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CANTOS
FROM THE
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COMMEDIA
OF DANTE

C. POTTER

Qn 50. 6.3

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FROM THE
DIVINA COMMEDIA
OF
DANTE

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(17) CANTOS

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OF

DANTE

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

BY

C. POTTER

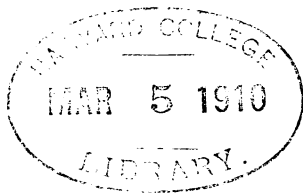
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Gift of
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Dante in Exile.



PARADISO.

CANTO XXV.

IF it should happen that my sacred song,
Wherewith my hands have grasped the earth and
heaven,
And kept me lean, should conquer cruel wrong,
That found me, sleeping lamb, from a fair sheepfold driven.

The enemy of wolves in that revolt ;
With other voice, and in another guise,
I will return a poet ; at that font
Baptismal, only will I take my cap as prize.

'Not else, but in the Faith which shows to man
The mind of God, an entrance give me now ;
When holy Peter will my merits scan,
And place the laurel wreath upon my aching brow.

INF ERNO.

CANTO I.

THE ARGUMENT.

The Poet having unwittingly entered a wood, and having lost the track, is exposed to great peril.

He reaches the open plain and dark valley below, where he meets the Shade of Virgil, who offers to guide him by other ways out of his difficulty.

Dante.



INFERNO.

CANTO I.

I WAS a Pilgrim that had turned, astray
 Within a trackless wood ;
And in the middle of Life's journeying way
 In shrouded darkness stood.

Why speak I now of that supremest hour,
 Of savage vastness, and of dire dismay,
That with the bitterness of death recalls
 Its ghastly, vanished power :

But to rehearse the good I since have tasted,
And tell of things committed to my care ;
Since foolishness my soul had once belated,
That punishment did not prevent my blessing's share.

A few more steps, and fatal as to all,
The chasm lay beneath me, dark and wide ;
The place my heart's fear should the most enthrall,
Because the Light of Heaven had ceased to be my Guide.

Yet scarcely had I reached the vale below,
When early morning touched the shouldered hill,
And in its light the Star of Love aglow,
Shone with her Beacon fire, a Guide and Guardian still.

Then after needful rest with strength supplied,
I slowly, cautiously, my steps retrace ;
And looked around me, at the chasm wide,
As rescued mariner, the baffled surge might gaze.

When lo ! some forest beast * ; a spotted pard,
With nimble feet entangled where I stept,
Nor forward scarcely let me go one yard ;
And more than once my thoughts repent the place I left.

* "Among the beasts of the Deoghur jungles an occasional *chetah* was to be found. In Oudh and other parts of India this animal is domesticated and kept by sporting Rajahs for the purpose of running down antelope ; in the Deoghur country they keep themselves by running down the goats and sheep of the people. A curious animal is this hunting chetah, a cat (*i.e.*, a small and much attenuated leopard) down to its feet, and at their extremities a dog."—From *Blackwood's Magazine*, article by Edward Braddon, Nov. 1893.

The hour, the season, and the spring's young time,
Were soothing all my troubled heart of care,
For soon the sun would take his glorious climb
Above the stars ; and earth as in her prime looked fair.

Nor marvelled I that the gay spotted thing,
Hindering my steps, should cease me to annoy ;
But much I marvelled, when with thunderous swing,
And head erect, a lion came in sight which might destroy ;

And with him came a wolf, a murderess, she
Insatiable, lean, with ravening jaw ;
The dread of many people, now of me,
Who hence no hope to gain the nearer hill top saw.

As those who covet most, with greed inspired,
Just touch the summit of their earthly gain ;
When times have changed, and that which they acquired
Is lost ; it feeds their empty thoughts with bitterness and pain.

Urged by the beast relentlessly, my feet
Have reached the open arid desert now ;
When with what speed I might, that forced retreat
Sent me beyond, to mute and sunless shades of woe.

There stood before me One methought looked faint,
As with long silence ; and in piteous case,
All breathlessly to him I made my plaint,
"Or art thou Man, nor Ghost? help, save me from this
place."

“Not man I am, though once in man’s estate ;
My parents from Mantua, Lombards they ;
Born under Julian, when the times were late,
And false gods in ; at Rome, in good Augustus’ day

“I was a poet, and I sang of one
Who came from Troy, after proud Ilion burned,
The just man he, of Anchises the son ;—
But wherefore to this baneful place, thy footsteps turned ?

“Why not ascend the Hill of thy delight,
The source and summit of thy every joy ?”

“And art thou Virgil, at whose soaring flight
I gazed ?” as with bowed head I stood, shamefaced and
coy.

“Fountain of Wisdom ! where thy student drew
His inspirations ; and the Guide of me ;
Who in my style one only master knew ;
So, that what praise I gained, I gave it back to thee.

“Let the great love I bore thee, now avail
To save me from this savage, and her fright ;
Which my whole being threatens to assail,
And from whose close pursuit just now I took my flight.”

“Thee it behoves to take some other way
From this bad place, if now thou wouldst be free” ;
(For he had seen my tears) “that beast will slay
All those she hinders, but to stay their death’s decree.

“ Her guilty nature makes her greedy will
Ravenous in feast, desire yet more of gain ;
And strangely does she mate ;—and strangely, till
The hind come that harries her ; that kills her with heart
pain.

“ This shall not live on land or dross, but be
For Wisdom, and for Virtue, and for Love ;
There in the Lowlands of his Italy,
Festro to Festro ; those that others died for, the salvation
prove.

“ This will not turn, or stay until he chase
The envious beast, lurking where men may dwell,
Forward, and thence pursuing to the place,
Whence envy drove her forth ; and chase her back to
Hell.

“ So, for thy betterment, as I discern
If thou wouldst follow wheresoe'er I led,
I would conduct thee to the eternal bourne,
And through the dark of Hell, with thee would closely
tread.

“ Where thou shouldst hear the ancient spirits cry,
And see them suffer in the second death ;
And after that, the souls of those that lie
Content, if saved by fire, they leave the sulphurous
breath.

“And if the blessed Folk thou too wouldst see ;
There is a soul, that is more blest than I,
That shall conduct thee to the place, and be
Thy Guide ; when I will leave thee in her company.

“For of that city, Governor he reigns,
Who wills not any should be there through me ;
Lord of all lands ; sole Emperor there remains ;
Blest man ! His Choice for place in that high sovereignty.”

“By the great God thou knew'st not, let me reach
Through realms of woe, the safety I should find
At Peter's gate ;—Poet, I thee beseech ” ;
This said, he led the way ; I followed close behind.

INFERN O.

CANTO IV.

THE ARGUMENT.

The Poets descend together into the limbo of the First Circle of the Inferno. Virgil discourses of the inhabitants to Dante, who thereafter recognizes the mighty Spirits of Antiquity; and with less fear than he entered it, leaves for the Second Circle.

Dante.

INFERNO.

CANTO IV.

AS from beneath, o'er me there broke a sound,
A thund'rous swell of some mysterious power,
Like those, I felt, that in deep slumbers bound,
Suddenly start and wake at an unwonted hour.

How, when, and where : till, with my eyes unsealed,
And consciousness returned, I looked, when lo !
A valley of great darkness stood revealed,
The gathered tone I heard, the infinite of woe.

Obscured with clouds and mist, the abyss profound
With straining eyes I strove to pierce ; the gloom
Unfathomed could reveal no standing ground,
As to this blinded world descending we must come.

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Then the pale poet silence broke, began,
 "I know this place, and surely shalt thou know."
 And I, with colour like to his and wan,
 "How canst thou soothe my doubt with fear upon thy
 brow?"

Then he to me: "The pity in my face
 For all this people's anguish and their doom,
 Thou didst mistake for fear of the dark place,
 But let us now descend, unhindered by the gloom."

So on he led me as he had before,
 Towards the first circle which the abyss now spann'd,
 And soon the sound I heard, I knew no more
 As moans, but as the sighs the eternal breezes fanned.

Fixed in unchanging state a mighty throng
 Gathered therein; women, and children, men,
 Dismartyred stayed—"Wherefore to these belong,
 "Such doul thou hast not asked," said the good Master then.

"These had reward,—in wisdom's ways took heed,
 No glaring sins their earthly lives had scarred,
 But having lived without the Church's creed,
 And unbaptized, as such of Paradise debarr'd.

"For in thy Faith this is the entrance door,
 Although the Christian Era not begun,
 They worshipped God, in ignorance, long before;
 Of such as these was I, and in their midst am one.

“For that defect, and not for graver sin,
Eternal loss, without transgression sore,
Hopelessly baffling my desires therein ;
Oppressed with grief for valiant souls I knew of yore.”

“Tell me, oh tell me, Lord and Master mine,”—
As though I would be certain of the Faith
That vanquished so much error,—“now define,
“Was it their merits, or one’s else, prevailed in that thou
saith?”

Then he as with my secret thought impressed :
“I had not long been in the place of woe,
Ere I beheld, more potent than the rest,
One with the sign encrowned of victory on his brow.

“And wandering by, the shades that swept the gloom
Of our first parents, with their youngest son ;
Abraham with Isaac and the patriarchs loom,
Moses, lawgiver, and David the King was one.

“Israel with Rachel, that a nation gave
And bless’d to many others of that day,
Though in thy knowledge none besides can save—
But let not such discourse further our steps delay.

“And undeterred by any speech I made,
Descend we now, and through the dark profound
To that abode of Spirits in the shade,
As dense and unrevealed as is the misty ground.”

So onward still, and through the gloom he led ;
Nor had we far advanced, when fiery glow
Conquered that realm of darkness : as it fled
With horror some I saw, inhabitants below.

“ Oh thou that gavest to Science and to Art
Due honour, tell me wherefore are these found
In so much anguish that they dwell apart
As disassociates from all else around ? ”

“ The honourable mention that these made,
And fame they gathered, was not of thy life,
Acquirèd grace from heaven on them was laid ; ”—
Whose voice I too had heard above the earthly strife.

And most of all the Poet's voice, whose shade
So honoured from their midst had disappeared,
My Master ;—who resuming converse, said,
His voice subdued and faint—“ Mark those we have revered.

“ The foremost of them, in his hand his sword,
Homer, with face unmoved, as others three
That follow him, their sire of verse the Lord ;—
Horace, the Satirist ; Ovid ; and Lucan last we see. ”

Not by their names I knew them, but their voice
As heard by me, and in their memories blest,
The assembled students of a school so choice,
They made one, for his song, the Lord of all the rest.

