

# **The Vision of Purgatory, Part 3      Translated By The Rev. H. F. Cary, Illustrated by Gustave Dore**

Dante Alighieri

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Title: The Vision of Purgatory, Part 3  
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Release Date: August 4, 2004 [EBook #8792]

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

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THE VISION

OF

HELL, PURGATORY, AND PARADISE

BY DANTE ALIGHIERI

TRANSLATED BY

THE REV. H. F. CARY

PURGATORY

### Part 3

#### Cantos 11 - 18

#### CANTO XI

"O thou Almighty Father, who dost make  
The heavens thy dwelling, not in bounds confin'd,  
But that with love intenser there thou view'st  
Thy primal effluence, hallow'd be thy name:  
Join each created being to extol  
Thy might, for worthy humblest thanks and praise  
Is thy blest Spirit. May thy kingdom's peace  
Come unto us; for we, unless it come,  
With all our striving thither tend in vain.  
As of their will the angels unto thee  
Tender meet sacrifice, circling thy throne  
With loud hosannas, so of theirs be done  
By saintly men on earth. Grant us this day  
Our daily manna, without which he roams  
Through this rough desert retrograde, who most  
Toils to advance his steps. As we to each  
Pardon the evil done us, pardon thou  
Benign, and of our merit take no count.  
'Gainst the old adversary prove thou not  
Our virtue easily subdu'd; but free  
From his incitements and defeat his wiles.  
This last petition, dearest Lord! is made  
Not for ourselves, since that were needless now,  
But for their sakes who after us remain."

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

"Ah! so may mercy-temper'd justice rid  
Your burdens speedily, that ye have power  
To stretch your wing, which e'en to your desire  
Shall lift you, as ye show us on which hand  
Toward the ladder leads the shortest way.  
And if there be more passages than one,  
Instruct us of that easiest to ascend;  
For this man who comes with me, and bears yet  
The charge of fleshly raiment Adam left him,  
Despite his better will but slowly mounts."  
From whom the answer came unto these words,

Which my guide spake, appear'd not; but 'twas said:

"Along the bank to rightward come with us,  
And ye shall find a pass that mocks not toil  
Of living man to climb: and were it not  
That I am hinder'd by the rock, wherewith  
This arrogant neck is tam'd, whence needs I stoop  
My visage to the ground, him, who yet lives,  
Whose name thou speak'st not him I fain would view.  
To mark if e'er I knew himnd to crave  
His pity for the fardel that I bear.  
I was of Latium, of a Tuscan horn  
A mighty one: Aldobranlesco's name  
My sire's, I know not if ye e'er have heard.  
My old blood and forefathers' gallant deeds  
Made me so haughty, that I clean forgot  
The common mother, and to such excess,  
Wax'd in my scorn of all men, that I fell,  
Fell therefore; by what fate Sienna's sons,  
Each child in Campagnatico, can tell.  
I am Omberto; not me only pride  
Hath injur'd, but my kindred all involv'd  
In mischief with her. Here my lot ordains  
Under this weight to groan, till I appease  
God's angry justice, since I did it not  
Amongst the living, here amongst the dead."

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

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

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

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

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

## CANTO XII

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

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

To ruminate the bed beneath thy feet."

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

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

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

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

Was shown beside upon the solid floor  
How dear Alcmaeon forc'd his mother rate  
That ornament in evil hour receiv'd:  
How in the temple on Sennacherib fell  
His sons, and how a corpse they left him there.  
Was shown the scath and cruel mangling made  
By Tomyris on Cyrus, when she cried:  
"Blood thou didst thirst for, take thy fill of blood!"  
Was shown how routed in the battle fled  
Th' Assyrians, Holofernes slain, and e'en  
The relics of the carnage. Troy I mark'd  
In ashes and in caverns. Oh! how fall'n,  
How abject, Ilion, was thy semblance there!

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

Lest they descry the evil of your path!

