

THE CHARGE OF HERESY AGAINST DANTE.

Dante Hérétique, Revolutionnaire, et Socialiste, par Eugène Aroux.
Paris, 1854.

Discorso sulla Divina Commedia, per Ugo Foscolo. London, 1825.

Sullo Spirito Antipapale, che produsse la Riforma, per Gabriele Rossetti.
London, 1832.

Gli Eretici d'Italia, Discorsi Storici di Cesare Cantù. Discorso VII.
Turin, 1865.

PROTESTANT polemics are so oppressed by the consciousness of the modern origin of their system that they would fain seek relief in the idea that the Lutheran movement was foreshadowed, at least, long before its author's time; that during the centuries when Roman influence darkened the Christian world, there were always a few pure spirits, some clear intellects, to cherish devotion to the true and the good, and who may, therefore, be regarded as precursors of the "Reformation." Alongside of Arnold of Brescia, John Huss, Jerome of Prague, and Wyklif, a place is given to Dante, child though he was, and pre-eminently, of Catholic theology and of Catholic philosophy. And it is remarkable that a few Catholic writers have also denied the orthodoxy of the first of poets. The most famous of these is the prince of paradoxists, the Jesuit Hardouin, who, in 1727, styled Dante an impostor wearing the mask of orthodoxy. In the time of Bellarmine there appeared "An Advice to Beautiful Italy," by a "French Nobleman," in which the author defended the thesis so flattering to the innovators. He was triumphantly refuted by the great controversialist; and also, in a "Reply to the Mystery of Iniquity" of M. Duplessis, by the able Dominican, Coeffeteau. The skeptical Bayle warns us to bear in mind that there are good reasons for doubt as to both the orthodoxy and heterodoxy of Dante. In our own day Ugo Foscolo and Gabriel Rossetti, men of much literary acumen, flattered the prejudices of their English hosts by proclaiming their great countryman "as desirous of reforming Christianity and Italy by means of heavenly revelations." But no author has shown more erudition in the ungracious task of aspersing the memory of the divine poet than Eugene Aroux, who arrives at the conclusion that Dante's works are socialistic, revolutionary and heretical. Cantù has ably refuted the arguments of Aroux, as, indeed, this

author seems to have admitted.¹ According to him, as well as according to Foscolo, Rossetti, etc., the Paterine sect was never entirely exterminated in Italy, but continued as a species of Freemasonry, preserving and transmitting certain doctrines—"mysteries of Platonic love," as Rossetti terms them—which tended to subvert the authority of the Church and of civil governments. Aroux thinks that this heresy was cherished by all the chivalry of the day, and especially by the survivors of the Templars, who, he insists,—and with some reason,—established a new school of Masonry. Dante thinks Aroux wished to show that the Papal supremacy was the visible kingdom of Satan, manifested in the "comedy of Catholicism." When Dante says that salvation will be his who follows "the pastor of the church," he signifies that we must obey the head of that hidden sect of which he was an adept. That is, Dante was a Templar, and devoted to a revenge of the suppression of his order. The word "love," says Aroux, is the key of all the mysteries in Dante's works. Francesca is something more than the mistress of Paolo; by her we must understand the poor little protesting church of Rimini, then a nursery of heresy. This is a strange theory. It is hard to understand how Dante would form so sublime a work, in which everything must always be taken in a sense different from the plain and natural one. And even though Aroux had given us the key to the poet's meaning, we cannot understand why Dante so frequently comments on himself in such a manner that the Guelphs must suppose one thing, the Ghibellines another.

Now, it is certain that in the time of Dante men did not regard him as a heretic, socialist, or (in the modern sense) a revolutionist. He died clothed in the habit of the Franciscans. His remains were lovingly laid to rest in a church, and a Papal legate—more recognizant than the poet's countrymen of his merit—erected a mausoleum to his memory. Immediately, all over Italy chairs were established and endowed for the explanation of the "Comedy," and often in churches. Thus, by a decree of the Florentine government, dated August 7, 1793, Boccaccio was appointed to such a chair in the church of St. Stephen.² By command of the fathers of the Council of Florence, the "Comedy" was translated into Latin prose by the Franciscan, John of Serravalle. In the Logge of the

¹ "The system of Aroux was not received by the studious; he complained that I was the only one in Italy who paid it any attention. I wrote him an open letter against his system, and he recognized in it not only a friendly courtesy, but certain arguments which he could not answer."—CANTU, *loc. cit.*

