

But Virgil, with entreaty mild, advanced,  
 Requesting it to show the best ascent.  
 In answer to his question none return'd;  
 But of our country and our kind of life  
 Demanded. When my courteous guide began,  
 "Mantua," the shadow, in itself absorb'd,<sup>1</sup>  
 Rose towards us from the place in which it stood,  
 And cried, "Mantuan! I am thy countryman,  
 Sordello."<sup>2</sup> Each the other then embraced.

Ah, slavish Italy; thou inn of grief!<sup>3</sup>  
 Vessel without a pilot in loud storm!  
 Lady no longer of fair provinces,  
 But brothel-house impure! this gentle spirit,  
 Even from the pleasant sound of his dear land  
 Was prompt to greet a fellow-citizen  
 With such glad cheer: while now thy living ones<sup>4</sup>  
 In thee abide not without war; and one  
 Malicious gnaws another; ay, of those

<sup>1</sup> *The shadow, in itself absorb'd.*—I had before translated "the solitary shadow," and have made the alteration in consequence of Monti's just remark on the original, that "tutta in se romita" does not mean "solitary," but "collected, concentrated in itself." See his "Proposta" under "Romito." Vellutello had shown him the way to this interpretation, when he explained the words by "tutta in se raccolta e sola." Petrarch applies the expression to the spirit of Laura, when departing from the body. See his "Triumph of Death," cap. i., v. 152.

<sup>2</sup> *Sordello.*—The history of Sordello's life is wrapped in the obscurity of romance. That he distinguished himself by his skill in Provençal poetry is certain; and many feats of military prowess have been attributed to him. It is probable that he was born towards the end of the twelfth, and died about the middle of the succeeding century. Tiraboschi, who terms him the most illustrious of all the Provençal poets of his age, has taken much pains to sift all the notices he could collect relating to him, and has particularly exposed the fabulous narrative which Platina has introduced on this subject in his history of Mantua. Honourable mention of his name is made by our poet in the treatise "De Vulgari Eloquentia," lib. i., cap. 15, where it is said that, remarkable as he was for eloquence, he deserted the

vernacular language of his own country, not only in his poems, but in every other kind of writing. Tiraboschi had at first concluded him to be the same writer whom Dante elsewhere ("De Vulgari Eloquentia," lib. ii., c. 13) calls *Gottus Mantuanus*, but afterwards gave up that opinion to the authority of the Conte d'Arco and the Abate Bettinelli. By Bastero, in his "Crusca Provenzale," ediz. Roma, 1724, p. 94, amongst Sordello's MS. poems in the Vatican are mentioned "Canzoni, Tenzoni, Cobbole," and various "Serventesi," particularly one in the form of a funeral song on the death of Blancas, in which the poet reprehends all the reigning princes in Christendom. This last was well suited to attract the notice of our author. Mention of Sordello will recur in the notes to the "Paradise," c. ix., ver. 32. Since this note was written, many of Sordello's poems have been brought to light by the industry of M. Reynouard, in his "Choix des Poésies des Troubadours" and his "Lexique Roman."

<sup>3</sup> *Thou inn of grief.*—"S' io son d'ogni dolore ostello e chiave."—*Vita Nuova di Dante*, p. 225.

"Thou most beauteous inn,  
 Why should hard-favour'd grief be lodged in thee?"

*Shakespeare, Richard II.*, act v., sc. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Thy living ones.*—Compare Milton, "Paradise Lost," b. ii. 496, &c.





"Salve Regina," on the grass and flowers,  
Here chanting, I beheld those spirits sit,  
Who not beyond the valley could be seen.  
*Canto VII., lines 82-84.*

Whom the same wall and the same moat contains.  
Seek, wretched one! around thy sea-coasts wide;  
Then homeward to thy bosom turn; and mark,  
If any part of thee sweet peace enjoy.  
What boots it, that thy reins Justinian's hand<sup>1</sup>  
Refitted, if thy saddle be unprest?  
Nought doth he now but aggravate thy shame.  
Ah, people! thou obedient still shouldst live,  
And in the saddle let thy Cæsar sit,  
If well thou marked'st that which God commands.<sup>2</sup>

Look how that beast to felness hath relapsed,  
From having lost correction of the spur,  
Since to the bridle thou hast set thine hand,  
O German Albert!<sup>3</sup> who abandon'st her  
That is grown savage and unmanageable,  
When thou shouldst clasp her flanks with forked heels.  
Just judgment from the stars fall on thy blood;  
And be it strange and manifest to all;  
Such as may strike thy successor<sup>4</sup> with dread;  
For that thy sire<sup>5</sup> and thou have suffer'd thus,  
Through greediness of yonder realms detain'd,  
The garden of the empire to run waste.  
Come, see the Capulets and Montagues,<sup>6</sup>  
The Filippeschi and Monaldi,<sup>7</sup> man  
Who carest for nought! those sunk in grief, and these

<sup>1</sup> *Justinian's hand.*—"What avails it that Justinian delivered thee from the Goths and reformed thy laws, if thou art no longer under the control of his successors in the empire?"

<sup>2</sup> *That which God commands.*—He alludes to the precept, "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's."

