

The Vision of Purgatory, Part 5 Translated By The Rev. H. F. Cary, Illustrated by Gustave Dore

Dante Alighieri

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Author: 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 5

Cantos 26 - 33

CANTO XXVI

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

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

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

Again drew near my side the very same,
Who had erewhile besought me, and their looks
Mark'd eagerness to listen. I, who twice
Their will had noted, spake: "O spirits secure,
Whene'er the time may be, of peaceful end!

My limbs, nor crude, nor in mature old age,
Have I left yonder: here they bear me, fed
With blood, and sinew-strung. That I no more
May live in blindness, hence I tend aloft.
There is a dame on high, who wind for us
This grace, by which my mortal through your realm
I bear. But may your utmost wish soon meet
Such full fruition, that the orb of heaven,
Fullest of love, and of most ample space,
Receive you, as ye tell (upon my page
Henceforth to stand recorded) who ye are,
And what this multitude, that at your backs
Have past behind us." As one, mountain-bred,
Rugged and clownish, if some city's walls
He chance to enter, round him stares agape,
Confounded and struck dumb; e'en such appear'd
Each spirit. But when rid of that amaze,
(Not long the inmate of a noble heart)
He, who before had question'd, thus resum'd:
"O blessed, who, for death preparing, tak'st
Experience of our limits, in thy bark!
Their crime, who not with us proceed, was that,
For which, as he did triumph, Caesar heard
The snout of 'queen,' to taunt him. Hence their cry
Of 'Sodom,' as they parted, to rebuke
Themselves, and aid the burning by their shame.
Our sinning was Hermaphrodite: but we,
Because the law of human kind we broke,
Following like beasts our vile concupiscence,
Hence parting from them, to our own disgrace
Record the name of her, by whom the beast
In bestial tire was acted. Now our deeds
Thou know'st, and how we sinn'd. If thou by name
Wouldst haply know us, time permits not now
To tell so much, nor can I. Of myself
Learn what thou wishest. Guinicelli I,
Who having truly sorrow'd ere my last,
Already cleanse me." With such pious joy,
As the two sons upon their mother gaz'd
From sad Lycurgus rescu'd, such my joy
(Save that I more repress it) when I heard
From his own lips the name of him pronounc'd,
Who was a father to me, and to those
My betters, who have ever us'd the sweet
And pleasant rhymes of love. So nought I heard
Nor spake, but long time thoughtfully I went,
Gazing on him; and, only for the fire,
Approach'd not nearer. When my eyes were fed
By looking on him, with such solemn pledge,
As forces credence, I devoted me
Unto his service wholly. In reply
He thus bespake me: "What from thee I hear
Is grav'd so deeply on my mind, the waves
Of Lethe shall not wash it off, nor make
A whit less lively. But as now thy oath
Has seal'd the truth, declare what cause impels
That love, which both thy looks and speech bewray."

"Those dulcet lays," I answer'd, "which, as long

As of our tongue the beauty does not fade,
Shall make us love the very ink that trac'd them."

"Brother!" he cried, and pointed at a shade
Before him, "there is one, whose mother speech
Doth owe to him a fairer ornament.
He in love ditties and the tales of prose
Without a rival stands, and lets the fools
Talk on, who think the songster of Limoges
O'ertops him. Rumour and the popular voice
They look to more than truth, and so confirm
Opinion, ere by art or reason taught.
Thus many of the elder time cried up
Guittone, giving him the prize, till truth
By strength of numbers vanquish'd. If thou own
So ample privilege, as to have gain'd
Free entrance to the cloister, whereof Christ
Is Abbot of the college, say to him
One paternoster for me, far as needs
For dwellers in this world, where power to sin
No longer tempts us." Haply to make way
For one, that follow'd next, when that was said,
He vanish'd through the fire, as through the wave
A fish, that glances diving to the deep.

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

CANTO XXVII

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

So day was sinking, when the' angel of God
Appear'd before us. Joy was in his mien.
Forth of the flame he stood upon the brink,
And with a voice, whose lively clearness far
Surpass'd our human, "Blessed are the pure
In heart," he Sang: then near him as we came,
"Go ye not further, holy spirits!" he cried,
"Ere the fire pierce you: enter in; and list
Attentive to the song ye hear from thence."