² MANNI: *History of the Decameron*, p. I., c. 29.—Boccaccio occupied this chair three years, and was succeeded by Antonio Piovano in 1381, and by Philip Villani in 1401. Bologna soon imitated Florence, and for ten years Dante was explained by Benvenuto dei Rambaldi. Pisa assigned the same charge to Bartolo da Buti, in 1385. (SALVINI; *Consular Annals of the Florentine Academy*, in preface. MAZZUCHELLI: *Italian Writers*, v. II., pt. 4. MURATORI: *Writers on Italian Matters*, v. XX.)

Vatican, our poet is depicted among the fathers of the Church. His portrait was hung in the church of Santa Maria del Fiore, in Florence, as it is now found in the façade of Santa Croce. "And when," remarks Cantù, "united Italy wished to celebrate, in 1865, the sixth centenary of his birth, the bitterness which has taken possession of our revolution manifested itself by proclaiming the hostility of Dante toward the Popes and religion. But while the official mob wallowed in such mud, the best thinkers and writers of Italy declared the truth, showing us Dante, the poet, angered against Boniface VIII., the personal enemy of the Pontiff's faction and indignant because of the abuses of the Papal court—then oppressed by kings and by demagogues; but ever reverent to the keys, and devoted to the faith of which Rome is the centre and the legitimate interpreter."

We propose to cite several of the many passages of the "Comedy" which prove Dante's orthodoxy. But before doing so, we would draw the attention of the reader to some facts which explain, though they do not justify, all the virulence which the poet manifests toward certain Pontiffs. Like nearly all unappreciated and persecuted men, Dante showed his humanity in peevishness and anger. Add to this that he was an intense Ghibelline, both by philosophy and in practice. He was heartily devoted to the idea of the emperor's universal monarchy, having nothing of the modern *Italianissimo* in his composition. All who opposed the emperor were mercilessly excoriated; witness his treatment of Lombardy, Genoa, Pisa, Pistoja, and his assignment of Brutus and Cassius to the lowest hell, alongside of Judas. He could condemn an emperor only when he would not visit "his" Rome, weeping because of her master's absence. Witness his curse on Albert.¹

¹ In his "Italiani Illustri," art. *Dante* (Milan, 1873), Cantù asks whether the divine poet had any aspirations for Italian unity, and he replies: "Yes, but after his own fashion, and in accordance with his own philosophical, theological, juridical, ethical and political principles, which he always combined. In his mind, the law of movement and the end of the universe were in the unity of the creative order, as thought St. Augustine, in whose steps walked St. Thomas, considering the two cities of God and of the world as joined on earth, but after death separated, one leading to eternal felicity, and the other to unspeakable misery. The real sources of Dante's inventions were the "City of God," the "Summa" of the Angelic Doctor, and the "Itinerarium" of St. Buenaventura, which contemplate the world coming from God in creation; returning to Him and resting in Him. Wisdom creates the world, Providence moves it, Justice completes it. The foundation of right is found in order ("Monarchy," II., 7). Even in politics there is a unity which harmonizes the various human societies and leads them to itself. The human race is regarded as one individual forming a part of the order of creation, according to which his end is the knowledge of truth. To attain this, a tranquility of mind is necessary, and, therefore, universal peace is the proximate end of human society, and an indispensable means whereby the human race may obtain its end. Peace can be procured only when there is some person who will unite men according to their divisions in nations and states; a universal monarch, who is the principle of the unity of the human race as a civil society, just as the Pope is that

Again, Dante was a "White." The expulsion of this faction from Florence had been caused by the favor shown by Boniface VIII. to Charles of Valois; consequently Boniface was to be treated as an enemy. Finally, Dante combated not so much the pontiff-kings as he did the spirit of democracy. When he declaimed against Constantine, it was not because of the Romagna supposed to have been given to the Pope, but because of the imperial dignity which, according to the Guelphic pretensions of the poet's time, had been transferred to the Pontiff. He shows his mind in his "Monarchia," b. III., c. 10, where he reproves Constantine for leaving to the Popes the imperial power, which was one and indivisible. Again, Dante greatly extolled Charlemagne, the asserter of the Pope's temporal sovereignty; and he also exalted the countess Matilda, the most profuse of all donors of dominion to the Holy See. No, the reason for Dante's imperialism must be sought elsewhere than in hostility to the Pope's temporal patrimony. "Dante wished for reforms," says Cantù, "but he felt that they would be sterile without one supreme master over all human society, who would cause it to progress, who would draw from Christian principles their practical consequences. In the mind of Dante, the emperor should rule all kings, and, therefore, he should rule even the king of Rome; while Boniface VIII. and John XXII. claimed for themselves the imperial authority, especially when it was disputed."