<sup>3</sup> *O German Albert!*—The Emperor Albert I. succeeded Adolphus in 1298, and was murdered in 1308. See "Paradise," canto xix. 114.

<sup>4</sup> *Thy successor.*—The successor of Albert was Henry of Luxemburgh, by whose interposition in the affairs of Italy our poet hoped to have been reinstated in his native city.

<sup>5</sup> *Thy sire.*—The Emperor Rodolph, too intent

on increasing his power in Germany to give much of his thoughts to Italy, "the garden of the empire."

<sup>6</sup> *Capulets and Montagues.*—Our ears are so familiarised to the names of these rival houses in the language of Shakespeare, that I have used them instead of the "Montecchi" and "Cappelletti." They were two powerful Ghibelline families of Verona. In some parts of that play of which they form the leading characters, our great dramatic poet seems to have been not a little indebted to the "Hadriana" of Luigi Groto, commonly called "Il cieco d'Adria." See Walker's "Historical Memoir on Italian Tragedy," 4to, 1799, § i., p. 49.

<sup>7</sup> *Filippeschi and Monaldi.*—Two other rival families in Orvieto.



With dire suspicion rack'd. Come, cruel one!  
 Come, and behold the oppression of the nobles,  
 And mark their injuries; and thou mayst see  
 What safety Santafiore can supply.<sup>1</sup>  
 Come and behold thy Rome,<sup>2</sup> who calls on thee  
 Desolate widow, day and night with moans,  
 "My Cæsar, why dost thou desert my side?"  
 Come, and behold what love among thy people:  
 And if no pity touches thee for us,  
 Come, and blush for thine own report. For me,  
 If it be lawful, O Almighty Power!  
 Who wast in earth for our sakes crucified,  
 Are thy just eyes turn'd elsewhere? or is this  
 A preparation, in the wondrous depth  
 Of thy sage counsel made, for some good end,  
 Entirely from our reach of thought cut off?  
 So are the Italian cities all o'erthrong'd  
 With tyrants, and a great Marcellus<sup>3</sup> made  
 Of every petty factious villager.

My Florence! thou mayst well remain unmoved  
 At this digression, which affects not thee;  
 Thanks to thy people, who so wisely speed.  
 Many have justice in their heart, that long  
 Waiteth for counsel to direct the bow,  
 Or ere it dart unto its aim: but thine  
 Have it on their lip's edge. Many refuse<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *What safety Santafiore can supply.*—A place between Pisa and Sienna. What he alludes to is so doubtful, that it is not certain whether we should not read "come si cura" ("how Santafiore is governed"). Perhaps the event related in the note to v. 58, canto xi., may be pointed at.

<sup>2</sup> *Come and behold thy Rome.*—Thus in the Latin Epistle to the Cardinals, which has been lately discovered in the Laurentian library, and has every appearance of being Dante's: "Romam urbem, nunc utroque lumine destitutam, nunc Hannibali nedum aliis miserandam, solam sedentem et viduam, prout superius proclamatur, qualis est, pro modulo nostræ imaginis, ante mortales oculos affigatis omnes."—

*Opere minori di Dante*, tom. iii., parte ii., p. 270, 12mo, Fir., 1840.

<sup>3</sup> *Marcellus.*—

"Un Marcel diventa  
 Ogni villan che parteggiando viene."

Repeated by Alamanni in his "Coltivazione," lib. i. He probably means the Marcellus who opposed Julius Cæsar.

<sup>4</sup> *Many refuse.*—He appears to have been of Plato's mind, that in a commonwealth of worthy men, place and power would be as much declined as they are now sought after and coveted: *κινδυνεύει πόλις ἀνδρῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐν γένεσσι, περιμαχητὸν ἀν εἶναι τὸ μὴ ἀρχειν, ὥσπερ νῦν τὸ ἀρχειν.* Πολιτ. Lib. A.

To bear the common burdens: readier thine  
 Answer uncall'd, and cry, "Behold I stoop!"

Make thyself glad, for thou hast reason now,  
 Thou wealthy! thou at peace! thou wisdom-fraught!  
 Facts best will witness if I speak the truth.  
 Athens and Lacedæmon, who of old  
 Enacted laws, for civil arts renown'd,  
 Made little progress in improving life  
 Towards thee, who usest such nice subtlety,  
 That to the middle of November scarce  
 Reaches the thread thou in October weavest.  
 How many times within thy memory,  
 Customs, and laws, and coins, and offices  
 Have been by thee renew'd, and people changed.

If thou remember'st well and canst see clear,  
 Thou wilt perceive thyself like a sick wretch,<sup>1</sup>  
 Who finds no rest upon her down, but oft  
 Shifting her side, short respite seeks from pain.

<sup>1</sup> *A sick wretch.*—Imitated by the Cardinal de Polignac;

"Cen lectum peragrat membris languentibus æger,  
 In latus alterne lævum dextrumque recumbens:

Nec juvat: inde oculos tollit resupinus in altum:  
 Nusquam inventa quies; semper quæsita: quod illi  
 Primum indelicis fuerat, mox torquet et angit:  
 Nec morbum sanat, nec fallit tædia morbi."

*Anti-Lucretius*, lib. i. 1052.