

The Vision of Hell, Part 4, Translated By The Rev. H. F. Cary, by Dante Alighieri

Produced by David Widger

THE VISION

OF

HELL, PURGATORY, AND PARADISE

BY

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TRANSLATED BY

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HELL

OR THE INFERNO

Part 4

Cantos 7 - 8

CANTO VII

"AH me! O Satan! Satan!" loud exclaim'd
Plutus, in accent hoarse of wild alarm:
And the kind sage, whom no event surpris'd,
To comfort me thus spake: "Let not thy fear
Harm thee, for power in him, be sure, is none
To hinder down this rock thy safe descent."
Then to that sworn lip turning, "Peace!" he cried,

"Curs'd wolf! thy fury inward on thyself
Prey, and consume thee! Through the dark profound
Not without cause he passes. So 't is will'd
On high, there where the great Archangel pour'd
Heav'n's vengeance on the first adulterer proud."

As sails full spread and belying with the wind

Drop suddenly collaps'd, if the mast split;
So to the ground down dropp'd the cruel fiend.

Thus we, descending to the fourth steep ledge,
Gain'd on the dismal shore, that all the woe
Hems in of all the universe. Ah me!
Almighty Justice! in what store thou heap'st
New pains, new troubles, as I here beheld!
Wherefore doth fault of ours bring us to this?

E'en as a billow, on Charybdis rising,
Against encounter'd billow dashing breaks;
Such is the dance this wretched race must lead,
Whom more than elsewhere numerous here I found,
From one side and the other, with loud voice,
Both roll'd on weights by main forge of their breasts,
Then smote together, and each one forthwith
Roll'd them back voluble, turning again,
Exclaiming these, "Why holdest thou so fast?"
Those answering, "And why castest thou away?"
So still repeating their despiteful song,
They to the opposite point on either hand
Travers'd the horrid circle: then arriv'd,
Both turn'd them round, and through the middle space
Conflicting met again. At sight whereof
I, stung with grief, thus spake: "O say, my guide!
What race is this? Were these, whose heads are shorn,

On our left hand, all sep'rate to the church?"

He straight replied: "In their first life these all
In mind were so distorted, that they made,
According to due measure, of their wealth,
No use. This clearly from their words collect,
Which they howl forth, at each extremity
Arriving of the circle, where their crime
Contrary' in kind disparts them. To the church
Were separate those, that with no hairy cowls
Are crown'd, both Popes and Cardinals, o'er whom
Av'rice dominion absolute maintains."

I then: "Mid such as these some needs must be,
Whom I shall recognize, that with the blot
Of these foul sins were stain'd." He answering thus:
"Vain thought conceiv'st thou. That ignoble life,
Which made them vile before, now makes them dark,
And to all knowledge indiscernible.
Forever they shall meet in this rude shock:
These from the tomb with clenched grasp shall rise,
Those with close-shaven locks. That ill they gave,
And ill they kept, hath of the beauteous world
Depriv'd, and set them at this strife, which needs
No labour'd phrase of mine to set if off.
Now may'st thou see, my son! how brief, how vain,
The goods committed into fortune's hands,

For which the human race keep such a coil!
Not all the gold, that is beneath the moon,
Or ever hath been, of these toil-worn souls
Might purchase rest for one." I thus rejoin'd:

"My guide! of thee this also would I learn;
This fortune, that thou speak'st of, what it is,
Whose talons grasp the blessings of the world?"

He thus: "O beings blind! what ignorance
Besets you? Now my judgment hear and mark.
He, whose transcendent wisdom passes all,
The heavens creating, gave them ruling powers
To guide them, so that each part shines to each,
Their light in equal distribution pour'd.
By similar appointment he ordain'd
Over the world's bright images to rule.
Superintendence of a guiding hand
And general minister, which at due time
May change the empty vantages of life
From race to race, from one to other's blood,
Beyond prevention of man's wisest care:
Wherefore one nation rises into sway,
Another languishes, e'en as her will
Decreases, from us conceal'd, as in the grass
The serpent train. Against her nought avails
Your utmost wisdom. She with foresight plans,

Judges, and carries on her reign, as theirs
The other powers divine. Her changes know
Nore intermission: by necessity
She is made swift, so frequent come who claim
Succession in her favours. This is she,
So execrated e'en by those, whose debt
To her is rather praise; they wrongfully
With blame requite her, and with evil word;
But she is blessed, and for that reck's not:
Amidst the other primal beings glad
Rolls on her sphere, and in her bliss exults.
Now on our way pass we, to heavier woe
Descending: for each star is falling now,
That mounted at our entrance, and forbids
Too long our tarrying." We the circle cross'd
To the next steep, arriving at a well,
That boiling pours itself down to a foss
Sluic'd from its source. Far murkier was the wave
Than sablest grain: and we in company
Of the' inky waters, journeying by their side,
Enter'd, though by a different track, beneath.
Into a lake, the Stygian nam'd, expands
The dismal stream, when it hath reach'd the foot
Of the grey wither'd cliffs. Intent I stood
To gaze, and in the marish sunk descried
A miry tribe, all naked, and with looks
Betok'ning rage. They with their hands alone
Struck not, but with the head, the breast, the feet,

Cutting each other piecemeal with their fangs.

The good instructor spake; "Now seest thou, son!

The souls of those, whom anger overcame.

This too for certain know, that underneath

The water dwells a multitude, whose sighs

Into these bubbles make the surface heave,

As thine eye tells thee wheresoe'er it turn."

Fix'd in the slime they say: "Sad once were we

In the sweet air made gladsome by the sun,

Carrying a foul and lazy mist within:

Now in these murky settlings are we sad."

Such dolorous strain they gurgle in their throats.

