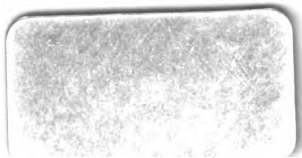


THE
"INFERNO" OF DANTE,
IN ENGLISH VERSE
BY
BRUCE WHYTE.

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Vet. Ital. IV B. 312



THE
"INFERNO" OF DANTE.
A FREE TRANSLATION.

A FREE TRANSLATION,
IN VERSE,
OF THE
"INFERNO" OF DANTE,

WITH A
PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE AND NOTES.

BY
BRUCE WHYTE, ADVOCATE,
AUTHOR OF
"A HISTORY OF THE ROMANCE TONGUES AND THEIR LITERATURE."

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E R R A T A .

- ◆
- Canto VII., page 29, line 28. Read—
“Then vouchsafe, my gracious master, to relate,”
Instead of
“Then vouchsafe, my master, to relate.”
- Canto XVI., page 70, line 26. Read—
“Seeing he marks it with so fix'd a view,”
Instead of
“Seeing he makes it with so fix'd a view.”
- Page 85, note 2. Read—
“Laggia caschero,” for “Laggio cachero io.”
- Page 119, note 3. Read—
“Cosi foss ei da che pure esser dee ;
Che piu mi gravera com piu m' attempo.”
Instead of
“Cosi foss' a da che pure còser dee ;
Che più ni graverà com' piu m' attempo.”
- Canto XXXII., page 144, line 26. Read—
“whose teeth betray'd,
“Like beaks of famished storks*, their woful plight.”
(* La Fontaine's fable, “Le Renard et la Cigogne.”)
Instead of
“stone teeth betray'd,
“Chattering like apes their miserable plight.”
- Canto XXXIII., page 152, line 14. Read—
“Learn that this Ptolomy (our prison's name),”
Instead of
“Learn that this Ptolomy (our prisoner's name).”

PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE.

It has been the singular fortune of Dante to have suffered more from the extravagant eulogium of most of his Italian commentators than from the severest criticism of foreigners. There is not a nauseous or indecent allusion, an obscure ellipsis, a prolix and irrelative description, a scholastic subtlety, a quaint or puerile conceit, in the "Divine Comedy" which the Biagiolis of Italy have not attempted to justify, which they do not extol, nay sometimes propose for imitation. What has been the consequence? The majority of readers, who peruse a poem not as a task but for amusement, finding these defects (and they are numerous) obtruded on notice and the objects of panegyric, are apt to infer that the poem contains nothing really worthy of admiration, and they discard it as a monstrous production of the middle age. Disgusted with the ogives, the minute and clustered columns, the niches overloaded with statues in some Gothic cathedral, they leave it without bestowing a thought on its grandeur and solidity. This is precisely what has happened to Dante. It is high time therefore to allow him to speak for himself, to read his poem without the aid of this class of commentators. We would especially warn the student against that love, or rather abuse, of allegory, which seems to have infested them like a contagious disease. Everybody knows that the three monsters which obstruct the poet's ascent up Mount Sion (if indeed that was its name) are a lion, a panther, and a she-wolf. Now these, the commentators assure us, are mere types—the first of ferocity, the second of sensuality, the third of avarice. Presumptuous as it may appear in an ultramontane to question the interpretation of so formidable a phalanx of diviners, we conceive that we are

justified in doing so by the authority of the poet himself, by the gratuitous and fanciful nature of the hypothesis, and by the danger of having recourse to allegory when the text bears a clear and definite sense. But it is evident that the force of these objections depends in a great measure on the view which we take of the "Divine Comedy." If it be considered as a mere fiction, every reader would be at liberty to put his own construction on it; it would be a tale without a moral, a vision which might be variously interpreted without compromising personages or things. Thus considered, the transcendent merits of the work vanish. If we would duly appreciate its importance, we must for a moment forget that it is fictitious. We must assume that Dante actually visited the eternal regions, that each incident is a literal fact. Why then allegorize the beasts in question? in other words, why sacrifice the savage guardians of the mountain to the vague phantoms of imagination? Virgil, alluding to the deliverance of Italy by Candella Scala, lord of Verona, says distinctly of the she-wolf—

" Questa la cacerà per ogni villa
 Fin che l' avra remessa nello' inferno
 La onde invidia primo departilla."

Canto i.

Can there be a doubt then that all the three monsters had been despatched from Hell by Lucifer to prevent virtuous and pious souls ascending the mountain of bliss? Why have recourse to allegory? The beasts amply suffice to guard it. If the figure means anything, it implies that Dante was impeded in his ascent by the vices typified, yet not one of his numerous biographers affords the least reason to suppose that he was addicted to any of them. He was vindictive and irascible in the extreme, but not ferocious. Instead of being voluptuous, his whole life was a series of hardships and privations; he himself feelingly adverts to the misery of being

dependent on the bread of strangers for our support. He had not a tincture of avarice in his character. Consequently, the above vices could not have impeded his ascent.

In the name of common sense then, let us interpret the words in their literal meaning; and when the poet specifies a lion, a panther, and she-wolf, let us conclude that they were such indeed. We have dwelt the longer on this point because this very passion for allegory has induced most of the commentators to denaturalize one of the noblest and most interesting personages in the poem. We refer to their endeavour to persuade us that Beatrice is the type or symbol of theology. As portrayed by Dante, she is a model of virtue, tenderness, constancy, intellectual wisdom, and unremitting solicitude concerning his welfare. At an early period of their lives, a mutual passion united their hearts; and, notwithstanding his expulsion from Florence, embittered by the confiscation of his paternal fortune, her affection for him never suffered the slightest diminution; it seems on the contrary to have increased with his misfortunes, and to have survived her premature death. In Paradise she watches over all the vicissitudes incident to his career—she anticipates impending dangers; consults with her fellow spirits, Rachel and Lucia, on the best means of averting them; she quits her celestial mansion and visits the infernal regions in quest of a spirit capable of conducting him in the perilous expedition which he was permitted, or destined, to accomplish; in a word, she becomes his guardian angel. Such was Beatrice. But when she is allegorized into the type of theology, the whole interest which she inspired vanishes; the brilliant colours of the portrait fade, and nothing remains but a meagre outline which affects us no more than a scholastic treatise on that science. It is scarcely credible to what absurdities this abuse of allegory has carried certain learned professors and popular commentators.

We have before our eyes an edition of the "Divine Comedy" published by Biagioli. In his comments on the xvith Canto of the "Inferno," in which Virgil demands the belt of his protégé, and throws it into a torrent as a lure or signal to Geryon to approach the bank where they stood, in order to transport them over the gulf, the scholiast assures us that this belt denotes humility, that it is the type of virtue. But as the passage is a curiosity in its kind, we cite it in his own words:—"Sogni parendomi tutte le spiegazioni, che si danno dagli spositori di questo luogo, mi son posto a medilarvi sopra sin che mi s'è offerta da se la verità. Ora posso, salvo a rivocar l'opinion mia, se altra migliore mi si ponga innanzi, con certezza affermare, che la corda che aveva veramente cinta a se d'intorno il Poeta, significa l'umiltà con la quale si dee l'uomo accostare alla scienza, perocche ella è colei, *che umilia ogni* superbo. E questa corda se la cinse il Poeta quando, accortosi d'esser nell'errore, si propose di lasciarlo, e di sposarsi alla scienza."—"La D. Commedia di Dante Alig., coi Comenti di G. Biagioli." Inf. cant. xvi. n. 108, p. 294.

Taking our leave of the commentators, we proceed to the more agreeable task of appreciating the value of this extraordinary production by its own merits. We have said enough to convince the reader that we have no desire to disguise or slur over its defects. We frankly admit that its author is, at once, the most prolix and elliptical of Italian poets. Endued with unparalleled powers of description, he often indulges them to excess, regardless whether they are apposite or not; and, provided the object depicted starts palpably from the canvass, he frequently invests it with revolting, and occasionally with indecent accessories. However inconsistent it may appear, this redundancy by no means excludes the opposite defect, frequent obscurity resulting from ellipsis which, if it impart great force to his versification, sometimes makes it the vehicle of enigmas. If

this criticism be well founded, how, it may be asked, could the "Divine Comedy" be entitled to the unanimous praise which has been bestowed on it by the most competent judges in Europe? How could it have survived the fourteenth century as fresh, as much admired, and as frequently quoted as at that period? Our answer is: that it abounds with beauties of the first order; beauties so rare and original, that its defects, like the spots in the sun's disk, only render its lustre more brilliant. Greatly indebted as he was to the Greek and Roman masters of epic song, the "Divine Comedy," in conception, in construction, in the nature, passions, and qualities of its spirits, in the analogy which exists between the crimes and punishments, is not only a new kind of epopee, more sublime, though less exciting, than the "Iliad," or the "Æneid," but is incomparably more interesting to the human species. There is yet another circumstance which characterises the condemned spirits, the merit of which inclusively belongs to Dante. Each of them is compelled to become his own accuser, and to reveal the whole of his guilt—an aggravation of suffering greater perhaps than the specific punishment. Yet no part of the "Inferno" has been more severely condemned, than his conception and account of its spirits. Instead of being spiritual, it has been objected, they are gross and corporeal, differing in nothing from what we may suppose they were whilst yet alive. They fight, they bleed, they give and receive wounds, they roll enormous masses; and Virgil himself, more than once, transports his ward in his arms over immense precipices and yawning gulfs. All this is true; but does it follow that the reproach is just? We think not. Be it remembered that Scripture affords little or no information concerning the intermediate state of the soul, that is, previous to the last judgment. It was, therefore, competent to the poet to endue his spirits with what powers,

faculties, passions, and sentiments, and to invest them with what forms and integuments as suited his purpose, and made them susceptible of the punishments allotted to them. We admit that nothing can be conceived more irreconcilable with popular notions of spirits. That, however, is no solid objection. To be of any avail, it must be proved, that this popular belief is warranted either by revealed religion or uniform tradition. If the soul, after death, be a mere shadow, it is difficult to imagine how it could be susceptible of physical pain. If it cannot be contested that in all the above respects the "Inferno" (for with that is our chief concern) is quite original, the motive of Dante's descent into the infernal regions is equally so, and greatly enhances its merit. A moment's reflection will suffice to convince us that such a motive could never have occurred to Homer or Virgil. The descent of their respective heroes was rather an excursion of curiosity, a poetical episode, than a matter of necessity, having either a predestined, a moral, or spiritual object for its cause. The motive of Dante's descent was, on the contrary, pious, urgent, sanctioned by Providence, and quite independent of his will. In the xiith Canto, it is distinctly stated, that it was for the salvation of his soul. Fully to comprehend that passage, we must advert to the civil and religious state of Italy, at the period when he composed his work. The most authentic historians are agreed, that she was a prey to every kind of oppression, to the animosities of inveterate factions, and, above all, to the tyranny and impostures of the Papal court, so notorious that Christianity retained little else than the name. No one need be informed that every species of extortion was practised, every pretext employed, in order to furnish the means for gratifying the ambitious or avaricious projects of certain pontiffs. The profligate sale of indulgences and dispensations, the undisguised acts of simony, the usurped power of

granting absolution for crimes, whether perpetrated or *in futurum*, these and many other enormities characteristic of the times, are so notorious, and so well attested, that it would be an insult to the reader to insist on them. The consequence was, that all those who, by education and reflection, were capable of detecting the perversion of the great precepts of religion, began to be staggered in their belief, and to regard the Church as an asylum for tonsured hypocrites, and Christianity as a pretext for every species of fraud. We will not affirm that Dante went to this extreme; but we cannot peruse the introduction to the first Canto of the "Inferno," coupled with his abjuration of the Guelphs, a faction to which his whole family belonged, we cannot read the discourse which Beatrice addressed to Virgil, without suspecting that her beloved began to waver, and that that very circumstance induced her to impose on him the task of visiting Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, in order that he might acquire ocular demonstration of the great truths of the Christian faith. Proceeding to what we have termed the architecture of the infernal circles, we find additional reasons for admiring the inventive and original genius of their author. Here he had no precedent, no aid, no competitor. Sublime as the conception of so many concentric circles unquestionably was, it becomes still more so when we reflect that all of them point to, and terminate in, a common centre, since called the centre of gravity. If this was not inspired, it may justly be regarded as one of the happiest suggestions of genius, for it preceded the discovery of science by many years. But besides inventing a new species of epopee, besides being the architect of the grandest fabric ever devised by a poet, Dante enriched his native tongue with various poetical beauties, which, if they do not surpass, equal at least the noblest effusions of the classic muse. He did more than that: he elevated the Italian to the first rank of modern

tongues. In the "Inferno," all is personified, all is figurative. The celebrated portico of Hell affords one of the sublimest examples of prosopopœia to be met with in ancient or modern, sacred or profane, poetry. We select another, less known but not less admirable: it is the personification of a whirlwind. Many other poets have described the ravages which it causes to men, beasts, and the face of nature, but it was reserved for Dante to personify it in verses that may compete in vigour and pictorial effect to any in the language:

"Gli rami schianta, abatte, e porla i fiori,
Dinanzi polveroso va superbo,
E fa fuggir le fière e gli pastori."

"Inf.," cant. ix. v. 70—72.

To convey to us an idea of the utter darkness of the lair of the she-wolf, who obstructed his passage over the holy mountain, he describes it thus: "*Mi repingeva la dove 'l sol tace.*" The billows of the bloody river in Hell announce to the poet, that they discharge themselves into burning Phlegethon (Canto xiv). The thorns in the forest described in the xiiiith Canto, address him, and give an account of their respective metamorphoses. The colossal statue which he places on a mountain in Creta, inimitable emblem of Time, or the different ages of the world, sheds torrents of bloody tears with which it nourishes the infernal rivers. If prosopopœia be justly regarded as the life and soul of poetry, that of Italy owes more in that respect to Dante than to all her subsequent poets put together. We have already alluded to his unrivalled powers of description, and to the excess with which he indulged them. Two remarkable instances of both may be noticed: his account of the arsenal of Venice, and of those parts of Italy which border on Romagna. It must be allowed that two-thirds of both are digressive. The first, consisting of several verses, has no other connexion with the pit of boiling

pitch, which it is intended to illustrate, than the use of that extract in both. But Dante takes occasion to specify every operation that usually occurs in the arsenal. Digressive and gratuitous as the details are, they are described in such graphic and pictorial terms, that in perusing them we seem to be spectators of the whole, and pause not to consider whether they are relative or extraneous. In the xxviiith Canto, a spirit anxiously inquires concerning the state of Romagna, his native province, and the poet gives him an exact account of the tyranny that oppressed it, and launches out in not less than eighteen verses into a description of Ravenna, Polentia, and several other independent states. At present, when a complete change has taken place in the extent and component parts of the ancient provinces of Italy, this account has all the appearance of a digression. But the historian who investigates the vicissitudes of each, and undertakes to exhibit a faithful narrative of their political and territorial extent, may probably refer to Dante as an authority to prove that the above states were formerly comprised under the direct and paramount dominion of Romagna. In point of local description of Italy, such as it was when he composed his poem, the "Inferno" is absolutely a map. But graphic as it is, there is another class of objects in the delineation of which he stands without a competitor, ancient or modern. That of the condemned spirits, beginning with Lucifer, entitles him to the same eminence as a portrait painter as Raphael or Van-Dyck. In the sister art his invariable object is, no matter at what expense, to place the thing described in such vivid colours before our eyes that it becomes, as it were, palpable to sense. It cannot be disguised, however, that to effect this, he sometimes disgusts us with revolting, degrading, and even with indecent allusions. A notable instance occurs of the second in the description of Lucifer.

It is impossible, we think, to conceive anything more sublime than the general features of the portrait. Represented as the most beautiful of created beings before his fall, he is plunged, in consequence of his rebellion, into a measureless frozen well, where his bust alone is visible, and the remaining portion of his enormous bulk is lost in the opposite hemisphere. With his three faces he views, contemplates, and torments the three divisions of the earth, as then computed, and under each face are deposited two prodigious wings, which, when in motion, give him the appearance of an enormous windmill agitated by a gale of wind. Terrified at his approach, when thrust headlong down from Heaven, the continent which once occupied the region of Hell started to the earth, and the mountain now called Purgatory leapt into the sea. Happy had the description terminated here! But no—Lucifer sheds torrents of tears, or rather blood:

. " e per tre menti
Gocciava 'l pianto e sanguinosa bava."

Never surely was so grand and fearful a picture debased by so degrading an incident. But the charge becomes infinitely more serious when a revolting or indecent image presents itself, such as the description of Thais in the xviiiith Canto, that of the impostors in the xxth, that of the signal given by Malacoda to the subordinate demons in the xxist, the latter at once so disgusting and ludicrous, that we are wholly at a loss to account for it in a poet well versed in the classics, and who repeatedly assures us that he had selected Virgil as his model and guide. It would however be extreme injustice to Dante were we to infer from those examples that all or most of his descriptions are liable to this reproach. Many of them are equally distinguished by elevation of ideas and sentiments, and by purity of

style. If some were suggested by the classics, he rarely fails to introduce some important ingredient, which, if it does not entirely absolve him from the charge of plagiarism, imparts such an air of novelty to the type as makes it his own by adoption. The colossal statue, to which we have alluded, is a proof. Such an emblem of Time is not rare in the poets of antiquity; the distinction of the different ages of the world by metals, has become proverbial, but Dante was the first who represented the right foot as composed of "terra cotta," indicating the fragility of human affairs. For one instance of a revolting character we could cite twenty remarkable for pathos and delicacy of sentiment. The story of "Francesca di Rimini," is too celebrated to require to be quoted; the horrors accumulated in that of "Ugolino," are equally notorious, they form a complete tragedy in themselves, and illustrate its definition to its full extent. In these there is not a word which the most fastidious critic would wish to be retrenched. That remark applies with equal truth to the description of Capanëus, in the xivth Canto, one of the seven kings who, according to Statius, besieged Thebes, and to that of Farinata, a leader of the Ghibbeline faction, delineated in the xth. Both appear to have been men of unconquerable pride; but they are so admirably distinguished by the poet that they exhibit as striking a contrast as if they had been actuated by two opposite passions. Capanëus in a frenzy of rage, braves Jupiter himself, ridicules his pretensions to omnipotence, and concludes with a taunt, that he had been obliged to have recourse to Vulcan for the bolt with which he had effected his triumph. Farinata, on the contrary, maintains a proud and silent dignity. He deigns not to utter a single complaint; but, elevating his head and breast from the tomb in which he is immersed, he manifests, by his looks and gesture, his utter contempt for the demons and

their threats of vengeance. The same Canto furnishes us with another, but very different confirmation of our remark. In the same sepulchre with Farinata is immersed another spirit of the family of Cavalcante, who, as Boccaccio informs us, left Guido, a surviving son, a youth of great promise, and wholly addicted to philosophical pursuits, to whom he was tenderly attached. As soon as the father had recognized Dante, he anxiously demands of him news of Guido, aware that they were united by ties of the purest friendship. He asks the poet why the latter did not accompany him in his descent. He answers that he was totally under the orders of Virgil.

The single word "ebbe" awakens all the fears of the father, and inferring from it that the youth no longer existed, he sinks into the flames and appears no more. It would be worse than superfluous to enlarge on the exquisite pathos of this incident; but we cannot refrain from observing that it is a signal proof of what has been sometimes contested, that Dante was endued with great sensibility, and that no man knew better than he how to touch a chord that could rouse the finest feelings of the heart. But it was not solely as an accurate observer of the intellectual faculties that he merited the title of a moral philosopher; he was no less attentive to the phenomena of the physical world, whether evident to the eye, or manifested by their influence on the mind. A most beautiful example of the latter occurs in the xxxth Canto, in which are narrated the punishments allotted to coiners of base money. Among them is one whom he terms Master Adam, who is afflicted with a dropsy, and unquenchable thirst, rendered still more intolerable by his recollection of the streams and fountains abounding in his native land, all of which he imagines are actually flowing at his feet. The passage is so remarkable that we make no apology for quoting it word for word:—

"Io ebbi vivo assai di quel oh' i' volli,
 E ora, lasso! un goocial d' aoqua bramo,
 Li ruscelletti, che de' verdi colli
 Del Casentin discendon giuso in Arno.
 Facendo i lor canali e freddi e molli,
 Sempre mi stanno innanzi, e non indorus,
 Che l' immagine lor via piu m' asciuga
 Che 'l male ond' io nel volto mi disoarno."

"Inf." canto xxx.

If our campaigns in Egypt, and the researches of men of science in the deserts of Africa, have rendered this phenomena familiar to us, it was little known, and less noted, at the period when our poet wrote. What the French term "mirage" may therefore be reckoned among the inspirations of genius, when thus graphically described in a work of the thirteenth century. How attentive an observer he was of men and their various classes and occupations, to say nothing of inanimate objects, the similes in the "Divine Comedy," more especially in the "Inferno," amply attest. In that respect he yields not the palm to Homer himself. Yet no part of the "Divine Comedy" has been so severely criticised as this. Like Homer, he frequently derives his illustrations from the meanest class of society, or from the most common accidents of life, or from animals apparently the least adapted to aid the flight of imagination. What then? If the subject be apt and illustrative, a genuine poet knows how to ennoble it. If it present the principal idea more forcibly and clearly to the mind of the reader, the more familiar the illustration, the more readily we acquiesce in its truth. But over refinement rejects this reasoning. We have become as aristocratic in criticism as in questions of pedigree, and the poet is actually deprived of half his natural resources. When Dante compares certain spirits peering and scrutinizing his features in the obscure atmosphere of their abyss, to a purblind

tailor threading his needle, our modern Zoili scout the simile, not as inapposite, but because it is homely. Again, in the xxiind Canto, where cheats of different kinds are immersed in a lake of boiling pitch, some of them ascend to the surface, merely showing their heads through fear of the impending demons. These he compares to frogs, who warily mount to the surface of a pool, only showing their muzzles. What a sinking in poetry! What bathos! Be it so. But so long as it conveys to us a clear and very striking elucidation of the main fact, we congratulate the poet on having selected it.

Two questions still remain to be discussed: the first is, whether Dante may be regarded as the inventor of the literary idiom of Italy? If not, what important improvements he introduced into it, especially adapted to the exigencies of poetry? As to the first question, it might suffice to observe that he had no such pretension. He positively assures us, that long before the middle of the thirteenth century, when he flourished, Italy possessed many indigenous poets, whom he honoured with particular praise, and awarded them a place in his poem, "De Vulgari Eloquio."—Canto x. Still the question occurs, is it certain that these poets invented or employed a language essentially different from the popular dialects, and exclusively appropriated to poetry? Our answer is, that neither the one nor the other can be positively affirmed, strong probability is all we can adduce. That the Romance began to be employed in literary compositions at a very early period is indisputable. Indeed, it may be asserted without a figure, that if it did not supersede the use of the Latin in its decrepitude, it supported the latter during the middle age. The invasion of Italy by the barbarians, the Bulgarians, the Allemanni, the Lombards, &c., far from being injurious to the vulgar tongue, confirmed and extended its empire. For there is good reason for believing that these hordes,

both at the respective periods of invasion, and long after their establishment in Italy, were wholly destitute of letters, and that they insensibly adopted the Italian Romance. The code of laws published by the Lombards, instead of being composed in their vernacular tongue, is replete with words and locutions borrowed from the former. Since the reign of Luitprand its language may be termed the Romance badly Latinized. But the advance of the vulgar tongue towards a grammatical state must have been slow and gradual.

The first step, as far as we know, was made in or about the sixth century. St. Jerome assures us that Fortunatianus, Bishop of Aquileia, composed a commentary on the Evangelists, "In Brevi ac Rustico Sermone," for the use of his flock—"St. Jerome de Viris Illustribus." The clergy, bishops as well as deacons, studied and taught it. Mayer, in his "Annals of Flanders," states that Eligius, Bishop of Momolen, was elected to the episcopal see on account of his sanctity, and because he cultivated the Romance as well as the German. He died in 665. The lives of several holy men, founders of monasteries, or priors of convents, were composed in the same idiom. The biographer of St. Adhaldard, Prior of Corbie, speaks of him in these words: "Qui si vulgari, id est romanâ linguâ loqueretur, omnium aliarum putaretur inscius: Nec mirum, erat denique in omnibus liberaliter educatus."—"Bolland Acta Sancta," t. i., p. 126. We forbear adding to the list, because all the authorities have been cited in our history of the Romance tongues and their literature, to which we refer the reader, and because this much controverted question is there fully discussed. But although it is incontestable that the vulgar tongue in Italy and other parts of Latin Europe, was cultivated and taught by the bishops, clergy, and monks, during the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, we must presume that they also continued to preach their

homilies in the miserable jargon which then passed for Latin, seeing that Charlemagne was under the necessity of issuing his famous Capitular, and the general councils of Tours and Rheims their decrees, enjoining them henceforward to instruct the people in their vernacular dialects. Under such auspices they could not fail to be divested of some of the anomalies and solecisms incident to patois; they must have acquired sufficient consistency to enable them to become the medium of religious instruction, of biography and historical tracts. Of this opinion was Dante. The value and merit of his treatise, "De Vulgari Eloquentia," consist in proving that the idiom which he calls "lingua cardinalis, aulica, et curialis," was not the invention of any particular country, province, or city, but a selection made from all the popular dialects, whether in Italy or elsewhere, and gradually brought to a grammatical state in each by men of genius and science.—Lib. i., c. 16.

We are far, however, from insinuating that the Romance advanced *pari passu* towards a grammatical condition, in all the countries comprised under the generic term of Latin Europe. Many circumstances concurred which accelerated its progress in one, many which retarded it in another. The Provençal is a striking instance of the first, the Italian of the second. Whilst Italy was a prey to the simultaneous or successive invasions of barbarians, France was for nearly six centuries free from the scourge, albeit frequently distracted by civil discord and the change of dynasties.

At length an event took place in the ninth century, which more than any other contributed to the ascendancy of the Provençal. The separation of Aquitania, comprising a vast extent of territory on the east and west of the Rhone, and the establishment of a distinct kingdom in the south of France, accomplished by the ambitious and highly gifted Boson, effected a revolution as complete in the language as

in the political situation of the country. It was a schism in the empire, not the irruption of barbarians. For Boson, indebted in the first instance for the success of his long meditated conquest to the superiority of his military talents, had recourse to other means for civilizing and assuring the fidelity of his subjects. He was the first statesman since the extinction of ancient Rome who conceived the noble project of uniting them by the bond of a common, grammatical, and homogeneous language. The benevolent motive of Charlemagne became a political maxim with Boson.

To realize it, he is reported to have founded in fact, if not in name, an academy, to which in the commencement none but the sons of noble families were admitted, and those alone who had received certain elements of education, and evinced some indications of poetical genius. Their first and most arduous task was to collate the different dialects of the Romance which pervaded the south of France, to ascertain in what particulars they disagreed, and having obtained correct notions of the anomalies and solecisms which chiefly prevented a fusion, they proceeded gradually to introduce such simple rules of composition as became in process of time characteristic of the Gai-Saber. If it be asked whether Boson or his nobles had a model in view when they effectuated this revolution, we answer, that Castrucci and the most authentic historians authorize us to affirm that they had no other than necessity, the most powerful indeed of all masters. To be of general use, that is to crown the great object of the founders' policy, it is evident that no complicated system of syntax or prosody could have been attempted. Both the one and the other were in all probability beyond their competence. That in imitation of the Latin grammar, they may have endeavoured to reduce the verbs to three regular conjugations, to assign its proper functions to each tense, and to make their persons correspond with the subjects, all this may be admitted: but

their poetry is very far from evincing that their efforts were crowned with success. We venture to affirm that there is not a verb in the Gai-Saber which does not present different and irreconcilable forms in its infinitive as well as the other moods and tenses. The persons do not regularly conform to the number of subjects; the substantive verb itself assumes in the present of the infinitive three or four anomalies, *esser, ester, ster,* and *er*; the conjugation of the possessive verb, as given by Raynouard, elicits no less variety. With all its defects, however, the Gai-Saber owed much to the academy. It introduced a fixed rule for the government of words in and out of regime, distinct tenses indicating the modifications of time, the formation of the future by its natural elements, the present of *avere* and the infinitive of other verbs, the invention of the patriarchal signs EN and NA for the distinction of sex, and finally the establishment of rules for adapting metrical partitions to the notes of the gamut, the indispensable associates of their verse. It cannot be imagined that such an example could have been lost on the neighbouring states; least of all on the Italians, who were for a time under the sovereignty of Bosen.

The brilliant but short-lived reign of the Gai-Saber excited their emulation. They studied, imitated, and composed in it, but as generally happens to the apes of novelty, they more frequently adopted its defects than its beauties. Under this fascination (and it continued for several years) the Italian was on the point of becoming a mere dialect of the Provençal. Fortunately, three memorable events prevented the catastrophe: first, the rapid decay of the Gai-Saber; secondly, the reign of Frederic II. in Sicily; thirdly, the apparition of Dante in the 13th century.

1st. When Provence became the seat of a distinct kingdom, when a new language had been adopted by the court, by the nobility, by all who cultivated poetry either

as a recreation or as the price of their admission into the academy, the Gai-Saber could not fail to acquire an ascendancy over the other members of the family who were destitute of similar advantages—that is the natural consequence of a grammatical standard. We have no intention however of overrating the qualities or disguising the defects of the Gai-Saber. We admit that the rules introduced by the academy were important, but they were more than counterbalanced by adverse circumstances. They left the troubadours at complete liberty to mutilate, dislocate, and corrupt the vocabulary of the language. To the radical consonants of the infinitives of Latin verbs, they appeared to have had especial enmity; hence the number of monosyllables with which their coblas and canzoni abound. It is indeed no exaggeration to say, that many of their words are so emasculated (pardon the phrase), that they seem to stagger under their own weakness. There is not a word borrowed by them from the Latin, or any other foreign tongue, but affords proofs of a similar syncope. Witness the following:—

Auire of *audire*,
Beire of *bibere*,
Rire of *ridere*,
Creire of *credere*,
Caer of *cadere*,
Dire of *dicere*,
Taer or *taire* of *tacere*,
Far and *faire* of *facere*,
Traer of *Tradere*, &c., &c.

The infinitives of verbs having suffered such elisions, it necessarily followed that the same, nay, infinitely greater corruptions must have occurred in the formation of their tenses and persons. For abundant examples, we refer the reader to the “Grammaire Romane” of the late Mr. Raynouard.

How much the versification of the troubadours must have suffered from these causes in vigour, imitative power, in a word, in metrical harmony, is evident. Are we not then justified in asserting that the Gai-Saber carried in itself the seeds of its own decay? However that may be, we admit that these circumstances alone would not sufficiently account for its rapid decay, for, at the utmost, it only lasted two centuries. But there were other, and far more important causes, which accelerated its fall. After the death of Boson and his son, a lamentable change took place in the constitution as well as the duties of the academy. When its doors were open to the admission of both sexes, to jongleurs as well as troubadours, to libertines, who coveted an entry within its walls solely for the purpose of obtaining a diploma for the commission of vice, the Gai-Saber totally changed its character. We will not assert that the admission of the fair sex diverted the attention of the academy from the care and superintendence of the literary idiom, but we have little doubt that it mainly contributed to the change. With the ladies, wives or daughters of the noblest families in Provence, courts of love (as they were termed) were introduced, to whose decision were referred the most immoral, the most subtle, and metaphysical questions. With scarcely an exception, the award of the ladies was in favour of the most profligate appellant. Upon the whole, the wonder is, not that the Gai-Saber should have lost its vogue in less than two centuries, but that it should have survived the death of its founder. For a time it certainly fascinated the early Italian poets; but in proportion as it decayed their ardour diminished; and they were compelled to have recourse to their own resources. Instead of servile imitators, they became original. Yet writers of no slight authority, especially the late Mr. Raynouard, would persuade us that the Provençal gave birth to Italian poetry!

