

After their courteous greetings joyfully  
Sev'n times exchang'd, Sordello backward drew  
Exclaiming, "Who are ye?" "Before this mount  
By spirits worthy of ascent to God  
Was sought, my bones had by Octavius' care  
Been buried. I am Virgil, for no sin  
Depriv'd of heav'n, except for lack of faith."  
So answer'd him in few my gentle guide.  
As one, who aught before him suddenly  
Beholding, whence his wonder riseth, cries  
"It is yet is not," wav'ring in belief;  
Such he appear'd; then downward bent his eyes,  
And drawing near with reverential step,  
Caught him, where of mean estate might clasp  
His lord. "Glory of Latium!" he exclaim'd,  
"In whom our tongue its utmost power display'd!  
Boast of my honor'd birth-place! what desert  
Of mine, what favour rather undeserv'd,  
Shows thee to me? If I to hear that voice  
Am worthy, say if from below thou com'st  
And from what cloister's pale?"—"Through every orb  
Of that sad region," he reply'd, "thus far  
Am I arriv'd, by heav'nly influence led  
And with such aid I come. There is a place  
There underneath, not made by torments sad,  
But by dun shades alone; where mourning's voice  
Sounds not of anguish sharp, but breathes in sighs."

There I with little innocents abide,  
Who by death's fangs were bitten, ere exempt  
From human taint. There I with those abide,  
Who the three holy virtues put not on,  
But understood the rest, and without blame  
Follow'd them all. But if thou know'st and canst,  
Direct us, how we soonest may arrive,  
Where Purgatory its true beginning takes.”

He answer'd thus: “We have no certain place  
Assign'd us: upwards I may go or round,  
Far as I can, I join thee for thy guide.  
But thou beholdest now how day declines:  
And upwards to proceed by night, our power  
Excels: therefore it may be well to choose  
A place of pleasant sojourn. To the right  
Some spirits sit apart retir'd. If thou  
Consentest, I to these will lead thy steps:  
And thou wilt know them, not without delight.”

“How chances this?” was answer'd; “who so wish'd  
To ascend by night, would he be thence debarr'd  
By other, or through his own weakness fail?”

The good Sordello then, along the ground  
Trailing his finger, spoke: “Only this line  
Thou shalt not overpass, soon as the sun  
Hath disappear'd; not that aught else impedes  
Thy going upwards, save the shades of night.

These with the wont of power perplex the will.  
With them thou haply mightst return beneath,  
Or to and fro around the mountain's side  
Wander, while day is in the horizon shut."  
My master straight, as wond'ring at his speech,  
Exclaim'd: "Then lead us quickly, where thou sayst,  
That, while we stay, we may enjoy delight."  
A little space we were remov'd from thence,  
When I perceiv'd the mountain hollow'd out.  
Ev'n as large valleys hollow'd out on earth,  
"That way," the' escorting spirit cried, "we go,  
Where in a bosom the high bank recedes:  
And thou await renewal of the day."  
Betwixt the steep and plain a crooked path  
Led us traverse into the ridge's side,  
Where more than half the sloping edge expires.  
Refulgent gold, and silver thrice refin'd,  
And scarlet grain and ceruse, Indian wood  
Of lucid dye serene, fresh emeralds  
But newly broken, by the herbs and flowers  
Plac'd in that fair recess, in color all  
Had been surpass'd, as great surpasses less.  
Nor nature only there lavish'd her hues,  
But of the sweetness of a thousand smells  
A rare and undistinguish'd fragrance made.

"Salve Regina," on the grass and flowers

Here chanting I beheld those spirits sit  
Who not beyond the valley could be seen.  
“Before the west’ring sun sink to his bed,”  
Began the Mantuan, who our steps had turn’d,  
“Mid those desires not that I lead ye on.  
For from this eminence ye shall discern  
Better the acts and visages of all,  
Than in the nether vale among them mix’d.  
He, who sits high above the rest, and seems  
To have neglected that he should have done,  
And to the others’ song moves not his lip,  
The Emperor Rodolph call, who might have heal’d  
The wounds whereof fair Italy hath died,  
So that by others she revives but slowly,  
He, who with kindly visage comforts him,  
Sway’d in that country, where the water springs,  
That Moldaw’s river to the Elbe, and Elbe  
Rolls to the ocean: Ottocar his name:  
Who in his swaddling clothes was of more worth  
Than Wincelaud his son, a bearded man,  
Pamper’d with rank luxuriousness and ease.  
And that one with the nose depress, who close  
In counsel seems with him of gentle look,  
Flying expir’d, with’ring the lily’s flower.  
Look there how he doth knock against his breast!  
The other ye behold, who for his cheek  
Makes of one hand a couch, with frequent sighs.

They are the father and the father-in-law  
Of Gallia's bane: his vicious life they know  
And foul; thence comes the grief that rends them thus.

"He, so robust of limb, who measure keeps

In song, with him of feature prominent,

With ev'ry virtue bore his girdle brac'd.

And if that stripling who behinds him sits,

King after him had liv'd, his virtue then

From vessel to like vessel had been pour'd;

Which may not of the other heirs be said.

By James and Frederick his realms are held;

Neither the better heritage obtains.

Rarely into the branches of the tree

Doth human worth mount up; and so ordains

He who bestows it, that as his free gift

It may be call'd. To Charles my words apply

No less than to his brother in the song;

Which Pouille and Provence now with grief confess.

So much that plant degenerates from its seed,

As more than Beatrice and Margaret

Costanza still boasts of her valorous spouse.

"Behold the king of simple life and plain,

Harry of England, sitting there alone:

He through his branches better issue spreads.

"That one, who on the ground beneath the rest

Sits lowest, yet his gaze directs aloft,

Us William, that brave Marquis, for whose cause

The deed of Alexandria and his war

Makes Conferrat and Canavese weep.”