

The Vision of Hell, Part 5, Translated By The Rev. H. F. Cary, Illustrated by Gustave Dore The Inferno

Dante Alighieri

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Produced by David Widger

THE VISION
OF
HELL, PURGATORY, AND PARADISE

BY
DANTE ALIGHIERI

TRANSLATED BY

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THE REV. H. F. CARY, M.A.

HELL

OR THE INFERNO

Part 5

Cantos 9 - 12

CANTO IX

THE hue, which coward dread on my pale cheeks
Imprinted, when I saw my guide turn back,
Chas'd that from his which newly they had worn,
And inwardly restrain'd it. He, as one
Who listens, stood attentive: for his eye
Not far could lead him through the sable air,
And the thick-gath'ring cloud. "It yet behooves
We win this fight"--thus he began--"if not--
Such aid to us is offer'd.--Oh, how long
Me seems it, ere the promis'd help arrive!"

I noted, how the sequel of his words
Clos'd their beginning; for the last he spake
Agreed not with the first. But not the less
My fear was at his saying; sith I drew
To import worse perchance, than that he held,
His mutilated speech. "Doth ever any
Into this rueful concave's extreme depth
Descend, out of the first degree, whose pain
Is deprivation merely of sweet hope?"

Thus I inquiring. "Rarely," he replied,
"It chances, that among us any makes
This journey, which I wend. Erewhile 'tis true
Once came I here beneath, conjur'd by fell
Erictho, sorceress, who compell'd the shades
Back to their bodies. No long space my flesh
Was naked of me, when within these walls
She made me enter, to draw forth a spirit
From out of Judas' circle. Lowest place
Is that of all, obscurest, and remov'd
Farthest from heav'n's all-circling orb. The road
Full well I know: thou therefore rest secure.
That lake, the noisome stench exhaling, round
The city' of grief encompasses, which now
We may not enter without rage." Yet more
He added: but I hold it not in mind,
For that mine eye toward the lofty tower
Had drawn me wholly, to its burning top.
Where in an instant I beheld uprisen

At once three hellish furies stain'd with blood:
In limb and motion feminine they seem'd;
Around them greenest hydras twisting roll'd
Their volumes; adders and cerastes crept
Instead of hair, and their fierce temples bound.

He knowing well the miserable hags
Who tend the queen of endless woe, thus spake:

"Mark thou each dire Erinnyes. To the left
This is Megaera; on the right hand she,
Who wails, Alecto; and Tisiphone
I' th' midst." This said, in silence he remain'd
Their breast they each one clawing tore; themselves
Smote with their palms, and such shrill clamour rais'd,
That to the bard I clung, suspicion-bound.
"Hasten Medusa: so to adamant
Him shall we change;" all looking down exclaim'd.
"E'en when by Theseus' might assail'd, we took
No ill revenge." "Turn thyself round, and keep
Thy count'nance hid; for if the Gorgon dire
Be shown, and thou shouldst view it, thy return
Upwards would be for ever lost." This said,
Himself my gentle master turn'd me round,
Nor trusted he my hands, but with his own
He also hid me. Ye of intellect
Sound and entire, mark well the lore conceal'd
Under close texture of the mystic strain!

And now there came o'er the perturbed waves
Loud-crashing, terrible, a sound that made
Either shore tremble, as if of a wind
Impetuous, from conflicting vapours sprung,
That 'gainst some forest driving all its might,
Plucks off the branches, beats them down and hurls
Afar; then onward passing proudly sweeps
Its whirlwind rage, while beasts and shepherds fly.

Mine eyes he loos'd, and spake: "And now direct
Thy visual nerve along that ancient foam,
There, thickest where the smoke ascends." As frogs
Before their foe the serpent, through the wave
Ply swiftly all, till at the ground each one
Lies on a heap; more than a thousand spirits
Destroy'd, so saw I fleeing before one
Who pass'd with unwet feet the Stygian sound.
He, from his face removing the gross air,
Off his left hand forth stretch'd, and seem'd alone
By that annoyance wearied. I perceiv'd
That he was sent from heav'n, and to my guide
Turn'd me, who signal made that I should stand
Quiet, and bend to him. Ah me! how full
Of noble anger seem'd he! To the gate
He came, and with his wand touch'd it, whereat
Open without impediment it flew.

"Outcasts of heav'n! O abject race and scorn'd!"
Began he on the horrid grunsel standing,
"Whence doth this wild excess of insolence

Lodge in you? wherefore kick you 'gainst that will
Ne'er frustrate of its end, and which so oft
Hath laid on you enforcement of your pangs?
What profits at the fays to but the horn?
Your Cerberus, if ye remember, hence
Bears still, peel'd of their hair, his throat and maw."

