

**THE DIVINE
COMEDY; VOLUME
ONE; HELL**

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The divine comedy; Volume one; Hell by Dante Alighieri & C. E Wheeler

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DANTE ALIGHIERI & C. E WHEELER

**THE DIVINE
COMEDY; VOLUME
ONE; HELL**



Drogi

DANTE ALIGHIERI.
From the bronze bust at Naples.

DANTE ALIGHIERI

THE
DIVINE COMEDY

TRANSLATED BY

C. E. WHEELER



VOLUME ONE

HELL

LONDON: J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

I HAVE been enabled to increase the value of this attempt to render the *Divine Comedy* into English, by the addition of the arguments and notes from the Temple Edition. I owe this great privilege to the kindness of the distinguished editor of that edition, the Rev. Philip Wicksteed, who extends his sympathy to all attempts to do honour to Dante. The arguments and the longer notes are from his own pen; the latter are signed with his initials. The notes to the text are taken from those prepared for the Temple Edition by Dr. Oelsner with only such modifications as were necessary to adapt notes to the Italian original into notes to a particular translation. The editor of the Temple Edition is in no way responsible for any of this translation: he has only allowed me to reinforce its shortcomings with his most admirable expositions and explanations, and I desire to express here my gratitude for his kindness. My debt to his edition, however, 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 to me.

HELL

CANTO I

DANTE finds himself astray in a dark Wood, where he spends a night of great misery. He says that death is hardly more bitter than it is to recall what he suffered there; but that he will tell the fearful things he saw, in order that he may also tell how he found guidance, and first began to discern the real causes of all misery. He comes to a Hill; and seeing its summit already bright with the rays of the Sun, he begins to ascend it. The way to it looks quite deserted. He is met by a beautiful Leopard, which keeps distracting his attention from the Hill, and makes him turn back several times. The hour of the morning, the season, and the gay outward aspect of that animal, give him good hopes at first; but he is driven down and terrified by a Lion and a She-wolf. Virgil comes to his aid, and tells him that the Wolf lets none pass her way, but entangles and slays every one that tries to get up the mountain by the road on which she stands. He says a time will come when a swift and strong Greyhound shall clear the earth of her, and chase her into Hell. And he offers to conduct Dante by another road; to show him the eternal roots of misery and of joy, and leave him with a higher guide that will lead him up to Heaven.

Midway along the highroad of our days,
I found myself within a shadowy wood,
Where the straight path was lost in tangled ways.

- Ah! had I words to tell, if any could, 4
The fierce harsh aspect that wild forest wore,
If I but think thereon my fear's renewed!
- So bitter is it, Death is hardly more; 7
But to make plain the good I found,—'twere well
To say what other fate I met before.
- How I came there, in truth I cannot tell; 10
Sleep lay so heavy on me in that hour,
That, dreaming, out of my true path I fell;
- But when above I saw the mountain tower, 13
There where the valley ended whence had flowed
The fear, which on my heart had set its power,
- I looked on high, and lo! its shoulder glowed 16
Already in the rays of that fair sun
That guides men right, wherever lies their road.
- Then was the fear a little past and done, 19
Which deep within my heart-springs had endured,
That night, through which in sorrow I had won;
- And like a man, by chance from death secured, 22
Who, panting, struggles from the sea to land,
Then turns to view his peril, ill assured,
- So, in my mind still trembling and unmanned, 25
I turned and looked along the gloomy strait,
Where living soul can never hope to stand.