

## CANTO XXII.

### ARGUMENT.

Dante, Virgil, and Statius mount to the sixth cornice, where the sin of gluttony is cleansed, the two Latin Poets discoursing by the way. Turning to the right, they find a tree hung with sweet-smelling fruit, and watered by a shower that issues from the rock. Voices are heard to proceed from among the leaves, recording examples of temperance.

NOW we had left the angel, who had turn'd  
To the sixth circle our ascending step;  
One gash from off my forehead razed; while they,  
Whose wishes tend to justice, shouted forth,  
"Blessed!"<sup>1</sup> and ended with "I thirst:" and I,  
More nimble than along the other straits,  
So journey'd, that, without the sense of toil,  
I follow'd upward the swift-footed shades;  
When Virgil thus began: "Let its pure flame  
From virtue flow, and love can never fail  
To warm another's bosom, so the light  
Shine manifestly forth. Hence, from that hour,  
When, 'mongst us in the purlieus of the deep,  
Came down the spirit of Aquinum's bard,<sup>2</sup>  
Who told of thine affection, my good will  
Hath been for thee of quality as strong  
As ever link'd itself to one not seen.  
Therefore these stairs will now seem short to me.  
But tell me: and, if too secure, I loose  
The rein with a friend's licence, as a friend  
Forgive me, and speak now as with a friend:

<sup>1</sup> *Blessed*.—"Blessed be they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."  
—Matt. v. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Aquinum's bard*.—Juvenal had celebrated his

contemporary, Statius, Sat. vii. 82; though some critics imagine that there is a secret derision couched under his praise.

How chanced it covetous desire could find  
Place in that bosom, 'midst such ample store  
Of wisdom, as thy zeal had treasured there?"

First somewhat moved to laughter by his words,  
Stattius replied: "Each syllable of thine  
Is a dear pledge of love. Things oft appear,  
That minister false matter to our doubts,  
When their true causes are removed from sight.  
Thy question doth assure me, thou believest  
I was on earth a covetous man; perhaps  
Because thou found'st me in that circle placed.  
Know then I was too wide of avarice:  
And e'en for that excess, thousands of moons  
Have wax'd and waned upon my sufferings.  
And were it not that I with heedful care  
Noted, where thou exclaim'st as if in ire  
With human nature, 'Why,' thou cursed thirst  
Of gold! dost not with juster measure guide  
The appetite of mortals?' I had met  
The fierce encounter<sup>2</sup> of the voluble rock.  
Then was I ware that, with too ample wing,  
The hands may haste to lavishment; and turn'd  
As from my other evil, so from this,  
In penitence. How many from their grave  
Shall with shorn locks<sup>3</sup> arise, who living, ay,  
And at life's last extreme, of this offence,  
Through ignorance, did not repent! And know,  
The fault, which lies direct from any sin  
In level opposition, here, with that,  
Wastes its green rankness on one common heap.  
Therefore, if I have been with those, who wail

<sup>1</sup> *Why*.—

"Quid non mortalia pectora cogis,  
Auri sacra fames?"

*Virgil, Æneid*, lib. iii. 57.

Venturi supposes that Dante might have mistaken

the meaning of the word *sacra*, and construed it "holy," instead of "cursed." But I see no necessity for having recourse to so improbable a conjecture.

<sup>2</sup> *The fierce encounter*.—See "Hell," canto vii. 26.

<sup>3</sup> *With shorn locks*.—See "Hell," canto vii. 58.



Their avarice, to cleanse me; through reverse  
Of their transgression, such hath been my lot."

To whom the sovran of the pastoral song:  
"While thou didst sing that cruel warfare waged  
By the twin sorrow of Jocasta's womb,<sup>1</sup>  
From thy discourse with Clio<sup>2</sup> there, it seems  
As faith had not been thine; without the which,  
Good deeds suffice not. And if so, what sun  
Rose on thee, or what candle pierced the dark,  
That thou didst after see to hoise the sail,  
And follow where the fisherman had led?"

He answering thus: "By thee conducted first,  
I enter'd the Parnassian grot, and quaff'd  
Of the clear spring: illumined first by thee,  
Open'd mine eyes to God. Thou didst, as one,  
Who, journeying through the darkness, bears a light  
Behind, that profits not himself, but makes  
His followers wise, when thou exclaimedst, 'Lo!  
A renovated world,<sup>3</sup> Justice return'd,  
Times of primeval innocence restored,  
And a new race descended from above.'  
Poet and Christian both to thee I owed.  
That thou mayst mark more clearly what I trace,  
My hand shall stretch forth to inform the lines  
With livelier colouring. Soon o'er all the world,  
By messengers from heaven, the new belief  
Teem'd now prolific; and that word of thine,  
Accordant, to the new instructors chimed.  
Induced by which agreement, I was wont

<sup>1</sup> *The twin sorrow of Jocasta's womb.*—Eteocles and Polynices.

<sup>2</sup> *With Clio.*—

"Quem prius heroum Clio dabis? immodicum iræ  
Tydea? laurigeri subitos an vatis hiatus?"

