

DIVINE COMEDY - PURGATORIO  
DANTE ALIGHIERI



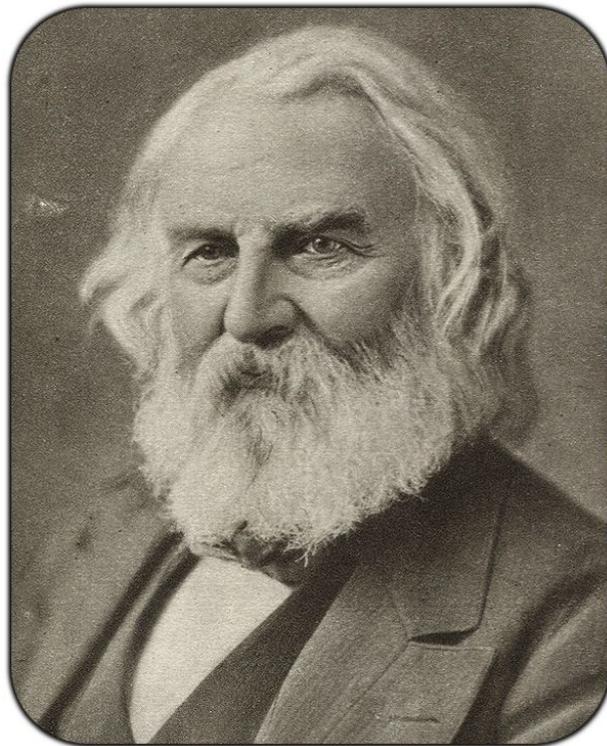
HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW  
ENGLISH TRANSLATION AND NOTES

PAUL GUSTAVE DORÉ  
ILLUSTRATIONS

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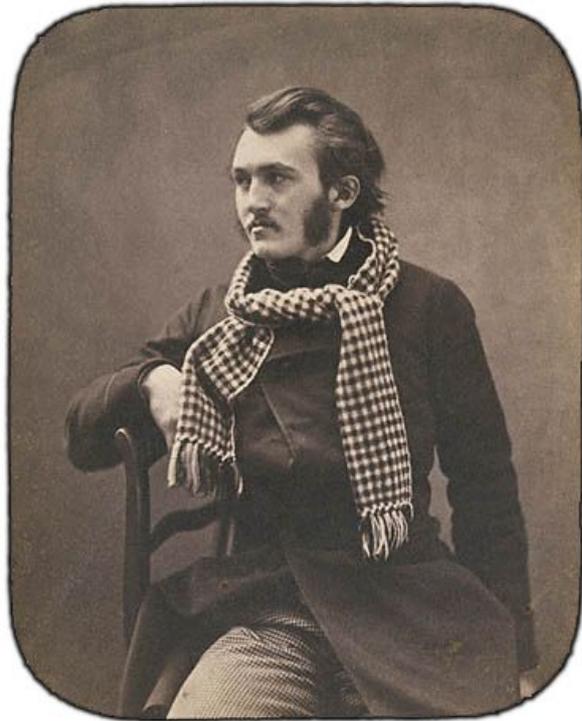


ENGLISH TRANSLATION AND NOTES  
**Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**





ILLUSTRATIONS  
**Paul Gustave Doré**



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# Contents

<b>Canto 1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Canto 2</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Canto 3</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Canto 4</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Canto 5</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Canto 6</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Canto 7</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Canto 8</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Canto 9</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Canto 10</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Canto 11</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Canto 12</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Canto 13</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Canto 14</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Canto 15</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Canto 16</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>Canto 17</b>	<b>111</b>

<b>Canto 18</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>Canto 19</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Canto 20</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>Canto 21</b>	<b>138</b>
<b>Canto 22</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>Canto 23</b>	<b>149</b>
<b>Canto 24</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>Canto 25</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>Canto 26</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>Canto 27</b>	<b>177</b>
<b>Canto 28</b>	<b>183</b>
<b>Canto 29</b>	<b>189</b>
<b>Canto 30</b>	<b>197</b>
<b>Canto 31</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>Canto 32</b>	<b>211</b>
<b>Canto 33</b>	<b>219</b>
<b>Dante Alighieri</b>	<b>227</b>
<b>Henry Wadsworth Longfellow</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>Paul Gustave Doré</b>	<b>239</b>

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# Purgatorio



Figure 1: The beautiful planet, that to love incites, was making all the orient to laugh...

