

# **THE NEW LIFE OF DANTE ALIGHIERI**

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The New Life of Dante Alighieri by Charles Eliot Norton & Dante Alighieri

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**CHARLES ELIOT NORTON & DANTE ALIGHIERI**

**THE NEW LIFE OF  
DANTE ALIGHIERI**



THE NEW LIFE  
OF  
DANTE ALIGHIERI

TRANSLATED BY  
CHARLES ELIOT NORTON

Però se le mie rime avran difetto,  
Ch' entreran nella loda di costei,  
Di ciò si biasmi il debole intelletto,  
E 'l parlar nostro, che non ha valore  
Di ritrar tutto ciò che dice Amore.

BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY  
*The Riverside Press, Cambridge*  
1893

Dm 3.3.1.5.3



*John ...*

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## THE NEW LIFE.

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### PROEM.

IN that part of the book of my memory before which little can be read is found a rubric which says: *Incipit Vita Nova* [The New Life begins]. Under which rubric I find the words written which it is my intention to copy into this little book, — and if not all of them, at least their meaning.

### II.

Nine times now, since my birth, the heaven of light had turned almost to the same point in its own gyration, when the glorious Lady of my mind, who was called Beatrice by many who knew not what to call her, first appeared before my eyes. She had already been in this life so long that in its course the starry heaven had moved toward the region of the East one of the twelve parts of a degree; so that at about the beginning of her ninth year she appeared to me, and I near the end of my ninth

year saw her. She appeared to me clothed in a most noble color, a modest and becoming crimson, and she was girt and adorned in such wise as befitted her very youthful age. At that instant, I say truly that the spirit of life, which dwells in the most secret chamber of the heart, began to tremble with such violence that it appeared fearfully in the least pulses, and, trembling, said these words: *Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi* [Behold a god stronger than I, who coming shall rule over me].

At that instant the spirit of the soul, which dwells in the high chamber to which all the spirits of the senses carry their perceptions, began to marvel greatly, and, speaking especially to the spirit of the sight, said these words: *Apparuit jam beatitudo vestra* [Now has appeared your bliss].

At that instant the natural spirit, which dwells in that part where our nourishment is supplied, began to weep, and, weeping, said these words: *Heu miser! quia frequenter impeditus ero deinceps* [Woe is me, wretched! because often from this time forth shall I be hindered].

I say that from that time forward Love lorded it over my soul, which had been so speedily wedded to him: and he began to exercise over me such control and such lordship, through the power which my imagination gave to him, that it behoved me

to do completely all his pleasure. He commanded me oftentimes that I should seek to see this youthful angel; so that I in my boyhood often went seeking her, and saw her of such noble and praiseworthy deportment, that truly of her might be said that word of the poet Homer, "She seems not the daughter of mortal man, but of God." And though her image, which stayed constantly with me, gave assurance to Love to hold lordship over me, yet it was of such noble virtue that it never suffered Love to rule me without the faithful counsel of the reason in those matters in which it were useful to hear such counsel. And since to dwell upon the passions and actions of such early youth seems like telling an idle tale, I will leave them, and, passing over many things which might be drawn from the original where these lie hidden, I will come to those words which are written in my memory under larger paragraphs.

### III.

When so many days had passed that nine years were exactly complete since the above-described apparition of this most gentle lady, on the last of these days it happened that this admirable lady appeared to me, clothed in purest white, between two gentle ladies who were of greater age; and,