; Translator's Note, pp. vii-viii; Contents, with summary of each canto, pp. ix-xiv; English text, printed in continuous blank verse, paragraphed, pp. 1-188; no notes or other explanatory matter. Illustrations: 69 full page plates in fine line from Doré's engravings (portrait as frontispiece, 29 Inferno, 26 Purgatorio, 13 Paradiso).

Lawrence Grant White (b. 1887) is a native of New York. Educated at Harvard, and later at the École des Beaux Arts, Paris, he had a successful career as an architect, and at the age of sixty published one of the results of his literary recreation, a complete blank verse translation of the Divine Comedy, beautifully printed, lavishly illustrated and handsomely bound.

One feels inclined, however, to doubt the suitability of the format. Certainly it makes a most impressive gift book, but having been presented and accepted, it seems likely to spend most of its time on a shelf (if one can be found wide and high enough to accommodate it) and be taken down only to show someone the pictures, with a convenient table to support it. It is certainly never likely to be anyone's bedside or week-end Dante. The twelve-point type is eminently readable, but it is set in two columns, which is always distracting, and the twenty-four point shadow outline running head-lines give one the impression of a new canto starting on every page. The use of guillemets instead of inverted commas creates an unfamiliar effect. The illustrations are so numerous throughout the first two cantiques as to be almost interleaved with the text—and why Doré? The answer in the translator's note is unconvincing:
It is natural that scenes so vividly described by Dante should have inspired many artists - such as Botticelli, Flaxman and Blake - to depict them. Most famous of all the illustrations are those of Gustave Doré (1833-83) whose dramatic portrayals, particularly of the horrors of the Inferno, are unsurpassed. A careful selection, reproduced from the original illustrations, embellish this edition.

A translation is presumably intended for those who seek to gain some knowledge of the original; and perhaps nothing could be more calculated to create a false impression than the gross and glaring inaccuracies of Doré's pictures, which are executed with a complete disregard of the descriptions which inspired them. Volkmann is putting it mildly when he says: 'nicht immer konnte er dem Anreiz widerstehen, aus Dante's strenger Dichtung ein phantasisches Zaubermärchen zu machen'; and the direct contradictions between text and illustrations must be most confusing to the ordinary reader. In this case the confusion is slightly increased by two of the plates having erroneous legends: the first of the Purgatorio, showing Dante and Virgil meeting Cato, is entitled 'Dante kneeling before Statius'; while the second, showing the Angel Pilot, has a reference to canto I instead of canto II.

Although the translation does not specifically follow the original line by line or terzina by terzina, every canto contains the same number of lines as the Italian except for four which make one line less. The Translator's Note states:

As the terza rima form of the original is alien to English, blank verse has been used, the form used by Milton in Paradise Lost. Milton's foreword to the latter poem is then quoted, with its stricture on 'rime'. This does not mean, however, that White's blank verse is in the Miltonic style; earlier in the Note he says:

In this version the aim has been to tell Dante's story as simply and accurately as possible. Any archaic or unfamiliar constructions that would impede the swift pace of the narrative have been avoided,
although the second person singular has been used in the Paradiso - for such is the language of heaven.

He keeps his promise; his verse is remarkably free from archaisms, inversions, colloquialisms, etc., nor does it; like the translations of Bandini and How, proclaim its country of origin by the use of Americanisms. With certain reservations to be noted White's rendering reads well, has force and dignity, and is skilfully handled both in the matter of varying pace and tone to suit the matter and avoid monotony, and, sometimes at least, of reproducing the felicity of expression of the original. To quote Dr La Piana (Italica, Vol. 27, p. 297):

As a whole Mr White's translation makes good reading: his blank verse flows smoothly most of the time and the ordinary reader who seeks only after knowledge of the various elements in the texture of the poem and enjoyment of its imagery will find this translation adequate and inspiring.

The dust jacket quotes an encomium by Mr Aldous Huxley:

The best-known translations of the Divine Comedy are those of Longfellow and Cary. Both lack the penetrating intensity of the original and both obscure the fact that Dante's language is dry and naked as well as poetical. ... We must be grateful to Lawrence White for having given us a translation considerably more faithful in this respect to the spirit of the original than either Longfellow's or Cary's.

Several other equally eulogistic comments by American writers and scholars are also quoted.

There are, however, quite a few lame lines in the translation, some possibly due to errors in reproduction or in revision. A few of eight syllables occur, e.g. 'There it is, hanging on your breast' (Inf. XXXI.75); 'After due penitence, torments you' (Purg. XVII.132). Other lines have more superfluous syllables than can be smoothed out in reading, e.g. 'Free from all fear of infamy I'll make reply' (Inf. XXVII.66); 'The lovely lady said: "This and some other things . . ."' (Purg. XXXIII.121).
Sometimes nine-syllabled lines are used deliberately and effectively, as 'Clasped me tight in his sustaining arms' (Inf. XVII.96); but there are other cases where the effect is merely awkward, for instance in the opening of Inf. III:

Through me lies the road to the city of grief.
Through me lies the pathway to woe everlasting.
Through me lies the road to the souls that are lost.

It is difficult to see how a kind of jog-trot, eminently unsuitable to the context, can be avoided in reading these. One has to get used to the fact that 'fire' and similar words can have either one or two syllables, e.g. 'Though Jove should tire out his armourer' (Inf. XIV.52), but three lines later (55), 'Or even if she should tire out these others', though here probably 'even' is meant to be monosyllabic.

One or two short passages that read well may be quoted.

There were no cries of woe, but only sighs
That quivered in the everlasting air. (Inf. IV.26-7)

Accordingly we downward took our way
Among these scattered broken stones, which moved
Beneath the novel burden of my feet. (Inf. XII.28-30)

Over that sandy waste fell slowly down
Broad flakes of fire, falling measuredly
Like snow upon the Alps in quiet air. (Inf. XIV.28-30)

And when I heard him speak to me in wrath,
I turned toward him, covered with such shame
That even now it circles through my memory.
And like a man who dreams of adverse fortune,
And who, while dreaming, hopes it is a dream,
Thus wishing that which is as though it were not:
So I became, who, though I could not speak,
Wished to excuse myself, and all the while
Was doing so, although I knew it not. (Inf. XXX.133-41)

At that sweet hour of morning near the dawn
When the small swallow starts her plaintive songs,
Perchance in memory of her former griefs,
And when the mind, drawn outward from the flesh,
And hampered less by thoughts of earthly things,
Becomes as if inspired in its foresight,
I seemed to see an eagle, in a dream,
Hovering in the sky, with golden plumes,
Its wings outspread and poising for a swoop.  
And then it seemed that, having wheeled a little,
He swooped as if he were a thunderbolt,
And snatched me upward to the realm of fire.  (Purg. IX.15 ff)
And I saw him sinking down to earth,
For death weighed heavily upon him now,
Yet with his eyes he stormed the gates of heaven;
And in such cruel straits, he prayed aloud
To the good Lord of all, that He forgive
His persecutors; and he bore that look
Which doth unlock compassion in the soul.  (Purg. XV.109-14)
Then as a clock that calls us at the hour
When God's bride is wont to rise and sing
Matins to her Spouse, that He may love her -
That clock in which one portion drives another,
Sounding 'ting, ting' with such a dulcet note
That every pious heart is filled with love:
Even so I beheld that glorious wheel
Begin to move, rendering voice to voice
With harmony incomprehensible
Save in that place where joy is everlasting.  (Par. X.139-48)
There are some neat and ingenious lines; the awkwardness of Inf. V.59-60
is well got over by: 'who history says, /As Minus widow sat upon his throne'.
The crux of Inf. IX.54 is avoided by: 'Alas that Theseus escaped our wrath!
No Scot can resist the description of Michael Scott of Balwearie as one
'who, verily, knew well / The canny tricks of magical deceit' (Inf. IX.
116-7). The lines:

Who by the second stormy lord of Swabia
Conceived the third and last of all that house,
convey the tempestuous quality of the original. Very apt is the trans-
lation of Par. XIX.133-5:

To demonstrate his utter paltriness
His record will be in abbreviations,
That much may be expressed in little space.

It must be said, however, that with all its good points, there is a
probably already been noticed: a failure to reproduce Dante's precise language, a tendency to be content with an approximation which amounts to a distortion, a toleration of weak or prosaic equivalents for those very terms that give the original its character. For instance, in the passage from Inf. XXVI quoted in Appendix I, lines 103-5, 'I saw the coasts', etc., do not translate Dante's words; they are all there, but looked into closely they are not combined even to make good sense. So in lines 110-11 the geographical relationship of Seville and Ceuta, the point of their being mentioned, is lost. Quite often there is a change of accent or tone that misses the effect required, as in Inf. IV,104-5 where 'but silence now / Were sweeter than the saying of them then' gives quite a wrong slant to 'parlando cose che 'l tacere è bello, / si com'era 'l parlar colà dov'era'.

The same is true of Purg. X,19-20, 'Io stancato ed amende incerti / di nostra via', which is rendered 'We both had lost the way, and I was spent'; there was no question of losing the way, but merely of deciding whether to turn to right or left.

Mr White falls into an amazing number of ancient traps for a modern translator. Thus in Inf. XV,58 he makes Brunetto say: 'Had I not died so early in my life'; he perpetuates the mistaken 'unpeopled world behind the sunset' of Inf. XXVI,117; he translates 'qua remote' by 'afar off' in Purg. VII,46, although in line 64 the distance turns out to be only 'a little way'. In Inf. XXVIII,93 'chi è colui dalla veduta amara' is rendered 'Who is that tyrant with the single eye?' with complete disregard of the context and reference.

There are other aberrations. We have already noted how Henry Johnson, possibly through a misunderstanding of Norton, reversed the sense of Par. XXIX,134. The latter's 'thou wilt see that in his thousands a determinate
number is concealed' may also have misled Mr White (who acknowledges the usefulness of Norton's version in his prefatory note); in any case he underlines the error by making it still more emphatic:

    thou wilt see that in his 'thousands!
    A multiple determinate lies hid.

There are various ways of reading Purg. XVII.38-9, 'alla tua pría ch'all'
altrui ruina', but Mr White's 'I am the one / O mother mine, to mourn thee,
more than others', whatever its intention, conveys a wrong meaning. Quite a few translators have stumbled over Purg. VI.78, 'non donna di provincie, ma bordello', but Mr White gets it completely wrong by rendering: 'Mistress not of states, but of a brothel!' through the common failure to see that it is 'donna di provincie' = a queen among other cities, which is opposed to 'bordello'.

Some of the expository passages are very woolly, e.g. the moonspots in Par. II, a passage too long for quotation here. In Purg. VI.71-5 we have:

    the path
    Upon which Phaethon so badly drove,
    Must pass, perforce - as you can plainly see
    If you but closely fix your mind upon it -
    There to the left, and here upon the right.

This preserves the common misunderstanding of 'che mal non seppe carreggiar Fetò', and also obscures the sense of 'dall'un . . . dall'altro fianco' by introducing the unwanted 'right' and 'left', directions which entirely depend on how the spectator happens to be facing, and not on which hemisphere he is in. Purg. XVII.91-4 is rendered:

    'Neither creature nor Creator,' he began,
    Was ever without love - or spiritual
    Or elective. This, my son, you know.
    Elective love is always free of error . . .'

It is hard to see why the word 'elective' was brought in at all; but if Mr White has been dipping into the schoolmen, he has got his terms mixed;
it is the natural ('naturale') not the elective (d'animo) love that is free from error. Par. X.45-5 runs:

Genius, experience, and art combined
Could ne'er suffice to aid in my description,
So that the truth could ever be perceived . . .

the third line of the Italian, 'ma creder puossi e di veder si brami', being omitted altogether. So the last line of Purg. XXVII reads: 'Wherefore I crown you sovereign of yourself', with no equivalent for 'mitrio'.

There is frequent weakening of the type where a striking phrase like 'Gia di veder costui non son digiuno' (Inf. XVIII.42) is replaced by an ordinary one, 'It seems to me / That I have seen this person's face before'. Doubtless this is sometimes inevitable, and even wise; but surely 'Until my grief was overcome by hunger' (Inf. XXXIII.75) is a somewhat lame conclusion for the Ugolino episode. Similarly Purg. VI.37-9 falls rather flat:

Judgment supreme is in no wise impaired,
Though ardent prayer accomplish in a moment
Penance incurred by spirits stationed here.

At times the colloquial or conversational tone jars with the context. Thus in Inf. II.101-2 Beatrice tells Virgil that Lucia 'came to where I chanced to be', but as we have had occasion to remark of a similar phrase before, Par. XXXII makes it clear that people do not 'chance to be' anywhere in Dante's Paradiso. Still worse is Purg. VI.121-3: 'Or is this nothing but a plan divine / Which Thou art making . . . ?' In Par. XVII.49 Cacciaguida tells Dante: 'This is prepared; the scheme is brewing now', and we have many rather depressingly prosaic lines like:

... explain to me
This Fortune that you just alluded to
One thing is sure: he'll not find any there
But Virgil had completely disappeared
In the following we seem to have a descent to the language of advertisements:

The wondrous properties are only valid
For him who tastes the water of both streams
And though perhaps your thirst has now been slaked
Without my making further revelations...
That, nourishing myself with olive juice,
I comfortably lived through frost and heat

Such striking passages as the following fall very flat in translation:

Its brilliancy depends upon our ardor;
Our ardor on our vision, which is great
As grace bestowed on it exceeds its worth.

Because those living splendors, every one
More brilliant than before, commenced to sing;
Their songs have fallen from my memory.

The greater virtue must work greater good.
A greater body holds the greater good
If all its parts are equally perfected.

An odd coincidence is Mr. White's rendering of Inf. V.97-8:

The land where I was born lies on the shore
Where Po with all his riot retinue...

is identical, except that 'lies on' is substituted for 'sits by' with
John Jay Chapman's version of the same lines in his selections of 1927.
The phrase may have stuck in Mr. White's mind, or he may have copied it because he admired it, but it seems an inappropriate one. No other such resemblances to Chapman's language have been noticed.

Earlier in this article we have bestowed such praise on Mr. White's translation as seems to be its due. Its merit is seriously diminished by the faults we have indicated, and it seems unlikely either to supplant earlier American versions or to achieve lasting favour.
John Thomas Benedict Cummins (born 1880) was the son of Patrick Cummins, and immigrant from Ireland, and Anna Ryan, daughter of another Irish immigrant. He was born in Roadway County, Missouri and educated at the country school of High Prairie, then at St. Mary's, Maryville. In 1895 he entered Conception College, became a novice in 1899, and made profession under the name of Patrick in 1900. Father Cummins studied in Europe for several years, and this included periods at the Benedictine College of St. Anselm's in Rome, where he received the doctorate in theology, and at the Maximilian University of Munich. Returning to Conception in 1906 he taught there, chiefly languages and philosophy, for fourteen years; then in 1920 he was appointed rector of St. Anselm's in Rome and professor of dogmatic theology there. He returned from Italy in 1925, spent a year as pastor of Keuterville, Idaho, then returned to his home monastery at Conception, Missouri, where he has taught ever since. He is the author of some theological books, and a frequent contributor to learned periodicals. He has translations of theological works from several languages to his credit. I am grateful to Father Cummins for personal information very willingly given; it is interesting to note that when he was honoured in
1950 on the occasion of his golden jubilee his youthful prowess as a catcher at baseball was recalled.

In the Introduction, Father Cummins describes his discovery of Dante with a frankness which seems naive until we notice a vein of humour that reminds us of Father O'Flynn's remark to the bishop. He tells us that until the publication of the encyclical In praeclara of 1921 he had no use for Dante.

In this state of mind I took up the encyclical. I underlined a series of astounding sentences... I read those sentences, and reread. They were a trumpet-call to action. I began to read Dante, to learn him by heart, to declaim him to my students, to expatiate on his beauties before any audience that would endure me. I listened to absorbing weekly lectures in the Arcadia and in the Casa di Dante. Dissatisfied with English versions, I made a new one, for others to be dissatisfied with. Lastly, as a condition, added by dubious publishers, I wrote a theological commentary... Thus, briefly and egotisticaly, I have sketched for you the genesis of this book.

Then follow explanations of the principles on which the translation is based. Dante's hendecasyllabic line is an integral part of his design, and it, along with the architectural form of the whole poem, must be preserved. This is reinforced by an argument, already put forward in an article, 'The Keystone of the Arch'.

The 14,233 lines of the Divine Comedy are, with one exception, unbroken unities. This assertion is based on stage-presentation. Editors (and translators), resting on arm-chair analysis, break many of Dante's lines. But intelligent actors, who feel the driving, sweeping force of Dante's whiplike line, break one line, and one only, in the whole poem. That line is verse 125 of canto seventeen in the Purgatorio. Why is that line broken? Because that line is the keystone line. Its number in the whole poem is 7117. Hence, in a poem of 14,233 lines, that line is mathematically central. This divine poem is a rainbow arch. The keystone of the arch must look both ways, toward both half-arches, backward to the ascending, forward to the descending. To mark that keystone line, Dante linked it both ways. Its first part looks back, its second part looks forward.

The terzina in question, Purg. XVII.124-6 is:

Questo triforme amor qua giù di sotto
si piange: or vo' che tu dell'altro intende
che corre al ben con ordine corrotto,
Patrick Cummins (3)

and Father Cummins' translation is:

This triform love three-circled here below us
beweeps itself.

But now turn thy attention

to where in good we outdo or beslow us,

with a footnote to tell us: 'Vergil, who has been pointing below, here
turns to point ahead and above.' Most readers will find the argument
rather unconvincing; it is interesting to compare it with that of Wil-
stach quoted earlier on the subject of the central line. At least Father
Cummins' arithmetic is unimpeachable.

The translator realises that, having declared his intention to
render the Comedy in hendecasyllabic terza rima, he will have a chorus
of objection to meet, and this he promptly anticipates.

Ideally, my reader may say, you are correct. But your attempt
to retain in English, not merely Dante's terza rima, but likewise
Dante's interwoven keystone symmetry - will not this attempt simply
succeed in clothing Dante with a bizarre and uncouth English dress?
Rhyming licences, overworked participles, archaisms, and neologisms,
formations by analogy stretched to breaking point - in dress woven
of such materials Dante, the real Dante, will be falsified. Out of
Scylla you have fallen into Charybdis.

My critic has done two things. He has pronounced both my con-
demnation and my apologia. First, my condemnation. On almost any
page of this translation the reader may exemplify the critic's
strictures. In the very first canto, the word 'frountain' is an
instance. I need a word that means forehead and rhymes with 'moun-
tain' and 'fountain'. Archaism gives me 'frount'. Analogy does
the rest.

But the critic has likewise pronounced my apologia. I will
glory in these deficiencies, to me unavoidable, if the critic will
but test my contention, that I have not been false to Dante's music
and Dante's architecture. What is the test? To read aloud, with
sympathetic feeling, both original and translation. If, having
repeated that test, the critic admits that my translation is echo,
not caricature, I shall rest satisfied. I have tried to write,
not an English poem, but an English echo of Dante's poem. May
this echo, however feeble, enkindle in noble minds an undying spark
of love for the divine original.

The idea was not altogether new. In Dante's American Pilgrimage
(pp. 167-8) Dr La Piana gives the instance of John Pyne whose English
Dante appeared at New York in 1914; this contained the first canto of Inferno, and some portions of the second, third and fifth, not merely in hendecasyllabic terza rima, but using the same vowel sounds as occur in the Italian. Fyne is said to have translated the whole Inferno in this fashion, but it remained unpublished. His version begins:

Midway the pilgrimage of life completing
Come to myself, I saw a wood obscuring
Which rendered vague, advancing or retreating.
To Tell of that abode of gloom enduring
Back to that savage wood my mind transporting
Recalls the terror of my dark immuring.
No doom but death so bitter were, supporting,
But, in the effort, Will with Pain is vying
Good to reveal, the evil, too, reporting.

Doubtless there are fragments of similar form to be found elsewhere. I have in my possession the manuscript of a hendecasyllabic version in terza rima of Inferno I to V made about the year 1920 by a young writer of some promise, who later laughed at his folly in wasting time on such an experiment. Here is a specimen (Inf. III.22-30):

Here sighs and groans and lamentations fearful
Loud through the black and starless air resounded,
Wetting at first my cheek with sorrow tearful.
Horrible outcries, many tongues confounded,
Agonised shrieks and furious shouts and gnashing,
Tones deep and hoarse, and hands together sounded:
All these arose and in a tumult crashing
Whirls through that air, for aye by murk infected,
As sand is borne before the tempest's lashing.

And here is Father Cummins' rendering of the same lines:

Here sighs and plaints, deep wails resounded sweeping through darkling air, no star or starlet streaking, so that outright mine eyes were set to weeping.
Outlandish tongues, cries horribly outshrieking, loud words of pain, and shrilling tones of anger, deep voices hoarse, and hand-blows smiting, breaking:
a tumult made, whose unremorseful clangor in that eternal darkness grinds unceasing, like sand which eddies round in whirlwind-anger.

We have already had something to say of the fallacy of the argument that
Dante's measure should be reproduced by English hendecasyllables. Anything but feminine rhymes, except on rare occasions, is impossible in Italian; whereas a succession of such endings, let alone rhymes, is intolerable in English. As for the rhymes themselves, only a perversely misapplied ingenuity could ever find them, and Father Cummins himself has set forth in his preface a very fair summary of what the results are bound to be.

In point of fact, the results go far beyond the worst forecast of the Introduction. At times we wonder if Father Cummins is pulling our legs, for instance, when he renders Inf. V.100-2:

By love, which gentle heart so quick ascendeth,
was this man here for my fair framework taken,
whence robbed I was in mode that still offendeth.

The word recurs, and presumably only scansion saves Cleopatra (Par. VI.76-8) from having the same structure as Francesca:

Its deeds Cleopatra still wretched harking,
who, as she fled before, from asp ill-starred,
felt all her frame black death full sudden darkening.

Having established 'fruuntain' in the first panto he makes it do good service thereafter; and since it is not always possible to work it in with 'mountain' and 'fountain', it is given new companions in 'pountain'
= 'bridge' and 'prountain' = 'ready', derived one imagines from 'pronto'.

Other unusual rhymes tickle the fancy, the most ingenious of which is to be found in Inf. XXI where lines 37-45 read:

'Ye Malebranche, bridge beneath in launches,
lo' elder here who in Saint Zita bided:
under with him, I go to seek more paunches
within that town, which I left well provided:
each one a grafter there except Bonturo,
there Yes and No for money's sake derided.'

Him down he threw, then back on old row, new row,
he wheeled; and never mastiff was unsolved
with such a haste on thief who robbed the bureau.
Patrick Cummins (6)

If Father Cummins wants to work in a word at the end of a line his resourcefulness is a match for W. S. Gilbert. So (Inf. XXIII,64-9):

They dazzle from without, so are they gilded:
of lead inside, in weight so full atlantal,
that Fremerick's to them of straw were builded.
O for eternity what weary mantle!
Our course to the left hand we here regained,
intent upon their weeping sad infantile.

He is equally ready to introduce some variation into the text, so as to provide a legitimate rhyme that no other translator would ever have thought of. Thus in Inf. XXXIII,49-54 we read:

I did not weep, to stone within all changed:
they wept: and Anselmuicio spoke, sweet darling:
'What makes thee look, my father, so deranged?'
I shed no tear, nor answered that poor starling,
till that long day and next long night were ended,
when light of coming day sent earliest barling.

The translator is considerate to the extent of providing a footnote to explain each neologism or achaism on its first occurrence, so we find that 'barling' = 'tiny ray of light'. Of the same kind is the extension of the Siren's activities in Purg. XIX,19-21 so as to work in 'pleasant':

Sweet Siren I, that be he king or peasant,
or sailor in mid-sea astray, I bait him:
form to the eye, voice to the ear, full-pleasant.

Par. XI,82-7 seems, however, to be a counsel of desperation:

O wealth unknown, O fertile good unblighted!
Unsandal Giles, unsandal too Sylvester,
behind the spouse, their souls with bride delighted.
Thence moved he on, the father, master, tester,
by lady and by household sweet adorned,
girded with cords which bind, but never fester.

Sometimes he descends to the kind of thing so familiar in the nineteenth century practitioners of terza rima, e.g. (Par. XXIX,19-24):

That 'time before' is not of sleeper measure:
'before' and 'after' no succession narrows,
when God first moved above this aqueous treasure.
Matter and form, within creation's marrows,
combined, and not, were all at once perfected:
as from three-corded bow at once three arrows.
In spite of his inventiveness, the startling or 'cute' rhyme is the exception among Father Cummins' thousands. The 'overworked participle', past or present, remains his chief stock-in-trade, along with words in 'ation', 'ition', etc. Indeed, to eke out his resources, he reckons all past participles as disyllabic, even when they are words like 'denied' or 'endued', and words ending in 'r' like 'fire', 'more' also do duty as line-endings. Strangely enough, Father Cummins fails to reproduce most of Dante's monosyllabic rhymes, even when they are obviously meant for effect, preserving them only in Inf. XX, 74-8, Arnault Daniel's speech in Purg. XXVI, and the Hebrew of Par. VII, 1-3.

He is wide-awake to the possibilities of the acrostic in Purg. XII, and by dint of beginning the three sets of terzine with 'Met me', 'Alas' and 'Now see I' he spells out the word 'Man', repeated with capital letters in the three lines 61-3:

Met me proud Troy, in ashes all inurned:  
Alas, O Ilion base, with vileness tainted:  
Now thee I see, in sculpture last discerned.

The opening of Par. XXIII will serve as a final example of the measure of success which Father Cummins achieves in the poetical passages.

Just as the bird, sweet leaves amid, love-hidden,  
brooding o'er nest of little ones unsounding,  
throughout the night which keeps the world all hidden:  
who strong in hope of faces sweet beholding:  
and gaining tidbits which their hunger prizes:  
her heavy toils for their sake pleasant holding:  
foreruns the time, and high on boughlet rises,  
with anxious ardent love the sun expecting,  
steadfastly watching till the dawn arises:  
thus stood my Lady, eager, self-erecting,  
all vigilant unto the region bended,  
beneath which sun its slowest speed selecting.

The commentary which follows the translation is prefixed with a double page reproduction in half-tone of Raphael's Disputa, and in the first few pages an analysis of the relations between the ten articles of the first
question in Aquinas' *Summa*, the poetry of Dante, and the painting of Raphael is given. This is followed several pages headed 'Dante's Meaning' and containing a list of numbered propositions, canto by canto, each of which is developed further, identified by the appropriate number, in the 'Spiritual Commentary'. Then come 150 pages of 'Literal and Spiritual Commentaries' in parallel columns, the former being for the most part a prose précis of each canto; the latter is by turns expository, homiletic and rhapsodic. Thus under Inf. IX we read:

Even demons flee from the Roman cross. The demons did not resist when the sorceress summoned Vergil. Why resist now? Because Vergil is leading a living man, who will visit their concentration camps, and reveal their horrible secrets to the world. Hurry, Furies! Come, Medusa! Before the Roman Christ appears, you must drive this living man to despair. With Rome's arms around me, with Roman hands over my own hands which cover my eyes, I weather this last storm.

The book, by the way, is a very handsome one; typography, machining and binding are all excellent. It is also so far as one can see free from those irritating misprints which too often mar expensive volumes. But why do publishers spoil their best efforts by defects which could be so easily avoided? There are running headlines throughout the book, but they do not include canto numerals, although there is a numbral to every third line of text.

The only review I have seen of this book is Dr La Piana's (*Italia*, Vol. 27, 1950, pp. 298-9) and she has little good to say of it. After quoting a passage from the Francesca episode she remarks:

The solemn drum beating of Dante's terzina, as Fletcher described it, has here turned to be a childish beating with a wooden spoon on a frying pan.

Father Cummins is obviously a man of great intellectual vigour, but in this case we can only regret that it has been lavishly misapplied.

This volume is No. 16 of 'The Penguin Classics'. It was reprinted in 1950 within five months of its first publication, and there have been two further reprints since.

Dorothy Leigh Sayers (born 1893, married surname Fleming) is the daughter of the Rev. Henry Sayers, and was educated at Somerville College, Oxford. Her reputation as a writer has long been established, and her versatility is remarkable. She is probably best known as the creator of Lord Peter Wimsey; one of that remarkable band of detectives, which includes Hercule Poirot, Albert Campion and Reggie Fortune, whose eccentricities have been getting more numerous, complicated and bewildering year by year since Sherlock Holmes first plunged the hypodermic into his arm in Baker Street.

There are different views as to what constitutes a good crime story, and even the most astonishing sleuth palls at times, but few readers have dipped into such a book as The Nine Tailors without emerging full of admiration for Lord Peter's, or rather Miss Sayers' campanological skill. She has achieved almost equally wide popularity through her plays and their broadcasts: The Zeal of Thy House and The Man Born to be King. She has also published two volumes of poems and a translation of The Romance of Tristan.

During the few years of its existence the series called 'The Penguin Classics' has provided, at a remarkably moderate price and in a genuinely

---

DOROTHY LEIGH SAYERS

---
attractive format, new translations of the classics in the widest sense, ranging from Homer and the Greek dramatists to Flaubert and Ibsen. These volumes are by various hands, and their reception and appeal has varied; but there can be few students of literature who have not added several of them to their libraries. The enterprising publishers and the accomplished editor of the series, Dr E. V. Rieu, himself a translator of distinction, are certainly to be congratulated on a project so boldly conceived and so competently executed.

Coming to the present translation, its popularity has been rapid and is due in some degree to the care with which the explanatory matter has been prepared and presented. There are ten diagrams scattered through the book which make clear to the reader at a glance the topography of Dante’s circles, the geography of northern Italy, and there is even a cross-section of Malebolge to clarify canto XXIV. The Introduction contains a sketch of medieval history, a biography of Dante, and an account of his prosody. The argument preceding each canto summarises 'the story', while the commentary following it first explains 'The Images', and then gives detailed notes on persons, places, allusions, etc., often arranged with praiseworthy consideration for the reader's convenience, e.g. the summary of the transformations in canto XXV which tabulates just what happened to each of the 'five noble Florentines'. It is true that Miss Sayers slips occasionally, as when she tells us that Brunetto Latini’s Tesoretto is an abridged version of Le Livre dou Tresor; but it must be said that the reader with no previous knowledge of Dante or the Comedy will have acquired a fund of useful and solid information by the time he reaches the end of this volume.

The sub-title of 'The Penguin Classics' is 'A series of new translations for a new generation' and the publishers' statement adds that

- 804 -
It is the design of this Library to provide English-speaking readers with new versions of the finest and most enduring of the foreign classics, ancient, medieval and modern. It was felt that many opportunities for enjoyment were denied to those unfamiliar with the languages concerned, by the stilted, old-fashioned and otherwise un-English style which has too often been adopted by translators. The work was therefore entrusted in each case to a practised writer who could be relied on both to satisfy his fellow-scholars and to present the original in a palatable form.

Miss Sayers has her own ideas as to what constitutes modern English; in her Introduction she writes:

I have considered the whole range of intelligible English speech to be open to me, excluding, however, at the one end of the scale words and forms so archaic as to be incomprehensible, and, at the other, 'nonce-words' and up-to-the-minute slang. I have tried, that is, to steer a discreet middle course between Wardour Street and Hollywood, and to eschew 'Mar'ry, quotha!' without declining upon 'Sez you!' I have tried to avoid, as far as possible, Latinised inversions (especially when they involve ambiguity), poetic clichés, and sudden drops into slang or bathos—bearing in mind, however, that Dante's own style moves continually from the grand manner to the colloquial, and that nothing could be more unfair to him, or more unlike him, than to iron out all his lively irregularities into one flat level of dignified commonplace.

Miss Sayers then proceeds to give us an example. In translating XXI.127 she tells us that since the candidates for admission were: 'Sir, I don't like the look of this one bit!' and 'Master, this prospect likes me not a whit!', the context seemed to call for liveliness rather than for archaic dignity.

In connexion with metre, having explained the effects of variation of accent and of elision in Italian, and the possible parallels in English, she concludes:

The best plan is, I think, to let the verse run on at its own pace, as the feeling of the passage demands, using to the full all such metrical variations as offer a native equivalent for the Italian play upon stress-shift and elision.

She adds that one variation from the norm is so characteristic of Dante's verse and so startling at first to English ears that it deserves special mention. This is the occasional appearance—sometimes in single
lines and sometimes extended over several successive stanzas - of the metre made so familiar to us by the nursery jingle 'Diddle-diddle dumpling, my son John'. . . . We are not accustomed to find this invigorating jog-trot mixed up with our 'heroic' metre; and one trouble about it is that, though easy enough to drop into, it is (even, I am told, in Italian) difficult to get out of again; while to jerk into it and out again in the course of three consecutive lines is, in English, very nearly impracticable. But the effect of it where it occurs is so entertaining that in one passage of the Inferno where it runs - like the creature whose movement it represents - over several terrains of the text, I have reproduced it as faithfully as I can:

And just as a lizard, with a quick, slick slither,
Flicks across the highway from hedge to hedge, etc. (XXV.79 sqq.)

