THE VISION OF PURGATORY

THE VISION

OF

HELL, PURGATORY, AND PARADISE

BY

DANTE ALIGHIERI

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CANTO I

O'er better waves to speed her rapid course
The light bark of my genius lifts the sail,
Well pleas'd to leave so cruel sea behind;
And of that second region will I sing,
In which the human spirit from sinful blot
Is purg'd, and for ascent to Heaven prepares.

Here, O ye hallow'd Nine! for in your train
I follow, here the deadened strain revive;
Nor let Calliope refuse to sound
A somewhat higher song, of that loud tone,
Which when the wretched birds of chattering note
Had heard, they of forgiveness lost all hope.

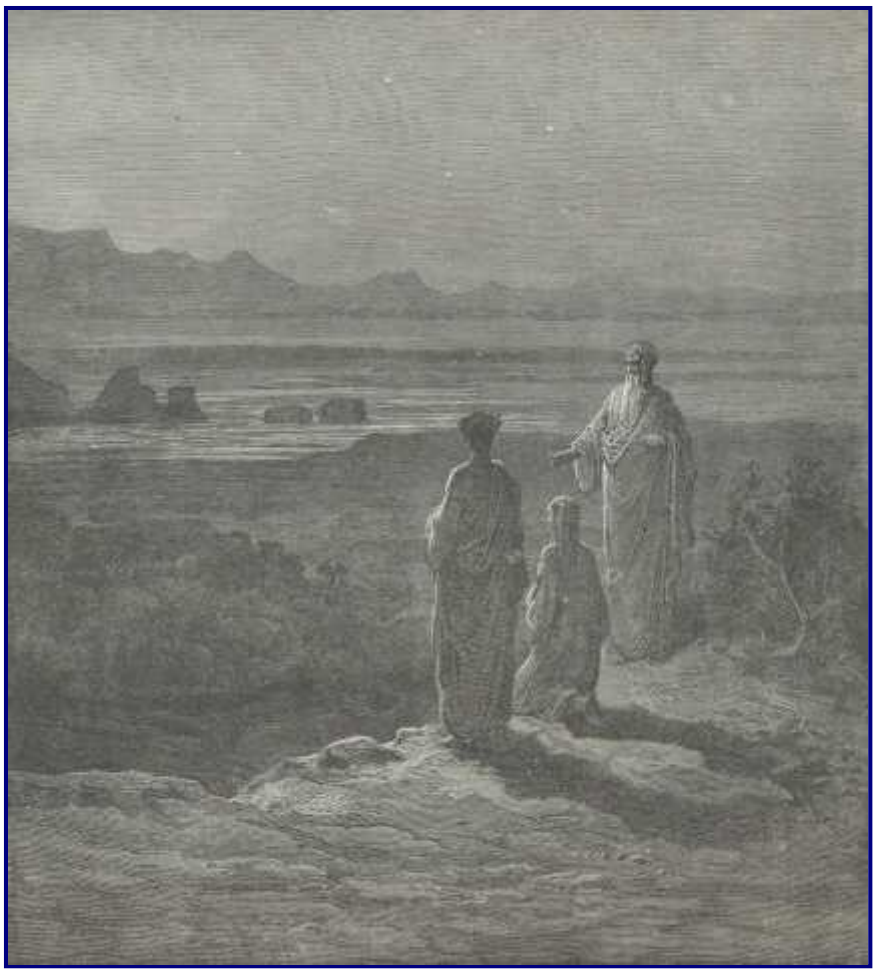
Sweet hue of eastern sapphire, that was spread
O'er the serene aspect of the pure air,
High up as the first circle, to mine eyes
Unwonted joy renew'd, soon as I 'scap'd
Forth from the atmosphere of deadly gloom,
That had mine eyes and bosom fill'd with grief.
The radiant planet, that to love invites,
Made all the orient laugh, and veil'd beneath
The Pisces' light, that in his escort came.

To the right hand I turn'd, and fix'd my mind
On the' other pole attentive, where I saw
Four stars ne'er seen before save by the ken
Of our first parents. Heaven of their rays
Seem'd joyous. O thou northern site, bereft
Indeed, and widow'd, since of these depriv'd!

As from this view I had desisted, straight
Turning a little tow'rds the other pole,
There from whence now the wain had disappear'd,
I saw an old man standing by my side
Alone, so worthy of rev'rence in his look,
That ne'er from son to father more was ow'd.

Low down his beard and mix'd with hoary white
Descended, like his locks, which parting fell
Upon his breast in double fold. The beams
Of those four luminaries on his face
So brightly shone, and with such radiance clear
Deck'd it, that I beheld him as the sun.

"Say who are ye, that stemming the blind stream,
Forth from th' eternal prison-house have fled?"
He spoke and moved those venerable plumes.
"Who hath conducted, or with lantern sure
Lights you emerging from the depth of night,
That makes the infernal valley ever black?
Are the firm statutes of the dread abyss
Broken, or in high heaven new laws ordain'd,
That thus, condemn'd, ye to my caves approach?"



My guide, then laying hold on me, by words
And intimations given with hand and head,
Made my bent knees and eye submissive pay
Due reverence; then thus to him replied.

"Not of myself I come; a Dame from heaven
Descending, had besought me in my charge
To bring. But since thy will implies, that more
Our true condition I unfold at large,
Mine is not to deny thee thy request.
This mortal ne'er hath seen the farthest gloom.
But erring by his folly had approach'd
So near, that little space was left to turn.

Then, as before I told, I was dispatch'd
To work his rescue, and no way remain'd
Save this which I have ta'en. I have display'd
Before him all the regions of the bad;
And purpose now those spirits to display,
That under thy command are purg'd from sin.
How I have brought him would be long to say.
From high descends the virtue, by whose aid
I to thy sight and hearing him have led.
Now may our coming please thee. In the search
Of liberty he journeys: that how dear
They know, who for her sake have life refus'd.
Thou knowest, to whom death for her was sweet
In Utica, where thou didst leave those weeds,
That in the last great day will shine so bright.
For us the' eternal edicts are unmov'd:
He breathes, and I am free of Minos' power,
Abiding in that circle where the eyes
Of thy chaste Marcia beam, who still in look
Prays thee, O hallow'd spirit! to own her shine.
Then by her love we' implore thee, let us pass
Through thy sev'n regions; for which best thanks
I for thy favour will to her return,
If mention there below thou not disdain."

"Marcia so pleasing in my sight was found,"
He then to him rejoin'd, "while I was there,
That all she ask'd me I was fain to grant.
Now that beyond the' accursed stream she dwells,
She may no longer move me, by that law,
Which was ordain'd me, when I issued thence.
Not so, if Dame from heaven, as thou sayst,
Moves and directs thee; then no flattery needs.
Enough for me that in her name thou ask.
Go therefore now: and with a slender reed
See that thou duly gird him, and his face
Lave, till all sordid stain thou wipe from thence.
For not with eye, by any cloud obscur'd,
Would it be seemly before him to come,
Who stands the foremost minister in heaven.
This islet all around, there far beneath,
Where the wave beats it, on the oozy bed
Produces store of reeds. No other plant,
Cover'd with leaves, or harden'd in its stalk,

There lives, not bending to the water's sway.
After, this way return not; but the sun
Will show you, that now rises, where to take
The mountain in its easiest ascent."

He disappear'd; and I myself uprais'd
Speechless, and to my guide retiring close,
Toward him turn'd mine eyes. He thus began;
"My son! observant thou my steps pursue.
We must retreat to rearward, for that way
The champain to its low extreme declines."

The dawn had chas'd the matin hour of prime,
Which deaf before it, so that from afar
I spy'd the trembling of the ocean stream.

We travers'd the deserted plain, as one
Who, wander'd from his track, thinks every step
Trodden in vain till he regain the path.

When we had come, where yet the tender dew
Strove with the sun, and in a place, where fresh
The wind breath'd o'er it, while it slowly dried;
Both hands extended on the watery grass
My master plac'd, in graceful act and kind.
Whence I of his intent before appriz'd,
Stretch'd out to him my cheeks suffus'd with tears.
There to my visage he anew restor'd
That hue, which the dun shades of hell conceal'd.

Then on the solitary shore arriv'd,
That never sailing on its waters saw
Man, that could after measure back his course,
He girt me in such manner as had pleas'd
Him who instructed, and O, strange to tell!
As he selected every humble plant,
Wherever one was pluck'd, another there
Resembling, straightway in its place arose.

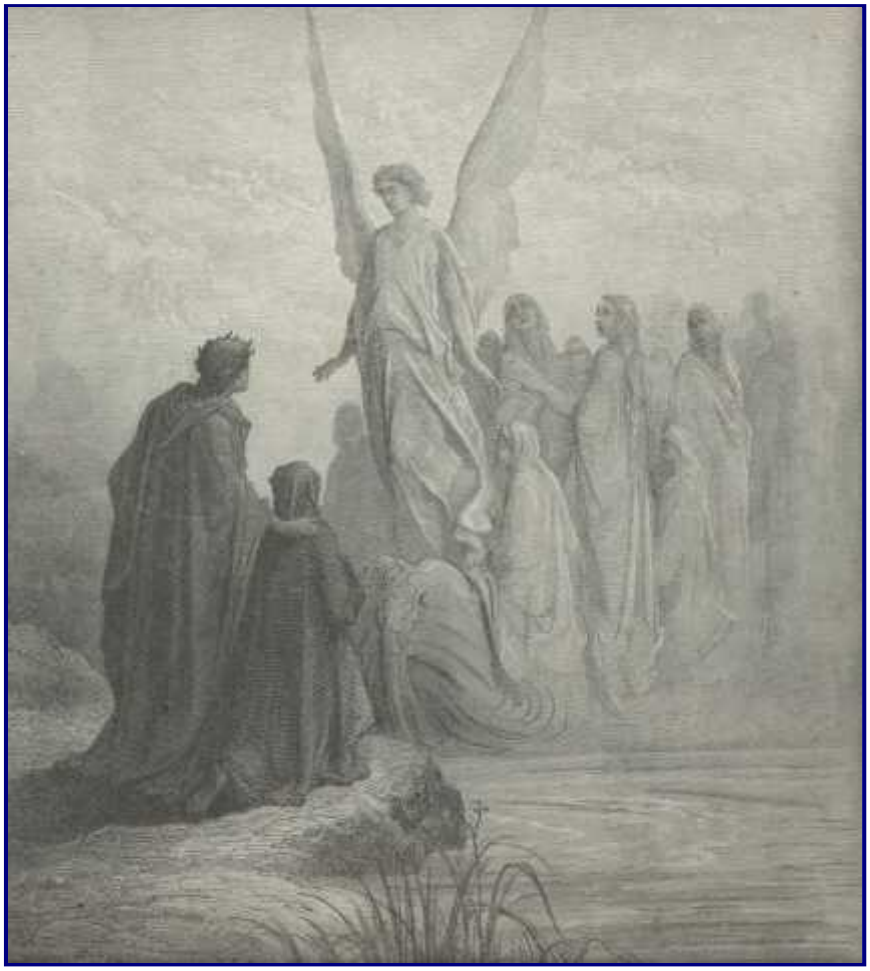
CANTO II

Now had the sun to that horizon reach'd,
That covers, with the most exalted point
Of its meridian circle, Salem's walls,
And night, that opposite to him her orb
Sounds, from the stream of Ganges issued forth,
Holding the scales, that from her hands are dropp'd
When she reigns highest: so that where I was,
Aurora's white and vermeil-tinctur'd cheek
To orange turn'd as she in age increas'd.

Meanwhile we linger'd by the water's brink,
Like men, who, musing on their road, in thought
Journey, while motionless the body rests.
When lo! as near upon the hour of dawn,
Through the thick vapours Mars with fiery beam
Glares down in west, over the ocean floor;
So seem'd, what once again I hope to view,
A light so swiftly coming through the sea,
No winged course might equal its career.
From which when for a space I had withdrawn
Thine eyes, to make inquiry of my guide,
Again I look'd and saw it grown in size
And brightness: thou on either side appear'd
Something, but what I knew not of bright hue,
And by degrees from underneath it came
Another. My preceptor silent yet
Stood, while the brightness, that we first discern'd,
Open'd the form of wings: then when he knew
The pilot, cried aloud, "Down, down; bend low
Thy knees; behold God's angel: fold thy hands:
Now shalt thou see true Ministers indeed."

Lo how all human means he sets at naught!
So that nor oar he needs, nor other sail
Except his wings, between such distant shores.
Lo how straight up to heaven he holds them rear'd,
Winnowing the air with those eternal plumes,
That not like mortal hairs fall off or change!"

As more and more toward us came, more bright
Appear'd the bird of God, nor could the eye
Endure his splendor near: I mine bent down.
He drove ashore in a small bark so swift
And light, that in its course no wave it drank.
The heav'nly steersman at the prow was seen,
Visibly written blessed in his looks.



Within a hundred spirits and more there sat.
"In Exitu Israel de Aegypto;"
All with one voice together sang, with what
In the remainder of that hymn is writ.
Then soon as with the sign of holy cross
He bless'd them, they at once leap'd out on land,
The swiftly as he came return'd. The crew,
There left, appear'd astounded with the place,
Gazing around as one who sees new sights.

From every side the sun darted his beams,
And with his arrowy radiance from mid heav'n
Had chas'd the Capricorn, when that strange tribe
Lifting their eyes towards us: "If ye know,
Declare what path will Lead us to the mount."

Them Virgil answer'd. "Ye suppose perchance
Us well acquainted with this place: but here,
We, as yourselves, are strangers. Not long erst
We came, before you but a little space,
By other road so rough and hard, that now
The' ascent will seem to us as play." The spirits,
Who from my breathing had perceiv'd I liv'd,
Grew pale with wonder. As the multitude
Flock round a herald, sent with olive branch,
To hear what news he brings, and in their haste
Tread one another down, e'en so at sight
Of me those happy spirits were fix'd, each one
Forgetful of its errand, to depart,
Where cleans'd from sin, it might be made all fair.

Then one I saw darting before the rest
With such fond ardour to embrace me, I
To do the like was mov'd. O shadows vain
Except in outward semblance! thrice my hands
I clasp'd behind it, they as oft return'd
Empty into my breast again. Surprise
I needs must think was painted in my looks,
For that the shadow smil'd and backward drew.
To follow it I hasten'd, but with voice
Of sweetness it enjoin'd me to desist.
Then who it was I knew, and pray'd of it,
To talk with me, it would a little pause.
It answered: "Thee as in my mortal frame
I lov'd, so loos'd forth it I love thee still,
And therefore pause; but why walkest thou here?"

"Not without purpose once more to return,
Thou find'st me, my Casella, where I am
Journeying this way;" I said, "but how of thee
Hath so much time been lost?" He answer'd straight:
"No outrage hath been done to me, if he
Who when and whom he chooses takes, me oft
This passage hath denied, since of just will

His will he makes. These three months past indeed,
He, whose chose to enter, with free leave
Hath taken; whence I wand'ring by the shore
Where Tyber's wave grows salt, of him gain'd kind
Admittance, at that river's mouth, tow'rd which
His wings are pointed, for there always throng
All such as not to Archeron descend."

Then I: "If new laws have not quite destroy'd
Memory and use of that sweet song of love,
That while all my cares had power to 'swage;
Please thee with it a little to console
My spirit, that incumber'd with its frame,
Travelling so far, of pain is overcome."

"Love that discourses in my thoughts." He then
Began in such soft accents, that within
The sweetness thrills me yet. My gentle guide
And all who came with him, so well were pleas'd,
That seem'd naught else might in their thoughts have room.

Fast fix'd in mute attention to his notes
We stood, when lo! that old man venerable
Exclaiming, "How is this, ye tardy spirits?
What negligence detains you loit'ring here?
Run to the mountain to cast off those scales,
That from your eyes the sight of God conceal."

As a wild flock of pigeons, to their food
Collected, blade or tares, without their pride
Accustom'd, and in still and quiet sort,
If aught alarm them, suddenly desert
Their meal, assail'd by more important care;
So I that new-come troop beheld, the song
Deserting, hasten to the mountain's side,
As one who goes yet where he tends knows not.

Nor with less hurried step did we depart.

CANTO III

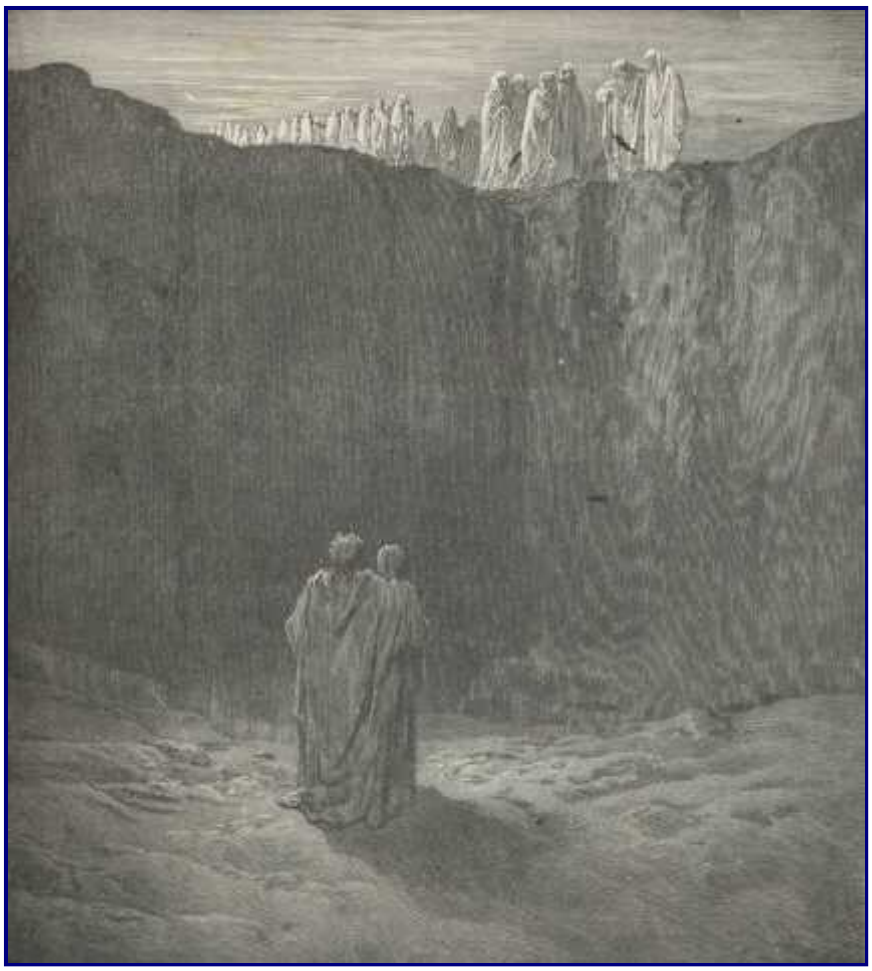
Them sudden flight had scatter'd over the plain,
Turn'd tow'rds the mountain, whither reason's voice
Drives us; I to my faithful company
Adhering, left it not. For how of him
Depriv'd, might I have sped, or who beside
Would o'er the mountainous tract have led my steps
He with the bitter pang of self-remorse
Seem'd smitten. O clear conscience and upright
How doth a little fling wound thee sore!

Soon as his feet desisted (slack'ning pace),
From haste, that mars all decency of act,
My mind, that in itself before was wrapt,
Its thoughts expanded, as with joy restor'd:
And full against the steep ascent I set
My face, where highest to heav'n its top o'erflows.

The sun, that flar'd behind, with ruddy beam
Before my form was broken; for in me
His rays resistance met. I turn'd aside
With fear of being left, when I beheld
Only before myself the ground obscur'd.
When thus my solace, turning him around,
Bespake me kindly: "Why distrustest thou?
Believ'st not I am with thee, thy sure guide?
It now is evening there, where buried lies
The body, in which I cast a shade, remov'd
To Naples from Brundusium's wall. Nor thou
Marvel, if before me no shadow fall,
More than that in the sky element
One ray obstructs not other. To endure
Torments of heat and cold extreme, like frames
That virtue hath dispos'd, which how it works
Wills not to us should be reveal'd. Insane
Who hopes, our reason may that space explore,
Which holds three persons in one substance knit.
Seek not the wherefore, race of human kind;
Could ye have seen the whole, no need had been
For Mary to bring forth. Moreover ye
Have seen such men desiring fruitlessly;
To whose desires repose would have been giv'n,
That now but serve them for eternal grief.
I speak of Plato, and the Stagyrite,

And others many more." And then he bent
Downwards his forehead, and in troubled mood
Broke off his speech. Meanwhile we had arriv'd
Far as the mountain's foot, and there the rock
Found of so steep ascent, that nimblest steps
To climb it had been vain. The most remote
Most wild untrodden path, in all the tract
'Twixt Lerice and Turbia were to this
A ladder easy' and open of access.

"Who knows on which hand now the steep declines?"
My master said and paus'd, "so that he may
Ascend, who journeys without aid of wine?"
And while with looks directed to the ground
The meaning of the pathway he explor'd,
And I gaz'd upward round the stony height,
Of spirits, that toward us mov'd their steps,
Yet moving seem'd not, they so slow approach'd.



I thus my guide address'd: "Upraise thine eyes,
Lo that way some, of whom thou may'st obtain
Counsel, if of thyself thou find'st it not!"

Straightway he look'd, and with free speech replied:
"Let us tend thither: they but softly come.
And thou be firm in hope, my son belov'd."

Now was that people distant far in space
A thousand paces behind ours, as much
As at a throw the nervous arm could fling,
When all drew backward on the messy crags
Of the steep bank, and firmly stood unmov'd

As one who walks in doubt might stand to look.

"O spirits perfect! O already chosen!"
Virgil to them began, "by that blest peace,
Which, as I deem, is for you all prepar'd,
Instruct us where the mountain low declines,
So that attempt to mount it be not vain.
For who knows most, him loss of time most grieves."

As sheep, that step from forth their fold, by one,
Or pairs, or three at once; meanwhile the rest
Stand fearfully, bending the eye and nose
To ground, and what the foremost does, that do
The others, gath'ring round her, if she stops,
Simple and quiet, nor the cause discern;
So saw I moving to advance the first,
Who of that fortunate crew were at the head,
Of modest mien and graceful in their gait.
When they before me had beheld the light
From my right side fall broken on the ground,
So that the shadow reach'd the cave, they stopp'd
And somewhat back retir'd: the same did all,
Who follow'd, though unweeting of the cause.

"Unask'd of you, yet freely I confess,
This is a human body which ye see.
That the sun's light is broken on the ground,
Marvel not: but believe, that not without
Virtue deriv'd from Heaven, we to climb
Over this wall aspire." So them bespake
My master; and that virtuous tribe rejoin'd;
"Turn, and before you there the entrance lies,"
Making a signal to us with bent hands.

Then of them one began. "Whoe'er thou art,
Who journey'st thus this way, thy visage turn,
Think if me elsewhere thou hast ever seen."

I tow'rds him turn'd, and with fix'd eye beheld.
Comely, and fair, and gentle of aspect,
He seem'd, but on one brow a gash was mark'd.

When humbly I disclaim'd to have beheld
Him ever: "Now behold!" he said, and show'd

High on his breast a wound: then smiling spake.

"I am Manfredi, grandson to the Queen
Costanza: whence I pray thee, when return'd,
To my fair daughter go, the parent glad
Of Aragonia and Sicilia's pride;
And of the truth inform her, if of me
Aught else be told. When by two mortal blows
My frame was shatter'd, I betook myself
Weeping to him, who of free will forgives.
My sins were horrible; but so wide arms
Hath goodness infinite, that it receives
All who turn to it. Had this text divine
Been of Cosenza's shepherd better scann'd,
Who then by Clement on my hunt was set,
Yet at the bridge's head my bones had lain,
Near Benevento, by the heavy mole
Protected; but the rain now drenches them,
And the wind drives, out of the kingdom's bounds,
Far as the stream of Verde, where, with lights
Extinguish'd, he remov'd them from their bed.
Yet by their curse we are not so destroy'd,
But that the eternal love may turn, while hope
Retains her verdant blossoms. True it is,
That such one as in contumacy dies
Against the holy church, though he repent,
Must wander thirty-fold for all the time
In his presumption past; if such decree
Be not by prayers of good men shorter made
Look therefore if thou canst advance my bliss;
Revealing to my good Costanza, how
Thou hast beheld me, and beside the terms
Laid on me of that interdict; for here
By means of those below much profit comes."

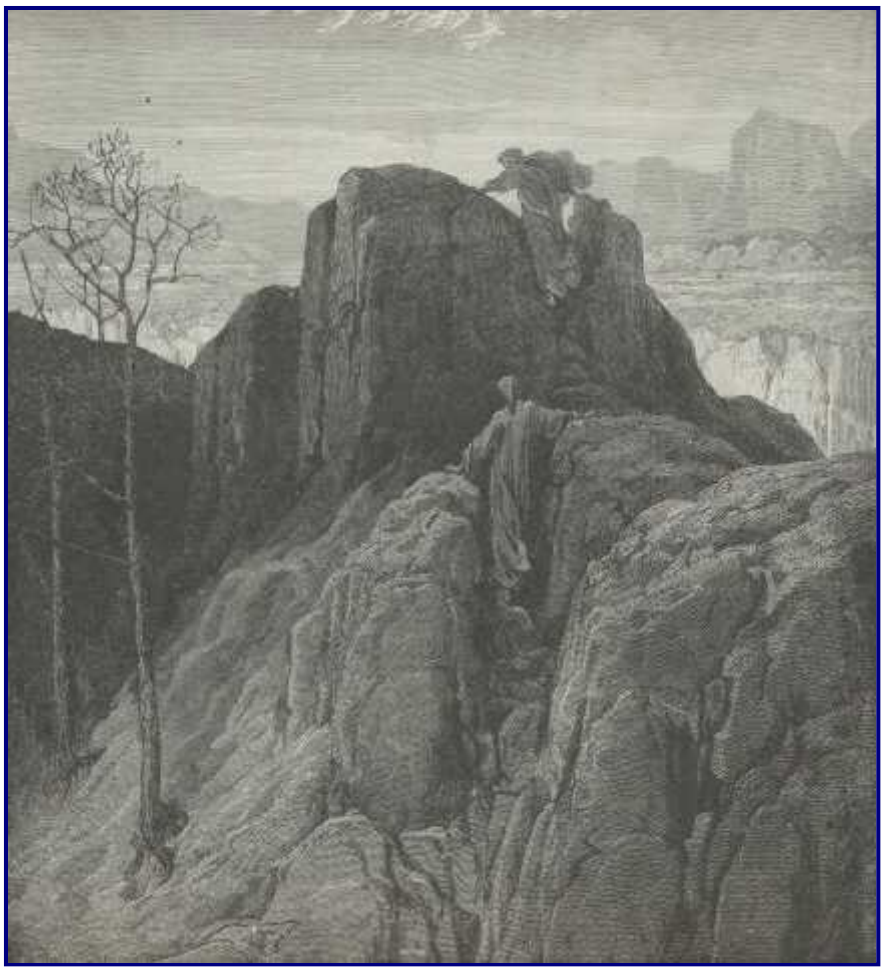
CANTO IV

When by sensations of delight or pain,
That any of our faculties hath seiz'd,

Entire the soul collects herself, it seems
She is intent upon that power alone,
And thus the error is disprov'd which holds
The soul not singly lighted in the breast.
And therefore when as aught is heard or seen,
That firmly keeps the soul toward it turn'd,
Time passes, and a man perceives it not.
For that, whereby he hearken, is one power,
Another that, which the whole spirit hash;
This is as it were bound, while that is free.

This found I true by proof, hearing that spirit
And wond'ring; for full fifty steps aloft
The sun had measur'd unobserv'd of me,
When we arriv'd where all with one accord
The spirits shouted, "Here is what ye ask."

A larger aperture ofttimes is stopp'd
With forked stake of thorn by villager,
When the ripe grape imbrowns, than was the path,
By which my guide, and I behind him close,
Ascended solitary, when that troop
Departing left us. On Sanleo's road
Who journeys, or to Noli low descends,
Or mounts Bismantua's height, must use his feet;
But here a man had need to fly, I mean
With the swift wing and plumes of high desire,
Conducted by his aid, who gave me hope,
And with light furnish'd to direct my way.



We through the broken rock ascended, close
Pent on each side, while underneath the ground
Ask'd help of hands and feet. When we arriv'd
Near on the highest ridge of the steep bank,
Where the plain level open'd I exclaim'd,
"O master! say which way can we proceed?"

He answer'd, "Let no step of thine recede.
Behind me gain the mountain, till to us
Some practis'd guide appear." That eminence
Was lofty that no eye might reach its point,
And the side proudly rising, more than line
From the mid quadrant to the centre drawn.

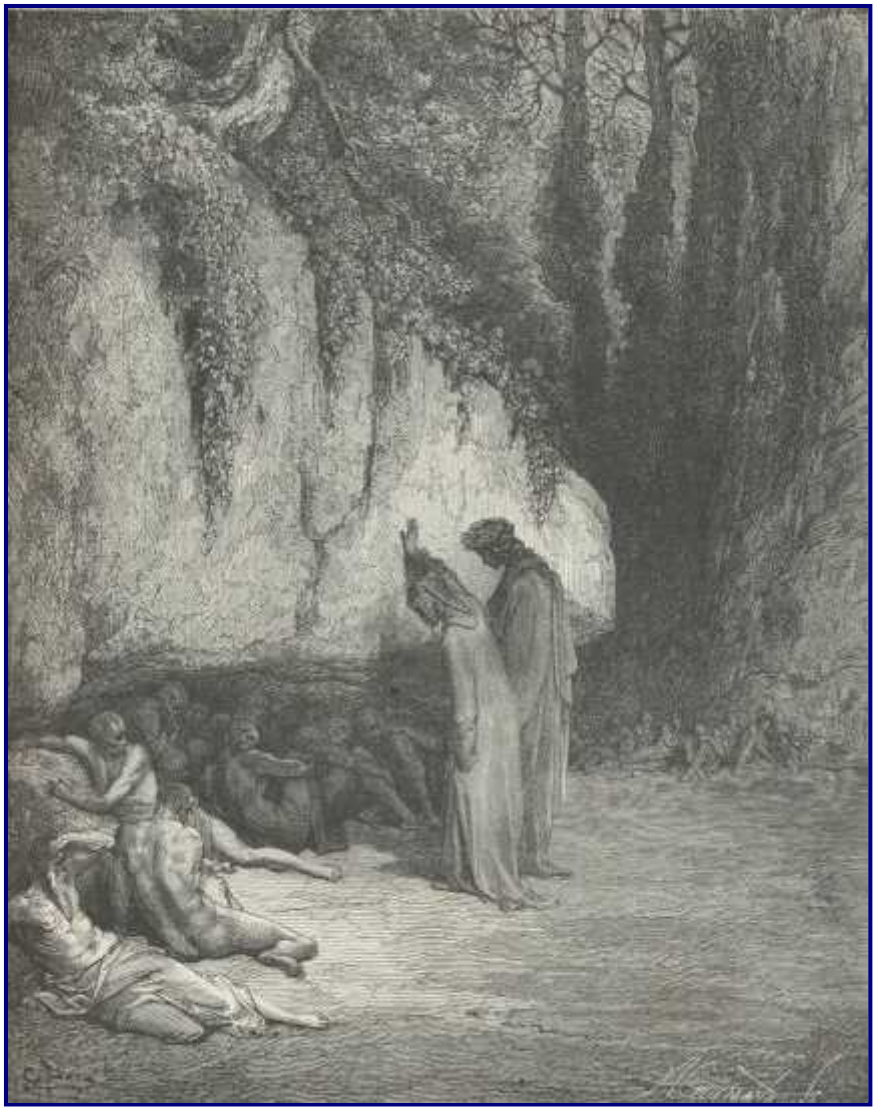
I wearied thus began: "Parent belov'd!
Turn, and behold how I remain alone,
If thou stay not."—"My son!" He straight reply'd,
"Thus far put forth thy strength;" and to a track
Pointed, that, on this side projecting, round
Circles the hill. His words so spurr'd me on,
That I behind him clamb'ring, forc'd myself,
Till my feet press'd the circuit plain beneath.
There both together seated, turn'd we round
To eastward, whence was our ascent: and oft
Many beside have with delight look'd back.

First on the nether shores I turn'd my eyes,
Then rais'd them to the sun, and wond'ring mark'd
That from the left it smote us. Soon perceiv'd
That Poet sage now at the car of light
Amaz'd I stood, where 'twixt us and the north
Its course it enter'd. Whence he thus to me:
"Were Leda's offspring now in company
Of that broad mirror, that high up and low
Imparts his light beneath, thou might'st behold
The ruddy zodiac nearer to the bears
Wheel, if its ancient course it not forsook.
How that may be if thou would'st think; within
Pond'ring, imagine Sion with this mount
Plac'd on the earth, so that to both be one
Horizon, and two hemispheres apart,
Where lies the path that Phaeton ill knew
To guide his erring chariot: thou wilt see
How of necessity by this on one
He passes, while by that on the' other side,
If with clear view shine intellect attend."

"Of truth, kind teacher!" I exclaim'd, "so clear
Aught saw I never, as I now discern
Where seem'd my ken to fail, that the mid orb
Of the supernal motion (which in terms
Of art is called the Equator, and remains
Ever between the sun and winter) for the cause
Thou hast assign'd, from hence toward the north
Departs, when those who in the Hebrew land
Inhabit, see it tow'rds the warmer part.
But if it please thee, I would gladly know,
How far we have to journey: for the hill

Mounts higher, than this sight of mine can mount."

He thus to me: "Such is this steep ascent,
That it is ever difficult at first,
But, more a man proceeds, less evil grows.
When pleasant it shall seem to thee, so much
That upward going shall be easy to thee.
As in a vessel to go down the tide,
Then of this path thou wilt have reach'd the end.
There hope to rest thee from thy toil. No more
I answer, and thus far for certain know."
As he his words had spoken, near to us
A voice there sounded: "Yet ye first perchance
May to repose you by constraint be led."
At sound thereof each turn'd, and on the left
A huge stone we beheld, of which nor I
Nor he before was ware. Thither we drew,
find there were some, who in the shady place
Behind the rock were standing, as a man
Thru' idleness might stand. Among them one,
Who seem'd to me much wearied, sat him down,
And with his arms did fold his knees about,
Holding his face between them downward bent.