## Canto 1

To run o'er better waters hoists its sail <sup>1</sup>  
The little vessel of my genius now,  
That leaves behind itself a sea so cruel;  
And of that second kingdom will I sing  
Wherein the human spirit doth purge itself,  
And to ascend to heaven becometh worthy.  
Let dead Poesy here rise again,  
O holy Muses, since that I am yours,  
And here Calliope somewhat ascend, <sup>2</sup>  
My song accompanying with that sound,  
Of which the miserable magpies felt <sup>3</sup>  
The blow so great, that they despaired of pardon.  
Sweet colour of the oriental sapphire,

---

<sup>1</sup>The Mountain of Purgatory is a vast conical mountain, rising steep and high from the waters of the Southern Ocean, at a point antipodal to Mount Sion in Jerusalem. In Canto III. 14, Dante speaks of it as

"The hill

That highest tow'rds the heaven uplifts itself";

and in Paradiso, XXVI. 139, as

"The mount that rises highest o'er the wave."

Around it run seven terraces, on which are punished severally the Seven Deadly Sins. Rough stairways, cut in the rock, lead up from terrace to terrace, and on the summit is the garden of the Terrestrial Paradise. The Seven Sins punished in the Seven Circles are, - 1. Pride; 2. Envy; 3. Anger; 4. Sloth; 5. Avarice and Prodigality; 6. Gluttony; 7. Lust. The threefold division of the Purgatorio, marked only by more elaborate preludes, or by a natural pause in the action of the poem, is, - 1. From Canto I. to Canto IX.; 2. From Canto IX. to Canto XXVIII.; 3. From Canto XXVIII. to the end. The first of these divisions describes the region lying outside the gate of Purgatory; the second, the Seven Circles of the mountain; and the third, the Terrestrial Paradise on its summit.

<sup>2</sup>The Muse "of the beautiful voice," who presided over eloquence and heroic verse.

<sup>3</sup>The nine daughters of Pierus, king of Macedonia, called the Pierides. They challenged the Muses to a trial of skill in singing, and being vanquished were changed by Apollo into magpies.

That was upgathered in the cloudless aspect  
Of the pure air, as far as the first circle,<sup>4</sup>

Unto mine eyes did recommence delight  
Soon as I issued forth from the dead air,  
Which had with sadness filled mine eyes and breast.

The beauteous planet, that to love incites,<sup>5</sup>  
Was making all the orient to laugh,  
Veiling the Fishes that were in her escort.

To the right hand I turned, and fixed my mind  
Upon the other pole, and saw four stars<sup>6</sup>  
Ne'er seen before save by the primal people.<sup>7</sup>

Rejoicing in their flamelets seemed the heaven.  
O thou septentrional and widowed site,  
Because thou art deprived of seeing these!

When from regarding them I had withdrawn,  
Turning a little to the other pole,  
There where the Wain had disappeared already,

I saw beside me an old man alone,<sup>8</sup>  
Worthy of so much reverence in his look,  
That more owes not to father any son.

A long beard and with white hair intermingled  
He wore, in semblance like unto the tresses,  
Of which a double list fell on his breast.

The rays of the four consecrated stars  
Did so adorn his countenance with light,  
That him I saw as were the sun before him.

---

<sup>4</sup>The highest heaven.

<sup>5</sup>The planet Venus.

<sup>6</sup>The stars of the Southern Cross. Figuratively the four cardinal virtues, Justice, Prudence, Fortitude, and Temperance. See Canto XXXI. 106: – “We here are Nymphs, and in the Heaven are stars.” The next line may be interpreted in the same figurative sense.

<sup>7</sup>By the “primal people” Dante does not mean our first parents, but “the early races which inhabited Europe and Asia,” says Dr. Barlow, *Study of Dante*.

<sup>8</sup>Cato of Utica. “Pythagoras escapes, in the fabulous hell of Dante,” says Sir Thomas Browne, *Urn Burial IV.*, “among that swarm of philosophers, wherein, whilst we meet with Plato and Socrates, Cato is found in no lower place than Purgatory.” In the description of the shield of Aeneas, *Aeneid*, VIII.1 Cato is represented as presiding over the good in the Tartarean realms: “And the good apart, Cato dispensing laws to them.” This line of Virgil may have suggested to Dante the idea of making Cato the warden of Purgatory.

“Who are you? ye who, counter the blind river,<sup>9</sup>  
Have fled away from the eternal prison?”  
Moving those venerable plumes, he said:<sup>10</sup>

“Who guided you? or who has been your lamp  
In issuing forth out of the night profound,  
That ever black makes the infernal valley?

The laws of the abyss, are they thus broken?  
Or is there changed in heaven some council new,  
That being damned ye come unto my crags?”

Then did my Leader lay his grasp upon me,  
And with his words, and with his hands and signs, so  
Reverent he made in me my knees and brow;

Then answered him: “I came not of myself;  
A Lady from Heaven descended, at whose prayers  
I aided this one with my company.

