

PAGET TOYNBEE

1855-1932

PAGET JACKSON TOYNBEE was born at Wimbledon on 20 January 1855. He was the third son of the distinguished aural surgeon and philanthropist, Joseph Toynbee, F.R.S., and the younger brother of Arnold Toynbee, the social philosopher and economist. Both Joseph Toynbee and his elder brother George were among the earliest friends of Mazzini in England, and were associated with him in his work for Italian boys at Hatton Gardens. It is tempting to see this Mazzinian tradition continued in the next generation; in the humanitarian enthusiasm of Arnold and the devotion to Italian studies of Paget.

Paget Toynbee was educated at Haileybury and Balliol. After taking his degree at Oxford, he travelled abroad as a private tutor, visiting Algiers, India, and Japan. In 1888 he settled at Stanhoe in Norfolk, where he took private pupils; but in 1892 he gave up teaching, and devoted himself to what became his life work: literature and research. In 1894 he married Helen Wrigley, the future editor of the letters of Horace Walpole, and moved to Dorney Wood, near Burnham, in Buckinghamshire. Here, in 1907, he built the house, 'Fiveways', where he passed the rest of his life and which will always be associated with his name.

Old French and Italian had attracted Toynbee from the outset. His first published volume was *Specimens of Old French from the Eleventh to the Fifteenth Century* (1892), which he followed up with *A Historical Grammar of the French Language*, in 1896, an enlargement—in great part entirely rewritten—of the well-known work of Auguste Brachet. But he had already begun his researches in Dante, the first-fruits of which appeared in 1886 as a series of notes contributed to the *Academy*, bearing upon points of contact between the poet and France: 'Dante and the Lancelot Romance', 'Dante and Paris', 'Siger de Brabant and Siger de Courtrai'.

The first of these was embodied in the important article, under the same title, which was published in the same year in the fifth Annual Report of the Cambridge (U.S.A.) Dante Society (18 May 1886), and was reprinted later with additions at the beginning of his *Dante Studies and Researches* (London, 1902). This very notable study, in which, as always in this field, his special knowledge of Old French stood him in good stead, thus stands as a worthy frontispiece to his work on Dante. Though his priority in the matter has been questioned, I think that Toynbee could justly claim to have been the discoverer of the real significance of the puzzling allusion in the *Paradiso* (xvi. 14-15) to the cough of the Lady of Malehot 'al primo fallo scritto di Ginevra'. But this was only an incidental point. With his 'Dante and the Lancelot Romance', Toynbee was the pioneer in the study of the influence of the Arthurian legend on the *Divina Commedia*, upon which much work has been done since in Italy and elsewhere, and he took some satisfaction, in later years, in the knowledge that this was recognized.

The year 1894 is memorable in the annals of British Dante scholarship as that of the publication of the first edition of the *Oxford Dante* under the editorship of Edward Moore. Toynbee had already compiled an 'Index of proper names in the Prose Works and *Canzoniere* of Dante' (which was published in the thirteenth Annual Report of the Cambridge U.S.A. Dante Society), when the Oxford enterprise began to materialize. He now proposed to Moore, as 'a useful adjunct to the proposed single volume edition', the 'Indice dei nomi propri e delle cose notabili', covering the whole of Dante's works, which has remained a valuable feature of the volume and marks the beginning of the long and fruitful collaboration of Britain's two greatest Dante scholars.

This naturally led to Toynbee's third published volume, the one by which he is probably still best known: *A Dictionary of Proper Names and Notable Matters in the Works*

of *Dante* (Oxford, 1898); 'an attempt', he defined it, 'to bring together, in a convenient and concise form, such information as is available concerning the various persons and places mentioned or referred to in the works of Dante'; a work on a grand scale, illustrated with copious extracts from original sources, which is still invaluable to every student of the poet. It was followed later by the *Concise Dictionary of Proper Names and Notable Matters in the Works of Dante* (Oxford, 1911), on a smaller scale, which, while supplementing and bringing up to date the former volume (for some time out of print), by no means altogether superseded it, as the limits of space involved the omission of a large amount of the illustrative matter that gave its predecessor no small part of its value.

