

**The Vision of Purgatory, Part 4      Translated By The Rev. H. F. Cary, Illustrated by Gustave Dore**

Dante Alighieri

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THE VISION  
OF  
HELL, PURGATORY, AND PARADISE  
BY DANTE ALIGHIERI  
  
TRANSLATED BY  
THE REV. H. F. CARY  
  
PURGATORY

Part 4

Cantos 19 - 25

CANTO XIX

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

I look'd upon her; and as sunshine cheers  
Limbs numb'd by nightly cold, e'en thus my look  
Unloos'd her tongue, next in brief space her form  
Decrepit rais'd erect, and faded face  
With love's own hue illum'd. Recov'ring speech  
She forthwith warbling such a strain began,  
That I, how loth soe'er, could scarce have held  
Attention from the song. "I," thus she sang,  
"I am the Siren, she, whom mariners  
On the wide sea are wilder'd when they hear:  
Such fulness of delight the list'ner feels.  
I from his course Ulysses by my lay  
Enchanted drew. Whoe'er frequents me once  
Parts seldom; so I charm him, and his heart  
Contented knows no void." Or ere her mouth  
Was clos'd, to shame her at her side appear'd  
A dame of semblance holy. With stern voice  
She utter'd; "Say, O Virgil, who is this?"  
Which hearing, he approach'd, with eyes still bent  
Toward that goodly presence: th' other seiz'd her,  
And, her robes tearing, open'd her before,  
And show'd the belly to me, whence a smell,  
Exhaling loathsome, wak'd me. Round I turn'd  
Mine eyes, and thus the teacher: "At the least  
Three times my voice hath call'd thee. Rise, begone.  
Let us the opening find where thou mayst pass."

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

With swan-like wings dispread and pointing up,  
Who thus had spoken marshal'd us along,

Where each side of the solid masonry  
The sloping, walls retir'd; then mov'd his plumes,  
And fanning us, affirm'd that those, who mourn,  
Are blessed, for that comfort shall be theirs.

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

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

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

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

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

I noted what remain'd yet hidden from them:  
Thence to my liege's eyes mine eyes I bent,  
And he, forthwith interpreting their suit,  
Beckon'd his glad assent. Free then to act,  
As pleas'd me, I drew near, and took my stand  
O'er that shade, whose words I late had mark'd.  
And, "Spirit!" I said, "in whom repentant tears  
Mature that blessed hour, when thou with God  
Shalt find acceptance, for a while suspend  
For me that mightier care. Say who thou wast,  
Why thus ye grovel on your bellies prone,  
And if in aught ye wish my service there,  
Whence living I am come." He answering spake  
"The cause why Heav'n our back toward his cope  
Reverses, shalt thou know: but me know first  
The successor of Peter, and the name  
And title of my lineage from that stream,  
That' twixt Chiaveri and Siestri draws

His limpid waters through the lowly glen.  
A month and little more by proof I learnt,  
With what a weight that robe of sov'reignty  
Upon his shoulder rests, who from the mire  
Would guard it: that each other fardel seems  
But feathers in the balance. Late, alas!  
Was my conversion: but when I became  
Rome's pastor, I discern'd at once the dream  
And cozenage of life, saw that the heart  
Rested not there, and yet no prouder height  
Lur'd on the climber: wherefore, of that life  
No more enamour'd, in my bosom love  
Of purer being kindled. For till then  
I was a soul in misery, alienate  
From God, and covetous of all earthly things;  
Now, as thou seest, here punish'd for my doting.  
Such cleansing from the taint of avarice  
Do spirits converted need. This mount inflicts  
No direr penalty. E'en as our eyes  
Fasten'd below, nor e'er to loftier clime  
Were lifted, thus hath justice level'd us  
Here on the earth. As avarice quench'd our love  
Of good, without which is no working, thus  
Here justice holds us prison'd, hand and foot  
Chain'd down and bound, while heaven's just Lord shall please.  
So long to tarry motionless outstretch'd."

