

The Prophecy of Dante Byron

*“Tis the sunset of life gives me mystical lore,
And coming events cast their shadows before.”*

—CAMPBELL, [LOCHIEL’S WARNING].

INTRODUCTION TO *THE PROPHECY OF DANTE*.

The *Prophecy of Dante* was written at Ravenna, during the month of June, 1819, “to gratify” the Countess Guiccioli. Before she left Venice in April she had received a promise from Byron to visit her at Ravenna. “Dante’s tomb, the classical pinewood,” and so forth, had afforded a pretext for the invitation to be given and accepted, and, at length, when she was, as she imagined, “at the point of death,” he arrived, better late than never, “on the Festival of the *Corpus Domini*” which fell that year on the tenth of June (see her communication to Moore, *Life*, p. 399). Horses and books were left behind at Venice, but he could occupy his enforced leisure by “writing something on the subject of Dante” (*ibid.*, p. 402). A heightened interest born of fuller knowledge, in Italian literature and Italian politics, lent zest to this labour of love, and, time and place conspiring, he composed “the best thing he ever wrote” (Letter to Murray, March 23, 1820, *Letters*, 1900, iv. 422), his *Vision (or Prophecy) of Dante*.

It would have been strange if Byron, who had sounded his *Lament* over the sufferings of Tasso, and who had become *de facto* if not *de jure* a naturalized Italian, had forborne to associate his name and fame with the sacred memory of the “Gran padre Alighier.” If there had been any truth in Friedrich Schlegel’s pronouncement, in a lecture delivered at Vienna in 1814, “that at no time has the greatest and most national of all Italian poets ever been much the favourite of his countrymen,” the reproach had become meaningless. As the sumptuous folio edition (4 vols.) of the *Divina Commedia*, published at Florence, 1817–19; a quarto edition (4 vols.) published at Rome, 1815–17; a folio edition (3 vols.) published at Bologna 1819–21, to which the Conte Giovanni Marchetti (*vide* the Preface, *post*, p. 245) contributed his famous excursus on the allegory in the First Canto of the *Inferno*, and numerous other issues remain to testify, Dante’s own countrymen were eager “to pay honours almost divine” to his memory. “The last age,” writes Hobhouse, in 1817 (note 18 to Canto IV. of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, *Poetical Works*, 1899, ii. 496), “seemed inclined to undervalue him. . . . The present generation . . . has returned to the ancient worship, and the *Danteggiare* of the northern Italians is thought even indiscreet by the more moderate Tuscans.” Dante was in the air. As Byron wrote in his Diary (January 29,

1821), “Read Schlegel [probably in a translation published at Edinburgh, 1818]. Not a favourite! Why, they talk Dante, write Dante, and think and dream Dante at this moment (1821), to an excess which would be ridiculous, but that he deserves it.”

There was, too, another reason why he was minded to write a poem “on the subject of Dante.” There was, at this time, a hope, if not a clear prospect, of political change—of throwing off the yoke of the Bourbon, of liberating Italy from the tyrant and the stranger. “Dante was the poet of liberty. Persecution, exile, the dread of a foreign grave, could not shake his principles” (Medwin, *Conversations*, 1824, p. 242). The *Prophecy* was “intended for the Italians,” intended to foreshadow as in a vision “liberty and the resurrection of Italy” (*ibid.*, p. 241). As he rode at twilight through the pine forest, or along “the silent shore Which bounds Ravenna’s immemorial wood,” the undying past inspired him with a vision of the future, delayed, indeed, for a time, “the flame ending in smoke,” but fulfilled after many days, a vision of a redeemed and united Italy.

“The poem,” he says, in the Preface, “may be considered as a metrical experiment.” In *Beppo*, and the two first cantos of *Don Juan*, he had proved that the *ottava rima* of the Italians, which Frere had been one of the first to transplant, might grow and flourish in an alien soil, and now, by way of a second venture, he proposed to acclimatize the *terza rima*. He was under the impression that Hayley, whom he had held up to ridicule as “for ever feeble, and for ever tame,” had been the first and last to try the measure in English; but of Hayley’s excellent translation of the three first cantos of the *Inferno* (*vide post*, p. 244, note 1), praised but somewhat grudgingly praised by Southey, he had only seen an extract, and of earlier experiments he was altogether ignorant. As a matter of fact, many poets had already essayed, but timidly and without perseverance, to “come to the test in the metrification” of the *Divine Comedy*. Some twenty-seven lines, “the sole example in English literature of that period, of the use of *terza rima*, obviously copied from Dante” (*Complete Works of Chaucer*, by the Rev. W. Skeat, 1894, i. 76, 261), are imbedded in Chaucer’s *Complaint to his Lady*. In the sixteenth century Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (“Description of the restless state of a lover”), “as novises newly sprung out of the schools of Dante, Ariosto, and Petrarch” (Puttenham’s *Art of Poesie*, 1589, pp. 48–50); and later again, Daniel (“To the Lady Lucy, Countess of Bedford”), Ben Jonson, and Milton (*Psalms* ii., vi.) afford specimens of *terza rima*. There was, too, one among

Byron's contemporaries who had already made trial of the metre in his *Prince Athanase* (1817) and *The Woodman and the Nightingale* (1818), and who, shortly, in his *Ode to the West Wind* (October, 1819, published 1820) was to prove that it was not impossible to write English poetry, if not in genuine *terza rima*, with its interchange of double rhymes, at least in what has been happily styled the "Byronic *terza rima*." It may, however, be taken for granted that, at any rate in June, 1819, these fragments of Shelley's were unknown to Byron. Long after Byron's day, but long years before his dream was realized, Mrs. Browning, in her *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851), in the same metre, reechoed the same aspiration (see her *Preface*), "that the future of Italy shall not be disinherited." (See for some of these instances of *terza rima*, *Englische Metrik*, von Dr. J. Schipper, 1888, ii. 896. See, too, *The Metre of Dante's Comedy discussed and exemplified*, by Alfred Forman and Harry Buxton Forman, 1878, p. 7.)

The MS. of the *Prophecy of Dante*, together with the Preface, was forwarded to Murray, March 14, 1820; but in spite of some impatience on the part of the author (Letter to Murray, May 8, 1820, *Letters*, 1901, v. 20), and, after the lapse of some months, a pretty broad hint (Letter, August 17, 1820, *ibid.*, p. 165) that "the time for the Dante would be good now . . . as Italy is on the eve of great things," publication was deferred till the following year. *Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice*, and the *Prophecy of Dante* were published in the same volume, April 21, 1821.

The *Prophecy of Dante* was briefly but favourably noticed by Jeffrey in his review of *Marino Faliero* (*Edinb. Rev.*, July, 1821, vol. 35, p. 285). "It is a very grand, fervid, turbulent, and somewhat mystical composition, full of the highest sentiment and the highest poetry; . . . but disfigured by many faults of precipitation, and overclouded with many obscurities. Its great fault with common readers will be that it is not sufficiently intelligible. . . . It is, however, beyond all question, a work of a man of great genius."

Other notices of *Marino Faliero* and the *Prophecy of Dante* appeared in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, April, 1821, vol. 9, pp. 93–103; in the *Monthly Review*, May, 1821, Enlarged Series, vol. 95, pp. 41–50; and in the *Eclectic Review*, June 21, New Series, vol. xv. pp. 518–527.

DEDICATION.

Lady! if for the cold and cloudy clime
Where I was born, but where I would not die,
Of the great Poet—Sire of Italy
I dare to build¹ the imitative rhyme,
Harsh Runic² copy of the South's sublime,
Thou art the cause; and howsoever I
Fall short of his immortal harmony,
Thy gentle heart will pardon me the crime.
Thou, in the pride of Beauty and of Youth,
Spakest; and for thee to speak and be obeyed
Are one; but only in the sunny South
Such sounds are uttered, and such charms displayed,
So sweet a language from so fair a mouth—³
Ah! to what effort would it not persuade?

Ravenna, June 21, 1819.

¹ [Compare—

“He knew
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.”

MILTON, *LYCIDAS*, LINE 11.]

² [By “Runic” Byron means “Northern,” “Anglo-Saxon.”]

³ [Compare “In that word, beautiful in all languages, but most so in yours—*Amor mio*—is comprised my existence here and hereafter.”—Letter of Byron to the Countess Guiccioli, August 25, 1819, *Letters*, 1900, iv. 350. Compare, too, *Beppo*, stanza xlv.; *vide ante*, p. 173.]

PREFACE

In the course of a visit to the city of Ravenna in the summer of 1819, it was suggested to the author that having composed something on the subject of Tasso's confinement, he should do the same on Dante's exile,—the tomb of the poet forming one of the principal objects⁴ of interest in that city, both to the native and to the stranger.

