

(There¹ whence the Greeks did after sunder him;) E'en thus I shook me, soon as from my face The slumber parted, turning deadly pale, Like one ice-struck with dread. Sole at my side My comfort stood: and the bright sun was now More than two hours aloft: and to the sea My looks were turn'd. "Fear not," my master cried, "Assured we are at happy point. Thy strength Shrink not, but rise dilated. Thou art come To Purgatory now. Lo! there the cliff That circling bounds it. Lo! the entrance there, Where it doth seem disparted. Ere the dawn Usher'd the day-light, when thy wearied soul Slept in thee, o'er the flowery vale beneath A lady came, and thus bespake me: 'I Am Lucia.² Suffer me to take this man, Who slumbers. Easier so his way shall speed.' Sordello and the other gentle shapes Tarrying, she bare thee up: and, as day shone, This summit reach'd; and I pursued her steps. Here did she place thee. First, her lovely eyes That open entrance show'd me; then at once She vanish'd with thy sleep." Like one, whose doubts Are chased by certainty, and terror turn'd To comfort on discovery of the truth, Such was the change in me: and as my guide Beheld me fearless, up along the cliff He moved, and I behind him, towards the height.

Reader! thou markest how my theme doth rise; Nor wonder therefore, if more artfully I prop the structure. Nearer now we drew, Arrived whence, in that part, where first a breach As of a wall appear'd, I could descry

¹ *There*.—Mr. Darley has noted the omission of this line in the preceding editions.

² *Lucia*.—See "Hell," c. ii. 97; and "Paradise," c. xxxii. 123.

A portal, and three steps beneath, that led For inlet there, of different colour each; And one who watch'd, but spake not yet a word. As more and more mine eye did stretch its view, I mark'd him seated on the highest step, In visage such, as past my power to bear. Grasp'd in his hand, a naked sword glanced back The rays so towards me, that I oft in vain My sight directed. "Speak, from whence ye stand;" He cried: "What would ye? Where is your escort? Take heed your coming upward harm ye not."

"A heavenly dame, not skilless of these things," Replied the instructor, "told us, even now, 'Pass that way: here the gate is.'—"And may she, Befriending, prosper your ascent," resumed The courteous keeper of the gate: "Come then Before our steps." We straightway thither came.

The lowest stair¹ was marble white, so smooth And polish'd, that therein my mirror'd form Distinct I saw. The next of hue more dark Than sablest grain, a rough and singed block, Crack'd lengthwise and across. The third, that lay Massy above, seem'd porphyry, that flamed Red as the life-blood spouting from a vein. On this God's angel either foot sustain'd, Upon the threshold seated, which appear'd A rock of diamond. Up the trinal steps My leader cheerly drew me. "Ask," said he, "With humble heart, that he unbar the bolt."

Piously at his holy feet devolved I cast me, praying him for pity's sake

¹ *The lowest stair*.—By the white step is meant the distinctness with which the conscience of the penitent reflects his offences; by the burnt and cracked one, his contrition on their account; and by that of porphyry, the fervour with which he resolves

on the future pursuit of piety and virtue. Hence, no doubt, Milton describing "the gate of heaven:"

"Each stair mysteriously was meant."

Paradise Lost, b. iii. 516.

That he would open to me; but first fell
Thrice on my bosom prostrate. Seven times¹
The letter, that denotes the inward stain,
He, on my forehead, with the blunted point
Of his drawn sword, inscribed. And "Look," he cried,
"When enter'd, that thou wash these scars away."

Ashes, or earth ta'en dry out of the ground,
Were of one colour with the robe he wore.
From underneath that vestment forth he drew
Two keys,² of metal twain: the one was gold,
Its fellow silver. With the pallid first,
And next the burnish'd, he so ply'd the gate,
As to content me well. "Whenever one
Faieth of these, that in the key-hole straight
It turn not, to this alley then expect
Access in vain." Such were the words he spake.
"One is more precious:³ but the other needs
Skill and sagacity, large share of each,
Ere its good task to disengage the knot
Be worthily perform'd. From Peter these
I hold, of him instructed that I err
Rather in opening, than in keeping fast;
So but the suppliant at my feet implore."

Then of that hallow'd gate he thrust the door,
Exclaiming, "Enter, but this warning hear:
He forth again departs who looks behind."

As in the hinges of that sacred ward
The swivels turn'd, sonorous metal strong,
Harsh was the grating;⁴ nor so surlily

¹ *Seven times*.—Seven P's, to denote the seven sins (Peccata) of which he was to be cleansed in his passage through Purgatory.

² *Two keys*.—Lombardi remarks that painters have usually drawn St. Peter with two keys, the one of gold and the other of silver; but that Niccolo Alemanni, in his 'Dissertation de Parietinis Lateranensibus,' produces instances of his being represented with one key, and with three. We have here, however, not St. Peter, but an angel deputed by him.

³ *One is more precious*.—The golden key denotes the divine authority by which the priest absolves the sinners; the silver expresses the learning and judgment requisite for the due discharge of that office.

⁴ *Harsh was the grating*.—

"On a sudden open fly
With impetuous recoil and jarring sound
The infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
Harsh thunder."

Milton, Paradise Lost, b. ii. 882.

Roar'd the Tarpeian,¹ when by force bereft
Of good Metellus, thenceforth from his loss
To leanness doom'd. Attentively I turn'd,
Listening to the thunder that first issued forth;
And "We praise thee, O God," methought I heard,
In accents blended with sweet melody.
The strains came o'er mine ear, e'en as the sound
Of choral voices, that in solemn chant
With organ² mingle, and, now high and clear
Come swelling, now float indistinct away.

¹ *The Tarpeian*.—

"Protinus abducto patuerunt templa Metello.
Tunc rupes Tarpeia sonat: magnoque reclusas
Testatur stridore fores: tunc conditus imo
Eruiat templo multis intactus ab annis
Romani census populi," &c.

Lucan, Pharsalia, lib. iii. 157.

"The tribune with unwilling steps withdrew,
While impious hands the rude assault renew;
The brazen gates with thundering strokes
resound,
And the Tarpeian mountain rings around.
At length the sacred storehouse, open laid,
The hoarded wealth of ages past displayed."

Rowe.

² *Organ*.—Organs were used in Italy as early as in the sixth century. See Tiraboschi, "Storia della Lett. Ital.," 4to, vol. iii., lib. iii., cap. i., § 11, where the following description of that instrument is quoted from Cassiodorus, in Ps. 150:—"Organum itaque est quasi turris diversis fistulis fabricata, quibus flatu folium vox copiosissima destinatur, et ut eam modulatio decora componat, linguis quibusdam ligneis ab interiore parte construitur, quas disciplinabiliter Magistrorum digiti reprimentes grandisonam efficiunt et suavissonam cantilenam." If I remember right, there is a passage in the Emperor Julian's writings which shows that the organ was not unknown in his time.