
ORLANDO FURIOSO



Orlando Furioso

or Orlando's Frenzy

Ludovico Ariosto

A Translation into English by

A. S. Kline

Published with the complete cycle of illustrations by

Gustave Doré

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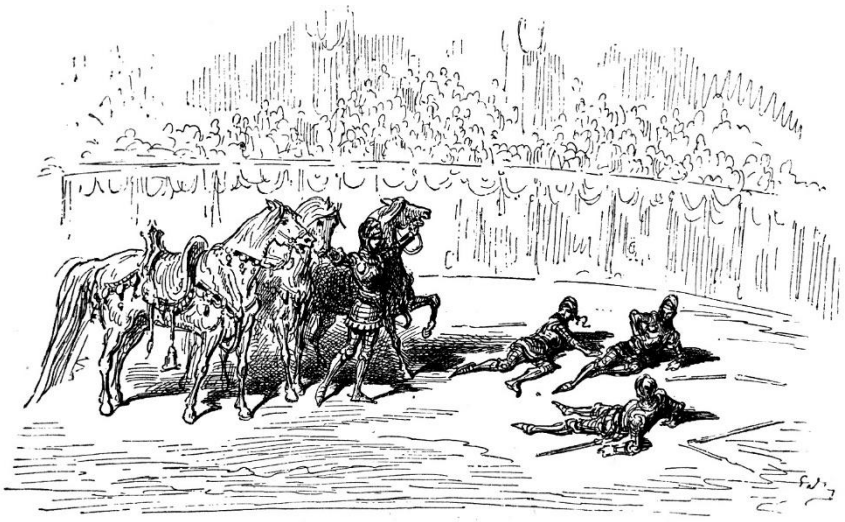
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INTRODUCTION

Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533) was trained in law, later joining the household of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, where he shared the patronage of the Cardinal's elder sister, Isabella d'Este, the 'First Lady of the Renaissance', and a patron of Leonardo da Vinci, who sketched her portrait. During his time in the Cardinal's employ, Ariosto wrote the epic poem for which he is famous 'Orlando Furioso' (or 'The Frenzy of Roland'), first published in 1516, a final version being published in 1532. Dismissed by the Cardinal in 1518, Ariosto transferred to the household of the Cardinal's brother, Alfonso Duke of Ferrara, where he distinguished himself in diplomatic roles.

'Orlando Furioso' is Ariosto's continuation of Matteo Maria Boiardo's unfinished romance 'Orlando Innamorato (or 'Orlando in Love') which was published posthumously in 1495. Its setting is borrowed from the 11th Century 'Chanson de Roland', written in Old French, which tells of the death of Roland at the Battle of Roncevaux (Roncesvalles). Orlando is here an Italian version of Roland the Christian knight who, in the French epic poem, fights for Charlemagne in a battle between the Christian paladins and the invading Saracens. The historical battle in 778, was actually with the Basques, retaliating after the destruction of Pamplona by Charlemagne's army. Since Ariosto continued Boiardo's epic, here follows a brief synopsis of Boiardo's story:

The beautiful Angelica (daughter to the king of Cathay) and her brother Argalia arrive at Charlemagne's Court. To win her hand a knight must first defeat Argalia in single-combat. Orlando and Ranaldo (Rinaldo) are in love with her, but when Argalia is slain by the heathen knight Ferrau, Angelica flees pursued by them. Angelica and Rinaldo drink the waters of enchantment, and Angelica is filled with a burning love for Rinaldo, while Rinaldo is now indifferent to her. Orlando and Rinaldo arrive at Angelica's castle where the company also includes Agricane, King of Tartary; Sacripante, King of Circassia; Agramante, King of Africa; and Marfisa an Asian warrior-queen.

Meanwhile, France is threatened by heathen invaders led by King Rodomonte of Sarza, in company with King Gradasso of Sericana whose principal reason for going to war is to win Orlando's sword Durindana (Durandel in the French epic). Rinaldo leaves the castle and Angelica and Orlando set out for France in search of him. Rinaldo and Angelica again drink the enchanted waters, reversing their state; she is now in love with him but Rinaldo is indifferent to her. Rinaldo and Orlando fight for her hand, but King Charlemagne intervenes and promises Angelica's hand to whichever of the two wins most honour in the battle against the heathen. He leaves her in the care of Duke Namus. Orlando and Rinaldo arrive in Paris in time to repulse an attack by Agramante. Namus' camp is overrun but Angelica escapes, with Rinaldo in pursuit, followed by Ferrau who, having defeated her brother Argalia, considers Angelica his. Ariosto pursues their story at the start of his own epic.

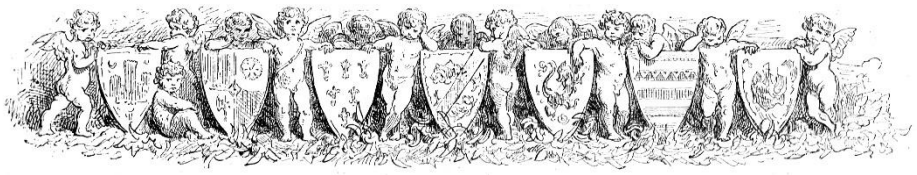
Of Boiardo's other characters the most important is the female knight Bradamante, Rinaldo's sister, who loves the heathen knight Ruggiero. Ruggiero, who is claimed to be a descendent of Hector and Alexander the Great, has also fallen fatally in love with the Christian Bradamante. It is prophesied that they will wed and found the Italian House of Este. Opposed to this outcome is Atlante, an African wizard who seeks to prevent Ruggiero from converting to Christianity. By the end of Boiardo's poem, Ruggiero is imprisoned in Atlante's castle, however, Bradamante is close by.

Other characters of importance in Boiardo's work, who also appear in Ariosto's, are: Astolfo, a friend of Orlando, who is captured by the sorceress Morgana and her sister Alcina; Mandricardo, a heathen; and a young knight named Brandimarte, who is in love with the beautiful Fiordelisa.

Regarding Ariosto's rhyme scheme, where the clinching couplet of each verse can be used to heighten the wit and reinforce the, often tongue-in-cheek, comments within the rest of the verse, the reader might note that it is the same rhyme-scheme Byron employed to great comic effect in 'Don Juan'.



LIST OF CHARACTERS



ABRANTE. Son of Cymosco.

ADONIO. A knight of Mantua in the boatman's tale.

AGOLANTE. A Saracen king of Africa. Father of Almonte and Galaciella. Grandfather of Ruggiero.

AGRAMANTE. A Saracen king of Africa, the son of Troiano.

AGRICANE. Khan of Tartary. He loved Angelica, but was slain by Orlando. The father of Mandricardo.

AISTULF (d.756AD). King of the Lombards after Ratchis, his brother, abdicated the throne (749AD). He appears as a character in the Innkeeper's Tale.

ALARDO. Son of Amone.

ALBANY. See Polinesso.

ALCESTUS. A Thracian warrior and suitor to Lydia.

ALCINA. A sorceress, sister to the sorceress Morgana.

ALDABELLA. The sister of Brandimarte, Oliviero, and Ziliante.

ALDIGIER. The bastard son of Buovo, lord, with his brothers Viviano and Malagigi, of Agrismonte. Cousin to Ricciardetto and the other sons of Amone.

ALERIA. Guidon's most loyal wife.

ALEXANDRIA. The daughter of Orontea, in Guidon's tale. In love with Elbanio.

ALMONIO. A follower of Zerbino.

ALMONTE. A Saracen, the son of Agolante and brother to Troiano, therefore uncle to Agramante. Slain by Orlando in Aspramonte. The father of Dardinello.

ALZIRDO. King of Tremisena.

AMONE. Duke of Dodona. Brother to Milone, husband of Beatrice, father of Rinaldo, Bradamante, Guicciardo, Ricciardo, Alardo, and Ricciardetto.

ANDRONICA. One of Logistilla's ladies, (symbolising courage) in company with Fronesia (wisdom), Dicilla (honesty) and Sofrosina (chastity).

ANGELICA. Daughter of the Khan of Cathay (a realm in India).

ANSELMO. A noble judge of Mantua, in the boatman's tale.

AQUILANTE THE BLACK. A son of Oliviero. His brother is Grifone the White.

ARGALIA. Angelica's dead brother, slain by Ferrau. His magic lance was taken by Astolfo.

ARGEO. A baron of the Eastern Empire, in Hermonides' tale.

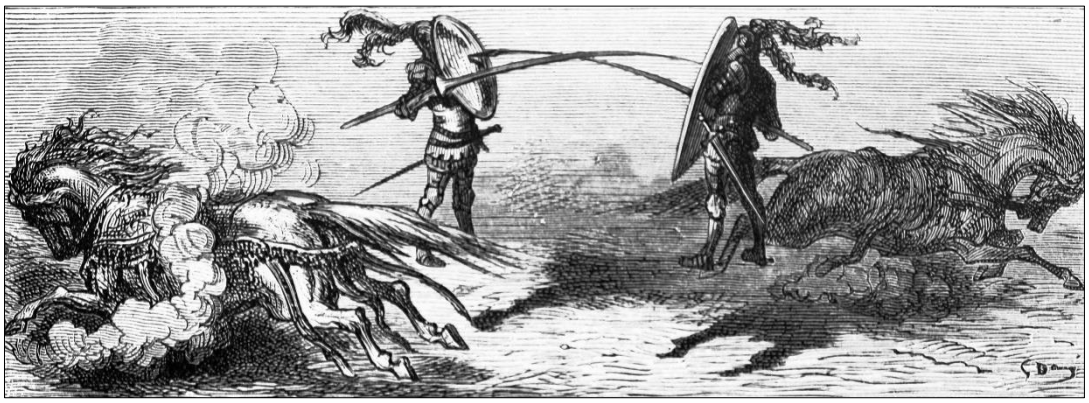
ARGIA. The wife of Anselmo, in the boatman's tale. She is from Ferrara.

ARMELINA. Wife to Uggiero, sister to Beatrice, and mother of Dudon.

ARIODANTE. Duke of Albany. An Italian knight in love with Ginevra. Brother to Lurcanio.

ATLANTE. An African sorcerer, from Carena. Ruggiero's foster-father.

ASTOLFO. A knight of France, son of King Otho of England, and cousin to Rinaldo, Orlando, Bradamante, and Ricciardetto. His horse is Rabicano ('The Arabian'). He bears Argalia's magic lance, and a magic horn given him by Logistilla.



AVINO. A son of Namo, his three brothers are Avolio, Otone, and Berlingerio.

BARDINO. An aged knight of the House of Monodante. The governor of Brandimarte's castle.

BEATRICE. Wife of Amone, mother of Rinaldo and Bradamante. Her sister is Armelina, Dudon's mother.

BERTOLAGI. A Maganzese villain.

BIRENO. Duke of Zealand. In love with Olimpia.

BRADAMANTE. A warrior-maid, of the House of Chiaramonte. Rinaldo's sister, and Ricciardetto's twin, she is in love with Ruggiero, with whom she founds the House of Este.

BRANDIMARTE. The son of Monodante. Brother to Oliviero, Ziliante, and Aldabella. A Christian knight in love with Fiordelisa. His horse is named Batoldo.

BRANZARDO. Agramante's viceroy in Bizerte (Hippo).

BRUNELLO. A devious Saracen, in the service of King Agramante.

BUCIFARO. King of Algeciras in North Africa.

CALLITREFIA. Nurse to Bradamante. Her daughter is Ippalca.

CHARLEMAGNE (748-814AD). (*Pronounced 'shaar·luh·mein' in English*). Charles the Great, King of the Franks and Lombards, and Emperor of Rome. He is Orlando's uncle.

CILANDER. Brother of Tanacro in the tale of Marganor.

CONSTANTINE. The text refers to both the Emperor Constantine the Great (c272-337AD) who founded Constantinople (Byzantium), and the Emperor Constantine V (718-775AD) who was the father of Leo IV, the Khazar, and a contemporary of Charlemagne.

CLODION (or Chlodio). The son of the legendary first King of the Franks, Faramund (Pharamond), according to the 8th-century Liber Historiae Francorum, which places him in the late 4th/early 5th century AD. He appears as a character in the tale of Tristan's Tower.

CLORIDANO. A Saracen warrior. Friend to Medoro.

COREBO. Of Bilbao, an associate of Odorico.

CYMOSCO. King of Friesland.

DALINDA. Female companion to Ginevra. In love with Polinesso.

DARDINELLO. King of the Zumara. The son of Almonte.

DORALICE. Daughter of the King of Granada, Stordilano.

DRAGONTINA. A sorceress, in Boiardo's 'Orlando Innamorato'.



DRUSILLA. The wife of Olindro, Lord of Lungavilla. She is seized by Tanacro, in the tale of Marganor.

DUDON. The son of Uggiero. A friend of Astolfo.

ELBANIO. A scion of Hercules. The lover of Alexandria, in Guidon's tale.

ERIPHILA. A savage giantess.

FALERINA. A sorceress in Boiardo's 'Orlando Innamorato'. Her enchanted garden is in the realm of Orgagna, where she created Ruggiero's sword, Balisarda.

FAUSTUS. A character in the innkeeper's tale. Iocondo is his brother.

FERRAU. The son of Lanfusa. A heathen knight in love with Angelica.

FIAMMETTA. A character in the innkeeper's tale. Her lover is named 'The Greek'.

FIORDELISA. In love with the knight Brandimarte.

FIORDISPINA. Of Spain. In love with the warrior-maid Bradamante.

GABRINA. An old crone who haunts Isabella and Zerbino, the wife of Argeo in Hermonides' tale.

GALACIELLA. Daughter of Agolante, mother of Ruggiero, and Marfisa.

GALAFRONE. Khan of Cathay (a realm in India). Father of Angelica and Argalia.

GALERANA. The daughter of the King of Spain, in Boiardo's 'Orlando Innamorato'. She eloped with the young Charlemagne, who was living, incognito, at the Spanish court.

GANO DI MAGANZA. Called Ganelone, and leader of the Maganzese.

GINEVRA. A king's daughter, in Scotland.

GISMONDA. The wife of Oliviero.

GRADASSO. King of Sericana and Nabatea. His horse is named Alfano.

GRIFONE THE WHITE. A son of Oliviero. His brother is Aquilante the Black.

GUICCIARDO. Eldest son of Amone.

GUIDON SELVAGGIO (the Savage). A member of the House of Chiaramonte. An illegitimate son of Amone, and therefore half-brother, with his twin Carinda, to Rinaldo. Astolfo is his cousin.

HERMONIDES. A knight from Holland, encountered by Zerbino.

IOCONDO. A character in the innkeeper's tale. Faustus is his brother.

IPPALCA. Maid to Bradamante. The daughter of Callitrefia her nurse.

IROLDO. A follower of Rinaldo, and friend to Prasildo.

ISABELLA. A noble Saracen lady. Loved by Zerbino.

ISOLIER. A pagan leader from Spain.

LANFUSA. Ferrau's mother.

LEO. Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, Leo IV, the Khazar (750-780). Son of Constantine V.

LEONE. A Byzantine prince.

LOGISTILLA. Sister to Alcina and Morgana.

LUCINA. Daughter to the King of Cyprus. The wife of Norandino.

LURCANIO. Brother to Ariodante.

LYDIA. Daughter to the King of Lydia, loved by Alcestus.

MALAGIGI. A sorcerer, appearing in Boiardo's 'Orlando Innamorato'. Brother to Viviano and Aldigier.



MAMBRINO. A Saracen king. Rinaldo slew him in Boiardo's 'Orlando Innamorato', and wears his enchanted helmet.

MANDRICARDO. King of the Tartars. His father was Agricane.

MANILARDO. King of Noritia.

MARFISA. An Asian warrior-queen. Ruggiero's twin sister.

MARGANOR. A tyrannical giant.

MARSILIO. King of Spain.

MARTANO. A knight from Antioch. Orrigille's lover.

MEDORO. A Saracen, loved by Angelica.

MELISSA. A benevolent sorceress.

MILONE. Brother to Almone, father of Orlando.

MORANDO THE FAIR. A baron, at odds with Argeo, in Hermonides' tale.

MORGANA. A sorceress. Sister to Alcina.

NAMUS. Duke of Bavaria, guardian to Angelica.

NORANDINO. King of Damascus, and all Syria.

ODORICO. A disloyal friend of Zerbino.

OLIMPIA. Daughter of the Count of Holland.

OLINDRO, LORD OF LUNGAVILLA. His wife is Drusilla. He is slain by Tanacro in the tale of Marganor.

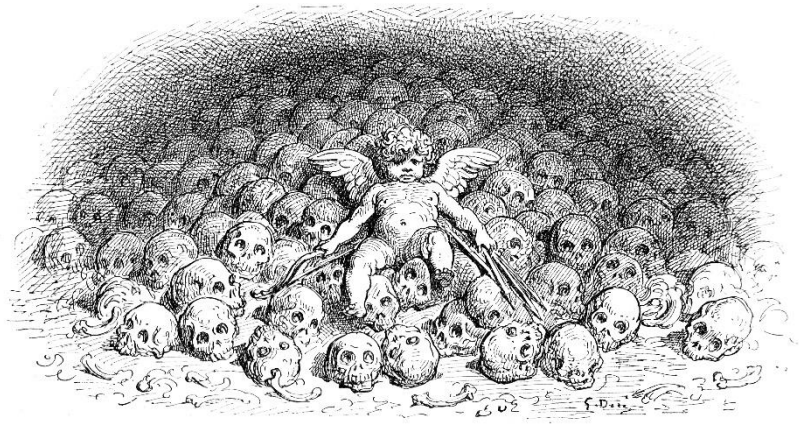
OLIVIERO. Marquis of Vienna. A Christian knight. Brother to Ziliante, Brandimarte, and Aldabella, Husband to Gismonda. Father of Grifone and Aquilante.

ORLANDO. Count of Brava. Lord of Anglante. Son of Milone. Nephew to Charlemagne, and Almone. In love with Angelica. His sword is Durindana. His horse is Brigliador. At the start of Boiardo's 'Orlando Innamorato' we are told that he has a wife, Alda.

ORONTEA. A Greek ruler of Latakia, in Guidon's tale.

ORRIGILLE. Loved by Grifone.

ORRILO. A robber demon.



OTHO. King of England, father of Astolfo.

PHILANDER, brother to Hermonides.

PINABEL. Count of the House of Maganza. Son of Anselmo d'Altaripa.

POLINESSO. The Duke of Albany, a Scottish lord.

PRASILDO. A follower of Rinaldo, and friend to Iroldo.

RICCIARDETTO. Son of Amone. Twin brother to Bradamante. Brother to Rinaldo.

RICCIARDO. Son of Amone.

RINALDO. Son of Amone, brother of Bradamante and Ricciardetto. A nobleman from Montalbano, of the House of Chiaramonte. His horse is named Bayard, his sword Fusberta. At the start of Boiardo's 'Orlando Innamorato' we are told that he has a wife, Clarice.

RODOMONTE. Of Sarza, King of Algiers. The son of King Ulieno. A noted Saracen leader.

RUGGIERO. Grandson of Agolante, in love with Bradamante. His father also named Ruggiero (II) was a heathen descendent of Alexander the Great, and Hector. His sister is Marfisa. Their mother was Galaciella, Agolante's daughter. His horse is named Frontino, his sword Balisarda. With Bradamante he founds the House of Este.

SACRIPANTE. King of Circassia, in love with Angelica. His horse is named Frontilatte, of whom Ruggiero's Frontino is an offspring.

SANSONETTO. A heathen convert. Viceroy to Charlemagne, and guardian of the Holy Places.

SOBRINO.

STORDILANO. King of Granada. Father of Doralice.

TANACRO. Brother of Cilander in the tale of Marganor.

THEODORA. Sister (*fictitious*) to Constantine V.

THRASO. Duke of Marra.

TROIANO. Agramante's father.

TRUFFALDINO. A villainous character slain by Rinaldo, in Boiardo's 'Orlando Innamorato'.

ULIENO. The former King of Sarza, father of Rodomonte.

ULLANIA. A lady sent on embassy from the Queen of Iceland.

UNGIARDO. A liegeman of the Emperor Constantine.

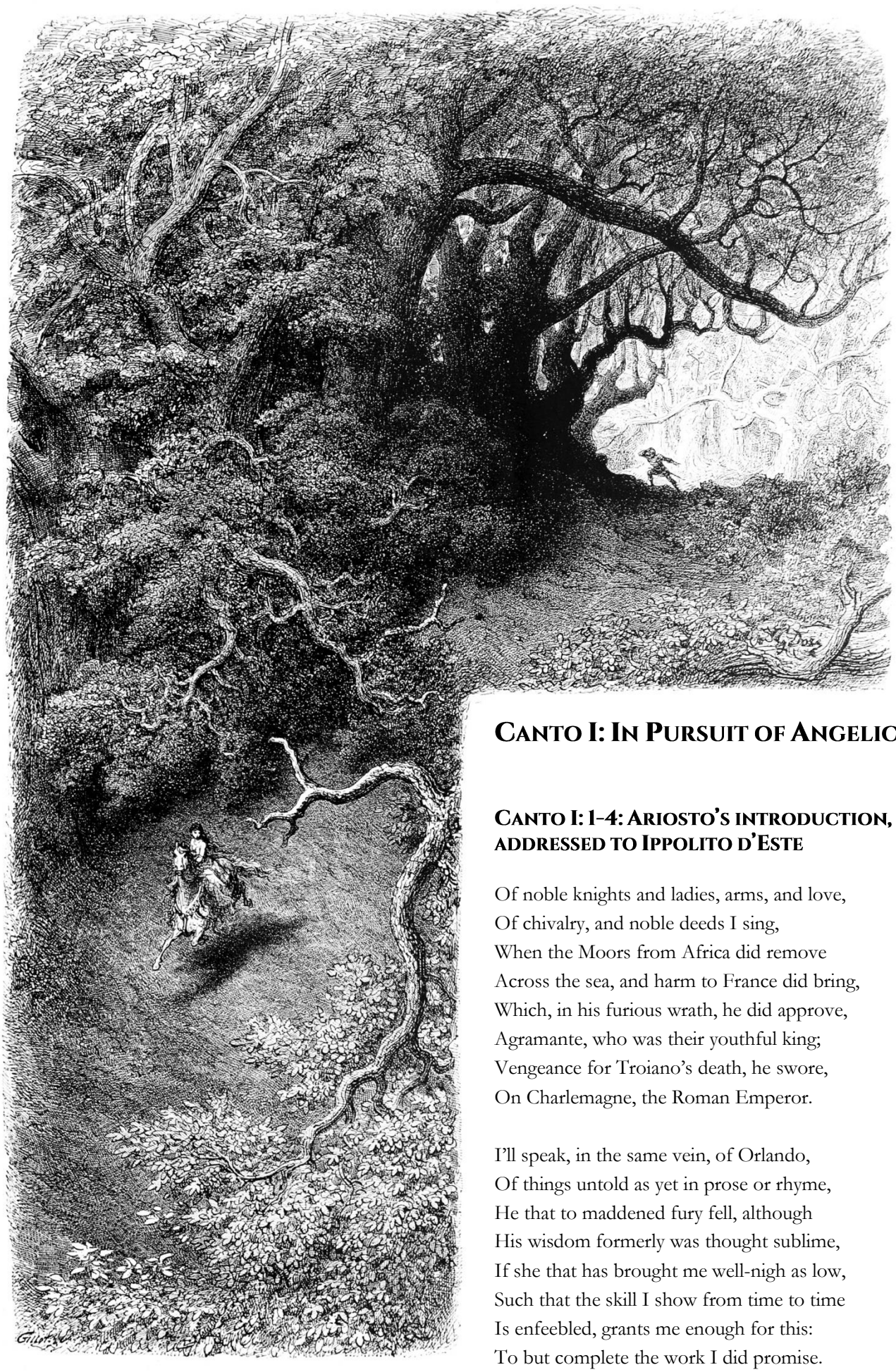
VALERIO. Gian Francesco. A Venetian gentleman who related the innkeeper's tale to him.

VATRAN. King of the Bulgars.

VIVIANO. Brother to Aldigier and Malagigi.

ZERBINO. The Duke of Ross, son of the Scottish king. Brother to Ginevra. Loved by Isabella.

ZILIANTE. The brother of Brandimarte, Oliviero, and Aldabella, in Boiardo's 'Orlando Innamorato'. Their father was Monodante.



Canto I: In Pursuit of Angelica

Canto I: 1-4: Ariosto's introduction, addressed to Ippolito d'Este

Of noble knights and ladies, arms, and love, 1
Of chivalry, and noble deeds I sing,
When the Moors from Africa did remove
Across the sea, and harm to France did bring,
Which, in his furious wrath, he did approve,
Agramante, who was their youthful king;
Vengeance for Troiano's death, he swore,
On Charlemagne, the Roman Emperor.

I'll speak, in the same vein, of Orlando, 2
Of things untold as yet in prose or rhyme,
He that to maddened fury fell, although
His wisdom formerly was thought sublime,
If she that has brought me well-nigh as low,
Such that the skill I show from time to time
Is enfeebled, grants me enough for this:
To but complete the work I did promise.

Deign, generous scion of Hercules, 3
Rare ornament and splendour of our day,
Ippolito, to favour what may please,
All that I, your humble servant, may
Do to repay my debt to you; take these
My words, the work of my slight pen, I pray;
Nor infer that I have naught but this small
Gift that I may give; for I give you all.

You will find, among the noblest heroes 4
Whom I intend to praise most fittingly,
Mention of Ruggiero who, midst those
Famed ancestors of yours, claims primacy.
To his great valour, and all that arose
From his fine deeds, if you but hear me,
I shall direct your noble thoughts, apace,
So that my verses there might find a place.

Canto I: 5-8: Orlando arrives at Charlemagne's camp

Orlando, who had loved many a day 5
The fair Angelica, and solely
For her to distant lands had made his way,
Media, India, and Tartary,
And glory won, returned now from the fray,
To the Pyrenees, where in company
With noble knights of France and Germany,
Charlemagne was camped, in open country,

All set to make them rue the day, these kings, 6
This Agramante, this Marsilio,
For their folly, the latter one who brings
Many a knight with sword, and spear also,
From Africa; the first whose army sings
Spain's destruction of fair France, her foe.
Thus came Orlando there, with true intent,
Yet of his presence he would soon repent.

For he was still far from his lady's side. 7
How often human judgement goes amiss!
She whom he had championed, in his pride,
From east to west, in warfare such as this,
Was now to him, amidst his friends, denied,
Without a contest offered; lost, his bliss.
For the wise emperor, seeking to ensure
No errant flame was lit, did her immure,

Since contention had been spawned, instantly. 8
Orlando, and Rinaldo his cousin,
Were both enamoured of this same beauty,
Their spirits, filled with passion, lit within.
Thus, Charlemagne, who feared their enmity
Might limit them, should battle now begin,
Removed the maid, their cause for rivalry,
And placed her in Duke Numas' custody.

Canto I: 9-13: Angelica flees from Rinaldo

She was promised to whoe'er it might be, 9
That in the conflict, on that fatal day,
The greatest number of the enemy,
Might, with his own hand, meet, attack, and slay.
Yet the course of the fight proved contrary
To such hopes, the army melting away,
The Duke and others taken prisoner,
While his tent was abandoned in the stir.

Therein the lovely maiden had remained, 10
Fated to be the finest knight's fair prize,
And hid herself within, as fate ordained;
Yet, deeming things would go contrariwise,
Since the Christian faith scant fortune gained,
Foreseeing their defeat must soon arise,
Into a wood she fled, but found, outright,
There, in the narrow way, a horseless knight.

Armed to the teeth, with helmet on his head, 11
His blade in hand, his strong shield at his side,
More swiftly through the forest he now fled
Than ever wretch to win the 'cloth' did glide.
Yet timid shepherdess no faster sped
From some venomous snake that she espied,
Than did Angelica, who tugged the rein
And, at the sight, her flight did fast maintain.

This knight was Rinaldo, Amone's son, 12
Lord of Montalbano, who his fine steed
Bayard had lost, that from his grip had run,
All through some strange mischance in being freed.
Once sight of the fair maiden he had won,
Though at some distance yet, he knew indeed
That angelic form, and that lovely face,
That now in passion's net did him enlace.

The lady straight turned her palfrey round, 13
And hastened, at full speed, through the wood,
No less among dense thickets than bare ground,
Taking whatever path her mount thought good,
For, pale and trembling, glancing not around,
She let the creature run where'er it could.
This way and that, among the trees it raced,
And reached a river, there amidst the waste.

Canto I: 14-20: Rinaldo and Ferrau do battle

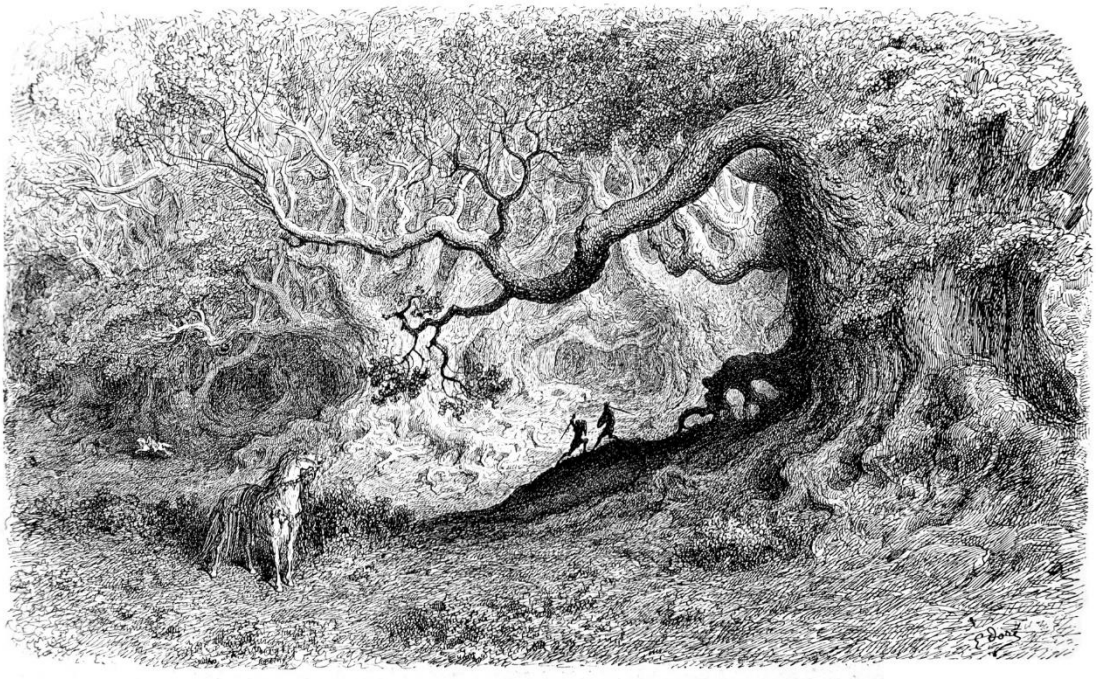
Here by the water, Ferrau could be found; 14
Bathed in dust and sweat, that heathen knight
Had from the battle hastened, safe and sound,
Desiring drink and rest, exhausted quite;
And there had stayed, despites his wishes, bound;
For in his greed for water, bending low,
His helmet he had dropped into the flow.

The maiden swift emerging from the trees, 15
Troubled at this new sight, cried out in fear,
And at the sound, the Saracen, from his knees
Rose up, and gazed at her as she drew near;
Despite her pallid aspect, he, with ease,
Knew that sweet face once nigh it did appear;
And though he'd had no recent news of her,
He recognised the fair Angelica.

Since he was chivalrous, and moreover, 16
A heart no less ardent beat in his chest
Than in his cousin's, he, bold as ever,
Lent now the aid she sought, and gave his best.
Drawing his sword, he threatened the other,
And then upon the brave Rinaldo pressed.
Now, each by sight was to the other known,
And each a perfect skill in arms had shown.

At once, the two engaged in fierce fight, 17
On foot as they both were, with naked blade,
Although their armour-plating was but light
Against such blows as anvils nigh unmade.
Now, as each man strains with all his might,
Her steed must show its swiftness, for the maid,
Spurs it with both her heels as best she may,
Through the woods and fields and far away.

When long the warriors had sought, in vain, 18
By some means to conquer one another,
For, with sword in hand, the fact was plain
That neither was more skilful than the other,
The Lord of Montalbano first did deign
A word to his Spanish foe to utter,
Like one who in his heart has such a fire
All it consumes, yet still burns the higher.



Stanza 17

'You think', he said, 'to harm myself alone, 19
And yet yourself must injure equally,
For though the sun's bright rays perchance have sown
These seeds of your fierce ardour, yet I see
No gain to you if this be all you own:
That even if you kill or capture me,
The lovely woman is not yours this day,
That flees from us while we, in vain, delay.

Better this surely: to yourself be kind, 20
And seek now to pursue her in her flight,
Detain her there, not linger here behind,
Before she is too far from you this night!
It would be still in our power, you'd find,
To take our swords, again, and end this fight,
Or else you do but face a deal of pain,
With harm and injury your only gain.'

Canto I: 21-23: In pursuit of Angelica, the two knights part company

By this the pagan knight was not displeased, 21
And so, their single combat was deferred.
Such was the truce, now that the fight had ceased,
Of wrath and hatred came there not a word,
So that when Ferrau left he was best pleased
To pray Rinaldo, ere he onward spurred,
To share his mount; together they did ride,
And sought Angelica, both far and wide.

How generous those knights of ancient days! 22
Rivals they were, of different faiths those two,
And they could feel their bodies still ablaze
From cruel blows that pained them now anew;
Yet through dark woods they rode, and obscure ways,
And not the least suspicion did ensue;
Encouraged by four spurs their steed now came
To where the path forked, each track much the same.

Thus, they knew not which road she had taken, 23
Whether to right or left the maid had gone,
And taking either they might prove mistaken,
For both those trails displayed hoof-prints thereon;
Chancing fate, each did the dust awaken,
That way Rinaldo strode, Ferrau rode on;
Yet, plunging ever deeper midst the wood,
He found himself again where once he'd stood.

Canto I: 24-31: Ferrau sees an apparition of the dead Argalia

His helmet he had lost there in the river, 24
Sunk deep beneath the flow, and so concealed,
And since he'd lost the maid, perchance forever,
He thought at least the helm might be revealed;
And so descended, where the bank was lower,
But naught did those shadowy waters yield;
So deep the sand that he'd have much to do,
Ere he might find, and wear, the helm anew.

With a branch, severed from a mighty tree, 25
That he had trimmed and carved into a pole,
He sounded out the bed, most cautiously,
Prodding at every angle, bank and shoal,
And while he struck and thrust so, angrily,
Stung by delay, no nearer to his goal,
Breast-high amidst the flood, he saw a knight,
Most proud of aspect, and a fearsome sight.

But for his head, he was armed completely, 26
And held a helm aloft in his right hand,
The very same Ferrau sought eagerly,
Amidst the depths in which it once did land;
The vision now addressed him, wrathfully:
'Ah, false in speech, a perjurer you stand,
Whom it aggrieves to leave a helm behind
That you owed me and in the depths I find.



Stanza 26

Do you remember not the knight you slew? 27
Brother to Angelica? Twas I –
You swore then to throw this helmet too,
Into the flood, with my steel coat to lie.
If then the deed that you refused to do,
Fortune effects, nor doth my wish deny,
Grieve not or, if you must, then grieve to be
A knight found wanting in true chivalry.

But if it's a fine helmet you desire, 28
Seek another you may wear with honour;
Such as Orlando's that all men admire,
Or Rinaldo's or one even better,
Almonte's or Mambrino's go acquire,
By some exercise of your true valour,
While this, you have already left with me,
You'd best bestow in perpetuity.'

When, suddenly, this vision had appeared 29
The hairs had risen on the pagan's head,
His face had paled, as upwards it had reared;
About to speak, his voice was stilled instead.
Yet, hearing from one he no longer feared
Whom he had slain (Argalia, long dead)
Beside this very stream, with ire and scorn
He filled, who thus indeed was proved foresworn.

Lacking the time to summon an excuse, 30
Knowing the truth of what the knight had said,
Speechless he stood there, guilty as accused,
The while his heart was stung by shame and dread;
And then he swore all helms would be refused,
Swore it, on his mother Lanfusa's head,
Except that which Orlando from Almonte
Had gained, slaying him in Aspramonte,

And let this new pledge now serve him better 31
Than had that idle oath he'd sworn before.
Then, filled with grief, he went from the river,
Grief that many a day his heart would gnaw;
And set on finding Orlando, ever,
All places he might be sought to explore.
Meanwhile Rinaldo met a different fate,
He who'd taken that other path of late.

Canto I: 32-36: Meanwhile Angelica still flees from Rinaldo

Rinaldo had but gone a little way, 32
When he beheld his warhorse roaming free:
'Halt, halt, my Bayard, and no further stray!'
He cried: 'Your lack has done me injury.'
Yet still the creature, failing to obey,
Deaf to its master, vanished speedily,
Rinaldo, angered, following did fly;
And on Angelica, there, cast an eye.

Through shadowy and fearsome woods, she fled, 33
Where only savages and hermits dwelt.
The motion of the green leaves overhead,
Oak, elm, and beech, every sigh she felt.
The sudden rustling filled her heart with dread;
Along the windings of strange tracks, full-pelt
She rode, each shadow seeming, in her mind,
Midst hills and dales, Rinaldo's, close behind,

Just as some fawn, of roe or fallow deer, 34
That midst the branches of its native glade,
Has seen its hunted mother run in fear,
Her throat wolf-torn, her flanks all ripped and flayed,
Flees now, through the trees, lest the beast appear,
Suspecting each last movement in the shade,
Thinking itself, at each bush to be passed,
Caught in the grip of those fell jaws at last.

All day and night, till the following noon, 35
She wandered ignorant of where she went,
And reached a grove, bright neath both sun and moon,
Where the light breezes their sweet music blent,
And two pure murmuring streams sang their tune,
Rendering the grass tender and innocent,
And bringing softly to the listening ear
Their flow among the pebbles, sweet and clear.

And there, at last, she felt herself secure, 36
A thousand miles distant from Rinaldo.
Pained by the weary track, and heat no more.
Thinking to halt her mount, she made to slow,
Amidst the flowers dismounting, by the shore;
Then let her palfrey browse there to and fro,
Loosening the bridle, so that it might pass
Beside the water edged with fresh new grass.

Canto I: 37-40: Angelica rests and sees a melancholy knight

There, not far off, a lovely glade she saw, 37
Of flowering hawthorn, and the pink dog-rose,
Whose glowing forms the water's mirror bore;
Its shade commanding oak-trees did enclose,
The space within sufficient to ensure
A fresh yet hidden bower for her repose.
Those leafy branches all so woven tight
The sun could enter not, no more the sight.

And there the tender grasses formed a bed 38
Inviting the spent traveller to rest.
The lovely woman to it lightly sped,
And there lay down to sleep, a weary guest.
But not long was her slumber; in its stead
Waking, a trampling sound her ears oppressed,
And quietly rising, following the shore,
A knight, armed fully head to toe, she saw.

She knew not whether he was friend or foe, 39
Troubled, her mind was torn twixt hope and fear,
Awaiting the outcome, she trembled, though
No sigh of hers revealed that she was near.
The knight descended to the shore below,
Where standing, head on hand, he did appear,
Lost in some profound thought of his own,
Altered it would seem to unmoving stone.

Thus, pensive, for an hour, his head bowed low, 40
Silent he stood, that melancholy knight,
And then began a mournful tale of woe;
Yet he complained so sweetly of his plight,
It was enough to melt hard granite so,
Or pity in a tiger's breast incite.
Sighing, he wept, and down the sad tears streamed,
While his breast a smouldering Aetna seemed.

Canto I: 41-44: The knight's lament

'My thoughts' he cried, 'that freeze and burn my 41
heart,
And cause this pain that gnaws at me alway,
What shall I do, who, at the very start,
Appeared too late, while others won the day?
Scarce word or glance have I gained, for my part,
Yet some other must bear the spoils away.
If I may touch neither fruit nor flower,
Why should I think on her another hour?

The virgin girl is like a budding rose, 42
In a fair garden, on its native briar,
That safe, and solitary, may repose,
No shepherd with his flock ever nigh her;
The sweet air and the dewy dawn enclose
Her favours, earth and water hers entire.
With roses, wistful youths and maids in love,
Adorn themselves, garland their brows above.



Stanza 39

Yet once removed, of its green stem bereft, 43
Once torn from the branch that bore it of late,
Naught that heaven or earth endowed is left;
Loss of grace, beauty, favour is its fate.
A maid should thus avoid that flower's theft,
Dearer than life and light, in its pure state,
Nor see the worth lost it had owned before,
When others its sweet beauty prize no more,

Scorned by others and loved by one alone, 44
To whom that greatest of gifts was given.
Oh, Fortune cruel, ungracious to her own!
Other men triumph; I by pain am riven,
Am I to be devoid of grace, none shown?
Must I forego my life, deathwards driven?
Better to cease to breathe, live no longer,
Than to live, and yet no longer love her!'

Canto I: 45-47: He is Sacripante, King of Circassia

If any ask me who this knight might be, 45
He whose tears pour down into the water,
The King of Circassia, it is he,
Sacripante, who from love doth suffer.
I say the prime cause of his misery,
Was that of this maid he was a lover,
And he was one of those who loved her true,
And that he sought her still the maiden knew.

For love of her, to where the sun doth set, 46
A journey from the East, this king had made,
Who'd heard in India, to his regret,
Orlando sought her and had anchor weighed;
And then in France with further news had met,
That the emperor's wish she now obeyed,
Meant for the knight who gave the best display
Against the Moors, for the fleur-de-lis, that day.

There, in the field, he had stood witness to 47
The cruel rout that Charles had undergone,
And looked for signs of her he did pursue,
The fair Angelica, both here and yon;
And this was why he wept, all pale of hue,
And felt such pain, and was so woebegone,
Grieving, and in such sad words lamenting,
That the sun, for pity, seemed nigh halting.

Canto I: 48-51: Angelica chooses to reveal her presence

While Sacripante grieved and lamented, 48
And made a tepid fountain of his eyes,
And uttered many words, as if demented,
Which I need not recite, in plaints and cries,
His good Fortune willed, and so consented
To bear to fair Angelica his sighs;
And so, he reached a place, amidst his tears,
That else had taken him a thousand years.

With close attention then, that lady fair 49
Heard the words and weeping, now, of one
Whose passion slept not, as she listened there
To yet one more confession, till twas done;
But with the hardness marble columns share,
And their great coldness, pity she did shun,
Like to a maid that all she hears disdains,
And naught but what is worthy entertains.

Yet all alone in those deep woods she thought 50
That she might need his presence as a guide;
For one who's drowning aid, of any sort,
Should seek before they founder in the tide;
And if his help in need should go unsought,
So true a friend she might then be denied,
For long experience had proved the king
More faithful than the rest in his wooing.

Yet she had no intention thus to ease 51
The pain that's visited on those that love,
Or heal past injuries, and thereby please
With such attentions as affection prove;
But fictions and deceptions, without cease,
She sought now to employ, nor doubt remove;
To let him hope on, and so serve her need,
And then return once more to her harsh creed.

Canto I: 52-59: Sacripante determines to gain his wish

Emerging from the shadows, suddenly, 52
Her lovely form, amidst the glade, was seen,
As from some cave or forest, equally,
Cythera's or Diana's might have been
Revealed to the eye, and then said she:
'Peace be with you, nor yourself demean,
In God's eyes, by slandering my name,
With little reason, and so false a claim.'

Not with such joy or such wonder ever 53
Did parent gaze upon their child once more,
Whom they had mourned as dead, lost forever,
Returned amidst the thinned-out ranks of war,
As gazed this king, in delight and rapture,
Upon the noble presence he now saw,
The angelic semblance, the graceful air,
That, in an instant, was apparent there.

Filled with sweet and amorous affection, 54
He ran towards his lady, his goddess,
And she embraced the knight then, an action
That might in her Cathay denote excess;
For her thoughts had turned in that direction,
Towards her native land; the fair princess
Found hope within now suddenly reborn
That once again that place she might adorn.

A full account she gave, Angelica, 55
Of all since he was sent to Gradasso,
King of Sericane and Nabatea,
To request his aid, and how Orlando
Had full oft defended her, thereafter,
From death, dishonour, and every foe,
So that hers was yet the virgin flower,
Borne thus intact from her natal hour.

Perchance all that she told the knight was true, 56
Though to a man of sense incredible,
Yet to Sacripante, if not to you,
Lost in his thoughts, it seemed believable;
For what we see Love re-creates anew,
And makes all that we dream of visible.
The mind it seems will readily concede
Our wishes to be facts, when we so need.

'If then the lord, Orlando, has refused, 57
Foolishly, his happiness to ensure,
His be the loss', so Sacripante mused,
'If Fortune fails to offer it once more.
The chance I have shall not be so abused,
I shall not do as he has done before,
And lose the good that has been granted me,
With naught to blame but my stupidity.

Rather, I'll gather the fresh morning rose, 58
That must be lost to me should I delay.
No sweeter thing to woman, I suppose,
Is granted them than this, whate'er they say;
Whate'er may be the scorn the woman shows,
Howe'er she may shed tears, or feel dismay,
I shall not brook rejection or disdain;
Ever my firm intention shall maintain.'

This said, preparing for the sweet assault, 59
He heard a sound, that echoed midst the trees,
From out the wood nearby, that made him halt,
Though so against his will as to displease.
He donned his helm (in those days, by default,
An armed knight bore it, even when at ease)
Approached his warhorse then, and seized the rein,
Mounted, and grasped his gleaming lance again.

Canto I: 60-65: He is obliged to duel with an unknown knight

Behold, from out the wood emerged a knight, 60
By his appearance, seeming strong and proud,
His vestments were as white as snow, and white
The plume upon his helm, that gently bowed.
King Sacripante, who felt scant delight
At finding the fair course he had avowed
So thwarted he might not his wish attain,
Dealt him a look of anger and disdain.

Approaching fast, he challenged him to fight, 61
Seeking to unsaddle him, in his pride,
Though the other seemed of equal might,
Whose haughty threats the king at once decried,
And spurred his steed towards the man, outright,
His lance already cradled at his side.
Thus, Sacripante like a tempest roared,
As they met head-to-head, in brief accord.

Lions or bulls charging into battle, 62
Ne'er clashed together with greater power
Than these two, seeking to prove their mettle,
And hoping their enemy to devour,
Such that the solid ground shook a little,
The grassy vales, the hills, seemed to cower;
And it was well the armour that they wore
Protection for their chests did thus ensure.

Neither steed swerved from the chosen course, 63
But met like rams in conflict, head-to-head,
The pagan king was tumbled from his horse,
That, though much prized in life, now fell stone dead,
The other's mount too could but feel the force,
Fell, yet spurred revived, to warfare bred,
While Sacripante's lay, such was its fate,
Burdening its downed lord with its great weight.

The unknown champion, as yet upright, 64
Seeing the other, unhorsed, on the ground,
Considering the skirmish won outright,
Cared not to fight again but, safe and sound,
Vanished through the forest, in full flight,
Galloping through the trees that pressed around,
And ere the king recovered from the fray,
Had spurred a mile or more upon his way.

As a ploughman, deafened and stupefied, 65
The lightning and the thunder moving on,
Rises from where he lies, there by his side
His stricken ox, to find great branches gone
From shattered trees, as the far sounds subside,
And, dazed as yet, gazes hither and yon,
So Sacripante rose, our pagan knight,
The maid a witness to his horrid plight.

Canto I: 66-70: He learns that he was unhorsed by the warrior-maid Bradamante

He groaned and sighed, but not from any pain 66
Caused by broken limbs, or wounds received,
But from shame alone, from the greatest stain
Upon his fame and honour, he believed,
That any true warrior might so sustain,
And worse, his lady had the weight relieved,
Moving his dead mount; thus, mute he'd been
Had she not given voice thus to the scene:

'Ah, good my lord' said she, 'be not dismayed, 67
It was no fault of yours you were brought low,
For it was by your steed you were betrayed,
That would have rather rested than fought so;
Nor great honour has that knight displayed,
Nor gained in glory; for the losing foe,
If I know aught, I call the first to yield,
And like a beaten warrior quit the field.'

While she sought to cheer the Saracen king, 68
Behold, towards them, on a nag, did ride
A messenger, each seemed a weary thing,
The lad with horn and pouch hung at his side.
He asked the king if, in his journeying,
A warrior midst the woods he had espied,
Who bore a shield, and a plume, all white,
For he came seeking that warrior knight.



Stanza 68

Sacripante replied: 'Tis, as you see, 69
He has unhorsed me, vanishing but now,
Come, tell me who this warrior may be,
That I may know the one that made me bow,
The other answered: 'I shall readily
Reveal the name to you, for I avow
A tender maid achieved your overthrow,
Well-tried in battle, she who laid you low.

Bold is the maid, full bold, yet fairer still 70
Her glorious name I'll not keep from you;
Twas Bradamante brought about your spill,
Robbing you of the honour that you knew!'
This said, he let his nag walk on at will,
Leaving the king but little joy, tis true,
For there was naught that he could do or say,
But, blushing, wish the rider on his way.



Stanza 67 "*It was no fault of yours you were brought low*"

Canto I: 71-76: Angelica and the Saracen king encounter Bayard, Rinaldo's mount

After the king had thought long, though in vain, 71
Upon his sorry case, accepting he
Had by a maid been overthrown, nigh slain,
And feeling it more in thinking deeply,
To mount Angelica's horse he did deign,
And then, without a word, he quietly
Lifted her up behind him, on a steed
Used to a sweeter load, and scene indeed.

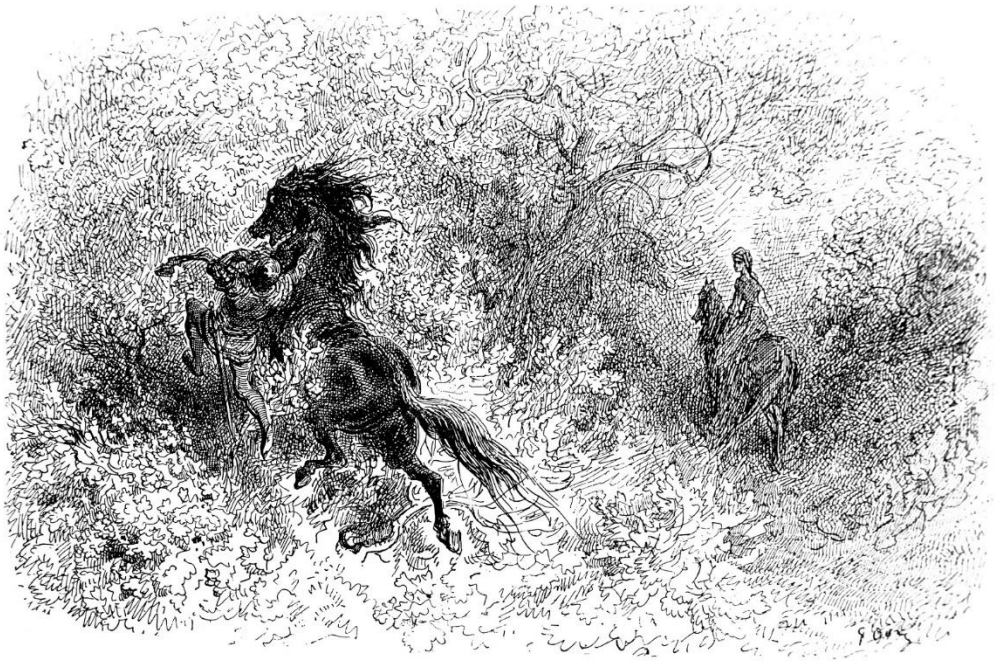
Not two miles had they gone ere they did hear 72
The forest, that lay all around them, sound
With such a noise of trampling, loud and clear,
That tall trees trembled, and the air, the ground;
And then a great war-horse did swift appear,
With gilded trappings richly girded round,
That leapt the streams, ploughed through every bush,
Striking whate'er delayed its onward rush.

'If the tangled branches, the misty air, 73
Do not deceive my eyes,' cried the maiden,
'Tis Bayard's noisy passage sounding there,
Forging a path where no way lies open.
Yes, for I'd know twas Bayard anywhere;
He has recognised we're over-laden!
A steed that's bearing two goes ill indeed,
Yet here is one who understands our need.'

Dismounting, the Circassian king went near, 74
And thought to set his hand upon the rein,
But now the horse another tack did steer,
Swift as a lightning bolt, it wheeled again,
And well that its kick failed to land; I fear
That if it had then great had been the pain!
Its legs revealed such power in battle,
With ease it could split a helm of metal.

Yet to the maid it went, most meekly, after, 75
Humble, and well-nigh human in its gaze,
Much as a faithful dog greets the master
It has been parted from for sundry days.
For Bayard her face did still remember,
Who in Abracca brought him food always,
At the time when she still loved Rinaldo,
That proved graceless there and cruel also.

She seized the bridle now, with her left hand, 76
With the other, patting its neck and chest,
While the horse, that seemed to understand,
Gentle as any lamb, her cheek caressed;
Yet soon the king upon its back did land,
Seizing the moment that indeed proved best,
Clasping the reins full tight, while the palfrey
Found its saddle claimed now by the lady.



Stanza 74

Canto I: 77-81: Rinaldo appears, Sacripante awaits his arrival

Then, gazing about, randomly, she sees 77
A man, on foot, appear, armour clashing;
Anger she feels, and spite, and deep unease.
Rinaldo, Amone's son's approaching
(He loves her more than life) midst the trees,
Whom like heron from hawk she is fleeing.
There was a time he loathed her more than death,
While she loved him; fate alters in a breath.

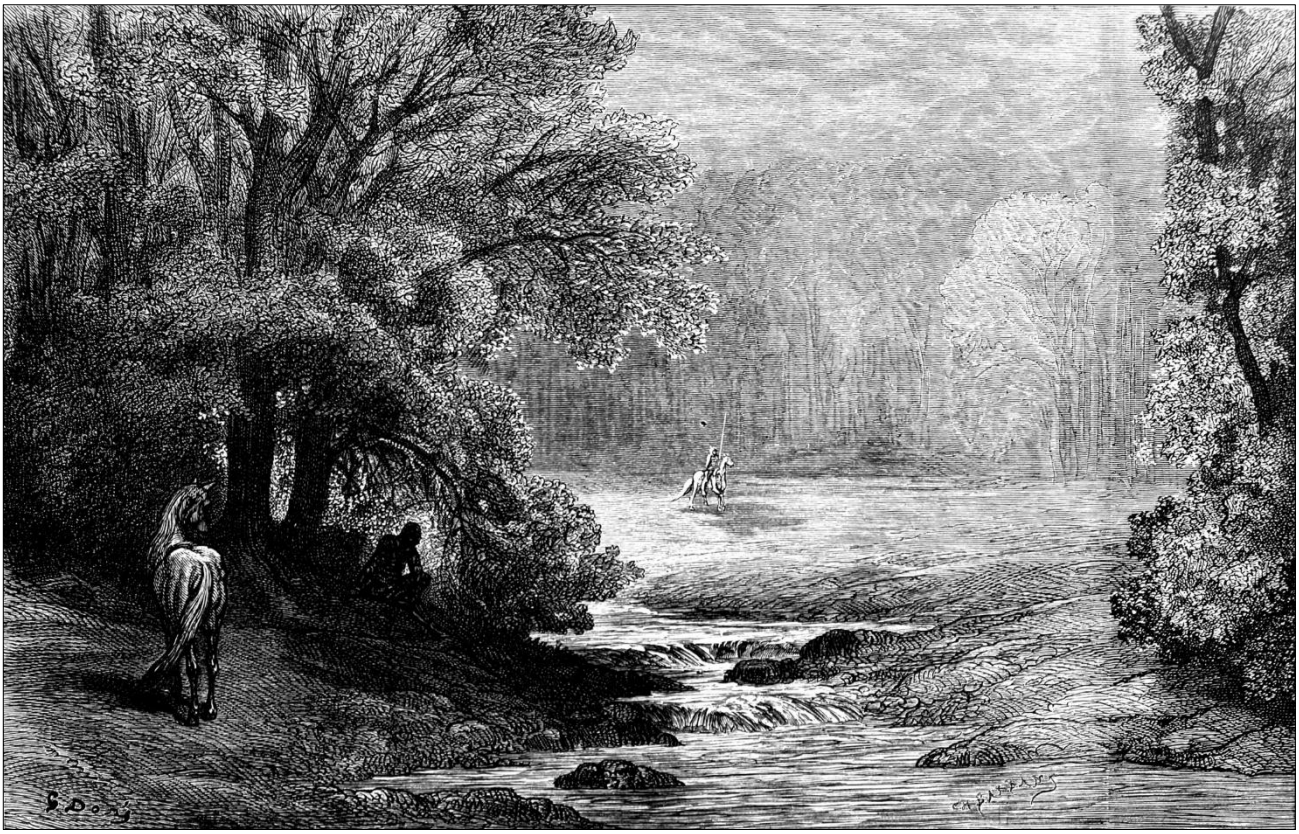
This, two differing fountains had achieved, 78
Opposite effects caused by their water,
Both in Ardenna their strange magic weaved;
One fills the heart with deep desire ever,
The other leaves that same heart undeceived,
And turns to ice the ardour of a lover.
Rinaldo tasting one – now loves her so;
She the other – hates him, and flees in woe.

Their waters contain a secret poison 79
That changes hate to love, or love to hate,
Such that the maiden, setting eyes upon
Rinaldo, felt o'er shadowed by her fate,
And with trembling voice, in sad affliction,
She begged the king, thus, not to hesitate,
Nor to attend on the approaching knight,
But both, at once departing, take to flight.

'Have I so little credit then with you,' 80
The king replied, 'that you consider me
Of little aid in your defence, one who
Could not defend us both effectively?
Recall but Albracca's battles, anew.
Forgot is that night, when, for your safety,
Against King Agricane in the field,
Naked and alone, I proved your shield?'

Feeling uncertain, she made no reply, 81
For bold Rinaldo called aloud his threat,
As, nearing them, Bayard he did espy,
And the angelic face that now had set
His heart aflame, and ever made him sigh;
And so, he and the Saracen were met,
But of what transpired twixt that proud duo,
That I shall reserve for the second Canto.





Canto II: The Sorcerer's Castle

Canto II: 1-4: Rinaldo denounces Sacripante as a thief

Love, so unjust, in that you so rarely 1
Make our loves and hatreds correspond,
Why then, do you, the lord of perfidy,
Refuse thus to allow two hearts to bond?
You lead me not where the clear ford I see,
But into the flood, and its depths beyond:
The one I love you'd have me love no more,
Yet the one I hate you'd have me adore.

Rinaldo finds Angelica most fair, 2
While she considers him an ugly man,
Though, when she loved him truly and did care,
He hated her as deeply as one can.
Now he grieves in vain, in his despair,
Repaid in like kind: he where she began.
For she so hates this knight, in love with her,
That death to his embrace she'd much prefer.

'Down from my horse, sir thief!' Rinaldo cried, 3
Proudly threatening the Saracen knight.
'I will not suffer any man to ride
My steed, and who does so must pay outright;
Nor shall the lady now with you abide,
For I'll not leave her here, without a fight;
So fine a horse, a lady so worthy,
Do scarcely suit a thief it seems to me.'

'In calling me a thief you do but lie,' 4
Cried Sacripante to the man, in answer,
(For no less haughty was his proud reply)
'Though a word I hate, it suits you better.
Come let us prove who's worthier, say I,
Of this lovely lady, and the charger;
For, as to her, we may indeed agree,
In all the world there's none so fine to see.'

Canto II: 5-10: They fight and Rinaldo gains the upper hand

As two dogs, that would each other bite, 5
Through envy or some other form of hatred,
Will grind their teeth together, set to fight,
Their eyes like burning embers, fiery red,
Then on each other, jaws apart, alight,
Bristling, growling, straining head-to-head,
So, from threats and reproaches to the sword
Passed the king and the Chiaramonte lord.

The one on foot, the other mounted high, 6
Think you twas to the pagan's benefit?
No more than if a hapless page should try
To prod the war-horse on which he doth sit,
For Bayard had, by instinct, rather die
Than such insult to his true lord admit.
So did the heathen king find in this case,
Nor hand nor spur led it to move a pace.

When the king thought to charge, it stood stock still, 7
When he would hold it back, it sprang away,
Or bowed its head towards its chest, at will,
Or arched its spine, or kicked as if in play.
Finding not one command it would fulfil,
Lacking the time to make the beast obey,
Grasping the pommel hard, he quit his seat,
Leapt from its flank, and landed on his feet.

As soon as Sacripante reached the ground, 8
Ceasing with Bayard's stubbornness to fight,
In fierce assault did those two swords resound,
Their conflict worthy of the bravest knight.
Each weapon raised on high its target found;
Less swift was Vulcan's hammer in its flight,
In that deep smoke-filled cavern where he strove
To forge the lightning-bolts of mighty Jove.

Now they lunge, or with feint and parry show 9
Their mastery of the sword; now they leap
High in anger, retreat now from a blow,
Show themselves, or their shields before them keep;
Drive forward, with a flurry, swift or slow,
Then give way, as many a thrust they reap,
Swivel round; and where one man's foot doth yield
The other's takes its place upon the field.

But now Rinaldo, with his sword raised high, 10
Throws himself wholly at the pagan king,
Who, with his shield of bone, would him deny;
Well-tempered steel its outer edge doth ring.
Yet the sword, Fusberta, falls from the sky,
Its steel as strong, and makes the forest sing;
With bone and metal shattered like thin ice,
The king's arm's rendered useless in a trice.

Canto II: 11-13: Angelica flees and meets a hermit in the wood

When the timid maid viewed the ruin dealt 11
By the great force behind that crushing blow,
Her face expressed the agony she felt,
As one condemned their misery will show;
Time for her to flee, the king's downfall spelt,
Lest she become Rinaldo's prey; her foe
That Rinaldo whom she loathed as deeply
As he now loved the maid most woefully.

She turned her horse into the tangled wood, 12
Galloping on, through rough and narrow ways,
Yet looked behind as often as she could,
Seeming to hear him following always.
And she had not gone far, for ill or good,
When, in the dale, a hermit met her gaze.
Whose beard, full long, descended to his waist;
Devotion, on his features, age had traced.

Made lean by fasting and the years, upon 13
A slow and steady mule the hermit came,
Seeming by his calm face, where wisdom shone,
Humble, pure of conscience, as free of blame
As any man yet living, or long gone.
Seeing the maid, delicate as her name,
However feeble he appeared to be,
And modest, he yet succumbed to pity.



Stanza 13



Stanza 12 "*When, in the dale, a hermit met her gaze*"

Canto II: 14-17: The hermit conjures a sprite who intervenes in the duel

The lady asked him to point her, swiftly, 14
To some fair harbour of the closest shore,
From which she might quit France and so, once free
Of this Rinaldo, hear his name no more.
The hermit, who was skilled in sorcery,
Seeking to comfort her, and reassure
The lady she would soon be safe, now took
From a deep pocket a mysterious book.

And this he now deployed to great effect, 15
For he had barely uttered the first page,
Before a sprite appeared and, with respect,
Asked what he might perform now for the sage.
Then, a squire's shape and garb he did effect,
And went to where the two knights did engage,
Amongst the trees, not in the open glade,
Where, most audaciously, their hands he stayed.

'Tell me, of courtesy,' the spirit cried, 16
'What use is either's death to the other?
What will you gain, true victory denied,
When this fine conflict of yours is over,
If Count Orlando, without having tried,
Without a single blow, free of bother,
Towards Paris leads the lovely lady,
That committed you to purgatory?

I met Orlando not a mile away. 17
To Paris with Angelica, he goes,
They ride together, making mock, I say,
Of you, and all your pointless painful blows.
Better twould be to follow them this day;
Hoof-prints they leave behind, I would suppose.
If he and she reach Paris, then tis plain,
Neither of you will that fair maiden gain.'

Canto II: 18-24: Rinaldo seeks Angelica once more

You'll not have seen two brave knights more amazed; 18
For at the news, both men were most unhappy,
Their eyes were vacant, and their minds half-dazed:
Mocked by Orlando then, and the lady!
Rinaldo moved to where his charger grazed,
Breathing sighs forth that seemed most fiery,
And swore in his anger that, for his part,
If he found Orlando, he'd have his heart!

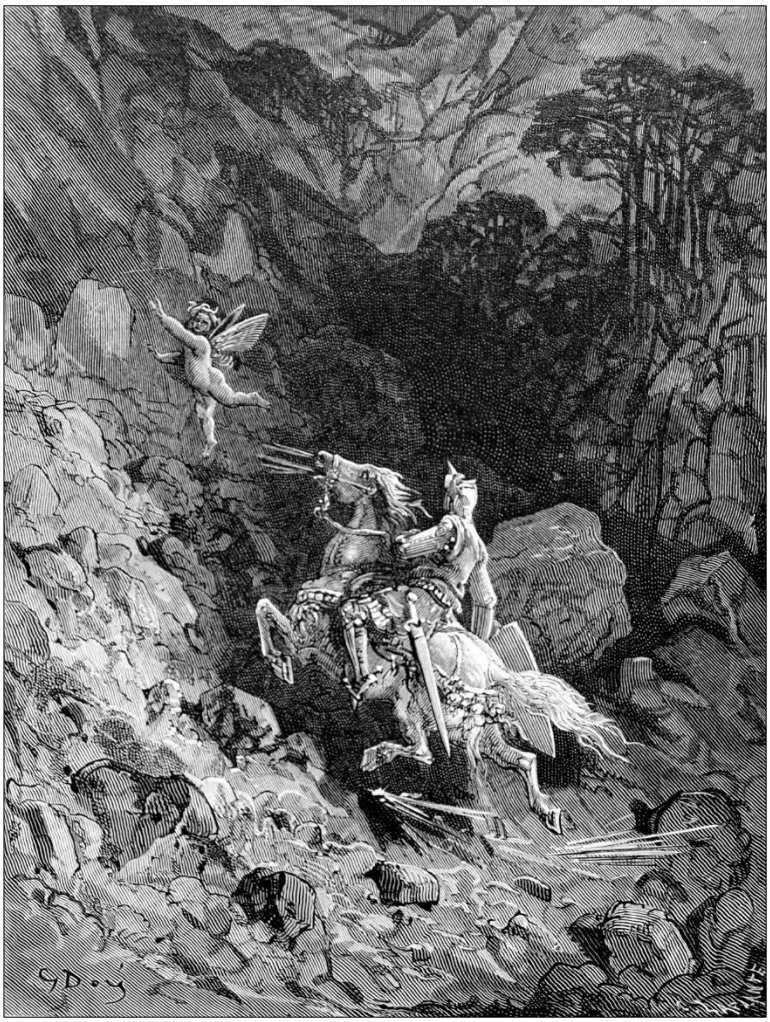
Reaching the place where Bayard was standing, 19
He leapt on the horse's back, and sped away,
Without a word of farewell, and leaving
The king behind, nor pledging to convey
Him at his back, but, his charger spurring,
He drove the creature on, and would not stay,
Ditch, boulder, stream, or thorn, naught halts the horse,
Or serves to swerve the rider from his course.

Lest it seem strange to you that Rinaldo 20
Could mount upon the steed so easily,
Considering that, for a week or so,
He'd pursued that horse of his fruitlessly,
(Had he so much as touched the bridle? No!)
Well, its mind was well-nigh human, you see,
It fled but to lead him to the lady
Whom he loved, as it had heard but lately.

For when Angelica had left the tent, 21
The steed had seen and marked her sudden flight,
And naught was there to hamper its intent
Its saddle being empty of the knight,
Who had descended, upon battle bent,
Desiring with some lord, on foot, to fight,
And so had followed her you'll understand,
Wishing to place her in its master's hand.

Eager to lead him to where she might be, 22
Thereafter it had run on through the wood,
Nor would it let him mount, for fear that he
Might turn away, and lose the maid for good.
Twice had it found her yet, frustratingly,
Was thwarted, though achieving all it could,
First by Ferrau, and so deviating,
Then, as you have heard, by the pagan king.

Now Bayard had believed the conjured sprite, 23
Whose news had set them on a phantom trail,
And so allowed Rinaldo to alight
Upon his back, obeying without fail,
As his master followed the maiden's flight,
Ever towards Paris, o'er hill and dale,
Filled with such eagerness that all too slow
Seemed a steed that fast as the wind did go.



Stanza 23

Rinaldo was at such pains to pursue
And thus meet Orlando, Anglante's lord,
For great was his belief the news was true
That the sorcerer's sprite did him afford.
That night and morn he sought the path anew,
Until he crossed a plain, and rode toward
The fortress where Charlemagne now rested
After that battle so ill-contested.

24

Canto II: 25-27: Reaching Charlemagne's fortress he is sent to England

There, with the remnants of his force, the king
Fearful of Moorish siege, had set his men
To gathering provisions, recruiting,
Breaking stone, and shoring the walls again;
All that might serve for defence procuring,
Without delay, to aid them, as and when.
And an envoy to England he would send,
That might new strength to his weak forces lend.

25

For again he sought to test himself in war,
And try his fate, on some fresh field, and so
To England, that was Britain long before,
He now chose to send the good Rinaldo.
And sore was he to go, you may be sure,
Not because he loathed the land, his woe
Was all because Charles saw him on his way
Without permitting him a moment's stay.

26

Naught did Rinaldo do less willingly,
Being diverted from his former quest
For that fair visage which had utterly
Ravished the heart from out his burning breast,
But obedient to Charles, towards the sea
He made his way, prepared to do his best;
And, in a few hours, arrived at Calais,
Embarking, indeed, the very same day.

27



Stanza 29

Canto II: 28-30: His vessel is caught in a storm

Ignoring the advice of the master, 28
Impatient to go so he might return,
He sailed on waters boding disaster,
The while a storm the narrow seas did churn,
A mighty tempest, waxing all the faster
Indignant at a pride that sense did spurn,
Raising the sea aloft with such power
Up to the masthead the waves did tower.

The watchful mariners soon manned the sail, 29
Intending to wear ship and come about,
Since, by so doing, they might yet prevail,
And reach the harbour from which they'd set out.
'That I shall not permit,' declared the gale,
'For tis not fitting thus my will to flout!'
And, threatening shipwreck, as it howled and cried,
Strained the more gainst every tack they tried.

Now at the stern, now at the prow it blows, 30
Never ceasing, but ever growing more,
While the vessel, now tangled in its throes,
Fails, in the deep, to find the distant shore;
Yet since many a varied thread I chose,
On setting forth, and none must now ignore,
I'll leave Rinaldo calmer waves to seek,
And of his sister Bradamante speak.

Canto II: 31-36: Bradamante meets a melancholy knight

The famed warrior-maid I mean by this, 31
Who toppled Sacripante to the ground,
Daughter of Amone and Beatrice,
And worthy of her brother, as we found.
Her mighty deeds and her ardent service
Did with Charles, and all of France, resound,
(That knew many a shining paragon)
As much as did her brother's here and yon.

She was loved by a bold Saracen knight, 32
That o'er the waves with Agramante came.
His father, a Christian of true might,
Ruggiero, whose son now shared his name,
In Agolante's daughter found delight,
That had borne this son of that very same.
And Bradamante loved the knight, though fate
Had one sole meeting granted them to date.

Since then, she had gone seeking her lover; 33
As safe, with none to keep her company,
As if a thousand guards protected her,
Trusting in her own skill and bravery.
Once Sacripante she had made to cover
The solid ground beneath, she sped swiftly
Through the wood and, after, o'er a mountain,
Until she came to a flowing fountain.

The spring flowed amidst a flowering meadow, 34
Adorned with ancient trees, that cast cool shade,
Inviting the passer-by to follow
Its murmuring, and rest there in the glade,
While a tamed hillside sheltered all below,
And, at full noon, a sanctuary made.
There, as she turned her lovely gaze, she saw
A knight's great war-horse, though no knight it bore.

The youthful knight was sitting, pensively, 35
Beneath the shadow of a bush that grew
Beside the flowering bank, and silently
Watching the crystal stream as past it flew.
His helm and shield hung from a nearby tree,
To which his mount was fastened, in full view,
While he, with lowered gaze, and with a tear
Wetting each eye, full weary did appear.

That longing that stirs in every heart 36
To know the fate of another person,
Prompted the maiden now, with gentle art,
For his sadness to enquire the reason.
Won by her courtesy, he did impart
The cause of his woe, at this sweet season,
And with a noble look that, at first sight,
Confirmed him to be a valiant knight.

Canto II: 37-40: Count Pinabel tells how his lover was snatched away

He answered thus: 'Brave knight, twas I who led 37
Horseman and infantry to that wide field
Where Marsilio our force awaited,
Seeking on his descent to make him yield,
As from the Pyrenees his army sped.
There, too, a maid I loved I sought to shield;
And yet, beside the Rhone, as fate decreed,
I saw one armed, atop a winged steed.

No sooner did that thief, amidst the air, 38
Whether mortal or some infernal sprite,
Behold the lovely lady in my care,
Than he stooped, as a falcon does in flight,
And caught her with his hands as in a snare,
And seizing her was well-nigh out of sight
Ere I had registered the bold assault,
Hearing her cry from out the sky's blue vault.



Stanza 38

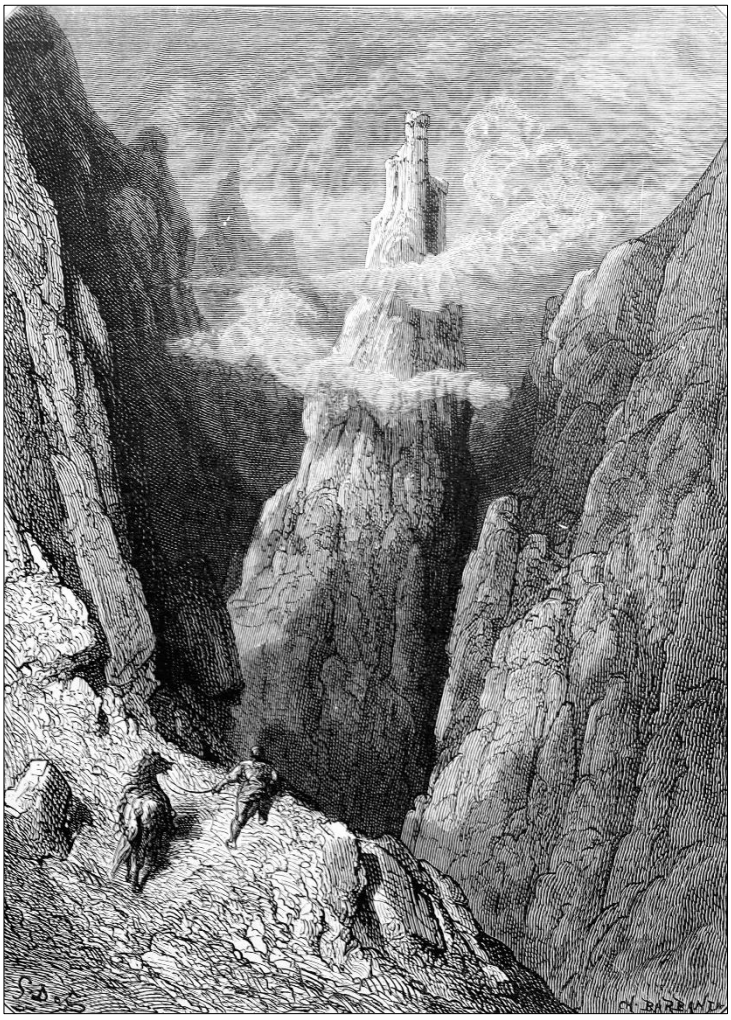
So, the rapacious hawk will plunge, and thieve, 39
Stealing a new-born chick from out the pen,
Leaving its hapless mother there to grieve,
Squawking, or clucking sadly now and then.
I could not fly, and midst the high peaks weave,
To reach his ledge of rock, his cliff-bound den;
And now my steed is wearied to the bone,
Travelling these harsh trails, o'er shattered stone.

For I, like one who had far rather seen 40
His beating heart torn from his living breast,
Left my brave men, and quit the martial scene,
While, masterless, they rode to seek the rest,
Along well-trodden paths, amidst the green,
As I, by ways love showed me, sought the nest
To which that cruel bird had flown, on high,
Bearing my hope and peace towards the sky.

Canto II: 41–44: And how he journeyed to the sorcerer's castle

Six days I journeyed on, from morn to eve, 41
Midst strange spires and hideous walls of stone.
Where paths were not, my mount a way did weave;
Where nothing human dwelt, I passed, alone,
Until a barren vale I did perceive,
Ringed by vast cliffs, with mighty boulders sown,
And in its midst, upon a rock, rose there,
A castle, strong and marvellously fair.

And from afar it shone like some bright flame, 42
Nor seemed it brick or marble to my eye,
For as I neared those walls now known to fame,
The finer and more wondrous twas, say I.
Later I learned a spirit wrought that same,
With spells, midst sulphurous fumes, raised it high,
Surrounding it with gleaming steel entire,
With Styx's water tempered, out the fire.



Stanza 41

Its shining turrets glowed with such a light 43
That I saw there no mark of rust, no stain;
The foul thief scours the land by day or night,
And then retreats within that bright domain.
All he desires he claims, without respite,
Though he's pursued with curses, all in vain.
So, there she lies, who won my heart from me,
And lost all hope that I might set her free.

Alas, what's left me but to keep my eye 44
Upon that fortress that holds my lady,
Like a she-fox that hears her lost cub cry
From the eagle's nest, nor knows what she
Can do but pace the empty fields nearby,
Lacking the wings to seek her enemy;
Such is the castle on that rock, on high,
Unreachable by all that cannot fly.

Canto II: 45–47: And how he met King Gradasso and Ruggiero

And, as I lingered there, behold I saw 45
Two noble knights appear, a dwarf their guide;
They to my longing brought fond hope, once more,
Hope well-aimed though ever the shot fell wide.
Warriors both, those bravest knights in war,
The King of Sericane, and at his side
One that the Moorish courts valued so,
Their names Gradasso, and Ruggiero.

"They come," the dwarf proclaimed, "to try their worth, 46
Against that mighty castle's errant lord,
To whom that winged creature of evil birth
Strange, unnatural passage doth afford."
"Fair sirs," said I, "oh, fairest knights on earth,
Have pity on me, whom fate grants scant reward!
Once the hoped-for victory you attain,
Come render me my lady, once again."

I told how the thief had seized my lady, 47
Witnessing my woe with many a tear,
They offered, in turn, a wealth of pity,
And then along a track, stony and sheer,
Made their way towards that evil city,
(While I remained, praying to God in fear)
To reach, below the wall, a piece of ground,
Perchance in width a few yards, all around.

Canto II: 48–57: And how those two knights fought the sorcerer

When both attained the base of that high wall, 48
They argued as to which of them should fight,
Whether to Gradasso the lot should fall,
Or on brave Ruggiero should alight.
The king, indeed, sounded his battle call,
The fortress ringing to its topmost height.
Behold! All armed, the sorcerer appeared,
Outside the gate, on his fell steed upreared.

Slowly, at first, his mount took to the skies 49
As a crane will do, its wings beating,
Running uncertainly, e'er it doth rise,
But then once launched, the ground beneath skimming,
It puts forth all its strength and upward flies,
Faster and faster, and onward sailing.
So, on high the sorcerer soared in flight,
An eagle scarce ascending to such height.

When he saw fit, he wheeled his steed around; 50
Closing its wings, it plunged down through the air,
As a well-trained falcon, its quarry found,
Dives at the duck or pigeon it doth scare.
So came, their enemy, with fearsome sound,
With lance outstretched, upon the valiant pair,
Gradasso scarcely saw his advent, though
He heard his passage, and he felt the blow.

The sorcerer's lance shattered; Gradasso 51
Striking the empty air, in vain fury,
Yet hardly troubling the creature so;
It beat its wings, and soared away swiftly.
His valiant steed, at the encounter, though,
Reared from the turf, surprised utterly;
It was an Arab steed the king did ride,
The finest ever man did sit astride.

Up towards the stars the sorcerer flew, 52
Then, wheeling, plunged towards the earth again,
Striking at Ruggiero ere he knew,
That his gaze on Gradasso did maintain.
He bent beneath the blow, his charger too
Recoiled a pace or so, and shook its mane.
Yet when Ruggiero turned to reply,
He saw his foe far distant in the sky.



Stanza 53 "*He circles widely, nor can they discern, whom next he will endeavour to unhorse*"

Gradasso, then Ruggiero, in turn, 53
On forehead, chest, and back, he strikes with force,
While all their empty blows no merit earn;
They ever fail to see him in his course.
He circles widely, nor can they discern
Whom next he will endeavour to unhorse.
Their eyes he dazzles, thus they never know
From which direction they'll receive the blow.

Between those two on earth and their foe above 54
War continued till the fall of evening,
That veiling the earth, doth light remove,
Stealing the fairest hues from everything.
Twas as I say; I saw it, and might prove
The matter, though but tentatively bring
It to your eyes for, marvellous to view,
Retold, it might seem rather false than true.

The celestial foe had veiled the shield 55
Upon his arm in a silken cover,
Though I know not why he took the field
And yet displayed it not, while he did hover,
For it so dazzled once it was revealed,
His opponent his sight could ne'er recover,
But must tumble corpse-like to the ground,
And by the sorcerer's power be bound.

Like to a gemstone the shield shone bright, 56
Though brighter than has any other shone;
None could choose but stagger at the sight,
Fall blinded to the ground, the senses gone.
I too was dazed, though distant from its light,
And when the scene I once more gazed upon,
No dwarf, no knights I saw, the place was bare,
The mount, the plain, and all was darkness there.

I deemed them gone with the fell enchanter, 57
Those warriors seized, and so borne away;
Trapped, by virtue of that blazing splendour,
Their freedom lost, and my hopes all astray.
To those walls, that held my heart prisoner,
I said a last farewell, and sought my way.
Now, judge: was ever greater punishment
Than mine incurred, by one on love intent?'

Canto II: 58-61: Bradamante wishes to be led to the sorcerer's castle

The knight relapsed into his gloomy state, 58
Lacking the wish to speak now, or the need.
Twas Pinabel this sad tale did relate,
Anselmo d'Altaripa's son, indeed,
Of the Maganzesi, his noted trait
Was to disdain, amidst that evil breed,
Loyalty and courtesy while, no less
Than they were, steeped in vice and wickedness.

With varying expressions, the fair maid 59
Gave ear to the melancholy knight,
For, at Ruggiero's name, she displayed
A look that conveyed intense delight,
Yet hearing further how he was dismayed,
True signs of love and pity showed outright,
Not satisfied until not once but twice
He'd told the tale, and scarce did that suffice.

And when at last the thing was clarified, 60
'Rest now awhile, sir knight, for our meeting
May prove to be of worth to you,' she cried,
'And fortunate the day I gave you greeting!
To this castle, that so fair a gem doth hide,
Let us go; for their venture's worth repeating,
Nor will my martial efforts seem in vain,
If Fortune will but prove my friend again.'

The knight replied: 'You wish that I should pass 61
That mountain track anew, and show the way?
It is no loss to me, who now, alas,
Have lost all I possessed; yet those, I say,
That seek to penetrate that rocky mass,
Gain but a prison, and prolong their stay.
So, blame me not, for what shall come to be;
Since all that I've warned you of, you shall see.'

Canto II: 62-65: A messenger arrives, but Bradamante is undeterred

This said, the knight mounted his steed once more, 62
And served the bold warrior-maid as guide,
That for Ruggiero's sake sought fresh war,
To free her knight, or on the field abide.

But now, behold, a messenger they saw,
One riding hard: 'Await my news!' he cried;
Twas from his lips King Sacripante found
How twas a maid had felled him to the ground.

Now, to that warrior, the news he brought 63
Of how Montpellier had, with Narbonne,
Raised high the standard of Castile, and fought
Against the Moors' incursion, whereupon,
With Aigues-Mortes armed, all Marseilles sought
Her help, that oft times to their aid had gone,
Ever recommending themselves to her,
And requesting counsel now, and succour.

This city, with great tracts of land around 64
Betwixt the Var and Rhone, set by the sea,
King Charlemagne had to the maiden bound,
In whom his trust and hope he placed, for he
In her a wondrous warrior had found,
A miracle of armoured chivalry.
Now, from Marseilles, this messenger was sent,
As I have said, on seeking aid intent.

Twixt yea and nay, uncertain, the maiden 65
Mused awhile: whether to return, or no?
Honour and duty weigh with her, but then
The flame of love now burns within her so,
She can but turn to her first aim again,
To free Ruggiero, and end his woe;
Or, if her skill or her strength should fail her,
To dwell beside him there, a prisoner.

Canto II: 66-68: Pinabel contemplates some evil deed

So fair was her excuse, the messenger 66
Was pleased to, quietly, await her will;
She shook the reins, and urged her steed to stir,
Then followed Pinabel who, gloomy still,
Seemed none too pleased, for indeed he knew her
To be of a hated line, boding ill
For him, if she should come to discover
That he, a Maganzese, sought to guide her.



Stanza 65

Twixt Maganza's and Chiaramonte's line 67
Lay bitter hatreds, ancient enmity;
Many an evil plan they would design
Against each other, till the blood ran free.
And so, the wicked count, his heart malign,
Thought to betray this maid, all unwary;
Or, at least, when it seemed convenient,
Leave her alone, as on his way he went.

Such was the innate hatred, doubt, and fear 68
That filled his mind, he, inadvertently,
Went astray, and far from the path did veer,
And in a dark wood found himself to be,
With, in its midst, a hilltop standing clear,
Its summit bare, in stony majesty,
While behind him rode Amone's daughter,
Whom he led towards despair or slaughter.

Canto II: 69–73: They come upon a dark wood and a chasm

He, when he found himself within the wood, 69
Thought to abandon her, that rode behind,
And said to her: 'Ere it grows dark, we should
Seek some fair place to rest, and lodging find.
Beyond that hill, if memory holds good,
Stands a fine castle in a dale, but mind,
You must wait here for me while I ascend
That bare summit, and see which way to wend.'

So saying, he spurred onwards to the height, 70
And, climbing that bare, solitary hill,
Sought out some evil plan whereby he might
Be rid of her, and his intent fulfil,
When, lo, a rocky chasm met his sight,
Falling two hundred feet or more, until
Its spurs and hollows reached a stony floor,
And there, within its depths, appeared a door.

This portal, that lay fully open, gave 71
Wide access to a spacious room inside,
And a great brightness issued from that cave,
That to the gloomy depths did light provide.
Yet while the wretch was musing there, the brave
Warrior-maid, who'd followed her ill guide,
(Fearing lest she be stranded in the wood)
Came fast upon the villain where he stood.

Finding his first design was all in vain, 72
The traitor sought a different strategy,
By which to rid himself now of his bane,
Or send down to the grave his enemy.
And so, returned a little way again,
And asked her to ascend, most urgently,
For he had spied, he said, in that bright place,
A lovely maiden that was fair of face,

Who, by her aspect, and manner of dress, 73
Seemed of a noble rank, of high degree,
Yet troubled sorely, and in great distress,
Imprisoned there, as far as he could see.
And when he'd endeavoured to make ingress
To seek the reason for her misery,
Someone had issued from the inner cave
Whose display of anger the reason gave.

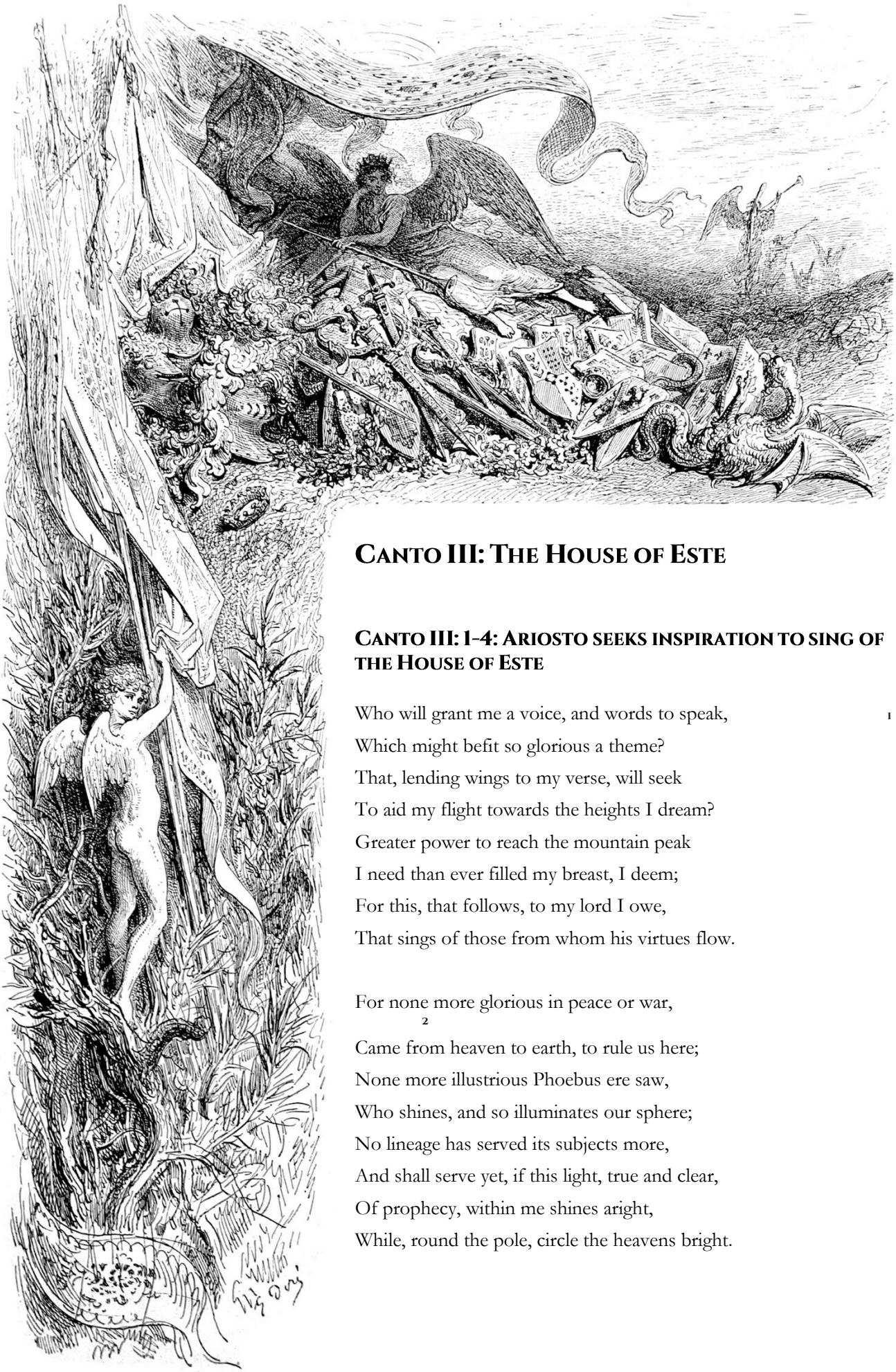
Canto II: 74–76: Through Pinabel's treachery Bradamante falls into the chasm

Bradamante, ever as unwary 74
As she was bold, trusted this Pinabel,
And, eager to bring aid to the lady,
Thought how she might descend to her deep cell.
In glancing round, she saw an old elm-tree
With a long branch that served her purpose well;
Severing it with her sword, in a trice,
Into the depths, she lowered her device.

To Pinabel, she gave the severed end, 75
While, in both hands, she yet held the other,
Then, feet first, sought the chasm to descend;
As she clung there, Pinabel, above her,
Said, laughingly, that she must now depend
On her powers of flight, and then the traitor
Let her fall, crying: 'Would I might deal so
With your whole house, and send them all below!'

Yet all went not as Pinabel intended, 76
Not such the guiltless Bradamante's fate,
For as, into the depths, she descended
The elm-branch broke her fall, and held her weight,
And though it splintered, yet still she ended
Her descent in not too dire a state,
For she lay there quite dazed, but still alive,
To tell of which in canto three I'll strive.





Canto III: The House of Este

Canto III: 1-4: Ariosto seeks inspiration to sing of the House of Este

Who will grant me a voice, and words to speak, 1
Which might befit so glorious a theme?
That, lending wings to my verse, will seek
To aid my flight towards the heights I dream?
Greater power to reach the mountain peak
I need than ever filled my breast, I deem;
For this, that follows, to my lord I owe,
That sings of those from whom his virtues flow.

For none more glorious in peace or war,
Came from heaven to earth, to rule us here; 2
None more illustrious Phoebus ere saw,
Who shines, and so illuminates our sphere;
No lineage has served its subjects more,
And shall serve yet, if this light, true and clear,
Of prophecy, within me shines aright,
While, round the pole, circle the heavens bright.

Yet to declare their honours here entire, 3
Apollo, yours the strings, not mine, we need,
That to sing out Jove's glory did aspire,
After the war the Giants sought to breed.
If instruments, more fitting than my lyre
To carve the stone, in this my hour of need,
You grant me, all my skill I will apply,
And all my wit, these forms to beautify.

Till then, with humble chisel, I will seek 4
To smooth the marble, cut the flakes away,
And, perchance, improving my technique,
Perfect this work that I attempt, someday.
Yet now, again, of that vile man I'll speak,
Whose armour shall protect him not, I say;
Pinabel of Maganza is that knight,
Who'd hoped to kill our warrior outright.

Canto III: 5-8: Bradamante enters the cave and meets the sorceress Melissa

The traitor thought our Bradamante dead, 5
In that precipitous tumble, and so,
With pallid face, straight from the chasm fled,
And from the light, his evil stained, below.
Then, swiftly mounting, to his saddle wed,
Like one whose spirit did but darkness know
And lapsed from sin to sin and fault to fault,
Purloined the warrior's steed too, by default.

Let us now quit that wretch, who for the maid 6
Planned instant death, yet but procures his own,
And turn to that fair knight he had betrayed,
Who so close to death and the tomb had flown;
Dazed she arose, such was the price she'd paid,
For meeting with that floor of solid stone,
And then made entry to the first bright cave,
That access to a larger cavern gave.

The place was square and spacious, and it seemed 7
To be a chapel, used from ancient days,
Where columns of pure alabaster gleamed,
Supporting the roof in various ways,
The rare and lovely architecture dreamed
By some skilled craftsman, while the light did blaze
From a lamp before the central altar,
That filled both the caverns with its splendour.

Most humble and devout thoughts filled her mind, 8
Viewing the holy place in which she stood;
She knelt, and her heart, by prayer refined,
Gave thanks to God, the source of all her good.
And then she heard a door creak; from behind
The altar came there one of noble blood,
Barefoot, with hair loose, and her dress the same,
That greeted the warrior-maid by name.



Stanza 9

Canto III: 9-15: And learns that beneath the cave lies Merlin's tomb

'O generous, Bradamante!' she cried, 9
'By divine will alone you reach this place;
For long ago, wise Merlin prophesied
That this most sacred chapel you would grace,
Thus, reaching, by a means not often tried,
The precincts that his relics now encase;
And here I've waited, that I might reveal
To you what heaven, and the fates, conceal.

This is the ancient memorable cave
Merlin, the sage enchanter, created.
The hateful way in which she did behave,
The Lady of the Lake, is oft related,
While here, beneath us, is the very grave
In which his corrupted flesh was fated
To remain, to sate her will; and where he,
Entombed alive, now lies dead, seemingly.

10

A living mind dwells in that dead body,
Till is heard the angelic trumpet sound,
That shall raise, or banish it completely,
On dove or raven's wing; yet, in the ground,
His voice lives, and you shall hear how clearly,
From out the marble tomb it doth resound;
For whoever asks that voice will answer,
Speaking of things past, and of the future.

11

Tis many days since, from a far country,
I came to this sepulchre, so that I,
That make the arcane mysteries my study,
Might see as Merlin, with as clear an eye;
And, since I wished to meet you, did tarry
Here a full month beyond, and know you why?
Merlin, who truth to come doth e'er convey,
Prophesied your presence, and on this day.'

12

Amone's warrior daughter, amazed,
In silence heard the speech that she did make,
Her mind so full of wonder, as she gazed,
She knew not if she dreamed or was awake.
And then with humble, downcast eyes, still glazed,
Like one who would bow for modesty's sake,
Replied: 'What merit can there be in me,
To make me worthy of such prophecy?'

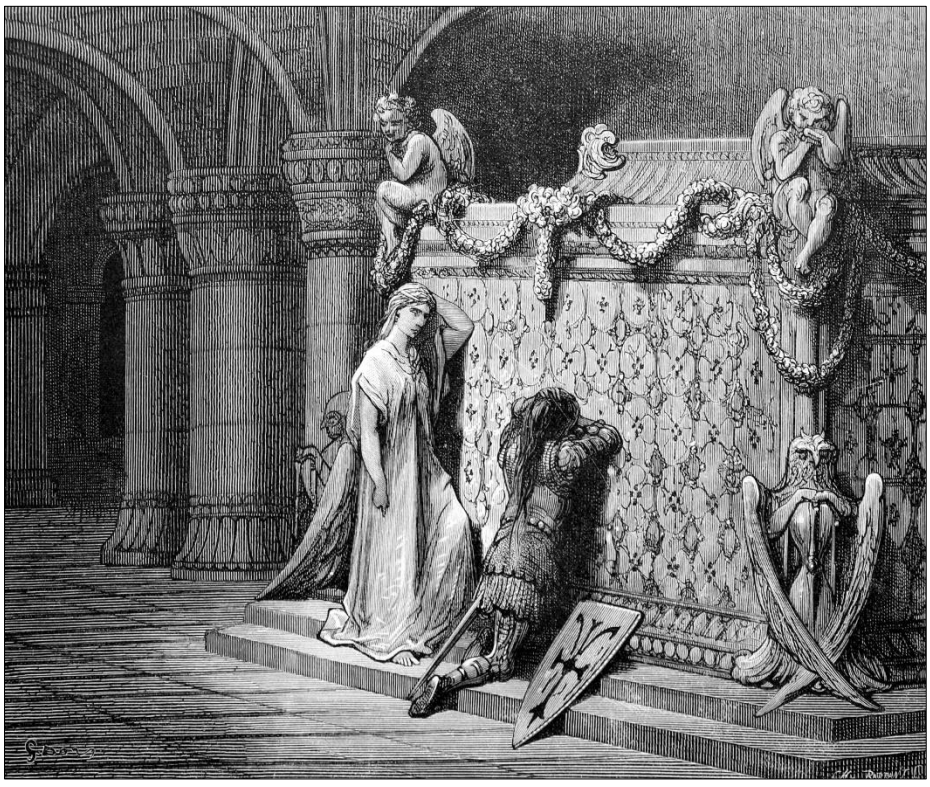
13

Yet, delighted by this strange adventure,
She now moved to follow the sorceress,
Who led her to the sepulchre beneath her,
Enclosing Merlin's bones and soul, no less.
Twas built of hard stone that lasts, forever
Of a fiery red, translucent brightness,
Such that, though hidden from the sun, the room
Shone with the light that issued from that tomb.

14

Whether tis in the nature of such stone,
Like a bright candle, to dispel the dark,
Or whether spells, and magic flame alone,
(Which indeed seems closer to the mark)
Or else some stellar influence unknown,
Produced the splendour blazing from that ark,
Fair sculptures, hues, many a lovely thing
The light adorned, that Merlin's tomb did bring.

15



Stanza 14

Canto III: 16-21: Merlin's spirit foresees the lineage that stems from her

Scarcely had Bradamante raised her foot 16
From the threshold of that most secret cell,
When a living voice the deep silence cut,
And, speaking clear, as from a stony well,
Said: 'May Fortune's fair gaze ne'er be shut
From you, O noble maid, where'er you dwell;
From your chaste womb a fecund race shall rise,
That Italy, and all the world, must prize.

The noble blood that issued forth at Troy 17
Merging in you its most glorious streams,
Will yield the flower, the ornament, the joy
Of every lineage on which Phoebus gleams,
That doth fierce cold, or burning heat enjoy,
By Indus, Tagus, Nile or Danube teems;
And midst your progeny, crowned with honour,
Dukes, marquises, emperors shall prosper.

Brave knights and captains shall arise from you, 18
Who with true wisdom, and the lance and sword,
Shall all the ancient honour, all that's due
And yet denied, to Italy afford,
While just men shall uphold her laws anew,
Such as Numa and Augustus did record;
And, under their true governance, once more
The golden age they shall to her restore.

And that heaven's wish may thus be brought 19
To take effect in you, Ruggiero,
That you for wife has ever boldly sought,
Was chosen, from the first, to bless you so.
Let nothing interpose to mar that thought,
Though to meet the sorcerer you must go,
So that a thief who bars you from your good,
Shall not be first to seal your fate with blood.'

So saying, Merlin's voice fell silent, there, 20
And gave way to wise Melissa and her task,
To show the maid her race, and thus prepare
To reveal each heir's illustrious mask;
Whether they came from Hell or from elsewhere,
The many that she chose, seek not to ask;
But all she sought she gathered in one place,
Varied in their manner, and dress, and face.

Then to the chapel she recalls our knight, 21
Where she inscribes a circle of a size
To hold the maid if she should fall outright,
With but a palm-width left if there she lies;
And that no spirit should invade the light,
Upon her head a pentacle she ties,
And tells her to be silent, stand and gaze,
Then opes her book, and to the demons prays.

Canto III: 22-25: Melissa conjures the first shade, the founder of the House of Este

Behold, what shapes from out the first cave press 22
About the sacred circle's boundary,
And yet the way is barred to their ingress,
As though a moat ringed the sanctuary.
Full three times must they go, to win success,
About that border, ere they may be free
To enter in that cave that holds the urn
In which the prophet's relics seem to burn.

'If I told the name and deeds of every one,' 23
The enchantress said to Bradamante, 'then
I must speak of them, ere their deeds are done,
Before their birth, in truth, and how and when
I might conclude I know not, for the sun
Might set, and yet we'd not have cried amen;
So, I'll but summon those I choose to me,
Granted both time and opportunity.

See now the first who's like to you indeed, 24
In his fair seeming, and his pleasant face,
Conceived by you of Ruggiero's seed,
The head in Italy of your proud race.
See him who'll stain the earth, his good deed
To spill Pontier's blood, who lacks grace,
And let fall the traitor's sins on his head;
Vengeance on those who'd see his father dead.

Through his actions, King Desiderio 25
Will be conquered, the Lombards' master;
Of Este and Calaon lordship, so,
He will be granted by the Emperor.
Behind him is your grandson Uberto,
Bearer of arms and his country's honour.
That on the Barbarians shall descend,
And Holy Church many a time defend.



Stanza 24 "*See now the first who's like to you indeed*"

Canto III: 26-63: She gives an account of the future Este line

Next, the unconquered captain, Alberto, 26
That trophies in many a shrine will lay;
With him goes, at his side, his son Ugo,
Who'll take Milan, and the viper display;
The next, will rule Insubria, Azzo
In his dead brother's realm shall hold sway;
See Albertazzo, through whose opinion,
Berengar will be banished, and his son.

His worth is such that emperor Otho 27
Will marry him to Alda, his daughter.
O noble line! Behold, another Ugo,
The son no less worthy than the father,
He with just cause the pride will overthrow
Of the contentious Romans, and after,
Removing Otho the Third from their hands
With Pope Gregory, end all their demands.

See Fulke, who will grant to his brother 28
All his patrimony in Italy,
And for that realm will accept another,
Midst Germany, as Duke of Saxony,
Those lands inherited by his mother,
Its rulers falling from their high degree,
While Alda's line he will thus maintain,
And through his progeny her rights sustain.

Azzo the Second now his face doth show, 29
Famed for his courtesy, less so in war;
His sons Bertoldo and Albertazzo.
The former shall prove Henry's conqueror;
A river of Belgian blood will Parma know,
Staining all the fields at that city's door.
The latter will the wise Matilda wed,
She, the Great Countess, chaste and nobly bred.

His virtues of that will make him worthy, 30
Great praise indeed, in his day, to receive
Half of Italy as the kingdom's dowry,
And the hand of such a one, I believe.
Rinaldo, Bertoldo's son, you now see,
He that the greatest honour will achieve,
Of rescuing the Church from Barbarossa,
His emblem the white eagle thereafter.



Stanza 29

Azzo the Sixth shall hold Verona, 31
(Behold him here!) with all its territory,
And be styled the Marquis of Ancona,
By Otho and Honorius; twould be
A lengthy task to show every other
Of your blood, that for the Consistory
Raises the banner, or count every deed,
Aiding Holy Church, of your noble breed.

See Obizzo, Fulke, Azzi and Ugo; 32
Two Henrys, the son beside the father,
Two Guelfs; the one, to Umbria a foe,
Gaining it, shall hold Spoleto after.
Now, behold one who shall stem the flow
Of Italy's tears, turning woe to laughter.
Azzo the Seventh (there, he is the one)
By him shall vile Ezzelino be undone.

Ezzelino, that inhuman tyrant, 33
A man that shall be thought the Devil's son,
Many a city's leaders will supplant,
Wasting Ausonia, its folk undone;
Yet Azzo the Seventh reprieve shall grant,
There at Cassano see the battle won,
That Marius, Sulla, Gaius, Nero,
Shamed, and Frederick the Second also.

Azzo, with happier sceptre, shall hold 34
Ferrara by the Rover Po's fair stream,
Where Phoebus' lyre, lamenting, wept the bold
Phaethon, his son, who drove his noble team
Too near the fiery orb, so that, of old,
Its trees weep amber, where the waters gleam
O'er which pale Cygnus glides so silently;
Azzo receives it, from the Holy See.

What of his brother, Aldobrandino? 35
He will grant succour to the Papacy,
And counter the Ghibellines and Otho,
As they wage war on Rome savagely,
Each nearby township dealt a bitter blow;
Then the Umbrians, and Picentini,
He will curb, and lacking funds will borrow
From Florence; his pledge his brother Azzo;

Naught else supports his promise to repay, 36
So, he must leave his brother in their care.
His victorious ensign he'll display,
(The German army its defeat must bear)
Restoring to the Church the lands alway,
While the Earl of Celano death must share.
Then, at the service of the Papal power,
He'll die, severed in manhood's early flower.

He'll leave to his elder brother Azzo, 37
Lordship of Pesaro and Ancona,
With all the towns lying twixt the Tronto,
From mountain to shore, and the Foglia,
And virtue, that precious jewel, also,
Greatness of spirit, faith; superior
To all the riches in Fortune's dower,
Since only virtue stands against her power.



Stanza 37

Rinaldo see; valour in him will shine 38
No less radiantly, though ill Fortune
And Death, in ire, and envy of your line,
Shall yet destroy his promise all too soon;
Hear the dirge rise, in Naples he must pine,
Hostage for his father, at eve and noon.
And now the young Obizzo shows his face;
Legitimised, takes his grandfather's place.



Stanza 38

To that fair dominion he will add 39
Bright Reggio, ferocious Modena,
His valour such his subjects will prove glad
For him to serve them as martial leader.
One of his sons, Azzo the Eighth, the bad,
Will gain in dower the rule of Adria,
Bearing the standard, on Crusade, with pride;
Charles of Sicily's Beatrice his bride.

Now in a fine, and friendly, group you see, 40
Many a fair prince of outstanding fame,
Obizzo, Alberto, filled with mercy,
Aldobrandino, Nicolo the Lame.
In haste, I'll pass them by, silently;
Yet they'll add Faenza to your name,
And take a firmer grip on Adria,
Her title shared with that sea forever;



Stanza 41

And Rovigo, that cultivates the rose, 41
Which gives that town its name, as Rhodes, in Greek;
Comacchio, which fish-rich fens enclose,
That ever fears the Po's two mouths that wreak
Great havoc, though its fisher-folk, God knows,
Desire the flood that offers what they seek;
Then there's Argenta, Luco, and a store
Of towns and castles; a good thousand more.

See Nicolo, whom at a tender age, 42
The people will choose to be their lord;
Azzo and Tydeus in vain may rage,
That had hoped to gain by civic discord.
The lad's childish pursuit will be to wage
War in play, which study shall afford
This Este such true skill with sword and spear,
The flower of warriors he shall appear.

Every rebellious scheme he'll thwart, 43
And return upon its instigator,
Every stratagem, each tactic that's sought,
He'll perceive, and foil the perpetrator.
Ottobuono, the tyrant, may have brought
To Reggio and Parma sheer terror,
Yet, late to comprehend, he shall be reft
Of life, and all reclaimed he gained by theft.

That realm so fair, will after see increase, 44
Without it straying from the rightful way.
Nor shall any subject break the peace
That has not first felt injury, I say,
And so, Providence will never cease
To further its true destiny, alway,
But it shall prosper, and in peace endure,
Until the very heavens turn no more.

See Lionello; see Duke Borso too, 45
The first to add that title to your line,
The doyen of his age, a leader who
Shall reign in peace, and many arts refine.
Fierce Mars he shall imprison, hid from view,
The Fury's hands behind her back entwine,
This splendid ruler's every fond intent
To see the people of his realm content.

See Ercole, his half-brother, that might 46
Reproach his tardy neighbour's feeble pace
And his listless forces, when in the fight,
At Molinella, he the troops must face,
And stem the rout, before they take to flight,
Naught gained but his Barco tower to grace,
Besieged; yet one of whom I'm still unsure
Whether he shines brighter in peace or war.

All Lucania, with all Apulia, 47
All Calabria, shall long remember
His jousting, his skill so singular,
As to garner him great praise and honour,
There, from the King of Catalonia,
And many a victory thereafter.
The dukedom shall be his, what is more,
Owed him, of right, some thirty years before.

As much as any realm may be in debt 48
To its great ruler, his realm shall be so,
Not only shall Ferrara wider yet
Extend; its marshlands drained; against the foe
New walls created; but here he shall set
Amidst the city, on his realm bestow,
Fine temples, palaces, theatres, squares,
And a thousand things to ease our cares.

Not only shall he his broad lands defend, 49
From the winged Venetian lion's claws,
But when the Gallic forces shall descend
Upon Italy, and invade her shores,
Against his fair realm they shall not offend;
Without fear, untaxed, he her peace secures.
Not just for these, but other blessings yet,
To Ercole shall his folk prove in debt.