But word distinct can utter none." Our route

Thus compass'd we, a segment widely stretch'd

Between the dry embankment, and the core

Of the loath'd pool, turning meanwhile our eyes

Downward on those who gulp'd its muddy lees;

Nor stopp'd, till to a tower's low base we came.

CANTO VIII

MY theme pursuing, I relate that ere

We reach'd the lofty turret's base, our eyes

Its height ascended, where two cressets hung

We mark'd, and from afar another light

Return the signal, so remote, that scarce
The eye could catch its beam. I turning round
To the deep source of knowledge, thus inquir'd:
"Say what this means? and what that other light
In answer set? what agency doth this?"

"There on the filthy waters," he replied,
"E'en now what next awaits us mayst thou see,
If the marsh-gender'd fog conceal it not."

Never was arrow from the cord dismiss'd,
That ran its way so nimbly through the air,
As a small bark, that through the waves I spied
Toward us coming, under the sole sway
Of one that ferried it, who cried aloud:
"Art thou arriv'd, fell spirit?"--"Phlegyas, Phlegyas,
This time thou criest in vain," my lord replied;
"No longer shalt thou have us, but while o'er
The slimy pool we pass." As one who hears
Of some great wrong he hath sustain'd, whereat
Inly he pines; so Phlegyas inly pin'd
In his fierce ire. My guide descending stepp'd
Into the skiff, and bade me enter next
Close at his side; nor till my entrance seem'd
The vessel freighted. Soon as both embark'd,
Cutting the waves, goes on the ancient prow,
More deeply than with others it is wont.

While we our course o'er the dead channel held.

One drench'd in mire before me came, and said;

"Who art thou, that thou comest ere thine hour?"

I answer'd: "Though I come, I tarry not;

But who art thou, that art become so foul?"

"One, as thou seest, who mourn:" he straight replied.

To which I thus: "In mourning and in woe,

Curs'd spirit! tarry thou, g I know thee well,

E'en thus in filth disguis'd." Then stretch'd he forth

Hands to the bark; whereof my teacher sage

Aware, thrusting him back: "Away! down there;

"To the' other dogs!" then, with his arms my neck

Encircling, kiss'd my cheek, and spake: "O soul

Justly disdainful! blest was she in whom

Thou was conceiv'd! He in the world was one

For arrogance noted; to his memory

No virtue lends its lustre; even so

Here is his shadow furious. There above

How many now hold themselves mighty kings

Who here like swine shall wallow in the mire,

Leaving behind them horrible dispraise!"

I then: "Master! him fain would I behold
Whelm'd in these dregs, before we quit the lake."

He thus: "Or ever to thy view the shore
Be offer'd, satisfied shall be that wish,
Which well deserves completion." Scarce his words
Were ended, when I saw the miry tribes
Set on him with such violence, that yet
For that render I thanks to God and praise
"To Filippo Argenti:" cried they all:
And on himself the moody Florentine
Turn'd his avenging fangs. Him here we left,
Nor speak I of him more. But on mine ear
Sudden a sound of lamentation smote,
Whereat mine eye unbarr'd I sent abroad.

And thus the good instructor: "Now, my son!
Draws near the city, that of Dis is nam'd,
With its grave denizens, a mighty throng."

I thus: "The minarets already, Sir!
There certes in the valley I descry,
Gleaming vermilion, as if they from fire
Had issu'd." He replied: "Eternal fire,

That inward burns, shows them with ruddy flame
Illum'd; as in this nether hell thou seest."

We came within the fosses deep, that moat
This region comfortless. The walls appear'd
As they were fram'd of iron. We had made
Wide circuit, ere a place we reach'd, where loud
The mariner cried vehement: "Go forth!
The' entrance is here!" Upon the gates I spied
More than a thousand, who of old from heaven
Were hurl'd. With ireful gestures, "Who is this,"
They cried, "that without death first felt, goes through
The regions of the dead?" My sapient guide
Made sign that he for secret parley wish'd;
Whereat their angry scorn abating, thus
They spake: "Come thou alone; and let him go
Who hath so hardily enter'd this realm.
Alone return he by his witless way;
If well he know it, let him prove. For thee,
Here shalt thou tarry, who through clime so dark
Hast been his escort." Now bethink thee, reader!
What cheer was mine at sound of those curs'd words.
I did believe I never should return.

"O my lov'd guide! who more than seven times
Security hast render'd me, and drawn
From peril deep, whereto I stood expos'd,

Desert me not," I cried, "in this extreme.
And if our onward going be denied,
Together trace we back our steps with speed."

My liege, who thither had conducted me,
Replied: "Fear not: for of our passage none
Hath power to disappoint us, by such high
Authority permitted. But do thou
Expect me here; meanwhile thy wearied spirit
Comfort, and feed with kindly hope, assur'd
I will not leave thee in this lower world."

This said, departs the sire benevolent,
And quits me. Hesitating I remain
At war 'twixt will and will not in my thoughts.

I could not hear what terms he offer'd them,
But they conferr'd not long, for all at once
To trial fled within. Clos'd were the gates
By those our adversaries on the breast
Of my liege lord: excluded he return'd
To me with tardy steps. Upon the ground
His eyes were bent, and from his brow eras'd
All confidence, while thus with sighs he spake:
"Who hath denied me these abodes of woe?"
Then thus to me: "That I am anger'd, think

No ground of terror: in this trial I
Shall vanquish, use what arts they may within
For hindrance. This their insolence, not new,
Erewhile at gate less secret they display'd,
Which still is without bolt; upon its arch
Thou saw'st the deadly scroll: and even now
On this side of its entrance, down the steep,
Passing the circles, unescorted, comes
One whose strong might can open us this land."

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