"Sweet Sir!" I cry'd, "behold that man, who shows
Himself more idle, than if laziness
Were sister to him." Straight he turn'd to us,
And, o'er the thigh lifting his face, observ'd,
Then in these accents spake: "Up then, proceed
Thou valiant one." Straight who it was I knew;
Nor could the pain I felt (for want of breath
Still somewhat urg'd me) hinder my approach.
And when I came to him, he scarce his head

Uplifted, saying "Well hast thou discern'd,
How from the left the sun his chariot leads."

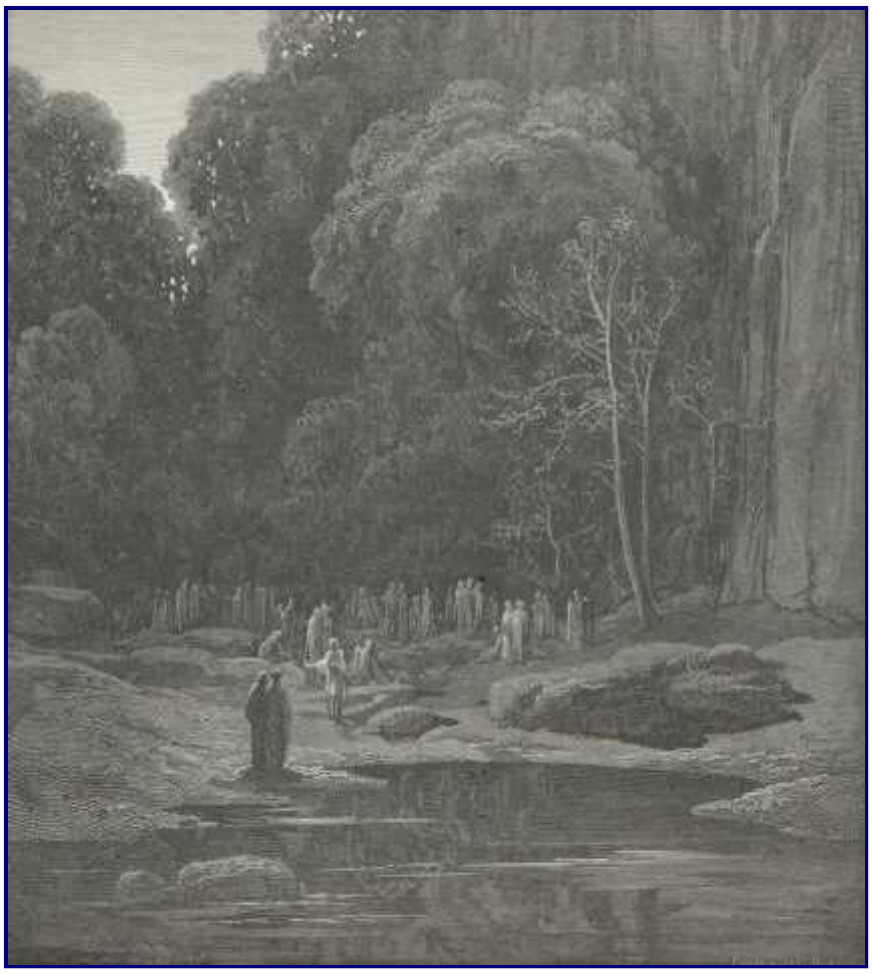
His lazy acts and broken words my lips
To laughter somewhat mov'd; when I began:
"Belacqua, now for thee I grieve no more.
But tell, why thou art seated upright there?
Waitest thou escort to conduct thee hence?
Or blame I only shine accustom'd ways?"
Then he: "My brother, of what use to mount,
When to my suffering would not let me pass
The bird of God, who at the portal sits?
Behooves so long that heav'n first bear me round
Without its limits, as in life it bore,
Because I to the end repentant Sighs
Delay'd, if prayer do not aid me first,
That riseth up from heart which lives in grace.
What other kind avails, not heard in heaven?"'

Before me now the Poet up the mount
Ascending, cried: "Haste thee, for see the sun
Has touch'd the point meridian, and the night
Now covers with her foot Marocco's shore."

CANTO V

Now had I left those spirits, and pursued
The steps of my Conductor, when beheld
Pointing the finger at me one exclaim'd:
"See how it seems as if the light not shone
From the left hand of him beneath, and he,

As living, seems to be led on." Mine eyes
I at that sound reverting, saw them gaze
Through wonder first at me, and then at me
And the light broken underneath, by turns.
"Why are thy thoughts thus riveted?" my guide
Exclaim'd, "that thou hast slack'd thy pace? or how
Imports it thee, what thing is whisper'd here?
Come after me, and to their babblings leave
The crowd. Be as a tower, that, firmly set,
Shakes not its top for any blast that blows!
He, in whose bosom thought on thought shoots out,
Still of his aim is wide, in that the one
Sicklies and wastes to nought the other's strength."
What other could I answer save "I come?"
I said it, somewhat with that colour ting'd
Which ofttimes pardon meriteth for man.
Meanwhile traverse along the hill there came,
A little way before us, some who sang
The "Miserere" in responsive Strains.
When they perceiv'd that through my body I
Gave way not for the rays to pass, their song
Straight to a long and hoarse exclaim they chang'd;
And two of them, in guise of messengers,
Ran on to meet us, and inquiring ask'd:
"Of your condition we would gladly learn."
To them my guide. "Ye may return, and bear
Tidings to them who sent you, that his frame
Is real flesh. If, as I deem, to view
His shade they paus'd, enough is answer'd them.
Him let them honour, they may prize him well."
Ne'er saw I fiery vapours with such speed
Cut through the serene air at fall of night,
Nor August's clouds athwart the setting sun,
That upward these did not in shorter space
Return; and, there arriving, with the rest
Wheel back on us, as with loose rein a troop.



"Many," exclaim'd the bard, "are these, who throng
Around us: to petition thee they come.
Go therefore on, and listen as thou go'st."
"O spirit! who go'st on to blessedness
With the same limbs, that clad thee at thy birth."
Shouting they came, "a little rest thy step.
Look if thou any one amongst our tribe
Hast e'er beheld, that tidings of him there
Thou mayst report. Ah, wherefore go'st thou on?
Ah wherefore tarriest thou not? We all
By violence died, and to our latest hour
Were sinners, but then warn'd by light from heav'n,
So that, repenting and forgiving, we
Did issue out of life at peace with God,

Who with desire to see him fills our heart."
Then I: "The visages of all I scan
Yet none of ye remember. But if aught,
That I can do, may please you, gentle spirits!
Speak; and I will perform it, by that peace,
Which on the steps of guide so excellent
Following from world to world intent I seek."
In answer he began: "None here distrusts
Thy kindness, though not promis'd with an oath;
So as the will fail not for want of power.
Whence I, who sole before the others speak,
Entreat thee, if thou ever see that land,
Which lies between Romagna and the realm
Of Charles, that of thy courtesy thou pray
Those who inhabit Fano, that for me
Their adorations duly be put up,
By which I may purge off my grievous sins.
From thence I came. But the deep passages,
Whence issued out the blood wherein I dwelt,
Upon my bosom in Antenor's land
Were made, where to be more secure I thought.
The author of the deed was Este's prince,
Who, more than right could warrant, with his wrath
Pursued me. Had I towards Mira fled,
When overta'en at Oriaco, still
Might I have breath'd. But to the marsh I sped,
And in the mire and rushes tangled there
Fell, and beheld my life-blood float the plain."
Then said another: "Ah! so may the wish,
That takes thee o'er the mountain, be fulfill'd,
As thou shalt graciously give aid to mine.
Of Montefeltro I; Buonconte I:
Giovanna nor none else have care for me,
Sorrowing with these I therefore go." I thus:
"From Campaldino's field what force or chance
Drew thee, that ne'er thy sepulture was known?"
"Oh!" answer'd he, "at Casentino's foot
A stream there courseth, nam'd Archiano, sprung
In Apennine above the Hermit's seat.
E'en where its name is cancel'd, there came I,
Pierc'd in the heart, fleeing away on foot,
And bloodying the plain. Here sight and speech
Fail'd me, and finishing with Mary's name
I fell, and tenantless my flesh remain'd.

I will report the truth; which thou again
Tell to the living. Me God's angel took,
Whilst he of hell exclaim'd: "O thou from heav'n!
Say wherefore hast thou robb'd me? Thou of him
Th' eternal portion bear'st with thee away
For one poor tear that he deprives me of.
But of the other, other rule I make."
"Thou knowest how in the atmosphere collects
That vapour dank, returning into water,
Soon as it mounts where cold condenses it.
That evil will, which in his intellect
Still follows evil, came, and rais'd the wind
And smoky mist, by virtue of the power
Given by his nature. Thence the valley, soon
As day was spent, he cover'd o'er with cloud
From Pratomagno to the mountain range,
And stretch'd the sky above, so that the air
Impregnate chang'd to water. Fell the rain,
And to the fosses came all that the land
Contain'd not; and, as mightiest streams are wont,
To the great river with such headlong sweep
Rush'd, that nought stay'd its course. My stiffen'd frame
Laid at his mouth the fell Archiano found,
And dash'd it into Arno, from my breast
Loos'ning the cross, that of myself I made
When overcome with pain. He hurl'd me on,
Along the banks and bottom of his course;
Then in his muddy spoils encircling wrapt."

"Ah! when thou to the world shalt be return'd,
And rested after thy long road," so spake
Next the third spirit; "then remember me.
I once was Pia. Sienna gave me life,
Maremma took it from me. That he knows,
Who me with jewell'd ring had first espous'd."

CANTO VI

When from their game of dice men separate,
He, who hath lost, remains in sadness fix'd,
Revolving in his mind, what luckless throws
He cast: but meanwhile all the company
Go with the other; one before him runs,
And one behind his mantle twitches, one
Fast by his side bids him remember him.
He stops not; and each one, to whom his hand

Is stretch'd, well knows he bids him stand aside;
And thus he from the press defends himself.
E'en such was I in that close-crowding throng;
And turning so my face around to all,
And promising, I 'scap'd from it with pains.
Here of Arezzo him I saw, who fell
By Ghino's cruel arm; and him beside,
Who in his chase was swallow'd by the stream.
Here Frederic Novello, with his hand
Stretch'd forth, entreated; and of Pisa he,
Who put the good Marzuco to such proof
Of constancy. Count Orso I beheld;
And from its frame a soul dismiss'd for spite
And envy, as it said, but for no crime:
I speak of Peter de la Brosse; and here,
While she yet lives, that Lady of Brabant
Let her beware; lest for so false a deed
She herd with worse than these. When I was freed
From all those spirits, who pray'd for others' prayers
To hasten on their state of blessedness;
Straight I began: "O thou, my luminary!
It seems expressly in thy text denied,
That heaven's supreme decree can never bend
To supplication; yet with this design
Do these entreat. Can then their hope be vain,
Or is thy saying not to me reveal'd?"
He thus to me: "Both what I write is plain,
And these deceiv'd not in their hope, if well
Thy mind consider, that the sacred height
Of judgment doth not stoop, because love's flame
In a short moment all fulfils, which he
Who sojourns here, in right should satisfy.
Besides, when I this point concluded thus,
By praying no defect could be supplied;
Because the pray'r had none access to God.
Yet in this deep suspicion rest thou not
Contented unless she assure thee so,
Who betwixt truth and mind infuses light.
I know not if thou take me right; I mean
Beatrice. Her thou shalt behold above,
Upon this mountain's crown, fair seat of joy."
Then I: "Sir! let us mend our speed; for now
I tire not as before; and lo! the hill
Stretches its shadow far." He answer'd thus:

"Our progress with this day shall be as much
As we may now dispatch; but otherwise
Than thou supposest is the truth. For there
Thou canst not be, ere thou once more behold
Him back returning, who behind the steep
Is now so hidden, that as erst his beam
Thou dost not break. But lo! a spirit there
Stands solitary, and toward us looks:
It will instruct us in the speediest way."
We soon approach'd it. O thou Lombard spirit!
How didst thou stand, in high abstracted mood,
Scarce moving with slow dignity thine eyes!
It spoke not aught, but let us onward pass,
Eyeing us as a lion on his watch.
But Virgil with entreaty mild advanc'd,
Requesting it to show the best ascent.
It answer to his question none return'd,
But of our country and our kind of life
Demanded. When my courteous guide began,
"Mantua," the solitary shadow quick
Rose towards us from the place in which it stood,
And cry'd, "Mantuan! I am thy countryman
Sordello." Each the other then embrac'd.
Ah slavish Italy! thou inn of grief,
Vessel without a pilot in loud storm,
Lady no longer of fair provinces,
But brothel-house impure! this gentle spirit,
Ev'n from the Pleasant sound of his dear land
Was prompt to greet a fellow citizen
With such glad cheer; while now thy living ones
In thee abide not without war; and one
Malicious gnaws another, ay of those
Whom the same wall and the same moat contains,
Seek, wretched one! around thy sea-coasts wide;
Then homeward to thy bosom turn, and mark
If any part of the sweet peace enjoy.
What boots it, that thy reins Justinian's hand
Befitted, if thy saddle be unpress'd?
Nought doth he now but aggravate thy shame.
Ah people! thou obedient still shouldst live,
And in the saddle let thy Caesar sit,
If well thou marked'st that which God commands.
Look how that beast to felness hath relaps'd
From having lost correction of the spur,

Since to the bridle thou hast set thine hand,
O German Albert! who abandon'st her,
That is grown savage and unmanageable,
When thou should'st clasp her flanks with forked heels.
Just judgment from the stars fall on thy blood!
And be it strange and manifest to all!
Such as may strike thy successor with dread!
For that thy sire and thou have suffer'd thus,
Through greediness of yonder realms detain'd,
The garden of the empire to run waste.
Come see the Capulets and Montagues,
The Philippeschi and Monaldi! man
Who car'st for nought! those sunk in grief, and these
With dire suspicion rack'd. Come, cruel one!
Come and behold the' oppression of the nobles,
And mark their injuries: and thou mayst see.
What safety Santafiore can supply.
Come and behold thy Rome, who calls on thee,
Desolate widow! day and night with moans:
"My Caesar, why dost thou desert my side?"
Come and behold what love among thy people:
And if no pity touches thee for us,
Come and blush for thine own report. For me,
If it be lawful, O Almighty Power,
Who wast in earth for our sakes crucified!
Are thy just eyes turn'd elsewhere? or is this
A preparation in the wond'rous depth
Of thy sage counsel made, for some good end,
Entirely from our reach of thought cut off?
So are the' Italian cities all o'erthrong'd
With tyrants, and a great Marcellus made
Of every petty factious villager.
My Florence! thou mayst well remain unmov'd
At this digression, which affects not thee:
Thanks to thy people, who so wisely speed.
Many have justice in their heart, that long
Waiteth for counsel to direct the bow,
Or ere it dart unto its aim: but shine
Have it on their lip's edge. Many refuse
To bear the common burdens: readier thine
Answer uneall'd, and cry, "Behold I stoop!"
Make thyself glad, for thou hast reason now,
Thou wealthy! thou at peace! thou wisdom-fraught!
Facts best witness if I speak the truth.

Athens and Lacedaemon, who of old
Enacted laws, for civil arts renown'd,
Made little progress in improving life
Tow'rds thee, who usest such nice subtlety,
That to the middle of November scarce
Reaches the thread thou in October weav'st.
How many times, within thy memory,
Customs, and laws, and coins, and offices
Have been by thee renew'd, and people chang'd!
If thou remember'st well and can'st see clear,
Thou wilt perceive thyself like a sick wretch,
Who finds no rest upon her down, but oft
Shifting her side, short respite seeks from pain.

CANTO VII

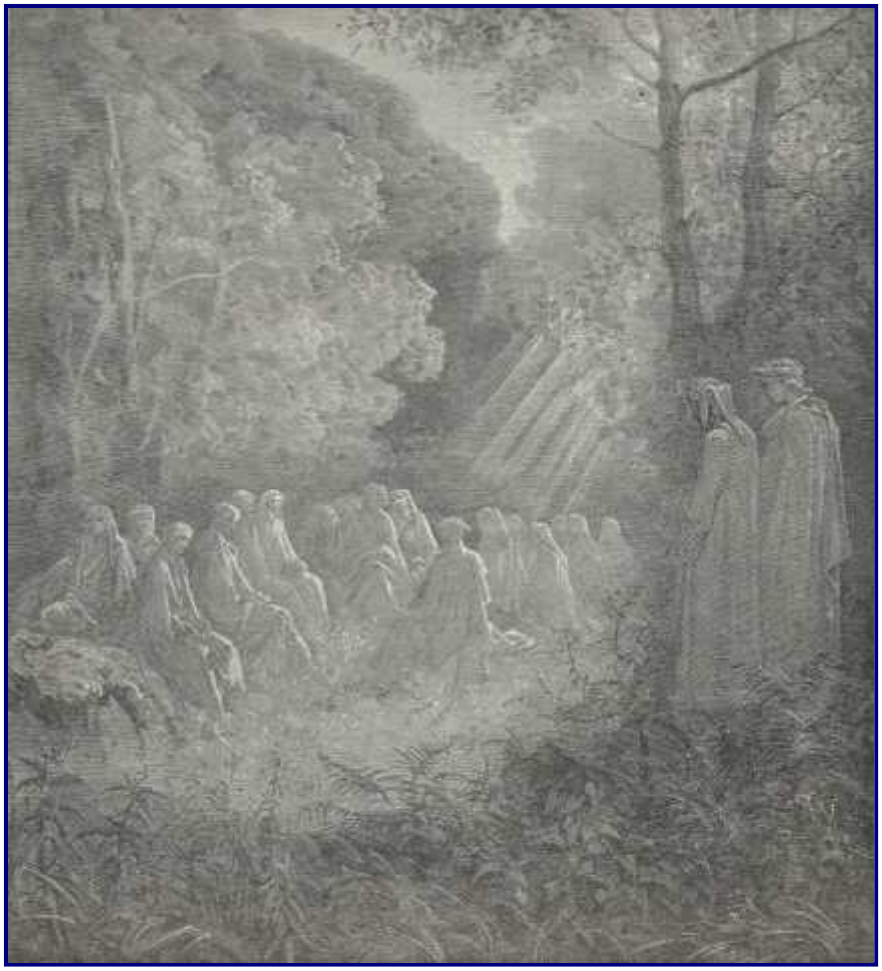
After their courteous greetings joyfully
Sev'n times exchang'd, Sordello backward drew
Exclaiming, "Who are ye?" "Before this mount
By spirits worthy of ascent to God
Was sought, my bones had by Octavius' care
Been buried. I am Virgil, for no sin
Depriv'd of heav'n, except for lack of faith."
So answer'd him in few my gentle guide.
As one, who aught before him suddenly
Beholding, whence his wonder riseth, cries
"It is yet is not," wav'ring in belief;
Such he appear'd; then downward bent his eyes,
And drawing near with reverential step,
Caught him, where of mean estate might clasp
His lord. "Glory of Latium!" he exclaim'd,
"In whom our tongue its utmost power display'd!
Boast of my honor'd birth-place! what desert
Of mine, what favour rather undeserv'd,
Shows thee to me? If I to hear that voice
Am worthy, say if from below thou com'st
And from what cloister's pale?"—"Through every orb
Of that sad region," he reply'd, "thus far
Am I arriv'd, by heav'nly influence led

And with such aid I come. There is a place
There underneath, not made by torments sad,
But by dun shades alone; where mourning's voice
Sounds not of anguish sharp, but breathes in sighs."

There I with little innocents abide,
Who by death's fangs were bitten, ere exempt
From human taint. There I with those abide,
Who the three holy virtues put not on,
But understood the rest, and without blame
Follow'd them all. But if thou know'st and canst,

Direct us, how we soonest may arrive,
Where Purgatory its true beginning takes."
He answer'd thus: "We have no certain place
Assign'd us: upwards I may go or round,
Far as I can, I join thee for thy guide.
But thou beholdest now how day declines:
And upwards to proceed by night, our power
Excels: therefore it may be well to choose
A place of pleasant sojourn. To the right
Some spirits sit apart retir'd. If thou
Consentest, I to these will lead thy steps:
And thou wilt know them, not without delight."
"How chances this?" was answer'd; "who so wish'd
To ascend by night, would he be thence debarr'd
By other, or through his own weakness fail?"
The good Sordello then, along the ground
Trailing his finger, spoke: "Only this line
Thou shalt not overpass, soon as the sun
Hath disappear'd; not that aught else impedes
Thy going upwards, save the shades of night.
These with the wont of power perplex the will.
With them thou haply mightst return beneath,
Or to and fro around the mountain's side
Wander, while day is in the horizon shut."
My master straight, as wond'ring at his speech,
Exclaim'd: "Then lead us quickly, where thou sayst,
That, while we stay, we may enjoy delight."
A little space we were remov'd from thence,
When I perceiv'd the mountain hollow'd out.
Ev'n as large valleys hollow'd out on earth,
"That way," the' escorting spirit cried, "we go,
Where in a bosom the high bank recedes:
And thou await renewal of the day."
Betwixt the steep and plain a crooked path
Led us traverse into the ridge's side,
Where more than half the sloping edge expires.
Refulgent gold, and silver thrice refin'd,
And scarlet grain and ceruse, Indian wood
Of lucid dye serene, fresh emeralds
But newly broken, by the herbs and flowers
Plac'd in that fair recess, in color all
Had been surpass'd, as great surpasses less.
Nor nature only there lavish'd her hues,
But of the sweetness of a thousand smells

A rare and undistinguish'd fragrance made.



"Salve Regina," on the grass and flowers
Here chanting I beheld those spirits sit
Who not beyond the valley could be seen.
"Before the west'ring sun sink to his bed,"
Began the Mantuan, who our steps had turn'd,
"'Mid those desires not that I lead ye on.
For from this eminence ye shall discern
Better the acts and visages of all,
Than in the nether vale among them mix'd.

He, who sits high above the rest, and seems
To have neglected that he should have done,
And to the others' song moves not his lip,
The Emperor Rodolph call, who might have heal'd
The wounds whereof fair Italy hath died,
So that by others she revives but slowly,
He, who with kindly visage comforts him,
Sway'd in that country, where the water springs,
That Moldaw's river to the Elbe, and Elbe
Rolls to the ocean: Ottocar his name:
Who in his swaddling clothes was of more worth
Than Winceslaus his son, a bearded man,
Pamper'd with rank luxuriousness and ease.
And that one with the nose depress, who close
In counsel seems with him of gentle look,
Flying expir'd, with'ring the lily's flower.
Look there how he doth knock against his breast!
The other ye behold, who for his cheek
Makes of one hand a couch, with frequent sighs.
They are the father and the father-in-law
Of Gallia's bane: his vicious life they know
And foul; thence comes the grief that rends them thus.
"He, so robust of limb, who measure keeps
In song, with him of feature prominent,
With ev'ry virtue bore his girdle brac'd.
And if that stripling who behinds him sits,
King after him had liv'd, his virtue then
From vessel to like vessel had been pour'd;
Which may not of the other heirs be said.
By James and Frederick his realms are held;
Neither the better heritage obtains.
Rarely into the branches of the tree
Doth human worth mount up; and so ordains
He who bestows it, that as his free gift
It may be call'd. To Charles my words apply
No less than to his brother in the song;
Which Pouille and Provence now with grief confess.
So much that plant degenerates from its seed,
As more than Beatrice and Margaret
Costanza still boasts of her valorous spouse.
"Behold the king of simple life and plain,
Harry of England, sitting there alone:
He through his branches better issue spreads.
"That one, who on the ground beneath the rest

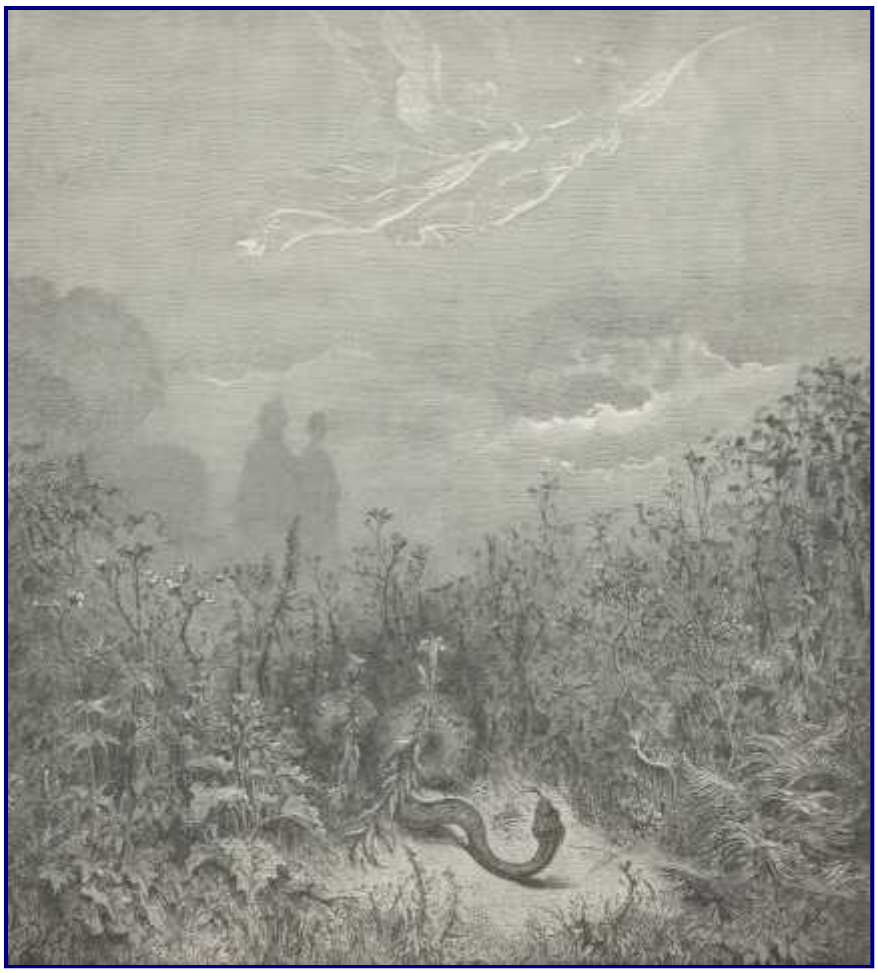
Sits lowest, yet his gaze directs aloft,
Us William, that brave Marquis, for whose cause
The deed of Alexandria and his war
Makes Conferrat and Canavese weep."

CANTO VIII

Now was the hour that wakens fond desire
In men at sea, and melts their thoughtful heart,
Who in the morn have bid sweet friends farewell,
And pilgrim newly on his road with love
Thrills, if he hear the vesper bell from far,
That seems to mourn for the expiring day:
When I, no longer taking heed to hear
Began, with wonder, from those spirits to mark
One risen from its seat, which with its hand
Audience implor'd. Both palms it join'd and rais'd,
Fixing its steadfast gaze towards the east,
As telling God, "I care for naught beside."
"Te Lucis Ante," so devoutly then
Came from its lip, and in so soft a strain,
That all my sense in ravishment was lost.
And the rest after, softly and devout,
Follow'd through all the hymn, with upward gaze
Directed to the bright supernal wheels.
Here, reader! for the truth makes thine eyes keen:
For of so subtle texture is this veil,
That thou with ease mayst pass it through unmark'd.
I saw that gentle band silently next
Look up, as if in expectation held,
Pale and in lowly guise; and from on high
I saw forth issuing descend beneath
Two angels with two flame-illumin'd swords,
Broken and mutilated at their points.
Green as the tender leaves but newly born,
Their vesture was, the which by wings as green
Beaten, they drew behind them, fann'd in air.
A little over us one took his stand,
The other lighted on the' Opposing hill,

So that the troop were in the midst contain'd.
Well I descried the whiteness on their heads;
But in their visages the dazzled eye
Was lost, as faculty that by too much
Is overpower'd. "From Mary's bosom both
Are come," exclaim'd Sordello, "as a guard
Over the vale, ganst him, who hither tends,
The serpent." Whence, not knowing by which path
He came, I turn'd me round, and closely press'd,
All frozen, to my leader's trusted side.
Sordello paus'd not: "To the valley now
(For it is time) let us descend; and hold
Converse with those great shadows: haply much
Their sight may please ye." Only three steps down
Methinks I measur'd, ere I was beneath,
And noted one who look'd as with desire
To know me. Time was now that air arrow dim;
Yet not so dim, that 'twixt his eyes and mine
It clear'd not up what was conceal'd before.
Mutually tow'rds each other we advanc'd.
Nino, thou courteous judge! what joy I felt,
When I perceiv'd thou wert not with the bad!
No salutation kind on either part
Was left unsaid. He then inquir'd: "How long
Since thou arrived'st at the mountain's foot,
Over the distant waves?"—"O!" answer'd I,
"Through the sad seats of woe this morn I came,
And still in my first life, thus journeying on,
The other strive to gain." Soon as they heard
My words, he and Sordello backward drew,
As suddenly amaz'd. To Virgil one,
The other to a spirit turn'd, who near
Was seated, crying: "Conrad! up with speed:
Come, see what of his grace high God hath will'd."
Then turning round to me: "By that rare mark
Of honour which thou ow'st to him, who hides
So deeply his first cause, it hath no ford,
When thou shalt be beyond the vast of waves.
Tell my Giovanna, that for me she call
There, where reply to innocence is made.
Her mother, I believe, loves me no more;
Since she has chang'd the white and wimpled folds,
Which she is doom'd once more with grief to wish.
By her it easily may be perceiv'd,

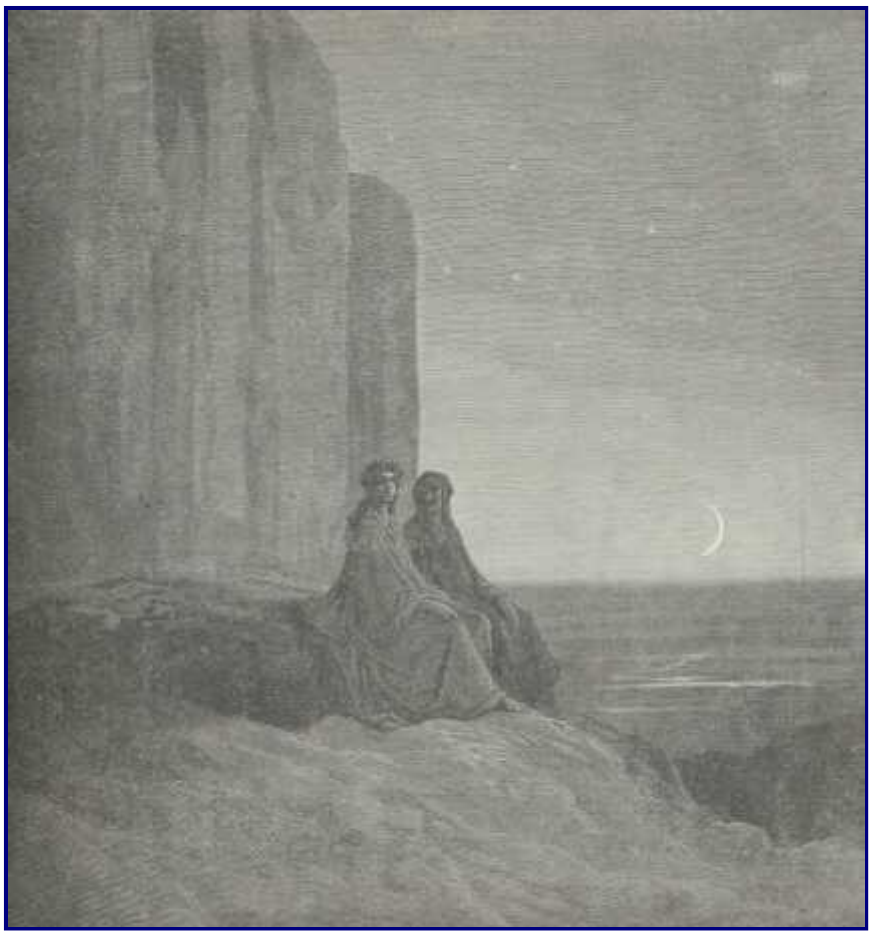
How long in women lasts the flame of love,
If sight and touch do not relume it oft.
For her so fair a burial will not make
The viper which calls Milan to the field,
As had been made by shrill Gallura's bird."
He spoke, and in his visage took the stamp
Of that right seal, which with due temperature
Glows in the bosom. My insatiate eyes
Meanwhile to heav'n had travel'd, even there
Where the bright stars are slowest, as a wheel
Nearest the axle; when my guide inquir'd:
"What there aloft, my son, has caught thy gaze?"
I answer'd: "The three torches, with which here
The pole is all on fire." He then to me:
"The four resplendent stars, thou saw'st this morn
Are there beneath, and these ris'n in their stead."
While yet he spoke. Sordello to himself
Drew him, and cry'd: "Lo there our enemy!"
And with his hand pointed that way to look.
Along the side, where barrier none arose
Around the little vale, a serpent lay,
Such haply as gave Eve the bitter food.
Between the grass and flowers, the evil snake
Came on, reverting oft his lifted head;
And, as a beast that smoothes its polish'd coat,
Licking his hack. I saw not, nor can tell,
How those celestial falcons from their seat
Mov'd, but in motion each one well descried,
Hearing the air cut by their verdant plumes.
The serpent fled; and to their stations back
The angels up return'd with equal flight.



The Spirit (who to Nino, when he call'd,
Had come), from viewing me with fixed ken,
Through all that conflict, loosen'd not his sight.
"So may the lamp, which leads thee up on high,
Find, in thy destin'd lot, of wax so much,
As may suffice thee to the enamel's height."
It thus began: "If any certain news
Of Valdimagra and the neighbour part
Thou know'st, tell me, who once was mighty there
They call'd me Conrad Malaspina, not
That old one, but from him I sprang. The love
I bore my people is now here refin'd."
"In your dominions," I answer'd, "ne'er was I.
But through all Europe where do those men dwell,

To whom their glory is not manifest?
The fame, that honours your illustrious house,
Proclaims the nobles and proclaims the land;
So that he knows it who was never there.
I swear to you, so may my upward route
Prosper! your honour'd nation not impairs
The value of her coffer and her sword.
Nature and use give her such privilege,
That while the world is twisted from his course
By a bad head, she only walks aright,
And has the evil way in scorn." He then:
"Now pass thee on: sev'n times the tired sun
Revisits not the couch, which with four feet
The forked Aries covers, ere that kind
Opinion shall be nail'd into thy brain
With stronger nails than other's speech can drive,
If the sure course of judgment be not stay'd."