2dly. The second circumstance to which we have alluded, as favourable to the emancipation of the Italian from a foreign yoke, appears at first sight highly improbable. How can it be supposed that a foreign despot, after having achieved the conquest of Sicily, would have co-operated in the development of its vulgar tongue, and patronized its poets? If that were a fair statement of the question, we should be puzzled how to answer it. But Frederic II. was not a foreign despot. Sicily, and a considerable portion of the continent, had been conquered by his grandfather, Henry VI. His father succeeded to it; and, though expelled from the latter in consequence of his tyranny and oppression, he still retained the sovereignty of Sicily, where he found a refuge. His son, of a very different character, was educated, perhaps born, in Palermo, where he had imbibed the Italian with his nurse's milk; he is celebrated as a poet, and he composed his verses in that idiom*.

Still, however, he fostered and meditated the reconquest of Italy, and with that view he endeavoured, by every possible means, to ingratiate himself with the people. He invited men of rank and influence to his court, and by a natural fellow-feeling, he especially patronized and rewarded indigenous poets.

As a pretender to the imperial crown of Italy, he could not but regard Boson and the other competitors for that prize as implacable enemies, and to that circumstance we must ascribe the fact, that the Provençal never attained a sure footing in his dominions, though it may for some time have exercised a certain influence on the Sicilian bards. The best proof we can adduce of the correctness of the preceding statement, is what Dante himself affords, attesting that during the reign of Frederic, the whole of Italian poetry

* "Raccolta di Allacci e di Giunti."

had assumed the name of Sicilian; and it is indubitable that the few specimens of it that survive were composed in that island.—“*De Vulgari Eloquentia*,” t. i., c. 12.

We may confidently infer from the united authority of Allacci, Giunti, Crescembeni, and Tiraboschi, that the first Sicilian poet who composed in the idiom so eulogized by Dante, was called Agatone Drusi, a native of Palermo, whose family seem to have inherited his talent. Of Drusi's poetry nothing unfortunately remains. Three indefatigable collectors have, however, discovered and transmitted to us a specimen, or rather an extract, of one of his countrymen, and nearly contemporary, who was called Cuillo d'Alcamo. Allacci assigns him to the beginning of the twelfth century. He quotes the following verses addressed by the poet to his mistress:—

“ Se tanto avere donassi mi quanto
E par ajunta quanto a lo sala dino,
Toccare-me non poteria la mano.”

The extract terminates with a distich:—

“ Per te non aio abente nocte e die
Pensando pur di voi madonna mia.”

However remote these verses may appear from the aulic and courtly idiom so much eulogized by Dante, they suffice to prove that even at that early period an idiom existed far removed from patois; and that a scheme of prosody had been invented essentially founded on three principles,—the pause, accent, and rhyme. They also manifest that in Palermo, at least, (the native place of Cuillo,) they had begun to imitate, grossly indeed, some rules of Latin syntax; the use of the subjunctive mood of verbs for example, immediately preceded by the conjunction “*se*,” the adoption of the locution “*nocte et die*,” and of the reciprocal adverbs “*tanto et quanto*,” in form, sense, and construction, purely Latin.

It must, on the other hand, be admitted, that they induce a suspicion that the Provençal was by no means a stranger at Palermo. The adjunction of pronouns to the different persons of verbs, a practice so prevalent and so notorious in the Gai-Saber, leaves little room for doubt on the subject.

Before we proceed further, we beg leave to make some general observations on the prosody invented or adopted by the early Italian poets, and the innumerable changes and modifications of the vulgar tongue which their verses exhibit. We think it highly probable that the Gai-Saber first suggested to them the use of the pause, accent, and rhyme, but we are convinced that they employed those principles according to their own notions of metrical harmony. If they cannot be said to have invented an idiom positively new, they effected such a change in the vocabulary of the popular dialects as almost entitles them to the praise of inventors. In that respect each poet was unrestricted; they added, retrenched, and dislocated letters; they prolonged and curtailed the different parts of speech; they new modelled the terminations of words just as suited the position of the accent or pause. Keeping in mind these remarks, we continue our references.

We have said that Frederic II. was himself a poet, and we may add that, as well as we can judge from what has survived of his contemporary poets, he surpassed them all both in style and sentiment. The Giunti have preserved the only surviving specimen of his muse: it is a sonnet addressed to his mistress:—

“ Poiche ti piace, amore,
Ch' io deggia trovare:
Faronde mia possanza
Ch' io vengna a compimento.
Dato haggio lo mio core
In voi, madonna, amare;

Et tutta mia speranza
 In vostro piacimento.
 Da voi, donna valente,
 Ch' eo v' amo dolcemente;
 E piace a voi ch' eo hagaia intendimento.
 Valimento mi date, donna fina!
 Che lo meo core adesso a voi s' inchina."

Here, if we mistake not, are positive indications of progress and improvements in the language. For the first time we perceive an attempt to elongate the monosyllables of the vulgar dialects, enabling them to serve the purposes of dactyls, such as "deggia" instead of "debba," "haggio," of "ho," a substitution most favourable to the movement intended to be imparted to the verse. This sonnet also exhibits a marked improvement in the position of the accent and pause, the former falling on syllables that could not be pronounced without it; the latter necessarily occasioned by the penultimate syllable of certain words. One single verse in the sonnet illustrates both—"Che lo meo *core adesso* a voi s' inchina."

Contemporary with Frederic, and one of the most distinguished of his Sicilian subjects, was a lady of the name of Monna Nina, justly celebrated for her genius, her tenderness, and as the first of her sex, in Italy at least, who had devoted herself to the muses. With a single specimen of both qualities we intend to close our reference to the Italian poets of the 12th and beginning of the 13th centuries, referring however to our work on the Romance tongues for several other specimens, among which we especially recommend to the reader's notice "Il Cantico del Sole," composed in blank verse by Francesco d'Assisi, a monk somewhat posterior perhaps to the above period. The history of Monna Nina, as given by the Giunti*, might furnish ample materials for a romance. For the present we shall only observe that she became en-

* "Raccolta di Giunti."

amoured of a fellow poet, incomparably inferior to her, called Dante di Maiano, whom she had never seen, affording both of them a curious example of the amor de "luench" so common in the Gai-Saber, and also affording a proof that the troubadours and their poetry were imitated in Sicily.

Monna's reply to the cold, common-place epistle of her lover, well deserves to be cited both on account of its tenderness and the comparative purity of the style: —

“ Qual sete voi, si cara preferenza
 Che fate a me senza voi monstrare?
 Molto m'agenzeria vostra parvenza
 Perche meo cor potesse dichiarare.
 Vostro mandato aggrada a mia intenza;
 In gioia mi conteria d'udir nomare
 Lo vostro nome, che fa profferenza
 D'essere sottoposto a me innorare.
 Lo core meo pensar non sauria
 Nessuna cosa che sturbasse amanza:
 Così affermo, e voglio ogn'hor che sia,
 D'udendo vi parlare è volliamia;
 Se vostra penna ha bona consonanza
 Co'l vostro core, non ha tra noi resia.”

Such, or nearly such, was the condition of the literary idiom of Italy at the great era of Dante Alighieri. It is scarcely necessary to observe, that the prevalent idea (and we ourselves once entertained it) that he was the inventor of that idiom, is an hypothesis opposed by positive facts, and which may now be ranked with the fable of Pallas starting, ready armed, from the brain of Jupiter. No man of letters requires to be informed that Dante enriched the literary idiom with a great number of words and locutions derived from the classics, but it is not so generally known, that a considerable portion of its vocabulary was derived from other sources*.

* In order to abridge the number of notes as much as possible, we shall here enumerate several words not derived from the Greek

We shall not enter into the question whether he selected all, or any of these roots from foreign tongues in which they are preserved, or whether he found them in the popular dialects of Italy, whither they had been imported by that mother tongue which, according to our hypothesis, once pervaded the west and south of Europe, long prior to the dawn of history*.

Be that as it may, it suffices to state here, that these archaisms surviving in the ancient Irish, in the Anglo-Saxon, in the Basque, the Welsh, or ancient British, the Dutch, and even in the Latinity of the Middle Age, were so variously modified, combined, and analyzed by Dante, that it requires

or Latin, abounding in the "Inferno," and which have been successfully discovered by Bolland and Ducange in the different idioms specified in our preliminary discourse. In the xxxth Canto we find *oroja, epa, greppo, leppo*; in the xxxist, *coto, doga, sogá, gabbo, chicce, rocci, crich*; in the xxxiird, *coppo, groppo, callo, stallo, avaccio, fascia, fove, crosta, zanche, magagna*. That the roots of these archaisms survive in the above cited idioms we doubt not, but if it be contended that they originated from them, or that they exclusively survived in them, we humbly presume to protest against the inference. No one ever imagined that Dante travelled into the respective countries in quest of them, nor is there the slightest reason for presuming that he had studied their language. Are we not, then, justified in assuming that these, and many other apparent exotics, also survived in the popular dialects of Italy and the adjacent countries, and that our poet transferred them from the mouths of the peasants to augment the vocabulary of that aulic idiom of which he was the foster-father? From whatever quarter he derived them, it appears to be a logical deduction, that they imply the existence of some mother-tongue which formerly pervaded the whole of Latin Europe. Thus the fossil remains which have been discovered in different portions of the globe, attest that a race of animals once inhabited it which have long since become extinct.

* 2, "Hist. des Langues Romanes," t. 1.

no slight degree of labour and patience to detect them in their disguise, a task rendered still more difficult by the enlarged or restricted sense in which he employed them.

We shall, for the present, only adduce two or three examples from the "Inferno," which have either escaped the notice of the commentators, or embarrassed them. The first occurs in the xxivth Canto, where the poet describes the joy of a farmer in finding his fields free from the frost and snow that had lately covered them :—

" Poi riede, e la speranza ringavagna
Veggendo 'l mondo aver cangiata faccia."

The word "ringavagna," though intelligible enough by means of the context, caused all the difficulty. Our common expression in England of the bells ringing a merry peal, suggested to us the idea that "ringavagna" might import an analogous meaning. The literal translation then would be "Hope rang a merry note in his ear." Our next task was to endeavour to discover the etymon. On consulting the dictionary of the ancient British, compiled by Dr. Davies, we found the elements we were in search of. The Welsh supplied us with the "ringhian, stridens," whence our English verb to ring, and "aven," or "awen," translated by Davies, "ingenium poetizans, cantilina." Two of the most expressive words in the Italian language, "rimbombo," and "rombo," may be traced to their source by means of roots surviving in living tongues; the first by "bomb," in the Anglo-Saxon, which Dr. Johnson (though egregiously mistaken as to its etymon) translates "a great noise;" the second, "rombo," by the Dutch, "rommelan," or the English, "rumble," both signifying a hoarse, low, and continued sound.

Indolent and pretended scholiasts may save themselves a vast deal of trouble by assuring us that these and many other archaisms in the "Divine Comedy" are pure inventions of

its author ; but we, who have spared no research, can fearlessly assert that we have scarcely discovered a word in the poem of which we have not found an etymon. As to those derived from the Anglo-Saxon, Dante had not to travel far in quest of them. That several Saxon tribes had established themselves in Tuscany and other parts of Italy before the fall of the Roman empire is unquestionable ; nor is it less certain that they retained their language with religious care, intermarrying exclusively with each other, and forming a distinct colony, descendants of which we have witnessed in the mountains above Val Ombrosa*.

Besides enriching the Italian with elements derived from all the above sources, he augmented its vocabulary by frequent draughts from other branches of the Romance, not forgetting the Gai-Saber, though then in its decline. That he made no scruple to put it under contribution we admit, but upon the whole there is no more analogy between the language of the "Divine Comedy" and the former, than between the voice of a Stentor and the trillings of a eunuch.

If it be asked what was the great, the essential improvement which he conferred on the literary idiom of his country, we would answer that it consisted in the invention of imitative versification. That phrase requires explanation. Of positive, physical imitation, it is obvious there could be none ; but the human mind is so constituted that we associate the sounds and movements of certain words with the sounds and movements of real objects. It would therefore be more logical to call terms of that kind analogous ; but, in compliance with common usage, we adopt the epithet imitative. Dante was positively the first poet of modern times who attempted this innovation. With that view, and for that purpose he modified words foreign and indigenous in such various ways that we

* "Muratori Antiquit. Ital." Dissertation 32nd.

are not at all surprised so many of his countrymen should have represented him as the inventor of the Italian. To particularize each modification would exceed the limits of a preface; we can only specify a few of the most important.

Aware of the defects of the Provençal poetry, and disgusted with the servile imitation by the Italians, he restored many of the elisions made by the troubadour, particularly the radical consonants of verbs. He borrowed from the Latin entire dactyls, such as "facere," "dicere," &c., and by a judicious alternation of dactyls, spondees, anapæsts, and other feet, imitated from the prosody of the Romans, he was enabled to vary the position of the pause and accent indefinitely, and to impart to his numbers such movements as best corresponded with the things described. This imitative quality indeed, is so characteristic of his versification, that to cite all would be to transcribe the whole of the "Inferno." We cannot, however, forbear quoting two or three passages so illustrative of the fact that they merely require a tolerable ear in him who reads, or who hears them recited, to be satisfied of its truth:—

" Gia era in loco ove s' udia 'l rimbombo
Dell' acqua che cadea nell' altro giro,
Simile a quel, che l' arnie fanno, rombo."

No knowledge of Italian is requisite to enable us to judge of the effect of these verses. The bare recitation of the two first verses is sufficient to make us imagine that we are within hearing of the fall of distant torrents, whilst the third verse, with its two pauses, and the final "rombo," produces an effect analogous to the gentler fall of the rivulet.

Who can read the following verse in the harrowing narrative of Ugolino without fancying that he is a witness of the dreadful spectacle?

" Vid' io cassar lè tre ad uno ad uno."

Now, how can we account for the phenomenon, but by assuming that there is a certain but latent analogy between the march of the verse and the incident narrated? The verse consists of three pauses, each of which awakens our sympathy, and the single accent falling on the word "tre," rivets our attention to the chief circumstance.

We shall only quote one other example not inferior in point of illustration to any other in the poem. It occurs in Canto xx, where the poet compares the slow, monotonous, movements of certain spirits to a procession of Franciscans, or other monks, chanting in lugubrious tones their homilies :—

" E vidi gente per lo vallon tondo
Venir, tacendo e lagrimando al passo
Che fanno le letane in questo mondo."

Who can peruse the second verse without perceiving that he is irresistibly arrested by the three pauses after "Venir, tacendo e lagrimando," and by the no less efficient accents on the second and third syllables of the Latin gerunds? Nor was this remarkable quality of Dante's versification limited to the imitation of the sounds and movements of natural objects. He supplies abundant proofs of its influence when he depicts the character, the discourses, the passions, and emotions of the condemned spirits. We have already adduced a matchless example of this from the xth Canto. We have only to add to our preceding remarks on it, that the broken exclamations of which it consists, find an echo in every heart not quite devoid of sensibility. With a quotation of the very words of the poet, we might conclude this preliminary discourse :—

" Egli ebbe? Non viv' egli aurora?
Non fiere gli occhi suoi lo dolce ome?"

We beg, however, permission to say a word or two touching

the translation, not with a view of disarming criticism, but to submit to competent judges the principles on which it has been conducted, and the omissions which cannot escape observation. We have considered it both as the privilege and duty of a translator to rectify any mistakes or point of fact; to explain palpable ellipses; to neglect or curtail passages of mere verbiage; and to omit altogether descriptions or allusions of an obscene or revolting nature.

Thus, we have ventured to supply the ellipsis in the beginning of the xvith Canto, without which one of the most expressive passages in the poem would be unintelligible. Thus, we have omitted the description of Limbo, as a mere vocabulary of proper names, and curtailed that of the arsenal of Venice, admirable in itself, but quite irrelative. For the same, or rather more cogent reasons, we have abbreviated many of the transmutations in the xxth Canto, which, in prolixity and obscurity leave Ovid at an infinite distance behind them.

Whatever the fate of this translation may be, if we have succeeded in elucidating a few passages in the "Inferno" which have never yet received a satisfactory explanation; if we have been the humble means of inducing Englishmen to a more assiduous study of Dante and Italian poetry in general, our object would be completely attained.

B. W.

HELL.

CANTO I.



When life's mid journey I had scarcely made,
I found me in a wood's obscure recess,
Whither in devious folly I had stray'd.
But who shall venture justly to express
The horrors of that scene?—e'en now dismay'd,
I tremble to recall its savageness,
That tale to fitter moment I defer :
What ills befell me there I cannot tell,
Nor can I, how I entered it, aver ;
For so o'erpower'd I was by some strange spell,
I seem'd as chance conducted me to err.
Escap'd from thence I enter'd on a dell
Which led me to a lofty mountain's site ;
Upwards I gaz'd, and I beheld its side
Illumin'd by that glorious planet's light
Which aids the wilder'd pilgrim as a guide.
Admiring this, the terrors of the night,
Which I had pass'd in tears, 'gan to subside.

D

As when a shipwreck'd sailor, breathless, spent,
Drifted ashore, with fear doth contemplate
The billows of the raging element
He had escap'd, so did I ruminatè,
On all the perils of that wood intent
Which never mortal left inviolate.
My wearied limbs repos'd, I strove to pace
Up the steep mountain's brow, one foot in air,
And one behind: Lo! from its ample base
A panther issued, light as gossamer;
His skin, speckled with stars, reveal'd his race.
At sight of me the monster did not stir,
But seem'd intent my progress to oppose.
I paus'd, and more than once resolv'd to fly.
'T was morning now, and bright the sun arose
Attended by those stars which grac'd the sky
When nature's God did that fair scene compose.
The hour and season wak'd (I know not why)
A hope I might possess the monster's hide.
But groundless was the hope, for I beheld
A lion who approach'd, elate with pride—
By rage and ravenous appetite impell'd.
At sight of him the air seem'd terrified.
Whilst I survey'd him with mixt dread and awe,
A she-wolf came in sight—insatiate brute:
Meagre and lank, tho' her ensanguin'd jaw
Show'd she had render'd many a victim mute.
My soul was so appall'd at what I saw
'T was vain to hope, and folly to dispute.
And as a wretch by lust of gold pursued,

When Fortune frowns, resigns him to despair,
 So I despair'd, when the fell beast I view'd
 Approaching me, slow pacing from her lair,
 Where the blest sun is mute. Whilst there I rued
 A figure rose before me, who essay'd
 Some words to utter, inarticulate;
 As if long silence had his tongue belay'd.
 When I perceiv'd him, "Pity my sad fate,
 "Spirit or mortal!" in suspense I said.
 "Mortal," he answered, "once was my estate;
 "But now no more. In fruitful Lombardy
 "Were both my parents born: *sub Julio* I,
 "Tho' that indiction came more tardily;
 "In Rome I liv'd 'neath good Augustus' eye,
 "When lying gods usurp'd divinity.
 "Poet, I sang Anchises' son the just,
 "Who to Hesperia came from vanquished Troy,
 "When Ilium's lofty towers were laid in dust.
 "But thou, why wouldst return to such annoy?
 "Why quit this sacred mountain in disgust—
 "Seat of eternal happiness and joy?"
 "And art thou then that Maro," I replied,
 "Who spread so far the streams of eloquence?
 "Do thou, of other bards the star and pride,
 "Speed my long vigils and the love intense,
 "Which makes thy text my prototype and guide;
 "From thee alone, unrivall'd excellence,
 "That style I learnt which elevates my page.
 "Behold the beast who caus'd me to descend.
 "Save me, oh! save me, from her frantic rage,

“ That chills my blood, and threatens to suspend
“ Each pulse of life ! ” The venerable sage,
Marking my tears, exclaimed—“ Not this, my friend,
“ The course thou must pursue ; another path
“ Thou need’st must choose, wouldst thou escape indeed
“ That felon beast’s unmitigable wrath,
“ Who each intruder bars, and dooms to bleed ;
“ And such voracious appetite she hath,
“ The more she feeds, the more she longs to feed.
“ With various animals engender’d she,
“ And so will mingle till the world behold
“ A hound will banish her with infamy.
“ That champion will not covet hoards of gold,
“ Nor vast domains ; his constant guides shall be
“ Love, Wisdom, Justice, like his sires, of old.
“ ’Twixt the two Feltri shall the chief abide ;
“ His arms degraded Italy shall save—
“ That Italy for which Camilla died,
“ Nisus, Euryalus, and Turnus brave,
“ Slain in their country’s cause. By him defied,
“ And chased from ev’ry city by his glave,
“ That rabid wolf he shall devote to Hell,
“ Whence she was lur’d by man’s primeval foe.
“ Enough ; each fear and peril to dispel,
“ ’T is meet thou follow’st me to realms below,
“ Where spirits of the damn’d for ever yell ;
“ And second death invoke to end their woe.
“ Many thou wilt behold of ancient times.
“ I will conduct thee to another place,
“ Where spirits are content to purge their crimes

" In flames of fire, hoping to join the race
 " Of blessed saints, in their celestial climes.
 " If to mount thither thou desirous art,
 " There is a spirit, worthier far than I,
 " To whom I will commend thee ere we part.
 " For the Almighty ruler of the sky,
 " Knowing I was rebellious in my heart,
 " Wills not that pious soul ascend on high
 " By me conducted. There supreme is He,
 " There is his empire, residence, and throne.
 " Happy the soul who his elect may be!"
 " O, bard, I charge thee by that God unknown
 " Conduct me from this den of misery,
 " To where the penitent their crimes atone.
 " From thence, if Heav'n permit, I may ascend
 " And view St. Peter's gate." The poet heard,
 And onward mov'd: I follow'd my good friend.

CANTO II.



'T was night, and mortals from their toils repos'd :
 I knew not sleep. The perils of the way,
 The horrors which that spirit had disclosed,
 Who ne'er deceiv'd me, fill'd me with dismay.
 Aid me ye Muses, ever well dispos'd
 To me and my designs ; assist my lay

Each power of mind ; your inspiration lend,
 Whilst I describe what I beheld below !
 " Poet," I cried, " ere further down we bend,
 " Think of my weakness. Thou hast said, I know,
 " That Silvius' sire, a mortal, did descend
 " To the eternal shades ; that chief renown'd
 " Was chosen to fulfil, Imperial Rome,
 " Thy glorious destinies, thy fame to found.
 " Rome, in whose holy site, in times to come,
 " St. Peter's heirs will be install'd and crown'd.
 " Assurances of this in Hell he gain'd ;
 " And he, the chosen vessel, who alive
 " To the third Heav'n ascended, there obtain'd
 " Comfort to that pure faith, whence we derive
 " Hopes of Salvation, there alone attain'd.
 " But me what object calls ? Who gives me leave ?
 " Am I Anchises' son, or holy Paul ?
 " Nor thou, nor I, nor others can believe
 " That I am worthy to obey the call.
 " If I renounce it, 't is that I conceive
 " Much evil might the enterprise befall ;
 " But thou art wise, and abler to decide
 " Than I." Like one who wills and then unwill,
 Perplext I stood. My leader mark'd and cried :
 " Unless I err, imaginary ills
 " And cowardice thy recreant soul divide,
 " 'T is cowardice alone these fears instils.
 " Oft it seduces men from honour's course,
 " And chills the noblest instincts of the heart.
 " Thus from his shadow starts the tim'rous horse.

“ Thy fears to dissipate I will impart
 “ Why I came hither, and from what pure source
 “ The knowledge I acquir'd of what thou art.
 “ With these I dwelt, who in suspense remain,
 “ When lo! a blessed dame, divinely fair,
 “ Accosted me. I begg'd her to explain
 “ Her high behests. Her eyes more radiant were
 “ Than brightest stars. In sweet angelic strain,
 “ She graciously responded to my pray'r.
 “ ‘ O, Mantuan spirit! thou who didst obtain
 “ ‘ Such fame on earth, renown that will prevail
 “ ‘ Long as the world endures, my faithful friend,
 “ ‘ Striving the mountain's arduous steep to scale,
 “ ‘ Is thwarted, so I fear he must descend.
 “ ‘ My tardy succour little can avail,
 “ ‘ As I have learnt above, so I commend
 “ ‘ His safety to thy care. Now quickly speed,
 “ ‘ And with thy powerful eloquence remove
 “ ‘ The perils which astound him and impede.
 “ ‘ T is Beatrice, who from the realms above,
 “ ‘ Hastes to implore thee at his utmost need
 “ ‘ To aid the constant object of her love.
 “ ‘ When I to Heav'n return, whence late I came,
 “ ‘ Oft to my Lord will I thy praise convey.’
 “ She ceas'd, and I replied—‘ O, glorious dame!
 “ ‘ Emblem of virtue, whose benignant ray
 “ ‘ Inspires the sage, and constitutes his fame,
 “ ‘ Thy mandate charms me so that each delay
 “ ‘ Discourages my hopes. No need there is
 “ ‘ To urge me further. I beseech thee say,

“ ‘ Why thou hast left thy residence of bliss
 “ ‘ For this abode of woe.’ ‘ I will reply
 “ ‘ Briefly to thy demand. This dark abyss,
 “ ‘ Its flames and horrors, only terrify
 “ ‘ Beings who are susceptible of harm.
 “ ‘ Of such I am not. There is one on high,
 “ ‘ A gracious spirit, who now feels alarm
 “ ‘ For him on whose account I thus invoke
 “ ‘ Thy potent aid. God hath dissolv’d the charm
 “ ‘ That held him long degraded by its yoke.
 “ ‘ Lucia obtain’d the grace, Lucia the foe
 “ ‘ Of each malignant soul! To me she spoke,
 “ ‘ Whilst commenting on various scenes below,
 “ ‘ By Rachel’s side I sat:—‘ O, Beatrice! our pride,
 “ ‘ Why dost abandon him who loved thee so,
 “ ‘ And for thy sake the vulgar herd defied?
 “ ‘ His sighs and piteous groans dost thou not hear?
 “ ‘ Dost thou not mark what deadly foes impede
 “ ‘ His progress up the mount? How his career
 “ ‘ Is menac’d by a current doth exceed
 “ ‘ The ocean’s wildest rage in violence?’
 “ ‘ And never wight did with such ardour speed
 “ ‘ To ward a loss, or gain a competence,
 “ ‘ As I to this receptacle of tears,
 “ ‘ Confiding in thy matchless eloquence,
 “ ‘ Which honours him who speaks, and him who hears.’
 “ ‘ She said, and turn’d to me her radiant eyes,
 “ ‘ Suffus’d with tears. As she enjoin’d, I flew
 “ ‘ Hither to stimulate thine enterprise,
 “ ‘ And save thee from the monsters would oppose

“ Thy passage o’er the mount. Why heave those sighs ?

“ Why do thine eyes such secret doubts disclose ?

“ Why do such terrors in thy breast arise ?

“ These are thy worst, most despicable foes.

“ Why doth not courage all thy soul possess,

“ Seeing three holy dames in realms above

“ Thy guardians are, and seeing what success,

“ Is pledg’d to thee, first object of their love ? ”

As when nocturnal frosts invade the plains,

The flow’rs contract their leaves, their bloom decays ;

But when the genial sun his pow’r regains,

Their strength revives, embellish’d by his rays,

So did my wearied soul, deprest by grief,

Revive and gladden when I heard the voice,

And mark’d the brave demeanour of my chief.

He too rejoic’d observing me rejoice.

“ Blest be the saint who comes to my relief !

“ And blest be thou, who justifi’st her choice !

“ Thy words such hopes and confidence impart,

“ I yearn to go, and instantly decide.

“ Thy will is mine—thy heart inspires my heart ;

“ Be still my master, confident, and guidé.”

Thus spake I, and proceeding where he led,

Down a profound and savage gulf we sped.

CANTO III.



Thro' me to the bewailing realms ye wend,
 Thro' me to regions of eternal woe ;
 Thro' me to damned spirits ye descend :
 Justice impell'd my lord, and will'd it so.
 Me did the pow'r divine create and place,
 Almighty wisdom and primeval love.
 Ere me was nothing, save th' angelic race
 Who dwell eternally in realms above :
 I too, like them, eternally endure.
 Abandon hope all ye who enter here !
 These awful words, in characters obscure,
 Carved on the summit of a porch appear.
 " Leader ador'd ! " I cried, " these words be sure
 " Impending ills announce." At this the seer,
 Probing the inmost secrets of my soul,
 Somewhat incens'd, exclaim'd—" Not this the time
 " For childish doubts and fears ; discard the whole.
 " We are arriv'd at that abode of crime
 " Of which I spake. Here wretches thou wilt see,
 " Who forfeited their privilege sublime
 " Of communing with God ! " Then courteously
 He plac'd his hand on mine ; his gracious mien
 My apprehensions calm'd, and gladden'd me.
 The mysteries and awful horrors of the scene,

He made me comprehend. " Here groans and sighs
 " Resound for ever thro' the starless air !"
 He said ; and copious tears suffus'd mine eyes.
 Conflicting tongues, fell curses of despair,
 Wailings of sorrow, anger's frantic cries,
 Wringing of hands, make such a tumult there,
 As drifts of sand when in the troubled sky
 The whirlwind raves. Bewilder'd, to my chief
 I turn'd and ask'd—" What may the sounds imply,
 " And who be they so overwhelm'd by grief?"
 " These," he replied, " who thus desponding sigh,
 " Were men who sought in indolence relief,
 " Exempt from praise—exempt from infamy.
 " Mingled they are with the degraded crew
 " Of angels who, in vile neutrality,
 " Were neither rebels to their God nor true.
 " Exil'd from Heav'n they are, lest it should be
 " Less pure ; yet are they not condemn'd to rue,
 " In Hell's profoundest gulf, lest worse than they
 " Some honour should acquire." " Why then," I cried,
 " This vehemence of grief? Why such dismay?"
 " I will inform thee," briefly he replied.
 " Hope they have none that at some future day,
 " Death may relieve them, or annihilate.
 " And sooth to say so abject were their lives,
 " They envy the worst criminals their fate.
 " No vestige of their fame on earth survives ;
 " Both Heav'n and Hell their presence deprecate.
 " Let's talk of them no more. Mark what arrives !"
 Admonish'd thus, a banner I beheld,

Which roll'd with such celerity along
It seem'd to spurn repose. Alike impell'd
A crowd of spirits follow'd; such a throng,
I scarcely could believe that Death had fell'd
So vast a multitude: and these among,
The abject shade of him I recognis'd
Who cow'd by fear, or for a brief repose,
The great secession made. The crowd compris'd
That wicked sect to God and to his foes
Odious alike. On earth abhorr'd, despis'd,
The wretches liv'd not, if good deeds compose
The end and aim of life. Naked they were,
And sore tormented by a multitude
Of wasps and hornets which abounded there.
Their visages with rivulets of blood
The reptiles smear'd, and this became the fare,
Mingled with tears, of the infernal brood.
Turning from these, vast numbers I descried
Of spirits flocking to a mighty stream
Not distant far. "Vouchsafe, my chief," I cried,
"Some tidings to impart of these, who seem
"So eager to be ferried o'er the tide;
"Such, by the glimm'ring light, their wish I deem!"
"All shall be told thee," sharply he replied,
"When we have gain'd the dismal Acheron!"
Abash'd, and like a culprit self-impeach'd,
I blush'd with shame, and silently went on
Till Acheron's sad margin we had reach'd:
When lo! an aged man approach'd anon
Steering a bark; his locks by eld were bleach'd.