This said, he turn'd back o'er the filthy way,
And syllable to us spake none, but wore
The semblance of a man by other care
Beset, and keenly press'd, than thought of him
Who in his presence stands. Then we our steps
Toward that territory mov'd, secure
After the hallow'd words. We unoppos'd
There enter'd; and my mind eager to learn
What state a fortress like to that might hold,
I soon as enter'd throw mine eye around,
And see on every part wide-stretching space
Replete with bitter pain and torment ill.

As where Rhone stagnates on the plains of Arles,
Or as at Pola, near Quarnaro's gulf,
That closes Italy and laves her bounds,
The place is all thick spread with sepulchres;
So was it here, save what in horror here
Excell'd: for 'midst the graves were scattered flames,
Wherewith intensely all throughout they burn'd,
That iron for no craft there hotter needs.

Their lids all hung suspended, and beneath
From them forth issu'd lamentable moans,
Such as the sad and tortur'd well might raise.

I thus: "Master! say who are these, interr'd
Within these vaults, of whom distinct we hear
The dolorous sighs?" He answer thus return'd:

"The arch-heretics are here, accompanied
By every sect their followers; and much more,
Than thou believest, tombs are freighted: like
With like is buried; and the monuments
Are different in degrees of heat." This said,
He to the right hand turning, on we pass'd
Betwixt the afflicted and the ramparts high.

CANTO X

NOW by a secret pathway we proceed,
Between the walls, that hem the region round,
And the tormented souls: my master first,
I close behind his steps. "Virtue supreme!"
I thus began; "who through these ample orbs
In circuit lead'st me, even as thou will'st,
Speak thou, and satisfy my wish. May those,
Who lie within these sepulchres, be seen?
Already all the lids are rais'd, and none

O'er them keeps watch." He thus in answer spake
"They shall be closed all, what-time they here
From Josaphat return'd shall come, and bring
Their bodies, which above they now have left.
The cemetery on this part obtain
With Epicurus all his followers,
Who with the body make the spirit die.
Here therefore satisfaction shall be soon
Both to the question ask'd, and to the wish,
Which thou conceal'st in silence." I replied:
"I keep not, guide belov'd! from thee my heart
Secreted, but to shun vain length of words,
A lesson erewhile taught me by thyself."

"O Tuscan! thou who through the city of fire
Alive art passing, so discreet of speech!
Here please thee stay awhile. Thy utterance
Declares the place of thy nativity
To be that noble land, with which perchance
I too severely dealt." Sudden that sound
Forth issu'd from a vault, whereat in fear
I somewhat closer to my leader's side
Approaching, he thus spake: "What dost thou? Turn.
Lo, Farinata, there! who hath himself
Uplifted: from his girdle upwards all
Expos'd behold him." On his face was mine
Already fix'd; his breast and forehead there
Erecting, seem'd as in high scorn he held
E'en hell. Between the sepulchres to him
My guide thrust me with fearless hands and prompt,
This warning added: "See thy words be clear!"

He, soon as there I stood at the tomb's foot,
Ey'd me a space, then in disdainful mood
Address'd me: "Say, what ancestors were thine?"

I, willing to obey him, straight reveal'd
The whole, nor kept back aught: whence he, his brow
Somewhat uplifting, cried: "Fiercely were they
Adverse to me, my party, and the blood
From whence I sprang: twice therefore I abroad
Scatter'd them." "Though driv'n out, yet they each time
From all parts," answer'd I, "return'd; an art
Which yours have shown, they are not skill'd to learn."

Then, peering forth from the unclosed jaw,
Rose from his side a shade, high as the chin,
Leaning, methought, upon its knees uprais'd.
It look'd around, as eager to explore
If there were other with me; but perceiving
That fond imagination quench'd, with tears
Thus spake: "If thou through this blind prison go'st.
Led by thy lofty genius and profound,
Where is my son? and wherefore not with thee?"

I straight replied: "Not of myself I come,
By him, who there expects me, through this clime
Conducted, whom perchance Guido thy son
Had in contempt." Already had his words

And mode of punishment read me his name,
Whence I so fully answer'd. He at once
Exclaim'd, up starting, "How! said'st thou he HAD?
No longer lives he? Strikes not on his eye
The blessed daylight?" Then of some delay
I made ere my reply aware, down fell
Supine, not after forth appear'd he more.