More so that he shall glorify your line 50
With two fair sons, like those born to Leda,
Alfonso, Ippolito the benign.
As her Castor and Pollux, forever,
Exchange a Stygian darkness malign
With the light above, each brother,
For the other, readily seeking death,
Shall brave endless night at every breath.

The great love of each other that they bear, 51
Will render the populace more secure
Than if Vulcan had twice encircled there
The walls with steel, their safety to ensure.
Alfonso with wisdom, beyond compare,
Justice shall combine, and love and law,
Such that Astrea seems returned again,
To this world that gave her so much pain.

And well were it that he should prove as wise 52
As his own father, and of like valour,
For Venice, on his flanks, her troops supplies
To one enemy and then the other,
And he with scant forces, yet replies.
I know not if mother or stepmother
Venice seems, but if a mother harsher
To her own than Procne or Medea.

Whatever time of day or night this lord 53
Shall issue forth from his realm to fight,
Rout and dismay he will the foe afford,
Whether on land or water, plain or height.
Ill led those soldiers of Romagna's horde,
That war with friends and neighbours shall ignite;
Bloodied the soil enclosed then by the Po,
The Santerno, and the Zaniolo.

And there the Pope's Spanish mercenaries, 54
Shall wage war against Alfonso's army;
Bastia's fortress they will take with ease,
Slaying its castellan, mercilessly,
For which crime, once the place he frees,
Alfonso leaves not one live enemy
Within its walls, lest they should seek their home,
Or carry news of their defeat to Rome.

He it shall be, with counsel and the sword 55
Will win great honour in Romagna's fields,
For he to France's marshals shall afford,
That great triumph where Pope Julius yields,
Or those Spaniards over whom he's lord;
Their mounts swim in blood, lost their shields,
Where midst the dead, warriors there shall be,
Of Germany, France, Greece, Spain, Italy.

He now, in priestly habit, that shall place 56
A cardinal's red hat, upon his head,
Sublime and generous, and full of grace,
Ippolito, to Holy Church is bred.
He shall, indeed, eternal matter trace,
To prose and rhyming verse his virtues wed,
By a just heaven that would add below
To our Augustus, a second Maro.

His deeds shall adorn his glorious line 57
Much as the sun adorns the living earth.
More than the moon above or stars divine,
Brighter than every light, is his worth,
Him I see, with few men neath his ensign,
Go forth in sadness, and return in mirth,
With fifteen captive gallies brought to shore,
While in the river he has sunk four more.

See one Sigismundo and the other, 58
See now Alphonso's five fair sons, all dear;
With great glory, three the earth shall cover,
Unmatched on land or sea they shall appear.
To a fair daughter of France, one brother,
Ercole the Second, is wed; see, here,
A second Ippolito's light shall shine,
His uncle's equal, and adorn the line.

Francesco is the third; the other two 59
Shall die as infants, both named Alfonso;
Yet if every branch we were to view,
The worth of your lineage proving so
Sublime, then, indeed, as I have told you,
Many a night and day twould take to show
All of your descendants, so, if you please,
I'll free these spirits and, in silence, cease.'

Thus, with the warrior-maid's permission, 60
The skilful enchantress closed her book,
And all the spirits were as swiftly gone
As they to Merlin's bones their passage took.
Then Bradamante, having gazed thereon,
Sought leave to speak anew, with a look:
'And who then were that sorrowful pair,
Twixt Ippolito and Alfonso there?

They came sighing, and with eyes downcast, 61
Deprived of confidence, and full of shame;
I saw the brothers shun them, as they passed,
As if some sin of theirs had brought them blame.'
Melissa's aspect changed, and then, at last,
She answered her, and those two shades did name:
'Ah, Guilio, Ferrante, to what pain
That evil counsel led you, for small gain!

O sons, worthy of Ercole the Good, 62
Let not their great crime forbid all mercy,
The wretched pair are yet of your own blood,
Let justice in their case yield to pity.'
Then, in softer tones be it understood,
And turning once more to Bradamante:
'I'll say no more, yet linger with the sweet,
To share what's bitter with you is not meet.'

As soon as the dawn light invades the sky, 63
You shall take the quickest way with me
To reach that fortress made of steel, on high,
Where dependent on another's mercy
Ruggiero lies; through the woods shall I
Accompany you, until we reach the sea,
For if amidst the trees you cease to stray,
You cannot err; for straight then is the way.'

Canto III: 64-68: Bradamante rides forth with Melissa as her guide

There the warrior-maid remained that night, 64
Listening to the sound of Merlin's voice
Seeking to convince her that, at first light,
Aiding Ruggiero must prove her choice;
So, leaving the cavern, then, our fair knight,
Who felt in the dawn all around rejoice,
Forth, by a dark and winding path, did ride,
The sorceress, beside her, as her guide.

They issued, from there, to a secret vale 65
Midst mountains inaccessible to man,
And all day without rest they strove to scale
The rugged cliffs, and surging torrents span;
And, since the path was tedious, to avail
Themselves of conversation was their plan,
Speaking of aught that might but make the way
Seem less severe; and, so, they passed the day.

The greater role the sorceress did take, 66
Advising Bradamante by what art
Ruggiero might be freed, and, for her sake,
How, without dying, she might play her part:
'If you were Mars, or Pallas, you'd not make
An end of that wizard, though from the start
Both Charlemagne's and Agramante's aid
Were yours, and every skill you displayed.

Not only is his fortress walled with steel, 67
Impregnable those cliffs that rear on high,
His fearsome steed is taught to plunge and wheel,
And swoop, and soar again towards the sky;
He bears a fatal shield, he will reveal
Amidst the fight, so dazzling to the eye,
So confusing to every other sense,
It leaves his foes half-dead, without defence.

And if perchance you think it might avail 68
To close your eyes, and so avoid its light,
How would you know if he then chose to sail
Towards you and attack, or soar in flight.
Yet there's a way to counter, without fail,
This and all other spells of that vile knight,
For there's a remedy, a means that's mine;
And none other in the world proves as fine.

Canto III: 69–75: Melissa tells her of the magic ring in Brunello's possession

King Agramante has a precious ring, 69
One stolen from a queen of India,
And to a baron he has lent the thing,
One Brunello, who a little further
Along the path we now take is walking.
Whoever shall wear it on their finger,
Is proof against every charm and spell;
The mage's art Brunello knows full well.

Brunello is most practised and most sly, 70
As I have said, and sent here by the king,
Commanding that his skill he should apply,
And, with the proven aid of this same ring,
Extract Ruggiero from that keep on high;
For Brunello boasted that he would bring
Ruggiero, once freed, to his master,
Who'd use him in his warfare thereafter.

Yet so that his release is owed to you, 71
And not the king, why then to free him so
From his enchanted cage you must pursue
The remedy I speak of, and must go
Three days along the coast we'll shortly view;
To that I'll lead you, and the path will show,
For, at your lodgings in the evening,
There shall you find the one who holds the ring.

That you may recognise the man on sight, 72
He has a curly head of hair, jet-black;
In stature he is scarce six palms in height,
Of beard, on cheek and chin, he has no lack;
Dull skin, and murky eyes, guarded not bright,
Thick eyebrows, a nose all squashed, his back
Clad in a courier's mantle, short and neat
His clothes likewise, to make my sketch complete.

With this man the subject you may raise, 73
Of strange enchantments and mystic charms,
And show him your desire, in a phrase,
To seize the sorcerer in your two arms.
Yet hide your knowledge of the ring, always,
That ensures such magic never harms,
And he will offer to show you the way,
And keep you company, as well he may.

Then follow close behind, and when you near 74
That mount, and see it clearly, slay the man;
Let pity not restrain you, show no fear,
And heed my counsel, execute your plan;
But let no trace of your design appear,
Such that the ring shall hide him, as it can,
Since he will disappear before your eyes,
If his lips touch the ring. Ensure he dies.'

As she was speaking, they approached the shore, 75
Where the Garonne, at Bordeaux, meets the sea.
There not without a tear, perchance a score,
They said farewell, and parted company.
Amone's daughter rode three days or more,
Beside the waves until, at evening, she
Found lodging at the inn where Brunello
Occupied a room until the morrow.

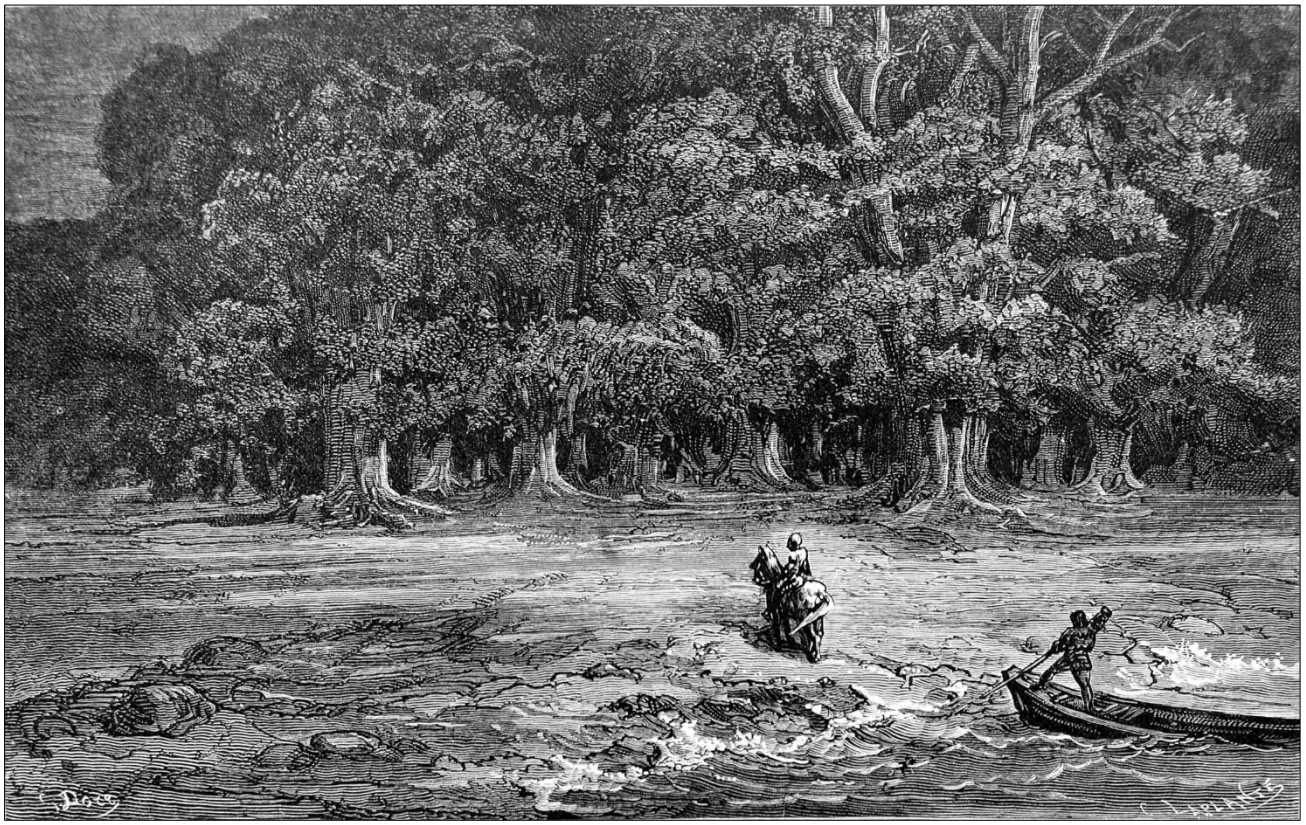
Canto III: 76-77: Bradamante finds Brunello at the inn

She recognised Brunello, at first sight, 76
His description lodged in her memory,
And asked him where he came from, outright,
And where he might be going presently.
With many a lie he answered the knight,
Yet she, forewarned, lied quite as well as he,
Concealed her name, sex, lineage and land,
While glancing, more than once, at his hand.

Her eyes, thus, rested on him, in her fear 77
Lest to his lips he raised his ring-finger,
While wishing he were far, and not so near,
Being well-informed as to his manner;
And this was the scene when to the ear
A sound arose, as they stood together,
Which I shall speak of, and explain its cause,
After my song has met with a brief pause.



Stanza 77



Canto IV: Bradamante and Ruggiero

Canto IV: 1–4: Bradamante beholds the winged steed and its master

Though dissimulation often conceals
The inner workings of an evil mind,
Many a time some good it yet reveals,
And many a benefit therein we find,
Saving us from harm in life's ordeals;
For those we meet with are not always kind,
In this our life, more clouded than serene,
Where envy bears many an ill, unseen.

If, in our bitter trials, we scarcely meet
With one true friend to whom we can display
Our secret thoughts, communicate, complete,
All we believe in, and not go astray,
Should Ruggiero's friend be less discrete,
When dealing with Brunello; one, I say,
Who was as insincere, and false, and tainted,
As by the wise Melissa he'd been painted?

So, she dissimulated, twas fitting,
With one who was a master of the lie,
And held her position, ever glancing
At those rapacious hands that met her eye,
When, behold, a mighty noise, arising,
Filled their ears, as if from out the sky.
'O Virgin Maid! O King, above!' she cried,
And quickly ran to seek its source outside.

She saw the host and his family there,
Folk at the windows, folk out in the lane,
All gazing upwards at the heavens bare,
As if a comet or eclipse showed plain;
There flew a wondrous thing, high in the air,
She scarcely credited, nor could explain,
A winged steed, gliding, in clear daylight,
Across the sky, bearing an armoured knight.



Stanza 4

Canto IV: 5-10: She sets out with Brunello to seek the sorcerer's castle

Broad, and of varied colours, was each wing, 5
And in the midst that figure shining bright,
Since his steel breastplate, a radiant thing,
Lit all around it; westward was his flight.
Yet the creature, now, did downward spring,
And midst the mountains there, was lost to sight.
This path, the host said, the sorcerer flew,
In raiding near and far, and he spoke true.

'Sometimes he flies straight upwards to the sky, 6
Then sometimes seems to skim along the ground.
He bears away those pleasant to the eye,
From all the distant countryside around,
So those who are, or think they are, all sigh,
(Though he in fact will steal what he has found)
And so, the maids are careful not to stray,
But hide their features from the light of day.

A keep, in the Pyrenees, forms his lair, 7
Built on high, by spells and incantation,
All made of steel, and it shines bright and fair,
The whole world shows no finer creation;
And many a brave knight has ventured there,
Yet none return from that destination,
For I fear,' the host said, 'naught do they gain,
But they are all imprisoned there, or slain.'

The warrior-maid thought on all he'd said, 8
Rejoicing, while believing that she would,
Without a doubt, strike the sorcerer dead,
Wielding the ring, and end his theft for good.
'Find me a bold guide, host, to ride ahead,'
She cried, 'who knows the way, by vale and wood;
For I must not delay, my heart beats so,
But find this enchanter, and destroy our foe.'

'You shall not lack a guide; with you I'll go. 9
I have the path, writ here, and then a thing
That may well aid us both,' cried Brunello,
'As we ride on our way.' He meant the ring,
But then he said no more, nor made a show
Of aught, lest that some penalty should bring.
'Twould please me, if you did so,' she replied;
Wishing to make the ring hers, thus, she lied.

She said but what she needed to, no more, 10
Concealing what might help the Saracen
To do her harm. At cock-crow, to the door
The host brought their two steeds, and once again
As dawn light filled the sky from hill to shore,
And promised a fine day, dwarf and maiden
Went their way, the sorcerer's keep to find,
Brunello now before her, now behind.

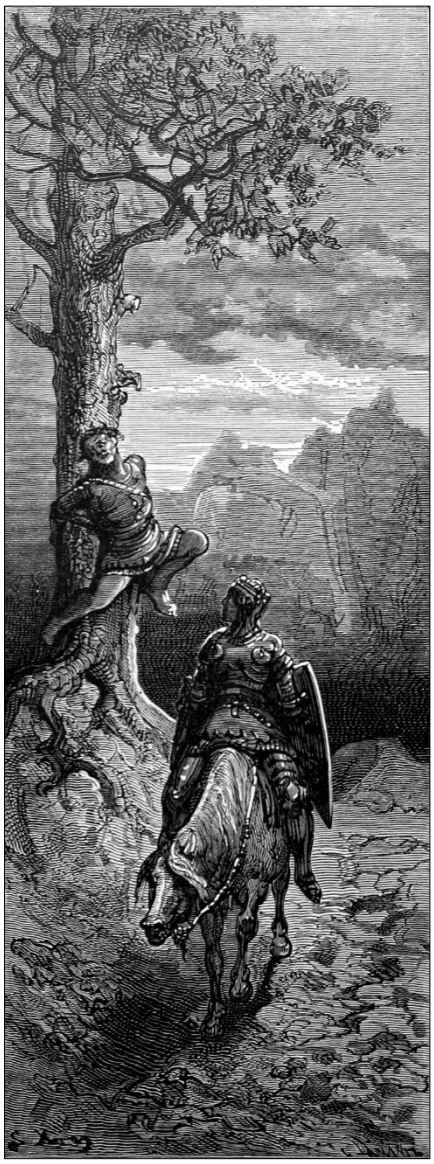
Canto IV: 11-15: She seizes his ring and issues a challenge to the sorcerer

From wood to wood they rode, and hill to hill, 11
Until they reached a Pyrenean height
From which both France and Spain the view will fill,
If the air is clear, and the day is bright,
As from the Apennines, those same eyes will
Have both the Adriatic's shores in sight,
From Camaldoli say; then, painfully,
And slowly, descended to a valley.

There, in its midst, a hill rose to the sky 12
Its summit circled by a wall of steel,
And towering, in its majesty, so high
That all the hills behind it did conceal,
And none could reach its top that could not fly,
And little to bring hope would that reveal.
'Behold,' Brunello cried, 'the wizard there,
Both men and women prisons in his lair!'

Sheer on all four sides, the mountain gleamed, 13
As if smoothed with a file, by day and night,
Nor was there any path or stair it seemed,
Whereby a living soul might climb the height.
Built for a winged creature, such they deemed
That nest and lair, where naught else could alight.
And this, the warrior-maid knew, was the hour
To seize the ring; the dwarf was in her power.

And yet she felt it wrong to wet her sword 14
With the blood of one unarmed, though vile,
For she might well obtain the ring, assured
Of overcoming him, with strength and guile.
So, the dwarf suspecting naught untoward,
She seized him, and then bound him fast the while,
To a tall fir-tree, where he might linger,
While taking the ring first, from his finger.



Stanza 14

Nor did a single groan, lament, or tear, 15
Brunello now brought forth, disturb the maid.
For she descended, filled with hope and fear,
To that small space within the tower's shade,
At a snail's pace, and then as she drew near,
Upon her horn she blew, and so conveyed
Her intent, to the mage above, outright;
With a loud cry, summoning him to fight.

Canto IV: 16-21: They fight and the sorcerer unveils his shield

The enchanter waited not but, swiftly, 16
He issued from the gate, at her loud cry;
The winged creature bore him, steadily
Towards her, plunging earthwards from on high.
Ferocious the armed knight seemed to be,
And yet the maid was comforted thereby,
For he appeared to lack a lance or sword,
Or aught else that might some harm afford.

He bore naught but a shield, on his left arm, 17
A scarlet cover hiding it from view;
He held a book in his right hand; a charm
He read aloud, to conjure wonders new.
And, now, a phantom lance caused her alarm,
While he scarce raised an eyelid; now, there flew
A club or mace that kept the maid at bay,
Without his touch, who glided far away.

It was not formed by magic, his fell steed, 18
But born of a mare, quite naturally,
Though fathered by a griffin and, indeed,
Was winged as was its sire, quite splendidly.
While the forelegs, beak and crest agreed
With that creature, though all else, equally,
Conformed to the mother; such are found
Midst Riphaean hills, northern, and ice-bound.

This 'hippogriff' he lured by incantation 19
From its far land, and waited not, but sought
To tame it and, with constant dedication
To the task, soon all he wished he wrought;
And in a month nigh made it his creation,
Such that it mastered every move he taught.
And then on earth, or through the air, he rode;
All else magic, but that which he bestrode.

Though magic could indeed change its colour, 20
Making its hide seem yellow now, or red;
The maiden was undeceived however,
For the wearer of the ring, was not misled.
Yet all her blows but empty air did sever,
As here and there she rode, in fear and dread,
Labouring and striving, struggling there,
To demonstrate her skills in that affair.

And when she'd exercised herself awhile 21
On horseback, she leapt, neatly, to the ground,
In order better to achieve, by guile,
Melissa's tactics, ever wise and sound.
The mage to work his final spell, meanwhile
Not knowing of the ring, at last unbound
His shield and, sure of blinding all below,
Swooped, and veiled her in its baleful glow.

Canto IV: 22-26: Bradamante overcomes his magic

He might well have shown his shield from the start, 22
Not needing, then, to keep the maid at bay,
But liked to see brave knights display their art,
A lance thrust, or a good sharp sword at play,
As the cat prefers the mouse to act its part,
And toys with it, in a mischievous way,
Then grows bored and bites it, by and by,
And, in the end, determines it should die.

The mage, in this, I liken to the cat, 23
The maiden to the mouse, each had their role,
But then my simile falls somewhat flat,
For with the ring the maiden sought her goal,
Intent upon the task that she was at,
Of fighting him, while staying sound and whole;
So, when she saw the naked shield appear,
She closed her eyes, and fell, as if in fear.

Not because the light from it could harm her, 24
As it had others who had met its glare,
But that, despite himself, the sorcerer
Might now descend, and to the earth repair.
Nor was she wrong in all she did infer,
No sooner did she fall than, in the air,
The sorcerer turned his strange steed around,
Which, landing swiftly, settled on the ground.

Leaving the shield, which he'd already veiled, 25
Hanging from his saddle-bow, he went
To seek the warrior-maid who had availed
Herself of cover, like a wolf content
To wait in ambush for the prey she's trailed.
Then the maid leapt forth, with fierce intent,
To seize the wretch, whose book fell from his hand,
His magic spells no more at his command.

He ran towards her, with a chain he bore 26
Around his waist, believing he could bind
The warrior, since he'd done the like before;
At least that was the purpose in his mind.
But she threw him, expertly, to the floor;
Although, for this, a fair excuse I find,
The old man's strength appearing none too great,
When matched against the maid I celebrate.

Canto IV: 27-36: Atlante, the sorcerer, yields her an explanation

Victorious, the maiden raised her sword, 27
Intending to remove the wizard's head,
And yet, as if base vengeance she abhorred,
Now showed the sorcerer mercy instead;
The visage that she viewed, to age inured,
Was but a face of woe, and filled with dread;
Its wrinkles, the white hair above, did show
His age as three score years and ten, or so.



Stanza 27

'For God's sake, slay me, youth!' the wizard cried, 28
Revealing ire, and spite, and bitterness,
Yet she was as keen to see his wish denied
As he to end his life; she longed, no less,
To know why a sorcerer would decide
To build a fortress, midst the wilderness,
And who he might be, that had built so high,
And wrought such outrage on the lands nearby.

'Yet not through some malign intent, alas,' 29
The aged wizard answered, in his woe,
'Did I create, upon this solid mass
Of rock that soars above the vale below,
A keep, of which I am the lord, and pass
For a thief, but to save, by doing so,
A beloved knight who, fate prophesies,
Else through treason, as a Christian, dies.

For none, between the Poles, has ever seen 30
A youth that is so handsome, or so fine,
Ruggiero by name, and I have been
His tutor since a child, his care was mine;
I am Atlante. Love of fame, I ween,
And how the stars within his chart align,
Led him to France in service of his king,
Yet I to him another fate would bring.

I only built the mighty fortress here 31
To hold Ruggiero most securely,
Who was then captured by me as, I fear,
I've failed to capture you, and, equally,
Fair ladies, and many a man his peer,
I seized, also, to bear him company,
So that if freedom ever proved his wish,
Sweet friendship might such desires extinguish.

So long as he and they seek not to leave, 32
I grant them every other pleasure there;
Whatsoever in this world they believe
They might like, I obtain or I prepare;
Whatever hearts long for, and minds conceive,
Such songs, games, dance, dress, food my captives share.
The seed well sown, a rich crop it would yield,
And yet you venture here, and win the field.

Oh, if your heart is lovely as your face, 33
Do not reject this, my sincere counsel:
Come, take the shield, I yield it you with grace,
And then, the creature shall be yours as well.
Leave all within my castle still in place,
Or take a friend or two, that therein dwell,
Or take all who are there, I'll not say no,
As long as you leave me Ruggerio.

Or if you choose to take him from the tower, 34
And he in France must, by your wish, remain,
Be pleased to free my soul, this very hour,
From this vile body that brings naught but pain!'
'You'll see him freed, for such is in my power,'
The maid replied, 'though loudly you complain.
Deign not to offer me your shield and steed;
All that was yours, now mine, you here concede.

Nor if all here were yours to take or give, 35
Would the thing be fitting; it seems to me.
You say you prison him that he might live,
And thus escape his ill-starred destiny,
Yet that you cannot know, nor heaven's sieve
May comprehend, nor alter what shall be;
For since you failed to prophesy your fall,
Far less another's fate shall you forestall.

Pray not to me for death, for your prayer 36
Will prove in vain; but if such you desire
Though all the world should seek your life to spare,
Strong souls win that to which they may aspire.
Yet, ere your spirit leaves your flesh, prepare
To free your prisoners, void your keep entire.'
So spoke the warrior, and drove him on
Towards the high mount, and the keep thereon.

Canto IV: 37-41: Bradamante frees Ruggiero and the other captives

Bound with his own chain, the enchanter, 37
Atlante, went before, the maid behind.
She scarcely trusted him, though his manner
Seemed much subdued to her cautious mind.
They'd gone but a few paces, together,
Before they came upon a stair that twined,
Incised within the rock, about that same,
And climbed till to the castle gate they came.

Atlante, at the threshold, raised a stone, 38
Engraved with arcane characters and signs,
And vessels lay beneath, to sight unknown;
Eternal fires burned, deep in their confines.
These the wizard shattered; all was flown,
The castle gone, bare the mount's outlines,
Now, empty slopes were all that met the eye,
As if no keep had towered beneath that sky.

The mage had suddenly escaped the maid. 39
He fled, a thrush from out the fowler's snare,
Freeing the knights and ladies he'd conveyed
To their prison, now vanished in thin air.
Bereft of their fine lodgings, they surveyed
The deserted summit, and could but stare,
And many there were grieved, in full measure,
That freedom had robbed them of their pleasure.

There stood Gradasso, there Sacripante, 40
There too was the noble knight, Prasildo,
Who'd accompanied Rinaldo, on his way
From the Levant, and his friend, Iroldo.
And now, at last, the fair Bradamante,
Has found her beloved Ruggiero,
Who when he saw that it was her, truly,
Welcomed her, and thanked her most profusely.

He greeted her, whom, more than his own eyes, 41
More than his heart, far more than his own life,
He'd loved since she, though in martial guise,
Doffing her helm, was wounded in the strife;
Of which I could relate more and, likewise,
How they then searched, confusion being rife,
Midst the wood for each other, day and night;
While destined not till now to reunite.

Canto IV: 42-46: Ruggiero, unwisely, takes to the air, astride the hippogriff

Once they had spoken, and he understood 42
That she alone had free him from his gaol,
His felt great joyfulness, as well he should,
And hailed his own good fortune. To the dale,
From the mount, they descended, till they stood
Where the maiden had laboured to prevail,
And where the sorcerer was made to yield.
She saw the hippogriff still bore the shield.

The maiden went to seize it by the rein, 43
The creature stood stock still, till she was nigh,
And then it spread its wings, and flew again,
Settling upon the slope, though not too high.
She followed, and the same thing did obtain,
It flew some way, then dropped to earth nearby.
Much as a crow behaves, on sandy ground,
Teasing a dog, leading it round and round.

Gradasso, Ruggiero, with the king, 44
Sacripante, and the rest, watched its flight,
Now here, now there, quietly pursuing,
Hoping it might turn back, and then alight.
Yet, the creature, its same ploy renewing,
Left them, one by one, on some rocky height,
Or deep in some moist and stony hollow;
But dropped beside the last, Ruggiero.

This, Atlante the mage had brought to be, 45
Whose deepest wish was ever as before,
To thwart young Ruggerio's destiny;
This was his only thought and care, therefore
He'd sent the hippogriff to, suddenly,
Bear him from Europe to a distant shore.
Ruggiero seized its bridle, but, lo,
The winged creature refused to follow.

Ruggiero, dismounting from his steed, 46
(Frontino was the lively charger's name)
Now sprang onto that mount of different breed,
And with his spurs dug deep into the same.
Its proud heart stirred, it moved now, for, indeed,
Bearing the youth aloft was its true aim,
Then, swifter than a falcon, soared away,
Whose lord unhoods it, and points out the prey.

Canto IV: 47-50: The hippogriff bears Ruggerio towards the west

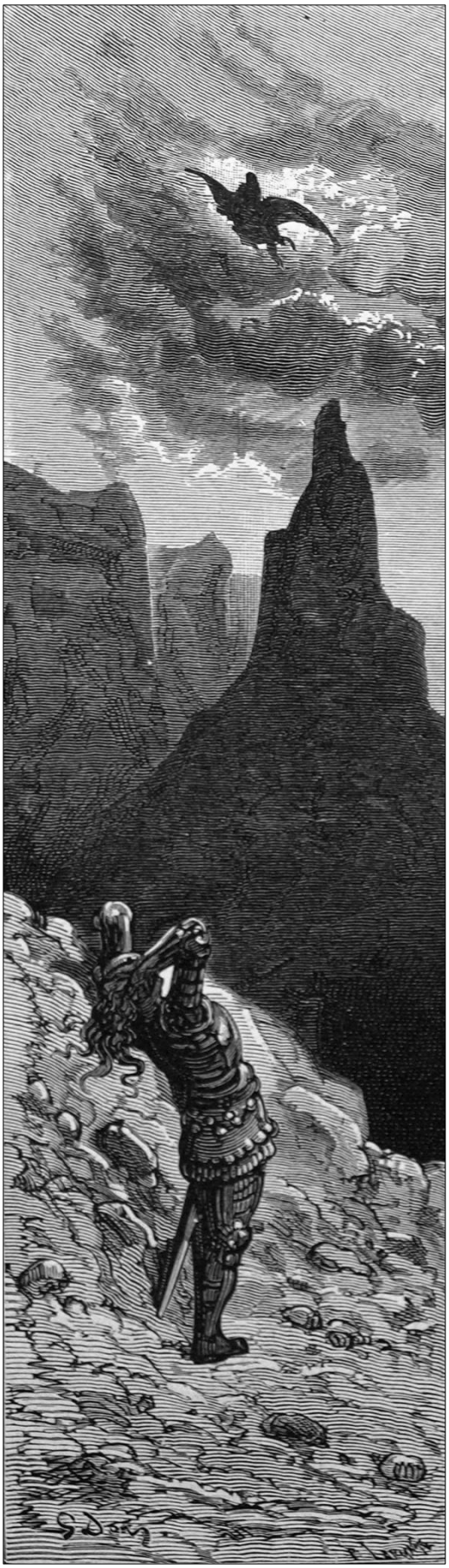
Bradamante, seeing them rise on high, 47
And her Ruggiero in such danger,
Stood mazed, astounded, peering at the sky,
And needed sundry moments to recover,
For he was not the first such youth to fly;
She knew of Ganymede, whom Jupiter
Had seized, and feared lest her Ruggiero
No less fair and noble, were treated so.



Stanza 44

She kept the flying creature in her sight, 48
Her gaze fixed on them, till they disappeared
Where eyes, unable to pursue their flight,
Must leave the heart to follow, all afeared;
Though all her tears and sighs for her lost knight,
Would bring but little comfort it appeared.
With Ruggiero vanished from her view,
Her eyes fell on his warhorse, whom she knew.

Not wishing to abandon poor Frontino, 49
That rich prey, to some random passer-by,
She decided to take him with her, so
As to keep him for her love, lost on high.
Meanwhile the hippogriff, with Ruggiero,
Unable to return, soared through the sky,
While the valleys and mountains passed below,
Their heights and depths one flat and even flow.



Stanza 48

When the steed had reached a point, high above, 50
Where it dwindled to a dot in the sky,
Towards the west, it then began to move,
Where the sun, in Cancer, set; it could fly,
Through the air, like a vessel set to prove
Its speed, whene'er propitious breezes sigh.
But we must leave the steed, and Ruggiero,
And turn our thoughts, at once, to Rinaldo.

Canto IV: 51-53: We return to Rinaldo, who has reached Scotland

Rinaldo had been driven, day after day, 51
Before the gale, over wide breadths of sea;
Swiftly towards the north, and then away
Beneath the western sky, blown, equally;
Till Scotland's shores, at last, were on display,
That Caledonian Forest, where he
Might hear within the stands of ancient oak,
Bold knights duelling, sounding stroke on stroke.

For many a knight-errant wandered there; 52
Those famous throughout Britain one might see;
From near and far, came those that arms did bear,
From France, from Norway, and from Germany.
None lacking valour its dark depths would dare;
Those seeking honour, found death frequently.
There did Lancelot, and Tristan, glory gain,
Sir Galahad, King Arthur, Lord Gawain,

Knights of The Round Table, old or new; 53
More than one monument, finely wrought,
Proof of their valiant deeds, all might view.
Next Bayard, and his arms, Rinaldo sought,
For he, on shore, his aim would now pursue,
Telling the vessel's master that had brought
Him there, to sail south, then await his need,
In the harbour, at Berwick-upon-Tweed.



Stanza 51

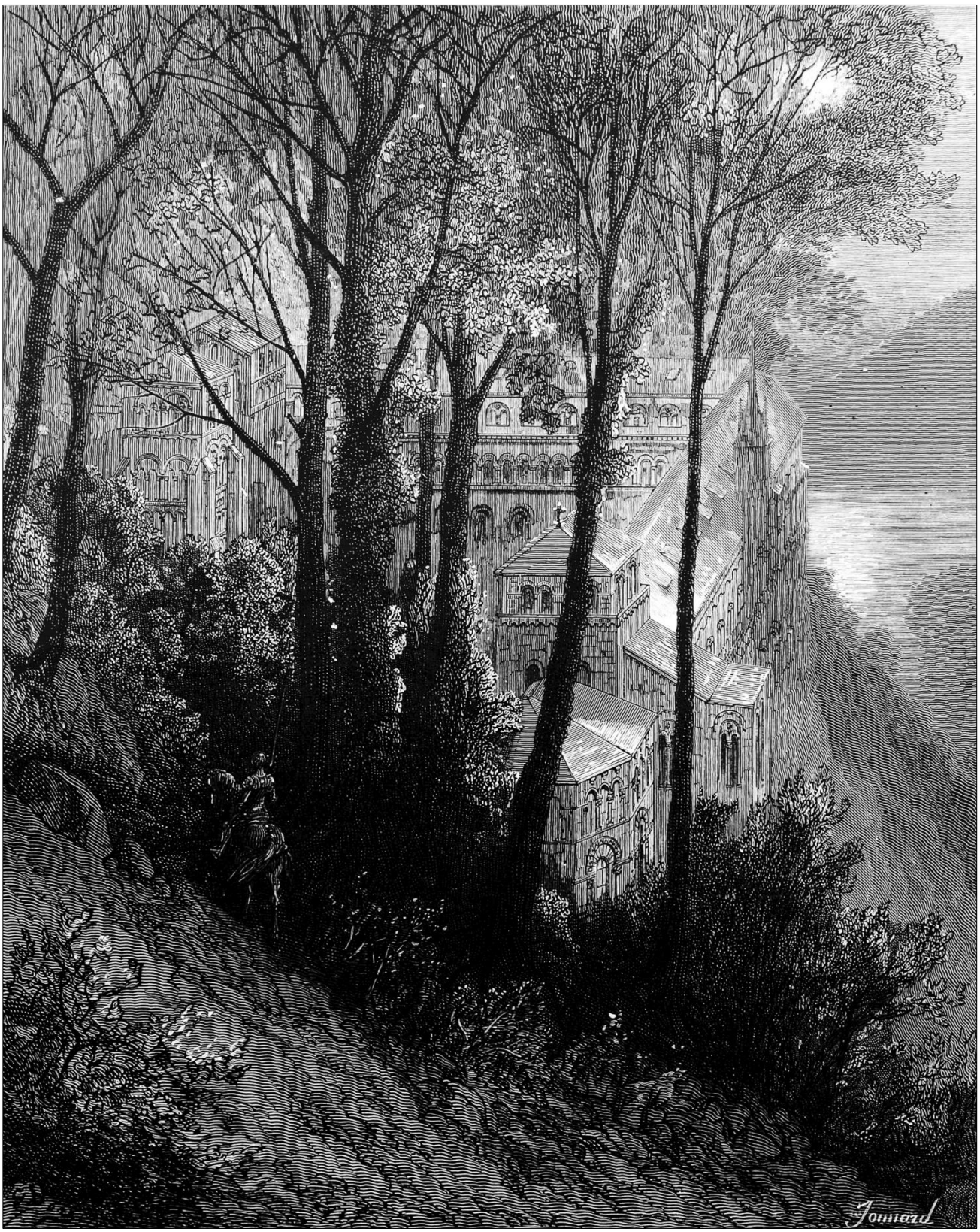
CANTO IV: 54-62: HE HEARS OF THE PLIGHT OF GINEVRA, A KING'S DAUGHTER

Devoid of squire, or other company, 54
Through that vast, ancient forest rode the knight,
Choosing now this, now that, path; constantly,
Hoping for some fair quest that might delight.
He headed that first day for an abbey
Where any that passed by might spend the night,
For a good deal of its wealth thus was spent,
In lodging those upon adventure bent.

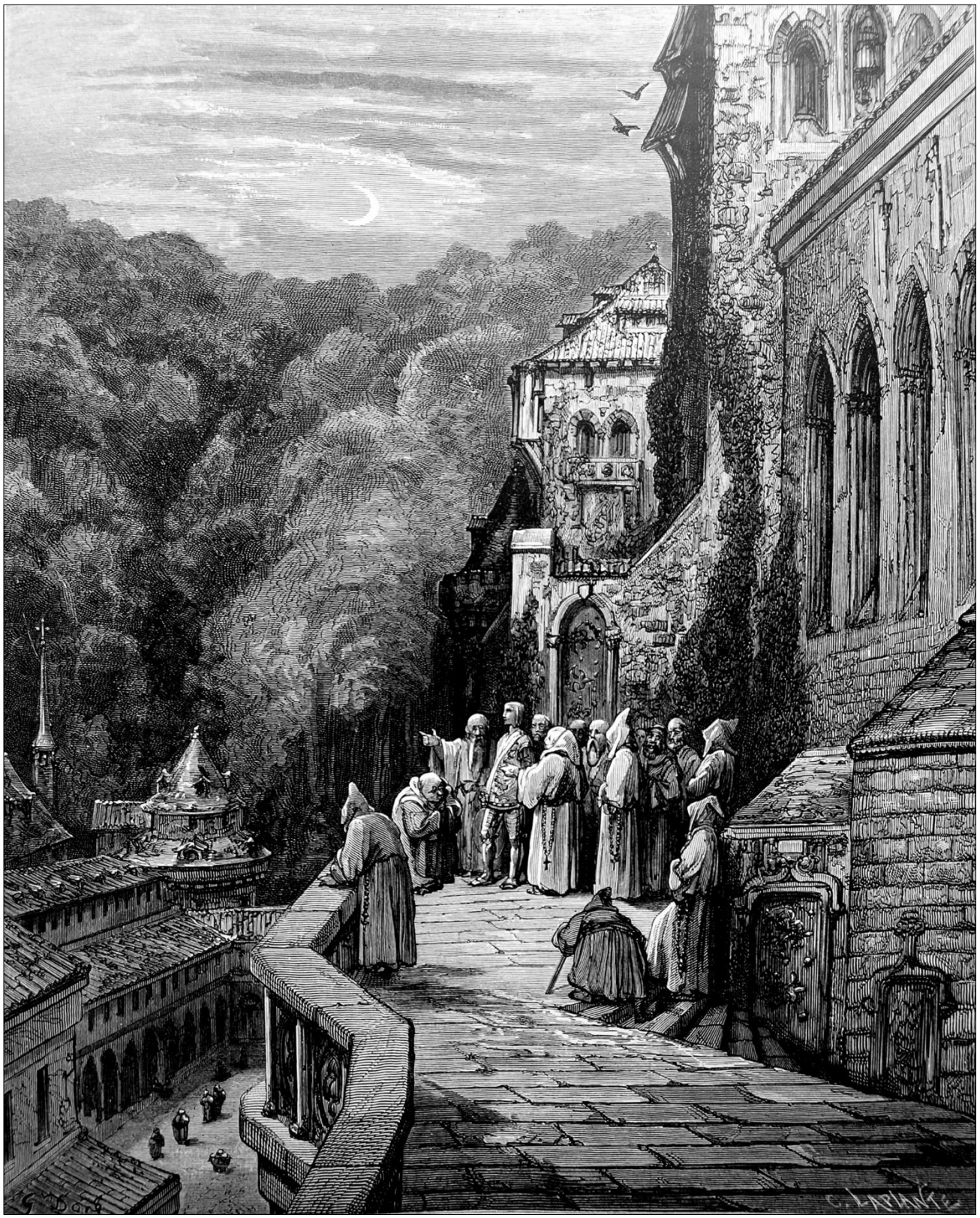
The abbot and the monks gave him good cheer, 55
And welcomed him; of them he sought to know,
(Though not before he'd doffed his martial gear,
And filled his stomach, from a plate or so)
Whether some brave adventure might appear
From which a host of valiant deeds might flow,
Whereby a man might prove whether merit
Or blame was his lot, and thus might profit.

They replied that wandering in the forest 56
With many a strange adventure he'd meet,
But, there, action won small fame, they confessed,
Since the place was as obscure as their retreat.
'Seek,' they said, 'to go where you'll be blessed
Your deeds not buried underneath your feet,
Where, after all the weariness and pain,
Glory will follow, and your name remain.

And if you would seek to prove your valour, 57
Prepare to hear of a quest as worthy
As any that brought a brave knight honour
In this age, or in some past century.
In need of aid is our king's fair daughter,
Who must defend herself, continually,
Against a baron, called Lurciano,
Who'd mar her name, and would destroy her so.



Stanza 54 "*Through that vast, ancient forest rode the knight*"



Stanza 56 *"'Seek,' they said, 'to go where you'll be blessed'"*



Stanza 55

For he has denounced her to her father, 58
(Without good reason, more, indeed, from spite)
And claims that he saw her lead her lover
To her own chamber, in the dead of night.
And death by fire is her fate, moreover,
According to our law, unless some knight,
Within this month, will be her champion,
And prove the baron lies, ere it be done.

Scotland's harsh laws, impious and severe, 59
State that a lady, of high rank or low,
Who lies with any but her husband here,
If she is but accused, to death must go.
Nor is there remedy should none appear
To champion her cause, and strike a blow,
And act as her defence, and so maintain
Her innocence, and thus remove her bane.

Grieving for his daughter then, our king, 60
(Ginevra is the guiltless lady's name)
In town and city, has proclaimed the thing,
And that if one would champion that same,
Counter the case the baron sought to bring,
(If he but of some fair lineage came)
She would be wed to him, with a dowry,
Of which so noble a maid is worthy.

But if no knight appears, to fight for her, 61
Or does, but fails to conquer, then she dies.
Such seems for you a more fitting venture
Than wandering the forest and, likewise,
There's the fame you'd win and the honour,
That would be yours for ever, and the prize,
The fairest flower of maids of tender years,
That twixt India and Atlas' mount appears;

And riches would be yours, a realm indeed, 62
So, you might live content for all your days;
And the king's favour, if by your brave deed
His honour is increased – dim glow its rays;
Then, by the laws of chivalry, at need,
You're obliged to champion such always;
Since, she is, by common opinion,
Of modesty, in truth, the paragon.'

Canto IV: 63-67: Rinaldo decides to champion the lady

Rinaldo thought a while, and then replied: 63
'Maidens must perish then because they choose
To embrace their love and in one confide
Whose very passion does the deed excuse!
Accursed are the laws by which she's tried
And cursed be he who seeks so to abuse
Such a maid. Slay, rather, her accuser,
Than one who grants new life to her lover.

Whether the tale that's told be false or true, 64
I care not; if she has so blessed her love,
Although, indeed, tis brought to public view,
Yet such an action I must still approve.
My every thought's bent upon her rescue;
Grant me a guide, and I shall swift remove
To where'er her accuser now doth stand,
And, trust to God, I'll counter his demand.

I may not claim she did not do the deed, 65
Lest I, unwittingly, proclaim a lie;
I simply say, whatever be your creed,
No reason can I see why she should die;
And that vile law's unjust, which so decreed,
One of undue severity, say I,
So iniquitous it must be repealed,
And to a new and better law shall yield.

If the same ardour, if a like desire, 66
Moves both the sexes, and both equally,
To that sweet end of love, and with like fire,
In which sad folk naught but excess can see,
Why should the woman take the blame entire?
Merely for doing what the man is free
To do with as many maids as he would,
And go unpunished, as if twere a good!

They are rendered unequal by this law, 67
A wrong's expressly done to the woman.
God willing, I will show tis so, before
All men; tis borne too long, its time is done!'
All there agreed it should be used no more,
And that their sires were wrong, every one,
Who had consented to such injustice,
And the king, if he would not amend this.

Canto IV: 68-72: Rinaldo rescues a maiden

When with its white, and crimson blush, the dawn 68
Heralded the day, and the skies grew clear,
Rinaldo, armed, and by good Bayard borne,
Rode with his guide, through the forest drear
And dense, mile after mile, on paths unworn,
Until the knight and his escort drew near
To the city where her case had been moved,
And the maid's innocence must now be proved.

Now, having sought the swiftest path to take, 69
They had left the broader track, completely,
When suddenly a sound arose, to break,
The silence, amidst the woods, and swiftly
He spurred Bayard, the other too did rake
His palfrey's sides, and plunged to a valley,
Whence came the sounds; and, twixt two villains there,
He saw a lady, who seemed passing fair.

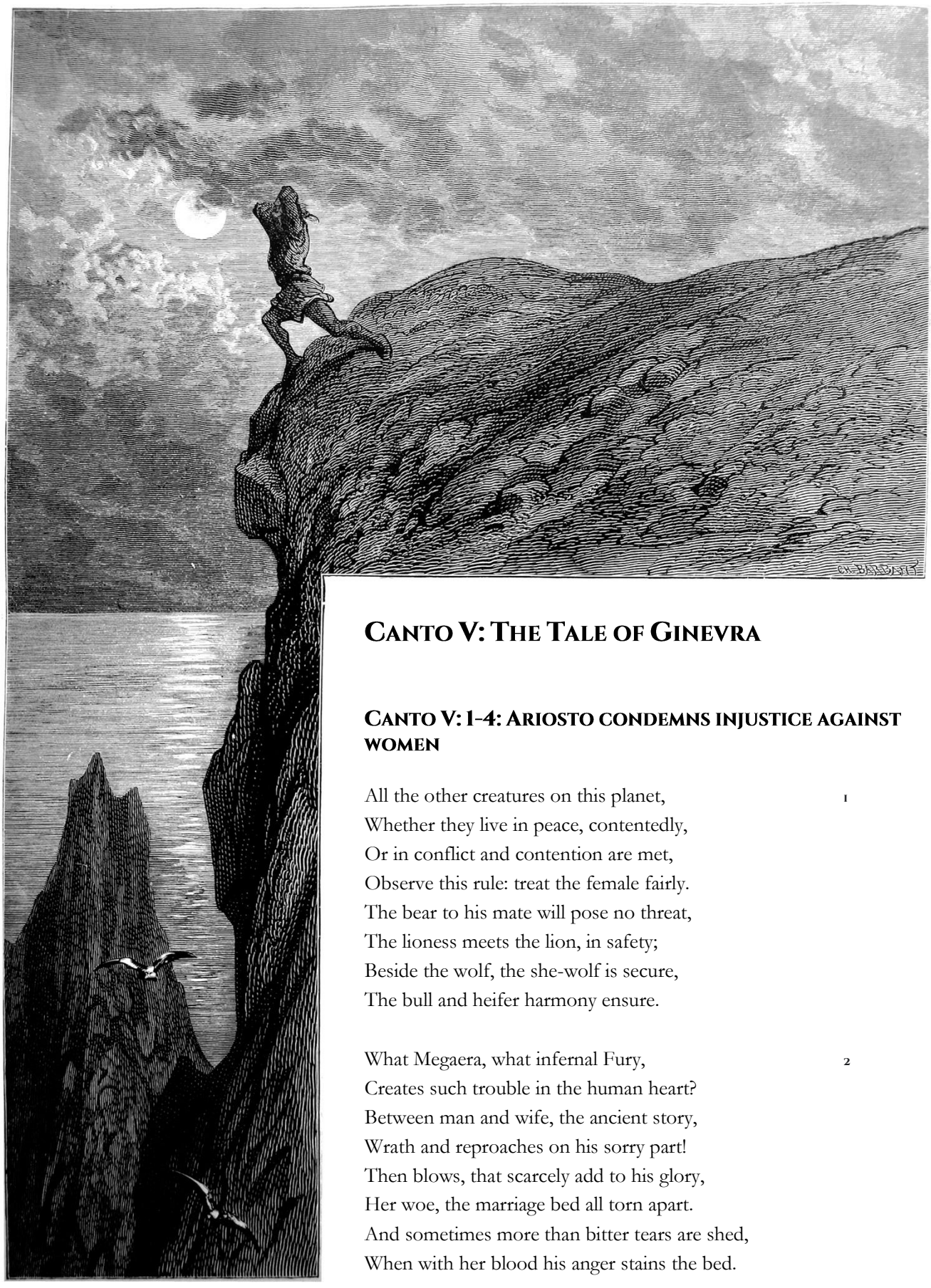
Yet she was as tearful, and full of woe, 70
As any maid on this earth was, ever,
Hastened to her death, by this vile duo
That sought to redden the grass around her.
She, with her prayers, looked for pity though,
And hoped to stave off death, by her fervour.
Came now Rinaldo, and to their surprise
Rode at the villains, with threatening cries.

On seeing help arrive, they turned and ran, 71
While he considered their two backs in flight;
To hide in that deep vale was all their plan,
Though their pursuit seemed worthless to the knight.
He sought the tearful lady, then began
To question her as to the fault that might
Have led to this, while ordering the guide
To take her up behind him, and so ride.

Once on their way, he could see her nearer, 72
And though her face, indeed, still showed dismay,
He found her beautiful, marked her sweet manner,
Despite the fear of death that turns one grey.
Then, once more, who was the man, he asked her,
Who'd brought about her woeful state that day.
In humble tones she answered his request, though
I'll defer it to another canto.



Stanza 71



Canto V: The Tale of Ginevra

Canto V: 1-4: Ariosto condemns injustice against women

All the other creatures on this planet, 1
Whether they live in peace, contentedly,
Or in conflict and contention are met,
Observe this rule: treat the female fairly.
The bear to his mate will pose no threat,
The lioness meets the lion, in safety;
Beside the wolf, the she-wolf is secure,
The bull and heifer harmony ensure.

What Megaera, what infernal Fury, 2
Creates such trouble in the human heart?
Between man and wife, the ancient story,
Wrath and reproaches on his sorry part!
Then blows, that scarcely add to his glory,
Her woe, the marriage bed all torn apart.
And sometimes more than bitter tears are shed,
When with her blood his anger stains the bed.

Not simply a mere crime, it seems to me 3
His act is opposed to God and Nature,
He that a woman's hair tears, viciously,
Or strikes a lovely maid, for his pleasure.
While he who uses poison, or would see
Her flesh robbed of the soul, its great treasure,
Should ne'er be thought a spirit, eternal,
But a demon sent from depths infernal.

And such the pair of villains must have been 4
That fled Rinaldo, freeing the lady,
And there, amidst the valley's depths, unseen,
Were lost to human knowledge, completely.
I left the maid at that point in our scene
Where she was about to tell the story
Of her ills to the paladin, her friend,
A tale which I shall follow to the end.

Canto V: 5-10: The lady, Dalinda, who was Ginevra's companion, begins her tale

The lady thus began: 'Now, you shall hear 5
A tale of greater cruelty than is known
From Mycenae, Thebes, or Argos, I fear,
Or told of some more blighted royal throne.
And I believe that if the sun shines here
Less than in other regions then this zone
It scorns, or else appears unwillingly,
Lest this most savage people it should see.

Every age has shown that men will ever 6
Prove savage and cruel towards their foes
But to seek the death of those who've never
Wished us but good, a rare injustice shows.
And, that you may comprehend it better,
And know the true reason why they chose
To seek my death, I'll tell you of this thing,
The tale complete, from its first beginning.

I'd have you know that, at a tender age, 7
I entered Princess Ginevra's service,
Was raised with her and, at every stage,
Held honourable place at court for this.
But envious Love sought then to engage
My heart, and played that cruel game of his,
Such that he made the Duke of Albany
Seem fairest among lords and knights, to me.

Because he showed me more love than any, 8
Him was I moved to love, with all my heart.
Yet the adage is true: the face we see,
But to judge what's within we lack the art.
Trusting in him, loving amorously,
I ceased not till, in bed, I played my part;
Careless that it was in that room ever
Retained as Ginevra's private chamber.

There, she kept all that occupied her care, 9
And there, indeed, many a time would sleep.
From it, a balcony hung, in mid-air,
As out the very wall it seemed to leap.
My lover, he would climb to seek me there,
For up a ladder made of rope he'd creep,
That I'd let down from that high balcony,
Whenever I wished him to lie with me.



Stanza 9

And many a time I'd request his presence, 10
For Ginevra would often sleep elsewhere,
Due to the heat or chill, and her absence
Left me but to release that hempen stair;
And none learned of our tryst for, in essence,
That part of the palace overlooked a bare
And empty scene of half-ruined buildings,
Whence none did view, night or day, our meetings.

Canto V: 11-15: Her lover, Polinesso, persuades her to further his suit with Ginevra

So, we continued our amorous game, 11
And saw each other often, night and day,
For many a month, while I felt the flame
Of deepening love, a fire within, alway.
Yet I was blind, for he knew not the same,
Loving but little, leading me astray.
Until all his deception was revealed,
By certain signs, ones not be concealed.

He disclosed that he was now the suitor 12
Of our Princess Ginevra. I know not
Whether this began before or after
He had won my heart; such was my lot,
And judge how powerfully this lover
Now commanded that heart, all shame forgot,
For he revealed much, and blushed not at all,
But sought my aid; I wrought my own downfall.

Tis true he claimed his love for her was less, 13
And that it was no true love he bore her,
Yet by simulating amorousness,
He'd every hope of wedding her thereafter.
Gladly would the king their union bless,
If such were requested by his daughter;
For none, by blood or rank, was more worthy,
In all the kingdom, of that noble lady.

He persuaded me that if, by my aid, 14
It was so, and he the king's son-in-law,
(Surely, I saw his fortune must be made,
Since no man would rank higher, he was sure)
The merit would be mine, and never fade,
For he'd recall my deed for evermore;
And above his wife, and every other,
He would cherish me, and be my lover.

I, intent on pleasing him entirely, 15
I, never seeking to oppose his wish,
Being content in his presence solely,
Seized the opportunity, with relish,
To speak of him, sing his praises, loudly,
And so, achieve his object in all this,
To win, through all my efforts, and my art,
Possession of Princess Ginevra's heart.

Canto V: 16-20: But Ginevra falls in love with Ariodante

God knows, in every way that I might, 16
I did what I could to achieve his aim,
But with Ginevra naught would go aright,
Nor could I further, thus, my lover's claim;
For all her thoughts and wishes did alight,
Every fond feeling that you might name,
Upon a noble, fair, and courteous lord,
That was visiting Scotland, from abroad.

He came, with his young brother to our court, 17
From Italy, and such was his command
Of weapons and jousting that it was thought
None was his equal throughout all the land.
The king loved him, and great reward it brought,
For he granted him, with generous hand,
Towns and castles, rendering him the peer
Of the greatest and richest barons here.

Ariodante was this fair knight's name, 18
Dear to the king, dearer to the daughter,
Who held a great opinion of that same,
Though more because she knew that he loved her.
Not Vesuvius, nor Aetna's fire and flame,
Nor ruined Troy, alight, e'er burned brighter
Than did his love for her, she realised;
This Ariodante she loved and prized.



Stanza 18

Now, the great love that for this lord she bore 19
With perfect loyalty, and honest heart,
Was the true reason why she'd know no more
Of Albany, nor the least hope impart.
If I, for him, a hearing did implore,
Or sought in any way to take his part,
The more antagonistic she became,
The less she wished to hear my lover's name.

Often, I would console him, and would say 20
That he should quit so vain an enterprise,
Nor hope to change her mind in any way
Since another seemed fairer to her eyes;
And that to me it was as clear as day
That such flames within her heart did rise
That the western ocean's waters, entire,
Ne'er would serve to quench so great a fire.

Canto V: 21-25: Polinesso schemes against Ginevra and Ariodante

My Polinesso, the Duke of Albany, 21
Hearing from me, full oft, this same sad tale,
Of how his love was disdained completely,
Realised my efforts seemed bound to fail.
Not a trace of love for her did I now see,
But finding the other suitor might prevail,
Polinesso, whose pride could but suffer,
Turned now from love to hatred and anger.

Between Ginevra and her love, he sought 22
To sow such conflict and such true discord
That they would never reconcile, so fraught
Would be those two, with enmity their lord;
For such shame on Ginevra would be brought
Nor life nor death could then relief afford.
With me he spoke not of this ill design,
Following his own counsel, and not mine.

Deciding, 'My Dalinda,' thus, he cried, 23
(Dalinda is indeed my name) 'you know
That from a single root, if one's denied
Some two, or four, or six new shoots will grow.
So too, in this, the wish may still abide,
Though robbed of all success, and thwarted so.
Things ever seek to flourish; what aspires,
Will ever strive to gain what it desires.

Nor do I crave her for herself; the pleasure 24
Is but in hoping that one's plan succeeds,
And if not now effected, still, at leisure,
I may yet contemplate the joy it breeds.
And so, when I come to you, my treasure,
Dress in the clothing she no longer needs
When naked in her bed, all she sets by,
That you may seem as she does to the eye.

Study and imitate her style, her hair, 25
Do everything you can to look the same,
Then, from the balcony, let down the stair,
That I may climb, and so my love may claim.
I shall imagine, thus, that she is there,
Since both will seem alike, in this our game,
And so, I hope, through this but slight deceit,
To quench my passion, and contentment greet.'

Canto V: 26-32: Polinesso and Ariodante agree to exchange confidences

Those were his words. And I who was beguiled, 26
And not myself, failed to appreciate
This this design he preached, as to a child,
Was the concoction of a reprobate;
And so, I lowered the ladder, reconciled
To all he wished, and thus was dressed to bait
His snare, dressed as Ginevra, not seeing
The harm that I might do, in so agreeing.

Meanwhile the Duke had sought conversation 27
With Ariodante (for they had been friends
Before my Duke of Albany's fixation
On Ginevra). He spoke to serve his ends:
'How slight it seems, the remuneration
I earn from you, yet my affection bends
Towards you ever, one whom I respect
More than many another should expect.

I'm sure you're aware of the love of old 28
That holds between myself and Ginevra,
Whom in lawful marriage I would enfold,
Claiming her hand from my lord and master.
Why cause us trouble now? Why so bold
As to seek a heart that's bound forever?
I would respect your case, and not repine,
If I were in your place, and you in mine.'

'And I,' said Ariodante, 'can but wonder, 29
At you who seem quite unaware that I
Was her true beloved ere you ever
Knew of the lady, or she caught your eye.
I swear the love between us could never
Be more ardent, and she would testify
That for myself alone she'll say "I do."
While, certainly, she has no love for you.

Why have you not the same respect for me, 30
In the cause of friendship, that you demand,
Which I would show for you, assuredly,
If, indeed, her love was yours to command?
Tis I who expect to wed her shortly,
And though you may have greater wealth to hand,
The king favours me, as events will prove,
And unlike you, I now possess her love.'

'Ah,' the Duke replied, 'how great the error 31
To which this mad love of yours has led you!
You think she longs for you, and no other,
And I believe the same; both can't be true!
To me your whole affair you shall discover,
While I shall reveal all mine to your view,
And let him who has the worst of it, yield,
Go seek for love elsewhere, and quit the field.

And I'm prepared, if you would have me swear 32
That I'll say naught of aught you might reveal,
To do so, if you'll pledge, in this affair,
That whate'er I may say you will conceal.'
They came to an agreement, then and there,
And on the Bible, next, their pact did seal.
Granted that vow of silence each did seek,
Ariodante was the first to speak.

Canto V: 33-35: Ariodante reveals his situation

He now explained, plainly and openly, 33
How the thing stood regarding Ginevra.
In speech and writing, she had sworn that she
Would never be married to another,
And, if the king objected, she would be
One who refused marriage ever after,
For she would be no other suitor's wife,
And single would remain, all of her life.

Then he hoped he had shown by his valour, 34
Which many a time he had demonstrated,
His true worth, for by his fame and honour
That of the king was also elevated,
Such that now his king would show him favour,
And the marriage then be consecrated,
Pleasing his daughter who would be content,
Since to be his wife alone was her intent.

He concluded: 'This is my state entire; 35
Nor to this bliss is any man as near.
No further sign do I seek or desire,
Of her love for me, which is proven clear;
I ask only that naught else transpire
But what God grants to lawful marriage here;
Aught else would prove in vain, for this I know,
That she is pure as is the driven snow.'

Canto V: 36-38: Polinesso responds, with a lie

Once Ariodante had, truthfully, 36
Disclosed all he wished for and hoped to win,
Polinesso, who planned that enmity
Would soon replace their love, did thus begin:
'Your hopes are far behind mine, certainly,
For you shall witness the fair state I'm in,
And, having seen the reason for my bliss,
Confess mine the sole happiness in this.

She feigns; she neither loves nor prizes you, 37
That nurtures you on words and hope alone;
And more than that she mocks your folly too,
When she and I converse, unseen, unknown.
In her I trust; no promises pursue,
Nor harbour those fond hopes to which you own.
All these things I tell you, in privacy,
Which were best but thought on, silently.

Not a month goes by, but some three or four, 38
Or even six or ten times I will find
Myself in her embrace, naked once more,
Whose joy adds to love's ardour, to my mind.
And you may prove it so, and thus be sure.
Vain are the hopes on which you have dined.
Seek another, yield her gracefully,
Accept that you must grant me victory.'

Canto V: 39-43: Polinesso prepares to deceive Ariodante

'I'll not believe it so,' his victim cried, 39
'Tis a falsehood you but now concocted!
To turn me from my purpose, thus you lied,
In hopes that she and I shall never wed.
This slur upon her name must be denied,
Tis fitting that we take the field instead,
Not only shall I prove you, there, a liar,
But traitor, too; such now is my desire.'

The duke replied: 'It were scarcely honest. 40
To seek to prove the truth of it by fighting,
When I've offered to make all manifest
To your eyes, whenever that is pleasing.'
Ariodante troubled, now confessed
To a chill within that set him trembling,
And if he had believed all that was said,
The very soul from out his breast had fled.

With faltering heart, and with a pallid face, 41
With shaken voice, mouth full of bitter gall,
He answered: 'Prove deceit to be the case,
And show me that upon her, thus, you call,
And I'll cease to pursue one that shows grace
To you it seems, and none to me at all.
But I'll not cease to hold your tale but lies,
If first I see it not with my own eyes.'

'I shall advise you when the time is right,' 42
Said Polinesso, and went on his way,
For not on that, but the following night
We two would meet together, as alway.
The very next day, he approached the knight,
And set the snare, as well a villain may,
By telling him to hide in that same street
Where none passed by, and all was incomplete.

He pointed out an angle, well-concealed, 43
From which the balcony was yet in view.
Yet Ariodante to doubt did yield,
Thinking the duke might some foul plan pursue,
To trap him in that place, his weapon wield,
And seek to slay him there, for all he knew,
While feigning to reveal what could not be,
Proof of Ginevra's infidelity.

Canto V: 44-47: Ariodante asks Lurcanio, his brother, to stand guard

He would take his place, but in a manner 44
That did not leave him open to surprise,
And if attacked, in some way or other,
Not vulnerable to harm or death, likewise,
He had a brave and level-headed brother,
Lurciano, whom the court did prize
For his prowess, and on whom he relied,
More than if ten others were at his side.

He summoned Lurciano and explained 45
That he would have him arm that night, and go
To the place where he'd lead him, but refrained
From telling him the cause, merely that so
A careful watch and guard might be maintained,
Some distance away, a good stone's throw.
'Come, if I call,' he said, 'but, as you love me,
Stir not otherwise; wait there, silently.'

'Lead on, and trust in me,' came the answer. 46
Ariodante brought them there apace,
In silence, and, stationing his brother,
Opposite the balcony took his place.
Polinesso came there from the other
Direction, ready now to bring disgrace
Upon Ginevra, and called up to me,
Caught up in his design, unknowingly.

For I, in a white dress trimmed with gold, 47
And with gold all spangled, and my hair
Caught up in a golden net, as of old
Was ever Ginevra's way, I walked there,
Feigning all her manner as I'd been told,
Upon that balcony, high in the air,
That was so fashioned, being deep and wide,
That I might be seen from every side.

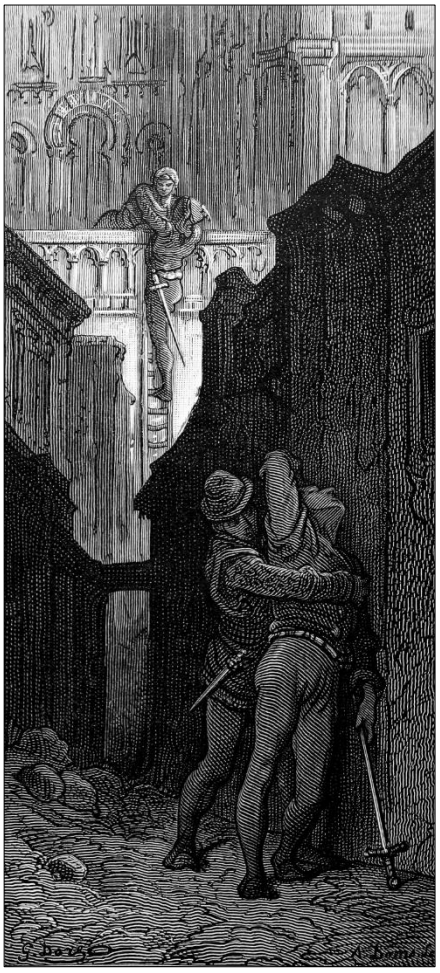
Canto V: 48-51: Polinesso executes his plan

Lurciano, meanwhile, left in some doubt 48
As to whether the other was in danger,
And wondering what it was all about,
Was tempted to spy upon his brother,
And so, he followed him to his lookout,

Keeping to the shadows as his cover,
And to the same location thus did glide,
And hid there not ten paces from his side.

I, knowing naught of this, dressed as I said, 49
Walked on the balcony, as times before
I'd placed myself there in Ginevra's stead,
To good effect; and since the clothes I wore
Were clearly seen (the moon was overhead)
I, clothed like her, it was the watchers saw;
In form and aspect not dissimilar,
And in visage too not so unlike her.

They were deceived, and much the more so 50
In that between the balcony and the place
Where the two brothers were concealed below
There lay an abundance of empty space.
So that the duke by this deceptive show
Easily deceived them; conceive the face
Of Ariodante, when, climbing there,
Polinesso reached me, by the hempen stair.



Stanza 51

Arrived at my side, I clasped him to my breast, 51
Not dreaming there were any there to see,
And kissed his face, and then his lips I pressed,
As I did ever, when he came to me;
And he, with ardour, all my form caressed
More so than usual, more fervently,
Aiding his fraud, those watchers to appal,
That, placed at a distance, must yet see all.

Canto V: 52-55: Lurciano dissuades his brother from suicide

Ariodante, feeling such deep despair, 52
That he resolved to die upon the spot,
Planted his sword hilt hard in the ground there,
To seek the death that now must prove his lot.
Lurcanio who viewed the hempen stair
With pure astonishment, though he knew not
Who ascended, seeing his brother's deed
Rushed to prevent the act that pain decreed.

Hindering him from piercing his own breast 53
He thus denied the death his brother sought;
Indeed, had he not so promptly addressed
The matter all his efforts had gained naught.
'Brother, alas, what foolishness possessed
Your mind, what madness robbed you of your thought?'
He cried: 'To die for a mere woman so?
Treat them as mist, lost when the wind doth blow!

Seek out her death, tis fitter that she dies; 54
Reserve yourself for a far sweeter fate.
Twas right to love, ere you did realise,
All her deceit, and now tis right to hate.
For you have witnessed, with your own two eyes
The kind of creature that you sought as mate.
Sheathe the blade you set against your breast,
Then, before the king, her deep guilt attest.'

Ariodante, seeing his brother, there 55
Abandoned the deed he'd contemplated.
Yet, still intent on death, in his despair
Though his first attempt was, thus, frustrated,
He made to go, his case beyond repair,
His heart broken, his mind devastated,
While feigning to his brother that the pain,
He felt within that heart, had eased again.

Canto V: 56-59: Ariodante ultimately drowns himself

The following morn, he set out to ride, 56
Saying naught to his brother, all alone,
With mortal desperation for his guide;
Of him, for many a day, naught was known.
Nor did any know why he had left, aside
From his brother and Albany, I'd own;
For, in the palace, was much discussion,
And throughout the realm, as to the reason.

After eight days or so, a traveller, 57
With ill tidings of some fatality,
Sought out an audience with Ginevra:
Ariodante was drowned in the sea;
Not through accident or stormy weather,
For he had sought out death, willingly,
Hurling himself from a high cliff, so
As to be lost among the waves below.

'He'd encountered myself upon the way,' 58
The traveller said 'ere he acted, though,
And to the Princess asked me to relay
All that I might see of what did follow,
And explain the cause, and he did say:
"What I declare, she must already know;
In seeing all too much the reason find,
Happier were I, if I had been born blind."

Upon a promontory there we stood, 59
That faces Ireland across the water,
And from that height he plunged into the flood,
And so was drowned; I hastened thereafter
To bring the news to you, though nothing good.'
Stunned and horrified, the king's daughter
Gazed at the man, while all her colour fled,
Unmoving there, like one who seemed half-dead.

Canto V: 60-65: Lurciano denounces Ginevra

Oh, Lord, what did she not say when, alone, 60
On her pillow she laid her head once more,
Ripping her gown, she beat at her breastbone,
And at her golden tresses wildly tore,
Uttering his last words in saddened tone,
Those of her love, that the traveller bore,
Claiming the reason for his death had been
That all too much his tearful eyes had seen.

That he had died of grief the rumour ran, 61
And there were none at court who failed to weep,
The ladies full of tears, and scarce a man,
From squire to king that did not vigil keep.
With his brother, all their mourning began,
Whose overwhelming sorrow ran so deep
Against himself he well-nigh turned his blade,
As if to follow, thus, to death's dark glade.

And many a time, to himself, he said 62
That Ginevra was the cause of it all,
For that ill deed it was of hers had led
To his brother's death, to his fatal fall;
And in his mind desire for vengeance bred,
So great his grief, his anger's bitter gall,
That he became estranged of full many,
Loathing the king's court, and that whole country.

When the audience hall was full, indeed, 63
He stood before the king and made this claim,
"Your daughter's fault, alone, this was the seed
Of my brother's madness, she slew that same,
Addling his wits, she brought about the deed,
For the deepest woe his reason overcame,
On viewing her shameful actions, and he
Sought but to die, and end his misery.

He loved her, and that fact I will not hide, 64
For his love was honest; to deserve her,
By his true worth and virtue close allied,
He sought, and faithful service, no other;
For while he wished her only as his bride,
He scented the rose from afar as ever,
Yet saw another scale the secret stair,
And win the fair flower that budded there.'

Then Lurciano hastened to explain 65
How he had seen her on the balcony,
And how a rope-ladder, that had lain
Upon its floor, she'd let down secretly,
By which her lover might her presence gain.
The name he knew not, for he could not see
Through the disguise, yet he would prove it true,
Should any seek to challenge all he knew.

Canto V: 66-69: The King proclaims her innocence and seeks a champion

You may imagine her poor father's grief, 66
On hearing that damning accusation,
A claim that, seeming far beyond belief,
Brought about his utter consternation,
Since, if none would haste to her relief,
And prove the tale a sheer fabrication,
She must then be punished for a lie,
And, lacking a brave champion, must die.

I think tis known to you, sir, that our law, 67
Condemns a woman here to death by fire,
Whether fair maid or lady, rich or poor,
That slakes aught else but her husband's desire.
And she must die, unless she can procure
A champion ere a month shall expire.
He her innocence must seek to maintain,
And against her false accuser then sustain.

The king has proclaimed, throughout the country, 68
(To demonstrate the falseness of the claim)
That whoever saves her from this infamy
Shall wed her; a fine dowry shall that same
Champion receive; and yet none we see
Appears as yet, since Lurciano's fame
As a knight is such, one so fierce in arms,
He is as feared in joust as war's alarms.

And her ill fate has willed that Zerbino, 69
Her brother, is absent from the kingdom.
For many a month he has wandered so,
Proving his worth abroad; were he to come,
Or be so placed that he might somehow know
Of his sister's dreadful plight, though wherefrom
I know not, his courage is such that he
Would champion her cause, then, instantly.

Canto V: 70-74: Dalinda concludes her story to date

The king meanwhile seeking to ascertain 70
By other means than combat, whether he,
Her accuser, speaks true, or then again
Whether he lies and she should be set free,
Has seized on several ladies in her train,
Who ought to know the facts; it seemed to me
That were I taken then the duke and I
Would find ourselves in peril, by and by.

That night I fled the palace, and the court, 71
And went to join my Duke of Albany,
And made him recognise the dread import
To both our lives of forced captivity.
He praised me then, and swiftly calmed my thought,
Inducing me to go, for my safety
To a castle that was his, which stood nearby,
With two men to guide me till it was nigh.

You have heard, sir, in what manner 72
I'd assured Polinesso of my love,
And can judge whether or not, thereafter,
He lay in debt to me, and so approve,
Or not, his care of me, for my lover
Granted me a scant reward thereof,
And bear witness whether women earn,
For loving thus, commensurate return.

For so ungrateful, cruel, and treacherous 73
Was he, and doubtful of my loyalty,
He thought my knowledge of him dangerous,
And that I might reveal all openly.
He feigned that the king was so furious
That I must be hidden for my safety,
And so be taken to this keep; though I,
Such was his intent, was but doomed to die.

For he had told my guides that, in the wood, 74
(This was his thanks for all my faithfulness)
I must be slain, and so no longer could
Disclose his plot; you witnessed my distress,
And if you'd not been in the neighbourhood,
His vile plan would have met with swift success.
See how love treats those who his laws obey!'
Such was her tale as they went on their way.



Stanza 74

Canto V: 75-78: Rinaldo arrives at St. Andrews

Above all else, Rinaldo felt delight 75
At this chance that fortune had created;
His rescuing a lady, who the plight
Of the guiltless princess had related.
For while he would, as the perfect knight,
Aid her, though her guilt were demonstrated,
His happiness was greater since the fight
Would prove her total innocence outright.

So, to St. Andrews he now rode apace, 76
Where lay the king and all his company,
And, thus, a lawful contest could take place
Regarding the daughter's fate. And briefly,
When short of the town but a little space,
He met a squire who spoke of the lady,
Giving him later news than had Dalinda
Concerning this matter of Ginevra.

It appeared that a knight whom none did know, 77
Had arrived to champion the princess;
His coat of arms was quite concealed also;
He hid his face, and none his name could guess,
Since naught that might proclaim it was on show,
Nor could they thus deduce it from his dress.
And then the very squire in his service
Declared: 'Indeed, I know not who he is.'

In a short while, they arrived at the wall, 78
And then reined in their mounts before the gate.
Dalinda fearful of what might befall
If she now entered, trembled for her fate.
Rinaldo gave her comfort, then did call
To the guard stood without, demanding straight
Why all was barred; the man replied all there
Had gone to view the end of that affair.

Canto V: 79-84: Rinaldo seeks to halt the fight

For Lurciano and this unknown knight, 79
At a place beyond the township, were met,
And they had even now begun the fight,
Upon that field, though none had conquered yet.
He then threw wide the gate, and did invite
Montalbano's lord to enter without threat;
Who, at last, after seeking far and wide,
Found lodgings for the lady at his side.

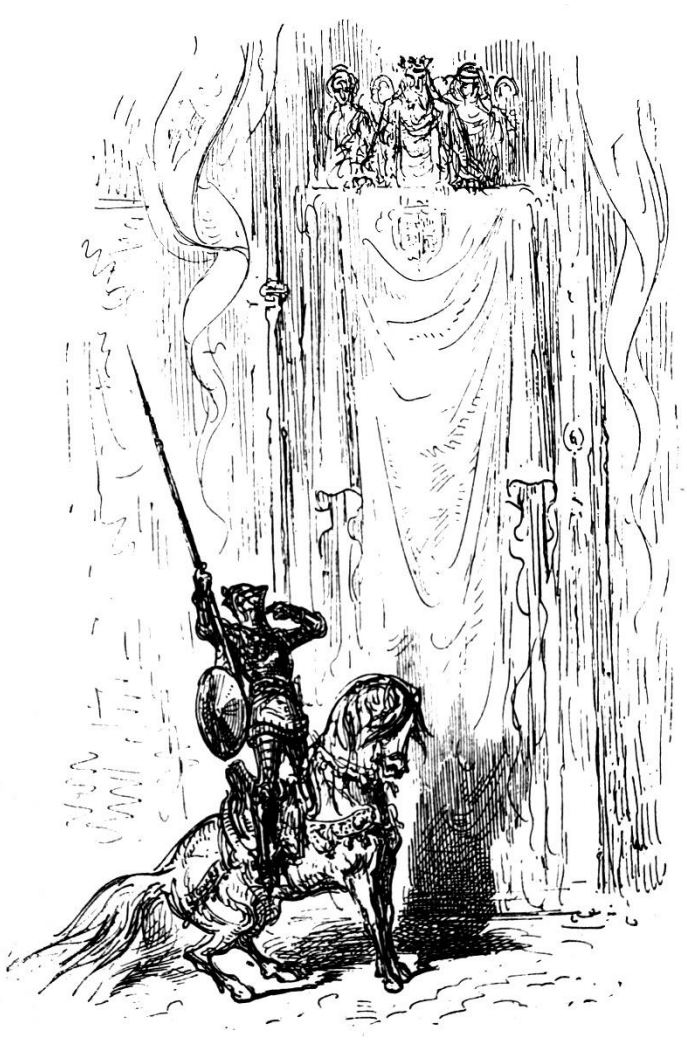
He said to her that he would soon return, 80
While she might rest, in safety, till he did,
And then towards the lists he went to learn
The outcome of this Lurciano's bid,
And found that both there did great merit earn,
Though neither of the other was yet rid,
The one for Ginevra's death battling still,
The other for the truth, to thwart his will.



Stanza 82 "*Rinaldo pushed onwards through the crowd*"

Six armoured knights manned the palisade, 81
Where Polinesso mounted on a steed,
Of the finest, and in the robes arrayed,
Of high-constable, performed, as decreed,
The role of judge, and saw that they obeyed
The rules of combat; relishing, indeed,
The sight of Ginevra's mortal peril,
With joyful heart, bold as any devil.

Rinaldo pushed onwards through the crowd, 82
(For Bayard's presence was felt far and wide)
While those who saw him nearing simply bowed
And moved away, ere they were thrust aside,
Above the steed they saw the rider, proud,
And seeming as one not to be denied,
A flower of chivalry, who halted near
The king's seat, while they gathered round, to hear.



Stanza 82

Rinaldo spoke: 'Sire, let the contest cease 83
And these brave warriors so end their fight,
Since if either man dies it should displease
Any here that would command what is right.
For this lord, here, thinks tis the truth he sees,
Claims what is false, yet is a truthful knight,
Though the same error brought his brother's death
That causes him, today, to lose his breath;

The other, of sheer kindness, plies his sword 84
Not knowing if the cause be right or wrong,
Because relief to her he would afford,
Your fair princess, and battles hard and long.
I bring relief to innocence, my lord,
The opposite shall to that wretch belong
That wrought the lie; but first let them forego
Their conflict, and give ear to what I know.'

Canto V: 85-87: And reveals Polinesso's deceit

So great seemed the innate authority 85
Of the lord Rinaldo appeared to be,
That the king signalled, out of chivalry,
Their attacks must cease, and instantly,
To whom, and all the barons, then did he
Reveal all Polinesso's treachery,
Explaining the plot whereby he'd sought
To bring about Ginevra's death, in short.

Then affirmed that he now wished to prove 86
The truth of every word that he had said,
Calling on Polinesso, who yet did move
That naught of this was valid, all instead
Mere lies indeed, and no man could reprove
His actions: 'Then be it on your own head!'
Cried Rinaldo; the field was made ready,
That they might now display their chivalry.

How dearly the king and his people prayed 87
That Ginevra would be proven innocent!
All hoped that, her guiltlessness displayed,
The outcome would condemn the duke's intent,
Finding his character, when rightly weighed,
Proud, avaricious, cruel and fraudulent.
Such that twas no great wonder, they agreed,
That he had wrought some dark, malicious deed.



Stanza 91

Canto V: 88-92: They fight and Polinesso is defeated

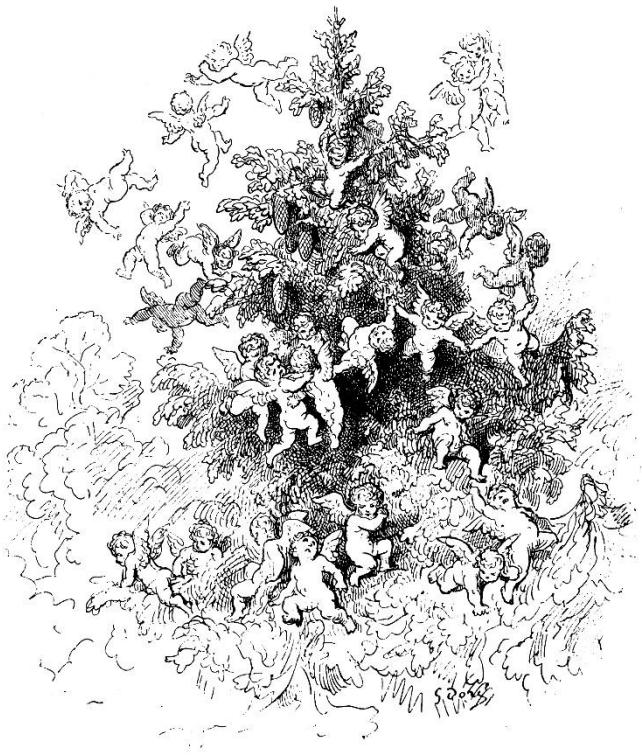
Now, Polinesso's face had lost its colour, 88
Yet at the signal, levelling his lance,
His heart quaking, his cheeks full of pallor,
Against Rinaldo he did swift advance,
Who then spurred towards him, bold as ever,
To end this fight at the earliest chance.
Nor was he unhappy with the issue,
Since his brave lance half-pierced the other through.

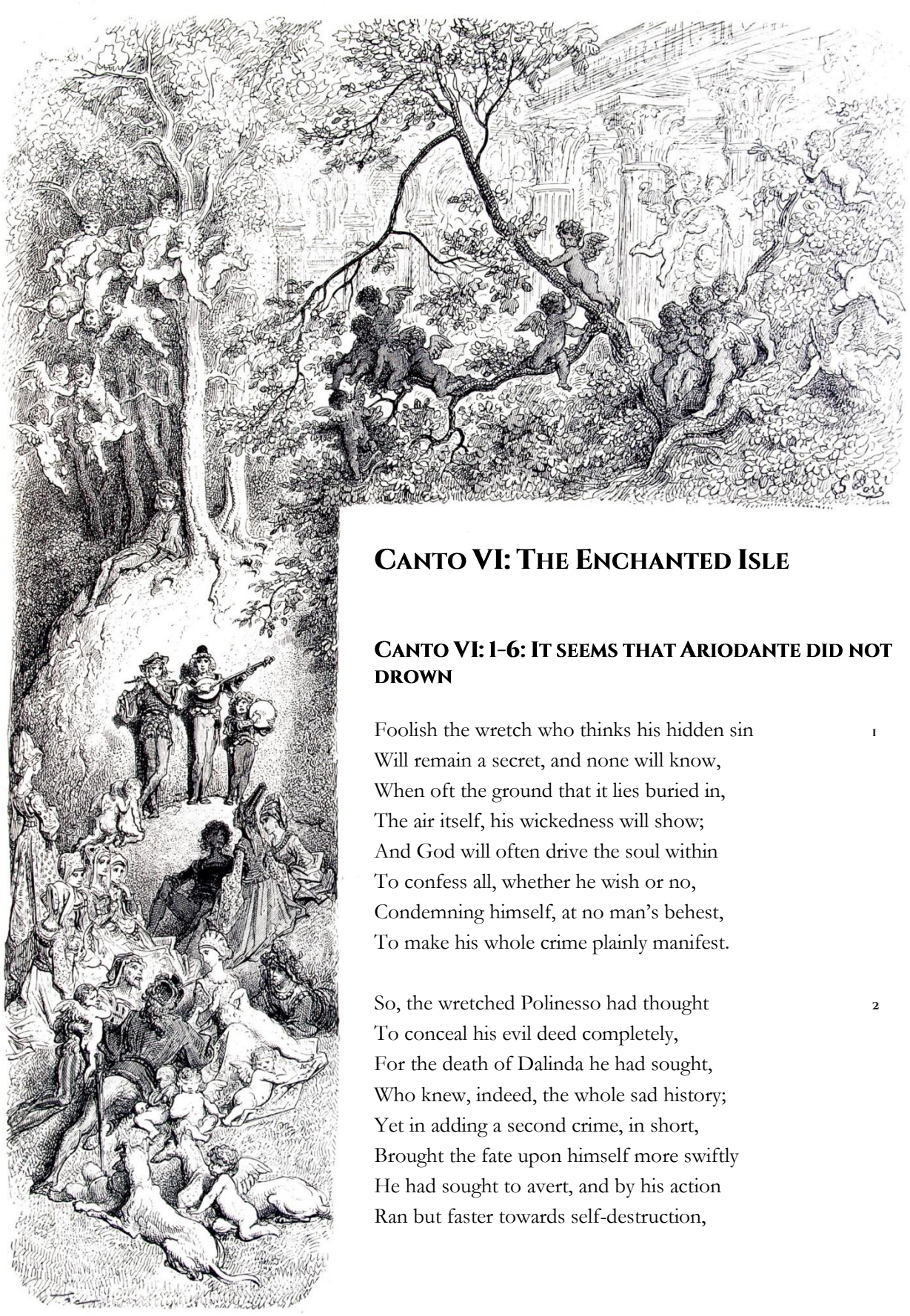
Transfixed, the duke was toppled to the ground, 89
More than six yards beyond his unharmed steed.
Rinaldo reached him, and the helm unbound,
Ere he could rise, though he could but concede,
(Unable to fight on, as now he found)
Then pray for mercy, in his hour of need,
And to the king confess, with fading breath,
His vile deceit had brought about his death.

He could not finish, in mid speech he died, 90
For with the failing life the voice had fled.
The king had seen the wrong thus rectified,
His daughter freed, and the miscreant dead,
Her name restored, and he with joy allied,
More so than if the crown upon his head,
Being lost, had been placed upon his brow;
Such that all honour was Rinaldo's now.

That knight free of his helm, the monarch saw 91
Features he knew, now openly displayed.
And thanked the Lord for helping him once more,
In sending this warrior to her aid.
The other unknown knight, who nobly bore
His lance to fight her cause, all unafraid,
Now stood apart, and gazed upon the scene,
That first Ginevra's champion had been.

He was requested to declare his name, 92
Or at least, said the king, to show his face,
So that, beyond the simple gift of fame,
Reward he might receive, of royal grace.
Yielding to their pleas to reveal that same,
He made clear, for his helm he did unlace,
What I shall speak of in the next canto,
If it pleases you to hear what did follow.





Canto VI: The Enchanted Isle

Canto VI: 1-6: It seems that Ariodante did not drown

Foolish the wretch who thinks his hidden sin 1
Will remain a secret, and none will know,
When oft the ground that it lies buried in,
The air itself, his wickedness will show;
And God will often drive the soul within
To confess all, whether he wish or no,
Condemning himself, at no man's behest,
To make his whole crime plainly manifest.

So, the wretched Polinesso had thought 2
To conceal his evil deed completely,
For the death of Dalinda he had sought,
Who knew, indeed, the whole sad history;
Yet in adding a second crime, in short,
Brought the fate upon himself more swiftly
He had sought to avert, and by his action
Ran but faster towards self-destruction,

Losing his friends, life, rank, and that honour, 3
The loss of which doth ever harm the most.
Now, as I said, the unknown warrior
Being at length persuaded by the host,
Doffed his helm, his visage to uncover.
And lo, a familiar face did boast;
For twas their Ariodante they saw,
Late lamented, yet alive once more;

Ariodante, wept for by Ginevra, 4
The king, the court, the people who all thought
Him long dead, and mourned, by his brother,
For his virtue, his bright valour when he fought.
It seemed to all then that the traveller
Had lied, for it was false, the news he'd brought.
And yet it was as true as truth could be
That he had seen him plunge into the sea!

But (as oft befalls in desperate plight, 5
When death, that was long desired, hovers near,
Yet now is dreaded; harsh the approaching night,
Its passage cruel, and painful, doth appear)
Ariodante, once lost to sight,
Repented of his action, and fought clear,
With strength and ardour, heading for the shore,
Rode the waves, and reached the land once more.

Despising now the folly that had led 6
Him to an action that but sought his end,
He took to the road, many a mile did tread,
And, cold and chilled, his weary way did wend
To a hermit's cell, where, to silence wed,
Still to each rumour he an ear did lend,
Wishing to know if fair Ginevra grieved,
Or was indifferent, as he believed.

Canto VI: 7-12: He had determined to champion Ginevra's cause

He learnt at first that from excess of pain, 7
She had nearly died, for through all the land
The rumour ran, and this all did maintain,
Such folk that heard of it, on every hand,
Countering all that he had seen quite plain,
Although in error he had been unmanned.
Then he heard how Lurciano had brought
A case against her, at her father's court.



Stanza 6

Then against his brother his anger burned 8
No less than his love waxed for Ginevra,
Thinking no such cruelty had she earned,
Though twas done in his support as ever.
Then, hearing that no brave champion yearned
To fight her cause, since none rallied to her,
(Believing Lurciano such a knight
As none dared to encounter in a fight,

And thinking him, also, so sincere, 9
So wise and possessed of such discretion,
That what he had claimed could but appear
The truth, all the facts in his possession,
Or he'd not have acted so; thus, in fear
Of wrongly supporting her transgression,
None would champion her) he now chose,
After much thought, his brother to oppose.

'Alas!' he cried, 'I could not bear to hear 10
That she was put to death because of me;
My seeming death will do worse harm, I fear,
If hers precedes it, and none shows pity.
For she is my lady, my goddess here,
The light of my two eyes, howe'er it be.
I cannot but defend her, wrong or right,
And conquer in the field, or die outright.

If I support the wrong, then be it so, 11
And, if I die, then there's some solace too,
(Except that, if I die, to death she'll go,
Since, by failing, I'd condemn her anew.)
The comfort in my dying would but be
That, Polinesso's love proving untrue,
She would clearly see how he'd deceived her,
Finding, thus, that he'd declined to aid her.

And then she'll see one whom she did offend 12
Meet death, while thus supporting her defence;
My brother must take vengeance; I depend
Upon the fire of ardour in him, whence
His woe when he shall learn how, in the end,
His own harshness has despatched me hence,
He thinking to avenge the wronged lover,
Yet slaying, by that act, his own brother.'

Canto VI: 13-16: Ginevra and Ariodante wed, Dalinda becomes a nun

Concluding, in this way, his train of thought, 13
He donned new armour, mounting a fresh steed,
(Black his surcoat, and his black shield wrought
With green and yellow stripes.) A squire agreed
To bear his arms, of whom none there knew aught,
Who his master's name concealed, as decreed.
Then all (as I have said) unknown, the knight
Set out to meet his brother, and to fight.

I've told you of what happened in the end. 14
And how he showed himself for all to see.
The king felt no less joy, I would contend,
At this than in his daughter winning free.
She thought never a lover could fate send
As true and faithful as he'd proved to be;
Who, after such injury moreover,
Had fought for her against his own brother.

The monarch, being naturally inclined 15
To cherish this knight, at the behest
Of Rinaldo, as all were of one mind,
The marriage with his loving daughter blessed.
Polinesso's duchy, which was assigned
To the king once more with all the rest
Of his estate, in no happier hour
Could have been forfeit, forming thus her dower.

Rinaldo won mercy for Dalinda, 16
Who, despite the part she'd played was set free.
She, weary of the world, vowed however
To turn to God, forego her liberty,
For in Denmark, as a nun, she would ever
Live content, and there find sanctuary.
Yet Ruggiero, now, we seek once more,
Who, on the creature, through the sky doth soar.

Canto VI: 17-22: We now re-join Ruggiero who has reached a distant island

Well, that Ruggiero, of constant mind, 17
Never blanched at the onset of danger;
I'll not believe a single leaf you'd find
Would tremble less, his heart firm as ever.
Yet Europe's shores he'd now left far behind,
And travelled a great distance, moreover,
Beyond the pillars that great Hercules
Set as a mark for all that sail those seas.

The hippogriff, that strange and mighty bird, 18
Carried the knight on such strong wings indeed,
It would have soon outmatched, its flanks unspurred,
Jove's thunder-bearing eagle, in its speed;
There was no other creature, in a word,
That flew so high; no bird of any breed
Could equal its velocity, no bright
Flash of lightning e'er swifter in its flight.

When that creature had flown many a mile, 19
And without ever bending from its course,
Tired of the air, it wheeled above an isle;
And then descended; thus, the winged horse
Fell towards a place, both fair and fertile,
Like that, which fleeing from her love, perforce,
The virgin Arethusa did attain,
While hid beneath the waves, though all in vain.

Ruggiero no island could have found, 20
As sweet and pleasant, in that stretch of sea
O'er which his mount had flown, no finer ground
In all the world, where'er he chanced to be,
Than that on which, once it had circled round,
The winged steed now settled, silently;
What fertile plains, delightful hills are seen,
Clear streams, and shaded banks, amidst the green.



Stanza 20 "*The winged steed now settled, silently*"

There flourished many a laurel bower, 21
Many a palm-tree, and pleasing myrtle,
Cedars, and orange-trees in fruit and flower,
Of various shapes and kinds, all beautiful;
From the burning heat, in a summer hour,
Yielding a shade, both deep and plentiful,
While safely, midst their boughs, the nightingale
Did, with its song, the secret glades regale.

Midst the red roses and white lilies there 22
Each of which delays the cool fresh breeze,
The rabbit roams, unhindered, and the hare,
While fine antlered stags Ruggiero sees,
Not fearful of some hunter's dart or snare,
Grazing the grass, or resting, at their ease,
As hinds in herds, and flocks of goats, display
Their nimbleness on slopes above the bay.

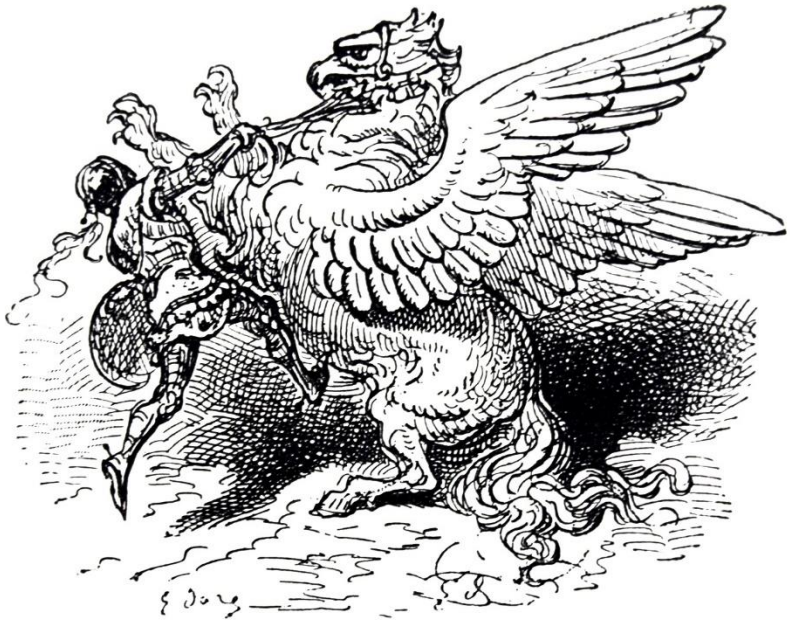
Canto VI: 23-26: Ruggiero tethers his strange steed to a myrtle tree

When the hippogriff was close to the ground, 23
Such that to dismount involved least danger,
Ruggiero leapt, and his footing found,
Midst the verdant grass, on terra firma,
Yet gripped the reins, lest with a single bound
The creature that had brought him rose higher,
And tied them, twixt a laurel and a pine,
To a green myrtle, fast by the shoreline.

And there, where a spring arose close by, 24
Amidst the cedars, and the rich palm-trees,
He doffed his helm, and left his shield to lie,
Removed his gauntlets and, once more at ease,
Now gazing on the sea, and now on high,
He turned his face towards the cool fresh breeze,
That made the topmost heights of beech and fir,
With the most pleasant murmurs, gently stir;

Then bathed his lips in the clear fresh water, 25
And splashed his brow, gently, with his hand
So that the blood in his veins ran cooler,
Heated by his armour; his face he fanned.
And that he felt so warm was no wonder,
No ramble in the street, but far from land
Full three thousand miles had been his passage,
Bearing arms and armour on that voyage.

Meanwhile the creature tethered to the tree, 26
Beneath the thickest branches' deepest shade,
Disturbed by I know not what, tried to flee,
Startled perchance by shadows in the glade,
Making the myrtle quiver, fitfully,
Till a heap of leaves at its feet it made,
Bending the myrtle almost to the ground,
And yet no means to free itself it found.



Stanza 23

Canto VI: 27-32: The myrtle tree speaks to him

Just as a stick that's placed upon the fire, 27
One which the pith within scarce fills complete,
Emits the air trapped in its midst, the pyre
Driving the vapour forth through its great heat,
Seething, bubbling like one that doth suspire,
And sounding, sighing doth the free air meet,
So, the offended myrtle, murmured, blind,
Then shrieking, moaning, split its outer rind

Thence came forth a sad and faltering voice, 28
Yet in clear and intelligible speech:
'If in grace and courtesy you rejoice,
As your noble figure would seem to teach,
Let my release be now your kindly choice,
For my own ills into my depths so reach,
I need no other pain, no other woe,
From without, to plague and torment me so.'

At the first sound it gave, Ruggiero 29
Turned suddenly, and then gazed all around,
And when he found that living speech did flow
From the myrtle tree, whence came the sound,
He stood amazed, then to the steed did go,
Blushing with shame, and swift the reins unwound:
'Human spirit, or goddess of this tree,
Whoe'er you are,' he answered, 'pardon me;

Not knowing such a spirit lay concealed 30
Beneath the roughened bark, I have done ill
To your living frame, the green leaves have peeled
From your fair branches, though against my will;
But, let your name, despite this, be revealed,
And say who lives within this matter still,
With both rational mind and speech, so may
The hail not mar you, nor the frost, I pray.

And if, in some manner, I may repair 31
This wrong, and be of benefit to you,
By that lady who hath my heart, I swear
To seek in word and deed, forever true,
To render aid, such as shall seem so fair
That you will praise all that I say and do.'
Thus, Ruggiero spoke, while the myrtle,
From head to foot did shiver and tremble.

Then drops of sap upon the bark appeared, 32
Like those which from a branch the fire will draw
When against some flaming pyre tis reared,
Too seared by far to be restored once more;
And then the voice its story volunteered:
'Your courtesy I must not now ignore,
And I shall tell of who I was, and how
To myrtle I was changed, if you'll allow.

Canto VI: 33-37: Astolfo, changed into the myrtle, tells his story

A French lord I was, by name Astolfo, 33
A paladin much feared in any fight,
Cousin to Rinaldo and Orlando,
Whose fame shall shine forever clear and bright;
And England's realm, that my father Otho
Did rule, was after him my land, by right.
Handsome, I inspired more than one lady
To love; yet harmed, at last, myself solely.

Returning from far distant isles, I say, 34
Those that India's seas lave on the east,
Where Rinaldo, and I, and others lay,
Held captive in a darkened cave, at least
Until Orlando came to save the day,
Whose valour saw its prisoners released,
Westwards I travelled along sandy shores,
That feel the southerlies without a pause.

There, as events and our ill fate decreed, 35
We came, one morn, upon a pleasant strand,
Where stood a castle, sited, close indeed
To the shore, and Alcina owned the land.
She had issued thence, to fulfil a need;
And all alone, lingering on the sand,
There, without net or hook, drew to her feet
All the fish that she sought for her retreat.

Dolphins hastened swiftly through the water, 36
With open mouths, the heavy tunnies came;
A sperm whale, like some ancient mariner
Roused from his idle sleep, docile and tame;
Salmon and bass, and sea-bream swam after,
And mullet, leaping, bathed in silvery flame,
Sea-serpents too, orcas, and baleen whales,
Reared their mighty backs and monstrous tails.

We saw a blue whale, the greatest ever 37
Yet encountered in any stretch of sea;
Eleven yards or more, its back moreover,
Rose from the waves, and, erroneously,
We thought (since he lay still in the water,
And was so vast from end to end) that he
Was some island that never moved at all,
Firm as a rock, and solid as a wall.

Canto VI: 38-42: Alcina the enchantress deceives Astolfo

Alcina made the whale approach the shore, 38
Simply by some magic incantation.
One mother this witch, and Morgana bore,
Yet perchance not of the same gestation.
That I was handsome, this Alcina saw,
Which wrought in her a pleasing sensation;
Such that she sought to part me, with deceit,
From my dear friends, achieving that complete.

She first received us with a cheerful face, 39
In a gracious and respectful manner,
And said: 'Sir knight, if you are pleased to grace
My dwelling, I shall show you, hereafter,
All the creatures that I draw to this place,
All the many kinds of prey I gather,
(With pelts, or smooth, or scaly to the eye)
Far more than there are bright stars in the sky.

And if you'd hear a mermaid sing so sweetly 40
That with her music she can still the wave,
We'll pass to another place, completely,
Where, at this hour, such often she doth crave.'
And she pointed out the whale, discreetly,
That semblance of an isle that waters lave.
I that was ever willing (to my own harm)
Mounted its back, while fearing no alarm.



Stanza 42

Rinaldo signalled to me, and likewise, 41
Dudon gave a warning, yet all in vain,
The fey, Alcina, with her smiling eyes,
Left them behind, and the whale's back did gain.
The creature, obedient, despite its size,
To its office, swam quickly o'er the main,
While I repented of my foolishness,
Too far from shore to ease my deep distress.

Mount Alban's lord, Rinaldo, sought to aid 42
My plight, and well-nigh drowned in the sea,
For a furious southerly did the air invade,
Darkening the waves and sky, suddenly.
I know not what became of him; the maid,
Alcina, sought to soothe and solace me,
Yet, all that day and night of constant motion,
Detained me on that monster in mid-ocean.

Canto VI: 43-46: They are carried to the island on which Ruggiero has landed

Yet to this island we two came at last, 43
The greater part of it Alcina's own,
Though taken from her sister, in times past,
Who'd held it, as her father's heir, alone,
For she was his legally, in contrast
(So was I told, by one who long has known
The details, and his oath to me has sworn)
To her fey sisters, both of incest born.

Unlike those two, drenched in iniquity, 44
Practised in every vice and evil art,
She, who has ever lived in chastity,
Upon virtue has set her kindly heart.
Against her that pair, leagued in conspiracy,
Have more than once directed, for their part,
Mighty armies to drive her from the isle,
Seizing many a castle here, meanwhile.

Nor would she hold a single piece of land, 45
This Logistilla (such the lady's name)
Were it not that the sea, and heights inland,
Bar easy passage to some further claim,
Just as they do twixt Scotland and England,
Where hills and river-mouths achieve the same.
Alcina and Morgana, tis confessed,
Will only cease when they possess the rest,

For they were bred to vice and wickedness, 46
And hate one who is both chaste and holy.
Yet let me once again my tale address,
And say how I was transformed but lately
Into green myrtle. Alcina did bless
Me with her favours, and loved me deeply,
Nor was I any the less amorous:
I found her beautiful and courteous.

Canto VI: 47-53: Astolfo loses her love and is changed to a myrtle tree

Clasped in her loving arms, it seemed to me 47
That I had found the source of all that's good,
Which mortals gain in measures that vary,
Some less, and none too much, tis understood;
Nor did I think of France, my fair country,
Gazing upon that face whene'er I could;
In her lay all my hopes, while my desire,
Ending in her, to naught else did aspire.

And by her I was loved, as much or more; 48
Alcina cared not for any other,
Though she'd won many a heart before,
For me she left every other lover.
Day and night, I was her counsellor;
She served me, where she'd commanded ever;
She trusted me, and so with me conferred;
And, night or day, with none else spoke a word.

Ah, why do I disturb the wound again, 49
When I now lack the hope of any cure?
Why then recall those happy times, in pain,
Now cruel and bitter penance I endure?
When I had thought no greater love to gain,
Believing that she could not love me more,
She took from me the heart she had bestowed,
And every sign of some new love she showed.

Too late I understood her fickleness, 50
Loving and leaving, in but little space;
Two months I reigned, perchance a little less,
Ere a new lover had assumed my place.
She drove me away, my fair enchantress,
Disdaining one now banished from her grace;
Who, later, learned that a thousand others
She had treated thus, all her wronged lovers.

And lest we go about the world and tell 51
Of her faithless and lascivious ways,
She transmutes us; casting a magic spell,
Turns us to trees, to live, for all our days,
As pines, palms, olives, cedars, in some dell,
Or as this green myrtle, whereon you gaze;
Some as sad fountains, some as wild creatures;
In such manner she remakes our features.

Now you, sir knight, are come, by paths unknown,52
To this fatal isle, thus one more lover,
Shall be transmuted to a wave or stone,
Or some such thing, as you shall discover;
You'll win, from Alcina, sceptre and throne,
High above mere mortals, yet, my brother,
Soon you'll be made to join our company,
As a wild creature, fountain, rock, or tree.

Willingly, I have given of my counsel, 53
Not that I think to benefit you so,
But tis better to possess the facts I tell,
Since something of her customs, then, you'll know;
And since men's talents differ, quite as well
As do their minds and faces, you may show
You have the knowledge (to repair this harm),
That many another lacked she did charm.'

Canto VI: 54-58: Ruggiero finds himself in sight of Alcina's castle

Ruggiero, who had previously learned 54
Astolfo was cousin to his lady,
Fair Bradamante, grieved to find him turned
From his true form into this barren tree,
And, for love of her for whom he yearned,
(Could he but find a way to set him free)
Would do the knight a service, if he might
Whom he could only comfort, in his plight,

And solacing him thus, then demanded 55
If some passage led to that fair kingdom,
That realm Logistilla now commanded,
To which, by hill or valley, he might come,
Escaping, thus, Alcina's, where he'd landed.
There was a way, the myrtle said, that some
Had gone, though harsh and stony, on the right,
By which a man might scale the mountain height.

And yet would not pursue that path for long, 56
Before he met a fierce and savage crew,
A company, both hard and passing strong,
That held the pass, and violence did pursue.
To Alcina, as her guard, these did belong,
Against all who sought to escape her view.
Ruggiero thanked the myrtle for his aid,
The gift of knowledge he had so conveyed.

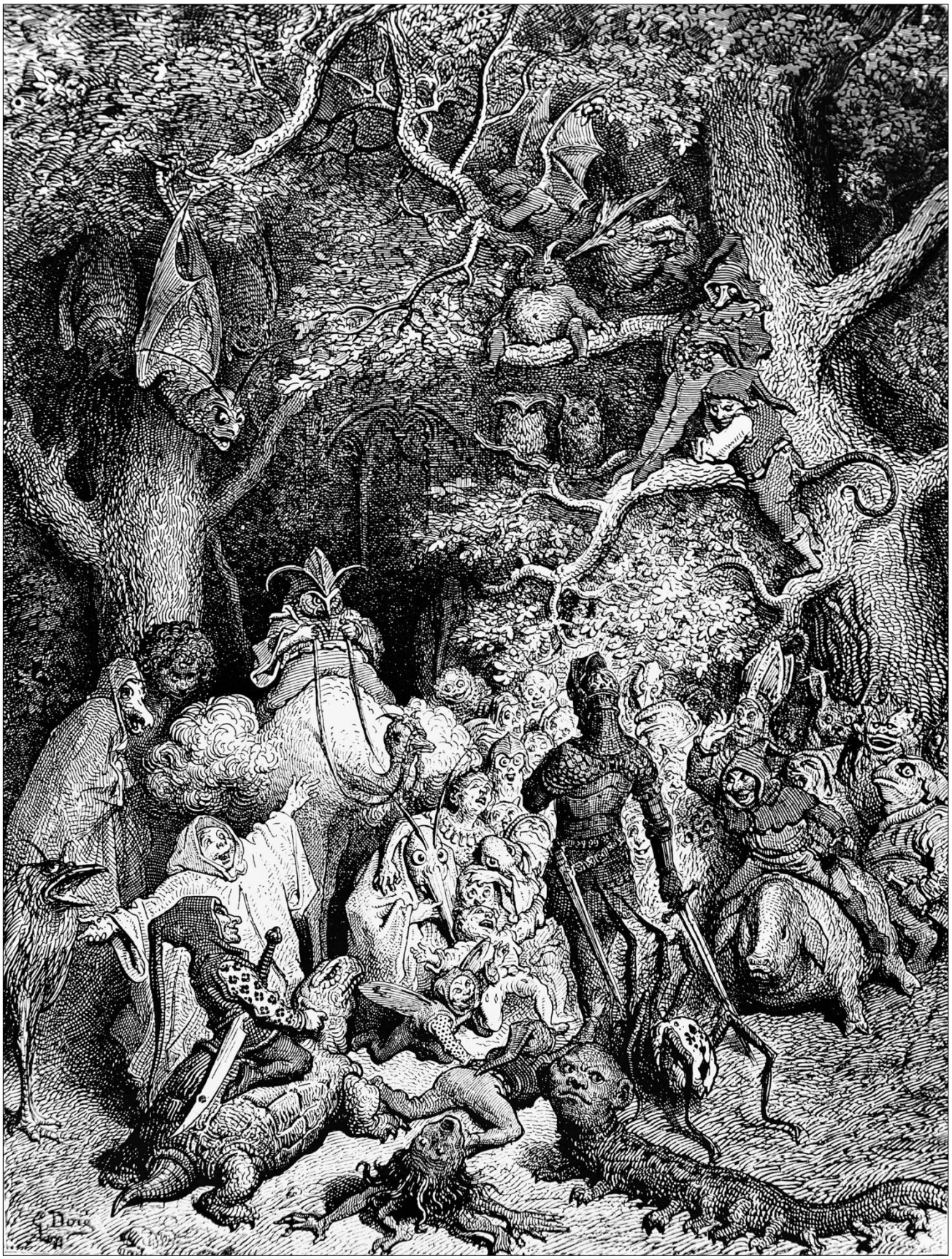
He went towards the steed, which he untied, 57
Took the reins, and made it follow after,
Nor would he mount the beast and sit astride,
Lest it bear him now to some place other;
Musing on how, in safety, might be tried
The path to her realm, this Logistilla,
Firm in his purpose to do all he could
To escape Alcina's power, and for good.

