

Oct 28– From *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* by John Locke (1693)

§148. When he can talk, 'tis time he should begin to learn to read. But as to this, give me leave here to inculcate again, what is very apt to be forgotten, viz. That great care is to be taken, that it be never made as a business to him, nor he look on it as a task. We naturally, as I said, even from our cradles, love liberty, and have therefore an aversion to many things for no other reason but because they are enjoined us. I have always had a fancy that learning might be made a play and recreation to children: and that they might be brought to desire to be taught, if it were proposed to them as a thing of honour, credit, delight, and recreation, or as a reward for doing something else; and if they were never chid or corrected for the neglect of it. That which confirms me in this opinion is, that amongst the Portuguese, 'tis so much a fashion and emulation amongst their children, to learn to read and write, that they cannot hinder them from it: they will learn it one from another, and are as intent on it, as if it were forbidden them. I remember that being at a friend's house, whose younger son, a child in coats, was not easily brought to his book (being taught to read at home by his mother) I advised to try another way, than requiring it of him as his duty; we therefore, in a discourse on purpose amongst ourselves, in his hearing, but without taking any notice of him, declared, that it was the privilege and advantage of heirs and elder brothers, to be scholars; that this made them fine gentlemen, and beloved by everybody: and that for younger brothers, 'twas a favour to admit them to breeding; to be taught to read and write, was more than came to their share; they might be ignorant bumpkins and clowns, if they pleased. This so wrought upon the child, that afterwards he desired to be taught; would come himself to his mother to learn, and would not let his maid be quiet till she heard him his lesson. I doubt not but some way like this might be taken with other children; and when their tempers are found, some thoughts be instilled into them, that might set them upon desiring of learning, themselves, and make them seek it as another sort of play or recreation. But then, as I said before, it must never be imposed as a task, nor made a trouble to them. There may be dice and playthings, with the letters on them to teach children the alphabet by playing; and twenty other ways may be found, suitable to their particular tempers, to make this kind of learning a sport to them.

§149. Thus children may be cozened into a knowledge of the letters; be taught to read, without perceiving it to be anything but a sport, and play themselves into that which others are whipped for. Children should not have anything like work, or serious, laid on them; neither their minds, nor bodies will bear it. It injures their healths; and their being forced and tied down to their books in an age at enmity with all such restraint, has, I doubt not, been the reason, why a great many have hated books and learning all their lives after. 'Tis like a surfeit, that leaves an aversion behind not to be removed.

§150. I have therefore thought, that if playthings were fitted to this purpose, as they are usually to none, contrivances might be made to teach children to read, whilst they thought they were only playing. For example, what if an ivory-ball were made like that of the royal-oak lottery, with

thirty two sides, or one rather of twenty four or twenty five sides; and upon several of those sides pasted on an A, upon several others B, on others C, and on others D? I would have you begin with but these four letters, or perhaps only two at first; and when he is perfect in them, then add another; and so on till each side having one letter, there be on it the whole alphabet. This I would have others play with before him, it being as good a sort of play to lay a stake who shall first throw an A or B, as who upon dice shall throw six or seven. This being a play amongst you, tempt him not to it, lest you make it business; for I would not have him understand 'tis anything but a play of older people, and I doubt not but he will take to it of himself. And that he may have the more reason to think it is a play, that he is sometimes in favour admitted to, when the play is done the ball should be laid up safe out of his reach, that so it may not, by his having it in his keeping at any time, grow stale to him.

§151. To keep up his eagerness to it, let him think it a game belonging to those above him: and when, by this means, he knows the letters, by changing them into syllables, he may learn to read, without knowing how he did so, and never have any chiding or trouble about it, nor fall out with books because of the hard usage and vexation they have caused him. Children, if you observe them, take abundance of pains to learn several games, which, if they should be enjoined them, they would abhor as a task and business. I know a person of great quality (more yet to be honoured for his learning and virtue than for his rank and high place) who by pasting on the six vowels (for in our language Y is one) on the six sides of a die, and the remaining eighteen consonants on the sides of three other dice, has made this a play for his children, that he shall win who, at one cast, throws most words on these four dice; whereby his eldest son, yet in coats, has played himself into spelling, with great eagerness, and without once having been chid for it or forced to it.

§152. I have seen little girls exercise whole hours together and take abundance of pains to be expert at "dibstones" as they call it. Whilst I have been looking on, I have thought it wanted only some good contrivance to make them employ all that industry about something that might be more useful to them; and methinks 'tis only the fault and negligence of elder people that it is not so. Children are much less apt to be idle than men; and men are to be blamed if some part of that busy humour be not turned to useful things; which might be made usually as delightful to them as those they are employed in, if men would be but half so forward to lead the way, as these little apes would be to follow. I imagine some wise Portuguese heretofore began this fashion amongst the children of his country, where I have been told, as I said, it is impossible to hinder the children from learning to read and write: and in some parts of France they teach one another to sing and dance from the cradle.

§153. The letters pasted upon the sides of the dice, or polygon, were best to be of the size of those of the folio Bible, to begin with, and none of them capital letters; when once he can read what is printed in such letters, he will not long be ignorant of the great ones: and in the beginning he should not be perplexed with variety. With this die also, you might have a play just like the royal oak, which would be another variety, and play for cherries or apples, etc.

§154. Besides these, twenty other plays might be invented depending on letters, which those who like this way, may easily contrive and get made to this use if they will. But the four dice above-mentioned I think so easy and useful, that it will be hard to find any better, and there will be scarce need of any other.

§155. Thus much for learning to read, which let him never be driven to, nor chid for; cheat him into it if you can, but make it not a business for him. 'Tis better it be a year later before he can read, than that he should this way get an aversion to learning. If you have any contest with him, let it be in matters of moment, of truth, and good nature; but lay no task on him about A.B.C. Use your skill to make his will supple and pliant to reason: teach him to love credit and commendation; to abhor being thought ill or meanly of, especially by you and his mother, and then the rest will come all easily. But I think if you will do that, you must not shackle and tie him up with rules about indifferent matters, nor rebuke him for every little fault, or perhaps some that to others would seem great ones; but of this I have said enough already.

§156. When by these gentle ways he begins to read, some easy pleasant book, suited to his capacity, should be put into his hands, wherein the entertainment that he finds might draw him on, and reward his pains in reading, and yet not such as should fill his head with perfectly useless trumpery, or lay the principles of vice and folly. To this purpose, I think Aesop's Fables the best, which being stories apt to delight and entertain a child, may yet afford useful reflections to a grown man; and if his memory retain them all his life after, he will not repent to find them there, amongst his manly thoughts and serious business. If his Aesop has pictures in it, it will entertain him much the better, and encourage him to read, when it carries the increase of knowledge with it: for such visible objects children hear talked of in vain and without any satisfaction whilst they have no ideas of them; those ideas being not to be had from sounds, but from the things themselves or their pictures. And therefore I think as soon as he begins to spell, as many pictures of animals should be got him as can be found, with the printed names to them, which at the same time will invite him to read, and afford him matter of enquiry and knowledge. Reynard the Fox is another book I think may be made use of to the same purpose. And if those about him will talk to him often about the stories he has read, and hear him tell them, it will, besides other advantages, add encouragement and delight to his reading, when he finds there is some use and pleasure in it. These baits seem wholly neglected in the ordinary method; and 'tis usually long before learners find any use or pleasure in reading, which may tempt them to it, and so take books only for fashionable amusements, or impertinent troubles, good for nothing.

§157. The Lord's Prayer, the Creeds, and Ten Commandments, 'tis necessary he should learn perfectly by heart; but, I think, not by reading them himself in his primer, but by somebody's repeating them to him, even before he can read. But learning by heart, and learning to read, should not I think be mixed, and so one made to clog the other. But his learning to read should be made as little trouble or business to him as might be.

What other books there are in English of the kind of those above-mentioned, fit to engage the liking of children, and tempt them to read, I do not know: but am apt to think, that children being generally delivered over to the method of schools, where the fear of the rod is to inforce, and not

any pleasure of the employment to invite them to learn, this sort of useful books, amongst the number of silly ones that are of all sorts, have yet had the fate to be neglected; and nothing that I know has been considered of this kind out of the ordinary road of the hornbook, primer, psalter, Testament, and Bible.

§158. As for the Bible, which children are usually employed in to exercise and improve their talent in reading, I think the promiscuous reading of it through by chapters as they lie in order, is so far from being of any advantage to children, either for the perfecting their reading, or principing their religion, that perhaps a worse could not be found. For what pleasure or encouragement can it be to a child to exercise himself in reading those parts of a book where he understands nothing? And how little are the law of Moses, the song of Solomon, the prophecies in the Old, and the Epistles and Apocalypse in the New Testament, suited to a child's capacity? And though the history of the Evangelists and the Acts have something easier, yet, taken altogether, it is very disproportional to the understanding of childhood. I grant that the principles of religion are to be drawn from thence, and in the words of the scripture; yet none should be proposed to a child, but such as are suited to a child's capacity and notions. But 'tis far from this to read through the whole Bible, and that for reading's sake. And what an odd jumble of thoughts must a child have in his head, if he have any at all, such as he should have concerning religion, who in his tender age reads all the parts of the Bible indifferently as the word of God without any other distinction! I am apt to think, that this in some men has been the very reason why they never had clear and distinct thoughts of it all their lifetime.

