

THE NEW LIFE

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The New Life by Dante Alighieri

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DANTE ALIGHIERI

THE NEW LIFE

THE
NEW LIFE

BY
DANTE/ALIGHIERI

ITALIAN TEXT WITH ENGLISH
TRANSLATION

EDITED BY
LUIGI RICCI



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1903

PREFACE

THIS Edition of the *Vita Nuova* has been prepared with the sole purpose of helping those students who wish to read the work in the Italian original, as written by Dante. It does not claim to supersede either Sir Theodore Martin's scholarly and learned translation, or the poetical and free version of D. G. Rossetti. It is a practical invitation to English students of Dante to read his works in Italian, the only way now left open to them of becoming acquainted with Dante's genius and ideas. More than seven thousand books on Dante have increased to such a point the difficulties of studying his works that to the bewildered student, mercilessly tossed on the stormy waters of contradictory commentaries and of subjective criticism, nothing is left but to take shelter in the safe haven offered by the Italian original—that is to say, if he wishes to know what Dante thought and

said and not what his commentators think that Dante said, or should have said.

The reading of the *Divina Commedia* should be preceded by that of the *Vita Nuova*, which is its indispensable introduction. In this immortal work, the greatest ever written by man on the eternal subject of Love, and in which the Italian poet has dignified, exalted, and glorified Woman to the highest ideal of perfection, the reader will become acquainted with Beatrice—Dante's Beatrice—and will be able to dismiss with a smile the innumerable Beatrices evolved from the inner consciousness of Dante's commentators.

My best thanks are due to all those Members of the Dante Society who have given me their valuable help in the preparation of this translation.

THE EDITOR.

22 ALBEMARLE STREET,
LONDON, W.
11th February 1903.

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LA VITA NUOVA

La Vita Nuova

I. In quella parte del libro della mia memoria, dinanzi alla quale poco si potrebbe leggere, si trova una rubrica, la quale dice: *Incipit Vita Nova*. Sotto la quale rubrica io trovo scritte le parole, le quali è mio intendimento d'assemblare in questo libello, e se non tutte, almeno la loro sentenza.

II. Nove fiate già, appresso al mio nascimento, era tornato lo cielo della luce quasi ad un medesimo punto, quanto alla sua propria girazione, quando alli miei occhi apparve prima la gloriosa donna della mia mente, (la quale fu chiamata da molti Beatrice, i quali non sapeano che si chiamare.) Ella era già in questa vita stata tanto, che nel suo tempo lo cielo stellato era mosso verso la parte d'oriente delle dodici parti l'una d'un grado: sì che quasi dal principio del suo anno nono apparve a me, ed io la vidi quasi alla fine del mio nono anno. Ella apparvemi vestita di nobilissimo colore,

The New Life

I. In that part of the book of my memory, before which little could be remembered, a motto is found, which says: *Here beginneth the New Life.* Under which motto I find written the words that it is my intention to perpetuate in this little volume, and if not all, at least their meaning.

II. Already nine times, since my birth, had the sun returned to the same point, according to its revolution, when the gracious lady of my imagination first appeared to my eyes, who was called Beatrice¹ by many who did not know her name. She had already been in this life so long that in her time the starry heaven had revolved towards the east the twelfth part of a degree²: so that she appeared to me almost at the beginning of her ninth year, and I saw her almost at the end of my ninth year. She appeared to me dressed in

¹ Beatrice = She who confers blessedness.

² The twelfth part of a century, eight years and four months, as stated in *Convito*, ii. 6 and 15.

umile ed onesto, sanguigno, cinta ed ornata alla guisa che alla sua giovanissima etade si convenia. In quel punto dico veracemente che lo spirito della vita, lo quale dimora nella segretissima camera del cuore, cominciò a tremare sì fortemente, che apparla ne' memoni polsi orribilmente; e tremando disse queste parole: *Ecce Deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi.* In quel punto lo spirito animale, il quale dimora nell'alta camera, nella quale tutti li spiriti sensitivi portano le loro percezioni, si cominciò a maravigliare molto, e parlando specialmente allo spirito del viso, disse queste parole: *Apparuit jam beatitudo vestra.* In quel punto lo spirito naturale, il quale dimora in quella parte, ove si dimostra lo nutrimento nostro, cominciò a piangere, e piangendo disse queste parole: *Heu miser! quia frequenter impeditus ero deinceps.* D'allora innanzi dico ch' Amore signoreggiò l'anima mia, la quale fu sì tosto a lui disposata, e cominciò a prendere sopra me tanta sicurtade e tanta signoria, per la virtù che gli dava la mia immaginazione, che mi convenia fare compiutamente tutti i suoi piaceri. Egli mi comandava molte volte, che io cercassi per vedere quest'angiola giovanissima: ond'io nella mia puerizia molte fiate l'andai