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Reading and Collecting Dante in America: Harvard College Library and the Dante Society

Christian Y. Dupont

IT TOOK THE BETTER PART OF A MORNING TO MOVE IT, BUT NO MORE.¹ By noon, on Friday, October 18, 1912, building supervisor Frank Carney could record in his pocket diary that the last of the 2,907 volumes comprising the Dante Collection had been crated, passed through a chute down to a waiting truck, and carried off to temporary storage in Randall Hall.² In a few short weeks, the remaining bookshelves would be emptied and the hollowed carcass of Gore Hall torn down so that a new library of titanic dimensions could be erected in its place, the Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library.

At the time, the Dante Collection at Harvard was neither the only nor the largest such collection in America. The distinction for having the most extensive collection had belonged to Cornell for nearly two decades.³ Meanwhile, the University of Notre Dame had quietly begun assembling a collection on the poet that would soon grow to several thousand volumes,⁴ and other institutions, such as the University of Pennsylvania,

1 Much of the research for this essay was conducted while I was a Joan Nordell Visiting Fellow at Houghton Library in 2002–2003. For their generous support and assistance, I wish to express my gratitude to William P. Stoneman, Florence Fearrington Librarian of Houghton Library, and his staff, especially Dennis Marnon, as well as to the staff of the Harvard University Archives. I also thank Anita Israel, Archives Specialist at Longfellow House–Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site. I am indebted to James Turner and Linda Dowling for reading and commenting on earlier drafts.

2 Harvard University, Library, Records, Frank Carney, Diary of moving books from Gore Hall, 1912, Harvard University Archives, UA III 50.29.12.3, entry for October 18, 1912.

3 For a history of the Fiske Dante collection at Cornell, see my essay “Collecting Dante from Tuscany: The Formation of the Fiske Dante Collection at Cornell University,” *Studies in Bibliography* 58 (2007–2008): 185–210.

4 At the beginning of the twentieth century, Reverend John A. Zahm, C.S.C., began assembling a similarly comprehensive Dante collection at the University of Notre Dame, though it remained at the time little known and little used; see Christian Y. Dupont, Louis Jordan, and Theodore J. Cachey Jr., “The John A. Zahm Dante Collection,” in *What is Written Remains: Historical Essays on the Libraries of Notre Dame*, ed. Maureen Gleason and Katharina J. Blackstead (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press,



Figure 2. Detail of illuminated initial *N* from the opening of the *Inferno* from the copy of the 1481 Florentine edition of the *Commedia* purchased by Charles Eliot Norton while he was in Venice in 1871. Norton was as much a connoisseur of Italian art as he was of Dante. Dante Alighieri, *Comento di Christophoro Landino fiorentino sopra La comedia di Danthe Alighieri poeta fiorentino* (Florence: Niccolò della Magna, 1481), fol. ai recto. Houghton Library, pf Inc 6120 (A). Detail 13 x 10 cm; letter 8 x 8 cm.

1994), 85-104; Christian Y. Dupont, "Collecting Dante in America at the End of the Nineteenth Century: John Zahm and Notre Dame," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 95, no. 4 (2001): 443-481; and Christian Y. Dupont, "Giulio Acquaticci e John Zahm collezionisti di Dante," in *Quei battenti sempre aperti: Gli Acquaticci e Treia nella cultura marchigiana. Atti del Convegno di Studi, 4 novembre 2000* (Treia: Accademia Georgica, 2002), 99-154.

the University of Vermont, and the Providence Public Library (Rhode Island), had received substantial donations of Italian literature from private collectors.⁵ As early as 1892, when Harvard librarian William Coolidge Lane and Charles Knowles Bolton published their *Notes on Special Collections in American Libraries*—the first directory of its kind—a handful of libraries reported having thematic collections on Dante numbering in the hundreds of volumes. These included the Peabody Institute Library (now part of The Johns Hopkins University), the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University), Columbia College (later Columbia University), St. Vincent College, and the Newberry Library.⁶

Harvard's Dante Collection was, however, the first such collection to be established at an American institution and the one that gave rise directly or indirectly to those that would follow. It sprang up from the roots laid down during the course of the nineteenth century by George Ticknor, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, and especially Charles Eliot Norton.⁷ Those roots nourished the reading and collecting of works by and about Dante, and brought forth translations, commentaries, and interpretative essays. These activities, in turn, were nurtured through the foundation of the Dante Society, which provided the impetus and the means to form a distinct Dante Collection in the Harvard College Library designed to support the burgeoning American interest in the poet's works, life, and influence.

In this manner, a muted yet noteworthy revolution was wrought, as Dante—and Italian literature, art, and culture more broadly—gained appreciation in the maturing United States, overcoming the dismissive and even despising prejudice against modern languages and literatures that was characteristic of the early federal period and its

5 The University of Pennsylvania received the Francis Macauley collection of Italian literature between 1901 and 1903; see Theodore Wesley Koch, *Dante in America: A Historical and Bibliographical Study* (Boston: Ginn and Co., reprinted from *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Dante Society, May 19, 1896*), 63. The George P. Marsh Library, presented to the University of Vermont, included some 2,400 volumes of Italian literature and philology according to William C. Lane and C. K. Bolton, eds., *Notes on Special Collections in American Libraries* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Library, 1892), 15. Lane and Bolton also noted that the Providence Public Library had received a gift of 670 volumes of Italian literature from Albert Jenkins Jones together with funds to support further acquisitions (61). Harvard University Archives has an interleaved working copy of *Notes* that includes annotations, clippings, and other inserts about additional special collections, including the Fiske Dante Collection at Cornell University (UA III.50.28.92). Lane had apparently planned to issue an updated edition of the volume.

6 Lane and Bolton, *Notes*, 4, 60, 42, 4, and 24, respectively.

7 I examine from a more critical and interpretative perspective Norton's central role in the American reception of Dante and Italian studies in "Charles Eliot Norton and the Rationale for American Dante Studies," in Aida Audeh and Nick Havely, eds., *Dante in the Long Nineteenth Century: Nationality, Identity, and Appropriation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 248-265.

pervasive spirit of Neoclassicism. As demonstrated by Angelina La Piana's seminal study⁸ and more recently by Kathleen Verduin,⁹ Dante was introduced through currents of British Romanticism and then transmuted by Transcendentalism. From there, the American appropriation of Dante proceeded through a dynamic interplay of reading and collecting that is strongly evidenced in the formation of the Dante collection at Harvard and the related establishment of the Dante Society.¹⁰ In order to read Dante, the key figures involved in those enterprises devoted efforts to acquiring works by and about the poet, sharing them with one another, spreading their enthusiasm to their students and other readers, and then, in several cases, placing the fruits of their collecting in Harvard College Library, thereby opening them up to more readers and inspiring other collectors.

GEORGE TICKNOR

Prior to leaving for his first European trip in 1815, George Ticknor, the pioneering historian and critic of Spanish literature who was soon to become the first professor of modern languages and literatures at Harvard, complained that he had "made several attempts to read Dante, and found it not only difficult to get a copy, but impossible to get

8 Angelina La Piana, *Dante's American Pilgrimage, 1800-1944* (New Haven, Conn.: Published for Wellesley College by Yale University Press, 1948).

9 See Kathleen Verduin, "Dante in America: The First 100 Years," in *Reading Books: Essays on the Material Text and Literature in America*, ed. Michele Moylan and Lane Stiles (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 16-51, as well as her two more recent essays: "Grace of Action: Dante and Longfellow," *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 128 (2010), and "Emerson, Dante, and American Nationalism," in Audeh and Havelly, *Dante in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 266-283. For a literary-critical perspective on the flourishing of Dante Studies in the United States, particularly during the twentieth century, see Giuseppe Mazzotta, "Reflections on Dante Studies in America," *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 118 (2000): 323-330.

10 The historical perspectives on the establishment of the Dante Society offered here are meant to complement the treatment of the subject by George H. Gifford, "A History of the Dante Society," *Seventy-Fourth Annual Report of the Dante Society, with Accompanying Papers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Dante Society of America, 1956), 3-27. For a historical account of the society that builds upon Gifford and takes the narrative through to the society's centennial, see Anthony J. De Vito, "The First Hundred Years of the Dante Society," *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 100 (1982): 99-132. Portions of Gifford's essay were drawn verbatim, though without citation, from a previously unpublished essay by Longfellow's grandson to which he had access; see Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, "Longfellow and Dante," transcribed and edited by Christian Y. Dupont, in *Dante Studies* 128 (2010): 221-278. See also Christian Y. Dupont, "Chronicling Longfellow's Interest in Dante: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana and Joseph Chesley Mathews," in *Dante Studies* 128 (2010): 191-220, especially 213.

help in reading.”¹¹ Following his arrival in Göttingen, Ticknor received the assistance he desired from a certain Mr. Balhorn, a lawyer and tutor to the young princes of Lippe, to whom he was introduced through a mutual acquaintance. “Balhorn knew everything about Dante,” according to Ticknor, and so he struck with him a quiet bargain, recalling that “a brother of my friend Mr. James Savage had sent me from Hamburg a box of very fine Havana cigars, and I found that Herr Balhorn would read and explain Dante to me, and consider some of those fine cigars—so rare in Germany—a full compensation.”¹²

Ticknor was still in Göttingen in November 1816, when the invitation from Harvard arrived asking him to accept the newly established and endowed Abiel Smith Professorship of French and Spanish Languages and Literatures. The offer allowed him two years to prepare his lectures while continuing his European travels and supplied him with a thousand dollars to purchase books.¹³ From Germany, Ticknor journeyed to Paris and then to Rome, where he finally sent firm notice of his acceptance almost a year later. On his way through Geneva, he purchased a pocket-sized edition of the *Divina commedia* that would become his constant companion on the remainder of his sojourn and for decades thereafter, and in which he would periodically add his own annotations.¹⁴ In Rome and in other cities he visited, Ticknor used a portion of his Harvard book money to acquire works on Italian language and literature, including some twenty editions of Dante from the most ancient to the most recent, a set of Tiraboschi’s *Storia della letteratura italiana*, and the volumes that had thus far appeared in a Milanese series of Italian classics.¹⁵ Probably because they were purchased with Harvard funds, Ticknor did not include any of these or later Dante acquisitions in the large donations of books he began making in 1860 to the Boston Public Library, of which he was one of the principal founders. Rather, he retained them in his personal library throughout his life. It was not until 1896, some twenty-five years after his death,

11 George S. Hillard, ed., *Life, Letters, and Journals of George Ticknor*, 2 vols. (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1876), 1:85.

12 Hillard, *George Ticknor*, 1:85–86, quoted in Koch, *Dante in America*, 19.

13 La Piana, *Dante’s American Pilgrimage*, 41, n. 23.

14 Dante Alighieri, *La Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri, edizione formata sopra quella di Comino del 1727*, 3 vols. (Venice: Vitarelli, 1811), Houghton Library, TDn 8.2*. An inscription on the title page reads: “Geo. Ticknor / Geneva Sep. 15. 1817.” According to Koch, *Dante in America*, 21–22, “[Ticknor] was in the habit of jotting down his favorite rendering of a word or passage on the margins of a copy of the Venice edition of 1811, which was his *vade mecum*. ‘I bought it in Geneva in 1817,’ says he to his daughter in an unpublished note of 1853, ‘and from that time have made my chief studies of Dante in it, taking it with me on my travels in Europe then and . . . in 1835–38. Add to this my manuscript notes in three quartos and you will have pretty much all I know about Dante.’” The three volumes of Ticknor’s manuscript notes on Dante are held in the Rauner Special Collections Library at Dartmouth College, Rauner Manuscript Codex 002166.

15 Angelina La Piana, *La Cultura Americana e l’Italia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1938), 143.

that his heirs donated some ninety-nine Dante-related volumes to the Harvard College Library.¹⁶

Ticknor used the works he acquired abroad to support his teaching at Harvard, which he proposed to model after the standards and practices of German universities, arguing at length for a general reform of the curriculum.¹⁷ The College Overseers resisted most of his efforts, but he did succeed in enlarging the scope of his own department, introducing courses in German and Italian in 1825. Believing that students needed both sound reading and speaking abilities, he hired native instructors to teach the four modern languages under his supervision while he lectured on philology and literature. His most successful appointment was in Italian. A well-cultured and competent instructor, Pietro Bachi attracted increasing numbers of students over the years. The solid linguistic grounding that Bachi gave his students and the use he made of the *Commedia* in his advanced classes permitted Ticknor to offer a special course on Dante beginning in 1831.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

When in 1834 Ticknor expressed his intention to resign his professorship, he counseled Harvard president Josiah Quincy to appoint Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in his place. Longfellow had held a similar post, created in imitation of Harvard, at Bowdoin College since 1829. Quincy made the offer, on condition that Longfellow return to Europe for a year and a half to improve his German (like Ticknor, Longfellow had spent three years studying abroad, including a full year in Italy, prior to his appointment at Bowdoin). Longfellow was also given a sum equivalent to that given Ticknor for the equivalent purpose of buying books.¹⁸

16 As explained farther below, the Ticknor donation was accessioned into a special “TDn” classification; see Harvard University Library, *Italian History and Literature*, 2 vols., Widener Library Shelflist 51-52 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), 51:507-10. In the old manuscript shelflist of the Dante collection kept in the Widener Library periodicals reading room, the TDn classification is listed at the end of volume 3. An inspection of the “Dn” Dante Collection volumes still shelved together as a call number class in a section of the Widener Library stacks shows that some of the Ticknor items were classified as “Dn” rather than “TDn.” See, for example, Widener Library, Dn 85 and Widener Library, Dn 250.8, the latter of which is a collection of several rare pamphlets Ticknor acquired during his second European tour. It is possible that these volumes were placed in Harvard College Library prior to the 1896 donation.

17 See David B. Tyach, *George Ticknor and the Boston Brahmins* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), esp. 113-117, and Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 117-120.

18 Carl Leonard Johnson, *Professor Longfellow of Harvard* (Eugene, Oregon: University of Oregon Press, 1944), 18: “The sum voted for Ticknor and Longfellow was the customary amount given to professors for books abroad, and remained so for another half century.”

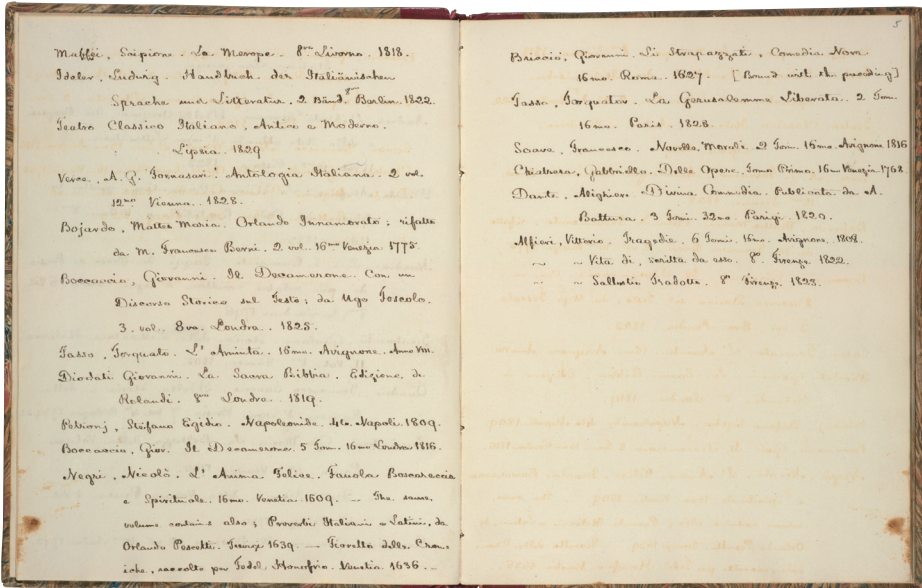


Figure 3. Longfellow compiled this inventory of books he owned around 1834, perhaps in anticipation of the book-buying he would do while traveling in Europe the following year. The inventory is divided into sections by language, beginning with Italian, which includes some thirty-five titles—among them, in the column on the right, the miniature three-volume Parisian edition of the *Commedia* that he received as a gift from George Washington Greene. Houghton Library, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (9). Opening: 21.5 x 33 cm.

An early unpublished inventory of books owned by Longfellow survives among his papers at Houghton Library.¹⁹ Compiled sometime after the early part of 1834—perhaps as memorandum of what he already possessed in preparation for his European study and book-buying tour—the small volume includes eighteen pages of brief author-title descriptions and imprints grouped by language, beginning with Italian and continuing with Spanish, French, German, English, and finally Greek and Latin. The Italian section contains some thirty-five titles, including the three-volume quarto edition of the *Commedia* based on the Codice Bartoliniano (Udine, 1823), as well as a three-volume pocket-size edition (Paris, 1820) that he, like Ticknor, kept with him for constant reading and reference. An inscription on the title page of each volume of the Paris imprint indicates that the set was presented to Longfellow while he was in Rome in 1828 by his friend George Washington Greene, who had acquired it in Paris

19 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, [Lists of books on languages], Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 1340 (9).