§159. And now I am by chance fallen on this subject, give me leave to say, that there are some parts of the Scripture which may be proper to be put into the hands of a child to engage him to read; such as are the story of Joseph and his brethren, of David and Goliath, of David and Jonathan, etc. and others that he should be made to read for his instruction, as that, "What you would have others do unto you, do you the same unto them"; and such other easy and plain moral rules, which being fitly chosen, might often be made use of, both for reading and instruction together; and so often read till they are thoroughly fixed in the memory; and then afterwards, as he grows ripe for them, may in their turns on fit occasions be inculcated as the standing and sacred rules of his life and actions. But the reading of the whole Scripture indifferently, is what I think very inconvenient for children, till after having been made acquainted with the plainest fundamental parts of it, they have got some kind of general view of what they ought principally to believe and practise; which yet, I think, they ought to receive in the very words of the scripture, and not in such as men prepossessed by systems and analogies are apt in this case to make use of and force upon them. Dr. Worthington, to avoid this, has made a catechism, which has all its answers in the precise words of the Scripture; a thing of good example, and such a sound form of words as no Christian can except against as not fit for his child to learn. Of this, as soon as he can say the Lord's Prayer, Creed, the Ten Commandments, by heart, it may be fit for him to learn a question every day, or every week, as his understanding is able to receive and his memory to retain them. And when he has this catechism perfectly by heart, so as readily and roundly to answer to any question in the whole book, it may be convenient to lodge in his mind the remaining moral rules scattered up and down in the Bible, as

the best exercise of his memory, and that which may be always a rule to him, ready at hand, in the whole conduct of his life.

§160. When he can read English well, it will be seasonable to enter him in writing: and here the first thing should be taught him is to hold his pen right; and this he should be perfect in before he should be suffered to put it to paper: For not only children but anybody else that would do anything well, should never be put upon too much of it at once, or be set to perfect themselves in two parts of an action at the same time, if they can possibly be separated. I think the Italian way of holding the pen between the thumb and the forefinger alone, may be best; but in this you may consult some good writing-master, or any other person who writes well and quick. When he has learned to hold his pen right, in the next place he should learn how to lay his paper, and place his arm and body to it. These practices being got over, the way to teach him to write without much trouble, is to get a plate graved with the characters of such a hand as you like best: but you must remember to have them a pretty deal bigger than he should ordinarily write; for everyone naturally comes by degrees to write a less hand than he at first was taught, but never a bigger. Such a plate being graved, let several sheets of good writing-paper be printed off with red ink, which he has nothing to do but go over with a good pen filled with black ink, which will quickly bring his hand to the formation of those characters, being at first showed where to begin, and how to form every letter. And when he can do that well, he must then exercise on fair paper; and so may easily be brought to write the hand you desire.

§161. When he can write well and quick, I think it may be convenient not only to continue the exercise of his hand in writing, but also to improve the use of it farther in drawing; a thing very useful to a gentleman in several occasions; but especially if he travel, as that which helps a man often to express, in a few lines well put together, what a whole sheet of paper in writing would not be able to represent and make intelligible. How many buildings may a man see, how many machines and habits meet with, the ideas whereof would be easily retained and communicated by a little skill in drawing; which being committed to words, are in danger to be lost, or at best but ill retained in the most exact descriptions? I do not mean that I would have your son a perfect painter; to be that to any tolerable degree, will require more time than a young gentleman can spare from his other improvements of greater moment. But so much insight into perspective and skill in drawing, as will enable him to represent tolerably on paper anything he sees, except faces, may, I think, be got in a little time, especially if he have a genius to it; but where that is wanting, unless it be in the things absolutely necessary, it is better to let him pass them by quietly, than to vex him about them to no purpose: and therefore in this, as in all other things not absolutely necessary, the rule holds, *nil invita Minerva*.

Shorthand, an art, as I have been told, known only in England, may perhaps be thought worth the learning, both for dispatch in what men write for their own memory, and concealment of what they would not have lie open to every eye. For he that has once learned any sort of character, may easily vary it to his own private use or fancy, and with more contraction suit it to the business he would employ it in. Mr. Rich's, the best contrived of any I have seen, may, as I think, by one who knows and considers grammar well, be made much easier and shorter. But for the learning this compendious way of writing, there will be no need hastily to look out a

master; it will be early enough when any convenient opportunity offers itself at any time, after his hand is well settled in fair and quick writing. For boys have but little use of shorthand, and should by no means practise it till they write perfectly well, and have thoroughly fixed the habit of doing so.

Oct 29– Poems by John Keats

[527. The Mermaid Tavern](#)

SOULS of Poets dead and gone,

What Elysium have ye known,

Happy field or mossy cavern,

Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

Have ye tippled drink more fine

Than mine host's Canary wine?

Or are fruits of Paradise

Sweeter than those dainty pies

Of Venison? O generous food!

Drest as though bold Robin Hood

Would, with his Maid Marian,

Sup and bowse from horn and can.

I have heard that on a day

Mine host's sign-board flew away

Nobody knew whither, till

An astrologer's old quill

To a sheepskin gave the story—

Said he saw you in your glory

Underneath a new-old Sign

Sipping beverage divine,

And pledging with contented smack

The Mermaid in the Zodiac!

Souls of Poets dead and gone,

What Elysium have ye known—

Happy field or mossy cavern—

Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

[528. Happy Insensibility](#)

IN a drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy Tree,
Thy branches ne'er remember
The north cannot undo them
With a sleety whistle through them,
Nor frozen thawings glue them
From budding at the prime.
In a drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy Brook,
Thy bubblings ne'er remember
Apollo's summer look;
But with a sweet forgetting
They stay their crystal fretting,
Never, never petting
About the frozen time.
Ah would 'twere so with many
A gentle girl and boy!
But were there ever any
Writhed not at passéd joy?
To know the change and feel it,
When there is none to heal it

Nor numbéd sense to steal it—

Was never said in rhyme.

[529. Ode to a Nightingale](#)

MY heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thy happiness,—
That thou, light-wingéd Dryad of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.
O, far a draught of vintage, that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delvéd earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sun-burnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stainéd mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:
Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget

What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs;
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.
Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways,
I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalméd darkness, guess each sweet

Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.
Darkling I listen; and for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a muséd rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.
Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path

Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,

She stood in tears amid the alien corn;

The same that oft-times hath

Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam

Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell

To toll me back from thee to my sole self!

Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well

As she is fabled to do, deceiving elf.

Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades

Past the near meadows, over the still stream,

Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep

In the next valley-glades:

Was it a vision, or a waking dream?

Fled is that music:—do I wake or sleep?

[530. Ode on a Grecian Urn](#)

THOU still unravish'd bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?
Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!
Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed

Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.
Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea-shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul, to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.
O Attic shape! fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;

Thou, silent form! dost tease us out of thought

As doth eternity. Cold Pastoral!

When old age shall this generation waste,

Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe

Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

[531. Ode to Autumn](#)

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease;
For Summer has o'erbrimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen Thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,

Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?

Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,

While barréd clouds bloom the soft-dying day

And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;

Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn

Among the river-sallows, borne aloft

Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;

And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;

Hedge-cricket sing, and now with treble soft

The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft;

And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

[532. Ode to Psyche](#)

O GODDESS! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung

By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,

And pardon that thy secrets should be sung

Even into thine own soft-conchèd ear:

Surely I dream'd to-day, or did I see

The wingèd Psyche with awaken'd eyes?

I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,

And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,

Saw two fair creatures, couchèd side by side

In deepest grass, beneath the whisp'ring roof

Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran

A brooklet, scarce espied:

'Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers fragrant-eyed,

Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,

They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass;

Their arms embracèd, and their pinions too;

Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,

As if disjoinèd by soft-handed slumber,

And ready still past kisses to outnumber

At tender eye-dawn of aurean love:

The wingèd boy I knew;

But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove?

His Psyche true!

O latest-born and loveliest vision far

Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!

Fairer than Phœbe's sapphire-region'd star,

Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky;

Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,

Nor altar heap'd with flowers;

Nor Virgin-choir to make delicious moan

Upon the midnight hours;

No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet

From chain-swung censer teeming;

No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat

Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

O brightest! though too late for antique vows,

Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,

When holy were the haunted forest boughs,

Holy the air, the water, and the fire;

Yet even in these days so far retired

From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,

Fluttering among the faint Olympians,

I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired.

So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
Upon the midnight hours;
Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet
From swingèd censer teeming:
Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.
Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branchèd thoughts, new grown with pleasant pain,
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind:
Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees
Fledge the wild-ridgèd mountains steep by steep;
And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,
The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep;
And in the midst of this wide quietness
A rosy sanctuary will I dress
With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,
With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,
With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
Who, breeding flowers, will never breed the same;
And there shall be for thee all soft delight
That shadowy thought can win,

A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,

To let the warm Love in!

Oct 30– From “The Progress of Geology” by Sir Charles Lyell (~1830)

Prepossessions in regard to the Duration of Past Time—Prejudices Arising from our Peculiar Position as Inhabitants of the Land—Others Occasioned by our not seeing Subterranean Changes now in Progress—All these Causes Combine to make the Former Course of Nature appear Different from the Present—Objections to the Doctrine that Causes Similar in Kind and Energy to those now Acting, have Produced the Former Changes of the Earth's Surface Considered

IF WE reflect on the history of the progress of geology we perceive that there have been great fluctuations of opinion respecting the nature of the causes to which all former changes of the earth's surface are referable. The first observers conceived the monuments which the geologist endeavours to decipher to relate to an original state of the earth, or to a period when there were causes in activity, distinct, in a kind and degree, from those now constituting the economy of nature. These views were gradually modified, and some of them entirely abandoned, in proportion as observations were multiplied, and the signs of former mutations were skilfully interpreted. Many appearances, which had for a long time been regarded as indicating mysterious and extraordinary agency, were finally recognised as the necessary result of the laws now governing the material world; and the discovery of this unlooked-for conformity has at length induced some philosophers to infer, that, during the ages contemplated in geology, there has never been any interruption to the agency of the same uniform laws of change. The same assemblage of general causes, they conceive, may have been sufficient to produce, by their various combinations, the endless diversity of effects, of which the shell of the earth has preserved the memorials; and, consistently with these principles, the recurrence of analogous changes is expected by them in time to come.

