

.DANTE'S VANISHING ACT.....

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Exiled from his beloved city of Florence, Dante Alighieri, author of the great poem Divina Commedia (Divine Comedy), died on 14th September 1321 and was buried in Ravenna, Italy at the Bracciaforte monastery of the friars minor. He was dressed in the scarlet robes of a doctor and crowned with laurel leaves ...as befitted a great poet. But the poem was apparently unfinished, so Dante's Sons Piero and Iacopo, also poets , were asked to complete it.

Eight months later Iacopo dreamt that his father came to him, dressed in shining white garments, his face bathed in bright light , and showed him where the missing 13 sections of the poem were hidden in his old room. On waking , Iacopo, rushed to the wall Dante had touched in the dreamand found them. mouldy with damp, in a concealed hole.

When Dante's tomb was opened in 1780 to verify the remains before placing them in a new mausoleum, it was found to contain only a handful of small bones and some laurel leaves. It was supposed that Dante's absence in soul and body reflected his earthly wanderings through hell, purgatory and paradise, and that he must have been received into one of those realms. The matter was kept quiet, but a rumour persisted that the chapel where he was buried held a great treasure. Some of the friars who slept nearby occasionally reported seeing visions of a red-robed figure.....

In 1865 when the Bracciaforte chapel was being renovated, workmen discovered in the walls a wooden chest , containing a skeleton, and an inscription : Dantis ossa a me Fre Antonio Santi hic posita Ano 1677 die 18 Octobris - "Dante's bones, deposited here by me, Brother Antonio Santi, 18 October 1677."xxx