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

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

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

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

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

Nor many stairs were overpass, when now

By fading of the shadow we perceiv'd
The sun behind us couch'd: and ere one face
Of darkness o'er its measureless expanse
Involv'd th' horizon, and the night her lot
Held individual, each of us had made
A stair his pallet: not that will, but power,
Had fail'd us, by the nature of that mount
Forbidden further travel. As the goats,
That late have skipp'd and wanton'd rapidly
Upon the craggy cliffs, ere they had ta'en
Their supper on the herb, now silent lie
And ruminant beneath the umbrage brown,
While noonday rages; and the goatherd leans
Upon his staff, and leaning watches them:
And as the swain, that lodges out all night
In quiet by his flock, lest beast of prey
Disperse them; even so all three abode,
I as a goat and as the shepherds they,
Close pent on either side by shelving rock.

A little glimpse of sky was seen above;
Yet by that little I beheld the stars
In magnitude and rustle shining forth
With more than wonted glory. As I lay,
Gazing on them, and in that fit of musing,
Sleep overcame me, sleep, that bringeth oft
Tidings of future hap. About the hour,
As I believe, when Venus from the east
First lighten'd on the mountain, she whose orb
Seems always glowing with the fire of love,
A lady young and beautiful, I dream'd,
Was passing o'er a lea; and, as she came,
Methought I saw her ever and anon
Bending to cull the flowers; and thus she sang:
"Know ye, whoever of my name would ask,
That I am Leah: for my brow to weave
A garland, these fair hands unwearied ply.
To please me at the crystal mirror, here
I deck me. But my sister Rachel, she
Before her glass abides the livelong day,
Her radiant eyes beholding, charm'd no less,
Than I with this delightful task. Her joy
In contemplation, as in labour mine."

And now as glimm'ring dawn appear'd, that breaks
More welcome to the pilgrim still, as he
Sojourns less distant on his homeward way,
Darkness from all sides fled, and with it fled
My slumber; whence I rose and saw my guide
Already risen. "That delicious fruit,
Which through so many a branch the zealous care
Of mortals roams in quest of, shall this day
Appease thy hunger." Such the words I heard
From Virgil's lip; and never greeting heard
So pleasant as the sounds. Within me straight
Desire so grew upon desire to mount,
Thenceforward at each step I felt the wings
Increasing for my flight. When we had run
O'er all the ladder to its topmost round,

As there we stood, on me the Mantuan fix'd
His eyes, and thus he spake: "Both fires, my son,
The temporal and eternal, thou hast seen,
And art arriv'd, where of itself my ken
No further reaches. I with skill and art
Thus far have drawn thee. Now thy pleasure take
For guide. Thou hast o'ercome the steeper way,
O'ercome the straighter. Lo! the sun, that darts
His beam upon thy forehead! lo! the herb,
The arboreta and flowers, which of itself
This land pours forth profuse! Will those bright eyes
With gladness come, which, weeping, made me haste
To succour thee, thou mayst or seat thee down,
Or wander where thou wilt. Expect no more
Sanction of warning voice or sign from me,
Free of thy own arbitrement to choose,
Discreet, judicious. To distrust thy sense
Were henceforth error. I invest thee then
With crown and mitre, sovereign o'er thyself."

CANTO XXVIII

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

My feet advanc'd not; but my wond'ring eyes
Pass'd onward, o'er the streamlet, to survey
The tender May-bloom, flush'd through many a hue,
In prodigal variety: and there,
As object, rising suddenly to view,
That from our bosom every thought beside
With the rare marvel chases, I beheld
A lady all alone, who, singing, went,
And culling flower from flower, wherewith her way
Was all o'er painted. "Lady beautiful!
Thou, who (if looks, that use to speak the heart,
Are worthy of our trust), with love's own beam
Dost warm thee," thus to her my speech I fram'd:
"Ah! please thee hither towards the streamlet bend
Thy steps so near, that I may list thy song.
Beholding thee and this fair place, methinks,
I call to mind where wander'd and how look'd
Proserpine, in that season, when her child
The mother lost, and she the bloomy spring."