He thought again of mounting the creature, 58
And, on a fresh course, taking to the air,
But feared lest it might convey its rider
To a worse place, and thus he did not dare.
'I may pass by force,' he cried, 'however,
I might fail there, and, so, end in despair,'
Such his vain thought, as, in a mile or two,
Alcina's faery castle came in view.

Canto VI: 59-67: He is attacked by Alcina's monstrous troops

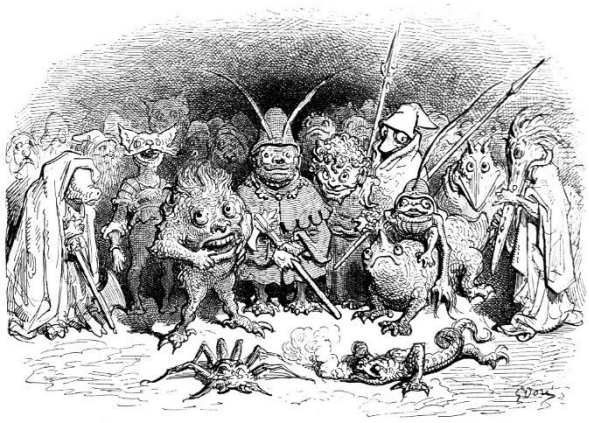
From a distance, he saw a towering wall, 59
Encircling that tract of open country,
Seeming to touch the sky, it was so tall,
From summit to foot, a thing of beauty.
It shone as if twas gold, some might say all
Its glittering was the work of alchemy.
Perchance such folk know better, and are right;
I say twas gold; it shone with golden light.

As he neared the city wall, now gleaming 60
Brighter than any other earth could show,
He left the road across the plain, deeming
That straight towards the gate its path must go,
And, on the right, he took a track, seeming
To be that safer route he might follow,
Yet soon he came against that wicked crew,
That must his passage bar, and did so, too.



Stanza 62 "*An eagle or an ostrich, mounted so*"

No stranger troop of folk was ever seen, 61
Monstrous in face, and hideous in shape,
Some with human bodies, though obscene,
Others in aspect like some cat or ape.
Some, goat-footed, trod the desert scene,
Others like centaurs thwarted all escape,
Some were old and stubborn, some young and bold,
These naked, those in pelts against the cold.

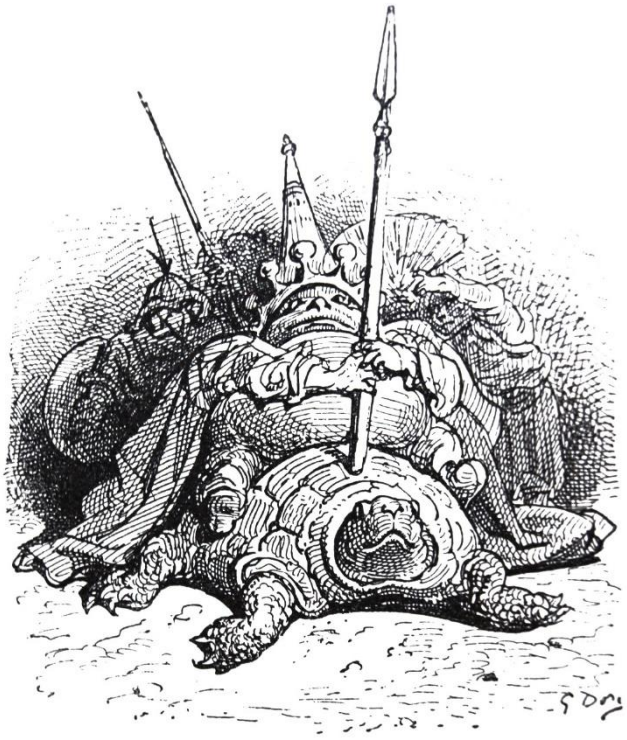


Stanza 61

One galloped on a horse, without a rein, 62
Slowly others, on ass or ox, did go,
Or on a centaur's back, or on a crane,
An eagle or an ostrich, mounted so.
As male or female some showed, some again
Were hermaphrodites, others there did blow
A horn, or drank, or bore a rope, a hook,
A sharpened file, or iron bar for luck.

The captain of this crew then hove in sight, 63
Replete with monstrous paunch and bloated face,
He rode upon a tortoise, this brave knight;
It moved across the ground at snail's pace.
And, now and then, arms held his form upright,
Since he was drunk, to keep his bulk in place;
Others wiped his chin and brow to ease him,
Others with their vestments gently fanned him.

And one, of human form up to his chest, 64
With hound's neck though, above, and ears and head,
Bayed loudly, viewing this unwelcome guest,
That he should turn towards the keep instead.
'No,' Ruggiero cried, 'nor shall I rest,
While I yet hold this, that shall see you dead!'
(Showing him the sword and, with due grace,
Pointing its gleaming tip towards his face).



Stanza 63

The monstrous captain sought now to advance, 65
But Ruggiero sprang towards the foe.
He raised his sword, and that gross paunch did lance;
The blade he drove a hand's breadth through or so.
Grasping his shield, he, to and fro, did dance,
Yet strong were his enemies, and harsh each blow.
Some grasped him from behind, and some before;
He stood his ground, and on that crew made war.

He cleft one member of that wicked host 66
To the teeth, and another to the chest,
Since none a helmet on his head did boast,
Nor bore a shield, nor was in armour dressed,
Yet, by sheer weight of numbers, they almost
Pierced his defences, he was so hard pressed.
Briareus, his every hand and arm,
Was needed there to keep that knight from harm.

If he'd but thought to show the magic shield 67
(I speak of that which, dazzling with its glow
Such that his every enemy must yield,
The wizard strapped beside his saddle-bow)
Then in a trice he might have cleared the field,
Blinding their eyes, and overcome the foe.
But such, perchance, the valiant despise,
Strength's preferable to magic, in their eyes.

Canto VI: 68-70: But is rescued by two maidens riding unicorns

Be that as it may, better were he dead 68
Than be rendered captive by such a crew.
And yet, behold, from out the gate, instead,
That portal in that wall, of golden hue,
Two maids appeared, who both seemed nobly bred,
As witnessed by their clothes, and manner too;
Not raised, in truth, among the common herd,
But nurtured in some palace, in a word.

Each maid was seated on a unicorn; 69
Whiter than whitest ermine was each steed.
Both maids were lovely, and their garb was worn
In such a gracious fashion, rare indeed,
That he who looked upon them would have sworn,
Divine sight one, who viewed that pair, would need
To judge between those two, who did embody
Gracefulness on this side, and there, Beauty.



Stanza 72

These lovely ladies rode into the field, 70
Where Ruggiero held his ground alone,
And each a kind hand to our knight did yield.
Like chaff, away the villains now were blown;
While he, with blushes scarce to be concealed,
Filled with shame, his thanks to them did own.
And then, content to wait upon his fate,
Returned with them, to pass the golden gate.

Canto VI: 71-75: They lead him into Alcina's domain

The cornice, above that pleasant gateway, 71
Projecting some distance from the wall,
Gleamed everywhere, rich gems it did display,
Rare jewels from the East spread over all.
And each corner there did gently weigh
Upon a diamond column, pure withal;
And whether twas true or false, no fairer
Or more pleasing a gate was viewed ever.

In and out the pillars, and o'er the sill, 72
Ran wanton maidens laughing, mockingly,
Who might yet have appeared more lovely still,
Had they shown the manners of a lady.
And all were dressed in green, as maidens will,
There hair crowned with fresh garlands, prettily,
And they with glance and gesture did entice
Ruggiero within their Paradise.

For, with good cause, I may so name that place, 73
Where I believe that Love himself was born,
And where they danced and played, with joyous face;
Where every hour was festive, none forlorn.
There old grey-headed Thought could find no space
In any mind to dwell; there none need mourn;
Nor poverty nor distress could enter where;
Plenty her cornucopia did share.

Where, with fair brow, unclouded and serene, 74
Graceful April wore a changeless smile,
Lads and maidens passed; one, by the green
Margin of a spring, sang so sweet, the while
These in the shade, those on the slopes were seen,
Dancing, playing, the bright hours to beguile;
And there, one whispered, in a trusted ear,
His plaint of love, that no one else might hear.



Stanza 74 "*Dancing, playing, the bright hours to beguile*"

Through the laurel branches, round the pine, 75
The lofty beech-tree, and the shaggy fir,
Flew Love's cherubs; none there did repine.
These hailed their latest conquest, him or her,
Those with some loving heart did darts align,
While others spread their hidden snares ever;
One tempered arrow-tips in the stream's flow,
Which others whetted on the stones below.



Stanza 74

Canto VI: 76-81: Of the giantess Eriphila who waylays travellers

To Ruggiero a fine steed was brought, 76
Strong and lively, of a sorrel colour,
Richly-caparisoned, for every sort
Of jewel the gilded cloth did cover.
And of the hippogriff they'd also thought
(The wizard alone had tamed that creature,
A mount indeed of a different kind);
A young man led it slowly on behind.

The two kindly maidens who'd defended 77
Ruggiero from the crowd in that affray,
From the crew, that is, who had descended,
Upon him when he took the right-hand way,
Said: 'Sir knight, your virtue, all your splendid
Deeds, known to us, are such we feel we may,
Emboldened by that knowledge, seek your aid
In what would ease our hearts, if twere essayed.

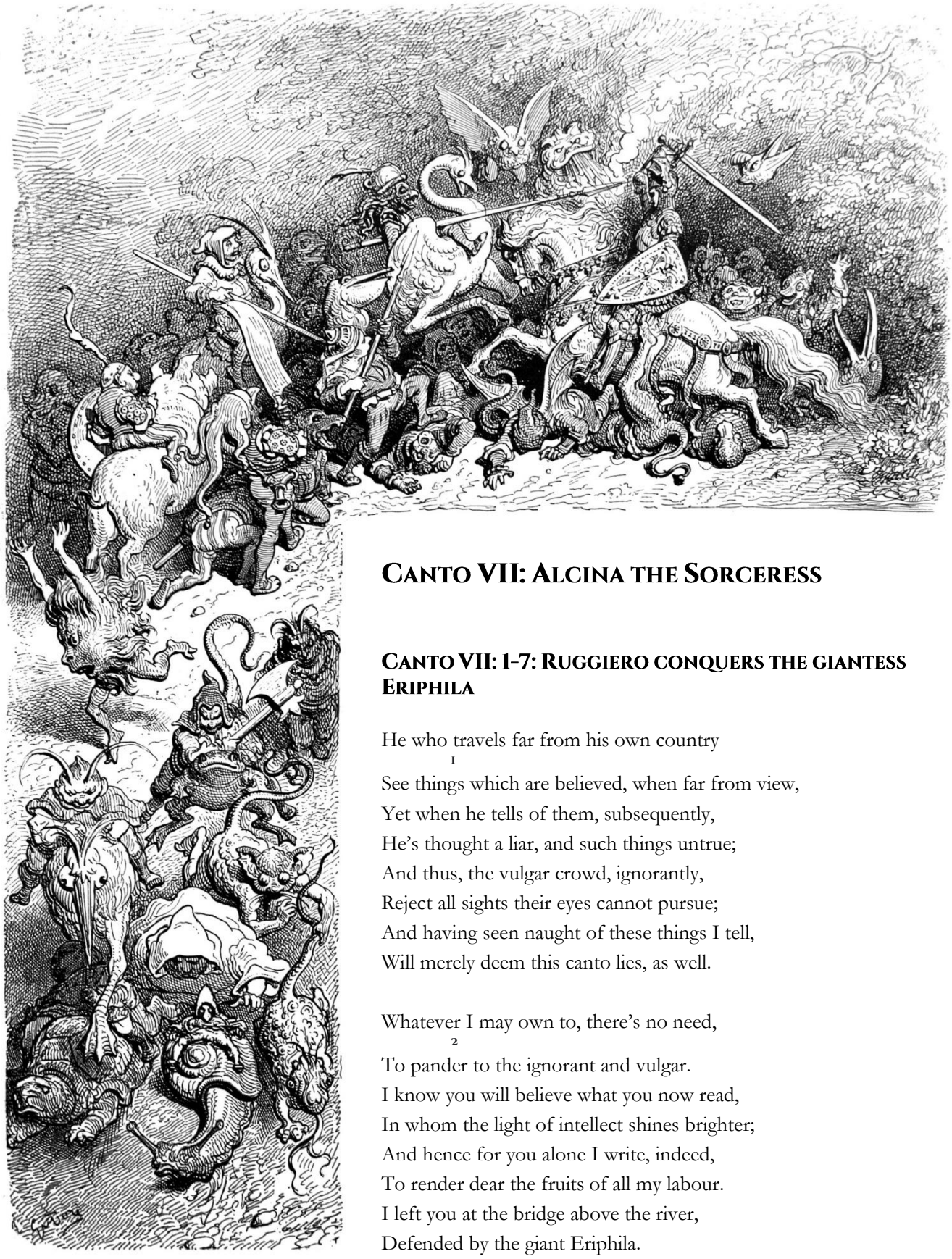
Soon we shall reach a dale that splits the plain, 78
Into its separate parts; a giantess
Guards the bridge there, thwarting, to her gain,
Those who seek passage, and our great distress;
Eriphila she's called, this source of pain,
Who cheats, and robs, and harms us to excess,
Long fangs she has that will the traveller tear,
And with sharp talons claws them, like a bear.

Moreover, she infests the public highway, 79
Which all were free to travel but for her,
She roams the park, and causes disarray,
And know that of that crowd who, earlier,
Attacked you on the path, and blocked your way,
Many are the sons of that vile mother,
And are her followers, as impious,
And inhospitable, and rapacious.'

'Not one but a hundred such I would fight, 80
On your behalf,' replied Ruggiero,
'Dispose of my person then, as you see right,
So that we may remove the source of woe.
The reason that I'm clad in armour bright,
Is not because I would gain silver so,
Nor land, but to bring aid where it is due;
Above all, to fair maidens such as you.'

Their grateful thanks those ladies now bestowed 81
On one so worthy of them, as was he,
And, talking thus, as they went down the road
The bridge and giantess they soon did see.
In golden armour, she the path bestrode,
Emeralds and sapphires decked her richly;
But I'll defer to the seventh canto
Her encounter with brave Ruggiero.





Canto VII: Alcina the Sorceress

Canto VII: 1-7: Ruggiero conquers the giantess Eriphila

He who travels far from his own country
[1]
See things which are believed, when far from view,
Yet when he tells of them, subsequently,
He's thought a liar, and such things untrue;
And thus, the vulgar crowd, ignorantly,
Reject all sights their eyes cannot pursue;
And having seen naught of these things I tell,
Will merely deem this canto lies, as well.

Whatever I may own to, there's no need,
[2]
To pander to the ignorant and vulgar.
I know you will believe what you now read,
In whom the light of intellect shines brighter;
And hence for you alone I write, indeed,
To render dear the fruits of all my labour.
I left you at the bridge above the river,
Defended by the giant Eriphila.

Her armour was of metal pure and bright, 3
With many a rich-hued gem set therein,
The crimson ruby, yellow chrysolite,
Tawny jacinth, the pale jargoon its twin,
Green emeralds too. She rode to the fight,
On no horse, but a wolf with savage grin.
Astride that wolf she rode beside the river;
Richer saddle none has mounted ever.

No larger wolf lives in Apulia; 4
This was bigger than a bull, and taller;
And although unbridled, it was tamer
Beneath her hand than a faithful charger.
Her surcoat was of a sandy colour,
That cast a sickly hue o'er the armour,
A coat which, but for that, was of the sort,
That both bishops and prelates wear at court.



Stanza 4

She had, upon her shield and helmet's crest, 5
As emblem, a venomous, swollen toad.
The maidens our valiant knight addressed,
Explaining this was how she barred the road,
Prepared to fight, for she was wont to test
The traveller who stout resistance showed.
'Turn back, sir knight!' the giantess now cried;
He took a lance, and her bold threat defied.

And no less promptly did the giantess 6
Spur the wolf, and sit tall in the saddle,
While, in mid-course, her lance she did address,
Making the very earth beneath her tremble,
Yet our hero held his ground, nonetheless;
He struck, beneath her helm, in the middle,
And so dislodged her, with such force indeed
She landed six full yards behind her steed.

Already had the knight unsheathed his sword, 7
Ready to rob her of her once proud head,
And well he might, since she lay on the sward,
Among the herbs and flowers, like one dead,
But both the maidens cried: 'Hold off, my lord,
Since she is conquered, let no blood be shed.
Sheathe your sword, our courteous champion.
Now, we may cross the bridge, and journey on.'

Canto VII: 8-10: He arrives at Alcina's palace

The path ran onwards through a grove of trees, 8
Quite rough and awkward to negotiate,
But then led upwards and, with greater ease,
They climbed where all was stony now and straight.
Ascending to the summit, by degrees,
They reached a meadow (its extent was great)
And saw a gracious palace, lovelier
Than any that the eye might discover.

The fair Alcina had advanced some way 9
Beyond the gate, to greet Ruggiero,
With all her noble court, in fine array,
And to the knight great honour there did show,
While the court did every reverence pay
To our knight likewise, honouring him so
They could have done no more, I'd testify,
Were Jupiter descended from the sky.

The palace owned no greater excellence, 10
Exceeding every other in its splendour,
Than the company was, in every sense,
The most courteous and pleasing, ever,
For youth and beauty; let me not commence
To choose amongst them all; yet still fairer
Was Alcina, midst that fair court, by far;
As, to our eyes, the sun outshines each star.

Canto VII: 11-15: Her beauty described

Her form was such, as artists labouring 11
Would find it difficult to recreate,
So shapely; her knotted tresses coiling,
Far brighter than gold of purest state;
The colours of rose and lily glowing
Upon her cheeks, so soft and delicate.
Her brow was clear as is smooth ivory,
And rounded out, in perfect symmetry.



Stanza 11

Two dark and slender eyebrows curved above 12
Two clear dark eyes, that shone like two bright rays,
With calm yet kindly gaze that scarce did move,
And from them, Love, that ever sports and plays,
Scattered his shafts, and no mean archer proved,
Piercing hearts, in a hundred thousand ways.
The nose, in perfect line, the face descended,
Where Envy could find naught to be amended.

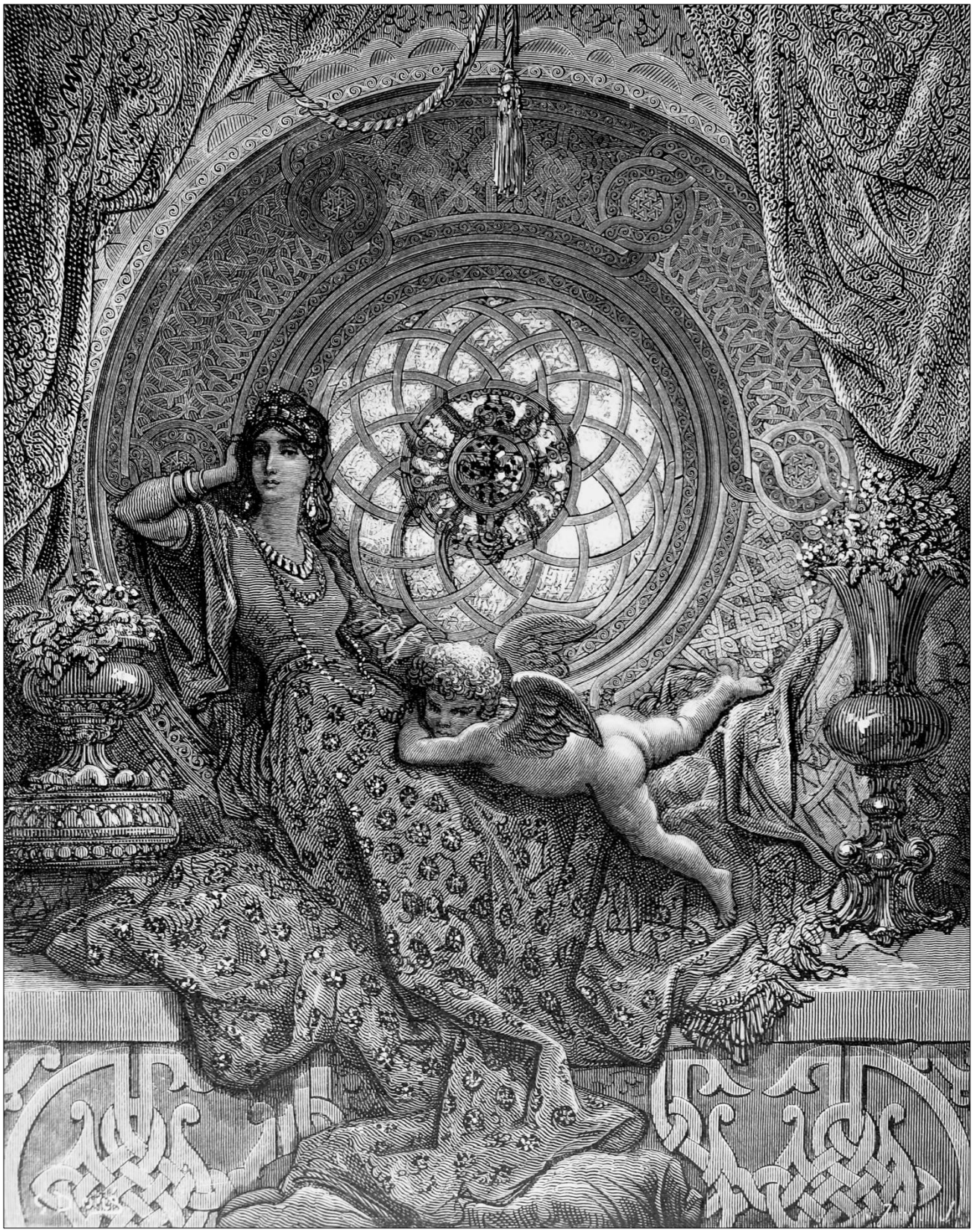
Beneath it, where two fair vales almost met, 13
Her lips revealed their hue, pure cinnabar;
Within, two rows of finest pearls were set,
That those sweet lips could or display or bar,
Or thence release fair words to soften yet
The hardest heart, and some man make or mar.
And, there, a gentle smile to that gave birth
Which seemed to offer paradise on earth.

The breast as white as milk, the neck as snow, 14
A lovely column; full and large the breast,
Where two unripe and ivory fruits did grow,
That rose and fell, like waves that swell, then rest,
As when some sea-breeze stirs the depths below.
Not Argos' hundred eyes could spy the rest,
But one might judge of what was so concealed
By all those charms the outer form revealed.

The arms were of a fitting proportion, 15
And a white hand, now and then, was seen,
Long and slender, and without distortion,
Quite free of any knot or vein, I mean.
And then the feet, the dull earth their portion,
Were small, and neat, as trim as any queen.
Such angelic semblances, heaven-born,
Go all unveiled, as doth the light of dawn.

Canto VII: 16-18: Ruggiero is instantly in love with her

Her every aspect was a subtle snare, 16
Whether she merely moved, spoke, sang or smiled,
No wonder Ruggiero could but stare,
Who found her pleasing, and was thus beguiled;
The myrtle's warning helped him little there,
Who thought her false, and so to be reviled;
For who could think betrayal and deceit
Could own such beauty, or a smile so sweet.



Stanza 16 "*Her every aspect was a subtle snare*"

Rather he now believed twas right that she 17
Had so transformed Astolfo on her isle,
Since, proving ungrateful, he was worthy
Of his fate and more, and filled with guile.
And as for all he'd heard but lately,
He thought it prompted by revenge, and vile,
A mere falsehood, born of hate and malice,
Pure poison, proffered in a humble chalice.

Bradamante, the lady that he loved, 18
Was now wholly banished from his heart,
For, with a spell, Alcina had removed
All traces of that former wound; her art
Ensured that she alone was now approved,
Her love, her image set there; for our part,
Surely, we must forgive Ruggiero,
For the inconstancy he seems to show.



Stanza 18

Canto VII: 19–23: At the feast, they agree to meet that night

At table later, lute, and harp and lyre 19
With other instruments sounded sweetly;
Soft music filled the air about, entire,
One melodious consort, in harmony.
Nor did they lack a fair voice, raised higher,
To sing of love's deep passion, joyously,
And with choice invention, true poetry,
Give life there to some pleasant fantasy.

What rare feast, both splendid and sumptuous, 20
That Ninus' successors might have proffered,
What costly spread, for the bold and famous,
That Queen Cleopatra might have offered,
Could compare with all that the amorous
Enchantress, for her paladin, now spread?
I believe none dine so, in those halls, indeed,
Where Jove accepts his cup from Ganymede.

Once the remnants of the feast were cleared away, 21
All sat in a circle, and enjoyed a game,
Requesting their neighbour, as if in play,
To whisper in their ear, some secret name;
Delighting every lover, I may say,
Who their love could reveal, in just this way,
And, in doing so, these two pledged outright
To meet together in the dark of night.

The game was quickly ended, and much sooner 22
In truth than the accepted custom there;
Pages with torches were swift to enter,
Chasing away the shadows everywhere;
Amidst fair company before and after,
Ruggiero to the chamber did repair,
Freshly adorned, appointed for his rest,
And ever reserved for the choicest guest.

And when the almond comfits and the wine 23
Had been offered, once more, as was fitting,
The others did their heads, with grace, incline,
And went to their chambers, till the morning.
Our knight midst scented sheets, rare and fine,
That seemed like those of Arachne's weaving,
Lay still, and, listening closely, sought to hear
The sound of his fair lady drawing near.



Stanza 19 "*Soft music filled the air about, entire*"

Canto VII: 24-29: Alcina and Ruggiero fulfil their pledge

At every little movement that he heard, 24
He raised his head, hoping it might be her,
Believing it was, then that naught had stirred,
And then sank back, sighing at his error.
Often, he left his bed, by longing spurred,
Opened the door, looked out, yet went no further,
While, a thousand times, he cursed the hour
That delayed her elsewhere in the tower.

Often, he thought: 'Now, she leaves her chamber.' 25
And counted out the steps along the way,
Twixt her room and his, where in a fever,
Awaiting her, our Ruggiero lay;
Such idle thoughts, and many another,
Crossed his mind, troubled at her delay,
Now fearing some impediment, unplanned,
Might deny the fruit, well-nigh in his hand.

Alcina, when at last she'd put an end 26
To her application of some rare perfume,
And could no longer her delay defend,
Prepared to go, and issued from her room,
Then, by a secret way, her path did wend,
While all around was silent as the tomb,
To where the warrior in hope and fear
Felt each pierce his heart, like a sharpened spear.

Thus, when Astolfo's successor saw her, 27
And felt the warmth flow from those smiling eyes,
It roused a fire in his veins, like sulphur,
For deep delight he now would realise,
And, plunged in a sea of bliss, might linger,
Where beauty grants its joys beyond surmise.
He leapt from his bed, took her in his arms,
For scarce could he wait to reveal her charms.

He thought it fine; no heavy robe she wore, 28
But only a light mantle, quickly thrown
Over her plain white shift, though this, he saw,
Was of the finest quality e'er known.
As Ruggiero clasped her, to the floor
The mantle fell, she, in her shift alone,
Veiled no more than the lily or the rose,
That, seen through clearest glass, yet brightly shows.

No closer does the ivy clasp the tree, 29
The branches winding tightly together,
Than did those lovers who, so tenderly,
Their spirits felt upon their lips, forever
Tasting of that perfumed spice that surely
Nor India nor Sabaea offer;
Their deep joy formed the content of their speech,
While mingling two tongues, two languages each.

Canto VII: 30-32: They take their pleasure

Whate'er happened there, was kept a secret, 30
Or if not secret, was ne'er spoken of;
Seldom are any blamed for silence yet,
Though many have had benefit thereof.
Ruggiero, smiled upon by those he met,
Was greeted warmly by the wise in love,
And honoured, and reverenced, as ever,
Since twas the wish of amorous Alcina.



Stanza 30



Stanza 31

No pleasure there was lacking, since they all 31
Dwelt within Love's court, for twas no less,
While for their use, or at another's call,
Twice, or three times, a day they changed their dress.
Oft they did feast, or banqueted withal,
Jousted, played, acted, bathed, danced to excess,
Or in the shade, by some fount, tenderly
Read from the love poems of antiquity.

Now through the cool vale, and o'er the hill, 32
They would go chasing the timorous hare,
Now flush the pheasants, with their dogs, at will,
From the fields and bushes, now set a snare
For thrushes, midst the juniper, now fill
Their nets and baskets with such fish as dare
To take the bait, and rise to line and hook
Troubling their secret haunts in pool or brook.

Canto VII: 33-36: We return to Bradamante, Ruggiero's lover

Thus, Ruggiero dwells, joying, feasting, 33
Whilst Charlemagne and Agramante fight,
Of whose brave wars I must not cease to sing,
Nor of Bradamante, that maiden bright,
To whom his absence great distress did bring.
She mourned for many a day her lost knight,
Who'd been borne away, amidst the air,
To some distant place; she knew not, where.

Before those others, I'll speak of this maid, 34
Who searched for him, many a day, in vain;
Through shadowy wood, or open field, she strayed,
Midst town and city, and by hill and plain,
That ne'er a sign of her dear friend displayed,
Divided from him by the rolling main;
And oft the Saracen host she saw below,
Yet none viewed therein was Ruggiero.



Stanza 32 "*Troubling their secret haunts in pool or brook*"

She asked for him a hundred times a day, 35
But none could answer her, or ease her mind;
She roamed far and wide, rode every way,
Searched every tent and lodging she could find;
This she could do unseen, I ought to say,
The knights, the soldiers, all were as if blind,
Thanks to the ring, whose power did eclipse
Her silent form, when pressed to her soft lips.

She could not, would not, think that he was dead, 36
Since the sad news of such a knight's demise
Would from far distant India have spread,
To where the sun dips in the western skies.
She knows not where his errant course has led,
As through the air, above the earth, he flies,
But seeks him everywhere, in company
With sighs and tears, still plagued by misery.

Canto VII: 37-41: She decides to re-visit Merlin's Cave

She thought, at last, to seek the distant cave, 37
Where the bones of prophetic Merlin lay,
And there to so lament about his grave
His voice, out the cold marble, might obey
Her request, and the answer that it gave
Show whether he yet saw the light of day,
Or whether fate had quenched his life, and so
Pursue the best counsel that might follow.

With this intention then, she made her way 38
Towards that wood, close by Pontiero,
Where Merlin's tomb, amidst the mountains, lay,
That sepulchre from which his voice did flow;
Yet the sorceress, who both night and day
Held Bradamante in her thoughts, also,
The wise Melissa, who in that fair cave
To her some knowledge of the future gave,

That benign, and ever-wise, enchantress, 39
Viewing the warrior-maid as in her care,
Knowing she would prove the fair ancestress
Of peerless rulers, demi-gods would bear,
And wished to know her deeds, and no less
All she said, cast lots, and viewed all there:
How Ruggiero freed, was lost once more,
And then transported to a foreign shore.

She saw him borne by that unbridled steed 40
Which his attempts to master it denied,
And how o'er a great space it flew at speed,
Upon a course both fearful and untried;
And how he now was well-nigh lost indeed,
To idleness, dance, play, feasts (all she spied),
Nor to his lordly realm now gave a thought,
His lady, nor the honour he had sought;

And that he'd waste the flower of his years 41
Consume his life, in endless inaction,
That chivalrous knight, first among his peers,
Losing body and mind to slow destruction;
And that sole part, outlasting joys and fears,
(That, when our frail form meets with corrosion,
Shall yet our life, from out the tomb, restore)
Be closed in tree or stone, on that far shore.

Canto VII: 42-45: But Melissa intercepts her with news of Ruggiero

But, the kind mage, who ever showed more care 42
For him than he himself had seemed to do,
Thought now by a harsh path, stony and bare,
To lead him on towards the heights of virtue,
Much like the doctors that no means do spare,
Blade, heat, or drug to render us as new,
Who, though at first, the body they offend,
Bring ease, and find us grateful, in the end.

She was not so indulgent as to seek, 43
Like the wizard Atlante, rendered blind
By excess of love, to grant to the weak
Life at all costs, for such was in his mind,
Prolong the knight's existence, week by week,
Though little fame or honour he would find,
And let all praise be lost, in idling so,
Rather than one vain passing hour forego.

Twas he who'd sent him to Alcina's isle, 44
There to forget all strife at her fair court,
And, as a lord of magic arts, likewise
So strong an enchantment he had wrought
It snared Alcina's heart, and fixed her eyes
Upon that knight so firmly that, in short,
Though Nestor's wealth of years he might see,
From such a love she never would win free.

Returning to the mage, who had foreseen
All that was yet to come, she took, I say,
A course to where the maiden might be seen
Lingering, woefully, beside the way.
Bradamante, who but mournful had been,
Soon felt fresh hope, and held her grief at bay,
As the heard the truth, now, from Melissa:
Her knight had been borne off to Alcina.

Canto VII: 46-50: The sorceress commits to rescuing Ruggiero

The warrior-maid was left in piteous state,
Half-dead, on hearing of his distant plight,
And, even more so, fearing for his fate,
If some swift cure failed to restore the knight.
Yet Melissa brought the salve; she needs but wait;
There was no lasting danger, for a sight
Of Ruggiero, she would win once more,
And that but in a few brief days, she swore.

'Give me the ring', she said, 'that you possess,
For it is proof against the magic art;
If I should visit now that sorceress,
Who holds your love, I doubt not, for my part,
I'll break the spell and, in a week or less,
Restore to you the one that holds your heart.
I'll go this evening, long before the morn
And there, by India, shall greet the dawn.'

And then continued to explain the mode
Of operation that she would employ
To draw the knight from out that lax abode
Whose luxuries could never bring him joy,
And back to France. So, Bradamante showed
The ring, and gave it into her employ;
And more than that she would have given too,
Her heart, her life, his safety to pursue.

The ring she gave, her cause she commended,
Ruggiero's more so, to Melissa;
Fair wishes to him, through her, she extended,
And took the road to Provence thereafter.
The enchantress, on whom she depended,
Swift departed for another quarter,
And a palfrey by her art did conjure,
But for one red foot, jet black all over.

Some Alichino, or Farfarello,
Drawn from the Inferno, in some wise,
Was that demon steed, while she did go
In barefoot, ungirt, and dishevelled guise.
She mounted, yet the ring did safely stow,
Lest it should mar the spell; then, through the skies,
Her palfrey swiftly flew and, ere the morn,
To Alcina's island was she borne.

Canto VII: 51-55: She visits him, in the guise of Atlante the sorcerer

Her shape she wondrously transmuted
Adding a full palm's length to her stature,
Increasing her limbs in size, as suited,
Until she felt she'd reached, in full measure,
Atlantes' form, and might go, undisputed,
In place of that wizard, at her leisure,
Who'd reared the lad; a beard adorned her now,
Her hair all hoary, wrinkles on her brow.

Atlante's face and speech she knew so well
She could imitate him most completely,
And, as the sorcerer, all doubts dispel;
And then she hid, and waited patiently,
Until the day came, and a chance befell,
To meet, Alcina absent, privately;
Rare chance indeed, for this Alcina so
Loved the knight, where'er he went she'd follow.

All alone she found him, as she wished,
As he was taking the fresh morning air,
Beside a stream that the hillside nourished,
Which flowed towards a clear lake, set there,
Hi soft and pleasant garments were finished
In a manner that love's idle ways declare,
Wrought by Alcina's hand, in silk and gold,
That of her spells and subtle magic told.

A fine string of richest gems was set
In a chain, that descended to his breast,
And round his once-manly arms were met
Twin bracelets, so adorning her fair guest;
Both ears were pierced, completing our vignette,
By rings of gold, designed to match the rest,
And from them hung two pearls, their quality
Unmatched in India or Araby.

His curling locks were moist with such perfume, 55
As owns the sweetest scent, and costs the most;
He soft and pleasing gestures did assume,
As, in Valencia, fond lovers boast;
Naught but unhealthy things in him found room,
Except his name, the rest corruption's host;
Such he appeared, destined for damnation,
His former self changed, by incantation.

Canto VII: 56-64: She reproaches him for his loss of virtue

She observed him, in the form of that mage, 56
Whose semblance she'd adopted, then drew near,
Severe her aspect, venerable with age,
Which he was once accustomed to revere,
And with a most threatening look of rage,
That was wont in his pupil to plant fear,
Cried sternly: 'Come, is this the fruit I gain
For all of my long labour, sweat, and pain?



Stanza 56

The marrow of the lion and the bear, 57
Was the first food I fed you on, and I
Nurtured you, gladly, in my mountain lair,
A child that strangled snakes (I tell no lie)
De-clawed the tiger and the panther there,
And drew the wild boar's tusks; then tell me why
After such disciplines, I find you later,
Mere Attis, or Adonis, to Alcina?

Is this what the stars I studied promised, 58
Those sacred entrails, and the flight of birds,
Omens, and auguries, and dreams, that fist
Full of lots, and all those learned words,
When from the milky breast you were dismissed,
All that proclaimed (since not by tending herds
Do men win fame) in arms you would appear,
And in your martial deeds would own no peer?

A fine beginning, one from which, sir knight, 59
One might surmise a Caesar would arise,
An Alexander, Scipio, outright!
Who alas, unless with their own two eyes
They saw it, could believe you ever might
Become Alcina's slave, one to despise,
With, on your arms and round your neck, her chains,
By which she leads you, and her will maintains?

Oh, if true praise and honour move you not, 60
Or the deeds for which heaven destined you,
Why is your own posterity forgot?
Why scorn the victories that must ensue?
Why shun that womb the fates to you allot,
Set to conceive a line that shall pursue
True fame, a more than human progeny,
Brighter than the sun in its great glory?

Do not deny those noble souls their birth, 61
Formed in Eternal Mind, that now and then
Must take on mortal bodies on this Earth,
And so, arise from your sole root again.
Do not deny those laurels, marks of worth,
With which, after the damage and the pain,
Your heirs, their children, their successors
Shall deck Italy, restore her honours.

Not only should those many souls add weight 62
To your purpose; bright, and illustrious,
Matchless, sacred souls, the truly great
Flowers of your fertile line, sent among us,
But two of them alone should demonstrate
My claim: Alphonso, and the glorious
Ippolito, his brother; none their peer,
Wherever strength and virtue prosper here.

I spoke more of these than any other, 63
When I described your future line to you,
Because these two will acquire, together,
More of that virtue all good men pursue.
Thus, I gave more attention to either,
Than to the deeds of your other issue,
Seeing that you delighted in my speech
That of their glorious renown would teach.

What has she, whom you have made your queen, 64
More than a thousand courtesans possess,
That to a host a concubine has been?
And you well know the end of such excess.
And yet to better learn what goes unseen,
Unmask her magic, her deceitfulness,
Don this ring now, return then to her side,
And see what seeming beauty yet may hide.'

Canto VII: 65-67: Melissa returns to her true form

Ruggiero now gazed, mute and ashamed, 65
At the bare ground, and knew not what to say.
The mage, placing the ring that she had named
Upon his little finger, stepped away.
As Ruggiero his true being claimed,
Such deep remorse upon his heart did weigh,
He'd rather have been hidden from the eye;
There, a full thousand fathoms deep, to lie.

For once the ring he'd lifted to his lips, 66
In an instant, Melissa's form he saw,
And old Atlante's shape was in eclipse,
Since she required that same disguise no more,
Like that mask from her face the actor strips,
That played its part, and casts it to the floor.
Now swiftly her true purpose she revealed,
And how and why she'd met him, thus concealed;

That she was sent there by that lady who 67
Loved him ever, and for his presence pined,
To liberate him from his chains anew,
Those bonds of sorcery that did him bind.
And to inspire belief that this was true,
By Atlante of Carena's form defined,
Had thus appeared; and, since he was restored,
The truth she told must not now be ignored.

Canto VII: 68-71: Ruggiero's love for Alcina turns to loathing

'The noble lady, she who loves you so, 68
And is of love right worthy on your side,
To whom you owe a debt, as you must know,
For the freedom in which you now abide,
Sends you the ring that magic art doth show,
And would have sent her heart, if deep inside
It owned a power that could match the ring's,
That, nonetheless, your true salvation brings.'

And she went on to speak more of that love 69
Bradamante had borne him, and still bore,
While commending her worth, as if to prove
How truth and affection informed her lore,
All framed in a manner he would approve,
Shrewdly as any diplomat, and more,
Bringing such hatred upon Alcina
As we show towards the wicked ever,

Fuelling hatred of one he had adored; 70
Yet why should that seem so wondrous a thing,
Since from a charmed state he'd been restored,
His enchantment now dispelled by the ring.
The ring made clear, also, how false a chord
Her beauty had sounded, her form changing;
Naught there, from head to foot, had been her own;
All vanished now, its ruin hers alone.

As if, one morn, some lad had set aside 71
A ripe apple, forgetting where it lay,
And then returned to where it did reside,
By some chance and after many a day,
Wondering then to find it marred inside,
A thing of rottenness and foul decay,
And what before was dear, and greatly prized,
Now loathed and scorned, discarded and despised.

Canto VII: 72-75: He perceives her true form

So, Ruggiero now (to whom the ring 72
Given him by Mellissa had revealed
The fey's true form, since that powerful thing
Made visible what magic spells concealed
And thwarted all enchantment) withdrawing
His love from one that to clear sight did yield,
Beheld an ugliness so great nowhere
Knew he of aught so withered or less fair.

Pale, wrinkled, lean was this Alcina's face, 73
And sparse and white the hair upon her head,
Her height not six palms, nor a tooth in place,
For she was longer lived, to magic wed,
Than the Sibyl, that Cumae's cave did grace,
Or ruined Hecuba, yet through a dread
Enchantment, to this present age unknown,
Had shown a youth and beauty not her own.



Stanza 73

Beauty and youth she'd gained by her dark art, 74
Fooling Ruggiero among many,
But now the ring had torn the veil apart
That all those years had hidden, utterly,
The deeper truth; no wonder that his heart
Denied he'd ever loved her, nor did he
Now think to do so, shorn of her disguise,
And helpless now to charm him with her lies.

Yet he was advised, thus, by Melissa: 75
To employ his customary manner,
Until he could retrieve his steel armour,
Laid by, neglected and unused as ever.
And lest Alcina should suspect him, further
Feign that he wished to determine whether,
Since he'd not worn that armour for so long,
It fitted him, to whom it did belong.

Canto VII: 76-80: He escapes Alcina's realm

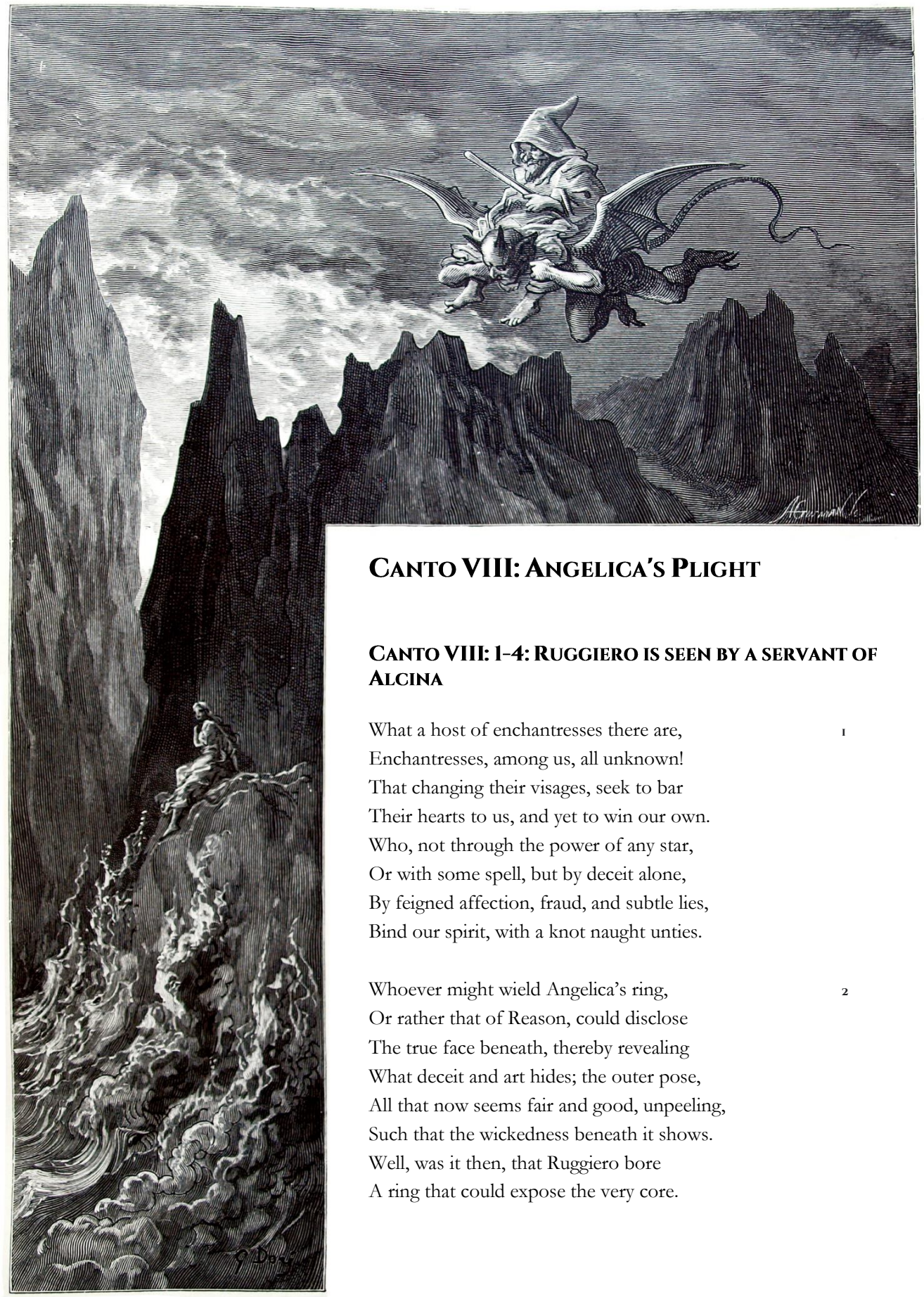
Once so clad, he fastened Balisarda 76
(For so brave Ruggiero's sword was named)
To his side, and grasped the shield with ardour
Which, dazzling the eyes, the vision maimed,
But seemed to strike the spirit yet harder,
As if the very breath of life it claimed.
This he now raised, and hung about his neck,
Wrapped in the silk, that held its power in check.

And then to the stables he passed swiftly, 77
Leading therefrom an Arabian steed,
(Melissa had so counselled, formerly,
Knowing it to be strong and sure indeed,
A horse as black as pitch, that o'er the sea
The whale had brought) and saw it met his need.
Swift as the breeze, twould bear him everywhere,
That sea-born breeze, now ruffling his hair.

The hippogriff he might have commandeered, 78
Which was housed beside the Arabian,
But the wise mage had said: 'I am afeared
You lack the skill to master such a one.'
For she, the following day, it appeared,
Would steer the beast to a fresh location,
Where it might be trained, more easily,
To obey the rein in flight, or run free;

Nor if he refused to take the creature, 79
Would any suspect what he intended;
So, Ruggiero could do naught other,
For Melissa e'er her counsel extended.
Now, from that realm that all worth did smother,
And its withered fey, his way he wended,
Reaching, in time, a gate from which the road
Would lead to Logistilla's fair abode.

Against its sentinels he charged, at will, 80
Riding towards them swiftly, sword in hand;
That one he chose to wound, and this to kill,
Then o'er the drawbridge, with his foes unmanned,
And Alcina unknowing of it still,
Ruggiero departed from her land.
In the next canto I'll tell how he fared,
Ere to her sister's palace he repaired.



Canto VIII: Angelica's Plight

Canto VIII: 1-4: Ruggiero is seen by a servant of Alcina

What a host of enchantresses there are, 1
Enchantresses, among us, all unknown!
That changing their visages, seek to bar
Their hearts to us, and yet to win our own.
Who, not through the power of any star,
Or with some spell, but by deceit alone,
By feigned affection, fraud, and subtle lies,
Bind our spirit, with a knot naught unties.

Whoever might wield Angelica's ring, 2
Or rather that of Reason, could disclose
The true face beneath, thereby revealing
What deceit and art hides; the outer pose,
All that now seems fair and good, unpeeling,
Such that the wickedness beneath it shows.
Well, was it then, that Ruggiero bore
A ring that could expose the very core.

Ruggiero, while feigning innocence, 3
Had ridden, armed, to the gate (as I said),
And braving the guard, hastened thence,
With his good sword, breaking many a head,
Leaving behind a crew whose poor defence
Had left them sorely wounded, or quite dead.
Towards a wood he'd gone, not far as yet,
When he a servant of Alcina met.

This servant bore a falcon on his wrist, 4
One he flew, for his pleasure, every day,
Now on the plain, now by a lake amidst
The fields, where'er the hawk might find its prey.
His faithful dog accompanied him, to assist,
His horse had modest trappings I may say;
On seeing how fast our brave knight did fly,
He knew from whence he fled, from whom, and why.



Stanza 4

Canto VIII: 5-8: The servant attacks him

The servant approached our Ruggiero, 5
And, in a haughty tone, demanded where
He was going, and why such haste did show.
Receiving no reply, the whole affair
Seeming plain, this servant, in the know,
Extending the arm, that his hawk did bear,
Cried: 'What if I should seek to stop you here?
You'll not escape my hawk, it would appear.'

Then he let loose the bird, that flew so fast 6
The Arabian steed could not keep pace.
The huntsman leapt from his horse, and cast
Aside the reins; like an arrow it did trace
An arc towards our knight, and when at last
It reached him bit, and reared towards his face,
While, behind, with such speed the servant came
He seemed a roaring wind or burst of flame.

And the dog was no slower to advance, 7
Snapping hard at his Arabian steed,
Which startled like a hare, now did a dance,
Shaming Ruggiero who turned at speed
Towards the servant, who had seized the chance
To wield his whip, for naught else did he need,
(The whip with which he made his horse obey)
Since Ruggiero's sword was not in play.

The servant ran at him, and struck him hard, 8
The dog gnawed his left foot, while, meantime,
The horse, now running free, with nothing barred,
Kicked at his left flank, then tried to climb,
As the hawk, wheeling, with its talons marred
Both steed and rider, adding to the crime,
The Arabian, neath the whip's flaying,
Neither guiding hand nor spur obeying.

Canto VIII: 9-11: Ruggiero employs the magic shield

Ruggiero, at last, unsheathed his sword, 9
And, to free himself from their bold attack,
He threatened now the servant, now the horde
Of creatures, with the point and now the back,
Which annoyed them more; with one accord,
They rushed at him, again, and blocked the track.
Our brave knight knew dishonour now, and shame,
Was his, if he allowed more of the same.

He also knew that little time remained 10
Before Alcina gathered her full strength;
The tower bells, and drums, and trumpets rained
Their noise upon him, while, throughout the length
Of every valley, men and horses strained
To reach the scene, and this was not a tenth
Of all her forces; yet to make these yield
With naked blade seemed wrong; best use the shield.

He raised the cloth that old Atlante's work 11
Enclosed, scarlet in hue, which kept it hid;
The shield, once freed from where its light did lurk,
Sent out that glare which no eye could forbid;
The servant gave a single sudden jerk,
And fell, the dog too, as the fierce horse slid
To the ground, while the falcon failed to keep
Aloft; and there he left them, fast asleep.



Stanza 11

Canto VIII: 12-15: Melissa cancels all Alcina's spells

Alcina, meanwhile, having heard the tale 12
(Of how our knight had forced the outer gate,
Killed her men, and now pursued the trail
To her sister's realm) near died from distress.
She tore her robe, she struck her face, now pale,
Berating herself for her foolishness.
And gave the calls to arms, while, instantly,
She gathered round her all her strong army.

She divided it in two, then she sent 13
One half in Ruggiero's direction,
The others, at the port, made swift ascent
Into her ships, which now sailed into action,
Darkening all the waves beneath them pent.
With them Alcina, troubled to distraction,
Blinded by her love for Ruggiero,
Embarked; her city, left unguarded, though,
Was open to Melissa, who now seized 14
The opportunity to liberate,
From her evil realm, those she'd been pleased
To prison there, in miserable state;
And comfort them, of their ill plight now eased;
And all her wicked plans thwart and frustrate,
Break seals, burn images, and void the lots,
Shatter the rhombs, and free enchanted knots.

And then through all the fields she passed apace; 15
There every former lover who'd been changed
To beast, fount, tree, or stone, in that vile place,
She returned to his own form; wide she ranged.
They, once restored, their freedom did embrace,
And following the knight's path, they exchanged,
Their present realm for that of Logistilla,
Bound for Ind, Persia, Greece, or Scythia.

Canto VIII: 16-18: She restores Astolfo, and they fly to Logistilla's castle

For each, to his own country, she sent, though 16
Under an eternal obligation,
And, before the rest, she changed Astolfo,
Restoring his human face and station;
For the noble courtesy he did show
Ruggiero, despite his transmutation,
And his kinship with that warrior, weighed
With Melissa, who granted him her aid,

For Ruggiero had returned the ring, 17
Which now helped her to restore Astolfo.
Wise Melissa thought it less than nothing
If his armour and lance were lacking, though;
That golden spear that to the earth would bring
Any knight, with a first, and only, blow.
Once Argalia's, twas now Astolfo's lance,
And, great renown it brought to both in France.

Melissa sought for it, and found it there, 18
In the palace, placed there by Alcina,
With all the armour that he used to wear,
Taken from him, in that evil harbour;
Then mounting that creature, strange and rare,
Atlante's, set Astolfo behind her,
And reached fair Logistilla's castle so,
An hour, at least, before Ruggiero.

Canto VIII: 19-21: Which Ruggiero is still struggling to reach

Amidst rough stones, and spiny thorns, our knight [19]
Strove to reach the kinder sister's dwelling,
From vale to vale, from mountain height to height,
Wild, solitary, harsh and forbidding,
Till, wearied, he arrived, in the broad light
Of noon, above a steep slope descending
To a strand, open to the south, below,
Deserted, bare, and parched, where naught would grow.

The burning sunlight struck the hills around, [20]
While the heat they reflected made the air
And the sand so hot that the very ground
Well-nigh turned to molten glass in that glare.
Not a bird but some shady nook had found,
The cicadas' tedious hum the sole sound there,
Among the trees, above the bay, their cry
Deafening cliffs and gullies, sea and sky.



Stanza 19

The heat, his thirst, and his sheer weariness 21
(From treading that deserted sandy shore,
Both hard labour and painful to excess)
Proved poor company, you may be sure;
I'll leave him there, to suffer, nonetheless,
Such subject matter ever proves a bore,
To chill Scotland, seeking brave Rinaldo,
I'll turn, from the hot, parched Ruggiero.

Canto VIII: 22-28: We return to Rinaldo, gathering troops for Charlemagne

Now, Rinaldo was held in great esteem 22
By the king, and his daughter, and the court,
And so, the time was right, it now would seem,
To explain his embassy, in that he sought
Levies from England, and the very cream
Of Scotland's forces, so he, as he ought,
Not only gave good reason for the thing,
But petitioned, for Charlemagne his king.

The monarch swiftly granted a reply, 23
That whatever of his forces were required,
To fight with honour, all would live and die
To serve King Charlemagne, in arms attired.
And in a few days hence, he would supply
As many knights and men as were desired.
And were he not so old in tooth and claw,
He would have led the troops, as long before.

Nor would that alone have held him back 24
Were it not that he had a son, and he,
Of strength, intellect and skill had no lack,
And had often led their foot and cavalry,
Cautious in defence, and skilful in attack.
Though he was then absent from that country,
He expected his return; he would be there,
Once his lords had gathered for the affair.

So, he sent his summons through all the land; 25
The wealthy must send horses and good men,
Prepare the ships and arms, and have to hand
Much gold, and of pure silver more again;
Rinaldo, meanwhile, sailed straight to England,
The king escorting him to Berwick, then
Parting from his guest, with deep emotion;
He was seen to shed a tear on that occasion.

A favourable breeze blew, and Rinaldo 26
Embarked, and wished farewell to those ashore,
The sails now filled before the breeze, and so
They voyaged, till the River Thames they saw,
Just as the rising tide began to flow.
They worked upriver with both sail and oar,
Secure in their progress, till, at the flood,
Their ship within the port of London stood.

Sealed letters were presented by Rinaldo, 27
To the Prince of Wales, from Charlemagne,
Besieged there, in Paris, and King Otho,
Requesting soldiers for a bold campaign.
Whatever forces he could raise must go,
Promptly, by ship to Calais o'er the main,
To bring aid, and the cause there to advance
Of England, and King Charlemagne, and France.

This Prince, who now held the land for Otho 28
And administered the kingdom in his stead,
Deigned to show such honour to Rinaldo,
As the king would have shown, let it be said;
And all those summoned now to fight the foe,
From Britain, and the isles about, were led
To the harbour where his fleet now lay,
Assembling there, by the appointed day.

Canto VIII: 29-34: Then to Angelica, in her encounter with the hermit

Yet, now, I must change my tune once more, 29
As the musician makes his instrument
Change key, and vary from what went before,
And strikes a flat, a sharp, so I, intent
Upon Rinaldo on that foreign shore,
Thought of Angelica, on flight still bent,
Who, while escaping him, a hermit met;
For, in that place, I've left the maid as yet.

I wish now to pursue her tale awhile: 30
I told how she had asked courteously,
Fearing Rinaldo whom she did revile,
The nearest way by which to reach the sea,
For she thought to die, so great her trial,
Since Europe treated her so savagely;
Yet the hermit caused her some delay,
Finding it pleasant to prolong her stay.

Her rare beauty had so inflamed his heart, 31
It warmed his bones to the very marrow,
Thus, when he saw her yearning to depart,
And loathe to stay, even till the morrow,
He pricked the mule, cruelly on his part,
Though it scarcely sped off like an arrow,
So slow its pace that it could barely trot;
It looked to pursue her, but had rather not.



Stanza 31

And since the maid was swiftly out of sight, 32
And, in a while, would be beyond pursuit,
The monk returned to his dark cell outright,
And summoned up a horde of imps to suit,
Selecting one of them, a wicked sprite,
And telling him to haste along her route,
And enter in the steed, like Cupid's dart,
That, with the lady, bore away his heart.

And as a dog accustomed to the chase, 33
That hunts the hare, or runs the fox to ground,
Will, if it sees its prey swerve, for a space
Appear to lose the trail, and hunt around,
Yet when its master rides there, at full pace,
Has thwarted all, and on the kill is found,
The monk, and by a means that we now know,
Will meet the lady, where'er she may go.

What was the monk's design I know full well; 34
And shall explain, but in another place.
Angelica knew naught of what I tell,
And rode all day, now fast, now slow, her pace.
Within her steed, the imp now worked its spell,
As a hidden fire will smoulder, for a space,
To break out later in a towering blaze,
None can escape or quench, and none obeys.

Canto VIII: 35-39: She is stranded on a rock-bound shore

Now, once Angelica had reached the shore 35
Where the waves lave the coast of Gascony,
She rode upon her horse a mile or more,
Where'er the sand was firm, close by the sea,
Yet the imp drew her mount towards the roar
Of the breakers, and plunged it, suddenly,
Into deep water, the maid, in her fright,
Left no recourse, except to cling on tight.

She'd no time to use the reins, nor did dare. 36
All the while her steed was plunging deeper.
She but drew her feet higher in the air,
And dragged her garments closer about her.
While round her shoulders fell her loosened hair,
As the wanton breeze grew ever bolder.
Yet wind and sea scarce harmed the maid, as though
They both paid tribute to her beauty so.



Stanza 36

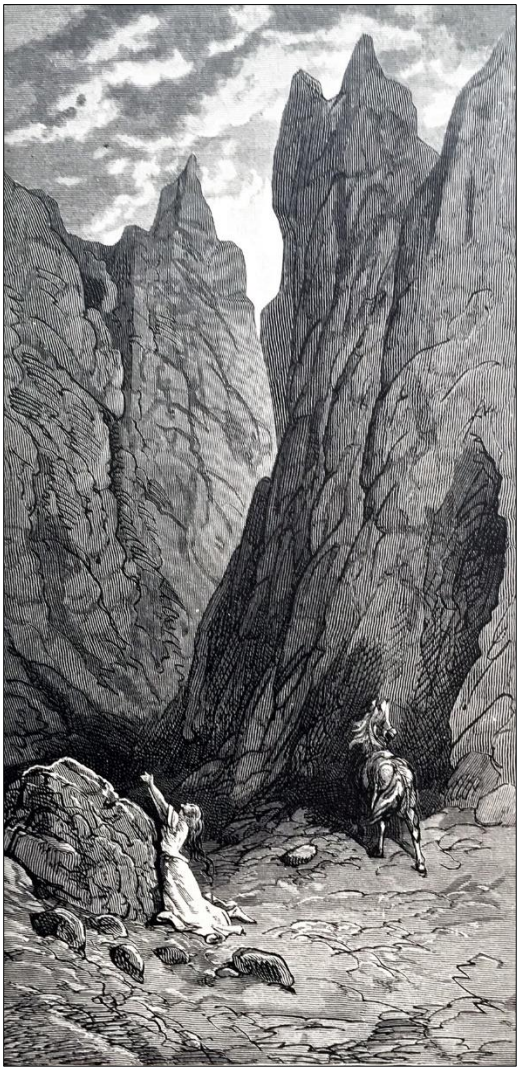
She turned her eyes towards the shore, in vain, 37
A flood of tears poured down her breast and face,
Seeing the land more distant, midst the main,
And shrinking ever, o'er the widening space.
Yet her palfrey towards the north did strain,
And, in a wide curve, bore her to a place
Surrounded by dark cliffs, and fearful caves,
As evening cast its shadows on the waves.

Finding herself on that deserted strand, 38
Which, to her anxious mind, alone brought fear,
Gazing as Phoebus, sinking, far from land,
Yielding to night, began to disappear,
Fixed like a statue, there, the maid did stand;
To any eye it would have proved unclear,
If this were a living woman, to the view,
Or merely some rock, like to her in hue.

Uncertain, gazing, stunned, in deep distress, 39
Her hair all loosened, blowing in the breeze,
Her hands in prayer, her lips yet motionless,
Her eyes turned heavenwards, as if to seize
Upon the cause of her unhappiness,
Blaming the powers above for her unease.
Unmoving, as if dazed, she stood awhile,
Then gave vent to her grief, in tearful style:



Stanza 39



Stanza 39

Canto VIII: 40-44: Angelica's lament

'Fortune, what more now can you do to me, 40
That might serve to satiate your anger?
What can I yield, drowned thus in misery?
My life, perchance, and suffer here no longer?
Yet you sought it not, for you, momently,
Wished me borne from out the deepening water,
So that you might torment me yet on land,
Before I die on this dark, barren strand.

I cannot see how you could harm me more; 41
Through you I'm exiled from my royal throne
Doomed to flee, to sail from shore to shore,
Ne'er to return, abandoned and alone,
And my lost honour, thus, can ne'er restore,
For though I have not sinned, yet, I must own,
A vagabond, I've fuelled the idle chatter
That calls me shameless, and debates the matter.

What good, in this world, can a woman find, 42
Whose chastity is questioned, and honour?
It harms me that I'm young, and some are kind
Enough to think me beautiful; however,
No thanks are due to Heaven, to my mind,
For such a gift, it only makes one suffer.
For this, Argalia, my brother, died,
Though he with magic weapons was supplied.

For this, Agricane, King of Tartary, 43
Subdued Galafrone, who was my father,
That, as Khan of Cathay, had mastery,
There in India; yet I've a humbler
Place now, doomed to roam eternally,
Seeking lodgings for the night, wherever.
You've robbed me of wealth, kin, and honour too,
What greater harm, Fortune, is there in you?

Since death by drowning failed to satisfy 44
Your cruel intent, then produce some monster
To devour me, and end my pain thereby.
There is no fate you could have me suffer,
For which I would not thank you; let me die,
Be it twixt the jaws of some vile creature!'
Yet, as she grieved, breathing many a sigh,
The hermit, suddenly, appeared nearby.

Canto VIII: 45-48: The hermit subdues her with a drug

On the heights above he'd sought to stand, 45
Mounting the summit of a towering rock,
Watching Angelica, now reaching land
Dismayed, afflicted, in a state of shock.
A full six days before, you understand,
He'd been borne, by a demon, to that block
Of stone, and now, feigning true devotion,
Approached, like Paul or Saint Hilarion.



Stanza 45



Stanza 45

Now, when Angelica saw the monk appear, 46
She found a deal of comfort in the sight.
His presence there allayed her previous fear,
Though her face was deathly pale in the light.
'O woe is me!' she cried, as he drew near,
'Holy father, how dire is my sad plight.'
And, sobbing loudly, did her tale pursue,
The which, small wonder, he already knew.

The hermit now set out to console her, 47
Giving her several reasons not to pine,
And, thereby, allowed his hand to linger,
Now on her cheek, now on her neck so fine,
Then, feeling secure, moved to embrace her,
While she, perceiving his perverse design,
Scornfully, set her hand against his breast.
She fell; in blushes all her face was dressed.

Now the hermit had a pouch at his side, 48
Which held a little vial full of liquid,
And over the eyes, where Love doth abide,
And sparks from his brightest torch lie hid,
Sprinkled a drop or two, which once applied
Had the power to bring sleep, as now it did.
Upon the sand, now unaware, she lay,
To all the old man's worst desires a prey.

Canto VIII: 49-50: And tries to rape her

He embraced and fondled her at leisure, 49
While she slept on, unable to resist;
Now her breasts, and now her mouth, brought pleasure,
No eye could see him in the evening mist;
And yet he failed to obtain full measure,
For his weak charger stumbled in the list;
He was anxious; too many years it bore;
Indeed, the more he worried, then the more



Stanza 49

All seemed in vain, for every ruse he tried, 50
The useless creature still refused to rise;
He tugged at it, a while, and heaved, and sighed,
Yet could not raise its head, despite his cries.
In the end, he fell asleep, by her side.
Yet a fresh disaster before him lies,
Since Fortune ne'er does aught by halves, when she
Subjects a man to shame and misery.

Canto VIII: 51-61: Of Proteus and the tribute of maidens

Before I tell you more, I need to veer 51
From my present course a little while.
For, if towards the West you were to steer
Past Ireland's coast, you'd come upon an isle.
Ebuda, it is called; scant folk appear
On those shores, for the orca, we revile,
And other sea-creatures, denude the place:
Old Proteus takes vengeance on that race.

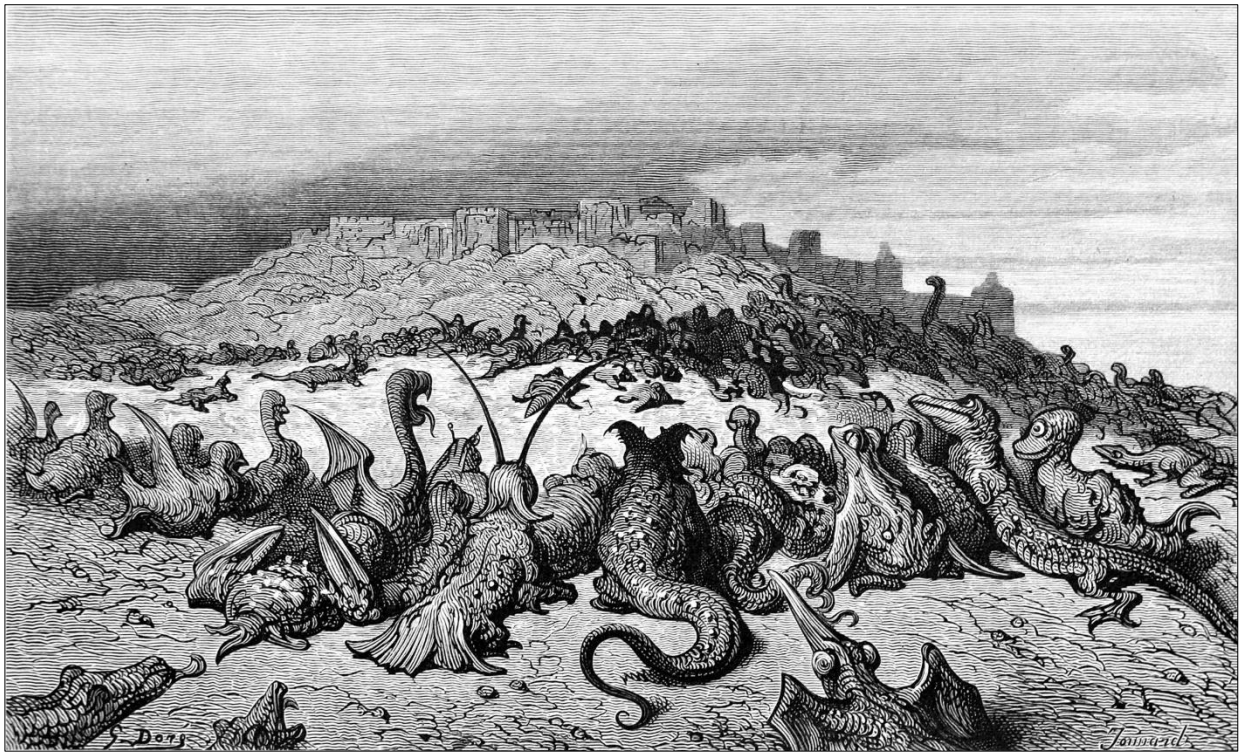
The ancient legends, whether false or true, 52
Say that once a powerful king ruled there,
Who had a daughter; she so fair to view,
So graceful, tis no wonder that, whene'er
She was seen, Proteus would burn anew,
Midst the waters, while she took the air,
And, finding her alone one day, defiled
The helpless maiden, and left her with child.



Stanza 52

This rape was a torment to the father, 53
Viler, more impious than aught he knew.
No excuse, no pity, quenched his anger,
Such was its force, against his own issue.
Nor did her state persuade him to defer
Her punishment which he did swift pursue;
For he condemned her and the child to death,
Before the babe had taken its first breath.

Now Proteus, who nurtures his great herd 54
Of sea-creatures for the god of the sea,
Mighty Neptune, of her sad plight had word,
And in his anger, quite unlawfully,
Against that isle his ocean monsters stirred,
(Orcas, and sharks, and whate'er else may be
Lurking beneath the waves) to slay them all,
Herds, flocks, and people, at his martial call.



Stanza 55

And then in force he did assault the place, **55**
Each town or village, and lay siege around,
Where fearful and weary folk must face
A tedious watch to secure their ground.
Abandoning their livelihoods, that race
As a last recourse, then agreed to sound
The oracle, for counsel; by and by,
It spoke to them, and yielded this reply:

That they must find a maiden in that land **56**
Who was equal in beauty to the other;
And offer her to Proteus, on the strand,
In exchange for slaying the king's daughter.
And if he thought her, once she was at hand,
As fair, he would keep her, and no longer
Attack the isle; if not, they must provide
Another, till that sea god found a bride.

And so, the deadly custom commenced, **57**
Whereby a maiden who was fair of face,
Was led to Proteus each day, from thence,
Till one seemed pleasing, in her looks and grace.
The others were but prey, without defence,
Fed to a giant orca, that kept place
Beside the port, and patrolled the shore,
Till the sea god left the isle once more.



Stanza 57

Whether the legend be false or true, 58
(For there is none I know of who could say)
Such a tribute had been offered, when due,
(A vile crime against woman) to that day,
Enshrined in law by that impious crew;
The monstrous orca fed on maids, I say.
Though to be a woman brings, everywhere,
Trouble and oppression, twas far worse there.

O unhappy maids whom misfortune brought 59
To that unhappy land, and dire distress!
For that folk ever some stranger sought
On whom to perpetrate their wickedness,
Since the more maids from elsewhere that were caught
In their snare, by so much their toll was less.
Yet since the breezes oft brought none to shore,
On every foreign strand they looked for more.

In frigates, galleys, in whate'er would float, 60
They roamed about the seas, and gathered in
All the maids that they found, that seemed of note,
To aid their tribute, dire as was the sin.
Some they took by force into their boat,
Some by flattery, stealth, or gold did win,
And plundering thus, from the wider region
Filled up every tower, and every prison.

Voyaging, one day, from land to land, 61
They came upon that solitary shore
Where Angelica slept, upon the strand,
Midst tufts of grass, but on a stony floor.
For water, and what wood there lay to hand,
Those pirates landed, to refill their store;
Thus, the fairest flower of earthly charms
They found there, in the holy father's arms.

Canto VIII: 62-68: Angelica is captured and offered as a sacrifice

Oh, too noble and far too dear a prey, 62
For so barbarous and villainous a crew!
Oh, who would credit it, that you hold sway
Fortune, o'er all things mortal, as you do!
That to feed the monster you'd bear away
Such beauty, that which Agricane drew,
From the Caucasus, to India, in state,
With half Scythia, to embrace his fate.

That beauty which King Sacripante set 63
So far above his honour and his crown;
That which saw Rinaldo swift forget
His better judgment and his fair renown;
That beauty for which whole armies met,
And turned the whole Levant nigh upside-down;
And now has naught to aid it, not a word,
So lonely that its cry must go unheard.

That lovely woman still oppressed by sleep 64
Was a prisoner, in chains, ere she woke.
The hermit sorcerer they chose to keep
Beside her, on the ship, with other folk;
This done they then sailed out upon the deep,
And returned to their island; not one stroke
Of a sword to prevent them, where their prey
They immured, to await the fatal day.

But her beauty, being great, moved to pity 65
That savage race, who for many a day
Delayed, until they deemed it necessary,
Her fate; and, while the monster made away
With others snatched from some foreign country,
They spared Angelica, until, I say,
As tribute to the monster, they did bring
The maid, with a tearful crowd following.

Who shall describe the anguish, and the cries; 66
The lament that rose to heaven above?
If the earth had opened, twere no surprise,
When to the cold stone she must remove,
Where chained, no help indeed could now arise,
And death awaited, and most harsh must prove.
I shall not; for such grief I feel too deeply;
My verse must take another path completely,

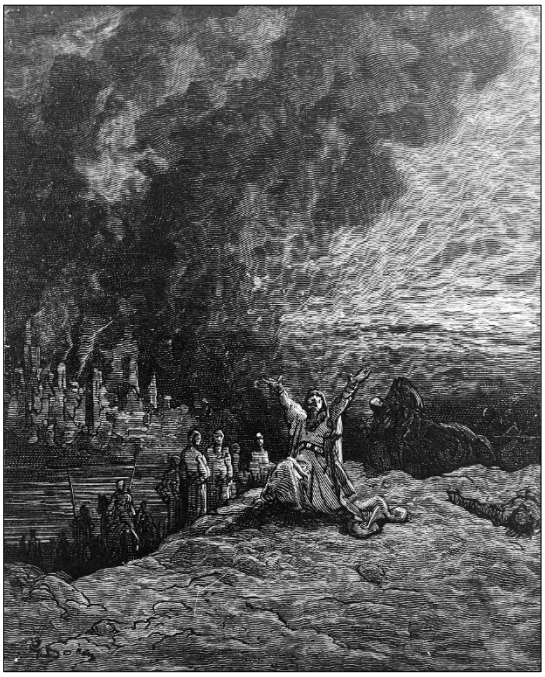
And seek lines of a far less mournful kind, 67
That might my weary spirit now restore,
For nor the squalid serpent, to my mind,
Nor the tigress with her savage roar,
Grieving her lost cubs, nor aught men find
Twixt the Atlantic and the Red Sea shore,
Foul and venomous, but must bemoan
Angelica, chained to the naked stone.

Oh, if it were but known to Orlando, 68
Who had left for Paris, in search of her,
Or that pair the cunning old man had so
Deceived, with a message from the other
Stygian world; among the dead they'd go,
A thousand times, her traces seeking ever,
That sweet angelic maid; yet, if they'd known,
What could they do, far off, and she alone?

Canto VIII: 69-78: Orlando's lament

Now Paris, besieged by the enemy, 69
(This Agramante, King Troiano's son)
Was reduced to such dire extremity
That the war he had waged was well-nigh won.
And were it not that shows of piety
Placated the heavens, that hid the sun
And brought on heavy rain, the Moorish lance,
Had seized the Empire, and the realm of France.

For the supreme Creator's eyes had turned 70
To the aged Charlemagne's just complaint,
And quenched the fire before fair Paris burned,
By more than human art, which is but faint.
Wise are those who have this lesson learned,
To seek God's help who suffers no constraint.
Twas well the pious Emperor understood
Aid came from heaven, source of all his good.



Stanza 70

Orlando lay, devoid of sleep, one night, 71
Many a thought passing through his mind,
Of one kind and another, many a flight
Of fancy, seized, yet swiftly left behind;
Like clear water glittering with the bright
Sun's rays, or by the risen moon defined,
Issuing light from out its sparkling flow,
Now to left or right, now high, now low.



Stanza 71

To him came the memory of his lady, 72
Although in truth it was ever present,
Stirring the flame in his heart that quietly
Burned by day, rendering it more ardent.
From far Cathay, with him, on his journey,
She had come, and yet, to his discontent,
Was lost, leaving no trace he might follow,
When Charlemagne was routed, near Bordeaux.

Orlando grieved at this, and reflected, 73
Although in vain, on his past foolishness:
'Dear heart, how sad that I e'er elected
To mistreat you; it pains me to excess,
That, by night and day, I so neglected
You that always sought to show me kindness,
Leaving you in the hands of old Namus,
Nor challenged that wrong, so injurious.

Had I not good cause to wait out the fight? 74
Nor would Charlemagne have refused me.
And if he had, who then, in my despite
Would ever have dared to take you from me?
Would I then not have armed myself, outright,
Rather than let them do so? Most surely.
Nor Charlemagne, nor all his host beside
Could have served to tear you from my side.

Oh, if he had but placed you in the care 75
Of his guards, in Paris, or some fortress!
All, since he left you with Duke Namus there,
That calms me, is that he caused your distress,
Not I. Who better, in that sad affair,
Than I to guard her, to the death no less,
Better than my own eyes and heart indeed,
And could and should have done, as I concede?

Where are you now, thus torn from me, dear heart? 76
So young, so lovely, a lamb, at the fall of night,
Lost in dark woods, far from the flock, apart,
That bleats aloud, hoping the shepherd might
Hear her cries, ere he chooses to depart,
Ere the wolf hears her in the distance, plain,
And the sad shepherd weeps for her, in vain.

Where are you now, my love? Wandering still, 77
Alone, as lost, perchance, and grieving so;
Or has the cruel wolf spied you from the hill,
And you defenceless, lacking, thus, Orlando?
Is the flower that amongst the gods yet will
Enthrone me, the flower that I've yet to know,
Intact (for your chaste spirit I sought to guard)
Or culled perchance, by force, its blossom marred?

O, wretched fool, what's left me but to die, 78
If the flower is culled, and so seek an end?
O, Lord above, let me but weep and sigh
For every other woe but this you send.
If such be true, my hand shall life deny,
And yield the spirit, that doth so offend.'
Lamenting to himself, and sighing so,
Complained the sad and tearful Orlando.

Canto VIII: 79-83: His dream

All beings, everywhere, now sank to rest, 79
Granting repose to spirits full of care,
Some on cold stone, some in their feathered nest,
Amongst the grass, midst beech or myrtle there.
And yet, in pain, Orlando, thus oppressed,
Closed his eyes, with many a wound laid bare,
Nor would his thoughts allow untroubled sleep,
All was but fleeting, neither long nor deep.

It seemed to him that on some grassy shore, 80
And all amidst the scent of flowers, he viewed
That ivory, that unmarred bloom, once more,
That Love with his own hand had so imbued
With colour; those bright eyes again he saw,
That to his famished spirit served as food.
I speak of those bright eyes, the lovely face,
That stole his heart, and did his spirit grace.

He felt the greatest joy, the greatest pleasure 81
That ever a happy lover could know,
Yet, behold, a storm, in rapid measure,
Wasted the flowers and trees, and brought them low.
No faster is the garden stripped of treasure
Than this, when north, or south, or east winds blow.
And through the wasteland, then, he seemed to stray,
While seeking cover from the storm alway.

Meanwhile the sorry lover lost his lady, 82
Vanished in dark cloud, he knew not how.
He made the woods and fields echo loudly
With her fair name, the while; with troubled brow
He kept repeating, sadly: 'Woe is me!
Who renders all my sweetness bitter, now?'
And heard his lady cry, requesting aid,
For many a heartfelt call to him she made.

He sought the place from which the sound arose, 83
Wearying himself, running here and there.
Oh, how fierce the grief how deep his woes;
Those sweet eyes he sought for everywhere.
Another voice cried then, at which he froze:
'Hope not for joy on earth, here find despair!'
At this cry he awoke, and found his eyes
Full of sad tears, that flowed forth at those cries.

Canto VIII: 84-91: He sets out to find Angelica

Forgetting that those visions are untrue, 84
That doubt or passion conjure, when we dream,
He simply felt his lady's plight anew,
Exposed to harm, and shame; his pain extreme,
As, leaping from his bed, his fears grew.
He donned his armour, and then, all agleam,
Sought out Brigliadoro, his strong steed,
Nor for a squire's assistance found the need.

And so as to pass everywhere, and yet 85
Not mar his dignity in any way,
He chose his honoured pennant to forget,
Quartered in, red and white, but showed, that day,
One all in black, perchance because it met
The needs of one who grieved; in an affray
He'd won it from a brave and steadfast knight,
Whom he had slain, and in that very fight.

At midnight he departed, silently, 86
Without word to his uncle, Charlemagne;
Nor to Brandimarte, whose loyalty
He cherished, did he seek to explain
His departure; but when the Sun rose free
From Tithonus' rich lodgings, and did deign
To drive away the shadowy mists of night,
That emperor soon missed his faithful knight.

With great displeasure Charlemagne now heard 87
His nephew had departed ere the dawn,
(Though he had need of him) without a word,
Nor could he curb his anger, but did mourn
Lamenting loudly, blame on him conferred,
Crying that he'd wish he'd ne'er been born;
Threatening that, if the knight did not return,
Many a weighty punishment he'd earn.

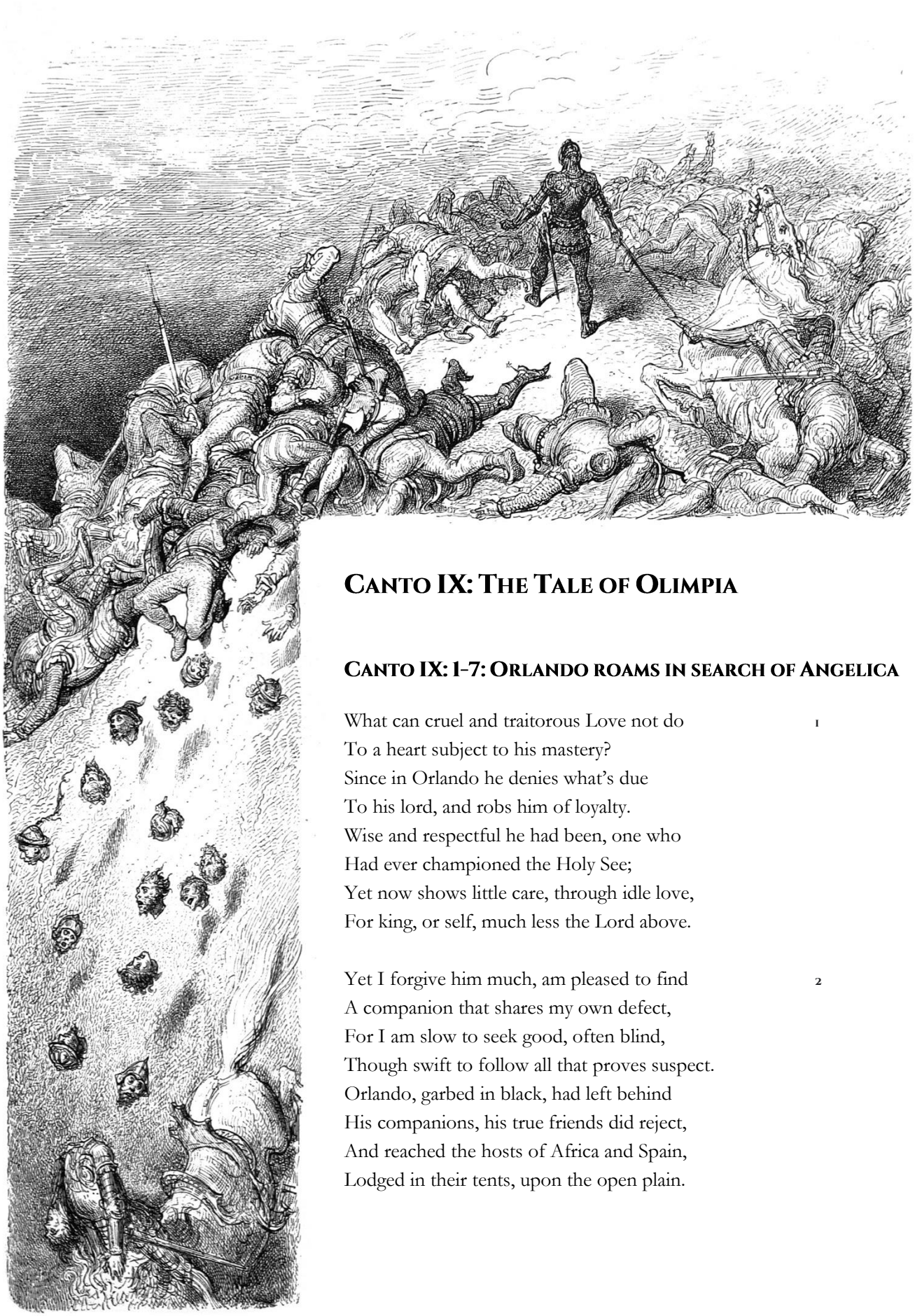
Now Brandimarte, whom Orlando loved 88
As firmly as his own self, would not stay,
Whether he hoped Orlando might be moved
To return, or whether he felt dismay
That his companion had been thus reproved,
And, ere the eve, sought to be on his way,
Saying nought to his Fiordelisa,
Lest she demanded that he not leave her.

This was a lady, she his true delight, 89
One who was rarely absent from his side,
Endowed with manners, grace, fair to the sight,
Her wit and wisdom not to be denied,
And if he went now, ere the fall of night,
Without taking leave, nor sought to confide
In her, well, he thought to return outright;
Yet events would serve to detain the knight.

And when she had awaited him, in vain, 90
For nigh on a month, and he gave no sign,
Without companions, or a guide, in train,
She left, her longing such; and, by design,
Her search through many lands did sustain,
Of which I'll tell in this long tale of mine.
Though no more as yet, since brave Orlando
Is now my care; for more of him I'd show.

He, foregoing Almonte's red and white, 91
Had ridden to the gate, but in the ear
Of the staunch captain there, our mournful knight
Whispered: 'It is the Count.' soft but clear,
And so, the drawbridge was lowered outright,
O'er which the road ran, that must bring him near
The battlefield, and lead towards the foe.
What followed, is fuel for the next canto.





Canto IX: The Tale of Olimpia

Canto IX: 1-7: Orlando roams in search of Angelica

What can cruel and traitorous Love not do 1
To a heart subject to his mastery?
Since in Orlando he denies what's due
To his lord, and robs him of loyalty.
Wise and respectful he had been, one who
Had ever championed the Holy See;
Yet now shows little care, through idle love,
For king, or self, much less the Lord above.

Yet I forgive him much, am pleased to find 2
A companion that shares my own defect,
For I am slow to seek good, often blind,
Though swift to follow all that proves suspect.
Orlando, garbed in black, had left behind
His companions, his true friends did reject,
And reached the hosts of Africa and Spain,
Lodged in their tents, upon the open plain.



Stanza 3

Or dislodged rather, since they'd sought shelter 3
From the heavy rain, in barns, neath trees,
Near or far, gaining them helter-skelter,
In groups, alone, or in their twos and threes.
Now they slept, all wearied by their labour,
Those propped on one arm, recumbent these.
They slept; their deaths he might have thus ensured,
Yet ne'er unsheathed Durindane, his sword.

So generous was Orlando's heart, that he 4
Thought it quite wrong to slay a sleeping foe,
He searched in every place for his lady,
But found her not, though he looked high and low.
If any man there woke, he asked him, sadly,
Describing her form, all her outward show,
If he had seen her and, of courtesy,
To think of any place where she might be.

And when dawn broke, and all was clear and bright, 5
He searched throughout the whole Moorish army,
Dressed in the garb of a Saracen knight,
So as to do so all the more safely;
It helped, indeed, that he was erudite
In many languages, not French merely,
And so well versed in Arabic that he
Might have been born and raised in Tripoli.

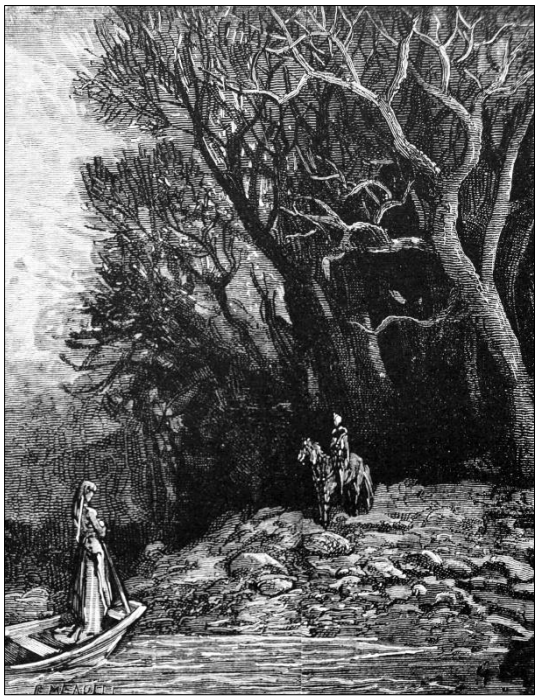
For three whole days, he searched the camp entire, 6
To the same end, then turned his attention
Towards the towns and cities, every shire,
Not only in the realm, I should mention,
But Gascony, Auvergne, each hut and byre,
Every place, and of the least dimension,
From Brittany to Provence, main to main,
And from Picardy to the ends of Spain.

Twixt the end of October, and November, 7
At that season when we see the trees
Divested swiftly of their leafy cover,
And all their branches trembling in the breeze,
When the restless birds, too, flock together
Orlando searched; a quest that did not cease
All winter long, and even with the spring
His fair maid continued, still, pursuing.

Canto IX: 8–13: A lady urges him to join the assault on Ebuda

Passing one day, as he had often done, 8
From one pleasant region to another,
He came to where the Norman and Breton,
Are parted by a sea-ward flowing river,
Now deep and swollen where'er it did run,
With rain and snow-melt, so as to cover
The bridge ahead and, thereby, close the way
As over banks and fields it sought to stray.

The paladin searched hard on every side, 9
(For neither fish nor water-fowl was he)
To see how he might overcome the tide,
And reach the other bank less riskily,
When suddenly, behold, a boat he spied,
And, at the stern, sat a comely lady,
Who gave a sign that right goodwill she bore
Towards him, but declined to touch the shore.



Stanza 9

Towards the land, indeed, she would not steer, 10
Suspecting he might act against her will;
Orlando begged that she might yet draw near,
And bear him o'er the flood, so deep and chill,
But she replied: 'No knight may pass, I fear,
Unless he swears, on oath, that he'll fulfil
My dearest wish, and honour this request,
To fight in a just cause, and with the best.

If you, sir knight, desire to pass beyond 11
The flood, and reach the far shore, by my aid,
Then promise me before next month has gone
That you will join the Scottish cavalcade,
For a mighty army, second to none,
Received a royal summons, and obeyed;
Their armada will assault Ebuda's isle,
Which the cruellest of races doth defile.

For you must know that, not far from Ireland, 12
Where there are many isles, this one doth lie;
Ebuda, whose folk roam from land to land,
Such is their law, and seize the maids they spy.
And all the fair sex that they steal, that band
To a voracious monster then supply.
It swims each day to shore, and e'er a new
Maiden feeds on, for such fare is its due.

And merchants and pirates that pass by, 13
Sell them many, and many of them fair.
Reckoning on one a day, you might apply
Your mind, and say how many perish there.
Yet if pity brings a tear to your eye,
Or if for love and maidens you've a care,
Be pleased to join that band of the elect,
That combine to such profitable effect.'

Canto IX: 14–17: He sets out for Ireland, but is driven by a storm to Antwerp

Orlando scarcely needed to hear all, 14
Before he swore to be the first to fight,
As one whom evil actions did appal,
And upon whom such deeds weighed, day and night.
He was induced to think, and fear withal,
Angelica might be in such a plight,
Since he had searched so widely yet had heard

Naught of her person, not a single word. 15
This suspicion robbed him of all quiet,
Quashing every plan, he'd made before.
So, he determined to spread his net,
And head for that distant island shore.
Thus, he, ere the evening sun had set,
Found a boat near St. Malo, and to war
Set forth at once, and soon was out of sight,
Clearing Mont Saint-Michel that very night.



Stanza 15

With Brieuc and Tréguier to larboard, 16
Orlando's vessel skimmed the Breton shore,
And then the white chalk cliffs they steered toward,
Of England, that was Albion before.
But the southerly that passage did afford,
Turned to a westerly, and evermore
Blew with such force the master reefed the sail,
And then fled eastwards driven by the gale.

A distance that had taken four full days 17
The helpless vessel now traversed in one,
Held by the master on that course always,
Lest frail as glass against the shore it run,
The wind that had blown them in that phase
Throughout four nights, now yielded to the sun,
And brought them to the Scheldt estuary,
Where Antwerp's broad river meets the sea.

Canto IX: 18-20: Orlando is urged to meet with a noble lady

As soon as their ship, sea-worn and weary, 18
Entered the roads, and drew near to shore,
From the land on their starboard, swiftly,
An elderly gentleman towards them bore,
(Whose age his white-hair, indeed, showed clearly)
And turning to the nobleman, he saw
To be their leader, most courteously
Greeted them, warmly and agreeably.



Stanza 18

He spoke on behalf of a fair lady, 19
Saying that, if he chose to meet with her,
He would find her, in affability
Sweetness, beauty, beyond every other,
Or she could come to him there, equally,
If that were more pleasing to the stranger,
Thus, he'd prove no less accommodating
Than other warriors the waves did bring.

No other knight who'd come by sea or land 20
Had e'er refused to meet with this fair maid,
To give her counsel, he must understand,
In a cruel case; all thus had honour paid.
On hearing this, Orlando did command
A boat, and to the shore he swiftly made,
And then as one both kindly and well-bred,
Followed, politely, where the old man led.

Canto IX: 21-27: The Count of Holland's daughter, Olimpia, begins her tale

Orlando was conducted through the town, 21
And to a palace, where they climbed the stair,
To find one there who, by her face and gown,
Seemed in mourning; jet black was her wear,
And the rooms, halls, galleries, up and down,
Were all draped likewise, in black, everywhere.
Welcoming him with heart-felt gratitude,
She seated him, and spoke, in that attitude:



Stanza 21

'I would have you know I am the daughter 22
Of the Count of Holland,' the lady said,
'Though not the only child of my father,
For two fine brothers, at my side were bred;
And he proved so kind, whatever favour
I asked was granted, nor aught did I dread.
While I lived happily, in such a manner,
There came to our court a noble stranger,

The Duke of Zealand, headed for Biscay 23
To fight the Moors; all his peerless beauty,
In the flower of his age, perceived that day
With such love as I knew not formerly,
Made me, with scant resistance, his fair prey;
Persuaded by all he seemed, outwardly.
I thought, and think, and think it to be true,
That he loved me, and loves as none else do.



Stanza 23

Twas then, while the wind blew contrary, 24
Contrary for others, for me set fair,
(A day to others, seemed an hour to me;
On swift wings fled the moments we did share)
In sweet conversation, privately,
We swore to wed, once he again was there,
With solemn rights, for so he said twould be;
Such was our promise, offered equally.

Now, Bireno had scarcely left my side, 25
(For such was the name my lover bore)
When Friesland's king (whose realm lies close beside
Our own, as close as we are to the shore)
Planned that his son should take me for his bride,
(His sole son, Arbante, he had no more)
And sent the greatest nobles in his land
To my father, our marriage to demand.

I, who had no wish to break the promise 26
I had made my lover, could not do so;
Nor yet would Love allow me to, in this,
Should I seek such ingratitude to show;
Thus, to avert the plan, and to dismiss
That which was near fulfilment, I cried no,
Telling my father, I would not comply;
Rather than wed in Friesland, I would die.

My good father, he whose greatest pleasure 27
Lay in pleasing me, now troubled me not;
To solace me, who wept in full measure,
He said the marriage plan should be forgot,
Which so provoked the proud king's displeasure,
That angered, disdainful, he chose to plot
Our downfall, entered Holland, and a war
Commenced, that saw my kindred die, and more.

Canto IX: 28-35: Cymosco, King of Friedland, wages war on Holland

Not only was he of such power possessed 28
That few men in this age would prove his peer,
And so skilful in war, that none professed
To match his martial strength, or came near,
Weapons he had the ancients ne'er confessed
To know, nor, but for him, our age I fear,
Such as iron tubes, two yards long or more,
That powder and iron ball hold secure.

To a vent at the rear, they touch a flame, 29
A vent which to the eye is less than plain;
A surgeon will create one much the same,
When he has need to open up a vein.
Thence the bullet flies to kill and maim,
Swift as lightning, with thunder in its train,
And, no less fiercely than a lightning bolt,
Will shatter and destroy, with sudden jolt.

Twice he routed our defeated army, 30
With this device that both my brothers slew,
The first, in the lead assault, savagely
Striking his breastplate, breaking it in two;
Then, in the second, as he sought to flee
In vain, the other was cruelly slain too.
His shoulder the iron ball did arrest,
Entering his back, and exiting his chest.

And then my father was slain, defending 31
The only fortress that was yet untaken,
(All his others had been lost) receiving
A like blow, before it, his life forsaken;
This was as he was coming and going,
To see what was needed, on occasion,
Treacherously struck between the eyes,
By a like shot, that took him by surprise.

Father and brothers dead, I now remained 32
The only heir to this realm of Holland,
While desiring to keep what he'd gained,
It was proposed by the King of Friedland,
That peace and prosperity be maintained
By my allowing his son to win my hand;
Thus Arbante, despite my previous wish,
Might yet satisfy the king's desire in this.

I, (not merely from the hatred that I felt 33
For him, and his vile, iniquitous kin,
That foul death to my own dear kin had dealt,
Father, and brothers; he who now would win
The realm, but for him to whom my heart-felt
Promise had been given, for I'd not sin)
I, (who'd sworn to marry not, till he again
Had returned to me from the shores of Spain)

Gave answer that I would rather suffer 34
A hundred ills than the one he proposed,
'Burn me alive, and my ashes scatter
To the winds,' I cried, to his will opposed.
My people sought to turn me in another
Direction, they being far more disposed
To peace, and so threatened to seize power,
If I chose not to yield within the hour.

Then, finding that their protests were in vain, 35
And that I proved as steadfast as ever,
The threats they made they chose to maintain,
And agreed that our realm they'd surrender,
And myself, to Friedland's king, who my reign
Proposed to secure, nor would he render
Any ill to me, if I'd yield in this,
And wed his Arbante, as was his wish.

Canto IX: 36-40: Her lover, Bireno, is taken captive, and she wed to Abrante

I, who would have chosen to forego 36
My life, to escape the man, reflected
That a far greater regret I'd yet know
Than e'er I'd suffered, if I rejected
Thoughts of revenge, and thus, despite my woe,
Found solace in a course yet undetected,
Not saying no, stating my wish instead,
For his forgiveness, and that we be wed.

From the many who had served my father 37
I now chose two brothers to assist me,
Gifted with intelligence, and valour,
Selecting them more for their loyalty.
Both were raised in the court, and ever
Companions of mine from infancy,
So much so that they'd give scarce a thought
To their own safety, if but mine it bought.

To them I revealed my whole design, 38
While they both promised me their aid,
One as my man in Flanders I did assign,
There to ready a vessel, the other stayed
At my side. While, to this marriage of mine,
Many gathered, to court news was conveyed
That, in the Bay of Biscay, Bireno,
Had armed a fleet, and conflict must follow.

For when in that first terrible affray, 39
One of my own dear brothers was slain,
I had despatched a message to Biscay,
To tell Bireno of our loss and pain;
Yet while he sought to arm, day by day,
The King of Friesland conquered our domain.
Not knowing this, Bireno now set sail
To bring us aid, that we might yet prevail.

The Frisian king being advised of this, 40
Handed the preparations to his son,
As regards the marriage, and then with his
Whole fleet, a vast and powerful squadron,
Found my Duke, all challenge did dismiss,
Destroyed his fleet, and cast him in prison;
Which I knew not, and to the prince was wed.
That, when the sun sought his, sought out my bed.

Canto IX: 41-43: Olimpia and her servant kill Abrante on the wedding-night

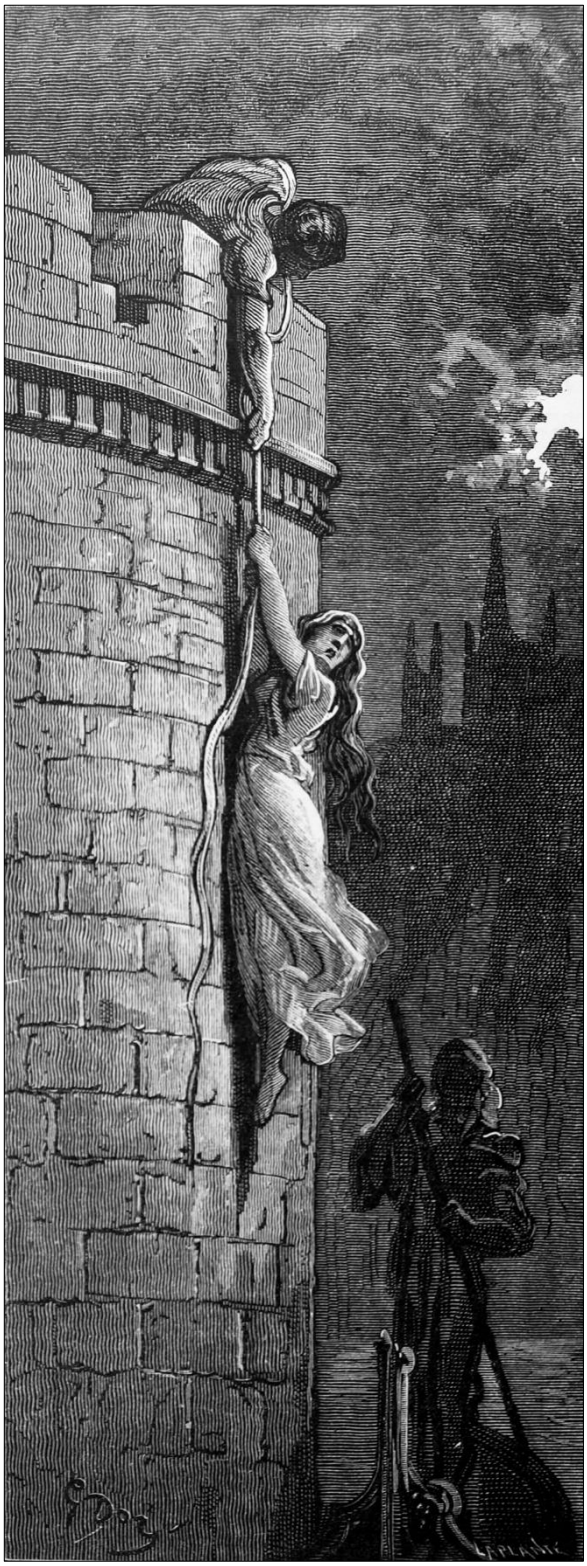
Hiding himself, my servant, well-concealed 41
Behind a curtain, waited motionless,
Till to his eye the bridegroom was revealed,
Then, ere that prince was able to undress,
A sharp blade, he had with him, he did wield,
And Abrante's head and neck did address,
With such force, it took both speech and life;
I slit his throat, for my part, with a knife.

As an ox falls to the axe, the young prince died, 42
Despite the power of his sire, Cymosco,
Friedland's ruler, he who had slain, beside
My father, my two brothers, as you know,
And bound me to him, then, as his son's bride,
Gaining a stronger right to Holland so,
Planning, once I was wedded to his son,
To kill me, when my usefulness was done.



Stanza 41

Ere the deed was known to any other, 43
With whatever was valuable and light,
My servant from a window did lower
Me gently, on a rope, at dead of night,
To where I was received by his brother;
On the deck of that vessel, I did alight,
Which he'd secured in Flanders; oar and sail,
Ensured the will of Heaven would prevail.



Stanza 43

Canto IX: 44-56: She now begs Orlando's aid

Thus, I escaped. I know not if the king 44
Felt greater grief for his son or greater
Anger at myself, upon arriving
The next day and learning of the murder.
With his victorious fleet, returning,
In pride, and Bireno his prisoner,
He'd thought to attend the marriage-feast,
Yet found the city mourning the deceased.

His pity for his son, the blind hatred 45
He felt for me, racked him day and night;
But since pity has ne'er restored the dead,
While vengeance vents our hatred outright,
His bitter grief, which should perhaps have led
His better self to muse on wrong and right,
United with his hatred, such that he
Sought only to retrieve, and punish, me.

Those he knew to be good friends of mine, 46
Or of those two brothers who assisted
In the murder, now paid a heavy fine,
Or lost all their goods, if they resisted,
Or were slain; and Bireno, at his sign,
Might thus have died, for, as he insisted,
No greater pain could he inflict on me;
But he saw he could be used cunningly.

For he made him a cruel proposition; 47
That in a year's time he yet would die,
Unless he could meet this harsh condition,
That through force or deceit, some ally
(Friend or kin) Bireno must commission,
To convey me, from where'er I might lie,
To that prison; and so, his own salvation
Was dependent now on my destruction.

What could be done to secure his freedom 48
Short of my own surrender, had been tried,
Six fine towns in Flanders, mine their income,
I disposed of, and the proceeds applied;
Seeking to corrupt the guards with some,
Such that they might deliver him outside,
And with the rest attempting to recruit
English or German mercenaries, to suit.

My agents in this, either betrayed me, 49
Or were unable to perform their task;
With idle words, not aid, they repaid me;
They deceived me, and yet more gold did ask,
And the allotted year's end must unmake me,
Since neither arms, nor gold in heavy cask,
May arrive in time, so that I might save
My lover from fresh torment, and the grave.

Through him, I lost both brothers and father, 50
And my own realm, too, was taken from me;
While my scant wealth, though I have no other
To sustain my life, I've spent unwisely,
In seeking to free my captive lover;
Nor is there aught now left, that I can see,
But to yield myself to this cruel foe,
And satisfy his vengeance, to my woe.

If there is, thus, no more that I can do, 51
No other means to achieve his freedom,
Than to render my life for his, that too,
To win his life with mine, to that I come.
One fear alone I have, that I shall rue
The deed, unable to extract therefrom
Assurances, so binding and complete
As to protect him from yet more deceit.

I fear that once he has me in a cage, 52
And has tormented me in every way,
He still will not Bireno's pain assuage;
He thus may never see the light of day.
A perjurer he'll prove, and in his rage,
This king will not be satisfied to slay
Myself alone, but he will do no less
To poor Bireno, in his cruel excess.

The reason that I now confer with you, 53
And state my cause, as I now do to all
The noblemen and knights in my purview,
Is so that, counselled thus, by those who call,
I may learn how to ensure, when I am due
To stand before the tyrant, in his hall,
That he will free Bireno, nor will shed
His blood, nor execute him, once I'm dead.

I pray that one might champion my cause, 54
When I am once in this vile tyrant's power,
To see that his promise gives him pause,
And that both are exchanged at that same hour,
In such a manner that to this sole clause
He attends, and frees, from his high tower,
My Bireno, for I shall die content
If life for life I win by my consent.

Nor have I found a champion as yet, 55
That, upon his oath, can reassure me
That if the king his promise doth forget,
As I stand there before him, to set free
Bireno, and declines to pay that debt,
He'll not have me; his power all do fear,
And that weapon no armour can withstand,
Howe'er strong, and against which none can stand.

Now if virtue is not lacking in you, 56
As your proud mien, and valiant form suggest,
And you believe, whatever doth ensue,
You can defend me thus, and so attest,
Be at my side, when I demand my due;
For if you do so, I'll not fear the rest,
Since I shall know that, though I have to die,
My love shall not; I'll win his life thereby.'