He who is familiar with the writings of Dante can scarcely avoid an impression that his invectives against certain Pontiffs are prompted by his intense devotion to and his consummate respect for the chair they occupied. Sometimes, indeed, it is evident that he is actuated by party spirit; but, as a rule, he attacks only such

principle in the moral society. But earthly happiness is ordered toward eternal blessedness, the true end of society; hence the monarch ought to be subject to the Pope, as a son is to his father, and as the moon, a lesser luminary, depends on the sun, the greater luminary. There is no question, then, of an emperor according to the Ghibelline mind, but of a head unifying civil society, without violence, without interfering with the various states; one who will remove causes of disturbance and scandals; who will make the world more similar to God, by making it one; who will be above cupidity, and, therefore, a dispenser of justice to all, peoples and princes. This universal emperor is the continuator of the monarchy of the Romans, which was like a confederation of peoples preserving, under one head, their own institutions; a patronage rather than an empire (*'Patrocinium orbis terrarum potius quam imperium poterat nominari'*—*Mon.*, II., 5); and the world never was and never will be so perfectly ordered as when it was subject to the one prince and commander of the Roman people. So testifies the Evangelist St. Luke (*Conviv.*, IV., 5). Therefore, when Dante sees every Italian province at war, and even citizens of the same town in civil strife, he calls on the Roman emperor to come and restrain such ferocity, and to unify Italy in the peace of order, without any interference with the particular institutions of each province. Dante thought that such unity would ensure the greatest amount of liberty of life and movement; such unity was very different from the centralization advocated by modern mediocrities, and very far removed from the servility of the Ghibellines of his day."

Pontiffs as he deems guilty of acts bordering, at least, on simony; only such as he regards as abusers of the excommunicating power. An Italian, he was naturally and rightly averse to a removal of the Papal residence from the legitimate seat of the Papacy. This sentiment of indignation was unshared only by those who saw no injury, no insult, to the tiara in making it an appendage to the crown of a foreign ruler. All Italian authors of that day, from the saintly Catherine of Sienna to the buoyant Petrarch, cursed the wretched blunder of Clement V., and begged the Pope-kings to return to their proper and only legitimate home. It is true that Dante locates Pope Anastasius II. in hell, because of alleged sympathy with the heresy of Photinus ("Hell," cto. xi.); but the poet erred in accepting the authority of Martin the Pole, Gratian, and others, who asserted that Anastasius restored the Eutychian, Acacius, and communicated with the Acacian, Photinus. For it is certain, according to the testimony of Evagrius (b. iii., c. 23), Nicephorus (b. xv., c. 17), and Liberatus ("Nestorian Cause," c. 18), that Acacius died before the election of Anastasius II.; and that Martin the Pole, Gratian, etc., confounded Pope Anastasius II. with the emperor of the same name, who favored Acacius, and was killed by lightning. With this one exception, Dante's invectives against certain Pontiffs came from motives which have no relation with Catholic faith.

There is scarcely a heretical doctrine which Dante does not explicitly condemn; not one does he even implicitly favor. There is not one apparently anti-Catholic passage in his writings which must not be interpreted in a Catholic sense. We would prefer to quote the Italian text, but as that is not familiar to every reader, we shall use the English version by the Protestant Cary, warning the reader that in many instances the Anglican minister very much weakens the force of the original.

I. Harken to Dante speaking of the Roman Pontiff, "Parad.," cto. 24:

"O everlasting light
Of him, within whose mighty grasp our Lord
Did leave the keys."

And in "Hell," cto. 2;

"It seems in reason's judgment well deserv'd;
Sith he of Rome, and of Rome's empire wide,
In heaven's empyreal height was chosen sire;
Both which, if truth be spoken,¹ were ordain'd
And 'stablished for the holy place, where sits
Who to great Peter's sacred chair succeeds."