"Woe!" he exclaim'd, "polluted souls to you!
 "To yonder bank to ferry you I come.
 "Hope not again the vault of Heav'n to view;
 "Eternal darkness, fire, and frost's your doom.
 "But thou, a living man, what hast to do
 "With spirits of the dead? No more presume!"
 But when he saw that I departed not,
 Incens'd he cried, "Some other passage find;
 "A lighter bark than mine must needs be got
 "To waft thee o'er; mine suits not to thy kind!"
 To whom my leader: "Charon, why so hot?
 "Our visit here is by that power assign'd
 "Who wills and it is done. No more inquire!"
 At this Hell's grisly ferry-man, deterr'd,
 Grew calm—no longer glar'd his eyes of fire;
 But the sad harass'd spirits when they heard
 The cruel words he uttered in his ire
 Livid became; with chatt'ring teeth they err'd,
 Blaspheming God, their parents, the whole race
 Of human beings, cursing heaven and earth,
 Themselves, their children's children, time and space,
 The womb that bore, the day that gave them birth.
 Weeping and wailing, with disorder'd pace,
 They hurry from the stream which waits for all
 Who fear not God. Charon, with fire-brand eyes,
 Warns and allures them with insidious call.
 Is there a lagger? Him with oar he plies.
 As one by one the leaves in Autumn fall,
 Loath to depart, until the parent tree
 Yields all its honours to the soil below,

So one by one did this vile family
 Drop from the bank, inveigled by their foe,
 Like birds decoy'd by calls of perfidy.
 Ere they depart, fresh crowds of ghosts appear,
 Of whom my leader : " These, and all who die
 " 'Neath God's displeasure must assemble here ;
 " Impetuous to the fatal bank they fly,
 " Compell'd to wish what they the most should fear.
 " No virtuous spirit by this pass can hie—
 " Such was the cause of Charon's stern rebuke!"
 Scarce had he ended when the dismal place
 On ev'ry side with such convulsions shook,
 That even yet, whilst I the scene retrace,
 Cold sweat bedews me. Subterraneous throes
 Emitted sounds like thunder, loud and deep ;
 Red lightnings flash'd, and as the tempest rose
 I swoon'd, like one o'erwhelm'd by sudden sleep.

CANTO IV.



A thunder-bolt dissolv'd the potent spell.
 I rose anon, and shook me like a man
 Suddenly waken'd by a larum bell.
 To scrutinize the place I then began
 With eyes and pow'rs refresh'd, and truth to tell,
 I found me at the entrance of a vale
 In midst of which Hell's terrible abyss

Yawns and re-echoes with incessant wail.
 So deep, obscure, and nebulous it is,
 That eyes of keenest vigour nought avail
 To measure its extent. "It is by this,"
 Pallid as death, the courteous poet cried,
 "To realms of darkness we must now descend—
 "I first, thou second." "Master," I replied,
 "How can I speed, if thou my constant friend
 "Art thus alarm'd? Thou! ever wont to guide,
 "Strengthen, and cheer me, counsel and defend!"
 "The pangs of those in yonder dungeon plac'd
 "Pale me with pity, which thou tak'st for fear.
 "But let us on, our journey urges haste!"
 With this he made me enter the first sphere,
 Which like a circle the abyss embrac'd.
 No shrieks, no loud laments, astound us here,
 But sighs that seem to make th' eternal air
 Vibrate with sympathy. These plaintive sighs
 The nature of their wretchedness declare—
 Profound regret, not pangs that martyrise.
 Vast multitudes, in sooth, I witness'd there;
 Men, women, children of each age and size.
 "How!" cried the poet, "dost thou not inquire
 "What souls are these, and wherefore their distress?
 "Know then, my son, ere we from hence retire,
 "They suffer not for flagrant wickedness.
 "'Tis not enough that many a virtuous deed
 "Adorn'd their lives: the great baptismal rite,
 "Which forms the very essence of your creed,
 "They slighted. If they liv'd before the light

“ Of Christian revelation, ’t is agreed
 “ They worshipp’d Nature’s God unworthily ;
 “ And so did I. For this, and nothing more,
 “ We were condemn’d to yearn incessantly
 “ For bliss we cannot hope, but must deplore.”
 Much was I griev’d at this sad history,
 For many a noble soul of days of yore
 I recognis’d, who in that limbo sigh’d.
 “ Deign to inform me, gracious chief,” said I,
 “ (That from thy lips I may be certified
 “ Of that blest faith which makes each error fly,)
 “ May not some penitents escape from hence
 “ By mass or merit, and attain the sky ?”
 He answer’d, well aware of my pretence :
 “ I had but newly reach’d this vale profound
 “ When *one* approach’d me with benevolence,
 “ Whom palms of victory sublimely crown’d.
 “ The shade of our first parent thence he drew,
 “ Abel and Noah, Moses the renown’d
 “ In Jewish law, to God’s injunctions true,
 “ Abra’am the patriarch, David, Israël
 “ His sire and sons, and Rachel’s spirit too ;
 “ All these and others he redeem’d from Hell,
 “ With him in Paradise for ever blest.
 “ Ere then, my son, (that truth remember well,)
 “ None could be sav’d, as all your laws attest !”
 Thus, whilst we commun’d, downward still we went,
 Passing a multitude of spirits dense
 Who peopled like a forest the descent.
 Not far remov’d, I mark’d a light intense,

Which here and there a transient lustre lent.
 Tho' somewhat distant, I might well discern
 That honourable folks possess'd the place,
 Their names and dignity I long'd to learn.
 "Do thou, whom every art and science grace,
 Inform me who such signal honours earn,
 So much distinguish'd from their fellows here."
 Then he: "The honours by their peers conferr'd
 Heaven still accords them in this nether sphere."
 Scarce had he spoken when loud shouts I heard:
 "Honour the bard, whom all on earth revere!
 His spirit comes again who lately err'd."
 Soon as the shouts had ceas'd, four shades I saw
 Approaching us. Their mien no signs display'd
 Of joy or grief, but fill'd my soul with awe.
 "Observe the first," my gracious master said;
 "Him who, with sword in hand, prescribes the law
 To future ages, and precedes the three;
 'T is Homer, of all poets the supreme.
 The next is Horace, fam'd for satire he;
 Ovid's the third, and Lucan last I deem.
 With me in name and genius they agree,
 And justly thus a fellow bard esteem."
 United thus, I witness'd the bright school
 Of him the monarch of sublimest song,
 Who, like an eagle, tow'rs above the whole.
 Awhile in friendly talk they mov'd along,
 Then hail'd me with such plenitude of soul,
 My leader smil'd as he the welcome view'd.
 To crown the whole, me deign'd they to enrol

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Sixth member of their glorious brotherhood.
Together we proceeded to the light,
Discussing mysteries, which 't were not good
To mention here. At length appear'd in sight
A noble castle, that was girt around
By seven high walls, and by a streamlet bright;
Unscath'd we pass'd it as o'er solid ground.
Thro' seven wide gates with them I enter'd here,
And passing onward a fresh mead we found,
Where spirits we perceiv'd of looks severe;
And signs of great importance in their mien:
Seldom they spoke, their accents mild and clear.
A spot there was, an hillock fresh and green,
High, luminous, and easy of ascent,
Whence all that pass'd might easily be seen;
Hither with one accord the party went.
Spirits of great renown were shown to me,
Whom to have witness'd thrills me with content.
When we had notic'd all the spirits well,
Our company of six decreas'd to two.
My sage conductor by a secret dell
Fore'd me to bid the bright abode adieu.
We left it for the reign of darkness visible.

CANTO V.



Thus to the second circle mute we go,
Inferior to the first in magnitude,
But far more dreadful by th' excess of woe.
Here Minos grinning horribly I view'd,
Th' inexorable judge of all below.
Soon as a culprit in his presence stood,
His crimes without delay the wretch confess'd;
And he, the judge, th' infernal place assign'd
That suited the delinquent's case the best.
Coil'd round his waist, his monstrous tail defin'd
The circles to be pass'd, each by a coil express'd.
Many offenders of each sex and kind
Are hourly by this dire tormentor tried,
Who hears, condemns, and hurries them to Hell.
"Stranger, whoe'er thou art," now Minos cried,
"Who dar'st approach this sad receptacle,
"Trust not its ample port, nor yet thy guide!"
To whom my leader: "Minos, why repel
"This mortal, whose approach is ratified
"By Him whose will no creature can dispute?"
Oh then such notes of sorrow reach'd mine ear,
I felt convinc'd that accents so acute
Could only flow from spirits tortur'd here.
It was a place where ev'ry light is mute;

A whirlwind roar'd like billows of the main
 When winds tempestuous rouse them and incense.
 No pause it knew, but whirling in its train
 The wretched ghosts, dash'd them with violence
 'Gainst pointed cliffs oppos'd to it in vain.
 Shrieks, curses, groans, complaints 'gainst providence
 Resounded here. These spirits were condemn'd
 For that their lives in carnal joys were spent,
 And Reason's dictates silenc'd and contemn'd.
 As stares, when Winter's frosts are imminent,
 In widely scatter'd groups prepare to quit
 In quest of some more genial continent,
 So by the whirlwind toss'd these spirits flit
 East, west, north, south, or up in air, or low;
 No hopes have they their torments will remit,
 None that the Fates will mitigate their woe.
 As storks with melancholy cries at eve
 In a long line depart, so I perceiv'd
 Shadows of this sad race the region cleave,
 Who follow'd one by one, and sorely griev'd.
 Of these I question'd: thus my chief replied:
 "The first is she whom many tongues obey'd,
 "Semiramis, whose luxury defied
 "All past examples. Thus, a law she made
 "Which sanction'd lust, and almost deified.
 "She wedded hapless Ninus and betray'd,
 "And rul'd the land which owns the Sultan's yoke."
 Next her the love-lorn suicide he show'd
 Who to Sicheus' shade her promise broke;
 Luxurious Cleopatra then I view'd,

And Helen who such dire contentions woke ;
 The great Achilles I beheld subdued,
 Who fell at last the victim of his love :
 Paris and Tristan and vast numbers more
 To whom unbridl'd lust did fatal prove.
 When he had counted all the dames of yore,
 Dames and their paramours, in vain I strove
 To stay my tears ; I could not but deplore.
 " Illustrious poet, I would fain confer
 " With yonder couple who together speed,
 " By the fell blast impell'd like gossamer."
 " When nearer they approach, then mayst succeed :
 " Then, O my son, thine anxious wish prefer ;
 " Urge them by love and they will not recede."
 Soon as the whirlwind forc'd the spirits nigh,
 I thus address'd them : " Deign, afflicted pair,
 " To speak with us, unless the Fates deny."
 As turtle-doves with outstretch'd wings repair
 To the lov'd nest where both their darlings lie,
 So did the couple at my earnest pray'r
 Hasten from Dido's troop, and answer'd me.
 " O thou, who com'st so gracious and benign,
 " To visit us in this obscurity,
 " If pray'rs like ours could reach the throne divine
 " Our daily orisons should mount for thee.
 " Thy sympathy makes all thy wishes mine,
 " What thou hast deign'd to urge is not in vain :
 " And whilst the storm a moment's respite lends
 " I will unfold our tale.—My native plain
 " On ocean's margin lies, where Po descends

" And bears his various tributes to the main.
 " Love, who the true and tender heart befriends,
 " My kinsman fir'd ; enamour'd he became
 " Of that fair person which a traitor's steel
 " Basely assail'd to his eternal shame.
 " Love, never slow to make the lov'd one feel,
 " Awaken'd in my heart so strong a flame
 " That even here thou dost perceive it glow.
 " By the same hand Love doom'd us both to bleed,
 " And dread Caïna will reward the blow !"
 Soon as her lips reveal'd the fiend-like deed
 Speechless I stood, mine eyes so fix'd below,
 My leader grew alarm'd. " Why droops thy head ?"
 " Alas, my friend, how these poor souls have burn'd—
 " What ardent passion urg'd them to their fate !"
 Thus to the hapless couple I return'd :
 " Thy tale, Francesca, makes one desolate.
 " But prithee tell me, when your hearts first yearn'd,
 " How love reveal'd the secret of your state !"
 She answer'd thus : " No greater pang there is
 " Than to remember days of happiness
 " When we are plung'd in misery's abyss,
 " A truth thy master did so well express.
 " But since the secret of our transient bliss
 " Thou seek'st to fathom with such earnestness,
 " I will divulge it, tho' I weep the while
 " Like a poor wretch by his own accents mov'd.
 " One day, the tedious moments to beguile,
 " We read of Lancelot and her he lov'd ;
 " We were alone, conceiving nothing vile.

" Whilst we perus'd, a mutual wish we prov'd
 " To read each other's eyes ; we blush'd and sigh'd.
 " One single incident subdued us quite ;
 " 'T was where the longing Lancelot applied
 " His lips to hers—O moment of delight !
 " Then he, who ever faithful liv'd and died,
 " Kiss'd me with rapture—need I more recite ?
 " The tale was Galeott call'd, the author's name.
 " That day we read no more."—She ceas'd, and he,
 Her soul's ador'd, so desperate became,
 And waken'd in my breast such sympathy,
 As a dead body falls supine I fell.

CANTO VI.



Soon as my mind its vigour had retriev'd,
 By pity for their suff'rings paralyz'd,
 New torments and new victims I perceiv'd
 Where'er I turn'd, or glanc'd, or scrutiniz'd.
 Some power had borne me, when of sense bereav'd,
 To the third circle, which was tyranniz'd
 By everlasting frost, unchangeable
 In nature and degree. Torrents of fetid rain,
 With snow and hail-stones mix'd, incessant fell,
 Infecting with their stench th' infernal plain,
 It stank as it became their foul receptacle.
 Fierce Cerberus, a monster diff'rent quite

From all his kind, with his three gullets barks
 Cur-like, and stuns the spirits with affright.
 His bloodshot eye his innate fierceness marks.
 Clotted his beard; his paunch distended wide;
 With paws like talons he the spirits sharks,
 Mangles, excoriates. Cow'ring 'neath the storm
 They howl like dogs; to right and left they turn,
 And with one side expos'd attempt to form
 A shelter to the other—hope forlorn!
 When he beheld us, the tremendous worm
 Open'd his rav'nous jaws, his tusks display'd,
 And shook in ev'ry limb like aspen leaf.
 Soon as my leader the fell beast survey'd,
 A mass of earth he gather'd in his neif,
 And thrust it in his gullet undismay'd.
 As when by hunger press'd a mastiff howls,
 But tranquil grows when his repast he gnaws,
 So Cerberus appeas'd no longer growls;
 Who, when he opens his terrific jaws,
 So scares the spirits, they for deafness pray.
 We pass'd along, and multitudes perceiv'd,
 Who jumbled by the storm, incumbent lay,
 On whom we trampled, at first sight deceiv'd.
 One only thus address'd us on our way:
 "O, thou!" exclaim'd he, with heart-rending sighs,
 "Who doubtless by command dost hither come,
 "Say, in my features canst thou recognise
 "A Florentine who, ere his martyrdom,
 "Was not perhaps a stranger to thine eyes?"
 "Thy torments, hapless spirit, I presume,

" Have changed thee so, that not a trace remains
 " In mem'ry's tablet of thy former mien.
 " Tell me thy name, and why such galling pains
 " Afflict thee here, that if there be more keen,
 " None can be half so loathsome I opine."
 Then he: " Thy native city now o'erflow'd
 " By envy's vilest dregs was also mine;
 " On me the nickname Ciaccio they bestow'd,
 " Tho' they themselves by beastlier gluttony
 " The nickname merited—the penance ow'd.
 " For that offence I'm mangled as you see;
 " All thou behold'st in this bleak circle pent
 " For the same crime are martyrized with me."
 Then I:—" Thy suff'rings, Ciaccio, I lament;
 " But tell me, I beseech thee, if thou know'st
 " The cause of Flora's broils, and their extent;
 " Is there a patriot 'midst the factious host?
 " What fate awaits them? When will they conclude?"
 " After long struggles," thus rejoind'd the ghost;
 " Blood will be shed—the blacks will be subdued
 " With mighty loss; but only for a time.
 " Ere thrice the sun his circuit hath renew'd,
 " The vanquish'd will be victors by the crime
 " Of one who merely aids them to betray.
 " Long shall he bear the royal crown sublime,
 " Grinding each faction with his iron sway,
 " Which both have equal reason to bewail.
 " Two genuine patriots will at length arrive;
 " But all in vain, their efforts nought avail.
 " Pride, envy, av'rice for th' ascendant strive,

“ Fire ev’ry heart, and finally prevail !”

Here ceas’d the lamentable narrative.

Still, still, I urg’d : “ Some further news I crave.

“ Where’s Farinata, Tegghiaio,

“ And Rusticucci, bravest of the brave ?

“ Tidings of Mosca I desire to know,

“ Who died, their country to avenge or save.

“ Say if the sweets of Paradise they taste,

“ Or wormwood in th’ abyss ?” “ These,” answer’d he,

“ ’Midst the worst spirits in th’ abyss are plac’d,

“ In circles divers as their perfidy ;

“ If thou descend’st, thou’lt see how they’re disgrac’d.

“ But when our much lov’d country thou shalt see,

“ Prithee forget me not.” No more he said,

But turn’d his eye aside ; yet sooth to tell,

A farewell look he cast, then bow’d his head,

And ’midst the reckless host supinely fell.

Then thus my leader : “ From their loathsome bed

“ They shall not rise, till in heav’n, earth, and hell,

“ Th’ angelic trumpet sound, when He they dread

“ To judge the living and the dead shall come ;

“ Then shall each spirit to his grave return,

“ His former flesh and figure shall resume ;

“ And from the lips of the Almighty learn

“ His final and irrevocable doom !”

Then slowly pass’d we o’er a filthy mass

Of spirits, mire, and sleet, in converse brief

On things which will in future come to pass.

Whilst communing on these I asked my chief,

If when their doom’s pronounc’d, this wretched class

Shall suffer greater or less poignant grief?
 "Consult," he answer'd "thy philosophy,
 "Which as a principle doth clearly state,
 "That our sensations vary in degree
 "As to perfection we approximate;
 "As more or less refin'd our organs be.
 "These spirits, it is true, so reprobate,
 "Tho' to perfection they can ne'er attain,
 "Yet vainly hope their torments will abate,
 "When their primeval figures they regain."
 Our course around the circle we pursued,
 Talking of things whose mention I forego;
 At length the passage to the next we view'd,
 And Pluto there, our most insidious foe.

CANTO VII.



"Rouse, Satan, rouse! 'T is I, O prince, who call!"
 Pluto exclaimed, with indignation hoarse;
 But he, my brave conductor, knowing all,
 Thus comforted me:—"Dread not thou his force,
 "His influence, whate'er it be, or great, or small,
 "Cannot impede thy heav'n-directed course!"
 Then turn'd he to the fiend, to madness driven:
 "Hence, cursed wolf! In thy own breast expend
 "Thy fruitless rage! Not without licence given
 "To the infernal regions we descend.

" Our errand is approved, assigned by Heav'n,
 " Where Michael with thy master did contend,
 " Chastis'd his pride, discomfited, and quell'd."

As when by furious gales a mainmast springs,
 Sails, cordage, yards, are all together fell'd,
 So fell the fiend with all his underlings.
 This only obstacle so soon repell'd,
 To the fourth circle we descend, that lies
 Still more remote from the circumference
 Which all the family of sin implies.
 O wond'rous power of God's omnipotence!
 What criminals, what toils assail'd mine eyes!
 What penalties await perverted sense!
 As when Charybdis' waves with Scylla's meet,
 Mingle, repel, and madly whirl around,
 So did the spirits here advance, retreat,
 Mingle, repulse each other, and confound.
 Many I saw, (the circle was replete,)

Who pond'rous masses roll'd along the ground,
 Impelling with their chests; now they would clash,
 Now, howling, separate, and backward press,
 Taunting each other: " Why dost grasp thy trash?"
 " Why dost thou squander with such recklessness?"

Thus the two hosts defying and defied
 With mutual gibes their mutual spite convey'd.
 Again they mount, again they would divide,
 And when two demi-circles they had made,
 Each party reassum'd his former side.
 Then I, disgusted, to my master said:
 " What folks are these whom on the left I see,

“ Tonsur’d like clerks ? ”—“ These spirits when alive
 “ Were so profuse, their prodigality
 “ No limits knew ; the charge doth still survive,
 “ The burden of their rivals’ ribaldry,
 “ When face to face alternately they strive.
 “ Those on the right were priests ; their shaven pates
 “ Attest their craft, Popes, Cardinals, in whom
 “ Insatiate avarice predominates ! ”
 “ If so, my chief, I should remember some,
 “ For many have I known, as Fame relates,
 “ By the same vice defil’d.”—“ That hope is vain :
 “ The sordid lives they led, their torments here,
 “ Have chang’d them so, no vestige doth remain
 “ Of what they were ; such as they now appear
 “ Hereafter they will be. These will retain
 “ Their close clench’d fists, as if they grasp’d their gear.
 “ Those, bald and naked, will arise again.
 “ Reckless profusion, sateless avarice,
 “ Perpetuate e’en here their vain dispute,
 “ And bar to them the gates of Paradise.
 “ Hence, O my son, ’t is easy to compute
 “ What wealth avails—how rapidly it flies ;
 “ And how unjustly prodigals impute
 “ The fault to Fortune. All the gold that lies
 “ In richest coffers, all the mines conceal,
 “ Cannot one atom of the pains abate
 “ These wearied spirits are condemn’d to feel.”
 “ Then vouchsafe, my master, to relate
 “ What this same Fortune is, on whom our weal
 “ Solely depends, as learned doctors state.”

" O, blind and impious race ! " exclaimed he then.
 " O, worse than folly to persuade mankind;
 " That wealth imports the happiness of men !
 " Weigh well my words, and store them in thy mind.
 " That Power, whose wisdom far transcends our ken,
 " Ordain'd the planets, and to each assign'd
 " A guide to rule them ; thus thro' all extent
 " Is light diffus'd in equal quantities ;
 " So to your earth a guardian power He sent,
 " Who gives and takes all genuine dignities.
 " But for the trifles on which man 's intent,
 " These she contemns, and grants them or denies,
 " Regardless of their pray'rs. From race to race they pass
 " In nature mutable ; but her decrees
 " Are permanent, tho' like the snake in grass,
 " Inscrutable. The future she foresees,
 " Judges, decides ; like other powers elate
 " She rules her orb, and governs it with ease.
 " Yet her rotations cease not, or abate,
 " Forc'd to elude the countless multitude,
 " Who plaining still, are still importunate.
 " Such is the power who daily is pursued
 " By taunts of malice ! Heedless of their hate
 " She speeds along and meditates their good.
 " Now to more piteous objects we must steer :
 " The stars that rose when we began our course
 " Are nearly set : we cannot tarry here."

Downward we went till we had reach'd a source
 Whose waters flow'd into a channel near ;
 More black than azure was that water's hue.

Th' line we follow'd by a pathless road,
 And soon arriv'd where there appear'd in view
 A marsh call'd Styx, by that sad stream o'erflow'd,
 Which the steep banks supplied, and check'd it too.
 I gaz'd upon the marsh and there beheld
 Wretches besmeared with filth; naked were they,
 And as by mutual menaces impell'd
 Assail'd each other, not with hands, I say,
 But with their heads, breasts, feet; and these repell'd,
 They mangled with their teeth, like beasts of prey.
 "Here," cried my courteous master "thou dost see
 "Spirits of those whom frantic ire possess'd:
 "But be assur'd yet many more there be
 "Who in the stream immers'd, with sighs attest
 "Their dire irrevocable destiny:
 "The bubbles on its surface manifest
 "Are caus'd by them."—Scarce had he ceas'd, when lo!
 These accents reach'd me: "Wretched was our state
 "'Midst all the blessings Nature could bestow
 "On thankless man: sole authors of our fate,
 "Our own unbridled passions caus'd our woe:
 "Now in this filth our final doom we wait."
 These accents, scarce articulate, I heard,
 Like water gurgling through an aperture.
 Then round the turbid fen long time we err'd,
 Between the banks and it, tho' not secure,
 Still gazing on the mire-polluted herd.
 At length we reached the precincts of a tower.

CANTO VIII.



I reassume my song. When to the base
 Of the commanding tower we had attain'd,
 Upwards I gaz'd and soon perceiv'd a place
 Where two bright signals with a third maintain'd
 Intelligence—distant, but face to face;
 More to detect, mine eyes in vain I strained.
 I turn'd to him whose knowledge like the sea
 Is fathomless: "What may these signals mean,
 " And who are they employ'd so busily
 " On yonder walls?"—"The fogs that intervene
 " Obscure the view; else evident would be
 " The object of the signals thou hast seen."
 He spake, and never arrow cleft the skies
 More rapidly than I a skiff beheld
 Approaching us, diminutive in size
 And rul'd by one who steer'd it and impell'd.
 "Ha! cursed spirit!—art thou then my prize?"
 Exulting he exclaimed; to whom my lord:
 "Phlegias, for once thou grossly dost mistake;
 "A living man thou must receive aboard,
 "And ferry him across this turbid lake."
 Like some egregious dupe the fiend deplor'd
 His disappointed hopes, and 'gan to quake.
 Whilst Phlegias rav'd, my chief without delay

Enter'd the skiff, and by his side I sate.
 Then o'er the murky fen it wound its way
 Creaking and groaning 'neath so strange a freight.
 We had not far advanc'd when from the spray
 A form besmeared with mud, and breathing hate,
 Arose before me, and addressed me thus:
 "What wight art thou who ere the time decreed
 "Dar'st to approach the Stygian lake and us?"
 "I come," rejoined I, "ere my time indeed;
 "But who art thou in such a mire immers'd?"
 "Thou seest my state, what further dost thou need?"
 "I knew thee well, vile spirit, from the first;
 "Such filth, such anguish, ever be thy meed!"
 At this he seiz'd the skiff, and had revers'd
 But that my leader, of his drift aware,
 Repell'd his gripe, and thrust him in his slough.
 Then he embrac'd me with a joyful air,
 And cried in transport: "Ever blest be thou!
 "Blest be the womb engender'd thee and bare!
 "Yon wretch on earth was furious as now:
 "Not one good action gilds his memory.
 "How many kings, who now all pow'rful shine,
 "For pride and passion shall condemned be
 "To wallow in the mud like herds of swine!"
 Then I: "Dear master, I desire to see,
 "Ere we depart, that hateful wretch decline
 "Deeper and deeper still in the disgusting mire."
 "Thy wish, my son, shall soon be gratified:
 "'Tis meet it should, for just is thy desire,"
 He said, and soon a number I descried

Of the polluted race, who wreak'd their ire
On him of whom I spake: at once they cried
" To Philip Argenti!" and their words of fire
Incens'd him so that with his teeth he tore
His own vile hands, and let us leave him so:
He merits not a single comment more.
Sudden I heard a loud lament of woe,
But whence it came, or from the lake or shore,
I could not ascertain. Anxious to know,
I to my master turned: " We now are near
" The city surnam'd Dis: these groans and sighs
" Proceed from miscreants are imprison'd here."
Thus he, and I no longer in surprise,
Recall'd to mind that I had mark'd with fear
Its tow'rs and battlements, which to mine eyes
Seem'd all in flames. " Th' eternal fire that glows
" Within its walls extends to all around
" And that red tint upon its tow'rs bestows."
He ceas'd, and we approach'd the ditch profound
That yawns beneath that citadel of woes:
Its walls appear'd with red hot iron bound.
Oft to and fro our surly pilot steers
Till we had reach'd a spot where with a growl
He warns us to descend, " The gate appears;
" Begone and enter! join the ghosts who howl!"
More than a thousand outcasts of the spheres,
Above the gate I saw: one with a scowl
Indignant cried, " A mortal doth invade
" The realms of death!" At this my sapient guide
Show'd by a sign he'd commune with the shade.

His gracious mien caus'd partly to subside
 The spirit's wrath : " Come then alone," he said.
 " Let him depart who with such reckless pride
 Presumes to violate this sacred reign ;
 Aye let him go, and prove he can retrace
 The dismal regions he hath pass'd in vain
 Under thy guidance." Reader, judge my case
 When the dire words I heard : never again
 Hop'd I to view my native land or race !
 " O chief belov'd ! " exclaimed I, " thou whose care
 Times out of mind my safety hath procur'd,
 Leave me not here a victim to despair.
 If further progress cannot be assur'd,
 Let us together to the earth repair ! "
 " Fear not, my son, no demons here immur'd
 Our passage can prevent, allow'd by one
 Far mightier than they—await me here.
 Be comforted, be confident my son,
 I will not leave thee in this world of fear ! "
 So he departed ; I remain'd alone,
 Deprived of him who to my soul was dear
 As my own sire—I was perplex'd by doubt
 Like one who hesitates 'twixt yes and no.
 What pass'd I heard not, for I stood without.
 Long time he tarried not, an hour or so,
 Slowly retreating from the dev'lish rout
 Who barr'd the gates against their deadliest foe.
 His eyes were downward bent, his lofty brow
 Shorn of its boldness ; sighs seem'd to inquire
 " Who bars our entrance to the fortress now ? "

At length he spake : " Tho' they have rous'd mine ire
 " Be not desponding or dishearten'd thou ;
 " Whoe'er they be that 'gainst our right conspire
 " Their utmost malice I have power to quell.
 " Not new their insolence : they once essay'd
 " To bar the port thro' which we pass to Hell.
 " Yet without lock that port thou hast survey'd,
 " And read the scroll tho' scarcely legible ;
 " Thro' that same port now hastens to our aid
 " One who well knows each circle of th' abyss,
 " And will at once unbar the gates of Dis."

CANTO IX.



Marking the pallid hue which coward fear
 Had painted on my cheek, my noble chief,
 Restraining his own feelings, strove to cheer
 My downcast soul.—Like one who hopes relief,
 List'ning he stood with an attentive ear ;
 For the dense vapours, to augment his grief,
 Forbade the wonted succour of his eye.
 " 'T is meet," exclaim'd he, " we chastise the foe,
 " But not alone if promis'd aid be nigh,
 " Yet why delay'd ?—how his approach is slow !"
 His words alarm'd me, for they seem'd t' imply
 A doubt of what he pledg'd not long ago.
 Perhaps I was deceiv'd, perhaps I gave

A meaning foreign to my chief's intent ;
 Yet succour might arrive too late to save !
 " Say, can a spirit, whose sole punishment
 " Is hope deferr'd, to this terrific cave,
 " Unscath'd, descend ? " Then he incontinent :
 " It rarely happens that a soul like me
 " Can pass the circles I have pass'd of late :
 " But once the potent witch Erichtoné,
 " Whose spells could raise the dead, did me translate
 " To this domain : scarce was my spirit free
 " From earthly ties when she to liberate
 " A wretch from Juda, lowest gulf of Hell,
 " And most remote from Heav'n, me she compell'd
 " To enter, in exchange, yon citadel :
 " Each secret of the palace I beheld.
 " Then rest secure, I know the precincts well.
 " The marsh, whose vapours breathe contagion round,
 " Begirts the wailing city, in whose walls
 " Perils and foes of ev'ry kind abound."