Meanwhile the other, great of soul, near whom
I yet was station'd, chang'd not count'nance stern,
Nor mov'd the neck, nor bent his ribbed side.
"And if," continuing the first discourse,
"They in this art," he cried, "small skill have shown,
That doth torment me more e'en than this bed.
But not yet fifty times shall be relum'd
Her aspect, who reigns here Queen of this realm,
Ere thou shalt know the full weight of that art.
So to the pleasant world mayst thou return,
As thou shalt tell me, why in all their laws,
Against my kin this people is so fell?"

"The slaughter and great havoc," I replied,
"That colour'd Arbia's flood with crimson stain--
To these impute, that in our hallow'd dome
Such orisons ascend." Sighing he shook
The head, then thus resum'd: "In that affray
I stood not singly, nor without just cause
Assuredly should with the rest have stirr'd;
But singly there I stood, when by consent
Of all, Florence had to the ground been raz'd,
The one who openly forbad the deed."

"So may thy lineage find at last repose,"
I thus adjur'd him, "as thou solve this knot,
Which now involves my mind. If right I hear,
Ye seem to view beforehand, that which time
Leads with him, of the present uninform'd."

"We view, as one who hath an evil sight,"
He answer'd, "plainly, objects far remote:
So much of his large spendour yet imparts
The' Almighty Ruler; but when they approach
Or actually exist, our intellect
Then wholly fails, nor of your human state
Except what others bring us know we aught.
Hence therefore mayst thou understand, that all
Our knowledge in that instant shall expire,
When on futurity the portals close."

Then conscious of my fault, and by remorse
Smitten, I added thus: "Now shalt thou say
To him there fallen, that his offspring still
Is to the living join'd; and bid him know,
That if from answer silent I abstain'd,
'Twas that my thought was occupied intent
Upon that error, which thy help hath solv'd."

But now my master summoning me back
I heard, and with more eager haste besought

The spirit to inform me, who with him
Partook his lot. He answer thus return'd:

"More than a thousand with me here are laid
Within is Frederick, second of that name,
And the Lord Cardinal, and of the rest
I speak not." He, this said, from sight withdrew.
But I my steps towards the ancient bard
Reverting, ruminated on the words
Betokening me such ill. Onward he mov'd,
And thus in going question'd: "Whence the' amaze
That holds thy senses wrapt?" I satisfied
The' inquiry, and the sage enjoin'd me straight:
"Let thy safe memory store what thou hast heard
To thee importing harm; and note thou this,"
With his rais'd finger bidding me take heed,

"When thou shalt stand before her gracious beam,
Whose bright eye all surveys, she of thy life
The future tenour will to thee unfold."

Forthwith he to the left hand turn'd his feet:
We left the wall, and tow'rds the middle space
Went by a path, that to a valley strikes;
Which e'en thus high exhal'd its noisome steam.

CANTO XI

UPON the utmost verge of a high bank,
By craggy rocks environ'd round, we came,
Where woes beneath more cruel yet were stow'd:
And here to shun the horrible excess
Of fetid exhalation, upward cast
From the profound abyss, behind the lid
Of a great monument we stood retir'd,

Whereon this scroll I mark'd: "I have in charge
Pope Anastasius, whom Photinus drew
From the right path.--Ere our descent behooves
We make delay, that somewhat first the sense,
To the dire breath accustom'd, afterward
Regard it not." My master thus; to whom
Answering I spake: "Some compensation find
That the time past not wholly lost." He then:
"Lo! how my thoughts e'en to thy wishes tend!
My son! within these rocks," he thus began,
"Are three close circles in gradation plac'd,
As these which now thou leav'st. Each one is full
Of spirits accurs'd; but that the sight alone
Hereafter may suffice thee, listen how
And for what cause in durance they abide.

"Of all malicious act abhorr'd in heaven,
The end is injury; and all such end
Either by force or fraud works other's woe
But fraud, because of man peculiar evil,

To God is more displeasing; and beneath
The fraudulent are therefore doom'd to' endure
Severer pang. The violent occupy
All the first circle; and because to force
Three persons are obnoxious, in three rounds
Each within other separate is it fram'd.
To God, his neighbour, and himself, by man
Force may be offer'd; to himself I say
And his possessions, as thou soon shalt hear
At full. Death, violent death, and painful wounds
Upon his neighbour he inflicts; and wastes
By devastation, pillage, and the flames,
His substance. Slayers, and each one that smites
In malice, plund'ers, and all robbers, hence
The torment undergo of the first round
In different herds. Man can do violence
To himself and his own blessings: and for this
He in the second round must aye deplore
With unavailing penitence his crime,
Whoe'er deprives himself of life and light,
In reckless lavishment his talent wastes,
And sorrows there where he should dwell in joy.
To God may force be offer'd, in the heart
Denying and blaspheming his high power,
And nature with her kindly law contemning.
And thence the inmost round marks with its seal
Sodom and Cahors, and all such as speak
Contemptuously' of the Godhead in their hearts.