“On this hint I spake,” and the result has been the following four cantos, in *terza rima*, now offered to the reader. If they are understood and approved, it is my purpose to continue the poem in various other cantos to its natural conclusion in the present age. The reader is requested to suppose that Dante addresses him in the interval between the conclusion of the *Divina Commedia* and his death, and shortly before the latter event, foretelling the fortunes of Italy in general in the ensuing centuries. In adopting this plan I have had in my mind the Cassandra of Lycophron,⁵ and the Prophecy of Nereus by Horace, as well as the Prophecies of Holy Writ. The measure adopted is the *terza rima* of Dante, which I am not aware to have seen hitherto *tried in our language, except it may be by Mr. Hayley,*⁶ of whose translation I never saw but one extract, quoted in the notes to *Caliph Vathek*; so that—if I do not err—this poem may be considered as a metrical experiment. The cantos are short, and about the same length of those of the poet, whose name I have borrowed and most likely taken in vain.

Amongst the inconveniences of authors in the present day, it is difficult for any who have a name, good or bad, to escape translation. I have had the fortune to see the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*⁷ translated into Italian *versi sciolti*,—that is, a poem written in the *Spenserean stanza* into *blank verse*, without regard to the natural divisions of the stanza or the sense. If the present poem, being on a national topic, should chance to undergo the same fate, I would request the Italian reader to remember that when I have failed in the imitation of his great “Padre Alighier,”⁸ I have failed in imitating that which all study and few understand, since to this very day it is not yet settled what was the meaning of the allegory⁹ in the first canto of the *Inferno*, unless Count Marchetti's ingenious and probable conjecture may be considered as having decided the question.

He may also pardon my failure the more, as I am not quite sure that he would

be pleased with my success, since the Italians, with a pardonable nationality, are particularly jealous of all that is left them as a nation—their literature; and in the present bitterness of the classic and romantic war, are but ill disposed to permit a foreigner even to approve or imitate them, without finding some fault with his ultramontane presumption. I can easily enter into all this, knowing what would be thought in England of an Italian imitator of Milton, or if a translation of Monti, Pindemonte, or Arici,¹⁰ should be held up to the rising generation as a model for their future poetical essays. But I perceive that I am deviating into an address to the Italian reader, where my business is with the English one; and be they few or many, I must take my leave of both.

⁴ [Compare—

“I pass each day where Dante’s bones are laid:
A little cupola more neat than solemn,
Protects his dust.”

DON JUAN, CANTO IV. STANZA CIV. LINES 1–3.]

⁵ [The *Cassandra* or *Alexandra* of Lycophron, one of the seven “Pleiades” who adorned the court of Ptolemy Philadelphus (third century B.C.), is “an iambic monologue of 1474 verses, in which Cassandra is made to prophesy the fall of Troy . . . with numerous other historical events, . . . ending with [the reign of] Alexandra the Great.” Byron had probably read a translation of the *Cassandra* by Philip Yorke, Viscount Royston (born 1784, wrecked in the *Agatha* off Memel, April 7, 1808), which was issued at Cambridge in 1806. The *Alexandra* forms part of the *Bibliotheca Teubneriana* (ed. G. Kinkel, Lipsiæ, 1880). For the prophecy of Nereus, *vide* Hor., *Odes*, lib. i. c. xv.]

⁶ [In the notes to his *Essay on Epic Poetry*, 1782 (Epistle iii. pp. 175–197), Hayley (see *English Bards, etc.*, line 310, *Poetical Works*, 1898, i. 321, note 1) prints a translation of the three first cantos of the *Inferno*, which, he says (p. 172), was written “a few years ago to oblige a particular friend.” “Of all Hayley’s compositions,” writes Southey (*Quart. Rev.*, vol. xxxi. pp. 283, 284), “these specimens are the best . . . in thus following his original Hayley was led into a sobriety and manliness of diction which . . . approached . . . to the manner of a better age.”

In a note on the Hall of Eblis, S. Henley quotes with approbation Hayley’s translation of lines 1–9 of this Third Canto of the *Inferno*. *Vathek* . . . by W. Beckford, 1868, p. 188.]

⁷ [*L’Italia: Canto IV. del Pellegrinaggio di Childe Harold* . . . tradotto da Michele Leoni,

Italia (London?), 1819, 8°. Leoni also translated the *Lament of Tasso* (*Lamento di Tasso* . . . Recato in Italiano da M. Leoni, Pisa, 1818).]

⁸ [Alfieri has a sonnet on the tomb of Dante, beginning—

“O gran padre Alighier, se dal ciel miri.”

OPERE SCELLE, DI VITTORIO ALFIERI, 1818, III. 487.]

⁹ [The Panther, the Lion, and the She-wolf, which Dante encountered on the “desert slope” (*Inferno*, Canto I. lines 31, *sq.*), were no doubt suggested by Jer. v. 6: “Idcirco percussit eos leo de silva, lupus ad vesperam vastavit eos, pardus vigilans super civitates eorum.” Symbolically they have been from the earliest times understood as denoting—the panther, lust; the lion, pride; the wolf, avarice; the sins affecting youth, maturity, and old age. Later commentators have suggested that there may be an underlying political symbolism as well, and that the three beasts may stand for Florence with her “Black” and “White” parties, the power of France, and the Guelf party as typically representative of these vices (*The Hell of Dante*, by A. J. Butler, 1892, p. 5, note).

Count Giovanni Marchetti degli Angelini (1790–1852), in his *Discorso . . . della prima e principale Allegoria del Poema di Dante*, contributed to an edition of *La Divina Commedia*, published at Bologna, 1819–21, i. 17–44, and reissued in *La Biografia di Dante* . . . 1822, v. 397, *sq.*, etc., argues in favour of a double symbolism. (According to a life of Marchetti, prefixed to his *Poesie*, 1878 [*Una notte di Dante*, etc.], he met Byron at Bologna in 1819, and made his acquaintance.)]

¹⁰ [For Vincenzo Monti (1754–1828), see letter to Murray, October 15, 1816 (*Letters*, 1899, iii. 377, note 3); and for Ippolito Pindemonte (1753–1828), see letter to Murray, June 4, 1817, (*Letters*, 1900, iv. 127, note 4). In his *Essay on the Present Literature of Italy*, Hobhouse supplies critical notices of Pindemonte and Monti, *Historical Illustrations*, 1818, pp. 413–449. Cesare Arici, lawyer and poet, was born at Brescia, July 2, 1782. His works (Padua, 1858, 4 vols.) include his didactic poems, *La coltivazione degli Ulivi* (1805), *Il Corallo*, 1810, *La Pastorizia* (on sheep-farming), 1814, and a translation of the works of Virgil. He died in 1836. (See, for a long and sympathetic notice, Tiplado’s *Biografia degli Italiani Illustri*, iii. 491, *sq.*)]

THE PROPHECY OF DANTE.

CANTO THE FIRST.

Once more in Man's frail world! which I had left
So long that 'twas forgotten; and I feel
The weight of clay again,—too soon bereft
Of the Immortal Vision which could heal
My earthly sorrows, and to God's own skies
Lift me from that deep Gulf without repeal,
Where late my ears rung with the damned cries
Of Souls in hopeless bale; and from that place
Of lesser torment, whence men may arise
Pure from the fire to join the Angelic race;
Midst whom my own bright Beatricē¹ blessed
My spirit with her light; and to the base
Of the Eternal Triad! first, last, best,²
Mysterious, three, sole, infinite, great God!
Soul universal! led the mortal guest,
Unblasted by the Glory, though he trod
From star to star to reach the almighty throne.
Oh Beatrice! whose sweet limbs the sod
So long hath pressed, and the cold marble stone,
Thou sole pure Seraph of my earliest love,
Love so ineffable, and so alone,
That nought on earth could more my bosom move,

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And meeting thee in Heaven was but to meet
That without which my Soul, like the arkless dove,
Had wandered still in search of, nor her feet
Relieved her wing till found; without thy light
My Paradise had still been incomplete.³
Since my tenth sun gave summer to my sight
Thou wert my Life, the Essence of my thought,
Loved ere I knew the name of Love,⁴ and bright 30
Still in these dim old eyes, now overwrought
With the World's war, and years, and banishment,
And tears for thee, by other woes untaught;
For mine is not a nature to be bent
By tyrannous faction, and the brawling crowd,
And though the long, long conflict hath been spent
In vain,—and never more, save when the cloud
Which overhangs the Apennine my mind's eye
Pierces to fancy Florence, once so proud
Of me, can I return, though but to die, 40
Unto my native soil,—they have not yet
Quenched the old exile's spirit, stern and high.
But the Sun, though not overcast, must set
And the night cometh; I am old in days,
And deeds, and contemplation, and have met
Destruction face to face in all his ways.
The World hath left me, what it found me, pure,
And if I have not gathered yet its praise,
I sought it not by any baser lure;

Man wrongs, and Time avenges, and my name 50
May form a monument not all obscure,
Though such was not my Ambition's end or aim,
To add to the vain-glorious list of those
Who dabble in the pettiness of fame,
And make men's fickle breath the wind that blows
Their sail, and deem it glory to be classed
With conquerors, and Virtue's other foes,
In bloody chronicles of ages past.