Whether we coincide or not in this doctrine we must admit that the gradual progress of opinion concerning the succession of phenomena in very remote eras, resembles, in a singular manner, that which has accompanied the growing intelligence of every people, in regard to the economy of nature in their own times. In an early state of advancement, when a greater number of natural appearances are unintelligible, an eclipse, an earthquake, a flood, or the approach of a comet, with many other occurrences afterwards found to belong to the regular course of events, are regarded as prodigies. The same delusion prevails as to moral phenomena, and many of these are ascribed to the intervention of demons, ghosts, witches, and other immaterial and supernatural agents. By degrees, many of the enigmas of the moral and physical world are explained, and, instead of being due to extrinsic and irregular causes, they are found to depend on fixed and invariable laws. The philosopher at last becomes convinced of the undeviating uniformity of secondary causes; and, guided by his faith in this principle, he determines the probability of accounts transmitted to him of former occurrences, and often rejects the fabulous tales of former times, on the ground of their being irreconcilable with the experience of more enlightened ages.

Prepossessions in regard to the duration of past time.—As a belief in the want of conformity in the cause by which the earth's crust has been modified in ancient and modern periods was, for a long time, universally prevalent, and that, too, amongst men who were convinced that the order of nature had been uniform for the last several thousand years, every circumstance which could have influenced their minds and given an undue bias to their opinions deserves particular attention. Now the reader may easily satisfy himself, that, however undeviating the course of nature may have been from the earliest epochs, it was impossible for the first cultivators of geology to come to such a conclusion, so long as they were under a delusion as to the age of the world, and the date of the first creation of animate beings. However fantastical some theories of the sixteenth century may now appear to us,—however unworthy of men of great talent and sound judgment,—we may rest assured that, if the same misconception now prevailed in regard to the memorials of human transactions, it would give rise to a similar train of absurdities. Let us imagine, for example, that Champollion, and the French and Tuscan literati when engaged in exploring the antiquities of Egypt, had visited that country with a firm belief that the banks of the Nile were never peopled by the human race before the beginning of the nineteenth century, and that their faith in this dogma was as difficult to shake as the opinion of our ancestors, that the earth was never the abode of living beings until the creation of the present continents, and of the species now existing,—it is easy to perceive what extravagant systems they would frame, while under the influence of this delusion, to account for the monuments discovered in Egypt. The sight of the pyramids, obelisks, colossal statues, and ruined temples, would fill them with such astonishment, that for a time they would be as men spell-bound—wholly incapable of reasoning with sobriety. They might incline at first to refer the construction of such stupendous works to some superhuman powers of the primeval world. A system might be invented resembling that so gravely advanced by Manetho, who relates that a dynasty of gods originally ruled in Egypt, of whom Vulcan, the first monarch, reigned nine thousand years; after whom came Hercules and other demigods, who were at last succeeded by human kings.

When some fanciful speculations of this kind had amused their imaginations for a time, some vast repository of mummies would be discovered, and would immediately undeceive those antiquaries who enjoyed an opportunity of personally examining them; but the prejudices of others at a distance, who were not eye-witnesses of the whole phenomena, would not be so easily overcome. The concurrent report of many travellers would, indeed, render it necessary for them to accommodate ancient theories to some of the new facts, and much wit and ingenuity would be required to modify and defend their old positions. Each new invention would violate a greater number of known analogies; for if a theory be required to embrace some false principle, it becomes more visionary in proportion as facts are multiplied, as would be the case if geometers were now required to form an astronomical system on the assumption of the immobility of the earth.

Amongst other fanciful conjectures concerning the history of Egypt, we may suppose some of the following to be started. 'As the banks of the Nile have been so recently colonized for the first time, the curious substances called mummies could never in reality have belonged

to men. They may have been generated by some plastic virtue residing in the interior of the earth, or they may be abortions of Nature produced by her incipient efforts in the work of creation. For if deformed beings are sometimes born even now, when the scheme of the universe is fully developed, many more may have been “sent before their time scarce half made up,” when the planet itself was in the embryo state. But if these notions appear to derogate from the perfection of the Divine attributes, and if these mummies be in all their parts true representations of the human form, may we not refer them to the future rather than the past? May we not be looking into the womb of Nature, and not her grave? May not these images be like the shades of the unborn in Virgil’s Elysium—the archetypes of men not yet called into existence?’

These speculations, if advocated by eloquent writers, would not fail to attract many zealous votaries, for they would relieve men from the painful necessity of renouncing preconceived opinions. Incredible as such scepticism may appear, it has been rivalled by many systems of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and among others by that of the learned Falloppio, who, as we have seen, regarded the tusks of fossil elephants as earthly concretions, and the pottery of fragments of vases in the Monte Testaceo, near Rome, as works of nature, and not of art. But when one generation had passed away, and another, not compromised to the support of antiquated dogmas, had succeeded, they would review the evidence afforded by mummies more impartially, and would no longer controvert the preliminary question, that human beings had lived in Egypt before the nineteenth century: so that when a hundred years perhaps had been lost, the industry and talents of the philosopher would be at last directed to the elucidation of points of real historical importance.

But the above arguments are aimed against one only of many prejudices with which the earlier geologists had to contend. Even when they conceded that the earth had been peopled with animate beings at an earlier period than was at first supposed, they had no conception that the quantity of time bore so great a proportion to the historical era as is now generally conceded. How fatal every error as to the quantity of time must prove to the introduction of rational views concerning the state of things in former ages, may be conceived by supposing the annals of the civil and military transactions of a great nation to be perused under the impression that they occurred in a period of one hundred instead of two thousand years. Such a portion of history would immediately assume the air of a romance; the events would seem devoid of credibility, and inconsistent with the present course of human affairs. A crowd of incidents would follow each other in thick succession. Armies and fleets would appear to be assembled only to be destroyed, and cities built merely to fall in ruins. There would be the most violent transitions from foreign or intestine war to periods of profound peace, and the works effected during the years of disorder or tranquillity would appear alike superhuman in magnitude.

He who should study the monuments of the natural world under the influence of a similar infatuation, must draw a no less exaggerated picture of the energy and violence of causes, and must experience the same insurmountable difficulty in reconciling the former and present state of nature. If we could behold in one view all the volcanic cones thrown up in Iceland, Italy, Sicily, and other parts of Europe, during the last five thousand years, and could see the lavas which

have flowed during the same period; the dislocations, subsidences, and elevations caused during earthquakes; the lands added to various deltas, or devoured by the sea, together with the effects of devastation by floods, and imagine that all these events had happened in one year, we must form most exalted ideas of the activity of the agents, and the suddenness of the revolutions. If geologists, therefore, have misinterpreted the signs of a succession of events, so as to conclude that centuries were implied where the characters indicated thousands of years, and thousands of years where the language of Nature signified millions, they could not, if they reasoned logically from such false premises, come to any other conclusion than that the system of the natural world had undergone a complete revolution.

We should be warranted in ascribing the erection of the great pyramid to superhuman power, if we were convinced that it was raised in one day; and if we imagine, in the same manner, a continent or mountain-chain to have been elevated during an equally small fraction of the time which was really occupied in upheaving it, we might then be justified in inferring, that the subterranean movements were once far more energetic than in our own times. We know that during one earthquake the coast of Chili may be raised for a hundred miles to the average height of about three feet. A repetition of two thousand shocks, of equal violence, might produce a mountain-chain one hundred miles long, and six thousand feet high. Now, should one or two only of these convulsions happen in a century, it would be consistent with the order of events experienced by the Chilians from the earliest times: but if the whole of them were to occur in the next hundred years, the entire district must be depopulated, scarcely any animals or plants could survive, and the surface would be one confused heap of ruin and desolation.

One consequence of undervaluing greatly the quantity of past time, is the apparent coincidence which it occasions of events necessarily disconnected, or which are so unusual, that it would be inconsistent with all calculation of chances to suppose them to happen at one and the same time. When the unlooked-for association of such rare phenomena is witnessed in the present course of nature, it scarcely ever fails to excite a suspicion of the preternatural in those minds which are not firmly convinced of the uniform agency of secondary causes;—as if the death of some individual in whose fate they are interested happens to be accompanied by the appearance of a luminous meteor, or a comet, or the shock of an earthquake. It would be only necessary to multiply such coincidences indefinitely, and the mind of every philosopher would be disturbed. Now it would be difficult to exaggerate the number of physical events, many of them most rare and unconnected in their nature, which were imagined by the Woodwardian hypothesis to have happened in the course of a few months: and numerous other examples might be found of popular geological theories, which require us to imagine that a long succession of events happened in a brief and almost momentary period.

Another liability to error, very nearly allied to the former, arises from the frequent contact of geological monuments referring to very distant periods of time. We often behold, at one glance, the effects of causes which have acted at times incalculably remote, and yet there may be no striking circumstances to mark the occurrence of a great chasm in the chronological series of Nature's archives. In the vast interval of time which may really have elapsed between the results of operations thus compared, the physical condition of the earth may, by slow and

insensible modifications, have become entirely altered; one or more races of organic beings may have passed away, and yet have left behind, in the particular region under contemplation, no trace of their existence.