There is a further paragraph on the frequency of enjambement, e.g. an adjective at the end of one line with its noun at the beginning of the next.

At the conclusion of the section Miss Sayers introduces two other matters of some consequence: Dante's humour and Dante's poetry. Of the first she says:

This, of all his qualities, has been the most hopelessly obscured by his translators and critics. Most of them (rather grudgingly) admit that the burlesque opening of canto XXXI (sic) is meant to be funny, though his early translator Cary shrinks from allowing even that, and merges the whole passage into a stateliness of sober Miltonics. But the pervading flavour of Dante's humour is much more subtle; it is dry and delicate and satirical; in particular his portrait of himself is tinged throughout with a charming self-mockery which has no parallel that I know of outside the pages of Jane Austen. In translating I have, inevitably, coarsened what is, for the most part, something more like a faintly ironic inflection in the voice than anything humorous in the words themselves; but here again, it seemed better to err by over-emphasis than by ignoring the change of tone.

She then gives examples of three terzine from her translation side by side with the versions respectively of Cary, I. C. Wright and Binyon.

The first (XI.76-8) and the third (XVII.91-3) of these are quoted later in this article; the second (XVI.124-6) is:

Sayers
When truth looks like a lie, a man's to blame
Not to sit still, if he can, and hold his tongue,
Or he'll only cover his innocent head with shame.
The truth which bears the semblance of a lie
To pass the lips man never should allow:
Though crime be absent - still disgrace is nigh.

Of Dante's poetry Miss Sayers says nothing that has not been said before, although she phrases it rather differently.

When Dante chooses to be sheerly beautiful, he writes not like a man but like an angel. . . . The most one can do with (certain passages) is to erect, as best one can, a kind of sign-post to indicate: 'Here is beauty; make haste to learn Italian, so that you may read it for yourselves'. . . . Such beauties as can be partially detached from their poetic form we can, indeed, notice and reproduce. . . . They are part of the poetry, but they are not the poetry itself: that is incommunicable in any other language than Dante's own.

Miss Sayers' translation has been described by more than one critic as a tour de force: a convenient way of disposing of it, for it possesses considerable vigour, displays great ingenuity, and is carried through with unflagging enthusiasm. More than one reader has found it much more 'palatable' (to use the publishers' word) than previous versions tried. This in itself, of course, is not necessarily a recommendation; the palatability may well be due to the lack of some of the ingredients of the original, or the addition of condiment not found there. Since the postulates enunciated in the preface are the foundations on which the structure of the translation rests, let us glance at them first.

To begin with metre, it is not clear what Miss Sayers means when she talks of the 'Diddle-diddle dumpling' metre in Dante. She adduces XXV.79 ff as an example of this metre running through several consecutive terzine, and says that she has reproduced it as faithfully as she can. Lines 79-87 of the Italian run:

Come 'l ramarro sotto la gran fersa
dei di canicular, cangiando sepe,
folgore par se la via attraversa,
si pareva, venendo verso l'èpe
delli altri due, un serpentello acceso,
livido e nero come gran di pepe;
Miss Sayers' rendering is:

And just as a lizard, with a quick, slick slither,
Flicks across the highway from hedge to hedge,
Fleeter than a flash, in the battering dog-day weather,
A fiery little monster, livid, in a rage,
Black as any peppercorn, came and made a dart
At the guts of the others, and leaping to engage
One of the pair, it pierced him at the part
Through which we first draw food; then loosed its grip
And fell before him, outstretched and apart.

Whatever merit these lines may have, they do not in the least resemble
those of Dante either in sound or movement. This is important, for Miss
Sayers keeps dropping into this galloping metre at frequent intervals, and
one is never sure whether she thinks she has found something like it in
Dante or has fallen into the difficulty to which she refers in the para-
graph quoted earlier. It is hard to see, for instance, how XIV.103-11
is to be read:

...A great old man stands under the mountain's mass;
...Toward Damietta he keeps his shoulders holden,
...And he looks on Rome as though on a looking-glass.
...He towers erect, and his head is purely golden,
...Of the silver fine his breast and arms and hands,
...Of brass down to the cleft his trunk is moulden,
...And thence to the ground his legs are iron bands,
...Save that the right foot's baked of the earthen clay,
...And that is the foot upon which he chiefly stands,

except by giving it a movement which is quite foreign to Dante's verse.

This metre recurs in many places, sometimes persisting through quite a
number of terzine; examples of it will be noticed in other citations, but
the following exceptionally long lines may be mentioned:

When I sang the high songs, whether little or great my due (XXVI.82)
It comes over me still though all these years have flown (XXX.155)
That I heartily wished we might travel another road (XXXI.141)
This kind of scansion is insidious, and even tends to make one read other more normal lines in a similar way. It proceeds ultimately from a wrong reading of the Italian. It is obvious that one can read such a terzina as XXXII.16-18:

Come noi fummo giù nel pozzo scuro
sotto i piè del gigante assai più bassi,
e io mirava ancora all'alto muro,

so that its syllabic groups correspond approximately to the English of Miss Sayers:

When we were down in the deep of the darkling well,
Under the feet of the giant and yet more low,
And I still gazed up at the towering walls of Hell.

Such a reading, however, will twist the Italian out of recognition. Even greater is the gap between (XVII.118-23):

Io sentia già dalla man destra il gorgo
far sotto noi un orribile scorsoio,
pár che con li occhi 'n giù la testa sporgo.
Allor fu' io più timido allo scorsoio,
però ch' i' vidi fuochi e senti' pianti;
on' io tremando tutto mi raccoscio,

and the English, which contains Miss Sayers' longest line:

And now I hear on the right as we spin wheeling
The noise of the cataract under us horribly roaring,
And I crane my head and look down with my senses reeling.
Then the terror of alighting seemed worse than the terror of soaring;
For I heard the wails and I saw the tall fires leap,
So that for fear I shrank back trembling and cowering.

In both the above cases the effect intended is one of suspense: the traveller is on the brink of new terrors and new sufferings, and the rollicking anapests are quite unsuitable, and not at all comparable to the presence of elided syllables in Italian.

So far as language is concerned Miss Sayers casts her net very wide; and if she succeeds in avoiding 'Marry quoth' and 'sez you' she is, at the extremes, very near them. The mixture of archaisms and neologisms is not,
however, necessarily unacceptable in a translation of Dante provided that some homogeneity of tone is retained. This is where Miss Sayers' system seems to break down. In attempting to reproduce the bold variety of Dante she resorts not to variations of style but to an assortment of different styles which ill suit each other's company. Here is the description of the souls on the banks of Acheron (III.100-8):

But those outworn, naked souls - how gash
And pale they grew, chattering their teeth for dread,
When first they felt his harsh tongue's cruel lash.

God they blaspheme, blaspheme their parents' bed,
The human race, the place, the time, the blood,
The seed that got them, and the womb that bred;
Then, huddling hugger-mugger, down they scud,
Dismally wailing, to the accursed strand
Which waits for every man that fears not God.

Two cuckoos of entirely different breed have intruded into the nest here; the sixth line, 'The seed that got them, and the womb that bred', is altogether too slick (and almost certainly a reminiscence of Shelley); the seventh, representing 'Poi si raccolser tutte quanta inseme', is at the opposite extreme. A similar mixture of styles can be seen in many places, e.g. in V.28 ff, where it is not difficult to pick out probable sources:

A place made dumb of every glimmer of light,
Which bellows like tempestuous ocean birling
In the batter of a two-way wind's buffet and fight.
The blast of hell that never rests from whirling
Harries the spirits along in the sweep of its swath,
And vexes them, for ever beating and hurling.
When they are borne to the rim of the ruinous path
With cry and wall and shriek they are caught by the gust,
Railing and cursing the power of the Lord's wrath.
Into this torment carnal sinners are thrust,
So I was told - the sinners who made their reason
Bond thrall under the yoke of their lust.
Like as the starlings wheel in the wintry season
In wide and clustering flocks, wing-borne, wind-borne
Even so they go, the souls who did this treason.
Hither and thither, and up and down, outworn,
Hopeless of any rest - rest, did I say?
Of the least minishing of their pangs forlorn.

- 810 -
As we turn over we find new styles in bewildering variety, even jostling each other in a single line like 'I felt quite shocked, and like a stricken man' (= 'E io, oh'avea lo cor quasi compunto', VII.36). The familiar, hearty, 'between-you-and-me' style crops up from time to time. Thus in XVI.118-26 we have:

Dear me! when one's with people who divine
More than they see, and read one's thoughts right through,
How careful one should be! My guide read mine:
'Oh, it will come,' said he, 'and quickly too,
The thing I look for; what thy fancies frame
There in thy head will soon be in thy view.'
When truth looks like a lie, a man's to blame
Not to sit still, if he can, and hold his tongue;
Or he'll only cover his innocent head with shame.

We have the same kind of slick writing in the final canto, lines 91 ff:

And if I stood dumbfounded and aghast,
Let those thick-witted gentry judge and say,
Who do not see what point it was I'd passed.
'Up on thy legs!' the master said; 'the way
Is long, the road rough going for the feet,
And at mid-terce already stands the day.'
The place we stood in was by no means fit
For a king's palace, but a natural prison,
With a vile floor, and very badly lit.
'One moment, sir,' said I, when I had risen;
'Before I pluck myself from the Abyss,
Lighten my darkness with a word in season.
Kindly explain; what's happened to the ice?
What's turned him upside-down? or in an hour
Thus whirled the sun from dusk to dawning skies?'

Nor could anything be less like the tone of Dante's conversation with Farinata than X.49-51:

'Quite true; and by that same arithmetic,'
Said I, 'they rallied all round and came back twice;
Your side, it seems, have not yet learnt the trick.'

Worse still is the language of the nursery which is scattered throughout. Thus Dante says to Virgil (XI.67-9):

'Master,' said I, 'how clear thy discourse is!
It makes this gulf's arrangement plain as plain,
With all its inmates; I quite follow this . . . .'
We even get it mixed up with the 'rough stuff' of cantos XXI and XXII.

After his interview with Belzebou ( = Malacoda) Virgil calls to Dante:

Thou, cowering there discreet
Hid mousey-mouse among the splintered, cracked
Cracks of the bridge, come down! all's safe for it.

And Ciampolo's words in XXII.100-5 are rendered:

Let but the Hellrakers draw back a wee
But from the shore, so that they need not fear
Reprisals, and for one poor little me
I'll fetch up seven, just sitting quietly here
And whistling, as it is our wont to do
When one pops out and finds the coast is clear.

These two cantos are a riot of fun. The fiends shout to the 'alderman of St. Zita' (XXI.48-51):

No Sacred Face will help thee here! it's not
A Serchio bathing-party! Now then, toes up
And dive! 'Ware hooks! To save thyself a jabbing,
Stay in the pitch, nor dare to poke thy nose up!

They welcome Dante's appearance (lines 100-2) with:

'They lowered their hooks to the ready, and, 'Just for fun,'
Says one, 'shall I tickle his rump for him?' 'Yes, try it,'
Says another, 'nick him and prick him, boy - go on!'

The hooking of Ciampolo (XXII.25-42) is described thus:

Others lay round about like frogs, that skulk
At the stream's edge, just noses out of shelter,
The water hiding all their limbs and bulk,-
Till Rarbiger arrived; then, in a welter
Of fear, with unanimity quite clamorous,
They shot into the hot-pot helter-skelter.

I saw - and from my memory cannot banish
The horrid thrill - one soul remain a squatter,
As one frog will at times, when others vanish;
And Grabbersnitch, the nearest truant-spotter,
Hooked him by the clogged hair, and up he came,
Looking to me exactly like an otter.

'Claws, claws there, Rubicant! we've got him now!
Worry him, worry him, flay him high and low'
Yelled all the demon-guardians of the slough.

Later we are hailed (line 118): 'New sport, good Reader! hear this merry prank!' It is strange that with all this wealth of language at command
lines 92-3, 'I' temo ch'ello / non s'apparecchi a grattarmi la tigna', should have been weakened to 'But sure he'll flay my scalp or skin my back'; a few lines later (107) Harrowhound (= Cagnazzo) gets in the words, 'That's a dirty trick'.

There are various other strains to be found, ranging from the description of the phoenix as 'the sole Arabian bird' in XXIV.106 (Miss Sayers is quite lyrical in her Introduction about this simile which 'wafts a breath of exotic perfume across the horrors of the seventh pit') to what one critic called the 'Butlin touch' in the Francesca episode where lines 100-2 of canto V are rendered:

Love, that so soon takes hold in the gentle breast,
Took this lad with the lovely body they tore
From me; the way of it leaves me still distress.

Miss Sayers is an apt, no doubt sometimes unconscious mimic, and we even hear the voice of Sarah MacFlannel when Virgil warns Dante (XXX.148):

'It's vulgar to enjoy that kind of thing'.

Miss Alice Curtayne in A Recall to Dante (1932) complains that commentators attempt to isolate Dante the theologian, Dante the politician, Dante the reformer, and so on. To this list Miss Sayers has added a hitherto almost undiscovered character: Dante the humorist. Since she finds that previous translators and critics have ignored or concealed him, she is determined that he shall have the maximum publicity. So Dante and Virgil go through Hell together like a couple of good companions, the elder poet rallying the younger from time to time with the frankness of a Buchmanite, and the latter pausing to laugh at himself like a genuine scout.

So I stood wavering in that moorland dim,
While through fond rifts of fancy oozed away
The first quick zest that filled me to the brim. (II.40-2)
'What error has seduced thy reason, pray?'
Said he, 'thou art not wont to be so dull;
Or are thy wits woolgathering miles away?' (XI.76-8)
Thou hast not yet turned the full circle through;
So why put on such a bewildered air
If now and then we come upon something new. (XIV.127-9)
So I climbed to those dread shoulders obediently;
'Only do' (I meant to say, but my voice somehow
Wouldn't come out right) 'please catch hold of me.' (XVII.91-3)

Miss Sayers is less than just in averring that previous translators,
and critics have 'hopelessly obscured' Dante's humour. Some of them have,
no doubt, but its existence has been often and aptly asserted, and identi-
ified in its right place. For the most part his mood is deadly serious,
and most so in the Inferno. Dante had that now unfashionable sense of sin
which Mr T. S. Eliot has been trying to revive in us of recent years; he
hated sin, both in himself and others, and it is this hatred which ex-
presses itself in the scenes, ghastly and grotesque alike, of the Inferno.
Nor should we be misled by the self-deprecation that seems to runk
through his exchanges with Virgil. Dante can censure his own failings
in real earnest, but when he does so it is not by poking fun at himself.
Yet such is his art that we are often led for a moment to suppose that
he is rebuking himself rather than us, his readers. When Virgil reproves
Dante for his folly or blindness, it is Dante who is reproving the world;
when Virgil expounds the mysteries of eschatology, it is Dante who is
proclaiming the divine truth to all men. As John Jay Chapman wrote:

He walks on the stage to deliver a lecture, and keeps his person-
ality ever between his audience and the subject. This is a defect
of art, if you will; but, then, he has a greater talent for exposi-
tion than any man ever possessed.

The reviewer of Miss Sayers' translation in the 1951 volume of Studi
Danteschi (Vol. 30, pp.226-32) took Miss Sayers to task on this matter:
Ella crede di discernere in Dante un certo tono umoristico e sardonico che lo renderebbe incline ad alludere a se stesso, particolarmente in riguardo a Virgilio, con un risolino appena accennato; sorge così in Dante un tratto del carattere inglese di cui i suoi connazionali si fan pregio, qual sense of humour per cui Chaucer cura di descriversi come piccoletto panciuto; onde ella talvolta calca su questa ipotetica venatura così da persuaderla a' suoi lettori, e, parrebbe, da suggerir loro un'impressione che il testo non consente a giudizio dei più.

A notable feature of Miss Sayers' work is that she avoids almost entirely the inversions and distortions of other translators in terza rima, but she does so by the simple expedient of altering her text to suit the rhymes. It will have been noticed throughout the extracts given that she is often content with a fairly rough approximation to the meaning; she is not averse to turn it round, add a piece of padding, or using an alternative phrase, and she never lets literality deprive her of a good rhyme. She is always ready to exaggerate in the interests of vividness, e.g. (III.25-30):

Tongues mixed and mingled, horrible execration,
Shrill shrieks, hoarse groans, fierce yells and hideous blether
And clapping of hands thereto, without cessation
Made tumult through the timeless night, that hither
And thither drives in dizzying circles sped,
As whirlwind whips the spinning sands together.

She has however mastered her text well; her notes show her familiarity with alternatives and make it evident that she has not decided between them without some thought. The best single terzina noticed is XXIII.142-4—a passage, by the way, where there is a momentary kinship between Dante and Jane Austen:

And the Friar: 'I heard the devil's iniquities
Much canvassed at Bologna; among the rest
'Twas said, he was a liar and father of lies.'

Miss Sayers' lowest depth is a descent to the sentimental near the beginning of canto XXX where she describes thus Athamas' slaughter of his child:

then, grasping in his wild
And pitiless clutch one of those little ones,
Baby Learchus, as he crowed and smiled,
He whirled him round and dashed him on a stone . . .
Dorothy Leigh Sayers (14)

Euripides sometimes stoops to this kind of thing; but Dante never.

The press were hardly encouraging to Miss Sayers. The Times Literary Supplement (14th April 1950, p. 224), quoting her own description of the Comedy as 'swift, topical and exciting', remarked that the phrase revealed both the strength and weakness of the translation. The article gives praise to the effective rendering of narratives passages, but in saying that

The workaday style of a translation in which the lines 'It's vulgar to enjoy that kind of thing' and 'Kindly explain what's happened to that ice?' can occur quite naturally fits the telling of a tale, and renders to us the Dante who could thrill simple souls among his contemporaries,

the reviewer is admitting that the version is 'written down'. He goes on to admit that she 'fails to communicate that exceptional grandeur which radiates from passages like the Ulysses canto', but he feels that 'Miss Sayers is too much personally in love with Dante to be Dantesque'. The New Statesman (10th December 1949, p. 709) in a brief unsigned notice gave the new translation very short shrift indeed:

Instead of making Dante's thought more accessible to the contemporary English reader, Miss Sayers has succeeded only in obscuring it. . . . The quality of the verse is unequal; in places it attains something of the grandeur of the original, but the impurity of the language used by Miss Sayers soon destroys the effect.

Dr La Piana (Italica, Vol. 27, 1950, pp. 300-1) begins: 'Of Miss Sayers' translation of the Inferno not much good can be said', and she quotes as apposite Professor Singleton's remark on terza rima translations in general: 'Time and again Dante is made to say things in English that he would never have dreamt of saying in Italian.' The review in Studi Danteschi already referred to criticised padding and inaccuracy, but thought that

Nondimeno nel complesso, e tenendo conto delle intenzioni, l'opera della Sayers sembra meritare considerazione e rispetto e in più parti ammirazione.
It was however somewhat critical of her scholarship, frowned on her 'trèppo aperta parzialità ed ammirazione per Charles Williams quale dantista', and went so far as to advise her:

"posto che la Sayers intende di continuare la sua fatica traducendo le altre cantiche, non sembra del tutto superfluo suggerirle di tener presente qualche autorevole commento moderno italiano, se non altro a controllo."

Interesting as reflecting what is likely to be the judgment of those who value the enduring, but to-day all too much neglected, standards of literary merit, are Peter Russell's remarks in Nine (December 1950, pp. 73-4):

"(Miss Sayers') language is a curious confection of literary stock-in-trade, archaism and slang. . . . The fairest way (ironically perhaps) to judge her translation is to quote without comment her version of Inferno XVII, 91-3, and Binyon's rendering of the same lines. I say ironically because Miss Sayers herself chooses to make this comparison to illustrate her thesis. Binyon has:

On those dread shoulders did I then get hold.
I wished to say, only the voice came not
As I had meant: 'Thy arms about me fold.'

Miss Sayers:
So I climbed to those dread shoulders obediently;
'Only do' (I meant to say, but my voice somehow
Wouldn't come out right) 'please catch hold of me.'

There can be no doubt that Miss Sayers has studied and loved her text, but it is evident that she has neither the talent nor the sensibility required for so great a task. What is worse, one has the feeling that she is either writing down to her audience or trying (and rather vulgarly at that) to court them.

This attack has since been followed up by a sonnet, which appears in the current number of Nine:

On first looking into Miss Sayers' Dante

Oft have I paused at some cathedral door
To hear the vaulted canopies prolong
The murmured adoration of the throng,
Swelled by the pipes to muffled thunder's roar.
Oft had I heard that Dante best could pour
The medieval miracle of song,
And never dared to deem the verdict wrong
Till Sayers rearranged the vocal score.
Then felt I like some nightlong penitent,
Who hears at dawn the minster gates flung wide,
And, hungry for the blessed Sacrament,
Scans the dim aisles, then starts back horrified
To see the madcaps of the motley season
Capering round their Abbot of Unreason.

Miss Sayers' Purgatorio is now in the press, and may be published this year; she is still at work on the Paradiso. One feels that her opportunities, unless she changes her style, will contract as the poem proceeds. Meanwhile we have a hint of the shape of things to come in the extracts quoted in her lecture to the Virgil Society (13th November 1948), which may not represent the final form. That the galloping metre is likely to re-appear is indicated by her version of Par. XX.103-5, given below in both languages:

De' corpi suoi non uscir, come credi,
gentili, ma cristiani,
in ferma fede
quel de' passuri e quel de' passi piedi.

These died, not pagans as thou deemest it,
But faithful Christians, clinging, he and he,
To the passion-pierced, to the yet-to-be-passible feet.

We have also the opening of Par. XXVII where Dante's exaltation is even a little heightened:

'To Father and to Son and Holy Ghost
Glory!' burst ringing, till I reeled the while,
Drunk with sweet sound, from all the ransomed host;
And what I looked on seemed as 'twere a smile
Of the whole universe; thus ear and eye
Did one vast sweet inebriate bliss beguile.

A comparison of the precision of Dante's 'per che mia ebezza / intrava per l'udire e per lo viso' and the somewhat slovenly equivalent above bears out earlier criticisms. We have also Purg. XV.67-75, already quoted in so many other renderings:
The infinite and inexpressive God
Up there, so speeds to love as the ray speeds
To bodies with clear lucency endued;
Lavish of self, all fires it finds it feeds;
And thus, as charity yet rifer runs,
Rifer thereby the immortal vigour breeds.
The more enamoured souls dwell there at once,
Ever the better and the more they love,
Each glassing each, all mirrors and all suns.

Incidentally, the matter of this lecture suggests certain limitations on Miss Sayers' part which one feels would militate against her successful rendering of the second and third cantique. She thinks that, while the above passage indicates the limit to which Virgil's thought on the subject of love can go, Dante's vision of the martyrdom of Saint Stephen which follows later in the canto

is the true measure of the heavenly love, weighed against the good pagan's conception. The natural reason can grasp the exchange of love for love; the exchange of love for hatred is irrational: it belongs to another frame of discourse.

Something of the same notion seems implicit in Rivalta's recent note on this passage, but the inference seems highly improbable. Although they occur in the same canto, the three visions, including that of Saint Stephen, are connected with what follows, the purgation of anger; whereas Virgil's explanation relates to what precedes, the sin of envy. Dante is inquiring about a specific doubt: how can riches be shared without diminution of the portion available to each sharer. He is inquiring academically, of course, for not only is he already in possession of the answer, but that answer is one that he is never tired of proclaiming: the folly of human selfishness is a dominant motive throughout the whole Comedy. In these lines, therefore, it is Dante, not Virgil, who is speaking, and to use Miss Sayers' language he is putting all he knows into it - forgetting for the moment that Virgil is only a virtuous pagan. Momigliano has said something worth quoting about this passage:
In questa discussione, e particolarmente nei versi 67-75, sono già visibili l'ispirazione e il motivo che diventeranno dominanti nel Paradiso: la corrispondenza di amore fra Dio e la creatura; la creatura che tanto più partecipa dell' 'infinito e ineffabil bene' quanto più ardentemente vi tende, Dio che tanto più si concede quanto più ardentemente è desiderato. Virgilio parla già come Beatrice, come un beato, come un santo.

Elsewhere in the lecture there is a free prose paraphrase of Cato's reply to Virgil in Purg. I in Miss Sayers' best colloquial vein:

There is no need of all this flattery; if a Lady from Heaven sent you here, there is nothing more to be said. Take this man, and wash his face, which is filthy - and you need not come back this way.

In Miss Sayers' long and serious discussion of Dante's Virgil there is something that reminds one of the question, 'How many children had Lady Macbeth?'. She writes:

... once the Gates of Dis are passed, Virgil is mighty in Hell. His relations with his pupil become more intimate and more cordial - though one feels that Dante is perhaps a rather trying companion, and that one would like to know what sort of report Virgil gave of him to Homer and Ovid and Horace and the rest when, his mission fulfilled, he returned to the Elysian Fields. The comments of Horace, 'the great satirical', would also be of interest, if we were but privileged to hear them.

Would they? Much more to the point, one feels, would be Dante's comments on Miss Sayers' lecture and translation.
Dante Alighieri: La Divine Commedia. With an English translation by
Harry Morgan Ayres. S. F. Vanni, Publishers and Booksellers, 30 West
12th Street, New York. Small demy octavo (8 x 5 1/4 in.). 3 volumes.

I. Inferno. 1949. pp. xvi (unnumbered), 349. In Memoriam Notice,
Harry Morgan Ayres, 1 page; Foreword (by translator), 2 pages;
Contents, 2 pages; Italian and English texts on facing pages,
no arguments, notes, or other explanatory matter, pp. 2-349.

II. Purgatorio. 1953. pp. xii (unnumbered), 351. Contents, 2 pages;
Italian and English texts (as Vol. I), pp. 2-351.

III. Paradiso. 1953. pp. xii (unnumbered), 357. Contents, 2 pages;
Italian and English texts, pp. 2-357.

All three volumes have as frontispiece a half-tone reproduction of
the Dante portrait by Andrea del Castagno.

These three volumes form part of a series entitled: 'Casa Italiana
Library of Italian Classics, Columbia University', and bear the names
of the Editorial Committee, consisting of the translator, Professor
Dino Bigongiari and Professor Giuseppe Prezzolini. In Volumes II and
III an additional colophon precedes the half-title: 'Edition under
the auspices of Order Sons of Italy in America'.

Harry Morgan Ayres (1881-1948) was born in New Jersey and educated at
Columbia, where he graduated in 1902 and received a Ph.D. in 1908. He
was appointed to the English staff of Harvard in 1904, and after holding
various posts was appointed Professor in 1928. In 1942 he became Director
of the Casa Italiana and four years later Director of General Studies
at Columbia. He was the author of several educational books, a trans-
lation of Beowulf and a volume entitled Carroll's Alice. His translation
of Dante occupied nearly all his available spare time during his last
years: it was completed but not all finally revised when he died in 1948;
and the first volume did not appear till the following year. The Casa
Italiana Library is an ambitious project, designed to include text and
translation of over twenty Italian authors, only a few of which have so
far been published. It is stated on the jacket that the purpose of the series is 'to permit the American Student to follow Italian texts without continuous recourse to a dictionary'.

The British reader who invests in this expensive version of the Divine Comedy (the volumes are priced at five dollars and cost £2 each in this country) is likely to feel some irritation at the format and typography before he gets to grips with the translation at all. Both texts are set in twelve point type, the Italian solid and the English two-point leaded. Owing to the fact that an unnecessarily wide measure has been used for the latter, even with the leading the English almost always occupies several lines less than the Italian. This is got over by inserting several blank lines (sometimes as many as three) between the paragraphs into which it is divided, thus giving it a disjointed appearance, and often making it difficult to connect text and translation. Much worse, especially in the Inferno, no care has been taken to make the turn-over of the page coincide in the facing versions, with the result that we quite often get three or four lines of English at the foot of a page, the Italian of which is overleaf. This happens so regularly throughout the Inferno as to become infuriating.

In the Inferno too each page of Italian contains thirty-one lines, so that the terzine must be broken in the middle on most pages. There is an improvement in the second two volumes in that there are thirty lines of Italian to the page, and more care has been taken to make the facing pages correspond; unfortunately this advantage is somewhat counterbalanced by the use of a much less opaque paper, which causes the English text to shine through from the back on each page of Italian, which is aggravated by the not infrequent presence of some set-off. The sizing of the pages throughout is chaotic; if there are not enough new paragraphs in the English to allow of the whiting-out process, all the space is put at the
bottom of the page. Some extraordinary lapses on the part of the printers add to the generally unpleasant effect, e.g. the last page of Paradiso XXV, where there are only twenty-five lines of Italian which have been drawn down to the foot of the page leaving a wide gap at the top, while the English opposite is normally imposed, with the gap at the foot. On top of all this the books contain no running headlines; it is impossible to tell even which cantica one is looking at without reference to the front of the book, or which canto without turning over to the opening page. An ugly, and utterly superfluous, two-page contents list appears at the beginning of each volume which is merely a list of canto numbers and the page on which each opens. To complete this depressing account, there are some misprints, misplaced quotation marks and wrongly printed line numerals. It is always difficult to keep a prose translation in step with verse on facing pages, but surely at this date something better could have been devised for a new series. The old method of putting the Italian below the English on each page, or the system of facing pages adopted by The Bodley Head for the new Sinclair translation are much superior.

Ayres himself wrote the short preface which appears in the first volume, the last paragraph of which is quoted on page 1 of my Introduction. The text used is that of Vandelli's Testo Critico; and acknowledgment is made of the close collaboration of Professor Bigongiari. The translation 'seeks to give the reader a faithful account of what Dante says on the basis of modern scholarship'; style and content are then referred to as follows.

As for the style adopted, Dante says in his tenth Epistle, 'The language of comedy is relaxed and plain, for it is the vulgar language in which ordinary women converse'. The Latin ecclesiastical style of the early Middle Ages on which he based his vernacular practice was the basis also in English, through centuries of tradi-
tion, in which, as Professor R. W. Chambers has pointed out, women played their part, of the style that shaped the English version of the Scriptures in the early sixteenth century. A certain flavor that the reader may regard as Biblical is therefore not to play false to the original.

If then the reader feels that some expressions are archaic; if now and then he comes upon a word, possibly technical, that is wholly unknown to him; if some passages are indeed obscure; if by the side of words and expressions that strike him as poetical there are other words and expressions that seem homely and even coarse; whether he likes the effect of all this or not, he may feel assured that this is the effect which the Italian text has produced on readers from Dante's own day to this...

These are not very wise words, even from the most impeccable of translators; similar claims by predecessors have been all too easily demolished.

One feels inclined to ask right away if it is really meant to suggest that there is any resemblance between the effect produced on a reader of Dante by Par. XXVIII. 67-9:

Maggior bontà vuol far maggior salute;
maggior salute maggior corpo cape,
s'elli ha le parti igualmente compiute,

and Ayres' translation of it:

The greater the excellence the greater the wholesomeness it seeks to produce; the greater the wholesomeness, the greater must be the body which produces it if it have its parts equally perfected.

There are plenty of similar examples, e.g. Purg. XXIX. 52-4:

Di sopra fiammeggiava il bello armese
più chiaro assai che luna per sereno
di mezza notte nel suo mezzo mese,

which is rendered:

This fair equipment flamed on its upper part brighter by far than moon at the full in clear midnight.

The cumbrousness of the first and the baldness of the second seem to conceal effectively the character of both terzine. Or, if such passages are thought to be too severe a test, take Inf. XX. 139-41:
tal mi fece io, non possendo parlare,
che disiava scusarmi, e scusava
me tuttavia, e nol mi credea fare,

= so did I when I was unable to speak, for I desired to hold me
excused, yet I excused me nonetheless, and believed not I did it.

or Purg. XXII. 87-9:

Facesti come quei che va di notte,
che porta il lume dietro e sè non giova,
ma dopo sè fa le persone dotte,

= Thou didst as one that goes by night who carries the light behind
him and helps not himself but after him keeps persons enlightened.

The fact is that after patiently reading through the whole of this
translation, favourably predisposed towards its accomplished author, and
inclined to make all possible allowances for the lack of revision caused
by his premature death, the admission has to be made that it does not
possess any feature of distinction, nor seem to be based on any recognisable
or commendable principle, which might justify its composition. One
tends to compare it with Sinclair's prose version, its immediate predecessor,
but the latter is so superior in every respect that the task is a useless
one. We must, however, support the allegation by some further examples.