I would have had my Florence great and free;⁵
Oh Florence! Florence!⁶ unto me thou wast 60
Like that Jerusalem which the Almighty He
Wept over, "but thou wouldst not;" as the bird
Gathers its young, I would have gathered thee
Beneath a parent pinion, hadst thou heard
My voice; but as the adder, deaf and fierce,
Against the breast that cherished thee was stirred
Thy venom, and my state thou didst amerce,
And doom this body forfeit to the fire.⁷
Alas! how bitter is his country's curse
To him who *for* that country would expire, 70
But did not merit to expire *by* her,
And loves her, loves her even in her ire.
The day may come when she will cease to err,
The day may come she would be proud to have
The dust she dooms to scatter, and transfer
Of him, whom she denied a home, the grave.

But this shall not be granted; let my dust
Lie where it falls; nor shall the soil which gave
Me breath, but in her sudden fury thrust
Me forth to breathe elsewhere, so reassume 80
My indignant bones, because her angry gust
Forsooth is over, and repealed her doom;
No,—she denied me what was mine—my roof,
And shall not have what is not hers—my tomb.
Too long her armed wrath hath kept aloof
The breast which would have bled for her, the heart
That beat, the mind that was temptation proof,
The man who fought, toiled, travelled, and each part
Of a true citizen fulfilled, and saw
For his reward the Guelf's ascendant art 90
Pass his destruction even into a law.
These things are not made for forgetfulness,
Florence shall be forgotten first; too raw
The wound, too deep the wrong, and the distress
Of such endurance too prolonged to make
My pardon greater, her injustice less,
Though late repented; yet—yet for her sake
I feel some fonder yearnings, and for thine,
My own Beatricē, I would hardly take
Vengeance upon the land which once was mine, 100
And still is hallowed by thy dust's return,
Which would protect the murderess like a shrine,
And save ten thousand foes by thy sole urn.

Though, like old Marius from Minturnæ's marsh
And Carthage ruins, my lone breast may burn
At times with evil feelings hot and harsh,⁸
And sometimes the last pangs of a vile foe
Writhe in a dream before me, and o'erarch
My brow with hopes of triumph,—let them go!
Such are the last infirmities of those
Who long have suffered more than mortal woe,
And yet being mortal still, have no repose
But on the pillow of Revenge—Revenge,
Who sleeps to dream of blood, and waking glows
With the oft-baffled, slakeless thirst of change,
When we shall mount again, and they that trod
Be trampled on, while Death and Até range
O'er humbled heads and severed necks—Great God!
Take these thoughts from me—to thy hands I yield
My many wrongs, and thine Almighty rod
Will fall on those who smote me,—be my Shield!
As thou hast been in peril, and in pain,
In turbulent cities, and the tented field—
In toil, and many troubles borne in vain
For Florence,—I appeal from her to Thee!
Thee, whom I late saw in thy loftiest reign,
Even in that glorious Vision, which to see
And live was never granted until now,
And yet thou hast permitted this to me.
Alas! with what a weight upon my brow

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The sense of earth and earthly things come back,
Corrosive passions, feelings dull and low,
The heart's quick throb upon the mental rack,
Long day, and dreary night; the retrospect
Of half a century bloody and black,
And the frail few years I may yet expect
Hoary and hopeless, but less hard to bear,
For I have been too long and deeply wrecked
On the lone rock of desolate Despair,
To lift my eyes more to the passing sail
Which shuns that reef so horrible and bare;
Nor raise my voice—for who would heed my wail?
I am not of this people, nor this age,
And yet my harpings will unfold a tale
Which shall preserve these times when not a page
Of their perturbéd annals could attract
An eye to gaze upon their civil rage,
Did not my verse embalm full many an act
Worthless as they who wrought it: 'tis the doom
Of spirits of my order to be racked
In life, to wear their hearts out, and consume
Their days in endless strife, and die alone;
Then future thousands crowd around their tomb,
And pilgrims come from climes where they have known
The name of him—who now is but a name,
And wasting homage o'er the sullen stone,
Spread his—by him unheard, unheeded—fame;

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And mine at least hath cost me dear: to die
Is nothing; but to wither thus—to tame
My mind down from its own infinity—160
To live in narrow ways with little men,
A common sight to every common eye,
A wanderer, while even wolves can find a den,
Ripped from all kindred, from all home, all things
That make communion sweet, and soften pain—
To feel me in the solitude of kings
Without the power that makes them bear a crown—
To envy every dove his nest and wings
Which waft him where the Apennine looks down
On Arno, till he perches, it may be,170
Within my all inexorable town,
Where yet my boys are, and that fatal She,⁹
Their mother, the cold partner who hath brought
Destruction for a dowry—this to see
And feel, and know without repair, hath taught
A bitter lesson; but it leaves me free:
I have not vilely found, nor basely sought,
They made an Exile—not a Slave of me.

¹ The reader is requested to adopt the Italian pronunciation of Beatrice, sounding all the syllables.

2 [Compare—

“Within the deep and luminous subsistence
Of the High Light appeared to me three circles,
Of threefold colour and of one dimension,
And by the second seemed the first reflected
As Iris is by Iris, and the third
Seemed fire that equally from both is breathed. . . .
O Light Eterne, sole in thyself that dwellest.”

PARADISO, xxxiii. 115–120, 124 (LONGFELLOW’S TRANSLATION).]

3

“Ché sol per le belle opre
Che sono in cielo, il sole e l’altre stelle,
Dentro da lor *si crede il Paradiso*:
Così se guardi fiso
Pensar ben dei, che ogni terren piacere.
[Si trova in lei, ma tu nol puoi vedere.”]

Canzone, in which Dante describes the person of Beatrice, Strophe third.

[Byron was mistaken in attributing these lines, which form part of a Canzone beginning “Io miro i crespi e gli biondi capegli,” to Dante. Neither external nor internal evidence supports such an ascription. The Canzone is attributed in the MSS. either to Fazio degli Uberti, or to Bindo Borrichi da Siena, but was not assigned to Dante before 1518 (*Canzoni di Dante, etc.* [Colophon]. Impreso in Milano per Augustino da Vimercato . . . MCCCCXVIII . . .). See, too, *Il Canzoniere di Dante* . . . Fraticelli, Firenze, 1873, pp. 236–240 (from information kindly supplied by the Rev. Philip H. Wicksteed).]

4 [“Nine times already since my birth had the heaven of light returned to the selfsame point almost, as concerns its own revolution, when first the glorious Lady of my mind was made manifest to mine eyes; even she who was called Beatrice by many who knew not wherefore.”—*La Vita Nuova*, § 2 (Translation by D. G. Rossetti, *Dante and his Circle*, 1892, p. 30).

“In reference to the meaning of the name, ‘*she who confers blessing*,’ we learn from Boccaccio that this first meeting took place at a May Feast, given in the year 1274, by Folco Portinari, father of Beatrice . . . to which feast Dante accompanied his father, Alighiero Alighieri.”—*Note* by D. G. Rossetti, *ibid.*, p. 30.]

5

“L’Esilio che m’ è dato onor mi tegno

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Cader tra’ buoni è pur di lode degno.”

SONNET OF DANTE [CANZONE XX. LINES 76–80, OPERE DI DANTE, 1897, p.

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in which he represents Right, Generosity, and Temperance as banished from among men, and seeking refuge from Love, who inhabits his bosom.

⁶ [Compare—

“On the stone

Called Dante’s,—a plain flat stone scarce discerned

From others in the pavement,—whereupon

He used to bring his quiet chair out, turned

To Brunelleschi’s Church, and pour alone

The lava of his spirit when it burned:

It is not cold today. O passionate

Poor Dante, who, a banished Florentine,

Didst sit austere at banquets of the great

And muse upon this far-off stone of thine,

And think how oft some passer used to wait

A moment, in the golden day’s decline,

With ‘Good night, dearest Dante!’ Well, good night!”

CASA GUIDI WINDOWS, BY E. B. BROWNING, *POETICAL WORKS*, 1866, III.
259.]

⁷ “Ut si quis predictorum ullo tempore in fortiam dicti communis pervenerit, *talīs perveniens igne comburatur, sic quod moriatur.*” Second sentence of Florence against Dante, and the fourteen accused with him. The Latin is worthy of the sentence. [The decree (March 11, 1302) that he and his associates in exile should be burned, if they fell into the hands of their enemies, was first discovered in 1772 by the Conte Ludovico Savioli. Dante had been previously, January 27, fined eight thousand lire, and condemned to two years’ banishment.]