Canto IX: 57-61: He departs to challenge Cymosco

With this the lady ended her story, 57
Which often had been interspersed with sighs.
Orlando, when she paused, answered briefly
(Being one who seeks the good to realise,
Though, by nature, rarely speaking idly,
And, ever, all that he is asked supplies)
That he promised, and faithfully he swore,
To perform all that she wished, and more.

It was not his intention that she place 58
Herself in the hands of her enemy,
So as to free Bireno; he would face
This tyrant king, and save both equally,
If his sword and valour, by God's grace,
Failed him not; so, they embarked, swiftly,
Setting sail that day, for the wind was fair,
For Cymosco's realm, and his palace there.



Stanza 60

Now beating on one tack, now the other, 59
They kept Zealand's islands on their right;
One large isle they viewed, and then its brother,
The first concealed the second one from sight.
On the third day Orlando reached another
Open strand, and from his ship did alight,
Still in Holland; though he left the lady
Aboard, till all was settled there, in safety.

Fully armed, our warrior rode the shore, 60
On a horse with dark brown coat, nigh on black,
Trained in Flanders, a breed that Denmark bore,
Prized for its size and power, yet speed did lack;
For, he'd left his own steed, Brigliador,
In Brittany; and, mounted on its back,
That was a creature swift, and twice as fair,
One with which only Bayard could compare.

Orlando rode to Dordrecht where he found 61
A squadron of armed guards before the gate,
More than ever; such suspicions abound,
At the formation of a larger state.
Then, from Zealand rumours flew around,
That to save Bireno, whom they held of late,
His cousin, with an army, had set sail
To rescue the prisoner from their gaol.

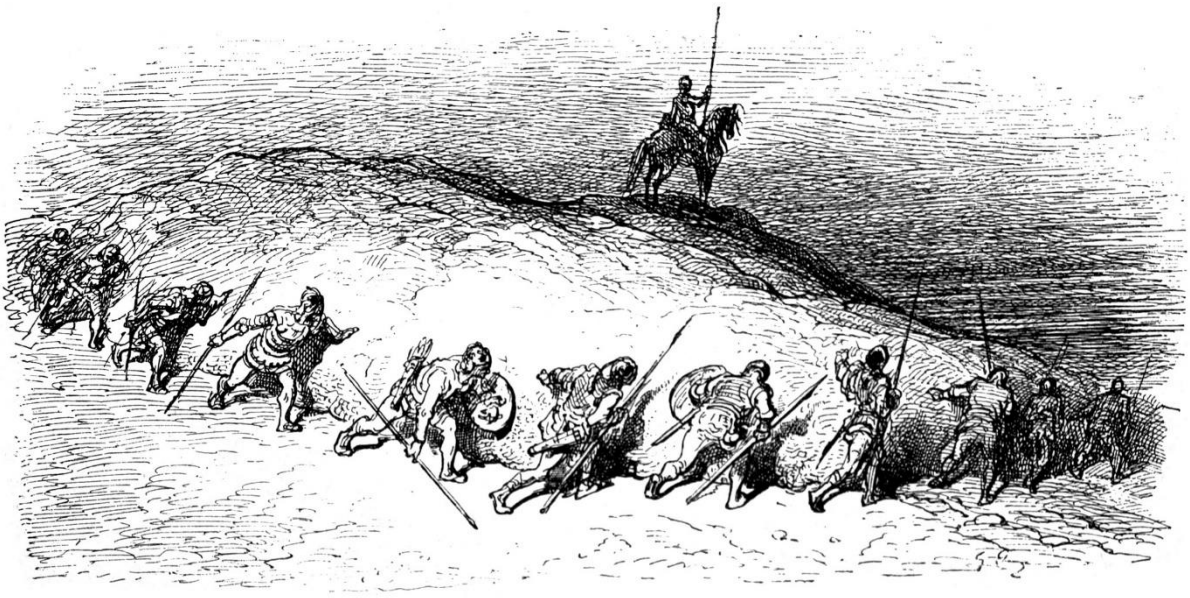
Canto IX: 62-66: Cymosco sets an ambush

Orlando asked a guard who stood nearby 62
To speak to the king, and declare a knight
Sought with lance and sword his skill to try,
If he'd but pledge one thing before the fight,
That if the king should win the joust, thereby
Arbante's slayer would be his of right,
For this knight errant held her life in hand,
And she could be produced at his command;

Yet also he would have the king agree 63
That if the knight errant were to conquer,
Bireno should be set at liberty,
And allowed to go his way, free as ever.
The guard delivered his message swiftly,
But the king, who chivalry had never
Prized nor virtue, fixed now his whole intent
On fraud and treachery, his truer bent.

It seemed to him that with the knight in hand, 64
He'd also have the woman who'd offended,
If this fellow did her person so command;
For such his bold message had pretended.
So, he sent thirty men, a well-armed band,
To where the knight waited, undefended.
They by a secret winding way did go
And swiftly issued forth, behind Orlando.

The tyrant meanwhile had the guard engage 65
Our warrior in talk, till he could see
His men in place, and thus had set the stage;
Then he emerged, with foot and cavalry,
In the way a hunter who is skilled and sage,
Will surround a savage beast entirely;
Or as, by the Volana, fishermen
With long nets trap the fish within their pen.



Stanza 64

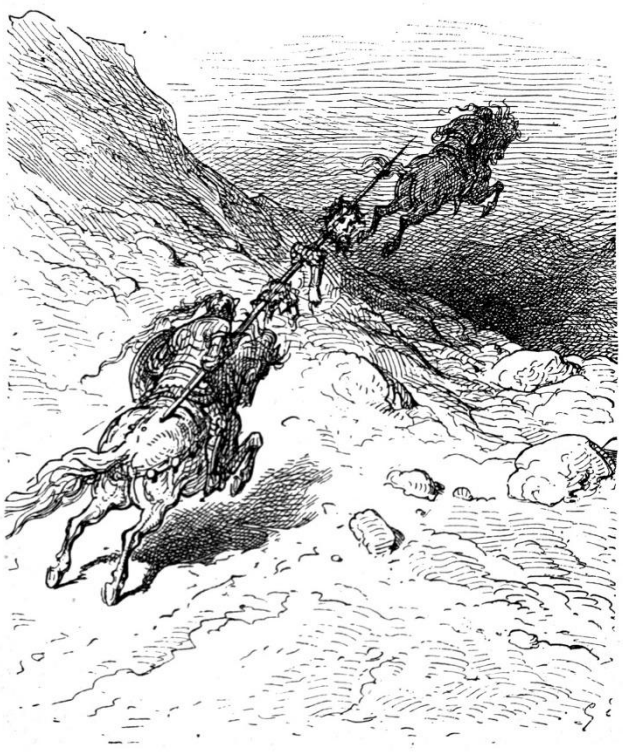
In such manner, did the Frisian king 66
Ensure the warrior had no means to flee;
He wanted him as yet among the living,
And thought he might achieve that readily,
Choosing not to use his cannon, that thing
Which had slain many, and brutally,
But was of little use here, where he would
Capture the knight, not finish him for good.

So, we may see upon the farther shore 69
Of some canal or moat, of frogs a host,
And a practised archer, his aim full sure,
A handful with a single shot may boast,
Or even half a dozen, though no more
Will it hold, tip to feathers filled almost.
Orlando, now abandoning his lance,
With sword in hand made furious advance.

Canto IX: 67-71: Orlando thwarts the enemy ambush

As a wildfowler bent on larger prey, 67
Keeps alive a lesser bird within his snare,
And by its call, and his deception may
Draw such within his net, and hold it there,
Such was the ambush that Cymosco lay,
Wishing to catch the lady, but, beware,
Orlando's wish was not to be so caught,
And he soon broke the circle, as they fought.

Where he saw the largest group of men, 68
Couching his lance, he charged at speed,
At one, and then another, and again,
At this and that one, all frail foes indeed,
Till he had pierced six, the seventh then
He was obliged to leave, slain by his steed,
Since the lance no more bodies could retain,
And the weight of six men could scarce sustain.



Stanza 68



Stanza 68

The lance forgotten, he had drawn the blade, 70
A blade as yet ne'er drawn and found to fail,
And every blow, or cut, or thrust it made,
The death of his opponent did entail.
And all it touched it turned a reddish shade,
From blue, green, yellow, white, black, dark or pale.
Cymosco longed to have his cannon there,
To fire a shot, and end that whole affair.

And with a great shout, gave forth his command 71
That it be brought there, and yet none would hear,
For those who had found safety, near to hand,
Stayed within, reluctant to appear,
The Frisian king, finding them unmanned,
Took flight to the gate now, in his fear,
And would have raised the drawbridge on high,
Had our valiant knight not come so nigh.

Canto IX: 72-80: And eventually kills Cymosco, the Frisian King

The monarch turned his face and left the knight 72
Master of the drawbridge, and the gate;
He fled, and overtook the rest in flight,
His steed maintaining much the faster rate.
Orlando scorned with lesser men to fight,
Wishing the tyrant to confront his fate,
But his great steed could barely stay the course,
While the other seemed to ride a winged horse.

From street to street, he'd fled before the face 73
Of our paladin, but afterwards returned,
Brought new arms, and set the cannon in place,
Preparing the result for which he yearned,
And waiting, like a hunter in the chase,
That with his dogs, now bides his time, concerned
To spear the wild boar plunging from the brake,
Sweet victory, from near defeat, to take,

The boar that breaks the branches, topples stone 74
And wherever he turns his proud mask seems,
So loud the crashing where the saplings groan,
As if he'd topple trees, and block the streams.
So, stands Cymosco, although scarce alone,
To make Orlando pay, or so he schemes,
And as soon he appears, sets a light
To the cannon, and fires upon our knight.



Stanza 74

A flash, like lightning, cleared the vent behind, 75
The shot flew out, filled the air with thunder,
To shake the walls, the ground as if twere mined,
The heavens echoing and the earth thereunder;
A fiery ball, it soared, now unconfined,
To strike whate'er it found, and burst asunder;
Flew hissing through the sky, as if from hell,
And seemed to strike the target as it fell.

But whether twas from haste, or his desire 76
To down the knight, the iron flew astray;
Or his heart, a leaf trembling in the fire,
Spoilt his aim, as he sent it on its way;
Or the Lord above scorned to thus conspire
In a deed that so true a knight might slay.
It struck the knight's steed, its chest it tore,
And drove it to the ground, to rise no more.

Both horse and rider tumbled, but the knight 77
Scare touched the earth, as his charger fell,
For he rose again, his step firm and light,
And seemed to be renewed by it, as well.
As, in Libya, Anteus, in a fight
Would gain strength from the earth, so they tell,
Fresh vigour had now enhanced Orlando,
Redoubling his strength at that fierce blow.

Whoe'er sees lightning fall from out the sky, 78
That Jove unleashes with thunderous sound,
And charcoal, nitre, sulphur chance to lie,
In storage, where it penetrates the ground,
Finds, though it barely touches them, on high
The heavens blaze, it levels walls around,
Splits solid marble, and some fortress mars,
Sending its ramparts soaring to the stars.

Let him imagine then our warrior, 79
Having barely touched the earth, rising so,
Seeming so fierce and fiery, in his manner,
As to make Mars tremble; thus Orlando
Rose while the tyrant king rode for cover,
Spurring his steed as fast as it would go,
Yet Orlando ran behind him at full pace,
Faster than an arrow flies, he did race.

And what his steed had failed to do before 80
He now achieved, on foot, his speed so great
Twas faster than a thought; unless one saw
Twas hard to credit at how fast a rate
He caught the tyrant king, and then made sure
To strike him on the helm, e'er twas too late,
His blade descending to the neck below,
And felling him to the ground with the blow.



Stanza 79



Stanza 80

Canto IX: 81-85: Bireno's cousin arrives, and Bireno himself is freed

Now a fresh noise rose from out the city, 81
Another threatening clash of arms did sound,
For Bireno's cousin, midst the army
He had led from his country, had found
The gates open, the guard-posts empty,
And entered, as Orlando roamed around,
So filling every heart with mortal fear,
He could move without hindrance, far and near.

The people were in turmoil, not knowing 82
Who these were, or what they might demand,
But when, by the clothes they were wearing,
And their speech, they knew they'd come from Zealand,
They sued for peace and, free passage granting,
Told the leader they were now at his command,
And would aid him against the Frisian king,
Who'd gaoled their duke; twas none of their doing.

The citizens had e'er opposed, they cried, 83
Friesland's vile monarch, and his following,
For at his hands their former lord had died.
The king had proved unjust, unforgiving,
Mean, rapacious. Orlando now supplied,
As a friend to both, a reconciling
Voice, bringing peace and unity again;
The Frisians were put in chains, or slain.

Seeking no key, they broke down the gate 84
Of the prison, and soon freed Bireno,
He expressed his deepest thanks, pleased to state
His true obligation to Orlando.
They, together with a company full great,
To the ship, and Olimpia did go,
(She to whom the dominion of that land
Belonged, as of right) as he had planned.

She had guided Orlando to the place, 85
With little hope that he would prosper so;
It sufficed her that, though she went to face
The tyrant, her death would free Bireno.
Revered and honoured by the populace,
It would take long to tell how she did show
Her love for him, and he for her also,
While both gave the credit to Orlando.

Canto IX: 86-94: Olimpia's realm is restored, and Orlando sets sail

The people to her father's place restored her, 86
And swore fealty to her, as was her due.
While upon Bireno she did confer
Governance of herself, her country too,
Being bound to him by Love forever;
Yet he, now being drawn away anew,
Left to his dear cousin the command
Of his towns and fortresses in Holland,

For Bireno to Zealand now was bound, 87
With his faithful consort in company,
And thence intended to test the ground
In Friedland; for a hostage rated highly
Was now his, one that he had found
Amongst the many prisoners, lately,
Who might help him to a swift success,
For she was the tyrant's daughter, no less;

And, he said, he had a younger brother, 88
To whom he proposed she might be wed.
Orlando set sail the same day, moreover,
As Bireno, to go where fortune led,
He would take none of the gifts, however,
Extended to him, requesting instead,
That thing of iron, which when deployed
An effect much like to lightning enjoyed.

In taking it, twas far from his intention 89
To use the cannon in his own defence,
Considering it a perverse invention
Not worthy of his quest when he went thence,
But of what he planned for it, made mention,
Since its power to maim was so immense:
He bore it off, the powder, shot and all,
That none to its lethal onslaught should fall.

And then, once he was far enough from shore, 90
His vessel riding fair upon the deep,
When every sign had been lost once more
Of the land on either side, the wind asleep,
He seized the thing, and cried: 'Your roar
Shall never aid some coward knight to reap
Advantage, or to claim a greater worth
Than men of valour; vanish from the earth!

O, foul, abominable ordinance, 91
Created in the depths of Tartarus,
By Beelzebub, as an infernal lance
To wreck this mortal world, O ruinous
Engine, I shall send you down, perchance,
To hell itself, from whence you came!' and thus,
He drowned it in the waves; and then set sail
For the cruel island; yet let sense prevail,

For so great was Orlando's wish to know 92
If his lady might be prisoned on that isle,
(She, whom above all others, he loved so
That his life without her seemed but vile)
That he chose not to step ashore shore, but go
Straight to that place, nor pause the while,
Lest some fresh adventure caused him to say:
'Oh, that I had but hastened on my way!'

Nor in England nor in Ireland would he land, 93
Nor, ere then, visit the opposing shore.
Yet let him go, whom Love holds in his hand,
Struck, by that naked archer, to the core!
For I choose to turn again to Holland,
And of our brave warrior speak no more,
(As yet) and invite you too, well knowing
You, also, would hate to miss a wedding.

And marriage feasts are quite sumptuous there, 94
Though not as fine as they in Zealand hold,
For their ceremonies are twice as fair;
But tis not my design that you be told
Of any such; quite other is my care;
Since all's delayed, as fresh events unfold,
That in another canto must appear,
If another canto you would wish to hear.

.



Stanza 94 "*And marriage feasts are quite sumptuous there*"



Canto X: Rescued and Rescuer

Canto X: 1-9: Ariosto on male fickleness

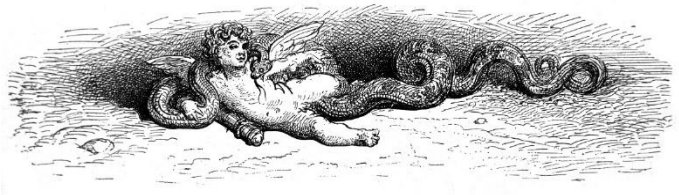
Of all the lovers, all those on this earth 1
Ever faithful, of all the constant hearts,
Of all those blessed, in sorrow and in mirth,
Who in love have played such famous parts,
To Olimpia I'd give the prize, her worth
Being such that, if not first in love's arts,
None of the new or ancient story-tellers,
Have told us of a greater love than hers.

And so many and such clear signs she gave 2
That she had made Bireno sure twas so;
No woman's faithfulness this side the grave
Were clearer, if her heart were there on show.
And if ever a spirit, loyal, loving, brave,
Deserved such love reciprocated, know
That Olimpia had deserved, no less,
Bireno's love and constant faithfulness,

Such that he never should abandon her 3
For any other, were the woman she
Who made both Europe and Asia suffer,
However great her title to beauty.
No, rather should he forego the splendour
Of the noonday sun, the use of every
Sense, his life, his honour, or whatever
Has been claimed, or thought, to be dearer.

Yet whether he loved her as much as she 4
Loved her dear Bireno, and proved as true
To her as she to him, whether he, duly,
Set his sail to maintain her barque in view,
Or proved ungrateful for her loyalty,
Treating such love and faith as nothing new,
I shall tell; and your lips I shall compress,
In wonder, and your eyebrows raise no less.

And when you've seen the depths of cruelty 5
That proved the reward for all her goodness,
Ladies, take note, for none of you should be
Fooled so easily by your lover's glibness.
Lovers to win what they desire, you see,
Forgetting God knows all, will oft express
Their so-called love in promises, and swear
Such things as vanish on the morning air.



Stanza 5

All their vain oaths and promises are lost, 6
Scattered, and dissipated by the breeze,
Once their great thirst is sated, to your cost,
Once those hot lips, so full of ardour, freeze.
Let this example leave you less star-crossed
Than doubting of their endless tears and pleas.
Less costly, ladies, is the wit and sense
That's gained from other folks' experience.

Beware of those in the first flower of youth, 7
With their smooth cheeks, that glow with white and red,
For like a fire in straw, swift born, in truth
Their every fancy is as swiftly fled;
Like to a hunter, who e'er plays the sleuth
And seeks the hare, deep in its grassy bed
Or on some hill or shore, he will not prize
What he has won, but only that, which flies.

Such are those youngsters, who will respect you 8
And love you, if you but treat them harshly,
As well as those who serve you, and prove true,
That offer you their homage, faithfully.
Yet, as slave not mistress, bid love adieu,
If you once let them claim the victory,
For from your own their eyes will quickly stray,
And their false gaze o'er other women play.

By this I do not mean (such would be wrong) 9
That love should be despised, for then you'd be
Like some uncultivated vine, among
The rest, that needs a prop, or two or three;
Tis only downy youth amid the throng,
Eloquent but inconstant, you should flee,
And choose the riper, not the bitter fruit;
Yet not the overripe: I doubt twill suit.

Canto X: 10-14: Bireno's affections stray elsewhere

A daughter they'd discovered, as I said, 10
Of the Frisian king, a captive there,
Who to Bireno's brother might be wed,
Such was the word, and yet delicate fare
Bireno thought such food, who, instead,
Deemed it would be but a foolish affair,
To give that dainty morsel to another,
Of courtesy, though it were his brother.

The little maiden was not yet fourteen, 11
Yet beautiful, and fresh, as is the rose,
That springing from the dew-wet bud is seen,
And with the springtime sun sweetly grows,
Not only did he love the maid, I mean,
But dry tinder with less ardour glows
Or ripened corn if some malicious hand
Sets it alight, hurling a burning brand,

Than did Bireno's passion, instantly, 12
(Such that he burned to the very marrow)
When he saw her grieving so deeply,
For the king, her gaze softened by sorrow;
And as cold water that is added swiftly
To water near to boiling, heat doth borrow,
And halts the seething, thus was extinguished
That love for Olimpia we'd distinguished.

Not merely sated with his bride, Bireno, 13
Loathed her so he could not bear to see her.
He longed so deeply for the other, though,
That he could scarcely wait to be her lover,
Yet, till the day appointed, sought to show
Such true feelings for Olimpia, ever,
That indeed he seemed to love her more,
And what she liked, he too feigned to adore.

And if he sought to embrace the other, 14
None there accused him of an ill intent,
(Though he embraced her more than was proper)
But thought it from pity, and kindly meant,
While to comfort one whom fate, moreover,
Has brought low, one fair and innocent,
Accrues scant blame, but rather garners praise;
Much less a harmless maid with pretty ways.

Canto X: 15-18: He and Olimpia reach a deserted island

Oh, Lord on high, how our human judgement 15
Is oft obscured, as if by some dark cloud!
Bireno's deeds, profane in their intent,
And impious, were by other folk allowed,
As kind and pure; The seamen now were bent
To their oars, and now the brave vessel ploughed
The waves, bearing Duke Bireno, gladly,
To Zealand, with his precious company.

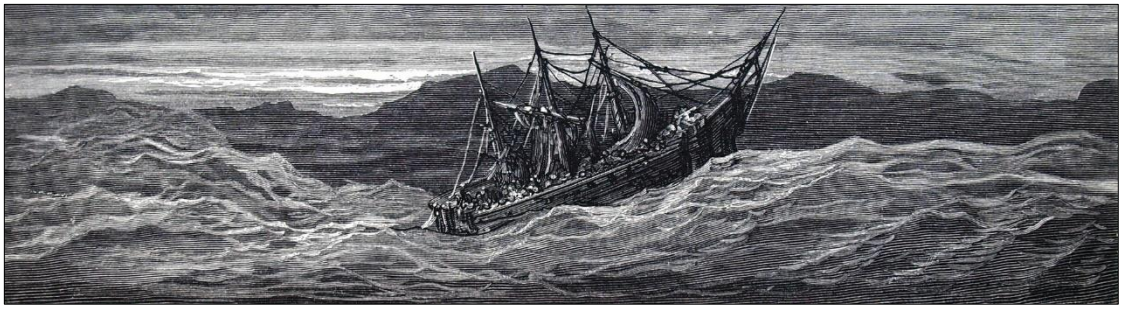
The coast of Holland was now far behind, 16
All lost to sight was that familiar shore,
(Avoiding Frisia, their course inclined
Towards fair Scotland on the port side more)
When, suddenly, opposing winds combined
To drive them to and fro, amidst their roar,
Till, on the third day, they were but a mile,
From an uncultivated stony isle.

They made anchor when the storm winds died; 17
Olimpia landed and, with true delight,
Dined contentedly, Bireno at her side,
Suspecting naught but kindness from her knight.
Then they entered their tent, above the tide,
Where they found a bed prepared for the night.
The rest of their court would sleep aboard,
Seeking sleep where the vessel now was moored.

Her travails while at sea, and then her fear, 18
Had weighed upon her, and denied repose;
Yet now she felt secure; the shore was drear,
But, here, at least no woodland cries arose;
While ne'er a care had she that one so near
Her side, her love, could ere a danger pose.
And, thus, Olimpia's slumber was so deep
No bear or dormouse wins a sounder sleep.

Canto X: 19-26: Bireno abandons Olimpia on the isle

Once she slumbered, that traitorous lover, 19
Prepared to execute his deception,
Slipped from the bed, bare of any other
Clothes than those he wore, fled their pavilion,
And, as if on wings, his clothes together
In a bundle, flew in the direction
Of his good ship, and bade the crew unmoor;
Then, silently, the vessel left the shore.



Stanza 16

Olimpia slept peacefully the while, 20
Until Dawn scattered the cold briny dew
From her golden chariot, o'er the isle,
And the ancient mournful cry rose anew
From the halcyon, the hearer to beguile.
Twas only then sleep from her mind withdrew.
When, stretching out her arm to Bireno,
Her hand grasped but emptiness, to her woe.

Finding him not, she now drew back her arm 21
Tried once more, and yet still tried in vain,
Then sought about the bed, in some alarm,
Although from that naught further did she gain.
Fear banished sleep, and with many a qualm,
She rose now from the bed, and viewed all plain,
Then from that couch, and the pavilion
Was driven forth by tremulous emotion.

She ran towards the sea, no vessel saw, 22
Fearful, and then more certain, of her fate,
She beat her breast, and at her hair she tore,
And looked about (while darkness did abate)
To seek some sign of life along the shore,
Yet all that shore was bare, an empty slate.
She called Bireno's name, soft, then loudly,
As hills and caves echoed their sympathy.

At the land's extremity a cliff stood tall, 23
Which the sea, by beating on it, fiercely,
Had hollowed to an arch; the waves did fall
And break beneath the rock, tumultuously.
Olimpia now scaled that stony wall,
(As if possessed) and gazed upon the sea,
And in the distance saw the swollen sail
Of her cruel lord diminish, and grow pale,

Until its form was scarcely to be found, 24
For the air between was misted as yet,
And then she fell, shuddering, to the ground,
As white and cold as snow, by tears beset.
Again, she rose, and then a cry did sound
Towards that ship, upon its course now set,
Louder and louder cries her voice did claim,
Mourning her love, still calling out his name.

And when her voice failed, turned to weeping, 25
Wringing her hands together, in her pain,
'Where with such speed are you now fleeing?
Swifter your ship, without me, such is plain,
Cruel one, let it bear my body, seeing,
My heart's weight it doth readily sustain.'
And waving a garment clasped in her hand
Called on the vessel to return to land.

But the wind that bore her treacherous lover 26
O'er the deep sea, filling his swollen sail,
Scattered her every cry, lament, and prayer,
Upon the waves; all proved to no avail.
Three times then she sought to smother
Her woe in the depths, yet her heart did fail,
So, from the sea below, she raised her sight,
And returned to where she'd passed the night.

Canto X: 27-34: Olimpia's lament

Throwing herself upon the bed, she lay 27
Face down, wetting it with many a tear,
'Two bodies you received, but yesterday,
Why at dawn did two likewise not appear?
O false Bireno, cursed be, I say,
The hour that saw my birth, that led me here!
What can I do, alone, who shall aid me?
Alas, betrayed, what could yet console me?

No sign of life is here, there's naught around 28
To show aught human dwells upon this isle;
No kind of vessel, perchance run aground,
That I, yet hoping to escape so vile
A place, might use; I'll starve, and not be found,
With none to close my eyes, with none to pile
The earth above; save for some wolf, maybe,
To consume my corpse, and so entomb me.

Thus, filled with doubt and fear, e'en now I seem 29
To sense a bear or lion, midst the trees
Or a tiger's sharp teeth and claws, I deem,
Or some such creature bent on my decease.
But what cruelty is theirs, more extreme
Than the death granted by your cruelties?
They can, indeed, but slay me once, say I,
And yet a thousand deaths you'd have me die.

Suppose some ship should even now appear, 30
And her master takes me on board, of pity,
And wolf, bear, lion, the wild beasts I fear,
I escape, and from hunger I win free,
And other forms of death, shall I be clear
Of harm, in Holland, or your tyranny?
Should he bear me thence where I was born,
From whence I was so treacherously, torn?

With a pretence of marriage and friendship 31
You took me from my own dear country,
Leaving your troops to extend their grip
On my realm, rendering it yours completely.
Shall I turn to Flanders, that did equip
My purpose, though I spent all left to me
In seeking aid, to free you from your prison?
Where shall I go, now my recourse is gone?

Ought I to go to Friedland, where I could, 32
But on account of you would not, be queen?
Friedland, through which my every good,
My father and my brothers, death did glean?
Twas all for you, you wretch, and yet I would
Not seek to reproach you, for that, I mean.
No less than I, the whole tale you well know.
Behold then my reward for acting so!

Oh, let me not be taken now in flight, 33
By those who visit, and be made a slave!
Rather let tiger, bear, or wolf, outright
Destroy me, or some fiercer creature rave,
Tear me with its claws, and rend and bite
My helpless flesh, and drag me to its cave.'
With this, she at her golden tresses tore,
Rending them strand by strand, much as before,

Then to the shore's extremity did run, 34
Tossing her head, hair blowing in the breeze,
As if possessed, and not it seemed by one
Dark demon, but by ten of all degrees.
(Like Hecuba, on viewing her dead son,
Young Polydore, maddened by his decease.)
Then, fixed upon a rock, gazed at the sea;
No less than true stone, stone she seemed to be.

Canto X: 35-39: We return to Ruggiero who meets three of Alcina's ladies

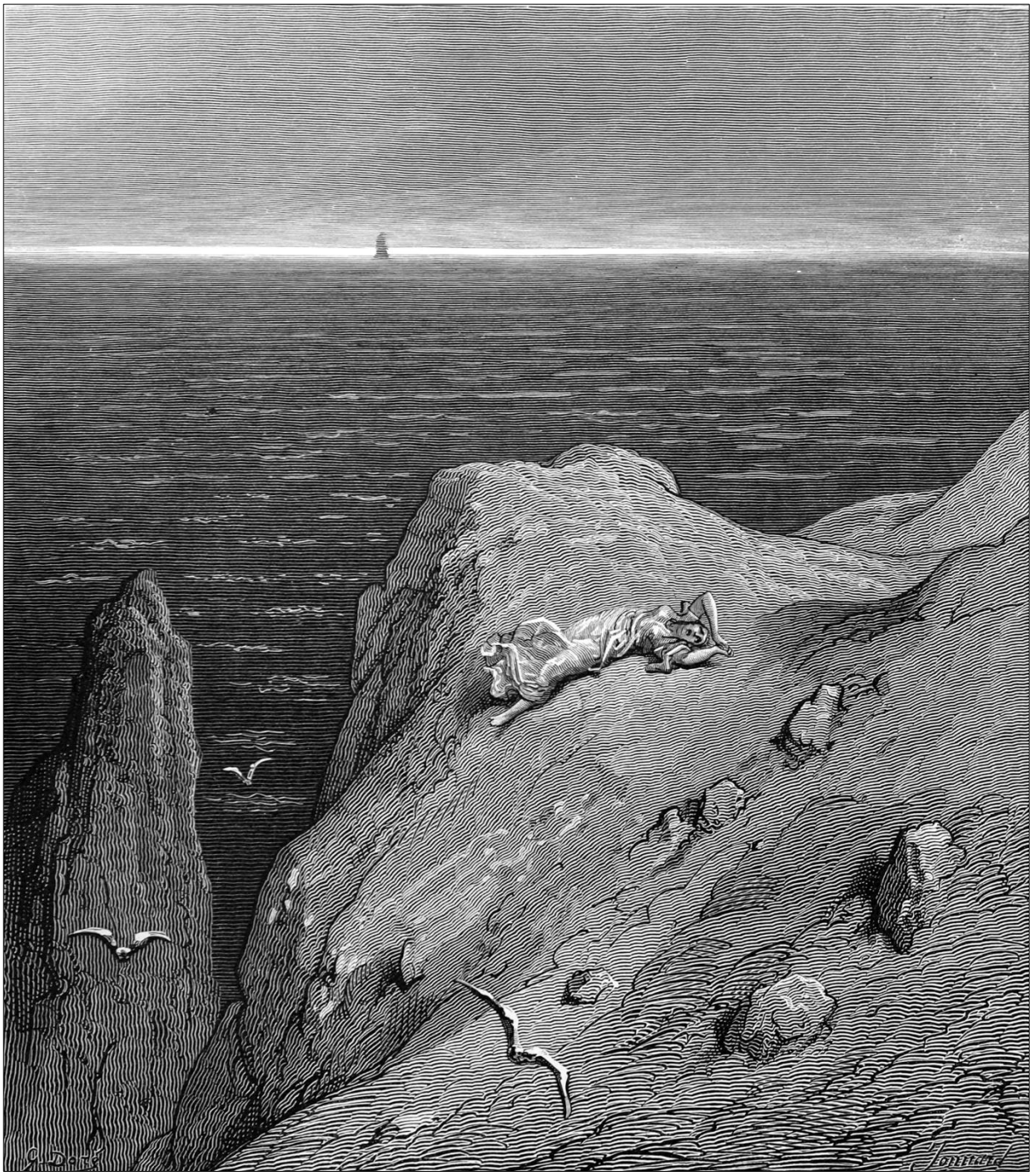
But leave her now to grieve till I return. 35
Of Ruggiero I would speak again,
That in the midday sun did grieve, in turn,
As, wearily, he rode the sandy plain.
Bright rays now struck the hills, and fierce did burn;
Boiling hot, the stones did that heat retain,
And little more was needed, such their might,
To render armour fiery, in that light.

Now, his great thirst and the heavy going, 36
As he toiled through the deep sand, silently,
Along the shore, its bright surface glowing,
Were both proving unpleasant company,
When, in the shadow of a tower reclining,
(An ancient turret rising midst the sea)
He found three ladies of Alcina's court,
As their dress and their gestures did report.

On carpets made in Alexandria, 37
They savoured the coolness with delight;
Round them wines, of every kind and colour,
Were placed, and delicacies sweet and light.
Near the shore, and flirting with the tremor
Of the waves, lay a vessel, small and slight,
That waited for its sails to fill once more;
For not the slightest breeze caressed the shore.

The three (observing Ruggiero toiling, 38
Through the heavy sand, upon his way,
Seeing his parched lips, his armour boiling
Hot, his sweating face) begged him to stay,
Saying that if he was not unwilling
To turn from his path, in the heat of day,
He might share the coolness of their shade,
And rest his weary limbs, for so they bade.

One of the ladies now approached the knight, 39
To hold his stirrup, while another bore
Foaming wine in a crystal cup, which quite
Aroused the thirst that he'd subdued before;
Yet against their pleas he chose to fight,
Knowing each delay was one chance more
For Alcina to appear, who, to his mind,
Was either at his heels, or close behind.



Stanza 34

Canto X: 40-43: Ruggiero, spurning their pleas, finds himself pursued

Fine saltpetre and pure sulphur blaze not
More instantly, when touched by a flame;
The sea, struck by a whirlwind, seethes not
More furiously, troubled by that same,
Than (on finding Ruggiero waited not,
But plodded o'er the sand much as he came,
Scorning maids that thought themselves most fair)
The third, who burned with rage and fury there.

'You are neither courteous nor a knight'
(She called to him, as loudly as she could)
'You stole that armour, and that horse, the right
To which cannot be yours, nor ever could,
And you, if truth be mine, must now requite
That robbery with death, and so you should.
I'll see you hung, and drawn and quartered too,
Vile thief, a fitting end for such as you.'

All the other cries, more furious yet, 42
With which the lady cursed the warrior,
Ruggiero with stony silence met,
Thinking to reply brought little honour.
With her sisters to their vessel, in a pet,
She departed and, once upon the water,
Took up the oars, and then pursued the knight
Along the shore, while keeping him in sight,

Venting many a threat, and accusation, 43
Blaming him with every word she preached.
Meanwhile, the knight arrived at a location
Whence Logistilla's realm might be reached.
And saw an ancient ferryman, on station,
Who, on the shore, was now already beached,
As if forewarned, positioned to await
Our warrior, and bear him o'er the strait.

Canto X: 44-47: He boards the ferry to Logistilla's realm

The ferryman now welcomed him politely 44
Set to transport him to a happier shore;
By his look, he seemed discreet and kindly,
As if his face revealed the heart he bore.
Ruggiero, with thanks to God, swiftly
Went aboard and, once seated at the fore,
Passed o'er the calm sea, in conversation
With this wise and experienced boatman.



Stanza 44

He praised our knight for fleeing the palace 45
Of Alcina, in good time, well before
He had drunk of her enchanted chalice;
For she transformed her lovers, by her lore.
And that, to escape her further malice,
He was crossing to Logistilla's shore,
Where eternal beauty, and endless grace,
Nourished the heart, in that most sacred place.

'Wonder and reverence are felt,' he said, 46
'In your soul, when you first behold her.
Gaze on her noble presence, and be fed;
Naught but that shall your being treasure.
Fear and hope by other loves are bred,
But love for her differs in such manner
As to desire no more of her than this:
To gaze forever, and in that find bliss.

She'll lead your intellect to deeper things 47
Than bathing, eating, music, perfumes, dance;
How, in line with your nobler thoughts, on wings
You may soar like a hawk, your mind enhance;
And how in the glory of blessed beings
A mortal might yet share, and so advance.'
So saying, his pilot approached the shore,
Though distant still; their path not yet secure.

Canto X: 48-51: Ruggiero employs the magic shield

A fleet of vessels flew across the water, 48
And steered towards the ferry, in a line;
For, thus, came the furious Alcina,
With the host she had gathered, o'er the brine,
Risking her ruin and her realm's together,
To win the knight; love prompted her design,
Good reason for her to be, thus, aggrieved,
But no less so the insult she'd received.

For such great anger she'd ne'er felt before, 49
As this ire, gnawing at her heart and mind,
Such that her ship drove on, with sail and oar,
Till all the sea, indeed, foamed white, behind,
And Echo sent the noise from shore to shore,
That every cliff and cave doth ever find.
'Ruggiero, use the shield, tis needed now,
Else you to death, or utter shame, must bow!'



Stanza 50

So cried the ferryman, and waited not, 50
But grasped the cover, and removed it quite,
And, with it in his grasp, all fear forgot,
He thus revealed its clear and shining light.
Its splendour shone, and forth the bright rays shot,
And so affected their enemies' sight
That, rendered blind, so fierce the light did burn,
They fell now from the prow, and now the stern.

Then, one who was on watch upon the wall 51
Who'd observed Alcina's approaching fleet,
Range the castle's warning bell; at his call
Swift aid was summoned, to advance and meet
Ruggiero, while their arrows fell on all
That sought to wrong our warrior by deceit.
And such help they granted him in the strife,
That they preserved his freedom, and his life.

Canto X: 52-56: Alcina is defeated

Four ladies now arrived upon the shore, 52
Sent there, hastily, by Logistilla,
Andronica and Fronesia to the fore,
Valorous the one, and wise the other,
Also (the latter needed even more)
Honest Dicilla, and chaste Sofrosina,
Burning brightest; while from the castle height,
A peerless host emerged to aid the knight.

Beneath the castle, in the calmer water, 53
A flotilla of mighty vessels lay,
Which, at a signal, from any quarter,
Was fit for martial action, night or day;
And, thus, on land or sea, to the slaughter
They put the enemy, and made them pay.
For they turned Alcina's realm upside-down,
Which she had stolen with her sister's crown.

Of how many battles is the outcome 54
Different than that anticipated!
Not only was Alcina parted from
Her lover, whose capture she'd awaited,
But of the host of ships, so great in sum
They filled the ocean as I have stated,
Out of the flames that destroyed the rest
She escaped with one, though twas the best.

Alcina fled, while all her people drowned, 55
Were routed and taken, or were burned,
Yet Ruggiero's loss was most profound,
And brought more pain than her defeat had earned.
Night and day, her tears would wet the ground;
Still, for her handsome warrior, she yearned;
While she now oft regretted, with a sigh,
She could not end it all, and simply die.

For no faery enchantress can do so, 56
While the sun and stars circle overhead,
Yet if she could, then the third Fate, Clotho
Would surely have severed her life's thread,
Seeing her sorrow; or she, like Dido,
By cold steel had died or, upon her bed,
Like Cleopatra to endless sleep allied;
But creatures such as her have never died.

Canto X: 57-63: Logistilla's castle

Now, let us turn to brave Ruggiero, 57
A knight worthy of eternal glory,
And leave Alcina to her pain and woe;
For he'd swiftly disembarked the ferry,
And, thanking God that all had ended so,
Had turned his back upon the sea, swiftly,
And being now upon dry land once more,
Ascended to the fort above the shore.



Stanza 57

A castle stronger, or more beautiful, 58
Was never viewed as yet by mortal eye,
The walls were of stones more wonderful
Than diamonds or garnets; scant supply
Of such gems as these, here, or their equal
Do we find; and if aught of those you'd spy,
Then, I believe, you'd need to travel there;
Except in heaven, there are none elsewhere.

What they owned that made them superior 59
To every other stone, was that, within,
One could see one's soul, as in a mirror,
One's virtues, and propensity to sin;
And so no more need heed the flatterer,
Nor yet the hostile crowd, for all their din;
For, one could, by the mere use of one's eyes,
Know oneself and, by gazing so, grow wise.

Their brilliant glow, that sought to match the sun, 60
Shed such splendour on all things around,
It yet would seem that, though the day was done,
Without fair Phoebus, light could yet be found.
Not with their light alone did these things stun,
But their cutting had been skilful and profound;
There, form and content vied to such extent,
Tis hard to say which was more excellent.

On arches tall enough to reach the sky, 61
So as to hold the heavens up to view,
Stood gardens, fair, so lovely to the eye,
None here perchance e'er so sweetly grew.
Odoriferous shrubs one might pass by
(Amidst the battlements) of verdant hue,
Adorned, the summer and the winter long,
With blossom, though ripe fruit hung there among.

Such noble trees it seems were never grown 62
Except within those gardens, nor such roses;
Such violets, and lilies, ne'er were known,
Such amaranth and jasmine, one supposes;
For here all such flowers are swiftly blown,
They live and die; here, the eve discloses
Bowed heads, on widowed stalks, to the eye;
All's subject to the ever-changing sky.

Yet there, it seemed, was everlasting spring, 63
Everlasting beauty, eternal flowers;
Nor did kind Nature temper everything,
Nor the influence of celestial powers,
But Logistilla there her care did bring,
And so preserved, beyond the passing hours,
(A thing that seems impossible elsewhere)
Her endless springtime, that showed ever fair.

Canto X: 64-68: Ruggiero leaves Logistilla's isle

This visit from so noble a fair knight 64
Was greatly pleasing to Logistilla,
And she commanded that he should, of right,
Be treated courteously and with honour.
Astolfo had dwelt there for many a night,
Whom Ruggiero greeted with pleasure;
And soon all those past lovers won there,
Whom Melissa had restored elsewhere.

When he had rested for a day or two, 65
Ruggiero sought out the faery queen,
With him Astolfo; he too had in view
A swift return; Melissa here was seen
To speak for them, and aid the pair anew,
Yet in humble supplication, I mean,
Asking for help and favour, in their name,
That they might now return from whence they came.

'I shall think on it', the faery replied, 66
'And in two days that same shall expedite.'
How to assist each she did then decide,
Brave Ruggiero and the English knight,
That, to fair Aquitaine, the first should ride,
And on the hippogriff resume his flight,
While she would fashion for that winged horse,
A bit and bridle to control its course.

She showed him what to do if he would soar, 67
And how he might then fall to earth again.
And, likewise, how to circle o'er the shore,
Or fly at speed, or hover o'er the plain.
All skilled horsemen seek to learn, and more,
On the ground, that knowledge he did gain
As regards the air; thus, he was master
Of the winged steed, then and thereafter.



Stanza 64 "*This visit from so noble a fair knight, was greatly pleasing*"

Once he was equipped in every way, 68
He next took leave of the fair enchantress,
Who was most dear to him and, on a day,
Took to the air and flew, with great success.
Regarding that fair flight I've much to say,
Then of Astolfo something to express,
He who must spend a deal of time and pain
To reach the friendly court of Charlemagne.

Canto X: 69-73: His flight takes him to England

Ruggiero left; yet not upon that course 69
He was obliged to take when, in flight,
The hippogriff had borne him off by force,
O'er the sea, the land beneath lost to sight;
But knowing how to steer the winged horse,
This way or that, as he now pleased, the knight
By a different route did homewards fare,
As the Magi did dodging Herod's snare.



Stanza 69

When carried to the isle, on leaving Spain 70
He'd reached India in unswerving flight,
A place ever bathed by the eastern main,
And where a faery with her peer did fight.
A view of other lands he would attain
Than Aeolus' realm of windswept light,
And finish, thus, the orbit he'd begun,
Having circuited the earth, like the sun.

Here Cathay he saw, there Mangiana, 71
Passing, on his journey, broad Quinsay,
And then Imavo; with Sericana
Left behind, on his right, he made his way
South, from Scythia to Hyrcania,
And reached Sarmatia, where, so they say,
Europe begins, while Asia is no more;
Russia, Prussia, Pomerania he saw.

Now though our knight had every desire 72
To return, and search for Bradamante,
He yet wished to circle the world entire,
And could not rest till he saw Hungary,
Then swept over Poland, rising higher,
Till he could view the whole of Germany,
And every other less than torrid land,
Descending o'er the nearest English strand.

And yet think not that throughout all this flight 73
Our warrior was always on the wing;
No, no, he found good lodgings for the night,
Shunned, as best he could, those that were lacking.
Months he spent in journeying, our knight,
To see the world, lands and seas reviewing,
Now, close to London, his travels ended,
As o'er the Thames his strange steed descended.

Canto X: 74-76: He arrives as Rinaldo is reviewing the troops

There, in a meadow, near to the city, 74
Cavalry and infantry were arrayed,
Who, to the drum and trumpet, marched neatly,
And, in squadrons, their finer points displayed
To Rinaldo, that flower of chivalry,
Who had, if you remember, lately made
The journey, sent there by Charlemagne,
In search of help to mount a fresh campaign.

Ruggiero arrived as this fine show 75
Was taking place outside the city wall,
And, from a knight nearby, he sought to know
The cause of it (dismounting first of all);
And soon learned, from the courteous fellow,
That England, Scotland, Ireland (you'll recall)
And all the isles around had raised this host
Whose many banners the parade did boast,



Stanza 75

Adding that, when this display was over, 76
The armies would descend upon the sea,
Where vessels were waiting, in the harbour,
To bear them o'er the water speedily.
The French, besieged, sought this show of valour,
Hoping that fresh troops would see them free.
'But so' he said, 'as to inform you fully,
I'll tell you more about each company.

Canto X: 77-89: The various companies described

There, you may see our great banner fly, 77
Leopards and fleur-de-lys upon it found,
Unfurled by our great captain, who is nigh,
And to whose ensign all the rest are bound.
Doyen of all the bravest neath the sky,
Lionel is his name, the which doth sound
In highest counsel and in war rings louder;
The king's nephew, and Duke of Lancaster.

That, next to the King's banner, now revealed
By the wind, streaming towards the mount,
And showing, thus, three wings on a green field,
Marks Richard of Warwick, that mighty Count.
The third the Duke of Gloucester's arms doth yield,
Two stag's antlers that half the brow surmount.
The Duke of Clarence shows a burning brand,
The Duke of York a tree, where he doth stand.

78

There on the Duke of Norfolk's great banner
You'll see three pieces of a broken lance,
While a lightning-bolt Kent's duke doth offer.
And Pembroke's count a griffin doth advance.
On Suffolk's flag a pair of scales hover,
As two twined snakes on Essex' banner dance.
And, neath that garland on an azure field,
Northumberland's great earl is half-concealed.

79

The Earl of Arundel is he who shows
A barque still foundering amidst the sea.
See the Marquis of Berkely's there, and those
Are March's and Richmond's earls'; of the three:
A cleft mount on the first, in pure white, glows,
The palm the second holds, a tall pine tree,
Amid the waves, the third. Southampton's crown,
And Dorset's chariot, mark their renown.

80

Raymond, Earl of Devon, bears that banner
With a hawk that spreads its wings o'er the nest.
Sable and or, those are the arms of Worcester.
Derby a dog, Oxford a boar, his crest,
Display; Bath's wealthy prelate, discover
Beneath that crystal cross, amidst the rest.
A broken chair, on silver ground there set,
Speaks of Edmund, the Duke of Somerset.

81

Forty-two thousand, that must be the sum
Of knights-at-arms and mounted archers there,
While twice as many here on foot are come,
Give or take a hundred, to this affair.
Behold the flags, sable and azure some,
Argent, and vert, and or, to which repair
Each to their own standard, the infantry,
Led by Edward, Henry, Hamelin, Godfrey.

82

The first is Edward, Earl of Shrewsbury,
Then comes Henry, Earl of Salisbury,
Next old Hamelin, Baron Bergavenny,
While Duke of Buckingham is this Godfrey.
Those to the east are English Infantry,
Turn to the west now, and the Scots you'll see.
Thirty thousand led by the monarch's son,
Zerbino, who hath many a skirmish won.

83

The lion midst three unicorns you'll see,
One that clasps a silver sword in its paw,
Tis the Scottish king's standard, floating free,
There Zerbino camps, his son, he's far more
Handsome than the other knights there, truly,
Nature made him and broke the mould; tis sure
He exceeds all in virtue, and in grace;
The Duke of Ross his title and his place.

84

Set on an azure field, that golden bar,
Marks the Earl of Huntley's great banner,
That other flag proclaims the Earl of Mar,
A leopard in travail displaying ever.
See those birds, multi-coloured and bizarre,
That ensign is Hamilton's, moreover,
Though he's neither duke, nor count nor marquis,
He is first in that savage realm of his.

85

The Earl of Crawford's has an eagle, there,
Fixing its bold gaze on the blazing sun,
Lurcanio, Earl of Angus, his doth bear
A bull, that's flanked by hounds; see, two not one.
The Duke of Albany's those colours share
Of azure and argent. See, the dragon,
All in vert, how it tears at the vulture
The Earl of Buchan shows on his banner.

86

The mighty Herman, Baron Forbes, displays
A banner striped in sable and argent;
At the Earl of Errol's, on his right, now gaze,
Which a lamp on a green field doth present.
Look upon the Irish; the sun's bright rays,
Reveal two squadrons, for Kildare has sent
Its Earl to lead the first, while the second
Is commanded by the Earl of Desmond;

87

Kildare's ensign reveals a blazing pine; 88
Desmond's a bend gules on an argent field.
Not only England, Scotland, Ireland line
The open plain, their weapons soon to wield
For Charlemagne, but Swedes and Norsemen, fine
Warriors from Iceland, Thule, are revealed:
All lands about, in sum, brave men release,
All those, by nature, enemies to peace.

Sixteen thousand fighting-men, more or less, 89
Have emerged, as well, from forest and cave,
With hairy face, and legs, and arms, and breast,
Like savage creatures, and as fierce and brave,
All about that argent standard see them press,
As if a floor of spears the ground doth pave.
Such Moray bears, by whom that folk are led,
He, who with Moorish blood would paint it red.'

Canto X: 90-95: Ruggiero flies onward and sees Angelica bound to the rock

While Ruggiero thus observed the army 90
Preparing to bring timely aid to France,
And marvelled at the banners' heraldry,
And heard the names, towards him did advance
A host of knights; they gathered round to see
The wondrous steed, sole specimen perchance,
Hastening to look, then gazing, stupefied,
Till a circle formed, drawn from every side.

To rouse in them a greater sense of awe, 91
And add to the sum of his own pleasure,
He shook the reins and set the beast to soar,
Touching his spurs to its sides a measure,
Then, rising heaven-wards a little more,
Set a course through the sky, at his leisure,
Left them gazing, and having viewed that day
The British troops, to Ireland made his way.

Thus, that fabled Hibernia he reached 92
(Where the old saint had a cell, and within,
It seems, was found the mercy that he preached;
There the penitents were purged of their sin)
And soon had nigh that island over-reached,
Washed by the waves, of Scotland the close kin,
And saw beneath him, fearful and alone,
Angelica, chained to the naked stone.

To the naked stone, in that isle of tears, 93
For the isle of tears indeed was its name,
A race, proud and cruel, had, through the years,
Dwelt, savage and inhuman, in that same.
They (from a previous canto, it appears)
Roamed armed about the scattered shores, their aim
To bear away the lovely maids they found,
And feed the sea-monster, as they were bound.

She had been chained there that very morning 94
Thence the immeasurable monster came,
To devour the poor maiden, while still living,
And make a horrendous meal of that same.
Above you were told of her becoming
The prey of those vile robbers who did claim
Her as their prize, as she slept on the shore,
Beside the monk, enchanted through his lore.

That proud, cruel, and inhospitable crew 95
Had exposed her to the savage creature,
Upon the rock, as naked to the view
As when formed, at first, by Mother Nature;
Nor yet a veil had she to hide her hue,
Of the rose midst the lilies, that ever
Mingled in her lovely limbs, still fair
In December frost, as if June were there.

Canto X: 96-99: He is overcome by love and pity

He would have thought, perchance, he did behold 96
Some work in marble, or alabaster,
Fixed, it seemed, to the solid rock, of old,
By the skilful hand of some past master,
If it was not for the fresh tear which rolled
Down her cheek, to wet the rose, thereafter,
And lily of her breasts, as if with dew;
And that, in the breeze, her gold tresses blew.

And as his eyes gazed at her lovely eyes, 97
Fair Bradamante filled his thoughts again,
Pity and love pierced him and, likewise,
From loving tears, he now could scarce refrain.
And mingling then those tears with his sighs
(After checking his winged steed with the rein)
Cried: 'O lady, of those chains full worthy,
With which Love binds his faithful company,

And undeserving of such cruel pain, 98
Or aught like to it, say, what perverse hand
Has so cruelly, with its livid stain,
Set, on those ivory members, his foul brand?'
She was obliged to blush, and stir in vain,
Her pale ivory as if with red grain fanned,
On finding, thus, those parts exposed to sight,
That shame conceals within the darkest night.

Her face she would have hidden if she could, 99
Except her arms were chained to solid stone,
Yet with her tears bedewed it (as she could)
To quench those blushes, or at least disown
Their crimson stain; speechless awhile she stood,
Then in a faint, and nigh-exhausted tone,
Began to speak, yet stopped, almost mid-word,
As some great tumult from the sea was heard.

Canto X: 100-106: He fights with the sea-monster

Behold, the enormous monster appeared, 100
Half-visible, half-hidden by the wave,
As before some northerly gale is reared
The bold longship, that doth the storm-wind brave.
So that great orca, ever loathed and feared,
Arose, and time was short in which to save
The lovely lady, now half-dead with fright
Despite the sudden presence of the knight.



Stanza 100

Ruggiero raised his lance overhead, 101
Then struck the monster, with a downward blow.
All shape it seemed to lack now, and instead,
A writhing mass o'er which the sea did flow,
Revealed no proper form, but for the head,
Which a huge sow's eyes and jaws did show.
The knight's blow, on the forehead, it took;
Twas as if at steel or solid rock he'd struck.

Since that first deed had proved of no avail, 102
The knight returned to perform another;
Thus, when the creature saw dark shadows sail,
Cast by those huge wings, across the water,
It left its prey and followed, without fail,
The phantom form, in its rage to slaughter
This sudden foe, and roiled the depths below.
Ruggiero swooped, and dealt it blow on blow.

As when an eagle spies, from its great height, 103
A snake that writhes and slithers through the grass,
Or on some bare stone that the sun doth light,
Cleans all its golden scales, a gleaming mass,
The raptor will avoid the poisonous bite,
Nor seek those shining flanks to overpass,
But gripping from behind, on beating wing,
Employs its claws, and thus evades the thing.

So, Ruggiero struck with sword and lance, 104
Not where the jaws were, filled with those sharp teeth,
But twixt the ears while it sought to advance,
On the spine, or the raised tail underneath.
If the creature turned, by design or chance,
He changed course, rose or fell, with it beneath.
But, as if he beat against a diamond block,
He could no more pierce it than solid rock.

So, the bold fly seeks to torment a dog, 105
In August's dust and heat, or either side,
When fields of grass are ripe or must doth clog
The wine-vats and the presses, far and wide.
It swoops downward, where he lies like a log,
Stings his muzzle, and his eyes, in its glide;
At its buzzing, he snaps his jaws together:
Reach the wretch, and tis over for ever.



Stanza 107 "*With the maid chained to the rock, thereupon*"

The monster's tail so churned the water there, 106
It sent it soaring far into the sky,
Such that he knew not if he flew in air,
Or if his steed swam, and the waves passed by;
And often wished an end to the affair,
For, if the spray continued so to fly,
He feared it well could drown the hippogriff,
And leave him searching for a float or skiff.

Canto X: 107-115: He employs the ring and frees Angelica

He took counsel with himself, for the better, 107
To fight the monster with a fresh weapon,
And thought to dazzle it with the splendour
The shield possessed (its cover still was on).
He flew to shore and, in case of error,
With the maid chained to the rock, thereupon
Left the ring, on her little finger set it;
Since it could dim the shield, if he let it:

The ring that Bradamante stole, I mean, 108
From Brunello, to free Ruggerio,
That saved him from the wicked faerie queen;
Twas borne to the isle by Melissa though,
Melissa who (I said, and you have seen)
For the good of many employed it so,
Then, quietly, returned it to our knight.
He wore it on his finger, day and night.

He gave it to Angelica, for fear 109
That it would impair the power of the shield;
And so those eyes might stay yet bright and clear,
(Despite its power) to which his own did yield;
For the monstrous whale chose to reappear,
Whose vast belly quite half the sea concealed;
Ruggiero showed the thing, and, thereby,
Seemed to add a second sun to the sky.

Its enchanted radiance dazed the sight 110
Of that dread beast, in the usual way.
As a trout, or grayling, will sink in flight
When the water, once limed, turns clear as day;
So was the monster troubled by our knight,
Belly-up, midst the foam and slime, it lay.
Ruggiero attacked it, here and there,
But its tough skin he failed, thus, to impair.

She begged him, all this while, not to persist, 111
And to cease from belabouring it in vain;
'For God's sake, sir', she cried, in tears, 'desist,
And free me, lest the monster rise again;
Better to drown, no longer to exist,
Rather than as this creature's prey remain.'
Moved by her righteous plea, the knight forbore,
Unchained her then, and raised her from the shore.



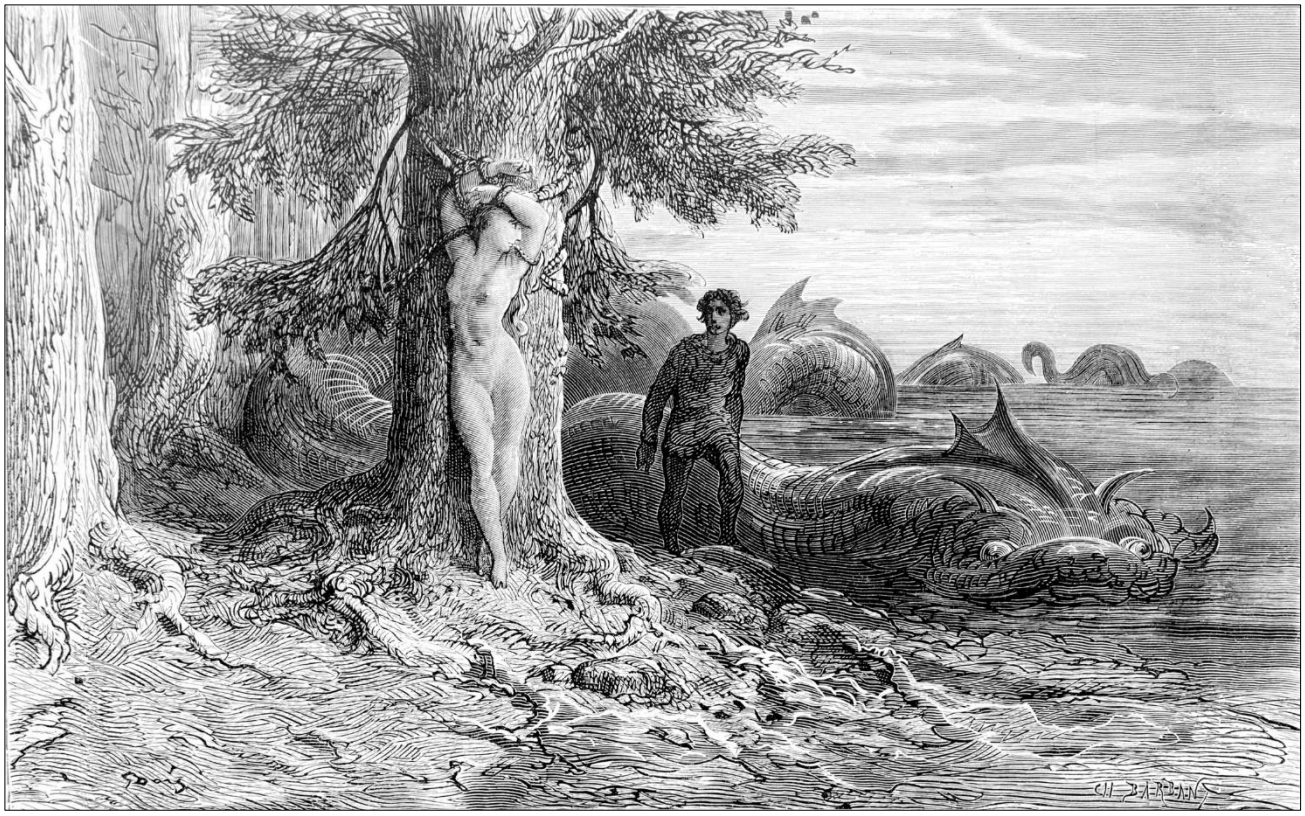
Stanza III

Spurred on, his steed took to the air swiftly, 112
And then flew onwards, speeding through the sky,
With the knight on its back, and the lady
Seated aft, on the croup, as if born to fly.
While the whale lost a meal, that was surely,
Too sweet and dainty for its taste, thereby.
A thousand kisses, Ruggiero, turning,
Pressed upon her eyelids, hot with yearning.

He took a course, not that first intended 113
Whereby he would encircle all of Spain,
But towards the nearer coast he tended,
Where lesser Britain doth adjoin the main;
An oak grove, by the shore, shade extended,
Where, as ever, Philomena did complain;
In its midst, a meadow, with a fountain,
And on each side, a solitary mountain.

Here the eager knight reined in his bold steed, 114
And descended to the meadow below,
Where he made it furl its wings, though indeed
It remained prepared for flight, even so.
Then down he leapt and, prompted by his need,
Might well have furthered his desire, but no,
His armour held him tight, and barred the way,
Thwarting his passion, keeping him at bay.

Fretting, now by one tie now another 115
Betrayed, he sought his armour to undo,
Nor had it ever proven so much bother;
For every one undone, he knotted two!
But this canto has seemed to last forever,
And its great length perchance has weighed on you,
So, I shall set my muse now at her ease,
Until a later time, when she may please.



Canto XI: Orlando and the Sea-Monster

Canto XI: 1-6: Angelica employs the ring and vanishes

Although the weakest rein, employed mid-course, 1
May serve to restrain a too-lively steed,
Reason's steel bit will scarce possess the force
To turn desire from its straight path; indeed,
Where pleasure is involved, refined or coarse,
Like a bear at the honey, filled with greed,
Passion will not soon desist, the sweetness
Having scented, or sipped at with success.

What reason had our knight then, to restrain 2
Himself from taking pleasure in the maid;
Fair Angelica, who was, to be plain,
Alone and naked in that pleasant glade?
No thought of Bradamante gave him pain,
To whom such homage, once, his heart had paid;
And foolish he, who thinking of her yet,
Were such a prize as this maid to forget;

With one in such a state Xenocrates 3
Would not have proved himself more continent.
Ruggiero cast his arms aside, to ease
His impatience, thus balked of his intent,
As she, all naked to the passing breeze,
Her eyes downcast in shame, and in dissent,
Saw there the precious ring on her finger,
That Brunello, in Albracca, took from her,

The very ring she'd carried into France, 4
The first time she had made that journey,
Her brother by her side (he bore the lance
Which Astolfo acquired); with this ring she
Made Malagigi's spells fail to advance,
By Merlin' stair, and, on a morn, set free
Brave Orlando, and many another,
From cruel servitude to Dragontina.

Rendered invisible, she fled the tower
Where an old villain had imprisoned her;
(And yet, as well as I, you know the power
Of the precious thing, so I'll not linger.)
This ring Brunello, in an evil hour,
Took, for Agramante, from her finger.
Since then, Fortune had held her in disdain,
Such that her realm was lost, as I made plain.

Once, as I've told, she saw it in her hand, 6
She was so full of pleasure and surprise,
She thought it but a dream, you understand,
And scarce believed it there, before her eyes.
Silently, she raised the encircling band
To her lips and, as fast as lightning flies,
She was hidden from Ruggiero's sight,
As sudden cloud will veil the sun's fair light.

Canto XI: 7-12: She sets out to seek her own realm

Ruggiero gazed about the whole shore, 7
And then ran all around, searching madly,
And then he thought of the ring once more,
Stood stupefied, and cursed himself sadly;
Again, at his own carelessness, he swore,
Accused the lady of discourtesy,
And blamed her for her unkind attitude,
Who'd repaid him with sheer ingratitude.

'Graceless maiden, is this all my reward?' 8
He cried, 'Is this your thanks for all my aid?
Why rather steal what I can ill afford
Than own it as a gift? Be not afraid,
To take the winged steed, the shield, my sword,
And I myself; for, thus, I would be paid,
As long as your sweet face I still may see.
I know you hear me, cruel one; answer me.'

So saying, he groped all about the fountain, 9
And yet, in vain, embraced the empty air,
Searching widely round him as do blind men,
Hoping he might come upon her there!
She, who was now far distant, fled again
Until to some deep cave she might repair;
And soon a spacious cavern met her eyes;
Within, a store of food, to her surprise.

For here an ancient herdsman used to stay, 10
That tended to a herd of mares, which strayed
All through the vale, and grazed, many a day,
About the fresh grass where the waters played,
And there were stalls within the cave, I say,
Where, from the sun at noon, they sought the shade.
She, the ring now dormant on her finger,
Hid from sight, did in the shadows linger.

And then, at evening, when she felt refreshed, 11
By rest and food, intending to depart,
Her body in but rustic clothes she dressed,
Far different than those that won her heart,
Green, yellow, purple, blue and red, the best
Of fashions, shaped with subtle grace and art.
And yet she could not don so coarse a wear
As not to seem a noble maid, and fair.

Be silent, you who praise Neaera, Phyllis, 12
For neither was as lovely, none in Greece,
Not Galatea, nor Amaryllis:
Tityrus and Melibaeus, be at peace!
From out the stall she took a mare of his,
The herdsman tended; thinking, without cease,
Of that fair realm that once had been her own:
She'd seek now the Levant, and her lost throne.

Canto XI: 13-17: Ruggiero comes upon a knight fighting with a giant

Meanwhile our Ruggiero (who had spent 13
His time in thinking she might reappear,
Gripped by that fantasy, though she, now absent,
Was neither close beside him, nor could hear)
Reflecting now, to his winged charger went,
Ready to search for her, both far and near;
But having slipped its halter, that strange steed,
Taking flight, had vanished, at full speed.

Twas a dire and grave addition to his loss 14
Of the maid, while she now owned the ring;
It pained his heart, and made him just as cross
As her deceit, to lack that precious thing;
For much as it now pained him that because
Of her scorn for him, the maid was missing,
He mourned the ring, more than for its power
That twas his lover's gift, in a dark hour.

Grieving sorely, yet, in armour once more, 15
Shield on shoulder, he now went on his way;
And, crossing a grassy field, left the shore,
Towards a broad valley, in which there lay
A wide and beaten track, upon the floor
Of a dense wood that hid the light of day.
He had not journeyed many yards within
Ere, on his right, he heard a mighty din.

A fearful clash of arms it seemed to be; 16
He hastened there, and found a martial pair
In furious dispute, twixt tree and tree,
In a narrow glade, its shape small and square.
They lurched, quite without regard, or mercy,
On what grounds I know not, here and there.
The one a giant laboured in proud fight;
The other was a bold and gallant knight.

The latter leaping to and fro, with shield 17
And gleaming sword, defended skilfully,
Lest forced by the two-handed mace to yield,
The giant deployed, and be conquered wholly,
His horse already lay there on the field,
Quite dead; Ruggiero watched intently,
And soon his wishes and desire inclined
Towards the knight, the weaker to his mind.

Canto XI: 18-20: The knight is Bradamante whom the giant bears away

Yet not for that cause would he intervene 18
But rather stood aside, to watch the fight.
Behold, the greater foe's strong mace was seen
To strike the helmet of the lesser knight.
At that harsh blow, the knight was felled, I ween;
The giant on seeing his stunned foe alight
Upon the grass, the knight's helm did unlace,
Thus, Ruggiero saw the warrior's face.

It was the visage of his sweet and lovely, 19
And most dear lady, he now saw revealed,
That of his very own Bradamante,
Whom the giant would slay upon the field.
Summoned, thus, to battle, suddenly,
He advanced, to force the giant to yield,
While he, not wishing to prolong the fight,
In his arms scooped up the half-dead knight,



Stanza 18

Flung her o'er his shoulder, and sped away, 20
As a wolf will a lamb, or an eagle
Will carry off a pigeon or like prey,
Then soar upwards fast as it is able.
Ruggiero saw, and ran in his dismay
To do all of which he was capable,
And yet so vast the strides that giant made,
He scarce could see him, once he'd left the glade.

Canto XI: 21-28: Ariosto's tirade against 'modern' weapons

The one in flight, the other pursuing 21
Down a dark and overshadowed trail,
That yet widened, gradually piercing
The wood, they reached a meadow, in the dale.
But no more of that; for, now, returning
To brave Orlando, I pick up the tale,
Who'd drowned Cymosco's cannon deep below,
So that the earth might such no longer know.



Stanza 20 "*Ruggiero saw, and ran in his dismay, to do all of which he was capable*"

But all in vain; the impious enemy 22
Human nature, ever the inventor,
Taught the iron ball, like the darts we see,
To soar in air then land on terra firma,
Thus, creating no less havoc, surely,
Than when Eve was deceived, as ever,
By that apple some enchanter had in store,
In our ancestors' day, or a bit before.

More than a hundred fathoms buried deep, 23
It must have lain there for many a year,
Ere, by enchantment raised from its sleep,
The cannon midst the Germans did appear,
That, by one trial or another, sought to reap
Knowledge of its powers; and thus, I fear
The bold demon, working on minds unfit,
That seeks our harm, found further use for it.

Italy, and France, and then most every 24
Land on earth has learned the cruel art.
Some, liquifying bronze, in their country,
Pour it into moulds, others, for their part,
Bore iron, to create the tubes they fancy,
Large or small, as will suit the ball they dart.
One a bombard was called, an early one,
This a single, that a double-cannon,

Falcon, saker, culverin, such are named, 25
Those the titles their inventors bestowed.
They split strong steel, and solid stone, as claimed,
And, where'er the ball passes, clear a road.
Send your sword to the forge, for it is shamed,
Wretched soldier, let all such things be stowed;
A carbine or musket you must shoulder,
(Or not be paid) ere you are much older.

Foul, vile, invention, how did you ever 26
Achieve a place within the human heart?
Through you, martial glory's lost, for never
Shall war prove, now, an honourable art.
Strength and courage are a vain endeavour,
Now the worse can play their better's part.
No more shall gallantry or ardour yield
Some paragon of virtue in the field.

Through you so many lords and knights must die, 27
And vanish neath the ground, before this war,
This conflict that has made the whole world sigh,
(Yet Italy, amongst the nations, more
Than most) shall end. I say, and do not lie,
That he was worse than all that went before,
And crueller, who first such things designed,
Cursed with an impious nature, to my mind.

And I believe that God shall so pursue 28
The eternal vengeance, that deepest hell
Will receive his spirit, amidst the few
That with accursed Judas there must dwell.
Yet of brave Orlando, who burned anew
To reach Ebuda's foul isle, we must tell.
For lovely women, were delivered there,
Still living, to the monster, for its fare.



Stanza 28

Canto XI: 29-32: Orlando reaches the island of Ebuda

Yet whatever eagerness the knight possessed 29
It seems the wind had less desire to blow,
At least in that direction; east or west,
At prow, or stern, gusting, as if to slow
The ship, the breeze blew, then sank to rest,
While little progress could be garnered so;
More often he was forced to go about,
Tacking to port or starboard, if in doubt.

It was God's will he should not reach that isle 30
Before the King of Ireland reached that lair,
More easily to do what, in a while,
I shall explain to you, and gladly share.
'Make for the shore now, and in goodly style,
Dear captain,' said Orlando, 'anchor there,
Where I may use the skiff, for I shall go
To the rock, and without companions, so.

Bring me the biggest cable yet aboard, 31
And with it the very largest anchor,
And a sight of their purpose I'll afford
When I seek to approach the vile monster.'
He had the skiff lowered, once they'd moored;
With all he needed for this fresh endeavour,
(But for his sword, he left his arms behind)
He then set forth, unsure of what he'd find.

He drew the oars to his chest, set his back 32
To the rocky isle he sought to attain,
In the way a crab that from the sea-wrack
Or the marshland seeks the shore to gain.
Twas the hour when, o'er the Sun's bright track,
Aurora her gold tresses spreads again,
(That orb half-seen, half-hidden in the sea,
Rousing, once more, Tithonus' jealousy)

Canto XI: 33-36: He prepares to attack the sea-monster

As soon as he'd approached the naked rock, 33
Yet was a good stone's throw still from its side,
He thought he heard, if naught his ears did mock,
A cry, that o'er the waves did faintly glide.
Steering to port, then, as he neared that block
Of granite, he gazed blushing at the tide;
He'd spied a maid, naked as she was born,
Her feet bathed by the waves, bound there, forlorn.

Because she was some distance from him, still, 34
And bowed her head, he could not well discern
Whom she might be, yet pulled hard with a will,
Upon the oars, some further news to learn.
But now a mighty roar the air did fill,
Which the woods and caves echoed in their turn.
The waves broke, and revealed, thus, to the light,
That monster that nigh hid the sea from sight.

As a cloud is seen to rise from some moist vale, 35
Pregnant with rain and storm, that extends
More than the darkest night, o'er hill and dale,
And to the day the deepest shadows lends,
So, the creature o'er the wide sea did prevail,
Such that it seemed that, to achieve its ends,
It must drown all; Orlando held his place,
Proudly, his courage steadfast as his face,

And, like a man possessed of firm intent, 36
Moved swiftly to achieve what he had planned.
Thus, to defend her from the beast's advent,
And yet attack the thing with a free hand,
Between her and the whale, the skiff he sent,
His sword still in its sheath, you understand,
Then gripped the cable tied to the anchor,
Waiting its charge, yet steadfast in valour.

Canto XI: 37-41: He succeeds in tying it to the rock

Now, as soon as the monster had drawn near, 37
And saw the skiff, with the brave Orlando,
It oped its mouth so wide it would appear
A man might ride his horse within it so,
Orlando (in the skiff, to be quite clear)
Plunged within it, set the anchor in tow,
And attached the sharpened flukes, so it hung
In the whale's palate, having pierced the tongue.

And so, the monster could no longer close 38
Its jaws which were pierced above, below,
As, in a shaft, the miners props dispose,
Along its length, to hold the ceiling so,
Lest where they pass sudden ruin follows;
Like to their timber that strong steel did show.
Orlando could not touch the anchor's tips
Unless he took a leap, between those lips.

Orlando having now secured the jaws, 39
So the beast could close its mouth no longer,
Unsheathed his sword and, without pause,
Set about that darkened cave, in anger.
The monster could no more, despite its roars
Defend itself than can some even stronger
Fortress, once the foe's inside, from the knight,
That, within its throat, carried the brave fight.

The vast creature, now overcome with pain, 40
Showed its huge flank, and rolled in the water,
And then descended to the depths again,
Scouring the sea-bed, sand trailing after;
While Orlando, drenched by a salty rain,
Swam forth, once alerted to the danger,
Leaving the anchor fixed there, but gripping
The long rope still tied to its iron ring.

Orlando swam with the cable, swiftly, 41
To the rock, where a footing could be gained.
And drew the rope towards him, sharply,
Till the anchor's twin flukes advantage gained.
By a force, which now exceeded every
Other, the monster felt itself constrained,
A force that with a single pull did more,
Than ten turns of a windlass could ensure.

Canto XI: 42-45: And ends the creature's evil reign

As an untamed bull, feeling a like force, 42
When its horn is roped, leaps here and there,
And spins around, now lacking all recourse,
Arches its back, but cannot shed the snare,
So, from its ancient place, on a fresh course,
The whale, dragged by an arm without compare,
With strange flicks of its tail, did roll and squirm,
While the anchor between its jaws held firm.

From its mouth, such a fount of blood now flowed, 43
Those depths the Red Sea had been aptly named,
While it struck the waves so, pricked by that goad,
Sight of the sea-bed folk might well have claimed.
Brine drenched the heavens, till the bright sun showed
But dimly through the flood, so high twas aimed.
While came the echo of that deafening roar,
From woods, and hills, and e'en the distant shore.

Forth from his grotto swam old Proteus, 44
And rose towards the surface at the sound,
In time to see our knight, with scarce a fuss,
Dragging the monster towards solid ground,
And, forgetting his multifarious
Flock, left them there, scattered all around,
While Neptune yoked his dolphins to his car,
And fled for Ethiopia afar.

Now Ino, weeping, with Melicertes 45
On her back, the Nereids their hair astray,
Glaucus, the Tritons, all within those seas,
Swam, here and there, all seeking for a way
To save themselves, as our brave knight, with ease,
Drew the vile monster slowly from the bay;
Yet needlessly; its wounds had proved so sore,
The whale had died there, on the ocean floor.



Stanza 45



Stanza 37 "*Orlando (in the skiff, to be quite clear), plunged within it, set the anchor in ton*"

Canto XI: 46-51: Orlando is attacked in turn by the islanders

Quite some few of the islanders had run 46
To assess the result of that strange fight,
Who, prompted by religious unreason,
Saw such sacred work in a darker light,
And called it another sad wrong done
To Proteus; twould anger him outright,
And make him send his sea-herds to the shore
And inflame the ancient conflict once more.

They said it was better to sue for peace, 47
From the offended god, or suffer worse,
And that was best achieved by the decease
Of the culprit, removing thus the curse,
By drowning. As a torch-flame we release
By spreading it abroad grows to immerse
A stubble-field, so was their anger spread,
Blind fury, that would see Orlando dead.

Armed with spear or sword, sling or bow, 48
This savage horde descended to the shore,
Then, from far or near, to strike him, did go
About him on both sides, behind, before;
He wondered at the anger they did show,
And the monstrous ingratitude they bore
Towards their saviour; a most vicious horde,
Whence he had hoped for glory and reward.

But as the bear that's led by some Russian, 49
Or Lithuanian, towards the fair,
Passing through the street, shows its opinion
Of the pack of dogs that goes yelping there,
Ne'er turning round, so on this occasion,
Orlando, fearless, gave them little care,
Knowing it was but a simple matter
With a single breath, to make them scatter.

Indeed, he swiftly made them yield their ground, 50
Unsheathing Durindana, his sharp blade,
The foolish crew believing they were bound
To conquer one they'd shortly see dismayed,
Since not a shred of armour clasped him round,
(He lacked a shield, a sorry foe he made)
Not realising that, from head to toe,
A hide tough as diamond clothed Orlando.

He did to others and most readily, 51
What, to our knight, no other man could do;
In ten blows, he thus dispensed with thirty,
More, if my count of blows is less than true;
He cleared the sand about him easily,
And then the captive lady sought anew,
When suddenly new noises and fresh cries,
From elsewhere upon the shore, did arise.

Canto XI: 52-55: The Irish army lands, as he recognises Olimpia

While Orlando was holding at bay 52
That horde of barbarous islanders,
The Irish, unopposed, had made their way,
Onto the island from several quarters.
And set themselves to pitilessly slay
Its population, the wives and daughters
Too, for moved by justice or pure rage,
They killed all, regardless of sex or age.

Scant defence was offered by that crew, 53
Partly through being taken unawares,
Partly because their numbers were so few,
And those few unused to martial affairs.
Put to the sack thus, carnage did ensue;
Some burned to death, the rest slain in their lairs.
What walls survived they then razed to the ground.
No living soul there, afterwards, was found.

Orlando, as if the tumultuous cries, 54
Concerned him not, now approached the lady,
Still chained to the barren rock, you realise,
Prey to that monstrous whale, slain but lately.
He knew her, now she stood before his eyes;
More and more so, as he viewed her closely.
Twas Olimpia, of this he felt assured,
Whose loyalty had gained such ill reward.

Wretched Olimpia, who, beside the scorn 55
Love had shown, found that ill-fate pursued her,
Sending the pirate crew, who then had borne
Her off (that very day) to foul Ebuda.
Orlando knew her, bound there, all forlorn,
To the rock, but seen while wholly nude, her
Head was bowed, nor dared she raise her eyes,
Nor could she speak a single word likewise.

Canto XI: 56-61: The Irish are led by King Oberto

Orlando asked what evil trick of fate 56
Had thus conveyed her to that cruel land.
From the fair place where she had been, of late,
Most happy, with her consort there to hand.
'I know not, if I should communicate
My thanks,' she said, 'that thus, preserved, I stand,
Or should regret that, thanks to you, I see
No likely end to pain and misery.

You have my gratitude for my salvation, 57
Rescuing me from death in that fell maw;
(Monstrous, indeed, if I, in such a fashion,
Were lost in that whale's belly, evermore)
Yet not that I must bear with the frustration
Of living on, for death were best, I'm sure.
Great my thanks would prove, were you to bring me
That which could end my woe completely.'

Then, with many a tear, she related 58
How her love had betrayed her, on a day,
And left her sleeping, nigh the shore, fated
To be found by pirates, and snatched away.
And as she spoke, growing more animated,
A Diana seemed, whom sculptors portray,
In the fountain, scattering (as she did now)
Drops of cold water, o'er Actaeon's brow,

Hiding her lovely front as best as she might, 59
And her full breasts, though somewhat liberal
With her hips and flanks, still in plain sight.
Orlando, after a brief interval,
In which he freed her, conscious of her plight,
Went for a robe, to raise her lost morale;
Meanwhile Oberto, King of Ireland, came,
Who'd found the beast, slain by our very same

Orlando, and had heard how a brave knight 60
Had swum, and fixed an anchor in its throat,
And dragged it to the shore then, as one might
Against the current, drag a tethered boat.
To find if the tale had been told aright,
Oberto came, who thought it of some note,
While his men burned and ravaged, far and wide,
Laying Ebuda waste, on every side.

The Irish king (though finding that Orlando 61
Was dripping wet, and stained with blood and gore,
Wet with the blood that from the beast did flow,
As he'd quit its mouth and set out for shore)
The visage of this knight did surely know,
Realising that it was the Count, and more
Certain, in that he'd thought, on first hearing,
None but Orlando could achieve this thing;

Canto XI: 62-64: Orlando relates Olimpia's story

Knew him, having been a page of honour 62
At the French court, leaving the year before
To receive the crown of his dead father.
Many a time he'd seen Orlando, more
Had spoken with him, and oft thereafter.
He ran to greet him, on that barren shore,
Removing the steel that guarded his head,
Clasping him tightly, once the helm was shed.

Orlando (no less pleased to see the king 63
Than was the king to see the noble knight,
Once they'd completed their embracing
And were done with all that clasping tight)
Told the tale of betrayal, narrating
All that was done to her, and did indite
Bireno, the traitor, who should rather
Have proved far kinder than any other.

Our knight told of the many times that she 64
Had given proof of her deep affection,
Of how her kin and realm were lost wholly;
Of how she'd have died for his salvation,
That Bireno; that a witness was he
To this, and her story was no fiction.
And while he spoke, the lady's shining eyes
Were drowned in tears, amid a wealth of sighs.

Canto XI: 65-72: The King is smitten with love for her

Her face was like those skies we see in spring, 65
When, midst brief rain, the sun will part the veil
Of cloud and, from the vapour, issuing
Light the flowers and trees, in wood and dale.
And, as the nightingale joys in singing
Amidst green branches then, o'er some moist trail,
Amor now bathed his plumage in her tears,
Delighting in that whence he oft appears.

The Love-God set his arrow-tip ablaze 66
At her bright eyes, then (in that flowing stream
That, twixt blooms white and crimson went its ways)
Tempered the metal, golden was its gleam;
Drew his bow, and fired his dart, as always,
At one no shield defended, so I deem,
Who gazing at her tresses, eyes, and brow,
Felt that his heart was pierced, but knew not how.

Her loveliness was of the rarest kind, 67
Not in the curve of that smooth brow alone,
But in the cheeks and hair, such eyes as blind,
Mouth, shoulders, throat, there was her beauty shown;
From those fair breasts that Nature had designed,
Down to those parts that are so seldom shown,
All was of such excellence, that no peer
Had she, in all the world, so twould appear.

Her skin was whiter than the untouched snow, 68
And, to the touch, felt smooth as ivory;
Gently rounded, her breasts like milk did show,
Poured from a jar, midst green rushes, sweetly;
The shadowed space between them seemed to flow
Downwards like a vale twixt two mounts, surely
Sweet in its season, seeming now as when
The winter's snows had filled its depths again.

Her swelling hips, and flanks, were both lovely, 69
The flat belly smoother than a mirror,
And those white thighs, both turned with artistry,
As if by Phidias, or his master.
And what should I say of all else that she
Sought to conceal in vain? Naught seemed lesser.
In sum, from head to foot, the eye could see
What beauty means, in its entirety.

If by the Phrygian shepherd, Paris, she 70
Had been viewed, on the slopes of Mount Ida,
Would Venus have boasted of her beauty
Whom Paris judged to be the lovelier
Of the goddesses? Nor perchance would he
Have sailed to Sparta, and gained that other.
'Fair Helen,' he'd have cried, 'stay there; be wise,
Love Menelaus; here's the greater prize.'

Or if she had dwelt there, in Crotona, 71
Where Zeuxis made his lovely images,
When, Juno's temple to adorn, that painter,
Viewed every naked model that might please,
And then, to compose the perfect creature,
Selected this one's breasts, and that one's knees;
Need he have chosen this or that to shun,
When all he sought was present there in one?

Surely, Bireno never viewed the beauty 72
Of all her naked form or, I am sure,
He'd never have displayed such cruelty
As to have left her on that barren shore.
That it had roused Oberto, all could see;
Love's flame had pierced him to the very core.
He sought to fuel her hopes, as best he could,
That present ill would end in future good.

Canto XI: 73-76: He vows to return her to her proper place

He swore he would carry her to Holland, 73
And there restore her to her proper place,
And that the perjured traitor, once at hand,
Just and memorable sentence would face,
While with the troops he had at his command,
He'd wage fierce war on all that was most base.
Meanwhile he bade men this request address,
To find the maid a bodice and a dress.

There was no need to search beyond the isle, 74
To gather proper female apparel,
Since every day to feed that monster vile
Maids were brought, and theirs would do full well;
They brought a cartload in a little while,
That would suffice, as far as they could tell.
Olimpia dressed, though it yet irked the king
That he must fail to clothe her to his liking.

But ne'er fine silk nor gilded cloth, you'll find, 75
Have the busy Florentines woven, ever;
Nor have the rest embroidered them and lined
Such fair designs, no matter how clever;
Nor Athene nor Hephaestus, to my mind,
Woven garments, the goddesses to cover,
Worthy to hide those limbs, that so enthralled,
And which perchance he, now and then, recalled.

In most respects, Orlando was content 76
To see that she had kindled such a love,
Knowing Bireno swiftly must repent
Of treacheries the Irish king could prove,
For it removed one last impediment
To his own quest, and left him free to move;
He had not sailed for Olimpia the fair,
Rather to find his love, had she been there.

Canto XI: 77-83: Orlando continues his search for Angelica

She was not on the isle now, such was clear; 77
Whether she had been was less apparent,
Since all the islanders were dead, I fear,
And none left to say if she'd been present.
So, next day from that place they chose to steer
And formed a single squadron as they went.
To Ireland first Orlando sailed, perforce,
And then from there to France he set a course.

Thus, in Ireland he barely spent a day, 78
Resisting every plea to stay there longer,
For Amor, who precluded more delay,
Conceded naught, and his pleas were stronger.
He commended Olimpia, and did pray
Oberto to serve her, and ne'er wrong her,
Though that was little needed, since the king
Set her contentment above everything.

Oberto quickly re-equipped his army, 79
And then, in league with the kings of England
And Scotland, sailed to Holland swiftly,
Retook the realm for her, next in Friesland
Left the traitor naught, then, cunningly,
Stirred rebellion in Bireno's Zealand.
To slay the captive wretch took little time,
The penalty scarce equal to the crime.

Olimpia Oberto took to wife, 80
And of a countess made a powerful queen.
But let us turn now from this mortal strife,
To Orlando, who night and day had been
Upon the waves, and now resumed his life
On land, in that same harbour whence, I mean,
He had set out. He, fully armed, did go
To seek his love, on Brigliadoro.

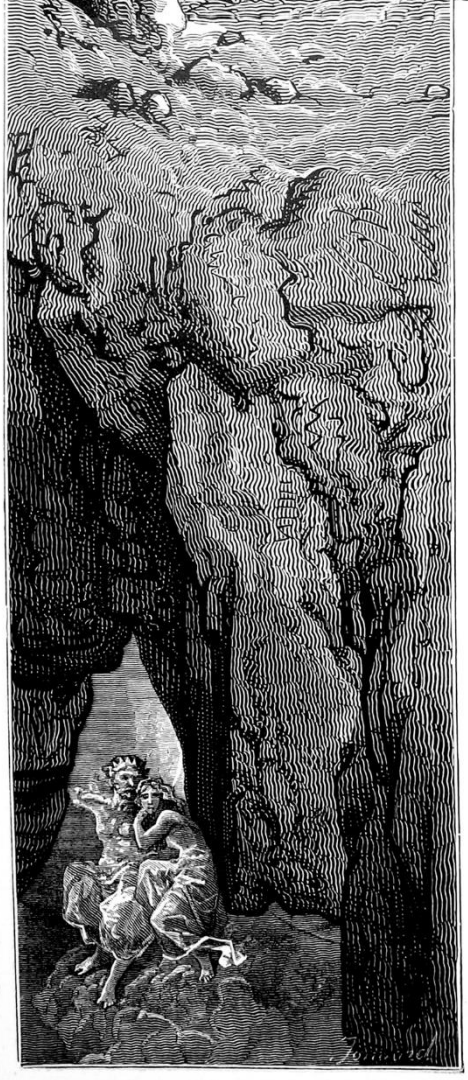
I've heard he spent the winter pursuing 81
Many a worthy deed, both brave and bold,
But as to what they were there's no knowing;
Tis not my my fault if they remain untold,
For our knight was prompter in the doing
Of deeds than in the telling, I would hold,
And, of his actions, folk would only hear
If some faithful witness was standing near.

He passed the winter thus; yet, as before, 82
Of his conquests, not a word came to light;
But when in Aries (the ram that bore
Phryxus, as silently) the sun shone bright,
And kind Zephyrus returned, as of yore,
Bringing sweet spring again, then folk had sight,
With the fresh grass, and the lovely flowers,
Of Orlando's deeds, and wondrous powers.

From hill to plain, and from field to shore, 83
He was journeying, in deep sadness so,
When one day, travelling the forest floor,
He heard a loud lament, and cries of woe.
He spurred his steed, drew his sword, as before,
And then, towards the sound, did swiftly go.
But I'll defer, to another time, my tale,
Should you wish to pursue Orlando's trail.







Canto XII: The Enchanted Mansion

Canto XII: 1-6: Orlando sees a knight carrying off a maid

When Ceres, from her Idaean Mother, 1
Hastened to return to her lonely vale,
Where fiery Mount Aetna sought to smother
Enceladus who had fought, to no avail,
She failed her fair daughter to discover,
Where she had left her, in the pathless dale,
Rent her hair, scarred her cheeks and breast also,
Then tore up two great pine-trees, in her woe.

She lit them, burning brands, at Vulcan's fire, 2
And gave them the power to last forever,
And bearing one in each hand, did aspire
(Her car drawn by two dragons, as ever)
To search the plains, the forest, and higher
Midst the hills, then stretches of fresh water,
Land and sea; and, having searched above,
Plunged to hell, to seek her she did love.

If Orlando, in power as well as will, 3
Had been the goddess of Eleusis' peer,
He'd have sought for Angelica o'er hill
And dale, searched fields, plains, forests, water clear,
All earth and air, his purpose to fulfil,
And all the seas, and the infernal mere;
But since he lacked her dragon chariot,
He did the best he could, yet found her not.

Now, having tried all France, he had in view 4
A search of German lands, then Italy,
And next the two Castiles, the old and new,
And Libya, from Spain, across the sea.
As he was pondering thus, while riding through
A dense wood, a voice he heard, raised in plea.
Onwards he spurred, and saw a steed that strode,
Bearing a knight, ahead, upon the road.

The knight bore in his arms a grieving maid, 5
Captive o'er his pommel, one filled with woe,
Who struggled fiercely, as she called for aid,
And every semblance of dissent did show,
Seeking help, with every gesture displayed;
And this young maiden seemed, to Orlando,
The very image of his love, I say,
Whom he'd searched all France for, night and day.

Not that I say it was her, but it seemed 6
To be Angelica whom he loved so,
His goddess, and the one of whom he dreamed,
Whom he now saw commanded by some foe,
And so, he called out, for a foe he deemed
This knight, in a great voice, his ire on show,
Summoning him, with angry threats, in vain,
While granting Brigliadoro full rein.



Stanza 7

Canto XII: 7-12: He pursues them and comes upon a mansion

The wretch stayed not, nor granted a reply, 7
Intent upon his fine and glorious prey,
But straight through the dense woodland he did fly;
The wind blew not more swiftly on its way.
One fled, the other followed, while a sigh
Of sad lament amongst the leaves did stray.
They issued on a spacious meadow; there
A mighty mansion stood, both rich and rare.

Of various marbles was this mansion wrought 8
With subtle skill indeed had it been made.
The lady in his arms, the thief now sought
The golden entrance gate that it displayed;
By Brigliadoro he might yet be caught,
Who bore Orlando, proud and unafraid;
And yet, on entering and gazing round,
No sign of knight or maid Orlando found.

The warrior dismounted, then he went 9
Through the inmost mansion seeking his foe,
Ran here and there, and he was not content
Till he'd searched every chamber, high and low;
For, having looked beneath, his firm intent
Was to check the upper stories, and so
He climbed the stairs, and spent as much labour
On the higher floors as on the lower.

Beds he viewed, adorned with silk and gold, 10
With never a partition or a wall,
For twas hung with tapestries, as of old,
And rich carpets on the floor covered all.
Orlando searched yet found the trail ran cold,
No glad sight met his eyes in room or hall,
Not one trace of Angelica the fair,
Nor of the vile thief who had borne her there.

Yet as he searched there, and went to and fro, 11
Full of puzzlement, in vain, there he met,
Ferrau, Brandimarte and Gradasso,
And King Sacripante, and others yet;
And they too were seeking, high and low,
For on that same vain task they all were set;
Cursing, as the chambers they explored,
The malice of that castle's unseen lord.

For all now sought the very same offender, 12
Accusing him of some vile theft he'd wrought,
One that his mount he'd stolen, another
That his beloved lady here he'd brought,
Others of other thefts; and they, together,
In that enchanted mansion thus were caught.
And all, through mere deception, had remained,
Through many a week and month, so detained.

Canto XII: 13-16: Orlando is subject to deception

When Orlando had paced five times or more 13
Round that strange mansion, to himself, he said:
'I could waste time and trouble, as before,
Searching this place, in vain, while he, instead,
Has vanished through some other secret door,
And to some far field with the maid has fled.'
And with this thought he took himself outside,
Where a meadow circled all, long and wide.

While he wandered around the wooded hall, 14
With his gaze still lowered towards the ground,
To see if, to right or left, beside the wall,
Any trace of horse and thief was to be found,
From a window there came a piercing call;
He raised his eyes towards that sudden sound,
Thinking he saw the sweet face, from which he
Was parted, who'd long kept it company.

He thought he saw Angelica, that she, 15
Called out, in floods of tears:' Help me, give aid!
To you I commend my virginity,
More than my life and soul. Or, here betrayed,
Must I be raped, must my Orlando see
A robber triumph o'er him?' cried the maid,
'Twere better that you slew me, in a breath,
Than leave me to a fate far worse than death.'

These words repeated now, and then again, 16
Sent Orlando searching through the hall,
Searching, with rising passion, and in pain,
Pain tempered yet with hope. He'd halt withal,
Listen, and hear a voice that he was fain
To think Angelica's, while her sad call,
(Which came first from one side, then another)
Begged for his help, and yet lacked it ever.



STANZA 11 "*Yet as he searched there, and went to and fro*"

Canto XII: 17-20: Ruggiero also arrives, in pursuit of the Giant

But I must return to Ruggiero, 17
Whom I'd left in the dense and gloomy wood,
Pursuing the Giant and the lady, though
By now he'd reached the meadow where he stood,
And so attained the place brave Orlando
Had attained before, be it understood.
Through the gate the Giant had swiftly passed,
Ruggiero now followed, closing fast.

And, no sooner had his foot passed the sill, 18
Than he resumed the chase, searching all
The courts and chambers, yet was cheated still,
For no sign of either found he in that hall;
And, though he'd set to searching with a will,
What he longed for seemed lost beyond recall.
Nor could he see how, in so brief a space,
Giant and lady had vanished in that place.

After four or five times searching every room, 19
And every hall, and every courtyard there,
He returned to wandering through the gloom
And inspecting the space beneath each stair,
Then thinking them outside, I would assume,
Went forth, but now that voice rose through the air,
Orlando thought he knew, and he no less;
So, he returned within, in deep distress.

The same voice and shape that to Orlando 20
Seemed those of his adored Angelica,
Seemed Bradamante's to Ruggiero,
To whom he'd now lost his heart forever.
So equally things seemed to Gradasso,
And Sacripante, and every other:
That the one form and voice, they saw and heard,
Were hers whom they desired most, in a word.

Canto XII: 21-22: Atlante had cast a spell on the place

This was a new and unfamiliar spell 21
Atlante of Carena had composed,
That Ruggiero in this state should dwell,
And labour so in pain, as if enclosed,
Until the influence, beneath which fell
So many knights by love to death exposed,
Had passed; though his steel tower had proved in vain,
And all Alcina's art, he schemed again.

And first he had brought there every knight, 22
From France, that was most renowned in fame,
These Ruggiero would not meet in fight,
Nor risk death now, at the hands of those same.
Beneath his spell, they dwelt, enchanted quite,
And so that none lacked aught who therein came,
He'd stocked the mansion with most pleasant fare
So as to please the knights and ladies there.

Canto XII: 23-26: Angelica now arrives in search of a guide

Next, to Angelica I must return, 23
(The wondrous ring now in her possession,
That between her lips did concealment earn,
Dormant on her finger twixt each session)
Who'd found, in the cave, that for which all yearn,
Clothes, food, and a horse, in quick succession.
Her design was India to visit,
And, then, her fair realm that lay within it.

Sacripante or Orlando, would she, 24
(Not caring for one more than the other),
Have gladly wished to have for company,
(Though equally indifferent to either),
But since through many a town and city
She must pass to the East, she had rather
Be escorted, and, as a trusted guide,
Either would pleasant company provide.

One or the other she sought for a while, 25
Before she stumbled upon either's trail,
Down the forest roads, for many a mile,
In town and city, and o'er hill and dale.
And yet Fortune led her steed meanwhile
To Orlando's and Sacripante's gaol,
Ruggiero's and Gradasso's prison too,
Where Atlante's spell seemed ever new.

She entered, hidden from that mage's eye, 26
Concealed by the ring, and inspected all;
Sacripante, and Orlando, found thereby,
Searching for her in vain midst the hall.
And saw her image used to mystify
Their senses; and then on which to call
She considered for a while, in her mind,
And no easy answer to that did she find.

Canto XII: 27-28: She reveals herself inadvertently to the rivals

She knew not which would suit her better, 27
Count Orlando or Circassia's king,
Orlando could, possessing greater valour,
Protect her from all risk while journeying,
But, if he played the master, thereafter,
She knew not how to prevent him lording
Himself over her, and command the knight,
Or send him back to France, as of her right;

While Sacripante she could keep in hand, 28
Though she raised him to the skies above.
She chose him to escort her to her land,
For that sound reason, trusting to his love;
And, thinking him alone, you understand,
The ring now from her lips she did remove,
And showed her face to him, but Orlando
And Ferrau came upon them as she did so.

Canto XII: 29-37: But employing the ring escapes their attentions

Ferrau and Orlando came upon the maid 29
Because the pair, while searching equally,
To and fro, to that location had strayed,
In quest of their beloved deity.
The ring back on her finger, she'd displayed
Her face, thus both ran towards her swiftly;
For the ring now, perversely, proved her bane,
That which rendered all enchantments vain.

Helmet on head, they were clad in armour, 30
That pair of warriors I first did name,
For, night and day, they'd worn it, since ever
They'd entered the place; such use, I'd claim,
They were so accustomed to, however,
Twas like a vest to them, and seemed the same.
Ferrau, the third, yet lacked a helm for he
Had none to hand, and refused such, proudly,

Till he should possess the one Orlando 31
Had taken from King Troiano's brother,
Almonte; for he indeed had sworn so,
When he sought Argalia's neath the water;
And though the Count stood near, as you know,
Ferrau could not take it from the other,
For, in that mansion, neither of the pair
Might recognise the other knight, while there.

That mansion, indeed, was so enchanted 32
That the other's identity lay hid;
Night and day, nor sword nor shield they wanted,
While dressing in full chain-mail as they did;
Each steed, with its saddle on it planted,
The bridle hanging from it, in a bid
To be more than ready, fed, in a stall,
On straw and barley, near the mansion wall.

Atlante had no power to stop these knights 33
From mounting in the saddle, now they chose,
To chase after the vision in their sights,
The blonde hair, black eyes, and cheeks like the rose,
Of the one they'd pursued for days and nights,
His enchantments having limits, I suppose.
She was grieved to see them in company,
Though useful if employed successively.

So, once she'd set a de cent space between 34
The mansion and herself, once free of fear
That they were subject to the spell, I mean,
And no sign of the wizard, far and near,
She set the ring to her lips, and was seen,
Swift as a thought doth fly, to disappear,
Vanishing, indeed, before their eyes,
Leaving them stunned, and gazing in surprise.

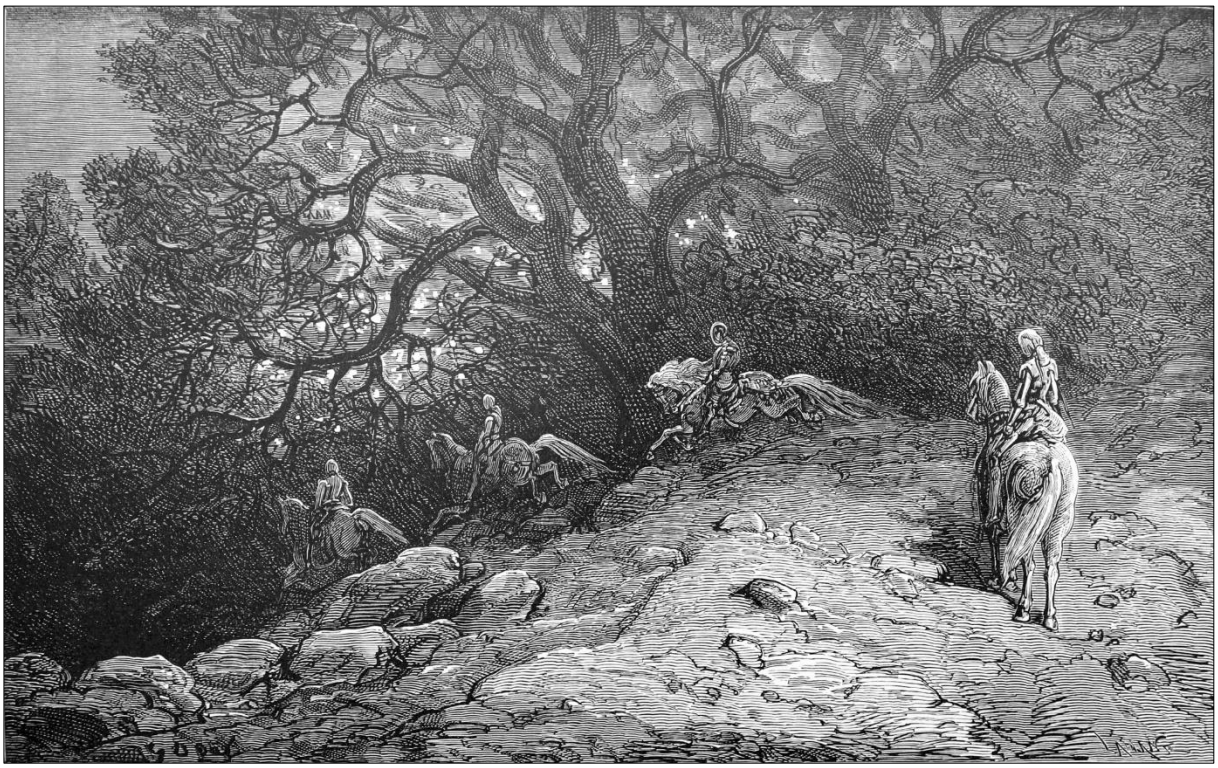
Now, although it had been her first intent 35
To take Sacripante, or Orlando,
On her journey as a guide, as they went
To her father Galaphron, who we know
Ruled a distant realm in the Orient,
She disdained to employ them even so,
And unobligated to count or king
Determined to trust solely in the ring.

Spurned, they gazed about the woodland, seeking 36
With foolish faces, here and there, in vain,
Like a hound upon the trail of something,
Fox or hare, perchance, it has lost again,
While the creature for cover goes fleeing,
To ditch or thicket, or its lair may gain;
While Angelica, observing their plight,
Laughed, unseen, as the three peered left and right.

Amidst the woods a single road appeared, 37
Thus, the trio of warriors concluded,
Twas down that road she must have disappeared.
And, by that means, had their gaze eluded.
Orlando galloped on, whom Ferrau neared,
Then Sacripante, down that secluded
Track, while Angelica reined in her steed,
Then followed them, though at a slower speed.

Canto XII: 38–47: Ferrau and Orlando quarrel

Together then, they came to where the road 38
Lost itself, suddenly, amidst the trees.
They looked to see if any hoof-prints showed,
Left by a maiden, fleeing like the breeze.
Ferrau, who midst the proudest that e'er rode,
Might have won the prize for pride with ease,
Glared angrily towards the other two,
And shouted to them loudly: 'Whence, come you?



Stanza 36

Turn back, or seek out some other way, 39
If you look not to meet death, swiftly, here.
Nor in loving, nor in pursuit, I say,
Of my love, need I your company near!'
'He addresses us,' Orlando, turned away,
In disgust, to Sacripante, 'tis clear,
Like the vilest sluts, and the most fearful,
That ever drew the wool from a spindle.'

Then turning to Ferrau again, he said: 40
'You brutish sot, if it were not so bare,
Your most ill-chosen words upon your head
Would return, ere you journeyed anywhere.'
Ferrau replied: 'I care not. Why be led
To care about what causes me no care?
I'll make good what I said on both of you,
Without a gleaming helm, or more ado.'

'Ah!', cried brave Orlando to the king, 41
'Lend me your helmet to crown this fellow,
Till I've beaten him, and cured his fooling,
For never such a madman did I know.'
'Who's then the greater madness in this thing?
The monarch said, 'If he's an honest foe,
Lend him your own, I am no less able
To beat a madman, and that's no fable.'

Said Ferrau: 'You're the foolish ones; if I 42
Chose to wear a helmet, then, already,
Yours were lost in the twinkling of an eye;
Taken, the moment you proved ready.
But know that I have sworn a vow whereby
I wear no helmet, till the day I see,
And win, the helm that's worn by Orlando,
Charlemagne's warrior, and treat him so.'

'So, you think,' the Count said, smiling coldly, 43
'That you, bare-headed, could repeat the deed
Orlando performed in Aspramonte,
On Agolante's son Almonte? Indeed,
From head to foot you'd shake, best believe me,
If you saw him face to face, for you'd need
Not only to forego the helm but give
Him all your other arms, if you would live.'

The Spaniard replied thus, boastfully: 44
'Many and many a time I've had him so,
In such straights, I could have easily
Stripped both helm and arms from Orlando,
And if I did not; well, tis full oft that we
Desire a thing we once chose to forgo;
I wished it not, do now, and hope no less
On meeting with him, to find swift success.'

Losing patience now, Orlando cried: 45
'Deceitful wretch, tell me in what country
You met me then, for truly you have lied;
Where did you gain so great a victory?
I am that knight; your boast is here denied;
No doubt you thought me far off; we shall see
If you can take the helmet from my head,
Or whether I'll take all from you instead.

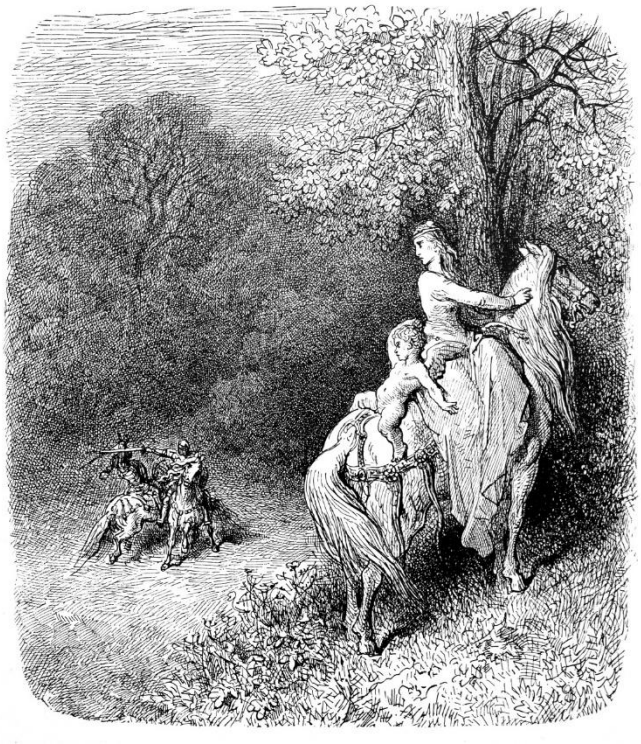
Nor would I seek the smallest advantage,' 46
He cried, and took the helmet from his brow,
And hung it on a beech tree, in his rage,
Unsheathing Durindana, and yet, now,
Brave Ferrau lost not an ounce of courage,
But drew his sword, a moment did allow,
Then, calmly, her raised his shield on high,
To seek defence of his bare head, thereby.