To a mind unconscious of these intermediate events, the passage from one state of things to another must appear so violent, that the idea of revolutions in the system inevitably suggests itself. The imagination is as much perplexed by the deception, as it might be if two distant points in space were suddenly brought into immediate proximity. Let us suppose, for a moment, that a philosopher should lie down to sleep in some arctic wilderness, and then be transferred by a power, such as we read of in tales of enchantment, to a valley in a tropical country, where, on awaking, he might find himself surrounded by birds of brilliant plumage, and all the luxuriance of animal and vegetable forms of which Nature is so prodigal in those regions. The most reasonable supposition, perhaps, which he could make, if by the necromancer's art he were placed in such a situation, would be, that he was dreaming; and if a geologist form theories under a similar delusion, we cannot expect him to preserve more consistency in his speculations, than in the train of ideas in an ordinary dream.

Oct 31– BUUUUURRRNNNNSSSS

Upon that night, when fairies light
On Cassilis Downans dance,
Or owre the lays, in splendid blaze,
On sprightly coursers prance;
Or for Colean the route is ta'en,
Beneath the moon's pale beams;
There, up the cove, to stray and rove,
Among the rocks and streams
To sport that night.

Among the bonny winding banks,
Where Doon rins, wimplin' clear,
Where Bruce ance ruled the martial ranks,
And shook his Carrick spear,
Some merry, friendly, country-folks,
Together did convene,
To burn their nits, and pou their stocks,
And haud their Halloween
Fu' blithe that night.

The lasses feat, and cleanly neat,
Mair braw than when they're fine;
Their faces blithe, fu' sweetly kythe,
Hearts leal, and warm, and kin';
The lads sae trig, wi' wooer-babs,
Weel knotted on their garten,
Some unco blate, and some wi' gabs,
Gar lasses' hearts gang startin'
Whiles fast at night.

Then, first and foremost, through the kail,
Their stocks maun a' be sought ance;
They steek their een, and graip and wale,
For muckle anes and straught anes.
Poor hav'rel Will fell aff the drift,
And wander'd through the bow-kail,
And pou't, for want o' better shift,
A runt was like a sow-tail,
Sae bow't that night.

Then, staught or crooked, yird or nane,
They roar and cry a' throu'ther;

The very wee things, todlin', rin,
Wi' stocks out owre their shouther;
And gif the custoc's sweet or sour.
Wi' joctelebs they taste them;
Syne cozily, aboon the door,
Wi' cannie care, they've placed them
To lie that night.

The lasses staw frae 'mang them a'
To pou their stalks of corn:
But Rab slips out, and jinks about,
Behint the muckle thorn:
He grippet Nelly hard and fast;
Loud skirl'd a' the lasses;
But her tap-pickle maist was lost,
When kitlin' in the fause-house
Wi' him that night.

The auld guidwife's well-hoordit nits,
Are round and round divided,
And monie lads' and lasses' fates
Are there that night decided:
Some kindle coothie, side by side,
And burn thegither trimly;
Some start awa, wi' saucy pride,
And jump out-owre the chimlie
Fu' high that night.

Jean slips in twa wi' tentie ee;
Wha 'twas she wadna tell;
But this is Jock, and this is me,
She says in to hersel:
He bleezed owre her, and she owre him,
As they wad never mair part;
Till, fuff! he started up the lum,
And Jean had e'en a sair heart
To see't that night.

Poor Willie, wi' his bow-kail runt,
Was brunt wi' primsie Mallie;
And Mallie, nae doubt, took the drunt,
To be compared to Willie;
Mall's nit lap out wi' pridefu' fling,
And her ain fit it brunt it;

While Willie lap, and swore by jing,
'Twas just the way he wanted
To be that night.

Nell had the fause-house in her min',
She pits hersel and Rob in;
In loving bleeze they sweetly join,
Till white in ase they're sobbin';
Nell's heart was dancin' at the view,
She whisper'd Rob to leuk for't:
Rob, stowlins, prie'd her bonny mou',
Fu' cozie in the neuk for't,
Unseen that night.

But Merran sat behint their backs,
Her thoughts on Andrew Bell;
She lea'es them gashin' at their cracks,
And slips out by hersel:
She through the yard the nearest taks,
And to the kiln goes then,
And darklins graipit for the bauks,
And in the blue-clue throws then,
Right fear't that night.

And aye she win't, and aye she swat,
I wat she made nae jaukin',
Till something held within the pat,
Guid Lord! but she was quakin'!
But whether 'was the deil himsel,
Or whether 'twas a bauk-en',
Or whether it was Andrew Bell,
She didna wait on talkin'
To spier that night.

Wee Jennie to her grannie says,
"Will ye go wi' me, grannie?
I'll eat the apple at the glass
I gat frae Uncle Johnnie:"
She fuff't her pipe wi' sic a lunt,
In wrath she was sae vap'rin',
She notice't na, an aizle brunt
Her braw new worset apron
Out through that night.

"Ye little skelpie-limmer's face!
I daur you try sic sportin',
As seek the foul thief ony place,
For him to spae your fortune.
Nae doubt but ye may get a sight!
Great cause ye hae to fear it;
For mony a ane has gotten a fright,
And lived and died deleeret
On sic a night.

"Ae hairst afore the Sherramoor, —
I mind't as weel's yestreen,
I was a gilpey then, I'm sure
I wasna past fifteen;
The simmer had been cauld and wat,
And stuff was unco green;
And aye a rantin' kirk we gat,
And just on Halloween
It fell that night.

"Our stibble-rig was Rab M'Graen,
A clever sturdy fallow:
His son gat Eppie Sim wi' wean,
That lived in Achmacalla:
He gat hemp-seed, I mind it weel,
And he made unco light o't;
But mony a day was by himsel,
He was sae sairly frightened
That very night."

Then up gat fechtin' Jamie Fleck,
And he swore by his conscience,
That he could saw hemp-seed a peck;
For it was a' but nonsense.
The auld guidman raught down the pock,
And out a hanfu' gied him;
Syne bade him slip frae 'mang the folk,
Some time when nae ane see'd him,
And try't that night.

He marches through amang the stacks,
Though he was something sturtin';
The graip he for a harrow taks.
And hurls it at his curpin;

And every now and then he says,
"Hemp-seed, I saw thee,
And her that is to be my lass,
Come after me, and draw thee
As fast this night."

He whistled up Lord Lennox' march
To keep his courage cheery;
Although his hair began to arch,
He was say fley'd and eerie:
Till presently he hears a squeak,
And then a grane and gruntle;
He by his shouther gae a keek,
And tumbled wi' a wintle
Out-owre that night.

He roar'd a horrid murder-shout,
In dreadfu' desperation!
And young and auld came runnin' out
To hear the sad narration;
He swore 'twas hilchin Jean M'Craw,
Or crouchie Merran Humphie,
Till, stop! she trotted through them
And wha was it but grumphie
Asteer that night!

Meg fain wad to the barn hae gaen,
To win three wechts o' naething;
But for to meet the deil her lane,
She pat but little faith in:
She gies the herd a pickle nits,
And two red-cheekit apples,
To watch, while for the barn she sets,
In hopes to see Tam Kipples
That very nicht.

She turns the key wi cannie thraw,
And owre the threshold ventures;
But first on Sawnie gies a ca'
Syne bauldly in she enters:
A ratton rattled up the wa',
And she cried, Lord, preserve her!
And ran through midden-hole and a',
And pray'd wi' zeal and fervour,

Fu' fast that night;

They hoy't out Will wi' sair advice;
They hecht him some fine braw ane;
It chanced the stack he faddom'd thrice
Was timmer-propt for throwin';
He taks a swirlie, auld moss-oak,
For some black grousome carlin;
And loot a winze, and drew a stroke,
Till skin in blypes cam haurlin'
Aff's nieves that night.

A wanton widow Leezie was,
As canty as a kittlin;
But, och! that night amang the shaws,
She got a fearfu' settlin'!
She through the whins, and by the cairn,
And owre the hill gaed screevin,
Whare three lairds' lands met at a burn
To dip her left sark-sleeve in,
Was bent that night.

Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
As through the glen it wimpl't;
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays;
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't;
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle;
Whyles cookit underneath the braes,
Below the spreading hazel,
Unseen that night.

Among the brackens, on the brae,
Between her and the moon,
The deil, or else an outler quey,
Gat up and gae a croon:
Poor Leezie's heart maist lap the hool!
Near lav'rock-height she jumpit;
but mist a fit, and in the pool
Out-owre the lugs she plumpit,
Wi' a plunge that night.

In order, on the clean hearth-stane,
The luggies three are ranged,

And every time great care is ta'en',
To see them duly changed:
Auld Uncle John, wha wedlock joys
Sin' Mar's year did desire,
Because he gat the toom dish thrice,
He heaved them on the fire
In wrath that night.

Wi' merry sangs, and friendly cracks,
I wat they didna weary;
And unco tales, and funny jokes,
Their sports were cheap and cheery;
Till butter'd so'ns, wi' fragrant lunt,
Set a' their gabs a-steerin';
Syne, wi' a social glass o' strunt,
They parted aff careerin'
Fu' blythe that night.

Nov 1– From *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare (1611)

Act I, Scene 1

On a ship at sea: a tempestuous noise

of thunder and lightning heard.

[Enter a Master and a Boatswain]

Master. Boatswain!

Boatswain. Here, master: what cheer?

Master. Good, speak to the mariners: fall to't, yarely,⁵
or we run ourselves aground: bestir, bestir.

[Exit]

[Enter Mariners]

Boatswain. Heigh, my hearts! cheerly, cheerly, my hearts!
yare, yare! Take in the topsail. Tend to the¹⁰
master's whistle. Blow, till thou burst thy wind,
if room enough!

[Enter ALONSO, SEBASTIAN, ANTONIO, FERDINAND,
GONZALO, and others]

Alonso. Good boatswain, have care. Where's the master?¹⁵
Play the men.

Boatswain. I pray now, keep below.

Antonio. Where is the master, boatswain?