But since it is thy will more be unfolded  
Of our condition, how it truly is,  
Mine cannot be that this should be denied thee.

This one has never his last evening seen,  
But by his folly was so near to it  
That very little time was there to turn.

As I have said, I unto him was sent  
To rescue him, and other way was none  
Than this to which I have myself betaken.

I’ve shown him all the people of perdition  
And now those spirits I intend to show  
Who purge themselves beneath thy guardianship.

How I have brought him would be long to tell thee.  
Virtue descendeth from on high that aids me  
To lead him to behold thee and to hear thee.

Now may it please thee to vouchsafe his coming;  
He seeketh Liberty, which is so dear,  
As knoweth he who life for her refuses.

Thou know’st it; since, for her, to thee not bitter

---

<sup>9</sup>The “blind river” is Lethe, which by sound and not by sight had guided them through the winding cavern from the centre of the earth to the surface. *Inferno* XXXIV.

<sup>10</sup>His beard. Dante uses the same expression, *Inferno* XX.

Was death in Utica, where thou didst leave  
The vesture, that will shine so, the great day.

By us the eternal edicts are not broken;  
Since this one lives, and Minos binds not me;<sup>11</sup>  
But of that circle I, where are the chaste<sup>12</sup>

Eyes of thy Marcia, who in looks still prays thee,  
O holy breast, to hold her as thine own;  
For her love, then, incline thyself to us.

Permit us through thy sevenfold realm to go;  
I will take back this grace from thee to her,  
If to be mentioned there below thou deignest."

"Marcia so pleasing was unto mine eyes  
While I was on the other side," then said he,  
"That every grace she wished of me I granted;

Now that she dwells beyond the evil river,  
She can no longer move me, by that law  
Which, when I issued forth from there, was made.

But if a Lady of Heaven do move and rule thee,  
As thou dost say, no flattery is needful;  
Let it suffice thee that for her thou ask me.

Go, then, and see thou gird this one about  
With a smooth rush, and that thou wash his face,<sup>13</sup>  
So that thou cleanse away all stain therefrom,

For 'twere not fitting that the eye o'ercast  
By any mist should go before the first  
Angel, who is of those of Paradise.

This little island round about its base  
Below there, yonder, where the billow beats it,  
Doth rushes bear upon its washy ooze;

No other plant that putteth forth the leaf,  
Or that doth indurate, can there have life,  
Because it yieldeth not unto the shocks.

Thereafter be not this way your return;  
The sun, which now is rising, will direct you

---

<sup>11</sup>See *Inferno* V.

<sup>12</sup>See *Inferno* IV.

<sup>13</sup>A symbol of humility.

To take the mount by easier ascent.”

With this he vanished; and I raised me up  
Without a word, and wholly drew myself  
Unto my Guide, and turned mine eyes to him.

And he began: “Son, follow thou my steps;  
Let us turn back. for on this side declines  
The plain unto its lower boundaries.”

The dawn was vanquishing the matin hour  
‘Which fled before it, so that from afar  
I recognised the trembling of the sea

Along the solitary plain we went  
As one who unto the lost road returns,  
And till he finds it seems to go in vain.

As soon as we were come to where the dew  
Fights with the sun, and, being in a part  
Where shadow falls, little evaporates,<sup>14</sup>

Both of his hands upon the grass outspread  
In gentle manner did my Master place;  
Whence I, who of his action was aware,

Extended unto him my tearful cheeks;  
There did he make in me uncovered wholly  
That hue which Hell had covered up in me.

Then came we down upon the desert shore  
Which never yet saw navigate its waters  
Any that afterward had known return.

There he begirt me as the other pleased  
O marvellous! for even as he culled  
The humble plant, such it sprang up again<sup>15</sup>

Suddenly there where he uprooted it.

---

<sup>14</sup>Some commentators interpret *Ove adrezza*, by “where the wind blows.” Put the blowing of the wind would produce an effect exactly opposite to that here described.

<sup>15</sup>*Aeneid* VI.: “When the first is torn off; a second of gold succeeds; and a twig shoots forth leaves of the same metal.”