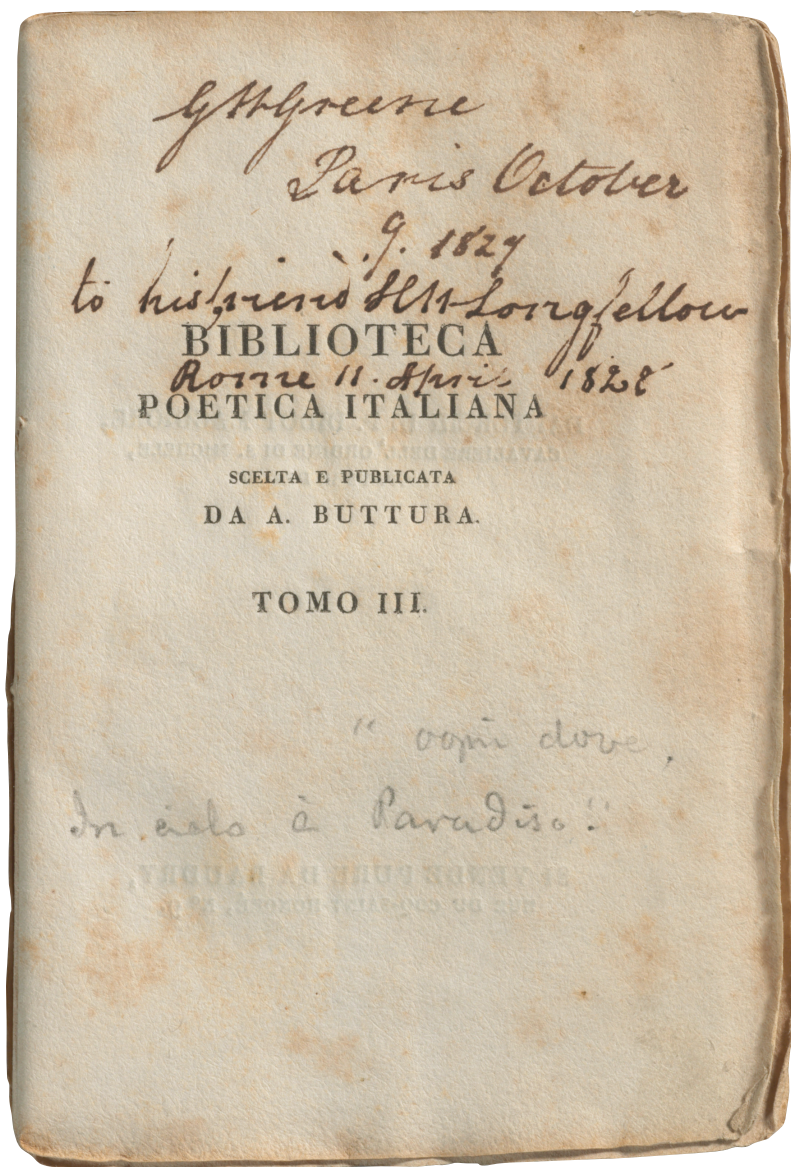


Figure 4. Title page of the third volume of the miniature Parisian edition of the *Commedia* that Longfellow received from his friend George Washington Greene while they were traveling together in Rome in April 1828. Below Greene's inscriptions, Longfellow has transcribed in pencil a verse from *Paradiso* (3:88-99): "ogni dove / In cielo è Paradiso" (everywhere in heaven is Paradise). Dante Alighieri, *La Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri pubblicata da A. Buttura*, 3 vols. (Paris: LeFevre, 1820). 10 cm. Longfellow House–Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Family Papers Collection (LONG 27930), Series XVII, Separated Materials; Subseries 7, Literary Career, Box 57. Reproduced with permission.

a few months earlier.²⁰ The first item listed in the inventory is a contemporary four-volume edition of the *Vocabolario degli Accademia della Crusca* (Verona, 1804–1806), in which Longfellow recorded that he paid eighteen dollars for the set at an auction of books from the library of Joseph Green Cogswell held in February 1834.²¹ Cogswell had studied with Ticknor in Göttingen, and had earned his praise during a stint as Harvard College Librarian from 1821–1823.

Other titles on Longfellow's list include Veneroni's *Complete Italian Master* (London, 1827), Pietro Bachi's *A Comparative View of the Italian and Spanish Languages* (Boston, 1832), and *Rudiments of the Italian Language* (Boston, 1832), together with sets of Nardini's *Saggi di prose e poesie de' più celebri scrittori d'ogni secolo* (London, 1796), Tiraboschi's *Storia della letteratura italiana* (Florence, 1805), and Quadrio's *Della storia della ragione d'ogni poesia* (Bologna, 1739–1752). This last work, according to an inscription in the first volume, Longfellow bought for \$2.50 a volume at the sale

20 Dante Alighieri, *La Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri pubblicata da A. Buttura*, 3 vols. (Paris: LeFevre, 1820). The pocket-size Paris edition is among the Dante volumes still kept at Longfellow House. Because of its miniature dimensions, it is housed separately from the main library collection in the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Family Papers Collection, Longfellow House–Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, Series XVII, Separated Materials, Subseries 7, Literary Career, Box 57. The inscription on the title page of each of the three volumes reads: "GWGreene / Paris October / .9.1827 / to his friend HWLongfellow / Rome 11 April 1828"; see J. Chesley Mathews, "Longfellow's Dante Collection," *ESQ: Journal of the American Renaissance* 62 (Winter 1971): 12, item 11, which I have recently edited for a special Longfellow bicentennial issue of *Dante Studies*: Joseph Chesley Mathews, "Longfellow's Dante Collection," updated by Christian Y. Dupont, in *Dante Studies* 128 (2010), 279–306. Note that in this paragraph and hereafter, full bibliographical citations with accession or call numbers are provided only in cases where copy-specific information is discussed; otherwise, parenthetical references to place and date of publications are given in the text as a ready means for identifying the relevant edition. Longfellow House refers to the former home of Elizabeth Craigie on Brattle Street in Cambridge where Longfellow had rented rooms while he was a professor at Harvard and which Nathan Appleton bought and gave to Longfellow and his daughter Fanny Appleton when they married in 1843. Since 1972, the home has been managed by the National Park Service, hence the official designation, Longfellow House–Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, in citations for materials held in its archives.

21 See *A Catalogue of Books, from the Library of J. G. Cogswell, Being a Rare Collection of Works on Natural History, and in Foreign, English and Miscellaneous Literature, to be Sold at the Auction Room of J. L. Cunningham, on Wednesday the 26th of February, at 9 o'clock, a.m.* (Boston: [Cunningham], 1834). Following the failure of the experimental Round Hill School that Cogswell had founded in Northampton, Massachusetts, with George Bancroft, Cogswell went to Raleigh, North Carolina, to assume the direction of a similar academy. Some years later Cogswell was appointed as the first librarian of the Astor Library in New York City.

of the library of Francis Adrian Van der Kemp, which was held in Boston in 1830.²² Also represented in Longfellow's inventory are Crescimbeni's works on the beauty and history of the *vulgar poesia* (Venice, 1730), which Longfellow likewise acquired from the Van der Kemp sale. There also appear editions of Alfieri (1808, 1822, and 1823, the second of which is noted as a gift from Greene), Boccaccio (1818, 1825), Boiardo (1775), Tasso (1789, 1828), and several lesser-known authors, together with an octavo edition of Diodati's Italian translation of the Bible (London, 1819).

It is unclear which of the 119 titles that J. Chesley Mathews describes in his inventory of Longfellow's Dante collection—many of which I examined myself in preparing this essay and which still are kept in the bookcases at Longfellow House—were acquired by Longfellow during his travels in Europe between April 1835 and the beginning of his professorship at Harvard in December 1836.²³ In a letter to his father from Rotterdam in October 1835, Longfellow mentions buying books for Harvard,²⁴ but then a few months later, in a letter from Heidelberg to George Washington Greene, he reports that he “met with a serious loss. Two large boxes of books, mostly Dutch,—ponderous folios with brass clasps and curious engravings, a treasure in their way,—all gone down into the great deep; food for fishes! The vessel sank in sight of Boston harbor, and went to the bottom ‘with man and mouse.’”²⁵ Longfellow did not reach Italy on this excursion, and so may not have acquired many Dante volumes after all. One significant title that does not appear in his early inventory, but which must have been acquired before March 1830 based on internal evidence, is the two-volume Italian edition of Dante's works (Paris, 1823) that he had interleaved and bound in four volumes, which he then filled with various notes and early attempts at translation.²⁶ It likely served the preparation

22 Francesco Saverio Quadrio, *Della storia e della ragione d'ogni poesia, volumi quattro* (Bologna: F. Pisarri, 1739–1744), Houghton Library, *AC85 L8605 Zy739q. See also Helen Lincklaen Fairchild, *Francis Adrian Van der Kemp, 1752–1829: An Autobiography, Together with Extracts from his Correspondence* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1903), 187. Van der Kemp's personal library of some 1,400 volumes was sold, according to the terms of his will, on July 15, 1830. Many of the volumes went to Harvard College Library.

23 Mathews, “Longfellow's Dante Collection.”

24 Longfellow to Stephen Longfellow, October 12, 1835, in Samuel Longfellow, ed., *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, With Extracts from his Journals and Correspondence*, 2 vols. (Boston: Ticknor and Co., 1886), 1:217.

25 Longfellow to George W. Greene, June 5, 1836, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Letters to Various Correspondents, Houghton Library, bMS Am 1340.1 (288). Here and elsewhere, I have preferred whenever possible to cite and provide my own transcriptions of original correspondence and other documents, even when published versions are available.

26 Dante Alighieri, *Opere poetiche di Dante Alighieri, con note di diversi per diligenza e studio di Antonio Buttura* (Paris: Lefebvre, 1823), Houghton Library, *AC85 L8605 Zy823d. On account of their extensive manuscript content, these volumes were among those transferred to Houghton Library by the

of his own lectures on Dante given over the course of his twenty years of teaching—the first ten of which were substantially aided by the preparation that Bachi gave his students, continuing in the role to which Ticknor had appointed him.

During a brief, restorative trip to Europe in 1842, Longfellow again turned his leisure to buying books. Just before returning home on September 17, he commented in a letter to Charles Sumner on the shipment of German, Flemish (i.e., Dutch), and French books he had prepared: “I know not how it is, but during a journey I collect books as a ship does barnacles.”²⁷

In a series of inventories from 1846, 1847, and 1848, Longfellow notes the books he read or acquired during those years.²⁸ Among the works mentioned relating to Dante are Schelling’s essay on “Dante in a Philosophical Point of View,” which Longfellow translated for *Graham’s Magazine* (June 1850), Leigh Hunt’s *Stories from the Italian Poets* (London, 1846), and Thomas Carlyle’s treatment of Dante in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (London, 1840 and 1841). Longfellow had visited with Carlyle on several occasions in 1835 during his second European tour, and it was Carlyle who had introduced him to Hunt. In his 1867 translation of the *Commedia*, Longfellow reproduced essays by Carlyle and Hunt and other English commentators on Dante under the heading of “Illustrations” at the end of the *Purgatory* volume.

Longfellow added many other Dante editions and commentaries to his library while he continued his teaching at Harvard, as well as several translations of Dante’s poetic works. Among the latter, considering only those volumes that contain inscriptions and dedications indicating the year in which they were acquired, the labors of Thomas William Parsons (1843), Charles Lyell (1845), Ichabod Charles Wright (1845), and John Aitken Carlyle (1849), brother of Thomas Carlyle, are all represented. This last work, the inscription notes, was presented to Longfellow by Ralph Waldo Emerson at the direction of the translator. Emerson had in fact been instrumental in arranging its publication.²⁹

Trustees of Longfellow House beginning in 1954; see Mathews, “Longfellow’s Dante Collection,” 11, and Dennis C. Marnon, “Longfellow and Dante in Houghton Library Collections,” *Caxtonian* 8 (2000): 7. All other Dante-related volumes and artifacts that Longfellow owned remain at Longfellow House–Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site.

27 Longfellow to Charles Sumner, September 17, 1842, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Letters to Various Correspondents, Houghton Library, bMS Am 1340.1 (565).

28 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, [Books read and purchased], 1846–1848, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 1340 (202).

29 Verduin, “Dante in America,” 26-28.

CHARLES ELIOT NORTON

Although Longfellow's Dante collection remained at his home on Brattle Street in Cambridge during his lifetime and after his death, it was nevertheless accessible to his close friends, who occasionally asked to borrow volumes. Longfellow recorded a number of loans from his personal library, including some for Dante-related titles, in a small black leather-bound notebook in which he also periodically registered book purchases. To take one example, he noted that he lent Charles Eliot Norton his copy of "Rossetti's Dante"—no doubt the edition of the *Commedia* published by Gabriele Rossetti containing his analytical commentary (London, 1826–1827).³⁰ This is confirmed by a brief letter of Norton to Longfellow from 1859, in which Norton asks, "Will you have the kindness to lend me Rossetti's Comento Analitico sopra Dante,—and his Dello Spirito Antepapale, for a few days? I think I remember seeing one if not both of them on your shelves,"—and adding warmly: "You were my first master in Dante, and I am for this, and for much beside, gratefully affectionately yours."³¹ That Norton was interested in Rossetti's commentary and his disquisition on the anti-papal spirit that he claimed pervaded Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarch, and a number of other early Italian writers, is significant. Like many of his contemporary New Englanders, Norton approached Christian religion through the framework of Unitarian theology, of which his father, Andrews Norton, had been a prominent proponent and professor at Harvard. As a consequence, he tended to regard Roman Catholicism with a certain suspicion, viewing it as a superstitious system of belief akin to Hinduism, as he once commented in one of his travel diaries.³²

Norton, in turn, occasionally lent Longfellow volumes from his shelves. On one occasion he wrote to his aging mentor, "I send you some of Ruskin's last work. My bound copy of the Val d'Arno is lent, so I sent the proofs as they first came to me. I

30 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, [Memorandum of books purchased, lent, etc.], 1835–1867, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 1340 (149): [128]. Italian poet, patriot, and father of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Gabriele Rossetti (1783–1854) published an edition of the *Divina commedia* with an analytical commentary after immigrating to London in 1824.

31 Norton to Longfellow, March 14, 1859, Letters to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Houghton Library, bMS Am 1340.2 (4150). Gabriele Rossetti published *Sullo spirito antipapale che produsse la riforma, e sulla segreta influenza ch'esercitò nella letteratura d'Europa, e specialmente d'Italia* in London in 1832. Longfellow commented upon the work in a letter to George Washington Greene, October 22, 1838, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Letters to Various Correspondents, Houghton Library, bMS Am 1340.1 (359).

32 Charles Eliot Norton, [Travel diary covering visits to England, Germany, and northern Italy], 1850–1851, Charles Eliot Norton, Miscellaneous Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 1088.5, Box 13; see entry dated Florence, December 12, 1850 [3 recto and following].

trust they will give you some pleasure.”³³ Norton’s having proof sheets of John Ruskin’s 1873 Oxford lectures on Tuscan art is emblematic of the close personal and professional relationship that had grown between them since their first extended meeting in Geneva in 1855. This chance encounter happened shortly after Ruskin had garnered widespread fame as a foremost critic of art history for his *Stones of Venice*, a copy of which Norton had carried with him as a guide to the lagoon city. Teaching art history was a vocation that Norton came to share with Ruskin, even formally, with his appointment in 1875 as professor of art history at Harvard. He was the first to hold such a title in the United States, just as Ruskin was among the first to be named a Slade Professor of Fine Art in England.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

Norton had still closer intellectual companions than Ruskin, especially when it came to Dante. In that category, none was more intimate than James Russell Lowell. Though they had known each other for years as members of Boston’s close-knit Brahmin society, their friendship formed in 1853, around the time Lowell’s first wife became ill and died following an extended sojourn in Italy, where the couple had buried one of their sons a few months earlier. Meanwhile, Lowell had received an invitation from the prestigious Lowell Institute to present a series of lectures. Though delayed by grief, Lowell eventually began the series in late 1855. The success of his lectures led directly to his appointment as Longfellow’s successor to the Abiel Smith Professorship at Harvard. Like his predecessors, Lowell immediately traveled abroad for a year to prepare for his teaching duties, particularly to improve his knowledge of German and Spanish, as he already felt confident in his knowledge of French and Italian. Continuing the tradition inaugurated by Ticknor and Longfellow, Lowell offered special advanced courses on Dante, which he typically held at his home a mile west of Harvard Yard, probably for the benefit of having his personal library at hand. During this same period, he also wrote a lengthy entry on Dante for Appleton’s *New American Encyclopedia*, in which he articulated a distinctively American appropriation of the poet as a prophet who speaks to and elevates the moral imagination.³⁴

There is no indication that Lowell was given money to spend on books while in Europe, but the records of the Harvard College Library Committee from 1859 show

33 Norton to Longfellow, July 2, [1867] (possibly 1877?), Letters to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Houghton Library, BMS Am 1340.2 (4150). The missing year supplied by the cataloger must be incorrect because Ruskin’s “Val d’Arno” series of ten lectures on Tuscan art was not published until 1874.

34 Lowell combined his encyclopedia entry with a more interpretative essay on Dante that he wrote in 1872, publishing the result in *Among My Books, Second Series* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1876), 1-124; see La Piana, *Dante’s American Pilgrimage*, 68, n. 2. I discuss Lowell’s moral approach to Dante, which he shared with Norton, in my essay “Charles Eliot Norton and the Rationale for American Dante Studies.”

that Lowell was given charge of an appropriation of \$500 for modern languages and literatures, the third largest departmental allocation.³⁵ Although the library's acquisitions budget had been increased sixfold with a pledge from William Gray to provide \$5,000 per year for the next five years, Lowell and other professors carried a large portion of their annual allocations into subsequent annual cycles, perhaps because Gray had stipulated that "the latest works be preferred to those of earlier dates" and potentially limiting the selection.³⁶ Yet Lowell already had been working privately with Norton to assemble a collection of commentaries on Dante's works, both new and old, for their mutual benefit: Lowell for his teaching, and Norton for his translation of the *Vita nuova*. When Norton decided to continue his European tour (his second) through 1856, Lowell implored him to "get all the books you can about Dante."³⁷ A few months later from Rome, Norton reported, "I had got some good books on him since being here, I shall bring home all I can find," adding, "I am amusing myself making a translation of the Vita Nuova. The more familiar I become with it, the more lovely does it seem to me, the fuller of an exquisite spirit of tenderness, grace, simplicity. One can hardly appreciate rightly the Divina Commedia without knowing this first."³⁸

Their correspondence over the next several years is filled with references to acquiring and sharing books on Dante criticism and their reactions to the same. In 1859, from his summer home in Newport, Norton wrote to Lowell to thank him for forwarding a copy of Luigi Picchioni's *Del senso allegorico, pratico, e dei vaticini della Divina commedia* (Basil, 1857) through a mutual friend, the portraitist S. W. Rowse. "I have read it all," Norton remarked, "for though on the whole it is poor enough it yet contains some few things of real interest."³⁹ It seems he never returned it, for the title

35 Harvard University, Library, Record of the Library Committee, 1859–1898, Harvard University Archives, UA III.50.10.150, 1, 10, 21, 29. At least one book which Lowell would seem to have recommended for purchase during these years is Ludwig Gottfried Blanc, *Vocabolario dantesco, ou, Dictionnaire critique et raisonné de la Divine comédie de Dante Aligheiri* (Leipzig: Jean Ambroise Barth, 1852), Widener Library, Dn 121.2, in which the Harvard College Library bookplate indicates that it was bought with income from bequest of Samuel Shapleigh (Class of 1789), former librarian of Harvard College. A handwritten note on the bookplate reads: "Rec'd 12 Aug 1862."

