

DANTE'S
DIVINA COMMEDIA



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DIVINA COMMEDIA

ITS SCOPE AND VALUE.

FROM THE GERMAN OF
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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

“THE scope and value of the *Divina Commedia*” is not a subject which interests merely the student of classic poetry, mediæval history, or the Italian tongue. In the present, even more than in the past, the poem holds its place, apart from its artistic merit, as a profound and comprehensive treatise on the principles of human conduct, and the end and worth of life. Most diverse, however, are the interpretations it receives. Writers, politicians, and statesmen of the foreign “liberal” school see in its pages the first expression and the strongest defence of their theories; while, on the other hand, theologians, religious, and bishops are among the most strenuous defenders of its orthodoxy. At Florence, in 1865, young Italy crowns the bust of the poet as the herald of free thought and revolution; at Ravenna, in 1857, Pius IX. places a wreath on his tomb, as a witness to his Catholic loyalty and faith. What then is the true teaching of the *Commedia*, and whence arise these conflicting judgments? Dr. Hettinger seeks for a reply by a method comparatively little used. He takes the poet’s own teachers, the Fathers and Schoolmen, as his guides, and shows, from their writings, the source, as he thinks, of Dante’s song, and therewith its true interpretation. For this mode of exposition Dr. Hettinger is eminently fitted. His great work, the *Apologie des Christenthums*, of which translations