

## CANTO XIII.

### ARGUMENT.

They gain the second cornice, where the sin of envy is purged; and having proceeded a little to the right, they hear voices uttered by invisible spirits recounting famous examples of charity, and next behold the shades, or souls, of the envious clad in sackcloth, and having their eyes sewed up with an iron thread. Amongst these Dante finds Sapia, a Siennese lady, from whom he learns the cause of her being there.

WE reach'd the summit of the scale, and stood  
Upon the second buttress of that mount  
Which healeth him who climbs. A cornice there,  
Like to the former, girdles round the hill;  
Save that its arch, with sweep less ample, bends.

Shadow, nor image there, is seen: all smooth  
The rampart and the path, reflecting nought  
But the rock's sullen hue. "If here we wait,  
For some to question," said the bard, "I fear  
Our choice may haply meet too long delay."

Then fixedly upon the sun his eyes  
He fasten'd; made his right the central point  
From whence to move; and turn'd the left aside.  
"O pleasant light, my confidence and hope!  
Conduct us thou," he cried, "on this new way,  
Where now I venture; leading to the bourn  
We seek. The universal world to thee  
Owes warmth and lustre. If' no other cause  
Forbid, thy beams should ever be our guide."

Far, as is measured for a mile on earth,  
In brief space had we journey'd; such prompt will  
Impell'd; and towards us flying, now were heard

<sup>1</sup> *If*.—"Unless there be some urgent necessity for travelling by night, the daylight should be preferred for that purpose."

Spirits invisible, who courteously  
Unto love's table bade the welcome guest.  
The voice that first flew by, call'd forth aloud,  
"They have no wine,"<sup>1</sup> so on behind us past,  
Those sounds reiterating, nor yet lost  
In the faint distance, when another came  
Crying, "I am Orestes,"<sup>2</sup> and alike  
Wing'd its fleet way. "O father!" I exclaim'd,  
"What tongues are these?" and as I question'd, lo!  
A third exclaiming, "Love ye those have wrong'd you."<sup>3</sup>

"This circuit," said my teacher, "knots the scourge"<sup>4</sup>  
For envy; and the cords are therefore drawn  
By charity's correcting hand. The curb  
Is of a harsher sound; as thou shalt hear  
(If I deem rightly) ere thou reach the pass,  
Where pardon sets them free. But fix thine eyes  
Intently through the air; and thou shalt see  
A multitude before thee seated, each  
Along the shelving grot." Then more than erst  
I oped mine eyes; before me view'd; and saw  
Shadows with garments dark as was the rock;  
And when we pass'd a little forth, I heard  
A crying, "Blessed Mary! pray for us,  
Michael and Peter! all ye saintly host!"

I do not think there walks on earth this day  
Man so remorseless, that he had not yearn'd  
With pity at the sight that next I saw.  
Mine eyes a load of sorrow teem'd, when now  
I stood so near them, that their semblances

<sup>1</sup> *They have no wine*.—John, chap. ii. ver. 3.  
These words of the Virgin are referred to as an instance of charity.

<sup>2</sup> *Orestes*.—Alluding to his friendship with Pylades.

<sup>3</sup> *Love ye those have wrong'd you*.—"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for

them which despitefully use you and persecute you."  
—Matt. v. 44.

<sup>4</sup> *The scourge*.—"The chastisement of envy consists in hearing examples of the opposite virtue, charity. As a curb and restraint on this vice, you will presently hear very different sounds, those of threatening and punishment."

Came clearly to my view. Of sackcloth vile  
 Their covering seem'd; and, on his shoulder, one  
 Did stay another, leaning; and all lean'd  
 Against the cliff. E'en thus the blind and poor,  
 Near the confessionals, to crave an alms,  
 Stand, each his head upon his fellow's sunk;  
 So most to stir compassion, not by sound  
 Of words alone, but that which moves not less,  
 The sight of misery. And as never beam  
 Of noon-day visiteth the eyeless man,  
 E'en so was heaven a niggard unto these  
 Of his fair light: for through the orbs of all,  
 A thread of wire, impiercing, knits them up,  
 As for the taming of a haggard hawk.

It were a wrong, methought, to pass and look  
 On others, yet myself the while unseen.  
 To my sage counsel therefore did I turn.  
 He knew the meaning of the mute appeal,  
 Nor waited for my questioning, but said:  
 "Speak, and be brief, be subtile in thy words."

On that part of the cornice, whence no rim  
 Engarlands its steep fall, did Virgil come;  
 On the other side me were the spirits, their cheeks  
 Bathing devout with penitential tears,  
 That through the dread impalement forced a way.

I turn'd me to them, and "O shades!" said I,  
 "Assured that to your eyes unveil'd shall shine  
 The lofty light, sole object of your wish,  
 So may heaven's grace<sup>1</sup> clear whatsoe'er of foam  
 Floats turbid on the conscience, that thenceforth  
 The stream of mind roll limpid from its source;

<sup>1</sup> *So may heaven's grace.*—

"Se tosto grazia risolve le schiume  
 Di vostra coscienza, sì che chiaro  
 Per esso scenda della mente il fiume."  
 This is a fine moral, and finely expressed. Unless

the conscience be cleared from its impurity, which  
 it can only thoroughly be by an influence from above,  
 the mind itself cannot act freely and clearly. "If  
 ye will do his will, ye shall know of the doctrine."  
 —John vii. 17.