¹ Here Cary's Protestantism induces him to misinterpret, or at least to minimize, the poet's meaning. The text has "to tell the truth."—"a voler dire il vero."

In "Hell," cto. 19, Dante thus addresses Pope Nicholas III. :

" *If reverence of the keys restrain'd me not,
Which thou in happier time didst hold, I yet
Severer speech might use.*"

In "Purgatory," cto. 20, he thus speaks of Sciarra Colonna's insults to Boniface VIII., much as he hated that Pontiff:

" To hide with direr guilt
Past ill and future, lo! the flower-de-luce
Enters Alagna! in His vicar, Christ
Himself a captive, and His mockery
Acted again! Lo! to His holy lip
The vinegar and gall once more applied!
And He 'twixt living robbers doom'd to bleed!
Lo! the new Pilate, of whose cruelty
Such violence cannot fill the measure up.
Oh, Sovran Master! when shall I rejoice
To see the vengeance, which Thy wrath well-pleas'd
In secret silence broods?"

In "Parad.," cto. 30, he thus recognizes the holy office even of Clement V., the cause of the "Babylonian Captivity":

" Nor may it be
That he who in the sacred forum sways
Openly or in secret, shall with him
Accordant walk; whom God will not endure
I' th' holy office long."

II. "Parad.," cto. 5, Dante thus acknowledges the teaching authority of the Church:

" Be ye more staid,
O Christians; not, like feathers by each wind
Removable: nor think to cleanse yourselves
In every water. Either Testament,
The Old and New, is yours; *and for your guide
The shepherd of the Church. Let this suffice
To save you.*"

And in the "Convivio," tr. iv., c. 5, Dante thus reproves heretics: "Most vile and most foolish little beasts, who presume to speak against our faith, and who wish to investigate the ordinances of God; accursed be ye, and your audacity, and all who follow ye!"

III. In "Parad.," cto. 25, he thus recognizes the necessity of good works:

" Hope, said I,
Is of the joy to come a sure expectance,
Th' effect of grace divine *and merit preceding.*"

IV. In "Purg.," cto. 16, the free will of man is admitted:

“ Brother, he began, the world is blind ;
 And thou in truth com'st from it. Ye, who live,
 Do so each cause refer to heaven above,
 E'en as its motion of necessity
 Drew with it all that moves. If this were so,
 Free choice in you were none; nor justice would
 There should be joy for virtue, woe for ill,
 Your movements have their primal bent from heaven ;
 Not all; yet said I all; what then ensues ?
 Light have ye still to follow evil or good,
 And of the will free power.”

V. In “ Purg.,” cto. 13, the souls in purgatory pray to the saints :

“ And when we pass'd a little forth, I heard
 A crying, ‘ Blessed Mary ! pray for us ;
 Michael and Peter ! all ye saintly host ! ’ ”

And in “ Parad.,” ctos. 32 and 33, Dante represents Mary's “ own faithful Bernard ” as exhorting him to pray to her :

“ Grace then must first be gain'd ;
 Her grace, whose might can help thee, then in prayer
 Seek her ; and with affection, whilst I sue,
 Attend, and yield me all thy heart.”

Then the poet pours forth his praises to the

“ Virgin mother, daughter of thy Son,
 Created beings all in loveliness
 Surpassing, as in height, above them all ;

 So mighty art thou, lady ! and so great,
 That *he who grace desireth, and comes not*
To thee for aidance, fain would have desire
To fly without wings.”

Seldom, indeed, has Mary's intercessory power been more lauded than in this address, and if the reader will peruse it in its entirety he will probably agree with us in regarding it as not unworthy of a place in the liturgy of the Church.

VI. In “ Parad.,” cto. 5, Dante thus evinces his respect for the monastic vows :

“ Of what high worth the vow, which so is fram'd
 That when man offers, God well-pleas'd accepts ;
 For in the compact between God and him,
 This treasure, such as I describe it to thee,
 He makes the victim, and of his own act.

 The matter and the substance of the vow
 May well be such, to that without offence,
 It may for other substances be exchang'd,
 But at his own discretion none may shift
 The burden on his shoulders, unreleas'd
 By either key, the yellow and the white.”