"Fraud, that in every conscience leaves a sting,
May be by man employ'd on one, whose trust
He wins, or on another who withholds
Strict confidence. Seems as the latter way
Broke but the bond of love which Nature makes.
Whence in the second circle have their nest
Dissimulation, witchcraft, flatteries,
Theft, falsehood, simony, all who seduce
To lust, or set their honesty at pawn,
With such vile scum as these. The other way
Forgets both Nature's general love, and that
Which thereto added afterwards gives birth
To special faith. Whence in the lesser circle,
Point of the universe, dread seat of Dis,
The traitor is eternally consum'd."

I thus: "Instructor, clearly thy discourse
Proceeds, distinguishing the hideous chasm
And its inhabitants with skill exact.
But tell me this: they of the dull, fat pool,
Whom the rain beats, or whom the tempest drives,
Or who with tongues so fierce conflicting meet,
Wherefore within the city fire-illum'd
Are not these punish'd, if God's wrath be on them?
And if it be not, wherefore in such guise
Are they condemned?" He answer thus return'd:
"Wherefore in dotage wanders thus thy mind,
Not so accusom'd? or what other thoughts
Possess it? Dwell not in thy memory
The words, wherein thy ethic page describes

Three dispositions adverse to Heav'n's will,
Incont'nence, malice, and mad brutishness,
And how incontinence the least offends
God, and least guilt incurs? If well thou note
This judgment, and remember who they are,
Without these walls to vain repentance doom'd,
Thou shalt discern why they apart are plac'd
From these fell spirits, and less wreakful pours
Justice divine on them its vengeance down."

"O Sun! who healest all imperfect sight,
Thou so content'st me, when thou solv'st my doubt,
That ignorance not less than knowledge charms.
Yet somewhat turn thee back," I in these words
Continu'd, "where thou saidst, that usury
Offends celestial Goodness; and this knot
Perplex'd unravel." He thus made reply:
"Philosophy, to an attentive ear,
Clearly points out, not in one part alone,
How imitative nature takes her course
From the celestial mind and from its art:
And where her laws the Stagyrite unfolds,
Not many leaves scann'd o'er, observing well
Thou shalt discover, that your art on her
Obsequious follows, as the learner treads
In his instructor's step, so that your art
Deserves the name of second in descent
From God. These two, if thou recall to mind
Creation's holy book, from the beginning
Were the right source of life and excellence
To human kind. But in another path
The usurer walks; and Nature in herself
And in her follower thus he sets at nought,
Placing elsewhere his hope. But follow now
My steps on forward journey bent; for now
The Pisces play with undulating glance
Along the' horizon, and the Wain lies all
O'er the north-west; and onward there a space
Is our steep passage down the rocky height."

CANTO XII

THE place where to descend the precipice
We came, was rough as Alp, and on its verge
Such object lay, as every eye would shun.

As is that ruin, which Adice's stream
On this side Trento struck, should'ring the wave,
Or loos'd by earthquake or for lack of prop;
For from the mountain's summit, whence it mov'd
To the low level, so the headlong rock
Is shiver'd, that some passage it might give
To him who from above would pass; e'en such
Into the chasm was that descent: and there
At point of the disparted ridge lay stretch'd
The infamy of Crete, detested brood

Of the feign'd heifer: and at sight of us
It gnaw'd itself, as one with rage distract.

To him my guide exclaim'd: "Perchance thou deem'st
The King of Athens here, who, in the world
Above, thy death contriv'd. Monster! avaunt!
He comes not tutor'd by thy sister's art,
But to behold your torments is he come."