From the purpose of the series already quoted one might suppose, were
it not for the translator's own preface, that it is intended primarily as
a crib. This is borne out by the painful literalness with which many parts
are rendered. All the worst features of Butler recur: we have an abundance
of un-English phrases like 'there where', 'for that' (conjunction), 'when
that', 'the which'. We have Italian constructions reproduced, e.g. Inf. XIX. 76:

La giù cascherò io altresì quando
verrà colui ch' i' credea che tu fossi
allor ch' i' feci 'l subito dimando,

= Down there will I fall likewise when shall come he that I deemed
thou wert then when I made the sudden question.
We have un-English idioms like 'since three months he has ... taken' (Purg. II.98-9) or 'Then I beheld Virgil to gaze' (Inf. XXIII.124). Often too there is a perverse adherence to the precise articles and particles of the Italian, producing quite unfamiliar effects in English (see, for instance, the beginning of Par. XXXIII in Appendix). There is a pervading awkwardness, exemplified in such extracts as:

Even as the blind men, whose means fail, stand about at pardons to crave their necessities, and one drops his head upon another that pity may be the sooner stirred in the beholders, not alone by the sound of the words but by the sight that pleads not less strongly. (Purg. XIII.61-6)

As the goats stand tamely chewing the cud, having been nimble and lively on the crags before they got their dinner, silently in the shade, while the sun glows, watched over by the shepherd, who is propped against his staff and, propped, guards them...

(Purg. XXVII.76-81)

Some awkwardness might be defensible on the ground of providing an absolutely literal prose rendering for the assistance of the student trying to cope with the Italian text; but Ayres' departures from the literal meaning are almost as frequent as his adherences to it. Again and again for no apparent reason he changes the construction or arrangement, but in spite of this he does not get rid of the prevailing clumsiness; indeed the tendency to unusual word order and expressions seems to have become an established habit. Sometimes there is an attempt to find a modern expression, e.g. Inf. II.37-8, 'E qual è quei che disvuoil ciò che volle / e per novi pensier cangia proposta' becomes 'And like one who shilly-shally changes his plan for some new notion' where the two clauses of the original have been telescoped. Occasionally the colloquialisms are vivid as in 'Gup, bawd, here be no females to cozen!' (Inf. XVII.65-6). Purg. XXIV.110, 'per fare esser ben la voglia acuta' is rendered 'to whet their appetite good and sharp'; but the same hendiadys seems less fitting in Par. X.96, 'u' ben s'impingua se non si vaneggia' = 'where it grows good and fat if it stray not'. While
on the subject of colloquialisms it may be mentioned that Ayres does not spare us any of Dante's obscene expressions, making the most of his opportunities in Inf. XXI-II and XXVIII. Very much mixed with the colloquialisms, however, are somewhat insipid archaisms which, far from recalling the stately language of the Authorised Version referred to in the preface, add to the disjointed effect of the whole, e.g. 'of the which I was never abandoned' (Inf. XXVI.102), where Dante is perfectly straightforward. Occasionally Ayres produces a good straight sentence, like Par. XXIX.20-2, 'for the moving of God upon the face of the waters came neither "before" nor "after" - a passage maltreated by many translators; and it was a happy thought to render Par. VI.22, 'Tosto che con la Chiesa mossi i piedi', by 'As soon as I fell in step with the Church'.

The most disconcerting feature, however, is the regular succession of small changes which are liable to bewilder the student without shedding any new light on the meaning, especially when contrasted with the extreme literality of the remainder. Why should 'più che tu non sperì' (Inf. XXIII.133) become 'nearer than thy hope', or 'che 'l fornito / sempre con danno l'attender sofferse' (Inf. XXVIII.98-9) be contorted to 'that it always did harm to put off what one was ready to do'? So in Purg. VI.27 'si che s'avacci lor divenir sante' is changed to 'in order that they may rise more speedily to Heaven'; 'ch'alli occhi temperava il novo giorno' (Purg. XXVIII.3) becomes 'that shaded my eyes from the new day'; 'dinanzi all'acqua che ritorna equale' (Par. II.15), 'ere ever the water closes it over'; 'lo rifrigerio dell'eterna ploia' (Par. XIV.27), 'the refreshment that eternally rains down'; 'che 'l suo fattore / non disdegnò di farsi sua fattura' (Par. XXXIII.6), 'that the Maker disdained not to be made by it'. There are hundreds of such examples where the departure from the text might not
draw unfavourable notice if the style were uniform throughout, but is
decidedly at odds with the apparent intention of being strictly literal.
At other times there seems to be an intention to elucidate by adding a
gloss, but in the absence of any notes whatever this becomes confusing.

Inf. XXIV.151, 'E detto l'ho perchè doler ti debbia' is expanded to 'And
I have said this so that thou have good reason to be troubled'. In Purg.
V.47 'vapori accesi' is rendered 'flaming meteors' and 'lightnings' added
in line 59 to explain the reference to 'clouds of August'. In the same
canto lines 126-7, 'e sciolse al mio petto la croce / ch' i' fe' di me
quando 'l dolor mi vinse' has two additions: 'and loosed from my breast
the cross I had made of my arms when sorrow for my sins overwhelmed me'.
A more noticeable case occurs in Purg. VII.13 where for 'Te lucis ante'
are substituted two lines of verse: 'To Thee before the end of day, Maker
of all things, we pray'. Par. III.54, 'letizian del suo ordine formati'
is astonishingly expanded to 'rejoice to occupy the post assigned to them
in the order by him established'. A similar expansion occurs in the well-
known opening to Cacciaguida's speech in Par. XVII, lines 40-2 becoming:

but does not therefrom acquire necessity any more than a ship
dropping down stream acquires necessity from the fact that its
course is mirrored in some beholder's sight.

On the other hand we get contractions where the claims of poetry seem to
be set aside in the interests of conciseness, e.g. Par. XXX.40-2:

luce intellettuäl, piena d'amore;
amor de vero ben, pien di letizia;
letizia che trascende ogni dolore,

which becomes:

intellectual light, filled with love; love of the true good, filled
with joy that transcends every sweetness.

There is a similar loss of the flavour of the original in the somewhat
inconsequent version of Par. XXXIII.64-6:
Thus melts snow in the sun; thus in leaves light upon the wind was lost the oracle of the Sybil.

There are many word choices that strike one as strange, e.g. 'ove non è che luca' (Inf. IV.151) rendered 'where is nought that is a light'. 'Caïna awaits him who snuffed out our lives' (Inf. V.107) is an attempt to get the basic meaning of 'spense'. 'Martyries' in Inf. IX.153 and X.1 seems decidedly odd. 'I shall whistle the tune we use' for 'io suffolerò, com' è nostro uso' (Inf. XXII.104) seems a trifle fanciful. In Purg. VII.109 'the bad man of France' for 'mal di Francia' suggests the speech of 'Westerns'. 'Which ever frisks about like a child' is not quite what is intended by 'che sempre a guisa di fanciullo scherza' in Purg. XV.3: nor is 'according to my infallible conceit' very happy for the beginning of Beatrice's speech in Par. VII.19. And are Adam's words in Par. XXVI.110-11, where 'costei' is rendered 'the woman' intended to indicate a slightly misogynistic streak?

It is rather strange that in spite of the remarks in the preface regarding the language of the Authorised Version, this is often not used for Dante's quotations for the Vulgate, e.g. in Purg. XXVII.8 'Beati mundo corde' is rendered 'Blessed are they of pure heart'. The regular use of 'blessed' to translate 'santo' gives a slightly ridiculous effect in some passages, e.g. Inf. XXXI.16-8: 'After the dolorous rout when Charlemagne lost his blessed peers Roland blew no such dreadful blast'.

As to the accuracy of this translation, although it seems to be in the main correct, there are some passages which suggest carelessness. The fact that there are no notes of any kind leaves us in some doubt, when a departure occurs from the normal interpretation, as to whether it is intentional or accidental. Here too there arises another complication, for which the translator cannot be blamed, but for which his editors and their printers
must be censured: misprints are so numerous that one is never sure whether
what appears to be a mistranslation is really a typographical error. When
we find, besides mis-spelt words and misplaced marks of punctuation (quo-
tation marks, in particular, are a constant source of irritation) phrases
like 'such men as thou has seen' (Purg. III.40), 'the beast goest faster'
(Purg. XXIV.85), 'O father oh his, truly Felice!' (Par. XII.79), we can
easily imagine that 'and I heard him name Geri del Bello' (Inf. XXIX.27)
or 'since lightning when it comes cases' (Purg. XXIX.19) do not reproduce
what Ayres originally wrote. Similarly a sentence at first very puzzling
like Purg. XII.100-2, 'Even as at the right, to climb the mount, where
sits the church that dominates above Rubaconte's bridge from the well-governed
city', is probably due to the printer's transposition of the word 'from'
which should come before 'above'.

There are a number of phrases which look suspiciously like careless
renderings, e.g. 'I' vidi . . . uno aspettar cosi, com'elli 'noontra . . . '
(Inf. XXII.51-2) = 'I saw . . . a sight such as happens when . . . ', where
surely both grammar and context require 'I saw . . . one linger'. In Purg.
I.53-4 'per li cui prieghi / della mia compagnia costui sovvenni' becomes
'by whose prayers this man gained my company'. The last three lines of
this canto are awkwardly turned: 'O wonder! for even as he plucked the
humble plant, so it of a sudden sprang up again where he had torn it', just
as if the idiom 'qual . . . cotal' had been misunderstood. The translation
of 'Sangue sitisti!' (Purg. XII.57) as 'For blood thou art athirst' is an
obvious slip which spoils the sense of the taunt. 'It was lifting up his
chin' (Purg. XIII.102) must again be laid to the proof-reader's charge. The
six lines (Purg. XIV.49-54) run:

It keeps on falling; and the larger it grows so much the more whelps
turned to wolves it finds in this cursed and ill-favoured ditch.
Harry Morgan Ayres (11)

Descended then through deeper pools it finds foxes so full of fraud they fear not the trap that catches them.

Line 51, 'la maladetta e sventurata fossa' is, of course, the subject to 'trova', while 'occupi' in line 54 is subjunctive; both Ayres' renderings are unfortunate, and the latter misleading. I can find no support in any commentator for Ayres' version of Purg. XVII.100-2:

ma quando al mal si torce, o con più cura
o con men che non dee corre nel bene,
contra 'l fattore adovra sua fattura,

= but when it turns aside to evil, or with more seal or less than it ought it runs after the good, it uses the creature against the creator.

'Adovra' is almost certainly intransitive; cf. 'adopera' in Inf. XXIV.25. The rendering of Purg. XIX.114, 'or, come vedi, qui ne son punita' as 'now, as thou seest, it is here punished for that' is probably a slip due to the attraction of 'I was a soul' in the preceding clause. Another obvious slip is the omission altogether of any equivalent for 'alle sua presenza' in Purg. XX.35. In translating 'ch'alcuna stella / perde il perse corre infino a questo fondo' (Par. XXX.6) as 'that a lesser star is lost to view in its depths', the word 'lesser' is inserted to make the meaning clearer, but surely 'a questo fondo' must mean 'at this depth', i.e. on the surface of the earth. Par. XXXI.73-5 seems very unsatisfactory:

From that region where loftiest thunder rolls, it is not so far for mortal eye down to where it loses itself in the nethermost depths of the sea.

There may be, in some cases, a reason for these renderings, but without any comment to support them they can only be regarded as errors.

The punctuation is very erratic; the modern custom of reducing the number of commas as far as possible is commendable, so long as it does not lead to ambiguity; but in this translation, while the prevailing tendency is to keep punctuation to a minimum, the commas are often misplaced,
causing momentary bewilderment. What is the uninitiated reader to make
of 'that for which of old Caesar in triumph heard "Queen" cried out against
him' - unless he look across to the opposite page and see 'di ciò per che
già Cesar, triunfando, / regina ... '; but two commas would have saved
the situation. There is a crop of superfluous commas near the end, e.g.
'so that down below they dream without being asleep, believing and not be-
lieving, they speak truth' (Par. XXIX.82-3); 'where the semicircles are
cut across by empty places, are placed they that, turned their faces, to
Christ come' (Par. XXXII.25-7); and see also Par. XXXIII.13-5 in the Appendix.
To conclude here are three passages which seem to be above the general
level of the rest of the translation and give an impression of Ayres at
his best.

So with sweet speech dost thou lure me that I may not keep silence;
and take it not ill that a little I entangle myself in discourse.
I am he that held both the keys to the heart of Frederick, and I
turned them, looking and unlocking, so softly that from his counsel
I kept out well nigh every man. Such faith I kept with the illustrious
office that for it I lost sleep and health. The harlot that
from the house of Cassar never turns her slutish eyes, common
plague and vice of courts, inflamed the hearts of all against me;
and they, inflamed, so inflamed Augustus that smiling honors were
turned to woful plaints. My mind in disdainful mood, thinking in
death to fly disdain, made me unjust to my just self. By the strange
roots of this tree I swear to you I broke not faith with my lord
that so was worthy of honor. And if either of you return to the world
give succor to my memory still lying prostrate under the stroke that
envy dealt it. (Inf. XIII.55-78)

Such wish upon wish to be up there came over me that thereupon at
every step I felt my feathers grow for the flight. When the stair
was wholly overrun below us and we were upon the topmost step, Virgil
fixed his eyes upon me and said: 'The temporal fire and the eternal
thou hast beheld, son; and thou art come to a region where of myself
I discern no further. I have led thee hither with wit and skill;
now do thou take thine own liking for leader; thou art forth from
the steep ways, forth from the narrow. Behold there the sun that
shines upon thy brow; behold the young grass, the flowers and the
shrubs which here the earth brings forth of itself. Until in joy
come the fair eyes that weeping caused me to come to thee, thou
mayest sit thee down or walk among them. Wait no longer for my word
or my nod; free, upright and sound is thy judgment, and it would be
wrong not to act according to its bidding; wherefore over thyself
I crown thee and mitre. (Purg. XXVII.121-42)
Like the fire that bursts the lock of the cloud by expanding so that it may not be held there and contrary to its nature hurls itself down to earth, so my mind, enlarged amidst these feasts, went forth from itself and what it became it knows not how to remember. 'Open thine eyes and gaze upon what I am; thou hast beheld things such that thou art made strong to sustain my smile.' I was like to one that wakes from a forgotten dream and sets his wit in vain to bring it back to mind, when I heard this proffer, worthy of such thanks that never is it blotted out of the book that records things past. If now should sound in my aid all the tongues that Polyhymnia with her sisters have fattened with their most sweet milk, hymning that blessed smile, and how radiant it made the blessed countenance it would reach not to a thousandth part of the truth; and so in bodying forth paradise the sacred poem must needs leap, even as one that finds his path cut off. (Par. XXIII, 40-65)

Press comment on the Inferno was on the whole unfavourable; at the date of writing no reviews of the two later volumes have appeared. The Modern Language Review (Vol. 46, 1951, pp. 117-8) confessed itself puzzled by the system of translation, cited numerous inconsistencies, and compared the version to its disadvantage with Sinclair's. Dr La Piana, in Italica (Vol. 27, 1951, pp. 299-300), thought it 'on the whole a very creditable performance', but found numerous points deserving adverse criticism.

Ramsey's original verse shows sensitiveness, ingenuity and versatility. Some of his jeux d'esprit attained passing celebrity, as for instance his verse to Chopin:

- 833 -
THOMAS WESTON RAMSEY


Thomas Weston Ramsey (1892-1952) was educated at Dulwich College and the University of London. For a time he taught modern languages, then he joined the family firm, S. Ramsey & Co., wire workers, of Clerkenwell. Mr John Gawsworth, in a Times obituary, tells us that he compiled a catalogue in connexion with his business which is known as 'the bible of the trade'. Always keenly interested in language and letters, he was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and a frequent contributor to the Poetry Review; he succeeded Earl Wavell as President of the Poetry Society. He published several small books of verse: Antares (1934), Four Witch Balls (1935), Endymion to Silver (1944), Fire and Ice (1946) and, in broadsheet form during 1951, Friendly Tree and Far Over Wires. He spent much of his leisure time for many years on a translation of the Divine Comedy, but while the first volume, Paradiso, was in the press, he died without having seen the proofs. The second part, which was to have been the Purgatorio, was still unrevised, although there is still some hope that it may be published. The Paradiso was printed exactly according to Ramsey's manuscript, so that there are probably some blemishes which would have been put right had he lived to revise his work.

Ramsey's original verse shows sensitiveness, ingenuity and versatility. Some of his jeux d'esprit attained passing celebrity, as for instance his verse to Chopin:

- 834 -
Out of the night that covers me,
The Mare Imbrium of the soul,
I thank whatever gods may be
For thee, unconquerable Pole!

This is more than a mere jest, for music meant as much to Ramsey as poetry
- indeed many of his poems are directly inspired by music - and he was
moreover discerningly imitative. He is equally at home in paraphrasingCatullus:

None but me would she marry, she says -
No, not if Jove the omnipotent sought her!
She says; but when passion engenders the phrase,
Write it in wind and running water,
or in throwing off a lyric in the French Parnassian style:

J'ai vu dans tes yeux profonds
Où les astres blancs et clairs
Ont balbutié leurs chansons
Sur les confins de la mer,
or in a Shakespearian sonnet:

Not for your beauty - beauty is a scroll
That Time reads over and then folds away
In secrecy, with all the gathered toll
Of tribute which the passing seasons pay...

One would guess Swinburne's prosodic influence to have been considerable
from such verses as:

The years have a swift and furtive tread,
Twenty years may flow and be sped
From evening mist to starlight shine
Where the river lies and nothing said,
and he could sink to the Swinburnian level of banality in a war poem:

Whether the Hood be sunk or the
Bismarck downed
To me is all one when I think of
Men who are drowned.

Something of Dante too is to be found in the spirit of the poems, suggestions
rather than imitations:
White hands, clean linen - what are these?
Have not the heathen all such things?
To move these gold and silver keys
Needs claws of lions, eagles' wings.

One agrees, therefore, with Mr Roy Campbell in his foreword, that Ramsey's choice of the later cantiche of the Divine Comedy as a subject for translation was a fortunate one.

Mr Campbell introduces the translation very briefly with some remarks on the rendering of verse in general, mentioning Longfellow's version of Jorge Manrique's *Coplas* as 'the one outstanding example of a translation in which beauty and truth to the original are balanced equally and reproduced intactly', but in adding that 'even the extremely difficult metrical scheme is reproduced in English' he must have been writing from a very distant recollection. His moral is that whereas Dante was a bad choice for Longfellow, because his Divine Comedy is 'even more commonplace and dull than some of his original work', it was a wise one for Ramsey:

Of all the translations I have read of the Paradiso, this one seems to me to hit the most perfect balance of beauty and accuracy.... He has avoided the cloying triple-rhyme, which, with our more emphatic rhymes, disqualifies the system (as too monotonous) from lengthy use in English, though with the softer Italian rhymes it sounds perfect in that language. Technically Mr Ramsey has invented our English equivalent for the terza-rima which, when reproduced in English, outweighs equivalence altogether and becomes really too strident.

Actually, although it is quite possible that Ramsey was unaware of it, his metrical form is the Schlegelian terzina as used by Fletcher, i.e. the middle rhyme of the terzina is omitted, and Mr Campbell's justification of the form is in essence the same as Fletcher's was. The translator's own preface is very short and is quoted in full:

In the shortest terms this must be called a translation. Yet I do not want it to be judged as such but rather as a poem in itself; and I should like it to be read mostly by those who have never
read the Italian and probably never will. For simply as translations, if that is what one wants, it would be difficult to excel the admirable versions in Dent's series, the Temple Classics; where also those who need notes and explanations of historical and geographical allusions may find them of just the right clarity and substance.

It will be seen that Ramsey stands on the same ground as Mr Fowler Wright: what he is offering is a substitute for Dante, for the benefit of those to whom the original must remain a closed book. We have pointed out that in judging a translation its function must always be kept in mind, and we must therefore consider Ramsey's effort as something quite distinct, for instance, from Professor Bickersteth's, which is specifically designed for reading along with the Italian text.

Since Ramsey's terzine correspond with Dante's, except for very occasional overrunning, we must assume that the omission of four terzine is an unfortunate consequence of the fact that he did not live to revise his poem. The lines are not numbered, and therefore an omission is not readily noticed, and happily none are vital. They are VI.28-50, XIII.70-2, XV.58-60 and XXXIII.88-90; the last, of course, is rather obvious to anyone familiar with the original.

In addition to the liberty of omitting the link-rhyme, Ramsey uses, doubtless intentionally, extreme freedom with his other rhymes. He does not, for instance, pay any attention to inflectional endings, so that he rhymes a singular with a plural, or uses such pairs as 'assumed - plumes'. Occasionally he rhymes on an unaccented syllable as in 'you - virtue'; he also permits identical rhymes in different senses as Dante does, e.g. 'lies - lies', although he does not reproduce the triple 'vidi' of canto XXX. Some of the rhymes are mere approximations, such as 'you - noose', 'evermore - Noah'. His disyllabic rhymes tend to eccentricity: 'circles - hurtles', 'blemish - parish'. The rhyme scheme is thus doubly weakened,
so that some portions read like blank verse, and this is particularly noticeable where one would expect a strong ending, e.g. XXIV.145-7:

This is the first beginning, this the spark
Which dilates later to a living flame,
And sparkles in me like a heavenly star.

At times too the rhymes verge on the absurd, e.g. XXXII.156-8:

And opposite the chief of family founders
Sits Lucy, who to aid you moved your Lady
When to destruction you so nearly floundered.

This brings us to the fact that there is an admixture of highly poetical language with phrases whose tone is disconcertingly conversational or lacking in the requisite measure of dignity. Thus at IX.74 'beato spirto' becomes 'you lovely, happy being', and Dante tells Saint James (XXV.94-8):

And then your brother tells us the same story
But gives it more in detail when he writes
About the white robes of the folk in glory.

The 'ferve et tape' of XXIX.141 becomes 'Is raised to boiling point or just to glowing'; and in the final canto there seems to be rather a falling off in the 'burning intensity' after line 121:

Now to my thought how paltry is the word!
And thought compared with seeing is so faint
To call it slight were almost too absurd.
O Light eternal, set in thyself alone,
Self-understanding and self-understood,
Pouring laughter and love on everyone!
That circle which had first appeared to me
Under the semblance of reflected light,
Scanned by my eyes somewhat more carefully . . .

The inconsequence of the sixth of these lines ('te ami e arridi') is equalled by its inaccuracy. The prosaic tone has some justification in such a case as XV.105-8:

No house yet lacked its natural population;
No Sardanapalus had come to show
What vulgar show can do with decoration,
and even if we feel it overdone, there is a graphic quality in XXI.34-42:

You know how jackdaws fly about together
As is their habit in the early morning
Scurrying round to warm their chilly feathers
So that some fly away and don't come back,
Others return unto their starting point,
Others fly round and round on the same track:
Such was the way that cascade of pell-mell
Descending splendours did disport itself
As soon as on a certain step it fell.

On the other hand Ramsey's version of XXV.31-3, although both his reading and interpretation are admissible, even if we do not think them the best, gets the tone wrong:

Make hope re-echo through this lofty height,
You know you represent it every time
That Jesus showed the three a clearer light.

There is a doubtful and rather ridiculous assumption in XXI.114-7:

I gave myself so fervently
That with my food in olive oil fried
I easily endured both heat and cold,
Only with contemplation satisfied.

The looseness of some of the renderings has doubtless already been noticed, but in commenting on this we must bear in mind that Ramsey himself has to some extent forestalled criticism. If we take the opening lines of the poem we see clearly his system.

The glory of the great all-mover goes
From end to end of the world, but in one place
More, in its neighbour less, the radiance glows.
I on the most illuminated floor
Of Paradise have stayed and seen what none
Can call to mind again outside the door.
Because our intellect as it draws near
Depth of desire is made to still and deep,
Memory loses all that once was clear.

The general sense is rendered, and the reader is left in no doubt as to what Dante is trying to say. Certainly the second of these terzine would afford little clue to the construction or literal meaning of:
Thomas Weston Ramsey (7)

Nel ciel che più della sua luce prende
fu' io, e vidi cose che ridire
nè sa nè può chi dà là su discende,

and the metaphor of 'floor - door' seems to be suggested by the rhyme;

but even so the terzina performs its function so far as the reader is concerned and is also quite in Dante's style. The difficulty of such a system

lies in restraining the temptation to take undue advantage of the liberty it gives. For instance, in XI.115-7, describing the death of Saint Francis, we have in the Italian:

e del suo grembo l'anima preclara
mover si volse, tornando al suo regno,
 e al suo corpo non volse altra bara,

and in Ramsey:

And then the flashing spirit from the sheath
Willed to be drawn and turned towards its home,
Leaving the scabbard on the rock beneath.

Here a metaphor from elsewhere in Dante has been turned to good account, and the terzina is poetical in its own right; but this time the sense of the original has vanished, and is replaced by something quite different.

Again the famous lines at XXIII.64-6 lose their urgency in:

Think how the theme so heavy is to bear
And that a mortal shoulder carries it -
The trembling stance is not for lack of care.

Such looseness in rendering, whether justified or not, makes it difficult to appraise the accuracy of this translation. When we find, for instance, at XXXII.64-6:

As he made all minds in his own aspect
Of joy, so at his pleasure did with grace
Diverse endow them; here you see the effect,

we cannot tell whether 'e qui basti l'effetto' has been wrongly understood or deliberately altered. There are some highly suspicious lines, e.g.

IV.141-2:

- 840 -
My vanquished strength of will let the reins go
And like one lost, eyes downcast, I became,
where 'diè le reni' seems to have been hastily and unwarrantably given an
impossible sense. The same applies to VIII.82-4:

His natural qualities, which trace descent
From such a noble line, need soldiery
On something nobler than their pay intent.

Here the sense of 'che di larga parca / discese' is, if understood, not
expressed, and its point in the context obscured. So XV.15, 'movendo li
occhi che stavan sicuri' is rendered 'And makes to follow it our steady
eyes', and we can hardly tell whether this is merely an awkward rendering
or a failure to see the sense of 'stavan'. Ramsey's version of XXV.112-4:

This is the one who lay upon the heart
Of our Pelican, and who upon the cross
For the great dignity was set apart,
is probably slovenly rather than erroneous, but would certainly be hard
to understand without reference to the Italian. The opening lines of
canto VI appear to contain either a slip or a misunderstanding:

Since Constantine had set the eagle to ride
Against the course of heaven it took eastward
With him who made Lavinia his bride,
for the course in question was a westward one.

Himself a poet, Ramsey is fully sensible of the poetic qualities of
his original, and his efforts are constantly directed, with some success,
to recapturing these effects. Thus in VII.7-9 we have:

Then all moved to the dance that kindled them,
Like sparks before the wind were whirled away
And in a moment distance dwindled them
To nothing.

Good likewise is XII.22-30:

The dance, the festival of flashing fire,
The song that answered light with glowing light
Love with bright love rejoicing in desire,
Suddenly at a point of time were still;
Even as the eyes that open and are closed
Moving at the direction of one will:
And from the heart of a new fire there stole
A voice which turned me in a moment round,
Even as the needle swings towards the Pole.

So too XXIII.79-84:

I have seen the sun pour down his golden light
Behind a cloud upon a field of flowers
Even though the cloud concealed him from my sight;
So I saw many crowds of splendours flame,
Under the ardent rays that lightened them
But not the source from which those lightnings came.

The famous passage of XXX.16-33 is well done:

If all that I have said of her till now
Were all compounded to one song of praise
It would not serve this final phase to show.
The beauty that I saw transcends degree
Not only past our measure, but I feel
Only her maker enjoys it utterly.
Here I acknowledge I am overthrown,
More than was any comic or tragic poet
By spear-point of his theme ever cast down.
For as the Sun in sight that trembles most,
So in remembering that lovely smile
My mind, cleft from its very self, is lost.
From that first day she came before my sight
In youth, till now my song has never been
Severed from following her steps aright;
But now my verses can no longer speak
Her beauty forth and I must climb no more,
Like every artist who has reached his peak.

Space forbids the quotation of other passages of like merit, but there are many of them, and the general standard of verse, in spite of the lapses we have mentioned, is a high one.

Ramsey's best and most original effects are obtained in the satirical passages, for which he has an undoubted flair. Dante would, we feel, have been pleased with IX.55-7:

Too ample far would be the loving-cup
Destined to hold the red Ferrara blood,
Weary who ounce by ounce would weigh it up.
Canto XII contains some well-written and vigorous lines, concluding:

Let not our Mr Knowall or his dame,
   Because they see one steal, another pray,
Think that God also sees them just the same;
The first may rise, the second fall away.

Excellent is XXI.130-5:

The modern pastors have become so fat
They need a scaffolding on either side,
A crane in front, a hoister at the back,
Then with their mantles overspread the stead
So that two bees go trotting in one skin:
0 patience, patience, will you never heed?

We sometimes have an intrusion of superfluous ornament, or a tendency to be precious. Thus III.110-11 is rendered: 'and seems to gather / Up to herself the moon's quiver of rays'. At XIV.25-7 the metaphor of 'lo refrigerio dell'eterna ploia' is extended with more ingenuity than relevance to:

Who grieves that death must wither every flower
Does so because on earth he does not see
The sweet refreshment of the eternal shower.

Of the same kind is the reference to 'eternal summer' in XXXIII.8 (quoted in Appendix I), and further on in line 24 'le vite spiritali ad una ad una' is rendered 'the manifold procession of the dead'.

A few lines are lame or cacophonous like 'Was for the first counsel given by Christ' (XII.75) or 'For good, as good, so far as understood' (XXVI.28); and in one or two places the grammar is shaky. It must be kept in mind, however, that many of these defects might have been eliminated by the translator had revision been possible.

In dealing with Fletcher we have already discussed some of the arguments for and against the omission of the link-rhyme. Ramsey was a much better poet than Fletcher; he knew how to handle words and metre, but as a translator, no doubt deliberately, he was less conscientious. Since Ramsey's avowed object was to write a poem to be read by those who would
never know the original, and since he aimed at creating, to some extent, a style and atmosphere of his own rather than reconstructing Dante's, his omission of the middle rhyme to secure added freedom seems a reasonable liberty. On the other hand his loose handling of the other rhymes, however justified by contemporary practice in modern poetry, gives a slipshod effect which is the antithesis of Dante's precision. One feels that Ramsey should have made more of the advantages which these licences gave him; that more rigour and discipline would have resulted both in a better poem and a better substitute for the original.

Opinions of this translation vary according to the relative importance of these considerations in the critic's view. The verdict, for instance, of Professor Bickersteth (communicated privately) is strongly adverse, because he finds Dante's characteristic effects and emphases missing in Ramsey. On the contrary the editor of Nine, who has let me see a review not yet printed, is highly favourable, because he thinks Ramsey's creation a good English substitute for the Italian poem, and feels that only by such a transmutation, rather than by a simple translation, can Dante be made acceptable in our language. In a brief review the Times Literary Supplement (26th December 1952, p. 854) stressed Ramsey's own statement of his aims, which it thought legitimate, and summed up:

Mr Ramsey's version of Il Paradiso is easy to read and has the quality most commendable in such a volume - it is alive and absorbing. . . . What Dante wrote Mr Ramsey has attempted to re-conceive in English as though in the making of an original poem. This is the wish of most translators, and the peak which so few attain.

This view requires some qualification. As we have seen, the wishes of translators differ, and many would deplore the measurement of their effort by such a standard. Moreover the words 'easy to read' must be taken in a relative sense to mean that Ramsey has put as few obstacles
as possible in the reader's way; for no matter what system of paraphrase or translation we adopt, it will have failed if it makes Dante easy reading in the ordinary sense.

Ruggins, son of a Warden of the Fleet Prison, and a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, is known for his translation of Ariosto's Orlando Furioso (1733). When he died he left a complete version of the Divine Comedy in manuscript, with instructions that it was to be published. The only portion of it ever to reach print, however, seems to have been as during his lifetime, when Purg. XI.1-21 appeared in the British Magazine, anonymously, but vouched for as Ruggins' on fairly good authority. This extract is reprinted by Toynbee (D.E.L., Vol. 1, p. 209), together with an account of the translator and a statement of what is known as to the fate of the manuscript. The extract is in heroic couplets and triplets; in the magazine it was preceded by the Italian text, and the English is headed 'Great ease may As literally as possible'. It begins:

Our Father blest, who art in Heav'n above,
Not circumscrib'd; but thro' consummate love,
Much to those primal essences you bear,
Thy name be hallowed; thy power rare,
By ev'ry creature; as it is so meet,
All thanks be render'd to thy influence sweet.

The sample justifies us in believing that the translation, had it been preserved, would have been of little value.

Charles Burney (1726-1814)

Madame D'Arblay records that her father, Dr. Burney, made a prose translation of the Inferno in the early 1760s, but no vestige of it exists. Burney was certainly familiar with the Comedy, and in the second volume of his History of Music (1782) he included a version in very ordinary heroic couplets of Dante's meeting with Cæsella in Purg. II. The curious
LOST TRANSLATIONS

William Huggins (1696-1761)

Huggins, son of a Warden of the Fleet Prison, and a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, is known for his translation of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1755). When he died he left a complete version of the Divine Comedy in manuscript, with instructions that it was to be published. The only portion of it ever to reach print, however, seems to have done so during his lifetime, when Purg. XI.1-21 appeared in the *British Magazine*, anonymously, but vouched for as Huggins' on fairly good authority. This extract is reprinted by Toynbee (D.E.L., Vol. I, p. 308), together with an account of the translator and a statement of what is known as to the fate of the manuscript. The extract is in heroic couplets and triplets; in the magazine it was preceded by the Italian text, and the English is headed *Sicut meus mos.*

As literally as possible'. It begins:

Our Father best, who art in Heav'n above
Not circumscrib'd; but thro' consummate love,
Which to those primal essences you bear,
Thy name be hallowed; thy power rare,
By ev'ry creature; as it is but meet,
All thanks be rendered to thy effluence sweet.