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

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

## CANTO XX

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

Onward I mov'd: he also onward mov'd,  
Who led me, coasting still, wherever place  
Along the rock was vacant, as a man

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

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

The words so pleas'd me, that desire to know  
The spirit, from whose lip they seem'd to come,  
Did draw me onward. Yet it spake the gift  
Of Nicholas, which on the maidens he  
Bounteous bestow'd, to save their youthful prime  
Unblemish'd. "Spirit! who dost speak of deeds  
So worthy, tell me who thou was," I said,  
"And why thou dost with single voice renew  
Memorial of such praise. That boon vouchsaf'd  
Haply shall meet reward; if I return  
To finish the Short pilgrimage of life,  
Still speeding to its close on restless wing."

"I," answer'd he, "will tell thee, not for hell,  
Which thence I look for; but that in thyself  
Grace so exceeding shines, before thy time  
Of mortal dissolution. I was root  
Of that ill plant, whose shade such poison sheds  
O'er all the Christian land, that seldom thence  
Good fruit is gather'd. Vengeance soon should come,  
Had Ghent and Douay, Lille and Bruges power;  
And vengeance I of heav'n's great Judge implore.  
Hugh Capet was I high: from me descend  
The Philips and the Louis, of whom France  
Newly is govern'd; born of one, who ply'd  
The slaughterer's trade at Paris. When the race  
Of ancient kings had vanish'd (all save one  
Wrapt up in sable weeds) within my gripe  
I found the reins of empire, and such powers  
Of new acquirement, with full store of friends,  
That soon the widow'd circlet of the crown  
Was girt upon the temples of my son,  
He, from whose bones th' anointed race begins.  
Till the great dower of Provence had remov'd  
The stains, that yet obscur'd our lowly blood,  
Its sway indeed was narrow, but howe'er  
It wrought no evil: there, with force and lies,

Began its rapine; after, for amends,  
Poitou it seiz'd, Navarre and Gascony.  
To Italy came Charles, and for amends  
Young Conradine an innocent victim slew,  
And sent th' angelic teacher back to heav'n,  
Still for amends. I see the time at hand,  
That forth from France invites another Charles  
To make himself and kindred better known.  
Unarm'd he issues, saving with that lance,  
Which the arch-traitor tilted with; and that  
He carries with so home a thrust, as rives  
The bowels of poor Florence. No increase  
Of territory hence, but sin and shame  
Shall be his guerdon, and so much the more  
As he more lightly deems of such foul wrong.  
I see the other, who a prisoner late  
Had steps on shore, exposing to the mart  
His daughter, whom he bargains for, as do  
The Corsairs for their slaves. O avarice!  
What canst thou more, who hast subdued our blood  
So wholly to thyself, they feel no care  
Of their own flesh? To hide with direr guilt  
Past ill and future, lo! the flower-de-luce  
Enters Alagna! in his Vicar Christ  
Himself a captive, and his mockery  
Acted again! Lo! to his holy lip  
The vinegar and gall once more applied!  
And he 'twixt living robbers doom'd to bleed!  
Lo! the new Pilate, of whose cruelty  
Such violence cannot fill the measure up,  
With no degree to sanction, pushes on  
Into the temple his yet eager sails!

"O sovran Master! when shall I rejoice  
To see the vengeance, which thy wrath well-pleas'd  
In secret silence broods?--While daylight lasts,  
So long what thou didst hear of her, sole spouse  
Of the Great Spirit, and on which thou turn'dst  
To me for comment, is the general theme  
Of all our prayers: but when it darkens, then  
A different strain we utter, then record  
Pygmalion, whom his gluttonous thirst of gold  
Made traitor, robber, parricide: the woes  
Of Midas, which his greedy wish ensued,  
Mark'd for derision to all future times:  
And the fond Achan, how he stole the prey,  
That yet he seems by Joshua's ire pursued.  
Sapphira with her husband next, we blame;  
And praise the forefeet, that with furious ramp  
Spurn'd Heliodorus. All the mountain round  
Rings with the infamy of Thracia's king,  
Who slew his Phrygian charge: and last a shout  
Ascends: "Declare, O Crassus! for thou know'st,  
The flavour of thy gold." The voice of each  
Now high now low, as each his impulse prompts,  
Is led through many a pitch, acute or grave.  
Therefore, not singly, I erewhile rehears'd  
That blessedness we tell of in the day:  
But near me none beside his accent rais'd."