As ye declare (for so shall ye impart  
 A boon I dearly prize) if any soul  
 Of Latium dwell among ye: and perchance  
 That soul may profit, if I learn so much."

"My brother! we are, each one, citizens  
 Of one true city.<sup>1</sup> Any, thou wouldst say,  
 Who lived a stranger in Italia's land."

So heard I answering, as appear'd, a voice,  
 That onward came some space from whence I stood.

A spirit I noted, in whose look was mark'd  
 Expectance. Ask ye how? The chin was raised  
 As in one reft of sight. "Spirit," said I,  
 "Who for thy rise art tutoring (if thou be  
 That which didst answer to me), or by place,  
 Or name, disclose thyself, that I may know thee."

"I was," it answer'd, "of Sienna: here  
 I cleanse away with these the evil life,  
 Soliciting with tears that He, who is,  
 Vouchsafe him to us. Though Sapia<sup>2</sup> named,  
 In sapience I excell'd not; gladder far  
 Of other's hurt, than of the good befel me.  
 That thou mayst own I now deceive thee not  
 Hear, if my folly were not as I speak it.  
 When now my years sloped waning down the arch,  
 It so bechanced, my fellow-citizens  
 Near Colle met their enemies in the field;  
 And I pray'd God to grant what He had will'd.<sup>3</sup>  
 There were they vanquish'd, and betook themselves  
 Unto the bitter passages of flight.  
 I mark'd the hunt; and waxing out of bounds

<sup>1</sup> *Citizens of one true city.*—"For here we have no  
 continuing city, but we seek one to come."—Heb.  
 xiii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Sapia.*—A lady of Sienna, who, living in exile  
 at Colle, was so overjoyed at a defeat which her  
 countrymen sustained near that place, that she de-

clared nothing more was wanting to make her die  
 contented. The Latin annotator on the Monte Ca-  
 sino MS. says of this lady: "Fuit uxor D. Cinii de  
 Pigezo de Senis."

<sup>3</sup> *And I pray'd God to grant what he had will'd.*  
 —That her countrymen should be defeated in battle.

In gladness, lifted up my shameless brow,  
 And, like the merlin<sup>1</sup> cheated by a gleam,  
 Cried, 'It is over. Heaven! I fear thee not.'  
 Upon my verge of life I wish'd for peace  
 With God; nor yet repentance had supplied  
 What I did lack of duty, were it not  
 The hermit Piero,<sup>2</sup> touch'd with charity,  
 In his devout oraisons thought on me.  
 But who art thou that question'st of our state,  
 Who go'st, as I believe, with lids unclosed,  
 And breathest in thy talk?"—"Mine eyes," said I,  
 "May yet be here ta'en from me; but not long;  
 For they have not offended grievously  
 With envious glances. But the woe beneath<sup>3</sup>  
 Urges my soul with more exceeding dread.  
 That nether load already weighs me down."

She thus: "Who then, amongst us here aloft,  
 Hath brought thee, if thou weenest to return?"

"He," answered I, "who standeth mute beside me.  
 I live: of me ask therefore, chosen spirit!  
 If thou desire I yonder yet should move  
 For thee my mortal feet."—"Oh!" she replied,  
 "This is so strange a thing, it is great sign  
 That God doth love thee. Therefore with thy prayer  
 Sometime assist me: and, by that I crave,  
 Which most thou covetest, that if thy feet  
 E'er tread on Tuscan soil, thou save my fame  
 Amongst my kindred. Them shalt thou behold  
 With that vain multitude,<sup>4</sup> who set their hope

<sup>1</sup> *The merlin.*—The story of the merlin is, that having been induced by a gleam of fine weather in the winter to escape from his master, he was soon oppressed by the rigour of the season.

<sup>2</sup> *The hermit Piero.*—Piero Pettinagno, a holy hermit of Florence.

<sup>3</sup> *The woe beneath.*—Dante felt that he was much more subject to the sin of pride, than to that of envy; and this is just what we should have concluded of a mind such as his.

<sup>4</sup> *Them shalt thou behold with that vain multitude.*—The Siennese. See "Hell," c. xxix. 118. "Their acquisition of Telamone, a seaport on the confines of the Maremma, has led them to conceive hopes of becoming a naval power: but this scheme will prove as chimerical as their former plan for the discovery of a subterraneous stream under their city." Why they gave the appellation of Diana to the imagined stream, Venturi says he leaves it to the antiquaries of Sienna to conjecture.



E'en thus the blind and poor,  
 Near the confessionals, to crave an alms,  
 Stand, each his head upon his fellow's sunk.

*Canto XIII., lines 55-57.*