In 1900, besides an edition of Witte's text of the *Divina Commedia* and a revision of Cary's translation, Toynbee published a small book on Dante for the general reader: *Dante, his Life and Works*. This was practically his only work of a popular character; it passed through four editions (an Italian translation by G. Balsamo-Crivelli from the third appeared in 1908); the fourth edition (London, 1910) was so thoroughly revised and enlarged as to be almost a new book. A Dante anthology—*In the Footsteps of Dante* (London, 1907)—was less successful. Popularization was something essentially alien to the character of Toynbee's mind and scholarship, upon which the accumulation of facts and the clarification of problems made a stronger appeal than literary appreciation. Eminently characteristic of him is the next important work that he published after the Dictionary: *Dante in English Literature from Chaucer to Cary*, in two volumes (London, 1909). He described it as 'an attempt to trace the history and influence of Dante in English literature from Chaucer in the fourteenth century to Cary in the nineteenth'. Here, enriched with critical introductory notes to each author, we have brought together practically all that was written about Dante, or echoed from Dante, in English during a period of some 460 years.

Toynbee was indefatigable in communicating the results of his researches in the shape of notes and articles to periodicals and proceedings of societies: more particularly the *Academy* (from 1886 to 1897); the Cambridge U.S.A. Dante Society; *Romania*; the *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*; the *English Historical Review*; the *Bulletin Italien* (the publication of the Faculté des Lettres of Bordeaux); and (with valuable reviews) *The Times Literary Supplement*.

As one of the editors of the *Modern Language Review*, I may record with pride and gratitude his valuable support and constant contributions to our pages, which began in 1905 with a note on 'English translations of Dante in the eighteenth century' and continued until a few months before his death. To the specialist his notes on minute points of textual criticism, on the precise significance of words employed by Dante, or on the poet's indebtedness to little-known sources (for instance, 'Dante's Latin Dictionary', the *Magnae Derivationes* of Uguccone da Pisa), were a never-failing delight; but, at times, he elucidated themes of a more general character and interest, as an article on 'Benvenuto da Imola and his Commentary on the *Divina Commedia*', in an English Miscellany presented to Dr. Furnivall in 1901, an essay on 'Boccaccio's Commentary on the *Divina Commedia*', read before the Oxford Dante Society in 1906, and another on the 'Earliest English Illustrators of Dante' published in the *Quarterly Review* in 1909.

Toynbee's association by correspondence with Dante scholars on the Continent naturally led to contributions to presentation miscellanies and the like: thus, in honour of Arturo Graf (1903), of Michele Scherillo (1904), of Ridolfo Renier (1912), of Francesco Torraca (1912), and of Émile Picot (1913). For the sixth centenary of the birth of Boccaccio, in 1913, he contributed to the *Miscellanea storica della Valdelsa* an 'Index of authors quoted by Boccaccio in his *Commento alla Divina Commedia*'; a contribution to the study of the sources of the Commentary'. These various notes and articles were collected by him and reissued, with revisions

and additions, in book form. Translated into Italian, *Ricerche e note dantesche*, as the first and second volumes of the 'Biblioteca storico-critica della letteratura Dantesca' edited by G. L. Passerini and P. Papa (Bologna, 1899 and 1904), they appeared in English as *Dante Studies and Researches* (London, 1902), to which was added a later volume, *Dante Studies*, published at the Clarendon Press in 1921.

Between 1912 and 1919 Toynbee had been working upon the text of Dante's Letters, and had published his results in a series of articles in the *Modern Language Review* and occasional notes in the *Bulletino della Società Dantesca Italiana* and elsewhere. Inspired by Professor A. C. Clark's study, *The Cursus in Medieval and Vulgar Latin* (Oxford, 1910), he was applying—simultaneously with E. G. Parodi in Italy—the test of the laws of the medieval Cursus for the revision of the text of the Letters, and at the same time examining Dante's other Latin works from the same standpoint, drawing thence a new argument for the authenticity of the *Quaestio de Aqua et Terra* (*Modern Language Review*, xiii. 1918). Finally, in 1920, he published with the Oxford University Press his *Dantis Alagherii Epistolae*: 'The Letters of Dante, Emended Text with Introduction, Notes, and an Appendix on the Cursus.' Toynbee avoided the word 'critical', in order not to anticipate Ermenegildo Pistelli, who was preparing the text of the Letters as part of the *testo critico* of the complete works which was to be published, under the auspices of the Società Dantesca Italiana, for the sixth centenary celebrations of 1921. A thoroughly sound and excellent piece of work in every respect, it presented a text far superior to that previously accepted of the Letters, and stands as one of Toynbee's most valuable contributions to Dante studies. Among points of special interest were his establishing the right reading of a passage in the famous letter in which Dante refused to accept the dishonouring terms of the amnesty ('Estne ista revocatio gratiosa, qua Dantes Alagherii revocatur ad patriam?') and a proposed emendation of the

closing sentence which immeasurably enhances the dramatic intensity of the poet's words.