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

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

## CANTO XXI

The natural thirst, ne'er quench'd but from the well,  
Whereof the woman of Samaria crav'd,  
Excited: haste along the cumber'd path,  
After my guide, impell'd; and pity mov'd  
My bosom for the 'vengeful deed, though just.  
When lo! even as Luke relates, that Christ  
Appear'd unto the two upon their way,  
New-risen from his vaulted grave; to us  
A shade appear'd, and after us approach'd,  
Contemplating the crowd beneath its feet.  
We were not ware of it; so first it spake,  
Saying, "God give you peace, my brethren!" then  
Sudden we turn'd: and Virgil such salute,  
As fitted that kind greeting, gave, and cried:  
"Peace in the blessed council be thy lot  
Awarded by that righteous court, which me  
To everlasting banishment exiles!"

"How!" he exclaim'd, nor from his speed meanwhile  
Desisting, "If that ye be spirits, whom God  
Vouchsafes not room above, who up the height  
Has been thus far your guide?" To whom the bard:  
"If thou observe the tokens, which this man  
Trac'd by the finger of the angel bears,  
'Tis plain that in the kingdom of the just  
He needs must share. But sithence she, whose wheel  
Spins day and night, for him not yet had drawn

That yarn, which, on the fatal distaff pil'd,  
Clotho apportions to each wight that breathes,  
His soul, that sister is to mine and thine,  
Not of herself could mount, for not like ours  
Her ken: whence I, from forth the ample gulf  
Of hell was ta'en, to lead him, and will lead  
Far as my lore avails. But, if thou know,  
Instruct us for what cause, the mount erewhile  
Thus shook and trembled: wherefore all at once  
Seem'd shouting, even from his wave-wash'd foot."

That questioning so tallied with my wish,  
The thirst did feel abatement of its edge  
E'en from expectance. He forthwith replied,  
"In its devotion nought irregular  
This mount can witness, or by punctual rule  
Unsanction'd; here from every change exempt.  
Other than that, which heaven in itself  
Doth of itself receive, no influence  
Can reach us. Tempest none, shower, hail or snow,  
Hoar frost or dewy moistness, higher falls  
Than that brief scale of threefold steps: thick clouds  
Nor scudding rack are ever seen: swift glance  
Ne'er lightens, nor Thaumantian Iris gleams,  
That yonder often shift on each side heav'n.  
Vapour adust doth never mount above  
The highest of the trinal stairs, whereon  
Peter's vicegerent stands. Lower perchance,  
With various motion rock'd, trembles the soil:  
But here, through wind in earth's deep hollow pent,  
I know not how, yet never trembled: then  
Trembles, when any spirit feels itself  
So purified, that it may rise, or move  
For rising, and such loud acclaim ensues.  
Purification by the will alone  
Is prov'd, that free to change society  
Seizes the soul rejoicing in her will.  
Desire of bliss is present from the first;  
But strong propension hinders, to that wish  
By the just ordinance of heav'n oppos'd;  
Propension now as eager to fulfil  
Th' allotted torment, as erewhile to sin.  
And I who in this punishment had lain  
Five hundred years and more, but now have felt  
Free wish for happier clime. Therefore thou felt'st  
The mountain tremble, and the spirits devout  
Heard'st, over all his limits, utter praise  
To that liege Lord, whom I entreat their joy  
To hasten." Thus he spake: and since the draught  
Is grateful ever as the thirst is keen,  
No words may speak my fullness of content.

"Now," said the instructor sage, "I see the net  
That takes ye here, and how the toils are loos'd,  
Why rocks the mountain and why ye rejoice.  
Vouchsafe, that from thy lips I next may learn,  
Who on the earth thou wast, and wherefore here  
So many an age wert prostrate."--"In that time,  
When the good Titus, with Heav'n's King to help,

Aveng'd those piteous gashes, whence the blood  
By Judas sold did issue, with the name  
Most lasting and most honour'd there was I  
Abundantly renown'd," the shade reply'd,  
"Not yet with faith endued. So passing sweet  
My vocal Spirit, from Tolosa, Rome  
To herself drew me, where I merited  
A myrtle garland to inwreath my brow.  
Staius they name me still. Of Thebes I sang,  
And next of great Achilles: but i' th' way  
Fell with the second burthen. Of my flame  
Those sparkles were the seeds, which I deriv'd  
From the bright fountain of celestial fire  
That feeds unnumber'd lamps, the song I mean  
Which sounds Aeneas' wand'rings: that the breast  
I hung at, that the nurse, from whom my veins  
Drank inspiration: whose authority  
Was ever sacred with me. To have liv'd  
Coeval with the Mantuan, I would bide  
The revolution of another sun  
Beyond my stated years in banishment."