⁸ [At the end of the Social War (B.C. 88), when Sulla marched to Rome at the head of his army, and Marius was compelled to take flight, he “stripped himself, plunged into the bog (*Paludes Minturnenses*, near the mouth of the Liris), amidst thick water and mud. . . . They hauled him out naked and covered with dirt, and carried him to Minturnæ.” Afterwards, when he sailed for Carthage, he had no sooner landed than he was ordered by the governor (Sextilius) to quit Africa. On his once more gaining the ascendancy and reentering Rome (B.C. 87), he justified the massacre of Sulla’s adherents in a blood-thirsty oration. Past ignominy and present triumph seem to have turned his head (“ut erat inter iram toleratæ fortunæ, et lætitiā emendatæ, parum compos animi”).—Plut., “Marius,” *apud* Langhorne, 1838, p. 304; Livii *Epit.*, lxxx. 28.]

⁹ This lady, whose name was *Gemma*, sprung from one of the most powerful Guelph families, named Donati. Corso Donati was the principal adversary of the Ghibellines. She is—described as being “*Admodum morosa, ut de Xantippe Socratis philosophi conjugē scriptum esse legimus,*” according to Giannozzo Manetti. But Lionardo Aretino is scandalised with Boccace, in his life of Dante, for saying that literary men should not marry. “Qui il Boccaccio non ha pazienza, e dice, le mogli esser contrarie agli studj; e non si ricorda che Socrate, il più nobile filosofo che mai fusse, ebbe moglie e figliuoli e uffici

nella Repubblica nella sua Città; e Aristotile che, etc., etc., ebbe due moglie in varj tempi, ed ebbe figliuoli, e ricchezze assai.—E Marco Tullio—e Catone—e Varrone—e Seneca—ebbero moglie,” etc., etc. [*Le Vite di Dante, etc.*, Firenze, 1677, pp. 22, 23]. It is odd that honest Lionardo’s examples, with the exception of Seneca, and, for anything I know, of Aristotle, are not the most felicitous. Tully’s Terentia, and Socrates’ Xantippe, by no means contributed to their husbands’ happiness, whatever they might do to their philosophy—Cato gave away his wife—of Varro’s we know nothing—and of Seneca’s, only that she was disposed to die with him, but recovered and lived several years afterwards. But says Leonardo, “L’uomo è *animale civile*, secondo piace a tutti i filosofi.” And thence concludes that the greatest proof of the *animal’s civism* is “la prima congiunzione, dalla quale moltiplicata nasce la Città.”

[There is nothing in the *Divina Commedia*, or elsewhere in his writings, to justify the common belief that Dante was unhappily married, unless silence may be taken to imply dislike and alienation. It has been supposed that he alludes to his wife, Gemma Donati, in the *Vita Nuova*, § 36, “as a young and very beautiful lady, who was gazing upon me from a window, with a gaze full of pity,” “who remembered me many times of my own most noble lady,” whom he consented to serve “more because of her gentle goodness than from any choice” of his own (*Convito*, ii. 2. 7), but there are difficulties in the way of accepting this theory. There is, however, not the slightest reason for believing that the words which he put into the mouth of Jacopo Rusticucci, “La fiera moglie più ch’altro, mi nuoce” [“and truly, my savage wife, more than aught else, doth harm me”] (*Inferno*, xvi. 45), were winged with any personal reminiscence or animosity. But with Byron (see his letter to Lady Byron, dated April 3, 1820, in which he quotes these lines “with intention” [*Letters*, 1901, v. 2]), as with Boccaccio, “the wish was father to the thought,” and both were glad to quote Dante as a victim to matrimony.

Seven children were born to Dante and Gemma. Of these “his son Pietro, who wrote a commentary on the *Divina Commedia*, settled as judge in Verona. His daughter Beatrice lived as a nun in Ravenna” (*Dante*, by Oscar Browning, 1891, p. 47).]

CANTO THE SECOND.

The Spirit of the fervent days of Old,
 When words were things that came to pass, and
 Thought
 Flashed o'er the future, bidding men behold
Their children's children's doom already brought
 Forth from the abyss of Time which is to be,
 The Chaos of events, where lie half-wrought
Shapes that must undergo mortality;
 What the great Seers of Israel wore within,
 That Spirit was on them, and is on me,
And if, Cassandra-like, amidst the din
 Of conflict none will hear, or hearing heed
 This voice from out the Wilderness, the sin
Be theirs, and my own feelings be my meed,
 The only guerdon I have ever known.
 Hast thou not bled? and hast thou still to bleed,
Italia? Ah! to me such things, foreshown
 With dim sepulchral light, bid me forget
 In thine irreparable wrongs my own;
We can have but one Country, and even yet
 Thou'rt mine—my bones shall be within thy breast,
 My Soul within thy language, which once set
With our old Roman sway in the wide West;
 But I will make another tongue arise

10

20

As lofty and more sweet, in which expressed
The hero's ardour, or the lover's sighs,
Shall find alike such sounds for every theme
That every word, as brilliant as thy skies,
Shall realise a Poet's proudest dream,
And make thee Europe's Nightingale of Song;¹
So that all present speech to thine shall seem 30
The note of meaner birds, and every tongue
Confess its barbarism when compared with thine.
This shalt thou owe to him thou didst so wrong,
Thy Tuscan bard, the banished Ghibelline.
Woe! woe! the veil of coming centuries
Is rent,—a thousand years which yet supine
Lie like the ocean waves ere winds arise,
Heaving in dark and sullen undulation,
Float from Eternity into these eyes;
The storms yet sleep, the clouds still keep their station, 40
The unborn Earthquake yet is in the womb,
The bloody Chaos yet expects Creation,
But all things are disposing for thy doom;
The Elements await but for the Word,
“Let there be darkness!” and thou grow'st a tomb!
Yes! thou, so beautiful, shalt feel the sword,²
Thou, Italy! so fair that Paradise,
Revived in thee, blooms forth to man restored:
Ah! must the sons of Adam lose it twice?
Thou, Italy! whose ever golden fields, 50

Ploughed by the sunbeams solely, would suffice
For the world's granary; thou, whose sky Heaven gilds
With brighter stars, and robes with deeper blue;
Thou, in whose pleasant places Summer builds
Her palace, in whose cradle Empire grew,
And formed the Eternal City's ornaments
From spoils of Kings whom freemen overthrew;
Birthplace of heroes, sanctuary of Saints,
Where earthly first, then heavenly glory made
Her home; thou, all which fondest Fancy paints, 60
And finds her prior vision but portrayed
In feeble colours, when the eye—from the Alp
Of horrid snow, and rock, and shaggy shade
Of desert-loving pine, whose emerald scalp
Nods to the storm—dilates and dotes o'er thee,
And wistfully implores, as 'twere, for help
To see thy sunny fields, my Italy,
Nearer and nearer yet, and dearer still
The more approached, and dearest were they free,
Thou—Thou must wither to each tyrant's will: 70
The Goth hath been,—the German, Frank, and Hun³
Are yet to come,—and on the imperial hill
Ruin, already proud of the deeds done
By the old barbarians, there awaits the new,
Throned on the Palatine, while lost and won
Rome at her feet lies bleeding; and the hue
Of human sacrifice and Roman slaughter

Troubles the clotted air, of late so blue,
And deepens into red the saffron water
Of Tiber, thick with dead; the helpless priest, 80
And still more helpless nor less holy daughter,
Vowed to their God, have shrieking fled, and ceased
Their ministry: the nations take their prey,
Iberian, Almain, Lombard, and the beast
And bird, wolf, vulture, more humane than they
Are; these but gorge the flesh, and lap the gore
Of the departed, and then go their way;
But those, the human savages, explore
All paths of torture, and insatiate yet,
With Ugolino hunger prowl for more. 90
Nine moons shall rise o'er scenes like this and set;⁴
The chiefless army of the dead, which late
Beneath the traitor Prince's banner met,
Hath left its leader's ashes at the gate;
Had but the royal Rebel lived, perchance
Thou hadst been spared, but his involved thy fate.
Oh! Rome, the Spoiler or the spoil of France,
From Brennus to the Bourbon, never, never
Shall foreign standard to thy walls advance,
But Tiber shall become a mournful river. 100
Oh! when the strangers pass the Alps and Po,
Crush them, ye Rocks! Floods whelm them, and for
ever!