Here, as in "Purg.," cto. 9, l. 118, Dante alludes to the golden key of science and the silver one of power, which the mediæval artists always placed in the hands of St. Peter. The idea, taken from the "Glossary in cap. 16 Matth.," was that, before using the absolving or dispensing power, the Pontiff should use the golden key of science to discover the true state of affairs.

VII. The whole "Purgatory" is a proof of Dante's belief in the Catholic Doctrine of a middle state of suffering for sin, and of the efficacy of prayer for the dead. But we would ask the reader's attention to the following passages. In "Hell," cto. 1, Virgil promises to consign Dante to the care of a more worthy spirit, who will lead him, after his visit to hell, to a region where he may view those

" who dwell
Content in fire, for that they hope to come,
Whene'er the time may be, among the blest."

In "Purg.," cto. 26, a suffering soul begs the poet

" say to Him
One ' Pater Noster ' for me, far as needs
For dwellers in this world, where power to sin
No longer tempts us."

And in cto. 11, our relations to the souls in purgatory are thus noticed :

" Well beseems
That we should help them wash away the stains
They carried hence, that so, made pure and light,
They may spring upward to the starry spheres."

VIII. Hear Dante's encomium on Sts. Francis and Dominick, the founders of the two great mendicant orders. In "Parad.," cto. 11, he says :

" The Providence that governeth the world,
In depth of counsel by created ken
Unfathomable, to the end that she
Who with loud cries was spous'd in Precious Blood,
Might keep her footing toward the Well-Beloved,
Safe in herself and constant unto Him,
Hath two ordain'd, who should on either hand
In chief escort her ; one seraphic all
In fervency ; for wisdom upon earth,
The other splendor of cherubic light.
Forth on his great apostleship he (St. Dominick) fared ;
Like torrent bursting from a lofty vein ;
And, dashing 'gainst the stocks of heresy,
Smote fiercest, where resistance was most stout."

Two passages, above all others, are confidently adduced as indicative of Dante's heresy. In "Hell," cto. 19, the poet addresses Pope Nicholas III. in these bitter terms :

“ Your avarice
O'ercasts the world with mourning under foot
Treading the good, and raising bad men up,
Of shepherds like to you, th' evangelist (“ Apoc.,” 17)
Was ware, when her, who sits upon the waves,
With kings in filthy whoredom he beheld,
She who with seven heads tower'd at her birth,
And from ten horns her proof of Glory drew,
Long as her spouse in virtue took delight.”

Nevertheless, Dante acknowledges Nicholas III. as supreme pastor :

“ *If reverence of the keys restrain'd me not*
Which thou in happier time didst hold, I yet
Severer speech might use.”

In “ Purg.,” cto. 33, Dante is said to exult in the coming of Luther :

“ Without an heir forever shall not be
That eagle, he, who left the chariot plum'd,
Which monster made it first and next a prey.
Plainly I view, and therefore speak, the stars
E'en now approaching, whose conjunction, free
From all impediment and bar, brings on
A season in the which, one sent from God,
Five hundred, five, and ten, do mark him out,
That foul one, and the accomplice of her guilt,
The giant both shall slay.”

Here Luther is supposed to be predicted in the “ five hundred, five, and ten,” the Roman numbers, D. V. X., forming the word *dux* (leader). And in the following passage the aspersers of Dante's name see the Roman Church in the “ beast,” and Luther in the *veltro*, “ greyhound.”

“ This beast
At whom thou criest, her way will suffer none
To pass, and no less hindrance makes than death ;
So bad and so accursed is her kind,
That never sated in her ravenous will,
Still after food more craving than before.
To many an animal in wedlock vile
She fastens, and shall yet to many more,
Until that greyhound come, who shall destroy
Her with sharp pain, He will not life support
By earth nor its base metals, but by love,
Wisdom, and virtue, and his land shall be
The land 'twixt either Feltro.”

Much as we admire Dante, we are not disposed to credit him with the gift of prophecy. “ Most of our poet's interpreters,” says Lombardi,¹ “ hold, either as certain or as probable, that the indicated leader is the emperor Henry VII.” But Lombardi himself

¹ In his *Notes on the Comedy*, 3d Rom. edit., 1821, p. 484.

contends that Can Grande, Lord of Verona, is signified. And certainly the passage applies more naturally to Can Grande than to Luther. Dante shows us, in "Parad.," cto 22, that he relied on this great baron, the chosen leader of the Ghibelline league, to reform the world. Again, we know that Dante had received many favors from Can Grande, and it is quite likely that he would adopt this poetical and easy method of showing his gratitude. Finally, the indicated birthplace or residence of the leader cannot be assigned to the German friar; whereas Verona, the fief of Can Grande, was midway between Feltro of Romagna and Feltro of the Marca Trevigiana—"the land 'twixt either Feltro."