The sample justifies us in believing that the translation, had it been preserved, would have been of little value.

Charles Burney (1726-1814)

Madame D'Arblay records that her father, Dr Burney, made a prose translation of the Inferno in the early 1760s, but no vestige of it exists. Burney was certainly familiar with the Comedy, and in the second volume of his *History of Music* (1782) he included a version in very ordinary heroic couplets of Dante's meeting with Casella in Purg. II. The curious
Reader will find all that is known about Burney's translation in Toynbee (D.E.L., Vol. I, pp. 323-5) also a transcript of the Casella passage which begins:

On me when first these spirits fix their eyes,
They all regard me with a wild surprise,
Almost forgetting that their sins require
The purging remedy of penal fire.

Thomas Wade (1805-75)

Wade, poet and journalist, is an interesting figure among the now forgotten poets of the period. He was an avowed disciple of Shelley; his devotion went so far as the composition of 'To a Glow-worm' in the 'Sky-lark' stanza. He really had something of his master's verbal magic, and his sonnets earned Saintsbury's commendation in the Cambridge History of English Literature. Harry Buxton Forman wrote an interesting article on him in Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century (ed. Nicoll and Wise, 1895, Vol. I, pp. 45 ff) at the end of which fifty of his sonnets are reproduced. Wade achieved some fame as a dramatist, having the encouragement of Fanny Kemble, but after the failure of his Jew of Arragon he ceased to write for the stage. He was active in journalism, editing first Bell's Weekly Messenger and later the British Press in Jersey. In 1835 he published the now rare volume of poems and sonnets on which his fame rests, probably damning it in advance by giving it the impossible title Mundi et Cordis: de Rebus Sempiternis et Temporariis: Carmina. He left many unpublished remains, among which was a translation of Dante's Inferno in terza rima. When Forman wrote the article mentioned the manuscript was in his possession, and showed that the work was begun in July 1845 and finished a year later. Wade, says Forman, embarked on this task because he was dissatisfied with Wright's inaccurate reproduction.
of Dante's metre; but evidently he abandoned the attempt at the end of the first cantica, perhaps because he came to know of Dayman's Inferno or of Cayley being engaged on the same task. Forman thought well of Wade's work; unfortunately he only reprinted a few lines (XXXIV.127-39):

Remote from Beelzebub, there is a place
As far as downward doth the Tomb extend,
Which not by vision, but by sound hath trace
Of a small brook, that hither doth descend
Along a hollowed rock which it hath worn
In its winding course, that gently doth impend.
My Guide and I upon that way forlorn
Entered to greet again the world sublime;
And, holding all repose but as in scorn,
He first, I following, did we upward climb,
Until I saw the gracious heaven unfold
Its beautiful things, thro' a round opening dim:
And thence we pass'd, the stars to re-behold.

Another portion of Wade's version was reprinted by Forman in the London Quarterly Review (Vol. 48, pp. 120-1) comprising Inf. III.1-42. The few lines available suggest that Wade's effort was not negligible, and may have touches reminiscent of Shelley, but unfortunately the manuscript cannot be found. Toynbee (Dante Studies, 1921, p. 211) says that it passed to the Macauley Collection in the Library of the University of Pennsylvania, but the curator there, Mr Thomas R. Adams, informs me in a recent letter that he has no record of it, and it does not appear to be or have been in that Collection.

John Payne (1842-1916)

Payne is credited by Toynbee (Dante Studies, 1921, p. 222) with a translation of the Divine Comedy and the Canzoniere in 'verse' (form unspecified). Payne, who was an indefatigable translator, and is known for his versions of Villon, the Arabian Nights, Omar Khayyam, Hafiz, Heine and Boccaccio, had extraordinary linguistic talents. He had little schooling, and what he had ceased at thirteen; from that age onwards he
had to earn his own living, and before he was eighteen he had tried clerking
to an auctioneer, a coachbuilder and an architect, had worked in a newspaper office, and been an usher in two schools. In support of his attribution Toynbee quotes mysteriously in a footnote part of a sentence from
an unspecified Biography, which turns out to be The Life of John Payne by
Thomas Wright of Olney (1919), the full sentence being (p. 12):

Between the ages of fourteen and nineteen he made metrical trans-
lations of the whole of Dante, Goethe's Hermann and Dorothea, the
second part of Faust, Lessing's Nathan der Weise, Calderon's Magico
Prodigioso, and a great number of shorter poems from a dozen or
more languages, including German, old and modern French, Italian,
Spanish, Portuguese, Turkish, Persian, Arabic, Greek and Latin,
all which languages, with the exception of French, Latin and Greek
(learnt at school) were acquired by private study.

Toynbee adds: 'The MS. of the translation of Dante was destroyed by
Payne', but gives no authority for this statement. Toynbee may have
consulted Wright, but if so it is strange that he does not mention his
name. Wright, who first met Payne in 1904, and became very intimate
with him, had his subject's full co-operation in the preparation of the
Biography; he was also in possession, from 1906 onwards, of Payne's own
Autobiography in manuscript; eventually he edited and printed the latter
privately in a limited edition of 225 copies in 1926. A statement occurs
in it which contradicts Wright's above, for Payne says that he learned
a dozen or more languages at Mr Ebenezer J. Pearce's school at West-
bourne Park, which he left when he was thirteen. Payne's own account of
his early translations on p. 10 of the Autobiography reads:

Between the years of 14 and 21 I translated into English verse
the Divina Commedia of Dante, the second part of Goethe's Faust,
the Hermann and Dorothea, Lessing's Nathan der Weise, Calderon's
Magico Prodigioso, and countless short poems by Goethe, Schiller,
Heine, and other German poets, and many Spanish, Italian and Por-
tuguese lyrics, besides unnumbered pieces by French poets of the
fifteenth, sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. The translations
from Heine and Goethe contained in Vol. II of the Collected Poems
are survivals from this period . . . but the majority of those
above mentioned were subsequently destroyed as inadequate.
Lost Translations (5)

Toynbee adds optimistically: 'presumably the Canzoniere was included' - but the entire story must be taken with more than the proverbial grain of salt. Wright was avowedly out to create a Payne legend, and in view of the history of the manuscript the Autobiography and the Life cannot be regarded as independent evidence. Payne's precocity was remarkable, and he had linguistic and poetic gifts of a high order, but the claim made would involve turning out some twenty-five lines daily, Sundays included, for five years, without any allowance for the 'countless short poems' and 'unnumbered pieces' from the French. That Payne could have made a good translation of the Divine Comedy cannot be doubted; but since none exists we must leave it at that.

Hugh Bent

This author's Inferno presents a problem of another kind. Toynbee lists it in Dante Studies, 1921, p. 225, under date 1862, as a version in terza rima 'printed but not published'. Judging from his footnote his sole authority is a letter by J. Bouchier in Notes and Queries, 5th ser., Vol. viii, p. 366 (10th November 1877). There had been some interchange of information in this magazine regarding English versions of Dante, and on the date in question Jonathon Bouchier, a frequent contributor to its pages on matters concerning Dante, sent a list of twenty-five existing translations of the Divine Comedy or parts thereof; it was not complete and contained some errors, as other correspondents promptly pointed out. The list contains the entry: 'Hugh Bent (a nom de plume), Inferno, printed, not published, 1862', with an asterisk against it to denote that the translation was in the terza rima of the original. No subsequent writer seems to have reverted to Hugh Bent, although there was correspondence
about other translations mentioned, but there is no reason to doubt that
the work existed, for in 1856 an English version of Tasso's *Jerusalem
Delivered* had appeared in two volumes, published by Bell and Daldy, with
Hugh Bent's name on the title page as translator. I have not been able
to find any further trace either of the *Inferno* or its author; there is
no copy in the Toynbee Collection at the Bodleian, nor does there seem,
in spite of exhaustive inquiries, to be a copy in any British library.
Neither is there any evidence of the existence of the translation beyond
the letter in *Notes and Queries*. Messrs G. Bell & Sons Ltd. have been
consulted, but they have no records now extending back to the days of
Bell and Daldy which throw any light on the matter. If Hugh Bent was
a *nom de plume* it is not known in the annals of pseudonymous literature,
and the British Museum evidently considers it a genuine name.

Sidney Allan Gunn (1876-1941)

Gunn was an American educationist who taught at various colleges
including St. John's, Maryland; he contributed articles to literary sym-
posia and periodicals, and published a book, *The Story of Literature*
(1927). He was a member of the American National Dante Committee formed
to celebrate the sexcentenary in 1921. Toynbee (*Dante Studies*, 1921,
p. 273) under date c. 1908 ascribes to him an unpublished translation
of the *Inferno* in terza rima, and later records the publication of
canto I in the *Sewanee Review* (October, 1912). In the Toynbee Collection
at the Bodleian Library there are two copies of a reprint of this article
in pamphlet form, bound together, bearing the inscription 'Paget Toynbee
from the translator'. It is evident therefore that Toynbee had been in
communication with Gunn, although he records neither his middle name nor
the date of his birth. The title page of the pamphlet reads:


This is followed by an Introduction, dated from St. John's College, Maryland, which states that Gunn's version aims to translate Dante as literally as possible in language that is free enough from inversions and distortions to be readable and intelligible without painful study.

He mentions earlier translations adding that 'of them all only Dean Plumptre is recognised as having made any sort of contribution to Dante literature'. His own effort, to judge from the specimen, shows little improvement on his predecessors. Nothing can be discovered regarding the fate of the remainder of the translation, but it seems unlikely that it was more than 'another of the same'. The beginning and end of the first canto are quoted below.

When at the middle point upon life's way
I found myself within a forest drear,
For I was from the rightful path astray -
Ah, it to picture is a task severe,
That savage wood both rough and cruel sore,
Which in the thought awakes again my fear!
So bitter is it death is little more;
But of the good which there I found to treat,
I shall what else I saw therein tell o'er.

'For that great Emperor who rules on high,
Because I did his righteous laws disdain,
Permits not me his city to draw nigh.
His rule is everywhere, but there his reign,
There is his city and his lofty seat:
O happy he elected it to gain!'
And I to him: 'Poet, I thee entreat
By that true God who was unknown to thee,
That this and greater ill I may not meet,
Do thou, as thou hast promised to, lead me
So I may look Saint Peter's gate upon,
And those thou say'st endure such agony.'
Then he set out, and I behind kept on.
Lost Translations (8)

Miscellaneous

Three translations by writers part of whose work has survived, listed by Toynbee as having existed in manuscript, are now apparently lost. These are a complete Divine Comedy in blank verse by Charles Gordon Wright (1908), Purgatorio and Paradiso in blank terzine by Edward Joshua Edwardes (c. 1915), and Purgatorio in amphiambics by Henry John Hooper (1916). Reference to these is made in the respective articles dealing with these translators.
P. Hawke

A prose translation of Inferno I-XVII, made c. 1840 by P. Hawke, is recorded by Toynbee in Dante Studies, 1921, p. 206, with the following note:

The translation has not been printed, the MS. is preserved in the Bibliothèque d'Angers. (See L. Auvray, Manuscrits de Dante des Bibliothèques de France, p. 139.) Each canto is accompanied by copies (in pencil) of the designs drawn by Flaxman. Hawke was professor of drawing at Angers from c. 1830 to 1848.

I have no further information regarding this translation, nor have I been able to examine it.

John Abraham Heraud (1799-1887)

Heraud was a Londoner whose long life was spent in literary pursuits, as poet, dramatist, journalist and editor. About 1840 he made a translation of the Inferno in terza rima which was never published. The manuscript was acquired by Paget Toynbee who later (1915) presented it to the British Museum where it is now Addit. MS. No. 39169. It is a fair copy in a beautifully clear hand with only a few erasures. As a translation, however, it is a pedestrian effort on much the same level as the printed versions which soon followed it; vocabulary and phraseology are not so well handled as in the contemporary renderings of Merivale. Inf. XXVI. 91-142, reproduced in Appendix I, is a fair sample of Heraud's style.

Anonymous

In the Bodleian Library (MS. Toynbee d.16) is a very untidy manuscript translation of selections from the Divine Comedy in terza rima comprising the following passages:
Translations in Manuscript (2)

Inf. I.1-100; II complete; III.1-99; VII.1-39, 55-100; VIII.1-64; XII.1-25; XX.1-26; XXIV.1-36; XXXIII complete; XXXIV.1-90.
Purg. I.1-51; II.1-79; III.1-54.
Par. II.1-102; III.1-18; X.1-15; XI.1-10; XV.1-65.

In addition the manuscript contains some fragments of a rhymed translation of the Walpurgis Night Scene from Goethe's Faust, Part I, and two pages of trigonometrical equations. It bears a note by Edward Moore:

These fragments sent to me by Rev. M. Lamert, June 1905.
The translation is very uneven, some very happy turns but sometimes very commonplace, E.M.

followed by a note in Toynbee's writing: 'This came to me from Dr Moore. Sept. 1918.' The manuscript is very difficult to read, full of erasures and alterations, with alternatives written in between the lines, and sometimes as many as three uncancelled versions to choose from. The commonplace portions are much easier to find than the 'happy turns'. Few punctuation marks are inserted; the beginning of Par. II is given below exactly as written. Toynbee tentatively dated this manuscript as c. 1875.

Ye summer sailors in your dainty boat
Who venture charmed o'er the deep to roam
After my skiff that sings the while she float
Be wise, and seek once more again your home
Nor seek the pathless seas, lest if ye fail
To catch my strain ye drift into your doom
I make for deeps where mortal ne'er did sail
Apollo guides my way The Nine his choir
Points to the North, Minerva sends the gale

William Charteris

Another of Toynbee's gifts to the British Museum is a translation of the Divine Comedy bound in two volumes (Addit. MS. Nos. 39170-1). It is described on the title page as 'Divina Commedia of Dante, translated into English verse by the Rev. Wm. Charteris', and the last folio bears the date '20 Sept. 1876'. A note by Toynbee on the manuscript states that Charteris was a Church of Scotland missionary at Smyrna in 1880, and may have been
Translations in Manuscript (3)

At the Church of Scotland Mission in Alexandria (founded 1858). The translation is in rhymed decasyllables, the rhyme pattern being for the most part irregular, with occasional passages in couplets (e.g. Par. III.70-87 reproduced in Appendix I, which has 21 lines against Dante's 18) and even in Spenserian stanzas. In some parts Charteris seems to have had the same system as was used later by Sydney Fowler Wright of using the rhyme as a loose linkage to unite the narrative; for instance the rhymes of Inf. XXVI.91 ff run:

\[ a b b a c d e f e g f h f j k k j g l \]

This translation does not seem to have any great value; sometimes it is a mere paraphrase, and it seldom rises above a pedestrian level. It will be noted that Charteris has produced one of the most infelicitous renderings on record of Par. III.85, where 'E 'n la sua volontade è nostra pace' is translated 'To do his will, us all this peace has given'. No doubt the work was undertaken to occupy leisure time on the mission station, and it certainly represents considerable industry.

James MacGregor (1832-1910)

Toynbee records both in Dante Studies (1921) and in Britain's Tribute to Dante of the same year, under date 1880, a prose translation of the Paradiso by James MacGregor, with a note to the effect that it is unpublished, being written in the margins of a printed copy of the Commedia, formerly in his possession, now in the Bodleian. The results of an examination of this manuscript and its collation with the biography of its writer are given below.

James MacGregor was named after his father, who was a farmer at Brownhill, near Scone, Perthshire; his mother was Margaret MacDougall. The elder MacGregor had in his youth been obliged to renounce a ministerial
career owing to his father's early death; he was anxious that his son should enter the Church of Scotland, and the boy himself seems to have felt a sense of vocation. Young James went from the Private Classical Academy at Perth to the University of St. Andrews at the age of fifteen and there, among other things, he preached a Gaelic sermon in the Town Church. He was licensed in 1855 and held in turn charges at the High Church of Paisley, Monimail in Fife, the Tron Kirk in Glasgow, the Tron Kirk in Edinburgh, finally going to St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, in 1873, where he spent the rest of his active ministry. Soon after his induction there he suffered a sad blow in the death of his first wife, Helen Robertson, whose enforced residence in the south of England owing to lung disease had separated him from her and his daughter for some years. He sought comfort in work, or rather in overwork, and the result was a complete breakdown which necessitated a long absence, first in Malaga, then in Spain and Russia. On his return to Scotland, still only convalescent, he spent a few weeks with his friend the Duke of Montrose on the latter's yacht, the Columba, in a cruise to Tyree, Mull and other places on the west coast of Scotland. It was during this cruise in August 1879 that the translation of Dante was begun, and its progress can be partly traced by notes and comments written at the end of some cantos.

At this point the 'manuscript' may be described. It is not among the Manuscripts in the Bodleian, but is Toynbee 984 among the printed books. It is an edition of La Divina Commedia, published by C. S. Arnold, London, in 1827, measuring only $5\frac{1}{2}$ by $3\frac{1}{2}$ in., printed in small type and with fairly narrow margins. Into these margins, top, bottom and both sides, is crammed the translation, partly in ink, partly in pencil, in a fine clear hand, but so small that a magnifying glass is often needed to decipher it; and not only the translation, but sometimes notes and parentheses as well. It is
strange that Toynbee records it as a translation of Paradiso only, for almost a third of Purgatorio, from the beginning to line 78 of canto X, is rendered in the same fashion. There are also marginal renderings of several passages in the Inferno and later parts of the Purgatorio, as well as many annotations and comments. A cutting preserved with the book shows that it was advertised in a bookseller's catalogue as 'Dr MacGregor's personal copy' and bought by Toynbee.

It seems doubtful if this translation should really be classed as such. MacGregor was a man of high intellectual gifts, with a natural talent for languages; he might well have made his mark in literature, had he not preferred to devote himself to things he thought more important. The notes in the book show that he first used it in 1877; that the translation itself was done in the ten months from August 1879 to June 1880; that he began to read the Inferno with his second wife, Helen Murray, during their honeymoon at Ilfracombe in 1892, continuing for a short time after their return, but ceasing, so far as the notes go, at canto III before the end of the year; and that he occasionally turned to it at other times - there is one note 'S.S. Sardinian 17/6/81', i.e. on a voyage to Canada when he accompanied the Governor-General as chaplain - one as early as 1876, and one as late as 1896. There is not, however, a single reference to Dante in Lady Frances Balfour's Life and Letters of James MacGregor (1912), although numerous letters of the period concerned are reproduced. It therefore seems likely that for MacGregor the Divine Comedy was a well-loved book for private reading, that his translation was made purely for his own benefit and to clarify his understanding of Dante, and that he would have been very much surprised to find himself included in a bibliography of Dante translators.
From the notes it is apparent that he began to translate at the seventh canto of Paradiso about a fortnight before he left Edinburgh to join the Columba, and had reached the end of canto XXVI by the time he got home at the end of September. He then continued the work at intervals, writing at the end of Par. XXXIII:

14.8.77. Incessant rain'. There are some notes relating to deaths and funerals. Other notes show that he had made use of the English translation by I. C. Wright and the French one by Lamennais. Some of his notes are very curious, e.g. on Inf. XXVI.141, 'com altrui piaque' he comments, 'answering the other, i.e. poop'. A specimen from Par. III is given in Appendix I; an illegible word or words in the copy is indicated by question marks. The following is his version of Purg. III.118-35:

After that my person was broken by two mortal thrusts I rendered myself weeping up to Him who freely pardons - willingly - Horrible were my sins, but the Infinite Goodness has an arm so great that it receives whatever turns back to it. If the shepherd of Cosenza who was sent by Clement to the hunt of me - chase - had then read this page - text - in God - God's book - the bones of my body had been still at the bridge end nigh to Benevento under the guard of the great mound of stones. Now the rain bathes them and the wind moves them outside my Kingdom near to the Verde whither he transported them with lights extinguished. By their malediction Eternal Love is not so lost that it cannot return while hope retains the smallest flower of green.

Eugene Jacob Lee-Hamilton

The manuscript of this writer's Purgatorio, Toynbee d.15 in the Bodleian Library, is dealt with in the article on his Inferno.
Edward Henry Pember (1833-1911)

Pember may suitably be considered here, since of the twelve cantos which he translated six are in manuscript. He was a Harrow and Christ Church man, who gained a first in Greats, then proceeded to Lincoln's Inn and in due course took silk. He made a high reputation at the bar; the high lights of his career were the Manchester Ship Canal case in the 1880s and his appearance as counsel for Cecil Rhodes before the Parliamentary Commission which investigated the Jameson Raid in 1897. Literature was his recreation, but he shrank from publication. His poems were privately printed in a series of beautifully produced volumes, each limited to 250 copies and restricted to his friends. Blank verse translations of six cantos from the Divine Comedy were included in these books: Par. XV in Adrastus of Phrygia (1897), Purg. VIII in The Death-Song of Thamyris (1899), Inf. I-IV in The Finding of Pheidippides (1901). Toynbee (Dante Studies, 1921) records an unpublished translation of Purg. XXVIII-XXXIII under date 1903, but makes no remark as to the existence of the manuscript. Evidently he later procured a copy of it, for MS. Toynbee e.3 in the Bodleian comprises these cantos, with a note to say that they were copied from the original manuscript in the possession of F. W. Pember, Warden of All Souls, in March-April 1917. The versions have pleasing qualities; there is no attempt to preserve the ternary structure, and the cantos contain slightly fewer lines than Dante's. Three short extracts are given below.

In sooth upon the brink I found myself
Above that dolorous and abyssmal vale
Which gathers into one tumultuous tone
The utterance of innumerable woes.

(Inf. IV.749)

E'en thus within a cloud of flowers that rose
From hands Angelic, and fell back again
Above her and around, a Lady, wreathed
With olive sprays surmounting a white veil,
Translations in Manuscript (8)

Appeared to me; her vesture had the hue
Of living flames, and over it she wore
A mantle green; my soul that for so long
Had not been crushed beneath the tremulous awe
Her presence ever wrought, without more aid
Of eyesight, by some influence occult
Felt the vast power of that mine ancient love.
Soon as this vision and its force sublime
Smote in my soul as through and through of old
It smote me in my boyhood, as a child
Runs to its mother in distress or fear,
I turned to say to Virgil: 'Not one drop
Of blood remaineth in me, but doth shake.
I know once more the signs of the old flame.'
But Virgil my beloved Sire of Song,
Virgil, to whom for my salvation's sake,
I did commit myself, had passed away,
And left us shorn of him. (Purg. XX.28-51)

Impulse benign, whereinto melts the love
That righteousness inspireth, e'en as sinks
Into malignant will untoward desire,
Silence imposed on that sweet minstrelsy,
And hushed to stillness all those saintly chords
Which Heaven's right hand now slackens, now restrains.
(Par. XV.1–6)

Work in Progress

Of the living writers who, up to the present, have published only
part of the Divine Comedy in English, several have either completed, or
are in the act of completing, the remainder. These are Sydney Fowler
Wright, Geoffrey Langdale Bickersteth, Dorothy Leigh Sayers and Thomas
Goddard Bergin. Details regarding these are given in the relevant
articles. Three of these translators have very willingly made their
manuscripts available to me, so that quotations are included in the
articles and in Appendix I. Thomas Weston Ramsey, who died in 1952
before his Paradiso was published, left a manuscript of the Purgatorio,
but I have not been able to inspect it, and it is still uncertain whether
it is likely to be published.
INCOMPLETE TRANSLATIONS

William Hayley (1745-1820)

Poor Hayley has had the misfortune to be immortalised in one or two jibes which have lived on long after his poetry was completely forgotten. Southey, in an attempt to dissuade Coleridge from turning his attention to contemporary criticism on a large scale, mentioned Hayley as one of those who would suffer unfairly, for, he said, 'there is nothing bad about the man except his poetry'. Hayley figures likewise in English Bards and Scottish Reviewers where Byron said of him:

His style in youth or age is still the same,
For ever feeble and for ever tame.

A most unfavourable portrait of Hayley is given in John Romney's Memoirs of the Life and Works of George Romney, but the artist's son had personal reasons for this exhibition of what is now realised to be largely spite. Swinburne too was unjust in his William Blake, for all the evidence goes to show that Hayley, whose kindness was well known, did his best for the unfortunate poet. Saintsbury, in the Cambridge History of English Literature, quoting Southey's phrase, and admitting that Hayley had good qualities, adds:

Unfortunately, on the present occasion, nothing about the man concerns us except his poetry; and the badness, or, at least, the nullity, of that it is impossible to exaggerate.

There are many pleasant facts to record about Hayley. He had, for instance, the good sense to decline Pitt's offer of the laureateship on Warton's death in 1790; one feels that he could hardly have done worse than Henry James Pye to whom the appointment was eventually given. He showed friendship to Cowper, and he encouraged the young Cary; for he
Incomplete Translations (2)

was an intimate of Miss Seward, who showed him her protégé's verses, on
which he gave a favourable verdict. The two poets continued on excellent
terms, and a year before his death, acknowledging a gift of the second
edition of Cary's Vision, Hayley wrote to his younger friend in generous
terms, telling him that only the ill health which would not permit him to
'dabble again in Rhimes' prevented him from a more poetical tribute to
'your Felicity in having converted the old Italian bard in to an English
Classick - your Book is a glorious acquisition to the Literature of our
Country'. After Hayley's death, in 1824, Cary contributed a life of the
former to the London Magazine, in which he wrote:

In one respect he is deserving of most honourable notice. During
the course of a long literary life, I doubt whether he was ever
provoked to use a single word of asperity or sarcasm towards any
of his contemporaries.

Although a bad scholar Hayley was a good scholar in his old-fashioned
way, and widely read in European literature. He has, moreover, the dis-
tinction of being the first writer to publish a complete canto of the
Divine Comedy in English, although he was only a month or two ahead of
Rogers. In his Essay on Epic Poetry (1782) he included a rendering of
the first three cantos of the Inferno in terza rima. He mentions that he
made this version some years earlier, and that he had

since been solicited to execute an entire translation of Dante;
but the extreme inequality of this Poet would render such a work
a very laborious undertaking; and it appears very doubtful how
far such a version would interest our country.

His effort aroused little interest when published, and no more was heard
of the project. Toynbee remarks that his translation is 'by no means
without merit', and one or two specimens are given below to confirm that
verdict. It will be noted, however, that there are a number of mistrans-
lations. Hayley was partly attracted, partly repelled by Dante, as is
Incomplete Translations (3)

indicated by his remarks quoted above, and by his couplet:

The patient Reader, to thy merits just,
With transport glows, and shudders with disgust.

Elsewhere he refers to 'the terrific gloom of Dante's song', and in The
Triumphs of Temper there are several imitations of Dante all in rather
horrid vein. In the Essay on Epic Poetry he remarks:

Though Dante is described as much inclined to melancholy, and his
genius particularly delighted in the gloomy and sublime, yet in
his early period of life he seems to have possessed all the lighter
graces of sprightly composition.

He then quotes the sonnet beginning 'Guido, vorrei . . .' and follows it
with an English paraphrase that still bears repetition, and is reproduced
below with other extracts. It is interesting to note that justice has
recently been done to Hayley in a full-length biography, Blake's Hayley,

Hayley's version of Inf. II.1-9 runs:

The day was sinking, and the dusky air
On all the animals of earth bestow'd
Rest from their labours. I alone prepare
To meet new toil, both from my dreary road,
And pious wish to paint in worthy phrase
The Unerring Mind, and his divine abode.
O Sacred Muses! now my genius raise!
O Memory, who writest what I saw,
From hence shall spring thy ever-during praise!

Lines 37-42 read:

Now as a man who, shudd'ring on the brink
Of some great venture, sudden shifts his mind,
And feels his spirit from the peril shrink;
So, in this scene of doubt and darkness join'd,
Wavering I wasted thought in wild affright,
And the first ardour of my soul resign'd.

The closing lines of the canto are decidedly in Hayley's more stilted style:

As tender flowers, reviv'd by solar heat,
That thro' the chilling night have sunk deprest
Rise and unfold, the welcome ray toOOSE;
So rose my spirit, of new life possess'd;
And, my warm heart on high achievements bent,
I thus my animating guide address:
Gracious that Spirit who thy succour sent!
And friendly thou, who freely hast display'd
Thy zeal to execute her kind intent!
Thy soothing words have to my soul convey'd
Such keen desire to those bright realms to soar,
I scorn the terror that my step delay'd.
Now lead! - thy pleasure I dispute no more.
My lord, my master thou; and thou my guard! -
I ended here; and, while he march'd before,
The gloomy road I enter'd, deep and hard.

The following is Hayley's rendering of the sonnet.

Henry! I wish that you, and Charles, and I,
By some sweet spell within a bark were plac'd,
A gallant bark with magic virtue grac'd,
Swift at our will with every wind to fly:
So that no changes of the shifting sky,
No stormy terrors of the watery waste,
Might bar our course, but heighten still our taste
Of sprightly joy, and of our social tie:
Then, that my Lucy, Lucy fair and free,
With those soft nymphs on whom your souls are bent,
The kind magician might to us convey,
To talk of love throughout the live-long day;
And that each fair might be as well content
As I in truth believe our hearts would be.

Edward N. Shannon

Not much is known of this writer, but he seems to have been well
acquainted with Italian, for his Tales, Old and New (1842) contain some
original stories in that language. In 1836 he published a collection of
poems alleged to be unacknowledged pieces by Byron, together with a trans-
lation of the first ten cantos of Dante's Inferno. The name of the author
is given on the title page as 'Odoardo Volpi', but his real name is dis-
closed in a Postscript. In the same year the ten cantos were published
as a separate volume. Shannon's Introduction to his translation runs to
33 pages, most of which are taken up with the criticism of his predeces-
sors, particularly Cary. Apart from finding fault with Cary's use of
blank verse, he devoted 15 pages to enumerating the mistranslations in
the first five cantos, which he does in a carping fashion and impudent style, nor is he always right. His comments on Cary's version of Inf. I.22-4 is an adequate sample. Cary wrote

And as a man, with difficult short breath,  
Forespent with toiling, 'scaped from sea to shore,  
Turns to the perilous wide waste, and stands  
At gaze . . .

Shannon says:

Did Mr Cary wish us to think that the poor man was asthmatic before he got into the sea? If not, he should have collocated his words very differently. There is not in the original a word about difficult or short, nor does it describe the man as forespent with toiling; nor say that he gazed at any wild waste.

Elsewhere he remarks that he

only read Mr Cary's version of each canto after I had finished my own of the same. Thus I have found that several of the verses were nearly identical, and this only proves that Mr Cary has been occasionally as correct as he should always have been.

After reading the Introduction one would imagine that Shannon's own version must be a model of accuracy; but like so many critics of other men's work, he serves only to exemplify the faults which he chides.

Shannon claims great credit for having translated Dante into terza rima alleging that he has done so line for line and word for word. As Tomlinson pointed out in his preface, an examination of the first few lines of the translation is sufficient to explode all Shannon's claims; Inf. I.1-9 quoted below substantiates this:

Midway upon the journey of our life,  
I found myself within a darksome wood,  
For the true way was lost, mid perils, rife.  
And hard it were to tell how drear it stood,  
That savage mighty wild of shade imbrowned  
Which still renews the fear that chilled my blood;  
So bitter is, death little more can wound.  
But now, to treat of good which me befell,  
I'll speak of other things that there I found.
Here we see all the familiar faults of nineteenth-century terza rima: padding, distortion, forced rhyme; and it is the same throughout. It will be sufficient to add a few lines from Francesca's speech (Inf. V.97-107):

The realm where I was born, a mortal weak,
Lies on the sea shore, where the Po descends,
With all his followers, for peace to seek.
Love, that in gentle heart full quickly wends,
Enthralled this dear one to that person fair,
Bereft from me: and still the mode offends.
Love, that can never the beloved spare
From loving, won me so this wight to gain
That, as thou seest, he forsakes me ne'er.
Love led us to one death. The place with Cain
Awaiteth him who quenched our life.

The ten cantos are quite worthless, and it is as well that Shannon did not persevere.

Charles Hindley

This writer is only mentioned because in 1842 he published his
Plain and Direct Translation of the Inferno of Dante, extending only to
canto IV line 57, which is the first sustained attempt at prose translation
of the Divine Comedy in English. His preface leads us to expect a literal
version such as Carlyle gave seven years later, but Hindley is neither
accurate nor literal, and his attempt has nothing to commend it save the
originality of the idea, probably suggested by the existence of prose
renderings in other languages. Canto I begins:

In the midway of this our mortal life I found myself in a dark and
gloomy forest, that from the direct path was turned aside.
Alas! how difficult would it be to describe the savage wildness of
that dense and intricate wood, the remembrance of which fills me
with so much horror,
That death itself could be little more painful; but to speak of
the good I derived from it, I will relate what else there I
encountered.

Hindley is very wordy at times, e.g. I.49-54:
Besides these, a she-wolf that from its meagreness seemed as if all desires were centred in itself, and that many had suffered grievously therefrom.