And then fierce battle the pair commenced, 47
Their two chargers wheeling round and round,
While where the plate was thinnest, as they fenced,
Steel pierced steel, and where the joints were found.
Nor were there e'er two knights (both were incensed)
As well-matched as that pair, above the ground,
So equal in vigour, and in ardour,
Neither combatant could wound the other.

Canto XII: 48-51: Angelica alone observes the conflict

I presume you've understood already, 48
That Ferrau by a charm was protected,
Except at that point where in the belly
A vestige remained of what connected
The mother to the child, internally;
And so, till he was by death selected
He chose to hide the vulnerable part,
Neath several layers of the armourer's art.

Equally protected was Orlando, 49
Everywhere but in a single place,
For he could be wounded, you should know,
Beneath one foot, and thus he used to face
His enemies sheathed skilfully below;
The rest of him a tough hide did encase,
Diamond hard; thus, to battle both men went
Armoured less for defence than ornament.



Stanza 50

The fight twixt the pair was hard and bitter, 50
Raising fear, dreadful for the eye to see;
Since Ferrau, with every blow, struck harder,
And none was less than full, assuredly,
While Orlando sought to split and shatter
Chain-mail and plate, and did so readily.
Angelica remained invisible,
And she alone now watched the spectacle,

For the King of Circassia, meanwhile, 51
Sacripante, who thought Angelica
Not far in front, perchance less than a mile,
Believing the fight might last forever,
Spurred his charger on its way, in good style,
Hoping that he might thus come upon her;
So, the only witness, once he was gone,
Was this fair daughter of King Galaphron.

Canto XII: 52-55: She carries off Orlando's helmet

After she had stood a while observing 52
The dire and dreadful conflict underway,
And found them both equally deserving
Of victory, though in danger every way,
Her desire for novelty, e'er unswerving,
She thought to carry off the helm, in play,
To see what they would do on noticing
The theft, though she knew twas not for keeping.

She intended to return it to Orlando, 53
But first would toy a little with the knight,
Thus, she took the helm, and hid it also,
And stood a moment gazing at the fight;
Then, upon her way, silently, did go,
And soon, in all respects, was out of sight,
Ere either knight had realised it was gone,
So fierce the task they were engaged upon.

But Ferrau noticed it had disappeared, 54
And so disengaged from the encounter.
'What fools we are, tis as we might have feared,
That knight that was with us proved a traitor!
What good if either had to victory steered,
If we possess the helm, our prize, no longer?'
Orlando glanced upwards at the tree
Where it had hung, and bristled angrily.

With Ferrau, he was in accord; twas clear 55
That the knight who'd accompanied them before
Had stolen it, and was no longer here,
So, he leapt on Brigliadoro once more.
On seeing him about to disappear,
Ferrau pursued, over the forest floor.
Both soon came to fresh prints upon the ground;
The tracks of knight, and maiden too, they'd found.

Canto XII: 56-62: Ferrau follows Angelica's trail and finds the helm

Towards a vale on the left, rode the Count, 56
On the path taken by Sacripante;
Ferrau chose the route, closer to the mount,
Down which Angelica had sped, swiftly,
Meanwhile Angelica had reached a fount,
A pleasant site, welcoming her sweetly,
For travellers it drew to its cool shade,
Nor without drinking might they quit the glade.

She halted there beside the clear water, 57
Believing none would disturb her there.
And then would not the wondrous ring hide her,
That, she might linger, free of every care?
She hung the helm on a branch, above her,
And to the tree's trunk she tied her mare,
So, the creature could graze upon the grass,
And there among the greenest herbs might pass.



Stanza 57

But the bold Ferrau to the fount now came, 58
Having followed hard on her trail, once more,
And no sooner did the maiden spy that same
Than she vanished on the mare, as before.
She somehow dropped the helm, nor could reclaim
The thing; it rolled across the forest floor;
While Ferrau, once he had the maid in sight,
Sprang towards the fleeting vision with delight.

She vanished, as I've said, before his eyes, 59
As fantasies in dreams do, when we wake,
While he sought for her everywhere, his prize,
Yet he found not a sign midst bush or brake.
Invoking Mahound, Termagant likewise,
As many a curse, and prayer, he did make,
Ferrau returned to seek the woodland fount,
And came upon the helm of our brave Count.

The helm was recognisable; around 60
Its rim were letters, written clearly there,
Proclaiming, as about the helm they wound,
How Orlando won it, from whom, and where.
Ferrau set on his brow the helm he'd found,
Who, in spite of his grief, could not forbear;
His grief, at losing her, now fled from sight,
Like to some passing phantom in the night.

Once he had set the helmet on his head, 61
All that he needed, to be quite content,
Was to find Angelica, who, instead,
Much like a flash of lightning came and went.
He searched the woods, amidst which he now sped,
Yet seemed forever balked of his intent,
And finding ne'er a trace, his passion spurned,
To Paris, and the Spanish camp, returned,

Tempering the pain yet burning in his breast, 62
At failing to achieve his fond desire,
With the coolness of the helm, now at rest
Upon his brow and not Orlando's, entire,
As he had sworn. Meanwhile the Count once blessed
With news of that ill deed, sought him, with ire,
Until the day he took it from his head,
Where, between two bridges, he laid him dead.



Stanza 61

Canto XII: 63-65: Angelica comes upon a wounded youth

Angelica, unseen and quite alone, 63
Went on her way, but with a troubled brow,
Bemoaning the helm, all too swiftly flown,
Now lying by the fount, or neath the bough.
'Wishing to do what I should not, I own
Twas stolen from the Count, which I avow
Was a fine reward for all I owed the knight,
Who though obliged to him, am yet in flight!

With only good intentions (as God knows) 64
Hoping some fair effect might be achieved,
I took the helm, thinking the path I chose
Might bring about a truce, as I believed,
Not that the Spaniard should upon it close,
And gain through me what he has thus retrieved.'
Onwards she rode, the while lamenting so,
At having snatched the thing from Orlando.

Angry at herself, filled with discontent 65
She took a seeming path towards the east,
Sometimes concealed, and sometimes evident
(If that proved opportune) to man or beast.
Through many a field, and meadow, she went,
And came where two companions, deceased,
Lay in a wood and, twixt the pair, a youth,
With a blood-stained breast, half-dead in truth.

Canto XII: 66-76: Orlando reaches a Paris under siege

Yet no more, for now, of Angelica, 66
Many a venture I must first narrate;
Nor of bold Ferrau shall I speak further,
As yet, nor on King Sacripante wait.
Orlando wishes that my verse should linger
Not upon them, but rather should relate
His labours, and the troubles he sustained
Pursuing his quest, yet with little gained.

At the very first town to which he came, 67
He donned a new helmet, concerned to go,
Now well-concealed, behind that very same,
Unconcerned about its strength; twas for show,
Since his life was so charmed (or such the claim)
It mattered not if it were strong or no.
Thus, hidden by his helm, he could maintain
His search by day or night, in sun or rain.

It was the hour when Phoebus leads his team, 68
With dew-wet hides, from out the ocean deep,
Aurora spreading o'er the sky her gleam
Of red and gold that summons us from sleep,
As the stars cease their dance, and we our dream,
Departing, veiled, their hidden watch to keep,
When, passing close to Paris, Orlando
All the virtues of his great worth did show.

He encountered two squadrons: Manilardo, 69
His was the first, a white-haired Saracen,
King of Noritia, once fierce, also,
But fitter now to counsel than lead men;
The second flew the banner of Alzirdo,
Tremisena's monarch, called, now and then,
Amidst the Africans, the perfect knight,
By those who knew him, and had seen him fight.

With the rest of the Saracen army, 70
They had wintered in camp, some far afield,
Some, as these two squadrons, near the city,
In villages and hamlets, unconcealed,
For King Agramante, who had many
A day sought to make its high walls yield,
Had now laid siege to Paris, in this guise,
Lacking the means to gain it otherwise.



Stanza 75

An infinite host had the king on hand, 71
For, in addition to his own vast army,
And that of Spain, also a mighty band,
Led by Marsilius, there were many
Frenchmen in his pay, you understand;
From Paris to the Rhône, or Gascony,
All were subject to Agramante's power,
Except for the odd fortress keep, or tower.

Now the quivering streams commenced to flow, 72
And free their warming waves of winter's ice,
While the heat persuaded fresh grass to grow,
And new leaves from the bark did thus entice,
The king gathered all that his flag did follow,
And shared his luck (some for a goodly price),
Mustering his armed forces from their lairs,
To grant a better shape to his affairs.

And so it was that Noritia's king 73
And Tremisenas' monarch gathered there,
In ample time for that grand reckoning,
In which each squadron, good or bad, would share.
Thus, Orlando chanced, in his journeying,
As I have said, to meet the royal pair,
Our brave knight, as was his wont, seeking her
On whose account he was Love's prisoner.

Alzirdo saw Orlando approaching, 74
One unequalled on this earth for valour,
So glorious, and so proud in seeming,
Mars might have been thought inferior,
And was astounded both by his coming,
And by his fierce glance, each angry feature,
Esteeming him a knight of great prowess,
While far too ready those skills to assess.

For Alzirdo was young and arrogant, 75
Known for his strength of heart, and his right arm.
He urged his steed forward, in an instant,
Yet should have held his place, free there from harm.
Orlando, being in his element,
Soon pierced that heart, nor felt the least alarm.
The monarch's steed now fled the field in fear,
Lacking a rider, who his course might steer.

Arose a sudden and horrendous cry, 76
And filled all the air with mournful sound,
As his companions saw him fall, and die,
The blood from out his breast shed all around.
In a moment, at the Count, men did fly,
En masse, with lance and sword, to surround
Our knight, gleaming arrows speeding, swiftly,
Towards that finest flower of chivalry.

Canto XII: 77-81: Having killed Alzirdo, he routs his company

With a sound like that of the bristling boar 77
That charges from the woodland or the hill,
If a wolf or bear treads the forest floor
Or descends from the mountain for its kill,
And takes some squealing runt, as oft before,
That grunts and moans a while, then lies still,
So, each of these attacking foes cried out:
'At him!', in one fierce and furious shout.

Many a sword and arrow, many a spear, 78
Struck his breastplate and pierced his shield,
While at his back a mace attacked his rear;
Yet, to such vile opponents, he'd not yield,
As at his sides, and in front, they drew near,
He who feared not such as these in the field,
Nor counted them more than the wolf the flock
When there, amidst the fold, it runs amok.

In his right hand his naked sword he held, 79
That had brought death to many a Saracen,
And he who'd count the slaughtered in that meld
He would have found his task as hard again.
The road ran red with blood from those he'd felled,
Scarce was there space to hold so many men;
For neither shield nor helm e'er defended
Where Durindana's fatal blade descended,

Nor did their cotton robes, nor turbans, wound 80
In a thousand folds about their heads, deny
His sword, but shoulders, arms, heads, bound, unbound,
To join their sad cries, through the air did fly.
And cruel Death now roamed about, and found
His home in many a glazed and horrid eye:
'Durindana in Orlando's hand doth shine,'
He cried, 'tis worth a hundred scythes in mine!'

One fierce blow scarce waited on another. 81
Soon the whole host of foemen was in flight.
And while before they'd sought to smother,
By their number, this solitary knight,
None now stopped e'en to defend a brother,
For each sought but to hasten from the fight;
Here one on foot, there another, mounted,
Careless of their road, they fled, uncounted.

Canto XII: 82-85: And then unseats Manilardo

Valour bore a mirror, near Orlando, 82
A glass that revealed the coward's tremor;
None dared looked therein, but Manilardo,
Whose aged blood was chilled, not his ardour;
He thought to die was better than to show
A shameful fear, flee, and find dishonour;
I speak of Noritia's king, whose stout lance
He couched, to meet the paladin of France.

And broke it on the edge of his strong shield, 83
While Orlando withstood the blow unmoved,
And answered him by striking, as he wheeled
At the king's armour, yet in error proved
Since fortune helped the king, although he reeled
At the stroke, for the bright sword blade moved
And turned, in descent, in Orlando's hand;
Yet was such as the king could not withstand.

From the saddle he fell, stunned, to the ground, 84
Nor did Orlando turn to view his fall,
But cut and slashed, cleft and slew those around,
While seeming close upon the heels of all,
As a merlin will stoop, with ne'er a sound,
On a flight of starlings, ere its recall.
Likewise, of the squadron he had shattered,
Some flew, some fell, and the others scattered.

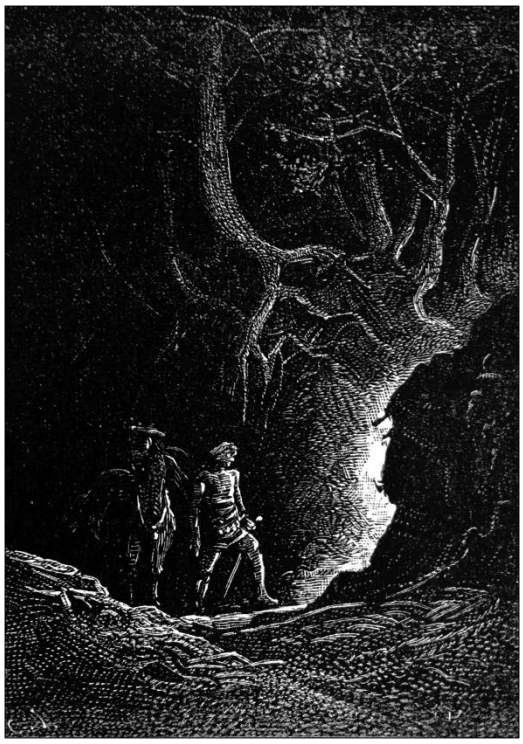
Nor did he cease to wield his blood-stained sword 85
Till not a living soul still kept the field.
He was doubtful, then, which road might afford
Best passage; would right or left now yield
A furtherance of his quest? Naught reassured,
Though to the land about him he appealed.
He sought Angelica where she might be,
Fearing to take some road quite contrary.

Canto XII: 86-89: Journeying on he comes to a cave in the hillside

Through the fields and through the woods he went, 86
(Often enquiring for the maid, he sought);
Beside himself, and filled with discontent,
Our knight strayed from the beaten path, in short,
And came at eve to a mount where a vent
Showed a distant flame that within did sport;
So, swiftly, he approached that stony lair,
In case Angelica was lodging there.

For as beneath low-hanging juniper, 87
Or in the stubble of an open field
The fearful hare is sought by the hunter,
Lest in some deep furrow she's concealed,
Or down an untrodden track doth wander,
Where brambles or a thicket might yet yield
A sighting, so Orlando, where hope led,
E'er searching for his lady, onward sped.

Towards that ray of light, he rode in haste, 88
And came to where it shone within the wood,
Out of an opening, in the rocky waste,
That showed a spacious cave within; there stood
Before it a high wall of brushwood placed,
To form a barrier, and so make good
Its inhabitants' defence, a thorny charm
To keep them safe from outrage, and from harm.



Stanza 89

It was hidden from the eye through the day, 89
But the bright flame revealed the place at night;
He though he knew what purpose it might play,
Yet to be certain wished to see outright,
What lay within, and once he'd led away
Brigliadoro, and tethered him, our knight,
Slid, silently, past the sharp branches there,
Without a word of greeting, but great care.

Canto XII: 90-94: In which he finds a maiden, Isabella

A flight of steps descended to this tomb, 90
Though one where living people were interred;
Carved from out the rock the vaulted room
A certain airy spaciousness conferred,
And then, natural light dispelled the gloom;
Though little from the entrance was transferred,
A window of a kind showed somewhat bright,
Created by a fissure on the right.

Amidst the cave, beside a fire's glow, 91
Sat a girl, possessed of a pleasant face,
She seemed but fifteen years of age or so,
As far as he could see, in that dark place;
And beautiful enough, thought Orlando,
To make a paradise, one filled with grace,
Of that harsh and stony cavern, although
Her tearful eyes declared her heart's deep woe.

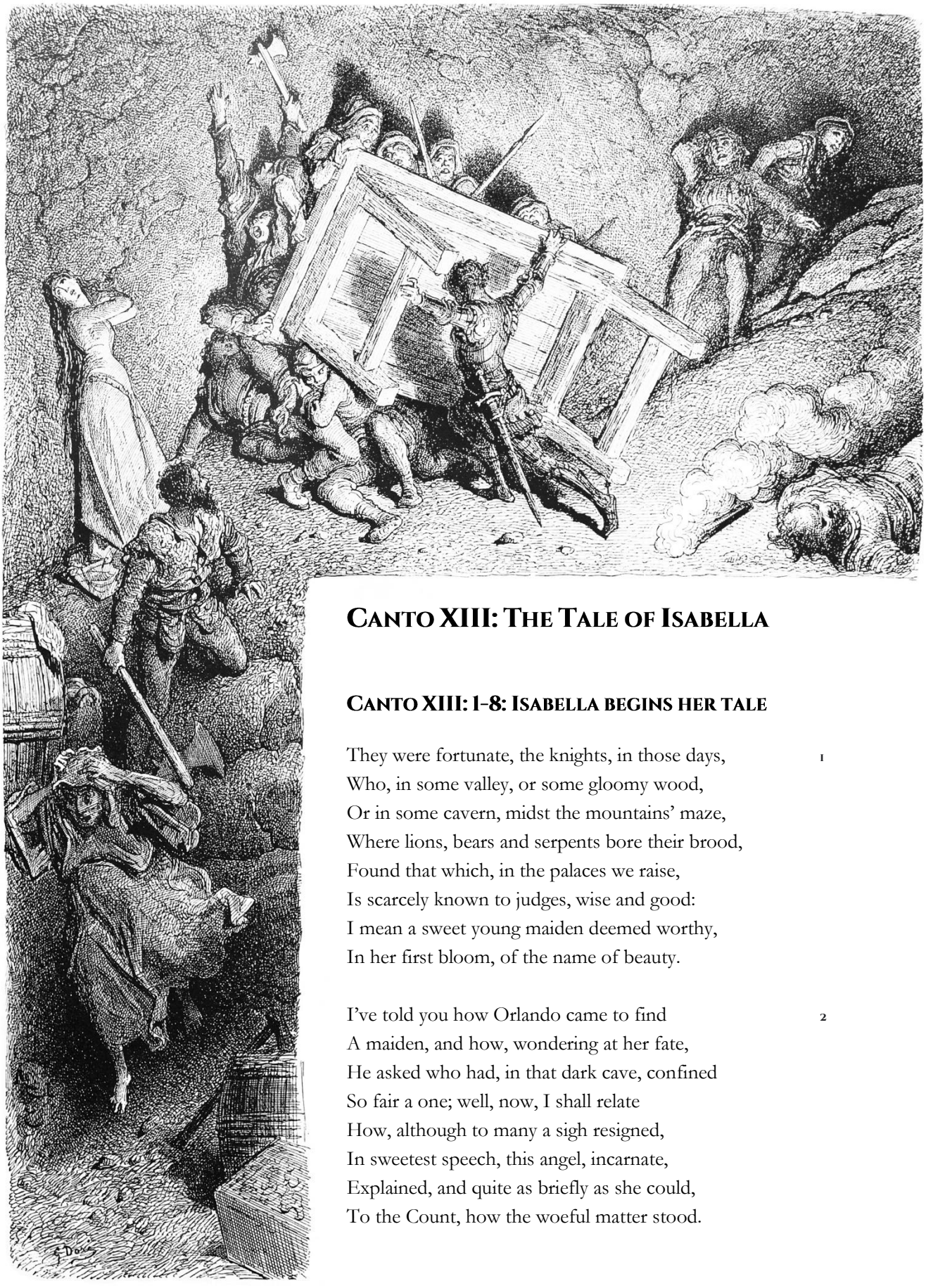


Stanza 91

And old woman sat with her, and the two 92
Quarrelled gently in the feminine manner,
But the moment the Count came into view
Silence fell, not a word more did they utter.
Orlando greeted them as one should do,
With the courtesy due to women, ever,
Then rising, instantly, from their seat,
Benignly, both the warrior did greet.

True, each gaze apprehension did betray, 93
On seeing him appear so suddenly,
As he descended, from the light of day,
Fully-armed, for fierce he seemed to be.
Yet Orlando asked, in a modest way,
Who was he, so lacking in courtesy,
So unjust, as to bury in that place,
Such a noble, and kind, and loving face.

The virgin maid then, haltingly, replied, 94
Her soft speech interrupted by sweet sighs,
Twixt bright pearl and coral there, scarce denied,
While, midst the rose and lily, from her eyes
Tears flowed, that often twixt her lips did glide,
For her sorrow moistened them likewise.
Yet, to the next, for the rest, please attend,
For it's time to draw this canto to an end.



Canto XIII: The Tale of Isabella

Canto XIII: 1-8: Isabella begins her tale

They were fortunate, the knights, in those days, 1
Who, in some valley, or some gloomy wood,
Or in some cavern, midst the mountains' maze,
Where lions, bears and serpents bore their brood,
Found that which, in the palaces we raise,
Is scarcely known to judges, wise and good:
I mean a sweet young maiden deemed worthy,
In her first bloom, of the name of beauty.

I've told you how Orlando came to find 2
A maiden, and how, wondering at her fate,
He asked who had, in that dark cave, confined
So fair a one; well, now, I shall relate
How, although to many a sigh resigned,
In sweetest speech, this angel, incarnate,
Explained, and quite as briefly as she could,
To the Count, how the woeful matter stood.

'Though I'm certain,' she said, 'that I, brave knight, 3
Will suffer for what I'm about to say,
Since, to him who pens me here, out of sight,
This old woman will every word relay,
Yet I would have you hear the tale outright,
And pray tis not with this poor life I'll pay.
Though what more can I hope from it, say I,
Than that my gaoler should decree I die?

Isabella am I, once the daughter 4
Of Galicia's most unhappy king;
Once, I say, for I am his no longer,
But the child of pain, and woe, and suffering.
Love's fault; of whom I complain no further
Than to say we see him first applauding
All love's deeds; he lulls us most sweetly,
And yet his snare deceives us completely.

Once it would seem Fortune smiled upon me, 5
Noble and wealthy, honest, young, and fair,
Yet now brought low, to woe and poverty,
And, if there be aught worse, in that I'll share.
But you shall know the root of this ill tree,
Which bore such evil fruit, to my despair;
For, though your aid grants them no shorter lease,
I see not how my woes you could increase.

My father at Bayonne arranged a tourney, 6
It must be quite twelve months ago today,
And so there came, from many a country,
Drawn by the rumour, a renowned array
Of knights, and amidst these Love, to me,
Or his virtues, perchance, in that display,
Showed such, that he alone my praises won,
Zerbino, the great King of Scotland's son.

And when I viewed him later in the field, 7
Performing wondrous deeds of chivalry,
I fell in love with him, to such did yield,
And knew myself no longer mine, wholly.
Thus, my love for him was ill-concealed,
Ever his face adorned my memory,
Since I had set my heart on nothing mean,
But on the worthiest the world has seen.

For my Zerbino was pre-eminent, 8
Beyond, in worth and looks, every other.
He showed me love and was, I think, content
To return my own, with no less ardour.
Nor did we lack a friend, ever-present,
To convey our love to one another,
Such that we could unite, in heart and mind,
Though yet apart and, in that, comfort find.

Canto XIII: 9-12: She and Zerbino plan to elope

When the tourney was completed, though, 9
And he returned to his own native shore,
If you know aught of love, then you must know
How, night and day, I yearned for him full sore.
And that no less a flame burned in him so,
Quite as deep within the heart, I feel sure.
And we could see no answer whatsoever,
But to find a way we might be together.

Due to our different faiths, you understand, 10
(He a Christian, I a Saracen)
He could not ask my father for my hand;
We must elope, and choose the how and when.
Beyond our wealthy city, which did stand
Amidst the green fields, I had a garden,
On a slope, a little distance from the sea,
From which I could view the space around me.

It seemed the place where we might achieve 11
What our differing religions denied us.
Zerbino the whole plan did now conceive,
And showed me the decree that would bind us.
By Santa Marta, hidden to deceive
All watchers, was a ship; none would find us;
Its captain Odorico of Biscay,
On land or sea, a good man in a fray.

Unable to, himself, perform the thing, 12
Since he'd been ordered by his father
To aid, in his time of need, the French king,
He'd send Odorico, thus to further
The scheme, as amongst his true friends being
Truer, and more loyal, than any other;
And would it not be fine if, here, indeed,
For every man such friendship was decreed.

Canto XIII: 13-18: The scheme goes awry and she is shipwrecked

13
And he would come at the appointed hour
In his armed vessel to bear me away.
And when the time came, there, in my bower,
They found me ready. Anchoring in the bay,
Odorico worked whate'er was in his power,
To keep me safe, his men, in close array,
Disembarking from a boat on the river,
At dead of night, this service to deliver.

14
Thus, I was carried to the ship at anchor,
Before any in the city were aware.
Of the household servants, a fair number
Fled, naked and unarmed, a few died there,
While the rest, being subject to capture,
Were brought away with me, in my care.
So, I denied my home, most joyful, though,
In hoping, soon, to be with my Zerbino.

15
And yet, we'd scarcely sailed by Mungia,
When a gale attacked us, on the port side,
Which troubled both sea and sky together,
Raising great breakers on a flowing tide;
A north-westerly arose, that blew forever,
And grew in power till waves the ship did hide,
And still increased, blowing with such force,
Though the crew strove, it drove us from our course.

16
The sail was reefed, the tall mast was downed
To the boards, and a storm-jib flown, in vain;
Driven leeward, we were set to run aground,
Near La Rochelle, nor could the vessel gain
Against that wind; unless some aid was found
From the heavens, brief life would we maintain.
The gale now drove us faster, with the flow,
Than arrow ever sped from out the bow.



Stanza 17

Odorico, conscious of present danger, 17
Sought a remedy that often goes awry,
The ship's boat he now made shift to lower,
And to it we descended, he and I;
Two followed, and soon many another
Would have swamped it, for some sought to try,
But our little crew countered with the sword;
We cut the ropes, and ran, with those aboard.

Driven landward, we managed to reach shore, 18
We few who had embarked, while all the rest,
With the vessel were drowned, and seen no more;
We lost everything aboard that we'd possessed.
Yet I thanked the Endless Good we adore,
Eternal Love which my own life had blessed,
That I had not been doomed to perish so,
Fated ne'er to see my own Zerbino.

Canto XIII: 19-28: Odorico attempts to rape Isabella

Though I had lost many a thing that day, 19
Clothes, and jewels, and much other treasure,
I hoped to find Zerbino, though astray,
Content that the sea should seize its measure.
No dwelling appeared, nor any pathway,
On that bleak shore, wrought for our displeasure,
Only a wooded slope thrashed, ceaselessly,
By the wind, its base by the raging sea.

Now, that cruel tyrant Love, who's forever 20
Disloyal to every faithful promise,
And joys in marring our schemes, as ever
Had found his pleasure in destroying this,
And, in that sad and deceitful temper,
Changed good to ill, my comfort, with relish,
To despair; the friend, Zerbino trusted
Cooling in loyalty, now hotly lusted.

Whether while at sea he'd desired me, 21
Yet had lacked the boldness to show it there,
Or whether on that shore, quite solitary,
He saw the chance to further the affair,
He planned to seize the opportunity
To work his will on one left in his care,
But first addressed himself to the two
That had, with him, formed our skiff's small crew.

The first, a Scot, was named Almonio, 22
Praised as a perfect knight, one ever true
While of his company, by Zerbino,
With this Odorico, trusted anew
With my protection. Said the latter, though,
For me to go on foot would never do,
And begged the knight to haste to La Rochelle,
And find a mount for me; themselves as well.

Almonio, not fearing any ill, 23
Departed swiftly and, without delay,
Reached the city, quite hidden by the hill,
Which was no more than six short miles away.
Odorico now sought to work his will,
And his plot to the other did display,
As much because the man seemed a fixture
As that he trusted in his base nature.

Corebo of Bilbao was his name, 24
He of whom I speak, the other there,
Who was raised from infancy with that same,
Odorico, who thus saw fit to share
His traitorous plan, quite devoid of shame,
With the fellow; thinking he would care
More to indulge a friend who claimed his trust,
Than stay faithful, and support what was just.

But Corebo, who was noble and courteous, 25
On hearing of the plot, felt indignation,
Called him a traitor, and quite furious
Wished him, and all his like, to damnation.
Their hearts full of ire, and angered thus,
They flourished their swords, in frustration.
At this, I fled in fear towards the wood,
That clothed the slopes in our neighbourhood.

Odorico, most skilful in a fight, 26
Had, in a few blows, gained such advantage
He quickly left for dead the other knight,
And followed, in pursuit, my swift passage.
Desire lent him wings to win, outright,
That race, if I mistake not the adage,
And taught him many a flattering plea
That I should yield, and end his misery.



Stanza 25



Stanza 28

But twas in vain, for I with firm intent 27
Had rather died, there and then, than yield.
When every plea, flattery, and ill-meant
Threat proved worthless, he sought to win the field
By force, regardless of my non-consent;
Nor did entreaty serve me as a shield,
Reminding him of my Zerbino's trust
In one who seemed at pains to prove unjust.

When I perceived my prayers were all in vain, 28
And that I could not hope for rest or aid,
Since he his wickedness would yet maintain,
As, like some half-starved bear, attacks he made;
With hands and feet, I struck, and struck again,
And at him, tooth and nail, great ire displayed,
While flailing at his mouth, and nose, and eyes,
Sending my woeful pleas, towards the skies.

Canto XIII: 29-32: She escapes him, but is then taken captive

Whether my cries they chose not to ignore, 29
That could perchance be heard for miles around,
Or whether they always headed for the shore,
Whenever any vessel ran aground,
I saw a vast host down the hillside pour,
And soon the pathways to the beach they found.
Odorico, saw them come and, thereupon,
Left me, and, in a moment more, was gone.

That crowd, indeed, saved me from the traitor, 30
But, to prove the adage, chose to conspire;
For I fell, as common folk hold ever,
From out the frying pan, into the fire.
True my state is not that of dishonour,
They're not so wicked, nor my case so dire;
They've not sought to violate my person,
Though little that is good or kind have done.

Yet that I am a virgin maid they know, 31
And, as I am, may fetch a higher price;
Nine months have come and gone while, to my woe,
This living grave as lodgings did suffice.
All hope is lost of aid from Zerbino,
While, from their speech, I gather their device
Is that some merchant will buy me, with gold;
To the Sultan, in the East, I'll then be sold.'

So twas the noble lady told her tale, 32
Though interspersed with gestures and with sighs;
Her angelic mode of speech oft did fail,
That might pity from an asp or viper prise.
While, her sad woes, to our knight, she did unveil,
Or some small comfort sought to realise,
A score of men made entry to the cave,
Armed with here a spear, and there a stave.

Canto XIII: 33-41: Orlando now disposes of her captors

Their leader, his face devoid of pity, 33
Was possessed of but one dull, squinting eye,
The other blinded by some blow, that neatly
Had sliced his jaw from ear to ear; no lie.
He, on seeing our knight, seated calmly
Beside the maid, turned to his friends nearby,
And cried: 'Behold, another bird we've caught
In our fine net, though not a fowl we sought!'



Stanza 33

Then, speaking to the Count: 'I never saw 34
One so happily, or opportunely, met.
Perchance you guessed, or were told before,
New armour I did need, but none could get.
And that sable tunic of yours, what's more,
So fashionably upon your shoulders set,
Has arrived, just at the right time, indeed,
To address, nay satisfy, my urgent need.'

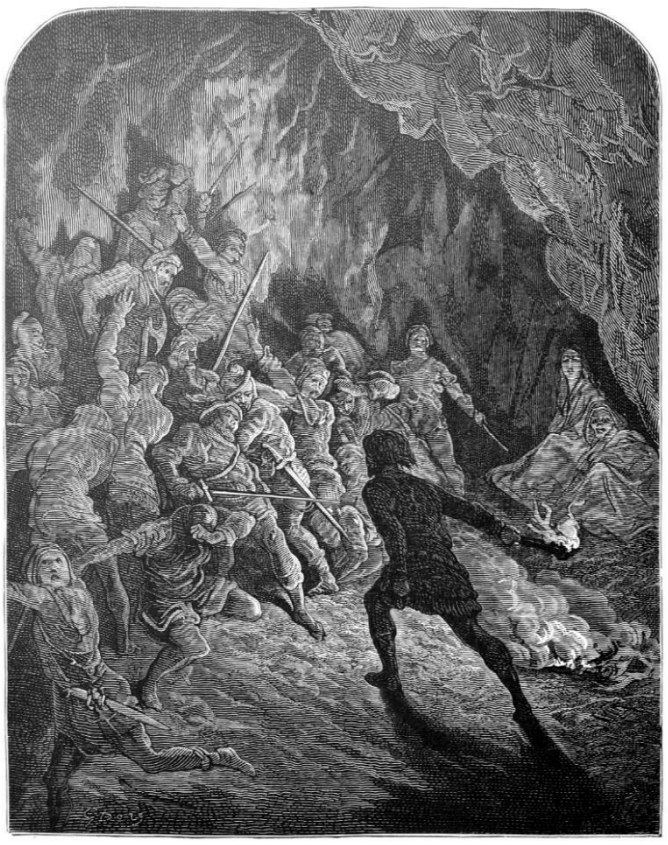
With a wry smile, Orlando rose, and then 35
To the ugly scoundrel made this reply:
'You may purchase them both, yet again,
If you do, then the price is somewhat high.'
And from the fire which lit that gloomy den,
He seized a burning brand, it being nigh,
And struck the rogue, by chance I suppose,
On the spot where the eyebrows meet the nose.
Both his eyes were scorched by the splinter



Stanza 36

But it wrought the most damage on the left, 36
And in doing so it robbed him, thereafter,
Of the sight of which the right was bereft.
Nor was our knight content with the offer,
But sought to send that connoisseur of theft
To join the souls Charon doth ever keep
Plunged in lakes, infernally hot and deep.

In the cave, sat a table, made of wood, 37
Two palms thick, and spacious in extent,
On one large rudely-fashioned foot it stood,
Behind it were that crew of ill-intent.
As easily as only our knight could
Towards the rogues that mighty thing he sent,
Flinging it as readily at all those there
As Spaniards hurl their reed-spears through the air.

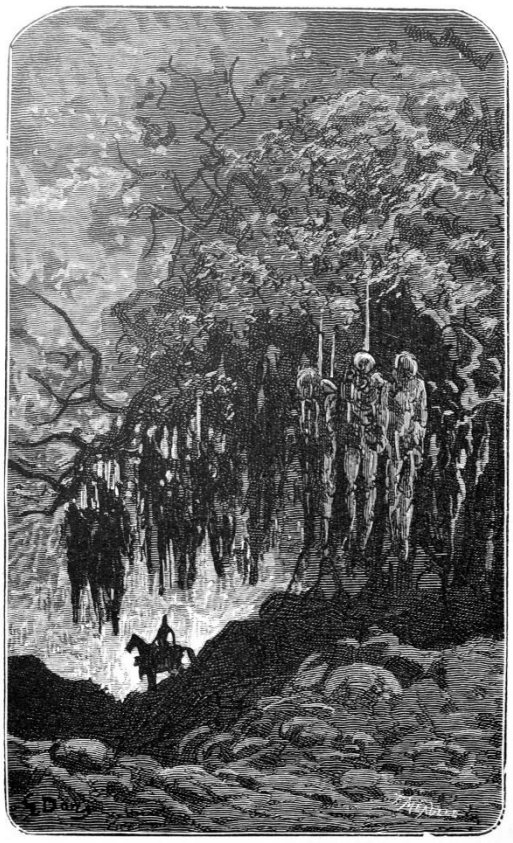


Stanza 35

Here a head was crushed and there a thigh, 38
A chest, or arm, or a swollen belly,
Some were slain, some only maimed thereby,
(While the least harmed fled the most promptly),
As a nest of vipers are seen to lie,
Crushed beneath a stone both large and heavy,
With battered heads and tails, when winter's done,
Caught while they are basking in the sun,

And damaged so, who knows to what extent, 39
Though this one's dead, that one lacks a tail,
Another cannot move, robbed of intent,
And writhes and coils, yet all to no avail,
While this, with whom the saints are more content,
Through the grass, slithers on some hidden trail.
Grievous the stroke, yet no great wonder though,
Since it was dealt by mighty Orlando.

Those who were scarcely harmed by his bold feat, 40
(Bishop Tilpin seven such did proclaim)
Sought safety as they ran from sore defeat,
But Orlando thwarted them of their aim.
And having caught those few, like bales of wheat
He trussed them, to render them quite tame,
With lengths of rope lying coiled on the ground,
Which deep within the woodland cave, he'd found.



Stanza 41

That done, he dragged them forth to the light; 41
Then, to where an old rowan cast its shade;
With his sword he trimmed the branches, our knight,
Then hung the villains there in the glade,
A fine banquet for the crows, in open sight,
(No hooks he needed, those the branches made)
And left them hanging for the birds to peck,
Once he'd hoisted the villains by the neck.

Canto XIII: 42-44: He departs accompanied by Isabella

The old woman, a friend to that base crew, 42
When she saw the rest were wounded or dead,
Tore her hair and, escaping what was due,
Through all the green, and leafy, labyrinth fled,
While weeping and lamenting as she flew,
Impelled by fear, down stony paths that led
To a river, and there met a knight, so fated;
Though who that was remains to be related.



Stanza 42

I turn to Isabella, who requested 43
That Orlando not leave her there alone,
Declaring she would go where'er he led.
The knight, who every courtesy had shown,
Consoled her, and when pale Aurora sped,
Wreathed with roses, in robes with scarlet sewn,
Through the sky, on her accustomed journey,
The knight and the maid departed, swiftly.

Not a thing of note did they encounter, 44
Pursuing their path for many a day;
Though, in the end, they met a traveller,
That led a captive, as he went his way.
More would I say, but a little later;
Since a tale as dear now calls me away:
For Bradamante I've left there, above,
Languishing, as yet, in the toils of love.

Canto XIII: 45-50: Melissa visits Bradamante with news of Ruggiero

That lovely warrior, longing, in vain, 45
For the swift return of Ruggiero,
Lay in Marseilles, pursuing a campaign
Of harassment against the pagan foe,
(The scourge indeed of every hill and plain
Throughout Provence, and Languedoc also)
Performing the true office, day and night,
Of a wise leader, and a valiant knight.

She waited there, much time having passed 46
In which Ruggiero ought to have returned,
And, not seeing him, felt, herself, harassed,
Fearing harm done to one for whom she yearned.
Yet, as she sat alone one day, downcast,
Bemoaning her sad fate, relief she earned,
For Melissa drew near, who, with the ring,
Had healed that heart Alcina's love did sting.



Stanza 47

Finding she'd returned without her lover, 47
After so long a space, you understand,
The heart within her began to quiver;
Pale and faint, our fair knight could scarcely stand.
But the kind Melissa came, smiling, to her,
Seeing her look of fear, and took her hand,
And, comforting her, wore a joyful face,
On bringing better news to that sad place.

'Fear not,' she cried, 'for your Ruggiero 48
Is yet alive and well, and still adores you,
But, once again, his freedom's lost; your foe,
Has robbed him of it; without more ado,
You need to mount the saddle now, and go,
If you would find him; follow me anew,
And if you do, I shall reveal the deed,
By which your Ruggiero may be freed.'

And then she told her of the magic spell 49
Atlante had cast, and of the mansion;
How by simulating her face, as well,
He'd led her knight to that enchanted prison,
(She captive to a giant) where it befell
That once within he found it but a vision,
And how likewise the wizard cheated all,
Knight and ladies, in that deceptive hall.

He seemed to each, that wondrous enchanter, 50
To be the one that each of them desired,
Lady, squire, companion, friend, whomever;
For by more than one form is love inspired.
And then they searched the mansion forever,
Both wearily, and fruitlessly, enmired;
And yet such was their longing even so
To win their fond desire, they could not go.

Canto XIII: 51-54: She tells her of the means to free him

'As soon,' she said, 'as you approach the place 51
Wherein the magic mansion will appear,
Atlante will don Ruggiero's face,
And his form, and greet you as you draw near.
While by his art twill seem he doth embrace
Defeat at another's hands (such my fear),
Trusting you will seek to aid your knight,
And, thus, amidst the rest be penned outright.

So that you may escape this hidden snare, 52
In which so many others have been caught,
Though he seems your Ruggiero, yet, beware,
Believe it not, though your swift aid is sought.
Knowing the wizard, in false form, is there,
Take his life, yea, slay him and fear naught.
It is not Ruggiero who shall die,
But he who seeks to work you harm, thereby.

I know, full well, it will seem hard to you, 53
To slay a knight who looks like Ruggiero,
But trust not to your eyes, all there's untrue,
Tis mere enchantment, a deceptive show.
Be certain, since the mansion we shall view,
To hold as firm when we perceive the foe.
For never shall you meet with wedded bliss,
If you let the wretch live, through cowardice.

The fair warrior-maid, with that intent, 54
(To slay the false enchanter) once she'd armed,
Followed Melissa, swiftly, where she went,
Whom she trusted as if her life were charmed,
By cultivated fields, through woods, content
To be led, and bleak stretches, unalarmed.
The latter seeking, by sweet conversation,
To ease the long road to their destination.

Canto XIII: 55-73: Melissa tells of the women of the House of Este

The fairest subject that she e'er did mine, 55
Oft repeated in Bradamante's ear,
Was that of her and Ruggiero's line,
The demi-gods now destined to appear.
For Melissa all the secrets could divine
Of those eternal gods that rule us here,
And had foreknowledge, in her day, of all
That midst the future ages would befall.

'My truest guide, I do well remember,' 56
The warrior maid thus addressed the mage,
'How, on a day, fair folk you did number,
Handsome offspring, born to adorn their age;
So now I beg you, speak of some member
Of that race, some lady, lovely and sage,
If one so virtuous time shall provide.'
And thus, Melissa, courteously, replied:

'From you chaste women will e'er descend, 57
Mothers of emperors and mighty kings,
Preservers and mainstays, without end,
Of mighty realms, of which the poet sings;
And they in women's garb will here defend
Worth and merit, all honourable things,
As well as will the men in armour, truly,
With prudence, modesty, and piety.

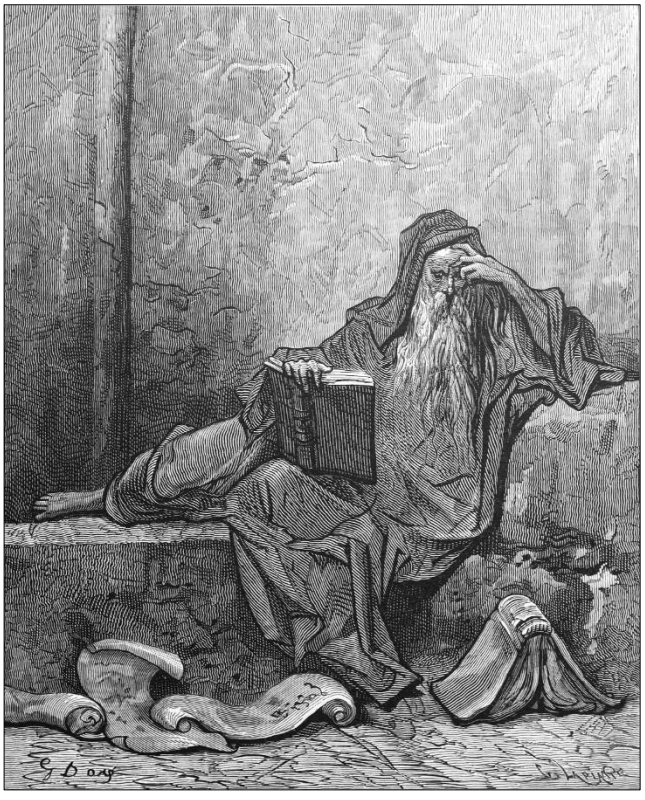
Yet were I to speak to you of all those, 58
Of your long line, right worthy to be praised,
Too long my speech, for none I would suppose
Deserve from such a tale to be erased.
And yet it would be fitting if I chose
One or two, from the thousand to be raised.
Why did you not ask me in the cavern?
There I might have shown their form, and fortune.

From your bright lineage one will issue, 59
A friend to learning, and illustrious art,
Of whom I know not if it is more true
To speak of her as fair, or wise at heart,
Isabella, just and generous too,
Who shall adorn Mantua, for her part,
(That Ocnus named for, his mother, Manto)
Which shines, day and night, by the Mincio.

With her glorious consort she shall reign, 60
Rivals in both splendour, and true honour,
That virtue shall love, prize and maintain,
Opening the gates of courtesy yet wider.
If he by Taro, and in Parma, shall gain,
The name of Italy's liberator
From French incursion, his Penelope
No less than her Odysseus shall be.

Great things and many I, here, praise in few, 61
And more than I speak of I leave behind,
Which, when from out the common herd I drew,
Clear-sighted Merlin, neath the stone, divined.
Old Typhis, Argo's helmsman, hid from view
Far astern, if my sails filled, you'd find.
I'll conclude: in brief, the heavens will bless
With every goodly virtue, that princess.

Then I must speak of Beatrice, her sister, 62
With whom her name shall so well accord,
That, while she lives, shall not only garner
All that delights us here, but her great lord,
Richest of men with her beside him, ever
The sum of human happiness shall afford;
He who, when far too soon she meets her end,
Will midst the depths of misery descend.



Stanza 61

While she's alive, Visconti's snakes, the Moor 63
(Il Moro, Sforza's name) all men shall fear,
From Hyperborean snows to Red Sea shore,
From India to where twin pillars rear
Above both seas, and when she is no more
They'll fall to servitude, to darkness drear,
With her Milan; all Italy shall untune,
And Chance be there called the sum of Fortune.

Others her illustrious name shall bear, 64
Flourishing many years before her day:
One shall, thus, the crown of Hungary wear,
While homage to another folk shall pay,
When once disburdened of all earthly care;
To her amidst the saints, true hearts shall pray
And with incense, and with images divine,
They will gather, in Ferrara, to her shrine.

The rest, in silence, I shall here pass by, 65
Long would it take to tell of so many,
Though of bright clarions, sounding on high,
Every one of them is more than worthy.
Thus, the Lucretias, the Biancas, I
Retain within my heart's depths, with every
One of those Constances; for, in Italy,
The source of its great Houses they shall be.

For, more than any other, shall your line 66
Be more than fortunate in its women,
And nor do I, in this brief speech of mine,
Lesser virtue to their female children
Than to the noble wives themselves, assign.
And so that you may note some part, again
Of what Merlin told me of your offspring,
Their praises I no less delight in singing.

Of Ricciarda I first shall speak, worthy 67
Mirror of chastity and fortitude,
Who, young, remains a widow and, wholly,
Disdainful of fortune. A state oft viewed
By the virtuous, she'll endure; the lady,
And her children, exiled and devalued,
Sent to Naples by their adversary;
Yet later they'll reclaim the seignory.

Nor shall I fail to tell of that fair queen 68
Spring from the ancient root of Aragon,
Her chastity and prudence rarely seen
In either Greek or Roman tales, and none
Such a friend of Fortune; here, foreseen
To be the mother, by Divine election,
Of a trio, who your House shall further,
Alfonso, Ippolito, Isabella;

I speak that is, of wise Leonora, 69
A happy graft to your most fruitful tree.
What shall I say of Lucrezia Borgia,
Her second daughter-in-law? For she
Shall prove this Leonora's successor,
And wax in beauty, virtue, chastity,
And good fortune, no less than a shoot
That into fertile soil has sunk its root.

As brass beside gold, or tin near silver, 70
As the wild poppy next the crimson rose,
As the pale willow by the fir-tree ever,
As stained glass by bright crystal shows,
All will seem dull, next her whom I honour,
All those, as yet unborn, whom I chose
Ere now; one, in wisdom and rare beauty,
In every virtue, of respect most worthy.

And then too, above every other praise 71
That shall be granted her, alive or dead,
Is that she'll educate in princely ways,
Her fair Ercole, all her sons so bred,
So, adding honour to their honours' blaze,
When they their light, on arms or counsel, shed.
Thus, we find, the wine's aroma, whether
For good or bad, in new casks will linger.

Nor should Renée of France be here forgot, 72
The daughter-in-law of this Lucrezia.
Of King Louis the Twelfth she'll be begot,
To Brittany's glory; in this daughter,
All virtues that adorned a woman's lot,
Since fire first burned, and was quenched by water,
Or first the heavens circled overhead,
Will be found, in that wife, by virtue fed.

More could I tell of Alda di Sansogna; 73
Or of the fair Countess of Celano,
Or Bianca Maria, of Catalonia,
Or of the Sicilian princess speak so,
Or the lovely Lippa di Bologna,
Or others, on whom praise men shall bestow;
Yet if to them my sail I chose to lend,
We'd embark on an ocean without end.'

Canto XIII: 74–79: Bradamante is enticed into the enchanted mansion

Once Melissa had ended her account 74
Of the Este line, to her satisfaction,
And retold how Bradamante might surmount
The wizard's spell, and evade the mansion,
She halted nearby, yet did not dismount,
Since, concerned now for her own protection,
She would not draw nigh the enchanted place,
Lest she should meet Atlante face to face;

But, once more, counselled the warrior-maid 75
As she had done a thousand times before;
Then left, alone. Not two miles through the glade
Had Bradamante ridden, ere she saw
A knight that Ruggiero's form displayed.
Two giants of cruel aspect, furthermore,
Pressed him so that, labouring for breath,
The man seemed but an inch or so from death.



Stanza 75

On viewing him, in such deadly peril, 76
He who seemed to be her Ruggiero,
Her certainty now wavered, thus her will
To carry through the bold design, also.
She thought Melissa, perchance, worked evil,
For some wrong inflicted, that none did know,
And that she sought revenge upon the knight,
And at her hands, whose love for him burned bright.

'Is this', she cried 'not my Ruggerio? 77
That with the heart, and now the eyes, I see.
If I do not my own beloved know
Whom shall I then behold with certainty?
Why should I yet believe another, so,
When my own sight proclaims that it is he?
Even were I blind, by the heart alone,
Or near or far, my knight would yet be known.'



Stanza 78

While her thoughts ran thus, a voice she heard, 78
Like to Ruggiero's, one seeking aid,
And witnessed how the knight his charger spurred,
Loosening the reins, fleeing through the glade,
While his fierce enemies, when this occurred,
Charged after him, and valiant progress made,
The maid pursuing, as they chased the knight,
Till the enchanted mansion came in sight.

No sooner had she passed the golden door, 79
Then she succumbed to the sorcerer's spell,
Each path, right or wrong, forced to explore,
Above, below within, and round the dell;
Nor could she rest by night or day, that law
Bound all who neath the vile enchantment fell.
She saw, and spoke with, her Ruggiero,
Yet neither of them did the other know.

Canto XIII: 80-83: We return to King Agramante and the Moorish camp

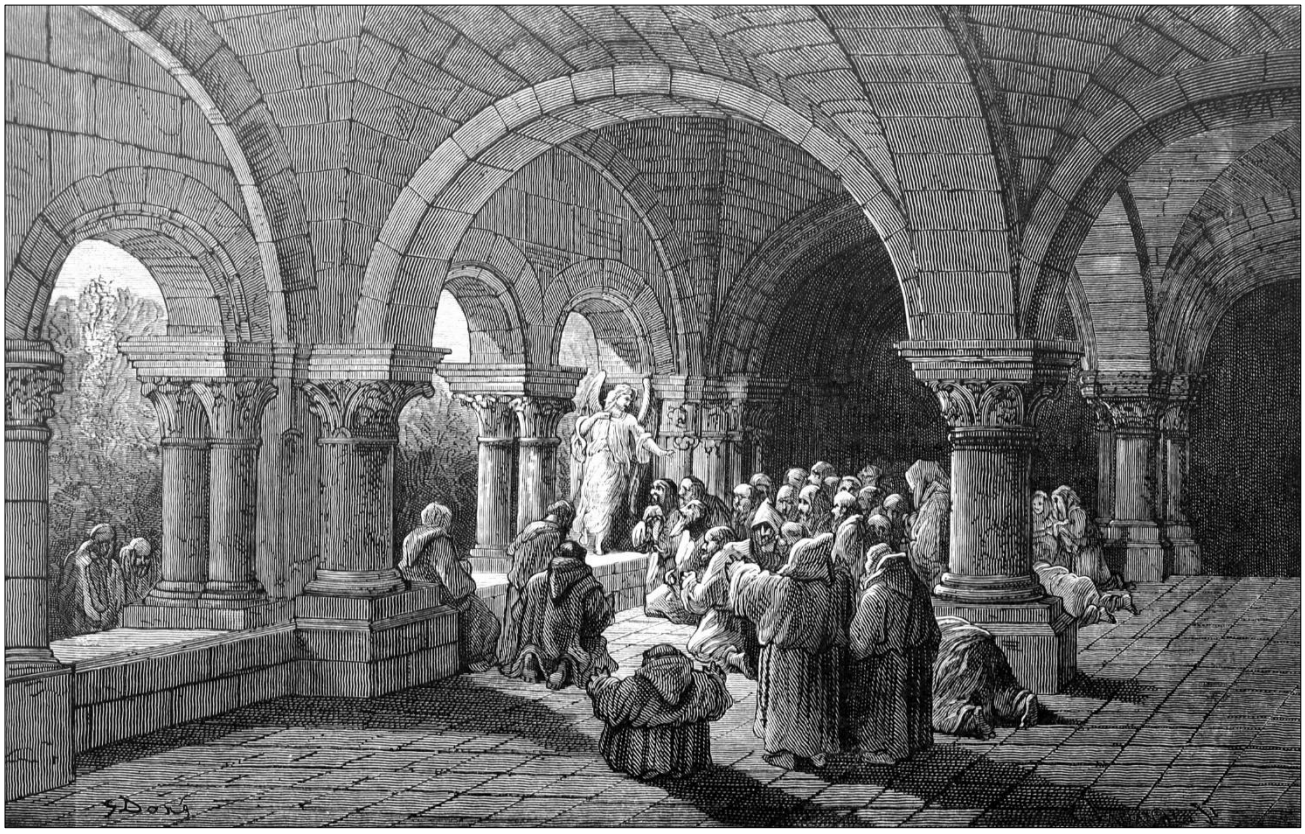
But I must leave fair Bradamante there, 80
(Constrained by the wizard's vile enchantment)
Whom I shall save, in due time, from despair,
And Ruggiero too, to your contentment.
Just as a wide variety of fare
Rouses the appetite, I now augment
My feast, for the more varied is my tale
The more the dulled palate it may regale,

And many a thread I must spin, to weave 81
This intricate web on which I labour.
So be not displeased, if I now relieve
Your thoughts by telling of the muster
Of Moorish troops the king did now conceive,
He who menaced the Fleur-de-lys ever;
This Agramante wished his force to number,
That the plain, before Paris, did encumber.

And besides requiring that a count be made 82
Of the cavalry, and infantry, he further
Proposed to replace in each brigade
The officers he'd lost, knights from Libya,
And Ethiopia, for the troops now strayed,
Since many a company lacked its leader;
And so, he'd ordered now a fresh review,
To number and to shape the ranks anew.

To allow for all those who had been slain 83
In the conflict, his losses great and little,
He sent his lords to Africa and Spain,
Where they might gather men of mettle,
To fill his camp; then mustered them, again,
With their captains, in order of battle.
But, if you will, I'll leave to the morrow
All this great host, and to the next canto.





Canto XIV: Mandricardo, Doralice, and Rodomonte

Canto XIV: 1-9: Of Charlemagne's army, and of the Battle of Ravenna (1512)

Those of France, those of Africa and Spain, 1
In many a battle twixt foe and foe,
Had left a host of dead among the slain,
To feed the eagle, wolf and greedy crow;
But though the many Franks had bled in vain,
Losing the land about them, at a blow,
Great to the Saracens had proved the cost,
Many a great Moorish prince and lord was lost.

Indeed, so bloody was their victory, 2
It left them little they might cheer about;
And if we may compare the wars, we see,
With those of former times, there is no doubt,
That Duke Alfonso's deeds with his army,
At Ravenna, the Spaniards put to rout,
And which redound to his praise and glory,
Were part of a not dissimilar story.

When the Gascons and the Picards did yield, 3
And those of Normandy and Aquitaine,
He, in their midst, with sword and shield,
Assailed the near-victorious troops of Spain.
While a host of brave men upon that field
Took his lead, and followed in his train,
Whom on that day he granted due reward
Of the gilded spur, and the gilded sword.

With the spirited heart that he bore, 4
Near, or never far from, present danger,
He broke the golden oak-tree, and tore
Apart its red and yellow fruit, forever
Deserving of the laurels which he wore,
Saving the Fleur-de-lys from dishonour.
And one more garland he earned also,
By preserving, for Rome, brave Fabrizio.

That Colonna, pillar of the Holy See, 5
Whom he captured there, and kept whole,
Granted him more honour, in victory,
Than if his hand had achieved the goal
Of routing all who rich Ravenna's country
Sought, yet fled again, nigh every soul;
Castile's standards, Aragon's, Navarre's,
Left, to be gathered by this son of Mars.

That hard-won victory brought more relief 6
Than joy; for the loss of our French captain,
Gaston de Foix, brought us but pain and grief,
And then, the deaths of many more again;
That storm took brave commanders-in-chief,
Glorious princes, fighting to maintain
Their own lands, or wide realms of their allies,
That o'er the frozen Alps had sought the prize.

Our safety and our lives, were, thus, ensured. 7
By that great victory, we were protected
From harsh winter, the storms that are abroad,
That angry Jove, from out the sky, projected.
Yet joy we cannot feel, nor feasts afford,
Seeing the widows by such pain affected,
Who, dressed in black, still lamenting, go,
Amidst a grieving France, and cry their woe.

There's need now for King Louis to provide 8
Fresh captains for the field, fresh companies,
That to restraining greed should be applied,
To guard the honour of the Fleur-de-lys,
From men that monks and nuns, far and wide,
Have harmed, black, white and grey; that seize
On wives and daughters, brides, on Christ divine
Stealing the silver from his sacred shrine.

Wretched Ravenna, twere better if you 9
Had not, indeed, resisted the victor,
Warned by Brescia's fate, as you, anew,
Give warning to Rimini and Faenza.
Come, Louis, let old Trivulzio go
Among your squadrons, and teach them, ever,
Greater restraint, and show what wrong has bred,
Italy's cities heaped now with the dead.

Canto XIV: 10-29: King Agramonte reviews his troops

As the French king needed knights a plenty, 10
Now, to replace his captains that were slain,
So Marsilio, and Agramante,
There, had need to marshal their troops again,
And, filled with that intent, wished to see
Them, out of winter quarters, on the plain,
So, they might review their every need,
And their good governance be then decreed.

Marsilio first, then King Agramante, 11
By company, inspected all their men,
The Catalonians headed the army
Of Spain, Dorifebo was made captain.
Next, without their king, Folvirante,
Whom the hand of bold Rinaldo, ere then,
Had slain, came the soldiers of Navarre,
Isolier named to be their guiding star.

Balagante led the forces from Léon, 12
Grandonio commanded the Algarbi;
Falsirone, Marsilio's brother, won
Lesser Castile, and all that company;
Men followed Madarasso's 'gonfalon'
Out of Malaga, and fair Seville's city,
Where the great Guadalquivir's waters play
Twixt Cordova's rich fields and Cádiz Bay.

Stordilano, Baricondo and Tessira, 13
Together, displayed their brave companies;
The first led the troops from Granada;
While the second, he commanded, with ease,
The warriors who came from Majorca.
Larbino had of Lisbon held the keys,
Now Tessira ruled his men; Serpentino
The Galicians, for Maricoldo.

Those of Toledo and Calatrava, 14
Who'd marched beneath bold Sinagon's flag there,
With those from beside the Guadiana,
That, in bathing, its crystal waters share,
Were governed now by brave Matalista;
While Bianzardin now had in his care,
Salamanca, Piagenza, Astorga,
Palencia, Avila and Zamora.

Those from Zaragoza, and from the court
Ferrau now led, for King Marsilio;
And to that well-armed captain did report
Bold Balinverno, and Malgarino
Malzarise and Morgante, who, in short,
Had lost their realms, and being exiled so,
Had turned to Marsilio; he as friends
Received them, now they furthered his own ends.

The king's bastard was in his company,
Follicon d'Almeria, with Doricante,
Analardo, Largalife, Bavarte,
And that most cunning lord, Archidante,
The brave Langhiran, and Lamirante,
And many another of whom I'll write
If e'er the time comes to display their might.

When the Spanish host had passed on by,
In fine style, before King Agramante,
The brave King of Oran now caught the eye,
Almost a giant in stature, and, sadly,
Those who for Martasino gave a sigh,
That was dealt his death by Bradamante,
Pained the warrior-maid had with such ease
Slain that fine king of the Garamantes.

The third company was Marmonda's,
Whom Argosto had slain in Gascony;
Both it and the second now lacked leaders,
As did the fourth, thus demanding three
Fresh warriors now to lead them onwards,
Agramante feigned to ponder, briefly;
Buraldo, Ormida, Arganio,
Upon those three their care he did bestow.

Arganio's troops, from Libicana,
Still wept for dark-skinned Dudrinasso,
Brunello ruled those from Tingitana,
With clouded visage, and a look of woe,
For in the woods, not far from the tower
Atlante raised o'er the mountain plateau,
He had lost the ring to Bradamante,
And, thus, was in disgrace with Agramante:

If Isoliero, Ferrau's brother,
Who found Brunello there, tied to the tree,
Had not explained the truth of the matter,
To the king, they'd have hung him instantly.
The monarch his mind, at length, did alter,
At the request, it would seem, of many,
(The noose was round Brunello's neck) but swore
To hang him, if the man offended more;

Which was the reason that Brunello rode,
With lowered brow, and sad demeanour.
Came Farurante, on whom were bestowed
The foot and horse once led by Maurina.
Behind them, a new-made monarch followed,
Leading the troops drawn from Constantina,
Libanio, the gold crown on his brow,
Once Pinador's, but gifted to him now.

Hesperia's men were ruled by Soridano,
The soldiers from Setta by Dorilon,
The Nasamonians by Puliano;
Agricaltes the Amonians led on,
And Malabuferso those from Fizano;
Finadurro led many a squadron
From the Canary Isles and Morocco,
Balastro took the place of King Tardocco.

Next, the troops of Mulga, and Arzilla,
Mulga still captaining his former band,
The second leaderless, thus, the tiller
The king now set in Corineus' hand,
While the soldiers from Almonsilla,
Once Tanfirion's, by Caico did stand;
Those from Gaetulia by Rimedonte;
Those from Cosca by Balinfronte.

The Bolgans' king was now one Clarindo,
Gifted brave Mirabaldo's vacant throne.
Then came that earthy figure Baliverso,
Amongst the host his bawdy was well-known.
I think no banner, mid that mighty show,
Above a firmer troop of men was flown
Than that of the valiant king Sobrino,
No Saracen more cunning gainst the foe.

Bellamarina's men whom Gualciotto 25
Used to lead, now served the King of Algiers,
Rodomonte of Sarza, who did show
Fresh strength in infantry and cavaliers;
For this king who'd been sent some time ago,
(When in the Centaur and the Goat appears,
The clouded sun) to his African shore,
Seeking men, had returned three days before;

In all the Moorish camp none was stronger, 26
No Saracen proved bolder, than that king.
And in Paris, rightly, their fear was greater
Of him, midst Agramante's following
And Marsilius' than any other
Whom they'd brought to France, or could ever bring.
And, more than any in that company,
To our faith this king proved an enemy.

Came the Alvarrachians' king Prusione; 27
And the Zumarans, to Dardinello
Subject; I know not if, on their journey,
From some ruined tower, an owl or crow,
Or other bird of ill-omen, loudly
Cried to one or the other, there below,
That, appointed by fate, the hour was nigh
When both, upon the battlefield, would die.

No more remained but the companies 28
Raised from Tremisenne and Norizia;
Yet no sign or news had appeared of these;
Both had been expected at the muster.
King Agramante, though, was not at ease,
Knew not what to think, and could but wonder
At the thing, when a squire his presence sought,
Sent by Tremisenne's king; ill news he brought.

He claimed that Manilardo, Alzirdo, 29
With all their host, lay dead upon the plain.
'Sire,' said the man, 'the bold and mighty foe,
Who slew our friends, would all the rest have slain,
If they to beat retreat had been as slow
As I, that escaped with no little pain.
This man kills cavalry, and infantry,
As a wolf does goats and sheep, and as swiftly.'

Canto XIV: 30-33: Orlando appears in the field

Now there had come, some few days before, 30
To the Moorish camp, a warrior lord;
In the West, in the Levant, none was more
Blessed with strength, or did skill afford
To equal his; much honour there he saw,
And much royal grace to him was assured,
Mandricardo his name, of King Agricane
The son, succeeding him, in Tartary.

He was renowned for many a glorious deed, 31
For all the world had heard of his success,
Exalted by his winning, twas agreed,
In that keep, of the Syrian enchantress,
The shining armour that once clad, indeed,
Two thousand years before, more or less,
The form of Trojan Hector; none could tell,
Without dread, the events that there befell.

Now present, when this melancholy word 32
Was uttered, he raised his head on high,
Disposed to go, ere others were preferred,
And find this warrior, if he were nigh,
But said naught of it, lest some other heard,
Fearing it might be thought bravado by
His peers, or, even worse, that his brave sword
Might be rejected, and his pleas ignored.

He asked the squire how the knight was dressed, 33
And of the ensign or emblem that he bore:
He replied that he showed no flag or crest,
His shield was black, and black the clothes he wore.
So it was, for all he said I, now, attest,
Orlando all such ornament forbore,
And since his heart within was in mourning,
Just as dark was all his outer clothing.

Canto XIV: 34-37: Mandricardo searches for the knight in black

Marsilio had gifted Mandricardo 34
With a fine bay horse, chestnut in colour,
Its tail and mane black, and the legs below,
Frisian its dam, Spanish its father.
Mandricardo, once armed from tip to toe,
Mounted this brave steed, and galloped after
The foe, and swore that thus he'd turn his back
On the camp, till he'd found this knight in black.

Many a frightened fugitive he met, 35
Escaping from Orlando's weighty hand,
Some grieving for a son caught in his net,
Or a brother, whom they had seen unmanned.
Ever a colourless face, still pale and wet,
Did the cowardly, and the sad, command,
As, fearful yet, they hastened on, in flight,
Mude pallid, and insensate, from this knight.

He had not ridden far before he saw 36
A cruel and most inhuman spectacle,
Witness to all he had heard before,
Regarding the site of their debacle,
And searched, midst those fatalities of war,
Lest one was saved, by some miracle,
While moved by a strange envy of the man
That had slaughtered so many, as they ran.

Like a mastiff or wolf, that comes upon 37
A dead bullock the herdsman's left behind,
And sees but horns and bones, the rest now gone
To feed the crows, and their ravenous kind,
And glares at useless remnants, here and yon,
So, the barbarous king reviewed his find,
He cursed, lamenting, like some savage beast,
At having come too late to that great feast.

Canto XIV: 38-48: He attacks the guards of the King of Granada's daughter

That day, and half the next, he searched around, 38
Seeking the knight in black, loudly calling.
Behold, a space, dusk shadowing the ground,
And there a river, past the meadows winding,
In tight, sinuous curves, to form their bound,
A narrow space between each, in its flowing;
A like set of close bends the Tiber makes,
Near Otricoli, as its course it takes.

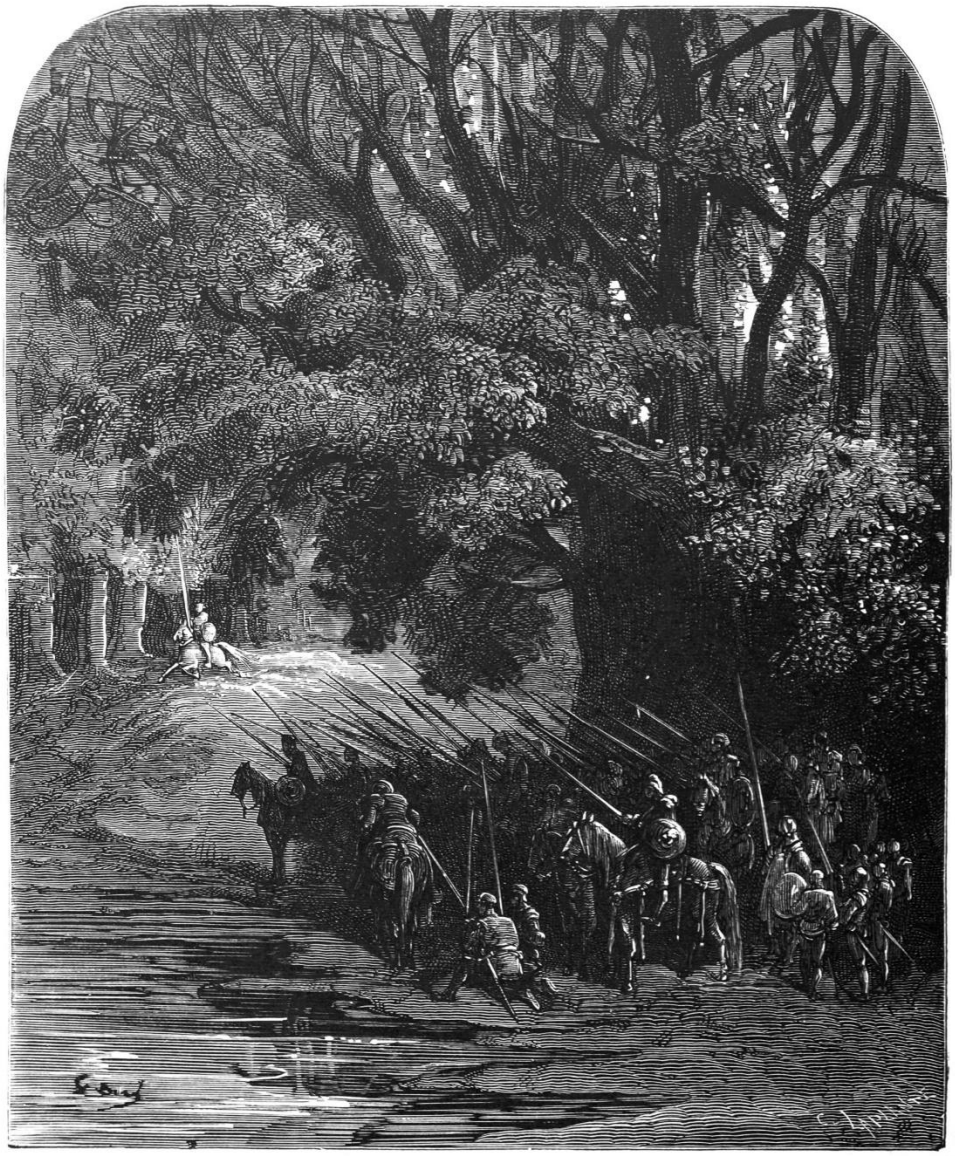
Where this river might be crossed, he saw 39
A crowd of well-armed warriors and, seeking
To know their purpose on the further shore,
He questioned them, their captain answering,
Moved by his manner, and the garb he bore,
All his gear with gems and red gold gleaming,
Quite rich enough for it to illustrate
Some great man, whose word there carried weight.

'We accompany the daughter,' he replied, 40
'Of the King of Granada; to be now
Rodomonte the King of Sarza's bride,
Though tis little known, I would allow;
And we'll convey her, this evening-tide,
While only the cicadas on the bough
Can be heard, into her father's keeping,
Within the Spanish camp; she's still sleeping.'

This lord, who held all others in disdain, 41
Sought to determine now how well they might
A defence of the lady, thus, maintain,
Whom they were to accompany that night.
'The maid, from what I hear, is far from plain,
And it would please me greatly to have sight
Of her,' he said, 'so lead on, while tis day;
And, swiftly now, ere I pursue my way.'



Stanza 37



Stanza 39

'You must be mad, indeed!' the other cried.
At the Granadan, then, with levelled lance,
The Tartar, not a man to be denied,
Flew, and through him did the point advance,
Steel armour failed to turn the blade aside;
And to the ground he fell, dead perchance.
Agricane's son his weapon swift regained,
Unarmed, in truth, if there it had remained,

Since the king bore neither sword nor mace;
For when Trojan Hector's armour he'd won,
Finding never a true blade in that place,
He was obliged to swear, ere all was done,
That Orlando's sword his armour would grace,
And that, until that time, he would bear none;
Durindana, the blade Almonte bore,
Orlando's now, was Hector's long before.

42

43



Stanza 42

Great was the monarch's daring, who now chose, 44
Though disadvantaged, to extend the fight;
With levelled lance, advancing on his foes,
Shouting, in fury: 'Who shall thwart this knight?'
Some pointed their spears, others drew close
Upon him with their swords; with all his might,
He laid about him, and a host he slew,
Before his shattered lance to pieces flew.

Nonetheless, he gripped the broken shaft, 45
In both hands, its wood still strong and sound,
And then swept that brave remnant fore and aft,
Laying the foemen dead upon the ground;
Nor ere was havoc wreaked with greater craft.
Like to the jawbone Samson whirled around,
In slaying all the Philistines, just so,
He crushed helm, shield, knight, charger, at a blow.



Stanza 45

To hasten to that fight, the wretches vied, 46
Nor did they cease because their friends were slain,
And yet the vile manner in which they died,
(More bitter than death itself, I'd maintain)
Stole not only life, but each warrior's pride;
Struck by that lance-shaft, bitter was the pain
They felt, beneath its pounding, to forsake
This life, crushed, broken, like some frog or snake.

But then deciding, once they viewed the cost, 47
That it was ill to die in any guise,
And with two thirds of them already lost,
The rest now thought it better to be wise,
And fled, although the pagan, thwarted, crossed,
Feeling that they'd robbed him of his prize,
Determined that, from that desperate strife,
Not a man there should escape with his life.

As reeds in a dry fen are soon consumed, 48
Or stalks in a stubble field, by the fire,
(Set by some careful farmer) swiftly doomed,
As the wind-blown flames rise ever higher,
Halt for a moment, then, their course resumed,
Speed through the furrows, ere they can expire,
To the sound of crackling and snapping, so
None could defend against this Mandricardo.

Canto XIV: 49-56: He carries off the lady, Doralice

Finding his path free of all obstruction, 49
Now unsecured, without a guard in sight,
Following clear tracks in that direction,
Midst cries of loud lament, the Tartar knight
Made his way, to execute his intention,
Of discovering if the lady was, on sight,
As lovely as was claimed; from the dead
He rode, since to the river these prints led.

In the middle of the meadow, he saw 50
Doralice, such was the lady's name,
Who, neath an ash tree, on the grassy floor,
Her miserable fate did now proclaim.
In a bright flowing stream, her tears did pour,
Down her breast, to more than wet that same,
And, from the pallor of her face, she appeared,
To mourn the dead, while for herself she feared.

Her fear increased as he now approached her, 51
Stained with blood, dark and impious of face,
And loud cries rose to the skies above her,
From her, and all her people in that place,
For as well as the knights who had led her
To the river, older men, there, did grace
Her presence, and many a dame, and maid,
The fairest that Granada's realm displayed.

When the Tartar king viewed that fair visage, 52
Unequalled for its beauty, throughout Spain,
And where amid the tears (what wars he'd wage
To see her smile) Love newly forged his chain,
He knew not if heaven or earth were her stage,
And from his victory naught else did gain
But this: that he was captive now to her,
Imprisoned, yet knew not in what manner.

However, he balked at thus conceding 53
To a maid all the fruits of his labour,
Though it was plain from her bitter weeping
That she grieved, as much as woman ever,
And hoping, now, to turn her lamenting
To joy, he determined to console her,
So, setting her upon a white palfrey,
He now prepared to resume his journey.

The ladies and the men, and every maid, 54
Who'd accompanied her from Granada,
He benignly dismissed: 'Be not afraid,'
He cried, 'I shall be her guide, none better,
And lord, and master, yet she'll be paid
Due respect, to all her needs I'll cater;
So, farewell!' Thus, unable to undo
The harm, her folk, with tears and sighs, withdrew;



Stanza 57

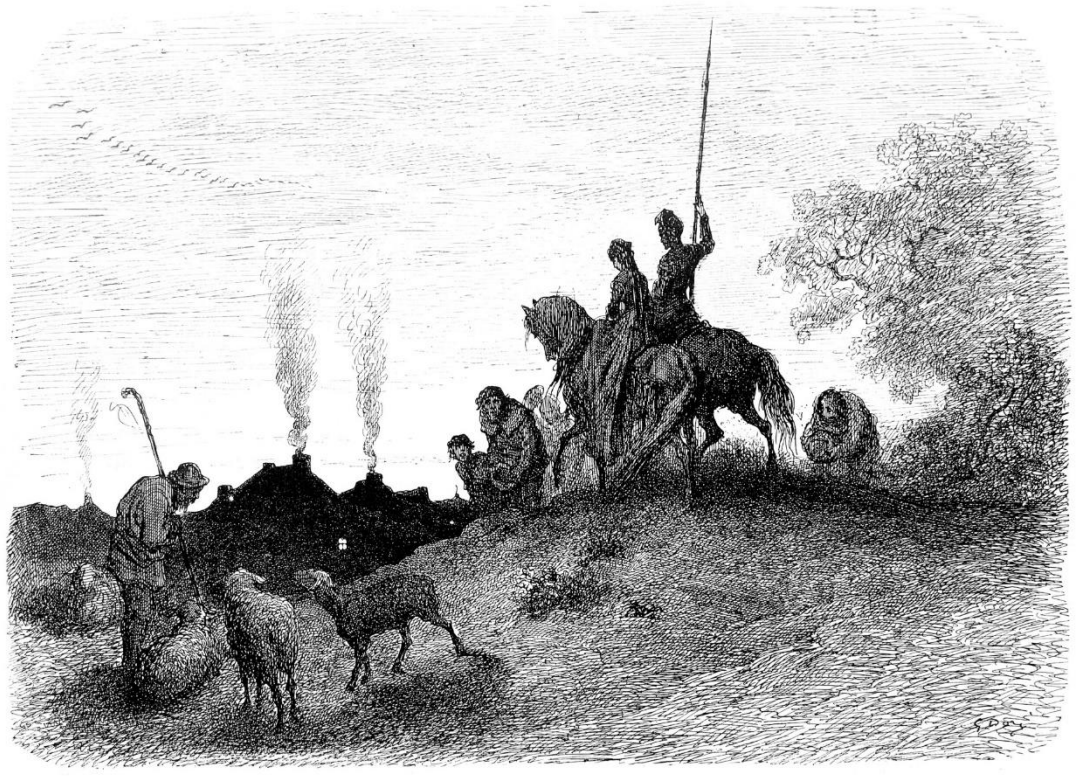
Crying: 'How distraught will be her father, 55
When he hears of her miserable state!
How great then the bridegroom's grief and anger,
And the revenge he'll exact, for her fate!
O why, in this time of need and danger,
Is there no knight nearby; ere tis too late
To save the ancient blood of Stordilano;
Ere she has vanished where none can follow?'

The Tartar king, content with his fair prize, 56
Which he'd won by chance, and through his valour,
Seemed to lack the urgency (tis no surprise)
He'd possessed, to follow and chase after
The knight in black; and, in wandering guise,
Now fast, now slow, looked about for shelter,
For some convenient and fitting place,
Wherein his fond desire he might embrace.

Canto XIV: 57-64: She is soon consoled; they come upon two knights and a maiden

Doralice, he comforted the while, 57
Her fair cheeks wet, her bright eyes filled with tears,
Feigning many things, in masterly style;
How, hearing of her, he'd loved her for years,
And how his land, of many a square mile,
Was praised for its vast size by all his peers,
Which he'd quitted not to view France and Spain
But that the sight of her face he might gain.

'If a man ought to be loved, for loving, 58
Then your love I deserve; if by birth,
Then who is nobler born, remembering
Agricane's my father? If by worth,
As measured in riches, who in counting
Has more than I, that dwells upon this earth?
If by valour, I think this day I've proved
That for valour I merit being loved.'



Stanza 62

With these words and others, Love dictated
And set there on Mandricardo's tongue,
He sought to ease a heart by sorrow weighted,
That unhappy maid's, by her fright unstrung.
Her fear ceased, and then her grief abated
With the tears that her fair cheeks had stung.
And then, with greater patience, she began
To give closer attention to the man;

59

And, thus, with much more courteous replies
She showed herself both kindly and pleasant,
And sometimes there was pity in her eyes,
Though her averting of her gaze was frequent.
The pagan then, more certain of his prize,
Having played Love's game before the present,
No longer hoped but thought the lady would
Resist him not; such things he understood.

60

In her pleasing and happy company,
Which brought him satisfaction and delight,
Near to the hour when all would hope to see
A shelter from the cold, to pass the night,
Now the setting sun, half-hidden, silently
Dipped lower, more swiftly rode the knight,
Until they heard a fluting reed-pipe sound,
And came upon a hut, smoke wreathed around.

61

It was a country dwelling, much less fair
Than spacious, built for convenience;
For a courteous herdsman he lived there,
Who welcomed them, a good man, full of sense,
Whose table pleased, despite the rustic fare.
Not only castle halls show the presence,
Or cities, of true people who prove kind,
Oft the like in cottages and huts we find.

62

As to what took place, later, in the darkness,
Twixt the maiden and Agricane's son,
I was not there, and so am not a witness;
Others I'll leave to judge whate'er was done;
Yet, as they seemed happier, nonetheless,
When they arose to share the morning sun,
Both appeared in accord, while the maiden,
For his kindness, sweetly thanked the herdsman.

63

They roamed, then, from one place to another,
But found themselves, at last, upon the shore
Of a river that, in silence, chanced to wander
To the sea, though its flow was most unsure,
Yet clear, such that the light on the water
Fell unbroken to the stream's sunlit floor.
On the bank, there lay two knights and a maid,
In the coolness and freshness of the shade.

64



Stanza 65

Canto XIV: 65-67: Meanwhile Agramante prepares an assault on Paris

Noble Imagination, that prevents me **65**
From merely following a single course,
Now leads me back to the Moorish army,
The French deafened by their cries, the source
That pavilion where King Agramante
Plots to attack the Empire, and in force,
While Rodomonte's boast doth yet resound:
To burn Paris, level Rome to the ground.

News had reached the ear of Troyano's son **66**
That the English had already passed the sea;
Garbo's aged king he now did summon,
With Marsilio, and his goodly company
Of captains, who all counselled him as one,
To launch a grand assault on the city.
Of victory they swore he'd be deprived,
If all were not done ere that aid arrived.

Already, scaling ladders were to hand, **67**
Planks and beams, and hurdles, and whatever
Was needed to execute his command;
Pontoon boats were there, ready to deliver
Bridges o'er the moat and river, all were manned;
And what might serve Agramante better,
The first and second hosts for the assault,
Which he would lead as ever, by default.

Canto XIV: 68-74: Charlemagne's prayer on the eve of battle

On the eve of that battle, Charlemagne, **68**
Was in Paris to celebrate the Mass,
All the priests, black, white, and grey, in his train,
Who granted absolution, en masse,
To those who'd confessed (and once again
Had been rescued from the infernal pass
To Stygian gloom) lest they should fall,
On the next day, when they must man the wall.

In the church, before his barons and his knights **69**
Midst preachers and princes, his piety
Was displayed, as he assisted in the rites,
Showing an example to the laity,
As with palms joined, face towards the heights
Of heaven, he cried out: 'O Lord, hear me!
Though my sins are great, in our hour of need,
Let no man suffer for my least misdeed!

Or, if it is thy will that they suffer, **70**
And my sins allow for supplication,
Let the punishment at least be other
Than to die at the foe's instigation,
For if tis granted them to deliver
To death the friends of your congregation,
These pagans will deem you powerless
To save your people in their last distress.

A hundred then would rebel against you 71
For every one that may elect to now,
Such that Babel's chaos would then ensue,
And good Christians to bold pagans bow.
Defend your people, these warriors who
Have cleansed your sepulchre; relief allow
To those who, by your enemies offended,
Have Holy Church, and her priests, defended.

I know our merit is not such that we 72
Can repay an ounce of the debt we owe;
Nor should we harbour hopes of your mercy,
As regards our sinful lives, here below;
Yet our ills may be healed utterly,
If you your grace upon us will bestow.
Nor indeed can we despair of your aid,
While your pity for us is yet displayed.'

Thus, the pious emperor prayed aloud, 73
With humble heart, and with deep contrition,
And added other prayers, as he had vowed,
Appropriate to his need, and position;
Nor did his request go un-avowed
For his guiding spirit heard his petition,
Amidst the angels, and spread wide its wings,
And to the Saviour bore his offerings.

A great host of other prayers were borne, 74
By like messengers, to the skies above,
Such that the blessed throng that there adorn
The choirs of heaven, faces filled with love,
Gazed on the place where Love is ever born,
And, with but one desire, the plea did move,
That He hear the request, so rightly made,
By His Christian people, seeking aid.

Canto XIV: 75-82: The Archangel Michael seeks out Silence and Discord

The ineffable Good, none seek in vain 75
That pray with a faithful heart and true,
Raised a merciful eye, and then was fain
To summon the Archangel to his view,
And to Michael said: 'Go, seek that train
Of men that sailed for Picardy; do you
Then bring them to the walls of Paris, so
That not a sound is heard by their dread foe.

Find Silence first, and then ask him, from me, 76
To lend his aid to your fair enterprise,
Since he is well equipped, assuredly,
To know what you require, being wise.
Then swiftly go where Discord you may see,
And command that she takes, from her supplies,
Steel and tinder, and then, with fierce intent,
Sets fires, amid the Moors' whole encampment;

And spreads strife, amongst those who are said 77
To be their greatest leaders; let them quarrel,
Such that some lie wounded there, others dead,
Others captured, trapped like rats in a barrel,
While some, in disdain, from the camp are fled,
No longer loyal to their king, or useful.'
The Archangel Michael gave no reply,
But, in silence, descended through the sky.

Where'er the Archangel steered his flight, 78
The dark clouds fled, the heavens were serene;
As bright as lightning flaring in the night,
His golden aureole displayed its sheen.
Meanwhile, he pondered where he should alight,
Since Silence can be neither heard nor seen,
Seeking the enemy of the spoken word,
To whom that first command must be referred.

He gave a deal of thought to the question, 79
As to where Silence was most wont to dwell,
And recalled that a monk, as if in prison,
Says nothing in the quietness of his cell,
In those orders where speech is not the fashion;
And Silence, where the monks their psalters tell,
Where they sleep and eat, should be present there,
And in every room be written, that they share.

Believing he'd find Silence there, he sped 80
On his golden wings swiftly through the sky,
Thinking fair Peace to such realms was wed,
And Charity, and Quiet must dwell nearby.
But found he was in error, since, instead,
As soon as he had entered where monks lie,
He found Silence absent, and was told
That twas only in old books such tales did hold.



Stanza 80 "*He sped, on his golden wings swiftly through the sky*"

Nor Love nor Peace appeared there, at all, 81
Nor Pity, Quiet, nor Humility,
That had dwelt there, as ancient tomes recall,
Now driven forth by Wrath and Gluttony,
By Avarice, Envy, Pride, from out the hall,
And Sloth and Cruelty; amazed was he
At the news, when, gazing at that crew,
Amid the rest, foul Discord he did view;

Whom the Eternal Father had commanded 82
Him to find, after Silence, not before.
Twas in Avernus, once he had landed
He'd thought to see her, on that evil shore,
Among the damned, yet here she demanded
Her part, midst Mass and prayers what is more,
(Who'd credit it?) Twas all the unkinder,
In that he'd thought twas in Hell he'd find her.

Canto XIV: 83-86: Not finding Silence, he meets with Discord first

He knew her by her multi-coloured dress, 83
Wrought from a host of unequal fragments
That covered her or not, as the wind's excess
Revealed or hid all its unsewn segments;
Silver, or gold, or black, or brown each tress
Upon her head, dyed with various pigments;
Some tied with a ribbon, some in a braid,
Or to her shoulders, or her breast, they strayed.



Stanza 84

Of summons, and affidavits she'd a store, 84
And of writs, and letters of attorney,
Of such her hands were full, her breast held more,
Sound counsel, and advice, and commentary,
From which the minds and hearts of the poor
Are never free, in any town, or city.
Before, behind, and all about, attended
Such folk as prosecuted, or defended.

Michael summoned her, and gave his command 85
That among the Saracens she should go,
Seek the first opportunity on hand
To bring upon them, ruin, war and woe.
Next, as she was like to know, he did demand,
Where Silence lay, for he did often show
Himself here and there, in many a place,
Scattering fire among the foolish and base.

Discord replied: 'I cannot now recall 86
Seeing Silence himself hereabout,
But have often heard him mentioned by all
As noted for his shrewdness and, no doubt,
Fraud's a friend of his on whom you might call,
For she's accompanied him, in and out,
And, therefore, may have news; now, let me see,'
She pointed with her finger, 'that is she.'

Canto XIV: 87-90: He enquires of Fraud regarding Silence

With a pleasing face, and modestly dressed, 87
Eye downcast, and sober manner, I would say,
And of a quiet and friendly tongue possessed,
A Gabriel she seemed, her greeting: 'Ave!'
Yet foul and deformed throughout the rest
Of her form, hid by a mantle alway;
Long and wide it was, and beneath her cloak
A knife she had, concealed from other folk.

The Archangel asked her by which road 88
He should travel, if Silence he would find,
'Near the Virtues' she said, 'was his abode,
Nor did he dwell elsewhere, to my mind,
Long ago; beside Benedict he showed,
And in the abbeys, too, with Elias' kind,
When they were new; and through the schools did pass,
When Pythagoras lived and Archytas,

In ancient days; but those times being gone, 89
With the saints, and philosophers he knew,
He strayed from the paths he'd walked upon
And from good to evil wandered, sad but true;
He'd spend the night with lovers and, anon,
With thieves, and he sinned with others too,
For, as often, with Treason he would dwell,
And I've known him lodge with Murder as well.

With the forgers of false coins, he would seek 90
Shelter in some safe, half-darkened chamber,
And he'd change his rooms and friends every week,
Meeting with him was a rare adventure,
And yet I've hopes, indeed, that you may peek
Upon his present dwelling, at a venture.
If you'll visit, this night, the House of Sleep,
You'll find him there, perchance, in slumber deep.'

Canto XIV: 91-95: The House of Sleep

Though Fraud was a liar ever, say I, 91
Her account seemed so credible, that he,
Believing her, at once took to the sky,
Flying, swiftly, from the monastery,
Though tempering his speed such that, thereby,
He'd find himself where he would wish to be,
Where Sleep now dwelt (a place he knew full well)
When Silence would be there: thus, it befell.

In Arabia lies a pleasant valley, 92
In the shadow of twin hills; in that dale,
Far from any village, town, or city,
Mighty beech-trees, and ancient firs prevail.
The sun shines above, and circles brightly,
But its rays rake the boughs to no avail,
The foliage is far too dense and deep:
And here a cave is found: the House of Sleep.

Beneath the trees this cavern, long and wide, 93
Runs far into the cliff, and ivy, there,
Wanders o'er the opening, while, inside,
Sleep slumbers heavily, devoid of care.
Ease, gross and corpulent, doth there abide,
On Sleep's one side and, in that darkened lair,
Sloth too, upon the other, one may meet,
She who can barely stand, or move her feet,

While at the entrance stands Oblivion, 94
All memory lost, so none may enter,
Nor does she recognise a single one;
She will hear and bear no message ever,
Driving all away; Silence dressed in dun,
Felt shoes, and a long dark cloak, forever
Paces round, on guard, and, from afar,
With a wave of his hand, the way doth bar.

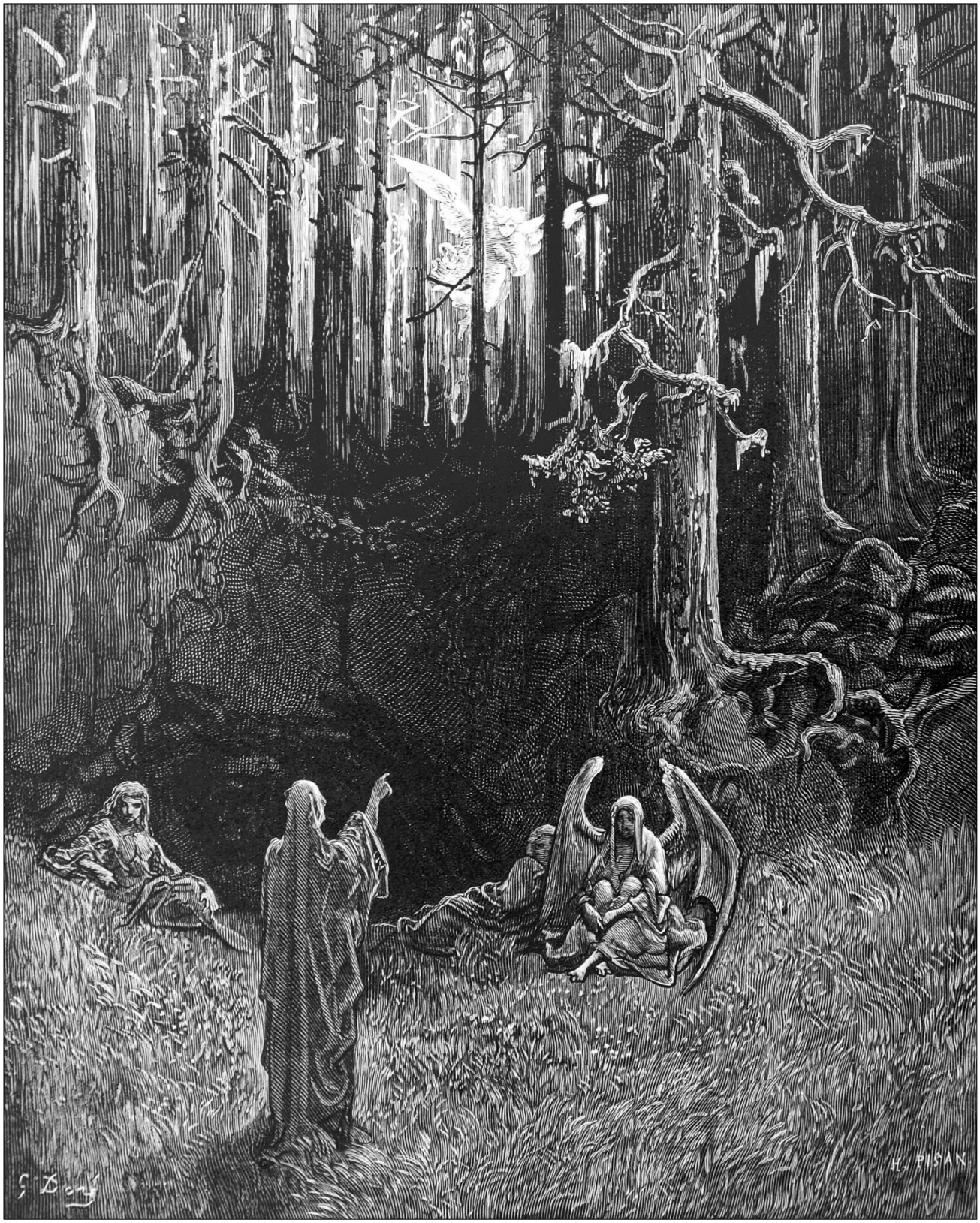
The angel approached and, speaking softly 95
But quite distinctly, said: 'God wishes you
To lead Rinaldo, and his company,
To Paris, there to aid the king anew,
And yet ensure all is done silently,
So that the Saracens hear naught, nor view
Their swift approach, and so that he is near,
Ere Rumour comes to whisper in their ear.'

Canto XIV: 96-98: Michael, with Silence's help, speeds Rinaldo to Paris

Silence granted him no other answer 96
Than, with a nod, to signal he'd comply,
Then he placed himself behind the other;
And off to Picardy they both did fly.
Michael stirred the host of men and ever
Shortened the road before them, whereby
They came to Paris safely, ere none
Was aware that the miracle was done.

For Silence sped about them, everywhere, 97
In the vanguard, on the flanks, to the rear,
And spread a covering fog through the air,
Though the sunlight all about them shone clear;
While, through that strange mist, the trumpets' blare,
Nor the sounding war-horns could any hear.
Then Silence went the pagan camp to find,
And, somehow, rendered all both deaf and blind.

While Rinaldo so hastened, with his men, 98
That is seemed to him they had an angel guide,
And in such silence that the Saracen
Encampment had heard naught, upon his side,
Agramante had closed on Paris, then
Distributed his forces, far and wide,
About the moat, beneath the city wall,
To launch a broad attack upon them all.



Stanza 94 "*Driving all away; Silence dressed in dun*"

Canto XIV: 99-103: Charlemagne prepares to defend the city

He who would count the troops that Charlemagne 99
Had gathered, against Agramante's host,
Might as easily have numbered, though in vain,
All the trees the Apennine forests boast;
Or the waves that race o'er the rolling main,
Down Mauretanian Atlas' miles of coast;
Or, at midnight, how many watching eyes
Watch the furtive acts of lovers, from the skies.

The tocsin bells now rang to hammer blows 100
And the sound of their pealing filled the air,
And pleas and vows, from every church, arose,
As hands and lips beseeched the Lord in prayer.
If He prized wealth as much, with all its shows,
As our weak judgement does, so foolishly,
The Consistory would have ruled, that day,
That our statues were to be of gold alway.

The godly old could be heard lamenting 101
That they had been reserved for such a fate,
Saying the dead in holy ground now lying,
Lost years ago, had known a happier fate.
But the young, their eager spirits burning,
Thought little of dull sorrow at the gate,
Scorning the counsel of their elders now,
As they ran to the walls, with ardent brow.

Here could be seen the baron, and the knight, 102
King, duke, marquis, count and commoner,
Citizen and stranger, all there to fight,
Ready to die for Christ, and their honour,
Now begging to attack the foe outright,
Crying that the emperor should lower
The drawbridges; their spirit he adored,
But their plea to issue forth, he ignored.

Rather he disposed of them here and there 103
As was required, to thwart the pagan foe;
Here, content that few men he needs spare,
Yet a company on that side must bestow;
Some were set to hurl flame through the air,
Others to work the catapults; to and fro,
Charlemagne went, looking, unceasingly,
To assist, and their weaknesses foresee.



Stanza 102

Canto XIV: 104-108: His state of readiness

Paris is sited on a spacious plain, 104
At the core of France, the heart rather.
Piercing its wall, then flowing forth again,
The Seine creates islands in the river,
That the city's noblest part e'er sustain;
The other two, either side the water,
(It's divided in three parts, I recall)
Are defended by the river, and a wall.

An attack could be made from any side 105
On those walls that ran for many a mile,
But wishing not to scatter far and wide
His vast host, Agramante, with due guile,
Sought but the one approach, and chose to guide
His troops from the west, as they made trial
Of the defences, for the towns, o'er that plain,
Were all his, and the land as far as Spain.

Within the walls that circled the city, 106
Charlemagne his vast munitions placed,
Fortifying the embankments strongly,
The counterscarps, within, he encased.
Where the river flowed in and out, there he
Laid great chains across, iron interlaced,
And, above all else, took care to ensure
That all the weakest points were made secure;

With as many eyes as Argus, Pepin's heir, 107
Charlemagne, foresaw the line of the attack,
All of Agramante's plans were laid bare
To his clear mind, nor vision did he lack.
Isoliero, Serpentino were there,
Ferrau too, neath Marsilio; at his back,
Balugante, Grandonio, held the plain,
Falsirone, and the forces brought from Spain.

Sobrin, on the Seine's left bank, appeared, 108
With Dardinel d'Almonte, and Pulian,
And, six feet tall and more, the much-feared
Form of the giant monarch of Oran.
But why, my pen, so painfully steered
To tell of these, unstirring, in the van?
For Sarza's Rodomonte, filled with anger,
Shouted, swore, and would delay no longer.

Canto XIV: 109-116: Rodomonte, King of Sarza, initiates the attack

As a host of flies, in the countryside, 109
Attack our tables, from a summer sky,
(On buzzing wings, in the heat, they ride
Then feed upon the plates that we let lie);
As starlings to the vine-poles, in a tide,
Descend, where now the ripe grapes hang, on high;
So seemed the Moorish army to men's eyes.
The heavens echoed to their shouts and cries.

On the walls, those of Charlemagne's army, 110
With their lances, swords, axes, stones, and fire,
Defended the fair city, fearlessly,
Disdaining the Saracens' pride and ire;
And when Death snatched a man, randomly,
Another would, swiftly, grasp the briar.
The Moors at the moat, at first, retreated,
By a storm of blades and blows defeated.

Nor was that show of steel alone the cause, 111
For huge rocks, whole boulders, descended,
Pieces of the battlements gave them pause,
Stones from the very walls, thus defended;
While streams of boiling water struck the Moors,
Fierce deluges, with which none could fight,
Entering helmets, robbing them of sight.

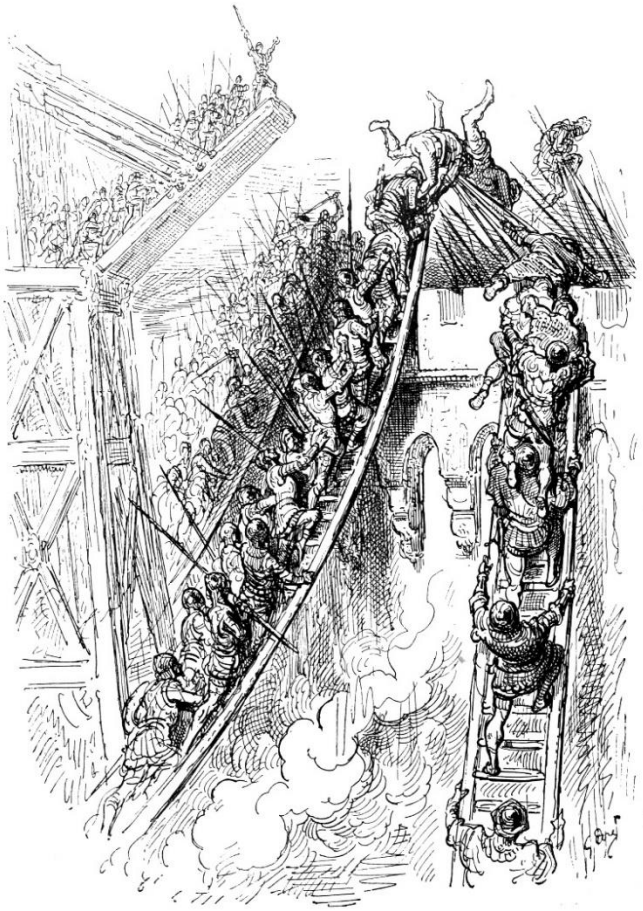
And things far more damaging than steel: 112
What of that fine mist of lime-dust ever?
What of the pain that burning vessels deal;
Their nitre, pitch, turpentine and sulphur?
What of the heated iron hoops; that reveal
Themselves as wreathes of flame, moreover?
These hurled upon them, by some willing hand,
Form cruel garlands for the foe, as they land.

Now, a second wave, the King of Sarza 113
Launched, beside Ormida and Buraldo,
(Of men from Garamante and Marmonda)
With them went Soridano and Clarindo.
And there rode Setta's king, as bold as ever,
And the kings of Cosca and Morocco,
That those around might their great valour know.

Rodomonte's banner flew o'er the plain, 114
On its field of vermeil, stood a lion,
Which a bit and bridle did not disdain
To receive from the hands of a maiden;
For, as the savage beast, the king did feign
To depict himself, its jaws wide open;
Doralice was intended by the other,
The King of Granada's lovely daughter.

She had been borne away, as I related; 115
(And from which location, and by whom)
She it was whom Rodomonte indicated
On his flag; loving her, you may assume,
More than all his realm; he demonstrated
His skill for her now, the intended groom,
Not knowing Mandricardo had laid claim
To her love, yet he'd still have fought the same.

A thousand ladders were now raised, or more; 116
Two men, at least, on each, now scaled the wall.
The man behind urged on the man before,
Sometimes a third climbed, seeking not to fall.
Whether brave at heart, or shaken to the core,
All found the strength to climb, and I say all,
For Algier's fierce king wounded or slew
Any that baulked, and those proved but a few.



Stanza 116

Canto XIV: 117-121: He scales the wall

Thus, amidst the fire and ruin, climbed the foe. 117
All but Rodomonte took good care
To find the safest route by which to go,
Chancing least danger on the passage there.
Sarza's monarch scorned such fears to show;
He sought the swiftest journey through the air.
And in that desperate case, while many a Moor
Prayed to his deity, he cursed and swore.

He was clad in good and solid armour, 118
Like to the scaly hide of a dragon,
The kind once borne by his ancestor
Who built the tower of Babel and, anon,
Sought the governance of the stars to claw
From God Himself, and then see Him gone;
His helm and shield were equally well-made,
Perfected to good purpose, like his blade.

No less than mighty Nimrod, long ago, 119
He seemed indomitable, wrathful, proud;
A king who'd scale the heavens if, below
His feet, those rungs he felt but allowed;
The furious king had waited not to know
If aught was breached, onwards had he ploughed;
All careless of its depth, ran, flew, the moat,
Though plunged in filthy water to his throat,

Dripping wet, and foul, as yet, with mud, 120
Midst fire, and stone, and arbalest, and bow,
As through the marshy reeds, scenting blood,
The wild boar of our Malea oft will go,
That with chest, and snout, and tusk, will make good
A passage for himself; he had done so,
This Saracen, that with shield raised on high,
Dared not the wall alone, but braved the sky.

No sooner had the bold king won his way 121
O'er the wall than on the platform he stood
That within the outer battlements lay,
A wide and roomy bridge, of solid wood;
Here many a skull he shattered on that day,
Shaved tonsures better than a friar could;
Heads flew and arms, a crimson river fell
Streaming from the walls, like that in Hell.

Canto XIV: 122-128: And sets about the Christian defenders

He doffed his shield and, in his two strong hands, 122
Took his sword, and struck at Duke Arnolfo,
(Who came from where the wide sea commands,
At long last, the mighty Rhine's broad outflow).
No more than a lump of sulphur withstands
The flame's touch, the man resisted, to his woe.
This Duke gave a shudder and slumped down,
Cleft to the neck, from high upon the crown.

At a stroke Spineloccio he slew, 123
With Anselmo, Prando and Oldrado,
For many had filled up the space anew,
Therefore, many fell to that sweeping blow.
Half of them were Flemings, not a few
Were Normans, whom he swiftly sent below;
Orghetto, the Manganese, fell there,
Cleft to his belly, where he held the stair.

He hurled down Andropono and Moschino, 124
Into the moat below, the first a priest,
The second loved his wine and, at one go,
Could drain a flagon and a half at least.
He treated water like the poisoned flow
Of venom from a viper; now, released
To the ditch beneath, amidst the slaughter,
What dismayed him most was death by water.

Then Louis of Provence was cleft in two; 125
Arnoldo of Toulouse pierced through the chest;
Hubert of Tours and brave Claudio too,
Dionigi, Hugo, slain among the rest;
Odo, Ambaldo, Satallone, who
With Walter were of Paris, and the best
Of men; to many, there, did death befall,
Whose name and country I can scarce recall.

The foe, behind those led by Rodomonte, 126
Raised many a ladder, and scaled the wall.
The Parisians made some little headway,
Though, in their first reply, a host did fall.
And still their enemies must forge a way,
Past further snares, designed to trap them all,
For between the wall, and the inner bank,
A fearful moat descended, deep and dank.

Add again that our defenders, below, 127
Fighting the Saracens, showed great valour.
New men succeeded, sent to stem the flow,
Those who had fallen, true men of honour,
And with long lances, and many an arrow,
Strong challenge to those climbing did offer,
Though many, in the end, might have run
Had it not been for King Ulieno's son.

He encouraged some, and rebuked the rest, 128
And drove them forward, for good or ill;
And here a head he cleft, and there a breast,
Midst the enemy, and those he could not kill
He pushed, and herded backwards, as they pressed,
Grappling with heads, necks, and arms at will;
And hurled so many outwards, from above,
Those in the moat below him scarce could move.