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

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

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

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

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

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

### CANTO XIII

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

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

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

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

"This circuit," said my teacher, "knots the scourge  
For envy, and the cords are therefore drawn  
By charity's correcting hand. The curb  
Is of a harsher sound, as thou shalt hear  
(If I deem rightly), ere thou reach the pass,  
Where pardon sets them free. But fix thine eyes

Intently through the air, and thou shalt see  
A multitude before thee seated, each  
Along the shelving grot." Then more than erst  
I op'd my eyes, before me view'd, and saw  
Shadows with garments dark as was the rock;  
And when we pass'd a little forth, I heard  
A crying, "Blessed Mary! pray for us,  
Michael and Peter! all ye saintly host!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

"He," answer'd I, "who standeth mute beside me.  
I live: of me ask therefore, chosen spirit,  
If thou desire I yonder yet should move  
For thee my mortal feet."--"Oh!" she replied,  
"This is so strange a thing, it is great sign  
That God doth love thee. Therefore with thy prayer  
Sometime assist me: and by that I crave,  
Which most thou covetest, that if thy feet  
E'er tread on Tuscan soil, thou save my fame  
Amongst my kindred. Them shalt thou behold  
With that vain multitude, who set their hope  
On Telamone's haven, there to fail  
Confounded, more shall when the fancied stream  
They sought of Dian call'd: but they who lead

Their navies, more than ruin'd hopes shall mourn."

#### CANTO XIV

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

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

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

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

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

To whom the other: "Why hath he conceal'd  
The title of that river, as a man  
Doth of some horrible thing?" The spirit, who  
Thereof was question'd, did acquit him thus:  
"I know not: but 'tis fitting well the name  
Should perish of that vale; for from the source  
Where teems so plenteously the Alpine steep  
Maim'd of Pelorus, (that doth scarcely pass  
Beyond that limit,) even to the point  
Whereunto ocean is restor'd, what heaven  
Drains from th' exhaustless store for all earth's streams,  
Throughout the space is virtue worried down,  
As 'twere a snake, by all, for mortal foe,  
Or through disastrous influence on the place,  
Or else distortion of misguided wills,  
That custom goads to evil: whence in those,  
The dwellers in that miserable vale,  
Nature is so transform'd, it seems as they  
Had shar'd of Circe's feeding. 'Midst brute swine,  
Worthier of acorns than of other food  
Created for man's use, he shapeth first

His obscure way; then, sloping onward, finds  
Curs, snarlers more in spite than power, from whom  
He turns with scorn aside: still journeying down,  
By how much more the curst and luckless foss  
Swells out to largeness, e'en so much it finds  
Dogs turning into wolves. Descending still  
Through yet more hollow eddies, next he meets  
A race of foxes, so replete with craft,  
They do not fear that skill can master it.  
Nor will I cease because my words are heard  
By other ears than thine. It shall be well  
For this man, if he keep in memory  
What from no erring Spirit I reveal.  
Lo! behold thy grandson, that becomes  
A hunter of those wolves, upon the shore  
Of the fierce stream, and cows them all with dread:  
Their flesh yet living sets he up to sale,  
Then like an aged beast to slaughter dooms.  
Many of life he reaves, himself of worth  
And goodly estimation. Smear'd with gore  
Mark how he issues from the rueful wood,  
Leaving such havoc, that in thousand years  
It spreads not to prime lustihood again."

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

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

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

A gentle cyon from ignoble stem.  
Wonder not, Tuscan, if thou see me weep,  
When I recall to mind those once lov'd names,  
Guido of Prata, and of Azzo him  
That dwelt with you; Tignoso and his troop,  
With Traversaro's house and Anastagio's,  
(Each race disherited) and beside these,  
The ladies and the knights, the toils and ease,  
That witch'd us into love and courtesy;  
Where now such malice reigns in recreant hearts.  
O Brettinoro! wherefore tarriest still,  
Since forth of thee thy family hath gone,  
And many, hating evil, join'd their steps?  
Well doeth he, that bids his lineage cease,  
Bagnacavallo; Castracaro ill,  
And Conio worse, who care to propagate  
A race of Counties from such blood as theirs.  
Well shall ye also do, Pagani, then  
When from amongst you tries your demon child.  
Not so, howe'er, that henceforth there remain  
True proof of what ye were. O Hugolin!  
Thou sprung of Fantolini's line! thy name  
Is safe, since none is look'd for after thee  
To cloud its lustre, warping from thy stock.  
But, Tuscan, go thy ways; for now I take  
Far more delight in weeping than in words.  
Such pity for your sakes hath wrung my heart."

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

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

## CANTO XV

As much as 'twixt the third hour's close and dawn,  
Appeareth of heav'n's sphere, that ever whirls

As restless as an infant in his play,  
So much appear'd remaining to the sun  
Of his slope journey towards the western goal.