Who like an eagle high above them flew ;—
Came swiftly t'wards me with saluting sign,
Not for sufficient reason as I knew ;—
Whereat I saw my Master smile, to honour me incline.

For that he knew it placed me in the set,
An added sixth amongst the assembled wise ;
So we passed through the radiance we had met
In silence as beseems it, and that speech supplies.

Till to a noble castle close we drew,
With seven arched portals round its lifted wall ;
Protecting it, a lovely streamlet, through
We stept as on dry ground, not hindering us withal.

And in the meadows bordering it between,
People were there, grave, and with dull set eyes,
And great authorities in them were seen ;
Seldom they speak,—their words scarce above whispers rise.

Some set apart, within the vaulted side
Of the wide openings, high exposed to view
In the broad light that showed their honour's pride,
Where all below might give their quality its due.

Whilst on the grass enamelled at their feet
The mighty spirits of the past were met ;
On the right hand, in this their green retreat,
In my opinion, seemed above the others set.

I saw Electra, with much company,
Of whom had Ettore and Æneas been ;
Cæsar, all armed, with his rapacious eye ;
Apart, Camilla, and the Amazonian Queen.

I saw the Latin King, and seated near,
Lavinia, his daughter, Brutus with the heel
That chased out Tarquin, and besides these were
Lucretia, Julia, Marzia, and Cordele.

With Saladin, from others that withdrew ;
Whilst, somewhat nearer to the border ground,
The Master Mind that coloured all they knew,
Had his philosophers assembled close around ;

Admiring, honouring him in every look ;
Plato and Socrates in their retreat,
Whom others for their earlier models took ;
But power would fail to tell the numbers at their feet.

And hurried from the place we sought in dread,
Our company reduced from six to two,
Out of the quiet, trembling breezes led,
Another way I passed into the night below.

INFERNO.

CANTO V.

THE ARGUMENT.

In the Second Circle, having past the Inquisitor Minos, Virgil introduces to Dante the Shades of some Historical characters ; and after listening to the story of Francesca and Paolo, overcome by emotion, he falls to the ground in a swoon.

Dante.



INFERNO.

CANTO V.

IN the descent of the next Circle now,
Less wide, but with complaint of sharper sting
More loud ; stood Minos with his wrinkled brow,
Hideous Inquisitor of deeds an entrance there might
bring ;

Examining each, dispatching with his word,
Such as confessed,—confess again, and sin,
To manner bred ; and those that draw the cord
Tighter, that holds them fast, and keeps the Hell within.

Continuing in their usual course below,
An entrance here would scarcely seem more sad,
When they descend to their apportioned woe,
According as the deeds they brought were low and bad.

Then Minos, when he saw me, thus he spake,
" Oh, thou that to this Hospice woe betide
Art come, despite the Inquisition that I make—
Beware the entrance broad ;—in whom thou dost confide."

Answered my Duke ;—" Wherefore so much complaint ?
Do not deter his fated footsteps now ;
By other's will he came, and by constraint ;
A will none can resist, and ask no more, do thou."

Then had mine ear first caught the dolorous sound,
As conscious of the place whereto we came ;
So full of plaint and murmuring all around,
The seat of darkest night, enduring still the same.

Mid groanings like to a tempestuous sea,
Always combating with contrary winds,
The infernal storm that soothed can never be,
In irksome repetition that the spirit binds.

Which had arrived beforehand to that end,
Wherein are now laments and loud complaint,
Virtue Divine blaspheming, they descend,
Foreknowing all the doom that waits their sinful taint,

And mingled with it a tormenting fact,
The condemnation of the carnal will,
When strong desire had conquered reason's tact,
Hither and thither borne without the guiding skill.

When in the colder time they leave the shore,
On battered wings that the wild storms detain,
Having no hope of rest for evermore
With the vast throng in space, else had they less of pain ;

And as in flock the cranes are seen to fly
Athwart the skies in a long darkened line,
With like complaining notes and mournful cry,
Some shadowy trailing forms nearest I could define,

Beating the hoary air : " Say who are those ? "
" A Queen, the first, of colour, wouldst thou know,
Much favoured as her license should disclose,
Who framed the laws to fit the less her crimes might show.

" This is Semiramis ; by state decrees
Succeeding Nino, who to her was wed,
Ruling the lands held of the Soudanese ;
The other one, Love's maniac, to costliest tomb had fled.

" There, Cleopatra, most luxurious Queen ;
Helen of Troy, who much of trouble brought
To many Peoples ; and Achilles seen,
The mighty warrior, that for love his battles fought.

" Paris, and Tristram, Britain's errant knight,
Thousands and thousands, shadowy forms are there,
Whom love had shattered, and withdrawn from sight ;
Names of such ancient knights and dames for pity I
forbear." -

Then I commenced : " Poet, wilt thou allow
Speech of those two we see that, keeping close,
Cumber the air, they seem to move so slow ? "

" When these are near, they will unfold to thee their woes.

" How love had brought them hither." Nearer now,
Fast as they might on the delaying air :

" Oh, anxious heart ! " to me they whispered low,

" Come near to us and speak, if others will forbear.

" For like two doves, responsive to a voice,
On outstretched wings shut out from a sweet nest,
To join the motley throng of Dido's choice,
In the malignant air we stay at Love's behest.

" Oh, human heart ! that gracious and benign,
Hast come to visit us in the dull sky,
Which had relation to that world of thine :

If with the Universe's king happily thy friendships lie.—

" For thy own peace pray that he would remit
The penalty to natures so perverse ;
And if speech with us be not deemed unfit,

Whilst treacherous winds keep still, our tale he will rehearse.

" By the sea coast, where Po's descending wave
Laves with the sea in peace, our birth was there ;
Love that makes heart to heart like waters lave,

Brought mine to hers—parted, had grave offence to bear.

“Love, that another’s loving ne’er forgives,
 Held me fast bound in his unyielding net;
 Nor has forsaken with our ended lives,
 Love that had brought us both to death—and Cain has met.”

This was a hard word of them now I heard,
 And when I understood the soul’s offence
 My countenance had changed, it was observed,
 So that the Poet said to me, “What thinkest thou from
 thence?”

And in response I said, “Alas, alas!
 That such sweet thoughts and so much fond regard
 Should but have led them to such dreary pass”;
 And where those two kept close, I turned Francesca toward:

“Francesca, hearing this of thy sad fate
 Has filled my heart with pity most, and grief,
 But say, when gentlest sighs were breathed of late,
 Was there no doubting mingled with thy fond belief?”

Then she to me: “There is no anguish dealt
 To misery that gives a sharper blow
 Than memory of departed joys once felt,
 As thou in thy affections, too, must surely know.

“And if thou hast an earnest wish to scan
 All the deep rooting of our earliest love,
 And if to know thou canst how it began,
 Not from its bitter end that tale wouldst thou remove.

“Of Lancelot, whom love had strictly bound,
A tale one day to our delight we read,
Believing nought amiss might there be found,
Suspecting more, had made our heightened colour spread,

“And reading on, all in a moment came
The strong desire to taste what bliss was there,
When lips pressed lips, and trembling, mine the same,
Thus soul once knit to soul we stay in the delaying air.”

Galeotto was the book of evil plan,
As he who wrote it will have cause to know :
Francesca thus approved as Paul began ;
Oblivion took my pity, faint at their tale of woe.

PURGATORIO.

CANTO I.

THE ARGUMENT.

Dante here relates that having recognised the Shade of Cato, he addresses him in a long and flattering speech. Whereupon Cato, guiding to the seashore, proposes to Dante similar acts to those he had first suggested to Cato.

Dante.



PURGATORIO.

CANTO I.

IN smoother waters now, with sails unfurled,
Bark of my Genius, wing thy onward way,
And leave the cruel sea for that new world
Where souls are purged from sin till mete for heaven are
they.

Oh ! Holy Muse, do thou my verse inspire,
Lifting from death to life the poet's lay ;
And Calliope, somewhat touch the lyre
For those who with the wayward nine, hopeless, unpardoned,
stay.

Fair streamed the colour of the saffron skies,
With fresh'ning airs from early morning now
That bathed, somewhat bedimmed, my aching eyes,
Whilst Orient, smiling, saw the Star of Love aglow.

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Then turned I to the Four Cross Stars that gleamed
Above the Nations of an earlier line ;
Oh ! happy they on whom such brilliance streamed
Whilst all the heaven rejoiced that saw the glorious sign.

So soon as these regards had filled my soul,
Slowly my gaze along the horizon went,
And turned towards that other northern pole,
Could see the glimmering light its constellation lent.

When in the dawn, and standing near was one,
An ancient man, with reverence in his face,
Such as no father ever gave to son ;
Like to the holy stars I saw, in radiant grace.

O'er his pale chest there streamed his silvery beard,
And touched his glistening locks, that with it blent
From his pale forehead, and his look revered,
Down to his girdle's hem in mingled whiteness went.

“Who may you be, that gainst the stream of Hell
Have dared to pass beyond the eternal bound ;
And who has guided you I bid you tell,
Or given you light to leave the dark infernal ground ?”

Shaking his honest beard :—“Do the laws change,
Or has prevailed in Heaven some council new ?
That the damned come, my grotto to estrange ;
Who held it from my Lord, from him my title drew.”

Thus spake ; then with uplifted hands and eyes,
And reverend gesture, pardon craved for speech ;
I stopt him ; " Pardon crave of me nowise,
But of the Lady who from Heaven could thus beseech

" My Guide ; and if allowed he can explain
The situation, whilst I vouch its truth :
Not that my fault, which gives thee so much pain,
For simply by his folly I was led forsooth.

" Only last evening was it that we met,
When hastily I bound myself to go
Where he might lead, who would no hindrance let
Till he had brought me hitherward, as thus you know.

" But first he led where wicked souls reside ;
And then proposed that I should see the rest,
That purified within thy realm abide,
Till in their high attainment I might see them blest.

" Grant us thy leave to pass and seek that place,
Which, as the Refuge of my life is dear ;
Albeit, thou may'st recall another case
In Utia ;—the bitterness of death thou didst not fear

" When title and magnificence were spoiled.—
Eternal Edicts do not fetter those
That live, and under Midas never toiled,
Who envious of thy Rights, hath heapt on thee such woes.

“ By the pale grandeur of thy vestment now,
Oh holy heart ! By all once held so dear,
For the great love’s remembrance sake allow ;
And in the Higher Courts thy Cause shall be made clear.