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

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

She spake; and I replied: "I know not how
To reconcile this wave and rustling sound
Of forest leaves, with what I late have heard
Of opposite report." She answering thus:
"I will unfold the cause, whence that proceeds,

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

"The water, thou behold'st, springs not from vein,
As stream, that intermittently repairs
And spends his pulse of life, but issues forth
From fountain, solid, undecaying, sure;
And by the will omnific, full supply
Feeds whatsoe'er On either side it pours;
On this devolv'd with power to take away
Remembrance of offence, on that to bring
Remembrance back of every good deed done.
From whence its name of Lethe on this part;
On th' other Eunoe: both of which must first
Be tasted ere it work; the last exceeding
All flavours else. Albeit thy thirst may now
Be well contented, if I here break off,
No more revealing: yet a corollary
I freely give beside: nor deem my words
Less grateful to thee, if they somewhat pass
The stretch of promise. They, whose verse of yore
The golden age recorded and its bliss,
On the Parnassian mountain, of this place
Perhaps had dream'd. Here was man guiltless, here

Perpetual spring and every fruit, and this
The far-fam'd nectar." Turning to the bards,
When she had ceas'd, I noted in their looks
A smile at her conclusion; then my face
Again directed to the lovely dame.

CANTO XXIX

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

Between us not an hundred paces trod,
The bank, on each side bending equally,
Gave me to face the orient. Nor our way
Far onward brought us, when to me at once
She turn'd, and cried: "My brother! look and hearken."
And lo! a sudden lustre ran across
Through the great forest on all parts, so bright
I doubted whether lightning were abroad;
But that expiring ever in the spleen,
That doth unfold it, and this during still
And waxing still in splendor, made me question
What it might be: and a sweet melody
Ran through the luminous air. Then did I chide
With warrantable zeal the hardihood
Of our first parent, for that there were earth
Stood in obedience to the heav'ns, she only,
Woman, the creature of an hour, endur'd not
Restraint of any veil: which had she borne
Devoutly, joys, ineffable as these,
Had from the first, and long time since, been mine.

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

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

Onward a space, what seem'd seven trees of gold,
The intervening distance to mine eye
Falsely presented; but when I was come

So near them, that no lineament was lost
Of those, with which a doubtful object, seen
Remotely, plays on the misdeeming sense,
Then did the faculty, that ministers
Discourse to reason, these for tapers of gold
Distinguish, and it th' singing trace the sound
"Hosanna." Above, their beauteous garniture
Flam'd with more ample lustre, than the moon
Through cloudless sky at midnight in her full.

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

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

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

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

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

As thou shalt find them character'd by him,
Here were they; save as to the pennons; there,
From him departing, John accords with me.

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

Now seem'd the white to lead, the ruddy now;
And from her song who led, the others took
Their treasure, swift or slow. At th' other wheel,
A band quaternion, each in purple clad,
Advanc'd with festal step, as of them one
The rest conducted, one, upon whose front
Three eyes were seen. In rear of all this group,
Two old men I beheld, dissimilar
In raiment, but in port and gesture like,
Solid and mainly grave; of whom the one
Did show himself some favour'd counsellor
Of the great Coan, him, whom nature made
To serve the costliest creature of her tribe.
His fellow mark'd an opposite intent,
Bearing a sword, whose glitterance and keen edge,
E'en as I view'd it with the flood between,
Appall'd me. Next four others I beheld,
Of humble seeming: and, behind them all,
One single old man, sleeping, as he came,
With a shrewd visage. And these seven, each
Like the first troop were habited, but wore
No braid of lilies on their temples wreath'd.
Rather with roses and each vermeil flower,
A sight, but little distant, might have sworn,
That they were all on fire above their brow.