36 See Kenneth E. Carpenter, *The First 350 Years of the Harvard University Library* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Library, 1986), 90.

37 Lowell to Norton, September 16, 1856, James Russell Lowell Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 765 (81).

38 Norton to Lowell, [January 1, 1857], James Russell Lowell Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 765 (571).

39 Norton to Lowell, June 23, 1859, James Russell Lowell Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 765 (576). In the letter, Norton mentions that Rowse had promised to draw him a portrait of Lowell. This may be the likeness that was later engraved by J. A. J. Wilcox.

was among others Norton gave to Harvard College Library in future years.⁴⁰ Later that summer, Lowell wrote from Cambridge to Norton, who was still in Newport: “I got lately Wegele’s “Dante’s Leben u. Werke” [Jena, 1852], and find it (I have nearly read it through) a very able and interesting book . . . If you read German with ease enough to enjoy it, I will send it you.”⁴¹ A few lines further he added, “I have received also the Latin version of the Comedia by the Abbate Dalla Piazza—a mere curiosity—but makes our Dante Library more complete.” That Lowell and Norton were consciously coordinating the development of their personal collections of Dante’s works is evident from the next lines of the same letter. “I send you by same mail with this another tract of Witte’s whereof I have a duplicate,” Lowell wrote, whereupon he asked Norton for some advice: “Trübner [i.e., Nicholas Trübner, a London bookseller and publisher who specialized in the American market] is so gentile as to beg my acceptance of a large paper copy of Colomb de Batines if I have it not. What do you think?” In his reply, Norton urged acceptance of de Batines’s authoritative bibliography on Dante as well as an offer Trübner had made to assemble a collection of essays by German Dantist Karl Witte that had lately appeared in various periodicals, “for he will do it well and we shall get many good things from him hardly otherwise to be obtained.”⁴² “I am glad to have the pamphlets you have given me,” Norton continued,

and if his style is not specially obscure I should like much to see Wegele’s Leben u. Dante. I can make most of it out without a Dictionary, and I should like particularly to see his views on one or two points which I shall treat in my Appendix [i.e., Norton’s translation of the *Vita nuova*]. I have meant to get this book since I read two or three years ago what Taillandier says about it.”⁴³

A month later, always in the spirit of collaborative collecting, Norton reported to Lowell: “I have sent out for some new books on Dante to Italy,—the best of them are the

40 Luigi Picchioni, *Del senso allegorico, pratico, e dei vaticini della Divina commedia: lezioni due recitate alla Società academica di Basilea* (Basil: Schweighauser, 1857), Widener Library, Dn 140.3. A library stamp on the verso of the title page indicates that the volume was donated by Norton on April 10, 1884.

41 Lowell to Norton, September 13, 1859, James Russell Lowell Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 765 (87).

42 Norton to Lowell, September 14, 1859, James Russell Lowell Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 765 (577). Later recalling his friend’s advice with gratitude, Lowell presented the deluxe edition of de Batines to Norton as a Christmas gift in 1866: “I wish in some way to show my love for so dear a friend as you have always been to me. I can add a handsome book to your many—an édition de looks of Colomb de Batines. It will be of no use to you, I know, for you have a small-paper copy, and that makes it all the better.” Lowell to Norton, [December 25], 1866, James Russell Lowell Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 765 (97).

43 Norton to Lowell, September 14, 1859.

Comentario of Francesco di Buti,—and the Comment of Benvenuto da Imola which has lately been translated and published with the texts.”⁴⁴ “These will be gains for us,” he concluded with an emphasis on the plural pronoun. The lengthy Latin commentary on the *Commedia* by Benvenuto Rimbaldi da Imola, a contemporary and friend of Boccaccio, was considered by scholars to be the most valuable of the fourteenth-century commentaries because of its wealth of linguistic and historical information. Hitherto, it had never been published in any form, but the Italian translation that appeared in 1855–1856 proved both inaccurate and also disappointing on account of its reliance upon an undeveloped early version. In 1861, Norton published a disparaging review that helped to renew discussion over the need for a properly edited publication of a later manuscript that scholars considered the final, mature state of Benvenuto’s commentary.⁴⁵

Although he was not then a professor like Lowell, Norton regularly brought together a Dante reading group at his home, and even turned the gatherings into an opportunity for courtship. Among the four or five “young ladies” he invited to read *Paradiso* with him was Susan Sedgwick, whom he married in May 1862. Lowell, appropriately enough, gave his friend a rare Dante folio for a wedding present.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, like Lowell and others before him, Norton published a memoir of his latest trip abroad. He inscribed a copy of his *Notes of Travel and Study in Italy* (Boston, 1860), “For Mr. Longfellow with C.E.N.’s love. 24th February. 1860.” thus supplying his beloved elder’s bookshelves with a permanent souvenir of his grateful affection.⁴⁷

44 Norton to Lowell, October 16, 1859, James Russell Lowell Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 765 (577). The edition of the Benvenuto commentary that Norton acquired and later donated to Harvard College Library was Giovanni Tamburini, ed. and trans., *Benvenuto Rambaldi da Imola, illustrato nella vita e nelle opere e di lui commento latino sulla Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri*, 3 vols. (Imola: Tipografia Galeati, 1855–1856), Widener Library, Dn 142.8.2.

45 Norton’s review appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* 7 (May 1861): 629–37, and was also issued separately as *A Review of a Translation into Italian of the Commentary by Benvenuto da Imola on the Divina Commedia* (Cambridge: n.p., 1861). For a contemporary discussion of Norton’s review and the surviving manuscripts of Benvenuto’s commentary, see Luigi Rossi Casè, *Di Maestro Benvenuto da Imola, commentatore dantesco, studio* (Pergola: Gasperini Editori, 1889), 130–138. Tamburini’s translation was based on a copy he had commissioned in 1835 of an early version of the commentary preserved in the Biblioteca Estense in Modena.

46 James C. Turner, *The Liberal Education of Charles Eliot Norton* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 173–174. See also Norton to Lowell, May 21, 1862, James Russell Lowell Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 765 (581): “I have given your note to me to Susan, as the best and most precious wedding present I could make her. I shall keep the Dante among my own dearest possessions.” Unfortunately, I have not as yet been able to determine which volume Lowell gave him.

47 Charles Eliot Norton, *Notes of Travel and Study in Italy* (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1860), Houghton Library, *AC85 L8605 Zy860n2.

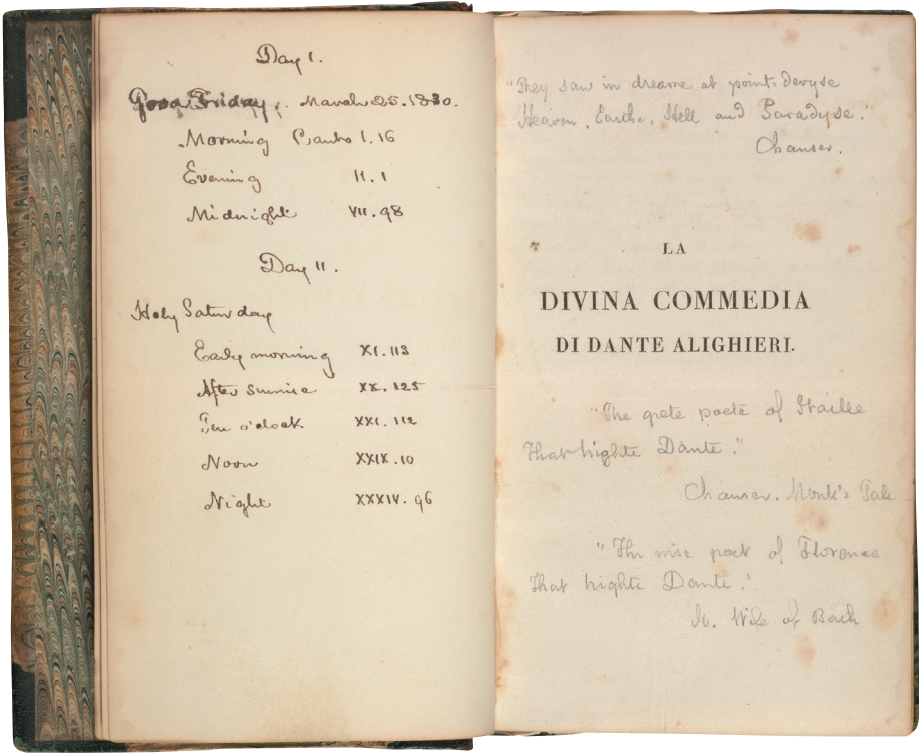


Figure 5. Longfellow recorded notes and quotations, preliminary attempts at translation, and what appears to be a reading timetable based on astronomical references in the *Commedia* in a copy of Dante's works that he had interleaved with blank pages. Dante Alighieri, *Opere poetiche di Dante Alighieri con note di diversi, per diligenza e studio di Antonio Buttura*, 4 vols. (Paris: Lefevre, 1823), vol. 1, half-title and verso of facing flyleaf. Houghton Library, *AC85 L8605 Zy823d. Opening: 20 x 23 cm.

THE DANTE CLUB

Longfellow was, in fact, almost as much a companion to Lowell and Norton as they were to each other, engaging with them in frequent exchanges of letters, visits, and dinner invitations. Indeed, from the time of his adolescence Norton had become accustomed to seeing Longfellow stop by his family home.⁴⁸ As they matured, the three men came to belong to the same social groups, including the so-called Saturday Club. Composed of a dozen or so preeminent Bostonian intellectuals who gathered over a long lunch for informal literary discussions on the last Saturday of each month, excepting summers, the club led more or less directly to the creation of the *Atlantic Monthly*, for which

48 Turner, *Liberal Education*, 34-35. Longfellow became a frequent guest of the Norton household following his appointment to the Abiel Smith Professorship formerly held by Norton's uncle, George Ticknor.

Lowell was chosen to serve as editor.⁴⁹ Consequently, when Longfellow wanted extra help to review and revise his translation of the *Commedia* as it was being set into type, it is no surprise that he thought to constitute the occasional consultations he had started having with Norton and Lowell as a new tradition patterned upon a familiar one. On October 25, 1865, Longfellow noted in his journal the first of the regular Wednesday evening meetings of their “Dante Club,” as he called it—likely with conscious reference to the Saturday Club.⁵⁰

Longfellow invited Norton and Lowell to his home to listen him to read aloud his rendering of a few cantos and hear their comments in return. Convenience favored continuation, as Longfellow’s home provided a central location for their weekly engagements: Norton’s Shady Hill residence was just over a mile to the east, beyond the university; Lowell’s home on Elmwood Street, a little more than half a mile to the west. Sometimes the three would be joined by out-of-town visitors, and more often by friends with ties to Cambridge, especially George Washington Greene and William Dean Howells. With the aid of this “support group” of Victorian men’s fellowship over the next year and a half, Longfellow steadily worked his way through corrections to his proof sheets, always rewarding his companions afterwards with a sumptuous supper that lasted long into the night. Decades later, Howells recollected the fabled gatherings in his memoir *Literary Friends and Acquaintance*.⁵¹ During the last several weeks of the Dante Club, Longfellow returned the favor, coming over to Shady Hill with Lowell on Saturday evenings to help Norton with a revision of his translation of the *Vita nuova*, which was to be published in tandem with Longfellow’s translation of the *Commedia*.⁵²

49 For an account of the Saturday Club including vignettes of its various participants, see Edward Waldo Emerson, *The Early Years of the Saturday Club, 1855–1870* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1918). References to Dante in relation to Longfellow are numerous; the Dante Club as such is mentioned on pages 395 and 407.

50 Christoph Irmscher instead traces the origin of the Dante Club to the “Five of Clubs,” a weekly dinner gathering that Longfellow, Charles Sumner, Henry Cleveland, Cornelius Felton, and George Hillard formed in 1837 and continued for a few years, at least until Cleveland’s death in 1843. Nevertheless, because the “Five of Clubs” was so much earlier and did not include Norton or Lowell, it seems more likely that the Saturday Club provided a more plausible and proximate inspiration for the Dante Club appellation. See Irmscher, “Public Poet, Private Man: Longfellow at 200,” *Harvard Library Bulletin*, n. s., 17, nos. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 2006): 77; also available as Christopher Irmscher, *Public Poet, Private Man: Longfellow at 200* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), which follows the same pagination. For a chronology and account of the Dante Club meetings, see J. Chesley Mathews, “Mr. Longfellow’s Dante Club,” *Annual Report of the Dante Society, with Accompanying Papers* 76 (1958): 23-35.

51 William Dean Howells, *Literary Friends and Acquaintance: A Personal Retrospect of American Authorship* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1900), 182-195.

52 Emerson, *Saturday Club*, 140; Gifford, “Dante Society,” 5; and Dana, “Longfellow and Dante,” 253, all quote the following passage from a letter of Norton to Aubrey de Vere written on March 25, 1867:

Longfellow had begun experimenting with translating *Purgatorio* as early as 1838 in conjunction with the lectures he offered his students at Harvard. Yet it was only in 1853 that he completed a first draft of the whole *cantica*, and he did not go back to revise it until after he had finishing translating *Inferno* and *Paradiso* in 1863. Presumably to serve as a reference while revising his translations, Norton prepared for Longfellow an extensive bibliography of Dante-related literature published in the United States. Although the list does not survive, in the letter that accompanied it Norton mentioned that he dutifully listed magazine articles about Dante, despite having “some compunctions for preserving the titles of so many trivial essays” and remarking that “Parsons [i.e., Thomas William Parsons, who had become the first American to publish a translation of any portion of the *Commedia* in 1843⁵³], yourself, Lowell and I are, I believe the only American writers who have done anything worth mention or preservation in Dantesque literature.”⁵⁴ Norton then added, as if to quicken Longfellow’s pace, “Are not some more cantos nearly ready for reading? Last week passed to my regret without any.”

With the urging and assistance of Norton, Longfellow privately printed ten advance copies of his *Inferno* translation in time to send one to Florence (by diplomatic pouch through their mutual friend Senator Charles Sumner) for inclusion in a large exhibition on Dante that was held at the Palazzo del Podestà [or, Potestà—i.e., the Bargello] in conjunction with celebrations for the six-hundredth anniversary of his birth in 1865.⁵⁵ This action, coupled with Longfellow’s fame as America’s leading poet,

“Longfellow is busy with the final revision of his translation of the ‘Divina Commedia,’ of which the whole is to be published very soon. Every Wednesday evening Lowell and I meet at his house to consider with him the last touches of his work; and on Saturday evenings he and Lowell come to me to read over with me my translation of the ‘Vita Nuova,’ which is to appear as a companion volume to Longfellow’s work. These evening studies are delightful; and after we have finished our work we have a little supper to which generally one or two friends come in, and at which we always have a pleasant time.” I have not, however, been able to determine the location of the original letter. Turner remarks that Norton’s new edition of the *Vita nuova*, which incorporated substantial revisions to the translation and a series of appendixes derived from an essay he had composed on the work in 1859, “was meant as a kind of pendant to Longfellow’s three volumes” (*Liberal Education*, 218).

53 Thomas William Parsons, ed. and trans., *The First Ten Cantos of the Inferno of Dante Alighieri, Edited and Translated by T. W. Parsons* (Boston: W. D. Ticknor, 1843). Though Parsons lived in and around Boston, he did not attend Harvard nor did he generally associate with Boston and Cambridge literati. Neither did he frequent Longfellow’s “Dante Club”; see La Piana, *Dante’s American Pilgrimage*, 75.

54 Norton to Longfellow, February 7, 1865, Letters to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Houghton Library, BMS Am 1340.2 (4150).

55 See *Esposizione dantesca in Firenze, maggio MDCCCLXV: Cataloghi*, 3 vols. (Florence: Tipografia dei Successori LeMonnier, 1865); Henry Clark Barlow, *The Sixth Centenary Festivals of Dante Alighieri in*

Parlando andava p non parez fiuole:
 a una uoce uita dall'altro fossi
 a parole firmar d'iston uer uole.
 Non so che disse ancor che spual d'isso
 fossi dell'arco/gia che uara quai /
 ma che parlaua ad uia parez mo' so.
 Io era uolto in gu' ma loach' uuij
 non potean ire al fondo p lo scuro
 p chio maestro fa che tu aruij.
 Dall'altro cinghion disinontiam lomuro
 che como odo quinci a non intendo /
 così gu' uoggio a mente affiguro.
 Altra risposta disse non turendo
 senon lo far che la d'anda honesta
 si dee seguir con lo pera tacendo.
 Noi discendem' il ponte dalla testa
 doue saguigne con loctua r'ipa /
 a poi mi fu labelga manifesta.
 Et uidi uento terribile stupa /
 di serpenti a di si duerza mena
 che la memoria il sangue ancor mi scupa.
 Più non si uanti liba con sua r'ena /
 che se che lida / yaculi / a pharce
 produce a che non / con amphi sibena.
 Ne tante pestilentie ne si uee
 mostro giamai con tucta lethiopia /
 ne con ao che di sopra al mar rosso ee.
 Tra questa cruda a tristissima copia
 corre uen genti nude a spauentate /
 a fanga spenir peccati gu' o elito pia.
 Con sepi le man dietro auzan legate.
 quelle Rocuan pleren la coda
 el capo a ermi dinangi agropate.
 Et ecco ad un chera d'ano tra proda
 sauento un serpeuz che al trauisse
 la doue collo alle spalle sanoda.

MS Ital 55

Figure 6. Norton acquired portions of two early manuscripts of the *Commedia* from the sale of the library of Seymour Kirkup in 1871. This single leaf from yet another fourteenth-century witness, containing *Inferno* 24:64-135, was inserted into one of them. Houghton Library, MS Ital 55. 34 cm.

had the intended effect of drawing European attention to the first complete translation of the *Commedia* to issue from the United States, which subsequently appeared in its entirety in the splendidly printed editions that were released concurrently in Boston (Ticknor and Fields), London (Routledge), and Leipzig (Tauchnitz) in 1867.⁵⁶ Ticknor and Fields also issued Norton's *Vita nuova* translation as planned, though it did not attract nearly as much attention as Longfellow's oeuvre.