Why sleep the idle Avalanches so,

To topple on the lonely pilgrim's head?
Why doth Eridanus but overflow
The peasant's harvest from his turbid bed?
Were not each barbarous horde a nobler prey?
Over Cambyses' host⁵ the desert spread
Her sandy ocean, and the Sea-waves' sway
Rolled over Pharaoh and his thousands,—why, 110
Mountains and waters, do ye not as they?
And you, ye Men! Romans, who dare not die,
Sons of the conquerors who overthrew
Those who overthrew proud Xerxes, where yet lie
The dead whose tomb Oblivion never knew,
Are the Alps weaker than Thermopylæ?
Their passes more alluring to the view
Of an invader? is it they, or ye,
That to each host the mountain-gate unbar,
And leave the march in peace, the passage free? 120
Why, Nature's self detains the Victor's car,
And makes your land impregnable, if earth
Could be so; but alone she will not war,
Yet aids the warrior worthy of his birth
In a soil where the mothers bring forth men:
Not so with those whose souls are little worth;
For them no fortress can avail,—the den
Of the poor reptile which preserves its sting
Is more secure than walls of adamant, when
The hearts of those within are quivering. 130

Are ye not brave? Yes, yet the Ausonian soil
Hath hearts, and hands, and arms, and hosts to
bring
Against Oppression; but how vain the toil,
While still Division sows the seeds of woe
And weakness, till the Stranger reaps the spoil.⁶
Oh! my own beauteous land! so long laid low,
So long the grave of thy own children's hopes,
When there is but required a single blow
To break the chain, yet—yet the Avenger stops,
And Doubt and Discord step 'twixt thine and thee, 140
And join their strength to that which with thee
copes;
What is there wanting then to set thee free,
And show thy beauty in its fullest light?
To make the Alps impassable; and we,
Her Sons, may do this with one deed—Unite.

¹ [In his defence of the "mother-tongue" as a fitting vehicle for a commentary on his poetry, Dante argues "that natural love moves the lover principally to three things: the one is to exalt the loved object, the second is to be jealous thereof, the third is to defend it . . . and these three things made me adopt it, that is, our mother-tongue, which naturally and accidentally I love and have loved." Again, having laid down the premiss that "the magnanimous man always praises himself in his heart; and so the pusillanimous man always deems himself less than he is," he concludes, "Wherefore many on account of this vileness of mind, depreciate their native tongue, and applaud that of others; and all such as these are the abominable wicked men of Italy, who hold this precious mother-tongue in vile contempt, which, if it be vile in any case, is so only inasmuch as it sounds in the evil mouth of these adulterers."—*Il Convito*, caps. x., xi., translated by Elizabeth Price Sayer,

1887, pp. 34–40.]

² [With the whole of this apostrophe to Italy, compare *Purgatorio*, vi. 76–127.]

³ [Compare—

“The Goth, the Christian—Time—War—Flood, and Fire,
Have dealt upon the seven-hilled City’s pride.”

CHILDE HAROLD, CANTO IV. STANZA LXXX. LINES 1, 2, POETICAL WORKS,
1899, II. 390, NOTE 2.]

⁴ See “Sacco di Roma,” generally attributed to Guicciardini [Francesco (1482–1540)]. There is another written by a Jacopo *Buonaparte*.

[The original MS. of the latter work is preserved in the Royal Library at Paris. It is entitled, “Ragguaglio Storico di tutto l’occorso, giorno per giorno, nel Sacco di Roma dell’ anno mdxxvii., scritto da Jacopo Buonaparte, Gentiluomo Samminiatese, che vi si trovo’ presente.” An edition of it was printed at Cologne, in 1756, to which is prefixed a genealogy of the Buonaparte family.

The “traitor Prince” was Charles IV., Connétable de Bourbon, Comte de Montpensier, born 1490, who was killed at the capture of Rome, May 6, 1527. “His death, far from restraining the ardour of the assailants [the Imperial troops, consisting of Germans and Spanish foot], increased it; and with the loss of about 1000 men, they entered and sacked the city. . . . The disorders committed by the soldiers were dreadful, and the booty they made incredible. They added insults to cruelty, and scoffs to rapaciousness. Upon the news of Bourbon’s death, His Holiness, imagining that his troops, no longer animated by his implacable spirit, might listen to an accommodation, demanded a parley; but . . . neglected all means for defence. . . . Cardinals and bishops were ignominiously exposed upon asses with their legs and hands bound; and wealthy citizens . . . suspected of having secreted their effects . . . were tortured . . . to oblige them to make discoveries, . . . the booty . . . is said to have amounted to about two millions and a half of ducats.”—*Mod. Univ. History*, xxxvi. 512.]

⁵ [Cambyses, the second King of Persia, who reigned B.C. 529–532, sent an army against the Ammonians, which perished in the sands.]

⁶ [The *Prophecy of Dante* was begun and finished before Byron took up the cause of Italian independence, or definitely threw in his lot with the Carbonari, but his intimacy with the Gambas, which dates from his migration to Ravenna in 1819, must from the first have brought him within the area of political upheaval and disturbance. A year after (April 16, 1820) he writes to Murray, “I have, besides, another reason for desiring you to be speedy, which is, that there is that brewing in Italy which will speedily cut off all security of communication. . . . I shall, if permitted by the natives, remain to see what will come of it, . . . for I shall think it by far the most interesting spectacle and moment in existence, to see the Italians send the Barbarians of all nations back to their own dens. I have lived long enough among them to feel more for them as a nation than for any other people in existence: but they want Union [see line 145], and they want principle; and I doubt their success.”—*Letters*, 1901, v. 8, note 1.]

CANTO THE THIRD.

From out the mass of never-dying ill,
 The Plague, the Prince, the Stranger, and the Sword,
 Vials of wrath but emptied to refill
And flow again, I cannot all record
 That crowds on my prophetic eye: the Earth
 And Ocean written o'er would not afford
Space for the annal, yet it shall go forth;
 Yes, all, though not by human pen, is graven,
 There where the farthest suns and stars have birth,
Spread like a banner at the gate of Heaven, 10
 The bloody scroll of our millennial wrongs
 Waves, and the echo of our groans is driven
Athwart the sound of archangelic songs,
 And Italy, the martyred nation's gore,
 Will not in vain arise to where belongs
Omnipotence and Mercy evermore:
 Like to a harpstring stricken by the wind,
 The sound of her lament shall, rising o'er
The Seraph voices, touch the Almighty Mind.
 Meantime I, humblest of thy sons, and of 20
 Earth's dust by immortality refined
To Sense and Suffering, though the vain may scoff,
 And tyrants threat, and meeker victims bow
 Before the storm because its breath is rough,

To thee, my Country! whom before, as now,
I loved and love, devote the mournful lyre
And melancholy gift high Powers allow
To read the future: and if now my fire
Is not as once it shone o'er thee, forgive!
I but foretell thy fortunes—then expire; 30
Think not that I would look on them and live.
A Spirit forces me to see and speak,
And for my guerdon grants *not* to survive;
My Heart shall be poured over thee and break:
Yet for a moment, ere I must resume
Thy sable web of Sorrow, let me take
Over the gleams that flash athwart thy gloom
A softer glimpse; some stars shine through thy night,
And many meteors, and above thy tomb
Leans sculptured Beauty, which Death cannot blight: 40
And from thine ashes boundless Spirits rise
To give thee honour, and the earth delight;
Thy soil shall still be pregnant with the wise,
The gay, the learned, the generous, and the brave,
Native to thee as Summer to thy skies,
Conquerors on foreign shores, and the far wave,¹
Discoverers of new worlds, which take their name;²
For *thee* alone they have no arm to save,
And all thy recompense is in their fame,
A noble one to them, but not to thee— 50
Shall they be glorious, and thou still the same?

Oh! more than these illustrious far shall be
The Being—and even yet he may be born—
The mortal Saviour who shall set thee free,
And see thy diadem, so changed and worn
By fresh barbarians, on thy brow replaced;
And the sweet Sun replenishing thy morn,
Thy moral morn, too long with clouds defaced,
And noxious vapours from Avernus risen,
Such as all they must breathe who are debased 60
By Servitude, and have the mind in prison.³
Yet through this centuried eclipse of woe
Some voices shall be heard, and Earth shall listen;
Poets shall follow in the path I show,
And make it broader: the same brilliant sky
Which cheers the birds to song shall bid them glow,
And raise their notes as natural and high;
Tuneful shall be their numbers; they shall sing
Many of Love, and some of Liberty,
But few shall soar upon that Eagle's wing, 70
And look in the Sun's face, with Eagle's gaze,
All free and fearless as the feathered King,
But fly more near the earth; how many a phrase
Sublime shall lavished be on some small prince
In all the prodigality of Praise!
And language, eloquently false, evince
The harlotry of Genius, which, like Beauty,
Too oft forgets its own self-reverence,

And looks on prostitution as a duty.⁴

He who once enters in a Tyrant's hall⁵

80

As guest is slave—his thoughts become a booty,

And the first day which sees the chain enthrall

A captive, sees his half of Manhood gone⁶—

The Soul's emasculation saddens all

His spirit; thus the Bard too near the throne

Quails from his inspiration, bound to *please*,—

How servile is the task to please alone!

