

The letter'd prize: and he, perhaps, is born,¹
Who shall drive either from their nest. The noise

• Or v' inchinate a sì dolce preghiera;
Spogliatevi di questa vesta grama,
Da che voi sete per ragion richiesto.
Che l'uomo per dolor more e dispera.
Con voi vedeste poi la bella ciera.
Se v' accogliesse morte in disperanza,
De sì grave pesanza
Traete il vostro cor ormai per Dio,
Che non sia così rio
Ver l'alma vostra che ancora spiera
Vederla in ciel e star nelle sue braccia,
Dunque spene dè confortar vi piaccia."
Allacci, Ediz. Napoli, 1661, p. 380.

"Comfort thee, comfort thee," exclaimeth Love;
And Pity by thy God adjures thee 'rest:
Oh then incline ye to such gentle prayer;
Nor Reason's plea should ineffectual prove,
Who bids ye lay aside this dismal vest:
For man meets death through sadness and de-
spair.

Amongst you ye have seen a face so fair:
Be this in mortal mourning some relief.
And, for more balm of grief,
Rescue thy spirit from its heavy load,
Remembering thy God;
And that in heaven thou hopest again to share
In sight of her, and with thine arms to fold:
Hope then; nor of this comfort quit thy hold."

To these I will add a sonnet by the same writer,
from the poems printed with the "Bella Mano" of
Giusto de' Conti. Ediz. 1715, p. 167:

"Io vo dal ver la mia donna laudare,
E rassembrarla alla rosa, ed al giglio.
Più che stella Diana splende, e pare,
Ciò che lassù è bello a lei somiglio.
Verdi rivere a lei rassembro, l'are,
Tutto color di porpora, e vermiglio,
Oro, ed argento, e ricche gioie preclare;
Medesmo amor per lei raffina miglio.
Passa per via adorna, e sì gentile,
Cui bassa orgoglio, a cui dona salute,
E fal di nostra fe, se non la crede.
E non le può appressare, uom che sia vile,
Ancor ve ne dirò maggior vertute,
Nullo uom può mal pensar finchè la vede."

"I would from truth my lady's praise supply,
Resembling her to lily and to rose;
Brighter than morning's lucid star she shows,
And fair as that which fairest is on high.
To the blue wave, I liken her, and sky,
All colour that with pink and crimson glows,
Gold, silver, and rich stones: nay lovelier
grows
E'en love himself, when she is standing by.
She passeth on so gracious and so mild,
One's pride is quench'd, and one of sick is well:
And they believe, who from the faith did err;
And none may near her come by harm defiled.
A mightier virtue have I yet to tell;
No man may think of evil, seeing her."

The two following sonnets of Guido Cavalcanti may
enable the reader to form some judgment whether
Dante had sufficient reason for preferring him to his
predecessor Guinicelli:

"Io temo che la mia disavventura
Non faccia sì ch' io dico io mi dispero,
Però ch' io sento nel cor un pensiero,
Che fa tremar la mente di paura.
E par ch' ei dica: Amor non t'assicura
In guisa che tu possa di leggiero
Alla tua donna sì contare il vero,
Che morte non ti ponga in sua figura.
Della gran doglia, che l'anima sente,
Si parte dallo core un tal sospiro
Che va dicendo: Spiriti fuggite;
Allor null' uom, che sia pietoso, miro;
Che consolasse mia vita dolente,
Dicendo: Spiriti non vi partite."
Anecdota Literaria ex MSS. Codicibus eruta.
Ediz. Roma (no year), v. iii., p. 452.

"I fear lest my mischance may so prevail,
That it may make me of myself despair.
For, my heart searching, I discover there
A thought that makes the mind with terror
quail.

It says, meseemeth, 'Love shall not avail
To strengthen thee so much, that thou shalt
dare

Tell her thou lovest, thy passion or thy prayer,
To save from power of death thy visage pale.'
Through the dread sorrow that o'erwhelms my
soul,

There issues from my bosom such a sigh,
As passeth, crying, 'Spirits, flee away.'
And then, when I am fainting in my dole,
No man so merciful there standeth by,
To comfort me, and answer, 'Spirits, stay.'"