“ For Heaven will prove beneficent, when thou
Hast shown the path which leads to that retreat
Of new Dominion ; for the bliss I owe,
My gratitude and thousand thanks shalt surely meet.

“ Where never more the poisonous stream can flow
To fret me as I breathed it, in that hour
When shut within its bounds I shrank to know
The inevitable law, a fact, and felt its power.

“ Go now and change thy garb for simple cloak
Of matted rush ; and with washed face, retain
No mark that might betray thy personal look,
Or give a lingering hint of suicidal stain :

“ Lest at our company in some surprise,
The Officers on Dignity that wait
In Paradise might cast suspicious eyes ;
And cautiously refuse admission at the gate.

“ There is an Island near, along whose shore,
In ooze and sand, the lonely rushes spread ;
Beneath the waves that beat for evermore ;
The only plant that thrives, that looks not sere and dead.

“ Let us depart ; for the now risen sun,
Mounting aloft shall light us on our way ;
And ere his downward course be yet begun,
Will aid thy safe return before the set of day.”

Ended my foolish speech erewhile, but he
Silently raised me ; not till with lifted eyes
I might recall my Chief, he answered me :
“ Follow my footsteps, son, far as my pathway lies.

“ Soon as the level plain that slanting low,
Ends in a steep descent, I must away ;
Morn brings the hour of prayer, none may forego ;
And near the trembling sea I must not long delay.

“ There is a secret path from here, which turns
Towards that spot of marsh and reedy ground ;
Which none could ever quit unless he learns ;
But in my guidance there the entrance may be found.

“ There where my swarthy race 'mid sun and dew
Which smite and harm them, in communion still
Worship as was their wont and as they knew ;
Thy Master's soft hands wash in the dark morass rill.

“ Bring him the mournful rushes that had part,
Colouring the native tissues of my skin ;
That he may learn to be expert in art,
Nor gain that shore belate, to stay unlaunched within.



“ And in return, if such should be your want,
Make me a girdle ; fitting gift from you.
Marvellous ! that such a kindred humble plant
Renewed, should walk the waves, where late beneath it
grew. ’

PURGATORIO.

CANTO II.

THE ARGUMENT.

Dante and Virgil, with their Guide, standing on the shore, witness the arrival of a group of Spirits, one of whom is recognised by Dante as his friend Casella, a Poet.

Cato receives and conducts the group towards the mountain, and leaves Dante and Virgil by themselves with apparent unconcern.

Dante.



PURGATORIO.

CANTO II.

TO paler hues had changed the vermeiled sky ;
As forth the Sun from his horizon crept,
Near to the shades of night, nor mounting high ;
Pillowed on faded Rose, the bel Aurora slept.

Following its course now on the shore we stood,
The boundary of a wide and unknown sea ;
Like those, who, powerless to attempt the flood,
Retain their heart's desire, though vain, the shore to flee.

When lo ! as dawn had changed to early day,
Amid the vaporous, red, and murky air,
That further than the coast-line dared not stray,
Borne on the waves, a light appeared, which seemed
approaching there,

Sailless and swift, whereat in some surprise,
Turning towards my Chief for that he knew ;
I saw a radiance in his widening eyes,
Gazing intently as it nearer came in view.

Soon I could faintly trace the form of one,
Seen only by its whiteness, and behind
Another, sheltered by his wings that shone,
Borne onwards towards us with the swiftness of the wind.

Whereat my Master spake aloud no word
Till he had seen the whiteness of their wings,
When at the bark afloat his soul was stirred :
“Beware, beware ! your bark but to the jungle brings.

“The Angel of the Lord ! Oh, raise your hand
In token that our service is divine ;
No human anger warns them from this land,
Nor will of ours to come from far and make this sign.

“Say that to them no right divine was given
As Messengers to treat of mundane things ;
Nor with decrees of the unchanging heaven
Hither to cleave the air on their immortal wings.”

Yet nearer still and nearer towards the shore
Approached the Light Divine, that pierced the mist,
Whereat our dazzled eyes could look no more
Till it arrived ; a slight, swift thing that could the waves resist.

And at the helm the heavenly pilot steered
With his credentials written in his face ;
A hundred souls, or more, with him had neared
The shore, and with one voice they raised the psalm of
praise.

“In Exitu Israel de Egypto ;”
Then with the holy cross they made the sign,
And leapt ashore as in delight to go :
With joyous steps and swift the troop towards us incline.

And fronting us began enquiring speech,
Gazing upon the shore in much surprise ;
“Tell us,” they said, “the best way we can reach
The higher ground, beyond, that seems from hence to
rise.”

For now the sun advanced with brightening ray,
And in his arrowy flight the stars subdued,
Nor in the Pleiades' light content to stay
Had chased the lingering Goat that in mid-heaven had
stood.

Then Virgil answered : “You perchance may deem
That we are well acquainted with this spot ;
Though strangers only like yourselves that seem ;
By road we came, so rough, return a trifling thing is
not.”

These souls aware that by my shortened breath
I was a mortal, pale with wonder grew,
And message sent with olive branch at length,
That we might speak, if so inclined, and tell them what we
knew.

And as they saw me affable in look,
Appeared to think themselves in fortune's way ;
And quite oblivious that the path they took
On betterment intent, might meet with some delay.

When one I noticed from amongst the rest
To eagerly press forward and embrace ;
That much it moved me to return his zest,
When in that fleeting shade I recognised his face.

Thrice did my arms essay to meet his own,
And thrice anon they fell against my breast ;—
Whereat he smiled, and backward stepped alone,
Whilst marvelling, as I thought, and with my face impressed.

Then I advancing followed close the shade,
Which tenderly entreated to desist,
But in a tone I recognised, and prayed
That it would stop and speak and not be so dismissed.

“ Because I loved thee in my mortal frame
Think not that now thou art to me less dear ;
Then why detain me, if our path the same ” ?—
“ Cassella mine ! It was a different way I entered here.

“But thou, how much hast thou been robbed of time?”—

“No robbery that, I was well pleased to rise
And take my passage to another clime

With those who stand and wait decree of the All-Wise.

“Three months I watched by Tiber’s stream that laves
With the salt sea, waiting the bark’s release,

In pleasure found floating upon the waves,
Whither the wing was turned ; and in departure peace.”

Then I to him : “If this alliance new
Has not effaced thy memory of Love Song
That ofttimes soothed me in the hours we knew,
Sing to us, weary now with travel rough and long.”

“Love be my song for ever” : then he sang,
In tones so soft and sweet, beyond me sent,
I and my Master, and the troop began
To feel united in a bond of great content.

As fixed we stood attentive to the strain,
Following his notes wafted upon the air,
Then suddenly another sound again
Attracts us in the cry of our true watchman there.

“Why linger thus? why should you be so slow
Detained ascending towards the rock-crowned height
Of wider vision, where you soon should know
The power of God revealed, that waits to meet your sight?”

Like as a flock of pigeons on the ground
Alighting, in a fresh green pasture fed,
Suddenly start at some unwonted sound,
They leave their dainty meal, and in a cloud have fled.

Away, away! from all allurements here,
That might from the great cure their souls detain,—
Startled by that assault of lingering there,
They leave their song in haste ; nor did we long remain.

PURGATORIO.

CANTO III.

THE ARGUMENT.

Arrived at the foot of the mountain, they are discouraged by the difficult ascent till instructed by a troop of spirits, amongst whom is Manfred, King of Naples, mortally wounded in battle with Charles, in a Florentine war, and excommunicated for his religious opinions at the instigation of Pope Clement; afterwards ignominiously buried without the walls of the kingdom.

Dante.



PURGATORIO.

CANTO III.

THAT flock of spirits from our sight withdrawn,
Virgil and I the lonely pathway went ;
He, with his stride, left me behind forlorn,
In his hot haste to gain the Mount Beneficent.

Bereft of him, my Guide, and where was I?—
One moment's recollection changed his pace ;
As only on his care I might rely,—
In soft contrition sought his error to efface.

The sunbeams now had pierced the mid-day sky,
Which thrust my shadow darkly on the ground ;
And as I turned towards Virgil I descri
That sunbeam cleft, his form is shadowless around.

D

Then straightway fear, that lacked an arm of flesh,
Oppressed my doubting soul ; but he replied,
With strengthening words my courage to refresh,
“Why shouldst thou him distrust who was, and is thy Guide?

“T is evening where my buried body lies
That once had cast a shadow, there enshrined
At Naples ; marvel not that from these skies
No scorching sunbeams now impediment can find.

“Suffering the torments still of heat and cold,
With those to virtue who were well inclined ;
And with like bodies as the men of old,
Not willingly who left their wishes far behind.

“The Mystery of the matter to indite
Seek not, ye blest ! nor why in shades forlorn
So many : Plato and the Stagirite—
But then what need for Mary’s Son to have been born ?”

Deep thought had bowed his head, and silent mood
Broke off his speech ; stedfast my face I set
To gain the mountain that before us stood,
But with ascent so steep, we might not move one step.

“And who knows now which way the pathway lies,”
Then spake my Guide, “for those who have no wings ?”
Upon the summit still I fixed my eyes,
Whilst he explores the ground, that no solution brings.

Then as upon the topmost rock I gaze,
A cloud of spirits on the left I saw,
That nearer, and yet nearer, in a maze
Which scarcely seen to move, towards us seemed to draw.

“Look up,” I said, “these may incline to teach
The way ; and where thy guidance fails, enlight.”
Then he regarding me with liberal speech,—
“Fear not, my Son beloved, but I will guide thee right.

“Let us advance towards those that move so slow ;
And thou, thy courage keep the steep to gain”—
When as we neared the thousand steps or so,
Within arm’s length, awhile, the troop with us remain.

“Spirits Elect ! Foretasters of the peace
Which I believe you hence expect to know :
Instruct us to ascend ; and so increase
Your bliss, by aiding those who else remain below.”

Like as a flock of sheep, they know not why,
Follow the leader, and by threes or four
Skip ; and with downcast eyes then scent, or lie,
As does the first, that troop their favoured leader saw.

Not at the voice of Virgil, shadowless,
They half retreat, but started at the shade
I cast upon the ground ; “Truly I will confess
“Without your question,” he his ready answer made.

“This is a mortal : marvel not that this
Should break the sunbeams’ force to pierce his side :
And surely virtue’s aim, in search of bliss,
Should gain reward, and find in you a certain guide.”