Boatswain. Do you not hear him? You mar our labour: keep your
cabins: you do assist the storm.²⁰

Gonzalo. Nay, good, be patient.

Boatswain. When the sea is. Hence! What cares these roarers
for the name of king? To cabin: silence! trouble us not.

Gonzalo. Good, yet remember whom thou hast aboard.

Boatswain. None that I more love than myself. You are a²⁵
counsellor; if you can command these elements to
silence, and work the peace of the present, we will
not hand a rope more; use your authority: if you
cannot, give thanks you have lived so long, and make
yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of³⁰
the hour, if it so hap. Cheerly, good hearts! Out
of our way, I say.

[Exit]

Gonzalo. I have great comfort from this fellow: methinks he hath no drowning mark upon him; his complexion is
perfect gallows. Stand fast, good Fate, to his hanging: make the rope of his destiny our cable, for our own doth little advantage. If he be not born to be hanged, our case is miserable.
[Exeunt]

[Re-enter Boatswain]

Boatswain. Down with the topmast! yare! lower, lower! Bring her to try with main-course.

[A cry within]

A plague upon this howling! they are louder than the weather or our office.

[Re-enter SEBASTIAN, ANTONIO, and GONZALO]

Yet again! what do you here? Shall we give o'er and drown? Have you a mind to sink?

Sebastian. A pox o' your throat, you bawling, blasphemous, incharitable dog!

Boatswain. Work you then.

Antonio. Hang, cur! hang, you whoreson, insolent noisemaker! We are less afraid to be drowned than thou art.

Gonzalo. I'll warrant him for drowning; though the ship were no stronger than a nutshell and as leaky as an unstanch'd wench.

Boatswain. Lay her a-hold, a-hold! set her two courses off to sea again; lay her off.

[Enter Mariners wet]

Mariners. All lost! to prayers, to prayers! all lost!

Boatswain. What, must our mouths be cold?

Gonzalo. The king and prince at prayers! let's assist them, For our case is as theirs.

Sebastian. I'm out of patience.

Antonio. We are merely cheated of our lives by drunkards: This wide-chapp'd rascal—would thou mightst lie drowning The washing of ten tides!

Gonzalo. He'll be hang'd yet, Though every drop of water swear against it And gape at widest to glut him.

[A confused noise within: 'Mercy on us!']

'We split, we split!'—'Farewell, my wife and children!'—

'Farewell, brother!'—'We split, we split, we split!']75

Antonio. Let's all sink with the king.

Sebastian. Let's take leave of him.

[Exeunt ANTONIO and SEBASTIAN]

Gonzalo. Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of barren ground, long heath, brown furze, any80 thing. The wills above be done! but I would fain die a dry death.

[Exeunt]

Act I, Scene 2

The island. Before PROSPERO'S cell.

[Enter PROSPERO and MIRANDA]

Miranda. If by your art, my dearest father, you have85 Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.

The sky, it seems, would pour down stinking pitch,
But that the sea, mounting to the welkin's cheek,
Dashes the fire out. O, I have suffered
With those that I saw suffer: a brave vessel,90
Who had, no doubt, some noble creature in her,
Dash'd all to pieces. O, the cry did knock
Against my very heart. Poor souls, they perish'd.

Had I been any god of power, I would
Have sunk the sea within the earth or ere95
It should the good ship so have swallow'd and
The fraughting souls within her.

Prospero. Be collected:

No more amazement: tell your piteous heart
There's no harm done.100

Miranda. O, woe the day!

Prospero. No harm.

I have done nothing but in care of thee,
Of thee, my dear one, thee, my daughter, who
Art ignorant of what thou art, nought knowing105
Of whence I am, nor that I am more better
Than Prospero, master of a full poor cell,
And thy no greater father.

Miranda. More to know

Did never meddle with my thoughts.110
Prospero. 'Tis time
I should inform thee farther. Lend thy hand,
And pluck my magic garment from me. So:
[Lays down his mantle]
Lie there, my art. Wipe thou thine eyes; have comfort.115
The direful spectacle of the wreck, which touch'd
The very virtue of compassion in thee,
I have with such provision in mine art
So safely ordered that there is no soul—
No, not so much perdition as an hair120
Betid to any creature in the vessel
Which thou heard'st cry, which thou saw'st sink. Sit down;
For thou must now know farther.
Miranda. You have often
Begun to tell me what I am, but stopp'd125
And left me to a bootless inquisition,
Concluding 'Stay: not yet.'
Prospero. The hour's now come;
The very minute bids thee ope thine ear;
Obey and be attentive. Canst thou remember130
A time before we came unto this cell?
I do not think thou canst, for then thou wast not
Out three years old.
Miranda. Certainly, sir, I can.
Prospero. By what? by any other house or person?135
Of any thing the image tell me that
Hath kept with thy remembrance.
Miranda. 'Tis far off
And rather like a dream than an assurance
That my remembrance warrants. Had I not140
Four or five women once that tended me?
Prospero. Thou hadst, and more, Miranda. But how is it
That this lives in thy mind? What seest thou else
In the dark backward and abysm of time?
If thou remember'st aught ere thou camest here,145
How thou camest here thou mayst.
Miranda. But that I do not.
Prospero. Twelve year since, Miranda, twelve year since,
Thy father was the Duke of Milan and
A prince of power.150
Miranda. Sir, are not you my father?
Prospero. Thy mother was a piece of virtue, and
She said thou wast my daughter; and thy father

Was Duke of Milan; and thou his only heir
And princess no worse issued.155
Miranda. O the heavens!
What foul play had we, that we came from thence?
Or blessed was't we did?
Prospero. Both, both, my girl:
By foul play, as thou say'st, were we heaved thence,160
But blessedly help hither.
Miranda. O, my heart bleeds
To think o' the teen that I have turn'd you to,
Which is from my remembrance! Please you, farther.
Prospero. My brother and thy uncle, call'd Antonio—165
I pray thee, mark me—that a brother should
Be so perfidious!—he whom next thyself
Of all the world I loved and to him put
The manage of my state; as at that time
Through all the signories it was the first170
And Prospero the prime duke, being so reputed
In dignity, and for the liberal arts
Without a parallel; those being all my study,
The government I cast upon my brother
And to my state grew stranger, being transported175
And rapt in secret studies. Thy false uncle—
Dost thou attend me?
Miranda. Sir, most heedfully.
Prospero. Being once perfected how to grant suits,
How to deny them, who to advance and who180
To trash for over-topping, new created
The creatures that were mine, I say, or changed 'em,
Or else new form'd 'em; having both the key
Of officer and office, set all hearts i' the state
To what tune pleased his ear; that now he was185
The ivy which had hid my princely trunk,
And suck'd my verdure out on't. Thou attend'st not.
Miranda. O, good sir, I do.
Prospero. I pray thee, mark me.
I, thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated190
To closeness and the bettering of my mind
With that which, but by being so retired,
O'er-prized all popular rate, in my false brother
Awaked an evil nature; and my trust,
Like a good parent, did beget of him195
A falsehood in its contrary as great
As my trust was; which had indeed no limit,

A confidence sans bound. He being thus lorded,
Not only with what my revenue yielded,
But what my power might else exact, like one²⁰⁰
Who having into truth, by telling of it,
Made such a sinner of his memory,
To credit his own lie, he did believe
He was indeed the duke; out o' the substitution
And executing the outward face of royalty,²⁰⁵
With all prerogative: hence his ambition growing—
Dost thou hear?

Miranda. Your tale, sir, would cure deafness.

Prospero. To have no screen between this part he play'd
And him he play'd it for, he needs will be²¹⁰

Absolute Milan. Me, poor man, my library
Was dukedom large enough: of temporal royalties
He thinks me now incapable; confederates—
So dry he was for sway—wi' the King of Naples
To give him annual tribute, do him homage,²¹⁵
Subject his coronet to his crown and bend
The dukedom yet unbow'd—alas, poor Milan!—
To most ignoble stooping.

Miranda. O the heavens!

Prospero. Mark his condition and the event; then tell me²²⁰
If this might be a brother.

Miranda. I should sin

To think but nobly of my grandmother:
Good wombs have borne bad sons.

Prospero. Now the condition.²²⁵

The King of Naples, being an enemy
To me inveterate, hearkens my brother's suit;
Which was, that he, in lieu o' the premises
Of homage and I know not how much tribute,
Should presently extirpate me and mine²³⁰
Out of the dukedom and confer fair Milan
With all the honours on my brother: whereon,
A treacherous army levied, one midnight
Fated to the purpose did Antonio open
The gates of Milan, and, i' the dead of darkness,²³⁵
The ministers for the purpose hurried thence
Me and thy crying self.

Miranda. Alack, for pity!

I, not remembering how I cried out then,
Will cry it o'er again: it is a hint²⁴⁰
That wrings mine eyes to't.

