

We traversed the deserted plain, as one
Who, wander'd from his track, thinks every step
Trodden in vain till he regain the path.

When we had come, where yet the tender dew
Strove with the sun, and in a place where fresh
The wind breathed o'er it, while it slowly dried;
Both hands extended on the watery grass
My master placed, in graceful act and kind.
Whence I of his intent before apprised,
Stretch'd out to him my cheeks suffused with tears,
There to my visage he anew restored
That hue which the dun shades of hell concealed.

Then on the solitary shore arrived,
That never sailing on its waters saw
Man that could after measure back his course,
He girt me in such manner as had pleased
Him who instructed; and, O strange to tell!
As he selected every humble plant,
Wherever one was pluck'd another¹ there
Resembling, straightway in its place arose.

"E resta in tremolar l'onda marina."
And Fortiguerra, "Ricciardetto," canto ix., st. 17:
"Visto il tremolar della marina."

¹ Another.—From Virgil, "Æneid." lib. vi. 143:
"Primo avulso non deficit alter."

CANTO II.

ARGUMENT.

They behold a vessel under conduct of an angel, coming over the waves with spirits to Purgatory, among whom, when the passengers have landed, Dante recognises his friend Casella; but, while they are entertained by him with a song, they hear Cato exclaiming against their negligent loitering, and at that rebuke hasten forwards to the mountain.

NOW had the sun¹ to that horizon reach'd,
That covers, with the most exalted point
Of its meridian circle, Salem's walls;
And night, that opposite to him her orb
Rounds, from the stream of Ganges issued forth,
Holding the scales,² that from her hands are dropt
When she reigns highest;³ so that where I was,
Aurora's white and vermeil-tinctured cheek
To orange turn'd⁴ as she in age increased.

Meanwhile we linger'd by the water's brink,
Like men,⁵ who, musing on their road, in thought
Journey, while motionless the body rests.
When lo! as, near upon the hour of dawn,
Through the thick vapours⁶ Mars with fiery beam
Glares down in west, over the ocean floor;

¹ Now had the sun.—Dante was now antipodal to Jerusalem; so that while the sun was setting with respect to that place, which he supposes to be the middle of the inhabited earth, to him it was rising. See Routh's "Reliquiæ Sacre," tom. iii., p. 256. So Fazio degli Uberti, "Dittamondo," lib. vi., cap. vi.: "Questo monte è quello

Ch' in mezzo il mondo apunto si divisa."

² The scales.—The constellation Libra.

³ When she reigns highest.—"Quando soverchia" is (according to Venturi, whom I have followed), "when the autumnal equinox is passed." Lombardi supposes it to mean "when the nights begin to increase; that is, after the summer solstice."

⁴ To orange turn'd.—"L'aurora già di vermiglia cominciava appressandosi il sole a divenir rancia." Boccaccio, "Decameron," Giorn. iii., at the beginning. See notes to "Hell," xxiii. 101.

⁵ Like men.—

"Che va col cuore e col corpo dimora."

So Frezzi:

"E mentre il corpo posa, col cor varca."

Il Quadrivregio, lib. iv., cap. 8.

⁶ Through the thick vapours.—So in the "Convito," p. 72: "Eso pare," &c., "He (Mars) appears more or less inflamed with heat, according to the thickness or rarity of the vapours that follow him."

So seem'd, what once again I hope to view,
 A light, so swiftly coming through the sea,
 No winged course might equal its career.
 From which when for a space I had withdrawn
 Mine eyes, to make inquiry of my guide,
 Again I look'd, and saw it grown in size
 And brightness: then on either side appear'd
 Something, but what I knew not, of bright hue,
 And by degrees from underneath it came
 Another. My preceptor silent yet
 Stood, while the brightness, that we first discern'd
 Open'd the form of wings: then when he knew
 The pilot cried aloud, "Down, down; bend low
 Thy knees; behold God's angel: fold thy hands:
 Now shalt thou see true ministers indeed.
 Lo! how all human means he sets at nought;
 So that nor oar he needs, nor other sail
 Except his wings,¹ between such distant shores.
 Lo! how straight up to heaven he holds them rear'd,
 Winnowing the air² with those eternal plumes,
 That not like mortal hairs fall off or change."

As more and more toward us came, more bright
 Appear'd the bird of God, nor could the eye
 Endure his splendour near: I mine bent down.
 He drove ashore in a small bark so swift
 And light, that in its course no wave it drank.
 The heavenly steersman at the prow was seen,
 Visibly written Blessed in his looks.
 Within, a hundred spirits and more there sat.
 "In Exitu³ Israel de Egypto,"
 All with one voice together sang, with what

¹ *Except his wings.*—Hence Milton:

"Who after came from earth, sailing arrived

Wafted by angels."

Paradise Lost, b. iii., ver. 521.

² *Winnowing the air.*—

"Trattando l'aere con l'eterne penna."

So "Filicaja," canz. viii., st. 11:

"Ma trattar l'aere coll' eterne piume."

³ *In Exitu.*—"When Israel came out of Egypt."
 Ps. cxiv.