

CANTO TWENTY-SECOND.

ARGUMENT :

The scar of avarice disappears from the forehead of Dante, as an Angel leads the Poets into the sixth terrace, where the shades undergo purgation for the sin of gluttony. Virgil and Statius continue in conversation. Therein Statius relates the process of his conversion to Christianity, attributing the first steps in it to the Pollio of Virgil. Statius explains that his vice was not avarice but its opposite, prodigality; that Virgil's outcry, in the *Æneid*, against the thirst for gold, had kept him from avarice.

TIME : Morning of Easter Tuesday.

PERSONS SPEAKING : The shade of Virgil. Statius. Voices of contrition and praise.

PERSONS APPEARING : Dante. The spirits undergoing purgation.

Now had we left the Angel, who our way
Into the Circle Sixth had guided, gone
Another scar his wing had beaten on ;
And those who justice seek from day to day
Had " Blessed " sung, and then " I thirst," an end
They with the first do all divinely blend ;
And I, now nimbler than in stairs below,
Such progress made, that free from sense of toil
I, with the shades, passed fleet this rocky coil ;

When Virgil thus : " If doth from virtue flow 10
Love's own pure flame, ne'er can it fail to warm
Another's breast, when clear its outward form.
Hence from that hour when Juvenal made descent
Amongst us in that limbo where we dwell,
And told how thy kind heart t'wards me did
swell,
My kindly feeling was t'wards thee, too, bent
As strongly as when one 's not seen can be ;
And now all brief this path will seem to me.

" But tell me, and this will thy friendship test, 19
And draw a friend's forgiveness to a friend,
Thy generous confidence due to me extend,
How chanced it Avarice lurked within thy breast,
Thou who such ample stores of wisdom reaped
As show thy works in all abundance heaped ? "
When met these words at first the Poet's ear
He laughed somewhat, then sweetly said : " Of
thine
Each several word is of dear love a sign.

" For oftentimes, we know, do things appear 28
Which to our doubts present fallacious shows,
While truth below in hidden fountains flows.
For in thy question thy belief 's implied
That covetousness me in that life disgraced,
Because, perhaps, in that round I was placed ;
Know, then, I was of Avarice far too wide,
And this extravagance rash hath moon on moon
By thousands made me pardon importune.

Jocasta.

“And were it not my soul was all alive 37
To heed that passage where, as if to inveigh
'Gainst human nature, thou dost nobly say :
'To what wilt thou not mortal bosoms drive,
Thou cursed thirst for gold ! ' there lost I 'd toil
Where rock 'gainst rock is rolled in dismal moil ;
Then I perceived with lavishment's wings too wide
The hands could spread, and happily penitence me
From that, and sins beside it, rendered free.

“How many from their graves shall rise denied 46
Their flowing locks, whose ignorant minds here
brought,
Alive and dying, no repentant thought !
And know that here opposing sinners hail,
Extremes here meet, and here their rankness dry
Sins which on earth dissevering highways try.
Therefore if I my sinning soul did trail
For cleansing, 'mongst that folk who Avarice
mourn,
'T was for a sin which held their sin in scorn.”

“Now, when thou didst the undying hatreds sing 55
Where twofold griefs Jocasta's load the line,”
Thus said the Bard of Pastoral Song divine,
“It doth not seem by inferences that spring
From Clio's prelude, that faith ruled thee there,
Faith without which good works fruit do not bear.
If this be so, what Sun's or candles' lights
Dispelled the darkness, so that onward sped
Thy bark thereafter where the Fisherman led ? ”

And he to him : " Towards Parnassus' heights 64
'T was thee me led, with thee its grotts I trod,
And thou didst first me teach concerning God.
Thou wast as one who, walking in the night,
Beareth his light behind, where wise its ray
Makes those who follow where its sparkles play,
When thou exclaim'dst, ' Yields Time a birth of
might,
Comes Justice back, and man's primeval state,
And now descends from Heaven a progeny great !'

" Through thee the Bard's wreath's mine, and
Christian's palm, 73
But that thou may'st more of my story learn,
I will into its lines more color turn.
Already had the true belief, by calm
And holy messengers sent, been spread abroad,
And had been preached the Kingdom of Our Lord,
And thy prediction with the reverent aim
Of those new teachers so in unison read
That I to seek them out was often led.

