

«Review of Dante, *Divina Commedia*, trans. Boyd»  
ROBERT MOREHEAD, 1803

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When we found that Dante had met with a translator, we opened the volumes with very humble expectations, and with a disposition for much indulgence. Our expectations, however, have been somewhat exceeded. Mr. Boyd has an equable easy style of versification, commonly somewhat dull, but always fluent. He expresses, in general very correctly, the meaning of his original; but he has an unfortunate habit of using obscure phrases which sometimes make that meaning not very perceptible. Dante, for instance, in the beginning of his poem, says, very simply, "But that I may treat of the good which I found in this valley, I will mention the other things I met with there." Mr. Boyd translates these words in the following unaccountable manner:

Yet tell, O Muse! what intellectual store,  
I glean'd along the solitary shore;  
And sing in louder strains the heav'nly freight.

Upon the whole, however, it appears to us, that Mr. Boyd has done as much for Dante, as can well be done in English rhyme; and is justly entitled to praise for the diligence and perseverance with which he has executed his laborious task. It is probable, however, that a prose translation would give a better idea of the genius and manner of this poet, than any metrical one. McPherson's Homer indeed is very heavy, because Homer is a diffuse writer, and is languid without the help of versification. Dante is remarkably concise, and never uses one word more than is absolutely necessary. There is a naked severe kind of poetry, to which verse seems no very necessary appendage. The poetry of the Scriptures would lose much of its effect if it were done into metre, as is evident from the versions of the psalms in common use. But as we scarcely expect that any one will set about this task, though a much easier one than that which Mr. Boyd has accomplished, we recommend his translation of Dante to the attention of our readers.