Much more he said than now my mind recalls.
 Whilst on the lofty tow'r I gaz'd, a sound,
 A scream of horrid dissonance, mine ear appals.
 Sudden three furies stain'd with gore I view ;
 Female they seem, girdled with hydras green
 Their waists appear, and horned serpents too,
 Instead of hair, upon their heads are seen.
 He, who full well the fearful handmaids knew
 Of Proserpine, the infernal region's Queen,
 Their names disclosed : " The frantic Diræ see,
 " Megæra on the left, and on the right

"Alecto weeps as if in misery :
 " 'Midst these Tisiphone exhales her spite."
 Each with her nails her wither'd bosom tears ;
 Then furious with palms to palms they fight,
 And shriek'd so loud that vanquish'd by my fears
 I to my leader clung. " Medusa, haste !
 (Such were the words that thunder'd in mine ears,)
 " Arrest yon caitiff lest we be disgrac'd
 " As once we were by Ægeus' daring son !"
 " Turn !" cried my chief, " and let thy hands be plac'd
 " Before thine eyes ; if Gorgon comes anon
 " And thou behold'st, thou never wilt return
 " To yonder earth ; one glance converts to stone.
 " How great the peril, how to ward it, learn !"
 He said, and with a parent's fond solicitude,
 Our hands he interpos'd with such address
 Mine eyes could nothing view, nor yet be view'd.
 O ye who pow'rful intellects possess,
 Divine the moral these poor rhymes include ;
 Occult it is, but it exists no less.
 Now o'er the troubled stream a crash is heard
 So terrible, the very banks appear
 To quake with dread ; so terrible, so fear'd,
 The whirlwind raves : uprooted far and near
 Trees and their branches crash. With dust besmear'd
 Proudly he stalks along, whilst cow'd with fear
 Man, birds, and beast, from his fell presence flee.
 Soon as he heard my chief mine eyes unveil'd,
 And bade me fix them with intensity
 Where the rank marsh its thickest fumes exhal'd.

As frogs, when they behold their enemy,
 A serpent, near, with trepidation dive
 Till a safe refuge 'neath the waves they find ;
 So I beheld a crowd of spirits strive
 T' elude a being of the noblest kind,
 Who Styx had pass'd untainted and alive.
 Oft to his face his left hand he applied
 To chase the fumes, whence he appear'd to prove
 Annoyance and disgust. I soon descried
 He was a messenger from Heav'n above.
 Quick to my chief I turn'd, who signified
 I should in silence testify my love.
 How his eyes glow'd with anger and disdain !
 He hasten'd to the gate, and with a wand
 Touch'd and it open'd, all resistance vain.
 " Outcasts of Heav'n ! O, despicable band ! "
 Exclaim'd he, as he reach'd the sad domain.
 " What mad presumption tempts you to withstand
 " The will of Him who is infallible ?
 " Have you forgot how often He increas'd
 " The torments you endur'd ? Remember well
 " How Cerberus, your own terrific beast,
 " Shorn of his beard was dragg'd in chains from Hell ! "
 With this rebuke th' indignant angel ceas'd ;
 And pass'd again the same encumber'd road
 By which he came. Pensive and mute he went,
 And all the semblance of a spirit show'd
 On other than the present cares intent.
 Assur'd by the rebuke he had bestow'd,
 To the wide open gate our steps we bent.

We enter'd it without resistance quite ;
 And I, who anxiously desir'd to see
 The spirits there imprison'd, and their plight,
 Peering, beheld a countless company
 In torments which I shudder to recite.
 Vast *sepulchres* of great diversity
 I saw : such as at fruitful Arles are found
 Where Rhone arrests his course ; such too remain
 At Pola, Italy's extremest bound :
 In number such, but how unlike in pain !
 Fires of intensest power the tombs surround
 And render them red hot ; art might in vain
 Strive to surpass it. All expos'd they were,
 And from them issued such heart-rending cries
 As direst tortures led me to infer.

CANTO X.

—♦—

The path thro' which we pass'd, as I have said,
 Lay 'twixt the sepulchres and ramparts near :
 Narrow it was, and two abreast forbade.
 My master led, I follow'd in his rear.
 " O thou, whose skill and courage are display'd
 " In these dire labyrinths of guilt and fear—
 " Thou who hast led me thro' the whole secure,
 " Say, might I parley for a while with those
 " Who in the sepulchres such pangs endure ?

"The covers are uprais'd, no fiends oppose!"
 "'Tis true, my son, and so they will endure
 "Till the last judgment, when the whole will close;
 "Then shall each soul in Josaphat resume
 "The body he had left: meanwhile in fire,
 "Of Epicurus and his sect they share the doom,
 "Holding that spirits after death expire,
 "And mocking the belief of life to come.
 "Be not alarm'd, my friend: thy just desire
 "Shall soon be gratified, nor that alone,
 "But all the wishes latent in thy breast."
 "Never," rejoin'd I, "have I harbour'd one
 "Mistrusting thee, tho' not at once express'd.
 "Taught by thy precepts I essay'd to shun
 "Prolix debate, importunate request."—
 "O Tuscan! thou who dost securely pace
 "Our citadel of fire, and speak'st so fair,
 "So please you tarry in this burning place.
 "Thy speech, beyond all question, doth declare
 "That thou art member of that noble race
 "To which, perhaps, too much despite I bear."
 Sudden I heard these accents emanate
 From one the nearest tomb. Trembling my chief I sought,
 Who thus reprov'd me: "Why dost hesitate?
 "What cause of fear? Art thou deceived in ought?
 "Lo! Farinata deigns to elevate
 "His head sublime; if courteously besought,
 "His bust he will display."—Consol'd, I gaz'd
 With wonder on the shade, whose brow and breast
 Seem'd to defy the demons they amaz'd.

No symptom of alarm the bard confess'd ;
 He urg'd me forward, and with hand uprais'd
 This caution gave : " Let all thy words attest
 " Profound respect."—His mandate I obey'd,
 And hasten'd to the tomb.—The ghost awhile,
 With ill conceal'd contempt, my face survey'd,
 Then ask'd me if mine ancestors were vile.
 True to my promise, I disclosure made
 Of all I knew, their offices and style.
 Like one who meets a serpent on his way,
 The spirit arch'd his brows. " To me and mine
 " Fierce and inexorable foes were they.
 " Twice I dispersed them."—" Aye, proud Ghibelline !
 " But twice they rallied, and regain'd the sway,
 " An art, I ween, but little known to thine."
 His pride provok'd me. But another rear'd
 His head from Farinata's sepulchre ;
 I think he must have knelt ere he appear'd.
 He peer'd around, intent, unless I err,
 On something long expected, long deferr'd.
 But when his hopes all disappointed were,
 Weeping, he cried : " If with impunity
 " Thy lofty genius serv'd thee as a guide
 " Through these fierce flames, why comes he not with thee,
 " Thy friend, my son ?" " O spirit !" I replied,
 " No powers of mine achiev'd that prodigy,
 " But one at hand, of human bards the pride,
 " Tho' by thy Guido, he, perhaps, was spurn'd."
 The spirit's words, the mode of punishment,
 Reveal'd to me his name ; hence, I returned

An answer so direct. Incontinent,
 Emerging from the prison, where he burn'd,
 He cried, or rather shriek'd, "Say'st thou *he was* ?
 "Then he is dead! No more the sun's blest light
 "Gladdens his eyes!"—Observing me to pause,
 Supine he fell and vanish'd from my sight.
 But he, great champion of a fallen cause,
 Chang'd not his attitude, nor budg'd a mite.
 Recurring to my sneer, he thus resumed:
 "That we were strangers to thy faction's skill
 "Afflicts me more than to be thus entomb'd.
 "But ere Hell's queen shall fifty times refill
 "Her silver crescent, learn that thou art doom'd
 "To be the victim of that faction's will.
 "But tell me true—so mayst thou soon regain
 "Thy sweet abode—why rave the people so
 "'Gainst me and mine?" I answer'd him amain:
 "The streams of Tuscan blood ye caus'd to flow
 "On Arbia's banks, yet purple with the stain,
 "Made church and state, with one accord, your foe."
 Here, with a sigh, he shook his head and said:
 "I caus'd it not alone; nor unprovok'd
 "Did we repay your unrelenting hate.
 "But trust my word, tho' I was much invoc'd
 "To compass with mine arms your Flora's fate,
 "Alone I blam'd the project, and uncloak'd."
 Well pleas'd I heard, and begg'd him to unfold
 The riddle in his prophecy disguis'd.
 "If, mighty chief, I have been rightly told,
 "You spirits of the future are appris'd,

“ Tho’ present things obscurely ye behold.”
 “ Aye! but like one whose sight is dimm’d by age,
 “ Future events we ponder and foresee :
 “ Such grace we owe to the almighty sage :
 “ But when they happen, in obscurity
 “ Our intellect is wrapt : at such a stage
 “ We nothing know of the reality,
 “ Save what’s disclosed to us.”—He ceas’d, and I,
 As conscience struck, implor’d him to reveal
 To him who just had vanish’d from mine eye
 His son yet liv’d, and shar’d the common-weal.
 “ Tell him, that if I fail’d to make reply
 “ Thro’ ignorance, I deem’d he knew it well.”
 Just then my master beckon’d me to come ;
 Therefore I urg’d the spirit *sans* delay
 To mention those who in the self-same tomb
 Waited the last inevitable day.
 “ More than a thousand here await their doom :
 “ Here is the Second Frederic, whose fell sway
 “ So vex’d the church. The Cardinal beside,
 “ And many more whose names I will suppress.”
 With this he disappear’d. Then to my guide
 I hasten’d back, my mind intent no less
 On what the spirit just had prophesied.
 “ Why ”—he demanded “ Why such earnestness ? ”
 I told him all. “ Thy reason I perceive
 “ Is wilder’d by the evils he denounc’d.
 “ Be not alarm’d ; deceiv’d, he may deceive ! ”
 And here he rais’d his finger and announc’d
 Tidings of joy.—“ When by Jehovah’s leave

“ In Paradise thou shalt that spirit see
 “ Who knows all future and all past events,
 “ From her thou ’lt ascertain thy destiny.”
 He spake, and quitting the vast battlements,
 Hied to the centre of the cemetery,
 And reach’d a gulf whence loathsome excrements
 Such stench exhal’d as pall’d us where we stood.

CANTO XI.



Around th’ abyss high rocks a rampart made,
 And torments more intense resounded there.
 To shun the horrid stench we sought the shade
 Of the huge cover of a sepulchre
 On which was writ: “ Here lies the renegade,
 Pope Anastasius, dup’d and urg’d to err
 By vile Photinus.”—“ There we must remain
 “ Awhile, my son; ’t is meet thou be’st inur’d
 “ To the rank fumes, the better to sustain.”
 “ If so, my chief, some means must be procur’d
 “ To while the time, for lassitude is pain.”
 “ Of that,” rejoined he, “ be at once assur’d.
 “ Know then this lofty rampart comprehends
 “ Three circlets, one surpassing in its size
 “ The other two; the second in the scale descends,
 “ The third is least of all: the three comprise
 “ Spirits whose guilt all other crimes transcends.

“ Henceforward ’t will suffice to use thine eyes ;
“ I will apprise thee why they were impal’d.
“ Wrong to their fellow creatures is the deed
“ Of human malice : or by fraud assail’d
“ Or open violence its victims bleed.
“ As fraud is only practis’d by mankind
“ It most offends the Lord : therefore He decreed
“ That cheats to lowest Hell should be consign’d.
“ The largest of the circlets is replete
“ With those whose violence no law could bind :
“ As threefold are its objects it is meet
“ The larger circlet should with these agree
“ In number of departments centripete.
“ To God, ourselves, and neighbours, rage may be
“ Baneful alike in person and estate ;
“ Thus murders, wounds, and lasting misery
“ On neighbours it inflicts : indiscriminate.
“ It burns, it spoils, and revels in excess.
“ Hence ruffians, pillagers, and homicides
“ Are pent and tortur’d in the first recess.
“ The second is reserv’d for suicides,
“ For gamesters, and for those who risk no less
“ Their all on projects which mere chance decides.
“ God suffers violence when man denies
“ His being, and blasphemes his sacred name ;
“ When nature’s laws and bounties we despise.
“ Therefore, the minor section brands with flames
“ Sodom’s vile crew, and Cahor’s usuries.
“ Fraud, which nor conscience nor the fear of shame
“ Restrains, deceives alike the nearest friends,

" And strangers who unwarily confide :
 " Invert the order ; with the last it rends
 " The bonds by which all nations are allied.
 " Thus the eighth circle racks, and comprehends,
 " Cheats, hypocrites, impostors, sorcerers,
 " Pimps, barrators, and such like miscreants.
 " Fraud to our friends yet deeper guilt infers :
 " The dearest ties of nature it supplants ;
 " And love itself from acts of love deters.
 " In the last circle, which the centre is
 " Of the whole universe, these traitors burn
 " In everlasting flames. There gloomy Dis
 " His sceptre holds," he said ; and in return
 I asked my chief : " The labyrinth of th' abyss,
 " And its inhabitants, for whom I yearn,
 " Thou clearly hast describ'd ; but prithee say,
 " Why those who in the Stygian marsh contend—
 " Why wretches whom the winds and rain dismay,
 " And others whose invectives never end,
 " Why in the burning city are not they
 " Tormented, if God's justice they offend ?
 " If not, why are such multitudes so vex'd ?"
 " How," he exclaim'd, with rare severity,
 " Is all thy reason clouded and perplex'd ?
 " Hast thou forgot that high philosophy,
 " Whose ethics were so long thy fav'rite text ?
 " Three crimes, it states, offend the Deity :
 " Malice, brutality, incontinence ;
 " Of those the last, least criminal He deems.
 " Remember this, and thou wilt learn from thence

“ Why less excruciating the penance seems
“ Of those without, than those who burn within.
“ God weighs their crimes, and what is just esteems
“ Correlative the punishment and sin.”
“ O, thou, who like the sun, dispensest light,
“ Such profit from each conference I win,
“ That doubts, no less than certainty, delight !
“ A moment’s retrospect : thou didst avow
“ That usury disgusts th’ Almighty’s sight.
“ Deign, O, my master, to inform me how ? ”
“ True science,” he replied, “ her views extends
“ To causes and effects. What follows now ?
“ That nature from God’s providence descends,
“ And art from her. If thou hast noted well
“ Thy physics, there thou hast perceiv’d, my son,
“ That human art, as much as possible,
“ Follows what nature dictates—master one
“ And one the pupil. Genesis will tell,
“ That whate’er nature yields, is meant for none
“ But all mankind to clothe them and to feed.
“ But usury holds this impertinent ;
“ Engrossing all, it makes its millions breed
“ Like sheep or kine, and lends at cent. per cent.
“ Enough ! now follow me ; ’t is time indeed
“ Another path to seek for our descent.
“ The pisces on th’ horizon ’gin to peep ;
“ The plough is opposite the choral stars,
“ And warns us to descend the murky steep.”

CANTO XII.



Precipitous and craggy was the way
 We were compell'd to take, more fearful too,
 For that in sight a hideous monster lay.
 Such is the fragment which detach'd we view
 Of Barco's mount, by earthquake torn away,
 Or sapp'd by time : Adigé then withdrew
 His waves in fear. From that vast fragment's peak
 Descent there 's none, e'en for the wariest feet.
 Nearly as steep was that of which I speak.
 Stretch'd at its base, the infamy of Crete,
 In the false cow conceiv'd, lay there to wreak
 Mad vengeance on himself. With rage replete,
 When he beheld us, his own flesh he gnaw'd.
 To him my leader : " Haply thou dost fear
 " That th' Athenian Duke, who erstwhile aw'd
 " And vanquish'd thee, approaches here.
 " Hence odious beast !—The mortal, taught by me,
 " Needs not instruction from thy sister's art ;
 " Sanction'd he comes, Hell's penalties to see."
 As a wild bull, when from the hunter's dart
 A death-wound he receives, bounds furiously,
 Loath to remain, unable to depart ;
 So madden'd Minotaur, when Maro spake.
 " Now," cried my chief whilst fury fires his veins,
 " 'Tis meet, my son, that we advantage take,
 " And hence depart, for much unseen remains."

O'er ruins on all sides that made me quake
 Our journey lay, unus'd to human tread ;
 Oft did the fragments 'neath my pressure slide.
 Observing my astonishment and dread ;
 " This mass of ruin, and the beast," he cried,
 " Whom I have quell'd, perhaps derang'd thy head.
 " Then know, when first these regions I beheld,
 " The vast convulsion was not yet begun.
 " This ruin (if I err not) was impell'd
 " But a short time before the mighty One
 " To Limbo did descend ; whence he redeem'd
 " The spirits of the just. Ere then, a crime was done
 " Without a name. Then the foul valley seem'd
 " Convuls'd ; its circles were so rent and tost,
 " That like Empedocles of old, I deem'd
 " All nature by conspiring atoms cross'd,
 " And chaos come again. This circle then,
 " And all the rest, were jumbled and revers'd.
 " But downward turn thine eyes, and thou wilt ken
 " The boiling pool of blood, where are immers'd,
 " Those who have shed the blood of fellow men."
 O blind cupidity ! O rage, accurs'd !
 That short-liv'd mortals to such horrors goad,
 And after plunge them in eternal pain !
 An ample ditch I saw, which overflow'd,
 And like a bended bow, hemm'd in the plain.
 Around the ditch, a band of Centaurs rode,
 Each with a bow and arrow in his hand,
 Like hunters, who on earth the game pursue.
 Perceiving us descend, three of the band,

With chosen arrows, from the rest withdrew,
 And one at distance ask'd: "By whose command,
 "And where, are ye condemn'd your crimes to rue?
 "Quick, answer me, or I discharge my bow."
 To whom my chief: "To Chiron we reply,
 "And not to thee: thy violence I know."
 He touch'd me then, and said: "Nessus meets thine eye;
 "He who for Dejanira lusted so,
 "And dying, caus'd th' invincible to die!
 "He in the middle, with his head declin'd
 "Upon his breast, is Chiron, the renown'd,
 "Who tutor'd great Achilles, and refin'd.
 "Thousands of jealous Centaurs stalk around
 "The crimson ditch, and if a wretch they find
 "Emerging from the blood beyond his bound,
 "Him with their shafts they pierce." Now we drew near
 The fierce and nimble band, when Chiron drew
 An arrow, and displacing with its spear
 His venerable beard, reveal'd to view
 His ample mouth, and thus, in accents drear,
 Question'd his comrades: "Is it known to you
 "That he who lurks behind, whene'er he moves,
 "Dislodges ev'ry pebble with his tread?
 "No spirit causes this who hither roves."
 My noble guide replied to him, whose head
 Scarce reach'd his breast: "O Chiron, it behoves
 "That I thro' Hell's dark labyrinth should lead
 "This lonely mortal—such in sooth he is,
 "For his soul's weal, and not for his delight!
 "Sanction'd by Heav'n he visits the abyss.

" This task, so new to me, a guardian sprite
 " Who hallelujah sings in realms of bliss,
 " Impos'd on me. He is no felon wight,
 " No wicked spirit I: observe me well.
 " Now I entreat thee by that pow'r supreme
 " Who led us thro' the wildest depths of Hell,
 " Vouchsafe us one of thine whom thou mayst deem
 " Fittest to guide us, and who best may tell
 " Where we may ford, and o'er the boiling stream
 " My friend transport, who cannot ride the air."
 When Chiron heard he turn'd without delay
 To the right hand, and order'd Nessus there
 My leader's least injunctions to obey.
 The mandate given, confiding in his care
 We pac'd along the ditch, and on our way
 Heard the sad wretches utt'ring their despair;
 Some I beheld who in the boiling flood
 Were to their eyebrows plung'd; " These," Nessus cried,
 " Were tyrants who in pillage and in blood
 " Indulg'd their rage; here scalded, scarified,
 " They mourn with hideous yells their turpitude.
 " Here Alexander, Dionysius, bide,
 " Who caused Sicilia such long years of woe;
 " And he with jet black locks is Ezzelin;
 " The other by his side, as white as snow,
 " Obizzo d'Esté, cover'd to the chin,
 " And strangled by his son long years ago."
 Doubting the truth of such atrocious sin,
 I to the poet turn'd, who urg'd me first
 To hear whate'er the Centaur might impart.

His course he stay'd where numbers were immers'd
 Far as the throat. He show'd to me apart
 The ghost of him who treacherously pierc'd
 In bosom of the church, the royal heart'
 Which still remains where Albion's monarchs rest.
 Others I saw who, from the boiling pool
 Emerging, show'd to me the head and breast:
 Many I knew of the detested school.
 As we advanc'd the depth of blood decreas'd
 Till it scarce reach'd his hoofs; the ford we found.
 "Observe," the Centaur cried, "on either side
 "The blood decreases; more and more profound
 "On t' other side where reflux is the tide
 "The depth becomes, and reddens all around.
 "Justice divine condemn'd the homicide:
 "Fierce Attila, the type of tyranny,
 "Pyrrhus and Sextus, there with tears that scald,
 "Condemn'd to weep their crimes eternally;
 "With them the Rayners, one Corneto call'd,
 "Pazzo the other, who by piracy
 "The shores of Italy so long appall'd."
 The Centaur ceas'd and then repass'd the ford.

¹ The Italian commentators agree in stating that Dante, in verse 120 of this Canto, refers to Henry III. King of England. They are egregiously mistaken. Henry was not assassinated in or out of the church; he died a natural death at St. Edmund's Bury, in the 64th year of his age.—Hume's *History of England*, vol. ii., p. 221. If they had taken the trouble to consult M. Paris, and the other authorities cited by Hume, they would have found that Simon and Guy de Montford, sons of the Countess of Leicester,

CANTO XIII.



The Centaur had not yet the bank regain'd
 Beyond the ford, when to a wood hard by
 We pass'd: no sign of footpath it retain'd;
 Not green the leaves, but of a sombre dye;
 The branches were not straight, but interchain'd
 And gnarled all; no fruit allur'd the eye,
 Save berries of the deadly aconite.
 The wildest beasts that roam the wilderness
 Between Cecina and Corneto's site
 Haunt not such scenes of savageness.
 The loathsome harpies in this wood delight;
 They, who predicting future wretchedness,
 Compell'd the Trojans to abandon quite
 Stophales isles. Large flapping wings have they;
 Faces and necks of women; their feet arm'd
 With frightful claws; feather'd like birds of prey
 Their paunches seem. The trees where most they swarm'd
 Utter'd deep groans that fill'd me with dismay.
 My courteous master, seeing me alarm'd,

sister to Henry III., and who had espoused Simon de Montford, created Earl of Leicester, assassinated at Viterbo their cousin Henry d'Almaine, who, at that very time, was endeavouring to make their peace with the king, A.D. 1271. There cannot be a doubt that Dante, in his usual elliptical manner, referred to that event in the above passage.

Accosted me : " Ere further we proceed,
 " Know we have reach'd the second minor sphere,
 " Of which I spake. Each object duly heed,
 " For thou wilt shortly view such wonders here
 " As all belief might stagger and exceed."
 From ev'ry quarter groans assail'd mine ear ;
 Yet could I not a single soul perceive.
 Breathless I stood, amaz'd, and terrified.
 My master deem'd, I verily believe,
 That I suppos'd the gnarled trees might hide
 Those who appear'd so heavily to grieve.
 " Pluck but a twig from one of them," he cried,
 " And ev'ry doubt thy passive mind will leave."
 I stretch'd my hand, and from a lofty thorn
 Sever'd a branch, when lo ! I heard a scream !
 The sliver spake : " Why am I rudely shorn ?"
 Blood follow'd next, and as it 'gan to stream
 Again it asked : " Why am I rudely torn ?
 " Hast thou no pity—thou whom I esteem
 " A human creature ? We too once were such,
 " Tho' now transform'd to trees. If vipers we had been,
 " More pity had not fail'd thy soul to touch !"
 As in a fire-brand, whilst it yet is green,
 If one end burns the other seems to weep,
 And whizzing in the air its breath exhales ;
 So from the thorn did blood and wailings deep
 Issue at once. Like one whose conscience fails,
 I dropp'd the branch, or rather durst not keep.
 " Thy fate, like me, poor spirit ! he bewails,"
 Exclaim'd the sage ; " and had he erstwhile lent

" More credit to my lay, his daring hand
 " Had not a twig of all thy branches rent ;
 " But sooth to say, thy fate doth so transcend
 " Experience and belief, that I induc'd th' event
 " Which I deplore. But, spirit, condescend
 " To tell him who thou art ; so in return,
 " When he the world revisits, he 'll revive
 " Thy fame perhaps effac'd." To whom the thorn :
 " Thou tempt'st me with such courtesy to thrive
 " I will confess the whole, nor wilt thou scorn
 " Details of what befell me when alive.
 " I am he who held the keys of Frederic's heart,
 " Open'd and clos'd it daily at my will,
 " My frown compell'd all rivals to depart ;
 " And with such zeal my officē did I fill,
 " My health was sacrific'd past cure of art.
 " That harlot, Envy, who polluteth still
 " The court of Cæsar, pest of ev'ry court,
 " Inflam'd his sycophants against me so,
 " That he, Augustus, trusting their report,
 " Turn'd all my honours, dearly bought, to woe.
 " Indignant at the charge, and as my last resort,
 " I call'd on Death. One fatal hasty blow,
 " Unmerited, concluded my career.
 " But by these roots, that now form part of me—
 " By all that men hold sacred and revere—
 " Never, I swear, did my fidelity
 " Swerve for an instant from my monarch dear.
 " Shouldst thou return to earth, in charity
 " Rescue my mem'ry, which now tarnish'd lies

" By envious tongues ! " He paus'd, when thus my sire :
 " Ere the propitious fleet-wing'd moment flies,
 " Speak, if yet further tidings you desire ! "
 Then I : " Speak thou, my friend, for thou art wise,
 " And know'st what best imports me to inquire ! "
 At this he recommenc'd : " If by this man
 " Your wish, imprison'd spirit, you attain,
 " Deign to inform us, if indeed you can,
 " How may these knobs imbody and restrain
 " An unsubstantial soul ? And say beside,
 " If one imprison'd here may yet regain
 " His pristine freedom ? " Here the thorn replied,
 With sighs, which soon became articulate.
 " I briefly will respond," the spirit cried.
 " When the soul quits with violence its mate,
 " Minos, th' inexorable judge of Hell,
 " To the seventh circle dooms the reprobate.
 " In this dire wood, a tree with trees to dwell,
 " Imbodied in a thorn he meets his fate,
 " And germinates in that receptacle
 " Like grain of spelt : his leaves the harpies eat,
 " Inflicting on the stems a martyrdom :
 " The blood that flows becomes the monsters' treat.
 " Like others, at the day of final doom,
 " Our prisons we shall quit our spoils to meet,
 " But not to wear ; we may not reassume
 " What we ourselves renounc'd. At that dread day
 " Each body shall be hung on its own tree ! "
 He spake, and hoping he had more to say
 We tarried by the trunk : when suddenly

A crash surpris'd and fill'd us with dismay.
 Such crash the hunter hears when watching he
 The boar and hounds perceives, who, high in blood,
 Dash thro' the copse and spread destruction round.
 On the left hand two fugitives I view'd,
 Naked and torn; each branch and twig they found
 They snapp'd and shatter'd as they pass'd the wood.
 The foremost of the two at ev'ry bound
 Madly exclaim'd: "Oh aid me, aid me Death!"
 "Lano!" the other cried, "at Toppo's fight
 "Thou wert not so alert!"—He ceas'd for want of breath
 And hid him in a bush in sore affright.
 For lo! the wood resounded with the cry
 Of black and famish'd dogs, as keen of sight
 As unleash'd greyhounds, with whose speed they vie;
 With their sharp teeth the crouching wretch they tear,
 Then with his quiv'ring limbs exulting fly.
 My leader with his hand now led me where
 The rifled shrub their violence bewail'd.
 "Jacob of St. Andréa!" cried the bush,
 "What hath the havoc of my leaves avail'd?
 "Must I for thy vile crimes, that made me blush,
 "By thee and thy tormentors be assail'd?"
 He ceas'd, when Maro, studious not to crush
 A single leaf, besought him to disclose
 Some tidings of his life. He answered straight:
 "O thou, who com'st in pity to my woes
 "To witness and deplore my dismal fate,
 "Gather my leaves, and at my roots depose.
 "I was a native of that far fam'd state

“ Which for its patron Mars at length assum’d
 “ St. John the Baptist ; hence the god enrag’d
 “ Its citizens to wars incessant doom’d ;
 “ And but that Arno’s banks his wrath assuag’d,
 “ Where even yet his statue is survey’d,
 “ In vain with patriot zeal they had engag’d
 “ To reconstruct its walls, in ruins laid
 “ By Attila, the scourge of Italy—
 “ I on a gibbet died myself had made.”

CANTO XIV.



Feeling the ties of country in full force,
 The leaves I gather’d, scatter’d on all sides ;
 And to the ghost restor’d, with speaking hoarse.
 This done, we reach’d the limit which divides
 The second and third circlets. In our course
 We mark’d the fearful art which there presides.
 What I observ’d I would distinctly state :
 First then, we halted near a barren heath,
 Where not a blade of grass could vegetate.
 The wailing wood begirt it like a wreath,
 Just as the boiling ditch encircled that.
 On tiptoe we advanc’d, for all beneath
 Was light and arid sand, just such I deem
 As Cato in the Lybian desert trod.
 O, vengeance of the Lord ! O, power supreme !

