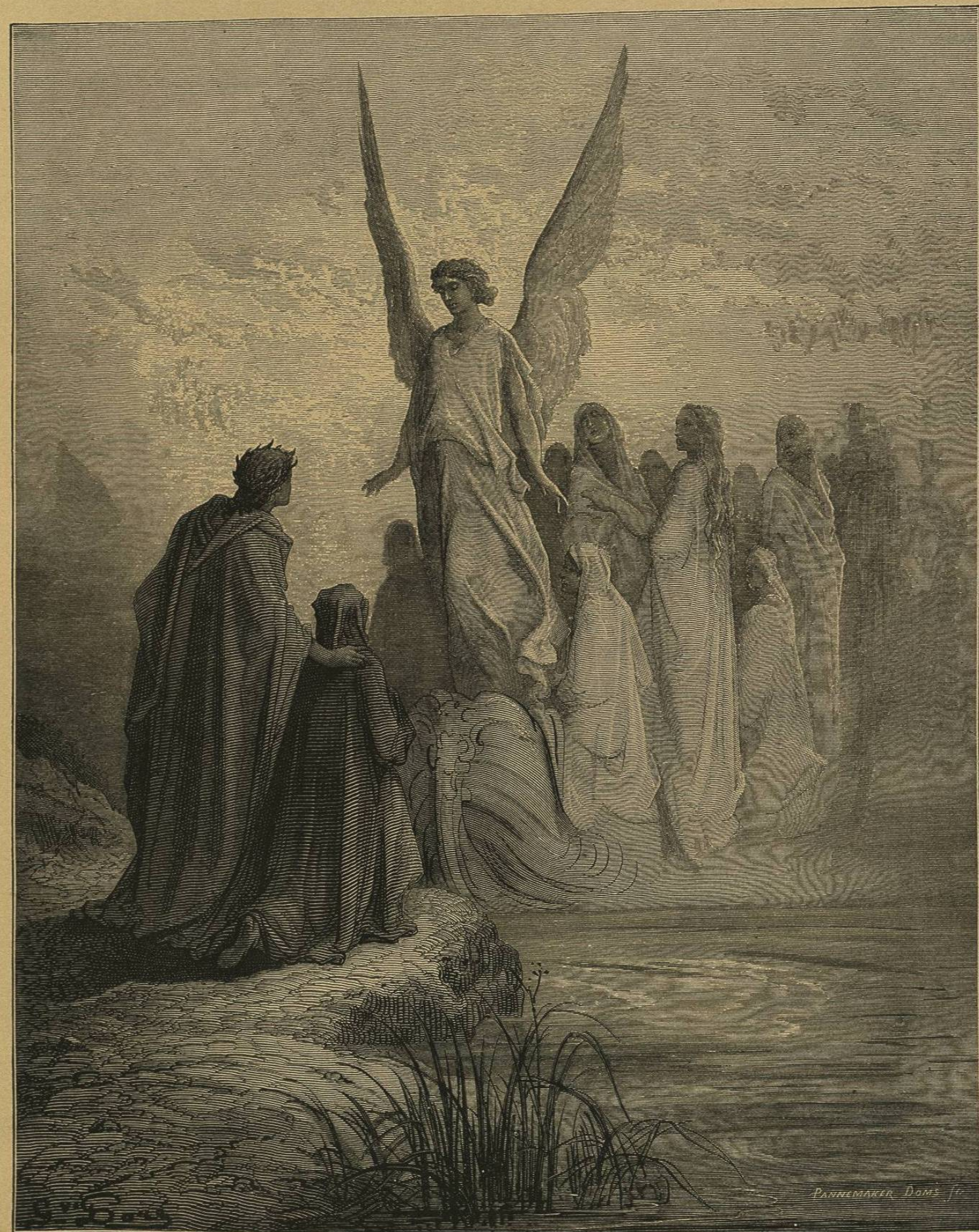




4

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."  
*Canto II., lines 27-30.*



5

The heavenly steersman at the prow was seen,  
Visibly written Blessed in his looks.  
*Canto II., lines 42, 43.*



In the remainder of that hymn is writ.  
 Then soon as with the sign of holy cross  
 He bless'd them, they at once leap'd out on land:  
 He, swiftly as he came, return'd. The crew,  
 There left, appear'd astounded with the place,  
 Gazing around, as one who sees new sights.

From every side the sun darted his beams,  
 And with his arrowy radiance<sup>1</sup> from mid heaven  
 Had chased the Capricorn, when that strange tribe,  
 Lifting their eyes toward us: "If ye know,  
 Declare what path will lead us to the mount."

Then Virgil answer'd: "Ye suppose, perchance,  
 Us well acquainted with this place: but here,  
 We, as yourselves, are strangers. Not long erst  
 We came, before you but a little space,  
 By other road so rough and hard, that now  
 The ascent will seem to us as play." The spirits,  
 Who from my breathing had perceived I lived,  
 Grew pale with wonder. As the multitude  
 Flock round a herald sent with olive branch,  
 To hear what news he brings, and in their haste  
 Tread one another down; e'en so at sight  
 Of me those happy spirits were fix'd, each one  
 Forgetful of its errand to depart  
 Where, cleansed from sin, it might be made all fair.

Then one I saw darting before the rest  
 With such fond ardour to embrace me, I  
 To do the like was moved. O shadows vain!

<sup>1</sup> With his arrowy radiance.—So Milton:

"And now when forth the morn:  
 . . . from before her vanish'd night,  
 Shot through with orient beams."

*Paradise Lost*, b. vi., ver. 15.

This has been regarded by some critics as a conceit,  
 into which Milton was betrayed by the Italian poets;

but it is, in truth, authorised by one of the correct-  
 est of the Grecians:

*Ὁν αἰόλα νύξ ἐναρπάζουσα  
 τίκτει, κατενύζει τε, φλογίζουσα*  
*"Ἄλιον."*

*Sophocles, Trachin.*, 96.