Like to a bull, that with impetuous spring
Darts, at the moment when the fatal blow
Hath struck him, but unable to proceed
Plunges on either side; so saw I plunge
The Minotaur; whereat the sage exclaim'd:
"Run to the passage! while he storms, 't is well
That thou descend." Thus down our road we took
Through those dilapidated crags, that oft
Mov'd underneath my feet, to weight like theirs
Unus'd. I pond'ring went, and thus he spake:

"Perhaps thy thoughts are of this ruin'd steep,
Guarded by the brute violence, which I
Have vanquish'd now. Know then, that when I erst
Hither descended to the nether hell,
This rock was not yet fallen. But past doubt
(If well I mark) not long ere He arrived,
Who carried off from Dis the mighty spoil
Of the highest circle, then through all its bounds
Such trembling seiz'd the deep concave and foul,
I thought the universe was thrill'd with love,
Whereby, there are who deem, the world hath oft
Been into chaos turn'd: and in that point,
Here, and elsewhere, that old rock toppled down.
But fix thine eyes beneath: the river of blood
Approaches, in the which all those are steep'd,
Who have by violence injur'd." O blind lust!
O foolish wrath! who so dost goad us on
In the brief life, and in the eternal then
Thus miserably o'erwhelm us. I beheld
An ample foss, that in a bow was bent,
As circling all the plain; for so my guide
Had told. Between it and the rampart's base
On trail ran Centaurs, with keen arrows arm'd,
As to the chase they on the earth were wont.

At seeing us descend they each one stood;
And issuing from the troop, three sped with bows
And missile weapons chosen first; of whom
One cried from far: "Say to what pain ye come
Condemn'd, who down this steep have journied? Speak
From whence ye stand, or else the bow I draw."

To whom my guide: "Our answer shall be made
To Chiron, there, when nearer him we come.
Ill was thy mind, thus ever quick and rash."

Then me he touch'd, and spake: "Nessus is this,
Who for the fair Deianira died,
And wrought himself revenge for his own fate.

He in the midst, that on his breast looks down,
Is the great Chiron who Achilles nurs'd;
That other Pholus, prone to wrath." Around
The foss these go by thousands, aiming shafts
At whatsoever spirit dares emerge
From out the blood, more than his guilt allows.

We to those beasts, that rapid strode along,
Drew near, when Chiron took an arrow forth,
And with the notch push'd back his shaggy beard
To the cheek-bone, then his great mouth to view
Exposing, to his fellows thus exclaim'd:
"Are ye aware, that he who comes behind
Moves what he touches? The feet of the dead
Are not so wont." My trusty guide, who now
Stood near his breast, where the two natures join,
Thus made reply: "He is indeed alive,
And solitary so must needs by me
Be shown the gloomy vale, thereto induc'd
By strict necessity, not by delight.
She left her joyful harpings in the sky,
Who this new office to my care consign'd.
He is no robber, no dark spirit I.
But by that virtue, which empowers my step
To treat so wild a path, grant us, I pray,
One of thy band, whom we may trust secure,
Who to the ford may lead us, and convey
Across, him mounted on his back; for he
Is not a spirit that may walk the air."

Then on his right breast turning, Chiron thus
To Nessus spake: "Return, and be their guide.
And if ye chance to cross another troop,
Command them keep aloof." Onward we mov'd,
The faithful escort by our side, along
The border of the crimson-seething flood,
Whence from those steep'd within loud shrieks arose.

Some there I mark'd, as high as to their brow
Immers'd, of whom the mighty Centaur thus:
"These are the souls of tyrants, who were given
To blood and rapine. Here they wail aloud
Their merciless wrongs. Here Alexander dwells,
And Dionysius fell, who many a year
Of woe wrought for fair Sicily. That brow
Whereon the hair so jetty clust'ring hangs,
Is Azzolino; that with flaxen locks
Obizzo' of Este, in the world destroy'd
By his foul step-son." To the bard rever'd
I turned me round, and thus he spake; "Let him
Be to thee now first leader, me but next
To him in rank." Then farther on a space
The Centaur paus'd, near some, who at the throat
Were extant from the wave; and showing us
A spirit by itself apart retir'd,
Exclaim'd: "He in God's bosom smote the heart,
Which yet is honour'd on the bank of Thames."

A race I next espied, who held the head,

And even all the bust above the stream.
'Midst these I many a face remember'd well.
Thus shallow more and more the blood became,
So that at last it but imbru'd the feet;
And there our passage lay athwart the foss.

"As ever on this side the boiling wave
Thou seest diminishing," the Centaur said,
"So on the other, be thou well assur'd,
It lower still and lower sinks its bed,
Till in that part it reuniting join,
Where 't is the lot of tyranny to mourn.
There Heav'n's stern justice lays chastising hand
On Attila, who was the scourge of earth,
On Sextus, and on Pyrrhus, and extracts
Tears ever by the seething flood unlock'd
From the Rinieri, of Corneto this,
Pazzo the other nam'd, who fill'd the ways
With violence and war." This said, he turn'd,
And quitting us, alone repass'd the ford.

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