

That from thy temples may be soon erased,
 E'en as the two already, those five scars,
 That, when they pain thee worst, then kindest heal."

"Thou," I had said, "content'st me;" when I saw
 The other round was gain'd, and wondering eyes
 Did keep me mute. There suddenly I seem'd
 By an ecstatic vision wrapt away;
 And in a temple saw, methought, a crowd
 Of many persons; and at the entrance stood
 A dame,¹ whose sweet demeanour did express
 A mother's love, who said, "Child! why hast thou
 Dealt with us thus? Behold thy sire and I
 Sorrowing have sought thee;" and so held her peace;
 And straight the vision fled. A female next
 Appear'd before me, down whose visage coursed
 Those waters, that grief forces out from one
 By deep resentment stung, who seem'd to say:
 "If thou, Pisistratus, be lord indeed
 Over this city,² named with such debate
 Of adverse gods, and whence each science sparkles,
 Avenge thee of those arms, whose bold embrace
 Hath clasp'd our daughter;" and to her, meseem'd,
 Benign and meek, with visage undisturb'd,
 Her sovran spake: "How shall we those requite³
 Who wish us evil, if we thus condemn
 The man that loves us?" After that I saw
 A multitude, in fury burning, slay
 With stones a stripling youth,⁴ and shout amain
 "Destroy, destroy;" and him I saw, who bow'd
 Heavy with death unto the ground, yet made

¹ A dame.—Luke ii. 48.

² Over this city.—Athens, named after Ἀθήνη. Minerva, in consequence of her having produced a more valuable gift for it in the olive, than Neptune had done in the horse.

³ How shall we those requite.—The answer of Pisistratus the tyrant to his wife, when she urged

him to inflict the punishment of death on a young man, who, inflamed with love for his daughter, had snatched a kiss from her in public. The story is told by Valerius Maximus, lib. v. 1.

⁴ Slay with stones a stripling youth.—The proto-martyr Stephen.



"Now who art thou, that through our smoke dost cleave,
And speak'st of us, as thou thyself e'en yet
Dividedst time by calends?"

Canto XVI, lines 23-25.



"Long as 'tis lawful for me, shall my steps
Follow on thine; and since the cloudy smoke
Forbids the seeing, hearing in its stead
Shall keep us join'd."

Canto XVI, lines 32-35.

His eyes, unfolded upward, gates to heaven,
Praying forgiveness of the Almighty Sire,
Amidst that cruel conflict, on his foes,
With looks that win compassion to their aim.

Soon as my spirit, from her airy flight
Returning, sought again the things whose truth
Depends not on her shaping, I observed
She had not roved to falsehood in her dreams.

Meanwhile the leader, who might see I moved
As one who struggles to shake off his sleep,
Exclaim'd: "What ails thee, that thou canst not hold
Thy footing firm; but more than half a league
Hast travel'd with closed eyes and tottering gait,
Like to a man by wine or sleep o'ercharged?"

"Beloved father! so thou deign," said I,
"To listen, I will tell thee what appear'd
Before me, when so fail'd my sinking steps."

He thus: "Not if thy countenance were mask'd
With hundred vizards, could a thought of thine,
How small soe'er, elude me. What thou saw'st
Was shown, that freely thou mightst ope thy heart
To the waters of peace, that flow diffused
From their eternal fountain. I not ask'd,
What ails thee? for such cause as he doth, who
Looks only with that eye, which sees no more,
When spiritless the body lies; but ask'd,
To give fresh vigour to thy foot. Such goads,
The slow and loitering need; that they be found
Not wanting, when their hour of watch returns."

So on we journey'd, through the evening sky
Gazing intent, far onward as our eyes,
With level view, could stretch against the bright
Vespertine ray: and lo! by slow degrees
Gathering, a fog made towards us, dark as night.
There was no room for 'scaping; and that mist
Bereft us, both of sight and the pure air.