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

"Marvel not, if the family of heav'n,"  
He answer'd, "yet with dazzling radiance dim  
Thy sense it is a messenger who comes,  
Inviting man's ascent. Such sights ere long,  
Not grievous, shall impart to thee delight,  
As thy perception is by nature wrought  
Up to their pitch." The blessed angel, soon  
As we had reach'd him, hail'd us with glad voice:  
"Here enter on a ladder far less steep  
Than ye have yet encounter'd." We forthwith  
Ascending, heard behind us chanted sweet,  
"Blessed the merciful," and "happy thou!  
That conquer'st." Lonely each, my guide and I  
Pursued our upward way; and as we went,  
Some profit from his words I hop'd to win,  
And thus of him inquiring, fram'd my speech:

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

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

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

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

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

Soon as my spirit, from her airy flight

Returning, sought again the things, whose truth  
Depends not on her shaping, I observ'd  
How she had rov'd to no unreal scenes

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

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

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

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

## CANTO XVI

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

As the blind man behind his leader walks,  
Lest he should err, or stumble unawares  
On what might harm him, or perhaps destroy,  
I journey'd through that bitter air and foul,  
Still list'ning to my escort's warning voice,  
"Look that from me thou part not." Straight I heard  
Voices, and each one seem'd to pray for peace,  
And for compassion, to the Lamb of God  
That taketh sins away. Their prelude still

Was "Agnus Dei," and through all the choir,  
One voice, one measure ran, that perfect seem'd  
The concord of their song. "Are these I hear  
Spirits, O master?" I exclaim'd; and he:  
"Thou aim'st aright: these loose the bonds of wrath."

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

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

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

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

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



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

"Forth from his plastic hand, who charm'd beholds  
Her image ere she yet exist, the soul  
Comes like a babe, that wantons sportively  
Weeping and laughing in its wayward moods,  
As artless and as ignorant of aught,  
Save that her Maker being one who dwells  
With gladness ever, willingly she turns  
To whate'er yields her joy. Of some slight good  
The flavour soon she tastes; and, snar'd by that,  
With fondness she pursues it, if no guide  
Recall, no rein direct her wand'ring course.  
Hence it behov'd, the law should be a curb;  
A sovereign hence behov'd, whose piercing view  
Might mark at least the fortress and main tower  
Of the true city. Laws indeed there are:  
But who is he observes them? None; not he,  
Who goes before, the shepherd of the flock,  
Who chews the cud but doth not cleave the hoof.  
Therefore the multitude, who see their guide  
Strike at the very good they covet most,  
Feed there and look no further. Thus the cause  
Is not corrupted nature in yourselves,  
But ill-conducting, that hath turn'd the world  
To evil. Rome, that turn'd it unto good,  
Was wont to boast two suns, whose several beams  
Cast light on either way, the world's and God's.  
One since hath quench'd the other; and the sword  
Is grafted on the crook; and so conjoin'd  
Each must perforce decline to worse, unaw'd  
By fear of other. If thou doubt me, mark  
The blade: each herb is judg'd of by its seed.  
That land, through which Adice and the Po  
Their waters roll, was once the residence  
Of courtesy and valour, ere the day,  
That frown'd on Frederick; now secure may pass  
Those limits, whosoe'er hath left, for shame,  
To talk with good men, or come near their haunts.  
Three aged ones are still found there, in whom  
The old time chides the new: these deem it long  
Ere God restore them to a better world:  
The good Gherardo, of Palazzo he  
Conrad, and Guido of Castello, nam'd  
In Gallic phrase more fitly the plain Lombard.  
On this at last conclude. The church of Rome,

Mixing two governments that ill assort,  
Hath miss'd her footing, fall'n into the mire,  
And there herself and burden much defil'd."

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

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

## CANTO XVII

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

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

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

Next shower'd into my fantasy a shape  
As of one crucified, whose visage spake  
Fell rancour, malice deep, wherein he died;  
And round him Ahasuerus the great king,

Esther his bride, and Mordecai the just,  
Blameless in word and deed. As of itself  
That unsubstantial coinage of the brain  
Burst, like a bubble, Which the water fails  
That fed it; in my vision straight uprose  
A damsel weeping loud, and cried, "O queen!  
O mother! wherefore has intemperate ire  
Driv'n thee to loath thy being? Not to lose  
Lavinia, desp'rate thou hast slain thyself.  
Now hast thou lost me. I am she, whose tears  
Mourn, ere I fall, a mother's timeless end."

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

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

He thus to me: "The love of good, whate'er  
Wanted of just proportion, here fulfils.  
Here plies afresh the oar, that loiter'd ill.  
But that thou mayst yet clearer understand,

Give ear unto my words, and thou shalt cull  
Some fruit may please thee well, from this delay.