"Ecco dimanzi a te fugge repente  
 Saettata la notte."

*Marini, Son. al Sig. Cinthio Aldobrandino.*



Except in outward semblance: thrice my hands<sup>1</sup>  
 I clasp'd behind it, they as oft return'd  
 Empty into my breast again. Surprise  
 I need must think was painted in my looks,  
 For that the shadow smiled and backward drew.  
 To follow it I hasten'd, but with voice  
 Of sweetness it enjoin'd me to desist.  
 Then who it was I knew, and pray'd of it,  
 To talk with me it would a little pause.  
 It answer'd: "Thee as in my mortal frame  
 I loved, so loosed from it I love thee still,  
 And therefore pause: but why walkest thou here?"

"Not without purpose once more to return,  
 Thou find'st me, my Casella,<sup>2</sup> where I am,<sup>3</sup>  
 Journeying this way," I said. "But how of thee  
 Hath so much time been lost?"<sup>4</sup> He answer'd straight:

"No outrage hath been done to me, if he,<sup>5</sup>  
 Who when and whom he chooses takes, hath oft  
 Denied me passage here; since of just will  
 His will he makes. These three months past<sup>6</sup> indeed,

<sup>1</sup> *Thrice my hands.*—

"Ter conatus ibi collo bare brachia circum,  
 Ter frustra compressa manus effugit imago,  
 Par levibus ventis voluerique simillima somno."  
*Virgil, Æneid, ii. 794.*

Compare Homer, "Odyssey," xi. 205. The incident in the text is pleasantly alluded to in that delightful book the "Capricci del Bottaio" of Gelli (Opere, Milan, 1805, v. ii., p. 26), of which there is an English translation entitled "The Fearful Fancies of the Florentine Cooper. Written in Toscane, by John Baptist Gelli, one of the Free Studie of Florence; and for recreation translated into English by W. Barker." 8vo, London, 1599.

<sup>2</sup> *My Casella.*—A Florentine, celebrated for his skill in music, "in whose company," says Landino, "Dante often recreated his spirits, wearied by severer studies." See Dr. Burney's "History of Music," vol. ii., cap. iv., p. 322. Milton has a fine allusion to this meeting in his sonnet to Henry Lawes:

"Dante shall give fame leave to set thee higher  
 Than his Casella, whom he wooed to sing,  
 Met in the milder shades of Purgatory."

<sup>3</sup> *Where I am.*—"La dove io son." Lombardi un-

derstands this differently: "Not without purpose to return again to the earth, where I am; that is, where I usually dwell."

<sup>4</sup> *Hath so much time been lost.*—There is some uncertainty in this passage. If we read—

"Ma a te com'era tanta terra tolta?"

with the Nidobeatina and Aldine editions, and many MSS., it signifies, "why art thou deprived of so desirable a region as that of Purgatory? why dost thou not hasten to be cleansed of thy sins?" If, with the Academicians della Crusca, we read—

"Diss'io, ma a te come tant'ora è tolta?"

which is not destitute of authority to support it, and which has the advantage over the other, as it marks Dante's speech from Casella's, then it must mean, as I have translated it, "why hast thou lost so much time in arriving here?" Lombardi, who is for the former reading, supposes Casella to be just dead; those who prefer the latter, suppose him to have been dead some years, but now only just arrived.

<sup>5</sup> *He.*—The conducting angel.

<sup>6</sup> *These three months past.*—Since the time of the Jubilee, during which all spirits not condemned to eternal punishment were supposed to pass over to Purgatory as soon as they pleased.

He, whoso chose to enter, with free leave  
 Hath taken; whence I wandering by the shore<sup>1</sup>  
 Where Tiber's wave grows salt, of him gain'd kind  
 Admittance, at that river's mouth, toward which  
 His wings are pointed; for there always throng  
 All such as not to Acheron descend."

Then I: "If new law taketh not from thee  
 Memory or custom of love-tuned song,  
 That whilom all my cares had power to 'swage;  
 Please thee therewith a little to console  
 My spirit, that encumber'd with its frame,  
 Travelling so far, of pain is overcome."

"Love, that discourses in my thoughts,"<sup>2</sup> he then  
 Began in such soft accents, that within  
 The sweetness thrills me yet. My gentle guide,  
 And all who came with him, so well were pleased,  
 That seem'd nought else might in their thoughts have room.

Fast fix'd in mute attention to his notes  
 We stood, when lo! that old man venerable  
 Exclaiming, "How is this, ye tardy spirits?  
 What negligence detains you loitering here?  
 Run to the mountain to cast off those scales,  
 That from your eyes the sight of God conceal."

As a wild flock of pigeons, to their food  
 Collected, blade or tares, without their pride  
 Accustom'd, and in still and quiet sort,  
 If aught alarm them, suddenly desert  
 Their meal, assail'd by more important care;  
 So I that new-come troop beheld, the song  
 Deserting, hasten to the mountain's side,  
 As one who goes, yet, where he tends, knows not.

Nor with less hurried step did we depart.

<sup>1</sup> *The shore.*—Ostia.

<sup>2</sup> *Love, that discourses in my thoughts.*—

"Amor che nella mente mi ragiona,"  
 the first verse of a canzone in the "Convito" of Dante,  
 which he again cites in his treatise "De Vulgari El-  
 oquentia," lib. ii. cap. 6.

<sup>3</sup> *As one who goes, yet, where he tends, knows not.*—

"Com' uom, che va, nè sa dove riesca."

So Frezzi:

"Come chi va, nè sa dove camina."

*Il Quadriregio, lib. i., cap. 3.*