The passages above quoted are as strong as any adduced to show the heterodoxy of Dante. In fact, the only argument worthy of attention is the one based upon a supposition which is purely gratuitous; namely, that the "Comedy," like many other Italian and Provençal compositions, was conceived and executed according to a metaphorical system, in order to deceive the Inquisition. Such is the theory of Rossetti and of Aroux; and as the reader may be curious to know how it is developed, we shall show, by way of example, how the latter author interprets the interview between the poet and the spirit of the unfortunate Francesca de Rimini ("Hell," cto. 5). We must imagine Dante writing as follows, in the midst of his presumed grief for the persecution of the Waldensians of Rimini:

"How many sweet thoughts of peace and evangelical charity, how many hopes of a brighter future—' *quanti dolci pensier, quanto desio*,'—have our brethren nourished! And this has brought them to so fearful a fate—' *menò costoro al doloroso passo!* '—Oh, daughter of the valleys (*Valdese*), buried in grief, humble church so cruelly treated, thy martyrs inspire me with pity, and force me to feign orthodoxy—' *Francesca, i tuoi martiri a lagrimar mi fanno tristo e pio*.'—But tell me; when thou wert timidly desired by the noble hearts of Rimini—' *al tempo dei dolci sospiri*,'—how did they manifest their trembling yearnings—' *i dubbiosi desiri*,' for the religion of love? Then Francesca replies: If thou wouldst know the first germ of our love—' *la prima radice del nostro amore*,'—I, a poor Vaudoise obliged to feign orthodoxy, will tell you—' *come colui che piange e dice*.'—Thou knowest that our propaganda was effected by means of Provençal sectarian poems and romances. One day, while we were enjoying a reading—' *lettura* '—the text of which was taken from the Albigensian romance of Lancillotto, and which narrated how that knight of the Holy Grail embraced the religion of love—' *come amor lo strinse* '—we thought that no profane eyes were watching us—' *solì eravamo e senza sospetto*.'—Frequently, this teaching—' *quella lettura* '—(in French freemasonry, *instruc-*

tion) enthralled us—'gli occhi ci sospinse'—and at the same time, frightened us—'scolorocci 'l viso'; but one passage of that book triumphed over our hesitation—'un punto fu quel che ci vinse.'—

When we read how the lover of the faith gave her the kiss of fraternity, and in exchange received from her the "consolation" (*consolamentum*)—"il disiato riso esser bacciata da cotanto amante"¹— "Then this people of Rimini—'cotanto amante'—kissed me on the lips, adored me, and received from me the 'consolation,' although trembling for fear of Rome—'la bocca mi baccio tutto tremante.'"

Let the reader compare this paraphrase with the original. Undoubtedly he will proclaim it ingenious, but just as surely will he deem it far-fetched and unwarranted. The strain to which the inventor subjected himself is evident in his work as a whole, and in every detail; its utter gratuitousness, its natural belonging to its native region of the "perhaps," is shown by an absolute and ever persistent absence of anything approximating to proof. Rossetti exercises his imaginative faculties over a larger field than that of Aroux; he devotes five volumes to convince us that the mediæval Italian poets were not at all erotic; that they were constantly engaged in manifestations of supernal truths—that their Beatrices,