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

Now down he bent t' embrace my teacher's feet;  
But he forbade him: "Brother! do it not:  
Thou art a shadow, and behold'st a shade."  
He rising answer'd thus: "Now hast thou prov'd  
The force and ardour of the love I bear thee,  
When I forget we are but things of air,  
And as a substance treat an empty shade."

## CANTO XXII

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

First somewhat mov'd to laughter by his words,  
Staius replied: "Each syllable of thine  
Is a dear pledge of love. Things oft appear  
That minister false matters to our doubts,  
When their true causes are remov'd from sight.  
Thy question doth assure me, thou believ'st  
I was on earth a covetous man, perhaps  
Because thou found'st me in that circle plac'd.  
Know then I was too wide of avarice:  
And e'en for that excess, thousands of moons  
Have wax'd and wan'd upon my sufferings.  
And were it not that I with heedful care  
Noted where thou exclaim'st as if in ire  
With human nature, 'Why, thou cursed thirst  
Of gold! dost not with juster measure guide  
The appetite of mortals?' I had met  
The fierce encounter of the voluble rock.  
Then was I ware that with too ample wing  
The hands may haste to lavishment, and turn'd,  
As from my other evil, so from this  
In penitence. How many from their grave  
Shall with shorn locks arise, who living, aye  
And at life's last extreme, of this offence,  
Through ignorance, did not repent. And know,  
The fault which lies direct from any sin  
In level opposition, here With that  
Wastes its green rankness on one common heap.  
Therefore if I have been with those, who wail  
Their avarice, to cleanse me, through reverse  
Of their transgression, such hath been my lot."

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

He answering thus: "By thee conducted first,  
I enter'd the Parnassian grots, and quaff'd  
Of the clear spring; illumin'd first by thee  
Open'd mine eyes to God. Thou didst, as one,  
Who, journeying through the darkness, hears a light  
Behind, that profits not himself, but makes  
His followers wise, when thou exclaimedst, 'Lo!  
A renovated world! Justice return'd!  
Times of primeval innocence restor'd!  
And a new race descended from above!  
Poet and Christian both to thee I owed.  
That thou mayst mark more clearly what I trace,  
My hand shall stretch forth to inform the lines  
With livelier colouring. Soon o'er all the world,  
By messengers from heav'n, the true belief  
Teem'd now prolific, and that word of thine  
Accordant, to the new instructors chim'd.  
Induc'd by which agreement, I was wont  
Resort to them; and soon their sanctity  
So won upon me, that, Domitian's rage  
Pursuing them, I mix'd my tears with theirs,  
And, while on earth I stay'd, still succour'd them;  
And their most righteous customs made me scorn  
All sects besides. Before I led the Greeks  
In tuneful fiction, to the streams of Thebes,  
I was baptiz'd; but secretly, through fear,  
Remain'd a Christian, and conform'd long time  
To Pagan rites. Five centuries and more,  
T for that lukewarmness was fain to pace  
Round the fourth circle. Thou then, who hast rais'd  
The covering, which did hide such blessing from me,  
Whilst much of this ascent is yet to climb,  
Say, if thou know, where our old Terence bides,  
Caecilius, Plautus, Varro: if condemn'd  
They dwell, and in what province of the deep."  
"These," said my guide, "with Persius and myself,  
And others many more, are with that Greek,  
Of mortals, the most cherish'd by the Nine,  
In the first ward of darkness. There ofttimes  
We of that mount hold converse, on whose top  
For aye our nurses live. We have the bard  
Of Pella, and the Teian, Agatho,  
Simonides, and many a Grecian else  
Ingarlanded with laurel. Of thy train  
Antigone is there, Deiphile,  
Argia, and as sorrowful as erst  
Ismene, and who show'd Langia's wave:  
Deidamia with her sisters there,  
And blind Tiresias' daughter, and the bride

Sea-born of Peleus." Either poet now  
Was silent, and no longer by th' ascent  
Or the steep walls obstructed, round them cast  
Inquiring eyes. Four handmaids of the day  
Had finish'd now their office, and the fifth  
Was at the chariot-beam, directing still  
Its balmy point aloof, when thus my guide:  
"Methinks, it well behooves us to the brink  
Bend the right shoulder' circuiting the mount,  
As we have ever us'd." So custom there  
Was usher to the road, the which we chose  
Less doubtful, as that worthy shade complied.