Prospero. Hear a little further
And then I'll bring thee to the present business
Which now's upon's; without the which this story
Were most impertinent.245
Miranda. Wherefore did they not
That hour destroy us?
Prospero. Well demanded, wench:
My tale provokes that question. Dear, they durst not,
So dear the love my people bore me, nor set250
A mark so bloody on the business, but
With colours fairer painted their foul ends.
In few, they hurried us aboard a bark,
Bore us some leagues to sea; where they prepared
A rotten carcass of a boat, not rigg'd,255
Nor tackle, sail, nor mast; the very rats
Instinctively had quit it: there they hoist us,
To cry to the sea that roar'd to us, to sigh
To the winds whose pity, sighing back again,
Did us but loving wrong.260
Miranda. Alack, what trouble
Was I then to you!
Prospero. O, a cherubim
Thou wast that did preserve me. Thou didst smile.
Infused with a fortitude from heaven,265
When I have deck'd the sea with drops full salt,
Under my burthen groan'd; which raised in me
An undergoing stomach, to bear up
Against what should ensue.
Miranda. How came we ashore?270
Prospero. By Providence divine.
Some food we had and some fresh water that
A noble Neapolitan, Gonzalo,
Out of his charity, being then appointed
Master of this design, did give us, with275
Rich garments, linens, stuffs and necessities,
Which since have steaded much; so, of his gentleness,
Knowing I loved my books, he furnish'd me
From mine own library with volumes that
I prize above my dukedom.280
Miranda. Would I might
But ever see that man!
Prospero. Now I arise:
[Resumes his mantle]
Sit still, and hear the last of our sea-sorrow.285

Here in this island we arrived; and here
Have I, thy schoolmaster, made thee more profit
Than other princesses can that have more time
For vainer hours and tutors not so careful.
Miranda. Heavens thank you for't! And now, I pray you, sir,290
For still 'tis beating in my mind, your reason
For raising this sea-storm?
Prospero. Know thus far forth.
By accident most strange, bountiful Fortune,
Now my dear lady, hath mine enemies295
Brought to this shore; and by my prescience
I find my zenith doth depend upon
A most auspicious star, whose influence
If now I court not but omit, my fortunes
Will ever after droop. Here cease more questions:300
Thou art inclined to sleep; 'tis a good dulness,
And give it way: I know thou canst not choose.
[MIRANDA sleeps]
Come away, servant, come. I am ready now.
Approach, my Ariel, come.305
[Enter ARIEL]

Ariel. All hail, great master! grave sir, hail! I come
To answer thy best pleasure; be't to fly,
To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride
On the curl'd clouds, to thy strong bidding task310
Ariel and all his quality.
Prospero. Hast thou, spirit,
Perform'd to point the tempest that I bade thee?
Ariel. To every article.
I boarded the king's ship; now on the beak,315
Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,
I flamed amazement: sometime I'd divide,
And burn in many places; on the topmast,
The yards and bowsprit, would I flame distinctly,
Then meet and join. Jove's lightnings, the precursors320
O' the dreadful thunder-claps, more momentary
And sight-outrunning were not; the fire and cracks
Of sulphurous roaring the most mighty Neptune
Seem to besiege and make his bold waves tremble,
Yea, his dread trident shake.325
Prospero. My brave spirit!
Who was so firm, so constant, that this coil
Would not infect his reason?

Ariel. Not a soul
But felt a fever of the mad and play'd³³⁰
Some tricks of desperation. All but mariners
Plunged in the foaming brine and quit the vessel,
Then all afire with me: the king's son, Ferdinand,
With hair up-staring,—then like reeds, not hair,—
Was the first man that leap'd; cried, 'Hell is empty³³⁵
And all the devils are here.'
Prospero. Why that's my spirit!
But was not this nigh shore?
Ariel. Close by, my master.
Prospero. But are they, Ariel, safe?³⁴⁰
Ariel. Not a hair perish'd;
On their sustaining garments not a blemish,
But fresher than before: and, as thou badest me,
In troops I have dispersed them 'bout the isle.
The king's son have I landed by himself;³⁴⁵
Whom I left cooling of the air with sighs
In an odd angle of the isle and sitting,
His arms in this sad knot.
Prospero. Of the king's ship
The mariners say how thou hast disposed³⁵⁰
And all the rest o' the fleet.
Ariel. Safely in harbour
Is the king's ship; in the deep nook, where once
Thou call'dst me up at midnight to fetch dew
From the still-vex'd Bermoothes, there she's hid:³⁵⁵
The mariners all under hatches stow'd;
Who, with a charm join'd to their suffer'd labour,
I have left asleep; and for the rest o' the fleet
Which I dispersed, they all have met again
And are upon the Mediterranean flote,³⁶⁰
Bound sadly home for Naples,
Supposing that they saw the king's ship wreck'd
And his great person perish.
Prospero. Ariel, thy charge
Exactly is perform'd: but there's more work.³⁶⁵
What is the time o' the day?
Ariel. Past the mid season.
Prospero. At least two glasses. The time 'twixt six and now
Must by us both be spent most precious.
Ariel. Is there more toil? Since thou dost give me pains,³⁷⁰
Let me remember thee what thou hast promised,
Which is not yet perform'd me.

Prospero. How now? moody?

What is't thou canst demand?

Ariel. My liberty.375

Prospero. Before the time be out? no more!

Ariel. I prithee,

Remember I have done thee worthy service;

Told thee no lies, made thee no mistakings, served

Without or grudge or grumblings: thou didst promise380

To bate me a full year.

Prospero. Dost thou forget

From what a torment I did free thee?

Ariel. No.

Prospero. Thou dost, and think'st it much to tread the ooze385

Of the salt deep,

To run upon the sharp wind of the north,

To do me business in the veins o' the earth

When it is baked with frost.

Ariel. I do not, sir.390

Prospero. Thou liest, malignant thing! Hast thou forgot

The foul witch Sycorax, who with age and envy

Was grown into a hoop? hast thou forgot her?

Ariel. No, sir.

Prospero. Thou hast. Where was she born? speak; tell me.395

Ariel. Sir, in Argier.

Prospero. O, was she so? I must

Once in a month recount what thou hast been,

Which thou forget'st. This damn'd witch Sycorax,

For mischiefs manifold and sorceries terrible400

To enter human hearing, from Argier,

Thou know'st, was banish'd: for one thing she did

They would not take her life. Is not this true?

Ariel. Ay, sir.

Prospero. This blue-eyed hag was hither brought with child405

And here was left by the sailors. Thou, my slave,

As thou report'st thyself, wast then her servant;

And, for thou wast a spirit too delicate

To act her earthy and abhorr'd commands,

Refusing her grand hests, she did confine thee,410

By help of her more potent ministers

And in her most unmitigable rage,

Into a cloven pine; within which rift

Imprison'd thou didst painfully remain

A dozen years; within which space she died415

And left thee there; where thou didst vent thy groans

As fast as mill-wheels strike. Then was this island—
Save for the son that she did litter here,
A freckled whelp hag-born—not honour'd with
A human shape.420

Ariel. Yes, Caliban her son.

Prospero. Dull thing, I say so; he, that Caliban
Whom now I keep in service. Thou best know'st
What torment I did find thee in; thy groans
Did make wolves howl and penetrate the breasts425
Of ever angry bears: it was a torment
To lay upon the damn'd, which Sycorax
Could not again undo: it was mine art,
When I arrived and heard thee, that made gape
The pine and let thee out.430

Ariel. I thank thee, master.

Prospero. If thou more murmur'st, I will rend an oak
And peg thee in his knotty entrails till
Thou hast howl'd away twelve winters.

Ariel. Pardon, master;435

I will be correspondent to command
And do my spiriting gently.

Prospero. Do so, and after two days
I will discharge thee.

Ariel. That's my noble master!440

What shall I do? say what; what shall I do?

Prospero. Go make thyself like a nymph o' the sea: be subject
To no sight but thine and mine, invisible
To every eyeball else. Go take this shape
And hither come in't: go, hence with diligence!445

[Exit ARIEL]

Awake, dear heart, awake! thou hast slept well; Awake!

Miranda. The strangeness of your story put
Heaviness in me.

Prospero. Shake it off. Come on;450
We'll visit Caliban my slave, who never
Yields us kind answer.

Miranda. 'Tis a villain, sir,
I do not love to look on.

Prospero. But, as 'tis,455
We cannot miss him: he does make our fire,
Fetch in our wood and serves in offices
That profit us. What, ho! slave! Caliban!
Thou earth, thou! speak.

Caliban. [Within] There's wood enough within.460

Prospero. Come forth, I say! there's other business for thee:
Come, thou tortoise! when?

[Re-enter ARIEL like a water-nymph]

Fine apparition! My quaint Ariel,

Hark in thine ear.⁴⁶⁵

Ariel. My lord it shall be done.

[Exit]

Prospero. Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself
Upon thy wicked dam, come forth

Nov 2– From *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri
(1321) translated by Rev. H. F. Cary

CANTO III

“Through me you pass into the city of woe:
Through me you pass into eternal pain:
Through me among the people lost for aye.
Justice the founder of my fabric mov’d:
To rear me was the task of power divine,
Supremest wisdom, and primeval love.
Before me things create were none, save things
Eternal, and eternal I endure.



“All hope abandon ye who enter here.”

Such characters in colour dim I mark'd
Over a portal's lofty arch inscrib'd:
Whereat I thus: “Master, these words import
Hard meaning.” He as one prepar'd replied:
“Here thou must all distrust behind thee leave;
Here be vile fear extinguish'd. We are come
Where I have told thee we shall see the souls
To misery doom'd, who intellectual good
Have lost.” And when his hand he had stretch'd forth
To mine, with pleasant looks, whence I was cheer'd,
Into that secret place he led me on.

Here sighs with lamentations and loud moans
Resounded through the air pierc'd by no star,

That e'en I wept at entering. Various tongues,
Horrible languages, outcries of woe,
Accents of anger, voices deep and hoarse,
With hands together smote that swell'd the sounds,
Made up a tumult, that for ever whirls
Round through that air with solid darkness stain'd,
Like to the sand that in the whirlwind flies.

I then, with error yet encompass'd, cried:
"O master! What is this I hear? What race
Are these, who seem so overcome with woe?"

He thus to me: "This miserable fate
Suffer the wretched souls of those, who liv'd
Without or praise or blame, with that ill band
Of angels mix'd, who nor rebellious prov'd
Nor yet were true to God, but for themselves
Were only. From his bounds Heaven drove them forth,
Not to impair his lustre, nor the depth
Of Hell receives them, lest th' accursed tribe
Should glory thence with exultation vain."