*Statius, Thebaid*, i. 42.

<sup>3</sup> *A renovated world.*—

"Magnus ab integro sæclorum nascitur ordo.  
Jam redit et Virgo; redeunt Saturnia regna;  
Jam nova progenies cœlo demittitur alto."

*Virgil, Ecl.*, iv. 5.

For the application of Virgil's prophecy to the incarnation, see Natalis Alexander, "Hist. Eccl.," Sæc. i., Dissert. 1. Paris, 1679, v. i., p. 166.

Resort to them; and soon their sanctity  
So won upon me, that, Domitian's rage  
Pursuing them, I mix'd my tears with theirs,  
And, while on earth I stay'd, still succour'd them;  
And their most righteous customs made me scorn  
All sects besides. Before<sup>1</sup> I led the Greeks,  
In tuneful fiction, to the streams of Thebes,  
I was baptised: but secretly, through fear,  
Remain'd a Christian, and conform'd long time  
To Pagan rites. Four centuries and more,  
I, for that lukewarmness, was fain to pace  
Round the fourth circle. Thou then, who hast raised  
The covering which did hide such blessings from me,  
Whilst much of this ascent is yet to climb,  
Say, if thou know, where our old Terence<sup>2</sup> bides,  
Cæcilius,<sup>3</sup> Plautus, Varro:<sup>4</sup> if condemn'd  
They dwell, and in what province of the deep."  
"These," said my guide, "with Persius and myself,  
And others many more, are with that Greek,<sup>5</sup>  
Of mortals, the most cherish'd by the nine,  
In the first ward<sup>6</sup> of darkness. There, oft-times,  
We of that mount hold converse, on whose top  
For aye our nurses live. We have the bard  
Of Pella,<sup>7</sup> and the Teian,<sup>8</sup> Agatho,<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Before.*—Before I had composed the "Thebaid."

<sup>2</sup> *Our old Terence.*—"Antico," which is found in many of the old editions, seems preferable to "amico."

<sup>3</sup> *Cæcilius.*—Cæcilius Statius, a Latin comic poet, of whose works some fragments only remain. Our poet had Horace in his eye:

"Decitur Afrani toga convenisse Menandro,  
Plantus ad exemplar Siculi properare Epicharmi,  
Vincere Cæcilius gravitate, Terentius arte."

*Epist.*, lib. ii. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Varro.*—"Quam multa pene omnia tradidit Varro."—*Quintilian, Institutiones Oratoricæ*, lib. xii. "Vix aperto ad philosophiam aditu, primus M. Varro veterum omnium doctissimus."—*Sadolet, de liberis recte instit.* Edit. Lugd. 1533, p. 137.

<sup>5</sup> *That Greek.*—Homer.

<sup>6</sup> *In the first ward.*—In Limbo.

<sup>7</sup> *The bard of Pella.*—Euripides.

<sup>8</sup> *The Teian.*—

"Euripide v' è nosco e Anacreonte."

The Monte Casino MS. reads "Antifonte" "Antipho." instead of "Anacreonte." Dante probably knew little more of these Greek writers than the names.

<sup>9</sup> *Agatho.*—Chaucer, speaking of the Daisy as a representation of Alceste, refers to Agaton:

"No wonder is though Jove her stellifie,  
As tellith Agaton for her goodnesse."

*Legende of Good Women.*

And Mr. Tyrwhitt tells us that "he has nothing to say of this writer except that one of the same name is quoted in the Prol. to the tragedie of Cambises, by Thomas Preston. There is no reason," he adds, "for supposing with Gloss. Ur. that a philosopher



Simonides, and many a Grecian else  
 Ingarlanded with laurel. Of thy train,<sup>1</sup>  
 Antigone is there, Deiphile,  
 Argia, and as sorrowful as erst  
 Ismene, and who show'd Langia's wave:<sup>2</sup>  
 Deidamia with her sisters there,  
 And blind Tiresias' daughter,<sup>3</sup> and the bride  
 Sea-born of Peleus."<sup>4</sup> Either poet now  
 Was silent; and no longer by the ascent  
 Or the steep walls obstructed, round them cast  
 Inquiring eyes. Four handmaids<sup>5</sup> of the day  
 Had finish'd now their office, and the fifth  
 Was at the chariot-beam, directing still  
 Its flamy point aloof; when thus my guide:  
 "Methinks, it well behoves us to the brink  
 Bend the right shoulder, circuiting the mount,  
 As we have ever used." So custom there

of Samos is meant, or any of the Agathoes of antiquity." I am inclined, however, to believe that Chaucer must have meant Agatho, the dramatic writer, whose name, at least, appears to have been familiar in the middle ages; for, besides the mention of him in the text, he is quoted by Dante in the "Treatise De Monarchia," lib. iii.: "Deus per nuncium facere non potest, genita non esse, genita, juxta sententiam Agathonis." The original is to be found in Aristotle, "Ethic. Nicom.," lib. vi., c. 2:

Μόνον γὰρ αὐτοῦ καὶ θεὸς στερίσκεται  
 Ἀγένητα ποιεῖν ἂν ἢ πεποιημένα.