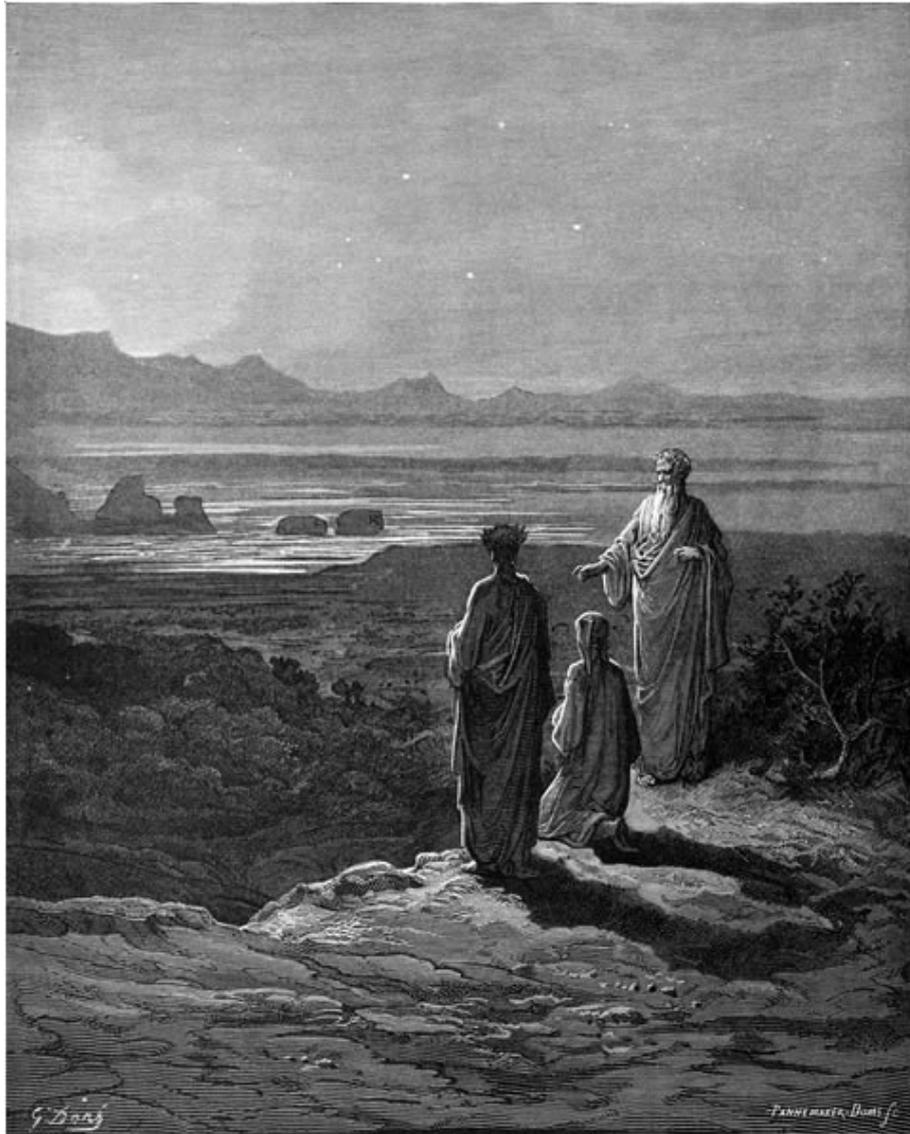


Figure 2: I saw beside me an old man alone...

## Canto 2

ALREADY had the sun the horizon reached <sup>16</sup>  
Whose circle of meridian covers o'er  
Jerusalem with its most lofty point,  
And night that opposite to him revolves  
Was issuing forth from Ganges with the Scales  
That fall from out her hand when she exceedeth;  
So that the white and the vermilion cheeks <sup>17</sup>  
Of beautiful Aurora, where I was,  
By too great age were changing into orange.  
We still were on the border of the sea,  
Like people who are thinking of their road,  
Who go in heart and with the body stay;  
And lo! as when, upon the approach of morning,  
Through the gross vapours Mars grows fiery red  
Down in the West upon the ocean floor,  
Appeared to me – may I again behold it! –  
A light along the sea so swiftly coming,  
Its motion by no flight of wing is equalled;  
From which when I a little had withdrawn  
Mine eyes, that I might question my Conductor,  
Again I saw it brighter grown and larger.  
Then on each side of it appeared to me  
I knew not what of white, and underneath it.

---

<sup>16</sup>It was sunset at Jerusalem, night on the Ganges, and morning at the Mountain of Purgatory. The sun being in Aries, the night would “come forth with the scales,” or the sign of Libra, which is opposite Aries. These scales fall from the hand of night, or are not above the horizon by night, when the night exceeds, or is longer than the day.

<sup>17</sup>Boccaccio, *Decamerone* Prologue to the Third Day, imitates this passage: “The Aurora, as the sun drew nigh, was already beginning to change from vermilion to orange.”