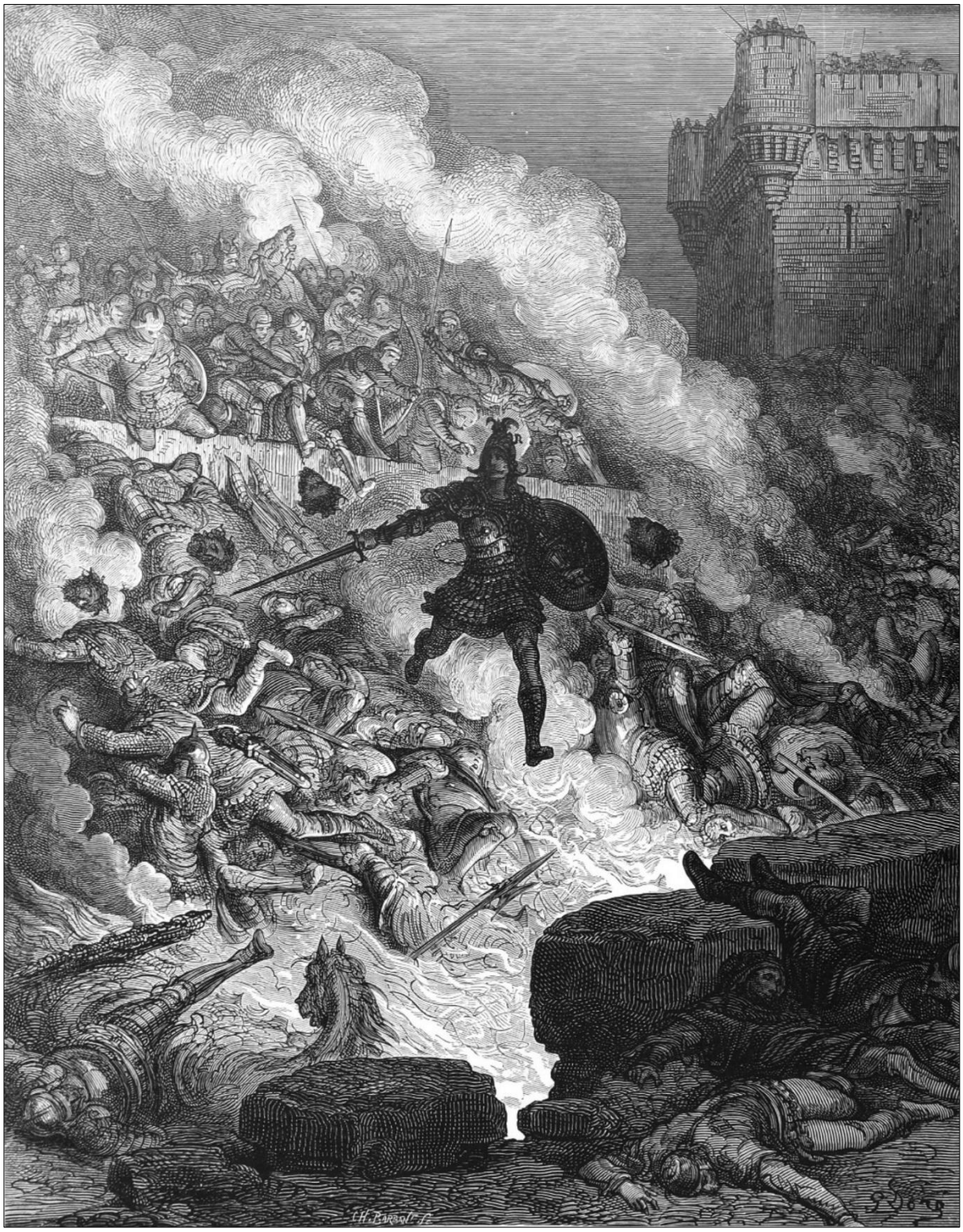
Canto XIV: 129-134: Many Saracens are destroyed at the inner moat

Meanwhile a host of barbarians descended, 129
Or rather leapt into the second moat within,
And then by many a means they ascended,
The summit of the inner bank to win.
Rodomonte (as if on wings suspended)
Despite the great bulk which did underpin
His mighty strength, and weight of armour,
Leapt clean across the ditch, in his ardour,

(Its width no less than twenty feet, or so) 130
Swift as a greyhound, eager to compete;
Making as little noise in landing, though,
As a man would with felt bound round his feet;
And then at coats of armour he did hew,
As if of pewter wrought, and not of sheet
On sheet of steel, or soft as willow rind,
Such was his sword and strength, as all did find.

Ere this time arrived, our forces had laid 131
An insidious trap in the moat below,
Where cut broom, and thick branches, overlaid
Cartloads of pitch, yet all well-hidden though,
For all was sunk below, and heavily weighed,
All that dense covering, so naught did show.
This depth of matter ran from bank to bank,
And, in the water, many a cask they sank,

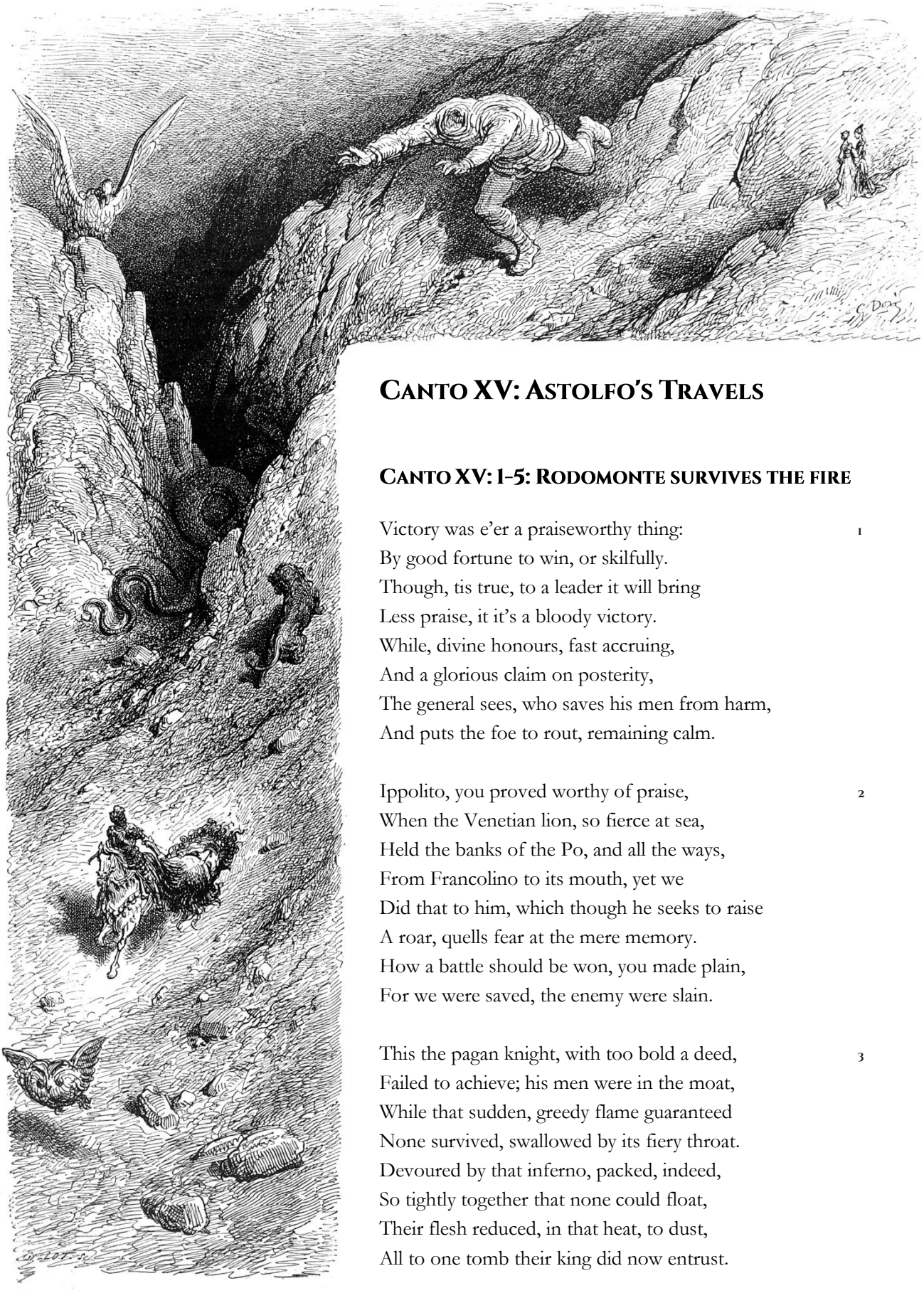
Charged with saltpetre, or oil, or sulphur, 132
Or with some other flammable substance.
Our men (intent on bringing ruin, ever,
Upon the Moors and thwarting their advance
Beyond the ditch, which, crammed together,
They thought to leave) our men of France,
And elsewhere, hearing the signal, set fire
To the ditch, lighting one great funeral pyre.



Stanza 130

For the many scattered flames soon united, 133
And set the moat ablaze, from side to side,
So high that the moon they'd have blighted,
Even her watery bosom they'd have dried;
While a vast dark cloud left all unsighted,
Hiding the sun, and spreading far and wide,
As, from the pit, a mighty roaring sound,
Like endless peals of thunder, shook the ground.

A dreadful concert rose, in harmony, 134
Of shrieks of pain, of bitter shouts and cries,
(From those lost ranks, in their last misery,
Who perished, led to death in such a guise,
By their fierce king) according, seemingly,
With that mighty flame, that on high did rise.
No more, no more, of this sobering canto!
For I am hoarse, and needs must rest, also.



Canto XV: Astolfo's Travels

Canto XV: 1-5: Rodomonte survives the fire

Victory was e'er a praiseworthy thing: 1
By good fortune to win, or skilfully.
Though, tis true, to a leader it will bring
Less praise, it it's a bloody victory.
While, divine honours, fast accruing,
And a glorious claim on posterity,
The general sees, who saves his men from harm,
And puts the foe to rout, remaining calm.

Ippolito, you proved worthy of praise, 2
When the Venetian lion, so fierce at sea,
Held the banks of the Po, and all the ways,
From Francolino to its mouth, yet we
Did that to him, which though he seeks to raise
A roar, quells fear at the mere memory.
How a battle should be won, you made plain,
For we were saved, the enemy were slain.

This the pagan knight, with too bold a deed, 3
Failed to achieve; his men were in the moat,
While that sudden, greedy flame guaranteed
None survived, swallowed by its fiery throat.
Devoured by that inferno, packed, indeed,
So tightly together that none could float,
Their flesh reduced, in that heat, to dust,
All to one tomb their king did now entrust.

Of eleven thousand and twenty-eight, 4
That found themselves inside that burning pit,
Who, though discontented, entered straight,
All were dead, but not he who ordered it.
In that hell of sound and flame, lay their fate,
Consumed by the flames the Christians lit;
Yet Rodomonte the cause of their pain,
Had lived on, so it seemed, to fight again.

For, midst his foes that held the bank, he'd passed, 5
By vaulting that wide ditch, most wondrously,
While, had he not been first, but of the last,
It would have brought his end, assuredly.
He turned to gaze, now, at the flames, aghast,
Leaping skywards, from that hellish valley,
And, hearing his warriors' screams and cries,
Called out vile blasphemies towards the skies.

Canto XV: 6-9: Agramante attacks the gate

Agramante, meanwhile, had launched a force 6
Of substantial size, against a city gate;
For as that cruel battle ran its course,
In which so many men had met their fate,
He thought it undefended or, perforce,
So weakly manned, his soldiers need not wait.
With him, Arzilla's king, Bambirago,
Went forth; that tub of vice, Baliverso;

Corineo of Mulga; Prisione, 7
The wealthy King of the Isles of the Blest;
And Malabuferso, who held the city
Of Fez, where summer ever was a guest;
While there followed, a goodly company
Of well-armed men, in battle of the best,
And a naked host, whom this side the grave,
A thousand shields could not have rendered brave.

But all proved contrary; against the foe, 8
(This King of Africa) the Emperor stood;
Within the walls his person he did show,
With many a knight, to make his mission good:
Salamone, the Dane Ugiero,
Both Angelinis, both Guidos, of high blood,
Bavaria's duke, Avino, Ganelone,
Berlengier, Avolio, and Ottone,

And many others, though of lesser stature, 9
Lombards, Franks and Germans, and the rest;
Each, in the presence of their Emperor,
Desiring to be numbered with the best.
Of this I'll give account, a little later,
For, now, a great duke claims my interest,
Who calls me from afar, and pleads with me,
Not to exclude him from my history.

Canto XV: 10-15: We return to Astolfo, who takes leave of Logistilla

It's time that I returned to where I left 10
That venturesome Astolfo of England,
Who, hating exile, still of home bereft,
Burnt with desire to reach his native land.
Logistilla had raised his hopes, who's deft
Use of her powers had granted her command
Of the battle with Alcina, and whose care
Was now to see him swiftly, safely, there.

And so, by her, a vessel was prepared, 11
A better ship has never sailed, surely;
And since she feared lest Alcina dared
To perpetrate on him some treachery,
She requested that Andronica shared,
With Sofrosina, his homeward journey,
Their ships armed, till the Arabian Sea
And the Persian Gulf were reached, in safety.

She preferred that a course he should maintain 12
Past India, Parthia, Nabatea,
And, by that long coastal route, attain
The realms of Persia and Eritrea,
Rather than attempt the northern main,
Where violent gales thwart the mariner,
And, at some seasons, the sun's so low
For many months, it barely seems to show.

When the faery queen saw all was ready, 13
She gave permission for the duke to leave,
After instructing him, first, carefully,
In many a thing (a tale too long to weave);
And, so none might delay him, unduly,
By means of magic charms, wrought to deceive,
A fine and a useful book she gave him,
To keep, for love of her, close beside him.

How a man might resist vile enchantment, 14
This book revealed, which was the faery's gift;
At start an end, more than in its treatment,
Its contents and its index showed its drift.
And she bestowed on him next, ere he went,
A war-horn that, whene'er a man did lift
It to his lips, made such a fearful sound
Any foe would flee whose ears it found.

The noise the war-horn made was such, I say 15
As to put all who heard it to swift flight;
Nor was there any man who, at that bray,
Owned a heart so sound he failed to take fright;
Tempest, earthquake, thunder, their din did weigh
Naught beside it, their whole effect was slight.
With thanks the Englishman did these receive,
Then, of the faery queen, he took his leave.

Canto XV: 16-24: Andronica's prophecy regarding the sea-routes

Quitting the port, and its calmer waters, 16
With, at their stern, a favourable breeze,
They sailed south, past rich, populous harbours,
Rounding the perfumed Indies with ease,
Skirting a thousand scattered island markers.
Bound now for Saint Thomas' land; in those seas,
The helmsman now turned, still following
The coast, and set them on a northward heading,

Furrowing the waves, their fine squadron sailed; 17
Shaving the Golden Chersonese, and then
Viewing the waters where the Ganges paled
The ocean; south, along rich shores again,
Past Coromandel; with Sri Lanka hailed,
Through the straits between, into the main,
Made Kochi, rounding India's southern tip
Following the coast northwards, at a clip.

Scouring the ocean with his faithful guide, 18
One so certain in her knowledge, the knight
Asked Andronica if from the western side,
Of Europe, named, from the fading light,
The Hesperides, a vessel might yet glide
Into the Eastern ocean's waves outright,
And so, without ever their touching land,
Those of India reach France, or England.

'You should know', replied wise Andronica, 19
'All Earth's land is surrounded by the seas,
And the waves pass from one to another,
Whether the water boils or seeks to freeze;
Yet, where the Ethiopian lands lie, further
To the north-west a few sun-scorched degrees,
Some mighty power has, long ago, decreed
That Neptune may not certain bounds exceed.

So that from here, India's western coast, 20
No vessel can to Europe makes its way,
Nor can our western navigators boast
That they have sailed to where we lie today.
Though, seeing those lands ahead, that almost
Invite the traveller on, from bay to bay,
To one, or another, it might appear
They could glide into the other hemisphere.

Yet I foresee, in time, that some new Argo, 21
Steered by some new Tiphys, will be seen
And from our own western lands they'll go,
Opening a path where none as yet have been.
Rounding Africa, sailing west, also,
Skirting the dark-skinned peoples' shores, I mean,
From where the sun stands overhead at noon
In Capricorn, to where that's true in June;

Finding the end of that great length of shore 22
That seems to border two quite separate seas;
Who have but known the coastlines, heretofore,
Of Araby, Persia, and the Indies.
Others I see who'll leave us, through that door
That's marked by the Pillars of Hercules,
Following the westward path of the sun,
Until, indeed, new lands, new worlds, are won.

On some green shore the sacred cross I see, 23
And the great banner, of your Emperor,
I see men guard the ships from treachery,
While others go to seize new lands in war;
I see ten chase a thousand there who flee,
As Aragon those realms, past India's shore,
Makes subject to its rule, while, everywhere,
Charles the Fifth's captains find victory there.

God wished, of old, these paths should be concealed, 24
That centuries must pass ere they be won,
Nor would allow this prophecy revealed
Until the seventh century was done,
And only then would that true knowledge yield,
When one great monarch ruled the world as one,
The wisest emperor, and most righteous,
That shall be, or has been, since Augustus.

Canto XV: 25-37: And regarding Charles V and his imperialistic ventures

Of the blood of Austria and Aragon, 25
I see a monarch raised, on Rhine's left bank,
A prince unequalled, in truth, for none
Shall be his peer, that tale or story rank
As such; Astraea, once more, neath the sun,
He shall install, he, whom all men shall thank,
And Virtue who, with Justice, left the Earth,
From exile shall return, and prove her worth.

Granted his great merit, Goodness Supreme, 26
Intends that this prince shall not only bear
The crown that on Augustus' brow did gleam,
That Trajan wore, Aurelius, wisdom's heir,
And Severus, but those of lands extreme,
That neither sun nor season know or share.
And desires that, beneath this emperor,
The sheep will form one flock, with one pastor.

And to accomplish it with greater ease, 27
Has ordained above, proclaimed eternally,
That high Providence, on lands and seas,
Shall grant him captains to his greater glory;
I count Hernando Cortez amongst these.
Men who'll bring him many a city,
And kingdoms in the East so remote
That, of them, we in India take no note.

Now Prospero Colonna, I behold, 28
And Fernando of Pescara, and I see
A youth, lord of Guasto, who to the gold
Fleur-de-lys will make dear our Italy;
And he, this third, the laurels shall behold,
His prize, as a strong athlete will, swiftly,
Take up the lead, and run with strength and art,
To finish first, although the last to start;

So great his valour, and his loyalty, 29
This Alfonso (for such will be his name)
That in his unripe age (no more he'll be
Than six and twenty, although born to fame)
The emperor will trust him with an army,
Saving which, that monarch shall reclaim
The rest, and make the world obey his hand,
With this youth, who at Pavia shall stand.

As with those captains ashore, who grow 30
His empire, and extend its ancient sway,
So, on the sea, that with its ebb and flow
Divides Europe from Africa, I say
He'll meet with certain victory also,
Good Andrea Doria his friend alway;
That Doria, who from the pirate horde
Will wrest the waters, their true peace secured.

Nor with Pompey should he be compared, 31
Who overcame the corsairs; in no way
Were those men equal to the power they dared
To challenge, the mightiest of their day,
While Doria, all alone, will be prepared
To purge the waves, and sweep that horde away;
And, from Calpe to the Nile, all who hear
His illustrious name will quake with fear.

Beneath the banner of his loyalty, 32
(This glorious captain of whom I speak)
I see his Emperor enter Italy,
The door to which he opens, yet will seek
For his country, not himself, victory,
Asking the monarch for a gift, unique,
The freedom of his Genoa, alone,
Though he might have claimed it for his own.

The pious love he'll show his native land 33
Is worth far more than any honour won
By Julius in France, Spain, your England,
Thessaly or Africa, when said and done;
Nor should Octavius like praise command
Nor Mark Antony (who met neath the sun,
With equal forces) for such civil war
Tarnished them, yet hurt their country more.

Let any man who would rob a country 34
Of its precious freedom, blush for shame,
Nor raise his eyes, nor call it victory,
While men speak Andrea Doria's name.
I see that Charles will add to his bounty,
Granting him, beyond the common claim,
Rich lands round Melfi, which had earlier
Watched Norman power wax in Apulia.

Not only will Charles show great courtesy, 35
Magnanimously, to this great captain,
But to all who, for the Empire, will be
Unsparing of their blood; he will obtain
More pleasure from bestowing some fair city
On a loyal friend than from some new gain,
An empire, or a kingdom, newly won,
Rewarding every worthy deed that's done.'

Thus, Andronica informed Astolfo 36
Of the achievements, that, on land and sea,
After long years had passed, this Charles would owe
To his great captains: many a victory.
All this while, as the easterlies did blow,
Sofrosina curbed or loosed them, gently,
Having this gust or that serve their need,
Increasing, or diminishing their speed.

Meantime the Persian Gulf they entered, 37
And viewed the wide extent of its waters,
Whence the ships, in a few days, visited
The Bay of the Magi, with its harbours,
And here they made port, and swiftly anchored,
Ships' prows towards the waves, those wanderers;
Then, safe there from Alcina and her war,
Astolfo continued his route on shore.

Canto XV: 38-41: Astolfo reaches the Nile

He passed through many a wood and meadow, 38
O'er many a hill, down many a dale,
Where thieves and brigands his tracks would follow,
Both day and night, as he pursued the trail,
And lions and venomous snakes, as he did go,
And savage monsters, and yet, without fail,
As soon as on his magic horn he blew,
Away the creatures ran, or slid, or flew.

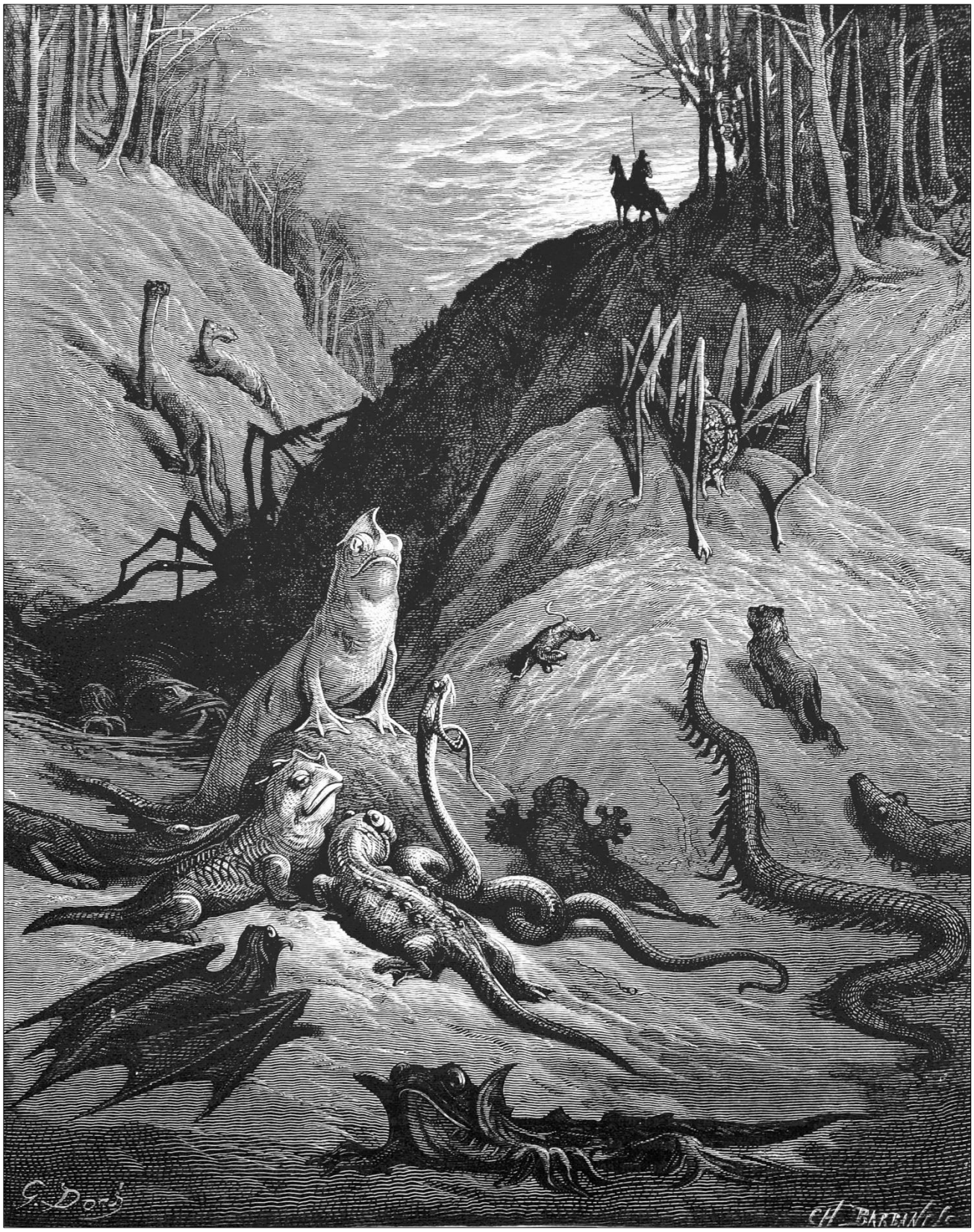


Stanza 38

Through Arabia Felix he progressed, 39
Rich with odorous incense, and with myrrh,
Where the solitary Phoenix makes her nest,
Though all the world is hers should she prefer
Another home; and by that sea did rest
Where God's vengeful miracle did occur,
Through which the Pharaoh and his troops were lost
While, to the Promised Land, Israel crossed.

Then along Trajan's wide canal he rode, 40
On his war-horse that ever lacked a peer,
That moved so lightly that the soft sand showed
No traces of our valiant cavalier,
No more than would the drifts if it had snowed,
Or fresh grass; while, dry-shod, o'er waters clear
Twould pass and, ever with the lightning twinned,
Fly faster than an arrow or the wind.

This charger was Argalia's before, 41
Born of the union of wind and flame,
Nourished not on fodder but the pure
Air itself; Rabicano was its name.
He followed the channel, upon the shore,
Till where the Nile united with that same;
Yet, before he reached the river, he saw
A boat upon its waves; a man it bore.



Stanza 38 "*Away the creatures ran, or slid, or flew*"

Canto XV: 42-49: He meets a hermit who warns him of a giant

A hermit steered it, seated at the stern, 42
A snowy beard descended to his chest.
He urged the duke, with evident concern,
To embark: 'Come, my son, for it were best;
Unless, perchance, you loathe your life, and yearn
For Death to come, and its fair course arrest.
Come, cross the water to the other side,
For on the path, you take, have many died.

Within a distance of six miles or so, 43
You'll find the opening to a dreadful cave,
Wherein the giant dwells, a house of woe,
And he seems eight feet taller to the brave.
You have no hope of fleeing from this foe,'
The hermit said, 'the place would prove your grave,
For some he quarters, and some he flays,
Many he swallows, while none go their ways.

Amidst his cruelties, he takes pleasure, 44
In a net, a cunning snare divinely made,
Nor far from his den, but a brief measure,
Concealing it, beneath the sand, in shade,
Such that those who seek shade, at leisure,
Unknowingly fall foul (tis so well laid)
Of its mesh, while his shouts then terrify,
Entangling the traveller further, thereby.



Stanza 44

Then, with cruel laughter, he drags all those 45
His malice captures to his dwelling place;
With man or maiden, to his cave he goes,
Plain commoners, or those of noble race.
On their flesh and brains, his mouth will close,
While their bones the desert sands will grace.
And the skins he hangs, all bloodied and torn,
About the walls, his cavern to adorn.



Stanza 45

Choose another road; embark, my son. 46
My boat will take you, safely, to the sea.'
'Thanks for your counsel, yet if that were done,'
The warrior now replied, fearlessly,
'Scant honour from such peril would be won,
For more than life I care for chivalry.
You'll not persuade me to cross; indeed,
His cavern I'll now seek, as fate decreed.

I could save myself, to my dishonour, 47
But worse than death is such salvation;
While, if I go, the worst that can occur
Is that I reach a like destination.
Yet if God directs my arm with vigour,
I live, and send the giant to damnation,
Thousands may, in safety, pass this way;
The greater good the risk does, thus, outweigh;

One life, my own, I risk in this encounter, 48
To ensure the safety of a countless host.'
'Go then, in peace, my son,' said the other,
'May the Archangel Michael swiftly post
To your side, obedient to God's order.'
He blessed the knight. Astolfo with utmost
Ardour, pressed on his way beside the Nile,
His hopes set on his horn not sword, the while.

Between the mighty river and a fen, 49
There ran a trail, along the sandy shore,
Barred by the giant's solitary den,
From human commerce; there Astolfo saw
The heads, and naked members of dead men,
And even women, set about its door.
From every arch, and window, they were strung;
In every corner, knights and maidens hung.

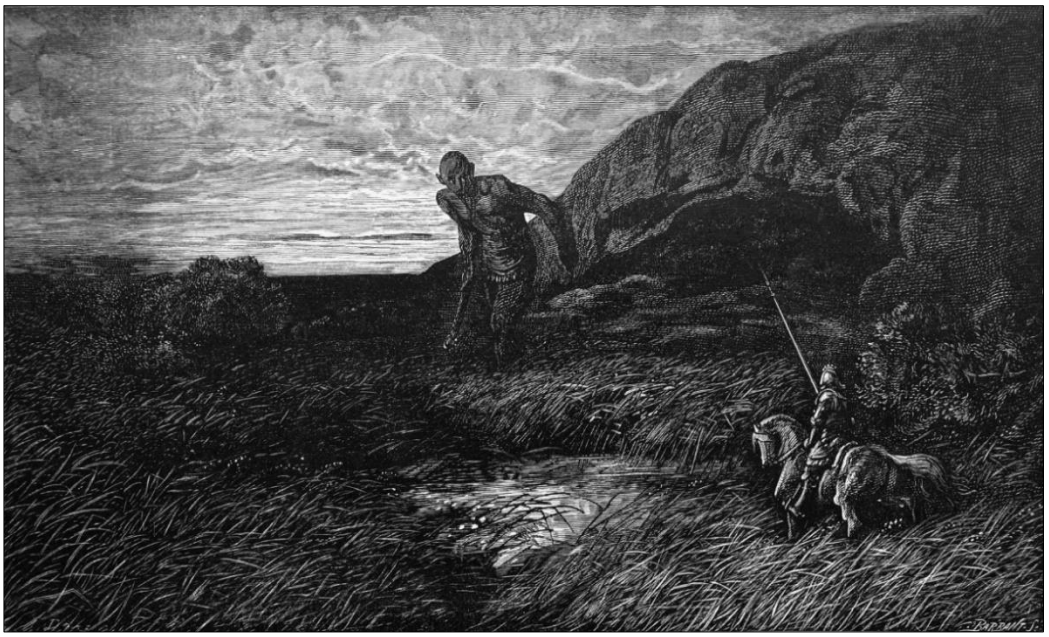
As, in some Alpine fastness, rich or poor, 50
A hunter, remembering dangers past,
Will nail some shaggy pelt to his front door,
Or a huge bear's head and paws, so this vast
Creature, had hung, above, those he'd thought more
Worthy of his attention, at the last.
The bones of other folk lay scattered there;
The ground, and ditches, blood-soaked everywhere.

Canto XV: 50–59: Astolfo overcomes the giant, Caligorante

At the threshold, Caligorante stood, 51
(For such was the pitiless monster's name)
Whose house was hung with corpses, stained with blood,
As, with cloth of red and gold, folk seek the same.
He scarcely could contain himself, when good
Astolfo down the narrow pathway came,
For two months had gone, and well-nigh a third,
Since a horseman along that way had spurred.

Towards the dense marsh, that hid him from sight, 52
Being full of tall green reeds, the giant ran,
Wishing to double back behind the knight,
And emerge at his rear, such was his plan,
Then drive him onwards, all so that he might
Trap him in his snare, and then drag the man
To his cave, like those others, previously,
Brought there, as was this knight, by destiny.

As Astolfo approached he saw him there, 53
And halted, suspecting hidden danger,
Lest his brave charger stray into that snare
Which the hermit had warned of, earlier,
Then to his magic war-horn did repair,
Nor did it fail him now, for its clamour
So struck Caligorante's heart and head
It shook him to the core, and off he fled.



Stanza 53

Astolfo blew again, forever cautious, 54
Anxious lest pursuit might trip the net.
The felon ran, in a blind careless rush,
For terror robbed him of all sense, as yet;
His fear was so great that, all unconscious
Of the very same trap that he had set,
He stumbled into it, and there was bound;
So entangled, it dragged him to the ground.



Stanza 53

Our valiant knight, seeing that mighty fall, 55
Now safe himself, sped to where he lay,
And left the saddle, swiftly, to forestall
The giant's rising, and to make him pay
The cost for his most cruel and bloody haul,
But then deemed it dishonourable to slay
So helpless a creature, one tied so tight
He could not stir his limbs enough to fight.

Vulcan, indeed, once forged as strong a net, 56
With subtle links of steel, and such art,
That he'd have wasted his toil and sweat
That sought to tear its weakest strand apart.
Venus and Mars were trapped, their limbs beset.
The god was jealous, and had, for his part,
Woven, to no less end, fine thread on thread,
Merely to catch that flagrant pair in bed.

Mercury stole it from the smith, likewise, 57
Seeking to catch young Chloris in that snare,
Sweet Chloris, who behind Aurora flies,
At sunrise, as she travels through the air,
Shedding roses and violets, o'er the skies,
From her robe, and pure lilies, everywhere.
Bold Mercury his trap so deftly set,
One day, he caught her in his airy net.

It seems that she was taken as she flew, 58
Where Ethiopia's flood meets the sea,
And in Anubis' shrine twas placed on view,
At Canopus, for many a century;
After three thousand years, the giant anew
Stole it, and deployed it, mercilessly;
Not only did the vile wretch rob the shrine,
He burned the city, scorning things divine.

He set it then, with care, beneath the sand, 59
In such a manner that the folk he chased
Towards it, needs but touch a single strand
Ere feet, and arms, and neck were embraced.
From this, Astolfo took a thread in hand;
The giant's wrists behind his back he placed,
And tied them, and bound him in such guise
He could not free himself; then let him rise.

Canto XV: 60-65: He reaches Cairo, where he hears of the robber demon, Orrilo

Next, forgoing the knots (the giant now tame 60
As any maid), he led him, fast or slow,
Through villages and towns, where'er he came,
And oft would halt, and put the freak on show;
The net as well, for finer none could claim
Was forged beneath the hammer, long ago.
On the giant, as on a mule, it was laid,
And, in triumph, down the road, thus conveyed.

He gave him, too, his helm and shield to bear, 61
As his squire, while he travelled on his way,
Gladdening all the pilgrims, everywhere,
Since they could pass in safety, night and day.
So well upon his road the knight did fare,
Soon the tombs at Memphis before him lay,
Memphis famed for its Pyramids, and more;
For crowded Cairo, opposite, he saw,



Stanza 61

O'er the Nile. All the people came to see
That immeasurable giant passing by,
'How could one so weak rule, so easily,
One so strong?' all about, the folk did cry,
Astolfo could scarcely progress freely,
So closely was he pressed yet, by and by,
He freed himself, so that all might honour,
And admire, the knight and his monster.

62

Cairo was less extensive, in those days,
That it is now, in this our present age,
Where eighteen thousand districts, a maze,
Still cannot lodge all in its wealthy cage;
Tall houses, full three stories high, they raise,
Yet still the people's needs cannot assuage,
Who oft sleep on the street; the Sultan, there,
Has a wondrous palace, one most rich and fair;

63

And, therein, fifteen thousand servants lie,
All Christian renegades, beneath one roof,
(Their wives, their families, their horses nigh)
That of their loyalty give constant proof.
The duke desired to view with his own eye
The Nile's delta, and see how far, in truth,
The river's flow might penetrate the sea,
At Damietta, where he'd heard lay treachery.

64

For on the banks of the Nile, at the delta,
A robber had found refuge in a tower,
To travellers, and the natives, a danger;
As far as the gates of Cairo, he'd scour
The countryside, troubling the stranger;
And none could slay him, or thwart his power,
For a hundred thousand wounds he'd borne,
And yet he lived, and put them all to scorn.

65



Stanza 62 "*That immeasurable giant passing by*"

Canto XV: 66-74: He finds Orrilo at Damietta, in battle with two brothers

To see if he could break the fatal thread 66
Of Orrilo's life (twas the robber's name);
Wishing to see so foul a demon dead,
To Damietta, next, Astolfo came.
And then he passed to where the river fed
The wider sea, and saw that tower of shame,
And hoped the charmed creature lay within,
Fruit of a faery's union with a goblin.



Stanza 71

There, he was witness to a cruel fight 67
Twixt Orrilo and two brave warriors.
Orrilo was alone, and yet his might
Seemed sufficient to defeat their cause,
Though the earthly fame of either knight,
Might have given the vile demon pause.
Aquilante the Black, he there made one,
With Grifone the White, and each the son

Of Oliviero; true the demon came 68
With a major advantage on his side,
To the battle, since he had brought, that same,
A creature to the field, from out the tide,
Found only in those parts, with a claim
To live beneath the Nile, but yet abide
On shore, and prey on human travellers,
Incautious folk, and careless mariners.

This beast slain by the two, lay on the sand, 69
Near the harbour, and so they did no wrong
To Orrilo though two gainst one did stand,
And struck at him, and both of them full strong.
For they'd cut from him, say a leg or hand,
Dismember him entire, and yet, ere long,
He'd replace those limbs, as if made of wax,
Despite the fierceness of their twin attacks.

Aquilante and Grifone would cleave 70
His head down to his teeth, or to his chest;
He'd mock the blows they might achieve,
While they, in vain, attempted his conquest.
He that knows quicksilver, which, I believe,
Alchemists call mercury, can attest
To how each separate scattered silvery ball,
Will reunite with the mass, if he'll recall.

And if his head was severed by the pair, 71
He would grope around till it was found;
He'd grasp it by the nose, or by the hair,
And re-attach it, plucked from off the ground.
Though oft Grifone hurled it through the air,
Into the flood, in vain the thing was drowned;
For Orrilo swam, straight to the river bed,
And emerged, in possession of his head.



Stanza 71

Two lovely ladies, beautifully dressed, 72
The one in black, the other all in white,
The battle being fought at their behest,
Stood by to gaze upon the savage fight.
Two faeries were they, both with kindness blessed,
Who'd nourished one, and the other, knight,
Oliviero's sons, after they'd been torn
From the clutches of two great birds, one morn,

That had snatched them away, in Gismonda, 73
And carried them far from that country,
But no more of that tale need I utter,
For all the world has heard their story;
Though the author has misnamed the father,
Mingling one with another history.
Now, the battle had been set in motion
At these lovely ladies' instigation.

The sun, in that place, had already set, 74
And off to the Fortunate Isles had run;
Beneath the moon, the deepening shadows met,
Ere, for lack of light to see, the fight was done.
The sisters, white and black, pleased to forget,
(Orrilo, to the tower, his way had won)
The failure of their knights, and so defer
The fight till a new day would light confer.

Canto XV: 75-78: The fight is deferred till the following day

Astolfo, who'd recognised Grifone 75
And Aquilante by their insignia,
As much as by their skill in every
Blow, was swift to greet them, they moreover,
Knew, in this knight who'd won a victory
Over the giant whom he led a prisoner,
The Baron of the Leopard (for twas so
He was named at court) greeting him also.

The two ladies, to grant the knights some rest, 76
Led them to a sumptuous palace nearby,
Where squires and maids, in fine garments dressed,
Lit their way with torches, and, by and by,
Some led away their horses, while the rest
Took their armour; in a garden, on high,
They saw the tables for a feast now laid,
Close to where a pleasant fountain played.

Astolfo tethered the giant, securely, 77
Fastening him, with a great length of chain,
To an ancient oak, both tall and mighty,
Quite sufficient, he thought, to take the strain,
While ten officers guarded him closely,
Lest the giant should free himself again,
And attack them, and cause a deal of harm,
Before any there could sound the alarm.

At this rich and sumptuous occasion, 78
Where the food itself was the least delight,
The major topic of conversation,
Was Orrilo, and the wonders of the fight;
For one and another sought the reason
For his strange ability to re-unite
His severed parts and, re-attaching all,
Return to the fray, after every fall.

Canto XV: 79-81: Astolfo determines to slay Orrilo

His book Astolfo opened then, and read 79
(For it contained a counter to the charm)
That if he could pluck one hair from its head
Then he could do the demon lasting harm,
Or leave the monster lying there, stone dead,
Could he but grasp that hair, and wield his arm.
So, the volume said, yet failed to say
Where, amidst those tufts, the one hair lay.

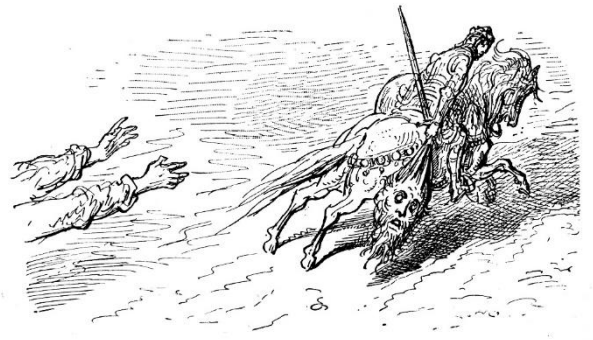
The duke rejoiced in hopes of victory 80
As though the palm was already won,
Anticipating that a blow or three,
Would suffice to see the wretch undone.
And convinced the brothers that only he
Should seek to shoulder the burden, or none.
Orrilo he would take in hand, and slay,
If the two of them would not say nay.

They granted it, however, willingly, 81
Though believing his toil would prove in vain;
A new dawn broke, and they arose to see
Orrilo fast descending to the plain.
The duke and he then battled furiously,
Sword against mace, down the blows did rain,
Astolfo waiting on the stroke that might
Part that vile spirit from the flesh outright.

Canto XV: 82-87: And succeeds in conquering him

He cut away the hand that grasped the mace, 82
Then one, and then the other, arm as well;
Pierced through the breastplate, in every place,
While he trimmed him all around, as he fell;
But Orrilo a hail of blows would face,
Then repair himself, as sound as a bell
Once more; though sliced in a hundred parts,
He thus pursued the fight, in fits and starts.

After a thousand cuts, one solid blow 83
Landed twixt the shoulders and the chin,
And lopped the head and helmet from the foe;
Astolfo leapt that fallen part to win,
Sprang to his horse again, and off did go,
Gripping it by the hair, blood red as sin;
All along the bank of the Nile he fled,
So that the wretch might not regain his head.



Stanza 83

The fool, not seeing Astolfo's deed, 84
Still was searching for the head, on the ground,
But, hearing the pounding hooves of the steed,
As the knight fled, and following the sound,
Mounting his charger, he pursued at speed,
Ready to go where'er the knight was bound,
And would, indeed, have cried out: 'Stay, man, stay!'
Had the duke not snatched his mouth away.

Yet, pleased that the knight had not, likewise, 85
Removed his heels, he drove his horse amain.
Rabicano, though, fast as the lightning flies,
Had now consumed a vast part of the plain,
While our Astolfo was casting his eyes
Over the hair, again, and yet again,
Searching to find the single entity
That granted the wretch immortality.

Amid the innumerable hairs, no one 86
Appeared to be much crisper or straighter,
What then, Astolfo thought, was to be done,
Since he sought to slay the demon robber?
'Better,' he thought, 'to cut them all than none!'
And, since he lacked scissors or a razor,
He had swift recourse to his gleaming sword,
So sharp a decent shave it would afford.

So, gripping the severed head by the nose, 87
He sheared the locks, behind, atop, before,
And cut the one amongst the rest, I suppose
That held the charm; the visage, wounded sore,
Turned up its eyes, its life now at the close,
While every mark of looming death it bore.
Then the body, still severed from its head,
Fell from the saddle, and the wretch was dead.



Stanza 87

Canto XV: 88-94: The three knights set out to visit Jerusalem

The knight returned, the robber's head in hand, 88
To where the ladies, and the brothers, stood,
And, pointing to the body on the sand,
He raised the gory emblem stained with blood.
I know not, though all had gone as planned,
If they praised him as fully as they should,
(He'd robbed the knights of victory) for they
Received him in a sadly human way.



Stanza 88 "*The knight returned, the robber's head in hand*"

Nor do I think the ladies felt happy, 89
That the battle had ended as it did,
Since that display of knightly chivalry,
Far away from war in France, was a bid
To keep the brothers from their destiny,
And (met with Orrilo) that path forbid;
In hopes that their fate they might delay,
Till the starry influence passed away.

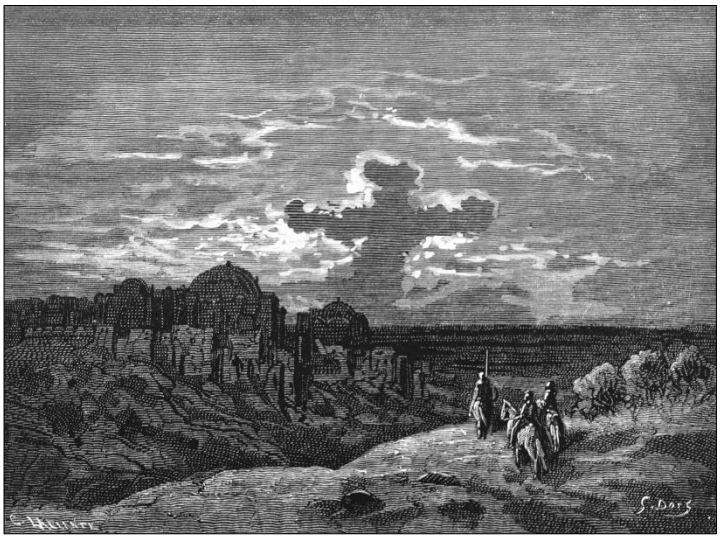
As soon as the castellan was notified 90
In Damietta, that the thief was dead.
He let loose a pigeon, having tied
A letter to one leg, with a strong thread.
She flew to Cairo and, thus, country-wide
The news of vile Orrilo's death was spread,
(As was their practice) till, to all, twas plain,
Throughout Egypt, the demon had been slain.

Since he'd brought the business to an end, 91
Astolfo now consoled the noble pair,
Suggesting Holy Church they might defend,
And the cause of Charlemagne, far from there;
(Though he found that he had no need to bend
Them to his wish, since they were well aware
Of the war) for to quit the East were best
And journey to seek honour in the West.

Aquilante and Grifone took their leave 92
Of their respective ladies, and withdrew;
They, though the knights' departure could but grieve
Them deeply, knew no means to keep the two.
The duke turned landwards, yet not to deceive
The pair; twas that his thoughts had turned anew
To viewing the sites where God incarnate
Had dwelt, ere he again embraced his fate.

They might have taken the seawards route, 93
It being less hilly, and more pleasant,
Never to leave the shore, in their pursuit
Of the road, yet he chose, in but an instant,
To take the shorter path, as that did suit;
For he knew that along the coastline scant
Sites with fresh grass, or drinking water, lay;
Here, Jerusalem was but six days away.

Before our travellers took to the road, 94
They gathered all they needed together
And to the giant's back they tied their load,
That might have borne a weight far heavier.
A hill, to them, the nearer distance showed,
Before their harsh and stony ride was over:
That sacred hill, on which Heavenly Good
Purged us of all our sins, with His blood.



Stanza 94

Canto XV: 95-99: They meet Sansonetto, governor of the Holy Places

They met, at the entrance to the city, 95
A noble young man, whom the brothers knew,
Sansonetto of Mecca, for chivalry,
Well-respected all that country through,
And for his goodness, and his prudency,
Wise beyond his years, and ever true;
Converted to our faith by Orlando,
Baptised at that warrior's hands also.

They found him with the Caliph of Egypt, 96
Designing a defensive wall around
The Mount of Calvary; this, by his edict,
Was to be two miles in length, and surround
The hill completely, and yet with no strict
Countenance they were met, for sound
And kindly was the heart that it betrayed.
With him their entry to the fort they made.

He was the ruler of the Holy Land, 97
And, for Charlemagne, he governed that place.
Astolfo, who good manners did command,
Gifted him the giant, who for a space
Had borne a mighty load, quite as grand
As ten cart-horses might have had to face.
He gifted him the giant and better yet
His means of catching him, that ancient net.

Sansonetto in return, at this encounter, 98
Gave him a rich and fine belt for a sword,
And costly spurs, wrought for a warrior,
And a golden buckle, fitting for a lord.
All these, twas thought, the knight wore earlier,
That freedom to a maiden did afford,
And slew the dragon; all from Jaffa brought,
When he'd captured the city, and its court.

Once purged of sin in a monastery, 99
From which the odour of good works arose,
They contemplated every mystery
Of the Passion, for every shrine they chose
To visit, which, with many an infamy,
The Moors now to our holy pilgrims close.
(Europe's in arms, and war is everywhere,
And yet our hosts, in arms, are needed there.)

Canto XV: 100-105: Of Grifone and his beloved, Orrigille

While our three knights, with humble spirits sought 100
Penitence, and sacred ceremony,
A Greek pilgrim, Grifone knew, now brought
News, from afar, that distressed him sorely,
(From his first vow, and former train of thought,
So distant as to disturb him wholly)
This inflamed his breast, now filled with care,
And distracted him, utterly, from prayer.

To his misfortune, he loved a lady, 101
The name of this maid was Orrigille,
Not one in a thousand matched her beauty,
Her form and visage ever lovelier;
Yet, by nature, so fickle, and flirty,
Was she, you might search the whole world over,
Every continent or island in the sea,
Yet ne'er find one so born to treachery.

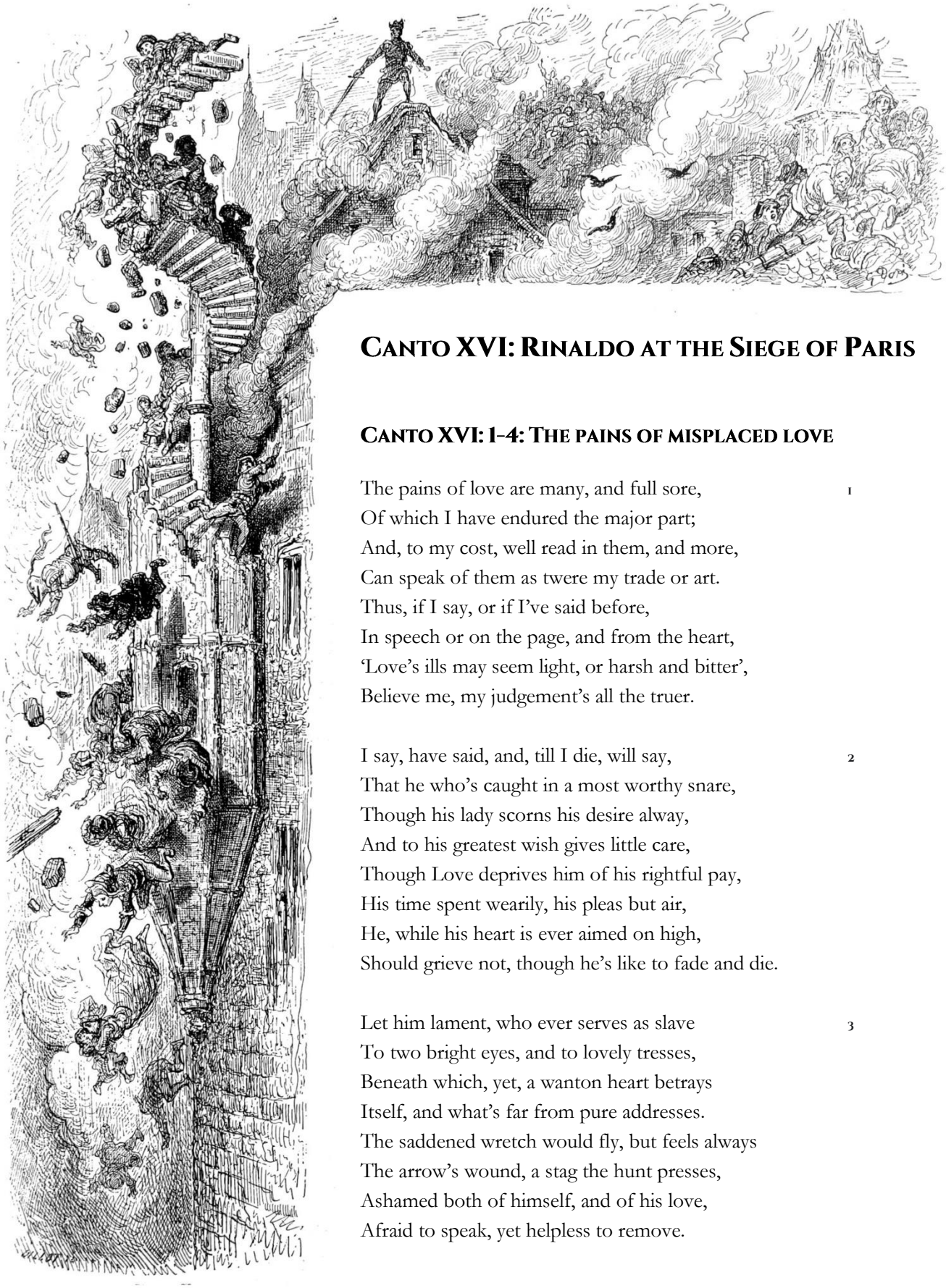
In Constantinople, he had left her, 102
Suffering from a fever, that lady.
He'd hoped to find her, lovelier than ever,
On his return, and seek her company.
Now, he heard, the witch had with a lover,
Sailed forth, for Antioch across the sea,
Declaring she would never sleep alone
While the flower of youth she yet did own.

From the moment Grifone heard the news, 103
He ne'er ceased his lament, night or day;
Whate'er pleasure the busy world pursues,
Seemed but to vex him, more than I can say,
(Let him reflect, who Love's court doth choose,
How finely tempered are his darts in play)
While all the more grievous was his pain,
In that his shame was too great to complain.

And this because a thousand times before 104
Aquilante had reproved him for that love,
Begged him to banish it from his heart's core,
Being wise, and reluctant to approve
This foolish maiden, who he felt was more
Fickle than all others, and so would prove.
The knight forgave her, despite his brother;
It seems we prize our own opinion ever.

Therefore, without telling Aquilante, 105
He thought to ride to Antioch alone,
And carry her away, who, so sweetly,
Had borne away his heart as twere her own;
And find him who'd taken her and, swiftly,
Wreak vengeance on him, such as few had known.
I'll relate what came of this, every word;
My next canto shall tell all that occurred.





Canto XVI: Rinaldo at the Siege of Paris

Canto XVI: 1–4: The pains of misplaced love

The pains of love are many, and full sore, 1
Of which I have endured the major part;
And, to my cost, well read in them, and more,
Can speak of them as twere my trade or art.
Thus, if I say, or if I've said before,
In speech or on the page, and from the heart,
'Love's ills may seem light, or harsh and bitter',
Believe me, my judgement's all the truer.

I say, have said, and, till I die, will say, 2
That he who's caught in a most worthy snare,
Though his lady scorns his desire alway,
And to his greatest wish gives little care,
Though Love deprives him of his rightful pay,
His time spent wearily, his pleas but air,
He, while his heart is ever aimed on high,
Should grieve not, though he's like to fade and die.

Let him lament, who ever serves as slave 3
To two bright eyes, and to lovely tresses,
Beneath which, yet, a wanton heart betrays
Itself, and what's far from pure addresses.
The saddened wretch would fly, but feels always
The arrow's wound, a stag the hunt presses,
Ashamed both of himself, and of his love,
Afraid to speak, yet helpless to remove.

Lo, in this sad case, was young Grifone, 4
Who saw his error, yet could not amend it;
He knew his heart was set, most foolishly,
On faithless Orrigille; he did own it.
Yet ill-use o'er reason gains the victory,
While to appetite yields our will and wit.
Howe'er treacherous, thankless, vile is she,
We're forced to seek for her, where'er she be.

Canto XVI: 5-7: Grifone finds the lovers near Damascus

I say, resuming now my lengthy tale, 5
That he left Jerusalem, secretly,
Nor his brother with his plans did regale,
Who'd reproved his foolishness, frequently.
But northwards he, to Ramla, sought a trail
Borad and level, and the going easy;
Six days then to Damascus, as he thought;
From there, Syrian Antioch he sought.

Just north of Damascus, he met the pair, 6
She, and the lover her heart had claimed,
As well-matched (in the sins they did share)
As flower and stem, and equally shamed
By their light hearts, forever free of care.
One a flirt, one a traitor might be named;
While each one hid their respective defect,
To others' cost, neath a courteous aspect.

Now, tis fair to say, the lover, a knight, 7
Came, fully armed, on a mighty charger,
With Orrigille, a most gorgeous sight,
In a dress of blue, with a gold border,
And two men at the rear, left and right,
Bearing one his shield, his helm the other;
For, to Damascus, they all did journey,
To make a brave display at the tourney.

Canto XVI: 8-13: Orrigille lays the blame on Grifone

Now, the King of Damascus, on a day, 8
Had declared a festival, the reason
For their visit and their gaudy display,
And there too came many a champion.
On seeing Grifone, she felt dismay,
Fearful of his scornful opinion,
Knowing that her knight might, in a breath,
Being the weaker man, face sudden death.

Yet she was so audacious and cunning, 9
(Though she shook from head to foot with fear)
That she fixed her expression, adopting
A pleasant tone, and let no trace appear
Of her anxiety, while alerting
Her lover, and, as if he were her dear,
Ran to Grifone, stretched her arms out wide,
Then clasped his neck, hung there awhile, and sighed.

Matching each affectionate gesture 10
To her suavity of speech, oft weeping,
She said: 'My lord, is this the due measure
Of my reward, for praising and adoring
Your good self, to live as a lone creature
A year, nigh on two, and you not grieving?
And, had I waited there till you returned,
I know not if your presence I'd have earned.

When, every day expecting you'd appear, 11
From Nicosia, and the high court there,
Holding me (infected with the fever!) dear,
Whom you left (fearing death!) in others' care,
I heard you'd gone to Syria, then drear
Were my days, and my sorrows harsh and rare,
Such that, without the means to follow you,
I near pierced my loving heart quite through.

But Fortune, by her double gift, has shown 12
More care for me than you have ever done,
She sent my brother here, who is my own
Screen against dishonour; that is the one
Gift; then that you've searched for me, to atone,
Which I prize more than aught else neath the sun,
And in good time, for had you stayed longer,
I'd have died of a love, ever stronger.'

The deceitful minx so pursued her theme, 13
(Worse than a fox for subtlety that same)
And so astutely worked her cunning scheme
That poor Grifone now received the blame,
While he was forced to treat with high esteem
This relative, her flesh and blood, in name,
And thereby swallow her whole deception,
As if it held more truth than Luke or John.

Canto XVI: 14–16: He accepts her excuses

For, not only did he fail to reproach her, 14
That wicked, though more than lovely, fay,
But he took no vengeance on her lover,
Who'd made her his mistress, but sought a way
Instead to defend himself, and rather
Deflect some portion of the blame away;
While by her brother (for so she'd professed
Him to be) she was oft kissed, and caressed.

And so, he rode, with our knight, to the gate 15
Of Damascus, while telling good Grifone
That the wealthy King of Syria, had of late
Announced he would hold a sumptuous tourney,
And that whoever came, or poor or great,
And of whatever faith he chanced to be,
Whether Christian or other, could stay
There safely, while the feast was under way.

However, I now choose not to follow, 16
The tale of deceitful Orrigille,
Who, in her day, not one loving fellow,
But a thousand, treated as perversely.
I turn to Paris; where with blow on blow
Two hundred thousand men yet warred cruelly,
(Scorched by the sparks of that dreadful fire)
Bringing its people fear, and pain, and ire.

Canto XVI: 17–20: We return to Paris under assault from Agramante

I left you at the point where Agramante 17
Had launched his fierce assault upon a gate,
Which he had thought he might attack freely,
It lacking guards, abandoned to its fate.
Yet King Charlemagne kept watch there, nobly,
With many a master of war, he did wait,
Two Angelinis, Guidos, Angeliero,
Otone, Avino, Avolio, Berlingiero.

The men on both sides sought now to display 18
Their prowess before king and emperor;
Knowing that praise and riches, on that day,
They might win by true service in this war.
But the Saracens could not repair, I say,
The damage they incurred, troubled sore;
A tithe lay dead, pierced in face and breast,
Which spoke of their brave folly to the rest.

A hail of arrows, from the city-wall, 19
Rained down upon the enemy below;
Up to the trembling sky, rose cry and call,
From the defenders, and the crowded foe.
But Charles and Agramante I must stall;
To sing of Africa's great Mars, I go,
King Rodomonte, devoid of pity,
Who now ran amok, amidst the city.

I wonder if, indeed, you yet recall 20
That Saracen, of reckless bravery,
Who, twixt the outer and the inner wall,
Had left so many of his company
Consumed there by that great fiery squall,
A sight to arouse the Christians' pity;
And how he'd cleared the moat at a bound,
Reaching the very summit of the mound.



Stanza 19 "*Up to the trembling sky, rose cry and call*"



Stanza 20

Canto XVI: 21-28: Rodomonte runs amok within the city

Once the Saracen intruder was spied, 21
With scaly hide, and clad in strange armour,
By the old and weak, gathered there, inside,
Now hanging on every whispered rumour,
Cries of grief and woe spread far and wide,
Lamenting, they beat their palms together;
While none, indeed, remained there who could flee,
To house or shrine, and scape the enemy.

Yet this the cruel sword to few conceded, 22
Which the mighty Saracen swirled around,
As here a foot, and half a leg, were ceded,
While there a head went flying to the ground;
One man, sliced across, his cries unheeded,
Another, by the falling blade, uncrowned;
While of the many conquered in that chase,
Not one of them bore wounds on chest or face.

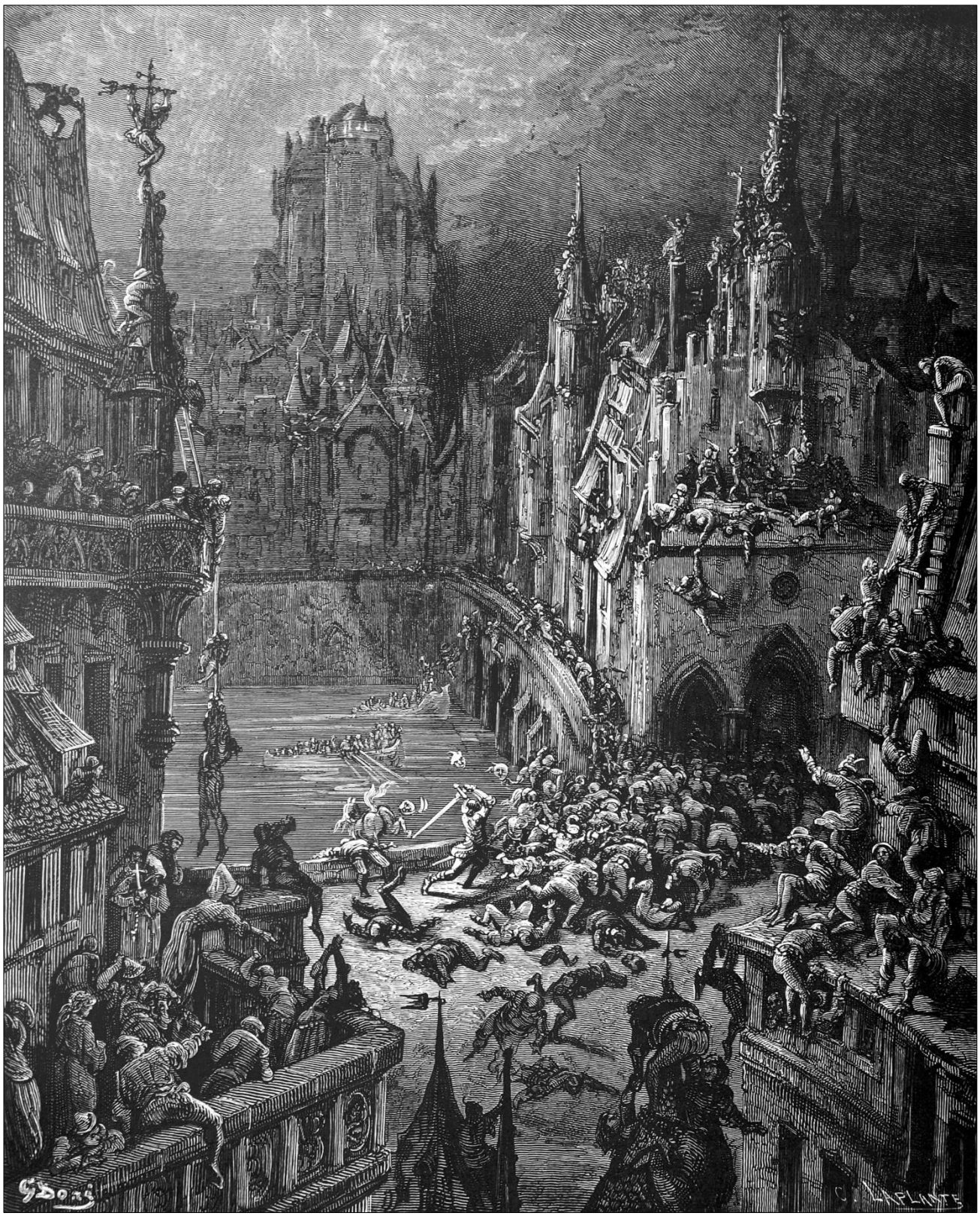
What the tiger wreaks on the fearful herd, 23
In the Hyrcanian field, or by the Ganges,
What, by the lambs and goats, is oft incurred
On Etna's slopes, when'er the wolf doth please,
This pagan executed, in a word,
Not on squadrons, but mere crowds of these
Sad folk, like sheep, of life now swiftly shorn;
All deserving of death, ere they were born.

Not one of them would look him in the face 24
Of the many that he pierced, cut, and maimed.
All that street, which leads towards the space
Before Pont Saint-Michel, the pagan claimed,
Whirling his sword, as onwards he did race;
Careless of lord or servant, his blade aimed
At sinner and saint alike, running swiftly,
Went the proud and fearsome Rodomonte.

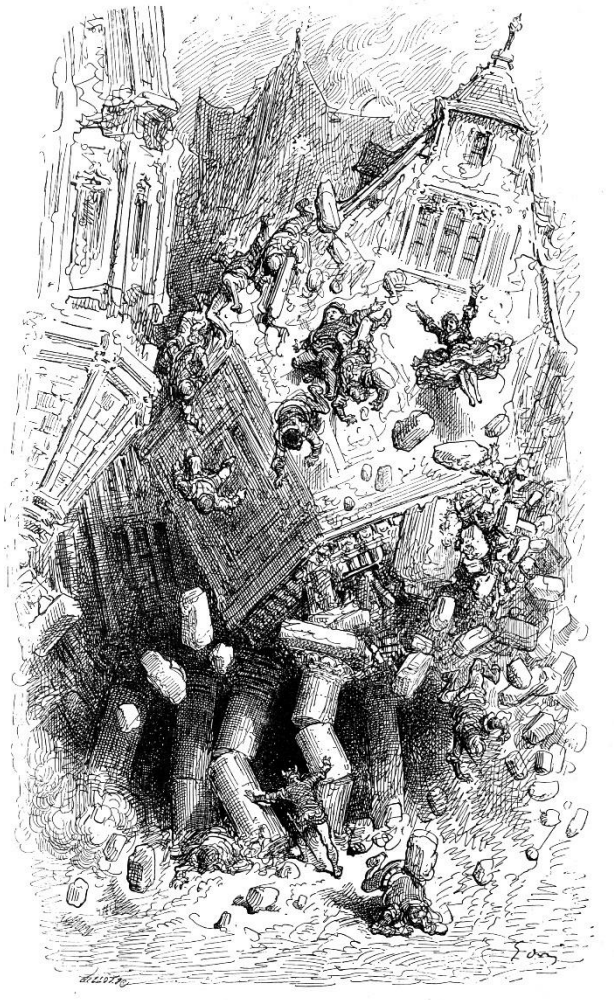
His religion proved no shield to the priest 25
Nor innocence a safeguard to the child,
Nor kind eyes and crimson cheeks to the least
Of ladies or maidens, meek and mild,
While the old struck at their chests, ere they ceased
To breathe, where the king, as cruel and wild
As he was brave, ran up the street in rage,
Not distinguishing by rank, or sex, or age.

Nor did that Lord of the Impious stain 26
His hands with human blood and gore, alone,
But against the walls, of houses, he was fain
To hurl himself (for few were made of stone,
In those days) bearing gouts of fire in his train.
(I well believe it, for tis widely known
That Paris then like some dense forest stood,
And six in ten there are still made of wood)

Though all was alight, it seemed his hatred 27
Was still far from quenched and, where'er,
He applied his hands, the disaster spread,
Tumbling roofs far and wide, naught did he spare.
Never, at Padua, was bombard seen so dread,
When the mighty battle was raging there,
Or so powerful in shattering its wall,
As this king was, who made great houses fall.



Stanza 24 "*Whirling his sword, as onwards he did race*"



Stanza 27

If, while Rodomonte exercised his sword 28
And brought flames to the streets of the city,
Agramante had pressed hard, be assured
Paris had been lost; and his, the victory.
But he was thwarted by a warrior lord,
A valiant knight midst the English army,
Racing to their aid, with the Scots, that day,
Led by Silence, and Saint Michael, on the way.

Canto XVI: 29-38: Rinaldo arrives, and exhorts his men

God willed that, while the King of Algiers 29
brought
Fire and destruction to the streets within,
Rinaldo came, that flower of every court,
To Paris, with the English, and their din.
Three leagues above, a bridge he laid athwart
The Seine, and by the left bank then did win
They way, such that in moving to attack,
The river would be sited at their back.

He'd commanded six thousand fighting men, 30
All archers, led by Edward, to the fore;
With him two thousand light-cavalrymen,
Under Ariman; from Picardy's far shore
By the swiftest roads they sped, who then
By Porte Saint-Martin might enter in; or
By Porte Saint-Denis bring Paris succour,
And defend her safety thus, and honour.

And after them he'd sent the baggage train, 31
With their equipment, by the shortest road,
While, with the troops that did still remain,
He made a circuit, where the river flowed;
Bridges and boats he bore to cross the Seine,
Fords being scarce, as ruin there he sowed,
Downed the bridges to his rear, by design,
Then ranked the English and the Scots in line.

But bringing, first, the knights and captains, 32
there,
In a ring about him, stood atop a hill
High above the plain, where all could share
His words, and hear all his thoughts and will.
'My lords,' he cried, 'give thanks in prayer,
To God, who guided us, and leads you still,
Who, through your sweat, and a little valour,
Above every race, shall bring you honour.

Through you two princes shall be defended, 33
If, from siege, you now relieve this city;
Your own king who, ever, has depended
On you, his wall gainst death or slavery;
And one whose praise has e'er ascended
Above, your emperor, throned in majesty;
And, with them, other kings, and dukes, and knights,
Many a lord, that in wide lands delights.

Thus, in saving this city, not only 34
Parisians shall be obliged to you,
Fearful, and saddened by more than merely
Their own despair, but that of others, too,
Of their dear wives and children, who clearly
Share their trouble, risking all anew,
And those virgins, cloistered, dedicated,
That pray their chaste vows be not frustrated.

I repeat, that in rescuing this city, 35
Not only will all Paris hold you dear,
But the folk of every Christian country,
Of lands that support her, far and near;
For all of Christendom owns to many
A brave soul midst those beleaguered here.
By victory, in what must now ensue,
More than the French will be obliged to you.

If, for rescuing one worthy citizen, 36
The soldiers of old received a crown,
Then for shielding the lives of many men,
What reward? Or for saving a whole town?
Shall jealousy now, or sloth, yet again,
Bring these most sacred walls tumbling down?
Believe me, should this city not endure,
Nor Italy, nor Germany, stands secure;

Nor any other land where men adore 37
That Christ, who died for us, upon the Cross.
Think not that distance saves yours from the Moor,
Nor that the sea shall keep those isles from loss,
For if from Gibraltar, or their native shore,
Those Gates of Hercules they quit, because
Fresh plunder and new riches they'd command,
What will they do once they possess this land?

And if nor gain nor honour leads you here, 38
To play your part in this great enterprise,
Then tis our common duty to appear,
And aid our Holy Church, in martial guise.
Nor this weakened enemy should you fear,
You'll see how swift their broken army flies,
Its inexperienced troops, in their fright,
Lacking armour, strength, or guts for a fight.'

Canto XVI: 39-42: He deploys, near to the Moorish army

Thus, it was that, in clear and fluent speech, 39
Rinaldo gave to valiant knight, and lord,
And eager captain, every and each
Good reason why he should his aid afford
To Paris, although he sought to preach
To the converted, their loyalty assured.
His speech done, he ordered them quietly
Beneath their banners, all and separately.

Without noise and murmur on the way, 40
The tripartite host deployed; Zerbino,
Marching along the river-bank that day,
Was granted the first meeting with the foe,
While the Irish were sent further away,
Taking a wide arc; twixt the two did go
The English cavalry and infantry,
The Duke of Lancaster, leading boldly.

As soon as this was done, brave Rinaldo, 41
Galloping his mount along the river,
And, swiftly overtaking Zerbino
And his men, their passage slower,
Came to where Oran's king, and Sobrino,
Had quartered the Moorish troops together,
Who, half a mile or so from those of Spain,
Were positioned to guard the open plain.

The Christian army, who, on their side, 42
Had arrived most safely and securely,
Led there by Silence, and their Angel guide,
No longer waited for action, quietly;
On hearing the foe's loud cries, they replied,
Making the shrill trumpets sound out fiercely,
Filling the heavens, once and then again,
And chilling the heart of every Saracen.

Canto XVI: 43-48: Rinaldo slays Puliano, King of Oran

Rinaldo spurred his mighty steed ahead. 43
Past all the company, with lowered lance;
A bow-shot's length, beyond the Scots, he sped,
Tired of delay, impatient to advance,
As a sudden gust of wind oft is bred
Within a coming storm, and forth will dance,
So, before the following troops, indeed,
Did the knight, urging on Bayard, his steed.

The coming of this French paladin, 44
Brought to the watching Moors a taste of fear;
Hands trembled on the lance, deep within
The ranks, feet and thighs too, with that spear,
As they gripped the saddles; but, amidst the din,
King Puliano, his gaze firm and clear,
Not knowing him, nor anticipating
A mighty shock, set his charger moving.

He stooped above the lance as he sped on, 45
Calm and collected for the encounter,
Then abandoned the reins and, thereupon,
With his spurs alone, urged on his charger,
While the knight, betraying no deflection,
Feigned not, revealing by his fierce ardour,
His epithet (his skill writ in the stars)
Not Amone's son, but the son of Mars.

Well-matched, the pair exchanged cruel blows, 46
Their lances sought to strike each other's head,
Yet, unequal in arms and strength these foes,
The one rode on, the other fell stone dead.
A clearer sign of skill the true knight shows
Than simply a stout lance thrust out ahead,
But good fortune a knight needs even more,
Without which, victory is never sure.

Grasping the lance tightly, Rinaldo flew 47
Towards Puliano, who was possessed
Of the massive bulk, and bone, and sinew
To resist, but not the courage; for the rest,
The blow Rinaldo gave was sound and true,
The stout shield's lower rim put to the test;
And all those who decline to praise that blow,
No lance had ere reached higher, you should know.

And, then again, the shield he'd pierced right 48
through,
Though wrought of palm without, and steel within,
So that forth, through the belly, his soul flew,
And, slighter than his frame, a path did win;
While the charger, a mount both good and true,
That had thought all day that weight to underpin,
Gave thanks, internally, to our brave knight
Who'd eased him, with the outcome of the fight.

Canto XVI: 49–54: Then, with Zerbino, presses on against the foe

His lance shattered, Rinaldo wheeled his steed 49
So swiftly that it seemed the beast had wings,
And where the ranks seemed thickest indeed,
Launched himself; as a thorn pricks and stings,
Blood-stained Fusberta, his blade, now freed,
Stabbed arms like panes of glass, while its swings
Biting not through some solid, armoured sheath,
But wood and cloth, soon found the flesh beneath.

Few tempered plates with iron pins it met, 50
That sharp descending blade, where'er it fell,
But shields of oak or leather, weaker yet,
And quilted coats and turbans, that dispel
Light blows alone; while his furious onset
Thinned, cleft, pierced, cut, and sheared his foes as
well,
Who could no more against his sword prevail,
Than grass against the scythe, or crops the gale.

The foremost squadron he had put to flight, 51
When, with the vanguard, came brave Zerbino.
Before his men, rode out that valiant knight,
With levelled lance, while the rest did follow;
The Scots beneath his banner, roused to fight
With equal ardour, ran to launch their blow;
Like fierce wolves they seemed or lions, that reap
A bloody path amongst the goats and sheep.

Both the knights, with lowered lances, pressed 52
Against the foe; between them little space,
As their fleeing enemies they addressed,
Eating up the ground, speeding on apace;
No stranger dance was ever so expressed,
For no pagan dared the fierce Scots to face;
One cut and pierced, the other fled and died,
As if led there to perish and abide.

The pagans' hearts grew colder now than ice, 53
Those of the Scots hotter than scorching flame.
The Moors began to think, caught in that vice,
Their foes Rinaldos, mighty as that same.
Sobrino now advanced, not waiting twice
For the herald's call; onwards they came,
His braver troops, responding to the cry,
More skilful, better armed, prepared to die,

Worthier to fight the African cause, 54
Though not deemed worthy of the greatest prize;
Dardinello, led his ill-equipped Moors,
Inexperienced in battle, to our eyes;
He had a shining helm, wrought on those shores,
His limbs sheathed in metal, and likewise
His breast; while the fourth company, the best,
Beneath Isolier, now stirred from rest.



Stanza 56

Canto XVI: 55-58: The Scots engage on a broader front

Meanwhile the Duke of Marra, brave Thraso, 55
That rejoiced in the fray, had raised the bar
To the lists, bidding his soldiers follow,
Seeing Isolier lead out Navarre,
Hearing the pagans cry against the foe,
Longing to reach those pagans from afar;
Then Ariodante roused his company,
He who'd been made the Duke of Albany.

The rising noise of the shrill trumpeting, 56
The sound of drums, and uncouth instruments,
The twang of bows, and the slings' loud whirring,
The creaking machines, their wheels in torment,
And above the din, and all that groaning,
The cries, and roars, and moans of sore lament,
Were louder than the cataracts' swift fall,
With which the Nile, descending, deafens all.
Twin flights of arrows from the armies soared,

Darkening the whole heavens in their flight. 57
A mist of dust, breath, sweat issued abroad,
Filling the air, and challenging the light.
One side advanced, the other would afford
Them ground, then change places, in the fight,
Leaving the dead, with the foes they'd slain,
Revealed to sight, spread-eagled, on the plain.

Where a squad withdrew, through weariness, 58
Another swiftly came to fill its place;
From here and there, men marched into the press,
Or rode their steeds towards an empty space;
While Earth, beneath them, bloodied now no less,
Her verdant cloak, bright crimson did deface.
And where but blue and yellow flowers had been,
Now men and mounts lay dead amidst the scene.

Canto XVI: 59-65: Zerbino's exploits

Zerbino wrought many a wondrous deed, 59
More than any at such a tender age.
He many a foe to his death did lead,
Bringing destruction on them, in his rage;
While Ariodante, his men agreed,
Showed as a paragon upon that stage,
Filling with dread and wonder, from afar,
The soldiers of Castile, and of Navarre.

Chelindo and Mosco, bastard brothers, 60
(Calabrun of Aragon, their late father)
With one well-respected by the others,
Brave Calamidor of Barcelona,
Left the standard, covering each other's
Backs, and hoping to win fame forever
By slaying this Zerbino, in due course
Succeeded in wounding the prince's horse.

Pierced three times in the flank, the creature died, 61
While Zerbino rose quickly to his feet;
Striking his foes, vengeance aloud he cried,
Eager to bring about their swift defeat.
And first to Mosco his sharp blade applied,
Who'd hoped to make the victory complete,
Piercing him, in reply, such that he fell
Into the dust, and there the man did dwell.

Seeing him fall, as by a stealthy blow, 62
Chelindo his brother, filled with fury,
Thinking to surprise him, charged Zerbino,
But the latter seized his bridle, swiftly,
And brought his war-horse down, at a blow,
Destined never again its stall to see,
For so mighty was the stroke, full and true,
Both the warrior and the mount, he slew.

When Calamidor saw the other fall, 63
He gripped the reins, to turn and quickly flee,
But Zerbino struck hard, seeking to forestall
His flight, from behind, while crying, fiercely:
'Stay, traitor, stay!' The stroke, unlike his call,
Failed to reach the rider, straying slightly,
But fell hard across the horse's croup, and so,
Brought the charger to the ground, at a blow.

Quitting the saddle, crawling o'er the ground, 64
The Spaniard sought safety, but in vain,
For Thraso's charger, that the earth did pound,
Passed over him, and struck him hard again,
As many an enemy now gathered round,
Our captains went racing o'er the plain,
Ariodante and Lurcanio,
To bring a spare mount to Duke Zerbino.

Twas then Margarno and Artalico, 65
Felt the force of Ariodante's blade;
Casimiro and, likewise, Etearco,
For, more heavily still, on them it weighed.
The former pair escaped all further woe;
The latter fell to earth, their last debt paid.
Lurcanio revealed his prowess too,
Who charged, and struck, and overturned, and slew.

Canto XVI: 66-70: The deeds of the English contingent

Think not the conflict raging on the plain 66
Was less intense than that by the river,
Nor that the Duke of Lancaster was fain
To maintain his place, and merely linger;
Rather he moved against the ranks of Spain,
Where the fighting was long and bitter,
For horse, and foot, and their brave captains' skills
Ensured a battle of opposing wills.

Forward went Oldrado and Fieramonte, 67
Those brave Dukes of York and of Gloucester,
With them moved Richard of Warwick, swiftly,
Henry, Duke of Clarence, followed after.
They faced Follicone, battling fiercely,
Brave Baricondo, and Matalista;
Those from Almeria, and from Majorca,
They led forth, and all those of Granada.

At first, the fight seemed balanced equally, 68
With but small advantage, though men died;
One, then the other, moved forward slowly
Then backward, like the rippling of the tide,
Or like the wheat, in a May breeze, stirred gently,
Swayed to and fro, and from side to side.
But when Fortune had toyed with them a while,
Upon the Christians she chose to smile.

At the same time the Duke of Gloucester 69
From his saddle toppled Matalista,
While Fieramonte, skilful as ever,
Struck Follicon, piercing his right shoulder,
And overthrew him; one and the other,
Midst the English, were taken prisoner,
As Clarence's hand, high above the strife,
Robbed Baricondo, as it fell, of life.

The Moorish troops knew great fear, at the sight, 70
While the Christians felt greater ardour;
Thus, the former, instantly, took to flight,
The latter advancing with fresh fervour,
Gaining ground, as their foes ceased to fight,
Then hounding them, ere they could recover;
And if none had come to the pagans' aid,
Then all there had been captured, or unmade.

Canto XVI: 71-74: Ferrau enters the fight

But Ferrau who, until that moment came, 71
Had scarcely left King Marsilius' side,
On witnessing the rout, was filled with shame,
As their troops, in flight, scattered far and wide,
He spurred his charger; deep into that same
Throng of men he plunged, that ebbing tide,
Just as Olimpio de la Serra,
Struck in the head, was silenced forever.

A youth he was who, with his sweet singing 72
Attuned to the tones of the twin-horned lyre,
Melted every heart, and set men dreaming,
Hard though they were, or devoid of fire.
Happy were he if he had scorned the fighting,
And sought fame pursuing his first desire,
Eschewing the scimitar and the lance,
That led one so young to his death in France!

When Ferrau saw Olimpio overthrown, 73
One whom he loved, and held in high regard,
He felt more pity for that youth alone,
Than for a thousand others slain and marred,
And cleft the man that struck him to the bone,
Splitting the helm in twain, the blow so hard
It sliced through skull and face, then neck and chest,
And left the Christian dead amidst the rest.

Nor did he linger, swinging his great sword, 74
Breaking helms and breastplates, far and wide,
Slicing at some man's brow, his fate assured;
A head, an arm, the sharp blade would divide.
Heart and soul from many a man he clawed,
Heartening the fearful on the pagans' side,
While the dispirited and fleeing army,
Breaking from their ranks, he sought to rally.

Canto XVI: 75-78: King Agramante attacks the Scots

Into battle rode King Agramante, 75
Bent on slaying and scattering the foe;
With him Baliverso, Farurante,
Soridano, Prusione, Bambirago,
And other, nameless, soldiers, full many
Whose blood, ere that long day was done, would flow,
To form a lake; one could, with greater ease,
Number the leaves, shed by the autumn trees.

Agramante removed a company 76
Led by the King of Fez, from neath the wall,
And commanded that host, there and then,
To issue beyond the camp, and forestall
A charge by the Irish cavalrymen;
They were, it would appear, set to fall
On the tents from behind, for they had made
A wide arc, all their banners there displayed.

The King of Fez soon obeyed the order, 77
Lest delay impair the action in hand;
While Agramante drew his men together,
And, parting company, took his command
Towards the river, thinking to cover
His left flank, as events did now demand,
For a courier, a terse request had made,
(The man sent by Sobrino) seeking aid.

More than half his camp he led to battle, 78
While the Scotsmen trembled at the sound,
Their dread such that, like a herd of cattle,
In disorder, they abandoned their ground.
Lurcanio, made of finer metal,
And Zerbino reserves of courage found,
As did Ariodante; though Zerbino
Might have died, but was saved by Rinaldo.

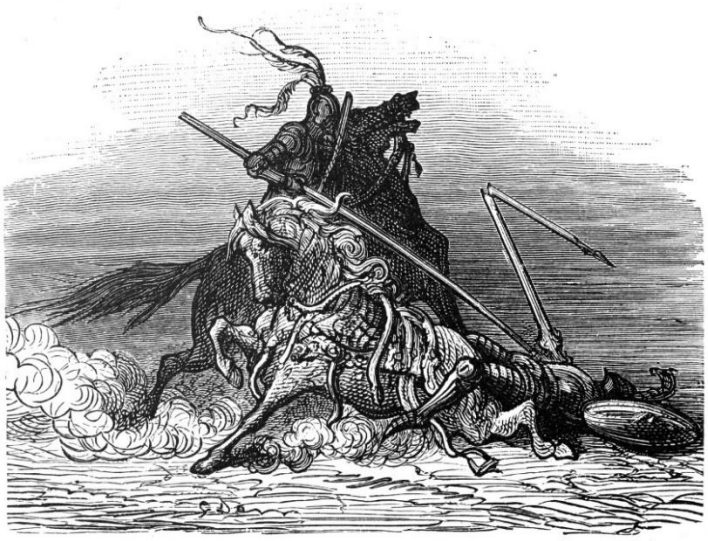
Canto XVI: 79-84: Rinaldo unseats Agramante

For that warrior, pursuing, in their flight, 79
A hundred banners, elsewhere on the field,
Hearing Zerbino's cry, saw that the knight,
All alone, on foot, would be forced to yield,
For, midst the Africans, dire was his plight,
Abandoned by his men; Rinaldo wheeled,
And, to where the Scots ran from the fray,
Spurring his steed, he swiftly made his way.

He rode among the fleeing troops, and cried: 80
'Where, go you? What baseness in you now
Leads you to yield, and quit your leader's side,
Abandoning all, breaking every vow?
Behold the spoils, destined to hang with pride
On the walls of every church, yet you bow
To lesser men. What praise what glory, here?
Dishonour, and not death, true soldiers fear.'

Then, from a squire, he took a mighty lance. 81
Prusione, the Alvarrachian king,
He saw nearby, preparing to advance,
And knocked him to the ground, surely dying.
Agricalte, he dispensed with, at a glance
Bambirago, Soridano wounding,
Who would, surely, have breathed no longer,
If Rinaldo's weapon had proved stronger.

The lance shattering, he drew Fusberta, 82
And Serpentino of the Star he struck,
Who, protected by its power, as ever,
Still felt the blow; hard was the fall he took.
Then around the Scottish lord, a wider
Space he cleared, while, in a rare stroke of luck,
The duke, on foot, seized a riderless mount,
Then gained the saddle, on his own account.



Stanza 82



Stanza 83

And well it was, indeed, that he did so, 83
He might not have won forth, if he'd delayed.
For Agramante, and Dardinello,
Sobrino, Balastro, the ground had made.
Yet he'd mounted, in time, and even though
He was attacked, he wielded his sharp blade,
Sending this or that man down to hell,
That they of this, our life above, might tell.

The good Rinaldo who e'er had regard 84
To unhorsing the boldest and the best,
With his sharp sword struck Agramante hard,
Who, to his eyes, seemed prouder than the rest,
(He'd fought a thousand battles, sang the bard)
As brave Bayard drove hard against the chest
Of his charger, such that the double blow
Spilled horse and rider to the ground below.

Canto XVI: 85-89: Charlemagne views Rodomonte's trail of destruction

While, without, in cruel and savage battle, 85
Hatred, Rage, and Fury, stirred the fight,
Rodomonte, within, those walls did rattle
Of house and shrine, burning left and right,
And slaying the people there, like cattle,
While Charlemagne yet laboured, out of sight.
Edward, and Ariman, he now received,
With the British force; and seemed relieved.

But a squire came to him, with pallid face, 86
Who scarce could draw his breath, and loudly cried:
'Oh, my lord, my lord!' naught else, for a space,
Till he had strength to utter aught beside.
'The Roman Empire falls, and Christ his grace
Has withdrawn from his people, penned inside.
From the sky, came a devil, free of pity,
To slay us, now Our Lord has left the city.

This Satan (for none other can it be) 87
Burns the houses, destroys the churches there.
Turn and gaze; those towers of smoke but see;
Huge walls of flame rise high into the air.
But hear those cries of woe and misery,
And trust to what your servant doth declare:
That sole creature, that brings both sword and fire,
Will render this, your city, one vast pyre.'

Like a man who, hearing noise all around, 88
(Cries, and groans, and alarm bells ringing)
Only grasps the true meaning of the sound
When it touches him, the danger pressing;
Such was Charlemagne, who quickly found
With ear, and eye, those signs of conflict rising.
Sending his finest troops on ahead,
Towards the tumult, and the cries, he sped.

Many a worthy, noble knight was there, 89
Summoned by the emperor to his side;
He directed their banners to the square,
Where the pagan had slain folk, far and wide;
Heard the cries, viewed the marks of that affair,
Human members, cruel tokens, sadly eyed.
No more: let those return some other time
That, willingly, would hear such things in rhyme.



Stanza 85 "*While, without, in cruel and savage battle, hatred, Rage, and Fury, stirred the fight*"



Canto XVII: Norandino and the Ogre

Canto XVII: 1-5: The curse of tyranny

The Lord of Justice when iniquity 1
Runs beyond the bounds of absolution,
Shows a justice equal to His pity,
To crown the tyrant is His solution,
Some monstrous expert in atrocity,
And grants him powers of execution.
He gave, to Rome, Marius and Sulla,
Two Neros, and the mad Caligula,

Domitian, the last Antonine, Commodus, 2
And, promoted from a common soldier
To imperial power, Maximinus.
Thus, to Creon, a Thebes must surrender,
An Agylla to Virgil's Mezentius,
He that drenched the fields with blood, not water;
And in Italy, in times near to our own,
Fierce Lombards, Huns, and Goths have held a throne.

And what of Attila? What of the impious 3
Ezzelino of Romana, and hundreds more?
Twas because of all their iniquitous
Deeds, God sent deep woe, and torment, and war.
And we have clear proof from those among us,
Not merely from the ancients, of His law,
When we, His worthless and ill-nurtured sheep,
He gives to some rapacious wolf to keep,

A beast, that having sated its own hunger, 4
And lacking the stomach to consume more,
Summons up some ultramontane other
From distant woods, greedier than before.
The bones of Trasimene, and Trebbia,
And Cannae, were yet sparse along the shore,
Compared to those that field and bank display
Where Adda, Mella, Ronco, Tara, stray.

Now, the Lord consents to our punishment
By those who, perchance, are worse than us,
For our sins, which are foul and pestilent,
And our desires, base and iniquitous.
Yet the time will come when our troops are sent
To despoil their lands, if more virtuous
We prove ourselves, their vile sins such again
As e'en Eternal Goodness must disdain.

Canto XVII: 6-13: Rodomonte reaches Charlemagne's palace

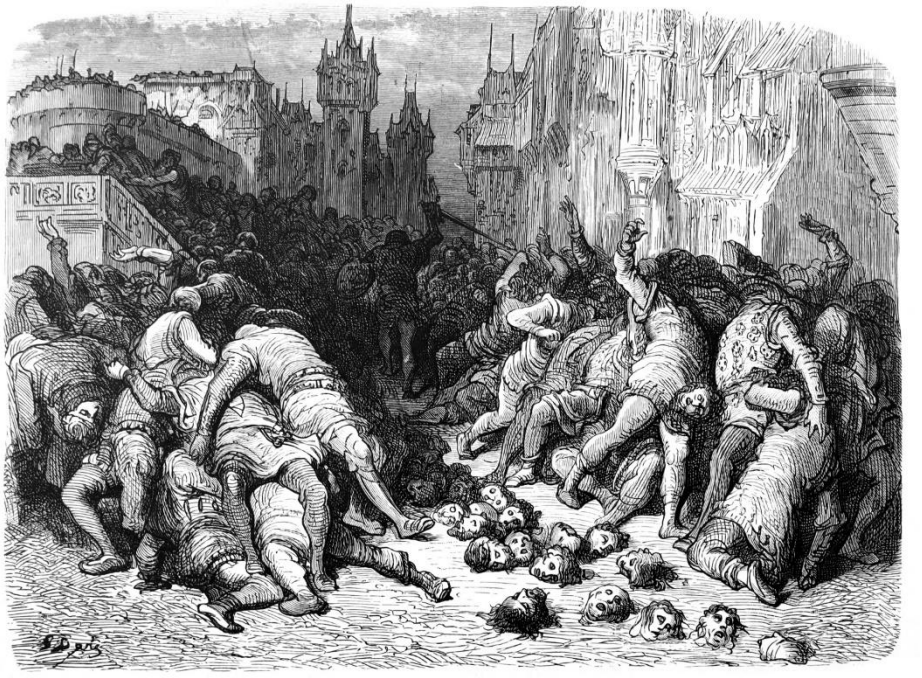
What excesses they must have committed,
This folk, to have troubled God's brow so;
For He the Turks and Moors had permitted
To rape, and kill, and plunder here below.
But worse than all to which they'd submitted,
Was Rodomonte's fury, bringing woe.
And so it was, I say, that Charlemagne.
Came seeking for him, in that place of pain.



Stanza 7

He saw the corpses littering the street,
The burning palaces, and ruined shrines,
A great part of the city razed complete,
Nor had he ever seen such fateful signs.
'Where will you flee to?' thus the king did greet
That crowd, 'Where is the coward that resigns
Himself to such a loss? What fresh city,
What place is yours, if you act shamefully?

Shall one man alone, constrained within,
Surrounded by walls he cannot conquer,
Go unchallenged, and thus his freedom win,
When all those around you die and suffer?'
Thus, Charlemagne now railed, and called it sin,
So intense the shame he felt; and, after,
To the open square, he then made his way
Where, before the palace, heaped corpses lay.



Stanza 8

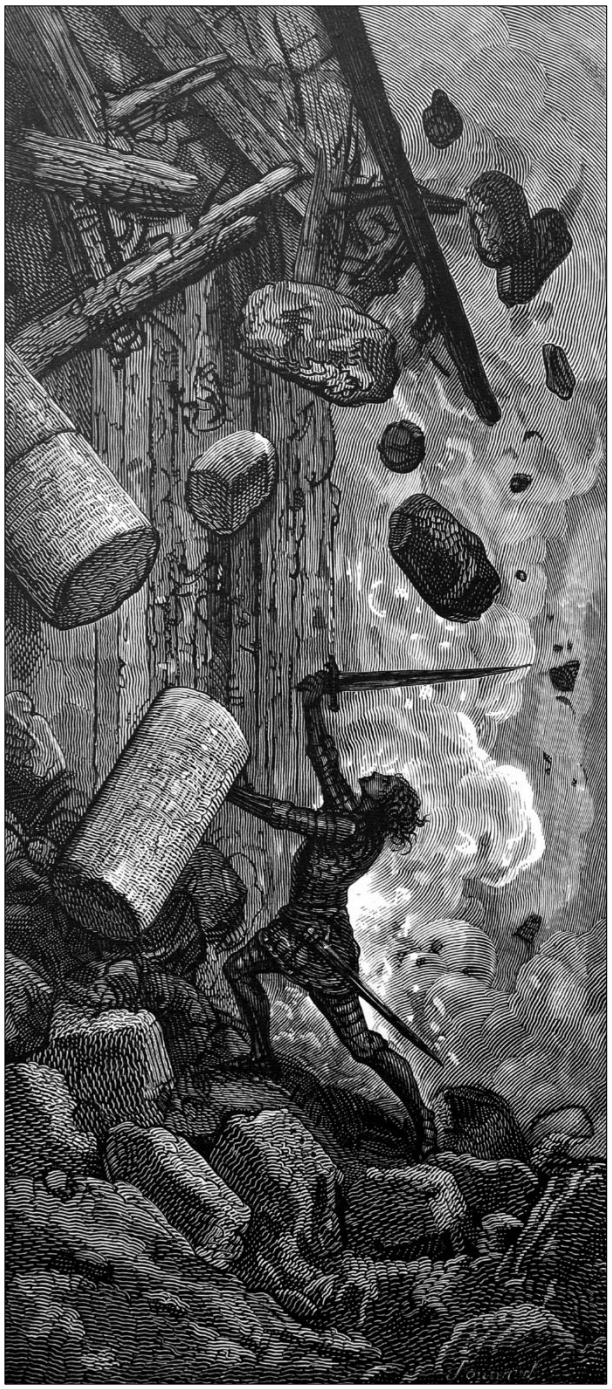
There, had fled many of the populace, 9
Hoping that they might find aid and shelter,
For well-fortified was that entire place,
With munitions for the brave defender.
Rodomonte, with proud and angry face,
Cleared the courtyard, scornful, as ever,
Of all the world, whirling his sword higher,
With one hand, with the other hurling fire.

He hammered on the gates, wide and tall, 10
Of the royal palace, as, from above,
The defenders let stones and timbers fall,
For whole sections they'd contrived to remove,
Hurling down the roofs of tower and hall;
Great fragments of them they sought to move,
Huge slabs, great columns, gilded beams, and more,
Prized by their grandsires, centuries before.

Rodomonte stood, gleaming in the light, 11
Clad all in steel, before the portal there,
Like a serpent issuing, shining bright,
Having sloughed its skin, to the outer air,
Proud of its scaly hide, and filled with spite,
Renewed in vigour, rising from its lair,
Forked tongue flickering, and eyes of fire,
All creatures yielding to its least desire.

Not stone or beam, not arbalest or bow, 12
Nor whatever else was aimed at the Moor,
Could arrest the hand of their mighty foe.
He struck, and cleft, and broke apart the door,
And made a vast opening, that did show
The courts full of people, and every floor
Filled with faces gazing, pale as death,
Scarce daring now to take a single breath.

But then there echoed from the vaults, on high, 13
Wails of woe, as the women sought to flee,
Striking their breasts and, with many a cry,
Seeking their chambers, in their misery,
Grasping the doorpost, or the bed nearby,
Some vile stranger would fill, seemingly;
Such was their state, menaced and sore afeared,
When Charlemagne, and his court, appeared.



Stanza 12

Canto XVII: 14–16: Charlemagne and his knights attack Rodomonte

The king turned to his mighty company, 14
Whom he'd e'er found loyal in time of need,
'Are you not those that, in Aspramonte,
Stood against Agolante, wrought the deed,
And slew Troyano, and bold Almonte,
And hundreds more? Do you, now, fear to bleed?'
He cried, 'When this vile foe we seek to face
Is but one more of that accursed race?



Stanza 14

Shall I behold less strength and skill in you 15
Than seems to live in that bold enemy?
Come, let your greater prowess be on view;
End this mere man, and his foul killing spree.
A valiant heart cares not when death ensue;
If the man dies well, therein lies victory.
Yet I doubt not; stronger are you by far,
For I have ever conquered where you are.'

With this, he spurred his mount, his lance held 16
low,
And galloped straight towards the Saracen,
Beside him rode Namo, Ugiero,
And Ulivier; came Avolio, then,
Otone, Berlingiero, Avino,
(Ever seen together, bravest of men)
Who charged at Rodomonte, allied,
In striking at his helmet, breast, or side.

Canto XVII: 17-21: We return to Grifone and Orrigille, in Damascus

But let us leave this talk of war, and ire; 17
Pray accept that I've said enough, for now,
Of that Saracen, bringing sword and fire,
As strong as he was cruel, you will allow.
It's time to seek Damascus, and enquire
Of Grifone, who rides with furrowed brow,
Beside Orrigille, and a brother
That is no kin of hers, but her lover.

Among the wealthy lands of the Levant, 18
The most populous, and the most ornate,
Is said to be Damascus; not distant
Seven days from Jerusalem's north gate.
Rich and fertile is the plain; abundant
Its crops, summer and winter, soon and late.
In that place, the dawn rays, shining bright,
Fill the hills, to the north-west, with their light.

Through the city, two crystal rivers flow, 19
That, dividing variously, water
An endless series of gardens, as they go,
That are never bare of leaf, or of flower;
And, their streams drive many a mill, also,
Possessing both the depth and the power,
Tis said; and that those who choose to wander
Its streets meet many a perfumed odour.

On that day, the main street was covered o'er 20
With bright cloths, of many a differing hue;
While fragrant herbs, and fresh green leaves, and
more,
Graced the open ground, and decked the walls too.
Every window was adorned, and every door,
With drapes and carpets, various and new,
But more so with fair ladies, richly dressed,
With costly jewels, and fine garments, blessed.

Within the gates, the people celebrated, 21
In the crowded squares, in joyful dance,
While in the streets, some demonstrated
Their greater rank, and set their steeds to prance;
And then their power the courtiers illustrated,
Knights, barons, vassals, with their slow advance,
And the showers of pearls, and gems, they wore,
From India, and Eritrea's shore.

Canto XVII: 22-25: Grifone learns the reason for the tournament

Grifone rode in, with his company, 22
Calmly gazing as he went, here and there;
When a knight stopped them, courteously,
And asked them to his palace in the square,
Where he wished them to stay, presently;
That they suffered no hardship, was his care.
He had them bathe, and then, cheerfully,
Led them to a sumptuous meal, those three.

He told them, then, how King Norandino, 23
King of Damascus, and all Syria,
Had invited every sworn knight, to go
Whether a native, or a foreigner,
To a great tournament, on the morrow,
Which would be held in the square, as ever;
Where, without straying further, one might show
Whether one's valour matched one's pride, or no.

Though that was not his purpose in coming, 24
Grifone agreed to participate,
For, when the occasion comes, tis pleasing
To display one's true worth, and demonstrate
One's martial skills; then asked him why the king
Gave the feast, and whether it was, of late,
A regular event, or something new,
By means of which his knights he might review.

'At every fourth moon,' came the reply, 25
'The king must offer a like tournament.
This is the first of them, for none, say I,
Have been held formerly, and his intent
Is to commemorate the day, drawn nigh,
On which his life was saved, though all but spent,
After four months of pain and woe, likewise
The constant threat of death before his eyes.

Canto XVII: 26-28: King Norandino's ship is caught in a gale

Norandino (to explain more fully), 26
Our monarch, had felt for many a year
A burning desire for the quite lovely
Daughter of the King of Cyprus; more dear
To him than any maid, and finally,
Sought her in marriage, then to bring her here,
With knights and ladies of her company,
To his Syrian realm, from o'er the sea.

But as we ran, with our mainsail outspread, 27
Through Carpathian waters, far from shore,
A storm arose, so cruel that it brought fear
Even to our old captain; down it bore
Upon the ship, took us, and drove us clear
From our course, threatening, evermore;
Yet left us, at the last, wet and weary,
In a bay with fresh streams, green and hilly.

We set up our pavilions, midst the trees, 28
Hung awnings there, and were more than happy;
Set a fire, and built a canteen, with ease,
And spread carpets for a banquet, swiftly;
Meanwhile, Norandino roamed, without cease,
The untrodden woods around, every valley,
Seeking goats, or deer: fallow, red, or roe;
And followed by two servants with his bow.

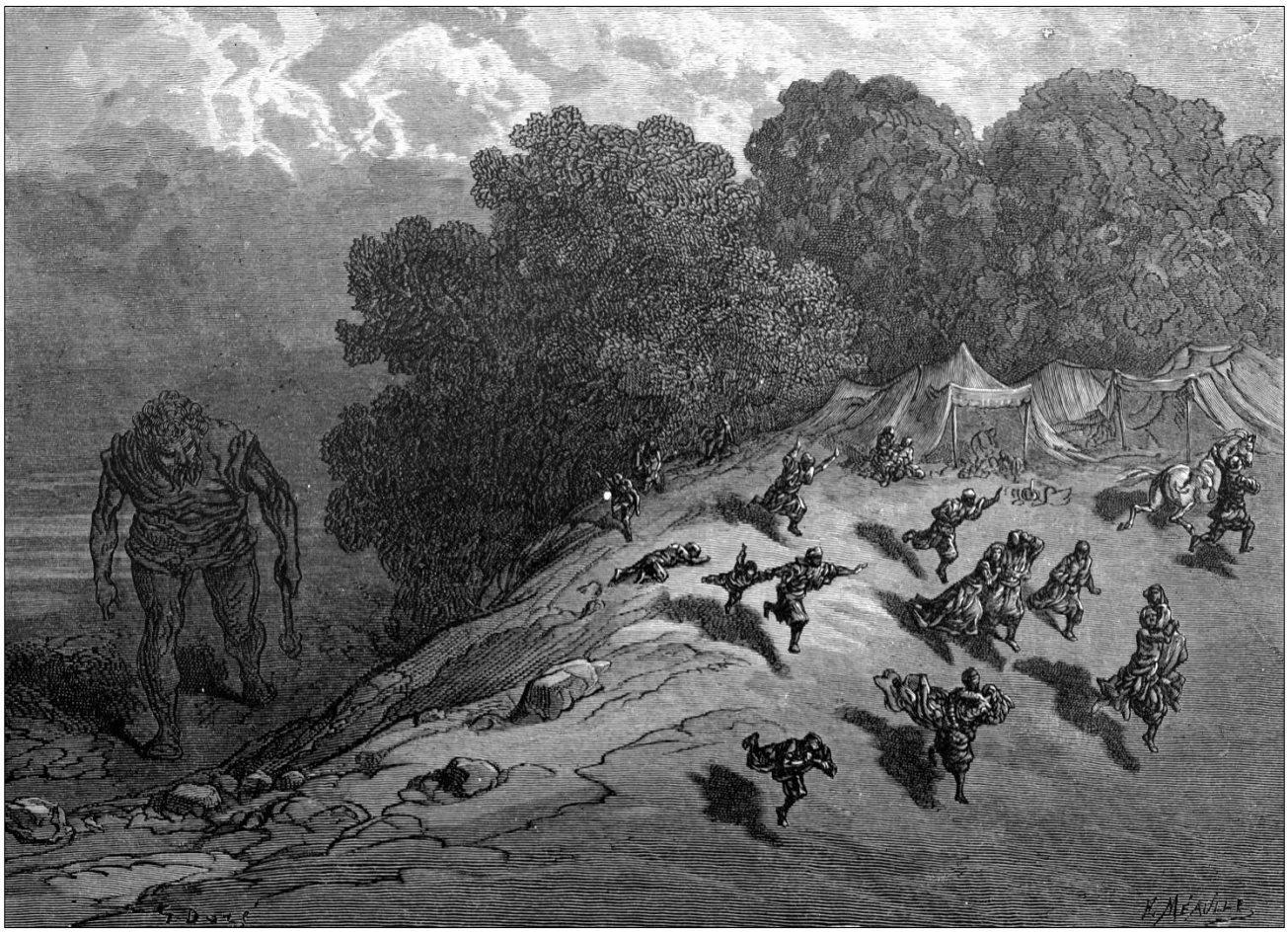
Canto XVII: 29-35: The rest of the company are captured by the Ogre

While we sat there, pleasantly, awaiting 29
The return of our monarch from the chase,
We saw a monstrous Ogre approaching,
Racing along the shore, towards that place.
God grant you never meet the wretched thing,
Nor that your eyes behold his dreadful face.
Better to hear that such exists, than see
It drawing near you, in reality.

Twas hard to calculate the creature's height, 30
So immense was he; he had, instead of eyes,
Two fungus-coloured berries, lacking sight,
Orbs of bone, neath the brow, of little size.
He came towards us, as I said, and might
Have been a hill decked out in mortal guise.
From his face two tusks, like a savage boar,
Projected, and a long snout, dripping gore.

He came running, scenting in the manner 31
Of a hound, when it's hot upon the trail.
We beheld him, and then fled, wherever
Fear drove us, with faces drawn and pale,
His blindness no comfort; he knew better
By sniffing at the ground, thus, all the tale
Of things about him than do those with sight;
Swift wings were needed to pursue our flight.

We scattered here and there, but all in vain; 32
He travelled faster than a sudden gale.
Of forty, scarce ten did our ship attain
By swimming, and were tempted to set sail.
He tucked some beneath his arm, and was fain
To clasp the rest to his chest, and avail
Himself of the immense pouch that was tied,
Like a shepherd's spacious purse, to his side.



Stanza 31



Stanza 32

The blind monster bore us off to his lair, 33
Carved deep into the cliff, above the shore,
Of marble were its walls, as white and bare
As a blank sheet of paper, fresh and raw.
A monstrous wife of sorts dwelt with him there;
Marks of pain and grief on her face she bore.
And women and maids too dwelt in that place,
Both fair and foul, of every age and race.

And close to this cave there was another, 34
Just beneath the summit of the rock,
No smaller in size, that, from the weather,
Served to hide, and defend his precious flock;
He would graze those sheep winter and summer,
Their number such that none could count his stock.
As he wished he'd pen them, or set them loose,
More to yield him pleasure than for use.

But, to mutton, he preferred human flesh, 35
And was seen, ere he had reached this enclave,
To eat three of our number, being fresh;
For the young and tender, such he did crave.
He moved a stone that had sealed the creche,
Drove forth his flock, and left us in that cave.
With that, he took his customary way,
While a flute, hung at his neck, he did play.



Stanza 35

Canto XVII: 36-39: Norandino reaches the Ogre's cave

Our king, meanwhile, returning to the shore, 36
Became aware of the loss he'd sustained,
For silence reigned and, everywhere, he saw,
Mere empty tents and canopies remained.
Nor did he know who should answer for
The theft, if such it was; fearful and pained,
He ran to the strand, and saw his men take
To a boat, that for the wide beach did make.

For as soon as their monarch came in view, 37
They launched the pinnace, and now plied the oar,
But no sooner did he hear, from its crew,
Of the Ogre, that he turned from the shore;
Indeed, his only thought was to pursue,
The creature till it reached its stony door.
So painful was the loss of his Lucina,
He was doomed to die, unless he found her.

On observing fresh footprints in the sand, 38
He tracked them, with a lover's fervour,
Swiftly, glancing about, on every hand,
Till the Ogre's cave he did discover;
Where imprisoned nearby, our fearful band
Awaited his return. Who worse could suffer?
At every sound we heard, we were afraid
That of our flesh his dinner would be made.

Fortune guided the monarch to the cave, 39
While the Ogre's wife was there, and not he.
Seeing the king: "Flee!' she cried, 'and save
Your life! Woe will be yours, if he should see
A sign of you." "Seen or not seen," the brave
King replied, "saved or not, my misery
Is such that led by love, not chance, am I,
That seek beside my honoured wife to die."