"Beltà di donna, e di saccente core,
E cavalieri armati, che sian genti,
Cantar d'augelli, e ragionar d'amore,
Adorni legni in mar, forti e correnti:
Aria serena, quando appar l'albore,
E bianca neve scender senza venti,
Rivera d'acqua, e prato d'ogni fiore,
Oro, e argento, azzurro in ornamenti:
Ciò che può la beltate, e la valenza
Della mia donna in suo gentil coraggio,
Par che rassembra vile a chi cio guarda.
E tanto ha più d'ogni altra conoscenza,
Quanto lo Ciel di questa terra è maggio,
A simil di natura ben non tarda."

La Bella Mano e Rime Antiche.
Ediz. Fir., 1715, p. 128.

"Whatso is fair in lady's face or mind,
And gentle knights caparison'd and gay,
Singing of sweet birds unto love inclined,
And gallant barks that cut the watery way;
The white snow falling without any wind,
The cloudless sky at break of early day,
The crystal stream, with flowers the meadow
lined,
Silver, and gold, and azure for array:
To him that sees the beauty and the worth
Whose power doth meet and in my lady dwell,
All seem as vile, their price and lustre gone.
And, as the heaven is higher than the earth,
So she in knowledge doth each one excel,
Not slow to good in nature like her own."

¹ He, perhaps, is born.—Some imagine, with much

Of worldly fame is but a blast of wind,
That blows from diverse points, and shifts its name,
Shifting the point it blows from. Shalt thou more
Live in the mouths of mankind, if thy flesh
Part shrivel'd from thee, than if thou hadst died
Before the coral and the pap were left;
Or e'er some thousand years have past? and that
Is, to eternity compared, a space
Briefer than is the twinkling of an eye
To the heaven's slowest orb. He there, who treads
So leisurely before me, far and wide
Through Tuscany resounded once; and now
Is in Sienna scarce with whispers named:
There was he sovereign, when destruction caught
The maddening rage of Florence, in that day
Proud as she now is loathsome. Your renown
Is as the herb, whose hue doth come and go;
And his might withers it, by whom it sprang
Crude from the lap of earth." I thus to him:
"True are thy sayings: to my heart they breathe
The kindly spirit of meekness, and allay
What tumours¹ rankle there. But who is he,
Of whom thou spakest but now?" "This," he replied,
"Is Provenzano. He is here, because
He reach'd with grasp presumptuous at the sway
Of all Sienna. Thus he still hath gone,
Thus goeth never-resting, since he died.
Such is the acquittance render'd back of him,
Who, in the mortal life, too much hath dared."
I then: "If soul, that to life's verge delays

probability, that Dante here augurs the greatness of
his own poetical reputation. Others have absurdly
fancied that he prophesies the glory of Petrarch;
but Petrarch was not yet born. Lombardi doubts
whether it is not spoken generally of human vicis-
situdes.

¹ What tumours.—

"Apt words have power to swage
The tumours of a troubled mind."

Milton, Samson Agonistes.

Repentance, linger in that lower space,
Nor hither mount (unless good prayers befriend),
Or ever time, long as it lived, be past;¹
How chanced admittance was vouchsafed to him?"