To this appeal responsive came a voice,
“Go, where the steep declines the other side” ;
Mid wave of hands that emphasized his choice,
The Leader of that meek and graceful flock replied.

Then turned to me : “Say if thou canst recall
My visage, and that we before have met ?”—
Modest his mien, and beautiful, withal
A sabre’s thrust its scar on his cleft eyebrow set.

I with his noble bearing much impressed,
Humbly disclaimed such knowledge, then he smiled,
And showed another wound high on his chest,
“Grandson to Queen Constanza ; Manfredi, I am styled.

“And whosoe’er thou art, to earth returned,
Seek my fair daughter, born to Arragon,
And Sicily ; of me if lies were learned,
Say thou hast seen me, and the truth, that grace is won.

“Perchance those two may find the arm that thrust
These mortal wounds, and my forgiveness own,
Whose sins were scarlet ; but I fled in trust
To the wide arms for those who have repentance known.

‘ From this had Shepherd Clement taken text,
My bones had still near Benevento lain,
Nor moved to foreign ground, where the winds vex’t
Moan, and unsheltered round them falls the drenching
rain.

“ An Excommunicant, in silent ways
Ignobly buried, yet no curses dark
Keep back the Love Divine, where hope still stays,
And verdure blossoms into life within the bark.

“ ’T is true that those who in contempt may stray
From Holy Church, a penalty endure ;
But Heaven itself is moved by those who pray,
And souls through prayer obtain an earlier cure.”

PURGATORIO.

CANTO XXVII.

THE ARGUMENT.

Dante is impeded in his course by the intense brilliance of the Sun, which he hesitates to enter ; but is persuaded to pass through. After sleeping in the shadow of a great rock, he has a dream ; awakening to see a level country before them, when Virgil takes a final leave of him.

Dante.



PURGATORIO

CANTO XXVII.

AS at the first, the Sun's vibrating force
Spread in his Maker's sky the ensanguined red,
And drooped o'er Spain, where Libra marks his course,—
Then from the Ganges' waves refreshed in newness sped.

Forth from the flame God's angel on the brink,
Stood in great joy and sang—"The pure in heart."
With voice above our life—"Ye saintly, think
Not through this fire ye enter here, till life depart."

Whilst to that song, not deaf my inward ear,
I thought of him who in the grave had lain,
As we pressed on. To me "Come not thou near":
Therewith a lifted arm he barred, "Nor entrance gain."

Then Virgil turned to me, the good escort :
"Thou that not tasting death did torment know :
Remember ! And from Gerion safely brought
Nearer to God thou art, and what can harm thee now ?

"Know that if through this fire thou shouldst be led
Into the midst thereof, a thousand years
Would never singe the hairs upon thy head,
Or doubt, hold front thy garment's hem, see if that sears ;

"Then enter undismayed, unharmed pass through."
I against conscience and my contract stood :
Which troubled him, and courage to renew,
"This is the wall that from Beatrice part thee could."

As at the name of Thisbe opened wide
The lids of Pyramus that death had bound ;
Whilst gazing changed to berry vermeil dyed :
In my hard fate I turned at that remembered sound.

Shaking his head : "How long will this require ?"
And then he smiled as if a child had tried
To lead as with an apple—front the fire
He placed me : Statius following us, who went as guide.

And when within I would had molten glass
Streamed to refresh me, so intense the glow ;
Spake the kind father, soothing whilst we pass,
"Soon shall thy eyes behold thy loved Beatrice now."

There guided us a voice of song without,
Whilst we attentive following close the sound,
Came forth of it, a higher step to mount,
And from amidst the light, the voice that led us found.

“Ye blessèd of My Father, come !” the song ;
Whilst too intense the glow to choose our way ;—
Then evening fell ; not changing or less strong,
Though veiled in ardour, beams that westward turned the
day.

With a huge rock projecting on one side,
I took my path, that shaded thus the sun,
And made with lessening force, in darkness hide
The ascending steps, before to mount we had begun.

Then by a gleam of light the glory left,
Ere darkness fell on all the horizon dark,
Each of us made a pillow in the cleft
Which had denied ascent, though in desire we passed.

And not unlike the goats that skip and bound
Upon a topmost crag, their meal supplied,
Silently ruminant, and closing round,
Hide from the sun, whereon for pasturage they relied.

Meanwhile their Pastor on the hillside set
Regardful watches, for their safety stays,
A guardian lest mischance one might befall,
Resting in that peculiar place for their delays.

Thus did our company allotments each
 Find in the grotto, sheltered from the day,
 And for a little while ere sleep might reach
 I watched the stars, grown large and of intenser ray.

And whilst I pondered on the new surprise
 Sleep overcame me—sleep that ofttimes gives
 An olden fact seen in a newer guise ;
 The hour, I think, when Venus with her ardent ray revives.

A lady, young and beautiful in dream,
 Bending amidst a flowery mead I saw,
 Singing, she asked my name, as by the stream
 She culled the flowers therein reflected from the shore.

“Leah, I am called,” she said, “it pleaseth me
 With my white hands to make a garland fair ;
 But Rachel with her beauteous eyes can see
 Mirrored, and all day long, the flowers that deck her hair.—

“In her enjoyment all my pleasures take :
 She for adornment, and for work am I.”
 Now had the lovely dawn begun to break,
 Which to the pilgrim tells that glorious day is nigh.

The darkness fleeing all around, and sleep
 Departing with it, I, too, then arose :
 Said the great master, “Soon the fruit thou’lt reap
 Hid in the boughs, a peace that mortals crave to ease their
 woes.”

Thus Virgil spake, and never New Year's gift,
In promise charmed me like the words he spake,
As onward still upon the rock-bound clift
To mount, did my desires their apter pinions make.

Then where the Mount was gained by steppings higher,
The eyes of Virgil turned and fixed on me :—
“The temporal seen, and the eternal fire,
Further no more, my son, I can discern for thee.

“Thy pleasure now must take thy Teacher's part,
As I have led thee hither in my skill,
Beyond this steep, no further goes my art,
Whereon thou didst rely, and knew no other's will.

“Behold the Sun in front that shows thee light ;
Behold the herb, the flowers in wooded dells,
Born solely of the earth ; till meets thy sight
Those watchful, beauteous eyes wherein delight there dwells.

“Eyes, full of tears, that brought me to thy side ;—
Stay if thou wilt, or travel, at thy choice ;
No longer with thee now can I abide,
No more direct thy way, by sign or guarding voice.

“Free as by right, thy own decision make ;
In wisdom now no failure can be thine ;
Henceforth I leave thee, thy own path to take ;
Crowned, and with sceptre from me, make thee sole
consign.”

PURGATORIO.

CANTO XXVIII.

THE ARGUMENT.

Dante, left with Statius, arrives at the entrance of the Earthly Paradise, where he meets with an Angelic being (the lady Matilda), who discourses with him on higher enjoyments, and hints at his future, as the Poet of Paradise.

Dante.

PURGATORIO.

CANTO XXVIII.

AND now I go to look around, and stray
Within the sacred forest's olive green ;
My sight, attempered to the newer day,
In leisure wandering through the paths between.

Where came no haunting fear of leave-take soon,
Contentedly I breathed the odorous air
Of a sweet morn that knows not eve or noon,
And felt its softest touch breathed on my forehead there.

Whilst waving branches beckoned me to stay
Where first the holy mountain's shadow fell ;
And midst the foliage, birds attuned their lay ;
No doubt but they were wise, and would direct me well.

As full of joy in early morning's hour
They sang their entertainment in the shade,
That was exchanged from the sirocco's power
In pine woods of Chiassi, whence their flight was made.

E

Whilst I, so late arrived from the delay
Of ancient shores into a kingdom new,
Had scarcely power as yet to know my way
Within the sacred grove, and find a pathway through.

Lo! on my left, a streamlet hid near by,
In rippling wavelets ran beneath the grass,
Within the shade made browniest tint thereby,
Where never sunlight fell, or glimpse of moon might pass.

Yet of all waters I could taste before,
In unmixed sweetness this had pleased me best,
The while I took my way along its shore,
Admiring novelties that much my soul imprest.

And as I wondered at the marvellous store
Of fresh varieties around me strewed,
Beheld a sight that made me marvel more,
And in its loveliness all other thoughts subdued.

Beneath the branches in the shady bowers
A lady all alone there roamed about,
Singing whilst she selected flower from flowers,
That with their varied hues tinted her path throughout.

“ Oh! beauteous Lady, that from Sun's love beams
Hast drawn thy brightness, if I may divine
That outer looks speak as the heart beseems,
Wilt thou come nearer, so I list that song of thine.

“Thou dost remind me of a tale of yore,
When Proserpina, gathering flowerets fair
In the lone fields at Springtime, lost her store
Of May blooms, and her anxious mother’s watchful care.”

Then as the Lady towards the brooklet came
That still divided us, hastening to meet,
In a light dance, careful she threw the same,
Rosied, or lily-belled, and cast them at my feet.

The while unchanged her pure and honest eyes,
In answer to my prayer she makes consent,
And now her voice across the stream supplies
The meaning to her words, which had but music lent.

Nearer approached the grassy streamlet’s bed,
Whither she sent her eyes across to mine ;
And ne’er such light ’neath Venus’ eyebrow sped,
From bow she gave her son, making it his ensign.

Smiling she came along the farthest side,
Still plucked the flowers, holding these in her hand,—
Flowers that the earth had ne’er for seed relied,—
Three paces off as yet, beyond the stream to stand.

Not Hellespont which Xerxes crossed, I ween
To curb all human pride in other men,
Or sea, Leander hating, swam between
From Sestos to Abydos, gave me more chagrin.

“Strangers and unaccustomed to this place,
My smiling countenance might ill beseem
Propriety, the while you fail to trace
My motive, as I answer you across the stream.

“But that sweet Psalm, ‘The Lord hath made me glad,’
Will best interpret of my joyful mien ;
And thou that foremost stood, and prayed me had
Nearer to come and sing to thee, less space between,

“If thou hast aught to question of these grounds,
I could inform thee as I best may know.”
And in reply : “I find these forest sounds,
Heard from within their shade and watery stream below,

“Surpass my former knowledge and report.”
And she : “I can explain from whence proceeds
Thy admiration of the place thus sought,
And clear thy comprehension of the clouds it breeds.

“The Highest Good, who for His pleasure made
Man good and blest, had given him here to stay
In earnest of the bliss that cannot fade,
But by his own default was hurried soon away.