To smooth the verse to suit his Sovereign's ease

And royal leisure, nor too much prolong

Aught save his eulogy, and find, and seize,

90

Or force, or forge fit argument of Song!

Thus trammelled, thus condemned to Flattery's
trebles,

He toils through all, still trembling to be wrong:

For fear some noble thoughts, like heavenly rebels,

Should rise up in high treason to his brain,

He sings, as the Athenian spoke, with pebbles

In's mouth, lest Truth should stammer through his strain.

But out of the long file of sonneteers

There shall be some who will not sing in vain,

And he, their Prince, shall rank among my peers,⁷

And Love shall be his torment; but his grief

Shall make an immortality of tears,

And Italy shall hail him as the Chief

Of Poet-lovers, and his higher song

Of Freedom wreath him with as green a leaf.
But in a farther age shall rise along
The banks of Po two greater still than he;
The World which smiled on him shall do them wrong
Till they are ashes, and repose with me.

The first will make an epoch with his lyre, 110
And fill the earth with feats of Chivalry:⁸
His Fancy like a rainbow, and his Fire,
Like that of Heaven, immortal, and his Thought
Borne onward with a wing that cannot tire;
Pleasure shall, like a butterfly new caught,
Flutter her lovely pinions o'er his theme,
And Art itself seem into Nature wrought
By the transparency of his bright dream.—

The second, of a tenderer, sadder mood,
Shall pour his soul out o'er Jerusalem; 120
He, too, shall sing of Arms, and Christian blood
Shed where Christ bled for man; and his high harp
Shall, by the willow over Jordan's flood,
Revive a song of Sion, and the sharp
Conflict, and final triumph of the brave
And pious, and the strife of Hell to warp
Their hearts from their great purpose, until wave
The red-cross banners where the first red Cross
Was crimsoned from His veins who died to save,
Shall be his sacred argument; the loss 130
Of years, of favour, freedom, even of fame

Contested for a time, while the smooth gloss
Of Courts would slide o'er his forgotten name
And call Captivity a kindness—meant
To shield him from insanity or shame—
Such shall be his meek guerdon! who was sent
To be Christ's Laureate—they reward him well!
Florence dooms me but death or banishment,
Ferrara him a pittance and a cell,⁹
Harder to bear and less deserved, for I
Had stung the factions which I strove to quell;
But this meek man who with a lover's eye
Will look on Earth and Heaven, and who will deign
To embalm with his celestial flattery,
As poor a thing as e'er was spawned to reign,¹⁰
What will *he* do to merit such a doom?
Perhaps he'll *love*,—and is not Love in vain
Torture enough without a living tomb?
Yet it will be so—he and his compeer,
The Bard of Chivalry, will both consume¹¹
In penury and pain too many a year,
And, dying in despondency, bequeath
To the kind World, which scarce will yield a tear,
A heritage enriching all who breathe
With the wealth of a genuine Poet's soul,
And to their country a redoubled wreath,
Unmatched by time; not Hellas can unroll
Through her Olympiads two such names, though

140

150

one¹²
—

Of hers be mighty;—and is this the whole
Of such men's destiny beneath the Sun?¹³ 160

Must all the finer thoughts, the thrilling sense,
The electric blood with which their arteries run,
Their body's self turned soul with the intense
Feeling of that which is, and fancy of
That which should be, to such a recompense
Conduct? shall their bright plumage on the rough
Storm be still scattered? Yes, and it must be;
For, formed of far too penetrable stuff,
These birds of Paradise¹⁴ but long to flee

Back to their native mansion, soon they find 170
Earth's mist with their pure pinions not agree,
And die or are degraded; for the mind
Succumbs to long infection, and despair,
And vulture Passions flying close behind,
Await the moment to assail and tear;¹⁵
—

And when, at length, the wingéd wanderers stoop,
Then is the Prey-birds' triumph, then they share
The spoil, o'erpowered at length by one fell swoop.
Yet some have been untouched who learned to bear,
Some whom no Power could ever force to droop, 180
Who could resist themselves even, hardest care!
And task most hopeless; but some such have been,
And if my name amongst the number were,
That Destiny austere, and yet serene,

Were prouder than more dazzling fame unblessed;
The Alp's snow summit nearer heaven is seen
Than the Volcano's fierce eruptive crest,
Whose splendour from the black abyss is flung,
While the scorched mountain, from whose burning
breast
A temporary torturing flame is wrung,
Shines for a night of terror, then repels
Its fire back to the Hell from whence it sprung,
The Hell which in its entrails ever dwells.

190

¹ Alexander of Parma, Spinola, Pescara, Eugene of Savoy, Montecuccoli.

[Alessandro Farnese, Duke of Parma (1546–1592), recovered the Southern Netherlands for Spain, 1578–79, made Henry IV. raise the siege of Paris, 1590, etc.

Ambrogio, Marchese di Spinola (1569–1630), a Maltese by birth, entered the Spanish service 1602, took Ostend 1604, invested Bergen-opZoom, etc.

Ferdinando Francesco dagli Avalos, Marquis of Pescara (1496–1525), took Milan November 19, 1521, fought at Lodi, etc., was wounded at the battle of Padua, February 24, 1525. He was the husband of Vittoria Colonna, and when he was in captivity at Ravenna wrote some verses in her honour.

François Eugene (1663–1736), Prince of Savoy–Carignan, defeated the French at Turin, 1706, and (with Marlborough) at Malplaquet, 1709; the Turks at Peterwardein, 1716, etc.

Raimondo Montecuccoli, a Modenese (1608–1680), defeated the Turks at St. Gothard in 1664, and in 1675–6 commanded on the Rhine, and out-generalled Turenne and the Prince de Condé]

² Columbus, Americus Vesputius, Sebastian Cabot.

[Christopher Columbus (circ. 1430–1506), a Genoese, discovered mainland of America, 1498; Amerigo Vespucci (1451–1512), a Florentine, explored coasts of America, 1497–1504; Sebastian Cabot (1477–1557), son of Giovanni Cabotto or Gavotto, a Venetian, discovered coasts of Labrador, etc., June, 1497.]

³ [Compare—

"Ah! servile Italy, grieves hostelry!

A ship without a pilot in great tempest!"

PURGATORIO, VI. 76, 77.]

⁴ [Alfieri, in his *Autobiography* . . . (1845, *Period III.* chap. viii. p. 92) notes and deprecates the servile manner in which Metastasio went on his knees before Maria Theresa in the Imperial gardens of Schoenbrunnen.]

⁵ A verse from the Greek tragedians, with which Pompey took leave of Cornelia [daughter of Metellus Scipio, and widow of P. Crassus] on entering the boat in which he was slain. [The verse, or verses, are said to be by Sophocles, and are quoted by Plutarch, in his *Life of Pompey*, c. 78, *Vitæ*, 1814, vii. 159. They run thus—

Ὅστις γὰρ ὡς τύραννον ἐμπορεύεται,

Κείνου ἐστὶ δούλος, κἂν ἐλεύθερος μῆ.

("Seek'st thou a tyrant's door? then farewell, freedom!

Though free as air before.")

VIDE INCERT. FAB. FRAGM., No. 789, TRAG. GREC. FRAGM., A. NAUCK,
1889, p. 316.]

⁶ The verse and sentiment are taken from Homer.

Ἡμισυ γὰρ τ' ἀρετῆς ἀποαίνυται εὐρύοπα Ζεὺς

Ἀνέρος, εὗτ' ἄν μιν κατὰ δούλιον ἤμαρ ἔλησιν.

ODYSSEY, XVII. 322, 323.]

⁷ Petrarch. [Dante died September 14, 1321, when Petrarch, born July 20, 1304, had entered his eighteenth year.]

⁸ [Historical events may be thrown into the form of prophecy with some security, but not so the critical opinions of the *soi-disani* prophet. If Byron had lived half a century later, he might have placed Ariosto and Tasso after and not before Petrarch.]

⁹ [See the Introduction to the *Lament of Tasso*, ante, p. 139, and *Childe Harold*, Canto IV. stanza xxxvi. line 2, *Poetical Works*, 1899, ii. 355, note 1.]

¹⁰ [Alfonso d'Este (II.), Duke of Ferrara, died 1597.]

¹¹ [Compare the opening lines of the *Orlando Furioso*—

"Le Donne, i Cavalier'! l'arme, gli amori,

Le Cortesie, l'audaci imprese io canto."

SEE CHILDE HAROLD, CANTO IV. STANZAS XL., XLI., POETICAL WORKS,
1899, II. 359, 360, NOTE 1.]

¹² [The sense is, "Ariosto may be matched with, perhaps excelled by, Homer; but where is the Greek poet to set on the same pedestal with Tasso?"]