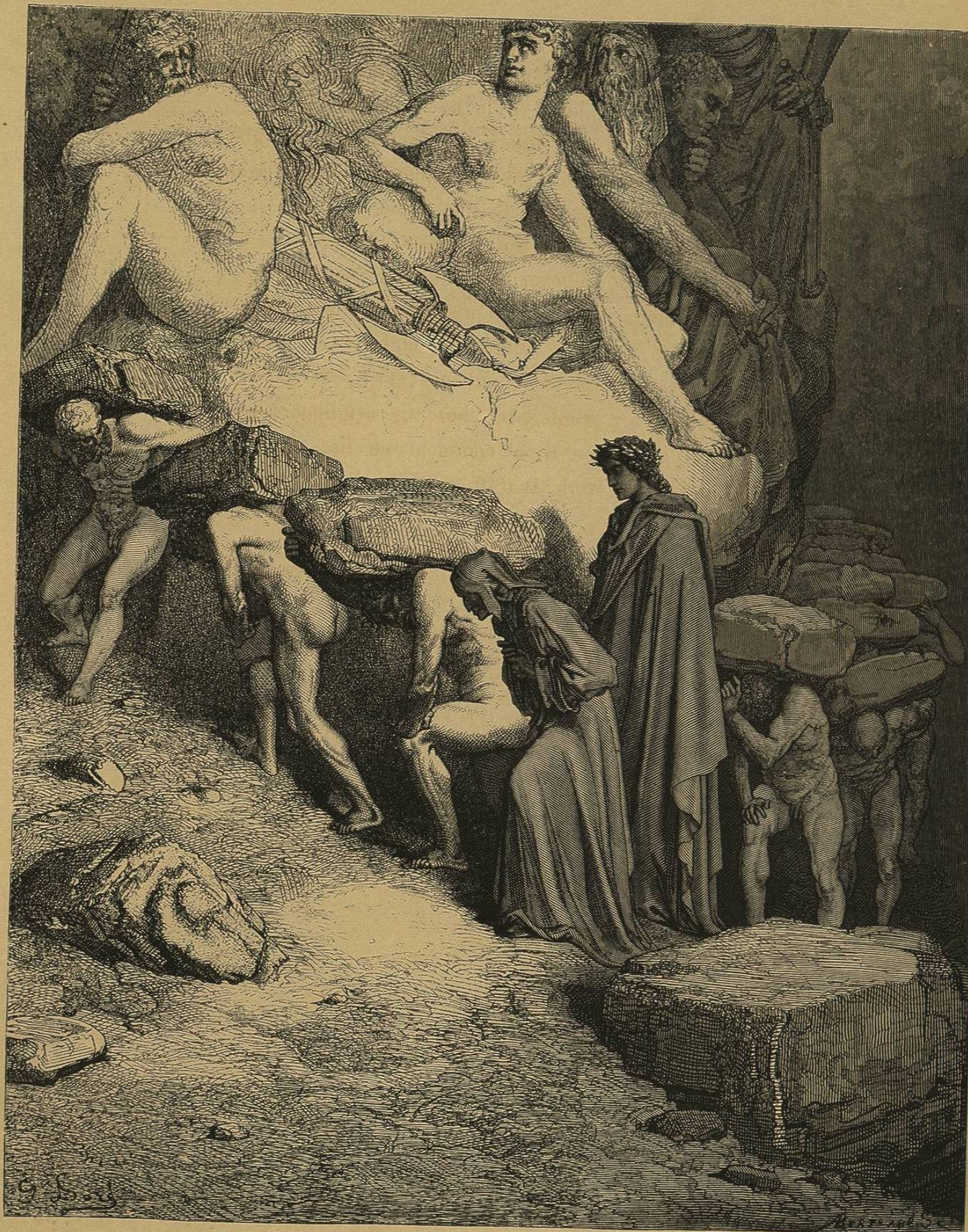
"When at his glory's topmost height," said he,
"Respect of dignity all cast aside,
Freely he fix'd him on Sienna's plain,
A suitor² to redeem his suffering friend,
Who languish'd in the prison-house of Charles;
Nor, for his sake, refused through every vein
To tremble. More I will not say; and dark,
I know, my words are; but thy neighbours soon³
Shall help thee to a comment on the text.
This is the work, that from these limits freed him."

¹ *Or ever time, long as it lived, be past.*—This line was omitted in the former editions, as Mr. Lyell has pointed out to me.

² *A suitor.*—Provenzano Salvani humbled himself so far for the sake of one of his friends, who was detained in captivity by Charles I. of Sicily, as personally to supplicate the people of Sienna to contribute the sum required by the king for his ransom; and this act of self-abasement atoned for his general ambition and pride. He fell in the battle of Val d'Elsa, wherein the Florentines discomfited the Siennese in June, 1269. G. Villani relates some curious particulars of his fate: "Messer Provenzano Salvani, the lord and conductor of the army, was taken, and his head cut off and carried through all the camp, fixed upon a lance. And well was accom-

plished the prophecy and revelation made to him by the devil by way of witchcraft, but he understood it not; for having compelled him to answer how he should succeed in the said engagement, he told him, lyingly—'Thou shalt go, fight, conquer not, die in the battle, and thy head shall be the highest in the camp.' And he thought to have the victory, and from these words hoped to remain master of all, and noted not the fallacy, where he said, 'Conquer not, die.' And therefore it is great folly to trust such counsel as that of the devil."—Lib. vii., cap. xxxi.

³ *Thy neighbours soon.*—"Thou wilt know in the time of thy banishment, which is near at hand, what it is to solicit favours of others, and 'tremble through every vein,' lest they should be refused thee."



With equal pace, as oxen in the yoke,
I, with that laden spirit, journey'd on,
Long as the mild instructor suffer'd me.

Canto XII., lines 1-3.