“For a defective love, and fruited tree,
Changed honest gaiety and soul’s delight,
And thus the troubled water that we see
Rising from hence, exhaled from damp and earthly blight,

“ Which never cures in man the vain desire
It henceforth leaves partaken of in draught,
The while that mount t’wards heaven we see aspire
Is freed from all the raging thirst this leaves thereaft,

“ For there an atmosphere untaint is found,
In primal force circling around the height,
Where nothing thwarts or hinders from the ground
The living air that, mounting, mounts in highest flight,

“ But makes below the umbrageous woods resound,
And gives the tender plant unerring blow,
That in its kiss had nestling virtue found,
And in the blizzard of the north lies waste and withered
now.

“ Whilst other climes, as so vouchsafed of heaven,
Bring forth a virtuous stock from diverse seed,
Deem it no less a marvel if is given
Unseeded plants to live and thrive, as so decreed.

“ For thou should’st know that this is holy ground,
Filled with all flowers that not from seed have grown,
Bearing the fruits that everywhere abound,
And gathered in the ripening of this clime alone.

“ This water that we see owes not its birth
To vaporous air congealed and held impure,
Falling in showers, again to leave the earth,
But springs from out a fountain sealed and sure ;

“And of the will of God largely partakes
As forth it issues in two channels bound ;
This one, towards virtue a new pathway makes,
Where memory of the past of sin no more is found.

“The other all the good to memory brings,
And one is Lethe, and the other's name
Eunoe ; but no taste is in its springs
Of sweetness unless Lethe bears away the blame ;

“Then in its relish does all taste excel.—
Whereas I now have satisfied thy quest
For further knowledge, I may end this well
With a Heart Token of my own joined to the rest.

“Nor deem it less a prize if, wandering by,
A hinted promise into light I bring ;
The Poets that a golden age could spy,
Perchance, in dreams, Parnassian, of this land might sing.

“Which innocent of human root now grows
In a perpetual spring the ripened fruit ;
Where nectar from one only fountain flows,
Whereof the praises sung can never more be mute.”

As from the Poets then aside she turned,
I saw a recognition and a smile
At what from her conclusion they had learned,
And toward the lonely lady set my face meanwhile.

PURGATORIO.

CANTO XXIX.

THE ARGUMENT.

Dante having followed the lady by the windings of the stream, sees in the forest a brilliant light, whence there issues a procession of attendants on the Car of Beatrice, drawn by the winged Griffin, which directs its course toward Dante.

Dante.



PURGATORIO.

CANTO XXIX.

AND as a lady to her lover sings,
She sent the notes in ending of her lay—
“Blessed are those whose sin a covering brings”—
As by the forest stream she took her onward way.

Like to those nymphs given the sole decrees
The shades to deepen or the sun set free,
Between the branches of o'erhanging trees
With a light step she passed ; I following close might see.

And as my feet in unison with hers
Trode the green margin of the parting stream,
With steps agreeing as each step recurs,
Together, for a hundred paces it would seem ;

Where the impeded water rose in height,
And stopped me in its onward course of flow,
The pathway underneath it lost to sight,
My lady turned towards me there, and spake she now ;

“My Brother, mark thou this, and listen well.”

Lo! all the forest broke in light untold,
So that I marvelled if the lightning fell,
But lightning breaks to pause, and this seemed floods of
gold.

That in my thought I said, “What thing is this?”
Whilst a melodious sound along the air,
Reminded me of Eve’s default in bliss,
As between Earth and Heaven she might have wandered
there.

Sole woman, and so formed to be the head,
Yet not allowing of another’s will,
From these delights ineffable had fled,
Else hers, first felt, had ours continued still.

And as there came to me the primal taste
Of overhanging and eternal peace,
That then had somewhat of my mirth displaced,
In the mid air, between the boughs, I saw the light
increase.

And intermingled with it came sweet song;—
Oh consecrated, holy virgins, ye
In cold and watch with whom I suffered long,
For that remembrance in my need, now succour me.

Or haply, Helicon might wander o’er,
And bathe me in the fulness of his stream,
Or might Uranus with his teaching lore,
Strengthen my thoughts to give in verse my theme.

Onward a space were Seven trees of gold,
As in the distance seen, and so removed
That such resemblance only might be told,
Till near approach had all their real nature proved.

Though common objects are by sense deceived,
These in their distance did not lose their height,
By virtue of a faculty received,
As golden candelabra were revealed to sight.

Whilst in the voice of song, Hosannas sound,
The beauteous garniture of golden light
Shone with a purer brilliance than had crowned
The moon serene in the mid heaven, at dark of night.

I, in my wonder, turned me to my Guide ;
With like surprise depicted in his face
He bade me look where might be seen beside
A Bridal train, or like, advancing with slow pace.

The Lady chiding me : " Why dost thou gaze
With so much ardour on the living light ?
Nor that which thence proceeds thy wonder raise ?"
As forth they came like chiefs of men all clothed in white.

And of such whiteness none might ever say.—
Restored, the pathway on the left hand side,
The shining water in its devious way,
As old adventure, gave a better light to guide.

I saw the flaming points of glistening gold,
 That left their light in the surrounding air,
 Tinting it with the colour sevenfold,
 That lends the Sun his bow, the Moon her crown to wear.

Leaving the light behind, yet still in view,
 Seemed wisest course, and urged ten steps return ;—
 The four and twenty Seniors, two and two
 Advancing, crowned with Fleur du Luce, I could discern.

Beneath a sky so beautiful the train,
 Singing as with one voice, "Blessed art thou
 Of Adam's daughters, and shalt blest remain
 In this thy loveliness, for evermore as now."

Since that the turf and flowery path were free,
 And I had parted on the farthest shore
 From Company Elect, I now might see,
 Proceeding amidst Light of Lights, Four others more.

Each with a chaplet of green leaves was crowned,
 Each had six wings, and every feather eyed
 As Argus had, in fabled days renowned ;—
 These living eyes, and not to ignorance allied.

But rhyme or lecture fails me to transcribe
 In words diffuse their forms, or I might tire ;
 Read how Ezekiel writing could describe
 How from the North there came a whirlwind, cloud, and fire

In vision as was seen, and as was writ,
 Such like were these, save numbering of their wings ;
 And there I hold with John, as seems most fit,
 For that his number six, similitude best brings.

The space behind these four a Car contained
Revolving on two wheels, triumphant borne
By a leashed Griffin that was there detained,
And fastened lightly at his shoulder, so was drawn.

A tendon on the one and other wing,
An intermediary had joined the three,
That nothing unforeseen might evil bring ;
Guiding it with a skill I ne'er before should see :

On wing of feathery gold the air to fly,
And others two of white, or misty red ;
There ne'er was Roman Car upheld so high
With Africanus jubilant ; or that Augustus led.

Not to the Sun was given a power like this,
When at the prayer of suppliants below,
Jove wrecked the Car of Phaeton, in his bliss
Wheeling to Earth ; consumed in conflagration's glow.

Four ladies there that dexterous guide the wheels,
With dancing step advanced ; one like a rose
Such as at night the light of fire reveals,
And one transparent tint of emeralds might disclose.

Another likened to soft fallen snow,
Now and again changing to roseate tint,
And to the song of this, or fast or slow,
The others moved in rhyme, mingling together went.

On the left hand and joining in the dance
Came Four in purple clothed, within their quest,
And one behind the others that advance,
Was treble eyed, with sight revealed above the rest.

And near approaching to the throng of those,
Two elder men, in different habit dressed,
But honest purpose made companions close ;
One, with some knowledge, Hippocratican, seemed possessed,

That human nature was of costliest store ;—
The other with a cure had stayed his mind,
And by the sharp and glittering blade he bore,
Filled me with sore affright, across the brook assigned.

Four, whom their humble garb did best befit,
And one behind, an aged man alone,
Seeming as if in sleep, but keen of wit ;
Like the first set, these seven were by their vestments known.

Not these had lily garlands on their brow ;
Rather, with rose, or ruddiest flowers were crowned ;
One might have sworn, in distance as they show,
That they were all with fire above the eyebrows bound.

Soon as the car approaching near me came,
A thunderous sound was heard, these worthy men
That with their talk had somewhat blocked the way,
At the first signal ended their discourses, there and then.

PURGATORIO.

CANTO XXX.

THE ARGUMENT.

Beatrice descends in a car, drawn by the Griffin of a double nature, and rebukes Dante.

Dante.



PURGATORIO.

CANTO XXX.

FORTH from the central Light the stars surround;—
Which knows not rise or set, or birth or end ;
Nor veil of mist that skirts the faulty ground ;—
An unseen Power to guide, and wandering footsteps bend ;

Forth through the seven starr'd gate that marks the
bound,
The car approached, leaving a light behind ;
Flying as towards its peace, and with a sound
From the mid heaven ; a voice borne on the winged wind.

“Veni de Libano, Sponsa mia !
“Veni de Libano ! Veni ” ; led
That higher angel of a hundred choir,
With voice that wakes to winged life, the caverned dead

F

“Blessed is He that cometh,” floats along
Responsive, as the angelic train anew
Takes up the message of that peace in song ;
Whilst with full hands, each way, fresh lilies round they strew.

Oft have I seen at dawn the eastern skies
Rose-tinted, opposite where lay the calm ;
And seen the sun in clouded crimson rise,
So wrapt and veiled in mist, the sight received no harm.

Straight as the needle towards the pole may draw,
Advanced the car ; and veiled in white from view,
And olive wreathed, the form of one it bore,
Seen through the cloud of flowers the attendant angels
threw.

Clad in a mantle, as the verdure, green ;
Beneath, the crimson caught from living flame ;—
Stirring the tremor of my soul ; unseen
The cause, that even from childhood in her presence came

Then though I knew her not, in trembling plight,
I turned to Virgil, for his strengthening aid :
But Virgil had withdrawn him from my sight,
Bereaved me of my friend, my sole dependence made.

Then turned I, at the sound of my own name,
Where stationed at the edged side of the car,
Commander of the angelic force she came,
Still veiled, as when the cloud of flowers fell from afar.

“Dante!” she said; and here I must record
The name she uttered:—“Wherefore is the need
To weep for Virgil? Yet another sword
Erewhile shall pierce thee through, when thou shalt weep
indeed.”