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

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

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

## CANTO XVIII

The teacher ended, and his high discourse  
Concluding, earnest in my looks inquir'd  
If I appear'd content; and I, whom still  
Unsated thirst to hear him urg'd, was mute,  
Mute outwardly, yet inwardly I said:  
"Perchance my too much questioning offends"  
But he, true father, mark'd the secret wish  
By diffidence restrain'd, and speaking, gave  
Me boldness thus to speak: 'Master, my Sight  
Gathers so lively virtue from thy beams,  
That all, thy words convey, distinct is seen.  
Wherefore I pray thee, father, whom this heart  
Holds dearest! thou wouldst deign by proof t' unfold  
That love, from which as from their source thou bring'st  
All good deeds and their opposite.'" He then:  
"To what I now disclose be thy clear ken  
Directed, and thou plainly shalt behold  
How much those blind have err'd, who make themselves  
The guides of men. The soul, created apt  
To love, moves versatile which way soe'er  
Aught pleasing prompts her, soon as she is wak'd  
By pleasure into act. Of substance true  
Your apprehension forms its counterfeit,  
And in you the ideal shape presenting  
Attracts the soul's regard. If she, thus drawn,  
incline toward it, love is that inclining,  
And a new nature knit by pleasure in ye.  
Then as the fire points up, and mounting seeks  
His birth-place and his lasting seat, e'en thus  
Enters the captive soul into desire,  
Which is a spiritual motion, that ne'er rests  
Before enjoyment of the thing it loves.  
Enough to show thee, how the truth from those  
Is hidden, who aver all love a thing  
Praise-worthy in itself: although perhaps  
Its substance seem still good. Yet if the wax  
Be good, it follows not th' impression must."  
"What love is," I return'd, "thy words, O guide!  
And my own docile mind, reveal. Yet thence  
New doubts have sprung. For from without if love  
Be offer'd to us, and the spirit knows  
No other footing, tend she right or wrong,  
Is no desert of hers." He answering thus:  
"What reason here discovers I have power  
To show thee: that which lies beyond, expect  
From Beatrice, faith not reason's task.  
Spirit, substantial form, with matter join'd  
Not in confusion mix'd, hath in itself  
Specific virtue of that union born,  
Which is not felt except it work, nor prov'd  
But through effect, as vegetable life  
By the green leaf. From whence his intellect  
Deduced its primal notices of things,  
Man therefore knows not, or his appetites  
Their first affections; such in you, as zeal  
In bees to gather honey; at the first,

Volition, meriting nor blame nor praise.  
But o'er each lower faculty supreme,  
That as she list are summon'd to her bar,  
Ye have that virtue in you, whose just voice  
Uttereth counsel, and whose word should keep  
The threshold of assent. Here is the source,  
Whence cause of merit in you is deriv'd,  
E'en as the affections good or ill she takes,  
Or severs, winnow'd as the chaff. Those men  
Who reas'ning went to depth profoundest, mark'd  
That innate freedom, and were thence induc'd  
To leave their moral teaching to the world.  
Grant then, that from necessity arise  
All love that glows within you; to dismiss  
Or harbour it, the pow'r is in yourselves.  
Remember, Beatrice, in her style,  
Denominates free choice by eminence  
The noble virtue, if in talk with thee  
She touch upon that theme." The moon, well nigh  
To midnight hour belated, made the stars  
Appear to wink and fade; and her broad disk  
Seem'd like a crag on fire, as up the vault  
That course she journey'd, which the sun then warms,  
When they of Rome behold him at his set.  
Betwixt Sardinia and the Corsic isle.  
And now the weight, that hung upon my thought,  
Was lighten'd by the aid of that clear spirit,  
Who raiseth Andes above Mantua's name.  
I therefore, when my questions had obtain'd  
Solution plain and ample, stood as one  
Musing in dreary slumber; but not long  
Slumber'd; for suddenly a multitude,

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

Soon they o'ertook us; with such swiftness mov'd  
The mighty crowd. Two spirits at their head  
Cried weeping; "Blessed Mary sought with haste  
The hilly region. Caesar to subdue  
Ilerda, darted in Marseilles his sting,  
And flew to Spain."--"Oh tarry not: away;"  
The others shouted; "let not time be lost  
Through slackness of affection. Hearty zeal  
To serve reanimates celestial grace."

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

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

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

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