This last caused me so much disquiet from the dread its look inspired, that in despair I relinquished all expectation of gaining the eminence.

Hindley's work is a mere curiosity and we have lost nothing by its being abandoned.

J. C. Peabody

Peabody was a clergyman at Newburyport, Massachusetts, and a zealous Protestant, who published at Boston in 1857 a slim volume entitled Dante's Hell, containing cantos I to X only, and described as 'A Literal Metrical Translation'. Canto I is actually translated twice, in terza rima, and then, like the remaining cantos, in blank terzine. Peabody explains in his preface that 'it was my intention to preserve the terza rima of the Italian, which had never been attempted by any translator, and which had often been pronounced impossible'. He had, however, only finished two cantos when Cayley's translation appeared, and 'feeling that I could not improve upon that if I retained the terzine, but that I could keep much closer to the original in another metre, I changed my design and adopted the present form.' The translation as actually carried out is, he says, 'a line-for-line literal translation' and 'on a different plan from all other translations'. Although he disclaims all intention of disputing the palm as a poet or scholar with the least of those who have walked with Dante before me, yet by such labor and plodding as their genius would not allow them to descend to, have I made a more literal, and perhaps, therefore, a better translation than they all. . . . The very looseness of other translators gives them room to soar to the utmost bounds of our language, while I am cramped and confined by my fidelity to the original.

Of Peabody's canto I in terza rima it will be sufficient to quote one terzina (52-4):
Incomplete Translations (8)

So did she then my heaviness renew,
With all the terrors flashing from her eye,
I lost the summit's hope, and bade it an adieu.

As for the blank verse translation, it is an almost word-for-word adaptation of John Aitken Carlyle's prose version, published some eight years earlier. There can be no doubt that Peabody plagiarised Carlyle; the similarities go far beyond the possibilities of coincidence. Throughout the ten cantos many lines are identical with the corresponding words in Carlyle; indeed wherever the latter's prose would go approximately into iambic pentameter it has been used. Thus (III.76-8) where Carlyle has:

And he: 'The things shall be told thee, when we stay our steps upon the joyless strand of Acheron.'

Peabody renders:

And he - 'The things shall all be told to thee whenever that our footsteps shall be stayed upon the joyless strand of Acheron.'

The opening of Peabody's canto III:

Through me the way into the doleful city;
Through me the way into th' eternal pain;
Through me the way among the people lost;

differs from Carlyle only by the omission of 'is' in the first line. The following longer extracts from both versions will serve as a full illustration of Peabody's method (VI.40-76).

'O thou who through this hell art led along,'
He said, 'now rec'ognise me if thou mayst;
For thou wast made before I was unmade.'
And I to him: 'The anguish which thou hast Perhaps withdraws thee from my mem'ry now;
So that it seems not I had seen thee ever.
But tell me who thou art, that in such place
Of woe art put, and in such punishment;
That none, though greater, would so shocking be.'
And he to me: - 'Thy city, which is full
Of envy, so that now the sack o'erflows,
Myself contained up in the world serene.
You citizens called me Ciacco, there;
And for the baneful crime of gluttony,
As thou dost see, I languish in the rain.
And I, unhappy soul, am not alone;
For all of these are in like punishment
For the like crime'; and more he uttered not.
I answered him: 'Ciacco, thy distress
So weighs upon me that it bids me weep;
But tell me if thou canst, to what shall come
The citizens of that divided city;
If there be any just; The reason tell
Wherefore such discord has assailed us now.'
And he to me: 'After a long dispute,
They'll come to blood, and then the savage party
The other shall expel with much offence.
Then afterwards this one itself must fall
Within three suns; the other one prevailing
Thro' force of that man who keeps tacking now.
For a long time 'twill bear a lofty front,
Keeping the other under burdens grave;
Whereat it well may weep and be ashamed.
Two men are just, but are not harkened to.
Envy and avarice and pride - they are
The three sparks which have set all hearts on fire.'
Here ended here the lamentable sound.

'O thou, who through this Hell art led,' he said to me; 'recognise me if thou mayest; thou wast made before I was unmade.' And I to him: 'The anguish which thou hast, perhaps withdraws thee from my memory, so that it seems not as if I ever saw thee. But tell me who art thou, that art put in such a doleful place, and in such punishment; that, though other may be greater, none is so displeasing.' And he to me: 'Thy city, which is so full of envy that the sack already overflows, contained me in the clear life. You, citizens, called me Ciacco; for the beneficent crime of gluttony, as thou seest, I languish in the rain. And I, wretched spirit, am not alone; since all these for like crime are in like punishment': and more he said not. I answered him: 'Ciacco, thy sore distress weighs upon me so, that it bids me weep. But tell me, if thou canst, what the citizens of the divided city shall come to; if any one in it be just. And tell me the reason why such discord has assailed it.' And he to me: 'After long contention, they shall come to blood, and the savage party shall expel the other with much offence. Then it behoves this to fall within three suns, and the other to prevail through the force of one who now keeps tacking. It shall carry its front high for a long time, keeping the other under heavy burdens, however it may weep thereat and be ashamed. Two are just; but are not listened to there. Pride, Envy, and Avarice are the three sparks which have set the hearts of all on fire.' Here he ended the lamentable sound.

In one or two cases Peabody uses the alternative translation given in Carlyle’s notes, e.g. 'My judgment of her take into thy mouth' (VII.72). All the slight inaccuracies in Carlyle are reproduced, e.g. in the conver-
Incomplete Translations (10)

sation with Cavalcante, Carlyle inadvertently rendered 'ebbe a disdegno' (X.63) 'held in disdain', but put for 'egli ebbe?' in line 68 'He had?' instead of echoing the preceding word; and Peabody does exactly the same. There are also quite a few of the latter's footnotes which correspond closely to Carlyle's.

Charles Eliot Norton, reviewing Peabody's translation in the Atlantic Monthly was very severe, calling it 'nothing more than a poor versification of Carlyle', and describing its author as presumptuous and ignorant and 'entirely unfamiliar with the Italian language'. There are certainly some bad mistakes in the book, but some may be due to carelessness rather than ignorance. The translator does not seem to have been well served by his printer. The punctuation is erratic, quotation marks are often misplaced, and there are numerous misspellings; we read for instance of the battle of Montapesti. In the argument to canto I 'principio e cagion di tutta gioia' (line 78) is mistranslated and misapplied as 'the cause and principle of every joy', while in the text itself it appears as 'the principal and cause of every joy'. In a note to VIII.127 the Italian of III.9 is misquoted 'Lasciatte ogni speranzì, voi ch' entrate' and referred to as III.10. In spite of this there is evidence that Peabody did know something about Italian, or at least had some source other than Carlyle; very occasionally he is more literal than the latter, e.g. in the opening lines of the extract in Appendix I (IX.64 ff) where Carlyle short-circuits Dante's idiom:

And now there came, upon the turbid wave, a crash of fearful sound, at which the shores both trembled: a sound as of a wind . . .

i.e. Peabody did not get either 'with terror filled' = 'pian di spavento' or 'It seemed not otherwise' = 'Non altrimenti fatto' from Carlyle. On the whole, however, his pillaging is so obvious as to justify Norton's wrath.
The adaptation is not even competently done, for Peabody has many awkwardnesses and some short, long and lame lines; for instance neither 'The wood I say of dense crowded souls' (IV.66) nor 'More I tell thee not; more I answer not' (VI.90) can pass muster as blank verse. Some of these oddities may be due to misprints; there is obviously a muddle at VII.106-8 where a line must have been dropped out.

In his preface Peabody claims Dante as 'the opening wedge of the reformation', and his notes bear witness to his religious bias. Against IV.41, 'Per tai difetti, e non per altro rio, / Semo perduti', he writes:

Dante says this in bitter irony. He ill brooks the narrow bigotry of the Church which would condemn the great souls of antiquity for the accident of not being born in her bosom.

The last sentence of Peabody's preface runs: 'The whole of the Divine Comedy, of which these ten cantos are a specimen, will appear in due time.' Whether he was discouraged by the reception of his specimen or not, he did not implement this promise even in part. We can hardly regret his omission, but it would have been interesting to read his notes on Par. XXXII.

Ernest Ridsdale Ellaby (1834-96)

Ellaby was the fifth son of the Rev. Francis Ellaby of St. Pancras; he was educated at Wadham College, Oxford, where he received a fellowship in 1857; four years later he became a student at Lincoln's Inn, and was called to the bar in 1864. Foster describes him as an equity draftsman and conveyancer. In 1871 he published a small book entitled The Inferno of Dante Alighieri containing an English version of cantos I to X; a second edition was issued in 1874. The first three cantos are in terza rima; the remaining seven in blank terzine but with frequent though not regularly placed rhyme. Of this system the author says in his brief preface:
The triplets are connected by means either of a final rhyme or half-rhyme or of some internal harmony, to combine something of the freedom of Miltonic verse with the two most essential characteristics of the Italian metre, viz. the separation of the triplets and their connection by a common sound.

Ellaby concludes by acknowledging help received from the translations of Cary, Wright, Pollock, Longfellow and Ratisbone. Considerable revisions took place in the second edition, from which the quotations below are taken.

Neither Ellaby's terzā rima nor his semi-rhymed blank terzine have much to recommend them. The former part is much on the same level as other contemporary efforts, with padding, distortion and forced rhymes, together with some striving after effect. The inscription on the gate of Hell (III.1-9) runs:

Thro' me you go to Acheron's doleful river,
Thro' me you go to realms of endless pain,
Thro' me you go among the lost for ever.
Eternal Justice did my being ordain:
Power, Wisdom, Love, supreme primeval Trine,
Ere yet the perishable world began,
The lofty fabric rear'd with art divine.
With things eternal I endure eternally.
O ye who enter, every hope resign.

A little further on (lines 22-30) we have:

Sighings, and moans, and piercing shrieks were here
Resounding thro' the starless air beneath,
That I upon the threshold wept to hear.
Tongues diverse, speeches foul, of human breath,
Each utterance of pain and wrath that telleth,
Hoarse notes and shrill, and smiting hands therewith
A tumult made that ever eddying welleth
Up thro' that realm in changeless gloom enshrouded,
Like sand which the Scirocco's blast impelleth.

In the remaining seven cantos Ellaby continues to render terzina by terzina, so that he gives himself little chance to use the freedom of Miltonic verse to which he refers. Rhyme and assonance are used frequently though not consistently, and the general effect can be gathered from the following lines (V.28 ff):
I found me in a place void of all light,
That moaneth as the troubled sea moaneth,
When roused in conflict with the tempest's might.
The infernal hurricane, that never resteth,
Gathers the spirits in its swift career,
And turns about and drives them where it listeth.
When yawns the precipice before their eyes,
Shrieks, moans, and lamentations rend the air,
And blasphemies against the heavenly Power.

And like as starlings, on their wings upborne,
Large flocks together in the wintry season,
So by that blast were those ill spirits borne
This way and that, now up, now downward driven:
Nor any hope their wretchedness allays
Or of repose, or of less grievous pain:
And like as cranes chanting their dolorous lays
Drift through the air in far extending train,
So came they uttering long drawn wailings drear . . .

The following is Ellaby's version of IX.64-72:

And now far echoing o'er the troubled waves
Broke the loud crash of a terrific sound
That shook both margins of the lake, and seem'd
As if occasion'd by a wind that, lash'd
Into strong fury by conflicting heat,
Heedless of all restraint the forest cleaves,
The boughs rends down, and strews them all abroad:
Wraapt in a cloud of dust it tears along;
The wild beasts and the shepherds fly dismay'd.

The extract from the Francesca apóde in Appendix I shows Ellaby's personal failings, which make his renderings neither faithful in matter or spirit. So far as his system of blank terzine with occasional rhymes is concerned, it has not commended itself to any successor. If the terzine are to be preserved and rhyme is to be used then, in order to secure an effect of the kind required, Dante's rhyming scheme must also be preserved. The alternative of irregular rhyme is incompatible with the ternary structure, and must inevitably lead to some such form as that used by Fowler Wright in which the division into terzine is entirely abandoned.
Incomplete Translations (14)

W. Cudworth

Cudworth's name does not occur in any of Toynbee's bibliographies, but he evidently found out about him later, because a copy of his translation is among the printed books in the Toynbee Collection at the Bodleian Library. The title page reads:


The book is crown octavo in size, has no preliminary matter or notes, and contains only a blank verse rendering of the first nine cantos of the Inferno. No information is available about the author; it looks as though the version were the leisure occupation of a man engaged in quite other activities. Cudworth does not keep to Dante's terzine, nor does his blank verse have any qualities to commend it; the general effect is very pedestrian. There are lame and broken lines, e.g. he finishes canto V thus:

I felt like one struck dead, and fell as does
A dead man.

The opening of canto III will sufficiently illustrate Cudworth's method and its defects.

Through me the way into the realm of woe,
Through me the way unto eternal pain,
Through me the way unto the people lost:
Justice my great Creator influenced:
Power divine made me, wisdom beyond thought,
And primal love. Before me there were no
Created things, but what eternal are,
And I forever last. Abandon hope,
All ye who enter here.

There is no indication as to whether Cudworth had hoped to continue his work. The book was obviously intended for circulation among friends, and its scarcity indicates that only a very few copies were printed.
Eleanor Prescott Hammond (1866-1933)

Miss Hammond was a Chicago scholar who wrote various books on literary subjects, including studies of Chaucer; she was also the author of a romantic comedy, *Susanna Shakespeare*. In 1919 she had a volume printed privately bearing on its title page

*Dante in English*, a terza rima translation and critique of terza rima translations, of the *Inferno* of Dante (Cantos I-VII) with notes by Eleanor Prescott Hammond. Specimen Print for the Translator. Chicago, 1919.

This book is chiefly valuable for the essay which it contains. Miss Hammond expresses her desire for a better English version of the Divine Comedy, which must, she feels, be in the terza rima of the original. She finds neither prose nor blank verse adequate, and she particularly dislikes blank verse-translation, remarking of Longfellow and Johnson:

> The dry monotone of the translations . . . gives no impression of the forte and soave of Dante's epic chant. Accuracy the reader has, freedom from the substitutions and additions to which the verse-translator is driven; but the armour of accuracy has crushed the spirit of poetry.

She admits that the existing translations in terza rima are poor, and she had, at that date, little difficulty in demonstrating the fact by examples. She contended, however, that the reason for this was not entirely the fact that English was poorer in rhymes than Italian, but that it lay in the translator's attitude to his task, 'the belief of partnership in poetic dignity which leads an insufficiently disciplined taste into a lamentable display of its own misapprehension'. This is an acute judgment, and we have already had occasion to point out the existence of such a falling in several translators. Miss Hammond wants 'fidelity to the poet's intention in choosing words rather than literal conformity to their outward shells', and on this point she again censures Longfellow's etymological equivalents. She insists that the translator must 'reproduce the amount and kind of
Incomplete Translations (16)

sense-suggestion characteristic of the original', the avoidance of abstract
and general terms where Dante is concrete and imaginative. This is followed
by a long and interesting discussion of Dante's own rhymes, and an enumer-
ation of a great many instances where Miss Hammond feels that he was 'forced
to obtain one of his three lines by a circumlocution or by an unnatural
selection of words'.

Excellent as are many of Miss Hammond's contentions and suggestions,
they were not by any means new. Translators had always been to some extent
aware of what they ought to achieve; but when they got down to the actual
task it was hard enough to get Dante's meaning twisted approximately into
the metrical scheme without the additional labour of attending to the
niceties of style and emphasis. Nor did Miss Hammond's own version of the
first seven cantos indicate that awareness of the requirements took one
very far on the way to successful translation. Her rendering of III.1-9
reads:

Through me thou comest to the land of woe;
Through me to endless sorrow is the gate;
Through me among the lost the way doth go.
Justice did my first Maker actuate;
I am the handiwork of Power Divine,
Of Supreme Wisdom, and Love the Uncreate.
Naught hath beginning older than was mine,
Unless eternal; eternal I abide;
Ye who make entrance here, all hope resign.

These lines are a stiff test, of course; but if one is to reject Cary's
rendering because it is unrhymed, one expects some completer expression
of 'the amount and kind of sense-suggestion characteristic of the original'
in the substitute. The fact seems to be that Miss Hammond, in spite of a
genuinely sound literary judgment and a true appreciation of the qualities
of Dante's poem, just did not have the degree of technical ability to put
her precepts into practice. We have reproduced in Appendix I her version

- 877 -
Incomplete Translations (17)

of the Francesca episode, which shows that she had recourse to all the undesirable expedients of her predecessors. Translation of poetry reduces itself in the end, as we have several times insisted, to a choice of evils; and the successful translator is the one who can make the right choice oftencnest. Some degree of technical skill is necessary, but there is a faculty beyond that the lack of which has often brought disaster to translators of otherwise unimpeachable knowledge and intention.

Miss Hammond did not persevere further with her experiment; Dr La Piana suggests that the publication of Anderson's translation in 1921 may have deterred her, or possibly the reactions to her effort were not sufficiently favourable to encourage her to proceed.

J. H. Whitfield

In his book Dante and Virgil (Oxford, 1949) Professor J. H. Whitfield of the University of Birmingham includes a very short discussion of English translations from the Italian and a prose rendering of the first five cantos of the Inferno. His version of the Francesca episode is reproduced in Appendix I, and the translation itself is discussed in the Conclusion to this work at the end of the section dealing with Prose Translation.
James Montgomery (1771-1854)

Montgomery is an interesting figure, especially to his compatriots, and although his output of Dante translation was small, he was one of the pioneers. He was born at Irvine in Ayrshire, the son of an Ulster Scot who was first a labourer, then a minister and later a missionary in the Moravian Brotherhood. James was likewise designed for the Moravian ministry, and to that end sent to Fulneck to be educated, but he showed no aptitude, ran away, tried several jobs, began to write poetry, and at eighteen was in London looking vainly for a publisher. At the age of twenty-five he became editor and proprietor of the *Sheffield Iris*, remaining there for over thirty years, although early in his journalistic career he twice suffered a short imprisonment in York Castle on a charge of publishing seditious libel. The preface to his *Collected Poems* (1850) and the introduction to the section of the volume entitled 'Prison Amusements' contain a spirited and convincing defence of his conduct, and what we know of him bears out the sincerity of his protest:

This was my ground - a plain determination, come wind or sun, come fire or water, to do what was right.

About 1835 he wrote lives of Dante, Ariosto and Tasso for the *Cabinet Cyclopædia* of Dionysius Lardner, to which many notable men of the period, including Scott and Southey, contributed. In this biography he included several passages from the Divine Comedy in his own blank verse renderings, and a number of other passages were added in his later volumes of verse. None of these extends to a complete canto, the two longest being the Farinata episode from Inf. X and the conversation with Adamo.
the counterfeiter in Inf. XXX. To several of the extracts he appended perceptive comments.

Saintsbury in the Cambridge History of English Literature makes a typical comment:

Montgomery is one of the poets who have no irrefragable reason for existing, but whom, as existing, it is unnecessary to visit with any very dammatory sentence.

He is indeed completely forgotten to-day except for his hymns, many of which are still in use. For this branch of verse he had a genuine talent, and they contain some lines that dwell in the memory, like

O for the living flame
From His own altar brought . . .

or the hymn beginning 'Pour out Thy spirit from on high', still sung at the ordination of nearly every Scottish minister. His metrical versions of the Psalms suffer, as all such must do, by comparison with the original, and his choice of metre was often unhappy; but among them his paraphrase of Psalm LXXXIII, which begins 'O God, Thou art my God alone', is outstanding and still retains its place in hymnaries. His translations of Dante are respectable rather than brilliant, generally accurate, and always dignified. He does not rigidly adhere to the terzine of Dante, although often his own groups of lines correspond to those of the original. In the following version of Par. XXX.61-9 he has replaced the 'fluvido di fulgore' of the original with a phrase reminiscent of the Bible, a frequent habit with him.

I saw
Light, like a river clear as crystal, flowing
Between two banks, with wondrous spring adorn'd;
While from the current issued vivid sparks,
That fell among the flowers on either hand,
Glitter'd like rubies set in gold, and then,
As if intoxicate with sweetest odours,
Replung'd themselves into the mystic flood,
Whence, as one disappear'd, another rose.

- 880 -
A long note is appended to the Farinata episode, the first and last sentences of which are:

The reader of these lines (however inferior the translation may be) cannot have failed to perceive by what natural action and speech the paternal anxiety of Cavalcanti respecting his son is indicated.

. . . Indeed it would be difficult to point out, in ancient or modern tragedy, a passage of more sublimity or pathos, in which so few words express so much, yet leave more to be imagined by any one who has 'a human heart', than the whole of this scene in the original Italian exhibits.

A few lines of the translation (X.52-78) are quoted below:

Just then, a second figure at his side
   Emerged to view; unveil'd above the chin,
And kneeling, as methought. - It look'd around
   So wistfully, as though it hoped to find
Some other with me; but, that hope dispell'd,
   Weeping it spake: - 'If through this dungeon-gloom
Grandeur of genius guide thy venturous way,
My son!' - Where is he? - and why not with thee?'
   Then I to him: - 'Not of myself I came;
He who awaits me yonder brought me hither,
   - One whom perhaps thy Guido held in scorn.'
His speech and form of penance had already
   Taught me his name; my words were therefore pointed,
Upstarting he exclaim'd, - 'How? - saidst thou held?
Lives he not, then? and doth not heaven's sweet light
Fall on his eyes?' - when I was slow to answer,
   Backward he sunk and re-appear'd no more.
Meanwhile that other most majestic form,
   Near which I stood, neither changed countenance,
Nor turn'd his neck, nor lean'd to either side:
   'And if,' quoth he, our first debate resuming,
'They have not well that lesson learn'd, the thought
Torments me more than this infernal bed. . . .'

John Herman Merivale (1779-1844)

Merivale was born at Exeter; he proceeded from St. John's College, Cambridge, without taking a degree, to Lincoln's Inn, was called to the bar in 1804, made a Chancery Commissioner in 1824, and a Commissioner in Bankruptcy in 1831. He was a good scholar and had some ability in verse-writing; his first venture was a volume of translations from the Greek
Anthology (1806), in collaboration with Robert Bland, which brought the authors a tribute from Byron in English Bards and Scottish Reviewers:

And you, associate bards! who snatch'd to light
Those gems too long withheld from modern sight;
Whose mingling taste combined to call the wreath
From Attic flowers Aonian odours breathe,
And all their renovated fragrance flung
To grace the beauties of your native tongue;
Now let those minds, that nobly could transfuse
The glorious spirit of the Grecian muse,
Though soft the echo, scorn a borrow'd tone:
Resign Achaia's lyre, and strike your own.

Both writers obeyed the advice in due course; and Merivale's Orlando in Roncesvallés (1814), in ottava rima, secured Byron's commendation:

You have written a very noble poem. . . . Your measure is uncommonly well chosen and wielded.

In 1838 Merivale published two volumes of Poems Original and Translated, and these were reissued, with some revision, in 1844. The translations include the following passages from the Divine Comedy in terza rima:

| Inf. | III; V.25-142; VI.34-100; VIII.31-64; X; XIII. |
| Purg. | II.67-end; III.103-end; VI.59-end; VIII.1-18, 109-end. |
| Par. | XV.97-end; XVII.13-end. |

This was the most sustained attempt to render Dante in terza rima yet made in English. In his 1838 preface Merivale remarked that he was convinced that the true character of the Divine Comedy is essentially at variance with the Miltonic style, according to which it was Mr Cary's endeavour to render it; and that, although Mr Wright has improved on the preceding translator, not only in the superior closeness of his version to the literal sense of the original, but also by his adoption of rhyme, the distinguishing vehicle of Gothic and medieval poetry; yet the division into measured stanzas is equally fatal to the design of transfusing the spirit of that original into the translation.

The Quarterly Review (October 1839, pp. 407-8) praised the translations, remarking that in the critic's opinion Merivale, so far as he had gone, excelled both Cary and Wright, especially by virtue of using the original metre. The latter part of Inf. V is quoted with the comment that
'the episode has never before had so good an English dress'. A still more flattering opinion was given in the Dublin University Magazine (April 1841, p. 429):

Could a word of encouragement from us give aid to the English public in obtaining from Mr Merivale a complete translation of Dante, we should feel we had done no light service to the literature of our country.

With characteristic Hibernian enthusiasm, however, the reviewer added a word of praise for Boyd's translation, as well as mentioning Cary and Wright favourably. The wish that Merivale would make a complete translation of the Comedy was expressed by several subsequent writers, but remained ungratified.

Looking over Merivale's fragments to-day we feel that he might well have made a complete version which would have excelled either Dayman's or Cayley's, to the extent that he maintained a better level of language than either; but on the whole we may think that it was just as well that he did not elect to spend his time on such a labour. His style and method are those of the previous century. His choice of words and expressions is conventional rather than imaginative, and although he is on the whole successful in avoiding inversion and distortion, he seldom produces a passage that bears any striking resemblance to the original, or even a line that stands out in the memory as English poetry. He was not averse to repeating Cary's 'Miltonics' on occasion; his rendering of Inf. III.9 runs:

Through me ye pass into the realm of woe;
Through me ye pass, eternal pain to prove;
Through me amidst the ruin'd race ye go:
Justice my heavenly builder first did move;
My mighty fabric Power Divine did rear,
Supremest Wisdom, and Primaeval Love.
None but eternal things created were
Before me; and, eternal, I endure.
All hope abandon, ye who enter here!
Selections and Extracts (6)

He lapses at times into mere translatesse, e.g. (Inf. III.100-9):

But those vexed ghosts, of mortal covering nude,
Change colour, and their teeth with anguish grind,
Soon as those threatening words are understood -
Blaspheming God, their parents, and their kind,
The place, the time - the hour both when the seed
Was sown, and when it burst its earthly rind.
Then all enforced, together they recede,
Bitterly wailing, to the accursed shoal
Ordain'd for all who take of God no heed.

Rhetoric suits him. The close of the invective (Purg. VI.156 ff) is good:

Now then be glad - as thou hast reason why -
Thou wealthy! thou at peace! thou grave and sage!
And, sooth to say, the facts all open lie.
Athens and Sparta, who, in the olden age
Gave laws, and were so skill'd in civil lore,
Threw but a glimmering light on wisdom's page,
Compared with thee, who makest such subtle store
Of laws, the thread that's in October spun
Will scarce hold out the half November o'er.
How oft, within the circuit of the sun,
Laws, coinage, customs, hast thou alter'd quite,
And all thy ranks dismember'd, one by one!
That, if thou wilt but think, and view aright,
Thou'llt see thyself like one who, rack'd with pain,
Tosses on bed of down the live-long night,
And, ever turning, seeks repose in vain.

The two passages from the Paradiso which Merivale selected are indicative
of his interests, and it is unlikely that he would have cared to attack
the theological parts of the poem. His rendering of Par. XV.118-26 is
typical of his frequently stilted manner:

Thrice happy! - sure sepulchral rites to share
In native soil, and none yet left to press
A lonely couch, exchanged for Gallic air.
Her cradled charge with matron watchfulness
One lull'd asleep to the selfsame strains that, troll'd
From infant lips, are wont the sire to bless -
Another at her wheel grave legends told,
To entertain her circling family,
Of Rome, or Fiesole, or Ilium old.

In his original verse Merivale frequently borrowed from Dante, and
his paraphrase of Purg. VIII.1-6 in Orlando in Roncesvalles (IV.16) is
better than the corresponding terzine of his translation:
"Twas now the hour when fond Desire renews
To those who wander o'er the pathless main,
Raising unbidden tears, the last adieu
Of tender friends whom fancy shapes again;
When the late parted pilgrim who pursues
His lonely walk o'er some unbounded plain,
If sound of distant bells fall on his ear,
Seems the sad knell of his departed joys to hear.

Merivale's version of part of the Francesca episode is reproduced in Appendix I; it would hardly earn such high praise to-day as it did when published.

It is interesting to notice that Merivale's 'associate bard', Robert Bland, teacher and clergyman, who died in 1825 in his middle forties, was also interested in Dante. In an article which appeared in the Quarterly Review (April 1814, pp. 10 ff) he included seven fragments of the Divine Comedy corresponding in all to 44 lines of the original in verse and 14 lines in prose. Toynbee duly records the details of these in Dante Studies (1921), describing the verse as terza rima; in Britain's Tribute to Dante of the same year, under date 1814 he mentions the same article by Bland without details, stating that 'many passages' are translated in terza rima, thus conveying a somewhat exaggerated idea of the performance. In Toynbee's D.E.L.C.C. part of the article and all the translations are quoted, the verse being again described as terza rima. Evidently Toynbee failed to notice that Bland's verse translations are all adaptations of Merivale; one of them (Inf. XXVI.25-31) consists of the first seven lines of a stanza from Orlando in Roncesvalles almost unaltered; another (Purg. VIII.1-6) is an altered version of Merivale's lines quoted above, in order to change the rhyme scheme and make the passage read like terza rima, although four lines are used for each of Dante's terzine:

'Twas now the hour when fond desire renews
To him who wanders o'er the pathless main,
Raising unbidden tears, the last adieu
Of tender friends, whom fancy shapes again;
When the late parted pilgrim thrills with thought
Of his loy'd home, if o'er the distant plain
Perchance, his ears the village chimes have caught,
Seeming to mourn the close of dying day.

The version of Purg. XI.91-102 and 115-7 has quite a number of lines which correspond with Merivale's later rendering, but expands the five terzine to seventeen lines. Since Orlando in Roncesvalles was published in the same year as Bland's article, it seems likely that Merivale had supplied his colleague with drafts of some of the stanzas; indeed they may have collaborated in writing these and also in some of the early versions of other passages later published by Merivale.

James Henry Leigh Hunt (1784-1859)

A complete list of Hunt's translations from Dante, amounting to almost a hundred entries, is given in Toynbee's Dante Studies (1921). The great bulk of these are the rather free prose fragments scattered through his essay on Dante in Stories from the Italian Poets (1846). The longest prose passage is the story of Ulysses which appeared much earlier, in the Indicator; it is reproduced in Appendix I. To it Hunt appended a characteristic comment:

Why poor Ulysses should find himself in hell after his immersion, and be condemned to a swathing of eternal fire, while St. Dominic, who deluged Christianity with fire and blood, is called a Cherubic Light, the Papist, not the poet, must explain. He puts all the Pagans in hell, because, however good some of them may have been, they lived before Christ, and could not worship God properly - (debitamente). But he laments their state, and represents them as suffering a mitigated punishment: they only live in a state of perpetual desire without hope (sol di tanto offesi)! A sufficing misery, it must be allowed; but compared with the horrors he fancies for heretics and others, undoubtedly a great relief. Dante, throughout his extraordinary work, gives many evidences of great natural sensibility . . . But unless the occasional hell of his own troubles, and his consciousness of the mutability of all things, helped him to
discover the brevity of individual suffering as a particular, and
the lastingness of nature's benevolence as an universal, and thus gave
his poem an intention beyond what appears upon the surface, we must
conclude, that a bigoted education, and the fierce party politics in
which he was a leader and sufferer, obscured the greatness of his
spirit.

That Hunt should have been so incapable of going below the surface, of
penetrating the 'velo sottile' is astonishing to us, but is a measure of
the extent to which his age and school were indoctrinated with 'utilitarian
philanthropy' as Cayley put it; but we have already said something on this
subject in the Introduction.

All Hunt's verse translations from the Comedy, except for a few frag-
ments, are included in his Poetical Works. The two longest pieces are the
Francesca (Inf. V.70-142) and Ugolino (Inf. XXXII.124 - XXXIII.90) episodes,
the former in terza rima, the latter in heroic couplets. An extract from
the first of these is given in Appendix I; in spite of his appreciation of
the original, Hunt repeatedly embroiders Dante, and consequently loses the
directness of the latter. The Ugolino passage is less literal, and the
metre inevitably increases the gap. The last few lines run:

That day, and next, we all continued mute.
O thou hard Earth! why openest thou not? -
Next day (it was the fourth in our sad lot)
My Gaddo stretched him at my feet, and cried,
'Dear father, won't you help me?' and he died.
And surely as thou seest me here undone,
I saw my whole four children, one by one,
Between the fifth day and the sixth, all die.
I became blind; and in my misery
Went groping for them, as I knelt and crawled
About the room; and for three days I called
Upon their names, as though they could speak too,
Till famine did what grief had failed to do.

Hunt's version of Inf. III.1-15, not published till long after his death,
does not add to his reputation, and in all probability the manuscript in
which it was found was a mere draft and should have been suppressed. Of
the other extracts originally published in *Stories from the Italian Poets*

the one that impresses most is a blank verse rendering of Par. XV.97-129,
a passage for which Hunt had genuine feeling and admiration. The following
are a few lines from it:

Florence, before she broke the good old bounds,
Whence yet are heard the chimes of eve and morn,
Abided well in modesty and peace.
No coronets had she - no chains of gold -
No gaudy sandals - no rich girdles rare -
That caught the eye more than the person did.
Fathers then feared no daughter's birth, for dread
Of wantons courting wealth; nor were their homes
Emptied with exile. Chamberers had not shown
What they could dare, to prove their scorn of shame.
Your neighbouring uplands then beheld no towers
Prouder than Rome's, only to know worse fall.

