

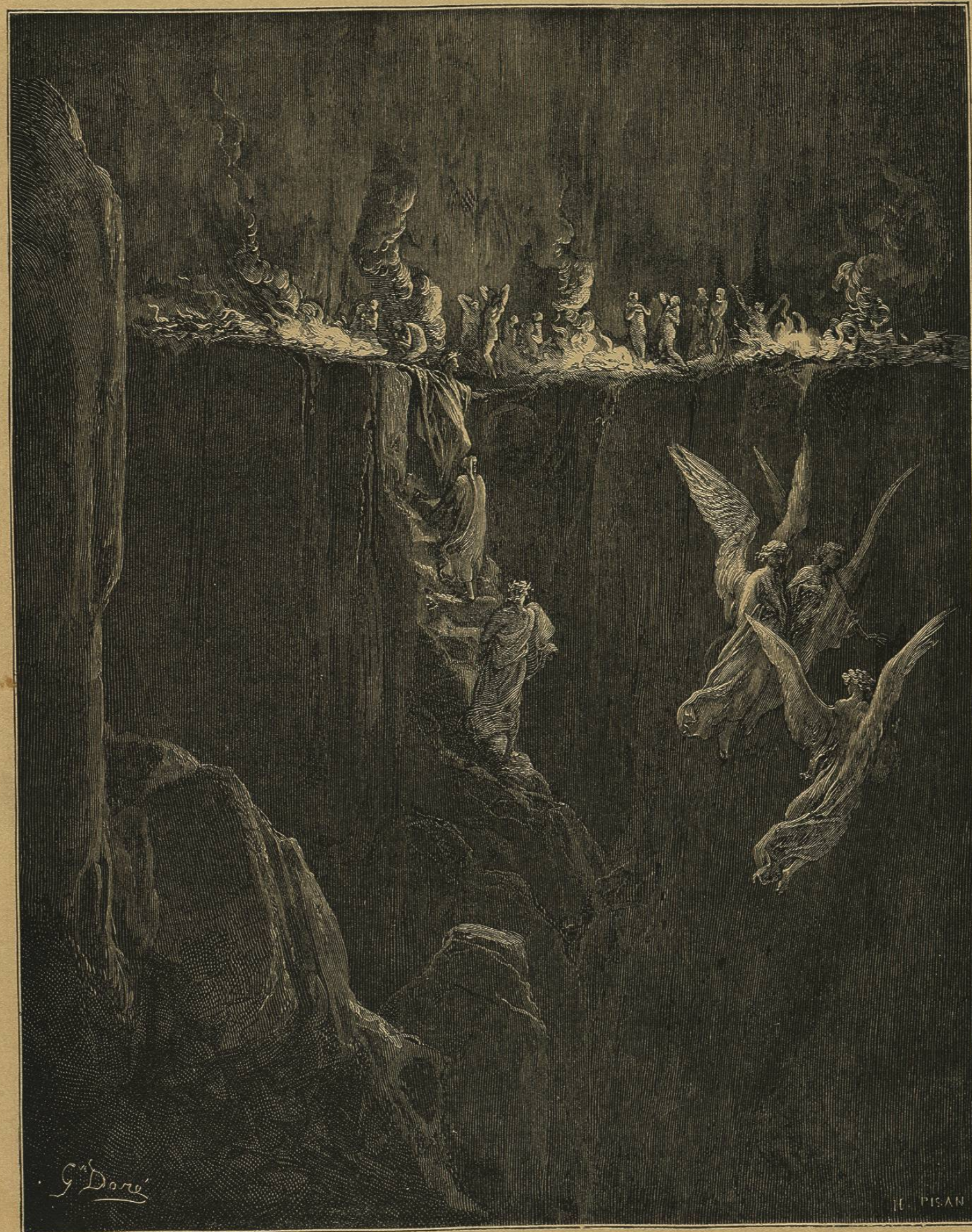
New spirit replete with virtue, that what here
Active it finds, to its own substance draws:
And forms an individual soul, that lives,
And feels, and bends reflective on itself.
And that thou less mayst marvel at the word,
Mark the sun's heat;¹ how that to wine doth change,
Mix'd with the moisture filter'd through the vine.