For the sixth centenary of Dante's death in 1921 (on which occasion he was awarded the Serena medal), Toynbee presented to the British Academy the monograph entitled 'Britain's Tribute to Dante in Literature and Art', a chronological record of 540 years from 1380 to 1920. This is a most elaborate and comprehensive list of all the translations, works, and studies on Dante, allusions and references in English, and representations in British art, from Chaucer to the date of publication; an exhaustive compilation of the kind that Toynbee loved.

From the *Epistolae*, Toynbee had turned to the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*. Here, while Pio Rajna's epoch-making edition (first published in 1896) naturally held the field, a new element had been introduced by the discovery of a manuscript at Berlin, of an earlier date than the two hitherto known manuscripts, a text based upon it having been published by its discoverer, Dr. Bertalot, in 1917. Of this manuscript Toynbee obtained photographic reproductions before its publication in facsimile in 1923 (*Il Codice B del 'De Vulgari Eloquentia'*). For the first time (the matter had been almost completely ignored by previous editors and students of the treatise) he applied the consideration of the *Cursus* to the constitution of the text, with results contributed to the British Academy as 'The Bearing of the *Cursus* on the Text of Dante's *De Vulgari Eloquentia*' (14 March 1923) and published in the tenth volume of the *Proceedings*. Toynbee showed that there are between fifty and sixty passages in which the application of the *Cursus* as test 'plays an important, if not decisive, part in the settlement of the text'. To take one very notable instance, its application enabled him to propose a highly satisfactory emendation of Dante's definition of poetry: 'Fictio rethorica musicaque composita.' Incidentally, his researches led him to appreciate the authority of the Berlin manuscript somewhat more highly than Pio Rajna was prepared to do, for the result

of his collations showed that the rhythmical structure in correspondence with the *Cursus* is far more consistently maintained here than in the other two manuscripts of the treatise.

This research had been undertaken with a view to what was destined to be Toynbee's last important work on Dante. The *Oxford Dante*, as we saw, had first appeared in 1894, and, though revised in Moore's subsequent editions of 1897 and 1904, was in many respects out of date, especially since the publication of the *testo critico* of the Società Dantesca Italiana at Florence in 1921. To give a single instance. The results of the work of Michele Barbi, as given in the *testo critico*, had largely revolutionized the ideas of students concerning Dante's lyrical poems—the *Canzoniere* or *Rime*. And this section of the Oxford volume (for which neither Moore himself nor Toynbee was responsible) had been from the beginning not only inadequate, but faulty in the arrangement and utterly uncritical as to the lyrics accepted as Dante's or excluded as spurious. Toynbee undertook the complete revision of the entire work for the fourth edition that appeared under his editorship in 1924; a task that assuredly no other English scholar could have accomplished, thus single-handed, with anything even remotely approaching his success. He gave an account of the principles by which he was guided in a paper read before the Oxford Dante Society on 12 November 1923, which was republished in a somewhat modified form, a little later, in an Annual Report of the Cambridge U.S.A. Dante Society. Toynbee had not altogether a free hand, as technical difficulties prevented him from rejecting the spurious works contained in previous editions (and also, it would seem, from making certain corrections, as the title of the *Monarchia*, which is perhaps more regrettable), and further it was desirable, as far as possible, to maintain a principle of numeration of lines and pages that would enable the student without difficulty to avail himself of the editor's own Dante Dictionary and of the well-known Concordances to the Minor Works. The

general result was that he made the *Oxford Dante* indispensable even to the student who naturally has the Florentine volume on his shelves. For the individual works, the *Vita Nuova* inevitably differs little from the critical text established by Barbi. The *Canzoniere* still reveals a few traces of its original sin, but, in the main, Toynbee showed a singular ingenuity in bringing that section as far as possible up to date with the insertion of the additional pieces accepted as authentic by Barbi. For the text of the *Divina Commedia*, a wise compromise was effected between the new readings adopted by Vandelli and the former tradition (there are several cases, I think, in which the readings chosen by Toynbee are to be preferred); somewhat similarly, with the *Convivio*, where the compromise was between Moore's readings and the new, sometimes far-reaching, emendations of Parodi and Pellegrini. In the case of the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* and that of the *Epistolae*, Toynbee maintained the result of his own researches, while accepting some corrections, especially with respect to the Letter to Cangrande, which had been made by Pistelli. In both these sections of the work of Dante there are some of Toynbee's emendations, though not accepted in the *testo critico*, that I cannot but think will ultimately prevail.