How vast, how terrible, the acts of God!
 Spirits quite naked, gall'd in th' extreme,
 Here groan'd in crowds beneath th' Almighty's rod.
 Some on the arid sand supinely lay;
 Some were contracted; some continually
 Rush'd to and fro—most numerous were they;
 And those the least who griev'd most audibly.
 Broad vivid flames augmented their dismay
 Slowly descending on the burning sand.
 Thus flakes of snow the tow'ring Alps invade;
 And thus in India's ever sultry land
 Great Alexander saw his troops dismay'd
 By flakes of fire, when each at his command
 Pounded the soil, which thus condens'd allay'd
 The fury of the raging element.
 So the eternal flames descended here,
 And caus'd the sand that glow'd incontinent
 To render all their pangs yet more severe.
 In vain their feeble hands a succour lent,
 Sear'd whilst they strove to save them from the sear.
 "Master," I cried, "O, thou who canst control
 "All save the fiends who at the gate of Dis
 "Oppos'd our passage! who is that fierce soul
 "Who seems so reckless of the dread abyss,
 "And stands alone undaunted of the whole?"
 Marking my words, the spirit fir'd at this,
 And answer'd me: "On earth I liv'd elate,
 "Such I remain. If mighty Jove in ire
 "Harass'd his limping smith to fabricate
 "The bolt that slew me; if the god could tire

" The Cyclops to accelerate my fate,
 " As erst at Phlegra, when the valiant sire
 " Called out for Vulcan's aid, slight cause hath he
 " To triumph at my fall!" My chief replied,
 Against his wont with just severity:
 " O, Capanëus! thy unbridled pride
 " Pangs more intense will shortly cause to thee,
 " Its madness is thy curse; all else beside
 " Inadequate to punish it would be,"
 He said; and viewing me with milder eyes,
 Continued thus: " One of seven kings he was
 " Who Thebes beleaguer'd, and did still despise
 " God's holy name, revil'd and spurn'd his laws;
 " And oft I told him, 'Thy mad blasphemies
 " ' Well suit thy pride, their origin and cause.'
 " Follow me closely, but with special care
 " Avoid the burning sand. We must regain
 " The wood's extremity." Of this aware,
 Mutely I follow'd, and did soon attain
 A rivulet, whose water caus'd my hair
 To stand on end; so vivid was the stain
 Of boiling blood: so boils Bulcame's stream,
 Where harlots lave their ever-tainted gear.
 Of stone its bed and sloping margins seem;
 I soon perceiv'd our resting place was here.
 " Of all the objects I have shown thee yet
 " Since thro' the gate we pass'd, Hell's open door,
 " Most wonderful I deem this rivulet,
 " Whose vapours quench the flames that hover o'er!"
 These words of Maro fail'd not to beget

An ardent wish that he would tell me more.
 " 'Midst the vast ocean is an island spoil'd,
 " Whose name is Crete, beneath its pristine king
 " The world was pure, by no vile passions soil'd ;
 " A mountain rises there, erstwhile rejoicing
 " In woods and streams, where Nature only toil'd.
 " 'T is Ida, now an old deserted thing.
 " This, Rhea, as a sure asylum chose
 " For her young boy, and when the infant cried,
 " The better to conceal him from his foes,
 " With drums and cymbals she deceiv'd their guide.
 " A vast colossus on the mountain rose,
 " Whose back was turn'd on Damietta's side ;
 " Its front on Rome : its head of gold complete ;
 " Silver its arms and breast, less pure were they ;
 " Its waist was form'd of brass ; its legs and feet
 " Of iron, save the right of potter's clay.
 " Each member of the statue, save the head,
 " Was rent, and thro' the fissures forced their way
 " Torrents of scalding blood ; this stream they fed,
 " The Stygian lake, and bitter Acheron.
 " Their course they held, till they had reach'd the spot
 " Where all things terminate, and there, my son,
 " They form'd Cocytus : I describe it not
 " Seeing thou wilt behold itself anon."
 Then I : " If this small stream, so red and hot,
 " From Ida springs, whence comes it we have found
 " No trace of it till we alighted here ? "
 " Thou know'st," replied he " all th' abyss is round,
 " And to the left we pass'd from sphere to sphere :

" Thou couldst not mark the whole, nor I expound.
 " What wonder then that in our long career
 " Thy notice it escap'd ?"—" Say, where are plac'd
 " Lethé and Phlegethon ? The first a theme
 " Thou hast not broach'd : the others, as thou say'st,
 " Spring from the tears which from the statue stream."
 " Much pleasure," he rejoin'd, " be sure I taste
 " From all thy questions, yet these billows seem
 " To speak to thee of burning Phlegethon.
 " When we have left this circle, thou wilt see
 " That Lethé, where the souls whose purge is done
 " Imbibe forgetfulness.—'T is time that we
 " Forsake the wood ; now follow me, my son ;
 " On the firm dyke we shall in safety be,
 " It burns not, for the vapours quench the flames."

CANTO XV.



Thus o'er the dykes we pass, whilst vapours dense
 Protect them, and the water they enclose,
 From the impending fiery pestilence.
 Such dykes the Flemings resolute oppose
 To save them from the ocean's violence.
 Behind such ramparts Padua's sons repose,
 Careful to guard their mansions, ere the sun
 At Chiarenté hath dissolv'd the snows
 Which swelling Brenta's flood, the plains o'errun.

Such dykes, but not so lofty nor so strong,
 Some unknown architect had here begun.
 Mute and absorb'd in thought I pac'd along,
 Till at such distance we had left the wood
 No tree was visible. A numerous throng
 Of spirits hurrying o'er the sand I view'd,
 Who gaz'd on us, as men in doubt descry
 Each other by the moon when first renew'd.
 Closer they peer'd as they advanc'd more nigh,
 And one by one my features scrutiniz'd,
 As an old tailor threads his needle's eye.
 One of the spirits, whom I recognis'd,
 Touching my skirt, express'd astonishment:
 And I, though he was sorely cauteris'd,
 Recall'd to mind each well-known lineament.
 "And art thou Sir Brunetto?" I exclaim'd.
 "My son," replied he, "do not thou prevent
 Thy friend Brunetto, of this troop asham'd,
 To talk with thee apart." "Most willingly
 Will I remain with thee, if not reclaim'd
 By yonder sage." "Alas! my son," said he,
 "If any of my class one moment stay,
 Twice fifty years will he condemned be
 To broil upon the sand, no fan to allay
 The torment of the flames. Then onward speed,
 And when I've told thee all, without delay
 To join my sad associates I proceed."
 Descend I durst not where the spirit moved,
 So bent my head in token of respect,
 Like one by some high personage reprov'd.

Hurrying along he spake to this effect :

“ What chance, what destiny, O well belov'd !

“ Hath brought thee hither thus in life erect ?

“ And who is he, that venerable sage,

“ Who leads and marshals thee ? ” “ Ere yet,” I said,

“ I had completed life's meridian age,

“ I lost me in a valley where I stray'd

“ Till yester morn, when I escap'd my cage ;

“ Then happily I found this trusty guide,

“ Who led me thro' the circles of th' abyss.”

Then he : “ If in thy star thou dost confide

“ A glorious recompense thou canst not miss ;

“ And but that Fate did otherwise decide

“ I would have aided to accomplish this.

“ But that malignant and ungrateful race

“ Who claim from rude Fiesole descent,

“ And still retain the vices of the place,

“ Thy virtues will reward with banishment.

“ Nor strange it is : sweet figs are in disgrace

“ Where arid soils abound. Fame speaks them insolent,

“ Proud, avaricious, envious, and malign.

“ Abjure their crimes, know Fortune hath in store

“ Such honours for thee—if I well divine,

“ Both factions will thy powerful aid implore ;

“ Tell them if they persist the grapes are sour,

“ A proverb I presume they 've heard before.

“ Let the Fiesolan beasts their fields manure

“ With their own blood, but let them not presume

“ To shed a particle of that so pure,

“ Which was transmitted by imperial Rome.”

" If Fate," replied I, " had propitious been,
 " Thou hadst not yet been sever'd from the race
 " Who mourn like me thine absence from our scene ;
 " For, trust me, in my heart's sincerest place
 " Lives thy paternal image, when serene
 " Thou didst instruct me by what means of grace
 " My name I might exalt, eternalize.
 " Doubt not thy lessons shall recorded be
 " In the best lays my genius can devise.
 " Of what concerns my future destiny
 " I will anon a holy Dame apprise,
 " Unless high Heaven my warmest hopes oppose ;
 " Whate'er th' event may prove, of this be sure,
 " That if my conscience leave me in repose
 " The worst of Fortune's freaks I can endure.
 " Such earnest of the future is not new ;
 " Let Fortune turn her wheel, his flail the boor,
 " Just as they list, my course I shall pursue."
 Here Maro turn'd to me : " 'T is nobly said,
 " Remember that, and prove that thou art true."
 I smil'd at this, and Sir Brunetto pray'd
 To name the most notorious of his crew.
 " Thy wish, my son, shall partly be obey'd.
 " Know then they all were clerks, in letters fam'd,
 " By the same crime polluted. Priscian is there,
 " With whom Acourcius, great Francesco nam'd ;
 " And he whom God's vicegerent did transfer
 " From Arno to Bauhiglion, where unclaim'd
 " His body rots. The rest I must defer,
 " For lo ! the sand grows more and more alive,
 " And folks approach with whom I must not blend.

" My treasure, in whose pages I survive
 " ('T is all I ask), I to thy care commend!"
 He left me here as swift as those who strive
 For the green bandrol on Verone's plain;
 Not like the sluggards who the last arrive,
 But like the victors who the prize obtain.

CANTO XVI.

—♦—

Now we had reach'd the dyke's extremity,
 And heard distinctly mighty torrents bomb;
 But the red streamlet in declivity
 Murmur'd like bees when buzzing o'er the comb;
 When from a throng of spirits issued three,
 Who hailing us, exclaim'd: " Tarry a while,
 " Thou mortal, who appear'st to us array'd
 " Like one of our own country, now so vile!"
 Ah me! what ravages the flames had made
 On all the three! It grieves me to recall
 The dreadful scars their visages display'd.
 My leader, whom no horrors could appal,
 Bade me be courteous, and salute the band.
 " And were it not," he said, " the flakes that fall,
 " I 'd urge thee to descend and tempt the sand."
 Seeing we budg'd not, they advanc'd more near;
 And recommencing their accustom'd strain,
 A wheel became, when they began to peer
 Like naked wrestlers, who attempt to gain
 Some vantage ere the struggle cost them dear.

So peer'd the spirits, eager to obtain
 A glimpse of me ; at variance their feet and eyes,
 Those backward turn'd, the others in repose.
 At length I heard these accents with surprise :
 " If this abode of turpitude and woes ;
 " If these scorch'd features cause thee to despise
 " Our pray'rs and tears, refuse not to disclose
 " Thy name ; and tell us by what miracle
 " In safety thou couldst thread th' infernal maze.
 " He, on whose traces I my steps propel,
 " Tho' miserably flay'd, had earn'd the bays,
 " And both in peace and war deserv'd them well.
 " Nephew of good Gualdrada, 't was his praise
 " To merit hers, and Guidoguerra was his name.
 " This other claim'd from Aldobrandi's race
 " His lineage, Tegghiajo, known to fame ;
 " And I, condemn'd to share in their disgrace,
 " Was Rusticucci called, tack'd to a dame
 " A curs'd shrew, who, 'gainst my native bent,
 " Urg'd to the crime for which I suffer now."
 He ceas'd, and had the flames their fury spent,
 I would have rush'd below (my chief, I trow,
 Had suffer'd me) but the fierce element
 And recreant fear conspired to disallow.
 " No !" I exclaim'd, " 't was not contempt, but grief,
 " That harrow'd up my soul, when I had heard
 " The tale of your achievements from my chief ;
 " Your high descent, the blessings you conferr'd
 " On me and mine ! So firm is my belief,
 " So deep my sorrow, years must pass away

" Ere its effects can cease. Behold in me
 " A countryman ; and many a charming day
 " I 've past in listening to your history.
 " I quit this scene of horror and dismay,
 " And mount to regions of felicity,
 " Promis'd by Him in whom my soul confides ;
 " But to the centre we must first descend."
 " If," cried the spirit, " thy brave soul presides
 " Long o'er thy body ; if renown attend
 " Thy life and death—tell us if worth resides
 " In Flora as of old, and who contend.
 " For William Borsiere, who of late
 " Hath join'd us here, augmented our distress
 " By tidings he disclos'd." " Strangers to the state,
 " Pride, lust of gain, have caus'd such wretchedness,
 " Her foes rejoice, her friends bewail her fate,"
 I answered, and my tears bewail'd no less.
 Aware of this in silence gaz'd the three,
 Like men struck dumb by some terrific tale.
 " Happy," exclaimed they ; " happy wilt thou be,
 " If thou hereafter hast no cause to wail
 " The frankness of thy speech. . . . If Heav'n decree
 " That thou escap'st this miserable vale,
 " And dost again the blessed stars behold,
 " When thou shalt tell thy friends, I there have been,
 " Some tidings of our destiny unfold."
 They ceased. The rolling wheel no more was seen ;
 All three, like lightning, vanish'd from my sight ;
 Thou couldst not say Amen so quick I ween.
 " We too," my master cried, " must wing our flight."

He pass'd, I follow'd trembling where he led ;
When lo ! tremendous torrents dizzied quite
My quaking ears ; boiling they were and red
As the Montoné from its mountain's height
Rushes impetuous, by no other fed,
Eastward of Apennine, at whose broad base
Call'd Acquachita, it o'erflows the plain ;
Descending thence to Forli, like the place,
Its name it changes, and there pours amain
Down Alpine steeps, till in its giant race
It gains St. Benedict, in whose domain
To thousands it should prove a rich resource.
Anon, a rapid precipice we saw,
The crimson torrents rushing with such force,
No creature could behold them without awe.
A corded belt around my waist I wore,
With which I lately hop'd to have trepann'd
The panther, with his many spotted corps.
This, in obedience to my chief's command,
Unbrac'd and coil'd I to his order bore ;
He, turning to the right, but from the verge
Somewhat remov'd, into the torrent threw
The belt, quite reckless of the boiling surge :
And thought I to myself some wonder new
Must doubtless from the precipice emerge,
Seeing he makes it with so fix'd a view.
Ah me ! how confident should mortals be
In those rare spirits, who before th' event
In Wisdom's mirror its reflection see !
“ What I expect, and thou less confident,

" Will soon," he said " rise in reality."
 When men recount some wondrous incident
 That seems incredible, we should be dumb,
 Doubt, and reflect, lest in repeating it
 We seem the dupes, and thus the sport become
 Of those who ridicule the want of wit :
 But here I cannot, should not, answer mum ;
 For by this comedy (if it be fit
 Its author so to swear) I did perceive
 A wondrous figure swimming, half reveal'd
 And half invisible ; it seem'd to cleave
 The torrent without fear, tho' half conceal'd ;
 Thus, when a diver hath obtained his prize
 He mounts again, and if he finds a site,
 On that as a sure footing he relies,
 And nothing, save his bust, appears in sight.

CANTO XVII.



" Behold the monster with a serpent's tail,
 " Whose pestilential breath infects alike
 " The court and camp, the mountain and the vale !"
 Thus spake to me my guide, and to the dyke
 Beckon'd the fiend, and warn'd him not to fail.
 This hideous prototype of fraud obey'd :
 His visage, sanctimonious and benign,
 The semblance of a holy cheat betray'd ;

His brawny arms were bristled like a swine ;
His back, breast, sides, symbolic types display'd
Of knots and springles, each of them a sign,
Their knits more various than the tissue weav'd
By Turk, or Tartar, or Arachne's hand.
The monster's bust, astonished, I perceiv'd
Nigh to the dyke, between the stream and sand ;
His tail, tho' hid, was arm'd, as I believ'd,
With scorpion's sting, and wriggled o'er the strand.
So skiffs are sometimes seen, half high and dry,
Half in the waves immers'd ; in Danube so
Beavers observe their prey with anxious eye.
" Now," cried the bard, "'t is meet that we should go
" Where thou perceiv'st the wicked monster lie."
So to the right some paces down we turn'd
But quitted not the dyke, where we remained
To shun the flakes of fire and sand that burn'd.
The monster's lair we scarcely had attain'd
When spirits I beheld who sadly mourn'd,
Couch'd on the sand : " By these may be explain'd
" What mysteries remain !" observed my chief ;
" Go, speak with them, and mark each act and word,
" But let thy questions and replies be brief ;
" Meanwhile I 'll tempt the monster to afford
" His potent aid, his shoulders in relief."
Ever submissive to the bard ador'd,
To the seventh sphere's extremity I went,
And found the wretches swelt'ring where they lay :
Their pangs in tears, not shrieks, obtained a vent ;
Their hands in vain attempted to allay

The flames and sand conspiring to torment.
 In summer thus our dogs in vain essay
 To chase with snouts and paws the ranc'rous flies
 That follow and torment them night and day.
 To certain spirits I addressed mine eyes
 On whom the flames such ravages had made,
 But could remember none : yet might I recognise
 Purses which arms and characters display'd,
 Which pendent from their necks like portraits hung :
 Each gloated on his purse, but nothing said.
 Intent on them I mark'd the rest among
 An azure lion on a golden field ;
 Another I observ'd amidst the throng,
 Whose purse, more red than blood, a goose reveal'd
 Whiter than new drawn milk ; a third I view'd,
 An azure sow upon a silver shield
 Ready to farrow. Whilst intent I stood
 A spirit said to me : " What dost thou here,
 " A mortal in this gulf of turpitude ?
 " Depart ! but when thou quitt'st this burning sphere
 " Go tell Vitalian, my rich neighbour late,
 " Such he will be or close to me or near.
 " Sole Paduan here, I'm taunted by the hate
 " Of all these Florentines, who with their cries
 " Deafen mine ears ; where 's he, the potentate,
 " Whose scutcheon bears those beaks which we despise ?"
 His tongue he now protrudes with a grimace,
 Like heifer when she licks her slaver'd snout.
 But fearing if I linger'd in the place
 I might offend my chief, who stay'd without

And warn'd me to be brief, I turn'd my face,
 And left the wearied miserable rout.
 I found him mounted on the monster's back :
 " Courage ! " he cried, " by him alone, my son,
 " Can we obtain the succour which we lack ;
 " Mount thou before me, lest false Geryon
 " With his fell tail should meditate attack ! "

As some poor wretch who, ere the fit comes on
 Of tertian ague, trembles when he sees
 His nails grow blue, and lingers in the shade,
 So did I tremble, so my blood did freeze,
 When his command I heard ; but tho' dismay'd,
 Reprov'd by him I feign'd to be at ease.
 I was asham'd as is a servant true
 When his good master threatens him downright.
 I mounted on the beast, a seat so new,
 And fain had cried, but language fail'd me quite,
 " Embrace me, my belov'd ! " but he who knew
 My weakness well, to dissipate my fright,
 His arms around my waist already threw,
 And thus enjoin'd the fiend : " Now, Geryon, move ;
 " Large be thy circles, easy our descent,
 " Think of thy novel charge, his saviour prove ! "

As a small bark, in crowded harbour pent,
 Must needs recede if it would quit the cove,
 So backward for a while the monster went ;
 But when at length all ready he perceiv'd,
 He launch'd into the air, and like an eel
 Wriggled his tail, whilst with his arms he cleav'd
 The murky element. Phaeton could not feel

More terror when, of consciousness bereav'd,
He dropp'd the reins, whence still the heav'ns reveal
The damage from his folly they receiv'd ;
Nor wretched Icarus, when in the sky
His wax-cemented wings detach'd he found ;
They could not feel more terrified than I,
When I beheld the dismal region round
As if eclips'd, and nothing could descry
Except the beast. He, without noise or bound,
Wheel'd slowly ; but I could not certify
Save that the wind blew fresher in my face.
On the right hand I heard the torrents fall
With horrible fracas, so to the place
I turned mine eyes, and saw what might appal
The stoutest heart : flames mounting from below,
With shrieks that made me cling to Geryon.
Now mark'd I what till then I could not know,
Our wheelings and descent ; the shrieks alone
Prov'd we had reach'd a dire abyss of woe.
As the tame falcon tir'd with hawking frets
When he perceives nor lure nor game on high,
And sullen quits, nor heeds his master's threats,
Indignant to behold him quit the sky ;
So Geryon, when no recompense he gets,
Fretful, beholds us from his back alight,
And swifter than an arrow vanishes from sight !

CANTO XVIII.



There is a place, a fearful gulf in Hell,
Call'd Malebolge ; 't is compos'd of stone,
Of iron hue, the circle's parallel.
Right in the centre of this wicked cone
Yawns a profound and very spacious well,
Whose structure in due time I'll analyze.
The space between it and the well is round,
And shows ten others of inferior size,
Concentric with the first, but less profound ;
They seem'd for mutual succour to arise.
Ditches like these in ancient forts abound,
Which guard each point, and save them from surprise ;
So did these gorges for defence appear ;
And as in ancient fortresses we find
Those drawbridges, which join the margins near
To those opposed, so rocks with arches joined
The wall and wells. In this abode of fear
We found ourselves depos'd, when we resign'd
The monster's back. The poet at the view
Turn'd to the left ; I follow'd slow behind.
New torments, new tormentors, victims new,
Appall'd mine eyes. The larger well appear'd
Completely fill'd with the afflicted crew.
At the well's basis, whence the shrieks I heard,
Naked they were, and half the family
Advanc'd with measur'd steps towards the bard,

The other half with more celerity.
 The Romans thus, in two dense bodies, go
 To view St. Peter's at the jubilee ;
 Some lag, some hasten to St. Angelo.
 Just so, with more or less alacrity,
 The ghosts approach'd us, flitting to and fro.
 On all sides horned demons I beheld
 Clacking salt whips, with which without a pause
 The fiends their wailing fugitives assail'd.
 Christ ! how they made them reel ! no need there was
 Of second lesson. Following my guide,
 I met with one whose features were not quite
 Unknown to me. My leader signified
 That I awhile might commune with the sprite.
 The flagellated wretch, in hopes to shun
 Discovery, strove to avoid my sight,
 But all in vain. " O, spirit ! " I began,
 " Unless thy pangs thy native mien deface,
 " 'T is Caccianimico now I look upon.
 " But say, what caus'd thee in this horrid place
 " Those stripes to suffer ? " " 'Gainst my will," he cried,
 " With blushes I 'll reveal to thee my case ;
 " Thy pure and friendly accents quench my pride.
 " In me behold that pander who to shame
 " Consign'd fair Ghisola, and gratified
 " The Marquis' lust, as Rumour's tongues proclaim.
 " Think not that I sole Bolognese endure
 " These cursed stripes ; the gulf is full of them ;
 " So full in numbers they exceed, be sure,
 " Those who 'twixt Reno's and Savena's stream

" For 'st' cry 'sipá.' If thou wouldst procure
 " More proof, go to Bologna, where they deem
 " Gold cheaply purchas'd by the pangs of Hell!"
 Scarce had he finished when a fiend severe
 Jerk'd him a lash, and cried in accents fell:
 " Pander, away! No maids are barter'd here!"
 My leader I rejoined, and from the well
 Pac'd to a rock which from the precipice
 Protruded. Easily we scal'd its ridge,
 And on the left forsook the first abyss;
 The victims pass'd beneath an arch of this.
 " Now," said my chief, " these other culprits see
 " Whose faces hitherto thou couldst not view,
 " Seeing they held the self-same course as we;
 " But these, detach'd from the preceding crew,
 " Have follow'd us, tho' they impeded be
 " By the fell demons who their pangs renew."
 Unsolicited he bade me scrutinize
 A noble spirit who approach'd alone.
 " No tears he sheds!—no unavailing cries!
 " Mark with what dignity he keeps his own!
 " 'T is Jason, fam'd of old, who brave as wise
 " The Colchians of their golden fleece depriv'd;
 " From thence to Lemnos' Isle the hero sail'd,
 " And there with his associates arriv'd
 " Just as the Lemnian beldams had assail'd
 " And slain their males, of whom but one surviv'd.
 " O'er young Hypsiphilé he there prevail'd,
 " She who with pious arts the rest deceiv'd;
 " Pregnant he left her, friendless and disgrac'd,

" For which with whips like scorpions he 's aggriev'd :
 " Thus are Medea's wrongs aveng'd, effac'd.
 " With him their crimes seducers expiate.
 " Enough of this ! " The rock on which we hied
 Another cross'd, which did communicate
 With one of the ten gorges notified.
 From this new station did we contemplate
 Folks snuffing noisome vapours, who beside
 With their own hands themselves did lacerate.
 Encrusted are its sides with vapours dense
 That from the bottom of the gulf exhale,
 Giving to eyes and nose a rude offence.
 So deep is this most execrable vale
 That who would sound it must in consequence
 The steepest rock of Malebolgé scale.
 I mounted thither, and the gulf reveal'd
 Thousands in human excrement immers'd,
 Such as no privies in the world could yield ;
 And one I mark'd with ordure so aspers'd
 'T was hard to say if 't was a clerk conceal'd
 Or layman in disguise. " Am I the worst,"
 Exclaim'd the wretch, " in this polluted cell,
 " That thou regard'st me with so stern an eye ? "
 " No ! " I replied, " If I remember well
 " Thou art Alessio Interminelli,
 " Whom I have seen in Lucca's citadel
 " With beard and locks less filthy and more dry ;
 " This is the cause I gaz'd on thee so long."

Striking his forehead, thus he answer'd me :

" Base adulations, ever on my tongue,

" Have plung'd me here, the sink of flattery !"
 At this my guide: " Observe amidst the throng
 " Yon filthy harlot with dishevell'd hair,
 " Who with her fetid nails, besmear'd with gore,
 " Her cheeks and bosom ceases not to tear :
 " 'T is Thaïs, so renown'd in days of yore,
 " And now erect she stands, now grovels there.
 " She when her lover panting by her side
 " Ask'd if she lov'd him, ' By the gods I swear,
 " ' Dearer than life ! ' the cozening quean replied."
 Enough, my son, 't is time that we depart.

CANTO XIX.



O Simon, wizard! O ye underlings
 Who God's most precious gifts adulterate,
 And make a traffic of the holiest things!
 Of you 't is meet I something should relate,
 Since the third bolge attests your sufferings.
 Already we had reach'd the pinnacle
 Of a steep rock, which perpendicular
 O'erlooks the centre of this yawning well.
 O sov'reign wisdom! O resplendent star!
 Whose virtue guides alike Heav'n, Earth, and Hell!
 How just are thy partitions, and how far
 Beyond what human art can parallel!
 The sides and bottom of the livid stone

Were full of pits, which equal in extent
 And in circumference the founts well known
 Of St. Giovanni, for the sacrament
 Of baptism reserv'd: one of them, I own,
 I lately broke, to save an innocent
 From certain death; let *him* I sav'd atone
 For the malignant tales my foes invent.
 From each pit's mouth a sinner's legs and feet
 Protruded, but their bodies burn'd below:
 Their soles were sear'd by the intensest heat,
 Which made their pliant ankles quiver so
 They might have snapt a band the most complete.
 As flames on surface of a cloth imbued
 With wax or pitch, from edge to edge they veer,
 Now clearly visible, now scarcely view'd,
 So from their heels to toes they vibrate here.
 "What 's he," my chief, "who 'midst the multitude
 Most tortur'd seems?—whose ankles quiver most?—
 Whom fiercer flames assail than his compeers?"
 "If thou wouldst commune," cried he "with the ghost
 By yonder rock, which so abrupt appears,
 I will transport thee. Him thou mayst accost,
 And he will tell you for what crimes he sears."
 "Thy pleasure, O rever'd! is ever mine;
 Thou art my lord, and canst at once foretell
 My wishes ere express'd; I 'm wholly thine!"
 Soon as we reach'd the base of the fourth well,
 To the left hand we turn'd, and gain'd the line
 Of countless pits, each pit a sinner's cell.
 But my good master will'd not to depose

His novel charge, till we had reach'd the hole
 Where the poor wretch's soles announc'd his woes.
 Thus I accosted him: " Unhappy soul,
 " Thrust downward like a stake, if nought oppose,
 " Speak, for with thee sincerely I condole!"
 Thus I conjur'd him, bending whilst I spake,
 Like monk when he absolves an assassin
 But just impal'd, who feigneth still to make
 Some new confession, a reprieve to win.
 " What!" cried the spirit, " is my Boniface
 " So soon arriv'd to expiate his sin?
 " If so, the Fates have much curtail'd thy race;
 " Art thou already wearied in amassing
 " That treasure for whose sake thou didst disgrace
 " And dupe the consort of th' Almighty King?"
 At this I gap'd, like simple folks who deem
 That they are flouted when they hear a thing
 Beyond their comprehension, and who seem
 Like statues petrified. " Tell him, my son,
 " Thou art no Pope unworthy of esteem."
 I answer'd as he wish'd it should be done.
 O then! the ghost distorted furiously
 His quiv'ring feet, and ask'd me in lugubrious tone,
 " What further tidings dost require from me?
 " If 't were thine object, risking this descent
 " So perilous, to learn my history,
 " I will reveal it, without ornament.
 " Know then, that I the sacred mantle wore
 " Of the Orsini's stock, a genuine Orse.
 " For them did I amass such golden store;

" For them was I condemn'd to fill this purse
 " Head foremost. But the pontiffs who of yore
 " Traffick'd in simony, like me, or worse,
 " At bottom of the pit, beneath me lie.
 " I too like them will sink, like them endure
 " Eternal pangs, when he shall meet mine eye ?
 " Whom I believ'd thou wert. He comes, be sure,
 " And the same place will occupy as I.
 " For long, too long, above the aperture
 " My feet have quiver'd. From the west will come
 " Another pontiff, guiltier far than we,
 " Who spurning every law, and foe to Rome
 " Longer than both of us, revers'd shall be.
 " A second Jason he will prove, of whom
 " We read in Maccabees, who gain'd his see
 " By bribing his weak king." I ask'd the ghost,
 (Too confident, perhaps,) what sum of gold
 Did holy Peter's sacred office cost ?
 Did Christ bestow the keys, or were they sold ?
 " It cost him not a doit. Christ only said
 " ' Follow me ! ' " " When good Matthias was enroll'd
 " To fill the void caus'd by the renegade,
 " The traitor Judas, what did they require ? "
 " Nothing ! " " Then bide ! Thy crimes are well repaid.
 " Still hoard thy ill got wealth that did inspire
 " Thy daring insolence to Carlo King ;
 " And but that I revere, unworthy sire,
 " The keys intrusted to thy care when living,
 " More harsh invectives should assail thine ear.
 " Thine avarice, which from the poor did wring

" Their hard earn'd pittance, caus'd us many a tear.
 " Thy tyranny no bounds, no merits knew ;
 " Kind to the bad, but to the good severe—
 " Pontiffs ! th' Evangelist alludes to you.
 " He saw a woman seated on the sea
 " Born with ten horns, whose number indicated
 " The Decalogue: seven heads beside had she,
 " Symbols of realms which own'd her as their head.
 " Long time she lived renown'd for purity,
 " By her first lord in all her conduct led,
 " But when he died his precepts she forsook :
 " No longer heeding the most sacred things,
 " The vilest suitors to her bed she took,
 " And play'd the harlot with successive kings.
 " To gold and silver as your gods you look :
 " Not so the pagans ; they some god adore,
 " But you mere counters—Constantine the great !
 " What cause have we to curse and to deplore
 " That fatal gift which thou didst consecrate
 " To the first pontiff, ever craving more !"
 Whilst boldly thus I did not hesitate
 To speak my mind, the spirit in a rage,
 Or haply stung by conscience, whirl'd his feet
 With double fury ; but my master sage,
 Whose lips with radiant smiles were still replete,
 Approv'd the frankness suited to mine age.
 With both his arms he rais'd me from my seat,
 And placing me with caution on his breast,
 Repac'd the rock which aided our descent.
 No weariness his noble mien express'd,

For eagle like, without a pause he went,
 And safely lodg'd me on the vaulted crest
 Which separates the fourth and fifth abyss :
 A mountain goat might have recoil'd at this.

² Some light may perhaps be thrown on this obscure passage, by reflecting that the punishments which Dante assigns to the condemned spirits, are always more or less analogous to their crimes. Thus, in the present Canto, where simoniacal popes are plunged headlong in deep and narrow pits, with their feet and ankles burning and quivering above them, the punishment indicates that they had reversed and perverted the divine precepts of the Gospel during their pontificate. But still a difficulty remains. How shall we account for what the pope alluded to (Nicolas III., elected by the influence of Philippe le Bel,) says concerning himself? "Laggio cachero io," &c. The only rational explanation we can suggest of the ellipsis is this: the poet, intending to proportion the duration and intensity of the punishment to the degrees of guilt, limits that of Nicolas, less guilty than Boniface, to the arrival of the latter in the pit; and he proceeds to inform us that a pastor "senza legge," and more guilty than either of them, will be plunged in it head foremost, in which position he will continue for a period equal to that of both his immediate predecessors. We have only to add, that after each simoniac has completed the term of his penance, he sinks to the bottom of the pit, making room for some new culprit, who occupies his place at the aperture.

CANTO XX.



Of new afflictions now my muse descants,
 In this the twentieth canto of her tale,
 Which treats of Hell and its inhabitants.
 As from the bridge I gaz'd upon the vale,
 Water'd with tears shed by its miscreants,
 I saw advancing o'er the hard round dale
 Spirits who wept in silence, and who pac'd
 Slowly like monks who in procession chaunt
 Their litanies. O wonderful! their heads defac'd,
 Were quite revers'd, and thus with back in front
 They were compell'd to move, their eyes so plac'd
 They nothing could behold as they were wont.
 It may have happen'd that paralysis
 Had caus'd it; I affirm it not,
 Nor can believe it could effectuate this.
 If, reader, thou hast profited a jot
 By the perusal of my comedy,
 Say could I witness their terrific lot
 With tearless eyes? certes my sympathy
 Was deeply waken'd when I gaz'd intent
 On tears descending so preposterously.
 My chief approach'd where on a rock I leant,
 And thus reprov'd me: "Dost thou pity them
 " God pitied not? Let them their fate lament,
 " But who shall dare God's justice to condemn?
 " Raise, raise thy head, and thou shalt view the ghost

“ Of him, who in th’ exulting Thebans’ sight,
 “ By earth was swallow’d up, when all the host
 “ Cried—‘ Amphiaraus! why dost quit the fight?’
 “ Lower and lower still he sank, till wholly lost,
 “ From gulf to gulf he fell, nor ceas’d the sprite
 “ Till Minos he had reach’d, who judges all.
 “ Mark how his breast and back have chang’d their place.
 “ Presumptuous! Fate’s decrees he would forestall,
 “ And penetrate the depths of time and space.
 “ His eyes and feet turn backwards and recall
 “ His impious crime. Behold Teresias!
 “ Who suffers for like crime like punishment.
 “ He found two serpents coil’d up in a wood,
 “ Smote and disjoin’d them, when incontinent
 “ A woman he became! Seven years he rued
 “ His violence. Thither again by chance he went,
 “ When the same serpents still conjoin’d he view’d,
 “ And smote them both. Then (wonderful event!)
 “ His sex he reassumed. Behold Aronta turn,
 “ His back revers’d, to the impostor’s breast.
 “ At Luni’s base, where the Carrarans earn
 “ A scanty pittance, overtoil’d, oppress’d,
 “ He sojourn’d in a cave, and could discern
 “ The main and planets.—Thou mayst guess the rest.
 “ She, with dishevell’d tresses, who essays
 “ To veil her paps and gazes so aghast,
 “ Is Manto, who so many live-long days
 “ Wander’d abroad, till here she fix’d at last,
 “ Where first mine eyes beheld the sun’s blest rays.
 “ Bear with me, if a ling’ring look I cast

“ On my dear native land. When Manto’s sire
“ Had ended his terrestrial pilgrimage ;
“ When Bacchus’ city ’neath a tyrant’s ire
“ A slave became, the prophetess in rage
“ From bondage and his presence did retire.
“ She wander’d long, a vagabond, but sage.
“ Below the tow’ring Alps, which separate
“ Lamagna from the rest of Italy,
“ Lies a fair lake, La Garda call’d of late ;
“ There is an island in this sanctuary
“ Where Trent’s, Verone’s, Brescia’s pastors might
“ Their functions exercise ; it owns all three.
“ Still further down is Peschiera’s site,
“ Whose forts and tow’rs a noble frontier make,
“ Between the Brescian and the Bergamite.
“ Here the superfluous waters of the lake
“ Discharge themselves, and rushing down the steep,
“ Refresh the verdant meads that smile below.
“ From Alps to Alps the foaming torrents leap ;
“ No more La Garda call’d, they onward flow
“ In Mincio’s name, till at Governo’s keep
“ They mingle with the streams that nourish Po.
“ Not far from this a spacious gulf they meet,
“ Which by the river fed becomes a fen,
“ Fatal to man in summer’s fiercest heat.
“ Here Manto, loathing the abodes of men,
“ An islet spied, a solitude complete ;
“ There, to avoid all human intercourse,
“ She with her slaves remain’d, her magic ply’d,
“ Liv’d, died, and left her miserable corse.

“ Thither anon came people to reside,
 “ Invited by the site, whose native force
 “ Was strengthen’d by the marsh on every side.
 “ They built a city where her ashes lay,
 “ And Mantua call’d, a name deriv’d from her,
 “ And not from chance ; prognostics none had they.
 “ Happy, contented, populous they were,
 “ Till Casalodi’s folly paved the way
 “ To Pinamonte’s plot, which I aver”—
 “ Master ! thy arguments such force possess,
 “ So just and so conclusive they appear,
 “ All others seem to me mere childishness.
 “ But say, if any of the spirits here
 “ Are worthy note. Such tidings I confess
 “ Befit me more than logic the most clear.”
 Unruff’d by my words, thus spake the bard :
 “ He who with back in front displays his beard
 “ Was augur when the Greeks for Helen warr’d,
 “ When Greece so destitute of males appear’d
 “ That scarcely one remain’d her shores to guard ;
 “ ’T was he who when the fleet from Aulis steer’d
 “ With Calchas gave the signal to depart :
 “ His name Eurypylus, of whom my muse
 “ Hath spoken in that epic which by heart
 “ Thou know’st, and daily, hourly dost peruse.
 “ That other, who so shrunk bewails apart,
 “ Was Michel Scotto, who in sooth did use
 “ With wondrous skill the necromantic art.
 “ Lo ! Guid Bonatti ; next the poor Ardènt,
 “ Who to his awl and soles, his former trade,

" Would fain return, but doth too late repent.
 " Behold yon wither'd beldams in the shade
 " Who left their looms on magic arts intent,
 " Who drugs distill'd and waxen symbols made
 " To dupe mankind. But we from hence must steer,
 " For Cain, surcharg'd with thorns (as story tells)
 " Hath reached the confines of each hemisphere,
 " And sinks beneath the waves where Seville dwells.
 " Last night the silver moon had fill'd her horns ;
 " Thou mayst remember, for her rays benign
 " Oft serv'd thee in the wood, beset with thorns."

He spake, and we pursu'd our main design.

CANTO XXI.



From bridge to bridge we pass'd in converse deep
 On things which in my poem I suppress,
 And halted at the summit of a steep
 To contemplate another pit, and those no less
 Who there in vain their crimes and torments weep.
 'T was dark beyond what language can express.
 As in Venetia's arsenal we view
 Th' adhesive pitch in depth of winter boil,
 Destin'd her leaky vessels to renew,
 Unsafe to steer : some at their bottoms toil,
 Some caulk the seams which tempests not a few
 Had caus'd to gape ; others the cordage coil ;

Some the bilg'd sides, the prow and poop refit ;
 One shapes an oar, and one repairs a yard ;
 This furls the mainsail, that remounts the sprit :
 So here a mass of resin I regard
 Boiling, but not by fire ; God sanction'd it.
 The pitch I saw, but nought that it conceal'd
 Except the bubbles bursting as they rise.
 The pit on ev'ry side its power reveal'd.
 Whilst on the mass I ponder'd with surprise,
 " Beware !" my leader cried, and with his hand
 Withdrew me from the sight that sear'd mine eyes.
 I yielded, but like one by fear unmann'd,
 Yet anxious the mysterious cause to know.
 A demon I beheld of that black band
 Whose colour suits the dismal scenes below ;
 On the same bridge he follow'd in our van :
 Heav'ns! what a dev'lish frown betray'd the foe !
 It was enough to scare the boldest man.
 Huge outstretch'd wings he had ; and springy feet,
 Alike alert or when he flew or ran.
 He bore a sinner on his hunched back,
 His sinews grasp'd, and held him in his seat.
 " See Malebranché," cried he, " victims do not lack,
 " Here 's one of holy Zita ; it is meet
 " To plunge him in the pitch, whilst I retrack
 " My journey thither with such goods replete.
 " All there are barrators, except, no doubt,
 " Bonturo, who abominates the class :
 " Proffer a bribe, and there 's not one will pout,"
 He said, and thrust his victim in the mass ;

Then o'er the vaulted rock retrac'd his route
 Fleeter than mastiff could a thief pursue.
 The victim on the surface show'd his snout ;
 The fiends beneath the bridge, who caught a view,
 Cried, sneeringly : " No holy relick 's near
 " To give relief. In Serchio's flood, 't is true
 " They bathe their limbs far otherwise than here.
 " Wouldst thou avoid our talons, don't presume
 " With head above the surface to appear."
 Then with a hundred jagged forks they come
 To harass him, and thus contemptuous jeer :
 " Here folks may dance, but there 's no public room ;
 " Here they may filch, but they must needs be sly."
 They plung'd him in the pitch, intensely hot.
 Thus scullions of a cook, when they descry
 Morsels that swim on surface of the pot,
 Hook them with forks and plunge them in the lye.
 My leader interpos'd : " That they perceive thee not,
 " Hide thee, my son, behind some eminence,
 " And there remain, nor be alarm'd if they
 " Menace and taunt me with their insolence.
 " I know them well, and mark without dismay."
 Descending from the bridge, he went from thence
 To the sixth pit, where he had need, I say,
 Of all the aid a dauntless front can lend.
 As when a beggar enters at the gate
 Of some rich squire the dogs in fury rend
 His tatter'd weeds, so did the fiends elate
 With hooks and staves against the bard descend.
 But he, undaunted, cried : " A moment wait !

" Ere with your hooks you seize me, let your chief
 " Advance and listen ; then, if so inclin'd,
 " Plunge me in yonder mass, like cheat or thief."
 " Go, Malacoda !" all the demons cried ;
 " What wouldst thou ?" he demanded. " Speak, be brief !"
 " Deems Malacoda," then the bard replied,
 " I would have pass'd th' infernal realms secure
 " Unless the pow'r divine had been my guide ;
 " Let me proceed : it is decreed, be sure,
 " I should conduct a stranger thro' this vale
 " Of horror ; what the Fates ordain endure."
 At this the demon's pride began to fail ;
 His fearful hook fell pow'rless at his feet :
 He warn'd the crew to gripe not or assail
 Their stranger guest. " Now," Virgil cried, "'t is meet
 " To quit thy hiding place." I heard, obey'd,
 But trembled when I saw the host complete
 Of devils, who with scowls their chief survey'd ;
 I feared they might reject him or forego !
 For I remember'd that the garrison
 Who yielded up Caprona to the foe,
 Were victims of the terms agreed upon.
 I to my leader clung as infants do,
 But could not, for a moment, cease to con
 The dire expression of the fiends below.
 One ask'd his fellow, " Shall I prick the wight
 " In 's buttock ?" " Aye !" the rest exclaim'd,
 " But hook him firmly in Mal'coda's spite."
 Mal'coda heard, and thus his vassal blam'd :
 " Hold ! hold, Scarmiglioné !—Dost thou slight

“ Thy chief’s behests ? or am I vainly nam’d ? ”
 Then he address’d the bard : “ Thou canst not speed
 “ By yonder rock, for ages now are past
 “ Since the sixth bridge gave way ; it is indeed
 “ A total ruin : if desire thou hast
 “ Still further to advance, thou must proceed
 “ By one at hand, and surer than the last.
 “ ’T is now twelve hundred years and sixty-six,
 “ Bating five hours, since it demolish’d was.
 “ Thither I send my vassals to transfix
 “ The wretch who from the pitch his head withdraws ;
 “ Choice folks they are, thou need’st not fear their tricks.
 “ Haste Calcabrina, Alichin, Cagnaz !
 “ Do thou Barbarico conduct the van :
 “ Let Libicocco, Farfarello, Draghignaz,
 “ Ciriatto with his tusks, Graffiacan,
 “ Watch well the pitch, but let these strangers pass
 “ Safe to the vaulted rocks that yonder span
 “ The boiling ditch ! ” “ Ah me ! ” exclaim’d I then,
 “ What scowls, what menaces assail mine eyes !
 “ Let us without an escort thread the glen ;
 “ Thou know’st the road, their proffer’d aid despise.
 “ Dost thou not mark each fellow of the ten
 “ Gnashing his teeth, and how their chief replies ? ”
 “ Let not thy looks,” rejoined the bard, “ betray
 “ The slightest fear.”—The fiends the signal gave,
 And turning to the left pursued their way.

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CANTO XXII.



I 've witness'd cavaliers to battle hie,
 The fight begun, th' impatient host review'd,
 And sometimes forc'd reluctantly to fly.
 I 've seen marauders on thy plains intrude,
 Ill starr'd Arezzo! knights in tourney vie,
 Mounted on steeds, pursuing and pursued:
 Some at the sound of trumpet, some of bell;
 These at the beat of drum, and those by brand
 Lighted on turret or some citadel;
 I 've seen the signals of my native land,
 And foreign too, a mighty shout or yell:
 But never heard I cavalry or foot
 Raise such a hurly-burly in the fray,
 Nor crew of stranded bark when they salute
 Some friendly star, or beacon from a bay,
 As now I heard. Pale, terrified, and mute,
 I follow'd with my chief the dread array.
 Ah, fearful escort! But the proverb's true—
 "Saints in the church, and strumpets in the stews;"
 I gaz'd upon the pitch in hopes to view
 The spirits it conceal'd, and learn their news.
 As dolphins with their backs apprise the crew
 To moor their vessel when the tempest brews,
 Then suddenly depart, just so the culprits here
 With backs emerge their torments to assuage,
 And then as quick as lightning disappear;

Dreading the demons' malice and their rage.
 As frogs above the surface of a ditch
 Or stagnant pool their muzzles only show,
 So peep the sinners o'er the boiling pitch ;
 But soon as they perceive Barbarico
 They plunge beneath the mass in sore affright.
 One only I beheld who did not so ;
 One only linger'd in the fiends' despite.
 Him Graffiácan view'd, with pitch besmear'd,
 And seiz'd him by the locks in equal plight,
 And like an otter hook'd, by hunter spear'd.
 But how could I the demons' names recite ?
 From their own chief I had distinctly heard
 Their names repeated. " Rubicon ! " they cry,
 " Flay him from top to toe ; secure him well ! "
 Then I : " If possible, my master, try
 " To urge this spirit something to reveal,
 " Him who appears the demons to defy. "
 The bard assented, and besought him tell
 His name and lineage. Thus he made reply :
 " My birth-place was Navarre. My father spent
 " All he possess'd, and died a suicide.
 " Me my good mother to a noble sent,
 " Where all the arts of barratry I tried.
 " To the good king Tibaldo next I went,
 " And still the same nefarious traffic ply'd,
 " For which I suffer here just punishment. "
 Here Ciriatto, whose vast mouth display'd
 Two boar-like tusks, show'd how a ghost must fare
 Beneath his fangs ; the mouse, it may be said,

By two ferocious cats was menac'd there :
 Him to the bank Barbarico convey'd.
 " Desist," he cried, " whilst I my hook prepare !"
 Then warn'd my chief: " If thou hast more to ask
 " Be quick, for him by piecemeal they will tear !"
 Admonish'd thus, the bard resum'd his task :
 " Amidst the sinners in the gulf below
 " Hast thou discover'd one in Latium born ?"
 " One," he replied, " not far from thence I know
 " Whom late I left ; ah ! would I might return
 " Safe from the demons who torment me so !"
 " Too long," cried Libicoc, with lips of scorn,
 " We have endur'd this chat." Then with his hook
 A sliver from the wretch's arm he tore ;
 And Draghignazzo cast a longing look
 Upon his legs, not cover'd as before.
 But here the captain with a stern rebuke
 Repuls'd the fiend : he durst attempt no more.
 Now from the mangled spirit, who look'd down
 With tears upon his wound, without delay
 My chief demanded : " Who is this unknown
 " Whom thou didst quit below ? Alas, the day !"
 " 'T was Fra Gomita, of Gallura's town :
 " Vessel of every fraud, each place he sold ;
 " And certain captives, trusted to his care
 " By his confiding prince, for bribes of gold
 " He ransom'd, leaving them as free as air.
 " In all the list of barratry enroll'd
 " He well deserv'd the diadem to wear
 " With Michael Zanché, his associate.

" Together 'neath the boiling pitch they lie
 " Talking for ever of Sardinia's state.
 " But ah ! behold a demon flitting nigh,
 " Gnashing his teeth ! Much more could I relate,
 " But that I fear he means to gratify
 " His malice on my poor defenceless pate."
 He paused, when he, their captain, at the sight,
 Cried out to Farfarell, whose starting eyes
 Show'd him prepar'd to smite : " Retire, vile kite !
 " 'T is ours to watch, not lacerate, the prize."
 The ghost, no longer quaking with affright,
 Cajol'd him thus : " Wouldst question or chastise,
 " Tuscans or Lombards I can furnish some ;
 " But let the Malebranchs retire awhile,
 " So that we need not fear a martyrdom.
 " I 'll tarry here, and in our native style
 " Will whistle, and a score at least will come."
 At this Cognazzo cried, raising his snout
 And shaking his fell head : " 'T is all deceit !
 " He longs to plunge and mingle with his rout."
 To whom the barrator with wiles replete :
 " O, rare deceit ! To me and mine no doubt,
 " I would procure the glory of defeat !"
 But Alichin, whose pride could hardly brook
 To be the dupe of such duplicity,
 Defied him thus : " If reckless of the hook
 " Thou wouldst replunge, thy passage shall be free ;
 " My wings, in spite of menace or rebuke,
 " Shall sweep the surface, and contend with thee.
 " Shouldst thou prefer the bank, we 'll struggle there,

“ And see if thou canst baffle Hell and me ! ”
Now, reader, for a novel tilt prepare.
The fiends on Alichin now gaz'd intent ;
But chiefly he who would have hook'd the ghost.
Whilst their invectives on the first they vent
The Navarrese, perceiving them engross'd,
Bounds from the bank, and leaves them to lament.
Vex'd and surpris'd was each, but he the most
Who had the terms propos'd. With glaring eyes,
Furious the fiend exclaimed : “ I will o'ertake the foe ! ”
But idle was the threat : fear quicker flies
Than vengeance can pursue. One sinks below ;
One hovers o'er the ditch, and vainly tries
To catch the fugitive ; so when a duck perceives
The falcon hov'ring near alarm'd she dives,
And he chagrin'd the upper regions cleaves.
Now Calcabrina from the rear arrives,
And though enrag'd, a fiendish joy receives,
Trusting that as their wily foe survives,
A conflict must ensue. 'Gainst Alichin
His talons he directs. Above the ditch
They meet, attack, and tumble headlong in.
No umpire, I presume, like boiling pitch.
But how escape, so pitchified and flay'd ?
Wicked Barbarico beheld their plight,
And sent four demons, seemingly to aid,
But well dispos'd to gratify his spite.
They found them both already half consum'd,
And so we left them scalded and deplum'd.

CANTO XXIII.



Silent, absorb'd in thought we wound our way,
 Without a guard. So in procession wind
 The mute Franciscans on a holiday.
 Whilst musing on the fiends, I call'd to mind
 The fable, where pretending to convey
 The mouse across a stream, the frog design'd
 To drown him as she div'd. For yes and yea
 Are not more German than the two I ween.
 As one idea fails not to suggest
 A kindred thought, so this perfidious scene
 Awoke a like suspicion in my breast.
 We are the cause (methought) the fiends have been
 Baffled and dup'd. If, as their looks attest,
 Rage stimulates their malice, they 'll pursue,
 Fleeter than ever greyhound cours'd a hare.
 My hair stood all on end: I peer'd anew,
 And whisper'd to my chief: "The Malebranchs are there!
 "They come behind! Oh! hide us from their view!
 "Methinks, already, I behold them glare."
 "Were I a mirror," blandly, he replied,
 "Thy face I could not with more truth reflect
 "Than our ideas blend and coincide,
 "Kindred they are, and cause the same effect:
 "One mind conceives, one will makes us decide.
 "If it be true, there is a bridge erect
 "More on the right, by that we may elude

"The menaced chase, if such they meditate."
 Scarce had he spoke, when I the demons view'd
 With outstretch'd wings prepar'd to lacerate
 Himself and me. By terror unsubdued,
 He snatch'd and sav'd me from impending fate.
 Thus the fond mother, waken'd suddenly
 By cries of fire, when she the flames perceives,
 Seizes her babe and flies distractedly ;
 Caring alone for him, the rest she leaves,
 With but one shift to veil their nudity.
 The summit gain'd, *flat* on his back my guide
 Slid downward ; on his breast meanwhile I lay ;
 And never stream more rapidly did glide
 To turn an inland mill, than with dismay
 Down the steep precipice I saw him slide.
 He bore me as his son, not partner of his way.
 Scarce had we reach'd the solid ground below
 When we perceiv'd the demons overhead
 Unconscious of our flight : for Heav'n had will'd it so
 The fifth pit should by them be minist'red
 But nothing more ; no further could they go.
 Here painted folks we found who slowly sped,
 Weeping and wailing, faint, o'erwhelm'd with care ;
 Cassocks they wore with hoods that cover'd quite
 Their eyes ; fashion'd like those the grey monks wear
 In Colonia : outside they were bright,
 But lined with lead, with which if we compare
 The vests of Fred'ric, his would seem as light
 As chaff or straw. Oh, cassocks that endure
 For ever ! pond'rous ! insufferable !

Still to the left we turn'd, intent, be sure,
On their sad wailings; but they pac'd the dell
So slowly, weigh'd down by their coverture
And hoods that render'd them inscrutable,
That still repassing us they still seem'd new.
I pray'd my leader to observe them well,
And see if any 'midst the whole he knew
Whom I might recognize by name or deed.
One, whom my Tuscan accents near us drew,
Sudden exclaim'd: " O ye who lightly speed
" Thro' this obscure and tainted hemisphere!
" Tarry awhile; I may perhaps succeed
" Some tidings to impart which you appear
" So ardently to wish."—" My son, proceed,
" At his own rate, with due attention hear."
I paus'd, and notic'd two whose march bespoke
Spirits impatient to converse with me.
Tho' pinch'd for room, and crippled by their yoke,
They soon approach'd so near that I might see
Their acts distinctly; not a word they spoke
At first, but gaz'd upon me silently.
At length I heard them say: " One seems alive!
" He breathes!— if they are spirits like to us,
" Whence comes it in this dungeon they arrive
" Without the massive hoods, uncover'd thus?"
Then they address'd me: " Tuscan, if thou art,
" Who com'st where hypocrites lament forlorn,
" Thy name and lineage scorn not to impart!"
Then I: " In Arno's city I was born,
" Tuscan I am in body, mind, and heart.

" But who are ye, so tortur'd and so worn
 " By those fell hoods, whose tears in torrents flowing
 " Attest your pangs ? and what your punishment ?"
 " Our pangs," cried one, " to these curs'd hoods are owing,
 " That weigh so heavily our brains are rent
 " Like scales that creak and snap surcharg'd with lead.
 " Frati Godenti once on earth were we,
 " Born in Bologna, in Bologna bred.
 " I Catalan was call'd, Lodringo he.
 " Thy city chose us governors, instead
 " Of one Podesta, for security.
 " Gardingo's ruins our good deeds attest."
 " O Frati !" I exclaim'd, " your doom awakes—"
 No more I could, for horror thrill'd my breast
 As I perceiv'd a spirit pierc'd with stakes
 Prostrate, contemn'd, and trampled by the rest.
 At sight of me he quak'd ; his sighs disturb'd the flakes
 Of his thick beard. At this Fra Catalan
 Disclos'd his name : " He whom thou seest impal'd
 " Assur'd the Pharisees 't was meet a man
 " Should perish for the people. There unveil'd,
 " Trampled he lies. How heavily our cassocks weigh
 " 'T is fit that he should feel. To crosses nail'd
 " Are Annas, his wife's sire, besides all they
 " Who gave such fatal counsel to the Jews."
 My leader, gazing on the wretch who lay
 Thus crucified, appear'd long time to muse ;
 But rous'd at length to Catalan he cried :
 " Tell us I pray, unless the Fates refuse,
 " Is there an exit on the dexter side

" O'er which we may proceed secure and free
 " From the malignant demons who deride,
 " Deceive, and wheedle us incessantly ?"
 " Aye, there is one," Fra Catalan replied,
 " Where thou mayst pass in full security.
 " 'T is a projection of primeval stone
 " That issues from the wall's circumference
 " And all the ditches spans, save this alone,
 " Where it is broken ; yet with confidence
 " Thou mayst the fragments mount ; when that is done
 " An easy exit thou wilt find from thence."
 Awhile with head depress'd my master stood,
 Then cried incens'd : " He tutor'd us amiss,
 " The fiend that hooks the sinners who protrude."
 To him Fra Catalan responded this :
 " Oft in Bologna and its neighbourhood
 " I've heard it stated what the devil is—
 " Father of lies, and foe to all the good."
 With hasty steps my leader bade adieu,
 And left with signs of anger and of grief.
 I parted with the hood-embarrass'd crew,
 And follow'd the dear footsteps of my chief.

CANTO XXIV.



In the cool season of the youthful year,
 When Phoebus laves his tresses in the urn
 Of moist Aquarius ; when the nights appear

To equinox impatient to return ;
When hoary frosts their sister's colour wear,
But vanish when the sun salutes the morn ;
The shepherd, destitute of worldly gear,
Rises betimes ; but when he views the plains
Whiten'd with rime he disappointed leaves,
Re-pens his flock, and here and there complains.
But when a change arrives no more he grieves,
Cheerful he sallies forth, and Hope's sweet strains
Ring in his ears ; delighted he perceives.
So when I mark'd my master's threat'ning look
My soul grew sad, I durst not read his face :
But presently a smile was my rebuke.
Scarce had we reach'd the bridge's ruin'd place
When all the clouds his radiant eyes forsook :
So he consol'd me at the mountain's base.
Musing he stood, still on the ruin bent,
And well regarding it he clasp'd me then ;
And as an artist on some plan intent
Considers every part, the why and when,
So Maro, ever wise and provident,
Each rock examin'd ere he plac'd me there.
Selection made, he bade me cling to it,
And well observe if it my weight could bear.
'T was not a task for hooded spirits fit,
Since he, so nimble, and as light as air,
Could only mount the fragments bit by bit.
In sooth the bank adjacent to the well
Was much inferior to the upper side,
Else had I perish'd in the arduous spell ;

I cannot guess what might my chief betide.
 Each lower bank in Malebolge's dell
 Decreases thus. At length we reach'd with pain
 The last remaining rock in our descent ;
 Its summit gain'd, my lungs essay'd in vain
 Their office to discharge. Fatigued and spent,
 I sank like one unable to refrain
 From sudden sleep. My leader's discontent
 Was soon evinc'd: " Leave, leave this bed of sloth !
 " Think not on downy pillow to acquire
 " An honest fame ; depriv'd of which, in troth,
 " Life is a bubble—smoke without a fire.
 " Rouse then, altho' thy body may be loth,
 " Prove that thy soul to glory can aspire :
 " Brave ev'ry rock, and triumph o'er each foe,
 " More arduous rocks thou hast anon to scale.
 " 'T is not enough that from the gulfs below
 " Thou hast escap'd. If ought my words avail
 " Thy confidence by further efforts show."
 I rose, apparently refresh'd and hale,
 And feigning what I felt not, told my friend :
 " I am myself again ; let us proceed."
 So down the beetling fragment we descend,
 Rough tho' it was, and more abrupt indeed
 Than we at first were apt to apprehend.
 Much did I prate that Maro might not heed
 My cowardice. Sudden a voice I heard
 Proceeding from the pit ; I stoop'd to hear,
 But could not comprehend a single word.
 Whate'er the cause, the speaker did appear

Incens'd ; so from his accents I inferr'd.
Still I look'd down, but tho' the gulf was near
'T was so obscure I nothing could descry.
Therefore I begg'd my master he would quit
And hasten to the next ; for human eye
Could nought discover in this murky pit.
His only answer was : " I will comply."
Another bridge we found, and crossing it
A station gain'd, whence we distinctly view'd
Each object in the nether bolge confin'd.
Heavens ! what a dreadful spectacle ensued !
Serpents abounded there of ev'ry kind ;
So horrible, and in such multitude,
That my blood curdles when I call to mind
What I beheld. Let Libya boast no more
Her Amphisbæna, Jaculi, Cerastes,
Nor Ethiopia, nor the Red Sea's shore,
Their deadliest reptiles, less to fear than these.
On all sides I beheld—behind, before,
Their dire tormentors—spirits in affright
Quaking and roving, without chance or hope
To find a refuge from the serpents' spite,
Or shun detection by eliotrope.
Their hands behind their backs were fasten'd tight
By serpents, twisted round them like a rope,
Piercing the wretches' reins with head and tail,
In front they form'd a clasp. Suddenly one
Seiz'd on a spirit fitting o'er the vale,
And pierc'd him where the neck and shoulders join.
Thou couldst not trace an O so speedily

As the sad victim blaz'd, and straightway fell
 In ashes on the soil. As rapidly
 Did he revive, as if by magic spell,
 And reassum'd his shape and quality.
 The Phoenix thus, as ancient legends tell,
 Dies and revives in twice three hundred years.
 He feeds not like the rest, on herbs or grains,
 But lives on frankincense and fragrant tears.
 Now to my tale. When in a mortal's veins
 The blood is apoplex'd, he needs must fall ;
 The crisis past, bewild'rd he remains,
 Stares wildly round, and nothing can recall ;
 So when the sinner from his ashes rose
 He gaz'd, unconscious of the interval.
 Justice of God ! how terrible the woes
 Thou dost inflict on such a criminal !
 At this my master asked him to disclose
 His name and country. Thus responded he :
 " Tuscan I am, and but some months ago
 " Was plung'd into this den of infamy.
 " Acts of brutality allur'd me so
 " I was an alien to humanity.
 " Van Fuccio was my name ; my birth I owe
 " To vile Pistoja, worthy such a brute ! "
 " Ask him, my leader," cried I, " ere he leaves,
 " For what offence—what act of turpitude,
 " He's doom'd to suffer in this den of thieves.
 " Impious I know he was, and dissolute."
 The sinner, well aware of what I said,
 Dissembling nothing, in these words replied :

" That thou hast found me thus, base renegade,
 " Afflicts me more than that disgrac'd I died.
 " Compell'd to speak, no question I evade.
 " I was condemn'd in this dire gulf to bide,
 " For that I robb'd the sacristy, and made
 " A false report against an innocent.
 " I know thee well, and ere thou dost depart,
 " Seeing thou gloriest in my punishment,
 " I'll give thee tidings will torment thy heart.
 " If from this dismal bolge where we are pent
 " Thou shouldst escape, mark well what I impart.
 " I see Pistoja of the blacks reliev'd
 " Flora restores her ancient friends and laws
 " But Mars at our discomfiture is griev'd,
 " And tempests from the vale of Magra draws,
 " Which will o'erwhelm the whites, betray'd, deceiv'd :
 " Picene's field decides their fate and cause.
 " Not one escapes. This, Tuscan, I presage :
 " May it afflict thee with despair and rage ! "

CANTO XXV.



In words like these the rabid thief replied,
 Rais'd up his hands, and vented blasphemies.
 Squaring his fists without a pause, he cried :
 " A fig for the proud tyrant of the skies ! "
 From that day forward I might well confide

In friendly serpents. One before mine eyes
 By the throat seiz'd him, and a pledge procur'd
 He could blaspheme no more. Another of like size
 With its huge tail his meagre arms secur'd,
 Coil'd around each. In front the serpent's head
 Serv'd as a knot, and all the coils assur'd.
 " In thee, Pistoja, are produc'd and bred
 " These impious felons ! Why dost thou delay
 " To crumble into dust, since thou art dead
 " To all that's good ? Since I have wound my way
 " Thro' Hell's bleak circles, not a soul I've found
 " So impious as this ; not him who in the fray
 " Of Thebes was slain ! " The miscreant at the sound,
 Fled from my sight, indignant, sullen, mute.
 Then I perceiv'd a Centaur stalking round,
 Who furious, cried : " Where, where 's the rabid brute ? "
 Maremma's wilds, for serpents fam'd of old,
 Ne'er nourish'd such a fearful multitude
 As on the monster's croup I did behold ;
 And some upon his bust their heads display'd.
 A dragon on his shoulders did unfold
 Its wings, and when a spirit it survey'd,
 It vomited its spite in flames of fire.
 " That monster 's Cacus," my conductor said,
 " Half man, half beast, and Vulcan was his sire.
 " His dwelling was a cave in Aventine,
 " Which oft with blood he delug'd, base and spire.
 " He differs from the Centaurs thou hast seen
 " In the seventh circle, for by fraud he stole
 " Alcides' kine when pasturing on a green

" Anent his cave ; for this the sordid soul
 " Twice fifty blows receiv'd, when ten I ween
 " Of the fell club had answer'd for the whole."
 Thus, whilst we commun'd and the Centaur stalk'd,
 Three spirits pass'd beneath us, unperceiv'd
 Both by my chief and me, until they talk'd :
 " What souls are you ?" they cried, " and when receiv'd ?"
 Interrogated thus we downward walk'd
 To greet the spirits for a while repriev'd.
 None of the three we knew ; but chance reveal'd
 The name of one of the sad family.
 " Cianfa !" they cried, " ah ! where art thou concealed ?"
 My fingers on my lips I placed, that he
 My leader should observe. If thou art slow
 Good reader to believe the prodigy
 I am about to state, I too was so,
 Tho' I beheld it. Whilst I mark'd the three,
 A serpent with six feet and six sharp claws
 Darted on one of them : the middle pair
 Ripp'd up his paunch ; the foremost paws
 Assail'd his arms ; the others, in the rear,
 Stuck to his thighs ; each lacerated was :
 Piercing his reins, its tail whirl'd round in air.
 Never did ivy some tall elm compress
 So closely, as the fearful beast was seen
 To mingle with the ghost, and coalesce ;
 As if their bodies melted wax had been :
 Neither, yet both, more than themselves, and less.
 Their aspect, like their sex, was epicene.
 The two remaining spirits star'd at this,

And turning to each other with surprise,
 " Aguel ! " they cried, " what metamorphosis !
 " Not two, not one, nor can we recognise
 " A single feature of thy former phiz."
 Heads, faces, bellies, breasts, arms, legs, and thighs,
 Were so confounded, so metamorphos'd,
 The like was never seen by human eyes.
 Such as it was, so chang'd, so decompos'd,
 It crawl'd along the dell at snail-like pace.
 More wonders still remain to be disclos'd.
 As when the dog star rages, changing place,
 A lizard glides like lightning o'er the way,
 So I a serpent saw, of tiny race,
 But full of fury, dart upon his prey,
 One of the twain ; and him the reptile bit
 There, where the foetus draws its nourishment,
 Then fell supine, as if asham'd of it.
 The spirit mark'd with mute astonishment,
 And yawn'd like one just wak'd, or in a fit
 Of tertian ague. Whilst they gaz'd intent
 Each on the other, I perceiv'd a fume
 Of vapour rising from the spirit's wound,
 Another from the serpent I presume.
 The potent vapours, when a vent they found,
 Blend in the void, and one sole mass become.
 Lucan be mute ! Nor more recount the plight
 Of poor Sabellas, or Nasidius' fate ;
 List ! whilst a greater wonder I recite.
 Ovid be mute ! No more of Cadmus prate,
 Or Arethusa ! If the former wight

Was to a serpent turn'd as you relate,
 And Arethusa to a fountain pure,
 I envy not the fables of your muse;
 For never in her boldest flights, I 'm sure,
 Did she two heterogeneous souls transfuse,
 Willing, nay almost longing, to endure
 A total change: such thou wilt now peruse.
 The serpent's pointed tail was cleft in two;
 The wounded spirit all his limbs curtail'd,
 His thighs and legs without a juncture grew;
 The forked tail replac'd them as they fail'd.
 Their hides assum'd a tint and nature new,
 One smooth became, the other rough and scal'd;
 His arms I saw, without apparent cause,
 Enter their pits, where they were nullified.
 Meanwhile the serpent's short and foremost paws,
 Transform'd and lengthen'd, their void place supplied.

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The vapour, mantling each, the spirit flay'd,
 Then in his spoils the serpent it enclos'd.
 A mass of flesh inert the brow display'd,
 With which two human ears the Power compos'd;
 A nose and lips of what remain'd he made:
 This done, the potent minister repos'd.
 He who supinely lay a muzzle show'd,
 But both his ears withdrew, just as a snail
 His horns retires. The tongue, on man bestow'd
 For speech, and single, like the serpent's tail

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Was cleft in twain. No more the vapour glow'd.
 The spirit, thus transform'd, fled o'er the vale
 With hisses ; him the new-made man pursued,
 Foaming with rage, but soon renounc'd the chase ;
 And back returning where the other stood,
 (He who surviv'd the rest, unchang'd in face,)
 Address'd him in a half sarcastic mood :
 " Muro, now metamorphos'd fills my place ;
 " We 'll see anon how he contrives to run !"
 Thus the seventh bolge and its mutations strange
 I witness'd ; if, recounting one by one,
 Too tedious I appear, so vast a change,
 Unparallel'd, its novelty alone
 My fault, I trust, will palliate or excuse.
 Tho' overwhelm'd with terror and surprise
 By sights so dread, so novel to my muse,
 Yet fail'd I not at length to recognise
 Puccio Secancato, sole survivor he
 Of the three spirits who first met mine eyes.
 The other, O, Gavelle ! was of that family
 Whose vengeance spar'd nor age nor infancy !

CANTO XXVI.

◆

Flora rejoice ! for thou so great art grown,
 Thy wings pervade the sea and continent,
 And Hell itself re-echoes thy renown.

'Midst the fell robbers in its circles pent,
Five I have found whom thou wert proud to own
As citizens, and dost no doubt lament.
But if our morning dreams apprise us true,
Prato, ere long, and others far and near,
Will wreak the vengeance to their honour due.
Since come it must, would I might witness here
Its full accomplishment, ere Time subdue
My sense of wrong, and finish my career.³
But I digress. Departing, we ascend
The self-same rocks that serv'd us as a bridge.
My leader fail'd not his support to lend ;
For mounting first, he dragg'd me over each ;
O'er fragments of the wall we scrambling bend,
For feet alone had not suffic'd to climb.
Pond'ring the past I griev'd, and still deplore,
That men should prostitute to vice and crime
The rarest talents ; therefore, more and more
I curb my genius, lest in future time
It swerve from Virtue's path, and Wisdom's lore.
Guided by them I shall not rue my lay,
Or curse the boon which Providence bestows.
As at that season when the god of day
The longest to our eyes his glory shows,
At evening when the buzzing fly gives way
To the tormenting gnat, when in repose
Stretch'd on some knoll the peasant doth survey
A swarm of glow-worms, where he cull'd of late
The ripe and luscious grape ; so when we came
To the eighth bolge did we discriminate

A multitude of orbs of vivid flame,
Which bolge and bridge serv'd to illuminate.
As he who was aveng'd by friendly bears,
When he beheld Elijah mount on high,
Strove to detect him in the crystal spheres,
But nothing save a meteor could descry ;
So vainly I essay'd with eyes and ears
To learn if any, and what souls might lie
Conceal'd within the orbs. Forward I bent,
And dearly might have rued my hardihood,
But for a ledge that did my fall prevent.
At this my chief, approaching where I stood,
And seeing me upon the orbs intent,
Told me that each a sinner did include.
" Master," replied I, " when inform'd by thee,
" A mere conjecture grows a certitude.
" Deign to inform me who those sinners be
" Imprison'd in yon orb, whose cone of fire
" Parted in two implies such enmity,
" As testified the Theban brothers' pyre."
" In that, my son, Ulysses, Diomedé,
" Together burn as they did erst conspire ;
" There they the horse bewail, which prov'd indeed
" Fatal to Troy ; but from its ruin sprung
" The glorious harvest of the Roman seed.
" There too they suffer for the flagrant wrong
" They did to Deïdama, who doth still complain
" Of great Achilles, by their arts suborn'd.
" Nor less for that they robb'd the sacred fane
" Of Pallas, which her effigy adorn'd."

" If these, my chief, the power of speech retain,
 " Whilst towards us their lurid orb is turn'd,
 " Most earnestly I beg thee to obtain
 " A moment's parley with these chiefs renown'd."
 Then he: " Thy prayer, which justly I esteem,
 " In me a willing advocate hath found.
 " But rest thou mute; I comprehend the theme.
 " As both were Greeks, 't is probable the sound
 " Of Tuscan accents may displeasing seem."
 Soon as the globe that station had attain'd
 Which to my leader most propitious seem'd,
 These words I heard: " O ye, who are detain'd
 " In the same orb! if you or yours esteem'd
 " My verse deserving of the praise it gain'd;
 " If worthy of the theme my muse you deem'd,
 " Tarry awhile, and let us hear from one,
 " When, where, and how you finish'd your career!"
 At this the antique flame that brightest shone,
 As if the breeze annoy'd it, 'gan to veer,
 And like a human tongue replied anon:
 " Escap'd from Circé, who a long, long year
 " Enthrall'd me near Caieta by her arts,
 " (Ere yet Æneas gave the mount its name,)
 " I, like a pilgrim, roam'd to foreign parts,
 " A passion which invincible became.
 " Nor sire, nor son, nor she, my heart of hearts,
 " The chaste Penelope could quench the flame.
 " In a poor bark I sail'd in company
 " Of a few chosen men—a slender crew;
 " But not a man did e'er abandon me.

" By turns Morocco open'd to our view,
 " Spain, and the islands in the middle sea.
 " Aged we were, and worn with toil we grew,
 " When we had reach'd the straits where Hercules
 " Two mighty columns with his name impress'd,
 " That future mariners beholding these
 " Might stay their course. Proceeding to the west,
 " Braving the perils of forbidden seas,
 " My crew with confidence I thus address'd :
 " " Brothers in arms ! who, like myself, have braved
 " " Unnumber'd perils, we at length attain
 " " A region by the western ocean lav'd.
 " " Let not the few brief years may yet remain
 " " Of life, by fav'ring gods from bondage sav'd,
 " " Pass ère a perfect knowledge we obtain
 " " Of lands beyond the sun—a solitude !
 " " Remember Greece, and what to her is due.
 " " You were not born like beasts to be emmew'd,
 " " But by far travels, and long vigils too,
 " " Gain information for the public good !'
 " This brief address so fir'd my company,
 " That had I wish'd their ardour to subdue
 " I had essay'd in vain. Right merrily
 " Wings of our oars we made, by Fate impell'd :
 " To seek our ruin in this unknown sea.
 " Still to the left our frantic course we held,
 " Till stars antarctic crown'd the queen of night
 " And the north pole seem'd more and more repell'd.
 " Five times she had withdrawn her silver light,
 " Five times renew'd it, when a mountain high

" Loom'd at a distance on our ravish'd sight ;
 " So vast a mountain never met mine eye.
 " We cheer'd, but soon had reason to repent :
 " A whirlwind from its peak impetuous blew,
 " And whirling round the prow, together sent
 " To ocean's lowest bed the bark and crew ! "

³ A literal translation of this enigma would serve no other purpose than to show, that what is unintelligible in Italian becomes still more so in English. All the translator of the poem can do in this and many similar cases, is to endeavour to divine the general import, without perplexing himself with mere verbiage, or the peculiar sense in which certain words are employed. How then shall we guess the general import ? By keeping in mind the cruel circumstances in which Dante was placed when he composed the poem. He was at that period writhing under the sentence of banishment and the confiscation of his private fortune. Justly incensed against the authors of the decree, he left no means untried to gratify his resentment, and with that view he strove to excite Prato, and the other States under the dominion of Florence, to avenge their wrongs, urging them by the recollection of those which their ancestors had vindicated, and by the more recent acts of tyranny which the Sovereign State had inflicted on them.

He concludes this ebullition of spite by giving vent to an ardent wish that the catastrophe might occur before old age had rendered him incapable of witnessing and enjoying it.

" Così foss' a da che pure coser dee ;
 Che più ni graverà com' piu m' attempo."

CANTO XXVII.



He ceas'd, and now the flame appear'd at rest,
 No more disturb'd by Grecian eloquence;
 It left us, and the poet acquiesc'd.
 Another follow'd in its rear, from whence
 Issued faint moanings of a soul oppress'd;
 I gaz'd upon the flame with eyes intense.
 As the Cicilian bull which, as 't was fit,
 First bellow'd with the maker's punishment,
 Sounds inarticulate did first emit,
 The murmurs of a wretch within it pent;
 So from the globe that scarcely did permit
 A syllable to pass, groans found a vent
 From some unhappy sinner pent in it.
 Such groans we heard ere yet the flame had found
 An issue from its orb; but when it rose on high
 In semblance of a tongue, no more the sound
 Was inarticulate—no more a groan or sigh,
 But words whose meaning I could well expound:
 "O thou," they signified, "whose looks and tone
 "Announce thee Lombard, such I deem'd thou art
 "When to the subtle Greek thou said'st 'begone!'
 "Vouchsafe a moment's audience ere we part
 "To one like thee of Lombardy a son.
 "These flames, thou 'lt find, have not consum'd my heart!
 "If from sweet Italy thou dost arrive
 "In this dread bolge, sweet Italy the scene

" Of all the crimes that soil'd me when alive,
 " Say if Romagna be in peace serene,
 " Or doth she still with foreign tyrants strive ?
 " Born in the mountains, which arise between
 " Urbino and the source of Tyber's flood,
 " Romagna's name is ever dear to me !"
 He spake, and whilst absorb'd in thought I stood,
 My leader interposed : " Thy countryman is he ;
 " Speak with respect—he is of noble blood."
 Prepar'd to answer, thus without delay
 I made reply : " Poor soul ! that art confin'd
 " Within these flames, Romagna is a prey
 " As heretofore to feuds of ev'ry kind,
 " Not open war. Ravenna is to-day,
 " As years long past, to tyranny resign'd.
 " Polenta's eagle with his wings elate
 " Hovers o'er Cervia. Forli, that sustain'd
 " So long a siege, whose bulwarks reek'd of late
 " With Gallic blood, is now, alas ! profan'd
 " By the green lion, mute and desolate.
 " Verruchio's mastiffs, they whose paws were stain'd
 " With brave Montagna's blood, indulge their spite
 " As they were wont. Faenza, water'd by the waves
 " Of the Lamone ; Imola, whose site
 " Santerno boasts, a lion's whelp enslaves,
 " Who veers alternately from black to white.
 " And she, Cesena, which the Savio laves,
 " Built partly on the mountain and the plain,
 " So partly is a slave, and partly free.
 " Vouchsafe, O hapless spirit ! to explain

" Thy history, nor more obdurate be
 " Than I, if thou art anxious to retain
 " A name on earth." The flame incessantly
 Began to vibrate, then this answer made :
 " Could I, my courteous countryman, suppose
 " That tidings of my fate would be convey'd
 " To earth, this flame would undisturb'd repose.
 " But as no spirit who is doom'd to burn
 " In this abhorr'd receptacle of woes
 " Can ever to the upper world return,
 " I will reply without reserve or fear.
 " Honour in war I strove in youth to earn,
 " Then, conscience-struck, became a cordelier,
 " Believing I my crimes might expiate,
 " Cinctur'd like them, my life like theirs austere.
 " I was sincere, nor do I hesitate
 " To own my full conviction of success.
 " But the high pontiff (cursed be his name !)
 " Absolv'd me from my former wickedness,
 " How, or with what intent I will proclaim.
 " The crimes that sullied me I will confess
 " Not leonine, but fox-like, to my shame.
 " Each wile I practis'd, cherish'd ev'ry strife,
 " And all the world resounded with the din.
 " At length, when I had reach'd that stage of life
 " When men should strike their sails, and gather in
 " The vessel's tackling, I at heart bewail'd
 " My various frauds, confess'd, abjur'd my sin.
 " Wretch that I am ! confession nought avail'd !
 " For he, the king of the new Pharisees,

" Who near the Lateran with arms assail'd
 " The noble father of the Colonnese ;
 " (For not on Turk or Jew his wrath he bent,
 " His foes were Christian, and of all degrees ;
 " Not one of them to conquer Acre went,
 " Or basely traffick'd with the Soldan crew ;)
 " He, on his sacred trust, no more intent,
 " Quite heedless of his Church and prelates grew,
 " And mock'd the cord of my fraternity,
 " Which help'd, perhaps, to mortify a few.
 " As Constantine, to cure his leprosy,
 " In Siratt's cave besought Silvester's aid,
 " So did the holy cheat solicit me
 " To quench the fire that on his entrails prey'd.
 " My counsel he requir'd ; I silent heard,
 " Astonish'd at the strange request he made.
 " ' Fear not,' he cried, ' nor startle at my word,
 " ' I will absolve thee first : then show me how
 " ' Prœnesté may be ravish'd from its lord.
 " ' Heav'n's gate thou know'st, or mayst have heard, I trow,
 " ' Lock and unlock I can ; the keys in trust I hold,
 " ' Tho' little priz'd, I must in sooth avow,
 " ' By the last pastor of the Christian fold.'
 " With these assurances, I deem'd it fit
 " To break my silence : ' Father,' I replied,
 " ' Since thou my sin hast promis'd to remit,
 " ' My best advice shall be no more denied :
 " ' Abound in promises, not press'd a whit
 " ' To realize. So shalt thou mount elate
 " ' Prœnesté's throne, and be confirm'd on it.'

" I died, and to redeem me from my fate
 " St. Francis came. A cherubim of Hell
 " Approach'd, and said to him : ' Thou canst not save ;
 " ' Then wrong me not ; this miscreant needs must dwell
 " ' With fellow sinners, seeing that he gave
 " ' Deceitful counsel ; I have watch'd him well ;
 " ' Without repentance, who can pardon have ?
 " ' But penitence and sinful inclination
 " ' In the same bosom can't accord at all ;
 " ' One strives to shun, one yields to each temptation.'
 " Ah me ! how he did flout me, and appal !
 " ' Perhaps,' he cried, ' this ratiocination
 " ' Sounds strange to thee : didst think I was so logical ?'
 " To Minos then he bore me, who eight times
 " Coiling around his waist his serpent tail,
 " Bit his own flesh, indignant at my crimes.
 " ' Hence !' he exclaim'd, ' with thy compeers bewail.'
 " My doom pronounc'd, I to this bolge was sent
 " Clad in a robe of flames." Here ceas'd his tale.
 At this the flame, appearing to lament,
 Flicker'd its horns, as if averse to quit.
 My leader and myself then onward went
 To the next arch, which overhangs the pit,
 Where heretics, impostors, slanderers are pent.

CANTO XXVIII.



Who can describe, however vers'd in prose,
 The scenes of mutilation I survey'd
 In the ninth bolge? No genius can disclose,
 No mind conceive, the horrors it display'd.
 Couldst thou compute the wounds and list of those
 Whose blood in torrents dy'd the Roman blade
 In hapless Puglia; or enumerate
 The nobles who in Cannæ's fatal plain
 Left countless rings, as Livy doth relate;
 Add to the list the thousands who were slain
 By Robert Guiscard, or who met their fate
 At Caperano, when each Puglian wight
 Betray'd his king; add too the multitude
 By old Alardo maim'd, but not in fight;
 All these, compar'd with horrors that I view'd
 In the ninth bolge, were nothing, or but slight.
 No barrel stav'd could such a wreck present
 As one I saw, cleft downward from the chin:
 "Behold," he cried, "how Mahomet is rent!"
 His bowels 'twixt his thighs were evident:
 His heart was visible, and all within.

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"Behold," he cried, "how Mahomet is rent!
 "Ali, in front of me, bewails his sin;
 "Cleft from the forelock: others in disguise

" Were firebrands whilst they liv'd ; absorb'd were they
 " In kindling discord, propagating lies.
 " A demon yonder lurks, who night and day
 " Assaults us with his sword : each as he flies
 " A gash receives : our wounds without delay
 " Collapse, till other demons martyrize.
 " But who art thou upon the rock who musest ?
 " Hop'st thou, perchance, the penance to elude
 " Of heinous crimes which thou thyself accusest ?"
 " Nor crimes," exclaim'd my chief, " nor turpitude
 " Have brought him here, as falsely thou presumest.
 " He comes to earn experience for his good ;
 " And I, a spirit, urg'd by purest love,
 " Conduct him thro' the shades from round to round ;
 " And this is true as that I speak and move."
 He spake, and when the sinners heard the sound,
 An hundred rose to gaze on me above,
 Each quite forgetful of his previous wound.
 " Mortal !" cried Mahomet, " who mayst again
 " The blessed sun behold, and shortly too,
 " Bid Fra Dolcino, would he still retain
 " His new got pow'r, his soldiers' wants review,
 " And give them food, else will Növara gain
 " An easy triumph o'er his famish'd crew."
 Thus the false prophet spake, and raising high
 One foot in air, he vanish'd from our sight.
 Another, sorely maim'd, now met mine eye,
 His throat transpierc'd, his nose slit longwise quite,
 And but one sorry ear could we descry.
 Apart from all the rest, in this sad plight

The victim mov'd along, his mouth imbued
 With bloody foam ; he open'd it and said :
 " O thou whom, if I err not, I have view'd
 " In Italy ! in me behold the shade
 " Of Peter, who occasion'd such a feud
 " In Medicina, by two tyrants sway'd :
 " Shouldst thou revisit the sweet plain that lies
 " Between Vercello and strong Marcabo ;
 " Two of the best of Fano's sons apprise
 " (Guido the brave, and Angioletto),
 " If we poor spirits truly prophesize,
 " They will be victims of their deadliest foe,
 " Drown'd by his mandate near Cattolica.
 " Act so perfidious never was conceiv'd
 " From Cypria's island to Majolica.
 " No lawless pirates ever such achiev'd,
 " Nor corsairs swarming in Argolica.
 " That ruthless tyrant, of one eye bereav'd,
 " Who gain'd Cattolica by artifice,
 " Allures them thither to a conference :
 " Dup'd, they accept, and will have cause I wis
 " Soon to repent their displac'd confidence :
 " Nor pray'rs nor vows can make amends for this.
 " They need not fear Focara's violence.
 " Curs'd be the land ! One by my side there is
 " Who rues the day he ever look'd on it."
 " Tell me," said I, " if thou desir'st I should
 " Revive thy name, and news of thee transmit,
 " Tell me, I pray, to whom dost thou allude ?"
 At this the ghost, returning to the pit,

Open'd the jaws of one who list'ning stood,
 And bade me mark : " Thou seest that he is dumb.
 " 'T is Curio, who, when banish'd from the state
 " By Pompey's faction, then supreme in Rome,
 " All doubts in Cæsar's mind did subjugate ;
 " And counsell'd him without delay to come,
 " Would he avert his own and country's fate ! "
 Ah, how abash'd he look'd ! that Curio
 Once for his daring eloquence so fam'd,
 But silent now, and mutilated so !
 Raising his stumps, another wretch exclaim'd :
 " Remember Mosca, who advis'd a blow
 " Fatal, alas ! to all in Tuscany ! "
 " And not alone to Tuscany," I cried,
 " 'T was also fatal to thy race and thee."
 Stung to the quick, the madden'd homicide
 Took his departure in an agony.
 I gaz'd intent, and suddenly descried
 So strange and terrible a spectacle,
 I fear to name it lest it seem a tale.
 But love of truth emboldens me to tell,
 And conscience arms me with a coat of mail.
 Certes I saw it, and remember well
 Each circumstance I venture to detail.
 Wanting its head, a body I beheld,
 Which mov'd like others of the sinful crew ;
 Grasp'd by the locks a gory head it held,
 Two substances in one, and one in two ;
 Its eyes towards us appear'd to be impell'd :
 How that could be the Maker only knew.

When the strange phantom had approach'd us near,
 With both its hands it rear'd aloft the head,
 No doubt that we might more distinctly hear.
 Its words were these: " In regions of the dead
 " Hast thou e'er witness'd penance so severe
 " As mine? That news of me on earth be spread,
 " Know I am Bertram Bornio, he who did inspire
 " Such fatal counsel to the royal John,
 " And made the son a rebel to his sire.
 " So did Achitophel and Absolon
 " 'Gainst David's life and government conspire.
 " By me were Nature's dearest ties undone;
 " And sever'd was my head to represent
 " The species of my crime and punishment!"

CANTO XXIX.



The number of the wretches I beheld,
 Their countless wounds and ghastly laceration,
 So shock'd mine eyes, and with such anguish swell'd,
 That weeping seem'd to me a recreation.
 But Virgil mark'd my weakness and repell'd:
 " What ails my son? What strange infatuation
 " Rivets thine eyes on this abode of woe?
 " For this alone didst thou such interest feel?
 " Wouldst thou the crimes of each offender know?
 " Think that this bolge in circuit doth reveal

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" Miles twenty-two, and we have far to go.
 " The moon beneath our feet already wanes ;
 " The time accorded us is nearly spent,
 " And much of Hell unvisited remains."
 " Hadst thou, my leader, known the incident
 " That touch'd my heart, and like a spell retains,
 " Thou hadst not felt the least astonishment."
 Still he advanc'd ; I, following behind,
 Inform'd him why I gaz'd so earnestly :
 " Among the wretches in that bolge confin'd,
 " I one discern'd of our own family,
 " Who dearly pays the penalty assign'd
 " To crimes like his." Then Virgil said to me :
 " Rack not, my son, on his account thy mind.
 " I mark'd him 'neath the rock on which we stood
 " Denouncing thee to miscreants of his kind,
 " With pointed finger boding thee no good.
 " The name of Geri Bello struck mine ear ;
 " But Hautfort's quondam lord did then preclude
 " Attention on thy part, tho' thou wert near."
 " Perhaps he felt indignant," I replied,
 " For that we fail'd thro' negligence or fear
 " To wreak revenge on his base homicide !
 " 'T was that I deem which caus'd him to depart
 " In sullen silence ; tho' dissatisfied,
 " I pity him the more with all my heart."
 Discoursing thus, a station we attain'd,
 Whence we had view'd the bolge in ev'ry part
 Had light suffic'd. Mounting a rock, we gain'd
 A glimpse of Malebolge's last abyss,

And of the wailing spirits it contain'd.
 Cries indescribable I heard from this
 Piercing my soul like darts, nor did I fail
 To cover with my hands each orifice.
 If the worst maladies in Chian's vale,
 Maremma, and Sardinia, were amass'd,
 When August heats most fatally prevail,
 They would be equall'd here ; perhaps surpass'd.
 Such loathsome stench as gangren'd limbs exhale
 Issued from each as to and fro they pass'd.
 Quitting the bridge, to the left hand we hied,
 And reach'd the margin of the gulf profound
 Where God's unerring justice doth preside ;
 And brands the counterfeits whose crimes are found
 In record of th' Almighty specified !
 Sights more portentous never could astound
 Ægina's people, when aghast they view'd
 The sky with such terrific pests replete,
 That men, beasts, reptiles, were alike subdued ;
 When, as old bards and chronicles repeat,
 Ants chang'd to men restored the solitude.
 Some we perceiv'd who on their hands and feet
 Crawl'd o'er the sod : some on their comrades fell,
 Too weak to stand.—Silent as death we pac'd,
 Wholly absorb'd by the sad spectacle.
 Two I discover'd who each other fac'd
 And stay'd from falling ; both, the truth to tell,
 From head to foot with ulcers were disgrac'd.
 Never did groom, disturb'd at break of day,
 Curry his master's steed so speedily,

As did these wretches with their nails essay
 T' assuage the prurience of their malady.
 The prurient scabs in vain they tore away,
 As cooks scale fish, the tribute of the sea.
 " Say thou," cried Maro, " who dost lacerate
 " Thy flesh like pincers, doth this gulf contain
 " A Latin spirit doom'd to expiate
 " His crimes with thee, so may this dreadful pain
 " By nail or other remedy abate ?"
 " We both are Latins, cried one of the twain.
 " But who art thou who dost interrogate ?"
 " I am commission'd by the Powers on high
 " To guide this mortal thro' each murky sphere
 " Of Hell's abyss."—At this my chief's reply,
 The lepers chang'd their posture, and drew near.
 " Now "—cried my leader, seeing them so nigh,
 " Now thou mayst question them, and nothing fear."
 I dallied not : " O spirits ! if ye would
 " Rescue from blank oblivion your fame,
 " And live for years remembered by the good,
 " Let each reveal his parentage and name,
 " And let not shame sincerity preclude."
 One answered thus : " I from Arezzo came,
 " And Albert de Sienne, a silly youth,
 " Caus'd me to perish guiltless in the fire.
 " I told him I could mount the air in sooth,
 " And he, intent the secret to acquire,
 " Mistook a random pleasantry for truth ;
 " Foil'd, he denounc'd me to his mitred sire ;
 " I could not make a Dædalus, yet he
 " Condemn'd me as a wizzard to expire.

" But not for that did Minos sentence me
 " To the last gulf of Malebolge's round—
 " He doom'd me for abuse of alchymy."
 He ceased, and I exclaimed: " Were ever found
 " Such brainless fools as these Siennais be!
 " Not France herself, for vanity renown'd—"
 " Excepting Stricca," t' other leper cried;
 " Stricca so sage and economical;
 " And Niccolo, the first who gratified
 " Our epicures with cloves, now us'd by all;
 " Aye, and the sapient band with whom allied
 " Caccia d'Asciano, never prodigal
 " His vines and forests sold: except beside
 " Abbagliato, so renown'd for wit and sense.—
 " That thou mayst know who seconds thy tirade
 " 'Gainst the Siennais, scan without offence
 " Each feature of my face; that survey made,
 " An ancient friend thy pains will recompense.
 " In me thou 'lt recognize Capocchio's shade,
 " Who gain'd in alchymy such eminence.
 " Unless I am deceiv'd thou best canst tell
 " If like an ape I counterfeited well."

CANTO XXX.



When Juno, jealous of the Theban dame,
 Vow'd vengeance 'gainst the people and their king;
 The royal Athamas so mad became,

That when he saw his hapless queen approaching
 With her two sons, he ceas'd not to exclaim :
 " Behold the lioness and whelps ! bring, quickly bring
 " The nets that I may catch them." Seizing one,
 By name Learchus, him he whirl'd in air
 And dash'd against a rock ; with t' other son
 The mother drown'd herself in pure despair.
 When Fortune humbled haughty Ilion,
 Whose sons dar'd all that human pride could dare,
 Sad Hecuba, when horror-struck she view'd
 Her lov'd Polyxena's terrific fate,
 And Polydore a corse, in frantic mood
 Howl'd like a dog, distracted, desolate.
 But neither Thebes, by Juno's wrath pursued,
 Nor Hecuba herself, though desperate
 'Gainst man and beast, such fury could display
 As two fell spirits show'd who met mine eye
 Biting all those encounter'd in their way,
 Like famish'd hogs escaping from the sty ;
 One rush'd upon Capocchio in dismay,
 And jerk'd him on the neck so lustily,
 That senseless on the flint the victim fell.
 The other Arctine, who quak'd with fear,
 In a low whisper said : " That risible
 " Is Gianni Schicchi ; in his mad career
 " He bites and jerks each spirit in the dell."
 Then I : " Before his fellow disappear,
 " If not fatigued, entreat him to unfold
 " His name, and lineage."—" Be not thou deceived,"
 Rejoined the Arctine. " Thou dost behold

" Incestuous Myrrha's spirit, who conceiv'd
 " A guilty passion for her sire of old.
 " Disguis'd she came, and thus disguis'd achiev'd
 " The object of her lust. And Schicchi there
 " For kindred fraud participates her doom :
 " He to obtain Donati's matchless mare
 " Her dying master's figure did assume,
 " Forg'd his last will, and prov'd himself his heir."

Soon as the rabid couple left us room,
 On whom mine eyes had hitherto been bent,
 I turn'd them to the rest, and one beheld
 Who, bating that his limbs were evident,
 Had seem'd a lute, his belly was so swell'd,
 So altered and defac'd each lineament.
 Dropsy, which causes such disparity
 By ill-concocted humours 'twixt the face
 And paunch, forc'd him to hold continually
 His lips apart ; as often is the case
 When burning thirst precedes a malady.
 At length he spake, but budg'd not from his place :
 " O ye who free from pain (I know not how)
 " Thro' Hell's dark regions thus securely pass,
 " Behold what torments Master Adam bow ;
 " Once happiest of the happy, but alas !
 " Obligated to crave a drop of water now.
 " The streams that from Casentin's verdant hills
 " Descend to Arno, gladding as they flow
 " Each plain and meadow with their bounteous rills,
 " Still fancy pictures to augment my woe,
 " And tantalizing, multiplies the ills

" That mar, emaciate my features so.
 " And thus inexorable Justice wills
 " That Casentin, my crime which testified,
 " The torments I endure should aggravate.
 " I see Romena, where I falsified
 " The Baptist's florins, for which crime the state
 " Condemn'd me to the flames in which I died.
 " But were I sure that Guido shar'd my fate,
 " Or either of his brothers, who, all three,
 " Urg'd me to sin, and aided to complete,
 " I would not barter that delight to see
 " Sweet Branda's fountain bubbling at my feet.
 " If the mad couple told the verity,
 " One of the three I cannot fail to meet ;
 " But how and when ?—Incapable to move
 " I languish here. Were I alert and light,
 " I would pursue them to the bank above,
 " And 'midst the wretches there indulge my spite,
 " However perilous the task might prove ;
 " Eleven long miles had caused me no affright,
 " Nor the diameter a mile in space.
 " As artful calls the simple birds decoy,
 " So was I lur'd the florins to debase,
 " Mixing with each three carats of alloy."

He spake, then I : " Say spirit, of what race
 " Be yonder couple, suff'ring such annoy,
 " Who prostrate on thy right transpire and fume
 " Like hands in Winter reeking from the tide ?"
 " I found them thus supine, and I presume
 " They will for ever without change abide.

" One of the two is she who falsely made
 " The charge 'gainst Joseph ; t' other by her side
 " Is the perfidious Sinon, who betray'd
 " Troy to the Greeks. A fever most intense
 " Exhales the vapours thou hast just survey'd."
 Here one of them, resenting the offence,
 Aim'd at his paunch a blow ; the paunch distent
 Resounded like a drum ; with equal violence
 Adam return'd the blow incontinent,
 And cried aloud : " Although incapable
 " To change my place, this dropsy don't prevent
 " Mine arm to exercise its functions well."
 " 'T was not so agile when compell'd thou wert
 " To feed the flames, albeit the truth to tell
 " To coin the florins it was not inert."
 " For once thou speak'st the truth : thou didst not so
 " When Troy proclaim'd thee in all frauds expert."
 " Deceiving Priam I deceived a foe,
 " And him alone ; but thou, base counterfeit,
 " More crimes didst perpetrate than all below."
 " Think of the horse, perfidious renegade,
 " And be it thy curse from Adam's lips to learn
 " That friends and foes thy conduct execrate."
 " And be it thine without a hope to yearn,
 " To have thy tongue thus parch'd, thy carcass swell'd,
 " Till its huge sack prevent thee to discern
 " Thy feeble limbs."—" O wretch to ill impelled,
 " Whose mouth ne'er opens but a curse to void,
 " If noxious humours vitiate my mass,
 " Thou by an ardent fever art annoy'd,

“ And thirst unquenchable, which doth surpass
 “ My malady : no prayers need be employ’d
 “ To make thee lick Narcissus’ looking glass.”
 Absorb’d I listen’d, when my leader said :
 “ It suits thee well to listen to such folk !
 “ In sooth I know not wherefore I delay’d
 “ To chide thee and deter.” Displeas’d he spoke.—
 I turn’d to him abashed and so dismay’d
 I scarcely durst his clemency invoke.
 As he who dreams he nods on an abyss,
 And fain would hope ’t is nothing but a dream,
 Yet shudders at the fancied precipice ;
 So fain was I my chief’s reproof to deem,
 So strove in vain my terror to dismiss.
 “ Less shame a greater folly might redeem,”
 Exclaim’d the bard. “ Be therefore of good cheer.
 “ Remember, I am ever by thy side.
 “ If chance hereafter should conduct thee near
 “ Such worthless disputants, in me confide.
 “ His taste ’s depraved who would such jargon hear.”

CANTO XXXI.



The tongue that had rebuk’d me, and diffused
 O’er both my cheeks the crimson tint of shame,
 Now brought me comfort. So, as I’ve perus’d,
 Achilles and his sire in fields of fame,
 To wound and solace the same weapon us’d.

Quitting this bolge of misery, we came
To the high wall that circumscribes its site,
And pass'd it without uttering a word.
Obscure it was, not quite as dark as night,
Nor light as day. Now suddenly I heard
A loud horn's blast that fill'd me with affright,
A peal of thunder had not so deterr'd.
It issued, I presum'd, from some exalted post,
So adverse to its course I raised mine eyes.
When Charlemagne at Roncesvalles lost
Such numbers in the holy enterprise,
Orlando's blast could not have scar'd the host
So much as this, nor caus'd them such surprise.
From the wall's dusky summit I descried
Many high towers (for such I deem'd they were).
"What city?" I demanded of my guide;
"What towers are these?"—"The twilight makes thee err,
And distance of the objects," he replied.
"Approach and thou 'lt behold what I aver."
Then courteously he took me by the hand
And said to me: "Ere further we advance,
I would apprise thee, lest thou beest unmann'd
By such a strange terrific circumstance,
These are not towers, but a gigantic band,
Whose impious scowls their former guilt enhance.
They from the navel downward are immers'd
In yonder well, of depth and breadth immense."
He ceas'd, and as the vapours are dispers'd
By the blest sun's benignant influence,
So when mine eye the vapours here had pierc'd

And I approach'd more near, in evidence
 The truth appear'd : I trembled I confess.
 As crown'd with towers is Montereccio's Queen,
 So o'er this wall's circumference no less
 Tremendous giants tow'r'd, half hid, half seen ;
 Giants whom Jove still menaces I guess,
 When thunder agitates the vault serene.
 The head, breast, shoulders, paunch, in part I view'd
 Of one of them ; his arms enormous, fell
 Close by his sides. When Nature quell'd the brood,
 And totally suppressed, she acted well.
 Mars, when they ceased, his best associates rued.
 If whales and elephants in size excel
 All other beasts, they cause no injury ;
 But when we find united force and size,
 Mental intelligence, malignity,
 To baffle these what means can we devise ?
 His face as long and broad appear'd to me
 As the bronz'd pine apple that dignifies
 St. Peter's front ; the rest proportional.
 The wall itself serv'd as a perezome
 To half his bulk : the half above the wall
 In length exceeded the collective sum
 Of three huge Frisons. Thirty palms in all
 From neck to waist I measur'd with mine eye.
 "*Rafel mai amech zabi almin,*"
 Mutter'd that monstrous tongue, to which no cry
 More musical was suitable I ween.
 " Poor idiot ! " cried my chief, " thy bugle try,
 " It may perhaps amuse thee with its din ;

" Search round thy neck, and thou wilt find the cord
 " By which it hangs ; it compasses thy breast.
 " He heeds me not, he answers not a word.
 " Thou seest, my son, his jargon doth attest
 " The sequel of his crime. In him behold
 " That famous Nimrod who, 't is manifest,
 " Was the sole cause why, as in days of old,
 " One only language did not still obtain.
 " But let us leave him ; unintelligible
 " Each to the other, why should we remain ?"
 Then to the left we pass'd, and found a well
 At distance from the first, which did contain
 Another giant still more terrible.
 Chain'd were his arms, but who secur'd them so
 I cannot tell. The right was chain'd behind ;
 The left, too, manacled descended low
 Far as his waist, round which the chain was twin'd
 Five times at least. His name I long'd to know,
 When thus my chief: " Most daring of his kind
 " This miscreant challeng'd mighty Jove to fight.
 " 'T is Ephialtes, who the mountains rear'd,
 " Ossa on Pelion, causing such affright
 " To gods of yore, by Greece and Rome rever'd.
 " His arms so potent once have lost their might."
 When from my leader's lips these words I heard,
 I told him I desired that fiend to see,
 Briareus, measureless if fame be true.
 " Too distant," he replied, " by far is he.
 " Nearer to us Antæus thou wilt view,
 " Who speaks distinctly, and like us is free.

" He will conduct us to the last abyss.
 " He thou wouldst fain behold immers'd remains
 " Like yonder wretch, but more ferocious is."
 Never did earthquake overwhelm the plains
 With violence so great as Ephialtes,
 Stung to the quick, did agitate his chains ;
 O then I fear'd my death was imminent,
 And death had surely been the consequence
 But that his fetters made him impotent.
 Forward we mov'd, and found, not far from hence,
 Antæus in his well sans ligament.
 His body o'er its mouth five ells immense
 Projected, like a mainmast in extent.
 " O thou who erst in Bagra's fatal vale,
 " Where Scipio's deeds immortal fame acquir'd,
 " And caus'd his rival, Hannibal, to quail ;
 " Thou who when Carthage from the field retir'd,
 " With lions didst the famish'd host regale ;
 " And hadst thou with thy daring race aspir'd
 " To conquer Heav'n, there is no doubt I deem
 " The giants o'er the gods had victors been ;
 " Deign to transport us where Cocytus' stream
 " By frost arrested in its course is seen.
 " Be courteous, nor compel me in th' extreme
 " To claim the aid of Tityus or Typhoene.
 " This mortal may procure thee in amends
 " Renown on earth, to ev'ry spirit dear ;
 " For many years his span of life extends,
 " Unless misfortune shorten his career."
 Thus spake the master, and with eagerness

Antæus stretch'd his hand, and rais'd the seer—
 That hand whose might Alcides did confess.
 Then Maro said to me: " Approach sans fear,
 " He will transport us both with gentleness."
 As when the pendent tower we contemplate
 Of Garisenda, if a cloud pass by
 We tremble lest the summit vacillate,
 And crush us in its fall; so trembled I
 When I beheld Antæus elevate
 His monstrous bulk, vouchsafing no reply.
 But vain my fears. He bore us to the pit
 Where Lucifer and Judas rue their crime,
 And gently there deposed us. Quitting it,
 Like some tall admiral he tow'r'd sublime.

CANTO XXXII.



If I had numbers dissonant and hoarse,
 Such as befit this terrible abyss,
 Where all the bridges terminate their course,
 I might perhaps depict it not amiss.
 But as I am devoid of skill and force,
 I hesitate to 'tempt a theme like this.
 'T is not the province of a puny lad
 To paint the centre of the universe:
 It suits not lips that mutter mam and dad.
 But you, ye Muses, deign t' inspire my verse,—

You, by whose potent aid Amphion bade
 Thebes rise from nothing, so may I rehearse
 Part of the horrors that o'erwhelm'd my mind.
 O wretches most unhappy of the whole,
 Who in that gulf, so hard to be defin'd,
 Your crimes bewail! happy had been your dole
 Had ye been sheep or cattle of the kind.
 Whilst we remain'd in this Cimmerian hole,
 Admiring the stupendous walls around,
 A voice in words portentous reach'd mine ear :
 " Be cautious as you pass, lest you should wound
 " Two brothers who are plung'd in penance here."
 Cautious I trod, and 'neath my feet I found
 A frozen lake, which rather did appear
 Like glass than water : ice so clear and thick
 Mantles and interrupts not Danube's course
 When Winter with his frosts shrouds Austerich,
 Or Tanaïs, whose hyperborean source
 Eludes research. On this if Tabernich
 And mount Piëtrapan with all their force
 Had fallen down, they had not caused a crick.
 And as in Autumn when the village maid
 Gleans all the day, and dreams she gleans at night,
 Frogs with their muzzles o'er a pond display'd
 Are heard to croak ; so here appear'd in sight
 The heads of frozen ghosts, stone teeth betray'd,
 Chattering like apes their miserable plight.
 Downward their eyes were fix'd upon the glade ;
 Their teeth evinc'd the rigour of the cold,
 Their tears, the pangs by which their hearts were wrung.

Intent on all, I fail'd not to behold
 Two heads, so closely join'd their tresses hung
 Commingled ; I besought them to unfold
 Their names. Astonish'd at a mortal's tongue,
 They gaz'd on me with wild uplifted eyes,
 And 'gan to weep ; but as the tears deflect
 They freeze, and icicles augment their ties ;
 Never did grapple with more force connect
 Two bits of wood. Incapable to rise,
 They butted with their heads, as in effect
 Two raging bulls who with their horns contend.
 Another, who by frost both ears had lost,
 His eyes turn'd downward, ask'd me to what end
 I gaz'd so stedfastly on either ghost :
 " If thou wouldst learn from whom these foes descend,
 " Know that the valley by Bisinzio cross'd
 " Their sire, Alberto, own'd, and lastly they :
 " Issue they were of the same mother's womb.
 " Search all Caïna (if a mortal may),
 " None canst thou find more worthy of their doom :
 " Not he whose plots and body at a blow
 " Arthur consign'd to an ignoble tomb ;
 " No, nor Focaccia, nor that head below
 " Which intercepts my view. The name he bore
 " In Tuscany was Massol Maschero ;
 " If thou art Tuscan I need add no more.
 " Enough of talk. Camuccio is my name,
 " One of the Pazzi.—Carlin I expect,
 " Whose deeper guilt will palliate my shame."
 Now saw I thousands of the same aspect

Livid with cold, and livid I became
 When I beheld them. Still when I reflect
 My blood grows chill, and fails to circulate.
 Now we approach'd the centre of the glade,
 That point to which all bodies gravitate ;
 From head to foot I shiver'd in the shade.
 My foot (I know not if by chance or fate)
 Amidst the heads, some latent, some display'd,
 Hurtled against a skull ; wailing he cried :
 " Why dost thou trample me ? if not to wreak
 " Revenge for Mont Aperte. Why deride,
 " Why wound a spirit weakest of the weak ?"
 Here I besought my leader to abide
 That I more freely with the ghost might speak.
 He stood apart. Then question'd I the sprite,
 Who dreadfully blasphem'd : " What wretch art thou
 " Who 'gainst a stranger dost indulge thy spite ?"
 " And what is he who, in Antenor's slough,
 " In maiming helpless spirits takes delight ?
 " The blow thou didst inflict on me but now,
 " Had it proceeded from a living wight,
 " Had made me quake."—" Know then I am alive,
 " And may perhaps, when I my steps retrace,
 " Render thee service, make thy fame revive,
 " Or quite obliterate thy past disgrace."
 " 'Tis the reverse I wish ; no longer strive ;
 " Begone ! thy wheedling arts have here no place."
 He ceas'd. I seiz'd him by the locks amain,
 And warn'd him he must needs his name declare,
 Else not a hair should on his pate remain.

" If thou shouldst leave me," he exclaim'd, " quite bare
 " I'd not reveal my name, nor ought explain."
 Thus brav'd, provok'd, I seiz'd him by the hair
 And wrench'd a part, he howling all the while ;
 When some one ask'd : " What ails thee, Borca, say ?
 " Why dost thou howl in such a cur-like style ?
 " What demon, Borca, causes thy dismay ?"
 " Now," cried I, " rest in silence, traitor vile !
 " Now, to thy lasting shame, proclaim I may
 " Thy penance here."—" Aye ! what thou wilt relate,"
 Replied he. " Shouldst escape from hence,
 " Forget not him who with vindictive hate
 " Accus'd me ; him who here in penitence
 " Rues the French gold that op'd Apulia's gate.
 " I saw, thou mayst assert, in frost intense
 " That chill'd the very soul, 'midst traitors laid,
 " Boso Duera ; Beccaria too,
 " Whose head in Florence for his treason paid ;
 " John of Soldanier, thou mayst near him view ;
 " With Ganalon Tribaldel, who betray'd
 " Faenza when they slept, and deem'd him true."
 Quitting the spirit, in a pit I view'd
 Two frozen heads, one only manifest,
 For one the other cover'd like a hood :
 And as a mendicant by hunger prest
 His crust devours, so one the other chew'd,
 E'en to the brain. With less ferocity
 Did Tydeus Menalippus' temples tear :
 " O thou," exclaim'd I, " who dost gratify
 " Thy beastly rage without remorse or fear,

" What could provoke thee, what can justify ?
 " If thou wert wrong'd indeed I pledge thee here
 " Redress when I return, unless my muse
 " Exhausted, or averse, her aid refuse."

CANTO XXXIII.



Soon as the sinner's dread repast was o'er
 On tresses of his victim he essay'd
 His mouth to cleanse, defil'd with filth and gore.
 Then he address'd me : " Thou desir'st," he said,
 " To renovate the pangs I felt of yore,
 " Which but remember'd make my heart dismay'd.
 " But if my frank avowal have th' effect
 " To brand with infamy this traitor's name,
 " My smiles and tears thou wilt at once detect.
 " I know not whom thou art, nor how thou came
 " To this abyss, thus scath'less and erect ;
 " But, if I err not, all thy words proclaim
 " Thou art a Florentine, and such thine air.
 " Tidings thou must have heard in Tuscany
 " Of Ugolino, and that traitor there,
 " Roger, Archbishop once of Pisa's see.
 " Why I have gnawed him I will soon declare.
 " But it were bootless to narrate to thee
 " How, trusting to that wretch, I was ensnar'd

“ And ’prison’d in a tower. But what no mortal knows,
 “ How in that dismal prison-house I far’d
 “ And how expir’d, at length I will disclose.
 “ A crevice in the tower, by time impair’d,
 “ (Whose name of Famine to my death it owes,)
 “ Enabled me to guess that I had wail’d
 “ Some moons within it, when a fearful dream
 “ Dispers’d the clouds my future woes that veil’d :
 “ Methought this Roger was a chief supreme,
 “ With eager hounds preparing for the chase
 “ Of an old wolf and whelps, whose lair extreme
 “ That mountain seem’d, which hinders Pisa’s race
 “ Perceiving Lucca. By the chieftain’s side
 “ The noblest Pisans held the foremost place.
 “ After a while the wolves seemed terrified,
 “ And, thirsting for their blood, the hounds elate
 “ With fangs acute their hunger gratified.
 “ Such was my dream. My boys, who shar’d my fate,
 “ Cried out for bread as soon as I awoke.
 “ If, stranger, thou unmov’d canst hear me state
 “ This tragic tale, callous as heart of oak
 “ Thou need’st must be to human wretchedness.
 “ My children rose, for it was near the hour
 “ When they were wont to dole our scanty mess ;
 “ But each had dream’d a dream of awful power,
 “ And fear’d to perish thro’ forgetfulness.
 “ I heard them shoot the bolt that barr’d the tower,
 “ And in despair upon my little ones
 “ Speechless I gaz’d, for language I had none,
 “ My heart was sear’d. The youngest of my sons,

" Anselmo, ask'd me what I gazed upon ;
 " I could not answer. Mute I languish'd so
 " That day and night, till the revolving sun
 " A gleam dispens'd on our abode of woe.
 " By that in all the four I plainly saw,
 " Akin to mine, suspicions of the foe;
 " Then madly I began my hands to gnaw.
 " My boys, believing that my flesh I tore
 " Thro' hunger, rising from their bed of straw,
 " Exclaim'd together : ' We should less deplore
 " ' If our dear father would our bodies take,
 " ' And feed on them ; our flesh was thine before,
 " ' Then take it back again, at least partake.'
 " More tranquil I became, at least I feign'd,
 " In hopes to calm their terrors for my sake.
 " That and the following day we mute remain'd.
 " O callous earth ! why didst not yawn and quake !
 " Thus famish'd we the fourth day had attain'd,
 " When Gaddo at my feet expiring fell,
 " Crying, ' Why dost not succour me, my sire ?'
 " So one by one, as I am visible,
 " I saw the others day by day expire.
 " Stupified, desponding, miserable,
 " I stumbled o'er their bodies, calling still
 " On each by name, till famine, more severe
 " Than grief itself, and more alert to kill,
 " In three days more concluded my career."
 He ceas'd, and with a frown denouncing ill,
 His teeth into the skull, convuls'd with fear,
 He dug, and gnaw'd with fresh ferocity.

Ah Pisa ! execration of all those
 Who the fair land inhabit, land of "si,"
 Since with such tardy steps advance thy foes,
 Would that Gorgona and the Caprojee
 Might block up Arno's mouth till it o'erflows
 And swallows in its flood thy sons and thee !
 If Ugolino, as the rumour runs,
 Thy forts and castles to the foe betray'd,
 Their tender years should have absolv'd his sons.
 Aye ! thou new Thebes ! Uguccio and Brigade,
 And those of whom I spake ; those little ones
 Who knew not right from wrong, and could not aid.
 Onward we pass'd to where th' eternal frost
 Another race like fetters did compress :
 They were not like the former, downward thrust,
 But prostrate on the ice lay motionless.
 Their very tears the vent of sorrow cross'd,
 And still repell'd, augmented their distress ;
 Filling the sockets, and meanwhile congeal'd,
 In icicles descending on their eyes,
 Their orbs like crystal visors they conceal'd.
 But tho' the first appear'd to paralyze
 Each feeling of my heart, 't was not so steel'd
 But I perceiv'd a sudden gust arise,
 And felt it too. " What could occasion this ?"
 I ask'd my chief. "'T is not each vapour spent
 " That generates the wind in Hell's abyss ?"
 " Anon," replied he, " this strange incident
 " Will be explain'd ; the cause adjacent is."
 One of the frozen crew incontinent

Exclaim'd : " O spirits, whom the fiends in spite
 " Have doubtless plung'd in this abhorrent sphere,
 " Remove the visor that obstructs my sight,
 " So that my heart may vent its load severe
 " Ere that its tears repell'd be frozen quite."
 " Wouldst thou be sure, O spirit, of mine aid,
 " Reveal to me thy name ; if I deny
 " May I for ever by thy side be laid."
 He answered thus : " Fra Alberig am I,
 " Who at a feast my brother monks betray'd."
 " How," I exclaim'd, " he lately met mine eye !"
 " My body may, perhaps, survive my shame ;
 " For what on earth betides it nought I know.
 " Learn that this Ptolomy (our prisoner's name)
 " This privilege enjoys : the soul oft sinks below
 " Ere Atropos its late associate claim.
 " And that thou sooner mayst thine aid bestow,
 " I will inform thee that when man betrays
 " His fellow man (and such offence was mine),
 " A fiend his body seizes, guards it, sways,
 " Till Nature's voice its final doom assign.
 " Perhaps yon spirit who behind me lays
 " Immers'd in ice may still a body boast
 " Alive on earth : shouldst thou approach more near
 " Thou 'lt recognise Sir Branca d'Orio's ghost,
 " Who many years ago descended here."
 " Methinks thou dost deceive me," I replied ;
 " Sir Branca d'Orio follows his career
 " As was his wont,—eats, drinks, till satisfied,
 " Sleeps, wakes, and trims him in his splendid gear."

" In Malabranche's gulf," the spirit cried,
 " Where pitch tenacious boils, was not yet seen
 " Don Michel Zanche, when Sir Branca left
 " A demon in his place, who with his mien
 " Conspiring with a relative, bereft
 " 'This Zanche of his life and dignity.
 " Now I beseech thee, now relieve mine eyes!"
 I did not open them : such courtesy
 Had prov'd I was inclin'd to sympathize.
 Genoa! thou sink of all iniquity!
 Why art thou not dispers'd with thine allies?
 With the worst spirits in Romagna bred
 One of thy souls I found, who side by side,
 Lies frozen in Cocytus' icy bed,
 Whilst his vile body yet is glorified.

CANTO XXXIV.



" The banners," said my chief, " of Hell's dread King
 " Are now approaching us. Advance thine eyes,
 " And say if thou behold'st a wondrous thing."
 I look'd; and as when clouds obscure the skies,
 Or night o'er half the world extends her wing,
 I indistinctly saw what had the guise
 Of a huge windmill, whirling round and round.
 To shun the blast, I to my leader clung,

For other refuge could not there be found.
Innumerable ghosts we reach'd ere long
Mantled with ice: some stretch'd upon the ground,
(I shudder to recount it in my song,)
Some on their feet erect, some shivering stood
With heads revers'd ; others, like bended bow
With both ends meeting, terrified I view'd.
Soon as my leader deemed it fit to show
That creature, with such beauty once endued,
He bad me pause, and said : " Hell's monarch lo !
" And this the time and place when meet it is
" To prove the utmost courage you possess."
What I became, O reader, hearing this,
Hope not that I can venture to express,
Nor prose nor verse could picture it I wis,
'Twi'x life and death I rested, motionless.
His bust protruded from a frozen well,
And to a giant more akin am I
Than loftiest giants to this King of Hell,
Whose bust alone could all their arms defy.
If then a portion seem'd so terrible,
Judge how the whole must have appall'd mine eye.
If, when created, he was eminent
In loveliness, as in deformity
Most hideous now ; if 'gainst th' Omnipotent
He durst rebel ; eternal misery
His crime entail'd. With what astonishment
On the same head three faces I descried !
The first evinc'd the vivid tint of blood :
Two, in a point converging, on each side

Rose from the shoulders ; one imbued
 With white and yellow, but diversified ;
 The other show'd the colour which is view'd
 Where mighty Nile disseminates his tide.
 Under each face two monstrous pinions lay,
 Proportioned to a bird of such a size ;
 Never did first-rate ship such sails display.
 Feathers they had not, but did symbolize
 Wings of a bat. Subjected to his sway
 Three chilling blasts did from the six arise
 Causing Cocytus all along to freeze.
 From his six eyes big tears the monster shed,
 And slaver, mix't with blood, augmenting these,
 Down his three chins their filth deposited.
 I saw him with each mouth a sinner seize,
 Whom more or less he gash'd and massacred.
 But he whom with his teeth in front he ripp'd
 Felt nought, compar'd with others who were flay'd
 On either side: their very spines were stripp'd,
 E'en to the marrow. " He," my master said,
 " Whose head the deepest in the ice is dipp'd,
 " Is Judas, who for pelf his Lord betray'd.
 " Of the two others, with their feet in air,
 " He from the fiend's black muzzle who depends,
 " Is Brutus: how he quakes in mute despair!
 " Gaunt Cassius next with Hell itself contends.
 " But night returns ; we have no time to spare:
 " All has been seen ; another task attends."
 Obedient to his will mine arms I threw
 Around his neck, whilst he the moment chose

Most opportune to what he meant to do :
 And when the wings, expanding, did expose
 The monster's shaggy back and flocks to view,
 My leader sliding down, conceal'd in those
 Himself and me. From flocks to flocks we went,
 Descending 'twixt the fiend and frozen well.
 When we had reach'd his haunch, my leader, spent
 With the increasing labours of his spell,
 Gaz'd upwards, as if dreading our descent,
 And much I fear'd we should return to Hell.
 "Courage!" exclaim'd he, panting with his toil ;
 "No issue there exists but this be sure,
 "By which we may escape this dire turmoil."
 At length he issued thro' an aperture
 On the well's side, and gently plac'd me where
 I might repose from all assaults secure.
 I rais'd mine eyes, expecting to find there
 The bust of Lucifer, alone, erect,
 As late I found him ; but his limbs in air
 Trembling, astonish'd I could now detect.
 "Rise !" cried my chief, "a journey long and rude
 "Awaits us, and the sun hath, in effect,
 "Three hours already of his course pursued."
 I rose, and we proceeded, but in sooth,
 No royal alleys in our path we found,
 No star to guide us, not a gleam ; in truth,
 It was a gulf created to astound.
 "Vouchsafe, my guide, ere we depart from hence,
 "Some doubts to solve that vex me and confound.
 "Where is the mass of ice that froze intense

“ ’Twixt night and morning? How could Lucifer
“ Turn upside down his head and bust immense?”
“ These murky vapours cause my son to err :
“ Thou deem’st we occupy our former place
“ Far from the centre, whence we first descried
“ That wicked fiend, who with his triple face
“ Scowls on the regions which the world divide.
“ What hath occur’d I briefly will retrace:—
“ Whilst down his shaggy back I dar’d to glide,
“ No change befell us, or the reprobate ;
“ But ere we left the well we had attain’d
“ That point to which all bodies gravitate ;
“ Another hemisphere we now have gain’d,
“ Oppos’d to that where the Immaculate
“ Mankind’s redemption by His death obtain’d.
“ The spot on which thou stand’st, this little sphere,
“ Binds on Judecca, in whose zone are pent
“ Traitors like Judas. It is morning here
“ When evening there. Our ladder in descent
“ Still fix’d remains as he did first appear,
“ Doom’d to endure eternal punishment.
“ Downward he fell from the abodes of love.
“ ’T was then that the affrighted continent,
“ Which once existed here, such fears did prove,
“ That borrowing ocean’s sails, it left its place,
“ And settled on our earth. By such a move,
“ And to avoid the terrors of his face,
“ Perhaps yon mountain, which now towers above,
“ Leapt to the moon.” There is a wild below,
Distant from Lucifer as far I deem

As his well's depth ; no human eyes could know
That such a wild exists : a gurgling stream,
Which from the fissure of a rock doth flow,
Alone betrays it : thither, sans a gleam
Of light to guide us, favour'd by the sound
My chief proceeded, and in this retreat
An issue to the sun's blest beams we found.
We thought not of fatigue : Hope wing'd our feet.
My leader pass'd the first, I quick pursued,
And all the glories of the Heav'ns review'd.



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