

CANTO XXVI.

ARGUMENT.

The spirits wonder at seeing the shadow cast by the body of Dante on the flame as he passes it. This moves one of them to address him. It proves to be Guido Guinicelli, the Italian poet, who points out to him the spirit of Arnaut Daniel, the Provençal, with whom he also speaks.

WHILE singly thus along the rim we walk'd,
Oft the good master warn'd me: "Look thou well.
Avail it that I caution thee." The sun
Now all the western clime irradiate changed
From azure tinct to white; and, as I pass'd,
My passing shadow made the umber'd flame
Burn ruddier. At so strange a sight I mark'd
That many a spirit marvel'd on his way.

This bred occasion first to speak of me.
"He seems," said they, "no insubstantial frame:"
Then, to obtain what certainty they might,
Stretch'd towards me, careful not to overpass
The burning pale. "O thou! who followest
The others, haply not more slow than they,
But moved by reverence; answer me, who burn
In thirst and fire: nor I alone, but these
All for thine answer do more thirst, than doth
Indian or Æthiop for the cooling stream.
Tell us, how is it that thou makest thyself
A wall against the sun, as thou not yet
Into the inextricable toils of death
Hadst enter'd?" Thus spake one: and I had straight
Declared me, if attention had not turn'd
To new appearance. Meeting these, there came,
Midway the burning path, a crowd, on whom

Earnestly gazing, from each part I view
The shadows all press forward, severally
Each snatch a hasty kiss, and then away.
E'en so the emmets, 'mid their dusky troops,
Peer closely one at other, to spy out
Their mutual road perchance, and how they thrive.

That friendly greeting parted, ere dispatch
Of the first onward step, from either tribe
Loud clamour rises: those, who newly come,
Shout "Sodom and Gomorrah!" these, "The cow
Pasiphae enter'd, that the beast she woo'd
Might rush unto her luxury." Then as cranes,
That part towards the Riphæan mountains fly,
Part towards the Lybic sands, these to avoid
The ice, and those the sun; so hasteth off
One crowd, advances the other; and resume
Their first song, weeping, and their several shout.¹

Again drew near my side the very same,
Who had erewhile besought me; and their looks
Mark'd eagerness to listen. I, who twice
Their will had noted, spake: "O spirits! secure,
Whene'er the time may be, of peaceful end;
My limbs, nor crude, nor in mature old age,
Have I left yonder: here they bear me, fed
With blood, and sinew-strung. That I no more
May live in blindness, hence I tend aloft.
There is a dame on high, who wins for us
This grace, by which my mortal through your realm
I bear. But may your utmost wish soon meet
Such full fruition, that the orb of Heaven,
Fullest of love, and of most ample space,
Receive you: as ye tell (upon my page
Henceforth to stand recorded) who ye are;
And what this multitude, that at your backs

¹ Their first song, weeping, and their several shout.—See the last canto, v. 118 and 123.

Have past behind us." As one, mountain-bred,
 Rugged and clownish, if some city's walls
 He chance to enter, round him stares agape,
 Confounded and struck dumb; e'en such appear'd
 Each spirit. But when rid of that amaze
 (Not long the inmate of a noble heart),¹
 He, who before had question'd, thus resumed:
 "O blessed! who, for death preparing, takest
 Experience of our limits, in thy bark;
 Their crime, who not with us proceed, was that
 For which, as he did triumph, Cæsar² heard
 The shout of 'queen,' to taunt him. Hence their cry
 Of 'Sodom,' as they parted; to rebuke
 Themselves, and aid the burning by their shame.
 Our sinning was Hermaphrodite: but we,
 Because the law of human kind we broke,
 Following like beasts our vile concupiscence,
 Hence parting from them, to our own disgrace
 Record the name of her, by whom the beast
 In bestial tire was acted. Now our deeds
 Thou know'st, and how we sinn'd. If thou by name
 Wouldst haply know us, time permits not now
 To tell so much, nor can I. Of myself
 Learn what thou wishest. Guinicelli³ I;
 Who having truly sorrow'd ere my last,
 Already cleanse me." With such pious joy,

¹ Amaze (not long the inmate of a noble heart).—

"Stupore

Lo qual negli alti cor tosto s'attuta."

Thus Speroni:

"Lo stupore

Lo qual dagli alti cor tosto si parte."

Canace.

He does not say that wonder is not natural to a lofty mind, for it is the very principle of knowledge (*μάλα γὰρ φιλοσόφον τοῦτο τὸ πάθος, τὸ θαυμάζειν, οὐ γὰρ ἀλλήλη ἀρχὴ φιλοσοφίας ἢ αὐτῆς*.—*Plato, Theat.*, edit. Bipont., tom. ii., p. 76), but that it is not of long continuance in such a mind. On this subject it is well

said by Dr. Horsley: "Wonder, connected with a principle of rational curiosity, is the source of all knowledge and discovery, and it is a principle even of piety: but wonder, which ends in wonder, and is satisfied with wonder, is the quality of an idiot."—*Sermons*, vol. i., p. 227. Compare Aristotle, "Metaphysics," lib. i., p. 335, edit. Sylb. The above passage from Plato is adduced by Clemens Alexandrinus, "Strom." lib. ii., sect. 9.

² Cæsar.—For the opprobrium cast on Cæsar's femininity, see Suetonius, "Julius Cæsar," c. 49.

³ Guinicelli.—See note to canto xi. 96.

As the two sons upon their mother gazed
 From sad Lyeurgus¹ rescued; such my joy
 (Save that I more repress'd it) when I heard
 From his own lips the name of him pronounced,
 Who was a father to me, and to those
 My betters, who have ever used the sweet
 And pleasant rhymes of love. So nought I heard,
 Nor spake; but long time thoughtfully I went
 Gazing on him; and, only for the fire,
 Approach'd not nearer. When my eyes were fed
 By looking on him; with such solemn pledge,
 As forces credence, I devoted me
 Unto his service wholly. In reply
 He thus bespake me: "What from thee I hear
 Is graved so deeply on my mind, the waves
 Of Lethe shall not wash it off, nor make
 A whit less lively. But as now thy oath
 Has seal'd the truth, declare what cause impels
 That love, which both thy looks and speech bewray."

"Those dulcet lays," I answer'd; "which, as long
 As of our tongue the beauty does not fade,
 Shall make us love the very ink that traced them."

"Brother!" he cried, and pointed at the shade
 Before him, "there is one, whose mother speech
 Doth owe to him a fairer ornament.
 He² in love ditties, and the tales of prose,

¹ Lyeurgus.—Statius, "Thebais," lib. iv. and v. Hypsipile had left her infant charge, the son of Lyeurgus, on a bank, where it was destroyed by a serpent, when she went to show the Argive army the river of Langia; and, on her escaping the effects of Lyeurgus's resentment, the joy her own children felt at the sight of her was such as our poet felt on beholding his predecessor Guinicelli. The incidents are beautifully described in Statius, and seem to have made an impression on Dante, for he before (canto xxii. 110) characterises Hypsipile as her—

"Who show'd Langia's wave."

² He.—The united testimony of Dante and of

Petrarch places Arnault Daniel at the head of the Provençal poets:

"Poi v'era un drappello

Di portamenti e di volgari strani:

Fra tutti il primo Arnaldo Daniello

Gran maestro d'amor ch' a la sua terra

Ancor fa onor col suo dir nuovo e bello."

Petrarca, *Trionfo d'Amore*, c. iv.

That he was born of poor but noble parents, at the castle of Ribeyrac in Périgord, and that he was at the English court, is the amount of Millot's information concerning him (tom. ii., p. 479). The account there given of his writings is not much more