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

## CANTO XXIII

On the green leaf mine eyes were fix'd, like his  
Who throws away his days in idle chase  
Of the diminutive, when thus I heard  
The more than father warn me: "Son! our time  
Asks thriftier using. Linger not: away."

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

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

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

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

He thus: "The water and tee plant we pass'd,  
Virtue possesses, by th' eternal will  
Infus'd, the which so pines me. Every spirit,  
Whose song bewails his gluttony indulg'd  
Too grossly, here in hunger and in thirst  
Is purified. The odour, which the fruit,  
And spray, that showers upon the verdure, breathe,  
Inflames us with desire to feed and drink.  
Nor once alone encompassing our route  
We come to add fresh fuel to the pain:  
Pain, said lolace rather: for that will  
To the tree leads us, by which Christ was led  
To call Elias, joyful when he paid

Our ransom from his vein." I answering thus:  
"Forese! from that day, in which the world  
For better life thou changedst, not five years  
Have circled. If the power of sinning more  
Were first concluded in thee, ere thou knew'st  
That kindly grief, which re-espouses us  
To God, how hither art thou come so soon?  
I thought to find thee lower, there, where time  
Is recompense for time." He straight replied:  
"To drink up the sweet wormwood of affliction  
I have been brought thus early by the tears  
Stream'd down my Nella's cheeks. Her prayers devout,  
Her sighs have drawn me from the coast, where oft  
Expectance lingers, and have set me free  
From th' other circles. In the sight of God  
So much the dearer is my widow priz'd,  
She whom I lov'd so fondly, as she ranks  
More singly eminent for virtuous deeds.  
The tract most barb'rous of Sardinia's isle,  
Hath dames more chaste and modester by far  
Than that wherein I left her. O sweet brother!  
What wouldst thou have me say? A time to come  
Stands full within my view, to which this hour  
Shall not be counted of an ancient date,  
When from the pulpit shall be loudly warn'd  
Th' unblushing dames of Florence, lest they bare  
Unkerchief'd bosoms to the common gaze.  
What savage women hath the world e'er seen,  
What Saracens, for whom there needed scourge  
Of spiritual or other discipline,  
To force them walk with cov'ring on their limbs!  
But did they see, the shameless ones, that Heav'n  
Wafts on swift wing toward them, while I speak,  
Their mouths were op'd for howling: they shall taste  
Of Borrow (unless foresight cheat me here)  
Or ere the cheek of him be cloth'd with down  
Who is now rock'd with lullaby asleep.  
Ah! now, my brother, hide thyself no more,  
Thou seest how not I alone but all  
Gaze, where thou veil'st the intercepted sun."

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

"The other is that shade, for whom so late  
Your realm, as he arose, exulting shook  
Through every pendent cliff and rocky bound."

#### CANTO XXIV

Our journey was not slacken'd by our talk,  
Nor yet our talk by journeying. Still we spake,  
And urg'd our travel stoutly, like a ship  
When the wind sits astern. The shadowy forms,

That seem'd things dead and dead again, drew in  
At their deep-delved orbs rare wonder of me,  
Perceiving I had life; and I my words  
Continued, and thus spake; "He journeys up  
Perhaps more tardily than else he would,  
For others' sake. But tell me, if thou know'st,  
Where is Piccarda? Tell me, if I see  
Any of mark, among this multitude,  
Who eye me thus."--"My sister (she for whom,  
'Twixt beautiful and good I cannot say  
Which name was fitter ) wears e'en now her crown,  
And triumphs in Olympus." Saying this,  
He added: "Since spare diet hath so worn  
Our semblance out, 't is lawful here to name  
Each one. This," and his finger then he rais'd,  
"Is Buonaggiuna,--Buonaggiuna, he  
Of Lucca: and that face beyond him, pierc'd  
Unto a leaner fineness than the rest,  
Had keeping of the church: he was of Tours,  
And purges by wan abstinence away  
Bolsena's eels and cups of muscadel."