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

CANTO XXX

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Upon the chariot's right edge still she stood,
Immovable, and thus address'd her words
To those bright semblances with pity touch'd:
"Ye in th' eternal day your vigils keep,
So that nor night nor slumber, with close stealth,
Conveys from you a single step in all
The goings on of life: thence with more heed
I shape mine answer, for his ear intended,

Who there stands weeping, that the sorrow now
May equal the transgression. Not alone
Through operation of the mighty orbs,
That mark each seed to some predestin'd aim,
As with aspect or fortunate or ill
The constellations meet, but through benign
Largess of heav'nly graces, which rain down
From such a height, as mocks our vision, this man
Was in the freshness of his being, such,
So gifted virtually, that in him
All better habits wond'rously had thriv'd.
The more of kindly strength is in the soil,
So much doth evil seed and lack of culture
Mar it the more, and make it run to wildness.
These looks sometime upheld him; for I show'd
My youthful eyes, and led him by their light
In upright walking. Soon as I had reach'd
The threshold of my second age, and chang'd
My mortal for immortal, then he left me,
And gave himself to others. When from flesh
To spirit I had risen, and increase
Of beauty and of virtue circled me,
I was less dear to him, and valued less.
His steps were turn'd into deceitful ways,
Following false images of good, that make
No promise perfect. Nor avail'd me aught
To sue for inspirations, with the which,
I, both in dreams of night, and otherwise,
Did call him back; of them so little reck'd him,
Such depth he fell, that all device was short
Of his preserving, save that he should view
The children of perdition. To this end
I visited the purlieus of the dead:
And one, who hath conducted him thus high,
Receiv'd my supplications urg'd with weeping.
It were a breaking of God's high decree,
If Lethe should be past, and such food tasted
Without the cost of some repentant tear."

CANTO XXXI

"O Thou!" her words she thus without delay
Resuming, turn'd their point on me, to whom
They but with lateral edge seem'd harsh before,
"Say thou, who stand'st beyond the holy stream,
If this be true. A charge so grievous needs
Thine own avowal." On my faculty
Such strange amazement hung, the voice expir'd
Imperfect, ere its organs gave it birth.

A little space refraining, then she spake:
"What dost thou muse on? Answer me. The wave
On thy remembrances of evil yet
Hath done no injury." A mingled sense
Of fear and of confusion, from my lips
Did such a "Yea" produce, as needed help

Of vision to interpret. As when breaks
In act to be discharg'd, a cross-bow bent
Beyond its pitch, both nerve and bow o'erstretch'd,
The flagging weapon feebly hits the mark;
Thus, tears and sighs forth gushing, did I burst
Beneath the heavy load, and thus my voice
Was slacken'd on its way. She straight began:
"When my desire invited thee to love
The good, which sets a bound to our aspirings,
What bar of thwarting foss or linked chain
Did meet thee, that thou so should'st quit the hope
Of further progress, or what bait of ease
Or promise of allurements led thee on
Elsewhere, that thou elsewhere should'st rather wait?"

A bitter sigh I drew, then scarce found voice
To answer, hardly to these sounds my lips
Gave utterance, wailing: "Thy fair looks withdrawn,
Things present, with deceitful pleasures, turn'd
My steps aside." She answering spake: "Hadst thou
Been silent, or denied what thou avow'st,
Thou hadst not hid thy sin the more: such eye
Observes it. But whene'er the sinner's cheek
Breaks forth into the precious-streaming tears
Of self-accusing, in our court the wheel
Of justice doth run counter to the edge.
Howe'er that thou may'st profit by thy shame
For errors past, and that henceforth more strength
May arm thee, when thou hear'st the Siren-voice,
Lay thou aside the motive to this grief,
And lend attentive ear, while I unfold
How opposite a way my buried flesh
Should have impell'd thee. Never didst thou spy
In art or nature aught so passing sweet,
As were the limbs, that in their beauteous frame
Enclos'd me, and are scatter'd now in dust.
If sweetest thing thus fail'd thee with my death,
What, afterward, of mortal should thy wish
Have tempted? When thou first hadst felt the dart
Of perishable things, in my departing
For better realms, thy wing thou should'st have prun'd
To follow me, and never stoop'd again
To 'bide a second blow for a slight girl,
Or other gaud as transient and as vain.
The new and inexperience'd bird awaits,
Twice it may be, or thrice, the fowler's aim;
But in the sight of one, whose plumes are full,
In vain the net is spread, the arrow wing'd."