We need do no more than mention Hunt's most ambitious Dantesque piece
of writing, *The Story of Rimini*. After Dante's handling of that story, he
had better have left it alone; as it was he sentimentalised it, albeit his
poem shows a skilful handling of the couplet and contains not a few good
passages.

**Margaret Oliphant Oliphant (1828-97)**

Margaret Oliphant Wilson, who became Mrs Oliphant by marriage with her
cousin, was a native of Midlothian. She was a woman of remarkable talent
and versatility; her novels gained her a national reputation, and led to
a long association with *Blackwood's Magazine* and its publishers. At their
request she became editor of their series, 'Foreign Classics for English
Readers', for which she wrote the volumes on Dante and Cervantes and col-
laborated in the one on Molière. Mrs Oliphant's best work dealt with the
aspects of life with which she was familiar, for she was a keen observer
and could set down the results of her observation convincingly, as her
Scottish Tales and *Salem Chapel* show. Unfortunately she had a passion for
sensation, mystery and profundity, which kept intruding on and spoiling her work. In tackling Dante she was well out of her depth, and her attempted popularisation of the Divine Comedy in a book of some 200 pages merely demonstrated her inability to cope with either Dante's thought or his poetry. Edward Moore, usually one of the most courteous of reviewers, felt moved to stigmatise her volume in the *Academy* (25th December 1886, pp. 419-20) as 'a shallow piece of popular book-making disfigured in the translations by the most grotesque blunders in rudimentary Italian grammar'. Commercially, however, it was a success; originally published in 1877, it was still being reprinted in the early years of the present century. Such readers as were content to base their knowledge of Dante upon it no doubt experienced that vague sense of 'uplift' which it was designed to convey; he had, in the words of the authoress, 'given many a high and worthy thought to multitudes of generations'. It is to be hoped that it accomplished more by introducing to Dante some readers who graduated from the 'primer' to more advanced Dante literature or to the original itself.

The translations scattered throughout the book, of which a complete list is given in Toynbee's *Dante Studies* (1921), amount to about a thousand lines and are in terza rima. Little can be said in their favour. Mrs Oliphant avoids distortion by the same means as Mrs Ramsay did; her apparent elegance is obtained at the expense of weakening, padding and inaccuracy, and it is often impossible to tell whether she has understood the text or not. Moreover, although her verses have the physical arrangement of Dante's, she does not seem to have grasped the idea of the terzine at all; she often gets a line out of phase and remains so throughout a whole passage. Part of her version of the Francesca episode is reproduced in the Appendix I, and is an adequate sample of her style. Lines 118-20 show the kind of thing that
stirred the wrath of Moore. Her version of Purg. XXI.103-9 is another specimen of her 'approximation':

At these words, Virgil turned to me his face,
Silent, in silence saying, 'Speak not!' yet
less strong than he had willed to be — such trace
Of laughter and of tears were thereon set
As show the movements of a soul sincere
More swiftly than it wills. And I, who met
His glance with sign of understanding, here
Smiled also.

The concluding sentences of her chapter on Paradiso indicate the extent of her presumption as an interpreter of Dante. Having given a translation of lines 58-75 of the concluding canto she writes:

The reader will want no more beautiful or fit conclusion of the Paradiso than these words. For six hundred years, 'this little sounding of my verse' has given many a high and worthy thought to multitudes of generations. But that fond fancy which marks our poet as human, the little signature of foolishness in the corner, which the sublimest of human productions is rarely free from, requires that this concluding strain of the great poem should end with the same word and phrase in as the preceding portions. In order to introduce this cadence, he adds a few bewildered verses comparing himself to the mathematician who would measure the circle: 'here I fail in the high fantasy,' he says, 'but my desire and will roll onward, moved like a wheel by that love which moves the sun and the other stars.'

Epiphanius Wilson (1845-1916)

Wilson was a native of England but spent most of his life in the United States as an Episcopalian clergyman. In 1899 he published a book entitled:


His only other literary work appears to have been a book on Cathedrals of France (1900). The essay on Dante is thickly strewn with quotations, nearly all in the Spenserian stanza. A complete list, amounting to some
60 passages containing about 1200 lines in all, is given in Toynbee's *Dante Studies* (1921). We have discussed earlier attempts to translate Dante in the Spenserian stanza in dealing with George Musgrave, and have demonstrated, we think, that the metre is quite unsuitable as a vehicle for Dante's terzine. Wilson is mentioned here, however, because his attempt at using the stanza for this purpose is quite the most successful of all these experiments, even although we cannot regard it as a success. The familiar difficulties are always present. The fact that Wilson can pick his passages, and does not deal with entire cantos, has not avoided the awkwardness of having to pad or compress where three terzine cannot be fitted into a stanza. He often finishes his extracts with broken stanzas; in one case a long passage ends lamely at the eighth line of the fifth stanza, there being no matter left to fill out the concluding Alexandrine. There are awkward enjambements between stanzas, and the length of the final line is often an embarrassment. Wilson is at his worst in the Francesca episode, reproduced in Appendix I, which contains some bad examples of translatese. He is better in Cacciaguida's speech, as seen in the following which represent Par. XV.97-114:

While Florence in the narrow precinct lay,  
Whence still the bell rings out the hours of prayer,  
The city's life ran peaceably its way  
Temperate and chaste; nor did her ladies dare  
Gold chains, nor crowns, nor sandalled shoon to wear,  
Nor girdle that outvied the wearer's face;  
Nor did the birth of daughters fill with care  
The father; each in wedlock could be placed,  
And at a fitting age with fitting dowry graced.

There were no childless homes; nor yet had come  
Sardanapalus, teaching wantonness;  
Nor had fair Montemalo looked on Rome,  
And seen a view, eclipsed in loveliness  
By your Uccellatojo; and not less  
Shall Rome outstripped by Florence in her fall  
Than in her rising be. I saw in dress  
Of bone and leather Berti walk, and all  
Untouched by paint his dame rise from her mirrored hall.
He is best of all, so far as exploiting his medium is concerned, when he is freest, and that he had learned something at least from the masters of the Spenserian form is evident from Par. XXXIII.115-32:

In that clear orb of self-existent light
Three rings, of vivid ray, were blazoned keen;
Each of three hues, all of one width and height.
The first was in the second reflected seen
Like rainbows spanning Heaven in opaline;
The third was like a fire that did emit
From this one and from that an equal sheen;
But vain are words, and vain is human wit
To paint in colours true the Splendour Infinite.

O Light Eternal! in Thyself alone
That dwellest, Who alone art comprehended
By Thine Own Self, knowing Thyself and known
To no one else, in love and smiles unended;
That circle, in reflected light extended
In Thee, as it appeared, when I surveyed,
Seemed to contain, with its own colour blended,
An outlined image on the light portrayed,
Absorbing my fixed glance, in human pattern made.

Gauntlett Chaplin

The title of Chaplin's book of selections from the Divine Comedy, Dante for the People, suggests a slightly earlier date than 1913 when it was published in London. One might say that it belongs to the very last year in which any publisher would have sanctioned such a title. The subtitle of the volume is 'Selected Passages from the Divine Comedy in English verse', and the first paragraph of the short Introduction states its object.

This work is an attempt to give the average man and women, in a moderate compass and, as far as may be, in the poet's own words, some real knowledge, confessedly incomplete, yet efficient if not critical, of that supreme presentation of the sins and sorrows of erring, bewildered humanity, the Vision of Dante, otherwise the Divine Comedy. It is not offered to the consideration of professed students. Its design is to disentangle the poet, in a degree, from the theologian and the politician.

Having justified the omission of 'many passages of secondary interest, and a few which are offensive to modern taste', he adds:
The Paradiso has been very lightly touched. It may be that the perfect flower of Dante's poetic genius blossoms there; but that flower is for few, and he who would enjoy its fragrance must seek it in the original.

There follows a very brief account of Dante's life and writings; a diagrammatic scheme of his cosmology; then a summary of the contents so far as the first two cantiche are concerned, giving a title, not repeated in the text, to each extract, e.g. Inf. XXX.100-47 is named 'A Vulgar Quarrel'. The text itself is in blank terzine, with an argument preceding each canto, and prose summaries or explanations of parts omitted; there are also a few short footnotes. In all 4,944 lines are translated, but of these 2,143 are from the Inferno, 2,550 from the Purgatorio and only 251 from the Paradiso, so that 'lightly touched' is literally true. Only one or two cantos are rendered in their entirety, but every one of the first 67 is represented, although sometimes only by a single terzina. Malebolge, for instance, is skimmed very lightly; cantos XXI to XXV are represented by a total of 51 lines, canto XXIX by 9 and canto XXXI by 3. The division of the sins explained in canto XI is entirely omitted, nor is any explanation of it given. Although Purgatorio is more evenly represented, here again there are notable omissions. The explanation of the scheme of the mountain in canto XVII is not given; cantos XXIV to XXVI have 52 lines among them. Of the few lines from Paradiso more than half are from the first canto; most cantos have merely summaries of one or two sentences; cantos XXVIII to XXXIII are epitomised in a little more than thirty words, the last line of the poem being the only one translated. Considering the avowed intention of the book the narrative links throughout are often weak and too short, and where portions of the poem are omitted the relation between successive episodes is not made clear. At times the links are not even accurate, like the one which follows Inf. XVII.16 to the effect that 'At this moment a band of
miserly usurers pass by'. There is a note to line 66 of the same canto reminiscent of Wilstach in an earlier generation ('Che fai tu in questa fossa?

An obvious sneer, the chuckle of Mephisto. It is 'What! has it come to this, my fine fellow? The speaker is a moneylender, probably one of Dante's creditors, whom he, no doubt, scorned in the lordly manner of open-handed poets.

The translation itself is very ordinary, often loose and weakened by paraphrase. The opening of Inf. II is an adequate example:

The day was waning, and as darkness gave
Release from labour unto all that live
On earth, I, in my loneliness, prepared
My faltering spirit to endure her toil,
To dare great sorrows and a fearsome march,
Of which, if memory serve me, I will sing.
O Muse, O lofty Mind! grant me thine aid!
O Soul, whereon my vision is inscribed,
Here shall thy noble faculty be seen!

Often the translation is very approximate, as Inf. XI.97-111 will show:

'Philosophy,' he said, 'to all who hear
Her gracious message, tells in many a line,
Not one alone, that Nature takes her course
From the Omnipotent, and from His works.
Now mark the doctrine which thy Physics teach;
Read a few pages, and learn therefrom
That art is naught but Nature's overflow -
As pupil follows at the Master's feet;
And hence Divinity breathes in your art.
Know, from this reasoning, that 'tis enjoined
On man - so Genesis declares the truth -
To glorify his life, and aid his race.
In perverse paths the usurer delights;
He hath but scorn for Nature and her school;
His hope is set upon far other things.'

There is a good deal of pseudo-poetry and unwanted ornament. 'Count my obedience but a laggard churl,' says Virgil gallantly to Beatrice (Inf. II.80). 'Fama di loro il mondo esser non lassa' (Inf. III.49) becomes 'No line for them on Honour's blazoned roll'. We get such lines as 'Flowing in latent virtue from her soul' (Purg. XXX.39) or 'Who sheds His
effluence o'er our wayward minds' (Par. III.84), which are sheer padding.

Strangest of all the description of Manto (Inf. XX.52-4):

And she, whose breasts are hidden from thy sight,
   By the sweet glory of her falling locks,
   Which seem to clothe her in a garb of hair . . .

It is often difficult to know whether the exact sense has been seized owing to the looseness with which it is expressed. There are also a good many misprints, and some actual mistranslations suggestive of carelessness.

''Twas upward turned, as if bereft of sight' may be a mere slip for 'lo mento a guisa d'orbo in su levava' in Purg. XIII.102; failure to think out what is really meant accounts for the absurd rendering of Purg. XXII.142-4:

   Mary gave far more thought
   To the fair order of the bridal-feast
   That to her words, which answer for you here.

But although we can hardly give Chaplin much praise for his translation we can award him at least this commendation, that his effort was directed towards raising 'the people' to Dante's level rather than trying, as some translators have done, to bring Dante down to theirs.

Charles Hall Grandgent (1862-1939)

Grandgent was a graduate of Harvard and Professor of Romance Languages there from 1896 to 1932. He succeeded Norton as Dante lecturer and later as president of the Cambridge Dante Society. Although Grandgent's name is so much linked with that of Dante, his scholarship was wide as well as deep.

In his twenties he wrote an Italian Grammar and an Italian Composition, both of which became established text-books. His Phonology and Morphology of Old Provençal (1905) and Introduction to Vulgar Latin (1907) form a considerable contribution to philological science, and the latter was translated into Italian for use as a college manual in Italy. From Latin to Italian (1927)
Selections and Extracts (18)

is a work of still greater importance, embodying the results of a lifetime's study and research.

Between 1909 and 1913 there appeared Grandgent's edition of the Divine Comedy, with introduction, valuable arguments, and notes. In four further books, Dante (1916), The Ladies of Dante's Lyrics (1917), The Power of Dante (1918) and Discourses on Dante (1925), and numerous articles in periodicals, he made a valuable addition to American literature on the subject. The first of these books was written for the series 'Master Spirits of Literature', the second and third are reprints of lectures, and the fourth a collection of essays, most of which had appeared previously. A very full account of Grandgent is given in Dr La Piana's Dante's American Pilgrimage (see especially pages 192-204).

Throughout these four books are scattered many passages from the Divine Comedy rendered in English terza rima, ranging from single terzine to quite lengthy extracts, the longest (Inf. XXII.16-151) being rather less than a complete canto. The greater part of these renderings are in the book entitled Dante, amounting to some 550 terzine, while there are over 250 distributed through the other three books, representing nearly 2,500 lines or roughly one sixth of the original. This considerable feat is somewhat obscured by the fragmentary form, since the translations, interspersed with reading matter, and in an order to suit the argument in the text rather than to provide a summary of the poem, must be collected and rearranged, at considerable labour, before one can get a complete impression of them. Although some ep still compliments were paid to the author by reviewers on his skill as a translator, criticism naturally dealt mainly with the subject matter of the books, and it was some time before the magnitude of Grandgent's total achievement was realised. In 1931 Jefferson Butler Fletcher, in the Introduction to his own version, bestowed well-merited praise:
C. H. Grandgent, in some passages scattered among his various essays, has gone far towards achieving the impossible. But I doubt if even he could carry such a tour de force through the whole poem.

Dr La Piana praises Grandgent's work, but expresses the same doubt as Fletcher; but she adds that if all the passages were collected they 'would make a valuable anthology of Dante's poetry in the English language'. Professor Bickersteth tells me that, after studying every English translation of the Comedy, he prefers Grandgent's terzine to all others.

While it is true that the disconnected fragments in Grandgent's books, when gathered into an anthology, have hardly enough continuity to justify a comparison with complete translations, they are so numerous, so varied and so well handled as to make it probable that, had he set his mind to it, Grandgent could have produced an excellent translation of the whole Comedy. That he did not do so need not astonish us; his translations were made for the express purpose of illustrating his lectures and writings on Dante; to have embarked on a complete version would have diverted him from other valuable work. But the evidence of the fragments seems to be all in favour of his having been equal to the task. He certainly had one essential qualification, without which scholarship is useless when it comes to translation: he could use the English language in the proper way. He had a sense of sound, rhythm, metre, which many would-be translators have lacked, and in which Fletcher was certainly deficient. Such original verse as he published is competent and free from the trivialities and pseudo-poetry which so often mar excursions of the kind. Here we may quote his rendering of the last sonnet of the Vita Nuova, to attempt which is a thankless task at best, for the translator can hardly help knowing Rossetti's version, and has either to avoid imitating it, or, in despair, must borrow from it.
Beyond the sphere that all-encircling sways,
A sigh, escaping from my heart, doth fare.
An insight new, which Love, so full of care,
Inspireth now, impels it up always.
When it has reacht the goal for which it prays,
It sees a lady, full of glory there,
And on her light, which shines beyond compare,
The pilgrim spirit wondering doth gaze.
'Tis all so strange that when it tells me this,
I cannot comprehend, it puzzles so
The mournful heart which ever bids it tell.
It speaketh of that gentle one, I know,
Because it often nameth Beatrice;
And that, dear ladies mine, I hear full well.

Grandgent's resource and ingenuity are also shown by the fact that when, in the course of his lectures, he had to quote a passage which he had used earlier, he very often made a new version of it, so that we have several fragments existing in two, or even three, different forms. Thus in *Dante Inf.* V.28-33 appears thus:

I reacht a spot where every light is dumb;
It bellows like the sea tempestuous,
When blown by blasts which there to battle come.
The storm of Hell, ever continuous,
Swift sweeps the spirits on its hurricane;
Whirling and clashing, it torments them thus.

In *The Power of Dante* we have:

All dumb of light the place which now I find,
It bellows like the sea on stormy days,
When swept by striving squalls and angry wind.
The blast of Hell, which never stops nor stays,
The spirits on its giddy current flings,
With whirl and clash tormenting them always.

Admittedly neither of these versions reaches the level of Binyon's, but either is a step ahead of Anderson's:

I came into a place of all light dumb
which bellows like a sea where thunders roll
and counter-winds contend for masterdom.
The infernal hurricane beyond control
sweeps on and on with ravishment malign
whirling and buffeting each hapless soul.

The latter is an example of the wrong kind of padding: 'beyond control'
Selections and Extracts (21)

and 'each hapless soul' are very weak, and are only brought in to rhyme with 'thunders roll' which has no business to be there at all. Grandgent's ending is weak in both versions; neither 'thus' nor 'always' has sufficient emphasis for the position. Moreover 'to battle come' in the first, and 'now I find' in the second rendering are obvious expedients. But as improvisations they are only inferior to the best efforts, and certainly far better than what Fletcher achieves even with his greater rhyming licence:

I came into a place, of all light hushed,
    That bellowed like the ocean, when in storm
By wind with wind contending it is brushed.
The hellish hurricane, that ne'er relents,
Hurtles along the spirits in its raging,
And buffeting and whirling them, torments.

Grandgent renders the boisterous passages with verve, e.g. Inf. XXII.79-83:

'Who was that spirit whom, unwisely rash,
    Thou didst forsake, this luckless shore to see?'
'That was a knave whom nothing could abash,
Gomita, steward of Gallura, he
Who had his master's foemen in his fort
And used them so that all were full of glee.
Their case, he says, he settled out of court.
    His every office proved him, I contend,
No petty grafter, but of princely sort.
And Master Michael Zanche is his friend,
From Logadoro. Never does their gab
And gossip of Sardinia seem to end.
But see yon fiend! No longer can I bab.
See how he grits his teeth! I know full well
He presently intends to scratch my scab.'

Satire is also well done, e.g. Purg. VI.127-44:

My Florence, frown not! Gladly I confess
That this digression interests thee not,
Thanks to thy people's wise forehandedness.
Justice from many a bow is slowly shot,
    For in the heart it first must be discust;
Thy patriots spit it from their lips red-hot.
Many refuse the load of public trust;
Thy patriots, all unaskt, but nothing slow,
Loudly respond: 'I'll take it if I must!'

- 899 -
Now smile, to think that thou art favoured so!
Such wealth, such peace, such wisdom tried and true!
If I am right, the consequence will show.

Athens and Sparta, which of old eschewed
Barbarity, and made the ancient laws,
Took but a baby step toward rectitude,
Compared to thee. Thine edicts are of guage
So fine, the fabric which October span
Ere mid-November fades away and thaws.

As an example of Grandgent's handling of the poetic passages lines 55975
of the final canto are quoted.

After this point my vision far surpast
Our human speech, from which such concepts flee,
And even recollection fails at last.
As dreaming men who something clearly see,
And afterwards their feeling can recall
But nothing else is left to memory,
E'en so am I: returneth scarce at all
The thing I saw, yet trickles thro' my mind
The dew of sweetness which therefrom did fall.
Thus runs the snow which sunshine doth unbind;
Thus, writ on fluttering leaves, the Sybil's lore
Was swept away forever by the wind.

O Fire Supreme, which human minds ignore,
Inept to scale thy height, I pray thee, some
Fragment of thy revealing now restore,
And lend such power unto mine organs dumb
That I one single spark of all thy light
May leave to generations yet to come.
For if it glimmer on mine aftersight
And faintly echo in the verse I pen,
Better conceived by man shall be thy might.

There are numerous lapses; Grandgent did not by any means escape the
pitfalls inseparable from terza rima translation. His version of the
Ulysses passage, reproduced in Appendix I, is definitely below the stan-
dard of his best work. On the whole, however, after making allowance for
the scope and purpose of his translations, they are a highly creditable
performance, and rank with the still rather small number of reasonably
successful versions in terza rima.
Henry Bernard Cotterill (1846-1924)

Cotterill was the son of the Rev. Henry Cotterill, an Anglican clergyman who later became Bishop of Edinburgh. Educated at St. John's College, Cambridge, he began a long and varied career by teaching at Haileybury. In 1877 he went to East Africa as a trade missionary, took part in an exploration enterprise in the Lake Nyassa region, and was the discoverer of Lake Chiassi. Thereafter he held various educational posts, mostly in Europe, and latterly lived in Switzerland. While he was at Haileybury he had a book of Selections from the Inferno, containing the Italian text, introduction and notes (but no translation), published (Oxford, 1874). Nearly half a century later, when he was seventy-five, he made a shorter selection, with a literal prose translation and notes, for Harrap's Bilingual Series, which is still in print and catalogued at the modest price of one shilling and sixpence. In one of his articles Mr Ezra Pound threw a bouquet in passing to Cotterill's memory; partly because he had translated Dante, partly because he preferred to live among non-English-speaking races. The book in question is undated, but was first published in 1922 and the title page reads: Dante's Inferno. Selected Cantos and Episodes, translated and annotated by H. B. Cotterill. London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd.

In accordance with the scheme of the series everything from the title page onwards appears in both languages; there are 64 folios of which the introduction occupies 6 and the text 58. The English is printed line for line opposite the Italian, the portions selected being:

Cantos I; III; V.70-142; IX.1-103; XIII.1-54, 91-108; XVII.1-30, 79-135; XXI.7-57; XXII.121-51; XXX.62-9; XXXI.19-48, 58-114, 130-45; XXXII.16-59, 124-9, 133-9; XXXIII.1-27, 37-75; XXXIV.1-21, 37-54, 70-87, 106-26, 133-9.

The preface makes clear the translator's aim, already implied in the title of the series:

- 901 -
This little book is meant to serve as a stepping-stone for those who already possess, or are willing to acquire, the desire to read the Divina Commedia in the original; and it is not so difficult to accomplish this, so far at least as to appreciate the beauty and grandeur of this great poem much more fully than is possible for those who know it only through translations. . . . I have accordingly made a quite literal line-for-line version; and it is remarkable how often, when one has rendered a line as literally as possible in the most suitable English words, one finds oneself forestalled by Longfellow.

The coincidences mentioned are frequent and indeed almost inevitable.

Cotterill's rendering is merely literal, the word order of the Italian being preserved wherever feasible. We have such un-English expressions as 'more sad' for 'più tristi' or 'foretold itself' for 's'annunziava'. This policy, however, is not carried out consistently; sometimes a word is transferred from one line to the other, e.g. 'cui minaccia / Giove dal cielo ancora quando tuona' (XXXI.44-5) becomes 'whom Jupiter still threatens from heaven when he thunders'. At other times words not in the text are supplied by way of clarification; sometimes but not always these are placed in parentheses. The system is therefore similar to Vernon's, but explanations are less frequent, and the strict line for line rendering which is adhered to for the most part makes the whole less readable as English, although quite suitable for its purpose. An extract from canto V is given in Appendix I, and this gives an adequate specimen of Cotterill's method. His notes are mainly linguistic and very useful to further his aim. His selection of passages is somewhat arbitrary and is not explained.

Thomas Watson Duncan

Duncan was a Glasgow man who in 1926 had a volume of selections from the Divine Comedy published, containing both Italian and English. The details of this book are:

The book is foolscap octavo in size, and contains 456 pages, of which 4 are occupied by the preface and 10 at the end by a classified index. In the preface the editor explains that he has chosen one or more extracts from every canto in the poem, 'designed to exhibit Dante in his various moods and styles'.

The extracts number 216 in all, ranging from 6 lines to over 100, each being, as far as possible, complete in itself, canto and verse providing a reference to the original. Altogether 5,866 lines have been chosen and translated. . . . The translation may be read along with the text or apart from it. Its principles are: first, that it shall be true to Dante's meaning as the translator understands it; second, that it shall not be so literal as to offend the English ear, nor yet so free as to spoil the simplicity, beauty, and power of the original; and third, without detriment to the severity and restraint of the Dante style, that as far as possible it shall be made to read well.

Reviewing the volume on 25th November 1926 the Times Literary Supplement found the translation 'on the whole dignified and reliable', although it pointed out some sentences made ludicrous by too great literality. Each extract has a sub-heading to indicate its subject matter, e.g. Inferno VIII consists of four sections: 'Phlegyas', lines 15-30; 'Filippo Argenti', 31-51; 'The City of Dis', 67-87; 'The Fallen Angels', 109-30. The extracts from each of the three cantiques are roughly equal in total extent.

Neither the system of selection nor the translation itself is satisfactory. The editor seems conscious of this when he remarks in the preface:

The reader who has some acquaintance with the Poem will find that there is a thread of continuity on which these parts are strung that may lead him to add others for himself.

Presumably, however, such a selection is meant for someone who desires to become acquainted with the poem, and such a reader is likely to find continuity conspicuously lacking. There is no preliminary explanation of
the scheme of the poem or of Dante's cosmology, nor are there any notes or connecting links between the episodes. Many essential pieces of narrative are omitted, e.g. lines 124-41 of Purg. XX are translated under the heading 'The Earthquake'; this is immediately followed by lines 40-72 of canto XXI headed 'Statius on the Earthquake'. Thereafter there is a blank till line 115 of canto XXII, 'The Mystic Tree', so that the uninitiated reader would be left completely bewildered, and his bewilderment renewed 'non pure una volta'.

That Duncan's English is hardly what Sinclair called 'credible' will be easily seen from the passages in Appendix I. His liking for superfluous articles and particles is evident from the very first page, as well as a tendency towards strange twists of language, e.g.

Ah! how hard a thing it is to tell what it was, this wood, wild, savage and masterful; the very thought of which renews the fear; death itself is hardly more bitter.  (Inf. I.4-7)

But 'tell me at the time of the sweet sighs, in what way and how did love concede that ye came to know the doubtful desires?'  (Inf. V.118-20)

The articles even intrude where they are not in the Italian, e.g. 'Colui lo cui saver tutto trascende' (Inf. VII.73) becomes 'He whose wisdom transcends the All'. Sometimes the phraseology is strange or involved:

Its very self had made of itself a lamp, and one whole had become two, and these two were one, and how this could be He alone knows who so contrives.  (Inf. XXVIII.124-6)

'Twas now the hour that turns the mariner's desire, and makes tender those who that day to sweet friends have bid adieu, and that pricks the heart of Love's new pilgrim if from afar he hears a bell that seems the lament of the dying day.  (Purg. VIII.1-6)

The last example is typical of the carelessness or inaccuracy that pervades the entire translation, giving us such phrases as 'in that timeless air, that is dyed like sand in a storm' (Inf. III.29-30); 'Over that river's mouth His wings now hover' = 'A quella foce ha egli or dritta l'ala'
Selections and Extracts (27)

(Purg. II.103); 'there weariness awaits its repose' = 'quivi di riposar l'affanno aspetta' (Purg. IV.95). There are scores of places where the rendering is either wrong or very slovenly, and hundreds where the use of the wrong word or phrase is jarring. Sometimes the result is ridiculous, as when Brunetto Latini tells Dante 'if I had not been dead for so long I would have encouraged thee in thy work' (Inf. XV.58). It can be seen, therefore, that this volume has little to recommend it either as a translation or as an introduction to the study of Dante.

John Jay Chapman (1862-1933)

Chapman was a native of New York, a graduate of Harvard, and a lawyer for some ten years, until he decided to occupy himself with literature. During the remaining thirty-five years of his life he gained a considerable reputation as an essayist and occasional writer, being as well a dramatist, a biographer and an editor. In 1927 he published a book which attracted some attention:


The book contains a short preface, a long introduction, verse translations of a number of passages from the Divine Comedy, and six essays: 'The Teachers', 'The Egoist', 'Dante's Obsession', 'Dante's Church Standing', 'The Commentators', 'Defects in the Divine Comedy'. The passages translated, with the title given to each, are:

The Great Poets (Inf. IV)
Paolo and Francesca (Inf. V)
The Coming of the Angel (Inf. VII.97 to end of X)
Ulysses (Inf. XXVI.25 to end)
A brighter World (Inf. XXXIV.127-end, Purg. I and II)
Sudden Death (Purg. V)
Sordello (Purg. VI.46 to end)
Virgil's Farewell (Purg. XXVII.64-75, 88-142)
The Flight upward (Par. II.1-15, I.1-36, 46-81, II.19-42, XXIII.1-39 in that order)
Chapman's approach to Dante was a novel one, and his short preface was calculated to shock readers into taking notice. Its last paragraph runs:

A glance at the table of contents will tell the theme of the book: Disparagement of Dante as a Character, praise of him as a Poet, and a kind of amazed wonder about him as a Force.

Postponing for the moment further investigation into what this means, we extract from the long prologue to 'The Great Poets' Chapman's views on translation. The translators of Dante have, he thinks, been 'slashed, maimed, and borne bleeding from the field after a duel with Dante' because they 'accept the conditions which the judges lay down'.

These judges are men whose very existence and function in the world depend on keeping Dante unscathed and victorious. Therefore they give their champion every advantage they can think of.

These judges are the scholars, ready to pounce on the translator if he dares to do anything but render clearly and unambiguously the obvious, moral, theological and anagogical meanings of his author. Chapman would have all this changed.

The modern translator or copyist should be given the same sort of freedom as the Old Master... The judges should be unengaged and made to sit with the populace. Their age-long labours as technical experts are completed; and no one in the future is likely to find out very much more about the geography of the whole dark Dantesque forest which has been so conscientiously explored during the last century.

... The legitimate future of the forest is as a pleasure-ground, a terrestrial paradise and region of Elysian Fields. ... every man should be allowed to wander freely in the reserve and to sketch in water-colours or write original verses thereon. This does no harm to anybody... The wise among the lovers who stray there will... at a later date, perhaps, lend their scribblings or their sketchings to a friend, saying - 'All we ask is that you do not approach the copy too near to the original or bring the sketch inside the sacred enclosure.'...

When one dares it, new side-lights of meaning and fresh little dramatic vistas appear in the background of Dante's scenes and episodes - sights that remain hidden to the reverent eye, but reveal themselves to the impudent. ... the vitality of a translation depends somewhat on the consciousness of these shadowy underplots.

It can be seen that Chapman wants a distillation rather than a translation,
something that will be on the same poetic level as Dante but several removes from him. At the same time he expresses doubt as to whether paraphrase and translation can be made to serve the same purpose; the translator and the paraphraser belong, he thinks, to different categories. In his own fragments the debate remains unresolved; sometimes he translates almost literally and sometimes he paraphrases very freely. The two passages quoted in Appendix I show both styles: the story of Ulysses keeps fairly close to the text, although using some freedom of language; the description of the angel vessel arriving in Purgatory is conceived as a lyric rather than as a narrative. The fragments show wide variations in competence. The section embracing cantos VII to X of the Inferno, the longest continuous portion among them, is also the most successful: 'a thing of beauty' Grandgent called it appropriately, because the influence of Keats is very obvious. Chapman, founding on Dante, mingled with the matter of his original other and later strains; yet at his best he uses his new matter to underline and reinforce Dante's poetry rather than to transform it. Hence the remark often made that Chapman succeeded in being truly Dantesque, even when furthest from Dante, in a way that other paraphrasers never are. Before quoting, we should explain that his metre is 'terza rima, with which I have been obliged upon occasion to take some small liberties'. These liberties include the omission of the line in the scheme, the insertion of a couplet, etc. Chapman adopted what seems a very unfortunate typographical arrangement, whereby every second line is indented, making it impossible to keep track of the terzine where they are regular, and having a rather confusing effect, since the rhymes have seldom any relation to the indention. It has been thought better, therefore, here and in the Appendix, to drop the indentation altogether and print the extracts straightforward.
The following is Chapman's version of Inf. VIII.65-81. It will be seen that he has taken his own way, or rather Keats's way, of dealing with the last two terzine, which he expands to eight lines. The power of these has been noted by many writers, but the legitimacy of Chapman's treatment will be disputed by many.