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

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

He, answ'ring, straight began: "Woman is born,  
Whose brow no wimple shades yet, that shall make  
My city please thee, blame it as they may.

Go then with this forewarning. If aught false  
My whisper too implied, th' event shall tell  
But say, if of a truth I see the man  
Of that new lay th' inventor, which begins  
With 'Ladies, ye that con the lore of love'."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## CANTO XXV

It was an hour, when he who climbs, had need  
To walk uncrippled: for the sun had now  
To Taurus the meridian circle left,  
And to the Scorpion left the night. As one  
That makes no pause, but presses on his road,  
Whate'er betide him, if some urgent need  
Impel: so enter'd we upon our way,  
One before other; for, but singly, none  
That steep and narrow scale admits to climb.

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

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

"If in thy presence I unfold to him  
The secrets of heaven's vengeance, let me plead  
Thine own injunction, to exculpate me."  
So Staius answer'd, and forthwith began:  
"Attend my words, O son, and in thy mind  
Receive them: so shall they be light to clear  
The doubt thou offer'st. Blood, concocted well,  
Which by the thirsty veins is ne'er imbib'd,  
And rests as food superfluous, to be ta'en  
From the replenish'd table, in the heart  
Derives effectual virtue, that informs  
The several human limbs, as being that,  
Which passes through the veins itself to make them.  
Yet more concocted it descends, where shame  
Forbids to mention: and from thence distils  
In natural vessel on another's blood.  
Then each unite together, one dispos'd  
T' endure, to act the other, through meet frame  
Of its recipient mould: that being reach'd,  
It 'gins to work, coagulating first;

Then vivifies what its own substance caus'd  
To bear. With animation now indued,  
The active virtue (differing from a plant  
No further, than that this is on the way  
And at its limit that) continues yet  
To operate, that now it moves, and feels,  
As sea sponge clinging to the rock: and there  
Assumes th' organic powers its seed convey'd.  
'This is the period, son! at which the virtue,  
That from the generating heart proceeds,  
Is pliant and expansive; for each limb  
Is in the heart by forgeful nature plann'd.  
How babe of animal becomes, remains  
For thy consid'ring. At this point, more wise,  
Than thou hast err'd, making the soul disjoin'd  
From passive intellect, because he saw  
No organ for the latter's use assign'd.

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

"When Lachesis hath spun the thread, the soul  
Takes with her both the human and divine,  
Memory, intelligence, and will, in act  
Far keener than before, the other powers  
Inactive all and mute. No pause allow'd,  
In wond'rous sort self-moving, to one strand  
Of those, where the departed roam, she falls,  
Here learns her destin'd path. Soon as the place  
Receives her, round the plastic virtue beams,  
Distinct as in the living limbs before:  
And as the air, when saturate with showers,  
The casual beam refracting, decks itself  
With many a hue; so here the ambient air  
Weareth that form, which influence of the soul  
Imprints on it; and like the flame, that where  
The fire moves, thither follows, so henceforth  
The new form on the spirit follows still:  
Hence hath it semblance, and is shadow call'd,  
With each sense even to the sight endued:  
Hence speech is ours, hence laughter, tears, and sighs  
Which thou mayst oft have witness'd on the mount  
Th' obedient shadow fails not to present  
Whatever varying passion moves within us.  
And this the cause of what thou marvel'st at."

Now the last flexure of our way we reach'd,  
And to the right hand turning, other care  
Awaits us. Here the rocky precipice

Hurls forth redundant flames, and from the rim  
A blast upblown, with forcible rebuff  
Driveth them back, sequester'd from its bound.

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

Then from the bosom of the burning mass,  
"O God of mercy!" heard I sung; and felt  
No less desire to turn. And when I saw  
Spirits along the flame proceeding, I  
Between their footsteps and mine own was fain  
To share by turns my view. At the hymn's close  
They shouted loud, "I do not know a man;"  
Then in low voice again took up the strain,  
Which once more ended, "To the wood," they cried,  
"Ran Dian, and drave forth Callisto, stung  
With Cytherea's poison:" then return'd  
Unto their song; then marry a pair extoll'd,  
Who liv'd in virtue chastely, and the bands  
Of wedded love. Nor from that task, I ween,  
Surcease they; whilesoe'er the scorching fire  
Enclasps them. Of such skill appliance needs  
To medicine the wound, that healeth last.

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