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

With less reluctance yields a sturdy holm,
Rent from its fibers by a blast, that blows
From off the pole, or from Iarbas' land,
Than I at her behest my visage rais'd:

And thus the face denoting by the beard,
I mark'd the secret sting her words convey'd.

No sooner lifted I mine aspect up,
Than downward sunk that vision I beheld
Of goodly creatures vanish; and mine eyes
Yet unassur'd and wavering, bent their light
On Beatrice. Towards the animal,
Who joins two natures in one form, she turn'd,
And, even under shadow of her veil,
And parted by the verdant rill, that flow'd
Between, in loveliness appear'd as much
Her former self surpassing, as on earth
All others she surpass'd. Remorseful goads
Shot sudden through me. Each thing else, the more
Its love had late beguil'd me, now the more
I Was loathsome. On my heart so keenly smote
The bitter consciousness, that on the ground
O'erpower'd I fell: and what my state was then,
She knows who was the cause. When now my strength
Flow'd back, returning outward from the heart,
The lady, whom alone I first had seen,
I found above me. "Loose me not," she cried:
"Loose not thy hold;" and lo! had dragg'd me high
As to my neck into the stream, while she,
Still as she drew me after, swept along,
Swift as a shuttle, bounding o'er the wave.

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

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

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

CANTO XXXII

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

Awhile my vision labor'd; as when late
Upon the' o'erstrained eyes the sun hath smote:
But soon to lesser object, as the view
Was now recover'd (lesser in respect
To that excess of sensible, whence late
I had perforce been sunder'd) on their right
I mark'd that glorious army wheel, and turn,
Against the sun and sev'nfold lights, their front.
As when, their bucklers for protection rais'd,
A well-rang'd troop, with portly banners curl'd,
Wheel circling, ere the whole can change their ground:
E'en thus the goodly regiment of heav'n
Proceeding, all did pass us, ere the car
Had slop'd his beam. Attendant at the wheels
The damsels turn'd; and on the Gryphon mov'd
The sacred burden, with a pace so smooth,
No feather on him trembled. The fair dame
Who through the wave had drawn me, companied
By Statius and myself, pursued the wheel,
Whose orbit, rolling, mark'd a lesser arch.

Through the high wood, now void (the more her blame,

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

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

Unearthly was the hymn, which then arose.
I understood it not, nor to the end
Endur'd the harmony. Had I the skill
To pencil forth, how clos'd th' un pitying eyes
Slumb'ring, when Syrinx warbled, (eyes that paid
So dearly for their watching,) then like painter,
That with a model paints, I might design
The manner of my falling into sleep.
But feign who will the slumber cunningly;
I pass it by to when I wak'd, and tell
How suddenly a flash of splendour rent
The curtain of my sleep, and one cries out:
"Arise, what dost thou?" As the chosen three,
On Tabor's mount, admitted to behold
The blossoming of that fair tree, whose fruit
Is coveted of angels, and doth make
Perpetual feast in heaven, to themselves
Returning at the word, whence deeper sleeps
Were broken, that they their tribe diminish'd saw,
Both Moses and Elias gone, and chang'd
The stole their master wore: thus to myself
Returning, over me beheld I stand
The piteous one, who cross the stream had brought
My steps. "And where," all doubting, I exclaim'd,
"Is Beatrice?"--"See her," she replied,
"Beneath the fresh leaf seated on its root.
Behold th' associate choir that circles her.
The others, with a melody more sweet

And more profound, journeying to higher realms,
Upon the Gryphon tend." If there her words
Were clos'd, I know not; but mine eyes had now
Ta'en view of her, by whom all other thoughts
Were barr'd admittance. On the very ground
Alone she sat, as she had there been left
A guard upon the wain, which I beheld
Bound to the twyform beast. The seven nymphs
Did make themselves a cloister round about her,
And in their hands upheld those lights secure
From blast septentrion and the gusty south.