CANTO IX

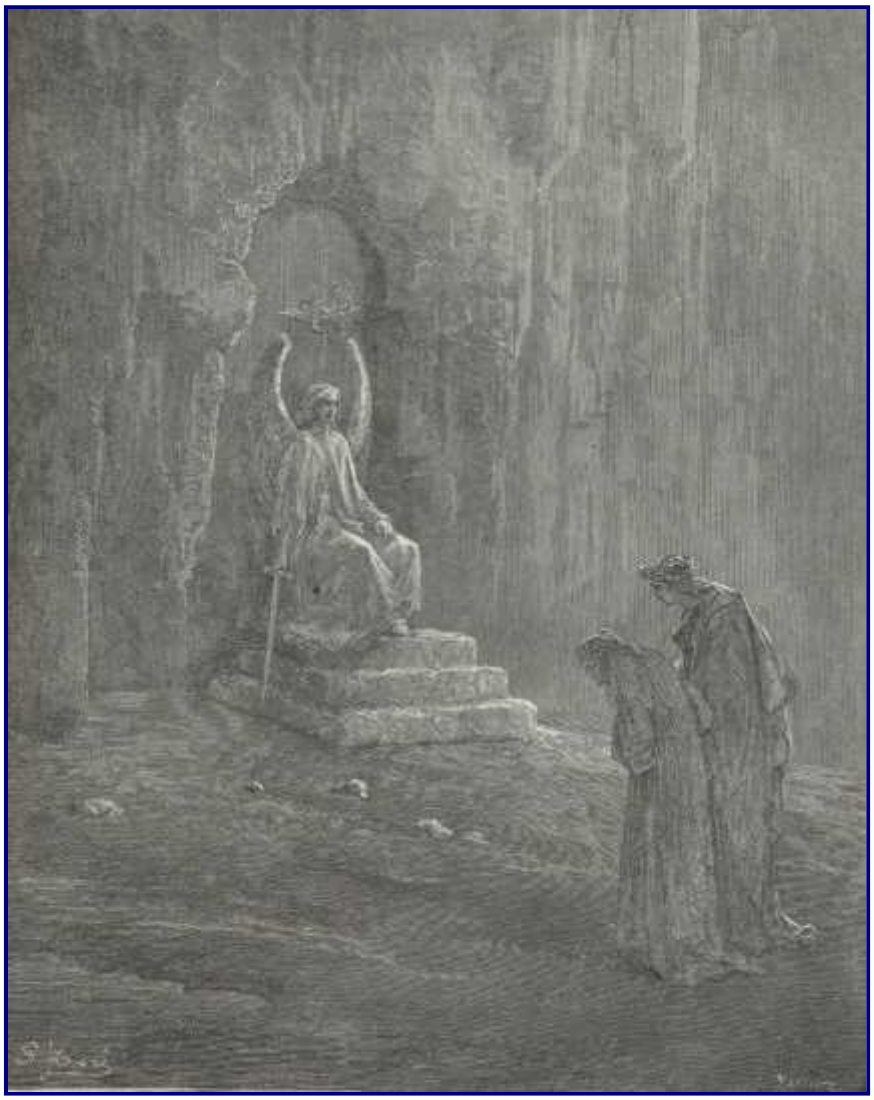


Now the fair consort of Tithonus old,
Arisen from her mate's beloved arms,
Look'd palely o'er the eastern cliff: her brow,
Lucent with jewels, glitter'd, set in sign
Of that chill animal, who with his train
Smites fearful nations: and where then we were,
Two steps of her ascent the night had past,
And now the third was closing up its wing,
When I, who had so much of Adam with me,
Sank down upon the grass, o'ercome with sleep,
There where all five were seated. In that hour,
When near the dawn the swallow her sad lay,
Rememb'ring haply ancient grief, renews,
And with our minds more wand'rers from the flesh,
And less by thought restrain'd are, as 't were, full

Of holy divination in their dreams,
Then in a vision did I seem to view
A golden-feather'd eagle in the sky,
With open wings, and hov'ring for descent,
And I was in that place, methought, from whence
Young Ganymede, from his associates 'reft,
Was snatch'd aloft to the high consistory.
"Perhaps," thought I within me, "here alone
He strikes his quarry, and elsewhere disdains
To pounce upon the prey." Therewith, it seem'd,
A little wheeling in his airy tour
Terrible as the lightning rush'd he down,
And snatch'd me upward even to the fire.

There both, I thought, the eagle and myself
Did burn; and so intense th' imagin'd flames,
That needs my sleep was broken off. As erst
Achilles shook himself, and round him roll'd
His waken'd eyeballs wond'ring where he was,
Whenas his mother had from Chiron fled
To Scyros, with him sleeping in her arms;
E'en thus I shook me, soon as from my face
The slumber parted, turning deadly pale,
Like one ice-struck with dread. Solo at my side
My comfort stood: and the bright sun was now
More than two hours aloft: and to the sea
My looks were turn'd. "Fear not," my master cried,
"Assur'd we are at happy point. Thy strength
Shrink not, but rise dilated. Thou art come
To Purgatory now. Lo! there the cliff
That circling bounds it! Lo! the entrance there,
Where it doth seem disparted! Ere the dawn
Usher'd the daylight, when thy wearied soul
Slept in thee, o'er the flowery vale beneath
A lady came, and thus bespake me: I
Am Lucia. Suffer me to take this man,
Who slumbers. Easier so his way shall speed."
Sordello and the other gentle shapes
Tarrying, she bare thee up: and, as day shone,
This summit reach'd: and I pursued her steps.
Here did she place thee. First her lovely eyes
That open entrance show'd me; then at once
She vanish'd with thy sleep." Like one, whose doubts
Are chas'd by certainty, and terror turn'd
To comfort on discovery of the truth,
Such was the change in me: and as my guide
Beheld me fearless, up along the cliff
He mov'd, and I behind him, towards the height.
    Reader! thou markest how my theme doth rise,
Nor wonder therefore, if more artfully
I prop the structure! Nearer now we drew,
Arriv'd' whence in that part, where first a breach
As of a wall appear'd, I could descry
A portal, and three steps beneath, that led
For inlet there, of different colour each,

And one who watch'd, but spake not yet a word.
As more and more mine eye did stretch its view,
I mark'd him seated on the highest step,
In visage such, as past my power to bear.



Grasp'd in his hand a naked sword, glanc'd back
The rays so toward me, that I oft in vain

My sight directed. "Speak from whence ye stand:"
He cried: "What would ye? Where is your escort?
Take heed your coming upward harm ye not."
"A heavenly dame, not skilless of these things,"
Replied the' instructor, "told us, even now,
'Pass that way: here the gate is."—"And may she
Befriending prosper your ascent," resum'd
The courteous keeper of the gate: "Come then
Before our steps." We straightway thither came.
The lowest stair was marble white so smooth
And polish'd, that therein my mirror'd form
Distinct I saw. The next of hue more dark
Than sablest grain, a rough and singed block,
Crack'd lengthwise and across. The third, that lay
Massy above, seem'd porphyry, that flam'd
Red as the life-blood spouting from a vein.
On this God's angel either foot sustain'd,
Upon the threshold seated, which appear'd
A rock of diamond. Up the trinal steps
My leader cheerily drew me. "Ask," said he,
"With humble heart, that he unbar the bolt."
Piously at his holy feet devolv'd
I cast me, praying him for pity's sake
That he would open to me: but first fell
Thrice on my bosom prostrate. Seven times
The letter, that denotes the inward stain,
He on my forehead with the blunted point
Of his drawn sword inscrib'd. And "Look," he cried,
"When enter'd, that thou wash these scars away."
Ashes, or earth ta'en dry out of the ground,
Were of one colour with the robe he wore.
From underneath that vestment forth he drew
Two keys of metal twain: the one was gold,
Its fellow silver. With the pallid first,
And next the burnish'd, he so ply'd the gate,
As to content me well. "Whenever one
Faileth of these, that in the keyhole straight
It turn not, to this alley then expect
Access in vain." Such were the words he spake.
"One is more precious: but the other needs
Skill and sagacity, large share of each,
Ere its good task to disengage the knot
Be worthily perform'd. From Peter these
I hold, of him instructed, that I err

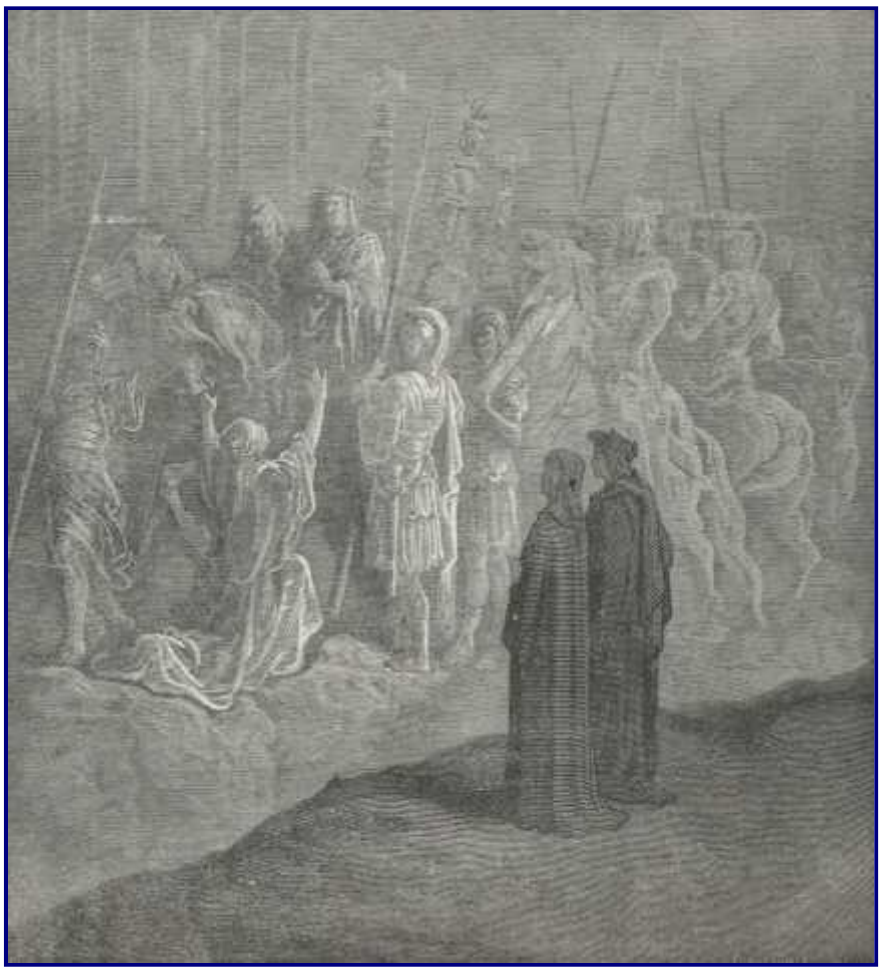
Rather in opening than in keeping fast;
So but the suppliant at my feet implore."
Then of that hallow'd gate he thrust the door,
Exclaiming, "Enter, but this warning hear:
He forth again departs who looks behind."
As in the hinges of that sacred ward
The swivels turn'd, sonorous metal strong,
Harsh was the grating; nor so surlily
Roar'd the Tarpeian, when by force bereft
Of good Metellus, thenceforth from his loss
To leanness doom'd. Attentively I turn'd,
List'ning the thunder, that first issued forth;
And "We praise thee, O God," methought I heard
In accents blended with sweet melody.
The strains came o'er mine ear, e'en as the sound
Of choral voices, that in solemn chant
With organ mingle, and, now high and clear,
Come swelling, now float indistinct away.

CANTO X

When we had passed the threshold of the gate
(Which the soul's ill affection doth disuse,
Making the crooked seem the straighter path),
I heard its closing sound. Had mine eyes turn'd,
For that offence what plea might have avail'd?
We mounted up the riven rock, that wound
On either side alternate, as the wave
Flies and advances. "Here some little art
Behooves us," said my leader, "that our steps
Observe the varying flexure of the path."
Thus we so slowly sped, that with cleft orb
The moon once more o'erhangs her wat'ry couch,
Ere we that strait have threaded. But when free
We came and open, where the mount above
One solid mass retires, I spent, with toil,
And both, uncertain of the way, we stood,
Upon a plain more lonesome, than the roads
That traverse desert wilds. From whence the brink

Borders upon vacuity, to foot
Of the steep bank, that rises still, the space
Had measur'd thrice the stature of a man:
And, distant as mine eye could wing its flight,
To leftward now and now to right dispatch'd,
That cornice equal in extent appear'd.
Not yet our feet had on that summit mov'd,
When I discover'd that the bank around,
Whose proud uprising all ascent denied,
Was marble white, and so exactly wrought
With quaintest sculpture, that not there alone
Had Polycletus, but e'en nature's self
Been sham'd. The angel who came down to earth
With tidings of the peace so many years
Wept for in vain, that op'd the heavenly gates
From their long interdict before us seem'd,
In a sweet act, so sculptur'd to the life,
He look'd no silent image. One had sworn
He had said, "Hail!" for she was imag'd there,
By whom the key did open to God's love,
And in her act as sensibly impress
That word, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord,"
As figure seal'd on wax. "Fix not thy mind
On one place only," said the guide belov'd,
Who had me near him on that part where lies
The heart of man. My sight forthwith I turn'd
And mark'd, behind the virgin mother's form,
Upon that side, where he, that mov'd me, stood,
Another story graven on the rock.
I passed athwart the bard, and drew me near,
That it might stand more aptly for my view.
There in the self-same marble were engrav'd
The cart and kine, drawing the sacred ark,
That from unbidden office awes mankind.
Before it came much people; and the whole
Parted in seven quires. One sense cried, "Nay,"
Another, "Yes, they sing." Like doubt arose
Betwixt the eye and smell, from the curl'd fume
Of incense breathing up the well-wrought toil.
Preceding the blest vessel, onward came
With light dance leaping, girt in humble guise,
Sweet Israel's harper: in that hap he seem'd
Less and yet more than kingly. Opposite,
At a great palace, from the lattice forth

Look'd Michol, like a lady full of scorn
And sorrow. To behold the tablet next,
Which at the back of Michol whitely shone,
I mov'd me. There was storied on the rock
The' exalted glory of the Roman prince,
Whose mighty worth mov'd Gregory to earn
His mighty conquest, Trajan th' Emperor.
A widow at his bridle stood, attir'd
In tears and mourning. Round about them troop'd
Full throng of knights, and overhead in gold
The eagles floated, struggling with the wind.



The wretch appear'd amid all these to say:
"Grant vengeance, sire! for, woe beshrew this heart
My son is murder'd." He replying seem'd;
"Wait now till I return." And she, as one
Made hasty by her grief; "O sire, if thou
Dost not return?"—"Where I am, who then is,
May right thee."—"What to thee is other's good,
If thou neglect thy own?"—"Now comfort thee,"
At length he answers. "It beseemeth well
My duty be perform'd, ere I move hence:
So justice wills; and pity bids me stay."
He, whose ken nothing new surveys, produc'd
That visible speaking, new to us and strange
The like not found on earth. Fondly I gaz'd
Upon those patterns of meek humbleness,
Shapes yet more precious for their artist's sake,
When "Lo," the poet whisper'd, "where this way
(But slack their pace), a multitude advance.
These to the lofty steps shall guide us on."
Mine eyes, though bent on view of novel sights
Their lov'd allurement, were not slow to turn.
Reader! I would not that amaz'd thou miss
Of thy good purpose, hearing how just God
Decrees our debts be cancel'd. Ponder not
The form of suff'ring. Think on what succeeds,
Think that at worst beyond the mighty doom
It cannot pass. "Instructor," I began,
"What I see hither tending, bears no trace
Of human semblance, nor of aught beside
That my foil'd sight can guess." He answering thus:
"So courb'd to earth, beneath their heavy teems
Of torment stoop they, that mine eye at first
Struggled as thine. But look intently thither,
An disentangle with thy lab'ring view,
What underneath those stones approacheth: now,
E'en now, mayst thou discern the pangs of each."
Christians and proud! O poor and wretched ones!
That feeble in the mind's eye, lean your trust
Upon unstaid perverseness! Know ye not
That we are worms, yet made at last to form
The winged insect, imp'd with angel plumes
That to heaven's justice unobstructed soars?
Why buoy ye up aloft your unfleg'd souls?

Abortive then and shapeless ye remain,
Like the untimely embryon of a worm!
As, to support incumbent floor or roof,
For corbel is a figure sometimes seen,
That crumples up its knees unto its breast,
With the feign'd posture stirring ruth unfeign'd
In the beholder's fancy; so I saw
These fashion'd, when I noted well their guise.
Each, as his back was laden, came indeed
Or more or less contract; but it appear'd
As he, who show'd most patience in his look,
Wailing exclaim'd: "I can endure no more."

CANTO XI

"O thou Almighty Father, who dost make
The heavens thy dwelling, not in bounds confin'd,
But that with love intenser there thou view'st
Thy primal effluence, hallow'd be thy name:
Join each created being to extol
Thy might, for worthy humblest thanks and praise
Is thy blest Spirit. May thy kingdom's peace
Come unto us; for we, unless it come,
With all our striving thither tend in vain.
As of their will the angels unto thee
Tender meet sacrifice, circling thy throne
With loud hosannas, so of theirs be done
By saintly men on earth. Grant us this day
Our daily manna, without which he roams
Through this rough desert retrograde, who most
Toils to advance his steps. As we to each

Pardon the evil done us, pardon thou
Benign, and of our merit take no count.
'Gainst the old adversary prove thou not
Our virtue easily subdu'd; but free
From his incitements and defeat his wiles.
This last petition, dearest Lord! is made
Not for ourselves, since that were needless now,
But for their sakes who after us remain."

Thus for themselves and us good speed imploring,
Those spirits went beneath a weight like that
We sometimes feel in dreams, all, sore beset,
But with unequal anguish, wearied all,
Round the first circuit, purging as they go,
The world's gross darkness off: In our behalf
If there vows still be offer'd, what can here
For them be vow'd and done by such, whose wills
Have root of goodness in them? Well beseems
That we should help them wash away the stains
They carried hence, that so made pure and light,
They may spring upward to the starry spheres.

"Ah! so may mercy-temper'd justice rid
Your burdens speedily, that ye have power
To stretch your wing, which e'en to your desire
Shall lift you, as ye show us on which hand
Toward the ladder leads the shortest way.
And if there be more passages than one,
Instruct us of that easiest to ascend;
For this man who comes with me, and bears yet
The charge of fleshly raiment Adam left him,
Despite his better will but slowly mounts."
From whom the answer came unto these words,
Which my guide spake, appear'd not; but 'twas said.

"Along the bank to rightward come with us,
And ye shall find a pass that mocks not toil
Of living man to climb: and were it not
That I am hinder'd by the rock, wherewith
This arrogant neck is tam'd, whence needs I stoop
My visage to the ground, him, who yet lives,
Whose name thou speak'st not him I fain would view.
To mark if e'er I knew him? and to crave
His pity for the fardel that I bear.

I was of Latiun, of a Tuscan horn
A mighty one: Aldobranlesco's name
My sire's, I know not if ye e'er have heard.
My old blood and forefathers' gallant deeds
Made me so haughty, that I clean forgot
The common mother, and to such excess,
Wax'd in my scorn of all men, that I fell,
Fell therefore; by what fate Sienna's sons,
Each child in Campagnatico, can tell.
I am Omberto; not me only pride
Hath injur'd, but my kindred all involv'd
In mischief with her. Here my lot ordains
Under this weight to groan, till I appease
God's angry justice, since I did it not
Amongst the living, here amongst the dead."

List'ning I bent my visage down: and one
(Not he who spake) twisted beneath the weight
That urg'd him, saw me, knew me straight, and call'd,
Holding his eyes With difficulty fix'd
Intent upon me, stooping as I went
Companion of their way. "O!" I exclaim'd,

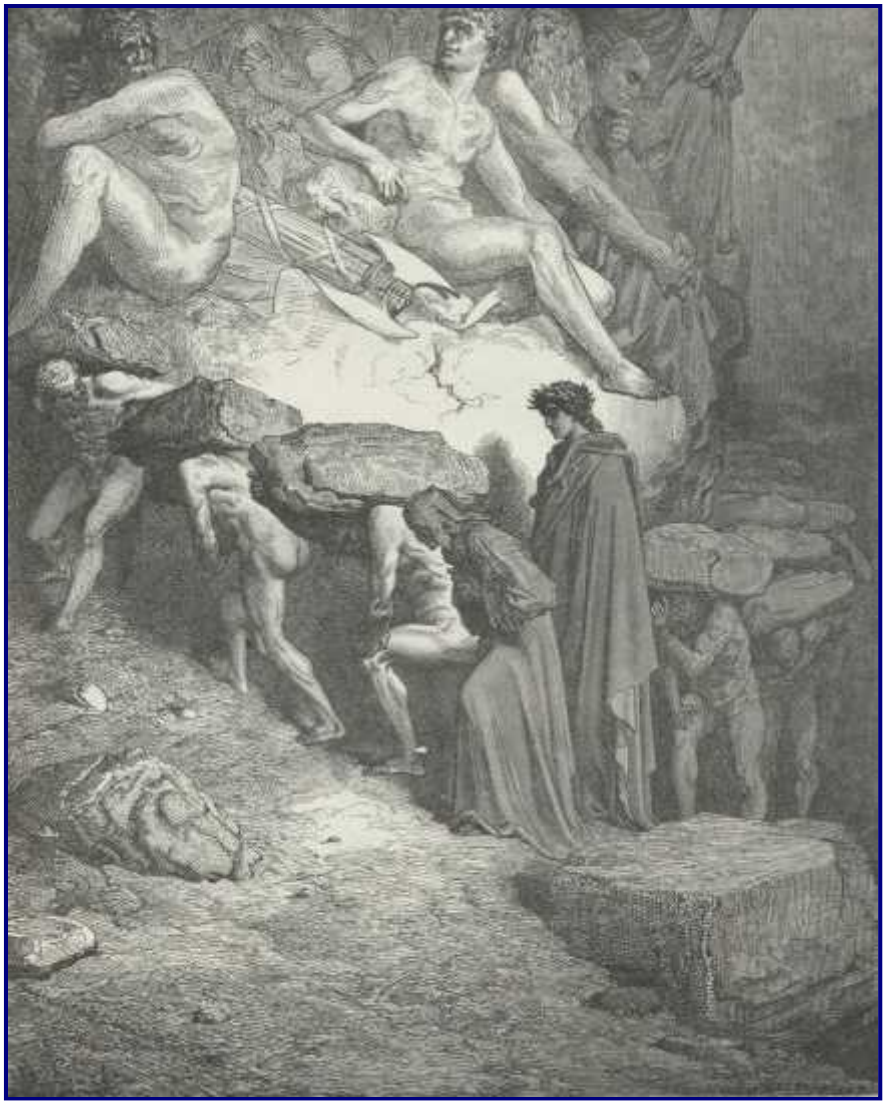
"Art thou not Oderigi, art not thou
Agobbio's glory, glory of that art
Which they of Paris call the limmer's skill?"

"Brother!" said he, "with tints that gayer smile,
Bolognian Franco's pencil lines the leaves.
His all the honour now; mine borrow'd light.
In truth I had not been thus courteous to him,
The whilst I liv'd, through eagerness of zeal
For that pre-eminence my heart was bent on.
Here of such pride the forfeiture is paid.
Nor were I even here; if, able still
To sin, I had not turn'd me unto God.
O powers of man! how vain your glory, nipp'd
E'en in its height of verdure, if an age
Less bright succeed not! Cimabue thought
To lord it over painting's field; and now
The cry is Giotto's, and his name eclips'd.
Thus hath one Guido from the other snatch'd
The letter'd prize: and he perhaps is born,
Who shall drive either from their nest. The noise

Of worldly fame is but a blast of wind,
That blows from divers points, and shifts its name
Shifting the point it blows from. Shalt thou more
Live in the mouths of mankind, if thy flesh
Part shrivel'd from thee, than if thou hadst died,
Before the coral and the pap were left,
Or ere some thousand years have passed? and that
Is, to eternity compar'd, a space,
Briefer than is the twinkling of an eye
To the heaven's slowest orb. He there who treads
So leisurely before me, far and wide
Through Tuscany resounded once; and now
Is in Sienna scarce with whispers nam'd:
There was he sov'reign, when destruction caught
The madd'ning rage of Florence, in that day
Proud as she now is loathsome. Your renown
Is as the herb, whose hue doth come and go,
And his might withers it, by whom it sprang
Crude from the lap of earth." I thus to him:
"True are thy sayings: to my heart they breathe
The kindly spirit of meekness, and allay
What tumours rankle there. But who is he
Of whom thou spak'st but now?"--"This," he replied,
"Is Provenzano. He is here, because
He reach'd, with grasp presumptuous, at the sway
Of all Sienna. Thus he still hath gone,
Thus goeth never-resting, since he died.
Such is th' acquittance render'd back of him,
Who, beyond measure, dar'd on earth." I then:
"If soul that to the verge of life delays
Repentance, linger in that lower space,
Nor hither mount, unless good prayers befriend,
How chanc'd admittance was vouchsaf'd to him?"

"When at his glory's topmost height," said he,
"Respect of dignity all cast aside,
Freely He fix'd him on Sienna's plain,
A suitor to redeem his suff'ring friend,
Who languish'd in the prison-house of Charles,
Nor for his sake refus'd through every vein
To tremble. More I will not say; and dark,
I know, my words are, but thy neighbours soon
Shall help thee to a comment on the text.
This is the work, that from these limits freed him."

CANTO XII



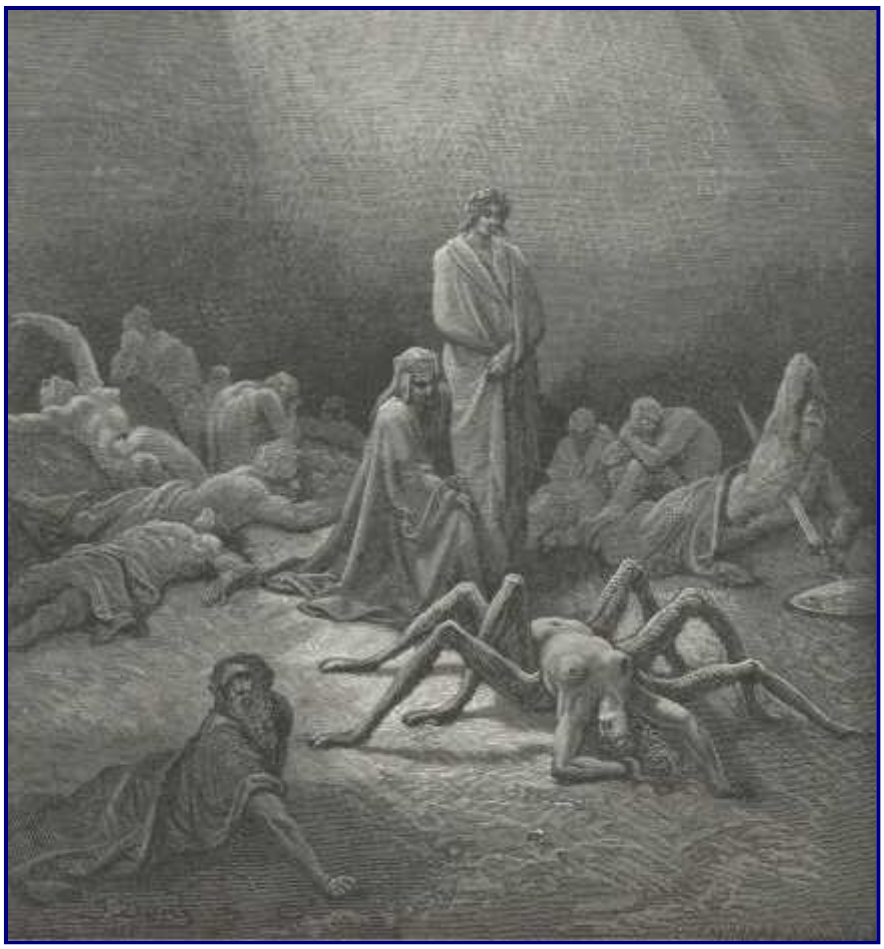
With equal pace as oxen in the yoke,

I with that laden spirit journey'd on
Long as the mild instructor suffer'd me;
But when he bade me quit him, and proceed
(For "here," said he, "behooves with sail and oars
Each man, as best he may, push on his bark"),
Upright, as one dispos'd for speed, I rais'd
My body, still in thought submissive bow'd.

I now my leader's track not loth pursued;
And each had shown how light we far'd along
When thus he warn'd me: "Bend thine eyesight down:
For thou to ease the way shall find it good
To ruminate the bed beneath thy feet."

As in memorial of the buried, drawn
Upon earth-level tombs, the sculptur'd form
Of what was once, appears (at sight whereof
Tears often stream forth by remembrance wak'd,
Whose sacred stings the piteous only feel),
So saw I there, but with more curious skill
Of portraiture o'erwrought, whate'er of space
From forth the mountain stretches. On one part
Him I beheld, above all creatures erst
Created noblest, light'ning fall from heaven:
On th' other side with bolt celestial pierc'd
Briareus: cumb'ring earth he lay through dint
Of mortal ice-stroke. The Thymbraean god
With Mars, I saw, and Pallas, round their sire,
Arm'd still, and gazing on the giant's limbs
Strewn o'er th' ethereal field. Nimrod I saw:
At foot of the stupendous work he stood,
As if bewilder'd, looking on the crowd
Leagued in his proud attempt on Sennaar's plain.

O Niobe! in what a trance of woe
Thee I beheld, upon that highway drawn,
Sev'n sons on either side thee slain! O Saul!
How ghastly didst thou look! on thine own sword
Expiring in Gilboa, from that hour
Ne'er visited with rain from heav'n or dew!



O fond Arachne! thee I also saw
Half spider now in anguish crawling up
Th' unfinish'd web thou weaved'st to thy bane!

O Rehoboam! here thy shape doth seem
Louring no more defiance! but fear-smote
With none to chase him in his chariot whirl'd.

Was shown beside upon the solid floor
How dear Alcmaeon forc'd his mother rate
That ornament in evil hour receiv'd:
How in the temple on Sennacherib fell
His sons, and how a corpse they left him there.
Was shown the scath and cruel mangling made

By Tomyris on Cyrus, when she cried:
"Blood thou didst thirst for, take thy fill of blood!"
Was shown how routed in the battle fled
Th' Assyrians, Holofernes slain, and e'en
The relics of the carnage. Troy I mark'd
In ashes and in caverns. Oh! how fall'n,
How abject, Ilion, was thy semblance there!

What master of the pencil or the style
Had trac'd the shades and lines, that might have made
The subtlest workman wonder? Dead the dead,
The living seem'd alive; with clearer view
His eye beheld not who beheld the truth,
Than mine what I did tread on, while I went
Low bending. Now swell out; and with stiff necks
Pass on, ye sons of Eve! veil not your looks,
Lest they descry the evil of your path!

I noted not (so busied was my thought)
How much we now had circled of the mount,
And of his course yet more the sun had spent,
When he, who with still wakeful caution went,
Admonish'd: "Raise thou up thy head: for know
Time is not now for slow suspense. Behold
That way an angel hasting towards us! Lo
Where duly the sixth handmaid doth return
From service on the day. Wear thou in look
And gesture seemly grace of reverent awe,
That gladly he may forward us aloft.
Consider that this day ne'er dawns again."

Time's loss he had so often warn'd me 'gainst,
I could not miss the scope at which he aim'd.

The goodly shape approach'd us, snowy white
In vesture, and with visage casting streams
Of tremulous lustre like the matin star.
His arms he open'd, then his wings; and spake:
"Onward: the steps, behold! are near; and now
Th' ascent is without difficulty gain'd."

A scanty few are they, who when they hear
Such tidings, hasten. O ye race of men
Though born to soar, why suffer ye a wind

So slight to baffle ye? He led us on
Where the rock parted; here against my front
Did beat his wings, then promis'd I should fare
In safety on my way. As to ascend
That steep, upon whose brow the chapel stands
(O'er Rubaconte, looking lordly down
On the well-guided city,) up the right
Th' impetuous rise is broken by the steps
Carv'd in that old and simple age, when still
The registry and label rested safe;
Thus is th' acclivity reliev'd, which here
Precipitous from the other circuit falls:
But on each hand the tall cliff presses close.

As ent'ring there we turn'd, voices, in strain
Ineffable, sang: "Blessed are the poor
In spirit." Ah how far unlike to these
The straits of hell; here songs to usher us,
There shrieks of woe! We climb the holy stairs:
And lighter to myself by far I seem'd
Than on the plain before, whence thus I spake:
"Say, master, of what heavy thing have I
Been lighten'd, that scarce aught the sense of toil
Affects me journeying?" He in few replied:
"When sin's broad characters, that yet remain
Upon thy temples, though well nigh effac'd,
Shall be, as one is, all clean razed out,
Then shall thy feet by heartiness of will
Be so o'ercome, they not alone shall feel
No sense of labour, but delight much more
Shall wait them urg'd along their upward way."

Then like to one, upon whose head is plac'd
Somewhat he deems not of but from the becks
Of others as they pass him by; his hand
Lends therefore help to' assure him, searches, finds,
And well performs such office as the eye
Wants power to execute: so stretching forth
The fingers of my right hand, did I find
Six only of the letters, which his sword
Who bare the keys had trac'd upon my brow.
The leader, as he mark'd mine action, smil'd.