There is one general point upon which I venture to think that the *Oxford Dante* (as compared with the *testo critico*) is still open to criticism. Whether to preserve the traditional character of the volume or in deference to a supposed English preference, the text of the various works is presented in a linguistically modernized fashion; whereas, in accordance with the admirable principle now usual with the editors of early Italian texts, the Florentine volume seeks as far as possible to reproduce the orthography, retaining the forms and sounds of the language of Dante's own time. This is not a matter of merely philological interest; all recent work on Dante's versification tends to show that these points are of great significance in the aesthetic appreciation of the *Commedia* and *Rime*.

‘Dante was extravagant, absurd, disgusting, in short a Methodist parson in Bedlam.’ So wrote Horace Walpole to William Mason in 1782. But Horace Walpole had become second only to Dante in Toynbee’s thoughts and activities. Between 1903 and 1905, Mrs. Paget Toynbee had published her monumental edition of the Letters of Horace Walpole in sixteen volumes. Further, she had discovered, in the possession of Mr. W. R. Parker-Jervis, the original letters, 838 in number, of Madame du Deffand to Horace Walpole, which had been lost sight of since a selection had been published by Miss Berry in 1810. Mrs. Toynbee had transcribed and was preparing to edit these letters, when her labours were cut short by her untimely death in 1910. Toynbee now undertook to complete her work, finishing her introduction and preparing the whole work for press. Thus, *Lettres de la Marquise du Deffand à Horace Walpole* appeared in three volumes in 1912. In his preface, Toynbee characteristically appeals to Dante in excuse for any shortcomings on his part in thus entering a new and for him comparatively unexplored field:

Comme circonstance atténuante aux imperfections dont il est
responsable, il peut seulement plaider avec Dante,
qui mi scusi

la novità, se fior la penna abborra.

Il a pleine conscience de son insuffisante préparation à entre-
prendre un travail pour lequel,

come colui che nuove cose assaggia,

il a dû, pour ainsi dire, se frayer à chaque pas la route dans une
région nouvelle pour lui, et faire sans préambule la connaissance
d’une foule de personnes qui jusqu’alors lui étaient restées plus ou
moins étrangères.

With the same tireless energy that he devoted to Dante, Toynbee now plunged into fresh researches to supplement his wife’s work on Walpole. In 1914, shortly before the outbreak of the War, he ‘had placed at his disposal an extensive collection of unpublished Walpole manuscripts’, belonging to Sir Francis Waller, Bart., of Woodcote, Warwick (who was killed in action near Neuve-Chapelle

on 25 October in that same year). The first results of Toynbee's work on this rich and previously unexplored field appeared promptly in the two volumes, *The Correspondence of Gray, Walpole, West, and Ashton* (1734-71), including more than one hundred letters now first published, issued by the Clarendon Press in 1915. This was followed by the *Supplement to the Letters of Horace Walpole*, in two volumes, completed in 1915, but delayed owing to the exigencies of the War, and published by the Clarendon Press in 1918. A third volume was added in 1925, his final supplement to the work that his wife had begun.

A series of what might be called subsidiary 'Walpoliana' followed: the *Journal of the Printing-Office at Strawberry Hill* (Chiswick Press, 1923); *Reminiscences written by Mr. Horace Walpole for the amusement of Miss Mary and Miss Agnes Berry in 1788* (Clarendon Press, 1924); *Satirical Pieces published anonymously by William Mason with notes by Horace Walpole* (Clarendon Press, 1926); *Strawberry Hill Accounts*, a Record of Expenditure in Building, Furnishing etc., kept by Mr. Horace Walpole from 1747 to 1795 (Clarendon Press, 1927). The texts of these four volumes were all printed for the first time from the Walpole manuscripts, enriched with very copious notes and commentaries of Toynbee's own (themselves the result of long and unwearied research), and with those characteristically elaborate indexes the compilation of which was to him a never-failing delight. The last work in particular, the *Strawberry Hill Accounts*, with many illustrations in collotype from contemporary drawings, is a truly sumptuous production.

The publication of all this hitherto unknown matter naturally called for a new life of Walpole, and we cannot but regret that Toynbee did not himself undertake such a work as a companion to his life of Dante. Instead, he contented himself with revising and enlarging the well-known volume of Austin Dobson, *Horace Walpole, a Memoir*, which, he wrote, 'had come to be regarded as a classic in its own sphere', and to which he hoped that a new lease of life

would thus be given. This modest completion of Toynbee's work on Walpole was published by the Oxford University Press in 1927.