¹ Speaking of the Waldensian Cathari, Aroux says that, in times of persecution this ceremony of consolation, "the most imposing in their ritual, was performed at night, and with great mystery. Numerous lighted torches symbolized the baptism of fire. The assembly was arranged in a circle (the perfect figure), and around a table covered with a white cloth, and serving as an altar (VAISSETTE: *Proofs*, III., 224, 387). *The brethren assemble around the altar, and form a circle, leaving a space for the most excellent master* (*Light on Masonry*, 116). The minister, placed in the centre, gave to the neophyte the doctrinal instruction, blessing him thrice (as did St. Peter to Dante—*tre volte cinse*), and receiving from the new brother a promise of fidelity to the rules of the Cathari—an engagement similar to that of the Masons. Among other obligations, he bound himself never to sleep 'without shirt and drawers'—*sine camicia et braciis*, as did the Templars, and to be ever accompanied by his companion—*socius* (MARTENE, *New Anecd.*, F., 1776; *Arch. Inq. Carcass.*, 1243, Dt. 22, f. 110 a). The minister then gave the brother the Gospels to kiss, and invoked upon him the Paraclete. Then all the brethren recited the Lord's Prayer, and the service ended with the reading of the first seventeen verses of the Gospel of St. John,—a reading reproduced in certain degrees of Masonry. In token of his initiation, the brother received a linen or woollen cloth for a garment, 'to be worn over the shirt' (*Lib. Sent. Inq. Tolos.*, 247). Women wore a cord under the breasts (*Arch. Inq. Tolos.*, 1273, Dt. 25, f. 60 a). It is remarkable that, in our day, the Masonic apprentice is introduced into the lodge of reception with one foot bare and the other sandaled, with a cord around the neck (*Light on Masonry*, 8), and the Mark Master wears the cord in four coils around his body (*Ibid.*, 96). The new Perfect received on his lips the 'kiss of fraternity,' and it was then passed around. The perfect ones, men and women, called each other brothers and sisters; Dante uses these terms, and with *fratè* and *suora* instead of *fratello* and *sorella* (and so could any Italian, without incurring the suspicion of Catharism). All these ritualistic usages are perpetuated in Masonry, and are found in the *Comedy* with the most minute details."—*Proofs of the Heresy of Dante, drawn from the fusion, about 1311, between Albigensian Masonry, the Templars, and the Ghibellines*; Paris, 1857.

Lauras, etc., were not flesh and blood women, but symbols of a free and pure Church, unencumbered by the errors of Rome. But, says Cantù, "without descending to particulars, the slightest notion of æsthetics would cause one to reject a system which would make of poetry an allusion, not an inspiration; which would celebrate persons and charms which had no reality. And to what purpose? The multitude, for whom poetry is written, would not understand it; only the initiated would appreciate such allegories, and they are supposed to have already received a revelation of the mystery. And if they so carefully disguised their hatred of Rome, why did they afterwards burst into open invectives? It is very well to say that Dante calls upon sound intellects to admire the doctrines hidden under the veil of his verses, but why proclaim the allusions if they were to remain a secret? And if he dared not declare the truth, how could he boast of a voice which "reached the highest summits," and vaunt himself as "no timid friend of truth;" how could he hope, thereby, to be famous in the minds of those who would look upon his times as ancient? Would he not merit rather a place among the "ill spirits both to God displeasing and to His foes," or among the hypocrites who are "in the Church with saints, with gluttons at the tavern's mess?"¹

¹ In the *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, 1836, p. 400, vol. vii., series 4, Schlegel remarks: "The Middle Age had a great taste for allegory. It was manifested in painting, and dramatic poetry commenced with allegory. The personification of a general or abstract idea has nothing equivocal; but in poetry, despite its clearness, it is always somewhat cold. In order that an ideal being may appear real, it must assume individual traits. Dante, in his personification, so combined the ideal and individual character that they cannot be separated. It is the natural man who travels through the three regions where souls dwell; but it is also the poet Dante Alighieri, with all his biographical peculiarities. Virgil represents reason, unenlightened by revelation, but yet he is the Latin poet whom the Middle Ages revered as a great sage. Beatrice represents the science of divinity, but she is the same Beatrice Portinari whose chaste beauty made so profound an impression on Dante's youthful heart. Is there anything unlikely in this combination? The beautiful is a reflection of the divine perfections in the visible world, and, according to Platonic fiction, a pure admiration moves the wings of the soul toward the heavenly regions." Probably no modern author was better constituted, both by nature and by study, to appreciate Dante than Silvio Pellico. In one of his unedited poems, cited by Pianciani (*Ragionamenti*, 1840), and called *La Morte di Dante*, he says: "I have never been able to understand why Dante, simply because a few of his magnificent verses are animated by an angry spirit, appears to anti-Catholics to be one of their coryphees; that is, to be an enraged philosopher, not believing in Roman Christianity, or, at least, professing another faith. If the poem of the Florentine is read in good faith, and without party spirit, it will show that he was a thinker who was an enemy to schism and heresy, and submissive to all Catholic teachings."