¹³ [Compare *Churchill's Grave*, lines 15–19—

"And is this all? I thought,—and do we rip

The veil of Immortality, and crave

I know not what of honour and of light
Through unborn ages, to endure this blight?
So soon, and so successful?"

VIDE ANTE, P. 47.]

14 [Compare—

"For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise."

*KUBLA KHAN, LINES 52, 53, POETICAL WORKS. OF S. T. COLERIDGE, 1893,
P. 94.]*

15 [Compare—

"By our own spirits are we deified:
We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness."

*RESOLUTION AND INDEPENDENCE, VII. LINES 5-7, WORDSWORTH'S POETICAL
WORKS, 1889, P. 175.*

Compare, too, Moore's fine apology for Byron's failure to submit to the yoke of matrimony, "and to live happily ever afterwards"—

"But it is the cultivation and exercise of the imaginative faculty that, more than anything, tend to wean the man of genius from actual life, and, by substituting the sensibilities of the imagination for those of the heart, to render, at last, the medium through which he feels no less unreal than that through which he thinks. Those images of ideal good and beauty that surround him in his musings soon accustom him to consider all that is beneath this high standard unworthy of his care; till, at length, the heart becoming chilled as the fancy warms, it too often happens that, in proportion as he has refined and elevated his theory of all the social affections, he has unfitted himself for the practice of them."—*Life*, p. 268.]

CANTO THE FOURTH.

Many are Poets who have never penned
Their inspiration, and perchance the best:
They felt, and loved, and died, but would not lend
Their thoughts to meaner beings; they compressed
The God within them, and rejoined the stars
Unlaurelled upon earth, but far more blessed
Than those who are degraded by the jars
Of Passion, and their frailties linked to fame,
Conquerors of high renown, but full of scars.

Many are Poets but without the name;
For what is Poesy but to create
From overfeeling Good or Ill; and aim¹
At an external life beyond our fate,
And be the new Prometheus of new men,²
Bestowing fire from Heaven, and then, too late,
Finding the pleasure given repaid with pain,
And vultures to the heart of the bestower,
Who, having lavished his high gift in vain,
Lies to his lone rock by the sea-shore?

So be it: we can bear.—But thus all they
Whose Intellect is an o'ermastering Power
Which still recoils from its encumbering clay
Or lightens it to spirit, whatsoe'er
The form which their creations may essay,

Are bards; the kindled Marble's bust may wear
More poesy upon its speaking brow
Than aught less than the Homeric page may bear;
One noble stroke with a whole life may glow,
Or deify the canvass till it shine
With beauty so surpassing all below,
That they who kneel to Idols so divine
Break no commandment, for high Heaven is there
Transfused, transfigured:³ and the line
Of Poesy, which peoples but the air
With Thought and Beings of our thought reflected,
Can do no more: then let the artist share
The palm, he shares the peril, and dejected
Faints o'er the labour unapproved—Alas!
Despair and Genius are too oft connected.

30

Within the ages which before me pass
Art shall resume and equal even the sway
Which with Apelles and old Phidias
She held in Hellas' unforgotten day.
Ye shall be taught by Ruin to revive
The Grecian forms at least from their decay,
And Roman souls at last again shall live
In Roman works wrought by Italian hands,
And temples, loftier than the old temples, give
New wonders to the World; and while still stands
The austere Pantheon, into heaven shall soar
A Dome,⁴ its image, while the base expands

40

50

Into a fane surpassing all before,
Such as all flesh shall flock to kneel in: ne'er
Such sight hath been unfolded by a door
As this, to which all nations shall repair,
And lay their sins at this huge gate of Heaven.
And the bold Architect⁵ unto whose care
The daring charge to raise it shall be given,
Whom all Arts shall acknowledge as their Lord,
Whether into the marble chaos driven
His chisel bid the Hebrew,⁶ at whose word
Israel left Egypt, stop the waves in stone,
Or hues of Hell be by his pencil poured
Over the damned before the Judgement-throne,⁷
Such as I saw them, such as all shall see,
Or fanes be built of grandeur yet unknown—
The Stream of his great thoughts shall spring from me⁸
The Ghibelline, who traversed the three realms
Which form the Empire of Eternity.
Amidst the clash of swords, and clang of helms,
The age which I anticipate, no less
Shall be the Age of Beauty, and while whelms
Calamity the nations with distress,
The Genius of my Country shall arise,
A Cedar towering o'er the Wilderness,
Lovely in all its branches to all eyes,
Fragrant as fair, and recognised afar,
Wafting its native incense through the skies.

60

70

Sovereigns shall pause amidst their sport of war,
Weaned for an hour from blood, to turn and gaze 80
On canvass or on stone; and they who mar
All beauty upon earth, compelled to praise,
Shall feel the power of that which they destroy;
And Art's mistaken gratitude shall raise
To tyrants, who but take her for a toy,
Emblems and monuments, and prostitute
Her charms to Pontiffs proud,⁹ who but employ
The man of Genius as the meanest brute
To bear a burthen, and to serve a need,
To sell his labours, and his soul to boot. 90
Who toils for nations may be poor indeed,
But free; who sweats for Monarchs is no more
Than the gilt Chamberlain, who, clothed and feed,
Stands sleek and slavish, bowing at his door.
Oh, Power that rulest and inspirest! how
Is it that they on earth, whose earthly power¹⁰
Is likest thine in heaven in outward show,
Least like to thee in attributes divine,
Tread on the universal necks that bow,
And then assure us that their rights are thine? 100
And how is it that they, the Sons of Fame,
Whose inspiration seems to them to shine
From high, they whom the nations ofttest name,
Must pass their days in penury or pain,
Or step to grandeur through the paths of shame,

And wear a deeper brand and gaudier chain?
Or if their Destiny be born aloof
From lowliness, or tempted thence in vain,
In their own souls sustain a harder proof,
The inner war of Passions deep and fierce? 110
Florence! when thy harsh sentence razed my roof,
I loved thee; but the vengeance of my verse,
The hate of injuries which every year
Makes greater, and accumulates my curse,
Shall live, outliving all thou holdest dear—
Thy pride, thy wealth, thy freedom, and even *that*,
The most infernal of all evils here,
The sway of petty tyrants in a state;
For such sway is not limited to Kings,
And Demagogues yield to them but in date, 120
As swept off sooner; in all deadly things,
Which make men hate themselves, and one another,
In discord, cowardice, cruelty, all that springs
From Death the Sin-born's incest with his mother,¹¹
In rank oppression in its rudest shape,
The faction Chief is but the Sultan's brother,
And the worst Despot's far less human ape.
Florence! when this lone spirit, which so long
Yearned, as the captive toiling at escape,
To fly back to thee in despite of wrong, 130
An exile, saddest of all prisoners,¹²
Who has the whole world for a dungeon strong,

Seas, mountains, and the horizon's¹³ verge for bars,
Which shut him from the sole small spot of earth
Where—whatsoe'er his fate—he still were hers,
His Country's, and might die where he had birth—
Florence! when this lone Spirit shall return
To kindred Spirits, thou wilt feel my worth,
And seek to honour with an empty urn¹⁴
The ashes thou shalt ne'er obtain—Alas!
“What have I done to thee, my People?”¹⁵ Stern
Are all thy dealings, but in this they pass
The limits of Man's common malice, for
All that a citizen could be I was—
Raised by thy will, all thine in peace or war—
And for this thou hast warred with me.—'Tis done:
I may not overleap the eternal bar¹⁶
Built up between us, and will die alone,
Beholding with the dark eye of a Seer
The evil days to gifted souls foreshown,
Foretelling them to those who will not hear;
As in the old time, till the hour be come
When Truth shall strike their eyes through many a
tear,
And make them own the Prophet in his tomb.

140

150

Ravenna, 1819.

¹ [So too Wordsworth, in his Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1800); "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings."]

² [Compare—

"Thy Godlike crime was to be kind,
To render with thy precepts less
The sum of human wretchedness . . .
But baffled as thou wert from high . . .
Thou art a symbol and a sign
To Mortals."

PROMETHEUS, III. LINES 35, SEQ.; VIDE ANTE, P. 50.

Compare, too, the *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte*, stanza xvi. var ii.—

"He suffered for kind acts to men."

POETICAL WORKS, 1900, III. 312.]

³ ["Transfigure," whence "transfiguration," is derived from the Latin *transfiguro*, found in Suetonius and Quintilian. Byron may have thought to anglicize the Italian *trasfigurarsi*.]

⁴ The Cupola of St. Peter's. [Michel Angelo, then in his seventy-second year, received the appointment of architect of St. Peter's from Pope Paul III. He began the dome on a different plan from that of the first architect, Bramante, "declaring that he would raise the Pantheon in the air." The drum of the dome was constructed in his life-time, but for more than twenty-four years after his death (1563), the cupola remained untouched, and it was not till 1590, in the pontificate of Sixtus V., that the dome itself was completed. The ball and cross were placed on the summit in November, 1593.—*Handbook of Rome*, p. 239.]