Across the stream she turned on me her eyes,
Although the veil, descending from her head,
Wreathed like Minerva’s, still was a disguise;—
Right royally kept back the colder words she said:

“Look at me well:—Beatrice sure am I;
And hast thou deigned thee to ascend the Mount?
And hast thou learned where happiness may lie?”—
Thus tauntingly she bid me take in my account.

With downcast eyes, as in the stream below
My face was mirrored, soon I turned in grief,
For such a weight of shame was on my brow,
That to the grassy bank I turned me for relief.

As to the gifted Mother, Son may bow,
Reproof had touched me sore, with arrowy haste;
The power that came from her I felt it now;—
’Tis love that to the pity gives a bitter taste.

Silent she stood; thereat the angelic train
Join with their voices in the Psalm of Peace:—
“In thee, Lord, have I hoped,” so rang the strain
Unto this last; “My feet hath set”; and there they cease.

As showers of drifting snow, piled high, remain
On the live rafters of supporting trees,
That clothe the back of Appeninia's chain,
Brought from Sclavonian climes by the rough northern
breeze,

Melting, diffuse then into copious streams,
If so, the roof falls in beneath the sighs
Of the soft south, and temper'd with its beams
Unfettered, find free course and in deep channels rise.

Thus was I fixed, without a sigh or tear ;
Till touched by note of heavenly harmonies,
The listening soul responsively may hear ;
Bringing to eyes their tears, and to the breast its sighs.

But less the fount of tearfulness then broke,
And less my heaving breast the sigh supplied,
Than when accosting her, the words were spoke :
"Lady, why dost thou thus distress him ?" pitying cried.

Unmoved, still on the right side of the car,
Her feet firm set against the ridge she stood ;
With voice that floated upward and afar,
Responsive to the angel's plaint, that saw my softened mood.

"Ye who your vigils keep in endless day,
And know not night, or sleep, how should you know
What passes in the world of his delay ;
Rather to him my answer comes, who weepeth so.

“That sorrow with transgression even stand ;—
Not his a fate by yonder orbs defined,
Directors of the seed cast o’er the land,
And marked in men for praise or blame, as stars combined.

“But in the largeness of the grace divine,
Descending from a higher altitude
In vaporous clouds ;—visits none may define,
That feed the scattered seed ; with gathered strength
renewed.

“This One in his new life was blest with all
Exceeding virtues, that in him attained
A marvellous power ;—but that rank seed will fall,
And flourish most in fruitful soil, if not restrained.

“Once I was near, aiding him with my will ;
And my young eyes led him in paths aright ;
With me he travelled willingly, until
On threshold of life’s second stage, I fled from sight.

“Then he turned back, and others’ talk would share ;
So soon as I had changed my mortal state
I was less dear to him, though grown more fair,
And as my virtues grew, so did his love abate.

“And swift his steps were turned in paths untrue ;
Imaginary bliss he sought to find,
Which no fulfilment in its promise knew ;
The inspiration of my wisdom left behind.

“Vainly in dreams, I strove to bend his will ;
In other ways had his deliverance sought ;
By night and day revisiting, until
I found the sword, to stop the way, too short ;

“And he must see where ruined souls abide :
Unto this end, the gates of death I reached :
The one who hitherward has been his guide,
With prayers and tears, of him his watchful aid beseeched.

“’T is not of ordinance divine assured,
That a new life be gained in the high sphere ;
That Lethe should be past, and life secured,
Without the signal given of the repentant tear.”

PURGATORIO.

CANTO XXXI.

THE ARGUMENT.

Beatrice continues her discourse, and Dante in contrition falls to the ground, when he is drawn swiftly through the river, to the opposite shore, near to Beatrice.

Dante.

PURGATORIO.

CANTO XXXI.

“**A** CROSS the sacred river where I stay,
Float back thy answer from the opposed shore,
If that I said sounds harsh and bitter, say
‘It is not truth’; and then the thrust will harm no more.

“I will absolve thee if such be thy plea ;
Say, ‘It is true’ : and accusation given
In seeming harshness only then will be
Link binding unto confession, firmer riven.”

Propriety thereat became confused :—
The voice first moved and suddenly it stopped ;
A power within arresting whilst it used ;—
For though I would have spoken, speech thereby seemed
locked.

So with the fragile bow, whose strength we try,
With too much tension on its corded arc,
Has less impulse to make the arrow fly,
And in uncertainty oft shoots beside the mark.

So I, beneath the stress of that grave charge,
Brake into sobs and tears, mingled with sighs,
The voice its channel failing to enlarge—
As thus she spake again ; my faltering answer tries.

“ When my regards towards thee did not tire,
All my endeavour spent on thee so much ;
What thwarted thy advance, at my desire,
And why was lost the large expenditure on such ? ”

After the heaving of a bitter sigh,
My lips were opened :—faint my voice replied,
“ The things of time allured my steps, when I
Lost thee beyond recall ; sight of thy face denied.”

Then she—“ Hadst thou been silent or would yet
disclaim
The accusation, it had none the less
Been thy transgression ; noted by the same
All-seeing Judge, who from His seat, hears thee confess.

“ But in our court it is the privilege,
Soon as confession’s tears break from the cheek,
The sin’s accuser makes the sharpened edge
Run counter to the wheel’s revolving break.

“ And as a better way the shame to bear
Of this thy error, whensoever again
Thou hearest the Syren’s voice thou mayest beware ;—
Whose song has so much grief, divided in her strain.

“ Hear now from me what should have been thy part,
When I no longer wore my mortal frame ;
If pleased thee nought in nature or in art,
When that enclosed me, mixed, went to its earth the
same :—

“ Seeing nought charmed thee henceforth, why again
Another mortal thing shouldst thou desire ?
Rather it had become thee in thy pain,
As there was none like me, to me thou shouldst aspire.

“ Nor with a downward flight pointed thy wing ;
Anticipatory of another blow,
In short-lived vanities ; or a young thing ;
Of other gauds, erewhile, the transient use to know.—

“ The new-fledged, inexperienced bird will fly,
Once, twice, or thrice athwart the fowler’s snare ;
But older and experienced birds espy
The harm that lurks within, and hence avoid with care.”

With hanging head, and downcast eyes—a child
In earned rebuke I stood, defenceless, coy :—
“ For greater grief if harmed by accents mild,
Look up at me and raise thy beard, once beardless boy.”

With less resistance does the sturdy oak
Yield to the northern blast, uprooted lie,
Or by the southern wind ;—the words she spoke
Yielded their answer ;—by my beard rebuked was I ;

And as my face, long in distress, was met
By hers, in primal loveliness, my eyes
Closed to their use of light :—Beatrice yet,
Came back ; the double nature in her no disguise.

Beneath her veil, across the verdant shore,
Passed out to me the old familiar sense
Of her own self :—than of those others more ;—
Guardians that Heaven had sent, and in her train from
thence.

Repentance, punishing, now had its way ;
Heart-breaking recollections with it came ;—
And vanquished, fallen on the ground I lay,
Feeling the sting was in her love, more than her blame.

Whilst none of those surrounding knew the cause ;—
But when my heart to virtue was regained,
There one alone came near me ;—without pause
Of swiftness, drew me, from above, and with firm hold
retained,

Across the stream ; then only did I hear
Reaching the blessed shore, a sweet refrain—
“Asperges me” : from those, there standing near,
Of such delight too great the memory to retain.

And where the pool was deep, her arms held fast,
Submerged me for a moment, when the rest
With joy received me, out the river past ;
And in a wreathed dance and song their joy expressed.

“Nymphs on the earth we were, now stars in heaven ;
Before Beatrice to the world came down,
We were ordained ; unto her service given ;
Now lead thee to her eyes ; but first direct thy own

“To those three orbs, whose light we left behind,
Of more ecstatic joy and depth profound,”
Thus sang they, and the while my looks inclined
From whence Beatrice took her course nearing the ground.—

“Hold not thy gaze, behold before thee set
The emerald light, wherewith love did disarm,
And drew thy eyes to eyes, more brilliant yet
Grown, from above the skies in doubled force of charm.”

As in a glass the sun reflects its beams,
With no less ardour does its nature burn,
And in reflection doubled, it but seems
Not yet another, but variety that we discern.

Reader, of this I marvelled much, I own,
Seeing unchanged the incandescent light
Transmitted to its idol, but still one,
Filling my soul thereby with wonder and delight.

For this : that I might show the high-born tribe
Neglected acts behind the advancing three ;
To the angelic dance my song inscribe ;—
“ Beatrice, turn that *he* thy holy eyes may see,

“ Whose song thou wert, and faithful found ; for thee,
Moved by thy love, he trod the paths of woe ;
The grace thou showest, such e’en to us shall be ;
Unveil to him thy eyes, thy second beauty show.”

Oh, splendour of Eternal Living Light !
Who, pale and wan, would dwell beneath the shade
Of his Parnassus ; drink of founts less bright ;
With mental vision too obscured the soul’s to aid ;

Nor give to thee the record of that bliss,
Once he beheld, and now for thee can solve,
That thou might’st take it to thyself from this,
When in the air, to heavenly harmonies, thou shalt dissolve.

PURGATORIO.

CANTO XXXII.

THE ARGUMENT.

The Celestial Escort prepares to depart, and Beatrice descends from the car.

Dante is recalled from a day-dream to find her seated at the foot of the tall tree, where strange reverses happen to the car, which he is instructed to record in the World, because of the evil therein.

Dante.

PURGATORIO.

CANTO XXXII.

TO quench my ten years' thirst, I fixed my gaze ;
"Avert thine eyes," they warned, lest now the sight
Of so much brilliance should, in unveiled rays,
O'erpower my vision, faint with the immortal light.

Restful, I turned, and could discern once more
The glorious procession moving round,
That had been hidden from my sight before
In the intensity that further vision bound.

Towards the seven-starred gate and central sun,
Backing their course, as with their shields in sign,
An army flies, till thereof every one
Circling is seen to turn, and duly forms in line.

As towards the car the heavenly escort bends,
Guarding retreat, that it may pass before,
The griffin on his way so softly wends
That not a plume is stirred as his blest charge he bore.

Past the high wood, despoiled and leafless now,
By the crest serpent, we with steps joy led
Followed their lead, till arrow's flight from bow
Thrice winged, Beatrice from the car made her descent.

And still I heard the murmur of the trees,
Adam denuded, where I saw a plant
Of flowers and leaves bereft like unto these,
Till bowery branches crowned the stem so sere and scant.

Such as in India, where none grows so tall,
Umbrageously it spreads its tufted head,
And highest admiration gains from all,
As higher yet, and higher, widening branches spread.

Blessed art thou, the griffin that tastes not,
Nor ever pecked the sweetness in the wood
That turns to bitterness of taste when got,
As those may learn who eat of undigestive food.

And all the stout-limbed and dismantled trees
Murmuring replied, and the voiced griffin too,
"So in the seed preserved the just abide";
Leashing the car to the reft stem in trembling haste then
flew.

How may our plants prepare in early spring
To push their buds, ere the celestial sign
Has mingled with the sun ; nor burst their ring,
Till towards a higher star his chariot wheels incline ?

Colouring with less of purple, more of rose,
The opening blossom that renews the plant,
In its bare branch, or lonely else it grows ;
I apprehend it not, so must my notes be scant.

If, as in painter's art, I had arranged
My colours, with the model in my eyes,
How to a water rose a nymph was changed,
Fated my song, like hers, only to end in sighs.

Thus was I lulled to sleep, or sleep that feigned,
When suddenly a flash of radiance flew,—
Absorbed the veil of mist, and sense regained,
I heard a voice that called “Arise, what dost thou do ?”

Thou that shouldst see in flower the fruited sweet,
That angels eat of in unsated feast,
Called by a voice, as at their Master's feet,
Those heard on Tabor's Mount, when earlier schools
decreased.

Then as I turned, close standing by, I saw
The gentle lady who had guided through,
And made me pass the flood to reach the shore ;
“Where is Beatrice now ?” as doubtfully I grew ;

“Behold her seated underneath the bough
New grown ; whilst her companions gather round,
The rest attendants on the griffin now,
Parted from us, their songs sweeter and more profound,

Since his diffusive voice may not be known ” ;
And whilst her wistful eyes seclusion sought,
I found her seated on the turf alone,
Sole guardian of the car the griffin lately brought.

The seven nymphs, circling round the cloistered shade,
Held in their hands aloft the lights that burned ;
No gusty winds disturbing, as she said,
“Thou that art in the forest now, with me returned,

“Shalt dwell for ever, Citizen of Rome,
Whereof Christ is a Roman ; but whilst here
See what reverses to the car will come,
And for the evil in the world record it there.”

And I to her behest, as to a law
Attentive ; not with less speed than flash
From distant cloud, Jove’s bird dart down I saw,
And from the yet unfruited tree the bark to snatch.

Loosing the car so leashed with all his force,
The while it yielded as a ship forlorn
Is vanquished by the waves beyond its course,
Either to starboard or to larboard fiercely borne.

Lo and behold ! a fox, greedy and fat,
Within the right side of the triumphal car !
Hung'ring he looked for all good things, whereat
My Lady, chiding him, he ran fast as he might and far.

Then came an eagle down, and from his breast
Plucked out the feathers, lining it with care,
Whilst from the Heaven there came a voice distressed,
"Alas ! poor bark of mine, what evil freight to bear !"

Then from the earth beneath, between the wheels,
Issued a dragon with his forkèd tail,
As when an angry wasp its sting reveals,—
Shattered the stand thereof, making it no avail.

And there remained, lodged in the tall rank grass,
Mingled with down, plucked with much good intent
It might be ;—grass that revives so soon as pass
The wheels ;—swift as a breathed sigh when lips are rent.

And thus transformed, I saw the holy ark
Send out four heads, one to each corner tied ;
And three in front crowned with two horns, I mark,
The other four alike, but with one horn supplied.

Secure as rock, mounted the ridge to ride,
There sat a Harlot with the wandering eyes ;
And that none take it from him at her side
A giant monster stood and close with kisses plies.

Till as on me she chanced her eyes to cast,
In jealous rage he scourged her ; the show-car
Dislodged and dragged ;—till in the wood at last,
Obscured from sight they passed, hid in the shades afar.

PURGATORIO.

CANTO XXXIII.

THE ARGUMENT.

Beatrice rises and leaves the tree, placing her Seven companions in the front ; then, conversing with Dante, she predicts darkly to him distant events connected with her Car. Afterwards he is invited to drink of the waters of Eunoe (a Greek name signifying "good thoughts,") and thence is prepared to ascend with Beatrice towards the regions of Paradise.



Dante.



PURGATORIO.

CANTO XXXIII.

“THE Heathen, Lord, are come,” changed the sweet
psalm ;
Beatrice, listening to the notes, had sighed,
Her colour changed to burning red from calm,
Seeming than Mary scarce less sad the cross beside.

Then, rising from the ground, said, “Sisters mine,
Somewhile you see me not, but short the time,
And you again shall see me.” With a sign
She set the Seven in front, we following in the rhyme.

Yet scarcely had she paced ten steps the ground,
Her aspect changed ; tranquil her eyes met mine :
“Conversing with thee, near to me be found,
And listening as thou wouldst closely thine ear incline.

“Brother,” she said, “Say, hast thou not a mind
 To question aught of me as thus we tread?”
 I like to some whom their superiors bind
 In too much reverence, voice whose half has fled :

“Lady, of my desire, thou know’st the good
 Thou wilt inform me as may best beseem,”
 And she : “Henceforth to rid thee of restraint, I would
 That thou might’st speak no more as man who has a dream.

“Know that the vase we saw the serpent brake,
 Was, and is not ; ye who feel not the blow,
 Believe a sop God’s vengeance will not slake,
 Nor long without an heir, the self-plucked eagle show.

“For the car, grown a sham, became a prey,
 And I who watched, with certainty repeat,
 To give to the near stars the time that they
 May rest secure, above all hindrance and defeat.”

“In the which he, *Five Hundred, Ten, and Five* ;*
 The sent of God, shall slay that furious one,
 And giant that transgressed with her to live ;
 But leave it dark, lest Fear and Sphinx should make thee
 shun.

* Beatrice dying in the year 1290, the prophecy, ten years later, might seem fulfilled in the abolition of the Inquisition in Spain, 1813, during the Napoleonic Era, ending in the Five Hundred and Fifteenth year after the Vision.—TRANSLATOR.

“For that the intellect has not attained
To it as yet ; but when the fact is, then
The Naiads that will solve the enigma dark,
Reveal it uncondemned for sin ; nor blamed of men.

“Note thou, and as from me bear thou this word,
And set it as a sign of truth to them
Whose lives are but a race to death, record
How the Tree was the second time robbed in its topmost
stem.

“And any who would maim or rob that tree,
Blasphemes in fact the God who made it grow
For His own service and to holy be ;
Whereof the first soul ate, self-punishment to know.

“Thy genius sleeps, if it has not discerned
The reason why so excellent a thing
Should have her crown reversed, thy thoughts have yearned
In vanity towards Elsa’s petrifying spring.

“And if its pleasures had not dyed thee dark
As Pyramus, the berry, thou mightst know
In many ways God’s justice did but mark
With interdict the Tree its moral force to show.

“But as I see thy mind to stone is turned,
And dark in sin, dazzled, thou canst not write,
Depict at least what from me thou hast earned,
Thy pilgrim staff with palm entwined bear well in sight.”

Then I : "As wax will from a seal retain
The image set, so is thy gifted word
Unalterably fixed within my brain :
Why should its meaning vault above my wished record?"

"Because, if thou wouldst know," she said, "the school
Which thou hast followed has no power given,
And so discordant is it in its rule,
As far from the Divine as earth from heights of heaven."

Then I replied : "Time I remember not
I was estranged from thee, there conscience brave
Yields no remorse." "If thou hast this forgot,"
Smiling—"At least recall how lately thou hast passed
through Lethe's wave.

"And if the dense mist of thy argument
Does not within some dark oblivion hide
A wilful fault, that in attendance went,
Which thy remembrance now no longer may abide.

"Hence shall my words of verity disclose
So much as in discourse may be revealed
To thy rude sight."—As now the sun uprose,
And with retarded steps towards his meridian wheeled,

The Seven that in the vanguard held their lights,
Stood in full gaze at the unwonted glare,
As if in forest shade of coolness, heights
Of Alpine scenery glanced through opening branches bare.

And right before them to my sight arose,
 As from one fount Tigris and Euphrates,
 That parting friendship different channels chose—
 “Oh, light and glory of our race! Why part so these?”

“What is this water that is seen to start
 From the same course, and then to part astray?
 This owest thou me.” “Matilda should impart
 To thee that knowledge now; entreat her, she will say.”

As one who from herself the blame would shift,
 Spake the fair damsel: “This and things yet more,
 Tell him by me, and be thou sure the drift
 Through Lethe has not hid it from him o'er and o'er.”

Beatrice then: “Perhaps the greater cure
 Which overpowers within all selfish thought,
 Has made it to his memory's eyes obscure;
 But see where Eunoe flows hard by, and thence is brought;

“There lead him, and before as was thy use,
 Revive his fainting virtue in that wave.”
 And as a gentle soul makes no excuse,
 But in another's will her own well pleased will have,

So did the gentle lady lead me there,
 Saying to Stazio, “Come thou too with him.”
 Had space allowed, reader, I would declare
 The unending sweetness of that draught drank at its brim.

And I returned from the most holy wave,
Revived, and seeming like a plant to rise,
With leaves renewed, when freshening waters lave ;
So was I then made pure and fit to mount the starry skies.

PARADISO.

CANTO II.

THE ARGUMENT.

Arrived at the lowest star, the Moon, Beatrice converses with Dante concerning the differing apportionments of the Divine light; suggested by the shadows in the Moon.

Dante.



PARADISO.

CANTO II.

O H ye that in light barks have followed mine,
And kept behind, desirous most to hear
Her singing as she cleaves the watery brine,
Return, revisit your own shores, nor venture near,

Lest, peradventure, ye should lose your guide,
And in mid-ocean lost have sore return ;
The watery way I take none took beside
Adventurous, and from none beside might learn.

Apollo guides, Minerva breathes the gale,
And a new muse discovers me the Pole :
Ye others few whose eager quest might hail
Foretaste of angels' food, that never sates the soul,

H

Bring all your wit to follow in the track
Of this my ship, that marks a furrow now
In front, on either side sends equal back,—
And see a glory as on Jason fell following the plough.

The thirst created that perpetual draws
The godlike to its kingdom, on will bear
With rapid flight till into heaven it soars ;
Beatrice thus, and I was in her guardian care.

Swift as an arrow started from the bow,
Soaring, I gazed upon a wondrous sight,
And turned my face to hers in fear, lest now
The works I did might not be hidden in that light.

Towards me her beauteous face she turned and said,
“Direct thy thoughts in thanks to God, as yet
Unto the nearest star thou hast been led.”
That in the sunfire clear, in adamant cloud seemed set,

Received us in the eternal living pearl,
As if a watery drop had in delay
A sunbeam held within it that might curl,
United as one essence, undissolved to stay.

If I, whilst in the flesh might not conceive
How one dimension could another hold,
Much more might one desire, and then believe
If of two natures joined, of God and Man were told.

Not demonstrated, but fast held in faith,
As at the first, by the first man believed.
Then I replied: "My Lady, as thou saith,
I render thanks that from the mortal world I am received.

"But tell me whence arise those spots of shade,
Seen in the moon by dwellers there below,
That fabled talk of Cain thereby have made?"
With a slight smile: "If mortals can such fancies show,

"At least the key of sense ought thou to hold,
That sting of arrow might not bite thee where
Admired wonders to thy sight unfold;
If reason had not clipp'd thy wing—what thinkest thou?"

And I replied, "From this height things I see,
In different aspect and of varied shade."
And she: "like this thy creed of false shall be
Submerged in argumentive truth, with listening's aid.

"The eight-starr'd sphere has in it many lights
That with diversity revolving shine,
Of rare, or dense, as these held in their flight,
Denote a differing power as different orbs incline.

"But one sun's virtue each is known to suit,
The more or less distributed to all;
So virtues differing, bear appropriate fruit,
Though out of one, there came leading astray, thy fall.

“ Then of that dimness the true cause thou ’lt know,
As by request, why different things appear,
How in one body gross and lean both show,
And how the pages of a book seem dark or clear.

“ If at the first was pierced a chasm wide,
In the eclipse the light that still resides
Would have revealed it on the other side ;
But this did not, and thus the fallacy decides.

“ If this be proved, other opinions too,
In all their falsity should then appear ;
If light is hindered that it pass not through,
Some obstacle ’t is plain prevents its passage clear.

“ And every beam impeded makes rebound
As colour will when seen returned by glass,
That in the lead behind it is not found ;
Or wilt thou say refracted beams all other beams surpass.

“ Take then an instance more decided still
In thy experience ; showing where your arts
Have been derived, and prove as sure it will
How from one fount alone a wandering streamlet starts.

“ Three mirrors take ; one place beyond the rest,
And turn thy eyes the foremost not to see,
Then pass behind these, and within thy quest,
See light beneficent arising from all three.

“Reflects each mirror, equal in its force,
The light so shed ; there is no need to stretch
Thy vision reaching to the farthest source,
Convinced that splendour equal does arise from each.

“Or if the subject be the Sun’s warm ray,
Melting from its first colour the cold snow
As this is laid ; so might’st thou see the way
That living light has made thy trembling aspect show.

“Within the heaven of the divinest peace
Circles a body, which its virtue gives
To all that is so held in its embrace,
To each and every Orb that in its essence lives.

“All various in distinctions these abide,
Prepare them for their end, and grow their seeds ;
These are the organ of the world outside,
Vanishing from thy sight ; that lower yet recedes.

“Regard me well as thus I lead thee on
Through pathways to the place so much desired ;
I am thy guide become, thy only one,
Where virtuous movements are alone by heaven inspired.

“As music’s art beats to the spirit’s touch,
Heaven that with her lights has made it fair,
Out of the thought profound had formed it such ;
Sent forth the image, sealed, imprest it there ;

“And as the soul has, hidden in your dust,
To diverse members differing powers decreed,
Conformable to power, dissolve it must,
Bound into sovereign unity that multiplies star seed.

“Virtue diverse has in its laws so bound
A precious frame, that thus it might arrive
To that which as the life in you is found,
A native light, from whence the virtues you derive ;

“And mingling with it in the body so,
Has by the eye its brightness there expressed ;
And thus is proved that light from light must grow,
A principle, in dense, or rare, as in its bounty blest.”

PARADISO.

CANTO VII.

THE ARGUMENT.

Beatrice continuing her ascent with Dante towards the Sun,
discourses with him on the Fall of Man, and his resurrection.

Dante.



PARADISO.

CANTO VII.

SALVATION, Glory of the God most high,
In thy blest fire the nation's light renew :
As upward from their music notes we fly,
The orbs beneath like sparks receded from our view.

Facing the light, and past their dance remote :
"Speak to me, speak, as was thy wont,"—but stopt
In reverential awe my doubtful note,
As in her name the B. and I. C. E. was dropt*

In homage that she drew ;—always possessed—
She, with some shade of suffering, seemed less pleased,
But answered to this tone of mine distressed,
With smile, as once her happy name the fire had eased :

* The familiar name given to Beatrice.



“ Assenting to my council as was fit,
Within thy consciousness a doubt I read,
Lest vengeance might not punishment remit,
Nor justice from just penalty of sin recede.

“ But I will solve so much within thy thought,
As thou whilst listening to my theme shalt own,
To thy presentment greater sense is brought ;
Than one man’s unborn progeny, past punishment disown ;

“ Or virtue should allow curbed side by side :—
So that the human race has weakly grown
In that great error ages to abide,
Till in man’s nature should the word of God in peace
be sown.

“ Unseated once, now with his Maker blent
In the high sun of His eternal love ;—
As lifts thy vision whence His rays are sent,
Know that the creature good, sincere made from above,

“ In first creation, had abandoned brief
His Paradise, wherein he turned astray
Out of the path of truth, which was his life,
A punishment that on the Cross was seen to lay,

“ That nature might thereby have recompence.—
Not so : nor was that person justly killed,
Regarding him who suffered, and from whence
So much unlike that nature was in him revealed.

“Nor might a deed so diverse have been given
As made both Jews, and God, pleased with a death,
That made the earth to shake, and opened Heaven :—
Nor would the bond more binding be, because thou
saith,

“A court of justice might such vengeance mete ;
But I perceive how thy contracted mind,
Thought within thought, has made the knot complete
Which thou with great desire expected to unbind.

“Thou sayst, ‘I well discern the thing I hate,—
But because God so willed, He hid it from me,
How our redemption could be in such state.’—
And the decree, my brother, hidden from all must be.

“Who in the flame of Love have not yet earned
Their growth of genius ;—verily, a sign
So many marvelled at, and few discerned,
Might seem as given to a world unworthy such design.

“Goodness supreme would of itself destroy
In its own burning brightness every ill,
Which its eternal beauty would destroy,
Or that from out another medium might distil ;

“Having no end, because unmoved in word
From His own image, that Himself had sealed ;
Without a medium, in abundance poured,
Liberal to all, not subject to a newer thing revealed.

“The more conformable, the more at peace ;
As holy ardour from each ray emits
Similitude ; and with it Life’s increase
To that nobility, which though it fell, it still befits.

“By sin alone disfranchised in the fall,
And made dissimilar to highest good ;
A dignity so lost beyond recall,
Because the lesser light in him had been withstood.

“Nor could the man recover from his blow
In the just punishment of self-delight ;
Your nature by that total overthrow
Lost, as his seed, your Paradise by right.

“Nor though thou covet, cannot reinstate
A lost inheritance, nor pass the guard :
Or God had in His kindness kept the gate,
Or the Man’s folly, of himself, had satisfied award.

“Fix now thy eyes on the profound abyss
Of the Eternal council, as thy sight
My words far reaching, yet may follow this :
Where none but humble and obedient souls can pierce the
light,

“Whilst disobedience still holds on its way ;
And for this reason that the victim gave
The larger satisfaction : and now say
If God contracted with his life, lost life to save,

“ Was it his own, or both his view was toward?
But as the work was more esteemed by those
Than other works they held ;—had in regard
To goodness of the heart, from out of which they rose,

“ The world, Divine Benevolence had sent,
Proceeding forth and out of His own ray,
With fragments from above remained content:
Nor was there between latest night and the first day

“ Such glorious procession in the height,
As chased, one saw the other vanquished fly ;
When God, in the full presence of His might
Gives unto man a strength to mount towards Him more
nigh,

“ Whence by his action sole he made his fall :
And failed all modes that justice might require,
If God’s incarnate Son, humble withal,
By His great works had not so satisfied desire ;

“ And having thus disclosed Him passed from there :
For in His presence, as He is, am I.
Thou say’st, I see the fire, the water, air,
Earth, and the vaporous mists that rise thereby ;

“ These from corruption come, and short their stay,
For this throughout creation was ordained,
That things so given be not cast away,
But through corruption, in security retained.

“The angels, Brother, and this clearer heaven
Wherein thou art, tells of creative force
Remaining, and in its perfection given,
Whilst all the elements so named run in their course—

“Till the creation’s truths may be disclosed
Within that star they turned to vanity ;
Created, was the matter which they hold ;
Created, the true knowledge that informs thereby.

“The animals diverse, and plants that grow
Towards their completion, powerfully draw
The rays of sacred light that move them so ;
But this, *our life*, was made no middle flight to soar

“To heights benignant, as beloved the best ;
In God’s desire fulfilled the most of all ;—
So might the resurrection be expressed,
And flesh restored, in which our parents made their fall.”

Dante's Last Vision.



PARADISO.

CANTO XXXIII.

WAITING to fix my meaning in the rhyme,
One moment in a lethargy doth creep
Like five and twenty ages, counting time,
Old Neptune watched for Argos' shade darkening the deep.

In rapt attention, all my powers of mind
Concentred in the gaze that fixed my eyes
On a transcendent light ; I saw combined
Within one marvel, yet another marvel rise.

But memory holds it not ; nor can endure
What would efface or mar all other joy ;
Intolerance of a lesser good procure,
And mix the present earth's delights with an alloy.

For in the abyss of radiance I beheld
Three circles that were blended in one bow ;
And in reflection every ray was weld ;
The third, like fire, caught from the others' glow.

Yet this to what I saw, than little, less ;
Oh, Light Eternal, of all else possessed,
Sole understood ; still thou dost seem to bless
Reflection ; for I saw our image there impressed.

Like those well versed in geometric lore,
Puzzle the circle with a measuring line ;
And anxious all its mystery to explore,
Can find no settled point the starting to define.

So I, with strong desire and looks intent,
Would fit the Image to its circling frame,
Which in agreement, still revolved, but lent
No power to tell its might, or fix a name.

Nor might I speak, struck by that dazzling light,
Which veiled in thought, of utterance debars ;—
The Myth, and my Desire, still keep their flight
Silent, and voiceless, like the Love that moves the sun and
stars.



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