Canto XVII: 40-44: The Ogre's wife confirms that Lucina is alive

And then he pressed the Ogre's wife to say 40
What became of those he made prisoner;
And whether his Lucina lived that day,
And, if so, where the Ogre might hold her;
She then answered him, in a kindly way,
And eased his mind, telling him his lover
Was alive, nor her death need any dread,
For on woman's flesh the Ogre ne'er fed.

"Of this," she said, "I am the living proof, 41
And all the women who dwell here with me,
From me, and them, the Ogre keeps aloof,
So long as we remain here, for, you see,
Any that would forsake this stony roof,
Will never be at peace, or pardoned be.
Buried alive are they, chained on the strand,
Or naked, in the sun, he'll make them stand.

When he brought your people here, today, 42
The men from the women were not parted;
Whate'er they be, he shut them all away.
Off to that pen of his they were carted.
Yet he will sort them out, by sex, I say,
With that nose of his; be not downhearted;
The men alone he eats, five, six, a day,
In his greed; the women he leaves alway.

I cannot counsel you on how to free her, 43
But be content to hear she will not die.
Her life, I tell you, is not in danger,
For good or ill she'll dwell here, in this sty.
But go, my son, remain here no longer,
Lest the Ogre should scent you, thereby.
Once here, he'll sniff all about the house,
And can hear and scent the smallest mouse."

The king replied that no, he would not go, 44
Until he had found his dear Lucina,
(And would die beside her, she should know),
Whom he esteemed, rather than desert her.
On finding she had naught to say, or show,
That could serve to move the monarch further,
The Ogre's wife a new thought did admit,
Pursuing it with all her strength, and wit.

Canto XVII: 45-49: She plans a way for the king to join Lucina

There were slaughtered sheep and goats aplenty, 45
That her husband provided, in that place,
To serve their needs; from the roof hung many
A fleece, that would, in time, the dwelling grace.
She made the monarch take the grease, that she
Extracted, from a male goat's guts, apace,
And coat himself with it, from top to toe,
That his true scent the Ogre might not know.

And when she thought that he gave off the scent 46
With which a fetid goat perfumes the air,
She took a fleece, and made the king consent
To creep inside, and so concealed him there.
And then she made him, crawling as he went,
Led by her, to the other cave repair,
Where his lady's sweet face might be known,
Now hid behind that weighty mass of stone.

Norandino obeyed; and hugged the grass, 47
Beside the entrance to the other cave,
So that with the homeward flock he might pass,
And there, till evening, the odd bleat he gave;
For twas evening ere he heard the notes, alas,
Of the elder-pipe, with which that wretch did pave
His path, as he called the sheep from pasture,
And led them all, behind him, to his parlour.

Think how his heart trembled to the core, 48
Norandino, when he heard the Ogre there,
As, approaching close to the cavern door,
That dread face hung above him in the air!
But his love, and not his fear, was to the fore;
You'll see if he feigned aught in this affair!
The Ogre then removed the stone, and so
The king, twixt sheep and goat, within did go.

The flock inside, the Ogre approached us; 49
But he first took care to replace the stone.
He sniffed around and after doing thus
Chose two to swallow quickly, flesh and bone;
At the memory, I grow nauseous,
And tremble, and sweat, and cry, and groan.
The Ogre left; the king cast off his fleece,
And then embraced his love, despite the grease.

Canto XVII: 50-57: He then helps the others to escape

Where she might have felt delight and comfort, 50
On seeing him, she felt fresh grief and pain;
She felt, now, that death would be his consort,
Since he could not prevent them being slain.
"Amidst my sorrows, it was sweet, in short"
She cried, "to know your freedom would remain
To you, and at least you would not suffer,
When we were dragged here by the Ogre.

While the very thought, that I must issue 51
Forth from this life, seemed harsh and bitter,
Twas for me to grieve, at that which must ensue,
As is the common instinct; now, whether
You die before or after me, tis true,
For your death, more than my own, I'll suffer."
And for Norandino's peril she did show
More concern than for her own, I must owe.

"Yet Hope has led me here," declared the king, 52
"To save you and your people, every one.
And if not, then tis better I die trying,
Than live blind without you, my living sun;
As I came, I may leave; and, so doing,
All of you may do just as I have done,
If you, indeed, can bear as I have borne,
The vile scent of a beast as yet unshorn!

Then he taught us the trick, to cheat the nose 53
Of the Ogre, that his wife had devised,
And, in any case, our bodies to enclose
In a fleece, that we might not be surprised.
Then, persuaded, as many sheep we chose,
As the number that our company comprised,
Men and women, and as many he-goats too
As that same, and then sheep and goats we slew.

Then we covered our bodies with the grease 54
That round about the goats' intestines lay,
And we sheared, and each dressed in, a fleece.
When, from his golden dwelling, with the day,
Rose the sun, came the Ogre, to release
His flock and, by that orb's first shining ray,
The shepherd raised a shrill note from his reed,
And summoned them to graze, as fate decreed.

He held his hand before the opening, 55
Lest his prisoners escaped midst the flock,
And held us by the door, feeling, smelling,
But, since he felt a fleece, none did he block.
Clothed in our shaggy coats, though unappealing,
Men and women issued forth from the rock,
And not one did the Ogre, there, restrain,
Till Lucina, in fear, the door did gain.

Lucina (whether loathing the idea, 56
Of coating herself, like us, in vile grease,
Or whether her soft step, as she came near,
Or slowness gave him pause, despite the fleece,
Or whether when he touched her, in her fear,
She cried out, as her terror sought release,
Or her hair tumbled down from her brow)
Was caught; though I cannot tell you how.

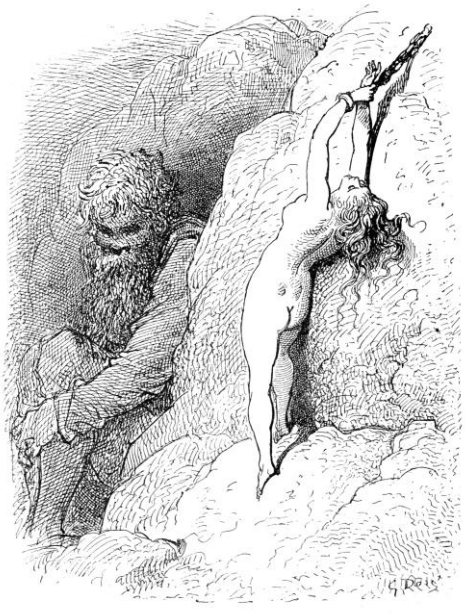
For, upon ourselves, we were so intent, 57
We gave scant thought to any other's fate,
Yet I turned at her cry, as forth I went,
And saw he had un-fleeced her at the gate.
And driven her within, where she was pent.
We, in our quaint, and ambiguous state,
Moved with the flock where'er the shepherd led;
Amidst green hills, to pleasant slopes we sped.

Canto XVII: 58-63: But, with Lucina still captive, is forced to linger

There we waited, till, beneath the shade 58
Of a dense grove, the Ogre fell asleep.
Some sought the shore, some for the hillsides made,
Norandino, alone, his watch did keep.
Love of his lady thoughts of flight delayed;
He wished now to return, amidst the sheep,
Nor leave that place before his life was done,
Unless he freedom, for his wife, had won.

When he had issued forth amidst the sheep 59
And found that she alone was captive still,
Maddened by sorrow, he had thought to leap
Into the Ogre's throat, and neath the mill
Of those sharp grinding teeth, and scarce did keep
From doing so; such, now, was not his will,
Hope sustained him, that he might yet save
His love, and lead her from the Ogre's cave.

That evening, when the creature had, once more, 60
Penned in his flock, he found that we had fled,
His supper lost, vanished along the shore.
The blame he cast on poor Lucina's head;
He made her stand (and heavy chains she bore),
On the very summit of the cliff, instead;
The king, whose plan had brought about her woe,
Felt like to die there; death escaped him though.



Stanza 60

At morn and eve, the unhappy lover, 61
Was witness to her sorrow and her pain,
As amidst the goats and sheep, for cover,
He went to pasture, and returned again,
She, with sorrowful face, pleading ever
That he, for love of God, should not remain.
Since her love, by doing so, risked his life,
Yet lacked the means to rescue his poor wife.

Likewise, the Ogre's spouse begged him to go, 62
But all in vain, for he refused to leave
Without his love; and the more she did so,
The firmer his refusal, I believe;
Sad was the servitude that bound him though.
Held by Love and Pity, naught did relieve
His state, till to that place came Gradasso,
And Agricane's son, Mandricardo.

They wrought so well, those two together 63
That they swiftly freed the fair Lucina,
More by chance than cunning, however;
Then down to the sandy shore they bore her,
And placed her in the hands of her father,
Who was there; a morn like any other,
It yet seemed to Norandino, standing
In the cave, midst the flock, ruminating.

Canto XVII: 64-68: Lucina having been rescued, Norandino searches for her

But when he left the cave, as the sun rose, 64
And then discovered that his wife was gone,
(For the Ogre's spouse told him, I suppose,
How it was achieved, and spurred him on)
He gave thanks to God, and did next propose,
To find his love, seek her thither and yon,
And then by arms, or prayer, or bribery,
Gain her side, and ensure her liberty.

Amidst the flock he lingered, by the bay, 65
And, rejoicing, wandered o'er the pasture,
Till slumbering, in the shade, the Ogre lay,
As was his wont, and his idle nature;
Then he journeyed onwards, night and day,
Until, no longer fearful of the creature,
He boarded a ship at Antalya,
And, in three days, arrived in Syria.

He had men search through North Africa, 66
Through Rhodes, Cyprus, Egypt, and Turkey,
For any sign of the fair Lucinda,
Nor had he news of her till, lately,
He heard she was safe in Nicosia,
With her father, the sailors, manfully,
Having fought with a gale, so furious
Southwards it had driven them, to Cyprus.

Filled with true delight, at the news he'd heard, 67
Our monarch prepared a sumptuous feast,
And, at every fourth new moon, so the word
Goes, he will grant the very same, at least;
Renewing the memory of the Ogre's herd,
And the four months, ere she was released,
On that day, which is recalled tomorrow,
When the king found himself free of sorrow.

These things, I tell of, in part I saw, 68
And heard in part, from one who knows the whole,
The king, I mean; Kalends and Ides he bore,
Till grief had turned to joy within his soul.
And if, from some other, you hear more,
That some conflicting tale doth unroll,
Know, he errs.' So, for Grifone, the knight,
Upon the reason for the feast, shed light.

Canto XVII: 69-72: Grifone prepares for the tourney at Damascus

A large part of the eve and night was spent 69
By these two men, in like conversation,
Who judged, therein, the monarch did present
Clear proof of his pity and affection.
Both then rising from the table, they went,
Each to his pleasant accommodation;
And when the morning broke, calm and clear,
Great cries of joy arose, from far and near.

With drums and trumpets men came running, 70
And all assembled in the market square,
While shouts along the streets went echoing,
The noise of carts and horses mingled there.
Grifone donned his armour, bright and gleaming,
Wrought in a manner that was rich and rare;
For the White Fay had cast a spell upon it,
Such that naught could shatter it, or pierce it.

The lover from Antioch armed, at his side, 71
Though a worse wretch never rode a charger,
Their host provided lances, true and tried,
While, of his kith and kin, a host did gather,
That with the knight into the square did ride,
Many a proud and worthy warrior,
With squires mounted, and on foot also,
To serve their needs, wherever they might go.

Once in the square, they waited, well apart, 72
Nor sought to show themselves in the field,
The better to see those of warlike art,
That came in two and threes, thus revealed.
One by his banner showed the lover's heart,
His joy or sorrow lay therein, concealed,
Another, by his shield or helm, displayed
The cruelty or kindness of the maid.

Canto XVII: 73-80: Ariosto exhorts the West to reclaim the Holy Land

The Syrians, at that time, had adopted 73
The armour, and the weapons of the West;
Perchance to that manner and custom led
By the Frankish knights, and all the rest,
Who ruled the Holy Land, where He once bled,
(Almighty God, in human flesh) and blessed
The ground we proud Christians, to our shame,
Now leave the heathen hounds to scar and maim.

Where Christians should wield the sword and lance, 74
And, furthering our faith, claim lands anew,
Against each other's forces they advance,
To the destruction of the faithful few.
You lords of Spain, and you, great lords of France,
And you the lords of Switzerland, and you
Of Germany, go, gain what is worth more;
For what you seek to win was Christ's before.

If you would be true Christians, indeed, 75
And catholic in dominion, as in name,
Why do you slay Christ's people? And then seed
The fields with destruction, to your shame?
Why, that kingdom of Jerusalem, concede,
That was once yours? Who else should we blame?
If Constantinople, with much the best
Portion of those lands, the Turks invest?

Spain, have you not North Africa nearby, 76
That has assailed you more than Italy?
While that great venture, ever, you pass by,
To bring, on us, yet deeper misery.
Beset with every vice, you, sleeping, lie,
My drunken Italy, content that we
Should play the handmaid to many a race,
Once subject to us, and in Rome's embrace.

If fear of dying leads you Swiss to seek 77
Our aid, in Lombardy, and sympathy,
To beg for bread, among the poor and meek,
Or a helping hand to end your misery,
The Turks' domains their ample wealth bespeak:
Drive them from Europe, and let Greece be free,
And in that way save yourselves from hunger,
Or die in foreign lands, and there win honour.

And what I tell you, I tell your neighbour: 78
You Germans, all the treasures of the West
That Constantine bore from Rome, and ever
Retained the finest, gifting all the rest,
All are there, and, there, the golden river
Pactolus, golden Hermus, all those blessed
Lands from Mygdonia to Lydia;
With the Holy Land, but a little further.

And you, Pope Leo, now ordained to keep 79
The keys to Paradise (immense their weight),
Let Italy not lie submerged in sleep;
Lift her head by the hair, redeem her fate.
You are the Shepherd; set to lead God's sheep.
He gave the 'ferula'; named you, of late,
That you might, likewise, roar; your arms extend,
And from the greedy wolves the flock defend.

Yet where stray I? Ever, from one thing 80
To another, it seems, I'm wont to go,
Yet think not to err so in my telling
That my former path I cease to know.
I said the Syrians mode of arming
Was like to the Frankish knights; even so,
In Damascus that crowded square was bright
With helms and breastplates, a glorious sight.

Canto XVII: 81-84: The prize assigned to the tournament

From their balconies, the fair ladies threw 81
Red and yellow flowers upon the jousters;
While, below, the trumpeters loudly blew,
And the proud horses pranced, as their riders
Displayed their skills, cavorting there anew,
Performing well or ill, amidst the others,
Such that one earned great applause, and was praised,
While some other a storm of laughter raised.

The tourney's prize was a suit of armour, 82
Presented to the king some days before,
Which a merchant, coming from Armenia,
Had chanced to find upon the desert floor,
The king had added a surcoat, further
Nobly adorned, with pearls, and gems, and more,
Trimmed about with gold, in ample measure,
Rendering it a veritable treasure.

Yet, if the king had known the quality 83
Of that armour, he would have held it dear,
Above all such, and not, from courtesy,
And liberality, assigned it here
To serve as a reward for chivalry;
Though it will prove a lengthy tale, I fear,
To say who'd scorned it, and had left it so,
As a prey to those who passed to and fro.

Of that I will tell you further, later; 84
Now, more of Grifone at the tourney,
That saw many a lance break, its wielder
Launched upon a sudden earthwards journey.
Eight knights were joined there, in league, together,
Dearest to the king, truest of any,
Young men, well-practiced, all, in chivalry,
All noble lords, or of good family.

Canto XVII: 85-90: Martano, Orrigille's lover, is defeated in the joust

These eight took on all-comers, on that day, 85
And one by one, dispensed with all that came,
At first with lance, then mace or sword in play.
The king, looked on, delighted with that same.
And often they would pierce a breastplate, say,
As though the thing were more than just a game,
As if of some true foe they took the measure;
Though the king could part them at his pleasure.

Orrigille's lover, named Martano, 86
He of Antioch, a foolish coward,
Being with Grifone, thought he, also,
Possessed great skill, and put himself forward.
Into the lists he, thus, did, swiftly, go,
But halted there, before charging onward,
Until a joust between two knights had ended,
After which he'd attempt what he intended.

Of the eight, Seleucia's lord made one, 87
Who, eager to maintain their enterprise,
Fought Ombruno, neath the morning sun,
Wounding that knight across the face and eyes,
Such that he fell there, mourned by everyone;
For many did that skilful warrior prize,
Not just for his skill, but his chivalry,
Praising him, above all in that country.

On seeing this, Martano felt great fear, 88
Lest, indeed, he should incur a like fate;
And, at once, his true nature did appear,
As his attempt he looked to terminate.
But Grifone, as he sought to disappear,
With many a word, harsh to contemplate,
Set him on a warrior, who held his ground,
As one, against a wolf, might set a hound,

That will, for ten or twenty yards, pursue 89
The beast, and then halt, and bark, at bay,
As the creature turns, and threatens him anew,
Its sharp teeth, and fiery eyes, on display.
Twas thus before the princes, in full view,
And all the lords and knights, there that day,
That Martano, now seized by fear and dread,
Tugged the reins to the right, and off he sped.

To be fair, twas the horse one might blame, 90
That sought to relieve itself of his weight;
But, after that, he fought so ill, that same,
E'en Demosthenes had left him to his fate,
As too hard to defend, so poor his aim;
Paper and not steel seemed his blade, his state
Was one of such fear, that, at last, half-dead,
Amidst the laughter of the crowd, he fled.

Canto XVII: 91-99: Grifone overcomes seven of the eight knights

Hands were clapped in mockery, midst the mirth 91
And the cries of those folk, on every side.
Like a fox, in the chase, that seeks its earth,
Martano, swiftly, from the lists did ride.
While Grifone felt the shameful loss of worth
Stained him also, as to that wretch allied,
Such that to leap into some blazing fire,
And die unseen, was now his fond desire.

With burning heart, and his face much the same, 92
He thought the knight's disgrace was, thus, his own.
Because by such ill deeds, that brought but shame,
He himself, by that crowd, might now be known.
He needed, if he would redeem his name,
To allow his brightest skills to be shown,
And shine forth clear, lest the slightest error
Seem six yards though the breadth of a finger.

The lance already rested at his thigh, 93
Which he was rarely known to wield in vain;
He urged his steed to the gallop, and let fly
Dealing grief to his opponent, and sore pain,
Sidonia's youthful lord, now like to die,
And then returned, and took his place again.
Overcome with wonder the spectators rose,
Their expectations confounded, I suppose.



Stanza 93

Grifone charged, with the self-same lance, 94
Recovered sound and whole from the field,
And broke it in three, in his bold advance,
On the lord of Laodicea's solid shield.
The latter lay on the croup, stunned perchance,
As three or four times he looked set to yield,
And fall, yet rose at last and drew his sword,
Wheeled his horse, and sent his challenge abroad.

Grifone, seeing him regain his posture, 95
The thrust having left him still on high,
Said to himself: 'Well, it seems, the failure
Of the lance, now, the blade must rectify.'
And, on the forehead, he smote him, harder,
With a stroke, that seemed to fall from the sky;
And then equalled that with another blow,
Till he'd stretched him flat, on the ground below.

There came two brothers next, from Apamia, 96
Tirse the one, the other was Corimbo,
Accustomed, in the jousting, to conquer,
Yet downed by that son of Oliviero;
The first quit the saddle, while his brother,
Felt Grifone's sword, and its mighty blow;
Thus, the common judgement was already
That our knight had indeed won the tourney.

Amidst the lists, now entered Salinterno, 97
Grand vizier, and marshal, to the king.
Who now governed the kingdom; he, also,
Was skilled at jousting, and at tourneying.
He was affronted that some foreign foe
Was about to take the prize and, seizing
A lance in his hand, called to Grifone,
Defying him with threats, loud and many.

But the latter answered him with a lance, 98
He'd selected, from ten weapons, as the best;
And lest he should err, in his swift advance,
Scorning the shield, he aimed straight at the breast.
It pierced between the ribs, and not by chance,
Protruding a palm's length; and, to the rest,
Though not the monarch, welcome was the blow.
They'd loathed the greed of this Salinterno.

Two from Damascus, he now overthrew, 99
Their names Ermofilo and Carmando,
The first the king's militia led, he knew,
Lord High Admiral was the other; though,
Flat on the ground, he laid the latter, too,
After the first left the saddle, at his blow.
Carmando's steed was too weak to withstand
Grifone's charge, and the lance in his hand.



Stanza 98

Canto XVII: 100-105: And lastly Seleucia's lord

The Lord of Seleucia yet remained; 100
Than those seven, the greater warrior.
And his great rank and honour were maintained
By a fine steed, and by perfect armour.
Both at the vizor of the helmet deigned
To aim their lances, then spurred their charger.
As Grifone landed the firmer blow,
From the stirrup the foot slipped of his foe.

The threw the broken lances down, and wheeled, 101
And now, with drawn swords, they met together.
Grifone struck a blow, an arm revealed,
That might have cleft an anvil, without bother.
It shattered the bone and steel of the shield,
This lord had preferred to any another,
And had that not been double, like his coat,
The thigh had been cleft, on which it smote.

At the same time, the Lord of Seleucia, 102
Struck Grifone's vizor such a blow,
It would have shattered it altogether,
Had it not been charmed and the rest also.
The other's efforts gained naught however,
So dense was his armour, while the foe,
His mail was pierced and broken everywhere,
For not a stroke had failed to mark its share.

All could see Seleucia's lord, that day, 103
Was inferior to this Grifone,
And he'd have seen his life reft away,
If the monarch had not, most suddenly,
Stopped the contest, by ordering away
His guards-captain, who entered swiftly,
And parted the knights from one another.
The king was much praised for it, thereafter.

The eight who had at first maintained their ground 104
Against the rest, had failed to defend
Themselves against one man, as they'd found,
And had vanished from the field, in the end.
The others set to fight, now stood around,
Absent those with whom they'd thought to contend;
For Grifone, alone, had conquered straight,
All those knights who had once comprised the eight.



Stanza 104

Thus, the tourney's duration was not long, 105
For in less than an hour the whole was done.
Norandino, to pacify the throng,
And prolong things, till the setting of the sun,
Descending from his balcony, among
The unwearied knights, assigned every one,
To one of two troops, by their rank and skill,
So as to grant them entertainment still.

Canto XVII: 106-108: The trio leave Damascus and halt at an inn

Meanwhile our knight, Grifone, had returned 106
To his lodgings full of anger and fury,
Thinking less of the honour he had earned,
And more of the scorn, with little glory,
That Martano had won, who bent to turn
The shame from himself, now spun a story,
While that most false and cunning courtesan,
Assisted, as she well knew how, her man.

Whether our knight believed her or no, 107
He received the excuse, most discreetly,
And thought that it was better that they go,
And, moreover, that they leave, silently,
Lest, catching sight of the shamed Martano,
The inhabitants might behave adversely.
So, by a short, well-hidden track, that day,
They passed the gates, and hastened on their way.

Whether he and the horse were battle-weary, 108
Or whether lack of sleep weighed him down,
Grifone stopped at the first hostelry,
Which lay scarcely two short miles from the town.
He doffed both his helm and armour, swiftly,
Had his steed unsaddled and, in his gown,
To the chamber assigned, he quickly sped,
Then, naked as a babe, took to his bed.

Canto XVII: 109-114: Martano, in disguise, is honoured as Grifone

No sooner had our brave knight laid his head 109
On the pillow than his eyes closed in sleep.
He slumbered more profoundly, in that bed,
Than a badger or a dormouse; sunk deep.
Orrigille and Martano strolled, instead,
In the garden nearby, and watch did keep,
While they plotted the strangest deception
That e'er was of human mind's conception.

Martano planned to ride the very steed, 110
Grifone rode, steal his clothes and armour,
And approach the king, as if he were, indeed,
Deserving of the knight's prize and honour.
No sooner was their vile deceit agreed,
Than he'd climbed aboard the milk-white charger,
In all Grifone's gear and emblems dressed,
His coat of mail, white surcoat, and white crest.

With Orrigille and the squires, he appeared 111
In the square, filled as yet with a crowd.
Just as all the lances were being cleared,
The battle finished, in the time allowed.
The king requested, while the people cheered,
That they find the knight, both strong and proud,
With the white surcoat, crest and charger,
Since he knew not the name of the victor.

He who was dressed in armour not his own, 112
Like a donkey covered by a lion's hide,
Was led, as he'd planned, before the throne,
In the place of Grifone, since he'd lied.
The king on seeing him, this knight unknown,
Rose, embraced him, and set him by his side,
Nor thought it quite enough to laud and praise,
But wished him to remember this, always;

And so pronounced him, to the trumpets' blare, 113
The winner of the tourney for that day,
And had his name conveyed to all those there,
An unworthy name, but be that as it may,
And proclaimed that his carriage he must share
When to the palace he'd soon make his way,
And showed him such honour, of his grace,
As brave Hercules or Mars did once embrace.

He granted him fine lodgings, at his court, 114
And honoured fair Orrigille, likewise;
Knights and squires to attend on them he sought,
Unaware of Martano's bold disguise.
But it is time that I spoke, as I ought,
Of Grifone, lying there with closed eyes,
Fearing nothing, least of all deception;
Nor did he wake until the day was done.

Canto XVII: 115-118: Grifone repents of his foolishness

Once he woke from sleep, and saw the hour, 115
He hastened, in his gown, from the chamber,
Seeking Orrigille; the place did scour
For a sign of her, and her (false) brother.
And when he found her not, e'en in the bower
Midst the garden, nor his clothes and armour,
He grew suspicious, more so when he saw
Martano's gear, where his had lain before.

His host appeared, and told him that the knight 116
Had gone with the lady to the city,
And how he had clothed himself all in white,
And that, with him, went all their company.
Grifone, little by little, saw the light,
Perceiving all that Love had, cunningly,
Kept hid, and his slowness to discover
That Orrigille's 'brother' was her lover.

He was grieved by his utter foolishness; 117
In that, having heard the tale the pair told,
He'd allowed himself to excuse a mistress,
That had betrayed him, so often, of old.
He had missed his revenge; nonetheless,
Though the wretch had, but now, escaped his hold,
He could pursue him; though, constrained, indeed,
To employ the villain's armour and steed.

An error: twere better had he followed, 118
All naked and unarmed than fully clad
In the shameful gear that he had borrowed,
Nor seized that miserable shield, as he had,
Nor the helm; yet ire at having swallowed
Their lying tale, had driven him half-mad;
Thus, to the city, hastening on his way,
He came, while there was yet an hour of day.

Canto XVII: 119-125: He is mistaken for Martano

Near to the gate by which our knight entered, 119
Upon his left, a splendid castle stood.
Strong it seemed, and readily defended,
Its walls, and its buildings, sound and good.
The king, by the Syrian lords attended,
And their ladies, of that neighbourhood,
Were met there, in a pleasant chamber,
Enjoying a rich, and sumptuous, supper.

The fortress towered above the city wall, 120
While from it their balcony projected,
Thus, allowing a wide view over all
The villages about, by roads connected.
So that when Grifone approached the hall,
Now dressed as one the crowd had rejected,
It was his unhappy fate to be seen;
By the king and his courtiers, I mean;

Thinking him the man whose crest he bore, 121
The lords and ladies were moved to laughter.
Vile Martano sat near the king, secure,
Basking in the royal grace and favour,
With the lady by him, suited far more
To him than to our knight; the king, further,
Sought, smilingly, to know the coward's name,
That, treating honour lightly, courted shame,

And, after so sad and ugly a display, 122
Now returned, to the town, quite brazenly.
And remarked: 'It is most strange, I must say,
That a knight so worthy, as all can see,
Should associate with him, in this way,
He the greatest coward in this country;
Perchance tis so your own worth and honour,
By contrast, may shine forth all the brighter?

By the eternal gods above, I swear, 123
That were it not for my regard for you,
Public ignominy he'd be made to share,
With all others of like cowardly hue.
And a lasting memory he would bear,
Of my loathing for all that craven crew.
And know that, if unpunished he depart,
Tis only thanks to you, that take his part.'

That sink of every earthly vice replied: 124
'Royal sire, I know not who he may be,
I came on him, by chance, the road beside
As we came from Antioch on our journey.
His martial guise misled me, I'll confide,
Such that I thought him fit for company,
Though I've seen naught of the man, I may say,
More than his sad performance here, today,

Which so displeased myself, that naught remains 125
But to punish his extreme cowardice,
By ensuring that he bear not, for his pains,
A lance or sword again, within the list;
Though I bear such respect in my veins,
I give way to your majesty, in this.
Yet I'd not desire him to boast that he
Spent a day, at least, in my company.



Stanza 119 "*The king, by the Syrian lords attended*"

Canto XVII: 126-128: Norandino devises his punishment

For I am tarnished, by association, 126
Tis a weight upon my heart forever;
And if, to the shame of your brave nation,
I see him depart, as bold as ever,
All untouched, I shall seize the occasion;
Though, indeed, to see him hang were better,
A noble deed, if done in princely style.
Let him dangle there, a mirror to the vile.'

Without a sign from him, Orrigille 127
Added her confirmation. 'Come now,' said
The king,' I think, though he is a sinner,
Tis wrong to take his life for such; instead,
For a deed so ill, twould prove far better
For him to entertain, in fear and dread,
My people,' so he summoned up a lord,
To arrange what might true pleasure afford.

This lord departed, with a squad of men, 128
And descended to the city gate below,
Posted them round him, silently, and then
Waited for the cowardly knight to show.
He surprised him, as he returned again,
And twixt the drawbridges took him so,
And detained him, with mockery and scorn,
In a dark cell, until the coming morn.

Canto XVII: 129-130: Martano and Orrigille depart

The Sun had scarcely raised his golden hair 129
From the bosom of his ancient nurse, and then
Begun to chase, through all the mountain air,
The shadows from the peaks, and gild again
Their lofty crests, when Martano, whose care
Was to ensure that Grifone, from his pen,
Was not released in time to state his cause,
Ere he was gone, took his leave, without pause.

He gave a plausible excuse for going, 130
And not waiting for the spectacle decreed,
The king, on him, many a gift bestowing
Besides the prize, undeserved, for his deed,
And letters patent, most bravely showing
That in high honour he was held indeed.
Let him go; for I promise he'll receive
All that's merited by those who deceive.

Canto XVII: 131-135: Grifone frees himself from his captors

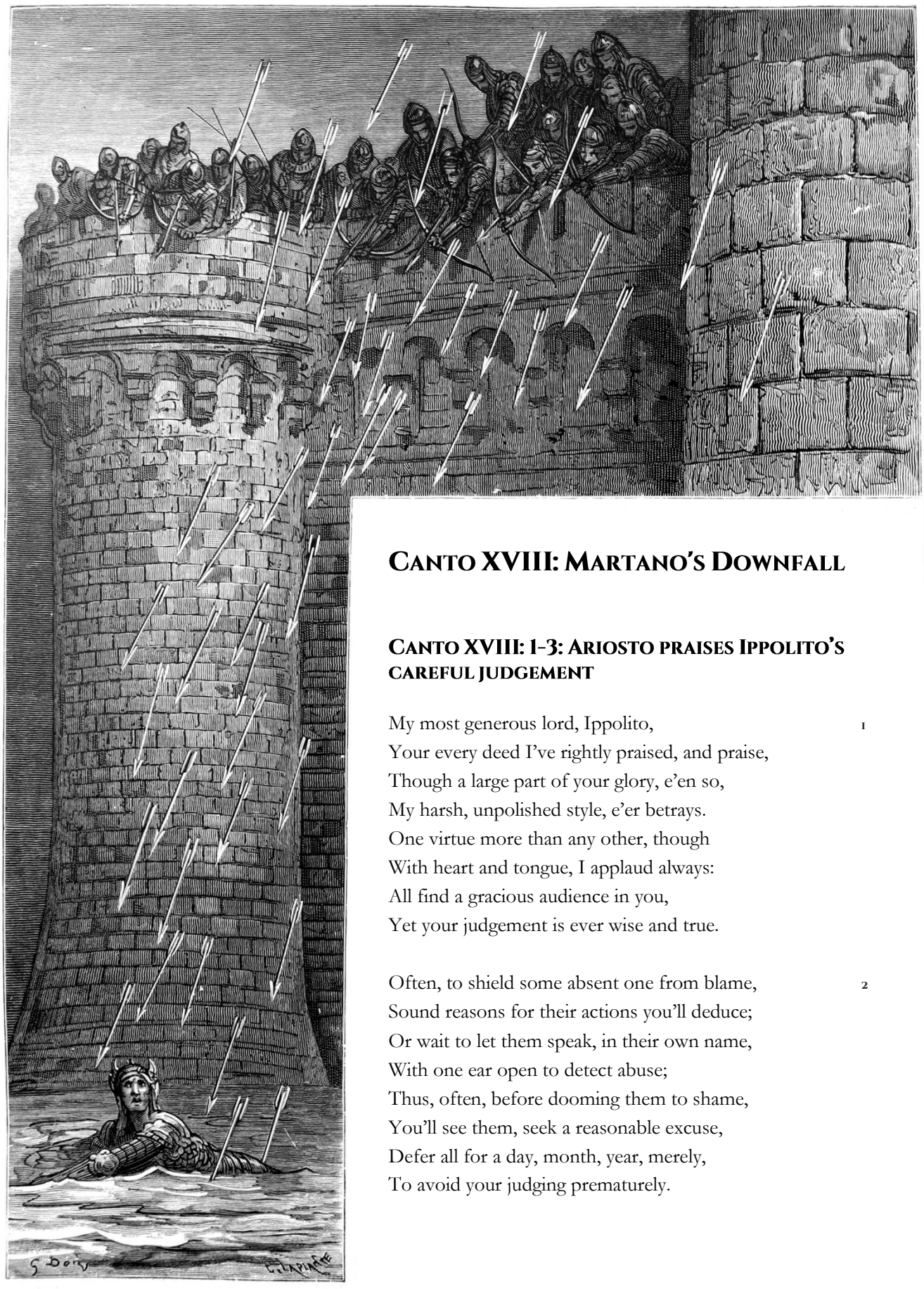
Grifone was dragged to the square, in shame, 131
(The place was all about with people set)
His helm and breastplate torn from the same,
Leaving him clad only in his doublet.
And, as if his life they were about to claim,
He was chained, high on a cart, there to sweat,
Pulled along by a pair of cows, slowly,
That, long unfed, seemed both weak and weary.

Round this ignoble chariot, appeared 132
Old crones of ill repute who, each in turn,
Played charioteer, while the others jeered;
And many a curse from them did he earn.
But more than any cries of shame he feared
The idle lads; they proved of more concern;
Hurling stones, viciously, at his bare head,
That, but for wiser folk, had seen him dead.

No sooner had the crowd set free his feet, 133
And then his hands, from that heavy chain,
Than his two eyes with sword and shield did meet,
And the blade he wielded, with might and main;
His advance, not a pike or spear did greet,
While the foolish folk, unarmed, fled in vain.
Yet, to the next one, I'll defer the rest,
For to end this canto here, that were best

Then they bore the captive thence, and displayed 134
Him, there, before the houses, temples, stores,
Nor spared their mockery (to be repaid),
And curses nigh unheard of on our shores;
And led him to the gate, in vast parade,
Persuaded of the virtue of their cause,
Ready to drive him forth, with many a blow,
Though little of their victim did they know.

No sooner had the crowd set free his feet,
And then his hands, from that heavy chain,
Than his two eyes with sword and shield did meet,
And the blade he wielded, with might and main;
His advance, not a pike or spear did greet,
While the foolish folk, unarmed, fled in vain.
Yet, to the next one, I'll defer the rest,
For to end this canto here, that were best.



Canto XVIII: Martano's Downfall

Canto XVIII: 1-3: Ariosto praises Ippolito's careful judgement

My most generous lord, Ippolito, 1
Your every deed I've rightly praised, and praise,
Though a large part of your glory, e'en so,
My harsh, unpolished style, e'er betrays.
One virtue more than any other, though
With heart and tongue, I applaud always:
All find a gracious audience in you,
Yet your judgement is ever wise and true.

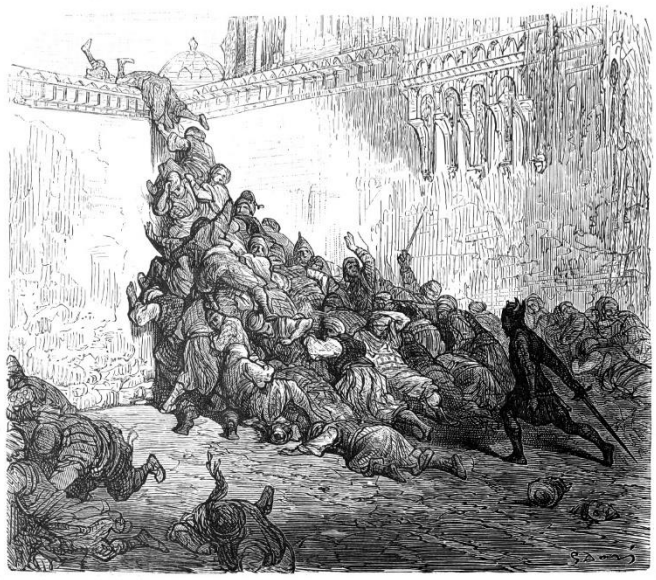
Often, to shield some absent one from blame, 2
Sound reasons for their actions you'll deduce;
Or wait to let them speak, in their own name,
With one ear open to detect abuse;
Thus, often, before dooming them to shame,
You'll see them, seek a reasonable excuse,
Defer all for a day, month, year, merely,
To avoid your judging prematurely.

If King Norandino had done likewise, 3
Then he'd not have treated Grifone so.
Honour and profit accrue to the wise;
His name he darkened, while your fame will grow.
That fault his people came to realise,
For but ten cuts and thrusts, now sent below
Some thirty dead that lay about the cart,
Dispatched in anger, by his skill and art.

Canto XVIII: 4–7: Grifone runs amok among the townspeople

The others fled, wherever fear drove them, 4
Some here, some there, routed, o'er road and field,
While others ran for the walls behind them,
Though they were still forced, one by one, to yield.
Nor did Grifone, silent, threaten them,
Not a trace of pity for the mob revealed,
Rather he swung his blade, furiously,
Seeking true vengeance for their mockery.

Of those who first attained the city gate, 5
Those who had been the swiftest folk to flee,
A part, far more concerned with their own fate
Than their friends', raised the drawbridge suddenly,
The others wailing, in a deathlike state,
Fled without looking back, through the city;
While wild cries, as they ran, high-pitched and loud,
Midst the noise of tumult, issued from the crowd.



Stanza 4

Grifone seized two, forcing them to yield, 6
For the drawbridge was raised, to their despair.
The first man's brains he scattered o'er the field,
Striking him with a stone, gripping his hair;
The other's chest he grasped, better to wield
Him and fling him, o'er the wall, through the air,
Chilling the bones of those who saw him fly,
And then descend, abruptly, from the sky.



Stanza 6

Many there were who feared that Grifone 7
Would decide to leap o'er the battlement,
Nor would it have less appalled the many
If the Sultan had arrived, with dire intent
To assail the walls; their cries for mercy,
The muezzins' calls, to the heavens lent
Their wailing tones, all mingled with the sound
Of trumpets, drums, those heavens to confound.

Canto XVIII: 8-16: We return to Rodomonte under attack from Charlemagne

But, at a later time, I shall explain 8
All that in Damascus then occurred;
For tis right that I follow Charlemagne,
Who sought out Rodomonte, as you've heard,
As the pagan dealt his folk grief and pain;
For the king had summoned, with a word,
Ugiero, Namus, Oliviero, Avino,
Avolio, Otone, and Berlingiero.

The shock of those eight lances, he defied 9
The Moor, though great the power of their attack,
As they struck upon the scaly serpent's hide
With which their foe had clad his chest and back.
As a ship will right itself, and then will ride,
Through calmer water, with the ropes now slack,
The gale once past, so Rodomonte rose,
Though a hill they might have raised with their blows.

Ranier, Ricardo, Guido, Salamone, 10
Loyal Turpin, faithless Ganelon, as well,
Ughetto, Angioliero, Angiolino, Ivone,
Marco and Matteo, from the plain of Saint-Michel,
With the eight, that I spoke of formerly,
All attacked the Saracen, for a spell;
With Ariman and Edward of England,
Sent to aid Charlemagne, and now on hand.

Groans not so loud, upon its Alpine height, 11
Some mighty castle, founded on the rock,
When Boreas, or Eurus, rage, in flight,
And tear away the firs and ash, en bloc,
As did the Saracen, amidst that fight,
Filled with anger, and proud, as he took stock;
As thunder accompanies lightning's fire,
So, in the wicked, vengeance joins with ire.

He struck the head of the nearest of all, 12
The luckless Ughetto of Dordona,
He cleft him to the teeth, and watched him fall,
Though his helm was of a goodly temper.
And then the rest he sought to strike and maul,
With sweeping blows at one, then another.
No more could they pierce his scaly hide
Than a needle can an anvil, though they tried.

The city and defences all around 13
Were deserted, all lay abandoned there,
For King Charlemagne had the trumpets sound,
And ordered all his soldiers to the square.
They ran to aid the eight, as they were bound,
And, in any case, flight proved a vain affair.
The presence of the monarch stirred each heart;
Their courage rose, as they rose to their part.

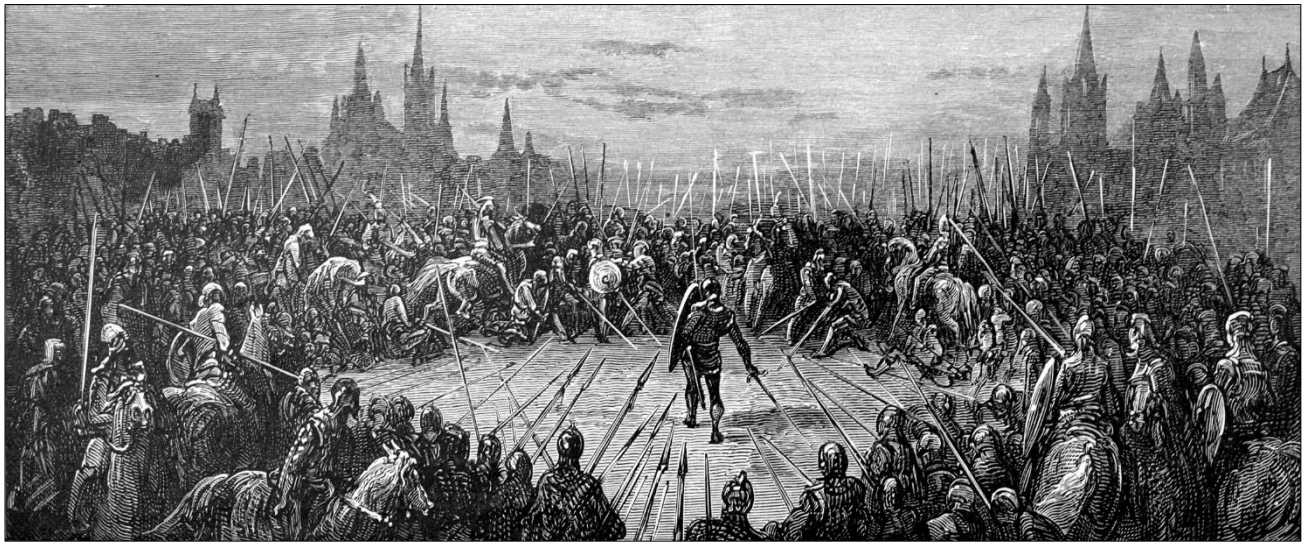
Just as, when, to the closely-barred steel cage, 14
Of a lioness accustomed to the fight,
A wild bull is introduced, filled with rage,
(Tis a contest in which the crowd delight!),
Her cubs will seek, amidst the sand, to gauge,
From its bellowing, the threat that it might
Represent, to those strange horns little used;
And watch, from afar, timid and confused,

Yet if their mother lunges at his ear 15
And fixes her great jaws on it, firmly,
Will sink their half-grown teeth, without fear,
In its flesh, and seek to aid her, boldly,
Biting the paunch, or back of that huge steer.
So, men now attacked the pagan, freely,
Leaping down upon him, from on high,
As a fierce storm, of weapons, they let fly.

The crowd of knights and men grew by degrees, 16
Such that the square could scarce contain them all,
They swarmed within it like a hive of bees,
Hastening to bring aid, from street and hall,
Who, if they'd been naked and unarmed, with ease,
Rodomonte might have reaped, and watched them fall,
More readily than scything stems of wheat,
Needing twenty days his harvest to complete.

Canto XVIII: 17-20: He breaks free from the square

The pagan, as the crowd about increased, 17
Found no means to escape the field of war;
Not an inch of space had the dead released,
Though he'd slain a thousand of them, and more.
But more came still, the number ne'er decreased,
Should he not seek his freedom now, he saw,
While his body was vigorous and sound,
He might not issue forth to win fresh ground.



Stanza 18

Casting his fearful gaze about him, then, 18
He found that he was blocked at every turn,
But at the cost of slaying a tithe of men,
He might forge a way, and that freedom earn.
And, behold, swinging his great sword again,
The Fury led him where he could discern,
The English force, newcomers to that land,
Under Edward's and Ariman's command.

Whoever has seen a wild bull shatter 19
The wattle fence in a crowded square,
(Behind which the crowd stand and chatter),
When pricked and beaten more than it can bear,
And then, as they flee, chase down the latter,
And send a handful flying through the air,
Let them think the African, as he charged
Akin to such a creature, though enlarged.

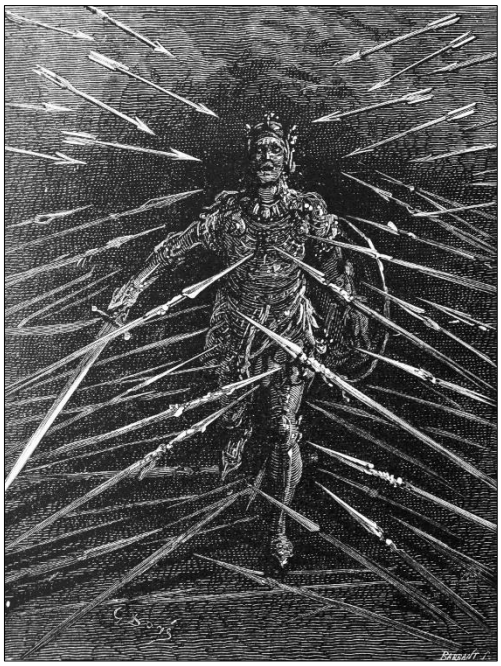
He smote fifteen or twenty at a blow, 20
And likewise left each man without a head,
All with a single stroke, reversed or no,
Like to pruning vines, or a willow-bed.
Rank with their blood, he cut a path, and so
From that perilous place he safely sped,
Heads, arms, and other members, underfoot,
Shoulders, and thighs, marred at every cut.

Canto XVIII: 21-25: And escapes down the Seine

He retired from the square in such a way 21
None could see, in him, the least sign of fear,
While reflecting, as he kept his sword in play,
On how to issue forth, and disappear.
Thus, he came to where the Seine flowed away,
Below the isles, past the walls, tall and sheer.
Meanwhile the crowd of soldiers saw increase,
Pressing hard, so he might not go in peace.

As some great-hearted beast moves, in the chase, 22
Once roused, in the woods about Marseille,
Which, though fleeing, shows a heart never base,
But threatens harm, as it proudly makes its way
To its lair, he left, at a steady pace,
That strange forest of weapons still in play,
Formed of lance, and sword, and spear, and arrow,
And made for the Seine, his steps long and slow.

Three times or more, driven by his anger, 23
He turned upon the rabble at his back,
And stained his great sword with blood, as ever,
Slaying a hundred in each fierce attack.
But reason finally his rage did conquer;
Ere the heavens stank, he changed his tack.
Better judgement, in his peril, he applied,
And leapt into the Seine's fast-flowing tide.



Stanza 22

He swam with the current, in full armour, 24
And floated down until he made the shore.
Surely Africa ne'er saw one stronger,
Though Anteus and Hannibal it bore.
And, once there, he turned to gaze up-river,
To view the city he had left, once more,
Angered that he'd passed through it, entire,
And yet had failed to set the whole on fire.

For so stung was he by his wrath and pride, 25
He wished to turn, and enter in again,
From the depths of his heart, he groaned and sighed,
And would have tried to swim against the Seine;
But a form approached, along the river-side,
That did his rage and hatred now restrain.
Of who that person was, you'll shortly hear,
But first another figure must appear.

Canto XVIII: 26-31: Jealousy's plot against Rodomonte

For of haughty Discord I first must speak, 26
Who, by the Archangel Michael's decree,
Was to rouse enmity, and quarrels seek,
Amongst King Agramante's company.
She left Fraud to take her place midst the meek,
As she made her way from the monastery;
Fraud would maintain the war till her return,
And stoke the fires that ever there do burn.

And, she believed, if Pride accompanied her, 27
It would add another string to her bow,
And since she dwelt there, with the other,
She had only a little way to go.
Thus, Pride went too, yet taking care
To leave a vicar there; she did bestow
Hypocrisy upon the monastery,
While she was absent, however briefly.

Implacable Discord set out with Pride, 28
And discovered, as they made their journey,
That down that same road, with a dwarf for guide,
Went troubled, disconsolate Jealousy;
For off, to the Saracen camp, she hied,
The little dwarf keeping her company,
Who'd been sent by Doralice the Fair,
Bearing news, to King Rodomonte there.

When she was seized on by Mandricardo, 29
(I've told you, previously, how and where)
She'd, secretly, ordered the dwarf to go,
And find the king, and say how she did fare,
Hoping (once the dwarf had informed him so)
That, if for her fair self he yet did care,
Rodomonte should ride to her relief,
And wreak summary vengeance on the thief.

The dwarf had been observed by Jealousy, 30
Who'd learned his mission, beside the way,
And so made him join her on her journey,
While thinking she might have a role to play.
Jealousy encountered Discord gladly,
More pleased still when she chose to relay
The reason for her coming, which would be
Most helpful to her own small task, thought she.

She'd found the means to set Mandricardo, 31
And Rodomonte against each other.
She'd find further ways to rile the rest, though
This method seemed a perfect gift, to her.
She and the dwarf, thus, swiftly, did go
To where the king had made Paris suffer,
And shortly reached the river, and the strand
Upon which Rodomonte chose to land.



Stanza 33

Canto XVIII: 32-37: She rouses him to seek out Mandricardo

As soon as Rodomonte recognized 32
His lovely lady's little messenger,
His anger dwindled, calm was realised,
While he felt his courage burning brighter,
Happy of any news to be apprised,
Save that some outrage was done upon her.
He met the dwarf and asked him, cheerfully,
'Whither go you, and how goes my lady?'

The little dwarf replied: 'Nor yours nor mine, 33
But in thrall to another, is that lady;
For on the road, and not by our design,
We met a knight, who seized her.' Jealousy
Now came and clasped the king, and sought to twine,
Cold as an asp, about him, silently.
Her messenger, continuing, confessed
How one man captured both, and slew the rest.

Discord at once took up her flint and steel, 34
And struck the one hard upon the other,
And, in an instant, he the fire could feel,
For, beneath it, Pride had spread the tinder,
Until his burning soul could not conceal
The conflagration, now sinking deeper.
Quivering, groaning, with a dreadful sigh,
He cursed the four elements, and the sky.

As a tigress who, descending in vain 35
To her empty den, pacing everywhere,
Realises that her cubs, to her pain,
Have been taken, feels her great anger flare,
So, on Rodomonte, rage and ire did gain.
Rivers, hills, night or day, were not his care,
Storm and distance would present scant delay,
As he strove to bring that bold thief to bay.



Stanza 34

Raging, the Saracen turned, swiftly, 36
And called out to the dwarf: 'Away now; go!'
Not waiting for a horse, or company,
Rodomonte set out, his pace not slow,
Much like a lizard in the heat, briefly
Seen, as crossing the path it doth show.
He lacked a horse, but would commandeer
One from the very first knight he came near.

Discord, who perceived his secret thought, 37
Glanced, smilingly, at Pride, and then she said
That she'd go seek the charger that he sought,
(For thus new grief and strife might be bred).
And she would clear the road that none be caught,
By the king, so he must mount on hers instead.
She knew just how that purpose to attain.
Yet I'll leave her; to return to Charlemagne.

Canto XVIII: 38-41: Meanwhile Charlemagne furthers the fight

When, with the departure of the pagan, 38
The fire around the emperor died away,
He reformed the scattered ranks, there and then;
Part he sent where the weaker places lay,
The rest to thwart the Saracens again,
To halt them, and then keep his foes at bay,
Commanding that through every gate they pour,
Thay lay twixt Saint-Germain and Saint-Victor;

And decreed that, at the Saint-Marcel gate, 39
Beyond which lay a wide stretch of country,
The various troops should group, and wait,
To create one large, and mighty company.
Exhorting them their skills to demonstrate,
To kill and maim, so that in memory
They'd long survive and, heartening them so,
Had the trumpets the battle-signal blow.

Agramante had reclaimed his saddle, 40
Despite the efforts of his Christian foe,
And was now waging perilous battle,
Against fair Isabella's Zerbino;
Lurcanio met Sobrino, as well,
While a troop had encountered Rinaldo,
With both Virtue and Fortune at his side;
That he charged, broke, and scattered far and wide.

While so the fighting stood, Charlemagne 41
Attacked the rear-guard of the enemy,
Where Marsilio, the flower of Spain,
Had halted, with all his vast company.
Towards them, the emperor set in train
A bold attack, foot flanked by cavalry,
With so great a sound of drum and trumpet,
It seemed the world echoed it, in concert.

Canto XVIII: 42-58: The progress of the battle

The ranks of the Saracens, commencing 42
To withdraw, now began to turn and flee,
And once broken, scattered, fast departing,
Nor could be restored to their company.
Falsiron and Grandonio, the king,
Yet stood fast, who'd met with greater misery,
And Balugante, and Serpentino,
And Ferrau who gave a mighty bellow:

'Come comrades,' he cried, 'come, valiant men, 43
Stand firm now, brothers, and maintain your place.
Mere cobwebs will they spin, these Saracen,
If we but do our duty for a space.
Consider the great honour, there and then,
Lady Fortune will grant us, of her grace.
And, if we fail, the everlasting shame,
That will accrue to every single name.'

So saying, with a great lance in his hand, 44
He spurred his steed against Berlingiero,
Who on swift Argaliffa rode the land,
And shattered his steel vizor, at a blow.
Hurling him to the ground, soon unmanned;
Then he dealt with another eight or so,
At sword-point, while at every stroke he made
Another horseman fell beneath his blade.



STANZA 44

Elsewhere Rinaldo had slain full many; 45
And more than I would care to speak of here,
Before him none could stand, the enemy
Were but blown away, scattering in fear.
Lurcanio, Zerbino, equally,
Did such deeds, as seldom meet the ear,
The latter, with a thrust, Balastro slew,
The first cleft Finaduro's helm in two.

Balastro led the troops from Alzerbe, 46
Those previously ruled by Tardocco,
The other led those of the pagan army
From Zamor, and Safi, and Morocco.
'Are there none,' you ask, 'midst the enemy,
That the true art of lance and sword can show?'
Indeed, step by step, I unfold my story,
And leave none behind worthy of glory.

Thus, I'll praise that King of the Zumara, 47
And son of Almonte, Dardinello;
His steel brought Hubert of Milford lower,
Claude of the wood, Dulphin, and Elio,
And Anselm of Stamford, moreover,
Pinamont of London, and Raimondo;
All downed with the sword (though to warfare bred,
Full strong) two stunned, one wounded, and four dead.

And yet, despite the valour he revealed, 48
He could not force his men to stand and fight,
Facing our lesser numbers in the field,
Lesser, yet with many a worthy knight,
Men steady in the joust, nor prone to yield,
Long used to stout defence of what was right.
The noble Moors fled; those of Zumara,
The Canary Isles, Morocco, and Setta.

Yet those of Alzerbe fled the faster, 49
Whom Dardinello bravely tried to stay;
For he, with harsh words, now with prayer,
Sought to raise their courage to face the fray,
'If Almonte,' he cried, 'was worthy ever
To live in your memory, then display
Your valour in the field, come, let me see,
If you'd leave his son, here, in jeopardy.

For Youth and Hope, I beg you, stand and fight, 50
Those things in which your trust you once did place;
Let not the seed of that courageous knight,
Be lost to Africa, and leave no trace.
If we band not together, joined in might,
If this land's barred to us before our face,
A wall too high the hills will prove to be,
To seek return, a ditch too deep the sea.

Far better to die here, than seek mercy 51
From these base hounds, and grovel at their feet.
For vain is every other remedy.
Stand firm, dear friends, the worthless rabble meet.
No more lives than we, has this enemy,
One pair of hands, one flesh, one soul complete.'
So saying, that bold youth, rose up anew,
And, with his sword, the Earl of Huntley slew.

Almonte's memory so roused their army, 52
That those men at the forefront of the rout,
Thought it better now to halt, and rally,
Than turn their backs; and gave a valiant shout.
William of Burnich (taller than any
Of his English comrades, without a doubt),
Dardinello downed, then he fell upon
And cleft the head of Cornwall's Aramon.

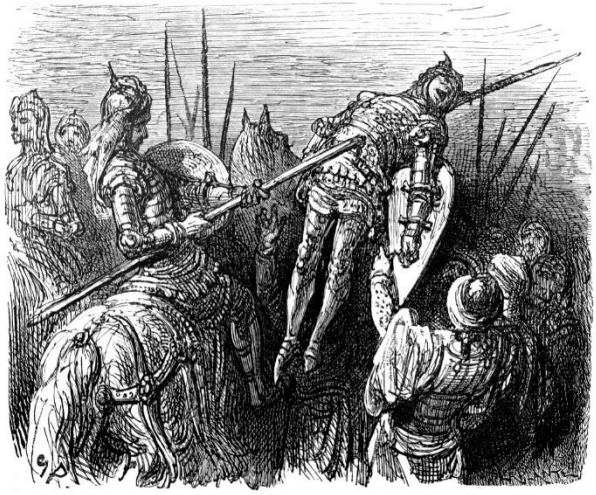


Stanza 52

Aramon toppled slowly to the ground, 53
As his brother ran to him, to grant him aid.
But Dardinello's sword his shoulder found,
Cleft to the fork, by his descending blade.
Next Bogio of Vergalla's unsound
Defence he penetrated, who betrayed
The promise to return he'd made his wife,
(Within six months, he'd sworn, upon his life).

A knight fought not far from Dardinello; 54
Lurcanio it was; but now he'd cleft
Dorchino's throat, and the head of Gardo,
Down to the jaw, while from him fled, bereft
Of courage, his faltering pace too slow,
Altheus, whom Dardinello loved; he left
Altheus dead, striking him from behind,
Rendering him, thus, both dumb and blind.

Dardinello, to avenge him, seized a spear, 55
And, seeking to slay Lurcanio, swore,
By his Mahomet (if he would but hear),
To vow the spoils to the mosque, and far more.
He went raging, through the field, far and near,
Found him, and soon pierced him to the core,
Driving the spear through, from side to side;
Ordered his armour stripped, and on did ride.



Stanza 55

No need to ask if Ariodante, 56
Lurcanio's brother, now mourned his fall,
Who desired, with his own hand, and swiftly,
To send his slayer to Hell's deepest hall,
Though he was barred from him, by not only
The pagans but the baptised, in that maul;
Yet sought revenge and, brandishing his blade,
Now here, now there, a passage-way he made.

He charged, and chased, and struck, all around, 57
At whoever blocked his course along the plain,
While Dardinello, eager to be found,
Knowing his wish, to fight with him was fain;
The two hosts yet contended, o'er that ground,
Thus, his efforts to meet him proved in vain.
If Christians slew Moors, no less the ranks
Were depleted of the English, Scots, and Franks.

Fortune thwarted the pair, all that long day, 58
Such that they could not meet, striving idly;
She kept one as a greater champion's prey;
For rarely does man cheat his destiny.
Behold, Rinaldo turned his face that way,
So refuge was denied him, then, swiftly,
Launched his attack; Fortune played the guide,
To grant him honour; Dardinello died.

Canto XVIII: 59-69: We return to Grifone, and a repentant King Norandino

But enough, it seems to me, has been shown 59
Of those glorious events in the West.
Tis time to seek Grifone, and make known
How he, with anger burning in his breast,
Had that sorry crowd of rascals overthrown,
Of more than common cowardice possessed.
King Norandino hastened there, when he heard,
With a thousand soldiers, summoned at his word.

The king, with his court for company, 60
Seeing the people fly, on every side,
Rode up to the gate, with a small army,
And then ordered the portal opened wide.
Our Grifone meanwhile had forced to flee
All of the worthless crowd he had defied,
And donned the armour, they had scorned, once more,
For his defence (the same he'd worn before).

Near a temple, well-walled on every hand, 61
Encircled by a moat, both deep and broad,
Upon a little bridge, he took his stand,
That most ample protection did afford.
Behold, there advanced a threatening band
As, through the gate, the king's brave force now poured.
Grifone, not retreating from his place,
Of fear or doubt, showed not the slightest trace.

Rather, when he saw the men approaching, 62
He advanced, in turn, and met them on the way,
And then his sword, in his two hands, grasping,
Made great slaughter, with a bold display.
Once more, his place on the bridge resuming,
He maintained his stand, and kept them at bay.
He issued forth, and then returned again,
Yet leaving, every time, some bloody stain.

Strokes before and behind he dealt; and threw 63
Foot-soldiers and horsemen to the ground;
While the fierce host, converging on him, grew,
Until he seemed, beneath the foe, near-drowned.
His concern was great as they waxed anew;
(He fears submergence, whom the waves surround).
With his left shoulder cut, hurt in the thigh,
Even his great powers seemed to fail, thereby.

And yet Valour, who often aids her own, 64
Brought Norandino to forgive the knight.
For the king amidst the tumult, was shown
The heaps of dead, that he had felled outright,
The wounds inflicted by one man alone,
Which, surely, had required brave Hector's might;
All witness to the fact that he'd poured shame
On a warrior most worthy of that name.

And then, as he drew nearer, and could see, 65
More clearly, he who had so many slain,
Who'd raised a mound, amidst the enemy,
And darkened the moat with many a stain,
He thought of him who gainst all Tuscany,
Once held the bridge, Horatius, their bane.
In his honour, and to save men from this foe,
He recalled them; and willingly they did go.

And raising a hand, weapon-less and bare, 66
A most ancient sign of truce and of peace,
'I know not,' he said, 'if greater grief I share
Or sense of guilt, but let this conflict cease;
Poor judgment have I shown in this affair,
Led by worse counsel; now I seek release
From error, for I've subjected the first
Of knights to what is owing to the worst.



Stanza 63 "*While the fierce host, converging on him, grew*"



Stanza 66

And if the bitter injury and shame 67
That you have suffered here, through ignorance,
Might be cancelled by the honour and fame
You win here (that only serves to enhance
Your name) then aught else you'd seek to claim,
That's within my scope and power to advance,
But say, so I might know what gifts are due,
Cities, forts, or gold, that would content you.

Full half of my fair kingdom ask of me, 68
And, from this day, that half you shall possess,
For not only of that you've proved worthy,
But that I grant my heart to you, no less.
And as a pledge of faith, here, openly,
Take my hand, a token of friendliness.'
So saying, from his steed he descended,
And his right hand to the knight extended,

Who, finding the king's manner, thus, benign, 69
And that he came to clasp his neck also,
To its sheath his sharp blade did now consign,
With all his rancour, and, humbly, bowed low.
The king who of his two wounds saw the sign,
Stains of blood, asked a messenger to go
For his doctor; they bore him to the town,
Then, in the palace, gently laid him down.

Canto XVIII: 70-73: His brother, Aquilante, follows Grifone to Antioch

There, wounded, he remained for some few days, 70
Ere he could arm, and pursue his journey.
But let us leave our knight, and go our ways,
And turn to his brother Aquilante,
With Astolfo, in Palestine, always
Intent upon their search for Grifone,
Through Jerusalem, every monastery,
And many a place far from the city.

Neither could divine, one nor the other, 71
Where Grifone might have gone, or could be;
But they met with that Greek pilgrim brother,
Who, in conversation, chanced to make free
With Orrigille's name; she her lover
Had gone to Antioch to meet, o'er the sea,
So, he said, which was where this lover dwelt:
He had kindled her love, or so she felt.

Aquilante asked the man if he'd told 72
Grifone of all this (indeed, he had)
And surmised the rest, for he knew of old
His brother's mind, and that he, driven mad,
Would go seek her within that Arab hold,
Before the maiden to her sins might add,
And snatch her from the hands of her lover;
His swift vengeance remembered forever.

Aquilante was unhappy that his brother 73
Should go alone without him, so to do.
And quickly clad himself in his armour,
But asked Astolfo, first, if he'd pursue
All his business there, and cease to further
His voyage to fair France, before the two,
Returned from Antioch; then, from Jaffa,
He travelled by sea, as that seemed quicker.

Canto XVIII: 74-77: Aquilante encounters Martano near Mamuga

So fair was the south-easterly that blew, 74
And the sea so calm, that, on the third day,
He saw famous Tyre, and Saffeto too,
Passing, next, by Beirut, upon his way,
To Zibeletto (with, beyond their view,
Cyprus' isle to larboard) where they lay,
Then Tripoli to Tartus, to Lizza,
And so, to Latakia's safe harbour.

From there to the north-east the vessel steered, 75
The pilot at the helm, lightly, swiftly,
Until the wide Orontes' mouth they neared,
Waited their moment, and entered neatly.
Next, in a trice a broad gangplank appeared,
And down it went his steed, and Aquilante,
Who, once ashore, made his way upriver,
Till to Antioch he came, armed, as ever.

There he made enquiry for Martano: 76
That he was gone to Damascus, he heard,
With Orrigille and the servants in tow,
To a tourney, decreed by royal word.
His fixed intent set him then to follow,
Certain that his brother thus had spurred
From Antioch, and so, that very day,
By land, not sea, southwards, he made his way.

To Lidia and Larissa, he did maintain 77
A course, then returned north, to Aleppo,
Where he rested a while. God next did show
That the good win mercy, the evil pain;
For, a league from Mamuga, Martano
Aquilante encountered, on the plain;
Martano, parading, on his journey,
Before his steed, the prize from the tourney.

Canto XVIII: 78-83: Martano attempts to deceive him

At first, he mistook him for his brother, 78
Since the armour and the coat that he wore
Deceived him; white as snow was the latter,
And twas brave Grifone's gear that he bore,
And, with that 'Oh!' we joyfully utter,
In our delight, began to speak, before,
On coming nearer, his expression altered,
For, on finding the lover, he faltered.

He thought that Grifone must be dead, 79
Through his companion's treachery.
'Come, tell me, you,' he cried, 'that have been bred
A traitor and a thief, as I can see,
Where did you steal those arms? You, now seated
On my dear brother's charger, knavishly.
Say if my brother is alive or no,
And then how you deprived him of them so?'

Orrigille, hearing him speak in anger, 80
Wheeled her palfrey about, prepared to fly;
But Aquilante, swift to restrain her,
Blocked her passage, in the blink of an eye.
Martano, at the threats of the brother,
Taken all unawares, seemed like to die;
He turned pale, and trembled like a leaf,
For he lacked a ready answer, our thief.

Aquilante cried out, fulminating; 81
At Martano's throat he pointed his sword,
As he glared at Orrigille, swearing
He'd have both their heads, by the Lord,
If all the facts were slow in appearing;
Martano thought what tale he might afford
That would serve to lessen, in some manner,
His grave fault, and these words chose to utter:

'Know sir,' he replied, 'this is my sister; 82
Of good, and virtuous, parents likewise born.
Yet treated shamefully by your brother,
Who therefore, of her good name has been shorn.
Troubled by her plight, I rode to free her,
Yet thinking that he'd but put me to scorn,
That most puissant knight, I wrought, astutely,
A scheme born of my ingenuity.

I planned, with her, who wished to return 83
To a far more honourable life, that she,
When Grifone to his chamber did turn,
Should steal away from him, all silently,
This she did; and lest Grifone should learn
Our route, and un-weave our web, readily,
We left him deprived of horse and armour,
And, as you can see, have travelled hither.'

Canto XVIII: 84-86: But his scheme is soon exposed

He might well have boasted of his cunning, 84
(Aquilante, no doubt, would have believed,
Since, but for the horse and such, his thieving
Had wrought no harm upon the well-deceived,
Or so he claimed) yet, by over-cooking
His tale, he found the thing most ill-received;
For it was well-wrought in every feature,
Except that he'd claimed her as his sister.

For Aquilante, in Antioch, had heard 85
She was his mistress, and so said many,
Whence, foaming at the mouth with every word,
He cried: False thief, tis all mendacity!'
While, upon him, such a blow he conferred,
Two teeth went vanishing throat-wards, swiftly.
Then, without resistance from Martano,
He tied his arms behind him, to his woe.

And then he did the same to Orrigille, 86
Though excuses enough the lady tried.
And then he dragged them both, willy-nilly,
To Damascus, through all that countryside,
And would have dragged the pair, most willingly,
Another million miles or so beside
Till he found his brother who, at leisure,
Might deal them vengeance, in equal measure.

Canto XVIII: 87-93: Aquilante finds his brother, and Martano is punished

Aquilante had their squires, steeds, and gear, 87
Returned, with him, to Damascus, where Fame,
On beating wings, had flown, both far and near,
Through the place, trumpeting Grifone's name.
There, great and little knew, it would appear,
His skill with the lance, and his prior claim
Upon the tourney's glory and the prize
His companion had stolen, with his lies.

Meanwhile, the populace reviled Martano, 88
And pointed him out to one another,
'Is this not he,' they cried, 'that gigolo,
Who was praised for the deeds of the other?
And while the braver knight was sleeping, so
Shamefully his greater worth did smother?
And is she not that servant of the devil,
That betrays the good, and aids the evil?

And others said: 'How well those two agree, 89
Marked with the self-same brand, and of one race.'
Some chased behind, others cursed them loudly,
And cried: 'Hang, draw, and quarter them, apace!'
All gathered to view them, filled with fury,
Then ran before them to the market-place.
The news now reached the king, who prized it more
Than if he'd gained a realm on some far shore.



Stanza 89

Just as he was, though lacking many a squire, 90
Behind, before, the king came forth to meet
This Aquilante, who revenge, entire,
Wrought for Grifone; and there, in the street,
He honoured him, and begged him to retire
To his palace (his manner gentle, sweet)
And, with his consent, saw the wretches well
Bestowed, deep in the darkest prison cell;

Next, conducting him to Grifone's bed, 91
(From which, with his wounds, he'd not yet stirred),
Who, at his brother's coming, waxed bright red,
Deducing that the whole sad tale he'd heard;
And when Aquilante his say had said,
Containing more than one reproachful word,
They decided what the punishment should be
For that pair, in their hands. Now, Aquilante,

And the monarch, thought they should undergo 92
A thousand torments, but our Grifone
Sought pardon for the pair of them, e'en so;
(He dared not seek it for the maiden only!)
And many an argument went to and fro.
He was answered, and they concurred swiftly:
Martano must the hangman's whip endure,
Till no more than half an inch from Death's door.



Stanza 92

They bound him, but not midst grass and flowers, 93
And he was flogged, all the next long morning;
Orrigille, in one of those high towers,
Was imprisoned, till the fair Lucina's coming,
To whose wise presence were reserved such powers
As might appertain to her sentencing.
Aquilante sampled, now, Damascus' charms,
Till Grifone was sound, and might bear arms.

Canto XVIII: 94-98: Norandino announces a second tournament

King Norandino could not choose but be 94
Repentant now, regretting his error,
For he'd become more temperate, clearly,
After the harm he'd wrought, and far wiser;
Remorseful, for treating so wretchedly
One most worthy of reward and honour;
Such that the monarch pondered, day and night,
How the wrong he had done he might set right.

He decided, as the guilty party, 95
That, since he ought to grant the knight the prize
Which was stolen from him, through treachery,
Twere best done openly, before all eyes,
With such honours granted as royalty
Bestows upon a perfect knight; likewise
He was bound to hold another tourney,
In a month, and so informed the country.

For this he made solemn preparation, 96
As great as could be made by any king,
And Rumour echoed his proclamation,
Speeding through Syria, on beating wing,
Phoenicia, Palestine, each location,
Till in Astolfo's ears the news did ring;
Both he and the viceroy, then agreed
That each must do there some glorious deed.

True histories have praised Sansonetto, 97
This viceroy, as a famous warrior;
Baptised, as I have said, by Orlando,
While Charlemagne had made him governor
Of the Holy Land. He, and Astolfo,
Now set out for the city that Rumour
Declared the venue and, on their journey,
Heard, everywhere, of the impending tourney.

By easy stages, these two made their way 98
Slowly and comfortably, so as to come
To Damascus, fresh, and ready for the fray,
On the day of the joust; and came upon
At a crossroads, in a knight's full array,
And seeming like a knight in her person,
One who was in fact a warrior-maid,
Wondrously fierce in war, and unafraid.

Canto XVIII: 99-103: Astolfo and Sansonetto meet the warrior-maid Marfisa

Marfisa was this brave warrior's name, 99
And of such valour that she'd fought Orlando,
Raising sweat on his brow, despite his fame,
And Rinaldo, Lord of Montalbano;
And now, armed fully night and day, she came
In search of some knight errant; high and low,
She sought, o'er hill and dale, in every town,
Hoping to win great glory and renown.

She saw Astolfo and Sansonetto, 100
Approaching her, slowly, clad in armour;
Each man as a seasoned knight did show,
Each a large-boned and doughty warrior,
And worthy of consideration so,
Against whom she might prove herself further.
And, viewing them closely, as they came near,
She found she recognised the English peer.



Stanza 104 "*And tell them when the king arrived, that day*"

She remembered Astolfo with pleasure, 101
From the days when she'd known him in Cathay.
She called out his name and raised, thereafter,
Her visor, and towards him made her way,
Drew off her gauntlets, and clasped the warrior,
Though far prouder than many, I should say;
While, no less gladly on his part, the knight
Greeted the paladin with true delight.

They questioned each other on their journey, 102
And when Astolfo, who was first to reply,
Said he sought Damascus, where a tourney
Would be held by its monarch, by and by,
And, there, knights might display their chivalry,
Marfisa, who ever such things would try,
Witnessing to it, said, with firm intent,
'I shall go with you, to this tournament.'

Astolfo was gratified that she would be 103
A comrade-in-arms, Sansonetto too.
They were there the day before the tourney,
And lodged outside the walls, until, anew,
Aurora should raise her old spouse, gently,
From his abiding slumber; there the two
Now rested, entertained at greater ease
Than in some great palace, where all must please.

Canto XVIII: 104–109: In the prize, Marfisa recognises her armour

And when the morning sun shone clear and bright, 104
And everywhere had spread its fulgent ray,
The lovely lady armed, as did each knight,
Sending men to the city, to relay
News of all that appertained to the fight,
And tell them when the king arrived, that day,
To see strong lances broken, and delight
In this joust, held to judge their skill and might.

At the word, they swiftly made their way, 105
Down the main road, to the crowded square,
Where, awaiting the sign, in brave array,
Knights stood, of noble rank, ranged here and there.
The prizes to be given on that day,
Were a fine club and a mace, both rich and fair,
And, to accompany those arms, a steed,
Fit for a knight supreme in word and deed.

Norandino was convinced, in his heart, 106
That Grifone the White would, yet again,
Win the joust, and display his skilful art;
And, thus, a second prize was like to gain,
To match the first, and so sustain his part;
Nor to less reward should the knight attain,
In adding to the armour, in due course,
The mace, the club, and the noble horse.

The armour, that in the first joust was won 107
By Grifone, who'd overcome all there,
Which Martano had stolen (now undone),
By feigning to be him, in that affair,
The king had hung in view, for everyone
To contemplate, and admire, in the square,
While the club and mace, as he'd decreed,
Were fastened to the saddle of the steed.

He was denied the effect that he'd intended 108
By the noble-hearted warrior maid.
She with her companions had descended
To the square, and seen the arms, there, arrayed.
On viewing the armour, thus suspended,
She swiftly recognised what was displayed
As hers before, for which she yet did care,
As we ourselves do for things rich and rare;

Twas she who'd left the armour by the road; 109
She'd found its weight a great impediment
And from her shoulders she had slipped the load,
Upon Brunello's capture then intent,
One worthy of the rope, though ill-bestowed
Were further words on such a story spent;
Enough that you've understood why, there,
Marfisa found her armour decked the square.

Canto XVIII: 110–113: And seizes it, causing turmoil

You'll comprehend, again why, having seen 110
And recognised it, of a certainty,
She would not leave it (hanging there, I mean),
For aught in the world, e'en an hour; so, she
Not thinking of this mode or that, I ween,
To gain them, seized them, precipitously,
Riding closer, and stretching out her hand,
Till that armour, which was hers, she did command,

And because twas in haste she took the armour, 111
She dragged gear owned by others to the ground.
The Syrian king, offended, in his anger,
With a glance, summoned the guards around,
To avenge this misdeed by the warrior;
(A clash of weapons instantly did sound),
Forgetting that but a short day before,
He'd caused another brave knight wounds full sore.

No less glad than a child, in spring, playing, 112
Midst the flowers' yellow, blue, red elegance;
Nor less willing than a maid obeying
A summons to the concert, or the dance,
Was she, midst true knights, engaged in slaying,
Midst the clatter, and clash, of sword and lance,
Where blood is shed, and cruel death draws near;
One, strong beyond belief, and free of fear.

She spurred her steed, charged, impetuously, 113
With lowered lance against that foolish crew,
Piercing some chest or neck, most shrewdly,
And hurling to the ground more than a few;
Then with the sword-blade pressed others nearly,
And broke one head, and sliced another through;
Or smote a knight, and struck him in the flank,
As, lacking arm or leg, his neighbour sank.

Canto XVIII: 114-118: Grifone and Aquilante battle the newcomers

Nearby, Sansonetto and Astolfo, 114
Clad, like her, in their brave suits of armour,
(Intended for a different battle though)
Viewing the fight, did their visors lower,
And then their lances, and prepared to mow
A path through the hostile crowd before her;
Their sharp swords they unsheathed, and brought in play,
And swiftly, through the crowd, they carved a way.

The knights who'd come there from many a land, 115
That they might play their part in the tourney,
Seeing the turmoil rise, on every hand,
And pleasure turning to hostility
(Not knowing the reason, you understand,
For the fight, nor why the host were angry,
Nor why the monarch should seem offended)
In doubt and stupefaction were suspended.

Some chose to be with royalty allied, 116
Though they'd come to repent of it later;
Others, inclined to join neither side,
That of the natives, or of the stranger,
Sought to depart; while others did abide,
Reins warily in hand, seeming wiser,
To view the outcome; while Aquilante
Flew to exact vengeance, with Grifone.

Seeing the monarch's eyes red with fury, 117
And learning of the reason for the fight,
From those who were about him, Grifone,
Thought it presented just as great a slight
To himself as to the king, an injury
That he needs counter with all his might,
And so, he and his brother did advance
And sought true vengeance with sword and lance.

Yet Astolfo spurred on Rabicano, 118
And encountered the brothers as they came,
His enchanted golden lance aimed at the foe,
Which had such power within it, that same,
That, at a touch, twould lay all-comers low.
To Grifone the weapon first laid claim,
Then Aquilante, who with shield in hand,
Barely struck, tumbled straightway to the sand.

Canto XVIII: 119-124: The warriors on both sides recognise each other

Meanwhile men of prowess and of might, 119
Fell before the lance of Sansonetto.
As the crowd fled from the square at the sight,
The king raged at the triumph of the foe.
Marfisa now possessing, as of right,
Her former armour, with the new also,
Seeing the soldiers, and the crowd fleeing,
Set out, as conqueror, for her lodging.

Likewise, Astolfo and Sansonetto 120
Were swift to follow her towards the gate,
(The fleeing throng, parting, so they might go);
The trio halted there, to contemplate
The victory, while the brothers, in their woe
At having been unseated, cursed their fate,
And heads bowed low in shame, dared not appear
Before the king, whose anger both did fear.

They seized the reins, and mounted, rather; 121
Then turned their steeds towards the enemy.
The king, with many a man, followed after,
Invoking death and vengeance, furiously.
The foolish crowd cried 'On, on!' with fervour,
Then stood, afar off, watching avidly.
Grifone now approached the drawbridge, where
The bold trio faced the advancing pair.

As he drew near, Astolfo recognized 122
Oliviero's son, who, as he came,
Bore the arms he'd worn the day he'd devised
Orrilo's death; his armour, steed, the same.
While he'd failed to note, he now realised,
Astolfo, in the square, to his great shame,
But knew him now; he greeted him warmly,
Then asked who his companions might be,

And why one of them had seized the armour, 123
And had shown the king scant reverence, thereby.
Grifone named the one, then the other,
But as to the armour he gave swift reply:
That he had no knowledge of the matter,
(In that, more ignorant than you and I)
But, as they'd come with the warrior-maid,
Sansonetto and he had lent their aid.

Meanwhile, as the two of them were talking, 124
Came Aquilante, who knew Astolfo,
And drawing near, on hearing them speaking,
Quenched that anger best reserved for the foe.
And then came a host of those belonging
To the number despatched by Norandino,
That, seeing them in conference, stood by,
Listening in silence, to who, what, and why.

Canto XVIII: 125-128: Marfisa explains the provenance of the armour

Yet, on hearing that Marfisa was there, 125
Known throughout the world for her bravery,
A guard turned back, to make the king aware
That if he would not lose his court, wholly,
He should swift withdraw from that affair,
Out the hands of Death, and Tisiphone;
For no thief, in the square, but Marfisa
Had seized upon, and removed the armour.

When Norandino heard that dreaded name, 126
For throughout the Levant she was feared,
(The hair bristled on men's heads at that same,
Though she seldom in the kingdom appeared)
Knowing, where'er she went, ill often came,
Saw that he must act, ere disaster neared,
And ordered the guards, whose former ire
Had been replaced by fear, to swift retire.

For their part, the brothers, with Astolfo, 127
And Sansonetto, pleaded with Marfisa,
Till in the end she acquiesced, and so
The fight ended, yet not all the matter,
For she turned proudly to the king, to know
Why he would grant the armour as a prize,
When it was not his own, in any wise.

'This is my armour; that I left, one day 128
By the road, that leads from Armenia,
Obliged there to pursue on foot, some way,
A thief who'd offended.' said Marfisa,
'My insignia the armour doth display,
Which you may witness, if you look closer.'
And there, clear upon the breastplate, did she
Reveal a crown imprinted, split in three.

Canto XVIII: 129-133: And ends by gifting it to Grifone

'Tis true,' replied the king, 'of Armenia 129
Was the merchant, he who found the armour,
And if you had but asked me earlier,
You would have gained it, without bother,
For though I granted it to another,
I know so well this Grifone's nature,
He'd have yielded it, most willingly,
That you might then receive the thing from me.

For you need do no more, to prove it yours; 130
The armour bears your own insignia.
Indeed, your word sufficed to gain your cause,
Weighing more than aught else might offer.
And, to yield it, but to Virtue restores
The prize, who is worthy of far greater.
Now take the thing, and let us not contend;
The knight, on me, may, for his due, depend.'

Grifone, who cared little for the armour, 131
Compared with contenting Norandino,
Said: 'Sire, if I can but grant you pleasure,
Then all other gifts I'd gladly forego.'
To herself Marfisa said: 'My honour
Is bound up with this.' Kindly she did show;
Granting, our knight, the armour, courteously,
As a gift; which he accepted, finally.

To the city, they peacefully did go, 132
Where redoubled were the festivities;
Next came the tourney, where Sansonetto
Carried off the jousting prize, with ease;
For the brothers abstained, with Astolfo
And (the best of them) Marfisa, to please
Their companion and, in that way, devise
A means by which he'd likely gain the prize.

They dwelt there, feasting and celebrating, 133
Ten days or so, with King Norandino,
Until a strong desire for France, swelling
Within, that would not let them linger so,
Urged them to leave; Marfisa, deciding
To accompany them, when they chose to go,
For she wished to prove, with sword and lance,
Her skills against those of the knights of France.

Canto XVIII: 134-139: The five leave Syria for France, and visit Cyprus

She would seek by experience, to know 134
Whether their valour was as Rumour said.
Another deputised for Sansonetto,
And would rule Jerusalem in his stead;
Then, taking their leave of Norandino,
To the distant coast the company sped,
Five who few could equal for their skill,
Seeking a ship their mission to fulfil.

Once there, they found a carack set to load 135
Rich merchandise, returning to the West;
So, with its captain's agreement, they stowed
Their steeds aboard, their armour, and the rest,
(He an old hand, from Luni); the sky showed
Fine and clear, and spoke of days fair and blessed.
They left the shore, the waves calm and serene,
As a following breeze bore them from the scene.

Cyprus, sacred isle of the Love-Goddess, 136
Breathed an air upon them, in its harbour,
That mars people, and rusts iron no less.
Life is but brief there; the marsh brings fever.
Nature, assuredly, has failed to bless
(Poisonous those vapours!) Famagusta,
Foul Costanza's swamp acrid and malign,
Though the rest of Cyprus is so benign.

The noxious odours, rising from the fen, 137
Prevent any vessel lingering there.
With a north-north easterly, they sailed again,
Eastwards, round Cyprus, to Paphos the fair.
Anchoring, the knights and crew, as and when,
Disembarked, all the island's joys to share,
The crew to trade, the rest, at their leisure,
To view Venus' land of love and pleasure.

Some six or seven miles from the sea, 138
There rises, to the view, a pleasant hill.
The orange, myrtle, bay and cedar-tree,
And a thousand others its inclines fill;
Thyme, marjoram, the crocus, the lily,
From their scented leaves, such sweets distil,
That those who sail the sea, on every hand,
Know that fragrant breeze, flowing from the land.

A stream, from a limpid fount, runs around 139
All of that fair, and sweetly perfumed, space.
Truly, it may be said, that Venus found
For herself, a fine and delightful place.
For every woman bred upon that ground,
More than those born elsewhere, proves full of grace.
And Venus wills that they feel love's ardour,
Young and old, all their life, near that harbour.

Canto XVIII: 140-145: They then meet with a storm at sea

There they heard the same tale of Lucina, 140
And of the Ogre, that they'd heard before
In Syria; and that, from Nicosia,
She was preparing to return once more,
To her lord. Their captain now raised anchor,
(For a fair wind rose, blowing from the shore)
And westward then he turned the vessel's head;
Thus, they sailed on, with all their canvas spread.

Before that north wind, blowing from starboard, 141
The ship drove on awhile, when suddenly,
The wind changed, as the sun upwards soared,
To a soft breeze, a light south-westerly;
But by nightfall, as a strong gale, it roared,
Raising the waves mast-high, blowing fiercely,
With such loud thunder, lightning-bolts so dire,
It seemed the heavens, splitting, rained down fire.

A gloomy bank of cloud obscured the light, 142
So dense that neither sun nor star could show;
On every side, the wind raged all that night,
The heavens roared above, the sea below,
With icy rain that robbed the crew of sight,
And scourged them more, the harder it did blow,
While, as time passed, the darkness deepened further,
Over the fearful and angry water.

The master blew his whistle, and so taught 143
The sailors to apply their vaunted skill
To the sheets, those to starboard and to port;
While they bent to their labours with a will.
Some deployed the sea-anchor on its taut
Cable; some reefed the mainsail further still.
While these secured the tiller gainst the blast,
Those cleared the decks, and re-lashed the mast.

The cruel wind grew, in their vicinity, 144
The sky was denser, darker than in hell;
The captain stood his ship far out to sea,
Where a little less broken seemed the swell,
And steered to port or starboard, cautiously
Adjusting to the blasts, where'er they fell;
Never without hope that, come the morn,
The tempest would relent with the dawn.

The fierce wind neither dropped nor eased, but grew 145
In power, with the morning; if twas day,
For twas only from the hour that they knew
That dawn had come, and not by any ray
Of welcome light; with ebbing hope, the crew
Felt greater fear, as their captain gave way
To its violence, and ran before the gale,
Driven on, with the storm-jib for a sail.

Canto XVIII: 146-154: We return to the siege, where Rinaldo slays Dardinello

While Fortune so troubled those out at sea, 146
She granted little rest to those ashore,
Those in France, I mean, seeking victory,
The English, and the armies of the Moor.
There Rinaldo had charged all he could see,
Broke the ranks, overthrowing them, and tore
Their banners to the ground. On Bayard, lo,
He spurred next towards brave Dardinello.

His quartered coat of arms Rinaldo spied, 147
Of which Almonte's son was greatly proud;
And thought him bold and valiant, to ride
With that badge which had to Orlando bowed.
Approaching him, the thought was verified,
Viewing the slain he'd reft from out the crowd.
'Better,' he cried, 'to crush this ill-got seed
Before it shoots and grows; be mine the deed!'

Wherever brave Rinaldo turns his gaze, 148
Those before him recoil, and so make space,
Both Christians and Saracens, always
Anxious lest Fusberta they must face,
Except this warrior, who boldly stays,
This Dardinello, bound for Death's embrace.
'Child, your father a fatal gift did yield
To his fond heir, in leaving you that shield;

For if you'll await me,' Rinaldo cried, 149
'I'll see how you defend the red and white
Of your shield; for if mine be not denied,
So much the less would be Orlando's might.'
'Now clearly comprehend,' the king replied,
That what I bear I e'er defend in fight,
More honour I shall gain than blood now shed,
From my paternal quartering, white and red.

Though I am young, yet think not I will yield, 150
Or fly; no quarter shall you have from me.
Take now my life, if you can take my shield,
Though I hope, by God, for the contrary.
Yet, be that as it may, none in this field
Shall claim I ever shamed my ancestry.'
Thus speaking, sword in hand, Dardinello
Attacked the great Lord of Montalbano.

A chilling fear ran through the Moorish host, 151
As they gazed now upon Rinaldo's face;
He charged towards their king, his glare almost
That of a lion (whose speed he would outpace)
Charging some bull, unable yet to boast
Of mounting a lady-love; thus, he did race.
The first blow to land was Dardinello's,
Vainly, upon that helm once Mambrino's.

Rinaldo smiled, and said: 'I'd have you know, 152
That I am better skilled at drawing blood.'
He spurred on Bayard, and the reins let flow,
And thrust his blade, as a brave knight should,
With such force, against the breast of his foe,
That the veins spurted forth a mighty flood,
The breath emerging, as the lungs it found;
Cold and bloodied, the king fell to the ground.

As a crimson flower languishes and dies, 153
Caught by the plough's sharp steel as it passed by,
Or as the dew-filled poppy droops, likewise,
And bows its head, so there, before the eye,
As the colour fled his face, in such sad guise,
Dardinello's soul, from out the flesh, did fly;
He passed so from this life, and with him went
His strength, his courage, all his bold intent.

As water, trapped by human art and skill, 154
Is contained, and so blocked in its flowing,
Yet when the dam is broken, from the hill
Pours down, and fills the vale in its going,
With a mighty noise, so, without the will
Of their young king to prevent them fleeing,
His Africans ran here and there, dismayed,
On seeing him descend into Death's shade.

Canto XVIII: 155-164: The Moors retreat

Those who would fly, Rinaldo let them fly, 155
And waited to attack those who would stand;
Ariodante caused so many there to die,
Their counts of the slain went hand in hand.
Lionetto too, he approached them nigh,
And Zerbino who'd many there unmanned,
Charles discharged his role, and Oliviero,
Guido, Turpin, Salamone and Ugiero.

The Moors, on that day, were in grave danger 156
Of ne'er seeing their heathen shores again.
But the wise King of Spain brought together
All who were left, and then withdrew his men;
To avoid further losses seemed much better
Than to chance his all in that gambling den.
Far better to save the remnants, thereby
Than order them to stand their ground and die.

The banners went, with every fighting man, 157
To their camp, defended by ditch and wall;
With Andalusia's king, and Stordilan,
And the Portuguese, obeying his call.
Then he sent to the King of Barbary
To retreat if he could, and scape the maul;
He that would earn no little praise that day,
Saving his army, leading them away.

For Barbary's king, thinking himself wholly 158
Doomed to see Bizerte never more,
Since Fortune's aspect never so grimly
Shown had that monarch witnessed e'er before,
Was cheered that Marsilio had swiftly
Retrieved part of the host, and was secure.
He faced the flags about and, to the beat
Of the recall, commenced a brave retreat.

Yet the best part of the scattered army 159
Had heard neither drum nor trumpet sound;
Some were confused, some simply cowardly,
But many a man in the Seine was drowned.
Sobrino accompanied Agramante
In scouring the squadrons that they found
For sound officers to gather in the men,
And retreat with them to the camp again.

But the King, Sobrino and their officers 160
Could save no more than a third of the host,
Despite their endless threats and menaces,
And rescue a third of the flags at most.
The rest had all relinquished their banners,
Were slaughtered, dying, or had fled their post.
Many had painful wounds, in front or back,
Wearied survivors of that fierce attack;

The Christians yet slew those who defied, 161
As to their camp the stragglers proceeded,
Which, in turn, was ill-suited to provide
Replenishment of all that they needed.
Charlemagne, with Fortune on his side,
Would have soldiered on till they'd conceded,
If the shadows of night had not descended,
Hampering all, and ensured the action ended;

Perchance twas the Creator hastened night, 162
Pitying the creatures He'd created,
For the blood ran in rivers, left and right,
And drenched all that soil, now desecrated.
Eighty thousand had been slain in the fight,
To a death by the lance or sword, thus fated.
From their dens came the wolves and scavengers,
Those nocturnal devourers and despoilers.

Charlemagne remained outside the city, 163
Pitching camp that night opposite the foe.
He besieged the quarters of the enemy,
And, about them all, his watchfires did glow,
While the pagans dug the earth, frantically,
Carved ditches, bastions, tunnelling below;
Then he stirred the guards, as he made his tour,
While, throughout that night, full armour he wore.

And, all that night, insecure, in their tents, 164
The Saracens lay, gloomy and oppressed,
Pouring out their tears, groans and laments,
Though, as best they could, such things they suppressed.
Some grieved at the result of past events,
Mourned kith and kin, others their wounds distressed,
Far more anxiety, as yet unsure
Of what dire ills their future held in store.

Canto XVIII: 165-171: Medoro decides to search for Dardinello's corpse

Two Moors there were midst the pagan army, 165
In Ptolomita born, of stock base and low;
A rare example of true love, their story,
Their names Cloridano and Medoro;
For they had ever served, most faithfully,
And loved, their master Dardinello,
Whether Fortune smiled, or frowned uneasily;
And so had journeyed with him o'er the sea.

Cloridano was both nimble and strong, 166
All his life he'd been a follower of the chase;
Medoro's snowy cheeks showed red among
The white, thus adding to his youthful grace.
And if the foe you'd searched, both wide and long,
Ne'er was a fairer or more joyful face.
His hair was crisp and golden, black his eyes,
A seeming angel sent down from the skies.

They were posted, with many another, 167
To defend the encampment overnight,
And gazed at the sky, or at each other,
With somnolent eyes, till it be light.
As they talked together, Medoro ever
Harped on memories of past delight,
And Dardinello, their lord; moreover,
That his corpse lay now bereft of honour.

And, turning to his friend, Medoro cried: 168
'What deep and dreadful pain, Cloridano,
I suffer, knowing that he lies outside,
Upon the plain, a prey to wolf or crow.
Thinking how on his kindness I relied.
It seems to me a small thing to forego
My life, to honour him, in recompense,
In that my obligation seems immense.



Stanza 168

So, he lacks not a burial, I must go 169
And seek for his poor corpse amidst the plain,
For God, perchance, will keep me hidden, so
None spy me from the camp of Charlemagne.
Stay here; and if my death be writ, also,
In heaven above, you shall here remain
And tell the tale, and though Fortune shuns me,
Fame will declare my heart true, and praise me.'

Cloridano, amazed that a mere youth 170
Should show such courage, and such loyalty,
Was yet, though loving him, inclined, in truth,
To curb the lad's intent, yet fruitlessly;
He'd not be comforted, so great his ruth.
Intent upon his plan, absorbed wholly,
Medoro was disposed, indeed, to die,
Rather than leave the corpse there neath the sky.

On finding that naught could change his purpose. 171
Cloridano said: 'Then, I shall go as well;
I too would seek a death as glorious,
I too would prove myself, like him that fell;
What would be left to me if, dying thus,
My Medoro amidst the shades did dwell?
To die with you, fighting, is far better
Than to die of grief, mourning you, later.'

Canto XVIII: 172-181: He and Cloridano slay folk within the Christian camp

Thus resolved, and leaving, in their stead, 172
Others to guard the camp, they went their way,
And, quitting the wall and ditch, quickly sped
Towards the Christian camp, with scant delay.
There men slumbered, free of care and dread;
Little fear of the Moors did they display,
Their fires quenched, midst carts and arms supine,
Drowned to the very eyes in sleep, and wine.

Here Cloridano paused awhile, then cried: 173
'Why should we lose this opportunity?
Should we not draw vengeance to our side,
Medoro, and destroy the enemy
That slew our lord? Now, do you here abide,
Use your ears and eyes, and so support me.
For I offer to create, with my good sword,
A broad and spacious pathway through this horde.'

With this, he ceased speaking; then he came 174
To where the wise Alpheus lay asleep;
A physician, and a mage, was that same,
And in knowledge of astrology full deep.
To Charles' court, the year before, seeking fame,
Had he come, yet all his skill failed to keep
Him alive; the death he'd foreseen, a lie,
That full of years, on his wife's breast, he'd die.

For, swift, the Saracen, with silent blade, 175
Had cut his throat; and then four others too.
Not a sound or movement had they made,
As, beside the mage's body, such he slew.
(Bishop Turpin their names perchance mislaid,
Or time had obscured those same from view)
Next Palidon of Moncalieri
That slept between two chargers, died swiftly.



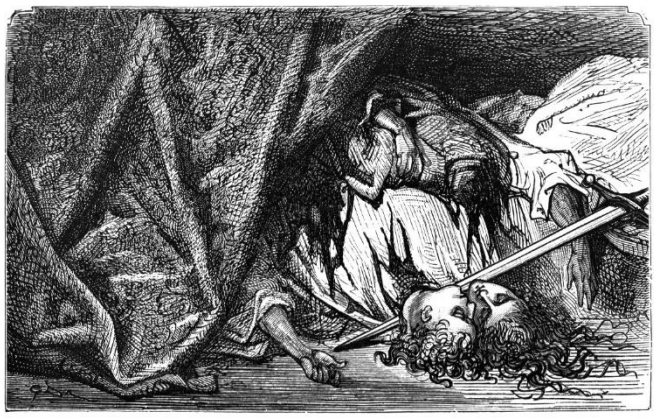
Stanza 175

Then Cloridano came to poor Grillo, 176
Who lay with his head propped on a barrel,
And, having drained it, had thought to follow
His draughts with peaceful sleep, free of quarrel.
The bold Saracen trimmed him neatly though,
(And from the severed neck there flowed a rill
Of wine amidst the blood, the cask empty)
While dreaming there, scorned by his enemy.

And near Grillo, a German and a Greek, 177
Their names were Conrad and Andropono,
Who'd passed part of the night there, cheek to cheek
O'er the flask and dice, he slew at a blow,
Happier if they'd lived the dawn to seek,
When the sun o'er India raised his glow;
But worthless all our dreams of destiny,
If mortals could their future end foresee.

Like to a famished lion, in a fold, 178
Whom hunger has rendered lean and spare,
Who bites, and devours both young and old,
Slaying the helpless creatures, everywhere,
So, the pagan slew all those in his hold,
For the dead there all fell to his share.
Medoro's sword was just as sharp, I'd say,
Yet he disdained the baser crowd to slay,

And came to where the Duke of Labretto 179
Lay sleeping in his lady's warm embrace;
Each there clasping the other tightly, so
Between the two was not the smallest space.
Both of them were slain, there, by Medoro;
Yet may God bless them with eternal grace,
For my belief is that with their bodies, lo,
Their souls embracing to their bourn did go.



Stanza 179

Malindo, he slew then, and his brother 180
Andalico, the Count of Flanders' sons,
Both newly knighted, one and the other.
Charlemagne had, for their escutcheons,
Granted them the lily, marks of honour;
For, amidst the brave, these were the ones
He'd noted; and he'd promised land also,
Denied to them, now, by this Medoro.

With their insidious blades, they drew close 181
To where the knights and lords, on the plain,
Guarded King Charles' pavilion from his foes,
And yet the pair did not their path maintain.
Their impious slaughter ended, they chose
To sheathe their swords and withdraw again,
Thinking that, amidst those sleepers, one
Must be awake; and, thus, their work was done.

Canto XVIII: 182-187: They retrieve Dardinello's body

For though they could have borne the spoils 182
away,
They thought their own escape sufficient prize,
And so, by what he thought the safest way,
Went Cloridano, hidden from men's eyes,
With Medoro behind, to where there lay,
Midst bows, shields, lances, swords, beneath the
skies,
King and vassal, rich and poor, equally,
Men and their mounts, lost, for eternity.

The dreadful mingling of the slaughtered, there, 183
That filled the blood-stained space, all around,
Might well have rendered vain the faithful care
The two gave to their search, o'er that ill ground,
Had not the Moon, at young Medoro's prayer,
Emerged from out the clouds, and lit the mound
Of corpses; to her orb he turned his eyes,
And with devotion, spoke, and in this wise:

'O sacred Goddess, whom the ancients knew 184
In triple form; you, whose sovereign beauty
Is revealed on earth, in hell, and heaven too,
In many shapes; who, neath the greenwood tree,
Many a beast and monster doth pursue,
Proving of the chase its immortal lady;
Show me where, midst these, my master lies,
That, once, your holy mysteries did prize.'

The Moon shone from the clouds at his prayer, 185
(Whether it was the work of faith or chance)
As lovely as when, all naked, to the fair
Endymion, she gave herself; while France
The hostile camps, and Paris, everywhere
Her light revealed, and every circumstance;
The gleaming hills, Montmartre on the right,
Montlhéry on the left, a distant sight.

The light was bright where Dardinello lay, 186
Greater the splendour o'er Almonte's son.
Medoro went weeping neath that silver ray,
Knowing the white and the vermilion
Quartering of that shield, as though twere day;
And many a bitter tear he shed upon
His master's corpse, and gave forth such sweet sighs,
Such sweet lament, as stilled the breeze, likewise,

But in so low a murmur none might hear. 187
Not that he cared if any heard him sigh,
If by so-doing it but brought death near,
Loathing his life, he wished that he might die;
That they might thwart his aim, his only fear,
That he might fail of his purpose, thereby.
The king they took upon their shoulders straight,
So, in that way, they might divide the weight.

Canto XVIII: 188-192: But are pursued by Zerbino's men

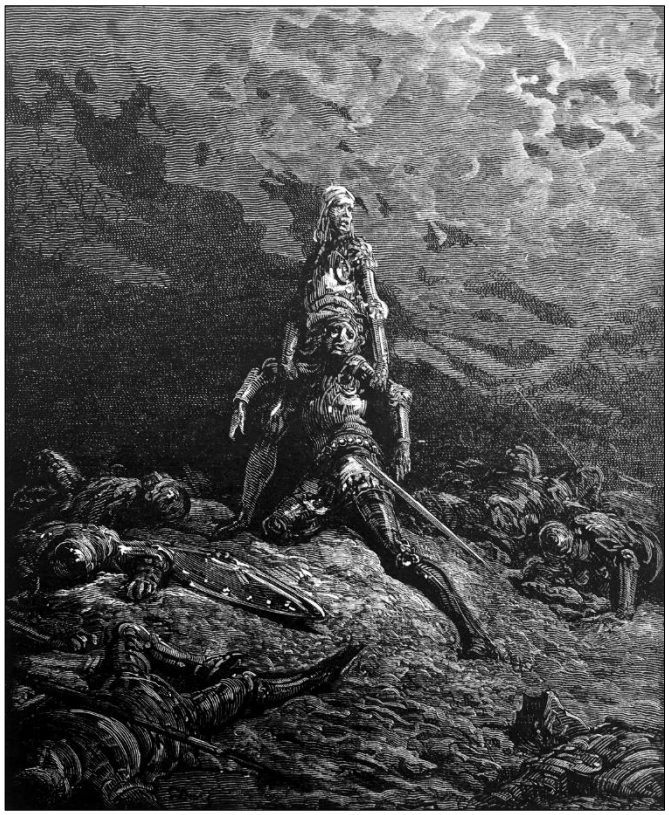
They sought to move apace, as best they might, 188
Beneath the cherished burden they conveyed.
Now came the Sun, banishing, with his light,
The stars from heaven, and from earth the shade,
As Zerbino, who e'er rose to Virtue's height
When needed, and on whom sleep scarcely weighed,
Having pursued the Moors all night, his way
Retraced now, at the coming of the day.

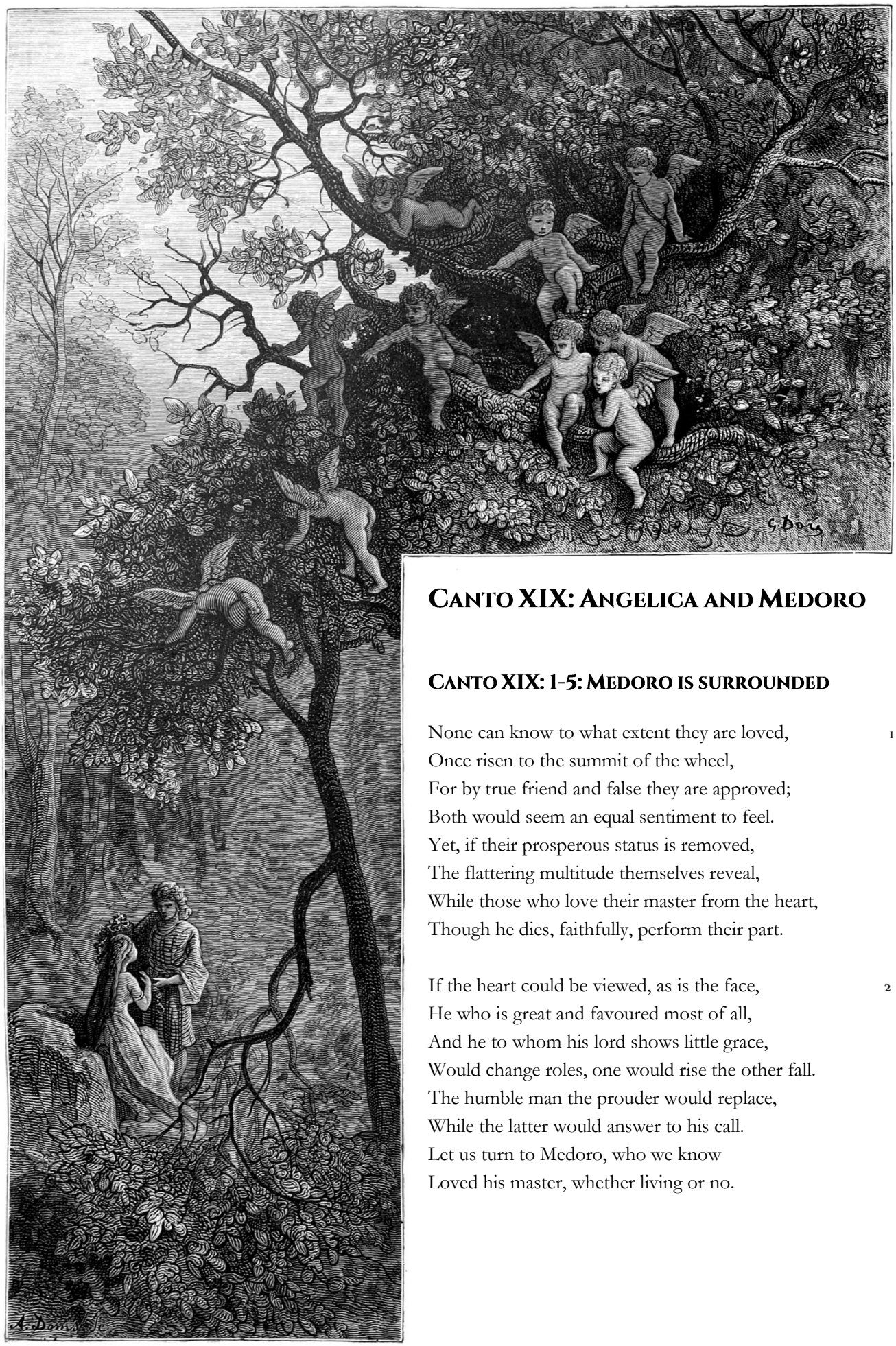
Some knights were there, that kept him company, 189
Who from afar the two companions saw,
And now, upon them, descended swiftly,
Hoping to gain, by that, the spoils of war.
'Brother,' cried Cloridano, 'we must flee,
And drop this burden we can bear no more.
For foolish it would prove if, for one dead,
Two living men were to be lost, instead.'

He dropped the corpse, certain that his brother 190
Would do the same, on his part, but the lad,
Loving his master more than did the other,
Took up the task that formerly he'd had
While Cloridano hastened all the faster,
(Thinking him at his back still, I should add)
Who if he'd known he'd left him to his fate,
A thousand deaths had died, or soon, or late.

The knights, disposed to make the brothers yield, 191
And take them prisoner, or slay them there,
Some here, some there, had occupied the field,
And so, the two were hemmed in everywhere.
Their captain, riding with them, now revealed
His wish to end, at once, that whole affair;
For viewing their speed, that of hares almost,
He'd deemed they came from the enemy host.

There was, of old, an ancient wood nearby, 192
Dense thickets, floored with tangled undergrowth,
A labyrinth, to deceive the watching eye,
To enter which all but wild beasts were loath.
Here the brothers hoped, concealed, to lie;
Its depths, from their pursuers, hiding both.
Yet those who in my canto found delight,
Must wait to hear the rest, as is my right.





Canto XIX: Angelica and Medoro

Canto XIX: 1-5: Medoro is surrounded

None can know to what extent they are loved, 1
Once risen to the summit of the wheel,
For by true friend and false they are approved;
Both would seem an equal sentiment to feel.
Yet, if their prosperous status is removed,
The flattering multitude themselves reveal,
While those who love their master from the heart,
Though he dies, faithfully, perform their part.