CANTO XIII

We reach'd the summit of the scale, and stood
Upon the second buttress of that mount
Which healeth him who climbs. A cornice there,
Like to the former, girdles round the hill;
Save that its arch with sweep less ample bends.

Shadow nor image there is seen; all smooth
The rampart and the path, reflecting nought
But the rock's sullen hue. "If here we wait
For some to question," said the bard, "I fear
Our choice may haply meet too long delay."

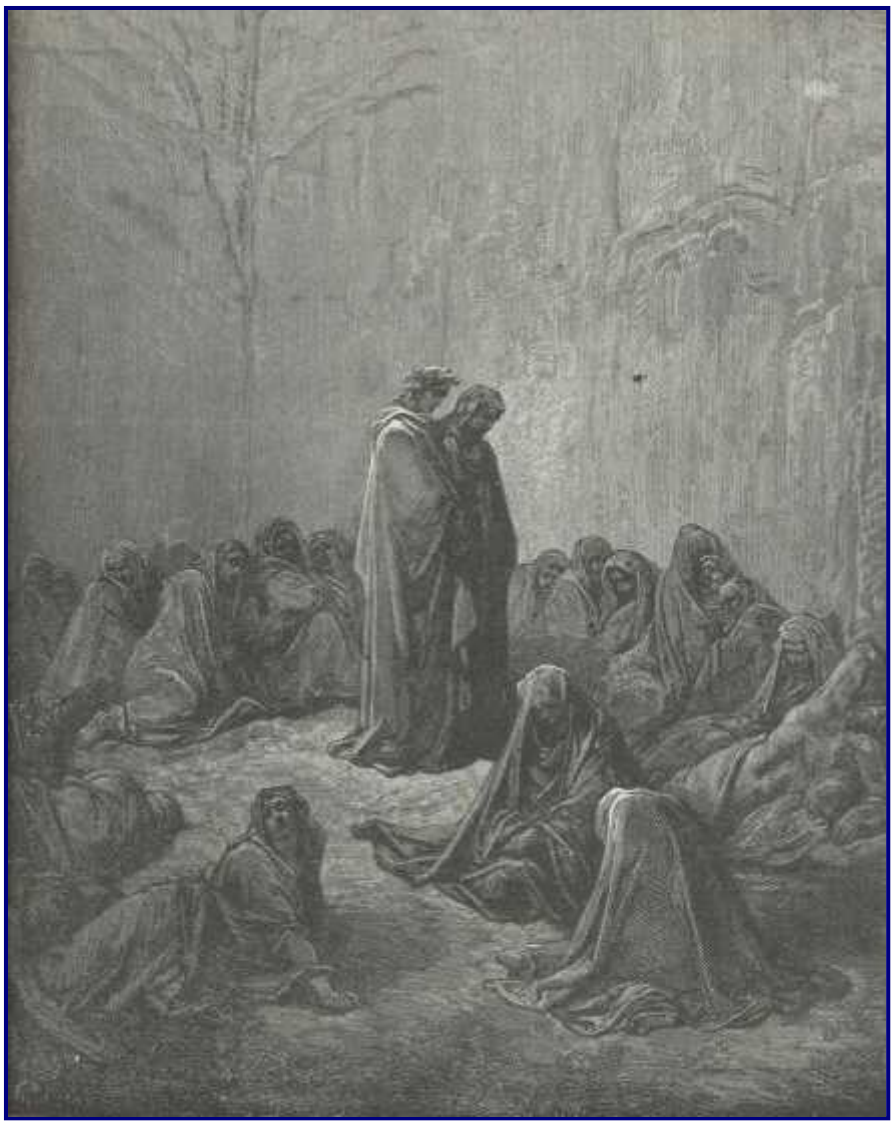
Then fixedly upon the sun his eyes
He fastn'd, made his right the central point
From whence to move, and turn'd the left aside.
"O pleasant light, my confidence and hope,
Conduct us thou," he cried, "on this new way,
Where now I venture, leading to the bourn
We seek. The universal world to thee
Owes warmth and lustre. If no other cause
Forbid, thy beams should ever be our guide."

Far, as is measur'd for a mile on earth,
In brief space had we journey'd; such prompt will
Impell'd; and towards us flying, now were heard
Spirits invisible, who courteously
Unto love's table bade the welcome guest.
The voice, that first? flew by, call'd forth aloud,
"They have no wine;" so on behind us past,
Those sounds reiterating, nor yet lost
In the faint distance, when another came
Crying, "I am Orestes," and alike
Wing'd its fleet way. "Oh father!" I exclaim'd,
"What tongues are these?" and as I question'd, lo!
A third exclaiming, "Love ye those have wrong'd you."

"This circuit," said my teacher, "knots the scourge
For envy, and the cords are therefore drawn
By charity's correcting hand. The curb

Is of a harsher sound, as thou shalt hear
(If I deem rightly), ere thou reach the pass,
Where pardon sets them free. But fix thine eyes
Intently through the air, and thou shalt see
A multitude before thee seated, each
Along the shelving grot." Then more than erst
I op'd my eyes, before me view'd, and saw
Shadows with garments dark as was the rock;
And when we pass'd a little forth, I heard
A crying, "Blessed Mary! pray for us,
Michael and Peter! all ye saintly host!"

I do not think there walks on earth this day
Man so remorseless, that he hath not yearn'd
With pity at the sight that next I saw.
Mine eyes a load of sorrow teemed, when now
I stood so near them, that their semblances
Came clearly to my view. Of sackcloth vile
Their cov'ring seem'd; and on his shoulder one
Did stay another, leaning, and all lean'd
Against the cliff. E'en thus the blind and poor,
Near the confessionals, to crave an alms,
Stand, each his head upon his fellow's sunk,



So most to stir compassion, not by sound
Of words alone, but that, which moves not less,
The sight of mis'ry. And as never beam
Of noonday visiteth the eyeless man,
E'en so was heav'n a niggard unto these
Of his fair light; for, through the orbs of all,
A thread of wire, impiercing, knits them up,
As for the taming of a haggard hawk.

It were a wrong, methought, to pass and look

On others, yet myself the while unseen.
To my sage counsel therefore did I turn.
He knew the meaning of the mute appeal,
Nor waited for my questioning, but said:
"Speak; and be brief, be subtle in thy words."

On that part of the cornice, whence no rim
Engarlands its steep fall, did Virgil come;
On the' other side me were the spirits, their cheeks
Bathing devout with penitential tears,
That through the dread impalement forc'd a way.

I turn'd me to them, and "O shades!" said I,

"Assur'd that to your eyes unveil'd shall shine
The lofty light, sole object of your wish,
So may heaven's grace clear whatsoe'er of foam
Floats turbid on the conscience, that thenceforth
The stream of mind roll limpid from its source,
As ye declare (for so shall ye impart
A boon I dearly prize) if any soul
Of Latium dwell among ye; and perchance
That soul may profit, if I learn so much."

"My brother, we are each one citizens
Of one true city. Any thou wouldst say,
Who lived a stranger in Italia's land."

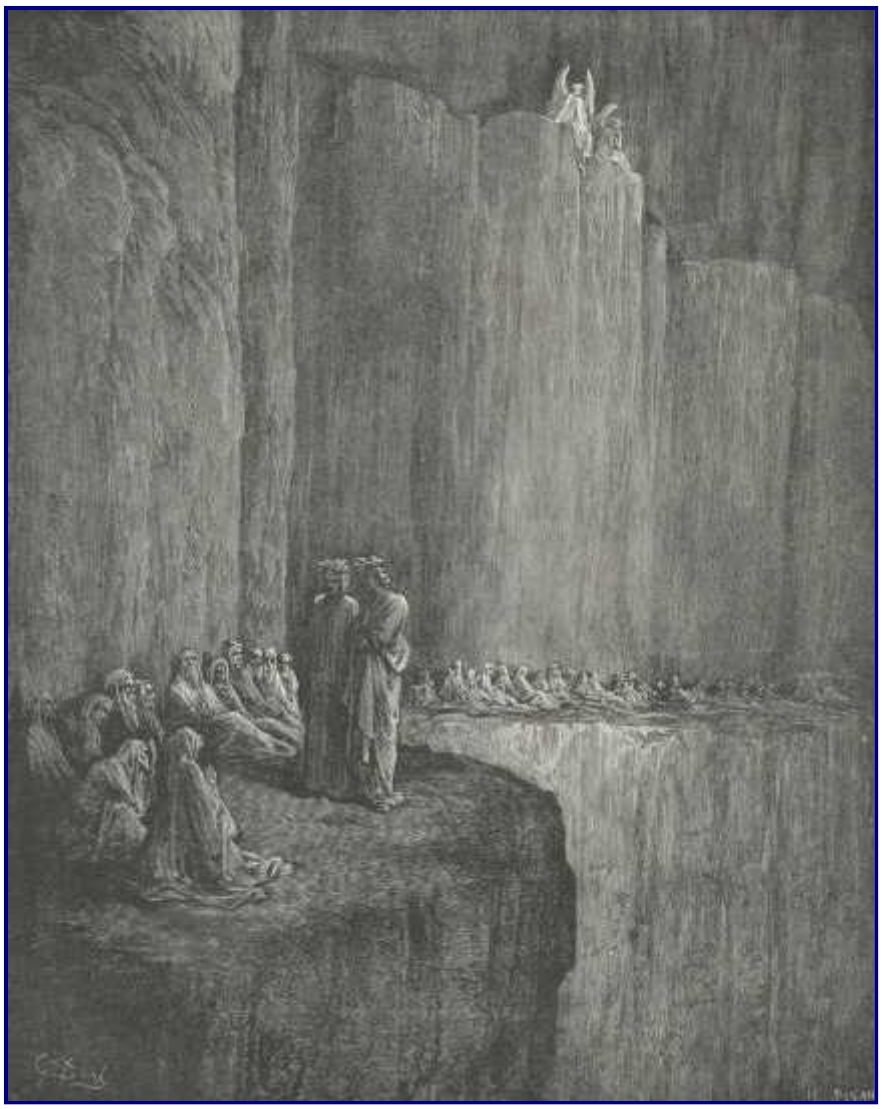
So heard I answering, as appeal'd, a voice
That onward came some space from whence I stood.

A spirit I noted, in whose look was mark'd
Expectance. Ask ye how? The chin was rais'd
As in one reft of sight. "Spirit," said I,
"Who for thy rise are tutoring (if thou be
That which didst answer to me,) or by place
Or name, disclose thyself, that I may know thee."

"I was," it answer'd, "of Sienna: here
I cleanse away with these the evil life,
Soliciting with tears that He, who is,
Vouchsafe him to us. Though Sapia nam'd
In sapience I excell'd not, gladder far
Of others' hurt, than of the good befell me.

That thou mayst own I now deceive thee not,
Hear, if my folly were not as I speak it.
When now my years slop'd waning down the arch,
It so bechanc'd, my fellow citizens
Near Colle met their enemies in the field,
And I pray'd God to grant what He had will'd.
There were they vanquish'd, and betook themselves
Unto the bitter passages of flight.
I mark'd the hunt, and waxing out of bounds
In gladness, lifted up my shameless brow,
And like the merlin cheated by a gleam,
Cried, "It is over. Heav'n! I fear thee not."
Upon my verge of life I wish'd for peace
With God; nor repentance had supplied
What I did lack of duty, were it not
The hermit Piero, touch'd with charity,
In his devout orisons thought on me.
"But who art thou that question'st of our state,
Who go'st to my belief, with lids unclos'd,
And breathest in thy talk?"--"Mine eyes," said I,
"May yet be here ta'en from me; but not long;
For they have not offended grievously
With envious glances. But the woe beneath
Urges my soul with more exceeding dread.
That nether load already weighs me down."

She thus: "Who then amongst us here aloft
Hath brought thee, if thou weenest to return?"



"He," answer'd I, "who standeth mute beside me.
I live: of me ask therefore, chosen spirit,
If thou desire I yonder yet should move
For thee my mortal feet."--"Oh!" she replied,
"This is so strange a thing, it is great sign
That God doth love thee. Therefore with thy prayer
Sometime assist me: and by that I crave,
Which most thou covetest, that if thy feet
E'er tread on Tuscan soil, thou save my fame

Amongst my kindred. Them shalt thou behold
With that vain multitude, who set their hope
On Telamone's haven, there to fail
Confounded, more shall when the fancied stream
They sought of Dian call'd: but they who lead
Their navies, more than ruin'd hopes shall mourn."

CANTO XIV

"Say who is he around our mountain winds,
Or ever death has prun'd his wing for flight,
That opes his eyes and covers them at will?"

"I know not who he is, but know thus much
He comes not singly. Do thou ask of him,
For thou art nearer to him, and take heed
Accost him gently, so that he may speak."

Thus on the right two Spirits bending each
Toward the other, talk'd of me, then both
Addressing me, their faces backward lean'd,
And thus the one began: "O soul, who yet
Pent in the body, tendest towards the sky!
For charity, we pray thee' comfort us,
Recounting whence thou com'st, and who thou art:
For thou dost make us at the favour shown thee
Marvel, as at a thing that ne'er hath been."

"There stretches through the midst of Tuscany,"
I straight began: "a brooklet, whose well-head
Springs up in Falterona, with his race
Not satisfied, when he some hundred miles
Hath measur'd. From his banks bring, I this frame.
To tell you who I am were words misspent:
For yet my name scarce sounds on rumour's lip."

"If well I do incorp'rate with my thought
The meaning of thy speech," said he, who first
Addrest me, "thou dost speak of Arno's wave."

To whom the other: "Why hath he conceal'd
The title of that river, as a man
Doth of some horrible thing?" The spirit, who
Thereof was question'd, did acquit him thus:
"I know not: but 'tis fitting well the name
Should perish of that vale; for from the source
Where teems so plenteously the Alpine steep
Maim'd of Pelorus, (that doth scarcely pass
Beyond that limit,) even to the point
Whereunto ocean is restor'd, what heaven
Drains from th' exhaustless store for all earth's streams,
Throughout the space is virtue worried down,
As 'twere a snake, by all, for mortal foe,
Or through disastrous influence on the place,
Or else distortion of misguided wills,
That custom goads to evil: whence in those,
The dwellers in that miserable vale,
Nature is so transform'd, it seems as they
Had shar'd of Circe's feeding. 'Midst brute swine,
Worthier of acorns than of other food
Created for man's use, he shapeth first
His obscure way; then, sloping onward, finds
Curs, snarlers more in spite than power, from whom
He turns with scorn aside: still journeying down,
By how much more the curst and luckless foss
Swells out to largeness, e'en so much it finds
Dogs turning into wolves. Descending still
Through yet more hollow eddies, next he meets
A race of foxes, so replete with craft,
They do not fear that skill can master it.
Nor will I cease because my words are heard
By other ears than thine. It shall be well
For this man, if he keep in memory
What from no erring Spirit I reveal.
Lo! I behold thy grandson, that becomes
A hunter of those wolves, upon the shore
Of the fierce stream, and cows them all with dread:
Their flesh yet living sets he up to sale,
Then like an aged beast to slaughter dooms.
Many of life he reaves, himself of worth
And goodly estimation. Smear'd with gore
Mark how he issues from the rueful wood,
Leaving such havoc, that in thousand years

It spreads not to prime lustihood again."

As one, who tidings hears of woe to come,
Changes his looks perturb'd, from whate'er part
The peril grasp him, so beheld I change
That spirit, who had turn'd to listen, struck
With sadness, soon as he had caught the word.

His visage and the other's speech did raise
Desire in me to know the names of both,
whereof with meek entreaty I inquir'd.

The shade, who late addrest me, thus resum'd:
"Thy wish imports that I vouchsafe to do
For thy sake what thou wilt not do for mine.
But since God's will is that so largely shine
His grace in thee, I will be liberal too.
Guido of Duca know then that I am.
Envy so parch'd my blood, that had I seen
A fellow man made joyous, thou hadst mark'd
A livid paleness overspread my cheek.
Such harvest reap I of the seed I sow'd.
O man, why place thy heart where there doth need
Exclusion of participants in good?
This is Rinieri's spirit, this the boast
And honour of the house of Calboli,
Where of his worth no heritage remains.
Nor his the only blood, that hath been stript
('twixt Po, the mount, the Reno, and the shore,)
Of all that truth or fancy asks for bliss;
But in those limits such a growth has sprung
Of rank and venom'd roots, as long would mock
Slow culture's toil. Where is good Lizio? where
Manardi, Traversalo, and Carpigna?
O bastard slips of old Romagna's line!
When in Bologna the low artisan,
And in Faenza yon Bernardin sprouts,
A gentle cyon from ignoble stem.
Wonder not, Tuscan, if thou see me weep,
When I recall to mind those once lov'd names,
Guido of Prata, and of Azzo him
That dwelt with you; Tignoso and his troop,
With Traversaro's house and Anastagio's,
(Each race disherited) and beside these,

The ladies and the knights, the toils and ease,
That witch'd us into love and courtesy;
Where now such malice reigns in recreant hearts.
O Brettinoro! wherefore tarriest still,
Since forth of thee thy family hath gone,
And many, hating evil, join'd their steps?
Well doeth he, that bids his lineage cease,
Bagnacavallo; Castracaro ill,
And Conio worse, who care to propagate
A race of Counties from such blood as theirs.
Well shall ye also do, Pagani, then
When from amongst you tries your demon child.
Not so, howe'er, that henceforth there remain
True proof of what ye were. O Hugolin!
Thou sprung of Fantolini's line! thy name
Is safe, since none is look'd for after thee
To cloud its lustre, warping from thy stock.
But, Tuscan, go thy ways; for now I take
Far more delight in weeping than in words.
Such pity for your sakes hath wrung my heart."

We knew those gentle spirits at parting heard
Our steps. Their silence therefore of our way
Assur'd us. Soon as we had quitted them,
Advancing onward, lo! a voice that seem'd
Like vollied light'ning, when it rives the air,
Met us, and shouted, "Whosoever finds
Will slay me," then fled from us, as the bolt
Lanc'd sudden from a downward-rushing cloud.
When it had giv'n short truce unto our hearing,
Behold the other with a crash as loud
As the quick-following thunder: "Mark in me
Aglauros turn'd to rock." I at the sound
Retreating drew more closely to my guide.

Now in mute stillness rested all the air:
And thus he spake: "There was the galling bit.
But your old enemy so baits his hook,
He drags you eager to him. Hence nor curb
Avails you, nor reclaiming call. Heav'n calls
And round about you wheeling courts your gaze
With everlasting beauties. Yet your eye
Turns with fond doting still upon the earth.
Therefore He smites you who discerneth all."

CANTO XV

As much as 'twixt the third hour's close and dawn,
Appeareth of heav'n's sphere, that ever whirls
As restless as an infant in his play,
So much appear'd remaining to the sun
Of his slope journey towards the western goal.

Evening was there, and here the noon of night;
and full upon our forehead smote the beams.
For round the mountain, circling, so our path
Had led us, that toward the sun-set now
Direct we journey'd: when I felt a weight
Of more exceeding splendour, than before,
Press on my front. The cause unknown, amaze
Possess'd me, and both hands against my brow
Lifting, I interpos'd them, as a screen,
That of its gorgeous superflux of light
Clipp'd the diminish'd orb. As when the ray,
Striking On water or the surface clear
Of mirror, leaps unto the opposite part,
Ascending at a glance, e'en as it fell,
(And so much differs from the stone, that falls)
Through equal space, as practice skill hath shown;
Thus with refracted light before me seemed
The ground there smitten; whence in sudden haste
My sight recoil'd. "What is this, sire belov'd!
'Gainst which I strive to shield the sight in vain?"
Cried I, "and which towards us moving seems?"

"Marvel not, if the family of heav'n,"
He answer'd, "yet with dazzling radiance dim
Thy sense it is a messenger who comes,
Inviting man's ascent. Such sights ere long,
Not grievous, shall impart to thee delight,
As thy perception is by nature wrought
Up to their pitch." The blessed angel, soon
As we had reach'd him, hail'd us with glad voice:
"Here enter on a ladder far less steep

Than ye have yet encounter'd." We forthwith
Ascending, heard behind us chanted sweet,
"Blessed the merciful," and "happy thou!
That conquer'st." Lonely each, my guide and I
Pursued our upward way; and as we went,
Some profit from his words I hop'd to win,
And thus of him inquiring, fram'd my speech:

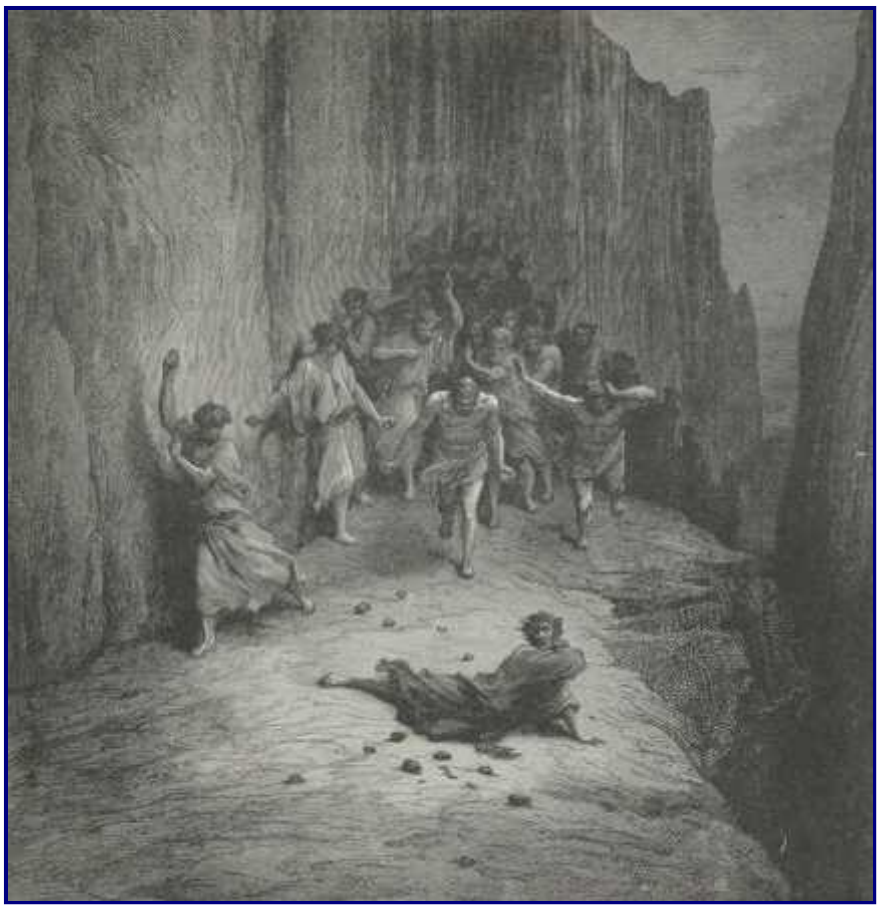
"What meant Romagna's spirit, when he spake
Of bliss exclusive with no partner shar'd?"

He straight replied: "No wonder, since he knows,
What sorrow waits on his own worst defect,
If he chide others, that they less may mourn.
Because ye point your wishes at a mark,
Where, by communion of possessors, part
Is lessen'd, envy bloweth up the sighs of men.
No fear of that might touch ye, if the love
Of higher sphere exalted your desire.
For there, by how much more they call it ours,
So much propriety of each in good
Increases more, and heighten'd charity
Wraps that fair cloister in a brighter flame."

"Now lack I satisfaction more," said I,
"Than if thou hadst been silent at the first,
And doubt more gathers on my lab'ring thought.
How can it chance, that good distributed,
The many, that possess it, makes more rich,
Than if 't were shar'd by few?" He answering thus:
"Thy mind, reverting still to things of earth,
Strikes darkness from true light. The highest good
Unlimited, ineffable, doth so speed
To love, as beam to lucid body darts,
Giving as much of ardour as it finds.
The sempiternal effluence streams abroad
Spreading, wherever charity extends.
So that the more aspirants to that bliss
Are multiplied, more good is there to love,
And more is lov'd; as mirrors, that reflect,
Each unto other, propagated light.
If these my words avail not to allay
Thy thirsting, Beatrice thou shalt see,
Who of this want, and of all else thou hast,

Shall rid thee to the full. Provide but thou
That from thy temples may be soon eras'd,
E'en as the two already, those five scars,
That when they pain thee worst, then kindliest heal,"

"Thou," I had said, "content'st me," when I saw
The other round was gain'd, and wond'ring eyes
Did keep me mute. There suddenly I seem'd
By an ecstatic vision wrapt away;
And in a temple saw, methought, a crowd
Of many persons; and at th' entrance stood
A dame, whose sweet demeanour did express
A mother's love, who said, "Child! why hast thou
Dealt with us thus? Behold thy sire and I
Sorrowing have sought thee;" and so held her peace,
And straight the vision fled. A female next
Appear'd before me, down whose visage cours'd
Those waters, that grief forces out from one
By deep resentment stung, who seem'd to say:
"If thou, Pisistratus, be lord indeed
Over this city, nam'd with such debate
Of adverse gods, and whence each science sparkles,
Avenge thee of those arms, whose bold embrace
Hath clasp'd our daughter; "and to fuel, meseem'd,
Benign and meek, with visage undisturb'd,
Her sovran spake: "How shall we those requite,
Who wish us evil, if we thus condemn
The man that loves us?" After that I saw
A multitude, in fury burning, slay
With stones a stripling youth, and shout amain
"Destroy, destroy!" and him I saw, who bow'd
Heavy with death unto the ground, yet made
His eyes, unfolded upward, gates to heav'n,



Praying forgiveness of th' Almighty Sire,
Amidst that cruel conflict, on his foes,
With looks, that With compassion to their aim.

Soon as my spirit, from her airy flight
Returning, sought again the things, whose truth
Depends not on her shaping, I observ'd
How she had rov'd to no unreal scenes

Meanwhile the leader, who might see I mov'd,
As one, who struggles to shake off his sleep,
Exclaim'd: "What ails thee, that thou canst not hold
Thy footing firm, but more than half a league
Hast travel'd with clos'd eyes and tott'ring gait,
Like to a man by wine or sleep o'ercharg'd?"

"Beloved father! so thou deign," said I,
"To listen, I will tell thee what appear'd
Before me, when so fail'd my sinking steps."

He thus: "Not if thy Countenance were mask'd
With hundred vizards, could a thought of thine
How small soe'er, elude me. What thou saw'st
Was shown, that freely thou mightst ope thy heart
To the waters of peace, that flow diffus'd
From their eternal fountain. I not ask'd,
What ails thee? for such cause as he doth, who
Looks only with that eye which sees no more,
When spiritless the body lies; but ask'd,
To give fresh vigour to thy foot. Such goads
The slow and loit'ring need; that they be found
Not wanting, when their hour of watch returns."

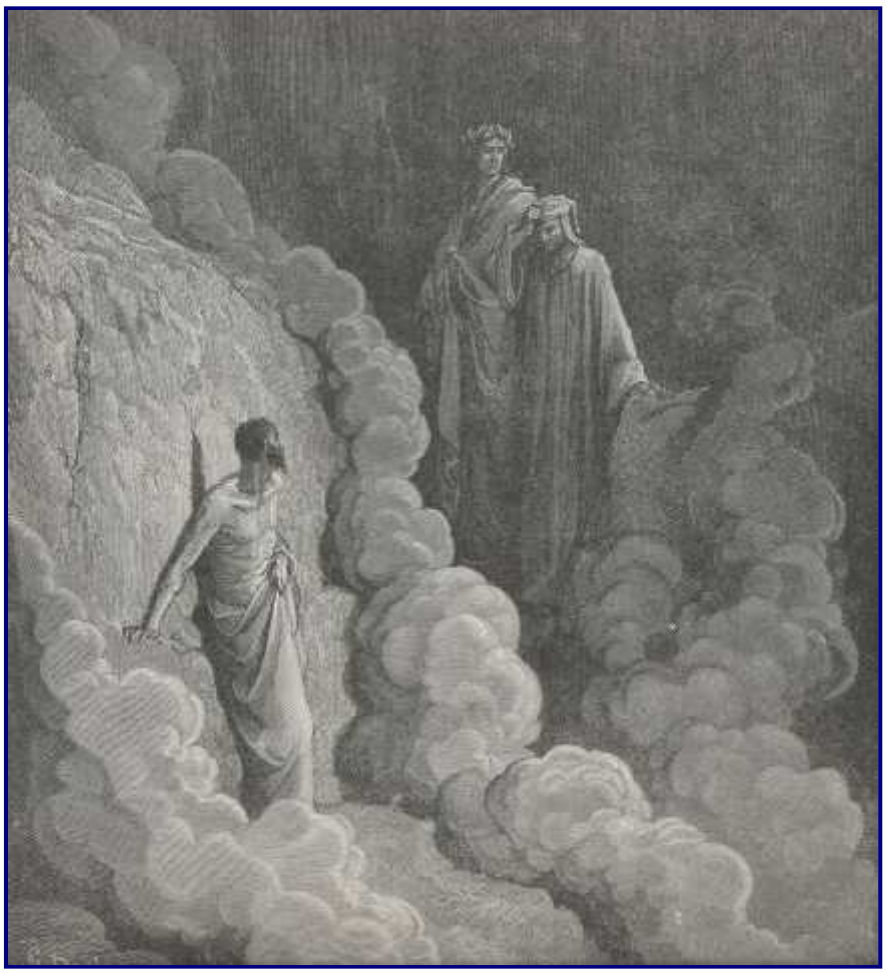
So on we journey'd through the evening sky
Gazing intent, far onward, as our eyes
With level view could stretch against the bright
Vespertine ray: and lo! by slow degrees
Gath'ring, a fog made tow'rds us, dark as night.
There was no room for 'scaping; and that mist
Bereft us, both of sight and the pure air.

CANTO XVI

Hell's dunnest gloom, or night unlustrous, dark,
Of every planes 'reft, and pall'd in clouds,
Did never spread before the sight a veil
In thickness like that fog, nor to the sense
So palpable and gross. Ent'ring its shade,
Mine eye endured not with unclosed lids;
Which marking, near me drew the faithful guide,
Offering me his shoulder for a stay.

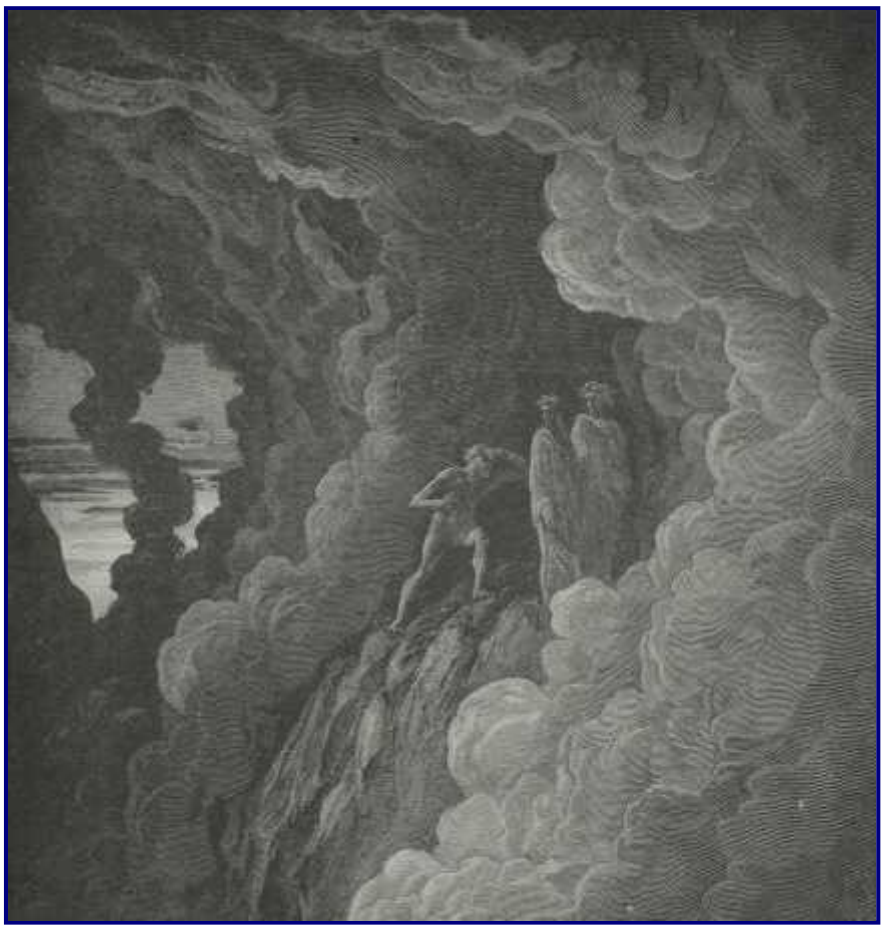
As the blind man behind his leader walks,
Lest he should err, or stumble unawares
On what might harm him, or perhaps destroy,

I journey'd through that bitter air and foul,
Still list'ning to my escort's warning voice,
"Look that from me thou part not." Straight I heard
Voices, and each one seem'd to pray for peace,
And for compassion, to the Lamb of God
That taketh sins away. Their prelude still
Was "Agnus Dei," and through all the choir,
One voice, one measure ran, that perfect seem'd
The concord of their song. "Are these I hear
Spirits, O master?" I exclaim'd; and he:
"Thou aim'st aright: these loose the bonds of wrath."



"Now who art thou, that through our smoke dost cleave?
And speak'st of us, as thou thyself e'en yet
Dividest time by calends?" So one voice
Bespake me; whence my master said: "Reply;
And ask, if upward hence the passage lead."

"O being! who dost make thee pure, to stand
Beautiful once more in thy Maker's sight!
Along with me: and thou shalt hear and wonder."
Thus I, whereto the spirit answering spake:



"Long as 't is lawful for me, shall my steps
Follow on thine; and since the cloudy smoke
Forbids the seeing, hearing in its stead
Shall keep us join'd." I then forthwith began
"Yet in my mortal swathing, I ascend
To higher regions, and am hither come
Through the fearful agony of hell.
And, if so largely God hath doled his grace,
That, clean beside all modern precedent,
He wills me to behold his kingly state,
From me conceal not who thou wast, ere death
Had loos'd thee; but instruct me: and instruct
If rightly to the pass I tend; thy words
The way directing as a safe escort."