LATER EUROPEAN TRAVELS AND BOOK ACQUISITIONS

In June 1868, Longfellow embarked on what became a celebrity tour through England and Europe that lasted through the following summer. He was received by Queen Victoria in a private audience and was awarded honorary degrees from both Oxford and Cambridge. He also accumulated many books while in England and still more on his travels through the continent.

One such volume was a copy of Artaud's *Histoire de Dante Alighieri* (Paris, 1841), which bears the following inscription on the verso of the half-title page: "To the eminent / translator of Dante / M. H. Longfellow / his grateful / reader / Paris 23 8th / 1868 / X. Marmier." Longfellow had visited many Parisian booksellers in the company of French critic and writer Xavier Marmier, who also appears to have inscribed to him a copy of Carnenti's 1823 edition of *Amori e Rime di Dante Alighieri*. Upon reaching Rome at the end of December 1868, Longfellow wrote to Marmier about all the books he had bought along the way, including "some beautiful Bodonis" which he "bore off in triumph" from Parma and "beautiful folio editions of Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca and the rest, published at Pisa" that he found in Florence.⁵⁷ At Monte Cassino, the monks presented him with a facsimile of a Dante manuscript held at their abbey, *Il Codice Cassinese della Divina Commedia* (Monte Cassino, 1865), to which they added

Florence and at Ravenna, by a Representative (London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1866); and especially "Il sesto centenario della nascita di Dante Alighieri," in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, ser. 3, vol. 2, part 1 (Florence: M. Cellini, 1865), 217, which mentions that Longfellow's translation was featured as the last in a series of editions of the *Commedia*. For an investigation of the provenance history of the ten privately printed copies, see Joan Nordell, "Search for the Ten Privately Printed Copies of Longfellow's Translation of the *Divine Comedy* 'In Commemorazione del secentesimo Anniversario della Nascita di Dante Alighieri,'" *Harvard Library Bulletin*, n. s., 16, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 5-36.

56 For a discussion of the Tauchnitz printing, as well as differences between it and other commercially published editions and the privately printed edition of the *Inferno*, see Irmscher, "Public Poet, Private Man," 162 and following.

57 Longfellow to Xavier Marmier, December 31, 1868, in Andrew Hilen, ed., *Letters of Henry Longfellow*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1966-1982), 5:271. According to Hilen, the original letter is held by the Hôtel de Ville, Pontarlier, France; see also F.B., "Une Lettre Inédite de Longfellow," *Revue Germanique* 1 (November 1905): 667-668.

an elegant inscription in Italian: “To the most illustrious of the American poets, Mr. Henry W. Longfellow, this volume by the father of modern poetry, whom he admirably turned into the English tongue, was given by the monks of Monte Cassino on 2 March 1869.”⁵⁸ Dante critic Niccolò Tommaseo likewise offered Longfellow a copy of his edition and commentary on the *Commedia* (Milan, 1865). He also received a copy of the masterful three-volume edition of the *Inferno* published for private circulation by George John Warren, Lord Vernon (London, 1858–65). This last was presented to him in Vernon’s memory by his elder son Augustus Henry, the sixth Baron Vernon, who also had a set sent to Ticknor through the publisher.⁵⁹

Norton, too, escaped to Europe with his family during the summer of 1868, spending a year in England and the next two in Italy. Breaking away from his editorship of the *North American Review* and involvements with the *Nation*, he sought restoration in scholarly reading and writing. From Florence in November 1869, he wrote to home to Lowell,

Yesterday I spent the morning at the Biblioteca Nazionale . . . I am just reading works of the Trecent [sic], and the reprint of others that had become rare. A new thirteenth century comment on the Divina Commedia is one of the last. I have not yet got it, but I am in treaty for a set of the collection of which it forms part. When I have it, if I find it to be of importance other than merely as a “testo di lingua,” I will send a notice of it to the Review. I wish I could have one or two thousand dollars to spend for the College Library. There are still rare opportunities for getting precious books to be met with here.⁶⁰

58 Dante Alighieri, *Il Codice Cassinese della Divinia Commedia, per la prima volta letteramente messo a stampa per cura dei monaci Benedettini della Badia di Monte Cassino* (Monte Cassino: Tipografia di Monte Cassino, 1865), Longfellow House–Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site, LONG 1204. The inscription on the title page reads: “Al più illustre degli Americani Poeti / Mr. Henry W. Longfellow / questo volume del Padre della moderna Poesia / da lui mirabilmente / volto nell’Inglese favella / i Monaci di Monte Cassino donavano—2 Marzo 1869—” (see Mathews, “Longfellow’s Dante Collection,” 13, item 21).

59 Dante Alighieri, *L’Inferno di Dante Alighieri disposto in ordine grammaticale e corredato di brevi dichiarazioni da G. G. Warren Lord Vernon*, 3 vols. (London: T. and G. Boone, 1858–1865). In Ticknor’s copy, classified as Widener Library, TDn 1, letters from Lord Vernon and publisher T. W. Boone are pasted on the front flyleaves along with a copy of Ticknor’s letter of thanks to Lord Vernon. For background on Vernon’s interest in Dante, see Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, eds., *Dictionary of National Biography*, 2nd ed., 22 vols. (New York: Macmillan; London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1908–1909), 20:276, s.v. “Vernon.”

60 Norton to Lowell, November 15, 1869, James Russell Lowell Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 765 (588).

Further on in the same letter, Norton mentions seeing a copy of the 1497 edition of Dante, which he later bought. Around this time, he also bought a copy of the 1521 edition of the *Convivio*,⁶¹ displaying again his taste for rare and older volumes and his willingness and ability to increase his personal library, if not the College's.

In February 1870, Norton visited the English artist, scholar, and spiritualist Seymour Stocker Kirkup, who had lived in Florence since 1823. Writing again to Lowell, he gushed over the Dante items he saw:

His books and manuscripts would make me envious, if envy were of any use. Eight editions of the D. C. before 1500, I know not how many from 1500–1550. Three or four precious manuscripts of the D. C. . . . and innumerable rarities relating to the poet, the poem or the minor works, such as you and I know the charm of. I suppose his books will be sent to Paris or London for sale, but I have, ghoul-like, inspired a worthy bookseller here with a zeal to get them that I may, if I survive, have some of them! This is horrible, but one does not want the old women in the kitchen to burn them.⁶²

Kirkup's library did go to auction as Norton predicted, and Norton did manage to acquire some items from the sale through agents he engaged, most notably two of the early manuscripts, which consequently became the first Dante manuscripts to enter the United States.⁶³

61 Dante Alighieri, *Lo amoroso co[n]vivio di Dante* (Venice: Giovan' Antonio e fratelli da Sabbio, 1521), Houghton Library, *IC D2358 490cb. On the front flyleaf, Norton has inscribed: "Rare e poco nota si è la edizione presente. Gamba." and "La seconda ediz. del Conv." This volume was among those Norton donated to Harvard College Library in 1905, as evidenced by the bookplate on the inside back cover.

62 Norton to Lowell, February 24, 1870, James Russell Lowell Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 765 (589).

63 One of the Kirkup manuscripts, containing all of *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* 1-21:63, was purchased from Norton by the Dante Society in 1882; see note 85, below. It was later cataloged as Houghton Library, MS Ital 56. The other Kirkup manuscript, containing *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* and the so-called "False Boccaccio" commentary, was transferred to Harvard College Library in 1906 in conjunction with the purchase of Norton's library; see further below and a letter of Norton to William C. Lane, March 13, 1906, [Scrapbook of correspondence between William Coolidge Lane and Charles Eliot Norton regarding the purchase of Norton's library for the Harvard Library], Houghton Library, MS Am 1088.4. This second volume was later cataloged as Houghton Library, MS Ital 54, but a leaf from yet another manuscript containing *Inferno* 24:64-135, which had been inserted loosely within it, was removed and cataloged separately as MS Ital 55. Norton's copy of the Kirkup sale catalog also survives: *Catalogue of the Celebrated Library of Baron Seymour Kirkup, of Florence . . . Besides a Most Extensive Collection of Dantiana, No Less than Six Manuscript Codici of Dante, and Most Important Printed Editions . . . Which Will be Sold by Auction, by Messrs. Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge . . .*

His appetite for collecting all the more enlivened, Norton pursued still more Dante material, whether individual volumes or whole collections. Writing once more to Lowell, this time from Venice in May 1871, he related,

I have just had the good fortune, in which you will take pleasure with me, of getting a fine copy of the original Landino Dante, printed at Florence in 1481, and illustrated, as you remember, by Sandro Botticelli. I am in treaty for a collection of editions of Dante, and books about Dante, which is for sale by a private person. If he accepts my offer for it, it will when added to the collection I already have, make my Dantesque library as good as any, and, I believe, more numerous than any collection in Europe. But as my offer is very moderate I do not feel confident that I shall have the pleasure of bringing the collection home.⁶⁴

Norton's prediction was again correct. He was not able to acquire the private collection, yet he could still take satisfaction in knowing that his extended time in Italy had enabled him to significantly enrich his own, particularly with early imprints, and to enlarge the scope of his reading and personal contacts. Around this time, Norton compiled an inventory of his collection in a forty-page index-tabbed register on whose cover he wrote "Bibliotheca Dantesca"—"Dante Library." From the contents, it seems likely, in fact, that Norton assembled this listing, like Longfellow, to serve as a memorandum of what he owned prior to his departure for Europe. As Norton made his purchases, he transcribed the essential bibliographical data under the appropriate alphabetical index page according to the author's last name.⁶⁵

Deciding that he, too, needed some European refreshment, Lowell resigned his Harvard professorship (at least temporarily) and booked passage to London in July 1872 along with his wife (he had remarried in 1857). There he met up with Norton and his family upon the latter's return from Italy. In October, after Lowell had left for Paris, Norton pursued him by letter, telling him that he had "bought two books since leaving

on Wednesday, 6th December, 1871, and Nine Following Days . . . (London: Dryden, 1871), Houghton Library, B 1827 486* (B). Tipped in at the end of the volume are two letters to Norton from his London agents F. S. Ellis and Thomas Boone, dated December 4 and 20, 1871, regarding Norton's commissions and purchases. For further discussion of these manuscripts, see Dennis Dutschke, "Collecting Italian Manuscripts in the United States: Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Others," *Manuscripta* 51, no. 1 (2007): 1-21.

64 Norton to Lowell, May 24, 1871, James Russell Lowell Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 765 (590). Norton's copy of the Landino Dante is cataloged as Houghton Library, Inc 6120 (A) PF.

65 Houghton Library, MS Ital 170. The 1497 Venetian edition of the *Commedia* is included in the listing, for instance, but not the 1481 Landino edition.

you, but those two are beauties.”⁶⁶ One was a handsome copy of the 1477 edition of the *Commedia* whose colophon claimed (falsely) that it contained the commentary of Benvenuto da Imola, upon which Norton remarked “some day the College will be grateful to me for getting it.”⁶⁷ The other was Aldus Manutius’s masterpiece of Renaissance printing, the 1499 *Hypnerotomachia*. “I shall not buy many more,—these two ought to suffice me for a long while,” he reflected, possibly on his dwindling funds, but then added, “I miss you in book hunting.”

What they missed in book hunting together, they tried to make up in their correspondence, through which they continued to exchange news and advice about their purchases. Also by correspondence, Norton deftly persuaded Lowell to accept a plea that he had persuaded Harvard president Charles Eliot, his younger cousin, to make, namely to have Lowell to return from his travels and resume his teaching duties at the College. Lowell had wanted Norton to succeed him, but finally accepted the offer, partly for financial reasons caused by the Panic of 1873, and partly because Norton informed him, tactfully, that he had himself accepted an appointment from Harvard to serve as a lecturer on the history of art.

Lowell thus returned to Cambridge in July 1874 and took up again his professorial mantle, though not for long. His involvement in Republican Party politics led to his appointment in 1877 as American minister to Spain, and thereafter England. During Lowell’s absence, Norton agreed to take over his regular course on Dante, adding it to his load of six fine arts lectures.⁶⁸

No doubt the responsibility of teaching Dante at the College caused Norton to think about the resources his students would require and what the College Library had, or lacked, in this regard. Norton had been appointed to the Library Committee in December 1876, and the position provided with him direct knowledge of the library’s acquisition budget and allocation process.⁶⁹ The following academic year, the committee decided to separate the allocation for Italian and Spanish books, which

66 Norton to Lowell, October 13, 1872, James Russell Lowell Papers, Houghton Library, BMS Am 765 (593).

67 The colophon of the 1477 edition of the *Commedia* published in Venice by Wendelin of Speyer misattributes the commentary to Benvenuto, possibly because he would have been considered a more notable authority than the commentary’s true author, Jacopo della Lana. Norton was certainly aware of the error, as it had been exposed in the early eighteenth century.

68 Turner, *Liberal Education*, 271-272. For details regarding Norton’s course offerings, see the “Charles Eliot Norton Number” of *The Harvard Graduates Magazine* 16 (1907): 62. Norton’s Dante course did not appear in the official Harvard course catalog until 1882.

69 Harvard University, Library, Record of the Library Committee, 1859–1898, Harvard University Archives, UA III.50.10.150, entry for December 29, 1876. Following Norton’s death in 1908, a two-page typewritten summary of his committee service to the Library was inserted in the record book; see

*The original prospectus of
the Dante Society.*

Dear Sir :

It is proposed to form a society for the encouragement and promotion of the study of Dante's life and works. There are many objects for which such an organization can exert itself, such as the obtaining a copy of Benvenuto da Imola's Comment; the publication of a good collated comment on the Divina Commedia; the translation into English of Dante's prose works; the collection of a library of Dantesque literature; the occasional publication of worthy papers on Dantesque subjects, and the furthering of other projects of a similar nature.

Such a society should properly include all the Dantesque scholars of this country, together with those who feel a warm interest in such studies. An annual assessment of five dollars will be levied on each member.

Mr. Henry W. Longfellow has consented to accept the Presidency of the Society, and the undersigned will act as Secretary and Treasurer. A meeting of the members will be speedily called in Cambridge for the formal organization of the Society, and for such other business as may properly come before it.

You are requested to become a member of the Society, and in case you are ready to do so, to send your name, and if you desire, the assessment for 1881, to the undersigned.

Respectfully,

JOHN WOODBURY, Secretary,

Dec. 6, 1880.

2 Gray's, Cambridge.

Figure 7. On December 6, 1880, a circular was issued under the name of one of Norton's students, John Woodbury, announcing the formation of the Dante Society and inviting membership. Dante Society, [Minute book], 1881-1928; a copy of the original circular is inserted loosely into the first few pages of the volume. Houghton Library, MS Am 1340 (117). 21 x 14 cm.

together had received \$100 per annum in preceding years, and to give Italian \$200 and Spanish \$100—this out of a total library budget that averaged just under \$8,000 per year. In addition, the committee also acted to consolidate foreign book purchases through a single agent, accepting a bid from Nicholas Trübner in London. Over the next few years, the overall library budget would more than double, and Norton would receive an annual allocation averaging \$1,000 for fine arts, while Italian and Spanish collections continued to receive approximately \$300 between them. Although Norton's presence on the Library Committee helped to ensure that modern languages and literatures received at least a modest level of annual support, he must not have been entirely satisfied with the outcome, especially with respect to the impact on materials for the study of Dante, for soon he advanced a proposal that would not only greatly increase the Library's holdings of Dante, but would lead to the establishment of a Dante collection as such.

THE DANTE SOCIETY

In a 1904 letter to his friend and former student William Roscoe Thayer concerning the origins of the Dante Society, Norton recalled,

It was, I think, in 1880 that some members of the class which I was conducting in "The Divine Comedy," hearing me speak of the possible service which a club for the promotion of Dante studies might render, came to me to say that they wished such a club might be founded, and would be glad to do what might be in their power to give it a good start . . . I told them that I thought that the success of the effort would depend on whether Mr. Longfellow would consent to take the presidency of the proposed society, and that I would consult with him about it. Longfellow was cordial in his approval of the scheme. He saw in it, especially, the means by which the Dante library of Harvard might be strengthened and steadily increased, and also he believed that such a society as was proposed might justify its existence by undertaking the publication of the "Comment on The Divine Comedy" of Benvenuto da Imola, of which only fragments had hitherto been printed. This had been long an object of desire with him, and he and I had often talked of how to bring it about.⁷⁰

Harvard University, Library, Record of the Library Committee, 1898–1909, Harvard University Archives, UA III.50.10.150, 2.

⁷⁰ Norton to William Roscoe Thayer, July 29, 1904, quoted by Thayer in "Professor Charles Eliot Norton," in *Twenty-Eighth Annual Report of the Dante Society, 1909* (Boston, Mass.: Ginn and Co., 1910), 2-3; this article is also excerpted in Sara Norton and M.A. De Wolfe Howe, eds., *Letters of Charles Eliot Norton*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), 2:101.

The idea to form an association to promote the study of Dante and advance Dante-related research and publication was not new but timely. The Deutsche Dante-Gesellschaft had been founded in Germany during the Dante sexcentenary anniversary in 1865, and 1876 saw the establishment of the Oxford Dante Society in England. Both in their own way probably contributed to Norton's suggestion to form a Dante "club" or "society" (he equivocated over the designation until it was formally established as the latter) in Cambridge, though neither sought to involve students as members and contributors.⁷¹

John Woodbury, one of the students who had approached Norton to express interest in the idea of forming a club, volunteered to serve as its secretary. On December 6, 1880, a circular relating the substance of the above proposal was issued under Woodbury's name and sent to prospective members.⁷² A few hours before the initial organizational meeting, which was held at Longfellow's home on February 11, 1881, Norton wrote to Lowell,

To-night I go to Longfellow's to attend the first meeting of the Dante Club, of which he has consented to be President. Your acceding to become a member of the Club gave great satisfaction to the young men who have been active in getting it up. They will ask you, I believe, to be the Vice-President. I do not know that much good will come of the Society, beyond the cherishing of the love and honor of the poet in the lives of a few of the better class of students of a generation younger than our own. This is enough.⁷³

Lowell was asked and did agree to serve as vice-president. After Longfellow's death in March 1882, Lowell became president, and Norton assumed the role of vice-president.