After the loss of his wife, Toynbee had become practically a recluse—a tendency that increased in the years following the War, when he lived entirely alone at 'Five-ways'. His chief relaxations were carpentry and gardening, his plants and flowers sharing his affections with the tame robins always so plentiful in the neighbourhood of Burnham Beeches. But he maintained his regular attendance at the meetings of the Oxford Dante Society, of which (since the death of Dr. Moore) he was the guiding spirit, and, from 1916 to 1928, the Honorary Secretary. In this capacity he compiled *The Oxford Dante Society, a Record of Forty-four Years (1876–1920)*, privately printed at Oxford in the latter year; a record of the activities of the members and of the meetings, not without interest even to outsiders. Toynbee had, very reasonably, come to look upon himself as holding a kind of watching-brief for Dante studies in England, and seldom missed an opportunity of writing a letter to *The Times*, when any current event seemed to call for an allusion or illustration from the rich stores of his learning. Once this practice led to a temporary misunderstanding. On the occasion of the eleventh centenary of the foundation of the Abbey of Montecassino in 1929, Toynbee, in pure innocence of heart, reminded the readers of *The Times* of Benvenuto da Imola's account of Boccaccio's unfortunate visit to the library. This was unreasonably taken in some quarters as an attempt on the writer's part to crab the celebrations—to which, as it happened, he had been one of the English subscribers.

In spite of his devotion to Walpole, Toynbee during these years found time for continued Dante researches. Between 1925 and 1929 he contributed a new series of Dante notes to the *Modern Language Review*, including a trenchant criticism of a recent restatement by Don Miguel Asin Palacios of his theory of the Islamic sources of the *Divina Commedia*,

and an important article, 'Some Notes on the text of Dante's *De Vulgari Eloquentia*' (March, 1927), in friendly controversy with Aristide Marigo, among which was a defence, against the attack of that Italian scholar, of his emendation of Dante's definition of poetry. These he followed with some briefer notes on matters connected with Walpole and his circle.

In November 1930 Toynbee's health broke down completely, and he was for some nine months in a nursing home. He had returned to 'Fiveways' when he wrote to me on 27 October 1931, enclosing an article for the Review: 'I am thankful to say that I am able to work, but of course I have to go steady, and soon tire. However, it is a blessing to be busy again, though in difficult conditions.' The last of his publications to meet his eyes were two short articles among the Miscellaneous Notes in our volume xxvii (January, 1932): 'Horace Walpole's Memoir of the Poet Gray', from the original at Chewton Priory (incorrectly printed in Mitford's *Correspondence of Thomas Gray and William Mason*, 1853); 'Gray on the Origin and Date of *Amadis de Gaul*', a note in Gray's hand, discovered by him among the Gray manuscripts belonging to Mr. A. T. Loyd, of Lockinge.

These were small bye-products of a much larger work, on which Toynbee had been engaged for some years—a new edition of the letters of Gray, in which he was so fortunate as to secure the collaboration of Mr. Leonard Whibley. Toynbee had traced some unpublished letters by Gray, and a large number of letters to Gray (which add greatly to the interest of the correspondence); and he had established the true text of many letters which previous editors had printed imperfectly. Mr. Whibley, working at first independently, had made important discoveries in the obscure history of Gray's life, which made it possible to redate many letters. Toynbee delivered the manuscript to the Oxford University Press before his death, and the work as revised by Mr. Whibley is now far advanced towards publication.

But he ended with Dante. He was keenly interested in

the issue, in the Oxford University Press series of *World's Classics*, of the English translation of the *Divina Commedia* by an American Dantist, Dr. Melville B. Anderson, together with the Oxford text. He finished correcting the proofs two days before he passed away on 13 May 1932.

Paget Toynbee was elected to the fellowship of the British Academy in 1919. He was a corresponding member of the Reale Istituto Lombardo di Scienze e Lettere, of the Reale Accademia di Lucca, and of the Reale Accademia della Crusca. That last honour was naturally one that he specially prized. The distinction of nomination as 'Accademico corrispondente della Crusca' had been held by only six other Englishmen since the beginning of the nineteenth century: William Roscoe, George Lord Vernon, John Kingston James, W. E. Gladstone, William Warren Vernon, and Edward Moore. Toynbee was recognized on the Continent as the representative of English Dante scholarship at its best, and, without detracting from the high achievement of Edward Moore and (from a different aspect) of Philip Wicksteed, I think that he was the only Englishman who could stand with the great Italian scholars in this field. Those of us who are students in that same field cherish a grateful memory of his generous appreciation of our own work, and of the unfailing liberality with which his vast learning was at our disposal.

EDMUND G. GARDNER.