"When Lachesis hath spun the thread,² the soul
Takes with her both the human and divine,
Memory, intelligence, and will, in act
Far keener than before; the other powers
Inactive all and mute. No pause allow'd,
In wondrous sort self-moving, to one strand
Of those, where the departed roam, she falls:
Here learns her destined path. Soon as the place
Receives her, round the plastic virtue beams,
Distinct as in the living limbs before:
And as the air, when saturate with showers,
The casual beam refracting, decks itself
With many a hue; so here the ambient air
Weareth that form, which influence of the soul
Imprints on it: and like the flame, that where
The fire moves, thither follows; so, henceforth,
The new form on the spirit follows still:
Hence hath it semblance, and is shadow call'd,
With each sense, even to the sight, endued:
Hence speech is ours, hence laughter, tears, and sighs,
Which thou mayst oft have witness'd on the mount.
The obedient shadow fails not to present
Whatever varying passion moves within us.
And this the cause of what thou marvel'st at."

¹ *Mark the sun's heat.*—Redi and Tiraboschi (Mr. Mathias's ed., v. ii., p. 36) have considered this as an anticipation of a profound discovery of Galileo's in natural philosophy; but it is in reality taken from a passage in Cicero, "De Senectute," where, speak-

ing of the grape, he says, "Quæ, et succo terræ et calore solis augescens, primo est peracerba gustatu, deinde maturata dulcescit."

² *When Lachesis hath spun the thread.*—When a man's life on earth is at an end.



32

Here the rocky precipice
Hurls forth redundant flames; and from the rim
A blast up-blown, with forcible rubuff
Driveth them back, sequester'd from its bound.
Canto XXV. lines 107-110



33

Then from the bosom of the burning mass
"O God of mercy!" heard I sung, and felt
No less desire to turn.

Canto XXV. lines 117-119.

Now the last flexure of our way we reach'd;
And to the right hand turning other care
Awaits us. Here the rocky precipice
Hurls forth redundant flames; and from the rim
A blast up-blown, with forcible rebuff
Driveth them back, sequester'd from its bound.

Behoved us, one by one, along the side,
That border'd on the void, to pass; and I
Fear'd on one hand the fire, on the other fear'd
Headlong to fall: when thus the instructor warn'd;
"Strict rein must in this place direct the eyes.
A little swerving and the way is lost."

Then from the bosom of the burning mass,
"O God of mercy!"¹ heard I sung, and felt
No less desire to turn. And when I saw
Spirits along the flame proceeding, I
Between their footsteps and mine own was fain
To share by turns my view. At the hymn's close
They shouted loud, "I do not know a man;"²
Then in low voice again took up the strain;
Which once more ended, "To the wood," they cried,
"Ran Dian, and drave forth Callisto's stung
With Cytherea's poison:" then return'd
Unto their song; then many a pair extoll'd,
Who lived in virtue chastely and the bands
Of wedded love. Nor from that task, I ween,
Surcease they; whilesoe'er the scorching fire
Enclasps them. Of such skill appliance needs,
To medicine the wound that healeth last.⁴

¹ "O God of mercy."—"Summæ Deus clementiæ."
The beginning of the hymn sung on the Sabbath at
matins, as it stands in the ancient breviaries; for in
the modern it is "summæ parens clementiæ."—*Lom-
bardi*.

² At the hymn's close they shouted loud, "I do not
know a man."—Luke i. 34.

³ *Callisto*.—See Ovid, "Metamorphoses," lib. ii.,
fab. 5.

⁴ *The wound that healeth last*.—The marginal note
in the Monte Casino MS. on this passage is: "Id est
ultima litera quæ denotat ultimum peccatum mor-
tale;" and the editor remarks that Dante in these
last two verses admonishes himself, and in himself
all those guilty of carnal sin, in what manner the
wound inflicted by it, and expressed by the last P.
on his forehead, may be healed.