I then: "Master! what doth aggrrieve them thus,
That they lament so loud?" He straight replied:
"That will I tell thee briefly. These of death
No hope may entertain: and their blind life
So meanly passes, that all other lots
They envy. Fame of them the world hath none,
Nor suffers; mercy and justice scorn them both.
Speak not of them, but look, and pass them by."

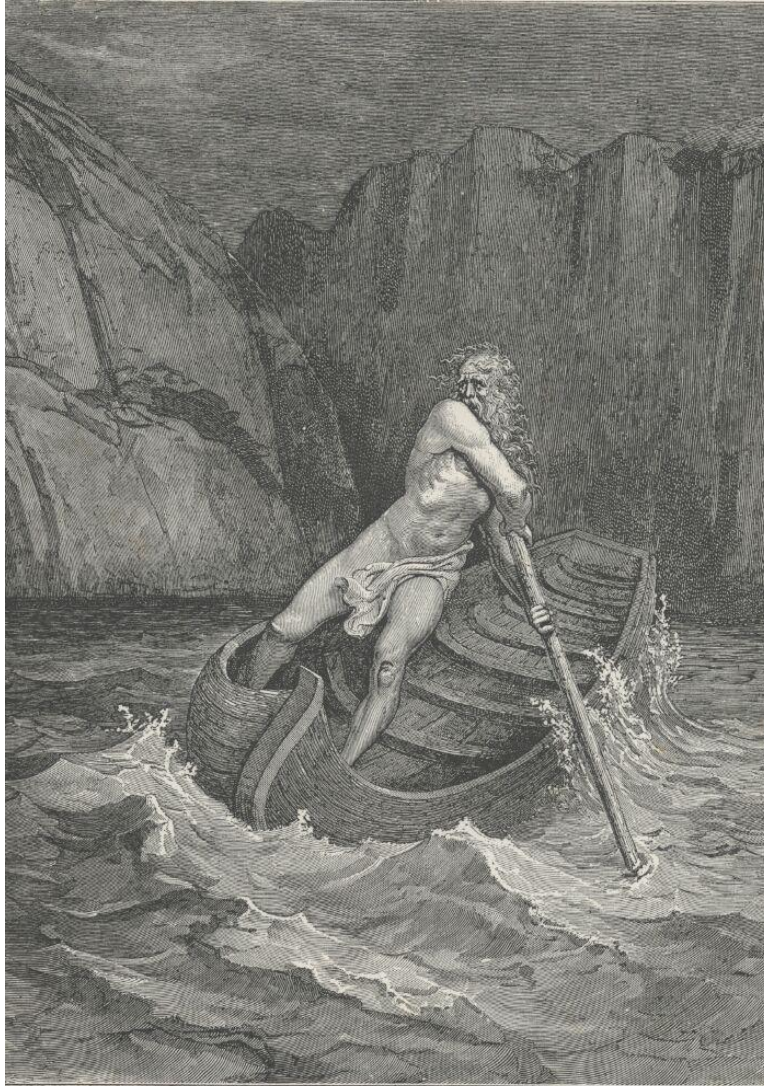
And I, who straightway look'd, beheld a flag,
Which whirling ran around so rapidly,
That it no pause obtain'd: and following came
Such a long train of spirits, I should ne'er
Have thought, that death so many had despoil'd.

When some of these I recogniz'd, I saw
And knew the shade of him, who to base fear
Yielding, abjur'd his high estate. Forthwith
I understood for certain this the tribe
Of those ill spirits both to God displeasing
And to his foes. These wretches, who ne'er lived,
Went on in nakedness, and sorely stung

By wasps and hornets, which bedew'd their cheeks
With blood, that mix'd with tears dropp'd to their feet,
And by disgustful worms was gather'd there.

Then looking farther onwards I beheld
A throng upon the shore of a great stream:
Whereat I thus: "Sir! grant me now to know
Whom here we view, and whence impell'd they seem
So eager to pass o'er, as I discern
Through the blear light?" He thus to me in few:
"This shalt thou know, soon as our steps arrive
Beside the woeful tide of Acheron."

Then with eyes downward cast and fill'd with shame,
Fearing my words offensive to his ear,
Till we had reach'd the river, I from speech
Abstain'd. And lo! toward us in a bark
Comes on an old man hoary white with eld,



And, lo! toward us in a bark
Comes on an old man, hoary white with eld,
Crying, "Woe to you, wicked spirits!"
Canto III., lines 76—78.

Crying, "Woe to you wicked spirits! hope not
Ever to see the sky again. I come
To take you to the other shore across,
Into eternal darkness, there to dwell
In fierce heat and in ice. And thou, who there
Standest, live spirit! get thee hence, and leave
These who are dead." But soon as he beheld
I left them not, "By other way," said he,
"By other haven shalt thou come to shore,
Not by this passage; thee a nimbler boat

Must carry." Then to him thus spake my guide:
"Charon! thyself torment not: so 't is will'd,
Where will and power are one: ask thou no more."

Straightway in silence fell the shaggy cheeks
Of him the boatman o'er the livid lake,
Around whose eyes glar'd wheeling flames. Meanwhile
Those spirits, faint and naked, color chang'd,
And gnash'd their teeth, soon as the cruel words
They heard. God and their parents they blasphem'd,
The human kind, the place, the time, and seed
That did engender them and give them birth.

Then all together sorely wailing drew
To the curs'd strand, that every man must pass
Who fears not God. Charon, demoniac form,
With eyes of burning coal, collects them all,
Beck'ning, and each, that lingers, with his oar
Strikes. As fall off the light autumnal leaves,
One still another following, till the bough
Strews all its honours on the earth beneath;



E'en in like manner Adam's evil brood
Cast themselves one by one down from the shore,
Each at a beck, as falcon at his call.

Thus go they over through the umber'd wave,
And ever they on the opposing bank
Be landed, on this side another throng
Still gathers. "Son," thus spake the courteous guide,
"Those, who die subject to the wrath of God,
All here together come from every clime,
And to o'erpass the river are not loth:
For so heaven's justice goads them on, that fear
Is turn'd into desire. Hence ne'er hath past
Good spirit. If of thee Charon complain,
Now mayst thou know the import of his words."

This said, the gloomy region trembling shook
So terribly, that yet with clammy dew
Fear chills my brow. The sad earth gave a blast,
That, lightening, shot forth a vermilion flame,
Which all my senses conquer'd quite, and I
Down dropp'd, as one with sudden slumber seiz'd.

CANTO IV

Broke the deep slumber in my brain a crash
Of heavy thunder, that I shook myself,
As one by main force rous'd. Risen upright,
My rested eyes I mov'd around, and search'd
With fixed ken to know what place it was,
Wherein I stood. For certain on the brink
I found me of the lamentable vale,
The dread abyss, that joins a thund'rous sound
Of plaints innumerable. Dark and deep,
And thick with clouds o'erspread, mine eye in vain
Explor'd its bottom, nor could aught discern.

"Now let us to the blind world there beneath
Descend;" the bard began all pale of look:
"I go the first, and thou shalt follow next."

Then I his alter'd hue perceiving, thus:
"How may I speed, if thou yieldst to dread,
Who still art wont to comfort me in doubt?"

He then: "The anguish of that race below
With pity stains my cheek, which thou for fear
Mistakest. Let us on. Our length of way
Urges to haste." Onward, this said, he mov'd;
And ent'ring led me with him on the bounds
Of the first circle, that surrounds th' abyss.
Here, as mine ear could note, no plaint was heard

Except of sighs, that made th' eternal air
Tremble, not caus'd by tortures, but from grief
Felt by those multitudes, many and vast,
Of men, women, and infants. Then to me
The gentle guide: "Inquir'st thou not what spirits
Are these, which thou beholdest? Ere thou pass
Farther, I would thou know, that these of sin
Were blameless; and if aught they merited,
It profits not, since baptism was not theirs,
The portal to thy faith. If they before
The Gospel liv'd, they serv'd not God aright;
And among such am I. For these defects,
And for no other evil, we are lost;



Only so far afflicted, that we live
Desiring without hope.
Canto IV., lines 38, 39.

“Only so far afflicted, that we live
Desiring without hope.” So grief assail’d
My heart at hearing this, for well I knew
Suspended in that Limbo many a soul
Of mighty worth. “O tell me, sire rever’d!
Tell me, my master!” I began through wish
Of full assurance in that holy faith,
Which vanquishes all error; “say, did e’er
Any, or through his own or other’s merit,
Come forth from thence, whom afterward was blest?”