"I was of Lombardy, and Marco call'd:
Not inexperienc'd of the world, that worth
I still affected, from which all have turn'd
The nerveless bow aside. Thy course tends right
Unto the summit:" and, replying thus,
He added, "I beseech thee pray for me,
When thou shalt come aloft." And I to him:
"Accept my faith for pledge I will perform
What thou requirest. Yet one doubt remains,
That wrings me sorely, if I solve it not,
Singly before it urg'd me, doubled now
By thine opinion, when I couple that
With one elsewhere declar'd, each strength'ning other.
The world indeed is even so forlorn
Of all good as thou speak'st it and so swarms
With every evil. Yet, beseech thee, point
The cause out to me, that myself may see,
And unto others show it: for in heaven
One places it, and one on earth below."

Then heaving forth a deep and audible sigh,
"Brother!" he thus began, "the world is blind;
And thou in truth com'st from it. Ye, who live,
Do so each cause refer to heav'n above,
E'en as its motion of necessity
Drew with it all that moves. If this were so,
Free choice in you were none; nor justice would
There should be joy for virtue, woe for ill.

Your movements have their primal bent from heaven;
Not all; yet said I all; what then ensues?
Light have ye still to follow evil or good,
And of the will free power, which, if it stand
Firm and unwearied in Heav'n's first assay,
Conquers at last, so it be cherish'd well,
Triumphant over all. To mightier force,
To better nature subject, ye abide
Free, not constrain'd by that, which forms in you
The reasoning mind uninfluenc'd of the stars.
If then the present race of mankind err,
Seek in yourselves the cause, and find it there.
Herein thou shalt confess me no false spy.

"Forth from his plastic hand, who charm'd beholds
Her image ere she yet exist, the soul
Comes like a babe, that wantons sportively
Weeping and laughing in its wayward moods,
As artless and as ignorant of aught,
Save that her Maker being one who dwells
With gladness ever, willingly she turns
To whate'er yields her joy. Of some slight good
The flavour soon she tastes; and, snar'd by that,
With fondness she pursues it, if no guide
Recall, no rein direct her wand'ring course.
Hence it behov'd, the law should be a curb;
A sovereign hence behov'd, whose piercing view
Might mark at least the fortress and main tower
Of the true city. Laws indeed there are:
But who is he observes them? None; not he,
Who goes before, the shepherd of the flock,
Who chews the cud but doth not cleave the hoof.
Therefore the multitude, who see their guide
Strike at the very good they covet most,
Feed there and look no further. Thus the cause
Is not corrupted nature in yourselves,
But ill-conducting, that hath turn'd the world
To evil. Rome, that turn'd it unto good,
Was wont to boast two suns, whose several beams
Cast light on either way, the world's and God's.
One since hath quench'd the other; and the sword
Is grafted on the crook; and so conjoin'd
Each must perforce decline to worse, unaw'd
By fear of other. If thou doubt me, mark

The blade: each herb is judg'd of by its seed.
That land, through which Adice and the Po
Their waters roll, was once the residence
Of courtesy and velour, ere the day,
That frown'd on Frederick; now secure may pass
Those limits, whosoe'er hath left, for shame,
To talk with good men, or come near their haunts.
Three aged ones are still found there, in whom
The old time chides the new: these deem it long
Ere God restore them to a better world:
The good Gherardo, of Palazzo he
Conrad, and Guido of Castello, nam'd
In Gallic phrase more fitly the plain Lombard.
On this at last conclude. The church of Rome,
Mixing two governments that ill assort,
Hath miss'd her footing, fall'n into the mire,
And there herself and burden much defil'd."

"O Marco!" I replied, shine arguments
Convince me: and the cause I now discern
Why of the heritage no portion came
To Levi's offspring. But resolve me this
Who that Gherardo is, that as thou sayst
Is left a sample of the perish'd race,
And for rebuke to this untoward age?"

"Either thy words," said he, "deceive; or else
Are meant to try me; that thou, speaking Tuscan,
Appear'st not to have heard of good Gherado;
The sole addition that, by which I know him;
Unless I borrow'd from his daughter Gaia
Another name to grace him. God be with you.
I bear you company no more. Behold
The dawn with white ray glimm'ring through the mist.
I must away--the angel comes--ere he
Appear." He said, and would not hear me more.

CANTO XVII

Call to remembrance, reader, if thou e'er
Hast, on a mountain top, been ta'en by cloud,
Through which thou saw'st no better, than the mole
Doth through opacous membrane; then, whene'er
The wat'ry vapours dense began to melt
Into thin air, how faintly the sun's sphere
Seem'd wading through them; so thy nimble thought
May image, how at first I re-beheld
The sun, that bedward now his couch o'erhung.

Thus with my leader's feet still equaling pace
From forth that cloud I came, when now expir'd
The parting beams from off the nether shores.

O quick and forgetive power! that sometimes dost
So rob us of ourselves, we take no mark
Though round about us thousand trumpets clang!
What moves thee, if the senses stir not? Light
Kindled in heav'n, spontaneous, self-inform'd,
Or likelier gliding down with swift illapse
By will divine. Portray'd before me came
The traces of her dire impiety,
Whose form was chang'd into the bird, that most
Delights itself in song: and here my mind
Was inwardly so wrapt, it gave no place
To aught that ask'd admittance from without.

Next shower'd into my fantasy a shape
As of one crucified, whose visage spake
Fell rancour, malice deep, wherein he died;
And round him Ahasuerus the great king,
Esther his bride, and Mordecai the just,
Blameless in word and deed. As of itself
That unsubstantial coinage of the brain
Burst, like a bubble, Which the water fails
That fed it; in my vision straight uprose
A damsel weeping loud, and cried, "O queen!
O mother! wherefore has intemperate ire
Driv'n thee to loath thy being? Not to lose
Lavinia, desp'rate thou hast slain thyself.
Now hast thou lost me. I am she, whose tears
Mourn, ere I fall, a mother's timeless end."

E'en as a sleep breaks off, if suddenly

New radiance strike upon the closed lids,
The broken slumber quivering ere it dies;
Thus from before me sunk that imagery
Vanishing, soon as on my face there struck
The light, outshining far our earthly beam.
As round I turn'd me to survey what place
I had arriv'd at, "Here ye mount," exclaim'd
A voice, that other purpose left me none,
Save will so eager to behold who spake,
I could not choose but gaze. As 'fore the sun,
That weighs our vision down, and veils his form
In light transcendent, thus my virtue fail'd
Unequal. "This is Spirit from above,
Who marshals us our upward way, unsought;
And in his own light shrouds him. As a man
Doth for himself, so now is done for us.
For whoso waits imploring, yet sees need
Of his prompt aidance, sets himself prepar'd
For blunt denial, ere the suit be made.
Refuse we not to lend a ready foot
At such inviting: haste we to ascend,
Before it darken: for we may not then,
Till morn again return." So spake my guide;
And to one ladder both address'd our steps;
And the first stair approaching, I perceiv'd
Near me as 'twere the waving of a wing,
That fann'd my face and whisper'd: "Blessed they
The peacemakers: they know not evil wrath."

Now to such height above our heads were rais'd
The last beams, follow'd close by hooded night,
That many a star on all sides through the gloom
Shone out. "Why partest from me, O my strength?"
So with myself I commun'd; for I felt
My o'ertoil'd sinews slacken. We had reach'd
The summit, and were fix'd like to a bark
Arriv'd at land. And waiting a short space,
If aught should meet mine ear in that new round,
Then to my guide I turn'd, and said: "Lov'd sire!
Declare what guilt is on this circle purg'd.
If our feet rest, no need thy speech should pause."

He thus to me: "The love of good, whate'er
Wanted of just proportion, here fulfils.

Here plies afresh the oar, that loiter'd ill.
But that thou mayst yet clearlier understand,
Give ear unto my words, and thou shalt cull
Some fruit may please thee well, from this delay.

"Creator, nor created being, ne'er,
My son," he thus began, "was without love,
Or natural, or the free spirit's growth.
Thou hast not that to learn. The natural still
Is without error; but the other swerves,
If on ill object bent, or through excess
Of vigour, or defect. While e'er it seeks
The primal blessings, or with measure due
Th' inferior, no delight, that flows from it,
Partakes of ill. But let it warp to evil,
Or with more ardour than behooves, or less.
Pursue the good, the thing created then
Works 'gainst its Maker. Hence thou must infer
That love is germin of each virtue in ye,
And of each act no less, that merits pain.
Now since it may not be, but love intend
The welfare mainly of the thing it loves,
All from self-hatred are secure; and since
No being can be thought t' exist apart
And independent of the first, a bar
Of equal force restrains from hating that.

"Grant the distinction just; and it remains
The' evil must be another's, which is lov'd.
Three ways such love is gender'd in your clay.
There is who hopes (his neighbour's worth deprest,)
Preeminence himself, and coverts hence
For his own greatness that another fall.
There is who so much fears the loss of power,
Fame, favour, glory (should his fellow mount
Above him), and so sickens at the thought,
He loves their opposite: and there is he,
Whom wrong or insult seems to gall and shame
That he doth thirst for vengeance, and such needs
Must doat on other's evil. Here beneath
This threefold love is mourn'd. Of th' other sort
Be now instructed, that which follows good
But with disorder'd and irregular course.

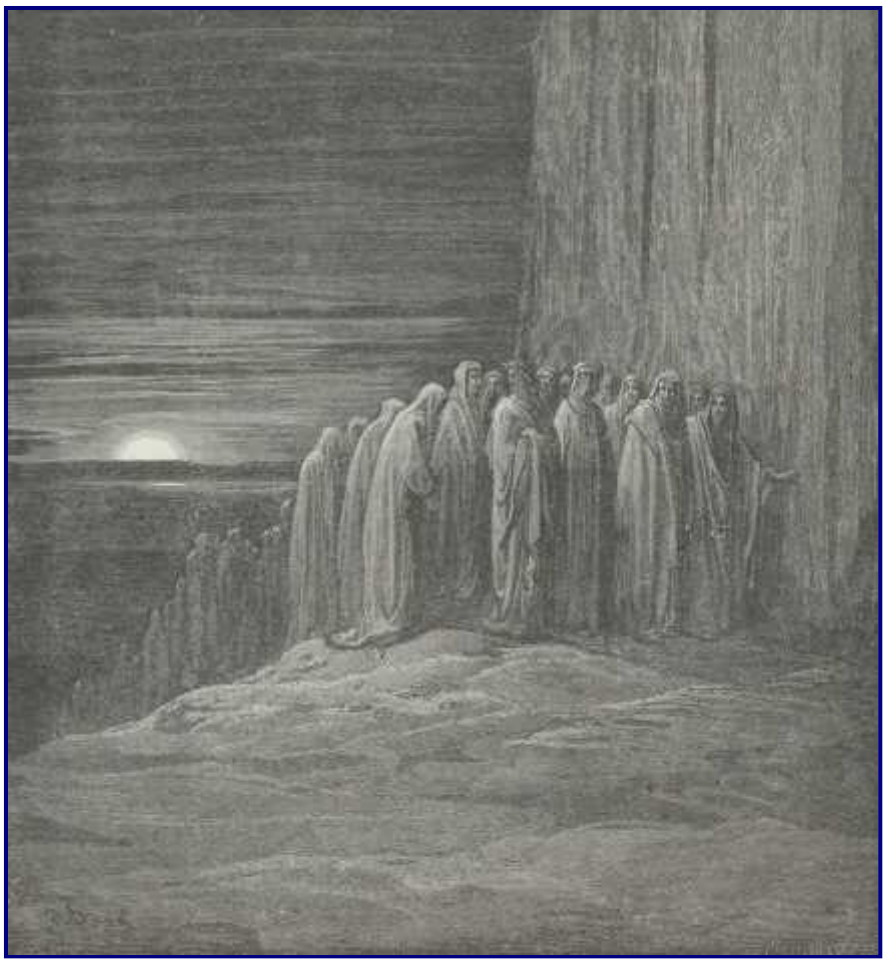
"All indistinctly apprehend a bliss
On which the soul may rest, the hearts of all
Yearn after it, and to that wished bourn
All therefore strive to tend. If ye behold
Or seek it with a love remiss and lax,
This cornice after just repenting lays
Its penal torment on ye. Other good
There is, where man finds not his happiness:
It is not true fruition, not that blest
Essence, of every good the branch and root.
The love too lavishly bestow'd on this,
Along three circles over us, is mourn'd.
Account of that division tripartite
Expect not, fitter for thine own research."

CANTO XVIII

The teacher ended, and his high discourse
Concluding, earnest in my looks inquir'd
If I appear'd content; and I, whom still
Unsated thirst to hear him urg'd, was mute,
Mute outwardly, yet inwardly I said:
"Perchance my too much questioning offends."
But he, true father, mark'd the secret wish
By diffidence restrain'd, and speaking, gave
Me boldness thus to speak: "Master, my Sight
Gathers so lively virtue from thy beams,
That all, thy words convey, distinct is seen.
Wherefore I pray thee, father, whom this heart
Holds dearest! thou wouldst deign by proof t' unfold
That love, from which as from their source thou bring'st
All good deeds and their opposite." He then:
"To what I now disclose be thy clear ken
Directed, and thou plainly shalt behold
How much those blind have err'd, who make themselves
The guides of men. The soul, created apt
To love, moves versatile which way soe'er
Aught pleasing prompts her, soon as she is wak'd
By pleasure into act. Of substance true

Your apprehension forms its counterfeit,
And in you the ideal shape presenting
Attracts the soul's regard. If she, thus drawn,
incline toward it, love is that inclining,
And a new nature knit by pleasure in ye.
Then as the fire points up, and mounting seeks
His birth-place and his lasting seat, e'en thus
Enters the captive soul into desire,
Which is a spiritual motion, that ne'er rests
Before enjoyment of the thing it loves.
Enough to show thee, how the truth from those
Is hidden, who aver all love a thing
Praise-worthy in itself: although perhaps
Its substance seem still good. Yet if the wax
Be good, it follows not th' impression must."
"What love is," I return'd, "thy words, O guide!
And my own docile mind, reveal. Yet thence
New doubts have sprung. For from without if love
Be offer'd to us, and the spirit knows
No other footing, tend she right or wrong,
Is no desert of hers." He answering thus:
"What reason here discovers I have power
To show thee: that which lies beyond, expect
From Beatrice, faith not reason's task.
Spirit, substantial form, with matter join'd
Not in confusion mix'd, hath in itself
Specific virtue of that union born,
Which is not felt except it work, nor prov'd
But through effect, as vegetable life
By the green leaf. From whence his intellect
Deduced its primal notices of things,
Man therefore knows not, or his appetites
Their first affections; such in you, as zeal
In bees to gather honey; at the first,
Volition, meriting nor blame nor praise.
But o'er each lower faculty supreme,
That as she list are summon'd to her bar,
Ye have that virtue in you, whose just voice
Uttereth counsel, and whose word should keep
The threshold of assent. Here is the source,
Whence cause of merit in you is deriv'd,
E'en as the affections good or ill she takes,
Or severs, winnow'd as the chaff. Those men
Who reas'ning went to depth profoundest, mark'd

That innate freedom, and were thence induc'd
To leave their moral teaching to the world.
Grant then, that from necessity arise
All love that glows within you; to dismiss
Or harbour it, the pow'r is in yourselves.
Remember, Beatrice, in her style,
Denominates free choice by eminence
The noble virtue, if in talk with thee
She touch upon that theme." The moon, well nigh
To midnight hour belated, made the stars
Appear to wink and fade; and her broad disk
Seem'd like a crag on fire, as up the vault
That course she journey'd, which the sun then warms,
When they of Rome behold him at his set.
Betwixt Sardinia and the Corsic isle.
And now the weight, that hung upon my thought,
Was lighten'd by the aid of that clear spirit,
Who raiseth Andes above Mantua's name.
I therefore, when my questions had obtain'd
Solution plain and ample, stood as one
Musing in dreary slumber; but not long
Slumber'd; for suddenly a multitude,



The steep already turning, from behind,
Rush'd on. With fury and like random rout,
As echoing on their shores at midnight heard
Ismenus and Asopus, for his Thebes
If Bacchus' help were needed; so came these
Tumultuous, curving each his rapid step,
By eagerness impell'd of holy love.

Soon they o'ertook us; with such swiftness mov'd
The mighty crowd. Two spirits at their head
Cried weeping; "Blessed Mary sought with haste
The hilly region. Caesar to subdue
Ilerda, darted in Marseilles his sting,
And flew to Spain."--"Oh tarry not: away;"

The others shouted; "let not time be lost
Through slackness of affection. Hearty zeal
To serve reanimates celestial grace."

"O ye, in whom intenser fervency
Haply supplies, where lukewarm erst ye fail'd,
Slow or neglectful, to absolve your part
Of good and virtuous, this man, who yet lives,
(Credit my tale, though strange) desires t' ascend,
So morning rise to light us. Therefore say
Which hand leads nearest to the rifted rock?"

So spake my guide, to whom a shade return'd:
"Come after us, and thou shalt find the cleft.
We may not linger: such resistless will
Speeds our unwearied course. Vouchsafe us then
Thy pardon, if our duty seem to thee
Discourteous rudeness. In Verona I
Was abbot of San Zeno, when the hand
Of Barbarossa grasp'd Imperial sway,
That name, ne'er utter'd without tears in Milan.
And there is he, hath one foot in his grave,
Who for that monastery ere long shall weep,
Ruing his power misus'd: for that his son,
Of body ill compact, and worse in mind,
And born in evil, he hath set in place
Of its true pastor." Whether more he spake,
Or here was mute, I know not: he had sped
E'en now so far beyond us. Yet thus much
I heard, and in rememb'rance treasur'd it.

He then, who never fail'd me at my need,
Cried, "Hither turn. Lo! two with sharp remorse
Chiding their sin!" In rear of all the troop
These shouted: "First they died, to whom the sea
Open'd, or ever Jordan saw his heirs:
And they, who with Aeneas to the end
Endur'd not suffering, for their portion chose
Life without glory." Soon as they had fled
Past reach of sight, new thought within me rose
By others follow'd fast, and each unlike
Its fellow: till led on from thought to thought,
And pleasur'd with the fleeting train, mine eye
Was clos'd, and meditation chang'd to dream.

CANTO XIX

It was the hour, when of diurnal heat
No reliques chafe the cold beams of the moon,
O'erpower'd by earth, or planetary sway
Of Saturn; and the geomancer sees
His Greater Fortune up the east ascend,
Where gray dawn checkers first the shadowy cone;
When 'fore me in my dream a woman's shape
There came, with lips that stammer'd, eyes aslant,
Distorted feet, hands maim'd, and colour pale.

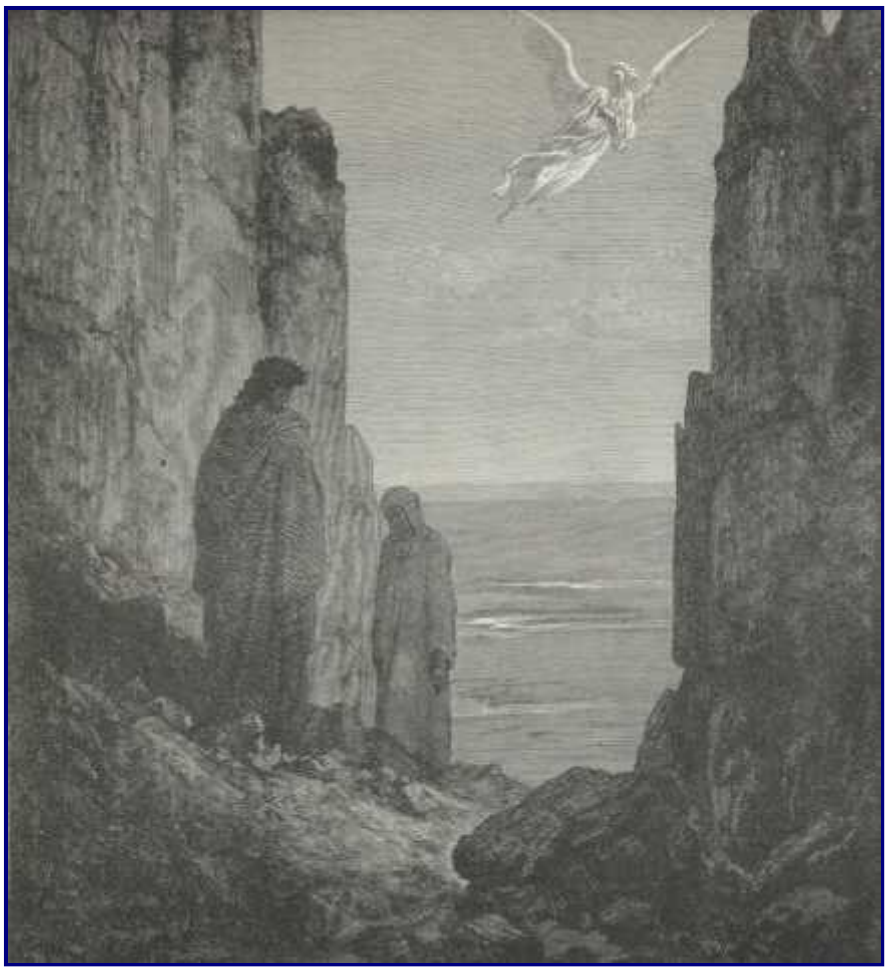
I look'd upon her; and as sunshine cheers
Limbs numb'd by nightly cold, e'en thus my look
Unloos'd her tongue, next in brief space her form
Decrepit rais'd erect, and faded face
With love's own hue illum'd. Recov'ring speech
She forthwith warbling such a strain began,
That I, how loth soe'er, could scarce have held
Attention from the song. "I," thus she sang,
"I am the Siren, she, whom mariners
On the wide sea are wilder'd when they hear:
Such fulness of delight the list'ner feels.
I from his course Ulysses by my lay
Enchanted drew. Whoe'er frequents me once
Parts seldom; so I charm him, and his heart
Contented knows no void." Or ere her mouth
Was clos'd, to shame her at her side appear'd
A dame of semblance holy. With stern voice
She utter'd; "Say, O Virgil, who is this?"
Which hearing, he approach'd, with eyes still bent

Toward that goodly presence: th' other seiz'd her,
And, her robes tearing, open'd her before,
And show'd the belly to me, whence a smell,
Exhaling loathsome, wak'd me. Round I turn'd
Mine eyes, and thus the teacher: "At the least
Three times my voice hath call'd thee. Rise, begone.
Let us the opening find where thou mayst pass."

I straightway rose. Now day, pour'd down from high,
Fill'd all the circuits of the sacred mount;
And, as we journey'd, on our shoulder smote
The early ray. I follow'd, stooping low
My forehead, as a man, o'ercharg'd with thought,
Who bends him to the likeness of an arch,
That midway spans the flood; when thus I heard,
"Come, enter here," in tone so soft and mild,
As never met the ear on mortal strand.

With swan-like wings dispread and pointing up,
Who thus had spoken marshal'd us along,
Where each side of the solid masonry
The sloping, walls retir'd; then mov'd his plumes,
And fanning us, affirm'd that those, who mourn,
Are blessed, for that comfort shall be theirs.

"What aileth thee, that still thou look'st to earth?"
Began my leader; while th' angelic shape
A little over us his station took.



"New vision," I replied, "hath rais'd in me
Surmizings strange and anxious doubts, whereon
My soul intent allows no other thought
Or room or entrance."—"Hast thou seen," said he,
"That old enchantress, her, whose wiles alone
The spirits o'er us weep for? Hast thou seen
How man may free him of her bonds? Enough.
Let thy heels spurn the earth, and thy rais'd ken
Fix on the lure, which heav'n's eternal King
Whirls in the rolling spheres." As on his feet
The falcon first looks down, then to the sky
Turns, and forth stretches eager for the food,
That woos him thither; so the call I heard,

So onward, far as the dividing rock
Gave way, I journey'd, till the plain was reach'd.

On the fifth circle when I stood at large,
A race appear'd before me, on the ground
All downward lying prone and weeping sore.
"My soul hath cleaved to the dust," I heard
With sighs so deep, they well nigh choak'd the words.
"O ye elect of God, whose penal woes
Both hope and justice mitigate, direct
Tow'rds the steep rising our uncertain way."

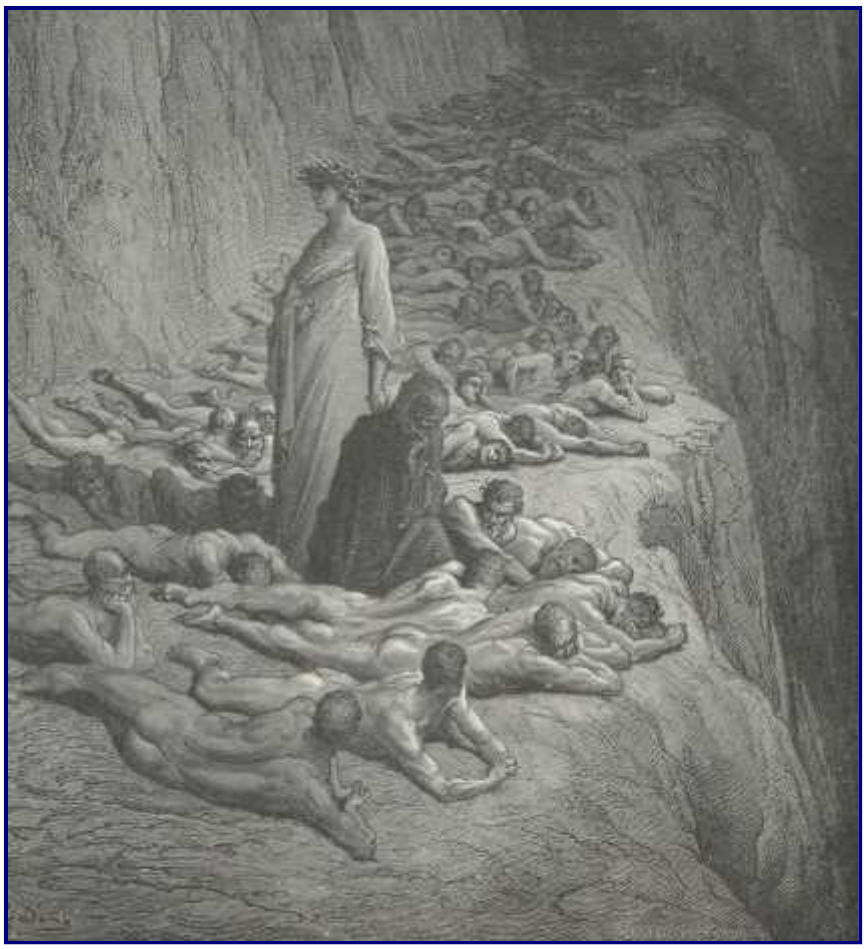
"If ye approach secure from this our doom,
Prostration—and would urge your course with speed,
See that ye still to rightward keep the brink."

So them the bard besought; and such the words,
Beyond us some short space, in answer came.

I noted what remain'd yet hidden from them:
Thence to my liege's eyes mine eyes I bent,
And he, forthwith interpreting their suit,
Beckon'd his glad assent. Free then to act,
As pleas'd me, I drew near, and took my stand
O`er that shade, whose words I late had mark'd.
And, "Spirit!" I said, "in whom repentant tears
Mature that blessed hour, when thou with God
Shalt find acceptance, for a while suspend
For me that mightier care. Say who thou wast,
Why thus ye grovel on your bellies prone,
And if in aught ye wish my service there,
Whence living I am come." He answering spake
"The cause why Heav'n our back toward his cope
Reverses, shalt thou know: but me know first
The successor of Peter, and the name
And title of my lineage from that stream,
That' twixt Chiaveri and Siestri draws
His limpid waters through the lowly glen.
A month and little more by proof I learnt,
With what a weight that robe of sov'reignty
Upon his shoulder rests, who from the mire
Would guard it: that each other fardel seems
But feathers in the balance. Late, alas!
Was my conversion: but when I became

Rome's pastor, I discern'd at once the dream
And cozenage of life, saw that the heart
Rested not there, and yet no prouder height
Lur'd on the climber: wherefore, of that life
No more enamour'd, in my bosom love
Of purer being kindled. For till then
I was a soul in misery, alienate
From God, and covetous of all earthly things;
Now, as thou seest, here punish'd for my doting.
Such cleansing from the taint of avarice
Do spirits converted need. This mount inflicts
No direr penalty. E'en as our eyes
Fasten'd below, nor e'er to loftier clime
Were lifted, thus hath justice level'd us
Here on the earth. As avarice quench'd our love
Of good, without which is no working, thus
Here justice holds us prison'd, hand and foot
Chain'd down and bound, while heaven's just Lord shall please.
So long to tarry motionless outstretch'd."

My knees I stoop'd, and would have spoke; but he,
Ere my beginning, by his ear perceiv'd
I did him reverence; and "What cause," said he,
"Hath bow'd thee thus!"—"Compunction," I rejoin'd.
"And inward awe of your high dignity."

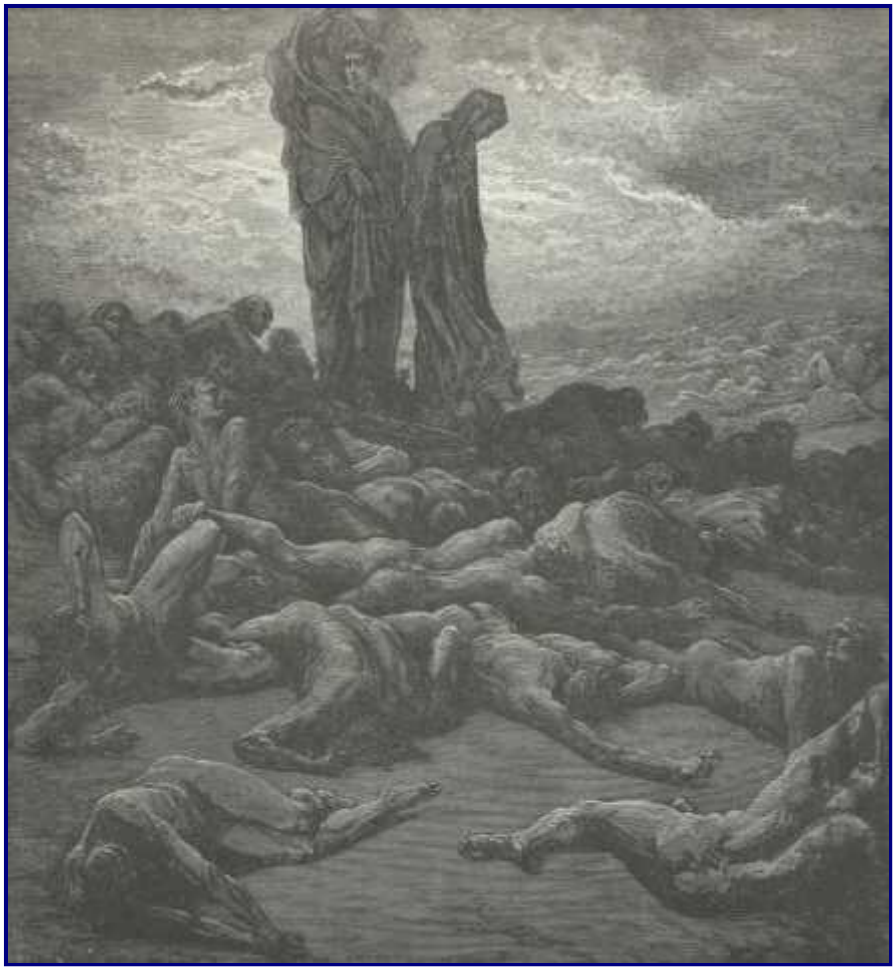


"Up," he exclaim'd, "brother! upon thy feet
Arise: err not: thy fellow servant I,
(Thine and all others') of one Sovran Power.
If thou hast ever mark'd those holy sounds
Of gospel truth, 'nor shall be given ill marriage,'
Thou mayst discern the reasons of my speech.
Go thy ways now; and linger here no more.
Thy tarrying is a let unto the tears,
With which I hasten that whereof thou spak'st.
I have on earth a kinswoman; her name
Alagia, worthy in herself, so ill
Example of our house corrupt her not:
And she is all remaineth of me there."

CANTO XX

Ill strives the will, 'gainst will more wise that strives
His pleasure therefore to mine own preferr'd,
I drew the sponge yet thirsty from the wave.

Onward I mov'd: he also onward mov'd,
Who led me, coasting still, wherever place
Along the rock was vacant, as a man
Walks near the battlements on narrow wall.
For those on th' other part, who drop by drop
Wring out their all-infecting malady,
Too closely press the verge. Accurst be thou!
Inveterate wolf! whose gorge ingluts more prey,
Than every beast beside, yet is not fill'd!
So bottomless thy maw!—Ye spheres of heaven!
To whom there are, as seems, who attribute
All change in mortal state, when is the day
Of his appearing, for whom fate reserves
To chase her hence? —With wary steps and slow
We pass'd; and I attentive to the shades,
Whom piteously I heard lament and wail;



And, 'midst the wailing, one before us heard
Cry out "O blessed Virgin!" as a dame
In the sharp pangs of childbed; and "How poor
Thou wast," it added, "witness that low roof
Where thou didst lay thy sacred burden down.
O good Fabricius! thou didst virtue choose
With poverty, before great wealth with vice."

The words so pleas'd me, that desire to know
The spirit, from whose lip they seem'd to come,
Did draw me onward. Yet it spake the gift
Of Nicholas, which on the maidens he
Bounteous bestow'd, to save their youthful prime
Unblemish'd. "Spirit! who dost speak of deeds

So worthy, tell me who thou was," I said,
"And why thou dost with single voice renew
Memorial of such praise. That boon vouchsaf'd
Haply shall meet reward; if I return
To finish the Short pilgrimage of life,
Still speeding to its close on restless wing."