Agatho is mentioned by Xenophon in his "Symposium," by Plato in the "Protagoras," and in the "Banquet," a favourite book with our author; and by Aristotle in his "Art of Poetry," where the following remarkable passage occurs respecting him, from which I will leave it to the reader to decide whether it is possible that the allusion in Chaucer might have arisen: ἐν ἐνίαις μὲν ἐν ἡ δὲ τῶν γνωρίμων ἐστὶν ὀνομάτων τὰ δὲ ἄλλα πεποιημένα· ἐν ἐνίαις δὲ οὐθέν· ὅσον ἐν τῷ Ἀγάθωνος Ἀνθεῖ. ὁμοίως γὰρ ἐν τούτῳ τὰ τε πράγματα καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα πεποιήται, καὶ οὐδὲν ἤττον εὐφραίνει.—Edit. 1794, p. 33. "There are, however, some tragedies, in which one or two of the names are historical, and the rest feigned; there are even some, in which none of the names are historical; such is Agatho's tragedy, called 'The Flower;' for in that all is invention,

both incidents and names; and yet it pleases."—*Aristotle's Treatise on Poetry*, by Thomas Twining, 8vo Edit. 1812, vol. i., p. 128.

<sup>1</sup> *Of thy train.*—"Of those celebrated in thy poem."

<sup>2</sup> *Who show'd Langia's wave.*—Hypsipile. See note to canto xxvi., v. 87.

<sup>3</sup> *Tiresias' daughter.*—Dante, as some have thought, had forgotten that he had placed Manto, the daughter of Tiresias, among the sorcerers. See "Hell," canto xx. Vellutello endeavours, rather awkwardly, to reconcile the apparent inconsistency, by observing, that although she was placed there as a sinner, yet, as one of famous memory, she had also a place among the worthies in Limbo. Lombardi, or rather the Della Crusca academicians, excuse our author better, by observing that Tiresias had a daughter named Daphne. See Diodorus Siculus, lib. iv., § 66. I have here to acknowledge a communication made to me by the learned writer of an anonymous letter, who observes that Manto and Daphne are only different names for the same person; and that Servius, in his Commentary on the "Æneid," x. 198, says, that some make Manto the prophetess to be a daughter of Hercules.

<sup>4</sup> *The bride sea-born of Peleus.*—Thetis.

<sup>5</sup> *Four handmaids.*—Compare canto xii., v. 74.

Was usher to the road; the which we chose  
 Less doubtful, as that worthy shade<sup>1</sup> complied.  
 They on before me went: I sole pursued,  
 Listening their speech, that to my thoughts convey'd  
 Mysterious lessons of sweet poesy.  
 But soon they ceased; for midway of the road  
 A tree we found, with goodly fruitage hung,  
 And pleasant to the smell: and as a fir,  
 Upward from bough to bough, less ample spreads;  
 So downward this less ample spread;<sup>2</sup> that none,  
 Methinks, aloft may climb. Upon the side,  
 That closed our path, a liquid crystal fell  
 From the steep rock, and through the sprays above  
 Stream'd showering. With associate step the bards  
 Drew near the plant; and, from amidst the leaves,  
 A voice was heard: "Ye shall be chary of me;"  
 And after added: "Mary took more thought<sup>3</sup>  
 For joy and honour of the nuptial feast,  
 Than for herself, who answers now for you.  
 The women of old Rome<sup>4</sup> were satisfied  
 With water for their beverage. Daniel<sup>5</sup> fed  
 On pulse, and wisdom gain'd. The primal age  
 Was beautiful as gold: and hunger then

<sup>1</sup> *That worthy shade.*—Statius.

<sup>2</sup> *Downward this less ample spread.*—The early commentators understand that this tree had its root upward and the boughs downward; and this opinion, however derided by their successors, is not a little countenanced by the imitation of Frezzi, who lived so near the time of our poet:

"Su dentro al cielo avea la sua radice,  
 E giù inverso terra i rami spande."  
*Il Quadriregio*, lib. iv., cap. 1.

"It had in heaven  
 Its root above, and downward to the earth  
 Stretch'd forth the branches."

<sup>3</sup> *Mary took more thought.*—"The Blessed Virgin, who answers for you now in heaven, when she said

to Jesus, at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, 'They have no wine,' regarded not the gratification of her own taste, but the honour of the nuptial banquet."

<sup>4</sup> *The women of old Rome.*—See Valerius Maximus, l. ii., c. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Daniel.*—"Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Michael, and Azariah, Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink."—Dan. i. 11, 12. "Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink: and gave them pulse. As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams."—*Ibid.* 16, 17.



Made acorns tasteful; thirst, each rivulet  
 Run nectar. Honey and locusts were the food,  
 Whereon the Baptist in the wilderness  
 Fed, and that eminence of glory reach'd  
 And greatness, which the Evangelist records."