Compare *Childe Harold*, Canto IV. stanza cliii. line i, *Poetical Works*, 1892, ii. 440, 441, note 2.]

⁵ ["Yet, however unequal I feel myself to that attempt, were I now to begin the world again, I would tread in the steps of that great master [Michel Angelo]. To kiss the hem of his garment, to catch the slightest of his perfections, would be glory and distinction enough for an ambitious man."—*Discourses* of Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1884, p. 289.]

⁶ The statue of Moses on the monument of Julius II. [Michel Angelo's Moses is near the end of the right aisle of the Church of S. Pietro-in-Vincoli.]

"SONETTO

"Di Giovanni Battista Zappi.

"Chi é costui, che in si gran pietra scolto,
Siede gigante, e le più illustri, e conte
Opre dell' arte avanza, e ha vive, e pronte
Le labbra si, che le parole ascolto?
Quest' è Mosè; ben me 'l diceva il folto
Onor del mento, e 'l doppio raggio in fronte;

Quest' è Mosè, quando scendea dal monte,
E gran parte del Nume avea nel volto.
Tal' era allor, che le sonanti, e vaste
Acque ei sospese, a se d' intorno; e tale
Quando il Mar chiuse, e ne fè tomba altrui.
E voi, sue turbe, un rio vitello alzaste?
Alzata aveste immagine a questa eguale!
Ch' era men fallo i' adorar costui."

[*SCelta DI SONETTI . . . DEL GOBBI, 1709, III. 216.*]

["And who is he that, shaped in sculptured stone
Sits giant-like? stern monument of art
Unparalleled, while language seems to start
From his prompt lips, and we his precepts own?
—'Tis Moses; by his beard's thick honours known,
And the twin beams that from his temples dart;
'Tis Moses; seated on the mount apart,
Whilst yet the Godhead o'er his features shone.
Such once he looked, when Ocean's sounding wave
Suspended hung, and such amidst the storm,
When o'er his foes the refluent waters roared.
An idol calf his followers did engrave:
But had they raised this awe-commanding form,
Then had they with less guilt their work adored."

ROGERS.]

⁷ The Last Judgment, in the Sistine Chapel.

["It is obvious, throughout his [Michel Angelo's] works, that the poetical mind of the latter [Dante] influenced his feelings. The Demons in the Last Judgment . . . may find a prototype in *La Divina Comedia*. The figures rising from the grave mark his study of *L'Inferno*, e *Il Purgatorio*; and the subject of the Brazen Serpent, in the Sistine Chapel, must remind every reader of Canto XXV. dell' *Inferno*."—*Life of Michael Angelo* by R. Duppa, 1856, p. 120.]

⁸ I have read somewhere (if I do not err, for I cannot recollect where,) that Dante was so great a favourite of Michael Angelo's, that he had designed the whole of the *Divina Commedia*: but that the volume containing these studies was lost by sea.

[Michel Angelo's copy of Dante, says Duppa (*ibid.*, and note 1), "was a large folio, with Landino's commentary; and upon the broad margin of the leaves he designed with a pen and ink, all the interesting subjects. This book was possessed by Antonio Montanti, a sculptor and architect in Florence, who, being appointed architect to St. Peter's, removed to Rome, and shipped his . . . effects at Leghorn for Cività Vecchia, among which was this

edition of Dante. In the voyage the vessel foundered at sea, and it was unfortunately lost in the wreck.”]

⁹ See the treatment of Michel Angelo by Julius II., and his neglect by Leo X. [Julius II. encouraged his attendance at the Vatican, but one morning he was stopped by the chamberlain in waiting, who said, “I have an order not to let you enter.” Michel Angelo, indignant at the insult, left Rome that very evening. Though Julius despatched five couriers to bring him back, it was some months before he returned. Even a letter (July 8, 1506), in which the Pope promised his “dearly beloved Michel Angelo” that he should not be touched nor offended, but be “reinstated in the apostolic grace,” met with no response. It was this quarrel with Julius II. which prevented the completion of the sepulchral monument. The “Moses” and the figures supposed to represent the Active and the Contemplative Life, and three Caryatides (since removed) represent the whole of the original design, “a parallelogram surmounted with forty statues, and covered with reliefs and other ornaments.”—See Duppa’s *Life, etc.*, 1856, pp. 33, 34, and *Handbook of Rome*, p. 133.]

¹⁰ [Compare *Merchant of Venice*, act iv. sc. 1, lines 191, 192.]

¹¹ [Compare—

“I fled, and cried out Death . . .
I fled, but he pursued, (though more, it seems,
Inflamed with lust than rage), and swifter far,
Me overtook, his mother, all dismayed,
And in embraces forcible and foul,
Ingendering with me, of that rape begot
These yelling monsters, that with ceaseless cry
Surround me.”

PARADISE LOST, BOOK II. LINES 787–796.]

¹² [In his *Convito*, Dante speaks of his banishment, and the poverty and distress which attended it, in very affecting terms. “Ah! would it had pleased the Dispenser of all things that this excuse had never been needed; that neither others had done me wrong, nor myself undergone penalty undeservedly,—the penalty, I say, of exile and of poverty. For it pleased the citizens of the fairest and most renowned daughter of Rome—Florence—to cast me out of her most sweet bosom, where I was born and bred, and passed half of the life of man, and in which, with her good leave, I still desire with all my heart to repose my weary spirit, and finish the days allotted me; and so I have wandered in almost every place to which our language extends, a stranger, almost a beggar, exposing against my will the wounds given me by fortune, too often unjustly imputed to the sufferer’s fault. Truly I have been a vessel without sail and without rudder, driven about upon different ports and shores by the dry wind that springs out of dolorous poverty; and hence have I appeared vile in the eyes of many, who, perhaps, by some better report, had conceived of me a different impression, and in whose sight not only has my person become thus debased, but an unworthy opinion created of everything which I did, or which I had to do.”—*Il Convito*, book i. chap. iii., translated by Leigh Hunt, *Stories from the Italian Poets*, 1846, i. 22, 23.]

¹³ What is Horizon's quantity? Horīzon, or Horizon? adopt accordingly.—[B.]

¹⁴ [Compare—

“Ungrateful Florence! Dante sleeps afar.”

CHILDE HAROLD, CANTO IV. STANZA LVII., POETICAL WORKS, 1899, II. 371,

NOTE 1.

“Between the second and third chapels [in the nave of Santa Croce at Florence] is the colossal monument to Dante, by Ricci . . . raised by subscription in 1829. The inscription, ‘*A majoribus ter frustra decretum,*’ refers to the successive efforts of the Florentines to recover his remains, and raise a monument to their great countryman.”—*Handbook, Central Italy*, p. 32.]

¹⁵ “E scrisse più volte non solamente a’ particolari Cittadini del Reggimento, ma ancora al Popolo; e intra l’ altre un’ Epistola assai lunga che incomincia: ‘*Popule mee (sic), quid feci tibi?*’”—*Le vite di Dante, etc., scritte da Lionardo Aretino, 1672, p. 47.*

¹⁶ [About the year 1316 his friends obtained his restoration to his country and his possessions, on condition that he should pay a certain sum of money, and, entering a church, avow himself guilty, and ask pardon of the republic.

The following was his answer to a religious, who appears to have been one of his kinsmen: “From your letter, which I received with due respect and affection, I observe how much you have at heart my restoration to my country. I am bound to you the more gratefully inasmuch as an exile rarely finds a friend. But, after mature consideration, I must, by my answer, disappoint the writers of some little minds . . . Your nephew and mine has written to me . . . that . . . I am allowed to return to Florence, provided I pay a certain sum of money, and submit to the humiliation of asking and receiving absolution. . . . Is such an invitation then to return to his country glorious to d. all. after suffering in exile almost fifteen years? Is it thus, then, they would recompense innocence which all the world knows, and the labour and fatigue of unremitting study? Far from the man who is familiar with philosophy, be the senseless baseness of a heart of earth, that could imitate the infamy of some others, by offering himself up as it were in chains. Far from the man who cries aloud for justice, this compromise, by his money, with his persecutors! No, my Father, this is not the way that shall lead me back to my country. I will return with hasty steps, if you or any other can open to me a way that shall not derogate from the fame and honour of d.; but if by no such way Florence can be entered, then Florence I shall never enter. What! shall I not every where enjoy the light of the sun and the stars? and may I not seek and contemplate, in every corner of the earth, under the canopy of heaven, consoling and delightful truth, without first rendering myself inglorious, nay infamous, to the people and republic of Florence? Bread, I hope, will not fail me.”—*Epistola, IX. Amico Fiorentino: Opere di Dante, 1897, p. 413.*]