For now a sound of grieving, and a din
Assails my hearing and deflects my sight;
And my good master said, 'Now draw we near
The City of Dis that throbs with gloomy light
And hums with crowds that make the sound you hear.'
'Indeed, Sir, in the valley there below
I see the Mosques already; they appear Vermilion, in a kind of furnace-glow,'
Said I. And he, 'The eternal fires that dwell Within them, - for the city is sunk low, - Keep them thus ruddy with the flames of Hell.'
And now we steered among the fosses deep
That guard the inconsolable citadel Whose bastions seemed of iron, and on we sweep
Round many a deathly turn and angle stark, By guarded mole and dreaming dungeon-keep, Beneath a bestling battlement and cries,
'This is the entrance; here ye disembark!'

The picture of the angel's arrival (Inf. IX.79-87) is admirable:

So did I see those huddling, ruined slaves
When terror seized them, dive, and in their wake
One coming dry-shod o'er the Stygian waves.
The heavy vapors from his face he fanned, -
The sole alleviation that he oraves, -
Lifting from time to time a quiet hand.
I knew him for the herald of the sky,
And turned, - but Virgil motioned me to stand
In silent reverence as he passed us by.

There is the same restraint in the picture of La Pia (Purg. V.130-6) where indeed Chapman has reduced Dante's seven lines to five of his own:

'Ah,' cried another, 'when in the upper land
Thou restest from the road that wearieth,
Forget not Pia.' Then her ring she scanned.
'Siena gave me life; Maremma, death:
He knows me who placed that upon my hand.'

(The last extract shows Chapman's actual indentions, which we shall not repeat.)
In the passages from Purg. XXVII, where the lyrical motive predominates, we find Chapman using some archaisms which would have been much better omitted, e.g. line 73 is rendered 'Our weary bodies on the slabs we dight', but Virgil's concluding speech is well done. Of all Chapman's efforts the weakest is the Francesca episode, the sentimental atmosphere of which dooms it right from the start of his version:

'Ah, Poet,' I began, 'twould be heart's ease To have some parley with yon clinging twain That seem to float so lightly on the breeze.'

Lines 100-7 read:

Love, that in gentle natures works his will,
Seized Paolo for the body that I wore,
And how 'twas taken from me shocks me still.
True love, that ne'er says nay to love that's true,
Seized me so strongly for his pleasure's sake
That, - as thou seest, - its clasp is ever new.
Death took us from Love's arms: and Hell shall take
Our Murderer.'

'Nessun maggior dolore' is metamorphosed to:

It is the worst of woes
That in them, men look back with streaming eyes
on by-gone joy.

The end is weaker still, and further weakened by the rhyme system breaking down altogether:

'... That he who from me never shall be ref
Utterly trembling, pressed his lips to mine.
Our Galeotto was the Book, and he
That wrote it! On that day we read no more.

The Times Literary Supplement (25th August 1927) quoted some of these lines, describing them as 'amateurish', and remarking that the translator was 'not a poet'; but agreed that some of the renderings 'have a directness and
momentum which convince and compel the reader'. Both verdicts are true, because Chapman was uncertain what he was trying to do, and the results ranged from striking success to equally striking failure.

Although it does not fall within our province here to discuss Chapman's provocative essays, some of which we have quoted elsewhere, we may remark that at the root of his difficulty lies something of the same disability that we have noted in Leigh Hunt. 'Disparagement of Dante as a Character, praise of him as a Poet' - the idea is familiar, although Chapman expresses it with rather differently. There is a key passage in the essay entitled 'Dante's Obsession'; after referring to the interviews with Aquinas, Caccia-guida, and others in the Paradiso Chapman writes:

Perhaps if some unsuccessful and aging and seedy American publicist, whose political ambitions Fate had thwarted, and who had spent the last half of his life as an on-hanger of indulgent rich patrons, despised, or worse - forgotten by an age in which he had not been able to cut a dignified figure; if such an American should publish a vision in which he declared that he had found himself in Heaven at a convention of Luminaries, where one of them had stepped forward and said, 'Sir, I know you well. You are destined to become President of the United States. My friend on the right here is Benjamin Franklin, and I am George Washington. Over yonder you see Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, John Adams, and by himself, in meditation, the thoughtful giant, Abraham Lincoln'; and if Washington should thereupon proceed to make two political speeches, giving the main points of the said seedy publicist's unpopular political faith, that publicist would have scored the same sort of point that Dante scores against his contemporaries in the Paradiso, X, XI and XII.

Unfortunately there are all too many to-day who would be willing to accept the parallel, unable to see the point at which it breaks down. The significant feature of the comparison is that it turns on the point of success - to be unsuccessful, in politics or otherwise, is an unforgivable crime in more than one modern community. It is useless to try to rationalise the Divine Comedy; as Professor d'Entrèves says we can never fully appraise it unless we regard it as prophetic and inspired, in so far, he adds ominously, as the word can mean anything to the modern mind.

- 910 -
Selections and Extracts (33)

Miscellaneous

Of the numerous shorter or incidental selections, one or two only of special interest are mentioned here.

In 1878 a slim volume was printed privately by the Formans, the edition being limited to 25 copies, bearing the title *The Metre of Dante's Comedy discussed and exemplified*. It contained translations in terza rima of Inf. I, III, Purg. I and Par. I all by Alfred Forman, and a discussion by Harry Buxton Forman, the book being a reprint of a series of anonymous contributions to the *Civil Service Review* which appeared in seven instalments from October to December 1874. The rhymes are hendecasyllabic throughout; and in order to combine such an exacting metrical scheme with a reasonable poetic standard, great liberties are taken with the sense. The accompanying discussion makes a plea for the preservation of the Italian hendecasyllable, frankly admitting that it can only be done tolerably by a transformation rather than a translation. With all the ingenuity at their command, the Formans failed to make a convincing case for their contention, and while one cannot but admire the virtuosity with which the task is carried throughout, the result is unlikely to commend itself to future translators. It is, however, very much better than the abortive attempt of John Pyne or the all too complete one of Father Cummins referred to in the article on the latter. Inf. III.1-9 is rendered:

By me you reach the City of all sorrow -
   By me the seat of unabandoned weeping -
   By me the tribes that hope not in to-morrow:

Justice had my great maker in her keeping;
   Almighty might of God was my inventor,
   Wisdom, and Love that lived when all was sleeping;

Ere me no matter drew to any centre
   Unless eternal, and I last for ever;

Leave every hope behind you, ye who enter.

Even the standard of the foregoing lines cannot be kept up through four
cantos. The opening of Par. I, for instance, might well be punctuated with question marks:

The splendour of the face that steers creation
Pierces the patient universe, and lightens
Leniently one fiercely another station.

Other terzine are almost unrecognisable, e.g.

Joy found me, like a summer-hunting swallow,
Soon as I issued from the deadly places
Where all was sad that eye or ear could follow,
where only the middle line gives a pointer to Purg. I.16-18. Later in the same canto lines 76-80 give a version of Virgil's words to Cato that might well have provoked the latter's rebuke about flattery:

I'm of the round where, like rain-dropping roses,
Your Marcia's fragrant eyelids stoop, reminding
Your soul to hold her still its perfect treasure.

Still stranger expedients are resorted to at times, e.g. Par. I.82-4:

The novel sound and large light made me shiver
With speed to know their cause - all old desire
Seemed now by this less sharp, and fugitiver.

It is true that some of the renderings are apologised for, after a fashion, in the discussion, which is certainly interesting in its approach.

Barbara Barclay Carter's novel, Ship without Sails (London, 1931), is a fictional, but well documented, narrative of Dante's life in exile. It contains English versions of a number of short passages from the Divine Comedy, of which the author says in her preface: 'the translated excerpts are a new version of my own'. They are improvisations, and some of them read well if not compared too closely with the original. Portions of the Francesca, Ulysses and Ugolino episodes are included. The second of these passages, quoted below, comes at the end of a chapter in which a chance remark recalls the legend of St. Brendan to Dante's mind, and leads to the inclusion of Ulysses' voyage in the canto on which he was working.
Leaving the dawn behind us, on we went, our oars were wings, our way a sea-bird's flight, and ever to the left our course was bent.

The stars that lit the darkness of the night were those that circle round the southern pole, and ours the ocean floor withheld from sight.

Five times the moon was darkened, five times whole, since we had ventured on that high emprise, when all at once we reached our ultimate goal. For through the mists we saw a mountain rise, dark with the distance, lofty past belief, such as was never seen by mortal eyes.

We laughed for joy, but soon our joy grew grief, for from that secret land a tempest blast smote on our ship and tossed it like a leaf, Thrice round in whirling waters, till at last the prow shot upwards - thus Another's will - the stern sank downwards, through the waters passed, And then the seas closed over us, and grew still.

An excellent selection of renderings from the Paradiso in terza rima is to be found in Adventures in Literature (London, 1929) by John Craufurd Wordsworth. The book contains four long essays, the first of which deals with 'Dante's Paradiso', and is copiously illustrated with translations, amounting in all to nearly 700 lines, i.e. over a seventh of the whole.

It may be mentioned that the other essays also contain numerous original verse renderings of considerable merit from Boiardo, Appollonius Rhodius and Euripides. It is certainly a subject for regret that Mr Wordsworth does not appear to have published any further versions from Dante. He is primarily a philosopher, and it is of Dante's philosophy that he is writing, but he is continually conscious that Dante is in the first place writing poetry, and he is concerned to show the relation between the two, and to vindicate the Paradiso as a supreme poem. He is thoroughly alive to the problems of the translator, and he points to one of the capital difficulties involved when he writes:

The Paradiso has in its favour, as I have shown, a more poetical conception of the universe than ours; it had, besides, a philosophical language much better fitted for the needs of poetry. The words, mostly derived from Latin, in which we express metaphysical
ideas are too heavy for anything but the most prosaical of prose; Dante's, too, are of course derived from Latin, but do not weigh down his verse. One may contrast, for instance, the line

*Sustanzia ed incidente e lor costume*

with a literal translation of it in the same metre:

Substance and accident and their relations.

The first is the music of the spheres compared with the other.

On the following page he quotes as an example of a passage where 'both the ideas and the languages of poetry and metaphysics are combined', Par. XIII. 52-60, and in a note he provides us with a translation:

That which does not, and that which suffers death
But by reflecting that Idea shine
Which through his love our Lord engendereth;
For that Effulgence living and divine,
Issuing yet never parted from its Sun
Nor from the Love which in them makes the trine,
Wills of its bounty that its light should run
Into nine beings, mirrors of its glory,
Yet everlastingly remaining One.

Admittedly the translator of fragments is at an advantage; he does not need to specify what rhymes for 'death' and 'glory' are to be used in the preceding and succeeding terzine. Yet we cannot deny that this rendering is on the face of it a distinct improvement on those of our best translators, say Binyon or Bickersteth, mainly by virtue of the concluding line, towards which the writer, acutely conscious that 'eternalmente rimanendosi una' is 'the music of the spheres', has been working all through. Binyon's version does not flow here:

*Both of its bounty its own rays unite,*
*As though in a mirror, in nine subsistences,*
*Itself remaining one eternal light.*

Professor Bickersteth has gone worse astray here - no doubt again a choice of the evils that suggested themselves - for although he knows very well that in accordance with his system the word 'one' must come at the end of
a line, he puts it emphatically in the wrong line when he writes:

doth, of its bounty, concentrate its rays
as in a glass - itself remaining one
forever - into nine subsistences.

Moreover, Wordsworth has scored by being bold, or sensible enough to use
'beings' instead of 'subsistences'. That he can do this in quite other
contexts is abundantly evident from his rendering of XX.73-5:

Like to the lark that singing flies along
Through the wide air and then is still, content
With the last sweetness of her rapturous song,

and this time he has left his competitors limping far behind. Even he,
however, cannot keep it up all the time; for instance his version of

VI.76-8 crashes dismally:

Yea, Cleopatra still must grieve to tell,
Who venturing not its onset to withstand
By the swift death in that black adder fell.

Some of his other failures suggest where his limitations lie, e.g. I.19-21:

Enter my breast and show thy spirit the same
That drew forth Marsyas, rival of thy art
From out the sheath that wrapped his mortal frame.

He makes another mistake which Professor Bickersteth would certainly not
dream of when he writes a terzina that cannot but jar on anyone who knows

Dante (XXIII.70-2):

Why hath my countenance so imparadised
Thine eyes, they turn not to the forms that shine
In the fair garden flowering under Christ?

On the whole, however, Wordsworth's renderings are well worthy of study,
and certainly good enough to make us wish that there were more of them.

Two further extracts from Wordsworth are given in Appendix I.

We may mention here two recent, and very different, Scottish contrib-
utions to the literature of Dante translation. Georgina Grace Moncrieff's
Lyrical Meditations on the Paradiso (Edinburgh, 1952) bears the sub-title
'The story of Dante's journey through Paradise told in verse', and its publication led to the authoress being made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Miss Moncrieff, now in her seventies, disclaims all pretensions to Dante scholarship, nor has she aimed at making a translation. Her series of poems consists of what one might call a sequence of paraphrases of very numerous passages, taken in their order, and including extracts from every canto in the Paradiso; prose rubrics supply some explanations, comments and occasionally links. The poems are in many different metres, and it is evident that Miss Moncrieff has considerable facility in versifying and also a long acquaintance with the Divine Comedy. She is at times diffuse, and could not often be called Dantesque; her muse is strongly imitative, and one detects the origin of many cadences as inspired by her reading in English poetry, e.g. the section dealing with Par. III.4-36 begins:

As faintly through a crystal-veil
Our lineaments return,
As with a pearl that glimmers pale
Love's forehead we adorn,
(So pale the pearl we almost fail
Its semblance to discern) . . .

There are only two passages in terza rima, hendecasyllabic in both cases, one from the first and one from the last canto. At times Miss Moncrieff seems to part company with Dante; one is not sure, for instance, how far the following terzina from the first of the passages mentioned is due to misunderstanding of the Italian, or if on the other hand the author has deliberately applied the simile of Marsyas in a different way:

But Thou, dwell in me! Breathe thine inspiration
Till, at the cost of agony, my spirit
Like Marsyas, rent from flesh, find consummation.

The second of the terza rima fragments, corresponding to XXXIII.67-75 is quoted in full below.
O Light Supreme, who in Thy Strength Immortal,
Dost reign, our weak mortality transcending,
Yet entering in glory by its portal;
Lift up my head, and grant that, reascending,
I may recall again the heavenly Vision,
Won by Thy help in supplication bending;
I lay my will before Thee in submission;
Such Virtue from Thy Countenance entreating,
That through my tongue Thy Word may find transmission.
That I Thy Message fraught with fire repeating,
A spark of splendour may the earth transfigure,
Lit from the gleam that lights my memory fleeting.
Not for my own delight I crave Thy Vigour;
Nay, lest unworthily Thy Light I squander,
Chasten my failing purpose with Thy Rigour;
'Tis on Thy Victory I fain would ponder;
Strengthen my being with Thy Light undaunted;
Let me interpret to Thy Souls who wander
The dream of Heaven wherewith my heart is haunted.

No Scottish author has so far shown any inclination to translate the Divine Comedy into Lallans; but in our own day there is such a revival of interest in the northern vernacular, both as a vehicle of original verse and of translation, that the attempt may well be made soon. There has been in particular a resurgence of interest in Gavin Douglas's Aeneid among the younger poets, not merely in Scotland. During the last few years Mr Tom Scott has distinguished himself as an occasional translator from various languages into Lallans, and he is engaged in the preparation of an anthology of such renderings, for which he has so far received fewer contributions than he would like. One of his latest contributions performances is a Lallans version of part of Inf. V which appears in the current number of Nine, and it is quoted here, with the proviso that it is in its present state no more than an experimental fragment.

Then I turn'd back till them an said:
Francesca, your disaster gars me great
Wi doole an pity. Tell me, whit was it made,
While still yir love was biddable an sweet,
(An bi whit snare yir weirdit sauls wer taen)
Luve grant ye leave tae pree sic taintit meat?
And then she said: There is nae greater pain
Than tae be mindset o lost happiness
In misery, as your auld guide shud ken.
But if ye maun hear whye we dre a this
Fur luvin owre unwisely an owre-weill,
I'll tell ye, though we doole, o oor first kiss.
Waan day we read thegither yon auld tale
O' Launcelot, an hoo he pined in luve.
We wer oorsels, an took nae thocht o ill.
Mony a time oor gliffs exchanged abuve
The page, an aa oor pallor turnit reid.
But only waan thing could oor doonfaa pruve.
When, hoo that sair-saucht smile was kissed, we read,
Bi sich a luver, he, I maun confess,
Whom naethin noo will pairt me frae, though deid,
Fumblit on ma mooth a tremlin kiss.
That bulk, that author, Galeotto pruved.
We read that day nae further on than this . . .
While the waan ghaist tellt me hoo they luved,
The tither grat, till I could staun nae mair,
An sank doun in a dwalm, I was sae muved.
Like a mein man, I sprachlet on the fluir.
CONCLUSION

The examination of this vast body of translation starts many trains of thought and provokes many questions. These are all to some extent interrelated, and it is difficult to consider them in isolation; they are also so numerous and complicated that to deal with them fully, even confining the discussion to this one poem, would involve a lengthy treatise rather than a brief summing-up. In the Introduction we have indicated some qualities thought essential to any good translation; in the course of the articles we have recurred to and amplified some of these points and added others. We shall now try to make a general assessment of the results achieved by the translators, with special reference to the function, development and future of English translators of the Divine Comedy, many of our remarks having also some bearing on translation in general.

First as to reasons for the surprisingly large number of translations of the Divine Comedy, they are in the main to be sought in the infinite variety of the poem itself. On the first page of the Introduction we quoted an enumeration by an American translator of different ways in which it can be regarded. It is, for instance, a moral and ethical treatise whose 'message' has appealed to the missionary instincts of those who desire to save or improve their fellows and feel that Dante's words are more potent than their own. It is a political tract wherein some see ready-made solutions for the national and international problems of law and government over which so many wars have been waged. It is an eschatological romance which fascinates those who, consciously or unconsciously, find this transient life meaningless in itself. Moreover, its eschatology is concrete and practical; it sets out the plan of the unseen world with a realism
that creates an illusion of certainty. Herein partly consists its kinship with Goethe's Faust, in which the physical presentation of theological issues produces an immediate interest which Milton's vaguer panorama of a majestic infinity and eternity fails to arouse. It is hardly possible to read Paradise Lost except as a poem, but evidence suggests that many readers have reached the end of the Divine Comedy without any real perception of its purely poetic qualities. On the other hand these qualities have forced themselves on the attention of readers whom the content repelled; so that we find men like Landor and Hunt divided between eulogy and condemnation.

For those who, like Voltaire or Dr Burton Rascoe, are antipathetic to traditional Christian thought and allergic to poetry not cast in a certain mould, the Divine Comedy is merely farcical or obscene, but such comparatively few in number, so far at least as expressed opinion is concerned. The linguist, the historian and the scholar are attracted by the wealth of vocabulary, allusion and learning which the Comedy contains, so that they have both swelled themselves the ranks of the translators and helped those who do not share their specialist interests. The very thoroughness with which the field was covered made it comparatively easy, after the work of the pioneers had been done, for the well-educated professional or business man or woman to follow predecessors over well-trodden ground, lured onwards by the hope that these previous efforts could be bettered. To the poet and man of letters the Comedy makes a powerful appeal on technical grounds, and invites him to test his skill by matching it with that of Dante. In most cases a combination of these factors is at work, but it is often noticeable that one or other predominates.

If we now go on to inquire why this body of writers, for the most part able, earnest and cultured men and women, should have produced work of which
more than fifty per cent has to be placed on the wrong side of mediocrity, we are forced to realise that among all their qualifications for the task they often lacked one that is essential. Whether form or content exercises the greater appeal, the fascination may, so far as translation is concerned, be a fatal one. The amateur philanthropist who conceives that it would be a good thing for his countrymen who cannot read Italian to benefit from Dante's philosophy or theology may well imagine that his own long study and great love fit him for the task of presenting it to them in translation, not realising that such an undertaking requires something beyond boundless enthusiasm and admiration. He may well recognise Dante's language and manner to be supremely capable of expressing Dante's ideas, and yet be quite ignorant that there are tricks in the trade of writing poetry which he has not, with all his long study and great love, even begun to acquire. He may indeed be so close to his original, so much wrapped up in it, so much possessed by its great thoughts, that he is all too ready to accept his own imperfect reproduction of them as having some real resemblance to Dante's poem. For him original and translation are so inseparably connected that he may well imagine them to be identical, especially if his appreciation of Dante's technical accomplishment is a passive one which accepts the result without probing the means by which it is produced. An analogy can be found in those amateur actors who 'throw themselves into the part'; we have all seen Jullets and Hamlets who imagine that their spiritual kinship with the character they are portraying will guarantee them a triumph on the stage, and we know the disaster to which such an illusion leads.

To the amateur versifier, for whom form is at least as important as content, the fascination of the Comedy may be equally fatal. The novelty
of Dante's metre attracts him; it does not take him long to master, or so he thinks, the secret of the terza rima, and the next step is to find an English equivalent. He may decide to adhere to the Italian scheme, and imagine that by composing a series of lines with rhyming words in the prescribed positions he is providing a facsimile of the Italian. He may shirk the task of finding triple rhymes and select some other rhymed or unrhymed form, and even prove to his satisfaction that Dante would have chosen the same had he been writing in English. Unfortunately among the too common fundamental misunderstandings of the nature of poetry none is more persistent than that which identifies metrical structure as its peculiarly distinctive feature. This delusion is widespread, but it was particularly noticeable in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, probably because so many would-be poets had been taught prosody but not poetic appreciation. The error is no less prevalent today, but with a much larger literate population and a much lower average standard of literacy, the majority ignore poetry rather than attempt to write it.

Little less widely disseminated was and is the notion that poetry is written by using what is called 'poetic language'. To some extent this is due to so many otherwise well-educated people having been 'taught poetry' without being given any more definite ideas on the subject than that poetry is the kind of thing written by, say, Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, Milton or Tennyson. Next to its metrical structure the most striking superficial feature of poetry is that its language differs from that of normal prose or conversation, hence the illusion that the use of certain words and phrases will automatically result in poetry. So we find strings of clichés, lines of pseudo-poetry, alternations of style as
the writer switches from reminiscences of Milton to recollections of Swinburne, as well as interludes when he is too hard pressed to be anything but a poetaster grasping for a word or a rhyme. These prosodic and linguistic prepossessions are well dealt with in Dr I. A. Richards' *Practical Criticism*, and anyone who has conducted similar experiments will be only too familiar with the extent to which they vitiate judgment. Nor are these misconceptions confined to poetry; as we have seen they can intrude in prose with equally distressing consequences.

We may add a word here regarding motive, purpose and function. Among the motives, we have seen that commercial gain has counted for little, often for considerably less than nothing, among translators of Dante. This state of affairs is liable, however, to be transformed by the current tendency to give the public what it wants; there may well be a fortune awaiting the man who translates Dante in a form to suit the speech-balloons of the comic strip or the technique of the motion-picture-cartoon. Not long ago a well-known literary journal pointed out that since we are inevitably doomed to have 'comic classics', or if you prefer it 'classical comics', it is useless to protest or object; we should not only acquiesce but devote our energies to ensuring that they take the least vicious form possible. It is however cheering to find that both here and in America translated classics can command large sales in a more reputable form, and we are glad that we have been able to commend the Crofts Dante, although we are less happy about the Penguin equivalent. But the danger of commercialisation, with consequent vulgarisation, is very acute; and meantime more than one good translation is mouldering in manuscript because neither author nor publisher can afford to risk certain loss.

Emulation has undoubtedly played a big part in moving translators to
action; their prefaces, sometimes modestly, sometimes brazenly, sufficiently proclaim it. Some of them are surprisingly indiscreet, although fortunately the case of Charles Tomlinson, already adequately discussed, is an exceptional one. Whether expressed or not, the hope of improving on the work of predecessors must almost inevitably be present; otherwise the effort would be meaningless. Quite a few prefaces indicate that the writer has been prevailed upon by the approval, or even solicitation, of his friends to make his work available to the public. Friends asked for an opinion on such an undertaking, even if they possess the qualifications for giving it, are in an awkward position; and few of them care, even if they feel so inclined, to act the part of Molière's Misanthrope.

There are other obvious motives, on some of which we have already touched: the desire to benefit one's fellows, for instance, or to help others to improve and extend their knowledge, with or without reference to the original. Nor must we forget 'the last infirmity of noble mind', which may take the form of wishing to see one's name on a title page.

Yet there is a more universal motive than all these, present to some extent in almost every case, perhaps often instinctive rather than deliberate. Colonel John Hunt remarked that men want to climb Everest because it is there - they desire to translate the Divine Comedy for the same reason. A great work of art, especially in a foreign language, is a challenge; we struggle to grasp it, to possess it, and some of us can best achieve that ambition by translating it, by mingling, as it were, our own experience with that of the author rather than merely sharing his. That hackneyed metaphor, 'the crucible of translation', is a very apt one. Whatever the result may mean to others, to the translator it may give a sense of satisfaction which goes far beyond a complacent pride in his own accomplishment. Indeed, the
higher that sense of satisfaction, the less is likely to be his complacency, because in grappling with his original he has found its stature increase and its power expand. His triumph and defeat are inseparable, but 'non a guisa che l'omo a l'om sobranza'. That is what caused Plumptre to write of his predecessors at the end of his preface:

I hope and believe that each of the translators has found in his work, as I have found in mine, its own best reward. It is a reward for which many men have given years of patient labour and, at the end of them, given also their accumulated savings to meet the cost of publication. The causes which we have mentioned earlier may have led the translator grossly to overrate the value of his work, and the critics may have justification for handling him severely; but even so the inward satisfaction, however unwarranted by external results, may still remain.

Such considerations may cast an aura around the dullest translation, but when we come to consider its value to persons other than its maker, we must cease to be sentimental. We can only judge it according as it fulfils its function, and on this aspect we must dwell for a moment. Here, it seems, we are bound to make some distinctions, according to the expressed or implied purpose of the translator, for we can hardly apply the same yardstick to an avowed crib as to a version which professes to be an English poem. We shall therefore now consider the translations in groups, beginning with those where literality is likely to take precedence over literary quality, so that our order will be: prose, blank terzine, blank verse, terza rima, and finally the other rhymed forms. In doing so we shall transfer those of the experimental versions which fit other categories to the latter, and by way of reference place the names of the translators in each group at the head of the discussion. We have already
Conclusion (8)

seen that some translations are mere curiosities and some even monstrosities, so that we shall content ourselves in these cases with a bare mention; and having already done them such justice as we can, refrain from exposing their demerits further unless they illustrate some matter of principle. Nor shall we have much to say individually of the terza rima translators from Dayman in 1843 to Eleanor Vinton Murray in 1920. Their work is so much of a piece, and they differ from each other so little, save in their own peculiar defects, that enough has already been said about them.

**Prose Translations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carlyle</th>
<th>O'Donnell</th>
<th>Butler</th>
<th>Dugdale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vernon</td>
<td>Norton</td>
<td>Sullivan</td>
<td>Wicksteed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okey</td>
<td>Garnier</td>
<td>Tozer</td>
<td>C. G. Wright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinclair</td>
<td>Ayres</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A notable feature of the prose translations is that they are nearly all concentrated in the period from 1880 to 1905. Before that we have only Carlyle and O'Donnell; after that there is nothing till we come to the quite recent Sinclair and Ayres. The reason for this concentration is that in the later years of last century Dante scholarship had reached a state of high development in Britain and elsewhere; it was the age of Moore and Toynbee, when the emphasis had moved from the general to the particular. Dante's significance was only to be arrived at by the minute examination of every part of his work, and its relation to the theology, philosophy, politics, and so forth, which had influenced it. Exactitude was essential and could only be obtained in prose.

Of the 14 translators listed above, we can dismiss O'Donnell and Garnier as negligible; while Sullivan and C. G. Wright are self-designated stylists. The other 10 belong to the literal school; their versions, in
several cases printed with the Italian text, are professedly intended for the student. The deficiencies of the biblical and Spenserian English of Sullivan and Wright have been sufficiently dealt with, and to these 10 only need we therefore devote our attention.

To provide a literal prose translation, even if it aims at being no more than a crib, is not so simple as it sounds. Carlyle, who was the first to attempt the Divine Comedy on this system, came up against an awkward problem, for, as Cayley says:

many passages have required, under Mr Carlyle’s treatment, to be doubly rendered, that is literally in the text, and more perspicuously in the footnotes, or vice versa.

We have already discussed this difficulty more than once. The translator who sets out to produce a crib is very unlikely to rest content with the kind of literal rendering we find in the notes to the school classics, where the text is first reproduced word for word in English as a guide to construing, then rendered more idiomatically. Moreover it is deceptive to talk of a literal rendering of Dante’s meaning because that meaning is not something that can be isolated from Dante’s verses; but up to a point we may permit the crib-writer to ignore some features of the text in a fashion which we could not excuse in a metrical rendering.

Butler and Vernon are extreme literalists. The latter’s translation, however, forming an integral part of his readings, and sometimes combining explanation with translation, may well escape criticism as really belonging to the category of comment and exegesis. Butler’s painful accuracy, on the other hand, shows all too clearly the dangers of over-literality; his language could hardly be called English, and often defeats its own object by being neither exact nor clear. Carlyle’s version, in spite of some inconsistencies, is very much better, and its selection for the Temple
Conclusion (10)

Classics half a century after its first publication was a deserved tribute. Its companion versions, Okey's Purgatorio and Wicksteed's Paradiso, suffer by comparison, for though they have dignity and often appropriateness their over-stylisation, perhaps to some extent modelled on Carlyle, militates against clarity and verges at times on pastiche. Norton succeeded in being as literal, sometimes even more literal than any of those mentioned, but at the same time writing more pleasing English. He is so steeped in Longfellow that we cannot consider him independent, and he owes a great deal to his metrical predecessor; but with the advantage of nearly twenty-five years of additional scholarship, and consequently a better text and many improved interpretations, his version was well worth making and formed a valuable legacy for his successors in turn.

Dugdale and Tozer hover between being literal and readable; they tend to weaken by paraphrase, without securing any corresponding gain. By the time the latter's version was published, the prose translators seemed to have written themselves out for the time being, and the break of over thirty years in their sequence was probably fortunate. Sinclair's resumption of the prose tradition in Britain was closely followed by that of Ayres in America, but there could hardly be a greater contrast. The American is so bad in places, that he might almost be among those dismissed with a mere mention. Sinclair is so good that, but for a certain coldness or indifference towards the poetic qualities of his original, of which we have already spoken, he might be said to have removed the need for another attempt in prose during the remainder of the century. He was the heir to a newer and plainer prose tradition than his fore-runners of forty years earlier, and of course he had great advantages over them in the matter of recent commentary and criticism. He discarded
Conclusion (11)

entirely the attempt to transliterate and the fashion of double rendering which Cayley disliked. Above all he was lavish of his time and effort in striving to attain the 'credible English' on which he insisted; he probably weighed his words more carefully and more patiently than any previous prose translator had done.

Professor J. H. Whitfield in Dante and Virgil (Oxford, 1949) deals with translation in his first essay, and makes a plea for a new prose version; but he mentions so few of the existing ones, and gives so little ground for his dissatisfaction with them, that his argument fails to convince. He avers:

There is one solution which I think in Dante's case is possible: to see how much can be done with a prose which need have no commitments to the building up of a new verse façade, and which can therefore be something other than one extra in the long, and by now inefficacious series of the verse translations. It must not be a prose which abjures poetry, or turns the Divine Comedy into a novel; nor need it be. . . . Such a translation will halt between prose and poetry. That is not wrong, or even inconvenient, since it seems to me the first duty of scholarship to provide new impetus for turning to Dante's text, and for the understanding of Dante's quality and his position not through old clouds, but through a fresh approach. It is in this spirit, and with in mind the lessened hold of Dante in England as compared with fifty years ago, that I have begun this volume with a tentative translation of the beginning of Dante's poem.

The specimen of translation, consisting of Inf. I-V, to which we have referred earlier, is even less convincing than the argument. For instance Whitfield's rendering of III.97-108 is:

Then quiet were the shaggy cheeks of the pilot of the livid marsh, who had wheels of flame about his eyes. But the souls, tired and naked, changed colour, with chattering teeth, when they heard the cruel words. They railed on God and on their parents, on the human race, the place, the time, the seed of their conception and their birth; then drew themselves together weeping fast to this bad bank that waits for all who have no fear of God.

There is some puzzling phraseology here, with what end in view it is hard to say. Norton's version runs:

- 929 -
Thereon were quiet the fleecy jaws of the ferryman of the livid marsh, who round about his eyes had wheels of flame. But those souls, who were weary and naked, changed color and gnashed their teeth, soon as they heard his cruel words. They blasphemed God and their parents, the human race, the place, the time and the seed of their sowing and of their birth. Then, all of them bitterly weeping, drew together to the evil bank, which awaits every man who fears not God.

Sinclair in the corresponding lines has:

On that the shaggy jaws of the pilot of the livid marsh, about whose eyes were wheels of flame, were quiet. But those souls which were weary and naked, changed colour and gnashed their teeth as soon as they heard his cruel words; they blasphemed God and their parents, the human, the place, the time, and the seed of their begetting and of their birth, then, weeping bitterly, they drew all together to the accursed shore which awaits every man that fears not God.