" Then they so favored in my sight became 82
That when Domitian's persecutions fears
To their souls gave, they gave to me sad tears.
And long as I upon the earth did bide,
Their friend I was, and their most innocent ways
Made me above all other sects them praise.
And ere in verse I to the streams that glide
Through Thebes the Greeks led forth, I was
baptized,
But, though a Christian, fear held me disguised.

“For long professing paganism as my creed ; 91
 And this lukewarmness base I hurried for
 Round the fourth terrace more than centuries
 four.

Thou therefore who me hast from that doubt freed,
 Which from me hid the blessing meets me here,
 While we ascend, still please my listening ear,
 And say where now doth our friend Terence bide ?
 Cæcilius where ? Plautus’ and Varro’s souls ?
 And, if ’t is Hell, what part of it them holds ? ”

“These, Persius, and myself, with more beside,” 100
 Said then my Leader, “with that Greek are placed
 Whom more than all the rest the Muses graced,
 In that blind prison’s first apartment ; oft
 That mountain forms the subject of our talk
 Whereon for aye our beauteous Muses walk.
 Euripides and Antiphon there aloft
 Their laurelled heads hold, with Simonides
 And Agatho, and Greeks far more than these.

“There may be seen of thine own train some
 souls ; 109
 Antigone, Deiphile and Argia there
 Meet with Ismene still deep-sunk in care.
 Her who Langia pointed out, it holds,
 Tiresias’ daughter, too, and Thetis ; dwell
 Deidamia and her sisters there as well.”
 The Bards were silent both, and both inclined
 To look around them, now that we were through
 The ascending defile, and spread wide the view ;

And the sun's chariot four had left behind 118
Of its handmaidens, and the fifth still higher
Its pole was turning, whence came floods of fire,
When thus my Guide : " Let us again proceed,
As is our wont in mounting, with our right
Turned t'wards the edge whence far extends our
sight."

Thus custom there as usher us did lead,
And with its rule were we the more content
When that good shade to it his sanction lent.

They on before me walked, while followed I, 127
My listening soul fed with discourses meet
From Bards to come so skilled in melody sweet.
But soon my lessons ceased ; for now near by
A tree me found which in the roadway grew,
And fruitage fragrant and abundant knew.
And, as a fir-tree's upward spread 's less wide,
So in the way reverse with this 't was done,
I think in order that might climb it none.

And where our path adjoined the Mountain's
side 136
Fell from the lofty rock a limpid stream,
Which 'mongst the leaves cast wide its pearly
gleam.

Near to the tree the Poets drew, while brake
From out the foliage forth a voice which cried :
" This food unto your longing is denied !"
Then said : " More thoughtful Mary was to make
The marriage-feast of care relax the bonds
Than of herself, who now for you responds ;

“ And for their drink the ancient dames, ’t is told, ¹⁴⁵
 Of Rome, drank water only ; while restrained
 Was Daniel in his food, he wisdom gained ;
 The primal age was beautiful as gold ;
 Hunger then made the acorns sweet, and ran
 Nectar each rivulet pure for thirsty man ;
 Honey and locusts were the aliment given
 To John the Baptist in the desert ; thence
 He glorious is, is thence his praise immense,

“ As saith the Evangel sent to you from Heaven.” ¹⁵⁴

NOTES TO THE TWENTY-SECOND CANTO.

5. “ *Blessed.*” “ Are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness : for they shall be filled.” *Matthew* v. 6.

8. “ *Free from sense of toil.*” In accordance with the prediction made in Canto iv. at line 90.

9. “ *The shades.*” Virgil and Statius.

13. “ *Juvenal.*” Decimus Junius Juvenalis, a Roman satirical poet of the latter part of the first Christian century, and of the first quarter of the second. Surviving Statius some thirty years, Juvenal died at the advanced age of eighty. He was born, some say he only lived, at Aquinum.

“ There is Aquinum, the old Volscian town,
 Where Juvenal was born, whose lurid light
 Still hovers o’er his birthplace, like the crown
 Of splendor seen o’er cities in the night.
 Doubled the splendor is, that in its streets
 The Angelic Doctor as a schoolboy played,
 And dreamed perhaps the dreams that he repeats
 In ponderous folios for scholastics made.”

LONGFELLOW.

41. “ *Thou cursed thirst for gold.*” “ *Auri sacra fames.*”
 Third Book of the *Æneid*, line 57.

55. “ *Undying hatreds.*” Of Eteocles and Polynices, the