"I," answer'd he, "will tell thee, not for hell,
Which thence I look for; but that in thyself
Grace so exceeding shines, before thy time
Of mortal dissolution. I was root
Of that ill plant, whose shade such poison sheds
O'er all the Christian land, that seldom thence
Good fruit is gather'd. Vengeance soon should come,
Had Ghent and Douay, Lille and Bruges power;
And vengeance I of heav'n's great Judge implore.
Hugh Capet was I high: from me descend
The Philips and the Louis, of whom France
Newly is govern'd; born of one, who ply'd
The slaughterer's trade at Paris. When the race
Of ancient kings had vanish'd (all save one
Wrapt up in sable weeds) within my gripe
I found the reins of empire, and such powers
Of new acquirement, with full store of friends,
That soon the widow'd circlet of the crown
Was girt upon the temples of my son,
He, from whose bones th' anointed race begins.
Till the great dower of Provence had remov'd
The stains, that yet obscur'd our lowly blood,
Its sway indeed was narrow, but howe'er
It wrought no evil: there, with force and lies,
Began its rapine; after, for amends,
Poitou it seiz'd, Navarre and Gascony.
To Italy came Charles, and for amends
Young Conradine an innocent victim slew,
And sent th' angelic teacher back to heav'n,
Still for amends. I see the time at hand,
That forth from France invites another Charles
To make himself and kindred better known.
Unarm'd he issues, saving with that lance,
Which the arch-traitor tilted with; and that
He carries with so home a thrust, as rives
The bowels of poor Florence. No increase
Of territory hence, but sin and shame

Shall be his guerdon, and so much the more
As he more lightly deems of such foul wrong.
I see the other, who a prisoner late
Had steps on shore, exposing to the mart
His daughter, whom he bargains for, as do
The Corsairs for their slaves. O avarice!
What canst thou more, who hast subdued our blood
So wholly to thyself, they feel no care
Of their own flesh? To hide with direr guilt
Past ill and future, lo! the flower-de-luce
Enters Alagna! in his Vicar Christ
Himself a captive, and his mockery
Acted again! Lo! lo his holy lip
The vinegar and gall once more applied!
And he 'twixt living robbers doom'd to bleed!
Lo! the new Pilate, of whose cruelty
Such violence cannot fill the measure up,
With no degree to sanction, pushes on
Into the temple his yet eager sails!

"O sovran Master! when shall I rejoice
To see the vengeance, which thy wrath well-pleas'd
In secret silence broods?—While daylight lasts,
So long what thou didst hear of her, sole spouse
Of the Great Spirit, and on which thou turn'dst
To me for comment, is the general theme
Of all our prayers: but when it darkens, then
A different strain we utter, then record
Pygmalion, whom his gluttonous thirst of gold
Made traitor, robber, parricide: the woes
Of Midas, which his greedy wish ensued,
Mark'd for derision to all future times:
And the fond Achan, how he stole the prey,
That yet he seems by Joshua's ire pursued.
Sapphira with her husband next, we blame;
And praise the forefeet, that with furious ramp
Spurn'd Heliodorus. All the mountain round
Rings with the infamy of Thracia's king,
Who slew his Phrygian charge: and last a shout
Ascends: "Declare, O Crassus! for thou know'st,
The flavour of thy gold." The voice of each
Now high now low, as each his impulse prompts,
Is led through many a pitch, acute or grave.
Therefore, not singly, I erewhile rehears'd

That blessedness we tell of in the day:
But near me none beside his accent rais'd."

From him we now had parted, and essay'd
With utmost efforts to surmount the way,
When I did feel, as nodding to its fall,
The mountain tremble; whence an icy chill
Seiz'd on me, as on one to death convey'd.
So shook not Delos, when Latona there
Couch'd to bring forth the twin-born eyes of heaven.

Forthwith from every side a shout arose
So vehement, that suddenly my guide
Drew near, and cried: "Doubt not, while I conduct thee."
"Glory!" all shouted (such the sounds mine ear
Gather'd from those, who near me swell'd the sounds)
"Glory in the highest be to God." We stood
Immovably suspended, like to those,
The shepherds, who first heard in Bethlehem's field
That song: till ceas'd the trembling, and the song
Was ended: then our hallow'd path resum'd,
Eying the prostrate shadows, who renew'd
Their custom'd mourning. Never in my breast
Did ignorance so struggle with desire
Of knowledge, if my memory do not err,
As in that moment; nor through haste dar'd I
To question, nor myself could aught discern,
So on I far'd in thoughtfulness and dread.

CANTO XXI

The natural thirst, ne'er quench'd but from the well,
Whereof the woman of Samaria crav'd,
Excited: haste along the cumber'd path,
After my guide, impell'd; and pity mov'd
My bosom for the 'vengeful deed, though just.
When lo! even as Luke relates, that Christ
Appear'd unto the two upon their way,
New-risen from his vaulted grave; to us

A shade appear'd, and after us approach'd,
Contemplating the crowd beneath its feet.
We were not ware of it; so first it spake,
Saying, "God give you peace, my brethren!" then
Sudden we turn'd: and Virgil such salute,
As fitted that kind greeting, gave, and cried:
"Peace in the blessed council be thy lot
Awarded by that righteous court, which me
To everlasting banishment exiles!"

"How!" he exclaim'd, nor from his speed meanwhile
Desisting, "If that ye be spirits, whom God
Vouchsafes not room above, who up the height
Has been thus far your guide?" To whom the bard:
"If thou observe the tokens, which this man
Trac'd by the finger of the angel bears,
'Tis plain that in the kingdom of the just
He needs must share. But sithence she, whose wheel
Spins day and night, for him not yet had drawn
That yarn, which, on the fatal distaff pil'd,
Clotho apportions to each wight that breathes,
His soul, that sister is to mine and thine,
Not of herself could mount, for not like ours
Her ken: whence I, from forth the ample gulf
Of hell was ta'en, to lead him, and will lead
Far as my lore avails. But, if thou know,
Instruct us for what cause, the mount erewhile
Thus shook and trembled: wherefore all at once
Seem'd shouting, even from his wave-wash'd foot."

That questioning so tallied with my wish,
The thirst did feel abatement of its edge
E'en from expectance. He forthwith replied,
"In its devotion nought irregular
This mount can witness, or by punctual rule
Unsanction'd; here from every change exempt.
Other than that, which heaven in itself
Doth of itself receive, no influence
Can reach us. Tempest none, shower, hail or snow,
Hoar frost or dewy moistness, higher falls
Than that brief scale of threefold steps: thick clouds
Nor scudding rack are ever seen: swift glance
Ne'er lightens, nor Thaumantian Iris gleams,
That yonder often shift on each side heav'n.

Vapour adust doth never mount above
The highest of the trinal stairs, whereon
Peter's vicegerent stands. Lower perchance,
With various motion rock'd, trembles the soil:
But here, through wind in earth's deep hollow pent,
I know not how, yet never trembled: then
Trembles, when any spirit feels itself
So purified, that it may rise, or move
For rising, and such loud acclaim ensues.
Purification by the will alone
Is prov'd, that free to change society
Seizes the soul rejoicing in her will.
Desire of bliss is present from the first;
But strong propension hinders, to that wish
By the just ordinance of heav'n oppos'd;
Propension now as eager to fulfil
Th' allotted torment, as erewhile to sin.
And I who in this punishment had lain
Five hundred years and more, but now have felt
Free wish for happier clime. Therefore thou felt'st
The mountain tremble, and the spirits devout
Heard'st, over all his limits, utter praise
To that liege Lord, whom I entreat their joy
To hasten." Thus he spake: and since the draught
Is grateful ever as the thirst is keen,
No words may speak my fullness of content.

"Now," said the instructor sage, "I see the net
That takes ye here, and how the toils are loos'd,
Why rocks the mountain and why ye rejoice.
Vouchsafe, that from thy lips I next may learn,
Who on the earth thou wast, and wherefore here
So many an age wert prostrate."—"In that time,
When the good Titus, with Heav'n's King to help,
Aveng'd those piteous gashes, whence the blood
By Judas sold did issue, with the name
Most lasting and most honour'd there was I
Abundantly renown'd," the shade reply'd,
"Not yet with faith endued. So passing sweet
My vocal Spirit, from Tolosa, Rome
To herself drew me, where I merited
A myrtle garland to inwreathe my brow.
Statius they name me still. Of Thebes I sang,
And next of great Achilles: but i' th' way

Fell with the second burthen. Of my flame
Those sparkles were the seeds, which I deriv'd
From the bright fountain of celestial fire
That feeds unnumber'd lamps, the song I mean
Which sounds Aeneas' wand'rings: that the breast
I hung at, that the nurse, from whom my veins
Drank inspiration: whose authority
Was ever sacred with me. To have liv'd
Coeval with the Mantuan, I would bide
The revolution of another sun
Beyond my stated years in banishment."

The Mantuan, when he heard him, turn'd to me,
And holding silence: by his countenance
Enjoin'd me silence but the power which wills,
Bears not supreme control: laughter and tears
Follow so closely on the passion prompts them,
They wait not for the motions of the will
In natures most sincere. I did but smile,
As one who winks; and thereupon the shade
Broke off, and peer'd into mine eyes, where best
Our looks interpret. "So to good event
Mayst thou conduct such great emprize," he cried,
"Say, why across thy visage beam'd, but now,
The lightning of a smile!" On either part
Now am I straiten'd; one conjures me speak,
Th' other to silence binds me: whence a sigh
I utter, and the sigh is heard. "Speak on;"
The teacher cried; "and do not fear to speak,
But tell him what so earnestly he asks."
Whereon I thus: "Perchance, O ancient spirit!
Thou marvel'st at my smiling. There is room
For yet more wonder. He who guides my ken
On high, he is that Mantuan, led by whom
Thou didst presume of men and gods to sing.
If other cause thou deem'dst for which I smil'd,
Leave it as not the true one; and believe
Those words, thou spak'st of him, indeed the cause."

Now down he bent t' embrace my teacher's feet;
But he forbade him: "Brother! do it not:
Thou art a shadow, and behold'st a shade."
He rising answer'd thus: "Now hast thou prov'd
The force and ardour of the love I bear thee,

When I forget we are but things of air,
And as a substance treat an empty shade."

CANTO XXII

Now we had left the angel, who had turn'd
To the sixth circle our ascending step,
One gash from off my forehead raz'd: while they,
Whose wishes tend to justice, shouted forth:
"Blessed!" and ended with, "I thirst:" and I,
More nimble than along the other straits,
So journey'd, that, without the sense of toil,
I follow'd upward the swift-footed shades;
When Virgil thus began: "Let its pure flame
From virtue flow, and love can never fail
To warm another's bosom' so the light
Shine manifestly forth. Hence from that hour,
When 'mongst us in the purlieus of the deep,
Came down the spirit of Aquinum's hard,
Who told of thine affection, my good will
Hath been for thee of quality as strong
As ever link'd itself to one not seen.
Therefore these stairs will now seem short to me.
But tell me: and if too secure I loose
The rein with a friend's license, as a friend
Forgive me, and speak now as with a friend:
How chanc'd it covetous desire could find
Place in that bosom, 'midst such ample store
Of wisdom, as thy zeal had treasur'd there?"

First somewhat mov'd to laughter by his words,
Statius replied: "Each syllable of thine
Is a dear pledge of love. Things oft appear
That minister false matters to our doubts,
When their true causes are remov'd from sight.
Thy question doth assure me, thou believ'st
I was on earth a covetous man, perhaps
Because thou found'st me in that circle plac'd.
Know then I was too wide of avarice:

And e'en for that excess, thousands of moons
Have wax'd and wan'd upon my sufferings.
And were it not that I with heedful care
Noted where thou exclaim'st as if in ire
With human nature, 'Why, thou cursed thirst
Of gold! dost not with juster measure guide
The appetite of mortals?' I had met
The fierce encounter of the voluble rock.
Then was I ware that with too ample wing
The hands may haste to lavishment, and turn'd,
As from my other evil, so from this
In penitence. How many from their grave
Shall with shorn locks arise, who living, aye
And at life's last extreme, of this offence,
Through ignorance, did not repent. And know,
The fault which lies direct from any sin
In level opposition, here With that
Wastes its green rankness on one common heap.
Therefore if I have been with those, who wail
Their avarice, to cleanse me, through reverse
Of their transgression, such hath been my lot."

To whom the sovran of the pastoral song:
"While thou didst sing that cruel warfare wag'd
By the twin sorrow of Jocasta's womb,
From thy discourse with Clio there, it seems
As faith had not been shine: without the which
Good deeds suffice not. And if so, what sun
Rose on thee, or what candle pierc'd the dark
That thou didst after see to hoist the sail,
And follow, where the fisherman had led?"

He answering thus: "By thee conducted first,
I enter'd the Parnassian grots, and quaff'd
Of the clear spring; illumin'd first by thee
Open'd mine eyes to God. Thou didst, as one,
Who, journeying through the darkness, hears a light
Behind, that profits not himself, but makes
His followers wise, when thou exclaimedst, 'Lo!
A renovated world! Justice return'd!
Times of primeval innocence restor'd!
And a new race descended from above!'
Poet and Christian both to thee I owed.
That thou mayst mark more clearly what I trace,

My hand shall stretch forth to inform the lines
With livelier colouring. Soon o'er all the world,
By messengers from heav'n, the true belief
Teem'd now prolific, and that word of thine
Accordant, to the new instructors chim'd.
Induc'd by which agreement, I was wont
Resort to them; and soon their sanctity
So won upon me, that, Domitian's rage
Pursuing them, I mix'd my tears with theirs,
And, while on earth I stay'd, still succour'd them;
And their most righteous customs made me scorn
All sects besides. Before I led the Greeks
In tuneful fiction, to the streams of Thebes,
I was baptiz'd; but secretly, through fear,
Remain'd a Christian, and conform'd long time
To Pagan rites. Five centuries and more,
T for that lukewarmness was fain to pace
Round the fourth circle. Thou then, who hast rais'd
The covering, which did hide such blessing from me,
Whilst much of this ascent is yet to climb,
Say, if thou know, where our old Terence bides,
Caecilius, Plautus, Varro: if condemn'd
They dwell, and in what province of the deep."
"These," said my guide, "with Persius and myself,
And others many more, are with that Greek,
Of mortals, the most cherish'd by the Nine,
In the first ward of darkness. There ofttimes
We of that mount hold converse, on whose top
For aye our nurses live. We have the bard
Of Pella, and the Teian, Agatho,
Simonides, and many a Grecian else
Ingarlanded with laurel. Of thy train
Antigone is there, Deiphile,
Argia, and as sorrowful as erst
Ismene, and who show'd Langia's wave:
Deidamia with her sisters there,
And blind Tiresias' daughter, and the bride
Sea-born of Peleus." Either poet now
Was silent, and no longer by th' ascent
Or the steep walls obstructed, round them cast
Inquiring eyes. Four handmaids of the day
Had finish'd now their office, and the fifth
Was at the chariot-beam, directing still
Its balmy point aloof, when thus my guide:

"Methinks, it well behooves us to the brink
Bend the right shoulder' circuiting the mount,
As we have ever us'd." So custom there
Was usher to the road, the which we chose
Less doubtful, as that worthy shade complied.

They on before me went; I sole pursued,
List'ning their speech, that to my thoughts convey'd
Mysterious lessons of sweet poesy.
But soon they ceas'd; for midway of the road
A tree we found, with goodly fruitage hung,
And pleasant to the smell: and as a fir
Upward from bough to bough less ample spreads,
So downward this less ample spread, that none.
Methinks, aloft may climb. Upon the side,
That clos'd our path, a liquid crystal fell
From the steep rock, and through the sprays above
Stream'd showering. With associate step the bards
Drew near the plant; and from amidst the leaves
A voice was heard: "Ye shall be chary of me;"
And after added: "Mary took more thought
For joy and honour of the nuptial feast,
Than for herself who answers now for you.
The women of old Rome were satisfied
With water for their beverage. Daniel fed
On pulse, and wisdom gain'd. The primal age
Was beautiful as gold; and hunger then
Made acorns tasteful, thirst each rivulet
Run nectar. Honey and locusts were the food,
Whereon the Baptist in the wilderness
Fed, and that eminence of glory reach'd
And greatness, which the' Evangelist records."

CANTO XXIII

On the green leaf mine eyes were fix'd, like his
Who throws away his days in idle chase
Of the diminutive, when thus I heard
The more than father warn me: "Son! our time

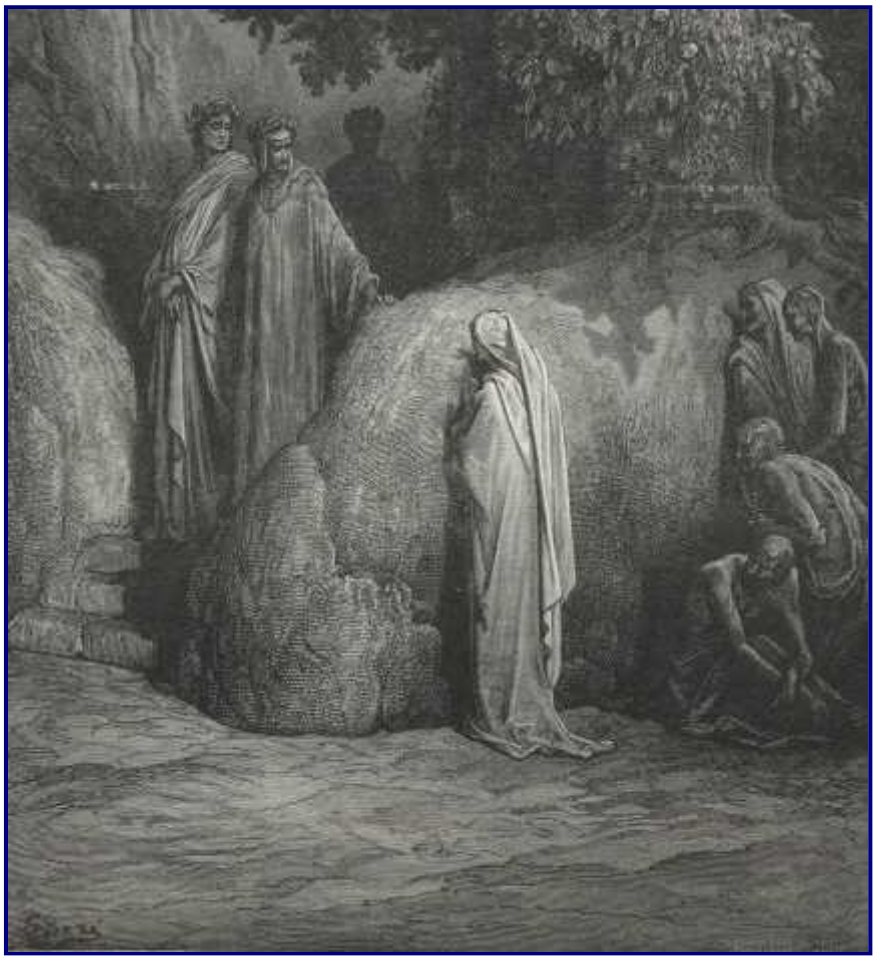
Asks thriftier using. Linger not: away."

Thereat my face and steps at once I turn'd
Toward the sages, by whose converse cheer'd
I journey'd on, and felt no toil: and lo!
A sound of weeping and a song: "My lips,
O Lord!" and these so mingled, it gave birth
To pleasure and to pain. "O Sire, belov'd!
Say what is this I hear?" Thus I inquir'd.

"Spirits," said he, "who as they go, perchance,
Their debt of duty pay." As on their road
The thoughtful pilgrims, overtaking some
Not known unto them, turn to them, and look,
But stay not; thus, approaching from behind
With speedier motion, eyed us, as they pass'd,
A crowd of spirits, silent and devout.
The eyes of each were dark and hollow: pale
Their visage, and so lean withal, the bones
Stood staring thro' the skin. I do not think
Thus dry and meagre Erisicthon show'd,
When pinc'ed by sharp-set famine to the quick.

"Lo!" to myself I mus'd, "the race, who lost
Jerusalem, when Mary with dire beak
Prey'd on her child." The sockets seem'd as rings,
From which the gems were drops. Who reads the name
Of man upon his forehead, there the M
Had trac'd most plainly. Who would deem, that scent
Of water and an apple, could have prov'd
Powerful to generate such pining want,
Not knowing how it wrought? While now I stood
Wond'ring what thus could waste them (for the cause
Of their gaunt hollowness and scaly rind
Appear'd not) lo! a spirit turn'd his eyes
In their deep-sunken cell, and fasten'd then
On me, then cried with vehemence aloud:
"What grace is this vouchsaf'd me?" By his looks
I ne'er had recogniz'd him: but the voice
Brought to my knowledge what his cheer conceal'd.
Remembrance of his alter'd lineaments
Was kindled from that spark; and I agniz'd
The visage of Forese. "Ah! respect
This wan and leprous wither'd skin," thus he

Suppliant implor'd, "this macerated flesh.
Speak to me truly of thyself. And who
Are those twain spirits, that escort thee there?
Be it not said thou Scorn'st to talk with me."



"That face of thine," I answer'd him, "which dead
I once bewail'd, disposes me not less
For weeping, when I see It thus transform'd.
Say then, by Heav'n, what blasts ye thus? The whilst
I wonder, ask not Speech from me: unapt

Is he to speak, whom other will employs."

He thus: "The water and tee plant we pass'd,
Virtue possesses, by th' eternal will
Infus'd, the which so pines me. Every spirit,
Whose song bewails his gluttony indulg'd
Too grossly, here in hunger and in thirst
Is purified. The odour, which the fruit,
And spray, that showers upon the verdure, breathe,
Inflames us with desire to feed and drink.
Nor once alone encompassing our route
We come to add fresh fuel to the pain:
Pain, said I? solace rather: for that will
To the tree leads us, by which Christ was led
To call Elias, joyful when he paid
Our ransom from his vein." I answering thus:
"Forese! from that day, in which the world
For better life thou changedst, not five years
Have circled. If the power of sinning more
Were first concluded in thee, ere thou knew'st
That kindly grief, which re-espouses us
To God, how hither art thou come so soon?
I thought to find thee lower, there, where time
Is recompense for time." He straight replied:
"To drink up the sweet wormwood of affliction
I have been brought thus early by the tears
Stream'd down my Nella's cheeks. Her prayers devout,
Her sighs have drawn me from the coast, where oft
Expectance lingers, and have set me free
From th' other circles. In the sight of God
So much the dearer is my widow priz'd,
She whom I lov'd so fondly, as she ranks
More singly eminent for virtuous deeds.
The tract most barb'rous of Sardinia's isle,
Hath dames more chaste and modester by far
Than that wherein I left her. O sweet brother!
What wouldst thou have me say? A time to come
Stands full within my view, to which this hour
Shall not be counted of an ancient date,
When from the pulpit shall be loudly warn'd
Th' unblushing dames of Florence, lest they bare
Unkerchief'd bosoms to the common gaze.
What savage women hath the world e'er seen,
What Saracens, for whom there needed scourge

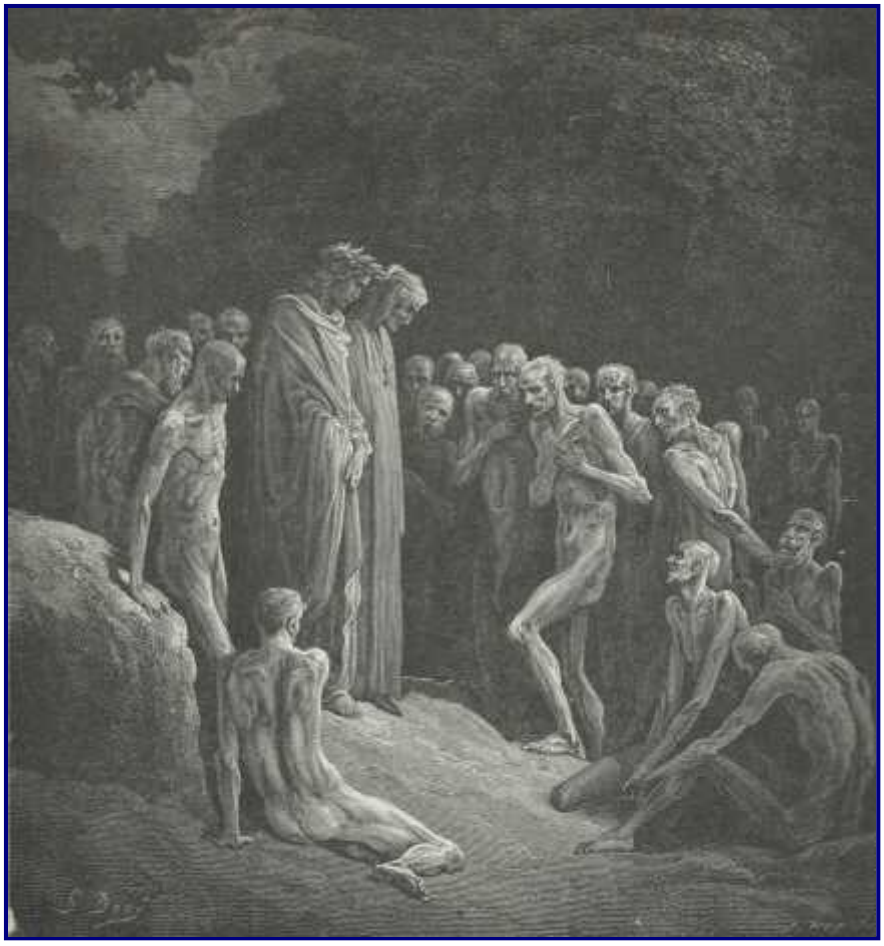
Of spiritual or other discipline,
To force them walk with cov'ring on their limbs!
But did they see, the shameless ones, that Heav'n
Wafts on swift wing toward them, while I speak,
Their mouths were op'd for howling: they shall taste
Of Borrow (unless foresight cheat me here)
Or ere the cheek of him be cloth'd with down
Who is now rock'd with lullaby asleep.
Ah! now, my brother, hide thyself no more,
Thou seest how not I alone but all
Gaze, where thou veil'st the intercepted sun."

Whence I replied: "If thou recall to mind
What we were once together, even yet
Remembrance of those days may grieve thee sore.
That I forsook that life, was due to him
Who there precedes me, some few evenings past,
When she was round, who shines with sister lamp
To his, that glisters yonder," and I show'd
The sun. "Tis he, who through profoundest night
Of he true dead has brought me, with this flesh
As true, that follows. From that gloom the aid
Of his sure comfort drew me on to climb,
And climbing wind along this mountain-steep,
Which rectifies in you whate'er the world
Made crooked and deprav'd I have his word,
That he will bear me company as far
As till I come where Beatrice dwells:
But there must leave me. Virgil is that spirit,
Who thus hath promis'd," and I pointed to him;
"The other is that shade, for whom so late
Your realm, as he arose, exulting shook
Through every pendent cliff and rocky bound."

CANTO XXIV

Our journey was not slacken'd by our talk,
Nor yet our talk by journeying. Still we spake,
And urg'd our travel stoutly, like a ship

When the wind sits astern. The shadowy forms,



That seem'd things dead and dead again, drew in
At their deep-delved orbs rare wonder of me,
Perceiving I had life; and I my words
Continued, and thus spake; "He journeys up
Perhaps more tardily then else he would,
For others' sake. But tell me, if thou know'st,
Where is Piccarda? Tell me, if I see
Any of mark, among this multitude,
Who eye me thus."—"My sister (she for whom,
'Twixt beautiful and good I cannot say

Which name was fitter) wears e'en now her crown,
And triumphs in Olympus." Saying this,
He added: "Since spare diet hath so worn
Our semblance out, 't is lawful here to name
Each one. This," and his finger then he rais'd,
"Is Buonaggiuna,—Buonaggiuna, he
Of Lucca: and that face beyond him, pierc'd
Unto a leaner fineness than the rest,
Had keeping of the church: he was of Tours,
And purges by wan abstinence away
Bolsena's eels and cups of muscadel."

He show'd me many others, one by one,
And all, as they were nam'd, seem'd well content;
For no dark gesture I discern'd in any.
I saw through hunger Ubaldino grind
His teeth on emptiness; and Boniface,
That wav'd the crozier o'er a num'rous flock.
I saw the Marquis, who tad time erewhile
To swill at Forli with less drought, yet so
Was one ne'er sated. I howe'er, like him,
That gazing 'midst a crowd, singles out one,
So singled him of Lucca; for methought
Was none amongst them took such note of me.
Somewhat I heard him whisper of Gentucca:
The sound was indistinct, and murmur'd there,
Where justice, that so strips them, fix'd her sting.

"Spirit!" said I, "it seems as thou wouldst fain
Speak with me. Let me hear thee. Mutual wish
To converse prompts, which let us both indulge."

He, answ'ring, straight began: "Woman is born,
Whose brow no wimple shades yet, that shall make
My city please thee, blame it as they may.
Go then with this forewarning. If aught false
My whisper too implied, th' event shall tell
But say, if of a truth I see the man
Of that new lay th' inventor, which begins
With 'Ladies, ye that con the lore of love'."

To whom I thus: "Count of me but as one
Who am the scribe of love; that, when he breathes,
Take up my pen, and, as he dictates, write."

"Brother!" said he, "the hind'rance which once held
The notary with Guittone and myself,
Short of that new and sweeter style I hear,
Is now disclos'd. I see how ye your plumes
Stretch, as th' inditer guides them; which, no question,
Ours did not. He that seeks a grace beyond,
Sees not the distance parts one style from other."
And, as contented, here he held his peace.

Like as the bird, that winter near the Nile,
In squared regiment direct their course,
Then stretch themselves in file for speedier flight;
Thus all the tribe of spirits, as they turn'd
Their visage, faster deaf, nimble alike
Through leanness and desire. And as a man,
Tir'd With the motion of a trotting steed,
Slacks pace, and stays behind his company,
Till his o'erbreathed lungs keep temperate time;
E'en so Forese let that holy crew
Proceed, behind them lingering at my side,
And saying: "When shall I again behold thee?"

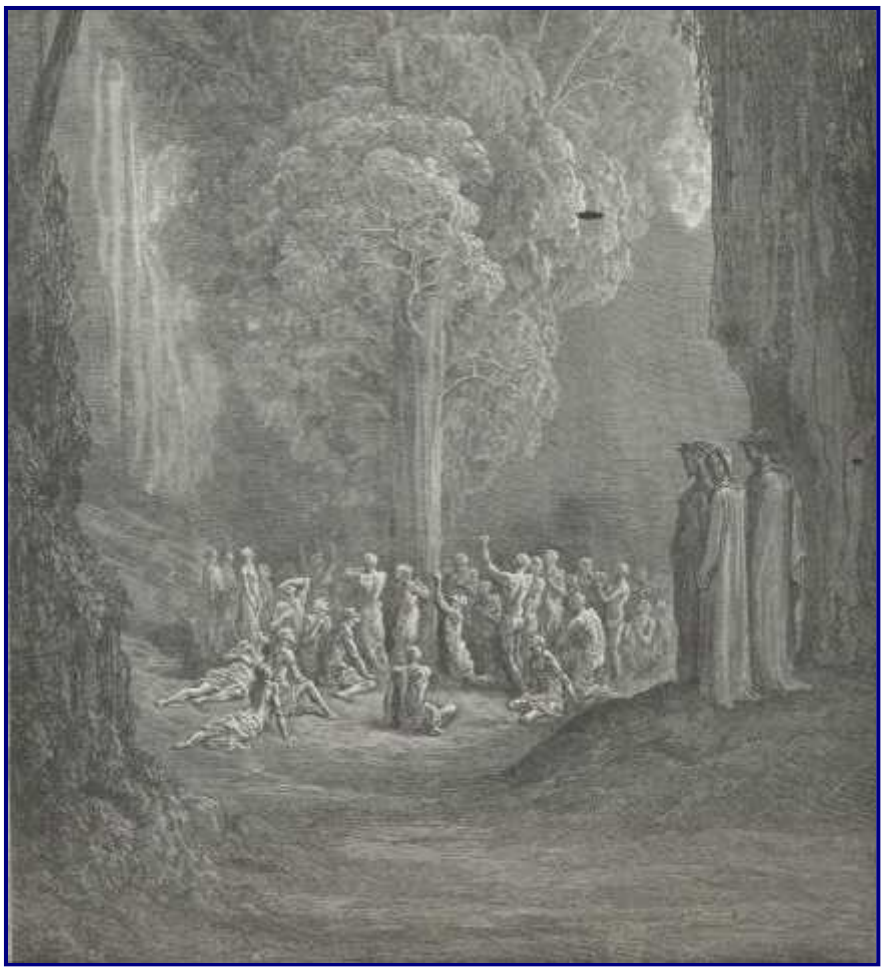
"How long my life may last," said I, "I know not;
This know, how soon soever I return,
My wishes will before me have arriv'd.
Sithence the place, where I am set to live,
Is, day by day, more scoop'd of all its good,
And dismal ruin seems to threaten it."

"Go now," he cried: "lo! he, whose guilt is most,
Passes before my vision, dragg'd at heels
Of an infuriate beast. Toward the vale,
Where guilt hath no redemption, on it speeds,
Each step increasing swiftness on the last;
Until a blow it strikes, that leaveth him
A corse most vilely shatter'd. No long space
Those wheels have yet to roll" (therewith his eyes
Look'd up to heav'n) "ere thou shalt plainly see
That which my words may not more plainly tell.
I quit thee: time is precious here: I lose
Too much, thus measuring my pace with shine."

As from a troop of well-rank'd chivalry

One knight, more enterprising than the rest,
Pricks forth at gallop, eager to display
His prowess in the first encounter prov'd
So parted he from us with lengthen'd strides,
And left me on the way with those twain spirits,
Who were such mighty marshals of the world.

When he beyond us had so fled mine eyes
No nearer reach'd him, than my thought his words,
The branches of another fruit, thick hung,
And blooming fresh, appear'd. E'en as our steps
Turn'd thither, not far off it rose to view.
Beneath it were a multitude, that rais'd
Their hands, and shouted forth I know not What
Unto the boughs; like greedy and fond brats,
That beg, and answer none obtain from him,
Of whom they beg; but more to draw them on,
He at arm's length the object of their wish
Above them holds aloft, and hides it not.