71 For a comparison of the origins, purposes, and projects undertaken by the Deutsche Dante-Gesellschaft, the Oxford Dante Society, the Dante Society founded in Cambridge, and the Società Dantesca Italiana, see Francesco Mazzoni, "La Società Dantesca Italiana e la formazione delle società dantesche straniere," in *Atti del I congresso nazionale di studi danteschi, 'Dante nel secolo dell'unità d'Italia,' Caserta-Napoli, 21-25 maggio 1961*, ed. Comitato di Terra di Lavoro per le Celebrazioni del Centenario dell'Unità (Florence: Olschki, 1962), 45-55. See also Gifford, "History of the Dante Society," 3-4, which also discusses these societies as well as several more that were founded after 1880, including the London Dante Society, which did involve students. The Deutsche Dante-Gesellschaft went into a long but temporary hiatus from around 1877 to 1921.

72 Dante Society, [Minute book], Cambridge, Mass., 1881-1928, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 1340 (117). A copy of the quoted circular together with circulars for membership dues and subscriptions to the proposed printing of the commentary on the *Commedia* by Benvenuto da Imola are inserted loosely amid the first few leaves.

73 Norton to Lowell, February 11, 1881, James Russell Lowell Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 765 (601).

Yet, since Lowell would not return from his ministerial duties abroad until 1885, the practical responsibilities associated with managing the society fell to Norton. And though Norton had been the driving force behind the formation of the society in the first place, it is consistent with his modest and deferential character that he would want to see Longfellow and Lowell—both his seniors in age—installed as the chief officers of the society before him. By-laws were drawn up and dues collected. Nearly fifty members joined the first year. Whatever cautious skepticism or reserve that Norton had meant to express to Lowell concerning the potential outcome of the society seems to have dissipated like mist. Plans were quickly formulated to carry out the expressed object of printing the final version of the commentary on the *Commedia* by Benvenuto da Imola as a means of demonstrating the existence and value of the fledging society to the larger scholarly world—and perhaps, more immediately and locally, to Harvard College, which did not always lend as much support to instruction in modern languages and literatures as Norton and his associates would have liked.⁷⁴

Unfortunately, the plans were just as quickly frustrated. Several years earlier, George John Warren Vernon, the fifth Baron Vernon, had commissioned a copy of the later redaction of the original Latin commentary preserved in the Laurentian Library in Florence and engaged the Anglo-Italian statesman James Philip Lacaita to publish it.⁷⁵ Lacaita had some pages set up in type, which Norton reported seeing when he visited with him in 1869, yet it seemed that the project had been abandoned on account of Vernon's death.⁷⁶ Norton reported further that he had tried to obtain the copy of the manuscript from Lacaita so that he might fulfill Vernon's intention of publishing it, but to no avail. Thus, in the summer of 1881, Norton arranged to have Federigo Bencini—the same copyist whom Vernon had hired—make a second copy, with Longfellow agreeing to cover the expense. Yet before Bencini could complete his work, news of the project traveled through Norton to Lowell in London, who mentioned it to English Danteist Edward Moore. In turn, Moore shared it with the new Lord Vernon,

74 For a discussion of Norton's grounding in comparative philology and its influence on his vision for academic formation, see Turner, *Liberal Education*, 340-345.

75 For discussions of the manuscript and publication histories of the Benvenuto commentary, see notes 44 and 45 above and "Note on the First Edition of the Comment of Benvenuto da Imola," a reprint of the circular issued by the publisher of Lacaita's edition included as an appendix to *Sixth Annual Report of the Dante Society, May 17, 1887* (Cambridge, Mass.: John Wilson and Son, University Press, 1887), 31-33. Lacaita's edition is based on the manuscript in the Biblioteca Laurenziana in Florence cataloged as Pluteo XLIII, but also cites variant readings from the Estense manuscript used by Tamburini and other early manuscripts containing the Benvenuto commentary. See also *The Dante Encyclopedia*, ed. Richard Lansing (New York: Garland, 2000), 97-98, s. v. "Benvenuto da Imola."

76 Norton to Longfellow, November 14, 1881, Letters to Longfellow, Houghton Library, bMS Am 1340.2 (4150).

Augustus Henry Vernon, under whose care the third and last volume of his father's monumental work on *Inferno* had been issued. After consulting with Lacaita, Lord Vernon decided to revive his father's project and informed Moore of his intentions. Moore wrote to Lowell, and Lowell then forwarded Moore's letter to Norton along with an expression of his disappointment that the Dante Society should thus be deprived of the honor of publishing the commentary.⁷⁷ Norton shared the same sentiment and items of correspondence with Longfellow, adding that he would issue announcements and a circular explaining that the society would forfeit its own project in deference to Lord Vernon.⁷⁸

By this time, Bencini had mostly finished copying the Laurentian manuscript for a second time and so was paid to complete his work according to the terms of the agreement he had made with Norton. Upon seeing the specimen pages Bencini had sent to him over the summer, Norton had remarked to Longfellow, "The handwriting is clear, simple in style, easily legible. Should we not be able to print the Comment, this manuscript accessible to students will be read a hundred years hence as easily as it is read today."⁷⁹ Bencini sealed Norton's prophecy with the last stroke of his pen on January 4, 1882, and sent the thousand-page transcript off to Cambridge. It was added to Harvard College Library as a gift of the Dante Society a few months later, as noted in the report from the first annual meeting of the society held that May, which gave an account of the whole affair.⁸⁰

With the Benvenuto chapter thus closed, the meeting report turned to the second stated objective of the society, namely "the establishing of a library of Dantesque literature."⁸¹ "It is of great importance that American students of Dante should have opportunities for study and research without the necessity of a journey to Europe," the report explained, "yet no public institution in this country can offer satisfactory material for such work." Noting that "the Society finds itself in a position to aid in making such a result possible," the report announced that "a member of the Society has arranged to have his Dante library deposited ultimately in the Harvard College

77 Lowell to Norton, October 31, 1881, James Russell Lowell Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 765 (109), which includes the letter from Moore to Lowell dated October 27, 1881.

78 Norton to Longfellow, November 14, 1881, Letters to Longfellow, Houghton Library, bMS Am 1340.2 (4150).

79 Norton to Longfellow, September 2, 1881, Letters to Longfellow, Houghton Library, bMS Am 1340.2 (4150).

80 Bencini's transcription is preserved as Houghton Library, MS Lat 398. An account of the Benvenuto commentary project is given in *First Annual Report of the Dante Society, May 16, 1882* (Cambridge, Mass.: John Wilson and Son, University Press, 1882), 10-12, 17-18.

81 Dante Society, *First Annual Report*, 12.

Library,” adding that “this collection is now accessible to any one who may desire to make use of it, upon application to the Secretary.”⁸²

The unnamed benefactor, of course, was Norton. Although Longfellow had just died, he had made no such provision for a deposit of his library, which remained in his home in the care of his daughter Alice and later his grandson Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana. Norton, on the other hand, had been considering how to provide greater access to his Dante materials for some time, even from the days when he and Lowell were acquiring volumes for what they regarded as their shared library. While correspondence quoted previously contained hints about his desire to place his collection in Harvard College Library, in a letter to Richard Grant White from October 1865, Norton stated his intention still more directly and clearly. Thanking White for giving him a copy of the first printing of the *Vita nuova* from 1576, Norton remarked,

I have now all the important editions of the Vita Nuova—indeed almost a complete collection of the various editions—and my apparatus for the critical study of all the works of Dante is tolerably satisfactory. I fancy that my collection is more valuable and larger than any other in America, and I trust that it may be of use to others as well as to myself, for I propose that it shall finally go to the Library of Harvard College.⁸³

The organization of the Dante Society may thus be understood to have served, at least in part, as a vehicle whereby Norton was able to fulfill his long-held desire to make his personal Bibliotheca Dantesca accessible beyond his close circle of friends and, moreover, to have it serve as the basis for establishing a permanent collection in Harvard College Library.

Norton delayed somewhat in making the actual transfer, but not because of any difficulties in dealing with the society or Harvard. It seems unlikely, in fact, that Norton ever contemplated asking money for the collection, although the 1882 meeting report went on to state that the society’s council was “negotiating for the purchase of a manuscript from the fifteenth century”⁸⁴—a reference to one of the early manuscripts that Norton had obtained from the Kirkup sale, which the society did proceed to buy in 1882.⁸⁵ Yet that was an isolated transaction. In May 1883, Norton wrote to Justin

82 Dante Society, *First Annual Report*, 13. See also the report of these early meetings of the Dante Society in *The Literary World* 14 (September 22, 1883): 305-306.

83 Norton to Richard Grant White, October 10, 1865, Letters from James Francis Child and Charles Eliot Norton, 1854–1880, Houghton Library, bMS Am 1430.1 (20).

84 Dante Society, *First Annual Report*, 13.

85 See William C. Lane, *The Dante Collections in the Harvard College and Boston Public Libraries*, Bibliographical Contributions 34 (Cambridge, Mass.: Issued by the Library of Harvard University, 1890),

Winsor, chief librarian of the College and member of the society's council, to inform him that he was sending, as a gift, "a considerable number of pamphlets concerning Dante," adding that while he had "not counted them . . . there must be between one and two hundred."⁸⁶ One may speculate that Norton elected to present this ephemeral material as an initial gift because it was probably the least essential to his ongoing study and writing. Still, Norton went on to suggest to Winsor, "with a little pain we may make in the course of a few years a catalogue of books relating to Dante and his works that shall have a distinct value, and be creditable to the Library." When assistant librarian William Coolidge Lane began to make such a catalog in 1885, he noted that the library then had some 701 bound volumes representing 654 titles, of which 384, or considerably more than half, had come from Norton.⁸⁷ It seems therefore that Norton must have donated some additional works between the initial offering of pamphlets and the accessioning of his gifts in 1884, when library records document that he "gave [the] larger part of his Dante collection."⁸⁸

Although no one else could match the scale of Norton's book donations, surely he hoped that his actions would stimulate others to contribute what volumes they could toward building up the library's holdings of Dantesque literature. Already, the first report of the society mentioned that Robert N. Toppan had donated a copy of the 1529 edition of *Divina Commedia* containing the Landino commentary, being "one of the least common editions of the sixteenth century."⁸⁹ Toppan, a lawyer in Cambridge and graduate of the Class of 1858, also established an essay prize in political history at Harvard during the same year. Prior to the establishment of the Dante Society, several other graduates and friends of the university had given Dante-related works to the library over the years, including Boston physician Winslow Lewis (Class of 1819),⁹⁰

3, item 1: "It was bought at the sale of his [i.e., Kirkup's] library in 1871 by Ellis & White for £20, and was purchased for this library by the Dante society £25."

86 Norton to Justin Winsor, May 13, 1883, Dante Society of America, Additional correspondence, 1883–1898, Houghton Library, fMS Am 1794.1 (1).

87 *Fourth Annual Report of the Dante Society, May 19, 1885* (Cambridge, Mass.: John Wilson and Son, University Press, 1885), 9–10.

88 Harvard University, Library, Library Accession Cards, Harvard University Archives, UA III.50.15.4.2, Box 2, card for "NORTON, Charles Eliot," filed under "Italian Literature."

89 Dante Society, *First Annual Report*, 13. The volume Toppan donated is Dante Alighieri, *Comedia di Danthe Alighieri, poeta diuino co[n] l'espositione di Christophoro La[n]dino, nuouamete impressa e con somma dilige[n]tia reuista & eme[n]data, & di nuouissime postille adornata* (Venice: Jacob del Burgofranco, 1529), Houghton Library, f *IC.D2358.472c.1529 (A). An inscription on the library bookplate reads: "Gift of the Dante Society Cambridge. 10 May, 1881."

90 Lewis gave a copy of *Omaggio a Dante Alighieri, offerto dai cattolici italiani nel maggio 1865 sesto centenario dalla sua nascita*, ed. Michele Caracciolo di Brienza (Rome: Tipografia Monaldi, 1865), Widener

Charles Sumner (Class of 1830),⁹¹ Thomas Wren Ward of New York (Class of 1868),⁹² and William Dean Howells, the frequent guest and chronicler of Longfellow's "Dante Club" who later served as a lecturer in Italian literature from 1869–1871.⁹³ The bequest of Henry Ward Wales, a Boston physician and graduate of the Class of 1838, included at least ten works by Dante, some rare, such as the edition of the *Commedia* printed by Giambattista Bodoni in Parma in 1795.⁹⁴

The *First Annual Report of the Dante Society* also noted that "from recent publications a number of books have been selected and ordered, which will be placed in the Harvard College Library."⁹⁵ The statement of accounts at the end of the report shows that from the \$225.00 collected in membership dues, \$100.00 was paid to the Library to support these purchases, while another \$49.50 went into printing and postage for the *Report*.⁹⁶ In subsequent years, the society generally contributed \$50.00 to the library, though the amount occasionally varied depending on the size of the annual report and associated printing and distribution costs and other expenses. The *Third Annual Report* mentions that in addition to funding domestic purchases, the "Society has made it possible, as well, to send a general order to the European agents of the library to procure a copy of every new work relating to Dante to be placed in this

Library, Dn 561.4. An inscription on the verso of title page reads: "1865 Nov 6 Gift of Winslow Lewis, MD of Boston (H.C. 1819)."

91 Among the many volumes Sumner gave to his alma mater, there is, for example, a copy of Dante Alighieri, *La divina commedia . . . con note di Paolo Costa* (Monza, 1837), Widener Library, Dn 28.37. The Harvard College Library bookplate indicates that it was received through the bequest of Charles Sumner (Class of 1830), April 28, 1874.

92 For example, Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy: The Inferno, A Literal Prose Translation by John A. Carlyle, M.D.*, 2nd ed. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1867), Widener Library, Dn 37.1. The Harvard College Library bookplate reads: "Gift of Thomas Wren Ward, of New York, 7 Oct 1878," with an additional note: "Bd. [i.e., bound] Jan., 1888."

93 Howells gave a copy of Bernardino Zandrini, *Per il centenario di Dante, ghirlanda di canti, di Bernardino Zandrini* (Milan: Editori della Biblioteca Utile, 1865), Widener Library, Dn 561.8. A handwritten annotation on the Harvard College Library bookplate reads: "The gift of W. D. Howells, of Belmont 25 Nov., 1878."

94 Dante Alighieri, *La divina commedia di Dante Alighieri*, 3 vols. (Parma: Co' tipi Bodoniani, 1795), Houghton Library, pf Typ 725B. 95.316 (formerly Dn 7.95). The other Dante-related titles that I have found bearing bookplates indicating that they came from the bequest of Henry Ward Wales, received on October 22, 1856, include Widener Library, Dn 8.4, Dn 8.17, Dn 28.30.2, Dn 28.30.5, Dn 28.38, Dn 28.44.2, Dn 28.54, Dn 146.3.2, and Dn 570.1.

95 Dante Society, *First Annual Report*, 13.

96 *Ibid.*, 16.

collection.”⁹⁷ As might be expected from such a broad ambition, the Society sometimes had to advise the library to exercise restraint so as not to overspend. For example, George Rice Carpenter, the society’s secretary and treasurer, wrote on one occasion, “About a week ago I sent \$50 to Hooper for Dante Books. I think we ought to go easy, though. We have been using money ahead. Each year ought to pay for itself, it seems.”⁹⁸

Lowell returned to Cambridge in 1885, having enjoyed visits from Norton in London during the two previous summers. The two undoubtedly must have used those occasions to talk about the progress of the Dante Society. Perhaps incited by Norton’s example, Lowell, who was then president of the society, acquired a perfect copy of the extremely rare Spanish translation of the *Commedia* printed in 1515 from the Duke of Hamilton’s sale in 1884 for the princely sum of £40 and presented it to the society as a gift.⁹⁹ The donation was duly noted in the *Fifth Annual Report of the Dante Society* in 1886, which also registered the transfer of another 130 volumes from Norton’s collection. Along with other acquisitions, these latest gifts brought the total number of Dante-related volumes in the library to 864.¹⁰⁰

In 1887, the society sent a circular to “many writers on subjects connected with the life and works of Dante, with the request for contributions to this collection, especially of books privately printed, and also of work of a more fugitive character published in periodicals and elsewhere.”¹⁰¹ In exchange, the society offered to send copies of its reports to any contributor interested in receiving them. The program resulted in the donation of some thirty works the first year and more in subsequent years.¹⁰²

97 *Third Annual Report of the Dante Society, May 20, 1884* (Cambridge, Mass.: John Wilson and Son, University Press, 1884), 9.

98 George Rice Carpenter to William Coolidge Lane, February 7, 1891, Dante Society of America, Additional correspondence, 1883-1898, Houghton Library, fMS Am 1794.1 (142). The identity of Hooper is unclear, though it might be a reference to the firm of Lewis Hooper & Co, 8 Milk Street, Boston, which is listed as a wholesaler and retailer, stationer, and blank book manufacturer in Carl Nicolaus Caspar, *Caspar’s Directory of the American Book, News and Stationery Trade, Wholesale and Retail* (Milwaukee: C. N. Caspar, 1889), 762 and passim.

99 Dante Alighieri, *La traduciō del dante de lengua toscana en verso castelano por el reuerēdo don po fernādez de villegas arcediano de burgos y por el comentado allende d’los otros glosadores . . . con otros dos tratados, vno q̄ se dize querella dela fe, y otro aversion del mūdo y cōuersio a dios* (Burgos: n. p., 1515), Houghton Library, f IC D2358 Ek515v. See also Lane, *Dante Collections* (1890), 85, item 241.

100 *Fifth Annual Report of the Dante Society, May 18, 1886* (Cambridge, Mass.: John Wilson and Son, University Press, 1886), 10.

101 *Seventh Annual Report of the Dante Society, May 15, 1888* (Cambridge, Mass.: John Wilson and Son, University Press, 1888), 12.

102 *Eighth Annual Report of the Dante Society, May 20, 1889* (Cambridge, Mass.: John Wilson and Son, University Press, 1889), 12: “In the past year, out of ninety titles added to the Library, thirty have come from the authors themselves, and ten from other persons.”

I. Editions of *La Divina Commedia*, or of complete Works.

1-36. Folios and Mss.

37-72 Large Quartos

73-1144 ? - 1820

1145-216 1821 - 1845

217-288 1846 - 1870

289-396 1871 -

397-432 Selections.

II. Translations.

433-540 English Translations (alphabetically by Translators).

541-576 French " " "

577-648 German " " "

649-684 Other languages

III. Commentary, etc.

685-706. Ancient comments (to circa 1600.)

707-792. Modern running commentaries, and comments on single cantos and verses, (arranged in boxes and not entered separately.).

793-828. Dictionaries and text criticism.

829-936. General and miscellaneous criticism and discussion of the *Divina Commedia*, its meaning, etc.:-

829-936 Italian, (alphabetically by authors).

937-1008 do. English " "

1009-1044 do. French " "

1045-1116. do. German " "

IV. Minor Works.

1117-1152. Collections and Miscellaneous.

1153-1188 *Convito*. (Text, translations, and comment.)1189-1224. *De vulgari eloquentia*, and *De monarchia*.

1225-1260. Minor poems.

1261-1296. *Vita nuova*.

Figure 8. William Lane created a special "movable" classification scheme for the Dante Collection. This page from the annual report of the library's cataloging department for 1883 represents an initial attempt that was apparently never used. Harvard College Library, Records of Catalogue Department, Annual Reports to the Librarian, 1881-1912, 53. Harvard University Archives, UA.III.50.8.113.3.75.1, box 1. 26.7 cm. Reproduced with permission.

In addition to bolstering the academic *bona fides* of the society, the practice of naming well-respected European Dante scholars as honorary members also served incidentally to augment the Dante Collection. Six honorary members were elected in 1889: Adolfo Bartoli, Giosuè Carducci, Edward Moore, Theodor Paur, Johann Andreas Scartazzini, and William Warren Vernon. Several more were approved over the next few years. In expressing his gratitude for the honor, Scartazzini sent copies of his *Prolegomeni della Divina Commedia* (Leipzig, 1890), stating that if the volume had not already gone to press he would have dedicated it to the society.¹⁰³ In late 1891, the society issued a circular similar to the one it distributed in 1887, only this time it was composed in Italian and presumably sent to various Italian writers.¹⁰⁴

Beginning in 1887, the *Annual Report* of the society published a complete and detailed list of all additions to the Dante Collection in Harvard College Library received during the previous year, including these solicited donations and other gifts along with books purchased by the society.¹⁰⁵ Such listings were included in subsequent annual reports through 1908 with only minor variations in the publication schedule. After that time, cumulative updates appeared sporadically. Most of the listings were compiled by Lane.

Lane had matriculated as a classics student at Harvard in 1877 and joined the staff of the Harvard College Library on the day after his graduation, serving first in the Order Department and then heading the Cataloguing Department.¹⁰⁶ He became a member of the Dante Society in 1886, perhaps having been conscripted on the basis of his command of modern as well as classical languages and his strategic roles within the library. In addition to compiling the annual lists of donations to the Dante Collection, Lane also prepared an annual bibliography of new publications on Dante that was printed as an appendix to the society's annual report until 1890, when the newly organized Società Dantesca Italiana decided to publish a similar bibliography in its *Bullettino*. Because the bulk of Dante-related literature was still being published in Europe, the Dante Society determined not to duplicate an effort that it reasoned could

103 Giovanni Andrea Scartazzini to [], May 13, 1890, Dante Society of America, Additional correspondence, 1883–1898, Houghton Library, fMS Am 1794.1 (96).

104 A copy of the Italian circular survives in the William C. Lane Dante Society Papers, Harvard University Archives, UA III.50.28.97.2.3, in a folder labeled “Dante Society—Misc. Correspondence & Papers.” The circular was drafted at the request of the society by assistant professor of Italian and Spanish Bennett Hubbard Nash; see the correspondence between Nash and Dante Society secretary George Rice Carpenter in Dante Society of America, Additional correspondence, 1883–1898, Houghton Library, fMS Am 1794.1 (154, 156).

105 Dante Society, *Sixth Annual Report*, 12–13.

106 Walter B. Briggs, Biographical sketch of William C. Lane, William C. Lane Papers, Harvard University Archives, HUG 1511.5510.

be more easily and exhaustively accomplished abroad. Still, members of the society's majority American audience regretted the decision, with one commenting to Lane that "the *Bulletino* of the Italian Society can hardly be so available as yours is to American and English students."¹⁰⁷

Lane was also tapped by Winsor for a far more important, comprehensive, and challenging bibliographical undertaking, the preparation of a joint catalog listing all of the works by and relating to Dante in the Harvard College Library, the Boston Public Library, and those that remained in Norton's personal library. This project, first announced in the *Third Annual Report of the Dante Society*, was subsequently expanded to include Dante-related items belonging to Norton's uncle, George Ticknor, who had passed away in 1871, leaving those portions of his library that he had not already given to Boston Public to the custody of his heirs.¹⁰⁸ No mention was made or explanation given as to why the numerous Dante volumes on Longfellow's shelves were not incorporated in the inventory, especially since some of the volumes he owned were likely the sole copies in the Boston area at the time.

Lane approached the task of preparing the catalog in stages, publishing a segment each year in the *Harvard University Bulletin* beginning in 1885. The first installment, containing the editions of the *Commedia*, also appeared as a separate publication in the library's series of "Bibliographical Contributions."¹⁰⁹ Lane organized the entries roughly according to the pattern of European bibliographies of Dante, such as the well-known and authoritative work produced by Colomb de Batines (Prato, 1845–1848). The first part contained editions of the *Commedia* in Italian followed by translations, arranged alphabetically by language and translator, after which were listed editions of the so-called "minor works" (*Convivio*, *De volgari eloquentia*, *Vita nuova*, etc.) arranged alphabetically by title, with translations of the same mixed in chronologically. The second part contained "works on Dante" arranged alphabetically by author, including critical treatments of individual works by Dante or those of a more general or biographical nature. Concurrently with the establishment of this arrangement, Lane also created a numbering scheme according to which he classified the volumes described in the catalog so that they could be physically organized into what then became a separate special collection on Dante. Essentially all works relating to Dante, whether donated through the society, purchased by the library, or previously

107 Robert Guy to William Coolidge Lane, September 17, 1890, Dante Society of America, Additional correspondence, 1883–1898, Houghton Library, fMS Am 1794.1 (124).

108 Dante Society, *Third Annual Report*, 9–10.

109 Lane, *The Dante Collections*; and Justin Winsor, ed., *Harvard University Bulletin* 4:30–37 (1885–1887): 188–192, 335–339, 374–379, and 429–436. The successive segments were eventually assembled into the complete edition of the catalog published in 1890, which also incorporated acquisitions made after 1885 (see page 40 and note 87).



Figure 9. Postcard of Gore Hall, showing, to the right, the 1887 addition containing six new stack levels. The Dante Collection, constituted as such in 1883, was initially shelved on the second floor but was moved to the sixth floor in 1894. Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Archives, LC 50-1-3. View of Gore Hall. Silver gelatin photograph. 4.4 x 7 cm. Reproduced with permission.

accessioned in the library's collections, were thus brought together in single location in Harvard's main library building at the time, Gore Hall.

One of the earliest of the faceted classification systems introduced at Harvard during the latter part of the nineteenth century, Lane's "Dn" classification essentially replicated the organization of the catalog in preparation with one significant exception: criticism of individual works by Dante were classified together with the corresponding work (nos. 1-388), presumably to facilitate shelf browsing, while the remaining critical works of a general nature and biographical studies were categorized by genre and topic in separate series (nos. 400-580).¹¹⁰ When cataloging a new acquisition, the main classification would be determined first and then an abbreviated numerical facet

110 See Harvard University Library, *Italian Language and Literature*, 51:67. An earlier version of the Dante classification scheme, mostly likely from late 1883 or 1884, is preserved in Harvard University, Library, Records of the Catalogue Department, Annual Reports to the Librarian, 1881-1912, Harvard University Archives, UA III.50.8.113.3.75.1, Box 1, 53-54. The class numbers range from 1-1908. The system does not appear to have ever been used.

EAST STACK—SIXTH FLOOR

WEST

Shelf-Mark	Subject	Rows
165...-205..	German Literature	1-6
Educ T (also 12)	Old Text Books	7
Mol	Molière	7
Swi	Swiss History	8
M G	Modern Greek Collection	9
Dn	Dante Collection	10-11
T Dn	Ticknor Dante Collection	11
Ital	Italian History and Literature	12-19
Span	Spanish History and Literature	20-23
Port	Portuguese History and Literature	24
Rom	Minor Romance Collection	24
Scan	Scandinavian Collection	25-28
Ott	Ottoman Collection	Side Shelves
P Scan	Scandinavian Periodicals	“ “
P Port	Portuguese Periodicals	“ “
P Rom	Romance Periodicals	“ “
P Span	Spanish Periodicals	“ “
P Ital	Italian Periodicals	“ “
P Hung	Hungarian Periodicals	“ “
P Gr.	Modern Greek Periodicals	“ “

EAST

SOUTH

NORTH

UAF 1548

Figure 10. Around 1894, the Dante Collection was moved from the second floor of Gore Hall to the sixth floor. This library stacks diagram from the period shows both the original “Dn” classification created for the Dante Collection, as well as the “TDn” classification that was applied to the Dante-related volumes from George Ticknor’s personal library donated by his heirs in 1896. Harvard University, Gore Hall Plans and Papers, 1840. Harvard University Archives, UA I.15.48.pf. 30.5 x 20.3 cm. Reproduced with permission.

added to represent the year of publication. As Lane's assistant, William H. Tillinghast, explained in the Order Department Journal,

For sections where the books are to be arranged chronologically ten numbers are left and the last figure of the section number represents the century figure in the date of such book, while the decade and year figure of the date of publication constitute the book number proper. Thus Dn 348.87 indicates a book in a certain section of the classification, published in the present year [i.e., 1887]. A second in this year would be Dn 348.87.1.¹¹¹

Meanwhile, the report continued, “for sections which require an alphabetical arrangement twenty-five numbers are left and each letter is denoted by a number. This gives an imperfect alphabetization but Mr. Lane found it sufficient for his purposes. He combined *xyz* on the 24th number and used the 25th to contain collections.”¹¹² For original editions of Dante's works, the last digit in the main classification designated the century of publication, with 4 representing the 1400s and 3 representing the 2300s—a rather forward-looking scheme that anticipated interest in Dante continuing almost as far into the future as it had already extended through the past from the first appearances of his works in print. As a further innovation, Lane designed the “Dn” classification to be a “movable” system—that is, one that would not be tied either to physical locations (as was the case with most other collections at the time) or integrated with other subject classifications.¹¹³ This meant that the whole collection could be shifted from one location to another without disturbing its internal arrangement. In fact, on account of the rapid growth of the Dante and other collections in Gore Hall during the last decades of the nineteenth century, the Dante Collection was relocated within the building in 1894 and again at a later date.¹¹⁴

111 Harvard University, Library, Records of the Order Department, Journal 1887–1912, Harvard University Archives, UA III.50.8.116 (2), 46.

112 Ibid.

113 See Matthew Battles, *Widener: Biography of a Library* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard College Library, Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2004), 6.

114 Harvard University, Library, Records of the Catalogue Department, ser. 5, 1887–1897, Harvard University Archives, UA III.50.8.113, 114, entry for April 14, 1894: “Dante will be moved to floor 3, where the Park. Coll. will also be placed.” (“Park. Coll.” was shorthand for a miscellaneous collection of books bequeathed to Harvard College by historian Francis Parkman.) At the time, the Dante Collection was shelved on the second floor, as shown on a set of stack location diagrams for Gore Hall in a folder dated 1893 in Harvard University, Library, Plans, Harvard University Archives, UA III.50.15.122pf. A later set of diagrams shows the “Dn” classification on the sixth floor of the east wing adjacent to the “TDn” (Ticknor Dante) classification; see: Harvard University, Library, Gore Hall Plans and Papers, 1840, Harvard University Archives, UA I.15.48.pf. As noted below, the Ticknor Dante donation was cataloged in 1896.

Beginning in 1888, a process was put in place whereby the typesetting used to print catalog entries for the *Harvard University Bulletin* was also used to generate printed shelflist cards for the library's collections.¹¹⁵ Likewise, the typeset entries that were prepared for the 1890 edition of the Dante catalog, consisting in the supplemental list of titles added to the collection since 1885, along with the indexes of subjects and passages from the *Commedia* (useful features not generally found in the older European Dante bibliographies), were employed in cataloging the remaining titles and generating their shelflist cards. Thus, the Dante collection was probably one of the first at Harvard to have a completely printed shelflist file.¹¹⁶

Lane's joint catalog of the Dante holdings of the Harvard College and Boston Public libraries was finally completed in 1890. The title page offered the following tribute: "For a large part of its Dante Collection Harvard College Library is indebted to Professor Charles Eliot Norton and to the Dante Society." Copies were distributed to all members and made available for sale to non-members.

One member of the society, Louis Dyer, a Harvard graduate who taught Greek at Harvard and Oxford and later Cornell, used the advance printings of Lane's catalog that he received as a buying guide to aid the continued growth of the Harvard collection. In a letter to Lane from January 1889, Dyer noted that he was careful to avoid squandering resources to purchase volumes that the catalog indicated were owned by Norton, understanding that they would eventually be donated to the library.¹¹⁷ On the other hand, he explained that if he had the opportunity, he would not hesitate to buy copies of

115 Annual Reports to the Librarian, 1881-1912, 118 [report for 1887-1888]: "Another important change which has been inaugurated this year is the use of printed cards. These are employed only for such titles as are printed in the Bulletin, the composition being the same for both purposes . . . After several preliminary trials made in order to determine the relative time required and the expense of the two methods, work was begun regularly on Jan. 1888 and all the titles appearing in the last two Bulletins (2155 in all) have been printed on cards."

116 Harvard University, Library, Records of the Catalogue Department, ser. 5, 1887-1897, Harvard University Archives, UA III.50.8.113, 86, entry for May [1892]: "Part of the Dante titles catal. by means of printed cards which had been made when the printed catal. was made." See also Annual Reports to the Librarian, 192 [report for 1891-1892]: "One other group of cards has been withdrawn from the author catalogue, viz. all the titles under Dante (author and subject) that are contained in the printed catalogue of the Dante collection. The card catalogue had never been made complete under this heading, and it was thought better frankly to accept the printed list as our official catalogue of these books so far as it goes. A copy has therefore been bound and stands on top of the catalogue case directly over the Dante drawer, in which, under Dante, are found the titles of those books only (both editions of Dante works relating to him) which have been received since the Catalogue was printed."

117 Louis Dyer to William Coolidge Lane, January 1, 1889, Dante Society of America, Additional correspondence, 1883-1898, Houghton Library, fMS Am 1794.1 (48).

works held by Boston Public for Harvard, so as to make the Harvard collection the more comprehensive and the primary repository for the preservation of Dantean literature in the United States. While Dyer's reasoning might appear incontestable, others would take an opposite view, recommending that Harvard should only maintain a small general library suited to the immediate needs of its undergraduates while deferring the task of building collections of special or research character to public institutions in the Boston area that are accessible to Harvard faculty and their students.¹¹⁸ Perhaps anticipating such arguments, Dyer made clear to Lane that he wanted his purchases to be presented as gifts from the society, not as personal gifts from an individual to the library, except in the case of volumes that may not be considered worthy on account of some defect. Presumably, gifts from the society had already established precedent and priority and even some prestige. Three of the volumes that Dyer acquired and presented were the 1484 edition of the *Commedia* printed in Venice¹¹⁹ and the two miniature editions of the poem printed in 1629 in Padua¹²⁰ and Venice.¹²¹ In so doing, Dyer modeled a practice that would later epitomize successful library friends' groups in the twentieth century; indeed, the Dante Society may be regarded as a prototype of such organizations.

As awareness of significant purchases like Dyer's spread throughout the antiquarian book trade, booksellers began offering rare volumes to Harvard with some regularity. For example, Max Kantorowicz wrote from Milan in April 1890, using his best English: "As I have heard that the hon[orable]. Dante Society of Cambridge is always buyer of some editions of Dante, I take the pleasure of offering to you the following editions," which included another copy of the 1484 Venetian edition of the *Commedia* together with another Venetian edition from 1493.¹²² He also asked for a copy of the society's

118 See Battles, *Widener*, 10-12. In 1902, New York Public Library director J. C. Billings persuaded Harvard President Charles W. Eliot to abandon plans to build a new library, arguing that Harvard reduce the size of its current library collections and make better use of its funds than storing and cataloging rarely used books, adding that it "should not purchase, and, as a rule, should not attempt to preserve books of this character which already exist in public libraries in Boston and are accessible to the professors and students of Harvard."

119 Dante Alighieri, *Comento di Christophoro Landino fiorentino sopra la Comedia di Danthe Alighieri poeta fiorentino* (Venice: Octauiano Scoto da Monza, 1484), Houghton Library, Inc 4581 (A).

120 Dante Alighieri, *La Diuina comedia di Dante, con gli argomentii, & allegorie per ogni canto, e due indici, vno di tutti i vocaboli più importanti vsati dal poeta, con la esposition loro, e l'altro delle cose più notabili* (Venice: Nicolo Misserini, 1629), Houghton Library, m Dn 26.29* Miniatures box 11, sec. 7.

121 Dante Alighieri, *La visione, poema di Dante Alighieri, diviso in Inferno, Purgatorio, & Paradiso* (Padua: Donato Pasquardi, 1629), Houghton Library, m *IC.D2358.472c.1629 Miniatures box 6, sec. 2.

122 Max Kantorowicz to [Dante Society], April 7, 1890, Dante Society of America, Additional correspondence, 1883-1898, Houghton Library, fMS Am 1794.1 (91).

latest annual report, which was duly sent according to a note penciled at the top of the letter.¹²³ Later in the year, Kantorowicz sent an advance copy of his latest catalog, calling attention to certain “very scarce books of Dante.”¹²⁴ In fact, the society and the library received many such catalogs from European booksellers and made a number of purchases from them.¹²⁵

OTHER DANTE COLLECTIONS

There is evidence that other American libraries took note of the growing Dante collection at Harvard. Some offered to help increase it while others drew inspiration from its example to build up their own Dante holdings. In May 1890, Reuben Brooks Poole, librarian of the YMCA in New York, contacted Lane to inform him that his library possessed several rare editions of Dante he had been thinking of deaccessioning, and inquiring whether Lane might be interested in making an offer on any of them. Poole added that “Columbia College is collecting something in this line and I expect they will want some on this list,” which included editions of the *Commedia* from 1477, 1481, 1484, 1507, 1529, 1578, and Lord Vernon’s *Inferno*, the last of which he indicated he would likely keep.¹²⁶ Columbia College, soon to become Columbia University, was in the process of reorganizing its Department of Modern Languages and Foreign Literatures into a Department of Romance Languages.¹²⁷ While it is not clear what became of Poole’s offer (Columbia did not acquire any of the volumes and Harvard already had them),¹²⁸ Columbia’s chief librarian, George Baker, wrote to Lane in January

123 The request was likely filled by Lane, who routinely responded to requests for copies and catalogs and annual reports, as evidenced by the amount of such correspondence from later years found in William C. Lane Dante Society Papers, Harvard University Archives, UA III.50.28.97.2.3.

124 Max Kantorowicz to [Dante Society], November 10, 1890, Dante Society of America, Additional correspondence, 1883–1898, Houghton Library, fMS Am 1794.1 (130).

125 See for example Widener Library, Dn 572.1.3, a bound volume of nineteen bookseller and auction catalogs dating from 1879 through 1894, many of them marked up to indicate desired or completed purchases. In addition, numerous items of correspondence from antiquarian booksellers are found throughout the William C. Lane Dante Society Papers, Harvard University Archives, UA III.50.28.97.2.3; as well as Dante Society of America, Correspondence and records, 1883–1904, Houghton Library, bMs Am 1794; and Dante Society of America, Additional correspondence, Houghton Library, fMS Am 1794.1.

126 R[euben]. B[rooks]. Poole to William Coolidge Lane, May 26, 1890, Dante Society of America, Additional correspondence, 1883–1898, Houghton Library, fMS Am 1794.1 (98).

127 Joseph Guerin Fucilla, *The Teaching of Italian in the United State: A Documentary History* (New Brunswick, N.J.: American Association of Teachers of Italian, 1967), 108.

128 I am grateful to Columbia University reference and research librarian Gerald Cloud for checking the provenance of Columbia’s pre-1600 editions of Dante’s works and verifying that none came from the YMCA library.

1891 to thank him for supplying a set of the annual reports of the Dante Society and to ask a series of questions about how the society helped to maintain the collection and whether the volumes were “treated in any other way than the ordinary books of similar character in the Library.”¹²⁹ The entry for Columbia in Lane’s and Bolton’s *Notes on Special Collections in American Libraries*, which appeared the following year, reported distinct holdings of eight major authors. With 281 volumes, Dante ranked just behind Kant but was represented by more than double the number of works by Milton.¹³⁰

Cornell University also established a Dante collection during this period, thanks to the efforts its former librarian and benefactor Daniel Willard Fiske, who began focusing his collecting prowess on the poet in the spring of 1893. Fiske later admitted that he employed Lane’s catalog as a bibliographical guide to get him started—wearing out several copies, in fact, in his book-hunting frenzy.¹³¹ Using money from the settlement of the estate of his wealthy widow, Jenny McGraw, Fiske purchased a villa near Florence and assembled a Dante collection for Cornell that more than doubled Harvard’s in size in just a year. Fiske’s rapid purchasing, though systematic and careful, nevertheless yielded a sizable number of duplicates. These were set aside until a plan for their disposal could be devised.

In the meantime, Fiske hired Theodore Wesley Koch to create and publish a catalog of his collection.¹³² Koch, who had recently earned a master’s degree in Romance languages from Harvard, displayed a keen interest in the American reception of Dante that had been nurtured by his studies under Norton. Koch joined the Dante Society before leaving Harvard in 1894 and was invited to contribute a historical and bibliographical study of Dante in America to the society’s annual report. It appeared two years later in the report for 1896.¹³³

129 George H. Baker to William C. Lane, January 8, 1891, Dante Society of America, Additional correspondence, 1883–1898, Houghton Library, fMS Am 1794.1 (140).

130 Lane, *Notes on Special Collections*, 42. By comparison, the entry for Columbia also reported holdings by and about the following authors: Goethe (733 vols.), Mary Queen of Scots (277 vols.), Herodotus (276 vols.), Shakespeare (706 vols.), Kant (282 vols.), Machiavelli (120 vols.), Milton (110 vols.).

131 Theodore Wesley Koch, *Catalogue of the Dante Collection Presented by Willard Fiske*, 2 vols. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Printed for Cornell University Library by John Wilson and Son, University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1898–1900), 1:v. See also Dupont, “Collecting Dante from Tuscany.”

132 Koch, *Catalogue of the Dante Collection*.

133 Koch, “Dante in America,” *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Dante Society, May 19, 1896*, 7–74. In 1901, Koch published *A List of Danteiana in American Libraries, Supplementing the Catalogue of the Cornell Collection* (Boston: Ginn and Co. [for the Dante Society], 1901), in which he noted the location of copies of works held in the Cornell, Harvard, and Boston Public Library collections together with those volumes that Norton had destined for Harvard but still held privately—thus adopting the “union” listing approach used by Lane in the 1890 joint catalog of the Dante Collections in the Harvard College and Boston Public Libraries.

As Koch was preparing to take up his duties at Cornell, he extended an invitation to Fiske to become a member of the Dante Society, which he gladly accepted. At the same time, Koch asked about the possibility of transferring to Harvard the duplicate Dante volumes that Fiske had thus far accumulated. Fiske readily consented to the suggestion and instructed Koch to

pack up the duplicates desired by Harvard and send them on to the College Library, and allow Mr. Winsor to put his own price on them,—which need not be very high, I am given to understand, as we wish to create a feeling of mutual co-operation between the two Dante Collections, and Harvard at some future day may have duplicates which we lack here. When I spoke to Mr. Winsor about the matter the other week, he said that the Library would do anything which Mr. Norton (that means the Dante Society) advocated.¹³⁴

Several dozen duplicates from Cornell were thus purchased and added to the Harvard collection in 1896.¹³⁵

MORE DANTE COLLECTING AND CATALOGING AT HARVARD

In the meantime, Harvard College Library, with the support of the Dante Society, continued to purchase additional works for the collection at a steady rate. A box of order slips numbering about 200, mostly dating from 1896–1899, survives in the society's archives.¹³⁶ A review of the yearly cataloging statistics shows that, on average, the Dante collection grew by between sixty to eighty titles a year. Numbering 654 volumes when the collection was initially constituted in February 1885, it grew to 2,561 when the last consistent tabulation was made in October 1905. The greatest boost came between 1885 and 1886 when Norton's initial donations were cataloged. A significant increase also occurred in 1897 as the duplicates received from Cornell were processed along with the Dante volumes given by Ticknor's heirs in 1896, which had already been included and described in Lane's catalog.¹³⁷ To put these figures in perspective, the library cataloged

134 Theodore Wesley Koch to Alfred Richmond Marsh, December 10, 1895, Dante Society of America, Records, Houghton Library, bMS Am 1794 (141).

135 See the minutes from the fifteenth annual meeting of the Dante Society, May 19, 1896, preserved in Dante Society, [Minute book, 1881–1928], Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 1340 (117), 48.

136 Harvard University, Library, Library Donations, Harvard University Archives, UA III.50.28.97.2.4 (2).

137 Harvard University, Library, Annual Reports to the Librarian, 1881–1912, Harvard University Archives, UA III.50.8.113.3.75.1 (1), 296 [report for 1896–1897]: "The Dante books formerly belonging to Professor Ticknor, received this last year, have not been catalogued, except that in the printed Dante list in

a total of 15,522 titles in 1884–1885 (a high figure) and 7,625 in 1894–1895 (a more typical number).¹³⁸

Number of Titles in the Dante Collection of Harvard College Library*		
<i>Date of Tabulation</i>	<i>Running Total</i>	<i>Titles Added (Reduced)</i>
February 1, 1885	654	244
October 1, 1885	818	164
October 1, 1886	944	126
October 1, 1887	1010	66
October 1, 1888	1094	84
October 1, 1889	1164	70
October 1, 1890	1241	77
October 1, 1891	1314	73
October 1, 1892	1400	86
October 1, 1893	1460	60
October 1, 1894	1532	72
October 1, 1895	1636	104
October 1, 1896	1707	71
October 1, 1897	2064	357†
October 1, 1898	2124	60
October 1, 1899	2175	51
October 1, 1900	2240	65
October 1, 1901	2294	54
October 14, 1901	2287	(7)‡
October 1, 1902	2355	68

the Delivery Room the shelf-mark has been placed against those titles there entered and marked T.” See also page 317 [report for 1897–1898]: “The Ticknor-Dante gifts mentioned in the last report are now cataloged.”

138 Harvard University, Library, Record Book of Cataloging Work, 1883–1936, UA III.50.15.15.28.10, various references.

<i>Date of Tabulation</i>	<i>Running Total</i>	<i>Titles Added (Reduced)</i>
October 1, 1903	2426	71
October 1, 1904	2485	59
October 1, 1905	2561	76
August 1, 1906	2601	40
August 1, 1907	2636	35
August 1, 1908	2698	62
August 1, 1909	2771	73

*Data derived from Old Widener Shelflist for the Dante Collection, Vol. 1, p. 5.
†Ticknor Dante (TDn) volumes added; likely also duplicates from Cornell received in May 1896.
‡A complete inventory was taken of the collection and an adjustment made to the total number of titles.

As the Dante Society’s council came to recognize that the continued growth and maintenance of the Dante collection would remain one of its chief responsibilities, it revised its by-laws in 1892 to include a librarian among its officers.¹³⁹ Naturally, Lane was chosen for the office, ratifying what had been a long-standing recognition of his vital role; indeed, his name had appeared in officer listings in the society’s annual report under the title of “librarian” since 1888.¹⁴⁰ Lane left Harvard in 1893 to become chief librarian of the Boston Athenaeum, yet returned in 1898 to succeed Justin Winsor. During his absence from Harvard and after his return, Lane continued to hold the office of librarian for the Dante Society.

DANTE READING AND SCHOLARSHIP

Following Lane’s departure in 1893, Winsor suggested to Norton that the society make alternative arrangements to fulfill the promised function of lending books from the Dante collection that had been advertised in the society’s annual report. Lane had been handling all such transactions himself and the “habit,” as Winsor called it, seemed to

¹³⁹ *Eleventh Annual Report of the Dante Society, May 17, 1892* (Cambridge, Mass.: John Wilson and Son, University Press, 1892): 7, 11. See also Dante Society, [Minute book], Cambridge, 1881–1928, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 1340 (117), 36, from the minutes of the eleventh annual meeting.

¹⁴⁰ See Dante Society, *Seventh Annual Report*, [2], and subsequent reports.

be “growing.”¹⁴¹ Consequently, an updated notice of the borrowing terms was published in the *Twelfth Annual Report of the Dante Society* in 1893:

Attention is called to the fact that members of the Society can always consult at the College Library in Cambridge the books belonging to the Dante Collection. Members can also have such books sent them in the way they designate, if their applications (which should give definite titles) are first transmitted to Professor A. R. Marsh, Cambridge, Mass., and are approved by him.¹⁴²

At least a few members took advantage of the privilege. For example, library charging records from this period indicate that G. H. Savage of Roxbury, Massachusetts, borrowed an Italian edition of the *Commedia* with the commentary of Jacopo della Lana on June 7, 1894.¹⁴³ Fred Norris Robinson of Lawrence, Massachusetts, a graduate of the Class of 1891, appears as one of the more frequent borrowers of Dante-related works.¹⁴⁴ Robinson later became Gurney Professor of English Philology and served as secretary and eventually president of the Dante Society.¹⁴⁵ The records also show that several “special borrowers” of Harvard College Library charged out items from the Dante collection, including some women, like Mrs. M. A. Ward of Cleveland, Ohio,

141 Justin Winsor to Norton, June 12, 1893, Dante Society of America, Records, Houghton Library, bMS Am 1794 (250a): “While Mr. Lane was here, we referred to him all applications from members, to have books sent to them by mail,—a habit which is growing. I think some defined process should be determined upon to help Mr. Kiemann in deciding when such applications come if the sending of books away is to be kept up. This process might be explained in your coming report.”

142 *Twelfth Annual Report of the Dante Society, 16 May 1893* (Cambridge, Mass.: John Wilson and Son, University Press, 1893), 16.

143 G. H. Savage of Lynnfield Center (near Roxbury) is recorded as having borrowed Dante Alighieri, *Comedia di Dante degli Allagherii, col commento di Jacopo della Lana, nuovissima edizione della Regia Commissione per la Pubblicazione dei Testi di Lingua, sopra iterati studii del suo socio Luciano Scarabelli* (Bologna: Tipografia Regia, 1866); see Harvard College Library, Charging Records, Library Charging Lists, 1893–1894, Harvard University Archives, UA III 50.15.60, Box 87, column 114. Although the charging records are by their nature tedious to browse, one can now do so online thanks to Harvard University Library’s Open Collections Program; see: <<http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/reading/libraries.html>> (accessed June 7, 2010).

144 See for example, Library Charging Lists, 1893–1894, column 138, which records Robinson’s borrowing of Dn 418.4.3 (Scartazzini, *Dante Handbuch*) on December 1, 1893. Robinson also borrowed several other volumes from the Dante Collection; see Harvard College Library, Charging Records, Library Charging Lists, 1892–1893, Harvard University Archives, UA III 50.15.60, Box 86, column 15.

145 Following Robinson’s death in 1966, his estate donated the records he retained as an officer of the Dante Society to Houghton Library. They were cataloged as Dante Society of America, Records, bMS Am 1794.

who borrowed half a dozen Dante volumes in 1885 though she became a member of the society only in 1887.¹⁴⁶

Yet did this extensive library and its generous provisions for borrowing lead to the scholarship that the society hoped to cultivate? Certainly popular awareness of Dante peaked during the latter part of the nineteenth century, as evidenced by the number of publishers who issued both inexpensive and deluxe editions of Henry Francis Cary's blank-verse translation of the *Commedia* paired with Gustave Doré's sensational Gothic engravings. The Dante cult remained strongest in the Northeast. Philadelphia and New York gave birth to their own Dante societies, though neither lasted more than a year.¹⁴⁷ The current also flowed steadily westward.¹⁴⁸ A scrapbook in the Dante Collection at Harvard preserves an array of newspaper clippings and other Dante-related ephemera from the 1880s and 1890s, such as a program from a series of weekly readings and discussions of the *Inferno* held at a church in Lawrence, Kansas, that made use of works by Longfellow, Norton and Lowell.¹⁴⁹ The Dante Collection also includes "A Reference List for the Study of Dante" issued by the St. Louis Public Library.¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the general public's mounting fascination with Dante and reading of translations of the *Commedia* in popular editions was not necessarily matched by a corresponding growth in academic studies. Indeed, the *Fifth Annual Report of the Dante Society* published in 1886 noted that "no work of importance has been done in the past year by American

146 See Harvard College Library, Charging Records, Library Charging Lists, 1885–1886, Harvard University Archives, UA III 50.15.60, Box 77, column 76. Ward first appears in the list of society members in the *Sixth Annual Report of the Dante Society*.

147 See La Piana, *Dante's American Pilgrimage*, 149; and Gifford, "History of the Dante Society," 3-4.

148 See Verduin, "Dante in America," 40-42.

149 Dante Scrap-book [1897], Widener Library, Dn 580.6, 1:141, "Friends in Council, Lawrence, Kansas, Program 1893–1894," which bears a Harvard College Library stamp dated October 14, 1893, and a penciled note: "For Dante Scrapbook. / Prof. Norton. of Cambridge." A note on the front flyleaf of the second volume of the Dante scrapbook reads: "This scrap-book was begun towards the end of 1896 with the duplicate clippings which had remained over from the making of the Fiske Dante Collection, and with such as I had collected during the few previous years. In May 1897 Mr. W. C. Lane turned over to me such clippings as he had accumulated on his hands since the beginning of his librarianship of the Dante Society; the latter I have inserted in such order as the miscellaneous nature of the material would permit. / Theo.W.Koch. / Oct. 1st, 1897. / Ithaca, N. Y." The binder and arrangements of these two scrapbooks is identical to the series of scrapbooks that Koch assembled for the Fiske Dante Collection at Cornell University; see Daniel Willard Fiske Papers, Cornell University Library, 13/1/1165.

150 St. Louis Public Library, "A Reference List for the Study of Dante" (St. Louis, 1890), Widener Library, Dn 573.9, which includes a Harvard College Library bookplate with a handwritten note indicating that it was received from the St. Louis Public Library in November 1890.

students of Dante that has come to the notice of the Council,” and similar statements appeared in reports from other years.¹⁵¹

To stimulate an increase in Dante scholarship by currently enrolled or recently graduated students of Harvard, a member of the society, George Armour, offered to contribute \$100 for three years (or \$50 for six years) to establish an annual Dante Prize.¹⁵² The prize was inaugurated in 1888 but no award was made the following year, presumably due to a lack of submissions. In 1890, the prize was designated the Latham Prize in honor and memory of its second recipient, Charles Sterrett Latham (Class of 1884), who passed away from a long illness before knowing that he had won.¹⁵³ His mother returned the prize earnings so that the competition could be extended another year. To increase the number of submissions, eligibility was expanded from Harvard students to include students and recent graduates of any college or university in the United States. Within a few years, the prize became firmly established and the society continued to fund it even after Armour’s initial pledge had been exhausted. The society also published selected winning essays, sometimes with its annual report, as in the case of George Rice Carpenter’s noteworthy analysis of the “Donna Pietosa,”¹⁵⁴ and sometimes separately, as with Latham’s translation and notes on Dante’s epistles.¹⁵⁵

By the time of the thirteenth annual meeting in May 1894, the society had in fact begun to shift its primary focus from building the Dante Collection in Harvard College Library to issuing publications. After acknowledging the success and benefits of the Dante Collection, the annual report for 1894 stated: “Especially it is desirable that the Society’s efforts in the way of publication and of fostering publication on Dante in English should be considerably greater in the future than in the past.”¹⁵⁶ In addition to its annual report and accompanying papers, the society already had published a concordance of the *Commedia* that was acclaimed for its usefulness, even by scholars

151 Dante Society, *Fifth Annual Report*, 11. See also the third and tenth annual reports.

152 George A. Armour to John Woodbury, May 17 [1886], Dante Society of America, Records, Houghton Library, bMs Am 1794 (8). According to the rules governing the administration of the prize, the advertised prize amount was \$100; see Dante Society, *Fifth Annual Report*, 11.

153 *Tenth Annual Report of the Dante Society, May 19, 1891* (Cambridge, Mass.: John Wilson and Son, University Press, 1891), 10-11.

154 George Rice Carpenter, “The Episode of the Donna Pietosa, Being an Attempt to Reconcile the Statements in the *Vita Nuova* and the *Convito* Concerning Dante’s Life in the Years after the Death of Beatrice and before the Beginning of the *Divina Commedia*,” in Dante Society, *Eighth Annual Report*, 21-79.

155 Charles Streeter Latham, *A Translation of Dante’s Eleven Letters, With Explanatory Notes and a Biographical, Historical, and Critical Comment to the First, Second, Third, Ninth, and Eleventh Letters* (Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1891).

156 *Thirteenth Annual Report of the Dante Society, May 15, 1894* (Boston, Mass.: Ginn and Co., 1894),

abroad.¹⁵⁷ Otto Harrasowitz, a bookseller in Leipzig, ordered thirty copies for distribution in Europe.¹⁵⁸ Based on its success, the society proposed publishing similar concordances to Dante's lesser Italian works and his Latin treatises, though it would be another decade and more before they were issued.¹⁵⁹ Meanwhile, Norton himself published his prose translation of the *Commedia* with notes and commentary in 1891–1892. A newly revised third edition of his translation of the *Vita nuova* was issued by Houghton Mifflin the same year as a marketing companion. Sales of both exceeded expectations.¹⁶⁰

In recognition of these achievements, Norton was invited to deliver the fourth annual Percy Graeme Turnbull Lectures on Poetry at The Johns Hopkins University in March, 1894. Norton naturally chose Dante for the theme of his six lecture series. In his opening lecture, he sought to account for the broad interest in Dante at the end of the nineteenth century, noting that it had become “so widespread throughout our country during the last few years as to deserve special attention as one of the characteristic features of such intellectual life as exists among us.”¹⁶¹ According to Norton, the phenomenon could be explained as a rebuttal to widespread cultural materialism which furthermore conveyed the essential remedy of enlivening the imagination through the agency of poetry. Dante was ideally suited to this function, surpassing even Homer and Shakespeare, for they only “show to us the scene of life without direct interpretation of it,” whereas

Dante gives us the image of his world not as a reflection from an unconscious and indifferent mirror but as from a mirror that shapes and orders its

157 Edward Allen Fay, *Concordance of the Divina commedia* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Dante Society; Boston, Little, Brown, and Co., 1888). For letters from foreign scholars praising the concordance, see, for example, A. Lupsthi to John Woodbury, March 15, 1888, and Ruggero della Torre to [William Coolidge Lane], March 19, 1888, Dante Society of America, Additional correspondence, 1883–1898, Houghton Library, fMS Am 1794.1 (16, 18).

158 Otto Harrasowitz to William Coolidge Lane, March 6, 1888, Dante Society of America, Additional correspondence, 1883–1898, Houghton Library, fMS Am 1794.1 (15).

159 *Concordanza delle opere italiane in prosa e del Canzoniere di Dante Alighieri, pub. per la Società dantesca di Cambridge, Mass.sachusetts, a cura di E. S. Sheldon coll'aiuto di A. C. White*, Edward Stevens Sheldon, ed. (Oxford, England: Stamperia dell'Università [London: E. Frowde], 1905); and Edward Kennard Rand, *The Latin Concordance of Dante and the Genuineness of Certain of his Latin Works* (Boston: Ginn and Co., reprinted from the *Twenty-Ninth Annual Report of the Dante Society*, 1912).

160 See Verduin, “Dante in America,” 37–38; and Turner, *Liberal Education*, 405.

161 Charles Eliot Norton, [Turnbull Lectures], [1894], in Charles Eliot Norton, Miscellaneous Papers, Houghton Library, bMS Am 1088.5, Box 13, unlabeled folder of Dante lecture notes, also available as microfilm 96-905. I discuss the identification of the lecture notes and their significance to Norton's interpretation of Dante in my essay “Charles Eliot Norton and the Rationale for American Dante Studies.”

reflections for a definite end. He is not simply the poet, controlled by his genius, and yielding to the temptations of the poetic temperament. But he is the man, endowed with poetic powers in some respects unequalled by those of any other, but holding these powers in complete command, controlling his own genius, by force of character and compelling it to minister to the perfecting and invigorating of his moral nature. In this lies the secret of his peculiar hold upon so many and so various minds. He is the poet of man as a moral and responsible being.¹⁶²

Norton's Turnbull lectures thus offered a culminating expression of his vision for rescuing moral virtue and culture from the threat of *fin-de-siècle* materialism and articulated a powerful rationale for American Dante studies within the broader context of his aspirations for liberal educational reform.

Norton's lectures also had a more local impact. In the spring of 1897, he was invited to repeat them for audiences of workers at the Prospect Union in Cambridge.¹⁶³ Founded as a Harvard University extension and settlement service in 1891, the Prospect Union aimed to provide for the educational needs of the local working classes while easing tensions between the elite and the swelling population of immigrants in the Cambridge vicinity, which included many Italians.¹⁶⁴ While it does not appear that Harvard or the Dante Society directed any additional outreach of this kind to the local Italian community in the following years, nevertheless, with the turn of the twentieth century, Boston-area Italians took steps to organize their own cultural preservation and outreach efforts. In 1901, the Circolo Culturale di Boston (Boston Cultural Circle) was formed for the purpose of establishing a local chapter of the Società Dante Alighieri, an organization founded in Rome a dozen years earlier to "protect and propagate Italian culture and language throughout the world," taking for its name the nation's most universally recognized symbol.¹⁶⁵ The Boston chapter received preliminary recognition

162 Norton, [Turnbull Lectures], 3.

163 Norton delivered his series of six lectures on "Dante's Life and Work" at the Prospect Union between February 15 and March 22, 1897; see the notice in the *Harvard Crimson*, February 12, 1897: <<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1897/2/12/lectures-by-professor-norton-professor-charles/>> (accessed October 16, 2010); and Prospect Union, *The Prospect Union, Bulletin for the Second Half-Year, 1896-97* (Cambridge, Mass.: Prospect Union, 1896), 10.

164 For background on the Prospect Union and an appraisal of its mission, see David B. Potts, "The Prospect Union: A Conservative Quest for Social Justice," *New England Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (September 1962): 347-366.

165 The formal mission of the Società Dante Alighieri is cited in various sources, including its Internet homepage: <<http://www.ladante.it/>> (accessed June 7, 2010). The first article of its statute of incorporation reads: "tutelare e diffondere la lingua e la cultura italiana nel mondo, tenendo ovunque alto il sentimento

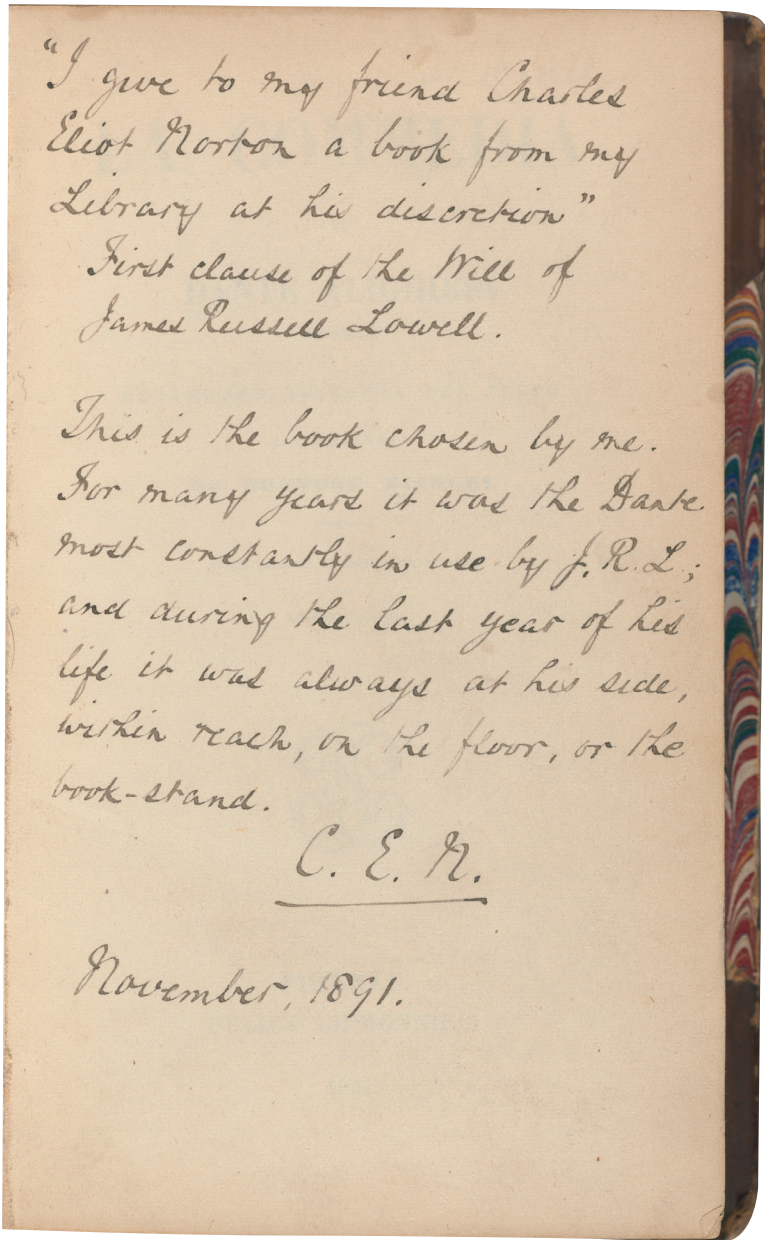


Figure 11. In his will, Lowell directed that Norton should choose one book from his library "at this discretion." The volume that Norton selected is the copy of the *Commedia* that Lowell most frequently consulted, especially during the last year of his life. Dante Alighieri, *La commedia di Dante Alighieri Fiorentino novamente riveduta nel testo e dichiarata da Brunone Bianchi*, 4th ed. (Florence: Le Monnier, 1854), showing Norton's inscription on the front flyleaf. Houghton Library, Nor 2239.5* 18 cm.



Figure 12. Photograph, ca. 1908, of the Treasure Room in Gore Hall, showing a bust of Norton in front of bookcases containing volumes from his personal collections, which had been purchased for Harvard College Library in 1905 with funds contributed by a number of friends. Harvard University Archives, HUV 48 (3-8). 7.6 x 13.4 cm. Reproduced with permission.

in 1901 and full recognition in 1911. In 1985, the Dante Alighieri Society of Massachusetts, as it had come to be called, opened a permanent headquarters building on Hampshire Street in Cambridge, near MIT, thanks in large part to the efforts of local community leaders. For generations, the East Cambridge neighborhood had been home to a largely immigrant population composed primarily of Italian, Irish, Polish, and Portuguese families, who naturally sought to preserve and promote their traditions. Representing Italians at the seventy-fifth anniversary of the incorporation of Cambridge as a city in 1921, the first Italian to be appointed a judge in Massachusetts, Frank Leveroni, cited Dante in the opening lines of his address.¹⁶⁶ Since 1921 also marked the sixth centenary of Dante's death, the Cambridge Public Library compiled and published a list of books on Dante that includes some three dozen editions and translations of his works along

di italianità, ravvivando i legami spirituali dei connazionali all'estero con la madre patria e alimentando tra gli stranieri l'amore e il culto per la civiltà italiana" (To protect and propagate Italian culture and language throughout the world, strengthening the spiritual ties of Italians living abroad with their motherland and fostering love and appreciation for Italian civilization among foreigners).

166 Frank Leveroni, "Address of Hon. Frank Leveroni," in *Cambridge Seventy-Five Years a City, 1846-1921: A Brief Account of the Interesting Events in Connection with the Celebration of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts, October 9-11-12, 1921* (Cambridge, Mass.: Printed under the direction of the City Council Committee, 1922), 46-52.

with another seventy-five references to books and articles about him.¹⁶⁷ Though local residents were still welcome to join the Dante Society, it was obviously convenient for them to have a basic Dante collection readily available in their local library.

PARTING GIFTS

From Lowell's death in 1891 until his own in 1908, Norton led the Dante Society as its president. In keeping with the generous spirit that prompted him to donate the larger part of his Dante Collection in the 1880s, Norton wished to bequeath his entire personal library to Harvard since his heirs expressed no interest in retaining it for themselves. On the other hand, he needed money to ensure that his large family home, Shady Hill, could be passed on to his children. Without his knowledge at first, some forty friends and admirers raised \$15,000 to purchase the contents of his bookshelves for the Harvard College Library, and some 540 more donors contributed to an endowed fund that would be used to purchase additional volumes for the library in his name. When several of the organizers of the fundraising effort visited Norton at Shady Hill to present him with a parchment folder inscribed with a testimonial and the names of all of the donors, William Roscoe Thayer offered a presentation speech to which Norton responded with "tears streaming down his face."¹⁶⁸ Writing to Lane about the details of the transfer that would take place in the summer of 1905, Norton commented, "it is a great satisfaction to me that the books which I have cared for henceforth to belong to the University, and that they and the fund for the purchase of others to be added to them are to be in your charge as I hope, for many years."¹⁶⁹

One of the conditions of the transfer was that Norton would be allowed to keep a selection of volumes for as long as he wanted.¹⁷⁰ For a time, he retained the more

167 *List of Books on Dante in the Cambridge Public Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts, compiled on the Occasion of the Six Hundredth Anniversary of Dante's Death* (Cambridge, Mass.: [Cambridge Public Library], 1921). I am grateful to Susan Ciccone, reference librarian at the Cambridge Public Library, for supplying this and the preceding reference.

168 Turner, *Liberal Education*, 408; see also Constance Grosvenor Alexander, "An Evening in the Library of Charles Eliot Norton, May 11, 1905," unpublished typescript (1942), Houghton Library, MS Am 1088.7.

169 Norton to William Coolidge Lane, July 13, 1905, Charles Eliot Norton, Correspondence with William Coolidge Lane, 1905–1906, Houghton Library, fMS Am 1088.4 (11). The uncataloged donor files in Houghton Library contain two copies of a forty-page typescript, "List of books sent to Harvard College Library from Shady Hill, 1905," which includes a number of Dante-related titles scattered throughout the general alphabetical inventory. One copy of the list is heavily annotated with the classification numbers assigned to the volumes.

170 See Norton to William Coolidge Lane, January 12, 1905, Charles Eliot Norton, Correspondence with William Coolidge Lane, 1905–1906, Houghton Library, fMS Am 1088.4 (3). Among other details

valuable Renaissance manuscripts he had purchased over the years, including the remaining Dante manuscripts he had obtained from the Kirkup sale, but even these he sent to Lane in March 1906.¹⁷¹ One precious volume that Norton kept until the end was the one that he had selected from Lowell's library in accordance with a provision of his will, which otherwise bequeathed to Harvard College Library any books from his collection that the College desired.¹⁷² The volume that Norton chose for himself was an edition of the *Commedia* which, as Norton noted on the front flyleaf, was for many years "the Dante most constantly in use by J. Lowell; and during the last year of his life it was always at his side, within reach, on the floor or the book-stand." The *Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of the Dante Society*, published the year after Norton's death, included the volume in the listing of contributions received by the library during the previous year with an annotation summarizing its provenance and association.¹⁷³ Just as the intimate circle of reading and collecting that these two close friends had enjoyed was thus quietly acknowledged by the society they helped to form and to lead, so, too, did the Dante collection they had contributed so much to establishing through their years of book hunting and scholarly exchanges pass unassumingly to the next generation of Dante's students in America.

At Harvard, that generation was led by Charles Hall Grandgent, Edward Stevens Sheldon, and Ernest Hatch Wilkins, each of whom served as president of the Dante Society. The Dante Society became formally incorporated as the Dante Society of America in 1954, reflecting a reinvigorated and wider-ranging mission. Soon thereafter, its annual reports were expanded into the scholarly journal *Dante Studies*, with the *Annual Report of the Dante Society* which, like the society itself, continues to thrive to this day. Dante-related holdings in Harvard College Library continue to increase each year, though acquisitions have been supported by central library budgets for the past several decades rather than by annual gifts from the Dante Society. Accordingly, new acquisitions are no longer added to the historic "Dn" classification, whose volumes for the most part have been transferred to Houghton Library. Houghton Library has also acquired the bulk of the historical records of the Dante Society, primarily through gifts

regarding the plan to acquire his library, Norton mentions that there are "two or three volumes of interest, which, because of personal associations, I should wish to reserve."

171 Norton to William Coolidge Lane, March 13, 1906, Charles Eliot Norton, Correspondence with William Coolidge Lane, 1905–1906, Houghton Library, fMS Am 1088.4 (11).

172 Dante Alighieri, *La commedia, novamente riveduta nel testo e dichiarata da Brunone Bianchi*, 4th ed. (Florence: Le Monnier, 1854), Houghton Library, Nor 2239.5*. An inscription on the front flyleaf reads: "I give to my friend Charles Eliot Norton a book from my Library at his discretion." For details of the will and Lowell's several bequests, see Emma Elizabeth Brown, *Life of James Russell Lowell* (Boston: D. Lothrop, 1887), 342–343.

173 *Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of the Dante Society, 1908* (Boston, Mass.: Ginn and Co., 1909), 2.

received in 1940 and 1966. In 2007–2008, the society transferred its library of historic books on Dante to Longfellow House–Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site, where it also now holds its annual meetings, reviving for present generations a tradition of collecting and reading Dante bound closely to its auspicious origins.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ “DSA’s Library of Historic Books Finds New Home,” *Dante Society Newsletter* 14, no. 2 (April 2008): 1.

Contributors

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