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

Thus Beatrice: at whose feet inclin'd
Devout, at her behest, my thought and eyes,
I, as she bade, directed. Never fire,
With so swift motion, forth a stormy cloud
Leap'd downward from the welkin's farthest bound,
As I beheld the bird of Jove descending
Pounce on the tree, and, as he rush'd, the rind,
Disparting crush beneath him, buds much more
And leaflets. On the car with all his might
He struck, whence, staggering like a ship, it reel'd,
At random driv'n, to starboard now, o'ercome,
And now to larboard, by the vaulting waves.

Next springing up into the chariot's womb
A fox I saw, with hunger seeming pin'd
Of all good food. But, for his ugly sins
The saintly maid rebuking him, away
Scamp'ring he turn'd, fast as his hide-bound corpse
Would bear him. Next, from whence before he came,
I saw the eagle dart into the hull
O' th' car, and leave it with his feathers lin'd;
And then a voice, like that which issues forth
From heart with sorrow riv'd, did issue forth
From heav'n, and, "O poor bark of mine!" it cried,
"How badly art thou freighted!" Then, it seem'd,
That the earth open'd between either wheel,
And I beheld a dragon issue thence,
That through the chariot fix'd his forked train;
And like a wasp that draggeth back the sting,
So drawing forth his baleful train, he dragg'd
Part of the bottom forth, and went his way
Exulting. What remain'd, as lively turf
With green herb, so did clothe itself with plumes,
Which haply had with purpose chaste and kind
Been offer'd; and therewith were cloth'd the wheels,
Both one and other, and the beam, so quickly
A sigh were not breath'd sooner. Thus transform'd,
The holy structure, through its several parts,
Did put forth heads, three on the beam, and one
On every side; the first like oxen horn'd,

But with a single horn upon their front
The four. Like monster sight hath never seen.
O'er it methought there sat, secure as rock
On mountain's lofty top, a shameless whore,
Whose ken rov'd loosely round her. At her side,
As 't were that none might bear her off, I saw
A giant stand; and ever, and anon
They mingled kisses. But, her lustful eyes
Chancing on me to wander, that fell minion
Scourg'd her from head to foot all o'er; then full
Of jealousy, and fierce with rage, unloos'd
The monster, and dragg'd on, so far across
The forest, that from me its shades alone
Shielded the harlot and the new-form'd brute.

CANTO XXXIII

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

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

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

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

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

I thus: "As wax by seal, that changeth not
Its impress, now is stamp'd my brain by thee.
But wherefore soars thy wish'd-for speech so high
Beyond my sight, that loses it the more,
The more it strains to reach it?"--"To the end
That thou mayst know," she answer'd straight, "the school,
That thou hast follow'd; and how far behind,
When following my discourse, its learning halts:
And mayst behold your art, from the divine
As distant, as the disagreement is
'Twixt earth and heaven's most high and rapturous orb."

"I not remember," I replied, "that e'er
I was estrang'd from thee, nor for such fault
Doth conscience chide me." Smiling she return'd:
"If thou canst, not remember, call to mind
How lately thou hast drunk of Lethe's wave;
And, sure as smoke doth indicate a flame,

In that forgetfulness itself conclude
Blame from thy alienated will incurr'd.
From henceforth verily my words shall be
As naked as will suit them to appear
In thy unpractis'd view." More sparkling now,
And with retarded course the sun possess'd
The circle of mid-day, that varies still
As th' aspect varies of each several clime,
When, as one, sent in vaward of a troop
For escort, pauses, if perchance he spy
Vestige of somewhat strange and rare: so paus'd
The sev'nfold band, arriving at the verge
Of a dun umbrage hoar, such as is seen,
Beneath green leaves and gloomy branches, oft
To overbrow a bleak and alpine cliff.
And, where they stood, before them, as it seem'd,
Tigris and Euphrates both beheld,
Forth from one fountain issue; and, like friends,
Linger at parting. "O enlight'ning beam!
O glory of our kind! beseech thee say
What water this, which from one source deriv'd
Itself removes to distance from itself?"

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

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

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

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