At length, as undeceiv'd they went their way:
And we approach the tree, who vows and tears
Sue to in vain, the mighty tree. "Pass on,
And come not near. Stands higher up the wood,
Whereof Eve tasted, and from it was ta'en
'this plant." Such sounds from midst the thickets came.
Whence I, with either bard, close to the side
That rose, pass'd forth beyond. "Remember," next
We heard, "those noblest creatures of the clouds,
How they their twofold bosoms overgorg'd
Oppos'd in fight to Theseus: call to mind
The Hebrews, how effeminate they stoop'd
To ease their thirst; whence Gideon's ranks were thinn'd,

As he to Midian march'd adown the hills."

Thus near one border coasting, still we heard
The sins of gluttony, with woe erewhile
Reguerdon'd. Then along the lonely path,
Once more at large, full thousand paces on
We travel'd, each contemplative and mute.

"Why pensive journey thus ye three alone?"
Thus suddenly a voice exclaim'd: whereat
I shook, as doth a scar'd and paltry beast;
Then rais'd my head to look from whence it came.

Was ne'er, in furnace, glass, or metal seen
So bright and glowing red, as was the shape
I now beheld. "If ye desire to mount,"
He cried, "here must ye turn. This way he goes,
Who goes in quest of peace." His countenance
Had dazzled me; and to my guides I fac'd
Backward, like one who walks, as sound directs.

As when, to harbinger the dawn, springs up
On freshen'd wing the air of May, and breathes
Of fragrance, all impregn'd with herb and flowers,
E'en such a wind I felt upon my front
Blow gently, and the moving of a wing
Perceiv'd, that moving shed ambrosial smell;
And then a voice: "Blessed are they, whom grace
Doth so illume, that appetite in them
Exhaleth no inordinate desire,
Still hung'ring as the rule of temperance wills."

CANTO XXV

It was an hour, when he who climbs, had need
To walk uncrippled: for the sun had now
To Taurus the meridian circle left,
And to the Scorpion left the night. As one
That makes no pause, but presses on his road,

Whate'er betide him, if some urgent need
Impel: so enter'd we upon our way,
One before other; for, but singly, none
That steep and narrow scale admits to climb.

E'en as the young stork lifteth up his wing
Through wish to fly, yet ventures not to quit
The nest, and drops it; so in me desire
Of questioning my guide arose, and fell,
Arriving even to the act, that marks
A man prepar'd for speech. Him all our haste
Restrain'd not, but thus spake the sire belov'd:
"Fear not to speed the shaft, that on thy lip
Stands trembling for its flight." Encourag'd thus
I straight began: "How there can leanness come,
Where is no want of nourishment to feed?"

"If thou," he answer'd, "hadst remember'd thee,
How Meleager with the wasting brand
Wasted alike, by equal fires consum'd,
This would not trouble thee: and hadst thou thought,
How in the mirror your reflected form
With mimic motion vibrates, what now seems
Hard, had appear'd no harder than the pulp
Of summer fruit mature. But that thy will
In certainty may find its full repose,
Lo Statius here! on him I call, and pray
That he would now be healer of thy wound."

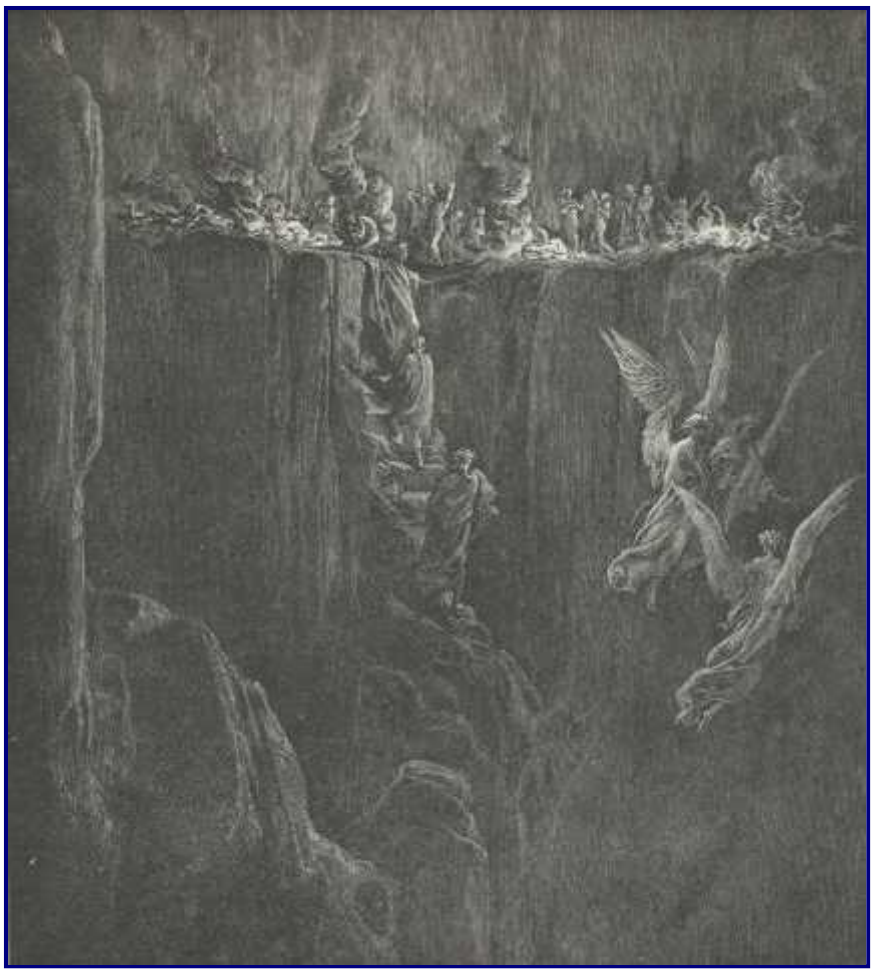
"If in thy presence I unfold to him
The secrets of heaven's vengeance, let me plead
Thine own injunction, to exculpate me."
So Statius answer'd, and forthwith began:
"Attend my words, O son, and in thy mind
Receive them: so shall they be light to clear
The doubt thou offer'st. Blood, concocted well,
Which by the thirsty veins is ne'er imbib'd,
And rests as food superfluous, to be ta'en
From the replenish'd table, in the heart
Derives effectual virtue, that informs
The several human limbs, as being that,
Which passes through the veins itself to make them.
Yet more concocted it descends, where shame
Forbids to mention: and from thence distils

In natural vessel on another's blood.
Then each unite together, one dispos'd
T' endure, to act the other, through meet frame
Of its recipient mould: that being reach'd,
It 'gins to work, coagulating first;
Then vivifies what its own substance caus'd
To bear. With animation now indued,
The active virtue (differing from a plant
No further, than that this is on the way
And at its limit that) continues yet
To operate, that now it moves, and feels,
As sea sponge clinging to the rock: and there
Assumes th' organic powers its seed convey'd.
'This is the period, son! at which the virtue,
That from the generating heart proceeds,
Is pliant and expansive; for each limb
Is in the heart by forgeful nature plann'd.
How babe of animal becomes, remains
For thy consid'ring. At this point, more wise,
Than thou hast err'd, making the soul disjoin'd
From passive intellect, because he saw
No organ for the latter's use assign'd.

"Open thy bosom to the truth that comes.
Know soon as in the embryo, to the brain,
Articulation is complete, then turns
The primal Mover with a smile of joy
On such great work of nature, and imbreathes
New spirit replete with virtue, that what here
Active it finds, to its own substance draws,
And forms an individual soul, that lives,
And feels, and bends reflective on itself.
And that thou less mayst marvel at the word,
Mark the sun's heat, how that to wine doth change,
Mix'd with the moisture filter'd through the vine.

"When Lachesis hath spun the thread, the soul
Takes with her both the human and divine,
Memory, intelligence, and will, in act
Far keener than before, the other powers
Inactive all and mute. No pause allow'd,
In wond'rous sort self-moving, to one strand
Of those, where the departed roam, she falls,
Here learns her destin'd path. Soon as the place

Receives her, round the plastic virtue beams,
Distinct as in the living limbs before:
And as the air, when saturate with showers,
The casual beam refracting, decks itself
With many a hue; so here the ambient air
Weareth that form, which influence of the soul
Imprints on it; and like the flame, that where
The fire moves, thither follows, so henceforth
The new form on the spirit follows still:
Hence hath it semblance, and is shadow call'd,
With each sense even to the sight endued:
Hence speech is ours, hence laughter, tears, and sighs
Which thou mayst oft have witness'd on the mount
Th' obedient shadow fails not to present
Whatever varying passion moves within us.
And this the cause of what thou marvel'st at."

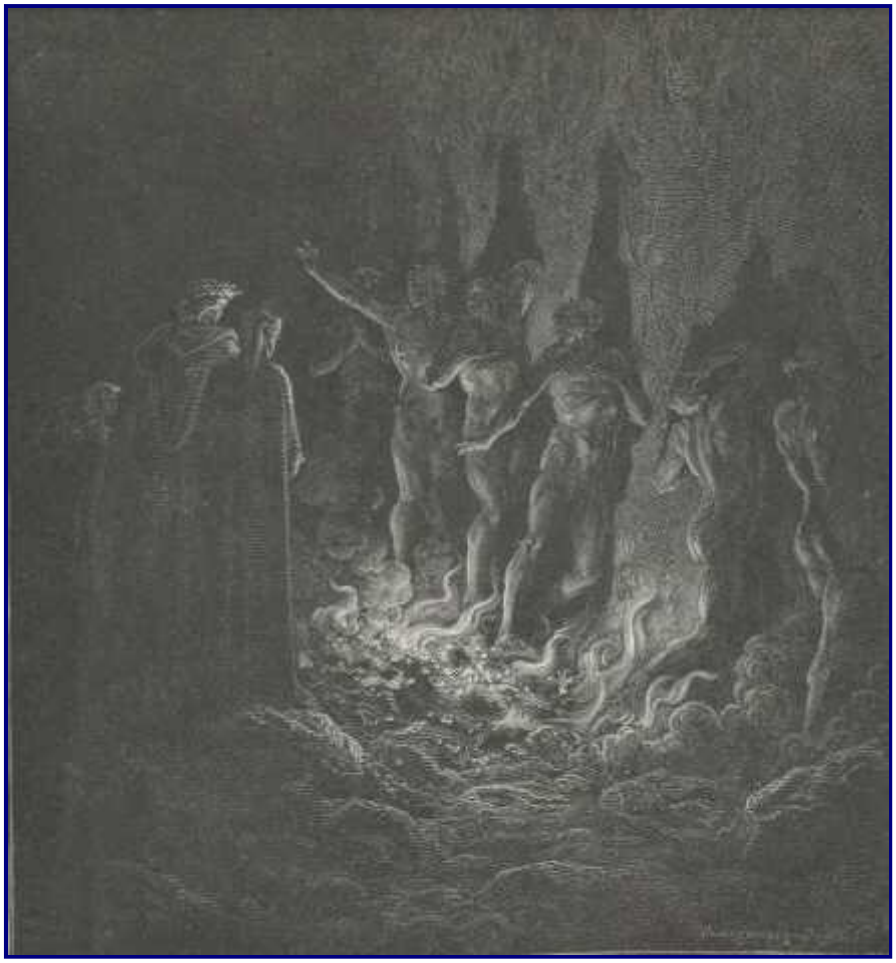


Now the last flexure of our way we reach'd,
And to the right hand turning, other care
Awaits us. Here the rocky precipice
Hurls forth redundant flames, and from the rim
A blast upblown, with forcible rebuff
Driveth them back, sequester'd from its bound.

Behoov'd us, one by one, along the side,
That border'd on the void, to pass; and I
Fear'd on one hand the fire, on th' other fear'd
Headlong to fall: when thus th' instructor warn'd:
"Strict rein must in this place direct the eyes.
A little swerving and the way is lost."

Then from the bosom of the burning mass,
"O God of mercy!" heard I sung; and felt
No less desire to turn. And when I saw
Spirits along the flame proceeding, I
Between their footsteps and mine own was fain
To share by turns my view. At the hymn's close
They shouted loud, "I do not know a man;"
Then in low voice again took up the strain,
Which once more ended, "To the wood," they cried,

"Ran Dian, and drave forth Callisto, stung
With Cytherea's poison:" then return'd
Unto their song; then marry a pair extoll'd,
Who liv'd in virtue chastely, and the bands
Of wedded love. Nor from that task, I ween,
Surcease they; whilesoe'er the scorching fire
Enclasps them. Of such skill appliance needs
To medicine the wound, that healeth last.



CANTO XXVI

While singly thus along the rim we walk'd,
Oft the good master warn'd me: "Look thou well.
Avail it that I caution thee." The sun
Now all the western clime irradiate chang'd
From azure tinct to white; and, as I pass'd,
My passing shadow made the umber'd flame
Burn ruddier. At so strange a sight I mark'd
That many a spirit marvel'd on his way.

This bred occasion first to speak of me,
"He seems," said they, "no insubstantial frame:"
Then to obtain what certainty they might,
Stretch'd towards me, careful not to overpass
The burning pale. "O thou, who followest
The others, haply not more slow than they,
But mov'd by rev'rence, answer me, who burn
In thirst and fire: nor I alone, but these
All for thine answer do more thirst, than doth
Indian or Aethiop for the cooling stream.
Tell us, how is it that thou mak'st thyself
A wall against the sun, as thou not yet
Into th' inextricable toils of death
Hadst enter'd?" Thus spake one, and I had straight
Declar'd me, if attention had not turn'd
To new appearance. Meeting these, there came,
Midway the burning path, a crowd, on whom
Earnestly gazing, from each part I view
The shadows all press forward, sev'rally
Each snatch a hasty kiss, and then away.
E'en so the emmets, 'mid their dusky troops,
Peer closely one at other, to spy out
Their mutual road perchance, and how they thrive.

That friendly greeting parted, ere dispatch
Of the first onward step, from either tribe
Loud clamour rises: those, who newly come,
Shout "Sodom and Gomorrah!" these, "The cow
Pasiphae enter'd, that the beast she woo'd
Might rush unto her luxury." Then as cranes,
That part towards the Riphaean mountains fly,
Part towards the Lybic sands, these to avoid
The ice, and those the sun; so hasteth off
One crowd, advances th' other; and resume
Their first song weeping, and their several shout.

Again drew near my side the very same,
Who had erewhile besought me, and their looks
Mark'd eagerness to listen. I, who twice
Their will had noted, spake: "O spirits secure,
Whene'er the time may be, of peaceful end!
My limbs, nor crude, nor in mature old age,
Have I left yonder: here they bear me, fed
With blood, and sinew-strung. That I no more
May live in blindness, hence I tend aloft.
There is a dame on high, who wind for us
This grace, by which my mortal through your realm
I bear. But may your utmost wish soon meet
Such full fruition, that the orb of heaven,
Fullest of love, and of most ample space,
Receive you, as ye tell (upon my page
Henceforth to stand recorded) who ye are,
And what this multitude, that at your backs
Have past behind us." As one, mountain-bred,
Rugged and clownish, if some city's walls
He chance to enter, round him stares agape,
Confounded and struck dumb; e'en such appear'd
Each spirit. But when rid of that amaze,
(Not long the inmate of a noble heart)
He, who before had question'd, thus resum'd:
"O blessed, who, for death preparing, tak'st
Experience of our limits, in thy bark!
Their crime, who not with us proceed, was that,
For which, as he did triumph, Caesar heard
The snout of 'queen,' to taunt him. Hence their cry
Of 'Sodom,' as they parted, to rebuke
Themselves, and aid the burning by their shame.

Our sinning was Hermaphrodite: but we,
Because the law of human kind we broke,
Following like beasts our vile concupiscence,
Hence parting from them, to our own disgrace
Record the name of her, by whom the beast
In bestial tire was acted. Now our deeds
Thou know'st, and how we sinn'd. If thou by name
Wouldst haply know us, time permits not now
To tell so much, nor can I. Of myself
Learn what thou wishest. Guinicelli I,
Who having truly sorrow'd ere my last,
Already cleanse me." With such pious joy,
As the two sons upon their mother gaz'd
From sad Lycurgus rescu'd, such my joy
(Save that I more represt it) when I heard
From his own lips the name of him pronounc'd,
Who was a father to me, and to those
My betters, who have ever us'd the sweet
And pleasant rhymes of love. So nought I heard
Nor spake, but long time thoughtfully I went,
Gazing on him; and, only for the fire,
Approach'd not nearer. When my eyes were fed
By looking on him, with such solemn pledge,
As forces credence, I devoted me
Unto his service wholly. In reply
He thus bespake me: "What from thee I hear
Is grav'd so deeply on my mind, the waves
Of Lethe shall not wash it off, nor make
A whit less lively. But as now thy oath
Has seal'd the truth, declare what cause impels
That love, which both thy looks and speech bewray."

"Those dulcet lays," I answer'd, "which, as long
As of our tongue the beauty does not fade,
Shall make us love the very ink that trac'd them."

"Brother!" he cried, and pointed at a shade
Before him, "there is one, whose mother speech
Doth owe to him a fairer ornament.
He in love ditties and the tales of prose
Without a rival stands, and lets the fools
Talk on, who think the songster of Limoges
O'ertops him. Rumour and the popular voice
They look to more than truth, and so confirm

Opinion, ere by art or reason taught.
Thus many of the elder time cried up
Guittone, giving him the prize, till truth
By strength of numbers vanquish'd. If thou own
So ample privilege, as to have gain'd
Free entrance to the cloister, whereof Christ
Is Abbot of the college, say to him
One paternoster for me, far as needs
For dwellers in this world, where power to sin
No longer tempts us." Haply to make way
For one, that follow'd next, when that was said,
He vanish'd through the fire, as through the wave
A fish, that glances diving to the deep.

I, to the spirit he had shown me, drew
A little onward, and besought his name,
For which my heart, I said, kept gracious room.
He frankly thus began: "Thy courtesy
So wins on me, I have nor power nor will
To hide me. I am Arnault; and with songs,
Sorely lamenting for my folly past,
Thorough this ford of fire I wade, and see
The day, I hope for, smiling in my view.
I pray ye by the worth that guides ye up
Unto the summit of the scale, in time
Remember ye my suff'rings." With such words
He disappear'd in the refining flame.

CANTO XXVII

Now was the sun so station'd, as when first
His early radiance quivers on the heights,
Where stream'd his Maker's blood, while Libra hangs
Above Hesperian Ebro, and new fires
Meridian flash on Ganges' yellow tide.

So day was sinking, when the' angel of God
Appear'd before us. Joy was in his mien.
Forth of the flame he stood upon the brink,

And with a voice, whose lively clearness far
Surpass'd our human, "Blessed are the pure
In heart," he Sang: then near him as we came,
"Go ye not further, holy spirits!" he cried,
"Ere the fire pierce you: enter in; and list
Attentive to the song ye hear from thence."

I, when I heard his saying, was as one
Laid in the grave. My hands together clasp'd,
And upward stretching, on the fire I look'd,
And busy fancy conjur'd up the forms
Erewhile beheld alive consum'd in flames.

Th' escorting spirits turn'd with gentle looks
Toward me, and the Mantuan spake: "My son,
Here torment thou mayst feel, but canst not death.
Remember thee, remember thee, if I
Safe e'en on Geryon brought thee: now I come
More near to God, wilt thou not trust me now?
Of this be sure: though in its womb that flame
A thousand years contain'd thee, from thy head
No hair should perish. If thou doubt my truth,
Approach, and with thy hands thy vesture's hem
Stretch forth, and for thyself confirm belief.
Lay now all fear, O lay all fear aside.
Turn hither, and come onward undismay'd."
I still, though conscience urg'd' no step advanc'd.

When still he saw me fix'd and obstinate,
Somewhat disturb'd he cried: "Mark now, my son,
From Beatrice thou art by this wall
Divided." As at Thisbe's name the eye
Of Pyramus was open'd (when life ebb'd
Fast from his veins), and took one parting glance,
While vermeil dyed the mulberry; thus I turn'd
To my sage guide, relenting, when I heard
The name, that springs forever in my breast.

He shook his forehead; and, "How long," he said,
"Linger we now?" then smil'd, as one would smile
Upon a child, that eyes the fruit and yields.
Into the fire before me then he walk'd;
And Statius, who erewhile no little space
Had parted us, he pray'd to come behind.

I would have cast me into molten glass
To cool me, when I enter'd; so intense
Rag'd the conflagrant mass. The sire belov'd,
To comfort me, as he proceeded, still
Of Beatrice talk'd. "Her eyes," saith he,
"E'en now I seem to view." From the other side
A voice, that sang, did guide us, and the voice
Following, with heedful ear, we issued forth,
There where the path led upward. "Come," we heard,
"Come, blessed of my Father." Such the sounds,
That hail'd us from within a light, which shone
So radiant, I could not endure the view.
"The sun," it added, "hastes: and evening comes.
Delay not: ere the western sky is hung
With blackness, strive ye for the pass." Our way
Upright within the rock arose, and fac'd
Such part of heav'n, that from before my steps
The beams were shrouded of the sinking sun.

Nor many stairs were overpass, when now
By fading of the shadow we perceiv'd
The sun behind us couch'd: and ere one face
Of darkness o'er its measureless expanse
Involv'd th' horizon, and the night her lot
Held individual, each of us had made
A stair his pallet: not that will, but power,
Had fail'd us, by the nature of that mount
Forbidden further travel. As the goats,
That late have skipp'd and wanton'd rapidly
Upon the craggy cliffs, ere they had ta'en
Their supper on the herb, now silent lie
And ruminate beneath the umbrage brown,
While noonday rages; and the goatherd leans
Upon his staff, and leaning watches them:
And as the swain, that lodges out all night
In quiet by his flock, lest beast of prey
Disperse them; even so all three abode,
I as a goat and as the shepherds they,
Close pent on either side by shelving rock.

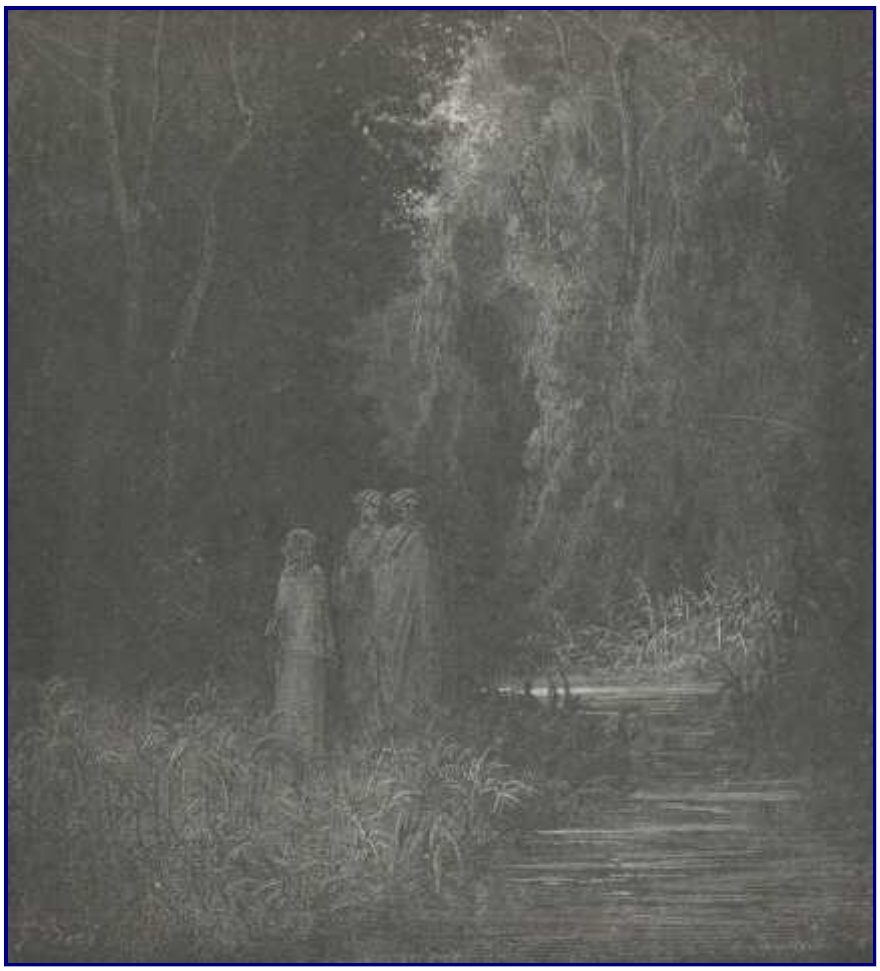
A little glimpse of sky was seen above;
Yet by that little I beheld the stars
In magnitude and rustle shining forth
With more than wonted glory. As I lay,
Gazing on them, and in that fit of musing,
Sleep overcame me, sleep, that bringeth oft
Tidings of future hap. About the hour,
As I believe, when Venus from the east
First lighten'd on the mountain, she whose orb
Seems always glowing with the fire of love,
A lady young and beautiful, I dream'd,
Was passing o'er a lea; and, as she came,
Methought I saw her ever and anon
Bending to cull the flowers; and thus she sang:

"Know ye, whoever of my name would ask,
That I am Leah: for my brow to weave
A garland, these fair hands unwearied ply.
To please me at the crystal mirror, here
I deck me. But my sister Rachel, she
Before her glass abides the livelong day,
Her radiant eyes beholding, charm'd no less,
Than I with this delightful task. Her joy
In contemplation, as in labour mine."

And now as glimm'ring dawn appear'd, that breaks
More welcome to the pilgrim still, as he
Sojourns less distant on his homeward way,
Darkness from all sides fled, and with it fled
My slumber; whence I rose and saw my guide
Already risen. "That delicious fruit,
Which through so many a branch the zealous care
Of mortals roams in quest of, shall this day
Appease thy hunger." Such the words I heard
From Virgil's lip; and never greeting heard
So pleasant as the sounds. Within me straight
Desire so grew upon desire to mount,
Thenceforward at each step I felt the wings
Increasing for my flight. When we had run
O'er all the ladder to its topmost round,
As there we stood, on me the Mantuan fix'd
His eyes, and thus he spake: "Both fires, my son,
The temporal and eternal, thou hast seen,
And art arriv'd, where of itself my ken
No further reaches. I with skill and art
Thus far have drawn thee. Now thy pleasure take
For guide. Thou hast o'ercome the steeper way,
O'ercome the straighter. Lo! the sun, that darts
His beam upon thy forehead! lo! the herb,
The arboreta and flowers, which of itself
This land pours forth profuse! Till those bright eyes
With gladness come, which, weeping, made me haste
To succour thee, thou mayst or seat thee down,
Or wander where thou wilt. Expect no more
Sanction of warning voice or sign from me,
Free of thy own arbitrement to choose,
Discreet, judicious. To distrust thy sense
Were henceforth error. I invest thee then
With crown and mitre, sovereign o'er thyself."

CANTO XXVIII

Through that celestial forest, whose thick shade
With lively greenness the new-springing day
Attemper'd, eager now to roam, and search
Its limits round, forthwith I left the bank,
Along the champain leisurely my way
Pursuing, o'er the ground, that on all sides
Delicious odour breath'd. A pleasant air,
That intermitted never, never veer'd,
Smote on my temples, gently, as a wind
Of softest influence: at which the sprays,
Obedient all, lean'd trembling to that part
Where first the holy mountain casts his shade,
Yet were not so disorder'd, but that still
Upon their top the feather'd quiristers
Applied their wonted art, and with full joy
Welcom'd those hours of prime, and warbled shrill
Amid the leaves, that to their jocund lays
inept tenor; even as from branch to branch,
Along the piney forests on the shore
Of Chiassi, rolls the gath'ring melody,
When Eolus hath from his cavern loos'd
The dripping south. Already had my steps,
Though slow, so far into that ancient wood
Transported me, I could not ken the place
Where I had enter'd, when behold! my path
Was bounded by a rill, which to the left
With little rippling waters bent the grass,
That issued from its brink. On earth no wave
How clean soe'er, that would not seem to have
Some mixture in itself, compar'd with this,
Transpicuous, clear; yet darkly on it roll'd,
Darkly beneath perpetual gloom, which ne'er
Admits or sun or moon light there to shine.



My feet advanc'd not; but my wond'ring eyes
Pass'd onward, o'er the streamlet, to survey
The tender May-bloom, flush'd through many a hue,
In prodigal variety: and there,
As object, rising suddenly to view,
That from our bosom every thought beside
With the rare marvel chases, I beheld
A lady all alone, who, singing, went,
And culling flower from flower, wherewith her way
Was all o'er painted. "Lady beautiful!
Thou, who (if looks, that use to speak the heart,
Are worthy of our trust), with love's own beam
Dost warm thee," thus to her my speech I fram'd:

"Ah! please thee hither towards the streamlet bend
Thy steps so near, that I may list thy song.
Beholding thee and this fair place, methinks,
I call to mind where wander'd and how look'd
Proserpine, in that season, when her child
The mother lost, and she the bloomy spring."

As when a lady, turning in the dance,
Doth foot it featly, and advances scarce
One step before the other to the ground;
Over the yellow and vermilion flowers
Thus turn'd she at my suit, most maiden-like,
Valing her sober eyes, and came so near,
That I distinctly caught the dulcet sound.
Arriving where the limped waters now
Lav'd the green sward, her eyes she deign'd to raise,
That shot such splendour on me, as I ween
Ne'er glanced from Cytherea's, when her son
Had sped his keenest weapon to her heart.
Upon the opposite bank she stood and smil'd
through her graceful fingers shifted still
The intermingling dyes, which without seed
That lofty land unbosoms. By the stream
Three paces only were we sunder'd: yet
The Hellespont, where Xerxes pass'd it o'er,
(A curb for ever to the pride of man)
Was by Leander not more hateful held
For floating, with inhospitable wave
'Twixt Sestus and Abydos, than by me
That flood, because it gave no passage thence.

"Strangers ye come, and haply in this place,
That cradled human nature in its birth,
Wond'ring, ye not without suspicion view
My smiles: but that sweet strain of psalmody,
'Thou, Lord! hast made me glad,' will give ye light,
Which may uncloud your minds. And thou, who stand'st
The foremost, and didst make thy suit to me,
Say if aught else thou wish to hear: for I
Came prompt to answer every doubt of thine."

She spake; and I replied: "I know not how
To reconcile this wave and rustling sound
Of forest leaves, with what I late have heard

Of opposite report." She answering thus:
"I will unfold the cause, whence that proceeds,
Which makes thee wonder; and so purge the cloud
That hath enwraps thee. The First Good, whose joy
Is only in himself, created man
For happiness, and gave this goodly place,
His pledge and earnest of eternal peace.
Favour'd thus highly, through his own defect
He fell, and here made short sojourn; he fell,
And, for the bitterness of sorrow, chang'd
Laughter unblam'd and ever-new delight.
That vapours none, exhal'd from earth beneath,
Or from the waters (which, wherever heat
Attracts them, follow), might ascend thus far
To vex man's peaceful state, this mountain rose
So high toward the heav'n, nor fears the rage
Of elements contending, from that part
Exempted, where the gate his limit bars.
Because the circumambient air throughout
With its first impulse circles still, unless
Aught interpose to cheek or thwart its course;
Upon the summit, which on every side
To visitation of th' impassive air
Is open, doth that motion strike, and makes
Beneath its sway th' umbrageous wood resound:
And in the shaken plant such power resides,
That it impregnates with its efficacy
The voyaging breeze, upon whose subtle plume
That wafted flies abroad; and th' other land
Receiving (as 't is worthy in itself,
Or in the clime, that warms it), doth conceive,
And from its womb produces many a tree
Of various virtue. This when thou hast heard,
The marvel ceases, if in yonder earth
Some plant without apparent seed be found
To fix its fibrous stem. And further learn,
That with prolific foison of all seeds,
This holy plain is fill'd, and in itself
Bears fruit that ne'er was pluck'd on other soil.
The water, thou behold'st, springs not from vein,
As stream, that intermittently repairs
And spends his pulse of life, but issues forth
From fountain, solid, undecaying, sure;
And by the will omnific, full supply

Feeds whatsoe'er On either side it pours;
On this devolv'd with power to take away
Remembrance of offence, on that to bring
Remembrance back of every good deed done.
From whence its name of Lethe on this part;
On th' other Eunoe: both of which must first
Be tasted ere it work; the last exceeding
All flavours else. Albeit thy thirst may now
Be well contented, if I here break off,
No more revealing: yet a corollary
I freely give beside: nor deem my words
Less grateful to thee, if they somewhat pass
The stretch of promise. They, whose verse of yore
The golden age recorded and its bliss,
On the Parnassian mountain, of this place
Perhaps had dream'd. Here was man guiltless, here
Perpetual spring and every fruit, and this
The far-fam'd nectar." Turning to the bards,
When she had ceas'd, I noted in their looks
A smile at her conclusion; then my face
Again directed to the lovely dame.

CANTO XXIX

Singing, as if enamour'd, she resum'd
And clos'd the song, with "Blessed they whose sins
Are cover'd." Like the wood-nymphs then, that tripp'd
Singly across the sylvan shadows, one
Eager to view and one to 'scape the sun,
So mov'd she on, against the current, up
The verdant rivage. I, her mincing step
Observing, with as tardy step pursued.

Between us not an hundred paces trod,
The bank, on each side bending equally,
Gave me to face the orient. Nor our way
Far onward brought us, when to me at once
She turn'd, and cried: "My brother! look and hearken."
And lo! a sudden lustre ran across

Through the great forest on all parts, so bright
I doubted whether lightning were abroad;
But that expiring ever in the spleen,
That doth unfold it, and this during still
And waxing still in splendor, made me question
What it might be: and a sweet melody
Ran through the luminous air. Then did I chide
With warrantable zeal the hardihood
Of our first parent, for that there were earth
Stood in obedience to the heav'ns, she only,
Woman, the creature of an hour, endur'd not
Restraint of any veil: which had she borne
Devoutly, joys, ineffable as these,
Had from the first, and long time since, been mine.

While through that wilderness of primy sweets
That never fade, suspense I walk'd, and yet
Expectant of beatitude more high,
Before us, like a blazing fire, the air
Under the green boughs glow'd; and, for a song,
Distinct the sound of melody was heard.

O ye thrice holy virgins! for your sakes
If e'er I suffer'd hunger, cold and watching,
Occasion calls on me to crave your bounty.
Now through my breast let Helicon his stream
Pour copious; and Urania with her choir
Arise to aid me: while the verse unfolds
Things that do almost mock the grasp of thought.