Little by little there came forth another.  
My Master yet had uttered not a word  
While the first whiteness into wings unfolded;  
But when he clearly recognised the pilot,  
He cried: "Make haste, make haste to bow the knee!  
Behold the Angel of God! fold thou thy hands!  
Henceforward shalt thou see such officers!  
See how he scorneth human arguments,<sup>18</sup>  
So that nor oar he wants, nor other sail  
Than his own wings, between so distant shores.  
See how he holds them pointed up to heaven,  
Fanning the air with the eternal pinions,  
That do not moult themselves like mortal hair!"  
Then as still nearer and more near us came  
The Bird Divine, more radiant he appeared  
So that near by the eye could not endure him,  
But down I cast it; and he came to shore  
With a small vessel, very swift and light,  
So that the water swallowed naught thereof,  
Upon the stern stood the Celestial Pilot;  
Beatitude seemed written in his face,  
And more than a hundred spirits sat within.  
*"In exitu Israel de Aegypto!"*  
They chanted all together in one voice,  
With whatso in that psalm is after written.  
Then made he sign of holy rood upon them,  
Whereat all cast themselves upon the shore,  
And he departed swiftly as he came.  
The throng which still remained there unfamiliar  
Seemed with the place, all round about them gazing,  
As one who in new matters makes essay.  
On every side was darting forth the day  
The sun, who had with his resplendent shafts  
From the mid-heaven chased forth the Capricorn,  
When the new people lifted up their faces

---

<sup>18</sup>Argument used in the sense of means, or appliances, as in *Inferno* XXXI.

Towards us, saying to us: "If ye know,  
Show us the way to go unto the mountain."

And answer made Virgilius: "Ye believe  
Perchance that we have knowledge of this place,  
But we are strangers even as ourselves

Just now we came, a little while before you;  
Another way, which was so rough and steep,  
That mounting will henceforth seem sport to us."

The souls who had, from seeing me draw breath,  
Become aware that I was still alive,  
Pallid in their astonishment became;

And as to messenger who bears the olive  
The people throng to listen to the news,  
And no one shows himself afraid of crowding,

So at the sight of me stood motionless  
Those fortunate spirits, all of them, as if  
Oblivious to go and make them fair.

One from among them saw I coming forward,  
As to embrace me, with such great affection,  
That it incited me to do the like.

O empty shadows, save in aspect only!  
Three times behind it did I clasp my hands,  
As oft returned with them to my own breast!

I think with wonder I depicted me;  
Whereat the shadow smiled and backward drew;  
And I, pursuing it, pressed farther forward.

Gently it said that I should stay my steps;  
Then knew I who it was, and I entreated  
That it would stop awhile to speak with me.

It made reply to me: "Even as I loved thee  
In mortal body, so I love thee free;  
Therefore I stop; but wherefore goest thou?"

"My own Casella! to return once more<sup>19</sup>  
There where I am, I make this journey," said I;

---

<sup>19</sup>Casella was a Florentine musician and friend of Dante, who here speaks to him with so much tenderness and affection as to make us regret that nothing more is known of him.

“But how from thee has so much time be taken?”

And he to me: “No outrage has been done me,  
If he who takes both when and whom he pleases  
Has many times denied to me this passage,

For of a righteous will his own is made.  
He, sooth to say, for three months past has taken <sup>20</sup>  
Whoever wished to enter with all peace;

Whence I, who now had turned unto that shore <sup>21</sup>  
Where salt the waters of the Tiber grow,  
Benignantly by him have been received.

Unto that outlet now his wing is pointed,  
Because for evermore assemble there  
Those who tow’rds Acheron do not descend.”

And I: “If some new law take not from thee  
Memory or practice of the song of love,  
Which used to quiet in me all my longings,

Thee may it please to comfort therewithal  
Somewhat this soul of mine, that with its body  
Hitherward coming is so much distressed.” <sup>22</sup>

*“Love, that within my mind discourses with me,”*  
Forthwith began he so melodiously,  
The melody within me still is sounding.

My Master, and myself, and all that people  
Which with him were, appeared as satisfied  
As if naught else might touch the mind of any;

We all of us were moveless and attentive  
Unto his notes; and lo! the grave old man,  
Exclaiming: “What is this, ye laggard spirits

What negligence, what standing still is this?  
Run to the mountain to strip off the slough,  
That lets not God be manifest to you.”

Even as when, collecting grain or tares,

<sup>20</sup>The first three months of the year of Jubilee, 1300.

<sup>21</sup>The sea-shore of Ostia at the mouth of the Tiber, where the souls of those who were saved assembled, and were received by the Celestial Pilot, who transported them to the island of Purgatory.

<sup>22</sup>This is the first line of the second *canzone* of the *Convito*.