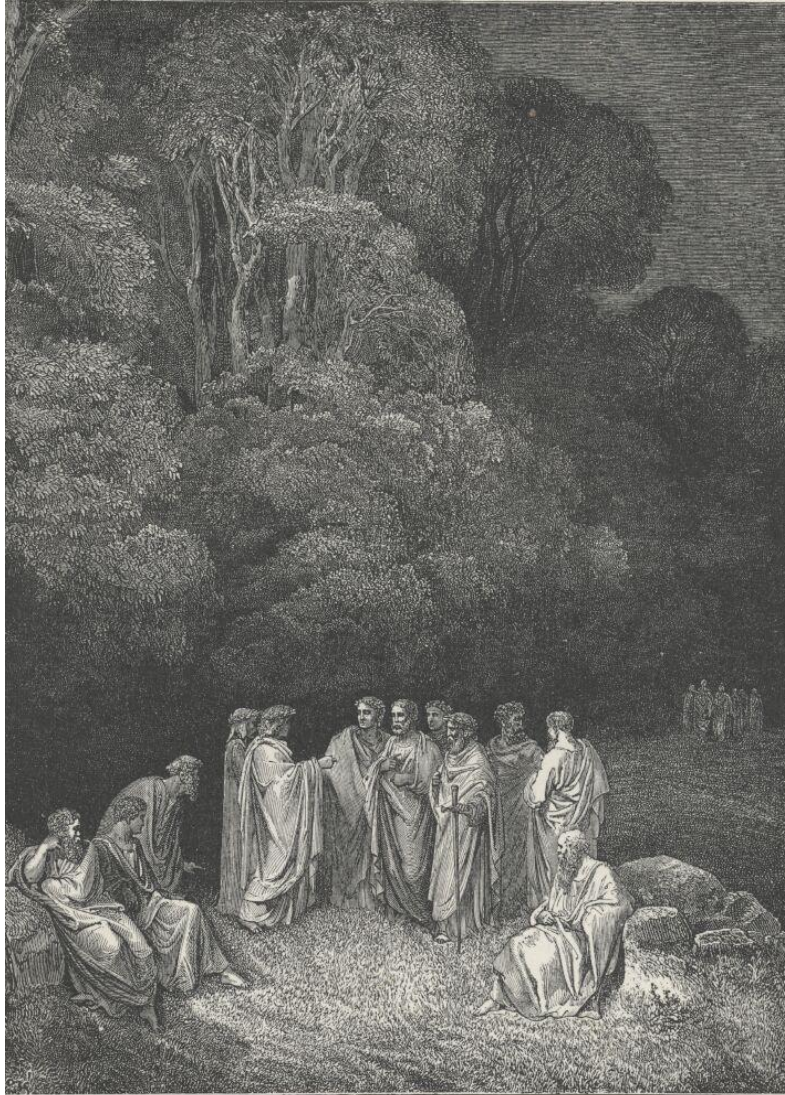
Piercing the secret purport of my speech,
He answer’d: “I was new to that estate,
When I beheld a puissant one arrive
Amongst us, with victorious trophy crown’d.
He forth the shade of our first parent drew,
Abel his child, and Noah righteous man,
Of Moses lawgiver for faith approv’d,
Of patriarch Abraham, and David king,
Israel with his sire and with his sons,
Nor without Rachel whom so hard he won,
And others many more, whom he to bliss
Exalted. Before these, be thou assur’d,
No spirit of human kind was ever sav’d.”

We, while he spake, ceas’d not our onward road,
Still passing through the wood; for so I name
Those spirits thick beset. We were not far
On this side from the summit, when I kenn’d
A flame, that o’er the darken’d hemisphere
Prevailing shin’d. Yet we a little space
Were distant, not so far but I in part
Discover’d, that a tribe in honour high
That place possess’d. “O thou, who every art
And science valu’st! who are these, that boast
Such honour, separate from all the rest?”

He answer’d: “The renown of their great names
That echoes through your world above, acquires
Favour in heaven, which holds them thus advanc’d.”
Meantime a voice I heard: “Honour the bard
Sublime! his shade returns that left us late!”
No sooner ceas’d the sound, than I beheld
Four mighty spirits toward us bend their steps,

Of semblance neither sorrowful nor glad.

When thus my master kind began: "Mark him,
Who in his right hand bears that falchion keen,
The other three preceding, as their lord.
This is that Homer, of all bards supreme:
Flaccus the next in satire's vein excelling;
The third is Naso; Lucan is the last.
Because they all that appellation own,
With which the voice singly accosted me,
Honouring they greet me thus, and well they judge."



So I beheld united the bright school
Of him the monarch of sublimest song,
That o'er the others like an eagle soars.
Canto IV., lines 89—91.

So I beheld united the bright school
Of him the monarch of sublimest song,
That o'er the others like an eagle soars.
When they together short discourse had held,
They turn'd to me, with salutation kind
Beck'ning me; at the which my master smil'd:
Nor was this all; but greater honour still
They gave me, for they made me of their tribe;
And I was sixth amid so learn'd a band.

Far as the luminous beacon on we pass'd
Speaking of matters, then befitting well
To speak, now fitter left untold. At foot
Of a magnificent castle we arriv'd,
Seven times with lofty walls begirt, and round
Defended by a pleasant stream. O'er this
As o'er dry land we pass'd. Next through seven gates
I with those sages enter'd, and we came
Into a mead with lively verdure fresh.

There dwelt a race, who slow their eyes around
Majestically mov'd, and in their port
Bore eminent authority; they spake
Seldom, but all their words were tuneful sweet.

We to one side retir'd, into a place
Open and bright and lofty, whence each one
Stood manifest to view. Incontinent
There on the green enamel of the plain
Were shown me the great spirits, by whose sight
I am exalted in my own esteem.

Electra there I saw accompanied
By many, among whom Hector I knew,
Anchises' pious son, and with hawk's eye
Caesar all arm'd, and by Camilla there
Penthesilea. On the other side
Old King Latinus, seated by his child
Lavinia, and that Brutus I beheld,
Who Tarquin chas'd, Lucretia, Cato's wife
Marcia, with Julia and Cornelia there;
And sole apart retir'd, the Soldan fierce.

Then when a little more I rais'd my brow,
I spied the master of the sapient throng,
Seated amid the philosophic train.
Him all admire, all pay him rev'rence due.
There Socrates and Plato both I mark'd,
Nearest to him in rank; Democritus,
Who sets the world at chance, Diogenes,
With Heraclitus, and Empedocles,
And Anaxagoras, and Thales sage,
Zeno, and Dioscorides well read
In nature's secret lore. Orpheus I mark'd

And Linus, Tully and moral Seneca,
Euclid and Ptolemy, Hippocrates,
Galenus, Avicen, and him who made
That commentary vast, Averroes.

Of all to speak at full were vain attempt;
For my wide theme so urges, that oft-times
My words fall short of what bechanc'd. In two
The six associates part. Another way
My sage guide leads me, from that air serene,
Into a climate ever vex'd with storms:
And to a part I come where no light shines.

Nov 3– Pliny's letter to Emperor Trajan and Trajan's response

[XCVII. To the Emperor Trajan](#)

IT is my invariable rule, Sir, to refer to you in all matters where I feel doubtful; for who is more capable of removing my scruples, or informing my ignorance? Having never been present at any trials concerning those who profess Christianity, I am unacquainted not only with the nature of their crimes, or the measure of their punishment, but how far it is proper to enter into an examination concerning them. Whether, therefore, any difference is usually made with respect to ages, or no distinction is to be observed between the young and the adult; whether repentance entitles them to a pardon, or, if a man has been once a Christian, it avails nothing to desist from his error; whether the very profession of Christianity, unattended with any criminal act, or only the crimes themselves inherent in the profession are punishable; on all these points I am in great doubt. In the meanwhile, the method I have observed towards those who have been brought before me as Christians is this: I asked them whether they were Christians; if they admitted it, I repeated the question twice, and threatened them with punishment; if they persisted, I ordered them to be at once punished: for I was persuaded, whatever the nature of their opinions might be, a contumacious and inflexible obstinacy certainly deserved correction. There were others also brought before me possessed with the same infatuation, but being Roman citizens, I directed them to be sent to Rome. But this crime spreading (as is usually the case) while it was actually under prosecution, several instances of the same nature occurred. An anonymous information was laid before me containing a charge against several persons, who upon examination denied they were Christians, or had ever been so. They repeated after me an invocation to the gods, and offered religious rites with wine and incense before your statue (which for that purpose I had ordered to be brought, together with those of the gods), and even reviled the name of Christ: whereas there is no forcing, it is said, those who are really Christians into any of these compliances: I thought it proper, therefore, to discharge them. Some among those who were accused by a witness in person at first confessed themselves Christians, but immediately after denied it; the rest owned indeed that they had been of that number formerly, but had now (some above three, others more, and a few above twenty years ago) renounced that error. They all worshipped your statue and the images of the gods, uttering imprecations at the same time against the name of Christ. They affirmed the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they met on a stated day before it was light, and addressed a form of prayer to Christ, as to a divinity, binding themselves by a solemn oath, not for the purposes of any wicked design, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble, to eat in common a harmless meal. From this custom, however, they desisted after the publication of my edict, by which, according to your commands, I forbade the meeting of any assemblies. After receiving this account, I judged it so much the more necessary to endeavour to extort the real truth, by putting two female slaves to the torture, who were said to officiate in their religious rites: but all I could discover was evidence of an absurd and extravagant superstition. I deemed it expedient, therefore, to adjourn all further

proceedings, in order to consult you. For it appears to be a matter highly deserving your consideration, more especially as great numbers must be involved in the danger of these prosecutions, which have already extended, and are still likely to extend, to persons of all ranks and ages, and even of both sexes. In fact, this contagious superstition is not confined to the cities only, but has spread its infection among the neighbouring villages and country. Nevertheless, it still seems possible to restrain its progress. The temples, at least, which were once almost deserted, begin now to be frequented; and the sacred rites, after a long intermission, are again revived; while there is a general demand for the victims, which till lately found very few purchasers. From all this it is easy to conjecture what numbers might be reclaimed if a general pardon were granted to those who shall repent of their error.

[XCVIII. Trajan to Pliny](#)

YOU have adopted the right course, my dearest Secundus, in investigating the charges against the Christians who were brought before you. It is not possible to lay down any general rule for all such cases. Do not go out of your way to look for them. If indeed they should be brought before you, and the crime is proved, they must be punished; with the restriction, however, that where the party denies he is a Christian, and shall make it evident that he is not, by invoking our gods, let him (notwithstanding any former suspicion) be pardoned upon his repentance. Anonymous informations ought not to be received in any sort of prosecution. It is introducing a very dangerous precedent, and is quite foreign to the spirit of our age.