Onward a space, what seem'd seven trees of gold,
The intervening distance to mine eye
Falsely presented; but when I was come
So near them, that no lineament was lost
Of those, with which a doubtful object, seen
Remotely, plays on the misdeeming sense,
Then did the faculty, that ministers
Discourse to reason, these for tapers of gold
Distinguish, and it th' singing trace the sound
"Hosanna." Above, their beauteous garniture
Flam'd with more ample lustre, than the moon
Through cloudless sky at midnight in her full.

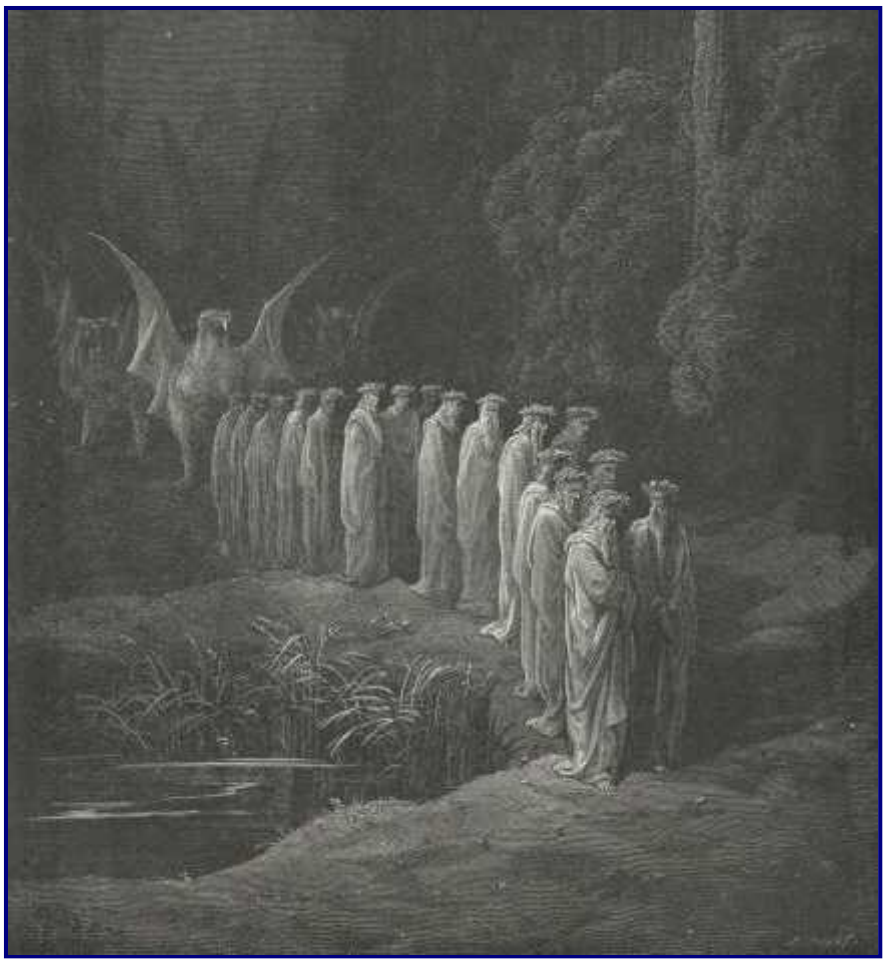
I turn'd me full of wonder to my guide;

And he did answer with a countenance
Charg'd with no less amazement: whence my view
Reverted to those lofty things, which came
So slowly moving towards us, that the bride
Would have outstript them on her bridal day.

The lady called aloud: "Why thus yet burns
Affection in thee for these living, lights,
And dost not look on that which follows them?"

I straightway mark'd a tribe behind them walk,
As if attendant on their leaders, cloth'd
With raiment of such whiteness, as on earth
Was never. On my left, the wat'ry gleam
Borrow'd, and gave me back, when there I look'd.
As in a mirror, my left side portray'd.

When I had chosen on the river's edge
Such station, that the distance of the stream
Alone did separate me; there I stay'd
My steps for clearer prospect, and beheld
The flames go onward, leaving, as they went,
The air behind them painted as with trail
Of liveliest pencils! so distinct were mark'd
All those sev'n listed colours, whence the sun
Maketh his bow, and Cynthia her zone.
These streaming gonfalons did flow beyond
My vision; and ten paces, as I guess,
Parted the outermost. Beneath a sky
So beautiful, came foul and-twenty elders,
By two and two, with flower-de-luces crown'd.



All sang one song: "Blessed be thou among
The daughters of Adam! and thy loveliness
Blessed for ever!" After that the flowers,
And the fresh herblets, on the opposite brink,
Were free from that elected race; as light
In heav'n doth second light, came after them
Four animals, each crown'd with verdurous leaf.
With six wings each was plum'd, the plumage full
Of eyes, and th' eyes of Argus would be such,
Were they endued with life. Reader, more rhymes
Will not waste in shadowing forth their form:
For other need no straitens, that in this
I may not give my bounty room. But read
Ezekiel; for he paints them, from the north

How he beheld them come by Chebar's flood,
In whirlwind, cloud and fire; and even such
As thou shalt find them character'd by him,
Here were they; save as to the pennons; there,
From him departing, John accords with me.

The space, surrounded by the four, enclos'd
A car triumphal: on two wheels it came
Drawn at a Gryphon's neck; and he above
Stretch'd either wing uplifted, 'tween the midst
And the three listed hues, on each side three;
So that the wings did cleave or injure none;
And out of sight they rose. The members, far
As he was bird, were golden; white the rest
With vermeil intervein'd. So beautiful
A car in Rome ne'er grac'd Augustus pomp,
Or Africanus': e'en the sun's itself
Were poor to this, that chariot of the sun
Erroneous, which in blazing ruin fell
At Tellus' pray'r devout, by the just doom
Mysterious of all-seeing Jove. Three nymphs
at the right wheel, came circling in smooth dance;
The one so ruddy, that her form had scarce
Been known within a furnace of clear flame:
The next did look, as if the flesh and bones
Were emerald: snow new-fallen seem'd the third.

Now seem'd the white to lead, the ruddy now;
And from her song who led, the others took
Their treasure, swift or slow. At th' other wheel,
A band quaternion, each in purple clad,
Advanc'd with festal step, as of them one
The rest conducted, one, upon whose front
Three eyes were seen. In rear of all this group,
Two old men I beheld, dissimilar
In raiment, but in port and gesture like,
Solid and mainly grave; of whom the one
Did show himself some favour'd counsellor
Of the great Coan, him, whom nature made
To serve the costliest creature of her tribe.
His fellow mark'd an opposite intent,

Bearing a sword, whose glitterance and keen edge,
E'en as I view'd it with the flood between,
Appall'd me. Next four others I beheld,
Of humble seeming: and, behind them all,
One single old man, sleeping, as he came,
With a shrewd visage. And these seven, each
Like the first troop were habited, but wore
No braid of lilies on their temples wreath'd.
Rather with roses and each vermeil flower,
A sight, but little distant, might have sworn,
That they were all on fire above their brow.

Whenas the car was o'er against me, straight.
Was heard a thund'ring, at whose voice it seem'd
The chosen multitude were stay'd; for there,
With the first ensigns, made they solemn halt.

CANTO XXX

Soon as the polar light, which never knows
Setting nor rising, nor the shadowy veil
Of other cloud than sin, fair ornament
Of the first heav'n, to duty each one there
Safely convoying, as that lower doth
The steersman to his port, stood firmly fix'd;
Forthwith the saintly tribe, who in the van
Between the Gryphon and its radiance came,
Did turn them to the car, as to their rest:
And one, as if commission'd from above,
In holy chant thrice shorted forth aloud:
"Come, spouse, from Libanus!" and all the rest
Took up the song—At the last audit so
The blest shall rise, from forth his cavern each
Uplifting lightly his new-vested flesh,
As, on the sacred litter, at the voice
Authoritative of that elder, sprang
A hundred ministers and messengers
Of life eternal. "Blessed thou! who com'st!"
And, "O," they cried, "from full hands scatter ye

Unwith'ring lilies;" and, so saying, cast
Flowers over head and round them on all sides.

I have beheld, ere now, at break of day,
The eastern clime all roseate, and the sky
Oppos'd, one deep and beautiful serene,
And the sun's face so shaded, and with mists
Attemper'd at lids rising, that the eye
Long while endur'd the sight: thus in a cloud
Of flowers, that from those hands angelic rose,
And down, within and outside of the car,
Fell showering, in white veil with olive wreath'd,
A virgin in my view appear'd, beneath
Green mantle, rob'd in hue of living flame:

And o'er my Spirit, that in former days
Within her presence had abode so long,
No shudd'ring terror crept. Mine eyes no more
Had knowledge of her; yet there mov'd from her
A hidden virtue, at whose touch awak'd,
The power of ancient love was strong within me.

No sooner on my vision streaming, smote
The heav'nly influence, which years past, and e'en
In childhood, thrill'd me, than towards Virgil I
Turn'd me to leftward, panting, like a babe,
That flees for refuge to his mother's breast,
If aught have terrified or work'd him woe:
And would have cried: "There is no dram of blood,
That doth not quiver in me. The old flame
Throws out clear tokens of reviving fire:"
But Virgil had bereav'd us of himself,
Virgil, my best-lov'd father; Virgil, he
To whom I gave me up for safety: nor,
All, our prime mother lost, avail'd to save
My undew'd cheeks from blur of soiling tears.

"Dante, weep not, that Virgil leaves thee: nay,
Weep thou not yet: behooves thee feel the edge
Of other sword, and thou shalt weep for that."

As to the prow or stern, some admiral
Paces the deck, inspiriting his crew,
When 'mid the sail-yards all hands ply aloof;
Thus on the left side of the car I saw,
(Turning me at the sound of mine own name,
Which here I am compell'd to register)
The virgin station'd, who before appeared
Veil'd in that festive shower angelical.

Towards me, across the stream, she bent her eyes;
Though from her brow the veil descending, bound
With foliage of Minerva, suffer'd not
That I beheld her clearly; then with act
Full royal, still insulting o'er her thrall,
Added, as one, who speaking keepeth back

The bitterest saying, to conclude the speech:
"Observe me well. I am, in sooth, I am
Beatrice. What! and hast thou deign'd at last
Approach the mountain? knewest not, O man!
Thy happiness is whole?" Down fell mine eyes
On the clear fount, but there, myself espying,
Recoil'd, and sought the greensward: such a weight
Of shame was on my forehead. With a mien
Of that stern majesty, which doth surround
mother's presence to her awe-struck child,
She look'd; a flavour of such bitterness
Was mingled in her pity. There her words
Brake off, and suddenly the angels sang:
"In thee, O gracious Lord, my hope hath been:"
But went no farther than, "Thou Lord, hast set
My feet in ample room." As snow, that lies
Amidst the living rafters on the back
Of Italy congeal'd when drifted high
And closely pil'd by rough Sclavonian blasts,
Breathe but the land whereon no shadow falls,
And straightway melting it distils away,
Like a fire-wasted taper: thus was I,
Without a sigh or tear, or ever these
Did sing, that with the chiming of heav'n's sphere,
Still in their warbling chime: but when the strain
Of dulcet symphony, express'd for me
Their soft compassion, more than could the words
"Virgin, why so consum'st him?" then the ice,
Congeal'd about my bosom, turn'd itself
To spirit and water, and with anguish forth
Gush'd through the lips and eyelids from the heart.

Upon the chariot's right edge still she stood,
Immovable, and thus address'd her words
To those bright semblances with pity touch'd:
"Ye in th' eternal day your vigils keep,
So that nor night nor slumber, with close stealth,
Conveys from you a single step in all
The goings on of life: thence with more heed
I shape mine answer, for his ear intended,
Who there stands weeping, that the sorrow now
May equal the transgression. Not alone
Through operation of the mighty orbs,
That mark each seed to some predestin'd aim,

As with aspect or fortunate or ill
The constellations meet, but through benign
Largess of heav'nly graces, which rain down
From such a height, as mocks our vision, this man
Was in the freshness of his being, such,
So gifted virtually, that in him
All better habits wond'rously had thriv'd.
The more of kindly strength is in the soil,
So much doth evil seed and lack of culture
Mar it the more, and make it run to wildness.
These looks sometime upheld him; for I show'd
My youthful eyes, and led him by their light
In upright walking. Soon as I had reach'd
The threshold of my second age, and chang'd
My mortal for immortal, then he left me,
And gave himself to others. When from flesh
To spirit I had risen, and increase
Of beauty and of virtue circled me,
I was less dear to him, and valued less.
His steps were turn'd into deceitful ways,
Following false images of good, that make
No promise perfect. Nor avail'd me aught
To sue for inspirations, with the which,
I, both in dreams of night, and otherwise,
Did call him back; of them so little reck'd him,
Such depth he fell, that all device was short
Of his preserving, save that he should view
The children of perdition. To this end
I visited the purlieus of the dead:
And one, who hath conducted him thus high,
Receiv'd my supplications urg'd with weeping.
It were a breaking of God's high decree,
If Lethe should be past, and such food tasted
Without the cost of some repentant tear."

CANTO XXXI

"O Thou!" her words she thus without delay
Resuming, turn'd their point on me, to whom

They but with lateral edge seem'd harsh before,
"Say thou, who stand'st beyond the holy stream,
If this be true. A charge so grievous needs
Thine own avowal." On my faculty
Such strange amazement hung, the voice expir'd
Imperfect, ere its organs gave it birth.

A little space refraining, then she spake:
"What dost thou muse on? Answer me. The wave
On thy remembrances of evil yet
Hath done no injury." A mingled sense
Of fear and of confusion, from my lips
Did such a "Yea" produce, as needed help
Of vision to interpret. As when breaks
In act to be discharg'd, a cross-bow bent
Beyond its pitch, both nerve and bow o'erstretch'd,
The flagging weapon feebly hits the mark;
Thus, tears and sighs forth gushing, did I burst
Beneath the heavy load, and thus my voice
Was slacken'd on its way. She straight began:
"When my desire invited thee to love
The good, which sets a bound to our aspirings,
What bar of thwarting foss or linked chain
Did meet thee, that thou so should'st quit the hope
Of further progress, or what bait of ease
Or promise of allurement led thee on
Elsewhere, that thou elsewhere should'st rather wait?"

A bitter sigh I drew, then scarce found voice
To answer, hardly to these sounds my lips
Gave utterance, wailing: "Thy fair looks withdrawn,
Things present, with deceitful pleasures, turn'd
My steps aside." She answering spake: "Hadst thou
Been silent, or denied what thou avow'st,
Thou hadst not hid thy sin the more: such eye
Observes it. But whene'er the sinner's cheek
Breaks forth into the precious-streaming tears
Of self-accusing, in our court the wheel
Of justice doth run counter to the edge.
Howe'er that thou may'st profit by thy shame
For errors past, and that henceforth more strength
May arm thee, when thou hear'st the Siren-voice,
Lay thou aside the motive to this grief,
And lend attentive ear, while I unfold

How opposite a way my buried flesh
Should have impell'd thee. Never didst thou spy
In art or nature aught so passing sweet,
As were the limbs, that in their beauteous frame
Enclos'd me, and are scatter'd now in dust.
If sweetest thing thus fail'd thee with my death,
What, afterward, of mortal should thy wish
Have tempted? When thou first hadst felt the dart
Of perishable things, in my departing
For better realms, thy wing thou should'st have prun'd
To follow me, and never stoop'd again
To 'bide a second blow for a slight girl,
Or other gaud as transient and as vain.
The new and inexperienc'd bird awaits,
Twice it may be, or thrice, the fowler's aim;
But in the sight of one, whose plumes are full,
In vain the net is spread, the arrow wing'd."

I stood, as children silent and asham'd
Stand, list'ning, with their eyes upon the earth,
Acknowledging their fault and self-condemn'd.
And she resum'd: "If, but to hear thus pains thee,
Raise thou thy beard, and lo! what sight shall do!"

With less reluctance yields a sturdy holm,
Rent from its fibers by a blast, that blows
From off the pole, or from Iarbas' land,
Than I at her behest my visage rais'd:
And thus the face denoting by the beard,
I mark'd the secret sting her words convey'd.

No sooner lifted I mine aspect up,
Than downward sunk that vision I beheld
Of goodly creatures vanish; and mine eyes
Yet unassur'd and wavering, bent their light
On Beatrice. Towards the animal,
Who joins two natures in one form, she turn'd,
And, even under shadow of her veil,
And parted by the verdant rill, that flow'd
Between, in loveliness appear'd as much
Her former self surpassing, as on earth
All others she surpass'd. Remorseful goads
Shot sudden through me. Each thing else, the more
Its love had late beguil'd me, now the more

I Was loathsome. On my heart so keenly smote
The bitter consciousness, that on the ground
O'erpower'd I fell: and what my state was then,
She knows who was the cause. When now my strength
Flow'd back, returning outward from the heart,
The lady, whom alone I first had seen,
I found above me. "Loose me not," she cried:
"Loose not thy hold;" and lo! had dragg'd me high
As to my neck into the stream, while she,
Still as she drew me after, swept along,
Swift as a shuttle, bounding o'er the wave.

The blessed shore approaching then was heard
So sweetly, "Tu asperges me," that I
May not remember, much less tell the sound.
The beauteous dame, her arms expanding, clasp'd
My temples, and immerg'd me, where 't was fit
The wave should drench me: and thence raising up,
Within the fourfold dance of lovely nymphs
Presented me so lav'd, and with their arm
They each did cover me. "Here are we nymphs,
And in the heav'n are stars. Or ever earth
Was visited of Beatrice, we
Appointed for her handmaids, tended on her.
We to her eyes will lead thee; but the light
Of gladness that is in them, well to scan,
Those yonder three, of deeper ken than ours,
Thy sight shall quicken." Thus began their song;
And then they led me to the Gryphon's breast,
While, turn'd toward us, Beatrice stood.
"Spare not thy vision. We have stationed thee
Before the emeralds, whence love erewhile
Hath drawn his weapons on thee." As they spake,
A thousand fervent wishes riveted
Mine eyes upon her beaming eyes, that stood
Still fix'd toward the Gryphon motionless.
As the sun strikes a mirror, even thus
Within those orbs the twofold being, shone,
For ever varying, in one figure now
Reflected, now in other. Reader! muse
How wond'rous in my sight it seem'd to mark
A thing, albeit steadfast in itself,
Yet in its imag'd semblance mutable.

Full of amaze, and joyous, while my soul
Fed on the viand, whereof still desire
Grows with satiety, the other three
With gesture, that declar'd a loftier line,
Advanc'd: to their own carol on they came
Dancing in festive ring angelical.

"Turn, Beatrice!" was their song: "O turn
Thy saintly sight on this thy faithful one,
Who to behold thee many a wearisome pace

Hath measur'd. Gracious at our pray'r vouchsafe
Unveil to him thy cheeks: that he may mark
Thy second beauty, now conceal'd." O splendour!
O sacred light eternal! who is he
So pale with musing in Pierian shades,
Or with that fount so lavishly imbued,
Whose spirit should not fail him in th' essay
To represent thee such as thou didst seem,
When under cope of the still-chiming heaven
Thou gav'st to open air thy charms reveal'd.

CANTO XXXII

Mine eyes with such an eager coveting,
Were bent to rid them of their ten years' thirst,
No other sense was waking: and e'en they
Were fenc'd on either side from heed of aught;
So tangled in its custom'd toils that smile
Of saintly brightness drew me to itself,
When forcibly toward the left my sight
The sacred virgins turn'd; for from their lips
I heard the warning sounds: "Too fix'd a gaze!"

Awhile my vision labor'd; as when late
Upon the' o'erstrained eyes the sun hath smote:
But soon to lesser object, as the view
Was now recover'd (lesser in respect
To that excess of sensible, whence late
I had perforce been sunder'd) on their right
I mark'd that glorious army wheel, and turn,
Against the sun and sev'nfold lights, their front.
As when, their bucklers for protection rais'd,
A well-rang'd troop, with portly banners curl'd,
Wheel circling, ere the whole can change their ground:
E'en thus the goodly regiment of heav'n
Proceeding, all did pass us, ere the car
Had slop'd his beam. Attendant at the wheels
The damsels turn'd; and on the Gryphon mov'd
The sacred burden, with a pace so smooth,

No feather on him trembled. The fair dame
Who through the wave had drawn me, companied
By Statius and myself, pursued the wheel,
Whose orbit, rolling, mark'd a lesser arch.

Through the high wood, now void (the more her blame,
Who by the serpent was beguil'd) I past
With step in cadence to the harmony
Angelic. Onward had we mov'd, as far
Perchance as arrow at three several flights
Full wing'd had sped, when from her station down
Descended Beatrice. With one voice
All murmur'd "Adam," circling next a plant
Despoil'd of flowers and leaf on every bough.
Its tresses, spreading more as more they rose,
Were such, as 'midst their forest wilds for height
The Indians might have gaz'd at. "Blessed thou!
Gryphon, whose beak hath never pluck'd that tree
Pleasant to taste: for hence the appetite
Was warp'd to evil." Round the stately trunk
Thus shouted forth the rest, to whom return'd
The animal twice-gender'd: "Yea: for so
The generation of the just are sav'd."
And turning to the chariot-pole, to foot
He drew it of the widow'd branch, and bound
There left unto the stock whereon it grew.

As when large floods of radiance from above
Stream, with that radiance mingled, which ascends
Next after setting of the scaly sign,
Our plants then burgeon, and each wears anew
His wonted colours, ere the sun have yok'd
Beneath another star his flamy steeds;
Thus putting forth a hue, more faint than rose,
And deeper than the violet, was renew'd
The plant, erewhile in all its branches bare.

Unearthly was the hymn, which then arose.
I understood it not, nor to the end
Endur'd the harmony. Had I the skill
To pencil forth, how clos'd th' unpitying eyes
Slumb'ring, when Syrinx warbled, (eyes that paid
So dearly for their watching,) then like painter,
That with a model paints, I might design

The manner of my falling into sleep.
But feign who will the slumber cunningly;
I pass it by to when I wak'd, and tell
How suddenly a flash of splendour rent
The curtain of my sleep, and one cries out:
"Arise, what dost thou?" As the chosen three,
On Tabor's mount, admitted to behold
The blossoming of that fair tree, whose fruit
Is coveted of angels, and doth make
Perpetual feast in heaven, to themselves
Returning at the word, whence deeper sleeps
Were broken, that they their tribe diminish'd saw,
Both Moses and Elias gone, and chang'd
The stole their master wore: thus to myself
Returning, over me beheld I stand
The piteous one, who cross the stream had brought
My steps. "And where," all doubting, I exclaim'd,
"Is Beatrice?"—"See her," she replied,
"Beneath the fresh leaf seated on its root.
Behold th' associate choir that circles her.
The others, with a melody more sweet
And more profound, journeying to higher realms,
Upon the Gryphon tend." If there her words
Were clos'd, I know not; but mine eyes had now
Ta'en view of her, by whom all other thoughts
Were barr'd admittance. On the very ground
Alone she sat, as she had there been left
A guard upon the wain, which I beheld
Bound to the twyform beast. The seven nymphs
Did make themselves a cloister round about her,
And in their hands upheld those lights secure
From blast septentrion and the gusty south.

"A little while thou shalt be forester here:
And citizen shalt be forever with me,
Of that true Rome, wherein Christ dwells a Roman
To profit the misguided world, keep now
Thine eyes upon the car; and what thou seest,
Take heed thou write, returning to that place."

Thus Beatrice: at whose feet inclin'd
Devout, at her behest, my thought and eyes,
I, as she bade, directed. Never fire,
With so swift motion, forth a stormy cloud

Leap'd downward from the welkin's farthest bound,
As I beheld the bird of Jove descending
Pounce on the tree, and, as he rush'd, the rind,
Disparting crush beneath him, buds much more
And leaflets. On the car with all his might
He struck, whence, staggering like a ship, it reel'd,
At random driv'n, to starboard now, o'ercome,
And now to larboard, by the vaulting waves.

Next springing up into the chariot's womb
A fox I saw, with hunger seeming pin'd
Of all good food. But, for his ugly sins
The saintly maid rebuking him, away
Scamp'ring he turn'd, fast as his hide-bound corpse
Would bear him. Next, from whence before he came,
I saw the eagle dart into the hull
O' th' car, and leave it with his feathers lin'd;
And then a voice, like that which issues forth
From heart with sorrow riv'd, did issue forth
From heav'n, and, "O poor bark of mine!" it cried,
"How badly art thou freighted!" Then, it seem'd,
That the earth open'd between either wheel,
And I beheld a dragon issue thence,
That through the chariot fix'd his forked train;
And like a wasp that draggeth back the sting,
So drawing forth his baleful train, he dragg'd
Part of the bottom forth, and went his way
Exulting. What remain'd, as lively turf
With green herb, so did clothe itself with plumes,
Which haply had with purpose chaste and kind
Been offer'd; and therewith were cloth'd the wheels,
Both one and other, and the beam, so quickly
A sigh were not breath'd sooner. Thus transform'd,
The holy structure, through its several parts,
Did put forth heads, three on the beam, and one
On every side; the first like oxen horn'd,
But with a single horn upon their front
The four. Like monster sight hath never seen.
O'er it methought there sat, secure as rock
On mountain's lofty top, a shameless whore,
Whose ken rov'd loosely round her. At her side,
As 't were that none might bear her off, I saw
A giant stand; and ever, and anon
They mingled kisses. But, her lustful eyes

Chancing on me to wander, that fell minion
Scourg'd her from head to foot all o'er; then full
Of jealousy, and fierce with rage, unloos'd
The monster, and dragg'd on, so far across
The forest, that from me its shades alone
Shielded the harlot and the new-form'd brute.

CANTO XXXIII

"The heathen, Lord! are come!" responsive thus,
The trinal now, and now the virgin band
Quaternion, their sweet psalmody began,
Weeping; and Beatrice listen'd, sad
And sighing, to the song', in such a mood,
That Mary, as she stood beside the cross,
Was scarce more chang'd. But when they gave her place
To speak, then, risen upright on her feet,
She, with a colour glowing bright as fire,
Did answer: "Yet a little while, and ye
Shall see me not; and, my beloved sisters,
Again a little while, and ye shall see me."

Before her then she marshall'd all the seven,
And, beck'ning only motion'd me, the dame,
And that remaining sage, to follow her.

So on she pass'd; and had not set, I ween,
Her tenth step to the ground, when with mine eyes
Her eyes encounter'd; and, with visage mild,
"So mend thy pace," she cried, "that if my words
Address thee, thou mayst still be aptly plac'd
To hear them." Soon as duly to her side
I now had hasten'd: "Brother!" she began,
"Why mak'st thou no attempt at questioning,
As thus we walk together?" Like to those
Who, speaking with too reverent an awe
Before their betters, draw not forth the voice
Alive unto their lips, befell me shell
That I in sounds imperfect thus began:
"Lady! what I have need of, that thou know'st,
And what will suit my need." She answering thus:
"Of fearfulness and shame, I will, that thou
Henceforth do rid thee: that thou speak no more,
As one who dreams. Thus far be taught of me:
The vessel, which thou saw'st the serpent break,
Was and is not: let him, who hath the blame,
Hope not to scare God's vengeance with a sop.
Without an heir for ever shall not be
That eagle, he, who left the chariot plum'd,
Which monster made it first and next a prey.
Plainly I view, and therefore speak, the stars
E'en now approaching, whose conjunction, free

From all impediment and bar, brings on
A season, in the which, one sent from God,
(Five hundred, five, and ten, do mark him out)
That foul one, and th' accomplice of her guilt,
The giant, both shall slay. And if perchance
My saying, dark as Themis or as Sphinx,
Fail to persuade thee, (since like them it foils
The intellect with blindness) yet ere long
Events shall be the Naiads, that will solve
This knotty riddle, and no damage light
On flock or field. Take heed; and as these words
By me are utter'd, teach them even so
To those who live that life, which is a race
To death: and when thou writ'st them, keep in mind
Not to conceal how thou hast seen the plant,
That twice hath now been spoil'd. This whoso robs,
This whoso plucks, with blasphemy of deed
Sins against God, who for his use alone
Creating hallow'd it. For taste of this,
In pain and in desire, five thousand years
And upward, the first soul did yearn for him,
Who punish'd in himself the fatal gust.

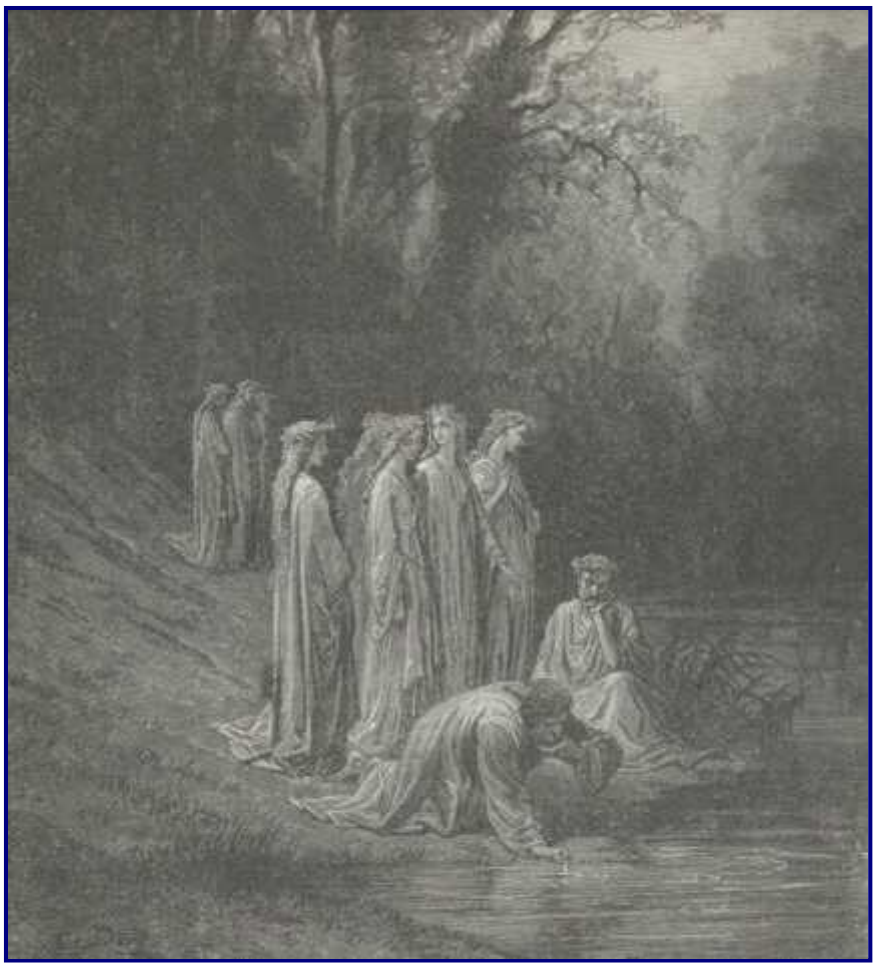
"Thy reason slumbers, if it deem this height
And summit thus inverted of the plant,
Without due cause: and were not vainer thoughts,
As Elsa's numbing waters, to thy soul,
And their fond pleasures had not dyed it dark
As Pyramus the mulberry, thou hadst seen,
In such momentous circumstance alone,
God's equal justice morally implied
In the forbidden tree. But since I mark thee
In understanding harden'd into stone,
And, to that hardness, spotted too and stain'd,
So that thine eye is dazzled at my word,
I will, that, if not written, yet at least
Painted thou take it in thee, for the cause,
That one brings home his staff inwreath'd with palm.

I thus: "As wax by seal, that changeth not
Its impress, now is stamp'd my brain by thee.
But wherefore soars thy wish'd-for speech so high
Beyond my sight, that loses it the more,
The more it strains to reach it?"—"To the end

That thou mayst know," she answer'd straight, "the school,
That thou hast follow'd; and how far behind,
When following my discourse, its learning halts:
And mayst behold your art, from the divine
As distant, as the disagreement is
'Twixt earth and heaven's most high and rapturous orb."

"I not remember," I replied, "that e'er
I was estrang'd from thee, nor for such fault
Doth conscience chide me." Smiling she return'd:
"If thou canst, not remember, call to mind
How lately thou hast drunk of Lethe's wave;
And, sure as smoke doth indicate a flame,
In that forgetfulness itself conclude
Blame from thy alienated will incurr'd.
From henceforth verily my words shall be
As naked as will suit them to appear
In thy unpractis'd view." More sparkling now,
And with retarded course the sun possess'd
The circle of mid-day, that varies still
As th' aspect varies of each several clime,
When, as one, sent in vaward of a troop
For escort, pauses, if perchance he spy
Vestige of somewhat strange and rare: so paus'd
The sev'nfold band, arriving at the verge
Of a dun umbrage hoar, such as is seen,
Beneath green leaves and gloomy branches, oft
To overbrow a bleak and alpine cliff.
And, where they stood, before them, as it seem'd,
Tigris and Euphrates both beheld,
Forth from one fountain issue; and, like friends,
Linger at parting. "O enlight'ning beam!
O glory of our kind! beseech thee say
What water this, which from one source deriv'd
Itself removes to distance from itself?"

To such entreaty answer thus was made:
"Entreat Matilda, that she teach thee this."

And here, as one, who clears himself of blame
Imputed, the fair dame return'd: "Of me
He this and more hath learnt; and I am safe
That Lethe's water hath not hid it from him."

And Beatrice: "Some more pressing care
That oft the memory 'reeves, perchance hath made
His mind's eye dark. But lo! where Eunoe cows!
Lead thither; and, as thou art wont, revive
His fainting virtue." As a courteous spirit,
That proffers no excuses, but as soon
As he hath token of another's will,
Makes it his own; when she had ta'en me, thus
The lovely maiden mov'd her on, and call'd
To Statius with an air most lady-like:
"Come thou with him." Were further space allow'd,
Then, Reader, might I sing, though but in part,
That beverage, with whose sweetness I had ne'er
Been sated. But, since all the leaves are full,
Appointed for this second strain, mine art
With warning bridle checks me. I return'd
From the most holy wave, regenerate,
If 'en as new plants renew'd with foliage new,
Pure and made apt for mounting to the stars.