Of the resemblance between Sinclair and Norton we have already spoken; their agreement is to some extent a measure of their excellence. Professor Whitfield's practice certainly suffers by the comparison.

It might be felt that what we lack among the prose versions to date is a plain, modern, idiomatic rendering. Sinclair's language, although he avoids archaism in vocabulary and phraseology, has now the less an element of remoteness. Professor Whitfield feels 'it is a pity that Mr Eliot did not himself exploit the possibilities in the explanatory translations which he appended to his own quotations from Dante's text'. The latter seem no more likely to help us than does the Professor's own experiment.

Mr Eliot's rendering of Inf. XXVI, 112-20 is:

'O brothers!' I said, 'who through a hundred thousand dangers have reached the West, deny not, to this so brief vigil of your senses that remains, experience of the world without men that lies behind the sun. Consider your nature, you were not made to live like beasts, but to pursue virtue and knowledge.'

If this is put alongside the versions of Norton and Sinclair in Appendix I it is seen to differ from them mainly in being less accurate. We might expect to get a lead from Professor Bergin, whose blank verse is plain and vivid, and who rendered one canto (Inf. XI) in prose. Lines 97-105 of this read:
'Philosophy,' he replied, 'to him who heeds her, points out, not in one place alone, how nature takes her course from the divine intellect and its art; and if you will observe your Physics well you will find - after not many pages - that your art follows hers as closely as it can, as the student follows the master, so that human art is, as it were, the grandchild of God.'

Sinclair's version is:

'Philosophy, for one who understands,' he said to me 'notes, not in one place only, how nature takes her course from the divine mind and its art; and if thou note well thy Physics thou wilt find, not many pages on, that your art, as far as it can, follows nature as the pupil the master, so that your art is to God, as it were, a grandchild.'

The gain in directness is slight, and the more modern sound of Professor Bergin's lines is mainly due to the dropping of the second person singular. It contains some hints that might be improved on; but would it get us much further if we rewrote it:

'Philosophy,' he replied, 'in all its branches makes it clear to the attentive student that nature emanates from the divine mind and its art; and if you read your Physics carefully, before you have gone far you will learn that your art follows hers as closely as possible, just as a pupil does his master, and therefore is so to speak God's grandchild.'

Inf. XI is something of a gift to the prose-writer; the same method applied to Ulysses might give us something like:

'Brothers (or Friends, or Comrades, or what you will),' I exclaimed, 'having passed through a hundred thousand dangers, and reached the west, do not grudge the short span of sensual life still left us acquaintance with the uninhabited world which lies in the direction of the sun's course. Think on your ancestry; you were not made to live as dumb animals do, but for the pursuit of virtue and knowledge.'

This kind of thing is much more difficult than might appear at first sight. If done thoroughly it seems unlikely that it would produce anything but a prosaic paraphrase, giving the dry bones of the meaning with little of the poetry, and at the same time losing the chief justification of a prose version which is to help the student by keeping reasonably close to the Italian.
The last two versions listed above, those of Wilkie and Hooper, are mere curiosities and unworthy of further discussion. As to the hendecasyllabic versions, we have already said enough about feminine endings in the articles on these three translators. It may be noted that as long ago as 1881 Scartazzini (Dante in Germania) found an uninterrupted succession of feminine endings 'noioso e stanchevole' in German, 'essendo il genio della lingua tutto diverso da quello dell'italiana'. It is still more so in English, and in discussing it we are brought back every time to the hackneyed but appropriate description, 'intolerable monotony'.

We have seen that the scheme of translation into blank terzine began in English with Pollock, but it was already well established in Germany, and the rendering of Philalethes, which began to appear in 1828 and was completed in 1849, gained a European reputation. The idea was a fairly obvious one; by using unrhymed decasyllables one could concentrate on getting the meaning right without having to twist it to suit the rhyme, and the sense content was such as to enable the Italian to be followed more or less line for line. This principle was enunciated by Philalethes himself in the preface to his first volume (Inf. I-X, 1828):

Bei dieser Vorliebe für Dante regte sich bald in mir ein unbeschreiblicher Drang, sein großes Werk in meiner Muttersprache wiederzugeben und zwar mit möglichster Treue, soweit es der Geist der Deutschen Sprache (und nicht bloß deren Sprachlehre) erlaubt. Zu diesem Endzweck zog ich es vor, zwar genau nach dem Sylbenmaße des Originals, aber reimfrei zu übersetzen. Ich hoffte dadurch auch mir ein
It is essential that the user of blank terzine should recognise this obligation; the only justification for the expedient is to make possible a fairly high standard of accuracy. Poetically, in English at least, it is a thoroughly unsatisfactory form. As long ago as the sixteenth century our ancestors discovered that the secret of continuous blank verse was the avoidance of end-stopping. It is true that in certain circumstances unrhymed decasyllables can be used with wonderful effect in stanzas and end-stopped at that; we need go no further than Tennyson's popular 'Now sleeps the crimson petal' for proof. But where the dimensions are beyond that of the short lyric and the single mood, the effect is one of maddening monotony. Pollock's own effort was a poor one, and was forgotten by the time Longfellow's came to supersede it; Rossetti's Inferno, in spite of the praise bestowed on it by some critics, had many awkwardnesses and never achieved popularity. Longfellow managed his medium on the whole skilfully, and he achieved just what Philalethes had aimed at, an almost literal version with just enough metrical distinction to suggest its poetic origin. The blank terzine cannot, nor were they meant to, stand on their own as giving poetic form to the English; but they can be used, and were used by Longfellow, to add to the actual meaning some suggestion at least of Dante's manner. The measure of his success has already been indicated by examples, and so long as we remember that it must be judged as a kind of improvement on bare prose as an aid to the student rather than as a translation offered on its own merits, we can give him well-deserved credit.

It has been argued that Rossetti, as being even more literal, is better
Conclusion (16)

than Longfellow, but this contention misses the point. Longfellow handles his language in such a way as to give the impression of readable English, so that however much he may pall if read at length, we can refer to him with pleasure and profit for odd terzine and passages, and even recall his best lines with real enjoyment and vivid recollection of the original; whereas Rossetti is seldom better than awkward and might very well have written in prose. Moreover Longfellow's historical importance can hardly be overstressed; he has been the most influential of all English translators and his words and phrases keep reappearing throughout the course of the eighty years that have passed since he wrote, as a glance at Appendix II will show, because they cannot be bettered.

Once the result had been achieved, little more could be done than to make a few improvements here and there. Longfellow, for instance, had many inferior readings and interpretations, and a few actual mistakes. Yet, as we have shown, his version remains superior to the more accurate ones of Henry Johnson and Langdon; partly because neither of them possessed his poetic faculty, partly because, in spite of that fact, they both tried to produce something more poetic. In making this attempt they showed their lack of understanding of the nice balance between prose and verse which is the distinctive feature of blank terzine. To change the measure from a vehicle for a particular kind of translation to a legitimate form of English poetry is impossible; the change can only be carried out by turning it into something else. To introduce variety by overrunning the terzine and smoothing out the awkwardnesses changes it from a justifiable expedient to an inferior form of blank verse. As it turned out the versions of Johnson and Langdon were failures, and deserved nothing better. Longfellow's most successful follower in the same measure was Miss Money, a
fact which probably surprises us as much as her ability to translate Dante at all surprised her family. The secret of her success was that she was not ambitious of writing poetry, but only of putting the Purgatorio into reasonable English; so that, whether she knew Longfellow's version or not, she trod in much the same path, and she had Vernon and Okey to guide her choice of words and interpretations. She had of course no publicity and no influence, so that in spite of her merits she remains unimportant historically.

Of the other translators in blank terzine Miss Fraser and Edwards are quite negligible, the former being merely eccentric and the latter dull and awkward. To the other two, David Johnston and Lowe, we have conceded some good points, but both are somewhat unequal, and neither keeps close enough to the text to justify the use of what Saintsbury described as 'one of the most abominable measures ever invented'.

It might be thought that Saintsbury's opinion of blank terzine would have been modified in the light of later developments, and no doubt the passage in this metre from Mr T. S. Eliot's Little Gidding could be adduced to support the contention that there is no reason why blank tercets should not be poetical. That passage is, moreover, so obviously Dantesque in its conception and execution that we might think it worth while repeating the experiment. Yet in spite of the formal resemblance to Dante, there are great differences between his technique and that of Mr Eliot; for instance of the 24 terzine only 10 end with a full stop. In the first 7 tercets the only strong stops occur in the middle of a stanza, and it is doubtful whether but for the typography many readers would recognise the measure, did not the subject matter immediately refer them to the Divine Comedy. The most striking imitation of Dante:
Conclusion (18)

... Over the asphalt where no other sound was
Between three districts whence the smoke arose
I met one walking, loitering and hurried
As if blown towards me like the metal leaves
Before the urban dawn wind unresisting,
And as I fixed upon the down-turned face
The pointed scrutiny with which we challenge
The first-met stranger in the waning dusk
I caught the sudden look of some dead master
Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled
Both one and many; in the brown baked features
The eyes of a familiar compound ghost
Both intimate and unidentifiable,

might very well pass for a blank verse paragraph; indeed, on the face of it, this bears a stronger resemblance to Milton than does Cary's Vision.

The real invalidating factor is that to translate Dante in a style like this would inevitably involve a remodelling of the original matter to the extent of making a new poem, thus destroying both the value of the version as a literal aid and the ternary structure which is the reason the measure was adopted, bringing us back in the end to blank verse in the ordinary sense.

Blank verse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rogers</th>
<th>Cary</th>
<th>Howard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hume</td>
<td>Vincent</td>
<td>Shaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodey</td>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mixed with prose and rhyme: Bergin

Although there is a no-man's-land where bad blank terzine and bad blank verse merge, when properly handled they are quite distinct. It so happens that one of the most notable practitioners in each came among the first users, though neither was quite first. Just as Longfellow was preceded by Pollock, so Cary came some years after Rogers had made history as the first English translator of a complete cantica, with a rendering in blank verse so bad that we shall not refer to it again, nor need we...
say more of his successors Howard and Hume except that the former, though by no means good, is not nearly so bad as the latter.

Blank verse, long recognised as one of the most flexible and valuable of English metres, was an obvious choice for translating a poem of epic proportions. To write blank verse properly meant abandoning almost entirely the ternary structure, and Cary was wise enough not to attempt a compromise. He was sufficient of a poet to produce a genuine minor classic which, although its popularity has declined somewhat in our day, is in no danger of being forgotten. It so happened that Cary adopted a style which differed very strikingly from Dante's. We have already discussed the issues involved and have emphasised Cary's historical importance, not as influencing the future course of translation, but as providing several successive generations with a bridge which has enabled them to cross at least one of the gulfs which separates Dante's time and work from our own.

Nearly a hundred years elapsed before Cary had a successor worth mentioning. His work had been well enough done to deter those who were in sympathy with his method from emulating him. Meanwhile the main effort was deflected towards rhymed versions, and later towards blank terzine. Even during the first third of the present century only two blank verse translations appeared; one of them, Vincent's Inferno, is hardly worthy of the name; the other, Mrs Shaw's complete Comedy, is unequal and inaccurate. Only in our own day has there been any noticeable revival of interest in blank verse, and of the three such versions produced two are American. The British one, Bodey's, was the first to appear; it is worthy of the high commendation given it, but its circulation was regrettably limited, and there is no chance of its ever becoming so well known as it deserves. Bodey, however, was a competent versifier rather than a poet, and his
success was of the dignified but moderate kind which, had it received more publicity, would have spurred to rivalry rather than discouraged competitors in the same vein.

The American versions, Mr Grant White's and Professor Bergin's, have both appeared since the end of the last war; the former is an amateur scholar, the latter a professional one of some reputation. Though Mr White's translation has some points in its favour, it is less equal, less competent and less accurate than Bodey's. Professor Bergin's, on the other hand, so far as the blank verse part of it is concerned, is the only translation in this medium which can be placed alongside Cary's, although they are poles apart in style, in the sense that it is a genuine re-making of the Comedy in an English form that is truly poetical. Unfortunately it is so far only available in a mutilated form and unattractive format, besides being difficult to obtain in this country; and the blank verse, as well as being interrupted by prose summaries, is here and there embellished with rhymed passages of dubious value. But it is evident that Professor Bergin has seized the vital principle that if a blank verse translation is to have any real rank as poetry the idea of retaining the terzina as a feature must, except very occasionally, almost one might say accidentally, be abandoned. He has further realised that it is equally fatal to poetry to attempt to combine with it any literal adherence to the Italian, and he has wisely forgone all aim of making it a direct aid to the student. It is to be hoped that some day we shall have his translation in its entirety and presented in a less questionable shape; meantime he has shown the possibilities of English blank verse as a medium for translating the Comedy to be still unexhausted, and it will be surprising if his example does not spur others to action.
In spite of the celebrity of terza rima as the measure of Dante's poem, it has never commended itself to poets writing in English. Chaucer toyed with it, but seems to have found it unsatisfactory; Wyatt made some rather clumsy experiments; Shelley revived it, but only as a rhyming device - such poems as Prince Athanase and The Triumph of Life are in terza rima but not in terzine; they are what Professor Bickersteth has called 'rhymed blank verse', i.e. the cadence is that of Alastor. Morris' Defence of Guinevere and Dixon's Mano are the main contributions in this kind during the second half of the nineteenth century, but these also, although printed in tercets, have little kinship with Dante's - through page after page enjambment between the groups of three and strong stops in the middle of the line are the rule. It is almost impossible to quote a passage from any of these poems without beginning or ending with a broken line; whereas from Dante one almost always isolates integral terzine.

The following from Mano illustrates the difference:

So great the multitude thus tossed by fate,
That as a mist they seemed in the dark air,
No Shrimper, who at half-tide takes his freight,
When high his pole-net seaward he doth bear,
   Ever beheld so thick a swarm to leap
   Out of the brine on evening still and fair,
   Waking a mist mile-long 'twixt shore and deep.

Saintsbury, who had an inveterate dislike of the measure in English, argued that those who performed creditably in it did so in spite of their metrical choice, and that the best thing the reader can do is to forget the ternary division altogether. He put forward some reasons for the impossibility of terza rima after Dante's fashion in English, suggesting that the difficulty lies mainly in the fundamental difference between the two languages. Here we are inclined to agree, and to particularise a little further by stressing the point that the predominance of short words and strong endings in English is the main obstacle to reproducing the flowing quality of Dante's terzina. It is the character of our tongue that has led to the formation of the canon that frowns on end-stopping and points to strong medial caesura as the best practice. In addition to this there is the inevitable accent which strong endings throw on the rhyme-words which must for the most part be masculine. Even when the utmost has been done to alleviate this by the use of as many weak endings as possible, the regularity of the rhyme pattern tends to force itself on the attention in a less pleasant manner than do the softer endings of the Italian.

It must be remembered that one frequently alleged obstacle to the use of English terza rima for translating Dante refers properly to translation only—namely the difficulty of finding three rhyming words. In original verse this is no more onerous than it is in many other rhymed forms, and rather less so than in the Spenserian stanza. In a translation, on the other hand, it becomes burdensome in the extreme, for not only must rhymes be found to suit a prescribed meaning (or, too often alas, the meaning distorted to suit the rhymes), but owing to the interlacing the
terzine cannot be isolated, and must always be considered in groups. There is the further difficulty that Dante very often uses his rhyme words for emphasis or to throw his meaning into relief, so that it may well happen that the only English word really suitable for the end of a terzina has no rhymes that can be worked in to suit the preceding lines. That Dante, in spite of the famous asseveration quoted in the Ottimo Comento, was obliged to juggle with his own rhymes occasionally, and to adapt the sense to fit them, has been often alleged, although commentators are by no means agreed as to the examples brought forward. In this connexion the Introduction to Eleanor Prescott Hammond's incomplete translation of the Inferno is interesting, for although she does not make much of her own rhymes, she has investigated Dante's with thoroughness and insight. If the poet himself was reduced to such expedients at times, what chance does the translator have?

Notwithstanding the difficulties we have many more English translations in terza rima than in any other measure. Including the variants described as experimental and defective, there are 30 versions in all. The first generation of translators did not venture on the form at all, Hayley's three cantos being the longest sample until Dayman's Inferno appeared in 1843, although I. C. Wright's device of six-line stanzas, rhymed a b a c b c and printed continuously to look like terzine, came out ten years earlier. Once the flood began, however, it poured without ceasing for over forty years, then after a lull it began again and is still in full spate. Since 1920 there have been 6 complete Comedies (4 of them American), 3 Infernos (2 American) and 1 British Paradiso. In addition to these we have the defective versions of Fletcher and Ramsey.

The translations in terza rima of the period 1850-1920 are on a con-
sistent low level; at their worst they are exceedingly bad, at their best pedestrian and mediocre. The best of them all is Sibbald’s Inferno, as we have shown in dealing with it, but it is by no means in the first class. In spite of the praise accorded to some of them by critics, not to mention the encouraging remarks of friends so often referred to in the prefaces, none of them met with any real success; and while their authors expended their substance in meeting the costs of printing, Cary’s and later Longfellow’s versions went on selling steadily. Leading literary reviews kept expressing their conviction that the writers of terza rima were beating their heads on a stone wall, and when the output tailed off in favour of prose at one end of the scale and all kinds of experiment at the other, it looked as though their gloomy prophecies were to be justified.

The main reason for the inferiority of eighty years’ output of these translations was an almost total lack of verse-craft on the part of their writers. Many of them were men of high intellectual capacity and sound scholarship, but it is to be noted that not one of them was a poet in his own right. It is easy to laugh at their blundering attempts to twist Dante into rhymed English verse; perhaps no one who has not tried it, to the extent of a few cantos at least, realises the heartbreaking labour involved in grinding out some 14,000 lines of difficult and complicated verse to satisfy in some manner the conflicting requirements of sense and sound. What it requires above all else is time. It needs hard work too, no doubt, but not the kind of hard work that is accomplished by setting one’s teeth and saying: ’I will turn out a hundred lines to-day’. The translation of poetry cannot be done to order; the patience needed is not only that of perseverance, but of being willing to wait when necessary, to pass on to some other canto and return later to the unsolved problems
of an earlier one, to force oneself back to the lame expedients and self-condemned *pis-allers* of the first draft. That translators have worked much too fast, and have been more intent on quantity than quality, is evident from some of their prefaces, even if the signs were not so plainly written in their work itself. But even with time and patience at command, a certain degree of aptitude, natural or acquired, is needed for the translation of verse, and that aptitude has been conspicuously lacking. We have stressed again and again the fact that there is a wide gulf between appreciating poetry and writing it; but many enthusiasts seem to have been ignorant of the 'cammin riciso', and have leapt right into the chasm without knowing it. We have already mentioned some of the causes which blind translators to the deficiencies of their work; in particular inability to take a detached view of the translation, tending to merge it with recollections of the original rather than sternly setting them side by side and facing the worst. Among the technical defects the commonest is lack of understanding of how effects are obtained; many who admire Dante's lines seem to be quite unaware of the workmanship that went to producing them. There are also the delusions as to the place of prosody and the function of words in poetry, on which we have already touched. There is the readiness to grasp at a rhyme without pausing to consider its implications; the piling-up of a series of small concessions to make a formidable total. A very common error is failure to look ahead; proneness to concentrate on the terzina in hand without remembering that the next one must rhyme with it, and then being unwilling to go back on one's previous work when it becomes apparent that reasonable rhymes cannot be got. We have drawn attention from time to time in these pages to the shortcomings of translators in these directions.
To Melville Best Anderson belongs the distinction of having restored faith in the possibility of rendering the Divine Comedy in English terza rima. His version was by no means perfect, but it was so very much better than any previously published that even the most hardened critics were taken aback. Undoubtedly his main virtues were patience and conscientiousness rather than poetic ability, and his twenty-one years of labour are a good indication of the kind of time-schedule on which translators in this medium must be prepared to work. The only other terza rima of that period worthy of comparison with Anderson's was Grandgent's; he also did his work with care, but it was too fragmentary to form the basis of even a volume of selections. Anderson's immediate successors were disappointing; in Britain MacKenzie was not much above the level of the many lawyers who had preceded him; in America Father Bandini was well under even the old bad standard (as one might expect from a writer who boasted of turning two cantiche into terza rima in less than three years 'amidst many other occupations'), while Professor Lacy Lockert, pinning his faith to increased rhyming licence, derived little benefit from it, but repeated all the old faults. It is not until we come to the 1930s that the work of Binyon and Bickersteth challenges the supremacy of Anderson's. It is invidious to make over close distinctions here, but we may repeat the view of the Times Literary Supplement front page article:

Bickersteth and Binyon are both more practised executants than Mr Anderson, but with their greater skill goes a greater sophistication which weakens them in their delivery of the essential impact of the narrative.

Here an individual choice must be made; personally I can only add to the analysis already recorded in the relevant articles that while both Anderson and Binyon have points in their favour, I think Professor Bickersteth's Paradiso better than either; better, in fact, than any other sustained
effort in terza rima, and only equalled or surpassed in places by the
brilliant fragments of J. C. Wordsworth. Here, however, it must be added
that it is not implied that the new translators have got rid of all the
defects complained of in their predecessors. They are still full of com-
promise, of lapses, of weaknesses, which make a poor show opposite the
Italian text; but they have faced their task in a sober spirit, having
really taken the measure of it; and the two British writers have, in a
higher degree than Anderson, also the technical equipment required. Of
the three Professor Bickersteth has the advantage of a more thorough un-
derstanding and appreciation of Dante's workmanship than the others, and a
longer apprenticeship in dealing with the mechanics of verse translation
from Italian.

The two latest terza rima translations, one British and one American,
form to some extent a pair. Miss Sayers and Louis How are both determined
to make Dante come alive for an age which does not like to be lectured,
edified or bored. Their enthusiasm, vigour and ingenuity are ample; it is
their conception of what a translation of the Divine Comedy should be that
seems at fault. One rather feels that Dante's own comment: 'e pur
si rida, . . . piú non si richiede' is applicable here, and that the trans-
lators have, through their desire to make Dante popular, been side-tracked
into inventing a Dante of their own to suit the purpose, instead of finding
some way of 'putting across' the real article.

Of the experimental versions, I. C. Wright's was a creditable if not
very brilliant piece of pioneer work, but now only of historical interest.

His rhyme system breaks the poem into stanzas, which is, as we have seen,
unacceptable; and besides we are continually conscious of what Cayley called
his 'boarding-school Shakespeare' style. Bruce Whyte we have agreed to
forget, and it is difficult to take seriously the hendecasyllabic rhymes of Father Cummins. Auchmuty's octosyllables show great ingenuity, but the result is no more than a museum piece. This leaves us with Fletcher and Ramsey, the only exponents in English on a large scale of the Schlegelian terzina with the link-rhyme omitted. Their use of it underlines the contrast between the man who has and the man who lacks technical accomplishment. Fletcher seems to have applied the increased freedom gained by the licence taken to lighten his own labour rather than to improve the result; he is not noticeably better than others who kept to the full terza rima, and he has far more awkwardness and inaccuracy than he should. Ramsey used his added liberty to transform the Italian poem into an English one. It is frankly intended as a substitute for the original, not as a companion to it; but in spite of Ramsey's poetic skill one never feels that he is really at home in the Paradiso. Doubtless there will be other translations of this form, which offers great advantages to those who seek to escape the tyranny of the triple rhyme. It should be possible for a translator of talent and patience to produce a result of higher literary quality than Fletcher's and showing much more resemblance to the original than Ramsey's. To what extent such a version would be acceptable is a matter of opinion. The arguments in favour of omitting the middle rhyme have been set forth repeatedly, from the time of Schlegel onwards, and they are reasonable and convincing. At the same time the abandonment of the link-rhyme is a sacrifice of the first magnitude, and its absence undoubtedly alters the character of the verse and spoils many of its effects. In spite of its difficulties, one feels that those translators who have ability of the kind required, are more likely to attempt the harder form than to rest content with the easier one.
Conclusion (29)

**Experimental Translations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boyd</th>
<th>Bannerman</th>
<th>Parsons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wilstach</td>
<td>Shadwell</td>
<td>Musgrave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potter</td>
<td>S. F. Wright</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Having already dealt with quite a few of the experimental versions under other headings, our last group is a very small one, and is diminished still further by the immediate exclusion from the discussion of Bannerman, Wilstach and Miss Potter, whose deficiencies need not be further exposed. The work of the experimentalists has been mostly of value in eliminating by trial various methods that need not be tried again, or by indicating some line of development that might be fruitful. We have already had an example of the first in the hendecasyllabic renderings, and of the second in the Schlegelian terzine.

Of the five translations still to be discussed four are written in rhymed stanzas: Boyd's in six-liners, Parsons in quatrains (although as we have seen he frequently departed from the strict form), Shadwell's in Marvellians, and Musgrave's in Spenserians. The degree of success obtained is not in any case at all high, and all the evidence goes to indicate that no stanzaic arrangement is likely to answer the purpose.

So far as Boyd is concerned, we can hardly take him seriously; yet, curiously enough, although he produced as hopeless a translation of the Divine Comedy as was ever perpetrated, making every mistake it is possible to think of, one cannot dismiss his version as worthless in the same way as Bannerman's or Wilstach's. With all its absurdities and pomposities, its preposterous padding and ridiculous blunders, it possesses an attraction of which the other bad translations are quite innocent. Boyd is a survivor of that sturdy race of translators who had no qualms about
improving on their authors, knowing the latter to be after all mere foreigners, who had the misfortune not to be born in England - or Ireland. He realised that, despite this misfortune, Dante was a great writer, and worthy of treatment on the grand scale; in a sense the Irishman was paying the Italian the highest compliment he could devise by raising the latter's rude nobility to the cultured heights of the Augustans. Boyd may have been a sycophant and a place-hunter, but he had something of the intellectual breadth and grasp of the Age of Reason leavened with a degree of spiritual insight that was far from negligible.

Over Parsons and Shadwell we may want to linger for different reasons. There is something about the venerable New England poet, whose devotion to Dante extended through a long life-time, that endears him to us, although his medical career smacks of charlatanry, and his translation was persisted in with an almost perverse industry. Like Cary, he felt that a translation of the Divine Comedy must be English poetry; but although he only decided on his metre after much experiment, his choice was not a fortunate one.

As for Shadwell, he is perhaps the most attractive of those who supported a lost cause. We are obliged to write off his eloquent defence of his choice of metre as largely a piece of self-deception, but we cannot help admiring what he made of it, nor resist the charm of his occasional successes. The fact that his patience and ingenuity were so great only serves, however, to underline the futility of the undertaking. His translation, like that of Parsons, neither gained popularity nor exercised influence; but both can be thought of as chance blooms which the connoisseur of Dante translation will continue to savour with pleasure.

This brings us to Fowler Wright, the last name on our list of seventy-six translators, and the most successful innovator of them all. His aim
has been not to translate but to re-create the Divine Comedy in English, and he has carried it off with the skill of a practised writer who understands both word-craft and verse-making. He has no ambition to compete with the scholars or to help the student, and it is no use putting his version alongside the Italian. His choice of metre reminds us of a remark of Saintsbury's in connexion with Mano, when he observes that, if printed continuously, Dixon's poem would not suggest terzine at a first reading but 'blank verse with straggling Lycidas-like rhymes'. These straggling rhymes of Lycidas, ringing their occasional chime as Milton goes his stately way, have a charm that is unique. Mr Wright seldom attains this kind of charm; but the underlying idea is the same - a connecting link which will run through the pages of a long poem giving it continuity without obtruding itself. Saintsbury's remark shows that it is not such a far cry as we might think from the regular terzina to the Lycidas metre - provided of course it is English we have in mind. The delicacy of the rhyme-arrangement in Lycidas itself is hardly suited to Dante's precision and vigour; but the worst defect of Mr Wright's translation is that he is not sufficiently careful in the use of his rhymes. He seems to let them come haphazard in many places, instead of planning his effects in paragraphs, so that his unrhymed lines leave us vaguely dissatisfied and his couplets and triplets jar by their over-emphasis. One would guess too that he is an over-rapid worker, and he could have spent more time to advantage in checking and polishing. Yet his enterprise commands respect both on account of its ingenuity and its verve; it seems unlikely that it will be the last of its kind, for it gives a lead that is almost certain to be followed, which is almost the greatest merit an experimental translation can have.
The Future of Dante Translation in English

It seems certain that the translation of the Divine Comedy into English is likely to go on for some time to come; the excellence of some recent versions is not so superlative as to deter competitors from trying to better them. They are likely, moreover, to be produced in considerable variety and for various purposes, ranging from 'cribs' for the benefit of students to rec Creations deliberately intended to rank as English poetry. The blank terzine form seems the least susceptible of further development unless someone can give it new life; all the other forms are liable to attract new practitioners, and no doubt some are already at work.

We may ask cui bono? but there is no clear single answer. The Divine Comedy is there like Everest, with the difference that the latter has in the end been scaled, whereas the former will remain for ever untranslatable; its would-be conquerors will try all manner of routes and reach different vantage-points, but the summit is unattainable. If, when we think on the effort that has already been spent on the task, we feel it a pity that it was not diverted to some more useful purpose, we must comfort ourselves with the reflection that utility is not a measuring-rod for literature, and that, as we have already noted, the translator may have felt amply rewarded, even if no one else derived any benefit beyond the purely material one of keeping printers and papermakers at work. When a critic in the Saturday Review wrote of Wilberforce's version:

We rather admire the fact of a Master of the Supreme Court translating Dante than the translation itself, he was expressing something that we have felt over and over again in examining these translations. We have mental glimpses of I. C. Wright wrestling with currency problems in his counting-house, Minchin arguing with Indian
farmers in his office at Vizagapetan, Plumptre snatching a hasty meal between a university lecture and an evening class, Wheeler hurrying from consulting room to hospital; and we remember that in the background of their minds were the terzine of Dante, for whose compelling magic they were trying to devise some equivalent in their own tongue, counting the day a happier one if a few more lines were completed by nightfall. They made a poor enough job of it, no doubt, but they might have been much worse occupied. A man whose thoughts are full of the Divine Comedy has a reasonable chance of living at a rather higher level than if his spare time reading is detective fiction or even Hansard. Indeed one of the regrets felt on comparing the list of present-day translators with that of the past is that the bankers and lawyers and doctors have left Dante to the professional authors and scholars. The latter are admittedly more competent to deal with the business of translation; but it is doubtful whether many of the professional men whose predecessors translated Dante in their spare time use their leisure nowadays even to read the translations of others, let alone the Italian.

In looking to the future there is one question that must not be shirked. We have made it clear that we consider the standard of several recent translations to be much higher than that of the older ones; that there is hardly, for instance, a tolerable terza rima version before Anderson, but several good ones since; we have commended the prose of Sinclair and the blank verse of Bodey and Bergin. Does this mean that we have really advanced in a literary and poetic sense, that we are better writers and translators than our grandfathers were? In a way it does. We have no space here to enter into the highly controversial issues as to the nature of Victorianism, or even to discuss whether such a thing ever existed, but this much may be
reasonably asserted without demonstration — that during the latter half of the nineteenth century conventional views on the nature and function of poetry predominated, and were if anything hardened by the efforts of those who rebelled and broke away from what they considered a dead tradition. That tradition was perhaps never more powerful than during the last few years of its existence, when the shadow of the axe already lay across it. When we recall Bridges’ thirty years’ delay in publishing Hopkins’ poems, and the effect of that publication when it did take place in 1918, we have an epitome of the change in outlook of the literary-minded public during the period. It was not a change in poetry itself, but in what was received as poetry. The poets had been at work all the time, especially in France, where the foundations of what we call ‘modern poetry’ were laid; although the term is deceptive, for it is only modern in regard to its date of composition and in those external fashions which necessarily change. What came about was a realisation that for something like half a century public opinion had been exploring a blind alley through identifying certain attributes or accompaniments of poetry with poetry itself. The extravagances which culminated in dadaism and kindred distempers were merely symptoms of the extent to which poetic practice had parted company with cultivated taste. Other battles on more practical issues were fought earlier — Ibsen’s plays, for instance, or Jude the Obscure: all these were phases in a reorientation of value judgments. This is not in the least to say that we live in a new and better age, but merely that conditions are such that the man of letters with a trained and balanced mind is more likely to be able both to appreciate Dante’s poetry and to reproduce it better than he could have done half a century ago. We are, and with some reason, less complacent than were our Victorian ancestors, and
our doubts have at least made us more sensitive to the voices on the wind because we realise that the summits to which we cling are by no means sheltered from their blast.

That a new spirit is abroad in Dante comment and criticism throughout Europe and America has been evident these last fifty years. We have already said something of this in the Introduction, and how far it has affected European countries other than our own is briefly glanced at in Appendix III. We began this work by citing Professor d'Entrèves' reminder that the Divine Comedy must be regarded as something more than the sum of its parts, that at its core there lies something that is missing from every inventory or analysis, the miracle that can only be accepted. We may very fitly close it by quoting the closing words of Professor Theophil Spoerri's Einführung: