

THE DANTE SOCIETY OF AMERICA
Boylston Hall
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Cambridge 38, Massachusetts

NEWSLETTER #5

THE DANTE STAMP

Thanks to efforts by certain members of the Dante Society, two resolutions were introduced into Congress during the summer authorizing the Postmaster General to issue a stamp or a series of stamps for the Dante Centenary. The first bill was introduced into the House of Representatives by Congressman Robert N. Giaimo of Connecticut on 23 July 1964, and his eloquent speech appears on p. 16231 of the Congressional Record. He said in part:

"Dante was a man of his age--a man of action, involved in the affairs of Florence and the papacy; a man of intellect, deeply learned in the philosophy and religion of his time; and a man of eminence, acquainted with the great men in politics and literature, both of Italy and of the rest of Europe. He is truly representative of his time and place, yet his stature far transcends that time and place--his eloquent vitality exerts its powerful influence on contemporary thought as well. It is therefore most fitting that the United States of America, in the 20th century, separated from Dante by 4,000 miles and seven centuries, should by the official act of issuing a postage stamp to celebrate his birthday, recognize that his poetic magnificence, his mastery of language, his human tenderness and moral grandeur, make him a man worthy of the praise and emulation of all men."

On 27 July Senator Paul H. Douglas of Illinois, introducing into the Senate a resolution (S.J. Res. 186), delivered a fine statement on the importance of Dante as a great humanist and the tremendous influence which his writings have exercised through the centuries. The resolution, printed in the Congressional Record, is as follows:

"Whereas Americans gratefully honor the memory of persons whose lives and accomplishments have enriched our own; and
Whereas the year 1965 will mark the 700th anniversary of the birth of the great Italian man of letters, Dante Alighieri; and
Whereas Dante Alighieri, through his treatise entitled De Monarchia was the first powerful voice to advocate a federation of nations as the only sure means of bringing about an enduring peace on this earth, thus anticipating what has become a reality in our United States and Nations; and
Whereas Dante's Divine Comedy, acknowledged as one of the greatest literary works of all time, has, through numerous translations into English become a genuine part of our American culture, tradition; and
Whereas Dante Alighieri, by virtue of his supreme genius as a poet and thinker, has enriched not only Italy but all of western civilization;
Now, therefore, be it
Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that the Postmaster General is authorized and directed to issue, during the calendar year 1965, a special series of postage stamps, of such appropriate design and denomination as he shall prescribe, in commemoration of the 700th anniversary of the birth of Dante Alighieri."

Both resolutions were referred to the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. The final decision is made by the Postmaster General himself with the counsel of his Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee.

OTHER NEWS

Northwestern University Library recently purchased a new edition of the Divine Comedy with illustrations by Dali (price: \$534.00). Northwestern Library News has this to say about this edition:

"For its new exhibit, the Rare Book Room is displaying one of its most important new acquisitions, Dante's La Divina Commedia. Far more than just a new acquisition, this is a totally new book. It is fresh from one of the finest printers in Italy and is filled with 100 water colors by Salvador Dali. There are six volumes, two each for Inferno, Purgatory and Paradise, boxed separately in symbolic colors, red, purple and blue, respectively. The color scheme is carried over into the book on the title page in a large modern typeface. It is a spectacular book.

"Dali has called this his 'artistic testament' and we can easily see the wholeness of his art in the 100 paintings on which he has worked for nine years. Here is Dali the draughtsman, his exquisite line, his almost Renaissance perfection. Dali the mythmaker, his imagination set alive by the creatures and the tortures of Hell and Purgatory and the peace of Heaven. Dali the surrealist, his anticipated trademarks--crutches, melting livers, stylized landscapes which become faces and figures, his windowed bodies. He is traditional and modern, brilliant and inventive, genius and technician. He is all in these drawings, good and bad." (Northwestern Library News, Vol. XVIII, No. 43)

The first public exhibition of Dali's illustrations took place at the Kasha Heman Gallery in Chicago, attracted many spectators and aroused considerable interest.

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Professor Allan Gilbert sends word that he expects to deliver to Bantam Books by 1 October 1964 a new prose translation of the Inferno, accompanied by the Italian text, and with introduction and notes. He says: "The language is that of the present, rather than the archaic diction sometimes employed. . . . Frequent headings within cantos indicate subjects dealt with. Thus the pages will not look quite like those in any English version I have seen, and the volume will, I believe, be unusually easy to read."

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Stefan Mrozewski of Monte Sereno, California, has been making illustrations of the Divine Comedy in wood-cut since 1938, in various countries of Europe and in the United States. His plan has been to make one illustration for each canto and one portrait for each cantica. He now has 83 illustrations finished.

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The Centenary celebration at Wellesley College will take place on 20-21 October, this year, in the form of a DANTE SYMPOSIUM. The programme includes: "How a Poet Saw God" by Charles S. Singleton, "Dante and the Poetics of Aristotle" by Francis Fergusson, "On The Mount of Purgation" by Jacob Klein and "The Guardians of Hell and the Planets of Heaven" by Peter H. Brieger. Congratulations, Wellesley!

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Those who would like to be included on a roster of Dante lecturers, to be kept as a reference list to aid institutions and other groups that might ask the Society for information concerning possible and available lecturers, should write immediately to the Secretary of the Society, indicating availability, title of lecture(s) and terms. The latter will be kept confidential.

Vincenzo Cioffari, National Chairman

Anthony J. De Vito, Secretary

George H. Gifford, President of the Dante Society