If the heart could be viewed, as is the face, 2
He who is great and favoured most of all,
And he to whom his lord shows little grace,
Would change roles, one would rise the other fall.
The humble man the prouder would replace,
While the latter would answer to his call.
Let us turn to Medoro, who we know
Loved his master, whether living or no.

That unhappy youth sought the nearest way 3
To save himself, amidst the tangled wood,
Heavily, indeed, did his burden weigh,
That he'd not leave behind, although he could.
Ignorant of the place, he went astray,
So, in a thorn-brake, half-concealed he stood.
Meanwhile, Cloridano, his shoulders free,
Sought a place of safety, as he did flee.

He knew not if his dear friend would follow; 4
Though none did so, as far as he could tell,
Yet once he found that he'd lost Medoro,
He felt as if his heart were lost as well.
'Ah, how was I so negligent? What woe!'
He exclaimed, 'Thinking of myself, I fell
So deeply into error I know not where
I have left him, nor when, in this affair!'

With that, he plunged again amidst the trees, 5
Threading his way through the tangled maze,
And so retraced his path, with great unease,
Sensing the danger, fearing death always.
He heard the riders calling without cease,
Threatening cries; sought to garner every phrase;
Till, at last, his Medoro's voice he heard,
Who stood, alone, as round him men conferred.

Canto XIX: 6-10: And ultimately made captive

A hundred horsemen ringed the place about. 6
Zerbino ordered them to seize the lad;
He retreated to the wood, with a shout,
(Still bowed beneath his burden, I should add).
Through stands of beech, oak, elm, ash, in and out
He went, bearing his master, as he had,
Till, wearily, he laid him on the grass,
Lacking strength to escape his foes, alas.

As a she-bear, that Alpine hunters face 7
Who've assailed her in her mountain den,
Will defend her cubs in that stony place,
And growl in her fierce anger at the men,
While rage and tenderness she must embrace,
Unsheathing her sharp claws, yet, now and then,
Drawing back, as love urges a retreat
To shield her young, though wrath their spears would meet,

So Medoro! Cloridano unsure 8
How to aid him, seeking death by his side,
Yet not prepared to die until ten more
Of the foe met the dust, to there abide,
Set his sharpest arrow to the bow he bore.
And launched a dart, that through the air did glide,
To pierce a Scottish rider through the eye;
He fell stone dead, to earth, with scarce a sigh.

His companions now turned towards the place 9
From which the fatal missile had emerged,
While Cloridano took another pace,
And launched a second dart; onwards it surged,
To strike a second rider in the face
As a charge, against this hidden foe, he urged;
It pierced him through the open mouth, and throat,
And cut his speech short, on that very note.



Stanza 9

But now the leader of the troop, Zerbino, 10
Losing his patience at the sorry sight,
Rode with fury towards young Medoro,
Crying: 'Now do penance for the knight!
As, with one hand, he grasped the hair below,
He dragged the youth to him, held upright,
Yet viewing that loyal and tender face,
Took pity on him, and held off a pace.

Canto XIX: 11-16: Medoro is wounded, against Zerbino's wish

Upwards, at him, Medoro stared, and cried: 11
'By your God, be not so cruel, sir knight,
As to deny the king I stand beside
A fitting burial, as is his right.
I ask naught else of you; come death, outright,
For life I care not, nor shall long abide;
I wish no more than that this life afford
Sufficient space yet to inter my lord;

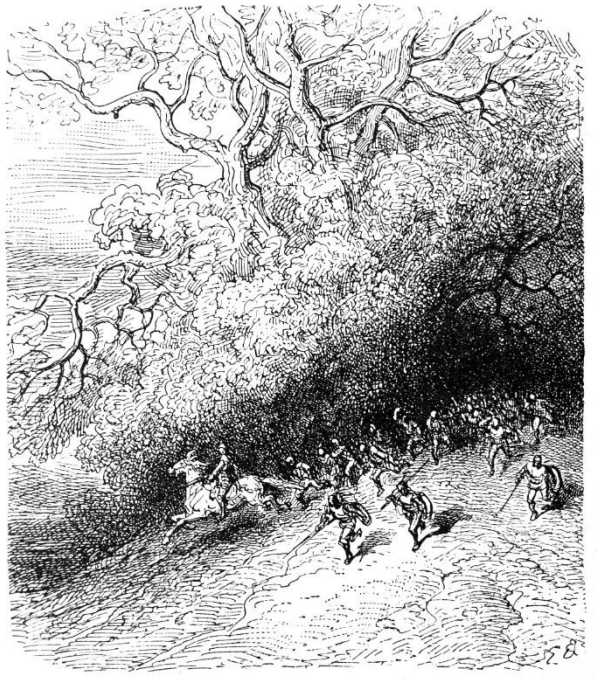
And if you needs must feed the wolf and crow, 12
In your wrath, and act like Theban Creon,
I'll be their feast; yet, in the tomb, bestow
All that remains of King Almonte's son.'
Thus, with pleasing grace, spoke Medoro,
Words that might mountains move, and so he won
Zerbino's heart to pity and respect,
That could not such a noble plea reject.

But at that moment, a malicious knight, 13
Possessing scant deference for his lord,
With a bold thrust of his lance, pierced outright
The lad's broad chest, his death all but assured,
The cruel deed a more than bitter slight
To Zerbino who the lad's wound deplored;
For he saw him fall earthwards, as if dead,
As all there believed, viewing how it bled.

Greatly angered, and grieved, was Zerbino, 14
'You'll not go unavenged!' the warrior cried;
And, filled with dire intent, he aimed a blow
At that horseman who had his will denied.
But the latter escaped him, even so,
Sought an avenue, and away he hied.
Cloridano, who had seen Medoro fall,
Sprang from the wood, eager to slay them all.

He hurled his bow away, he grasped his sword, 15
Whirling it about him; though death, he thought,
More than vengeance, his action would afford.
Yet he stained the ground with blood as he fought
Midst the blades, and many a hit he scored,
In his anger, while that swift revenge he sought;
Till feeling his strength departing, slow,
At length, he fell to earth, beside Medoro.

Meanwhile the Scots rode after their leader 16
Through the dense wood, urged on by their disdain
At having left the dying clasped together,
(Though one was yet alive) upon the plain.
There young Medoro lay, beside the other,
As, from out his wound, the life-blood did drain,
And would soon have perished altogether,
Had not one appeared who aid did proffer.



Stanza 16

Canto XIX: 17-20: Angelica comes upon him, close to death

A maiden chanced to come upon the place, 17
Who, though rustic and humble was her dress,
Bore a noble manner, a lovely face,
And seemed a regal presence, nonetheless.
Tis so long since I did her tale embrace,
You might fail to recognise our princess:
Angelica it was, still riding on her way,
Proud daughter of the great Khan of Cathay.



Stanza 17

Angelica, once she'd again retrieved 18
The ring Brunello had taken from her,
Was filled with monstrous pride, for she believed
That all the mortal world was beneath her;
She went alone, her journey unrelieved
By any friendship this earth might offer,
And scorned to consider as a lover,
Orlando, Sacripante, or some other;

And, above all else, she now repented 19
Of loving bold Rinaldo, long ago,
Believing that to have, thus, consented,
Had shamed her, receiving one so low.
Love such boundless arrogance resented;
He refused to let the matter rest, and so,
Where young Medoro lay, he took his stand,
And waited for her, bow and dart in hand.

When Angelica saw the young man there, 20
Near to death, sorely wounded in the chest,
(That for his master had shown greater care
Than for himself) pity stirred, in her breast,
A feeling which she was unused to share,
Softening the heart that it now addressed,
Tempering its harshness; her face grew pale,
(And more so, when she came to learn his tale).

Canto XIX: 21-26: And tends to his wound, restoring him

She now recalled to mind the doctor's art 21
Of which she was apprised in India;
For, it seems, such knowledge they impart
In that country, and do praise it ever;
For, with little use of books, but by heart,
Fathers pass it on to son or daughter;
And thus, with the juice of herbs, she now thought
To restore him to life; and these she sought.

She remembered one she'd seen while passing 22
Through a pleasant place, whether dittany
Or pansy (that panacea) growing,
Or I know not what, whose powers fully
Served to staunch a wound, while greatly easing
Every painful pang and spasm, swiftly.
She found and culled the herb, not far away
And returned to Medoro where he lay.

While doing so, she came upon a cowherd, 23
Mounted on horseback, there, amid the wood;
He was searching for a heifer, so she heard,
Two full days lost, in that wild neighbourhood.
She brought him with her, with scarce a word,
To where the warrior's last strength, with blood,
Was staining the ground, dyed deeply now,
While winged Death yet hovered o'er his brow.

From her palfrey, Angelica descended, 24
And the cowherd dismounted, there, also.
Next, between two stones, the herb she pounded,
And scooped it in her hands when she'd done so;
Then the wound she infused, and surrounded,
With the juice, and smeared the rest below,
On belly, waist and hips, and such its power
It staunched the blood, and roused him, in an hour.

Its force imbued him with such strength that he 25
Could even mount the horse the cowherd rode,
Though Medoro would not depart, till he
The king and Cloridano had bestowed,
For he now interred the two, reverently.
Then, where'er the maiden went, he followed;
And, she, beneath the cowherd's humble roof,
Remained with him; of pity certain proof.

Nor wished she to depart till he was sound, 26
Such was her liking for this warrior,
And such the maiden's pity, rare, profound,
That, at first sight, had so stirred within her.
Then his address and courtesy, she found,
Had wounded her heart, in secret manner,
Wounded her heart and warmed it, by and by,
Until with amorous flame the maid did sigh.

Canto XIX: 27-30: Angelica falls in love with Medoro

The cowherd dwelt in a well-built cabin 27
On flat ground, twixt two hills, in a fair glade,
With his wife and children; and there, within,
All had lately been re-worked, and remade.
And here Medoro to full health did win,
Through the kind ministrations of the maid.
Who felt a sharper pain, despite her art,
Than ere Medoro felt, deep in her heart.

A sharper pain, a wound far more profound, 28
From an unseen arrow, she did suffer,
From those fair eyes, those golden locks, unbound,
A wound the winged Archer had dealt her.
A fire she felt, its burning wrapped her round,
Yet cared less for herself than for the other,
Scarce thought about herself, her sole intent
To ensure that her tormentor was content.

The more Medoro's wound closed and healed, 29
The more hers ached and opened; heaven knows,
The youth thrived, she languished, yet concealed
Her fever: now she burned, and now she froze.
More beauty every day his form revealed,
While she but wasted, like the springtime snows
That, born unseasonably, melt away,
In open fields, caught in the Sun's bright ray.

If she were not to die, she needed now 30
To aid herself, and that without delay;
Nor should she wait till he might such avow,
If she to her desire would find a way.
Without a trace of shame upon her brow,
Her tongue as bold as were her eyes that day,
For the wound he'd dealt her, unwittingly,
She begged him to show kindness and pity.

Canto XIX: 31-36: The pair enjoy wedded bliss

O Count Orlando, O Sacripante, 31
Say what the prize is for all your valour?
Say what your service earns you, now, what fee,
What reward for all your worth and honour?
Show me, in truth, a single courtesy
Old or new, that she did ever offer,
In recompense for all the pain you've felt
On her behalf; for all the pain she's dealt.



Stanza 31

Oh, if aught could your former life restore, 32
How bitter, Agricane, this would seem!
You whom she scorned endlessly, before,
Sad slave to her cruel, inhuman, scheme.
O brave Ferrau, O you, the thousand more,
Unsung, whose fond desire proved but a dream,
The thousand deeds you wrought for her, but vain,
To see her clasped in those arms now, what pain!

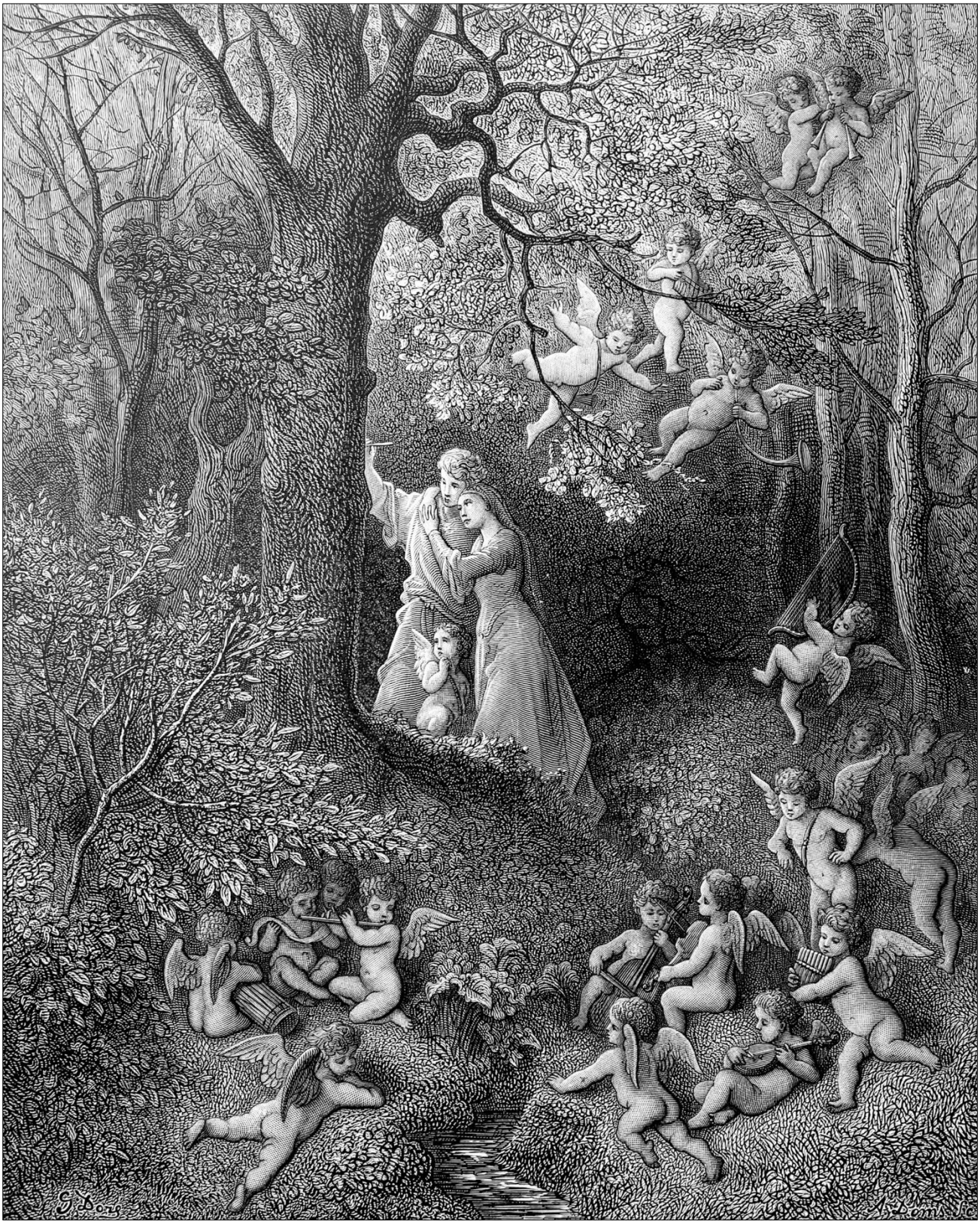
For Angelica allowed this Medoro, 33
To cull the virgin rose, untouched before.
None was so fortunate, till then, to know
That garden, that so fair a flower bore.
Sacred ritual they employed also,
To honour the thing, yet veil it o'er,
A marriage Love predicted, born of strife,
And whose sole witness was the cowherd's wife.

Beneath that humble roof, the pair were wed, 34
With what solemnity they could achieve;
There, for a month or more, time swiftly sped,
They found delight together, I believe.
The lady's eyes upon her husband fed,
Nor life without him could she e'er conceive,
Nor, arms about his neck, could ever tire
Of seeking, thus, to sate her fond desire.

Whether she kept within or wandering wide 35
And far beyond, at morn or eve, she strayed,
She had the fair youth ever at her side,
In some green meadow, or fair woodland glade;
Or in some cave, from noonday heat, they'd hide,
No less pleasant and welcome for its shade
Than that which Dido and Aeneas sought
True witness to their secret, tempest-fraught.



Stanza 35



Stanza 36 "*His knife, her pin, at work there, instantly*"



Stanza 34

Amidst such pleasures, where'er some fine tree 36
Cast its shadow on a fount, or flowing stream,
His knife, her pin, at work there, instantly,
Would carve the bark (or stone if it did seem
Quite soft) in a thousand places, deeply,
Or within, on the walls, in a like scheme,
'Medoro' and 'Angelica' they traced,
With diverse knots, prettily interlaced.



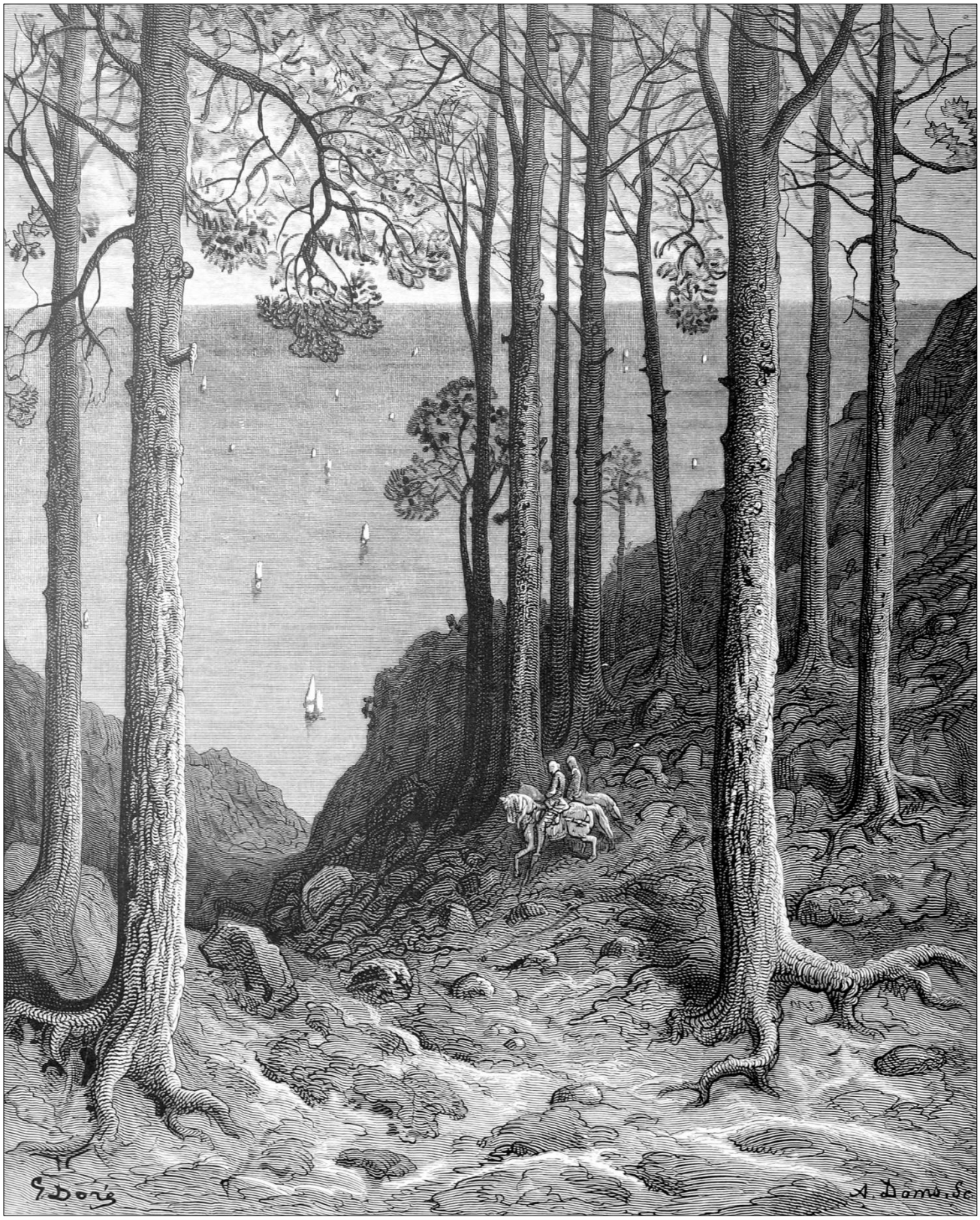
Stanza 35

Canto XIX: 37-42: They set out for her land of Cathay, and approach Barcelona

When she concluded the length of their stay, 37
Had been sufficient, she framed a design,
To return to India, and Cathay,
And a crown to Medoro there assign.
A bracelet, on her arm, she had alway,
Gold set with gems, a token and a sign,
Of Count Orlando's love, and this she'd borne,
For many a day, and happily had worn.

It had been bestowed on Ziliante, 38
When hid beneath the wave, by Morgana,
And he (once restored to Monodante,
His father, through Orlando's great valour)
Gave it to Orlando; a lover, he,
One that deigned to wear that bracelet ever;
With intent to gift it to his fair queen,
Angelica, of whom we speak, I mean.

Yet not for love of that knight she wore it, 39
But because it was rich and finely wrought;
And, thus, she felt so great a love for it,
That, beside it, she held others as naught.
In that Isle of Tears, Ebuda, she bore it
On her arm, by some privilege unsought,
When exposed, all naked, to the whale,
By that inhospitable folk (you've heard the tale).



Stanza 41 "*With the coast to their east, sure but slow*"

There being little else she did possess 40
That she might offer as a small reward
To the man and his wife, for their kindness
In granting two fond lovers, bed and board,
She bestowed on them the bracelet, no less,
That some memory of her it might afford.
Then to ascend the mountains they were fain,
The Pyrenees, dividing France from Spain.

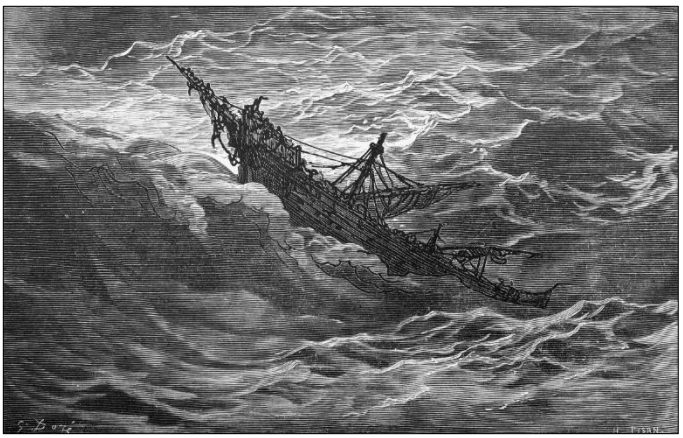
At Valencia or Barcelona, 41
The couple thought they might awhile remain,
Until some vessel chose to weigh anchor,
And set sail for the Levant, once again.
They first saw the sea beyond Girona,
Having descended to the open plain;
With the coast to their east, sure but slow,
To Barcelona's city they did go.

Yet, ere they reached it, they met a madman, 42
Crouched upon the sand, close to the water,
Who like a wild boar, or some pagan clan,
Was daubed in filth and foul mud, all over.
He attacked as fiercely as (when it can)
A malicious dog assails the stranger,
And annoyed them, and put them both to scorn.
But for Marfisa, once again, I'm borne.

Canto XIX: 43-49: We return to Marfisa and the knights amidst the storm

Of Marfisa, Astolfo, Grifone, 43
Aquilante, and all the rest, I'll tell,
That, facing death, pursued their journey
O'er the waves, scarce countering the swell;
While ever more threateningly and fiercely
The mighty waves upon their vessel fell.
Three days, entire, the wicked gale had blown,
And not one sign of abatement had shown.

The hostile breakers tore the deck apart, 44
And the tall aftercastle at the stern,
While whate'er was left of any other part
Was hurled into the water, in its turn.
Here, the captain stood, head bowed to a chart,
By which he might their troubled course discern,
By a lantern's flame, that the wind did fight,
There, another, on the bilges, shed a light.



Stanza 43

One at the stern, another at the bow, 45
Observed the sand sifting through a glass,
And at each half-hour, gazed, at poop and prow,
To watch lest some feature they might pass,
Then, each with his chart, amidships now,
Would search for a sight of some landmass,
While the seamen clustered there, together,
At the captain's call, and faced the weather.

One called, loudly: 'Off Limassol are we, 46
Midst the shoals,' another: 'We are nigh
Those perilous reefs close to Tripoli,
Where many a shipwrecked vessel must lie.'
Another: 'Antalya's coast we'll see,
Whose currents make many a captain sigh.'
Each championed his opinion, eagerly,
All oppressed by fear and dread, equally.

On the third day, the wind blew spitefully, 47
And angrier the breakers then became,
While the one drowned the foremast in the sea,
The other did both helm and helmsman claim;
Harder than marble, solid steel was he
That failed to dread the power of those same.
Marfisa who had ever felt secure,
Denied not, on that day, she feared their roar.

A pilgrimage some vowed, to Mount Sinai, 48
To Cyprus, Rome, or to Galicia,
Or some other sacred place, by and by,
Ettino's Virgin, or the Holy Sepulchre,
Meanwhile their ship was tossed twixt sea and sky,
Both elements seeking, now, to conquer,
Her mizzen-mast removed by the master,
That she might labour less midst the water.

The bales and chests of substantial weight 49
Were hurled, from stern, prow, gunwales, overboard,
And every hold and cabin, filled of late
With rich merchandise, was cleared of its hoard;
While the sailors pumped the importunate
Waters from the bilge, sea to sea re-poured;
Or, where plank was torn from plank, stemmed the flow,
Which the pounding waves had started below.

Canto XIX: 50-55: They are driven to Latakia, in Syria

They laboured in such misery and woe, 50
Four days entire, in a nigh helpless state.
The waves would have won the victory so,
If their fury had refused to abate.
But, with St. Elmo's fire a lance did glow,
(Bringing them hope of a far better fate),
Within a ship's boat, stowed at the bow,
For the topmost spar was shattered now.

On viewing that most lovely show of light, 51
All the mariners fell down on their knees,
And prayed for fairer weather, calm and bright,
In tears, as they voiced their trembling pleas.
The cruel tempest vanished then, outright,
And the vessel floated midst quieter seas.
The mistral and the savage cross-winds died,
Only a strong south-westerly did abide,

Which blew forcefully across the water, 52
And sent the breath from its dark mouth abroad,
Driving the current neath the surface faster,
Such that it did them greater speed afford
Than a peregrine falcon (that stoops swifter
Than any hawk) as through the waves they bored.
The captain feared that on, to the world's brink,
They'd be borne, or be torn apart, and sink.

Gainst this, the captain knew a remedy, 53
Employing a sea-anchor; once in play,
The float and line, paid out steadily,
By two-thirds at least, now slowed their way.
His wise thought (and still more the augury
Of the saint whose fire had shone bright as day)
Saved the ship, that might have sunk easily;
And held her on a true course o'er the sea;

To Syria where in Latakia's bay 54
They found themselves, nigh that great city,
Close to the shore, from which, not far away,
They could view two castles, tall and mighty.
The captain turned quite pale, in his dismay,
For he knew where they were, instantly,
And sought not to moor within the harbour,
Yet could not flee, nor ride there at anchor,

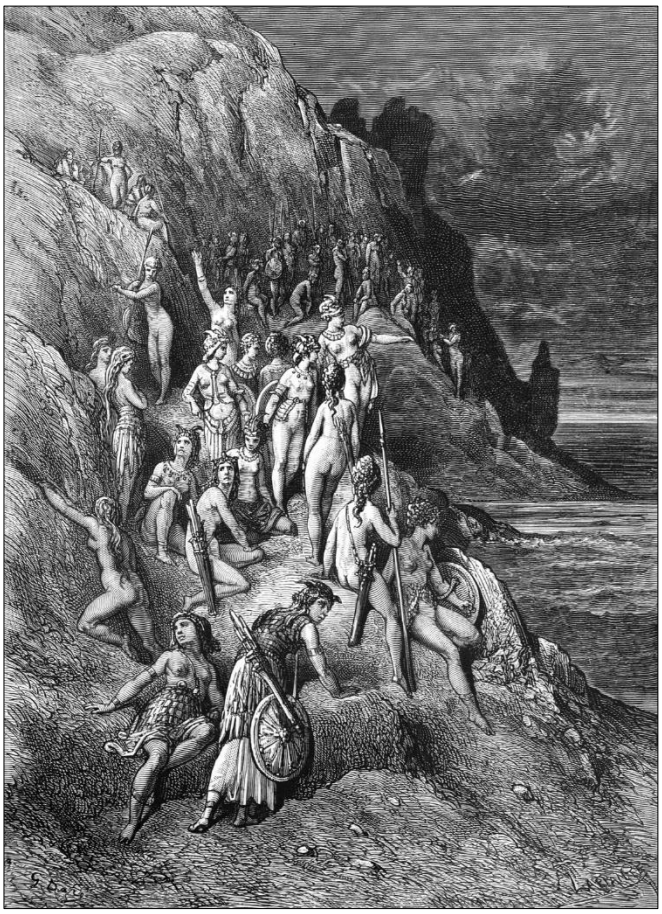
Not rigged to do either of the latter, 55
Having lost a mast and spars out at sea;
Where many a beam and plank the waves did shatter,
Such the pounding they received, endlessly;
And yet the ugly truth of the matter
Was that to land meant death, or slavery.
For all must die, or be slaves for ever,
That found themselves there, by chance or error.

Canto XIX: 56-59: The captain explains his reluctance to disembark

To linger there, unsure, was full of danger, 56
Hostile troops might issue from the city,
And row, armed, to climb aboard a stranger
Not fit to sail, or meet an enemy.
While in such doubt the man did hover
Astolfo questioned his uncertainty,
Seeking to understand why the master
Had chosen not to dock in the harbour.

The captain told him that upon that shore 57
A murderous band of women had their lair,
Who, in accordance with their ancient law,
Enslaved or slew all warriors that came there;
And from that fate but one escape was sure,
To conquer their ten champions, then repair
To a bed with ten maidens that same night,
And with those maidens seek carnal delight.

And if a man the first task could complete, 58
But left the second challenge part-undone,
He was slain; and all with him, in defeat,
Set to guard the herds, or toil neath the sun.
While if both of those harsh tests he could meet,
Then the freedom of his company was won,
Though not his own; he was obliged to wed
Ten women chosen there to share his bed.



Stanza 57

Astolfo could not hear of that strange rite, 59
Without smiling at the thought of that same.
Sansonetto and Marfisa joined our knight,
And Aquilante and Grifone came
And listened, as he told them of their plight,
While the captain explained the sorry game;
'I'd far rather drown,' he cried, 'in the sea,
Than bow beneath the yoke of slavery.'

Canto XIX: 60-64: They are towed to the shore

The sailors were of the same opinion, 60
As were the other passengers aboard,
But not Marfisa nor a single one
Of her companions, who such fear deplored,
Saying they'd rather meet, beneath the sun,
A hundred thousand swords than afford
The sea another chance to slay them all;
Not this nor other fight could them apall.

The warriors were keen to reach the shore, 61
And boldest of all was the English knight,
Whose magic horn, deployed as before,
He knew would clear every place in sight.
The other travellers yet remained unsure,
Seeking neither servitude nor a fight.
But the strongest, as ever, won the day,
And the captain was, thus, forced to give way.

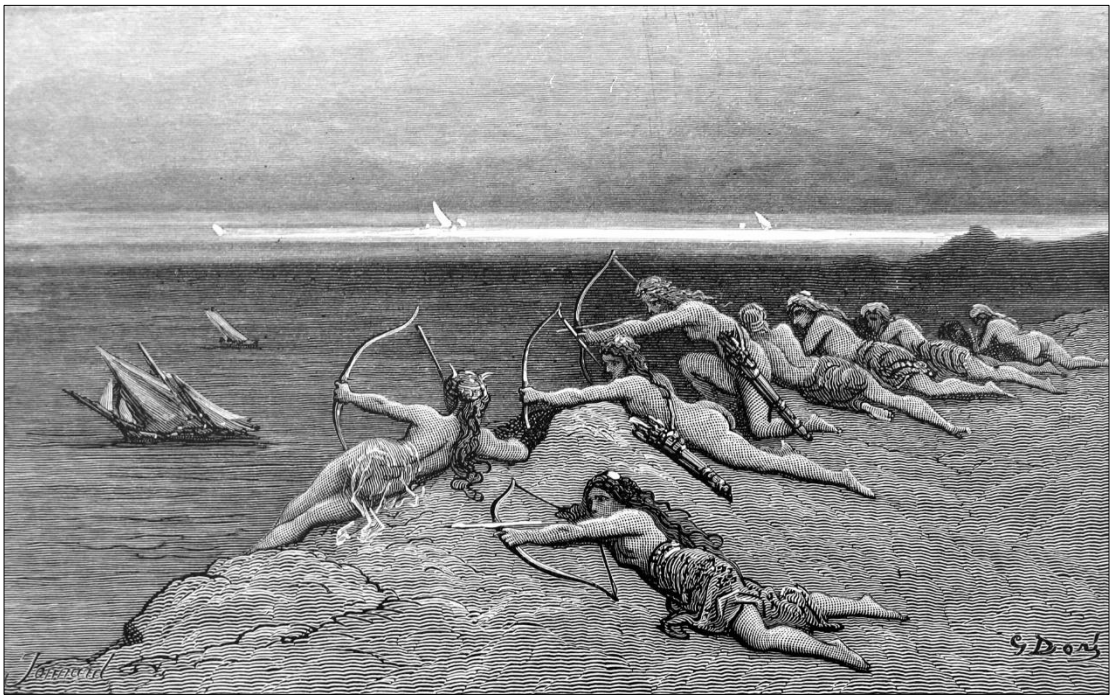
When first the harbour had come into view, 62
On their approach to that cruel city,
A vessel, with full complement of crew,
Had left the shore and then, steered expertly,
Sought them, as their plight they did review;
While, on reaching their ship, its company
Lashed her lofty prow to their low stern,
And then, towards the port, their way did earn;

For they entered the harbour under sail, 63
Yet more by rowing, than before the breeze,
Since a strong offshore wind did now prevail,
And prevented them manoeuvring with ease.
Meanwhile the five warriors donned their mail,
And, after that, their faithful swords did seize,
And with hope and comfort sought to reassure
The crew and passengers, whose dread they saw.

The city's harbour, four miles long or so, 64
Was, in shape, a half-moon of curving shore,
Full six hundred yards deep, each horn also
Ended in a stony fortress; safe therefore,
From a sudden assault by sea-borne foe,
Unless, perchance, from the south they bore.
Like some vast theatre the city met the eye,
While, all around it, tall hills rose on high.

Canto XIX: 65-68: An old woman confirms the terms of entry to the city

No sooner had their vessel reached the land, 65
(The news had swiftly sped through the place)
Than some six thousand women, bow in hand,
Came there, in warlike dress, with savage face,
And to thwart all escape from that fierce band,
Great chains were stretched, over a wide space
Of the harbour's waters, so they could close
That port to any vessel, if they chose.



Stanza 65

A woman as old as Hector's mother, 66
Or the Sibyl at Cumae, now appeared,
Calling on the captain to address her,
And asked him whether slavery they feared
The most, or dying, and, if the latter,
Then to bear the yoke they'd volunteered.
According to the custom of the city,
Their present choice was death or slavery.



Stanza 66

'Tis true', she said, 'that if someone of might 67
Is found among you, full of courage too,
That ten men of ours will engage in fight,
And slay them all here, without more ado,
And then lie with ten women, in a night,
And play the very part that husbands do,
He shall be our king, our lives command,
And you may then depart for your own land;

Though tis up to you if you wish to stay, 68
All or some, with this single proviso,
That he who would remain here, alway,
Must wed ten women, willingly or no,
While if your champion should fail to slay
Those ten men who against but one shall go,
Or, for the second task, lacks strength and breath,
Then your fate is servitude, his is death.'

Canto XIX: 69-75: Marfisa acts as their champion

Where that old crone thought to find fear and dread 69
In the warriors before her, valour
She was forced to recognise there, instead,
For trust they placed in their swords and armour.
Nor did Marfisa quail, to battle wed,
Though the second task might prove beyond her.
Despite being ill-equipped by nature,
With the sword she was as skilled as ever.

To the captain they entrusted their reply, 70
First attained by mutual discussion,
That since they lacked the power to defy
This custom, they would accept the mission.
The gangplank they lowered, by and by,
Having brought the ship to a near position,
So that the knights, in their shining armour,
Might disembark, with each restless charger.

Then through the city's midst they progressed, 71
And saw the haughty maidens riding there,
In every street, while equally impressed,
By those who were arming in the square.
The men were not allowed, not e'en the best,
To bear arms, except the ten in this affair,
No man there wore a sword or spur, no knight,
But those who would perform the martial rite.

Of the rest some were forced to weave or spin, 72
In female garments, descending to their feet,
Rendering them effeminate; while, within
Such gowns, no flight could be swift or fleet.
Others there were chained, for some past sin,
Made to plough, guard the herds, toil in the heat.
And few there were, barely a hundred men
For every thousand women; one in ten.

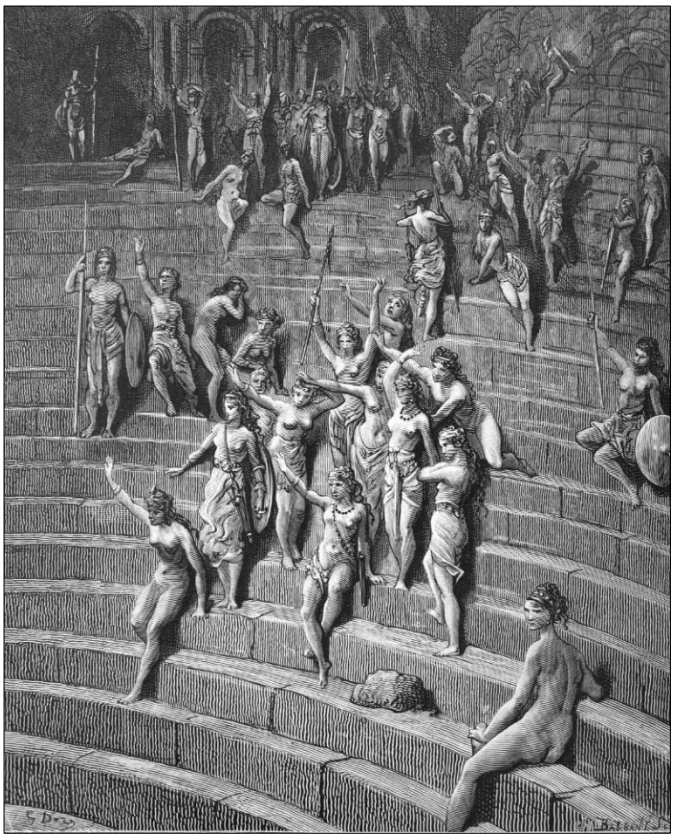
The knights decided to draw lots to find 73
Who, in their common cause, should up and fight,
And dispatch the ten enemies assigned,
Ere contesting the other field that night,
Each excluding Marfisa, in their mind,
As incapable of answering their plight,
Ill-suited as she was, they sought to claim,
As regards the needs of the latter game.

But she desired to draw lots with the rest, 74
And, as it chanced, to her the mission fell,
'I'll risk my life,' the maiden did attest,
'To win your freedom, and my own as well.
And this sword, of all companions, is best,
That to sudden death all foes doth impel.
It undoes all that's tangled, on the spot,
As Alexander solved the Gordian knot.

I would have no traveller complain 75
Of this place, while the world lasts,' said she,
And none to thwart her of the task proved fain,
Since, perchance, to fight there was her destiny.
And all to lose there, or, perchance, to gain,
They left to her, their hope of liberty.
Then, clad in all her armour plate and mail,
She took the field those male foes to assail.

Canto XIX: 76-87: And soon deals with nine of the warriors

There was a place, high above the city, 76
With tiers of seats, that did a square enclose,
Used for jousting, and many a tourney,
Or gladiator fights, and wild-beast shows.
And four gates of bronze prevented entry.
Through these went the crowd, and sat in rows,
Armed women, en masse, from rim to centre;
And then Marfisa was allowed to enter.



Stanza 76

The warrior-maid rode a piebald charger, 77
With spots and patches all about its hide,
With a slender head, but spirited manner,
Good features, proud air, and splendid stride.
For, out of a thousand mounts, Marfisa
Was with this, by Norandino, supplied;
The bravest, biggest, rarest, of his stable
And fine too the trappings, and the saddle.

She entered, through the south gate, at midday, 78
And had not long to wait before the sound
Of trumpets reached her ears, and the loud bray
Of horns, that echoed, high and clear, around.
She watched her ten opponents make their way
From the north gate, o'er the open ground,
Of whom their leader looked to her the best,
Seeming of greater worth than all the rest.

He rode a warhorse; but for its forehead, 79
And one hind foot, twas blacker than a crow;
The brow and foot were snowy white instead.
The rider's clothes were mostly black also,
As if to say that, like the darkness spread
O'er evening sky that steals the light below,
Likewise, some sadness, darkening his face,
Obscured his happier nature, in that place.

The signal for the joust rang loud and clear; 80
Nine warriors each their lance did lower.
Yet the horseman in black, it would appear,
Disdained to take advantage of their number;
It seemed his honour was to him most dear,
And that to flout the custom were better
Than fail of chivalry, so paused to view
What nine against a single lance might do.

The warrior-maid's steed, moving freely, 81
Bore her swiftly to the fierce encounter,
The lance she carried so large and heavy
Four men could scarcely lift it; earlier,
She'd sought out that same lance, eagerly,
When they'd disembarked, and no other.
A thousand faces paled, so fierce her look;
At her charge, a thousand hearts quaked and shook.

She struck the first of the nine in the breast, 82
As though he bore no armour to the field,
Piercing the breastplate, then the mailed chest,
But first the solid, well-constructed shield,
So fierce was the blow, and so well-addressed,
A yard beyond the lance-tip was revealed.
A shake of that lance, left his corpse behind,
As, at full speed, the next she sought to find.

Likewise, her lance impaled the second knight, 83
And struck the third so terrible a blow
That both, with shattered spines, fell outright,
And underneath her charger's hooves did go,
For her great lance was of such weight and might,
While close on each other's heels came the foe.
I have seen a bombard in like manner
Cut through a squadron; thus, did Marfisa.

Nor did their lances trouble her at all, 84
Broken on her armour; at every blow,
She was as little moved as is a wall,
When the players, chasing to and fro,
Strike it, by chance, with the heavy ball.
Hard was her armour, that no mark did show,
Forged in the fires of Hell, deep below,
And in Avernus' waters tempered so.

At the end of her run, she checked her steed, 85
Waited a moment, and then charged once more
At those remaining, toppling them, at speed,
And dyeing her sword to the hilt with gore;
Shorn of their head, or arms, she saw them bleed.
Whirling her blade about her, as before.
She sliced one at the waist, left to straddle,
With lower half alone, the bloodied saddle.

She cleft him, I say, in such a manner, 86
There, where the belly and the haunches meet,
That she left, mounted, but half a figure,
Like those oft placed at holy statues' feet,
Mostly made of wax, sometimes of silver,
With which the folk, that mercy did entreat,
In deepest gratitude discharge their vow,
As richly as their rank and means allow.



Stanza 87

Then she followed after one who fled, 87
And caught him, near the centre of the square,
And, from his neck, she clean removed the head,
Such that no surgeon could the flesh repair.
In sum, successively, she left them dead,
Or dying, and never a one did spare,
Sure, in the end, that not a single knight
Would rise again, and challenge her to fight.

Canto XIX: 88-91: The tenth, their leader, offers her a respite

Meanwhile the sombre knight, who led the nine, 88
Had held his self-same place, within the square,
Since for so many men to, thus, align
Against but one, to him, seemed scarcely fair.
Now that he'd seen one knight alone consign
Them all to death; a deed, beyond compare,
To show that it was chivalry, not fear,
Had caused him to refrain, he now drew near.

He gestured with his hand, to indicate 89
That he would say a word, ere they went further,
And, not thinking that beneath the weight
Of heavy plate and mail a maid did linger,
Thus, declared: 'Sir knight, I surmise that great
Must be your weariness, post such slaughter,
And if I were to weary you more deeply
Than you are now, that were no chivalry.

That you may rest until the morning light 90
And then renew the battle, I concede,
Twould be no honour to me, now, to fight
With one who must be tired and spent, indeed.'
'To labour in the joust, the effort slight,
Is nothing new to me, no rest I need,'
Replied Marfisa, 'and I hope to prove
That, to your cost, ere we from here remove.

I thank you, sir, for your courteous offer, 91
Though not in need of rest, as you imply.
As for some time yet the day will linger,
Twould be a shame to let the chance slip by.'
'Oh, could I but as readily, in other
Matters the heart might wish, so satisfy,
As I now satisfy your wish,' said he,
'And yet you may lose the light, too swiftly.'

Canto XIX: 92-97: She refuses, and the pair engage

So, he spoke, and had two fresh lances brought, 92
(Rather two great spars) then to Marfisa
He had the finest carried and, as twere naught,
Wielded, himself, the weight of the other.
Lances lowered, they waited, as in sport,
For the trumpet call, then met together.
Behold! The land, and sea, and air echoed,
As it sounded, and their advance followed.

None dared breathe or blink; the audience 93
Was spellbound as they watched the two engage,
Wondering which one would issue thence,
And which lie dead upon that bloodied stage.
Marfisa, who would pierce the knight's defence
Such that he could not arise, her aim did gauge,
Levelling her lance, while the other sought
No less to slay his foe; and, thus, they fought.

The lances, though of solid seasoned oak, 94
Seemed more like willow, to the watching eye,
As, up to the grip, they splintered and broke,
While against each other their mounts did fly,
Such that sliced at the knee, at a stroke,
As by a scythe, both steeds were felled thereby,
But, slipping from their saddles easily,
Both riders rose to their feet, equally.

Marfisa had overthrown a thousand 95
With a first swift lance thrust, and had never
Herself been brought to earth, you understand,
And yet was toppled, in this fierce encounter.
She was not only shocked as she did land,
But nigh on beside herself with anger
At her strange fall, so too the other knight,
Unused to being downed in any fight.

And yet, their steeds had scarcely touched the ground, 96
Ere they were on their feet, and fought again,
Cut, then thrust, retreated, made their ground,
Deployed their shields, or came on amain;
The air stirred, by blade and armour's sound,
Whether they struck home, or struck in vain.
Breastplate, helm, or shield rang out, below
Harsher than anvil neath the hammer's blow.

If the maiden's strokes fell full heavily, 97
Those of the other were scarcely light,
And, in full measure, both paid equally,
For all they dealt returned upon each knight.
Those who would bold, courageous, spirits see
Need look no further than that daring fight,
To witness pride, matched by dexterity;
For no finer show of skill could there be.

Canto XIX: 98-108: They agree to postpone the fight

The women, seated, absorbed in viewing 98
That martial spectacle, fierce blow on blow,
Seeing no sign of weariness ensuing,
Nor any grievous wound there on show,
Praised them as the worthiest two going,
Where'er the sea's wide arms extended; though,
They said, they had surely died ere long,
Had they not been the strongest of the strong.

To herself, the maid said: 'Tis well indeed, 99
That he chose to wait, and not fight, before,
For I risked not merely losing my steed
But my life, if, at first, he'd made one more,
Since I do little here but stand and bleed,
Beneath this hail of blows none can ignore.'
Marfisa meanwhile plied her restless blade,
And continued her defence, quite unafraid.

'Tis fortunate for me,' the other knight 100
Reflected, 'that my foe did not accept
My suggestion of resting from the fight,
For, though I am myself scarcely inept,
I struggle here; yet what if, at first light,
Renewed in strength and vigour, having slept,
This warrior fought? Fortune favours me,
In that naught came of all my chivalry.'

The battle lasted till the close of day, 101
Nor was either seen as having won;
Nor as the sun sank, beyond the bay,
Could either clearly view the other one.
So, the courteous knight, now had his say,
In noting that the day was almost done:
'What should we do, since Fortune equally
Smiles on both, now we can barely see?

It seems to me twere better you prolong 102
Your life, at least until tomorrow morn;
I may not adjourn further, twould be wrong.
I can but add the one short night, till dawn,
Yet that tis but a night, which is not long,
Blame me not; indeed, the blame should be borne
By these women, and their savage custom,
For the female sex rules this kingdom.

That I grieve for you, and your company, 103
He knows, from whom nothing is concealed.
You, and your companions, may rest with me,
All other places will but danger yield.
For gainst you now, leagued in conspiracy,
Are those whose spouses fell there, in the field,
For every one you slew of those nine men,
Had, of this band of women, married ten;

And for the harm that they've received from you, 104
Ninety women their revenge would take;
Should you my hospitality eschew,
A bold attack, this night, they're sure to make.'
Marfisa answered: 'I, and my comrades too,
Accept your offer for, here's no mistake,
No less true are your kindness and honour
Than your daring and your martial valour.

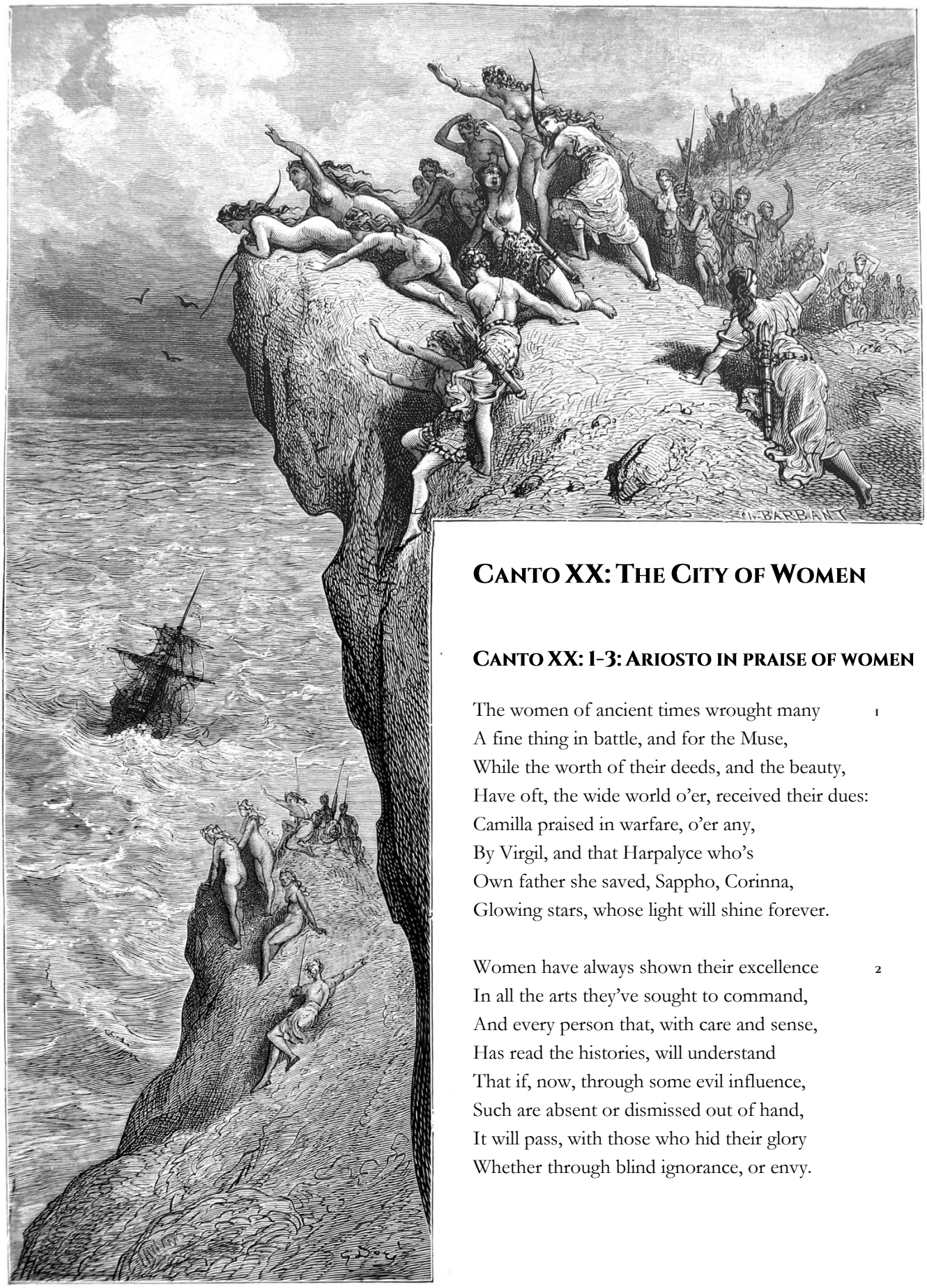
But, if you rue the thought of my demise, 105
You yet may live to rue the contrary.
I've given you no cause for grief, likewise,
For I am no less fierce an adversary.
Whether you'd pursue this, or devise
Another plan; by day, to joust with me.
But give the signal, and I'll be ready,
Howe'er, and whene'er, you seek it of me.'

Thus, the battle was deferred till dawn, 106
When the sun appears o'er the Ganges' flow.
And so, the question rested, till the morn,
Of whether either was the stronger foe;
Then he went to her company, to warn
Them of their plight, begging them also,
To seek his roof now and in comfort stay,
As honoured guests, until the break of day.

They accepted his plea, without suspicion, 107
And, by the light of torches, they ascended
Till his princely palace they came upon,
With many a chamber, and well-defended.
Raising their visors, gazing here and yon,
The two in amazement stood, suspended,
For Marfisa found that the knight once seen,
Appeared to be no older than eighteen.

And while the warrior-maid wondered, there, 108
How one so young could show such martial skill,
The other wondered, gazing at her hair,
How a maiden had shown such strength of will;
Then they asked each other's name, that pair.
For his, indeed, I'll leave you longing still;
How the young warrior was named, I fear,
You must wait on my next canto, to hear.





Canto XX: The City of Women

Canto XX: 1-3: Ariosto in praise of women

The women of ancient times wrought many 1
A fine thing in battle, and for the Muse,
While the worth of their deeds, and the beauty,
Have oft, the wide world o'er, received their dues:
Camilla praised in warfare, o'er any,
By Virgil, and that Harpalyce who's
Own father she saved, Sappho, Corinna,
Glowing stars, whose light will shine forever.

Women have always shown their excellence 2
In all the arts they've sought to command,
And every person that, with care and sense,
Has read the histories, will understand
That if, now, through some evil influence,
Such are absent or dismissed out of hand,
It will pass, with those who hid their glory
Whether through blind ignorance, or envy.

For such is the virtue, it seems to me, 3
That is possessed by women, in this age,
With pen and ink, they'll win celebrity
In years to come, who grace the written page,
(You and your works, consigned to infamy,
You evil tongues, that now command the stage.)
Their praise will be sung in such a manner
As to surpass that earned by Marfisa.

Canto XX: 4–8: Guidon reveals his name and origin

To turn, once more, to her: the warrior-maid 4
Refused not to declare her given name,
To one who had such kind attention paid,
For he had first agreed to do the same.
She nigh discharged the debt ere it was laid,
So keen was she to hear the knight proclaim
His identity 'Marfisa,' she cried,
'Am I!' for she was famous, far and wide.

Since it was his turn to speak, the other 5
Began with this preamble: 'None of you
Will fail, I think, to know of my father,
For not just France and Spain, but Pontus too,
Ethiopia, India, and further
Countries still, far lands both ancient and new,
Know Chiaramonte's House, and the knight
Rinaldo, that slew Almonte, in fight,

And Chiariello, and King Mambrino, 6
And sacked their royal kingdom; my mother
Bore me to Amone, of whom all know,
Where the Danube's nine streams (or more) enter
The Euxine, for, a wanderer he did go
To that region, and there I did leave her,
A year ago, now, she with grief oppressed.
Since to seek my kin in France is my quest.

I failed to complete my journey, though, 7
For a southerly gale impelled me here,
Ten months, and more, have I been prisoned so;
I count the hours; each day is like a year.
And I am named Guidon Selvaggio,
One little tried, or known as yet, I fear.
Argilon of Meliboea I slew,
And the rest of that band of ten died too.

I proved myself with the maidens also, 8
And ten share my bed, to my pleasure;
The very noblest the city can show,
And the loveliest, by any measure.
These ten are in my sole command, although
I wield the sceptre o'er the rest at leisure;
And Fortune will grant this to any knight
That overcomes the ten, with skill and might.'

Canto XX: 9–13: He is questioned regarding the city's strange custom

The warriors asked Guidon to explain 9
Why so few males dwelt there in the city,
And how these women did such power retain
While elsewhere one would see the contrary.
'I've heard, since I've lived here, time and again,
The reason for it all, and their story,'
Guidon replied, 'and, indeed, I'll tell it
To you, if that would please, as I heard it.

When after twenty years the Greeks returned 10
From Troy (the siege itself had lasted ten,
And then, for ten more, they were tossed and turned
By the waves, the winds adverse once again)
They found that their womenfolk who had yearned
For comfort in their absence, had been fain
To take up with young lovers in their stead,
So that they might not freeze, alone, in bed.

The Greeks found that others' children filled 11
Their houses, and yet, by common consent,
They pardoned their wives, their anger stilled,
Knowing that twas not done with ill intent,
But rather that without them they were chilled.
Yet the adulterous issue forth they sent,
To seek their fortunes elsewhere; an offense,
They thought it, thus to live at their expense.

Some were exposed, while others were concealed, 12
And kept alive, by many a mother,
While those who were of age roamed far afield,
And were employed at one task or another.
Some fought abroad, others chose to wield
The pen, or practice trades, or agriculture;
This one served in court, that as a shepherd
(Pleasing to her that reigned below, I've heard).

Now, among all those who left, was the son 13
Of that most cruel queen, Clytemnestra,
Fresh as a lily (eighteen years he'd won)
Or a rose that, from the thorns we gather.
Arming a ship, he sailed, beneath the sun,
To roam the wide seas in search of plunder,
With a hundred youths in his company,
All of an age, picked from out that country.

Canto XX: 14–18: Of Phalantus and the women of Crete

In those days the Cretans had banished 14
The cruel Idomeneus from their island.
To ensure their security, they wished
A wealth of men and weapons to command.
The mercenary band he established,
This Phalantus, for such, you understand,
Was the youthful soldier's name they now chose
To guard Dictynna's walls from their foes.

Among the hundred cities of fair Crete 15
Dictynna's was the richest and most fair,
With lovely and amorous maids replete,
That from morn to night in joyous sport did share;
And as with kindness they would ever greet
The stranger, his men were welcomed there,
Such that little remained ere they were made
The lords of all those households where they stayed.

Young and handsome were they, every one, 16
(The flower of Greece Phalantus selected)
Such that, at first sight, the hearts they won
Of those maids, and no man was rejected.
And not only were they handsome, bar none,
But skilled in bed, as those maids expected.
Thus, so grateful, in a few days, they proved
That, above all else, those warriors were loved.

After the war was ended, by accord, 17
For which, indeed, Phalantus had been hired,
Their being no further need for the sword,
Since naught was left to gain, nor aught required,
The men thought, once more, to roam abroad,
Not something that the women there desired,
For, lamenting, many a tear they cried,
More than if their fathers had up and died.

Thus, the maidens begged the young men to stay, 18
But, failing that, not wishing to remain,
Both left fathers, brothers, sons, sailed away,
Taking, of their wealth, all they could obtain
In gold and gems, departing, on a day,
With a secrecy, they'd worked to maintain;
For the plan that they made was so well hid
Not a man left in Crete knew what they did.

Canto XX: 19–21: The women are left behind in Syria

So fair was the wind, so perfect the hour, 19
When Phalantus chose his moment to flee,
They were out of sight of the highest tower,
Ere the city woke to its misery.
This shore, then uninhabited and dour,
Received them, as they wandered o'er the sea,
Here they rested, and here found safe shelter,
To weigh the stolen fruits of their labour.

And they remained here, for ten days in all, 20
Sating themselves with amorous pleasure,
But as often happens, things began to pall,
With endless play, and abundant leisure.
All the youths were soon inclined to recall
Their lost days of freedom without measure,
For there is ne'er a burden so heavy
As a love of which the heart doth weary.

They were eager for plunder and for gain, 21
(None thereabouts had payment to bestow)
Well-knowing more was needed to maintain
Their many paramours than shaft and bow;
And so, they left the women to complain,
While off, with their weapons, they did go,
And there, in Puglia, the shore quite near,
Founded Tarentum, or so twould appear.

Canto XX: 22–27: Orontea proposes they remain and take revenge

The women, finding that they'd been betrayed, 22
By these lovers, in whom they'd placed their trust,
Were so troubled, for days, and so dismayed,
They sat like lifeless statues, in the dust.
But finding that tears small difference made,
Though their treatment was unearned, and unjust,
They began to consider, somewhat late,
What they might do to remedy their fate.

Some now proposed that they return to Crete, 23
(For they might win them better husbands there),
And throw themselves at their fathers' feet,
Rather than languish in the desert air,
Or in the woods around, with naught to eat,
Perish, in time, of hunger and despair;
Others proclaimed that such they'd never do,
They'd drown first, twas more honourable too;

For twere better to embrace harlotry, 24
In this world, or be a slave or beggar,
Than to sail for home, hoping for mercy,
Where, for their sins, they would surely suffer.
Such schemes they offered in their misery,
Each one no less dreadful than another,
Till Orontea rose, their hearts to win,
That to King Minos traced her origin,

The youngest and the fairest of that band, 25
The shrewdest, and the least prone to error,
She'd loved Phalantus, and left her land,
And her father, to follow him, however.
She showed by the words she did command,
That her generous heart burned with anger.
And, rejecting all that had gone before,
She spoke, to this effect, upon the shore.

She would not leave the place where they stood. 26
She thought the ground was fine, the air healthy,
Limpid streams flowed there, with many a wood
To grant them shade; the shore was flat, mostly.
This seemed a natural harbour, which would
Grant fair shelter from the gales to every
Stranger, merchant, and mariner,
That offered trade with Egypt, and Africa.

Here they might rest, and vengeance take 27
On the male sex, that had so offended.
She wished each ship and crew, the wind did rake,
That sheltered there, and thought their ills ended,
Might be sacked, burnt, slain, for honour's sake,
Nor mercy to a single man extended.
So was it put, and so was it agreed,
And a law, to enshrine it, was decreed.

Canto XX: 28-31: They change the law to ensure progeny

When it blew a gale, then they would gather 28
And, fully armed, hasten to the harbour,
Led by the relentless Orontea,
That had made the law, and was their ruler;
And all the vessels that here sought shelter
They set ablaze, and the crews did murder,
Leaving no man alive to spread the word,
In any place; thus, the tale went unheard.

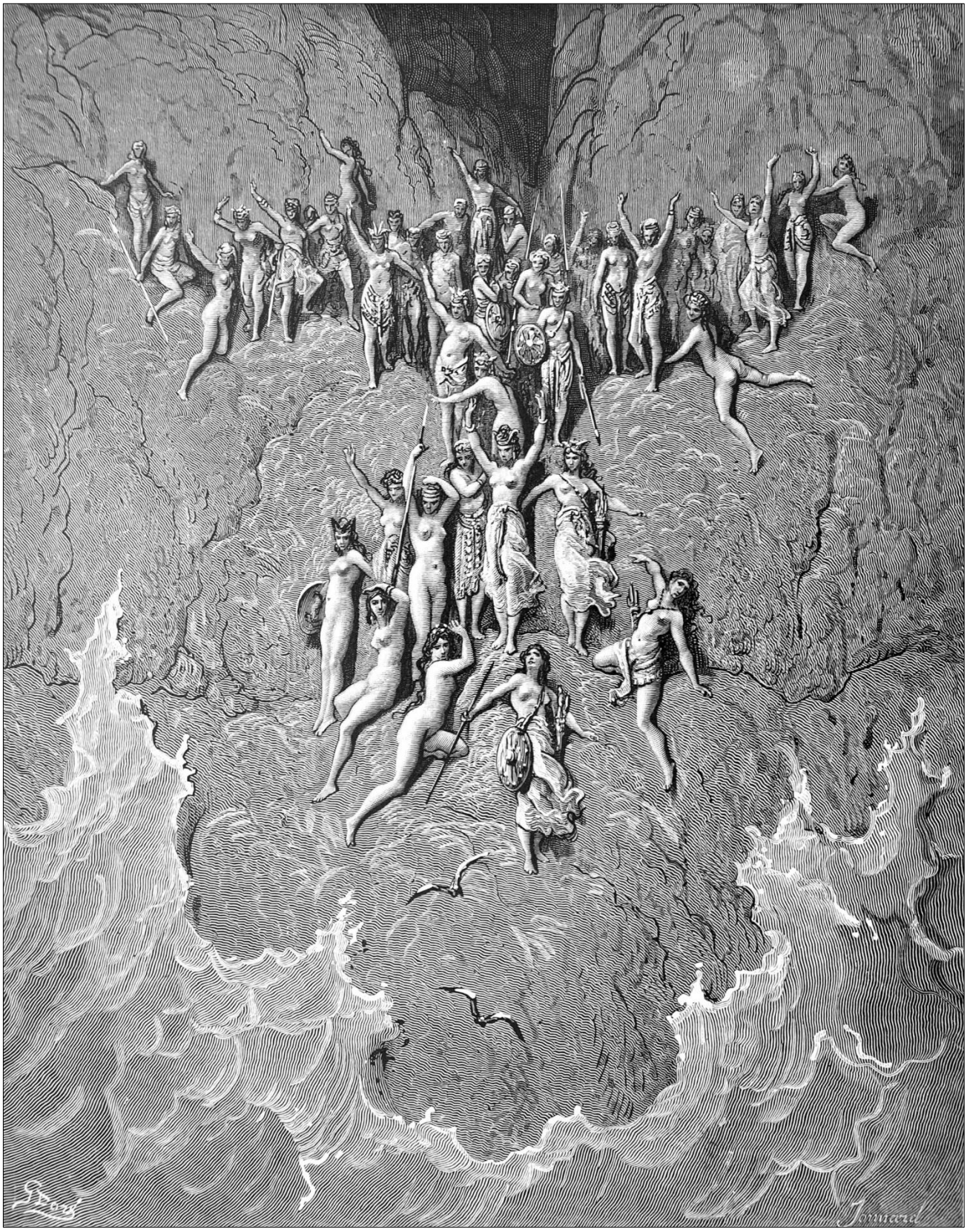
They lived so, for many years, alone, 29
At enmity with the male sex, entire,
Then realised the loss would prove their own,
Unless they changed the custom there; for dire
The consequence if no fresh seed were sown;
The law would be scorned, and all conspire
To end it, lest their barren realm should fail,
And all they had hoped eternal, prove frail.

Tempering somewhat that law's harsh rigour, 30
From all the vessels driven to that bay
In the next four years, they chose to gather
Ten bold and handsome knights for their prey,
Who might last against a hundred, moreover,
When engaged with them in amorous play.
A hundred they; and so, from out the men,
One lover was assigned to every ten.

Of those not chosen, many were beheaded 31
As failing to meet their main requirement.
But these ten were all approved, and bedded,
And allowed a share in their government,
First made to swear, to those they wedded,
That if any other men that way were sent,
They would put them to the sword, equally,
To none would they show a trace of mercy.

Canto XX: 32-35: Each woman might retain one male child

When the women found themselves with child, 32
Fearing to rear too many that were male,
(Since to that they remained unreconciled,
Lest their children oppose them, and prevail,
And the laws and statutes they'd compiled
Be set aside, and men their rule assail)
They, while their babes were still young, took care
That no rebels should be bred, to their despair.



Stanza 28 "*When it blew a gale, then they would gather*"

Lest to the male sex they be subjected, 33
Each mother was allowed one son alone,
Any other she must smother, as directed,
Or sell the child abroad, ere fully grown.
And this, by barterers, they effected,
Telling them to seek some girl unknown,
And barter boy for girl, in foreign lands,
And if not, return not with empty hands;

Nor should any male child be shown mercy, 34
If, without him, the race could be sustained.
Such then the law's sole act of clemency:
To spare one child, that order be maintained,
Yet condemn all the others, equally.
Only in this, some kindness was retained:
Where once all male babes each used to slay,
Now one might live, to prosper day by day.

No matter how many men came to shore, 35
All were imprisoned, to await their end,
And every day but one of them, no more,
By lot selected, to his death they'd send.
In a shrine Orontea built, before
An altar raised to Vengeance, he was penned,
While one of the chosen ten, did there suffice
To execute the cruel sacrifice.

Canto XX: 36-38: Elbanio arrives, of whom Orontea's daughter hears praise

Now, to that murderous shore, there came, 36
After many a year, a youthful knight,
Elbanio was this proud warrior's name,
Of the line of Hercules, great in might.
There he was seized, not knowing of this same
Vile law, and unsuspecting of his plight.
He was prisoned in a closely-guarded cell,
That gaol claiming other knights as well.

He was handsome, and most pleasant of face, 37
Noble in his manners, and his dress,
His speech so eloquent, and of such grace,
The 'deaf' adder might hark to his address.
So that news of his presence, in that place,
Reached Queen Orontea's daughter, no less,
As though twere of something rich and rare.
Alexandria was her name; she, sweet and fair.

Orontea was old, while those who, with her, 38
Had once founded the city, were long gone.
And ten times as many, born then and later,
Filled the plain and wielded power thereon.
Of ten forges that might yield bright armour,
They had need, it seems, for no more than one,
For the ten knights selected took great care
To offer battle to all who ventured there.

Canto XX: 39-46: Alexandria, in love with him, conveys his plea

Alexandria, most eager to behold 39
This youth who had garnered such great praise,
Asked her mother, Orontea, wise and old,
If she might but view him (and thereon gaze!).
And having heard him, and his tale-retold,
Found her heart bound in unaccustomed ways,
Caught, so it knew not how to break free;
To their prisoner, she had lost her liberty.

Elbanio said: 'If pity was ever 40
Witnessed here, and shone as clear and bright
As it does in every other country
On which the wandering sun sheds its light,
Then, I would dare to ask of your beauty,
That must capture every soul, at first sight,
The gift of my life, which I'd dedicate
To serving your wish, both soon and late.

But since hearts, here, lack all humanity, 41
I will not ask my life of you, in vain,
Since to do so, though deprived of liberty,
Were but to meet with cruelty again;
Yet the knight, good or ill, I seek to be,
Would seek to die, sword in hand, on the plain,
And not, as one condemned, pay the price,
Or some beast, slaughtered as a sacrifice.'

Full of pity for the youthful warrior, 42
Alexandria, with moist eyes, replied:
'Though this land may appear far crueller
Than any other place, both far and wide,
Not every woman here is a Medea,
As you seem to believe; if all beside
Were such, then I, alone, you yet would find,
Know how to show true mercy, and be kind.

If I have been, like many here, I own, 43
Both impious and cruel, I can say
That no object of pity was I shown,
That deserved clemency, in any way;
But fiercer than a tiger, were I grown,
Harder than diamond, were my heart this day,
If that harshness did not melt, completely,
Before your courage, grace, and chivalry.

If less severe were the customs of this land, 44
Towards the stranger reaching this shore;
Then no less than my life you might demand,
In exchange for your own, whose worth is more.
But none has such power in their command
To aid you freely, for such is the law.
And what you ask, a simple act of grace,
Is yet hard to accomplish in this place.

Yet that I'll endeavour to achieve, 45
So that, as a knight, you may die content,
Though it will but prolong, I believe,
Your dying, and harm come of your intent.'
'So long as I,' he said, 'gain that reprieve,
At heart, I feel more than confident
That I shall save myself, and death shall deal
To my foes, though they were made of steel.'

Alexandria, at this, gave no reply, 46
Her poor heart wounded, beyond remedy,
And departed sadly, with a sigh,
Pierced a thousand times, indeed, and deeply.
Of her mother she begged that he not die
Would he but fight the ten, and willingly,
And, there, reveal himself as of such might,
As to slay them in fair and open fight.

Canto XX: 47-54: The council consent to Orontea's request

Orontea called the council to gather 47
And said 'We must forever seek the best
To guard the shoreline and the harbour,
Though we choose as yet to slay the rest.
And to know who that may be, as ever,
It is fitting that we put some to the test,
So as not, in our choice, to go awry,
And the vile rule while their betters die.

It seems to me, if you agree, that the law 48
Should say that every knight landing here,
Whom Fortune has abandoned to our shore,
Ere he in the temple dies, like a steer,
May fight alone, and liberty ensure,
If he can slay the ten, with sword and spear.
He afterwards the harbour should defend,
With nine others, selected to that end.

This I suggest, since, in our prison, 49
We hold one who has offered so to do.
Who if he'd fight thus, ten against the one,
Is worthy of the chance, whate'er ensue.
But if, in boasting rashly, he's undone,
Then let him bear the punishment still due.'
Orontea made her case, then stood aside,
As the oldest of the others, now, replied:

'The principal purpose of the law, 50
And our commerce with men, I understand,
Is not to defend this pleasant shore,
Nor that their strength or aid we need command.
For we have wit and skill enough, I'm sure,
To perform that ourselves, and rule this land;
But that, alone, we lack means to propagate
Our race, and so defy the world and fate.

And since we cannot do without the men, 51
We allow a few amongst our company,
And yet no more than one for every ten,
Such that they'll ne'er claim the sovereignty.
For conception are they here, I say again,
And not to defend us and our city.
To use them to that end, be you content,
Vain and idle else is their employment.

To allow one here who's as strong as ten 52
Would be contrary to our first design.
If he can fight and conquer all those men,
How many women could he keep in line?
If our ten champions were as strong again
Then our rule they'd have ended, at a sign.
Tis no way to hold power, free and alone,
To arm a hand that's mightier than your own.

Consider this: if Fortune aids your man, 53
So that he slays our champions in the fight,
You'll find a hundred women of our clan,
Deprived of their husbands, day and night.
Let him, to scape, devise some other plan,
Than murdering ten youths for his delight.
Yet pardon him, if he's the strength of ten,
And can do the deeds they do, as and when!'

Thus, cruel Artemisia's opinion; 54
(So, she was named) and had she gained her way,
Elbanio, straight to the shrine had gone,
To placate their vile gods, that very day.
But Orontea, fondly thinking on
Her daughter's wish and plea, yet had her say,
With argument on argument, until
They were forced to surrender to her will.

Canto XX: 55-57: Elbanio completes the two trials

Elbanio boasted of a beauty 55
Greater than any other on this earth,
Which so convinced the vast majority
Of the younger women there, of noble birth,
That the judgement of the minority,
Artemisia's, regarding his worth,
Was set aside, the final decision
Being, to free him on one condition:

That if he slew the ten, as he intended, 56
He must take ten women to his bed,
(Not a hundred, for that was amended)
And conquer them, once the ten were dead.
So, next day his prison-stay was ended,
And, fully armed, on a fine steed, he sped
To battle with those ten knights in the square,
And, one by one, slew the warriors there.

That night saw his second encounter, 57
Against ten women, naked and alone.
He wrought so well, owing to his ardour,
That his mastery was swiftly shown.
With Orontea he gained such favour,
That she then adopted him as her own,
And, next, to Alexandria he was wed,
With the other nine he'd overcome in bed.

Canto XX: 58-64: Guidon ends his tale

Orontea left the realm, named after her, 58
To Alexandria, and Elbanio,
With this clause, that every successor
Should retain the law, of which you know.
Thus, whoever's stars bring him hither
Whether through pure misadventure, or no,
Must then die, a sacrifice, in the temple,
Or fight alone against the ten in battle.

And if he should conquer the ten, by day, 59
Then he must sleep with ten women, that night,
And if fate determines that he hold sway,
And he overcomes them all, by first light,
Then as the prince and leader he shall stay,
To command all, and rule the ten outright,
And so, reign, till another knight arrive
That can master all and, thus, survive.

For two thousand years this law they've obeyed, 60
And this wicked custom they maintain still.
And rarely a day goes by ere, conveyed
To their temple, some hapless knight they kill.
If one seeks, like Elbanio, with his blade,
The terms set for his freedom, to fulfil,
He's often slain in that first encounter;
Not one in a thousand wins the other.

Yet some have achieved the deed, though rarely, 61
Less, in sum, than the fingers on one hand.
One of these was Argilon; but briefly
Did he rule, as one of ten, all the land,
For, brought by a gale to this fair country,
I slew him, and the rest of his command.
Yet I wish I had died with him that day,
Than live a slave, scorned in every way.

For amorous pleasures, laughter, and play, 62
In which those of my years oft find delight,
And robes and gems, and then, with fine display,
To hold first place in the land, as of right,
Scant joy of such applies to one, I say,
Deprived of liberty, both day and night.
And never to be free to leave this place
Bound in servitude, seems but deep disgrace.

To know the best years of my life I waste, 63
The flower of youth, in utter idleness,
The heart within corrupted and debased,
Brings me no pleasure, adds to my distress.
News of my kin every fair land has graced,
Fame bears, on wings, the tale of their success,
Even to the heavens; and I might share
In such if, with my brethren, I fought there.

It seems that, wounded by my destiny, 64
I'm condemned to a slavery so low
That I am like the war-horse that, sadly,
Is turned out to grass, damaged by a blow,
Or maimed in eye or foot, accidentally,
Or, due to some defect, is treated so.
For, except through death, no escape I spy
From this vile slavery, and so would die!'

Canto XX: 65-69: Astolfo declares himself kin to Guidon

Guidon ended his tale, and cursed the day 65
With proud disdain, that he had fought the ten,
And then with the ten women had his way,
A double victory o'er maids and men,
And won the realm; Astolfo let him say
His piece, and claim high kinship once again,
Though it seemed as clear as day that Guidon
Was, indeed, his cousin, Amone's son.

And so, the English duke made this reply: 66
'I am Astolfo, your cousin,' and embraced
The knight, and with courteous, kindly eye,
Not free of tears, their arms now interlaced,
Said: 'Come, no sign to better signify
Your birth could your mother e'er have placed
About your neck, for that good sword you bear,
And your courage, cry out the blood we share.'

Guidon who, elsewhere, would have felt delight, 67
At having met with such near kin, dismayed,
And with a mournful face, now clasped the knight,
Knowing that, if that vile law he obeyed,
And he survived, Astolfo, post that fight,
Must die, or death be but a time delayed,
While for the Duke to go free, he must die;
One's good would spell the other's ill, thereby.

He grieved that the duke's companions too, 68
He would doom, in conquering, to slavery.
While if he died, all means were lost, anew,
His power thus ended, to set them free.
And if Marfisa from one quicksand drew
Her company, and yet, subsequently,
Failed that night, her victory must prove vain,
For they would be enslaved, Marfisa slain.

While, on their side, lay this bitter thought: 69
That (since the youth's courtesy and valour,
Upon the hearts, with tender pity, wrought
Of all their company, e'en fierce Marfisa)
If, by his death, their liberty was bought,
They must grieve the fact, in love and honour.
While Marfisa declared if he must die
Then she desired beside him, dead, to lie.

Canto XX: 70-76: Marfisa calls on Guidon to join forces

'Join with us,' to Guidon, now, she cried, 70
'So, we may issue out in force, as one.'
'Forsake all hope,' on his side, he replied,
'Of leaving; win with me, or be undone.'
'Fear not,' she said, 'I shall not be denied,
I complete my every task, once tis begun;
Nor a safer path can this world afford
Than one where I am guided by my sword.

I have so proved your valour in the square, 71
I would share any enterprise with you.
When, in the theatre, for this affair
The crowd congregate, then shall we two
Slay the onlookers, once gathered there,
Whether they flee, or stand against the few;
Then leave them to the wolves and crows entire,
Shun their corpses, and set the place afire.'

And Guidon replied: 'You'll find me ready, 72
To follow you, or die there at your side,
Yet let us not seek to live, but simply
Battle on, till vengeance is satisfied.
For oft ten thousand fill the place, wholly,
A female host, while as many are outside
To defend the forts, the walls, the harbour;
No is any way from here unguarded, either.'

Said Marfisa: 'If of foes there were more, 73
Than Xerxes had about him in his army,
More than the rebel angels that did pour
From out the heavens, to endless misery,
All, in a day, would die upon this shore,
At least if, scorning them, you were with me.'
'I know no other scheme,' Guidon replied,
'That is of worth, if one plan be not tried,

For it alone would serve, should it succeed, 74
This that I speak of: I now remember,
Except to women, so it is decreed,
No voyage is allowed, and none may wander
About the sandy shore; yet in our need
I shall seek aid from one loyal ever,
Whose perfect love for me oft have I proved,
In trials not so far from these removed.

No less than me, she loathes this slavery, 75
And would flee it, if with me she might go,
For she would wish an end to rivalry,
And, thus, she alone might possess me, so.
She'll obtain a boat, and prepare for sea,
While it is dark, ready, when we may show,
For your sailors to take to the water,
So that we may all depart together.

Behind me, in close formation, then 76
Merchants, sailors, warriors, all you
Who have chosen (for which my thanks, again,)
To rest beneath my roof, whate'er ensue
You all must forge ahead, if these women
Attempt to block our way; and battle through,
I hope, thus, with the aid of sword and spear,
To lead you from the city, and win clear.'

Canto XX: 77-81: He ensures their means of escape

'Do as you wish.' Marfisa spoke again. 77
'For I am sure to gain my liberty.
Tis likelier my enemies will be slain
All who, behind these walls, would hinder me,
Than that I take flight, or from fear refrain
To fight, or fail to triumph and win free.
Through force of arms, in daylight, I would go,
My sense of honour would e'er have it so.

If my fame, to these women, was made known, 78
Their respect I would receive, as I deserve,
Be freely entertained, and have them own
My worth, and in their highest council serve.
But I would seek no privilege, alone,
The like, for my friends, must fate reserve;
While great the wrong if I were to be free,
While those friends were deprived of liberty.

These words, and others she added later, 79
Revealed that Marfisa withheld her arm,
And refrained from attacking with ardour
That female host, and dealing them great harm,
Solely because she might increase the danger
To her friends, by raising the alarm.
She left it to Guidon to plan, therefore,
The means for their escape he deemed most sure.

Guidon spoke with Aleria that night, 80
(She, his most loyal wife) nor did it need
Many words from her beloved knight,
She being well disposed, ere she agreed
To prepare and arm a vessel for their flight,
Stowed with the finest goods, as he decreed;
And to feign that, the next day, she would sail
About the bay, since calm weather did prevail.

Swords, shields, spears, had her companions brought 81
Into the palace, darkness all around,
To arm the sailors, so they could reach the port,
With the company, and there hold their ground;
Some slept, some kept watch lest they be caught,
While seeking, as they watched, to make no sound.
With armour on their back, and weapons drawn,
They waited on the first pale light of dawn.

Canto XX: 82-86: The companions fight their way to the gate

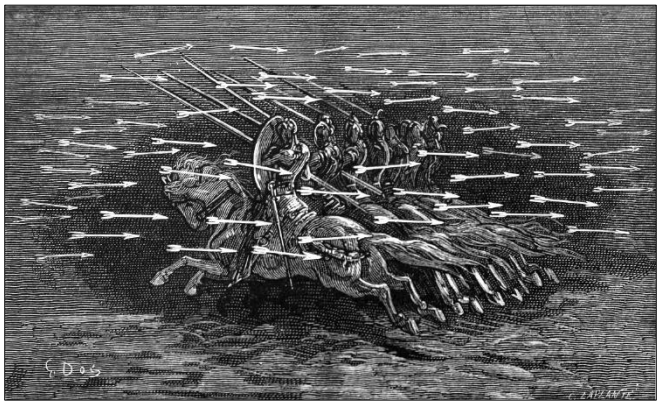
The sun had scarcely raised the darkened veil 82
From the earth's harshest and most bitter face,
Scarce had the northern ploughman, in the pale
Furrow, turned his ploughshare, to retrace
His steps than the female host, ne'er a male,
Came to the theatre there, and filled the place,
To see the fight; like bees they swarmed the gate,
Changing their realm, in spring, by chance or fate.

To the loud noise of trumpet, horn and drum, 83
That great crowd made heaven and earth resound,
Demanding their champion Guidon come
To end the fight, begun upon that ground.
Aquilante and Grifone, midst the hum,
Stood fully-armed; there was Astolfo found,
Guidon, Marfisa and Sansonetto,
With all their other knights and men, also.

To reach the harbour and the sea from there, 84
There was no other passage, long or short,
But to traverse the densely-crowded square,
So, Guidon cried; then, ceasing to exhort
His companions to perform their share,
He issued forth across the central court,
And silently appeared, amidst the throng,
Leading his company, a hundred strong.

Hastening them on, Guidon led his force 85
Towards the other gate, but all around
The well-armed women now delayed their course,
Using whatever ways and means they found;
Their view, one they did swiftly endorse,
On seeing who led that host o'er the ground,
Being that all would flee, so raised their bows,
And next the gate their own force did dispose.

Guidon and the knights, and, bravest of all, 86
Marfisa, were not slow to use the blade,
And many a blow from their swords did fall
As they strove to force that gate, unafraid.
But such a storm of arrows did forestall
Their best efforts, with wounds and death repaid,
Pouring down upon their armour from on high,
They feared to meet with harm and scorn thereby.



Stanza 86

Canto XX: 87-91: Astolfo sounds the magic horn

Proof against all, the armour that they wore, 87
That, without it, might have had worse to fear.
But Sansonetto's horse fell, and that which bore
Marfisa, while, Astolfo, drawing clear,
Said to himself: 'Why wait a moment more?
The horn I must needs use, it would appear.
If I can gain naught further with the sword,
Then let the horn a passage forth afford.'

Then, as he was wont, in extremity, 88
That magic trumpet to his lips he placed,
And, as the dreadful sound rose, forcefully,
And earth and sky both trembled, on they raced.
It brought about such fear in the enemy
That, seeking to escape, in sudden haste,
As from the square they fled deafened quite,
They left the gate unguarded in their flight.

Like to some family, fleeing danger 89
Who leap from the windows, up on high,
Chancing life and limb, as near and nearer
The fire approaches, and flames fill the sky,
Which had crept upon them in their slumber,
Their eyes closed to all, where they did lie,
So, reckless of their lives, the women fled,
The horn's loud cry filling them with dread.

Above, below, scattering here and there, 90
Their foes sought to flee, and at each gate
A thousand milled about upon the square,
Falling there, so thwarting each other's fate,
Or leapt from the galleries, through the air,
To lose their lives, fearing to contemplate
Worse ills, many a head and arm broken;
Here one crippled, there a corpse forsaken.

Great cries and sore lament rose to the sky, 91
Mingling with the noise, amidst the rout.
Where'er the sound of the horn passed by,
Dreading its noise, they scattered all about.
If tis said but little caused such to fly,
Lacking courage, filled with fear and doubt,
Tis no wonder, for the hare, by nature,
Is likewise a timid, fearful creature.



Stanza 91

Canto XX: 92-98: All but he set sail

92
But what of those two brave hearts, Marfisa
And (their leader) Guidon Selvaggio?
Or that pair, whose lineage showed ever
Great deeds (those sons of Oliviero),
Who'd held a thousand as naught earlier,
Yet fled now, robbed of courage, even so,
As rabbits run, or fearful doves will fly,
That hear some echo from the earth, or sky?

93
Quite as dreadful to friend as to stranger,
Was the power of that enchanted horn.
Guidon, Sansonetto, and Marfisa,
With the brothers, in fear, to flight were sworn.
Nor could they reach such a distance either,
That the clamour was not towards them borne.
For Astolfo, galloping far and wide,
Blew the horn ever louder, on his ride.

94
Some sought the sea, some the mountain high,
And some chose to hide, deep within the trees;
While one who never turned her head, did fly
For a good ten days at least, without cease.
Some sought to leap down from the bridge nearby,
Never to rise again, e'en to their knees.
The temples, houses, squares, now, silence claimed,
And free of human presence they remained.

95
Marfisa, Guidon, and Sansonetto,
All pale and trembling, fled towards the sea,
With the brothers, and mariners, also,
Where, between the two strong forts, they could see,
Aleria's barque, to which they now did row,
For she'd left the boats there, riding easily,
And, once they'd reached the vessel, did avail
Themselves of the breeze, and soon set sail.

96
Astolfo had scoured the whole city,
From the hills to the shore, within, without,
Leaving the streets echoing and empty,
All having fled before him, midst the rout;
Many, whom cowardice led completely,
Hid, in some dark and filthy place no doubt,
While many not knowing how they might flee,
Took to the waves, and drowned, there, in the sea.

97
The English duke now sought the company,
Whom he had hoped to find upon the shore.
He turned his gaze upon the sand, yet he
Found them not; as he raised his eyes once more,
There, in the distance, sailing, silently,
Over the open sea, their ship he saw.
And so was forced to seek another way
Of escape, they having gone from the bay.



Stanza 93 "*Astolfo, galloping far and wide, blew the horn ever louder, on his ride*"

Let him depart; feel no regret that he 98
Must travel, now, a long and lonely road,
Through a barbarous and pagan country,
Where suspicion haunts each least abode,
There is no danger, once the enemy
Hear that magic horn, as he lately showed.
But let his five companions be our care
Who'd fled in fear, and o'er the waves now fare.

Canto XX: 99-101: The company, minus Astolfo, make their way to Marseilles

Far out to sea, the vessel now did stand, 99
Scorning that most cruel and bloody shore,
And having reached a distance from the land
Where they could hear the dreadful horn no more,
Unaccustomed shame set its fiery brand
Against their faces, till its flames they bore;
None dared to eye another, in a daze,
They stood, unspeaking, sad, with lowered gaze.

Intent upon his course, their captain passed 100
Cyprus and Rhodes, then, o'er the Aegean,
A hundred islands fell behind their mast.
Next by Malea's fierce cape, in their run
Before the wind's fair, and constant blast,
They sped, and Greek Morea, neath the sun;
Round Sicily, o'er the Tyrrhenian Sea,
Reaching the pleasant shores of Italy.

Luni, on Genoa's coast, now rose to view, 101
Where the master had left his family.
He thanked God, to whom fulsome thanks were due,
That they'd received no damage from the sea.
The knights sought to journey now, anew,
France was their object, all that company.
They embarked, and blown swiftly on their way,
In a brief while, found themselves at Marseilles.

Canto XX: 102-105: Marfisa quits the other four

Bradamante, who had sole governance 102
Of that region was absent at that hour,
Who if she then had been in residence,
Would have used every means in her power
To persuade the group to grace her presence;
But Marfisa, staying but a brief half-hour,
Took leave of the three and Aleria,
And took her wandering way, at a venture,

Saying that she thought it unbecoming 103
For so many knights to travel together,
So, doves, or starlings, journey on the wing,
And deer, and such, in a herd will gather;
Yet the falcon, and the eagle, soaring,
Place no reliance on any other,
While lion, bear, and tiger roam, alone,
Fearing no greater strength than is their own.

None of the rest were of similar mind, 104
And so, she took her solitary way;
Through the forest, lonely tracks she did find,
As, without companions, she did stray.
Guidon (with Aleria his wife behind),
Aquilante and Grifone, left that day,
And a castle, from the broad road, did see,
Wherein they were lodged, most courteously.

Courteously, so it seemed outwardly, 105
Though soon the contrary would be revealed,
For the castellan feigning courtesy
And benevolence, their opposites concealed;
And, as they slept, seemingly securely,
In their beds, laying by both sword and shield,
He took them, and refused to let them go,
For a custom, most vile, they must follow.

Canto XX: 106-110: And comes upon an aged crone, and then Pinabel

Yet, I shall pursue the warrior-maid, 106
Before I speak again of those four.
Beyond the Durance, Rhône, and Saône she strayed,
Where neath a mountain, on the valley-floor,
Beside a torrent, all in black arrayed,
She met an aged crone, one wearied sore,
Twould seem, from some long tiring journey,
Though afflicted more with melancholy.

She was the aged crone who once had served 107
The band of robbers in their mountain cave,
To which, to mete the justice they deserved,
Orlando came, Anglante's count, full brave.
The crone, fearing death, though yet preserved,
Had, for a reason I must briefly waive,
Fled swiftly through the forest, dark and deep,
Lest any should remembrance of her keep.

Viewing the semblance of a foreign knight 108
In Marfisa, her surcoat and armour,
She chose not to flee, as before, on sight,
She had fled from every native other,
But feeling more secure, she ceased her flight,
At the ford and, once there, waited on her;
At the ford through the torrent, and then she
Advanced to greet Marfisa, pleasantly.

Then she asked the warrior-maid to bear her 109
On her horse's croup to the other shore,
And, being of noble stock, Marfisa,
Lifted her up, and so carried her o'er;
And did not disdain to bear her further,
Till the path beneath them was more secure,
Clear of weed and stone; once there, they found
A horseman who towards the ford was bound.



Stanza 109

This knight bestrode a saddle rich and fair, 110
His weapons gleaming, ornate his armour,
A squire, and a lady, the road did share,
As they descended towards the river.
The lady was lovely, yet her proud air
Was scarcely pleasing, to the onlooker,
So full of pride, and insolence, indeed,
Twas worthy of the knight who led her steed.

Canto XX: 111-116: Marfisa disposes of the knight

Pinabel, of the House of Maganza, 111
Was the knight accompanying the lady;
The same who Bradamante, earlier,
Had plunged into the cavern, spitefully.
Those sighs, those tears burning ever hotter,
That had near blinded the fellow, surely,
Were for the lady he now led towards her,
Once imprisoned by the necromancer.

Yet, when the enchanted tower was razed 112
From the mount, the keep of old Atlante,
And his prisoners, once free, all amazed,
Then roamed at will, thanks to Bradamante,
The lady who before had always praised
And obeyed this Pinabel entirely,
Once more at his side, had journeyed so,
As from castle to castle, they did go.

Now, being so inclined, when she saw, 113
Marfisa's companion on the road,
Her laughter could contain itself no more,
Mocking the crone, as with delight she crowed,
Proud Marfisa, who ne'er an insult bore,
Unused to hearing such, swift anger showed,
And, scornfully, replied to the lady,
That the crone was far lovelier than she;

And this she would prove upon the knight, 114
And more she would strip her of her gown,
And seize her good palfrey, when, in the fight,
She had brought her fine friend tumbling down.
Pinabel, who could scarce accept the slight,
A source of shame, a blight on his renown,
Raised his shield, lowered his lance, and spurred his steed,
And rode towards her angrily, at speed,

Marfisa grasped her heavy lance, and thrust, 115
As she encountered him, at Pinabel's face,
And stretched him, dumbfounded, in the dust,
Nor could he raise his head an hour's space.
Marfisa, conqueror o'er the unjust,
Told the maid to strip her gown off, apace,
With all the gems and ornaments she wore;
And these to the old crone as gifts she bore,



Stanza 115

Requesting her to don that youthful gear, 116
Both the dress and ornaments of the maid.
And then the palfrey she did commandeer,
On which the maid had ridden; so arrayed,
The crone now high on horseback did appear,
The better dressed, the worse the sight she made.
Three days they rode, without encountering
A single thing at all worth the telling.



Stanza 116

Canto XX: 117-120: They encounter Zerbino who insults the crone

On the fourth day they met a knight who sped, 117
In wild gallop, all alone, down the road.
If you would have me name the knight ahead,
Twas Prince Zerbino who that steed did goad,
That exemplar, of worth and beauty bred,
Who, in grief and anger, bore a heavy load,
Lacking the means to take vengeance, swiftly,
On him who'd thwarted his great courtesy.

He'd pursued the man through the wood in vain, 118
Ever behind the one who'd done him wrong,
While the other had managed to maintain
The greater speed, as they had coursed along,
Through tangled undergrowth, and then again,
Amidst the wood, the dawn light lost among
The misted trees, and scaped his sword, to hide,
Till his anger and fury might have died.

Yet Zerbino, despite his blazing anger, 119
On seeing the crone, could not but raise a smile,
Her youthful dress was a source of laughter,
When contrasted with her face, old and vile.
Then he said: "You are wise sir,' to Marfisa,
(After gazing at the crone for a while)
'To go leading so peculiar a lady,
That you needs must fear no other's envy.'

The crone possessed (as indeed one might guess 120
From her wrinkles) more years than the Sibyl,
And in all her ornaments, and in that dress,
Seemed an ape, adorned, to be risible,
And far viler since angered to excess,
Her old eyes glittering now, and terrible,
For no man can insult a woman more,
Than to claim she is old, and an eyesore.

Canto XX: 121-127: Marfisa unseats him

She showed her disapproval, our warrior, 121
At his taking pleasure in it, as he had,
And called to Zerbino: 'She is fairer
By far than you are courteous, my lad.
Though I think the words you chose to utter
Came not from the heart indeed, and tis sad
That you feign not to own to her beauty,
To avoid being seen as cowardly.

For what knight is there who would not wish, 122
On finding such a young and lovely maid,
With no more company at her side than this,
To take her for his own, in this fair glade?'
'She suits you so well,' he said, with relish,
'Twere ill if from your side she were conveyed.
And I would never prove so bold, sir knight,
As to deprive you of your fond delight.

Yet if you would, indeed, have more of me, 123
I would be glad my skill to demonstrate,
Though deem me not of such perversity
That I ask no more than with such to mate.
Fair or foul, may she share your company;
I would not seek to mar a love so great.
Well matched the pair of you; and I do swear
You are as valiant as she is fair.'

'Despite all you say,' replied Marfisa, 124
'You shall not seize the lovely maid from me;
One so beautiful I shall not suffer
You to gaze on, nor gain her easily.'
Said the prince: 'I know not why a warrior
Should undertake to win a victory,
And place himself in peril, for his pains,
When, if he succeeds, the loser gains!'

'Well, if that course seems less than good to you, 125
I'll suggest another, out of chivalry;'
Cried Marfisa, 'if your aim's good and true,
And you win, she shall yet remain with me.
But if I succeed, she will be your due.
Let us see, now, whose prize she shall be.
If you lose, you shall escort her ever,
Where'er she's pleased to go, and whenever.'

'So be it!' cried Zerbino, in reply, 126
And wheeled his steed about, suddenly,
Gathered himself, and raised himself on high,
Firm in the saddle, then struck her neatly,
In mid-shield, thinking she must fall, thereby;
As if made of steel, she swayed but slightly,
And then thrust at his helmet so surely,
He fell from the saddle, dazed completely.

Much grief it gave Zerbino thus to fall, 127
To whom the like had ne'er occurred before;
Thousand upon thousand, after all,
He had vanquished, and left upon the floor.
For a long while he lay, twas bitter gall,
And thinking on it, it pained him the more
That he had promised, and it must be so,
To accompany the crone where'er she'd go.

Canto XX: 128-134: She departs; the crone deduces that he is Zerbino

Turning to him in triumph, and smiling, 128
Marfisa cried: 'This lady I present
To you; the more beauty there residing,
She being yours, the more I am content.
Take you the place I am forsaking,
And yet of your firm promise ne'er repent;
Fail not to lead and guide her on the way,
(As you have sworn) wherever she would stray.'

And then, without waiting for an answer, 129
She spurred her steed, and vanished midst the trees.
Zerbino, who would know the warrior
That had defeated him, and with such ease,
Asked the crone, and she, to fuel his anger,
Was happy to provoke the knight, and tease:
'Why, the blow came from the hand of a maid,
That on the ground your noble self has laid.

Her valour sees her overcome each knight 130
She meets; she is the pride of sword and lance,
And from the East she comes now to men's sight,
To test the mighty paladins of France.'
Not only did Zerbino blush outright,
With the shame of his most grievous mischance,
But little was wanting to crimson o'er
Every piece of armour that he wore.

He re-mounted, blaming himself, indeed, 131
For his inability to keep the saddle,
While the crone smiled within, and sought to breed
More ire in him, and increase his trouble.
She reminded him of her pressing need
For a guide, and Zerbino, ever noble,
Stood like a weary steed that, ears drooping,
Feels the bit in its mouth, the spurs pricking.

And, sighing, he said: 'O fickle Fortune, 132
What alteration you e'er bring, night and day!
The fairest one, beneath the sun and moon,
That should be mine, you rudely snatched away.
And think you now to sound another tune,
And with this gift of yours the debt repay?
To lose all I own, would seem less strange,
Than suffering so unequal an exchange.

She, that for her virtues, and her beauty, 133
Was never equalled, nor shall ever be,
You drowned among the reefs, most cruelly,
Food for the birds, or creatures of the sea.
And she that should have fed the worms, why she
You preserve beyond her time, fatally,
Granting this crone ten years, fifteen, a score
She should not own, but to torment me more.'

So said Zerbino and in these words displayed 134
No less grief, nor less sorrow in his face,
For the vile acquisition he had made,
Than for the loss of his lady, full of grace.
The aged crone, though she had never laid
Eyes on him before, yet deduced, apace,
From his speech, that he must be the lover
Of Galicia's fair Isabella.

Canto XX: 135-138: She has news of his beloved Isabella

For, if you recall all that you have heard, 135
This crone had escaped the robbers' hold,
Where Isabella, who his heart had stirred,
Was kept a prisoner, to be bought and sold.
And she'd oft described, with many a word,
How, o'er the waves, she'd left her native fold,
And how her ship had been wrecked, as well,
Upon the reefs that border La Rochelle.

And she had so portrayed her Zerbino, 136
His handsome features, and his noble face,
That the crone, on hearing him, and also
Drawing nearer to view his form and grace,
Realised this was the youth, he who had so
Grieved the heart of Isabella, in that place,
Who had wept more at losing him, she knew,
Than at falling captive to that vile crew.

The old woman, hearing all the pain and woe 137
The prince poured forth, realised that he
Wrongly believed (and hence his deep sorrow),
That Isabella had drowned in the sea.
Yet, though the true position she did know,
To plague him, out of sheer perversity,
She hid what would have granted him relief,
And only told him what would cause him grief.

'Hear me,' she said, 'you who are so haughty, 138
You who mock me, and treat me with such scorn,
Since you'd wish to hear the news, eagerly,
That I possess regarding her you mourn:
Well, I would rather be strangled, slowly,
Or, to a thousand pieces, ripped and torn;
While if you had been kinder, and less cold,
All that is hidden from you, I'd have told.'

Canto XX: 139-144: But withholds her whereabouts

As the mastiff, that attacks a robber, 139
Is soon pacified, with a crust or bone,
As promptly, now, did Zerbino offer
His apologies to the triumphant crone,
Humbling himself, prepared to suffer,
If only something further might be known.
For in that wrinkled face of hers he'd read
That she had news of one whom he'd thought dead.

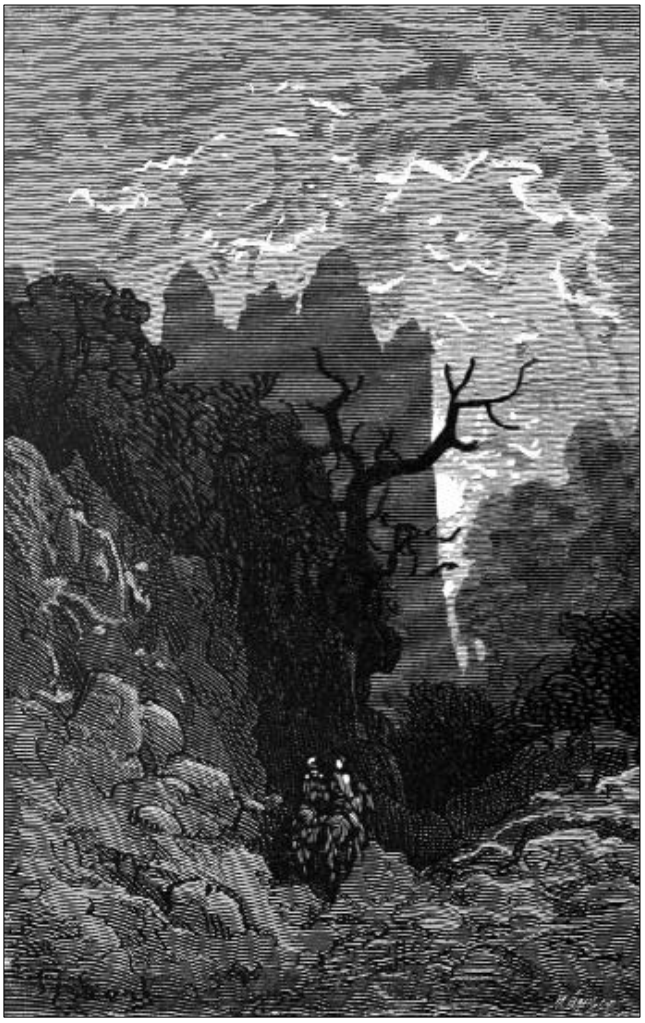
And turning to her, with a kinder face, 140
He supplicated, begged, and conjured her,
By all the gods, and men, though he must face
Ill news not good, the whole truth to utter.
Replied the stubborn crone, devoid of grace:
'Naught shall you hear but will make you suffer;
She did not die, in spite of all you've said,
Yet her life is such, she envies the dead.

She, fell (so swift it was that you heard naught), 141
Captive, to a band of twenty or more,
Such that if she now, to you, was brought,
Think not to cull the flower you longed for.'
Ah, cursed hag, how cruelly you wrought
Those lies, for false indeed the tale you bore:
Though, in the hands of twenty, a prisoner,
Not a single one had sought to touch her.

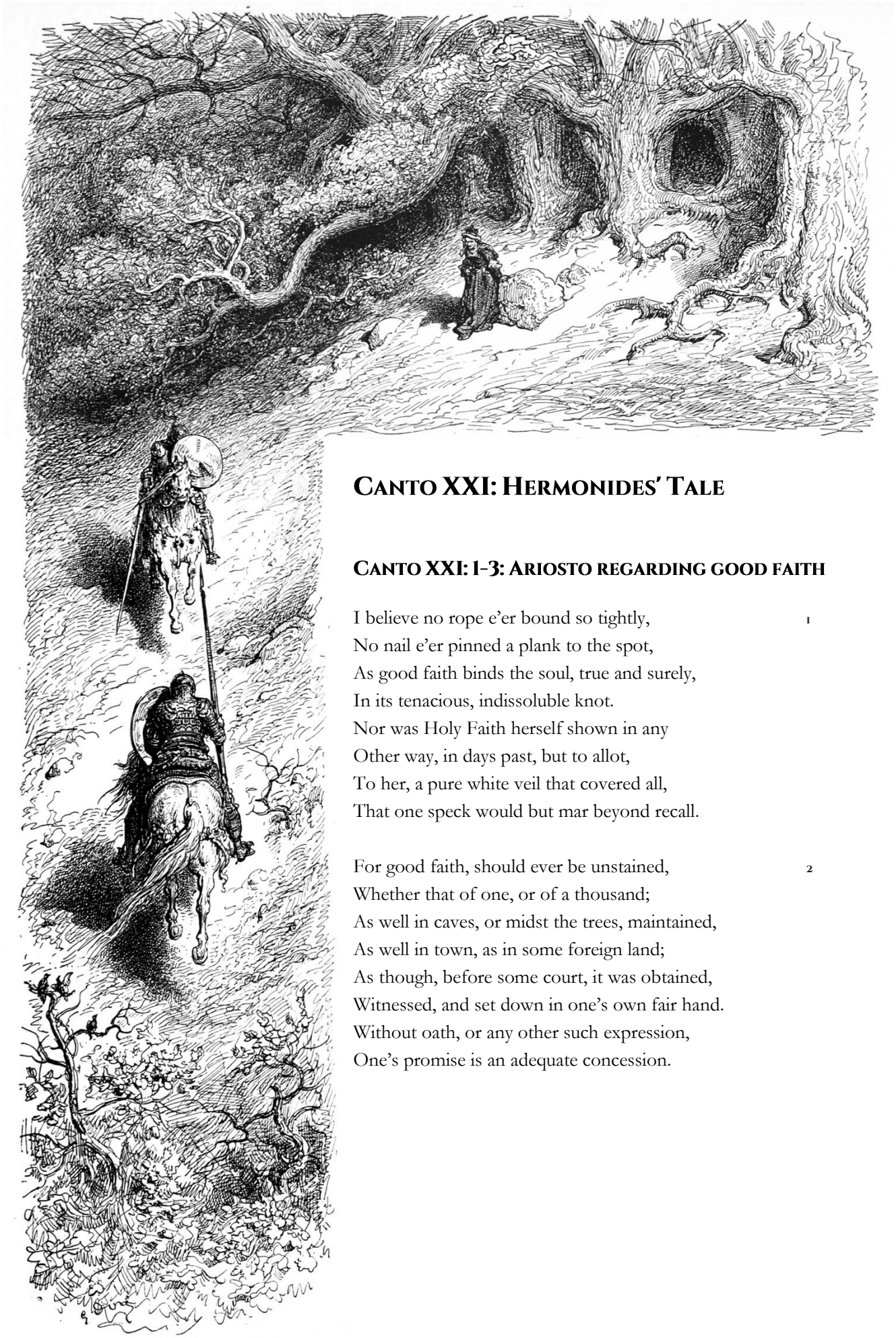
Though he asked to know where she had seen her 142
And when, yet poor Zerbino asked in vain,
For the obstinate crone, despite his prayer,
Would add naught, nor would she further explain.
The prince gentle pleas, at first, did utter,
Then swore he'd cut her throat, in his pain,
But prayers and threats likewise went unheard,
For he failed to make the monster speak a word.

At length Zerbino's tongue came to rest, 143
Since his speeches had brought him little joy;
He could scarce feel the heart beat in his chest,
Such jealousy with that poor heart did toy.
To search for his lady, was now his quest,
Any and every means he would employ,
E'en to leap into the flames, yet ever
Was bound by the oath he'd sworn Marfisa.

So, from thence, by strange and solitary ways, 144
As the old crone chose, Zerbino was led,
O'er hill and dale, each averting their gaze,
And in silence, for not a word was said.
But the peace was broken, when the sun's rays
Declined from noon, by a bold knight who sped
Towards them, on the road, and you shall know
What happened, in the canto to follow.



Stanza 144



Canto XXI: Hermonides' Tale

Canto XXI: 1-3: Ariosto regarding good faith

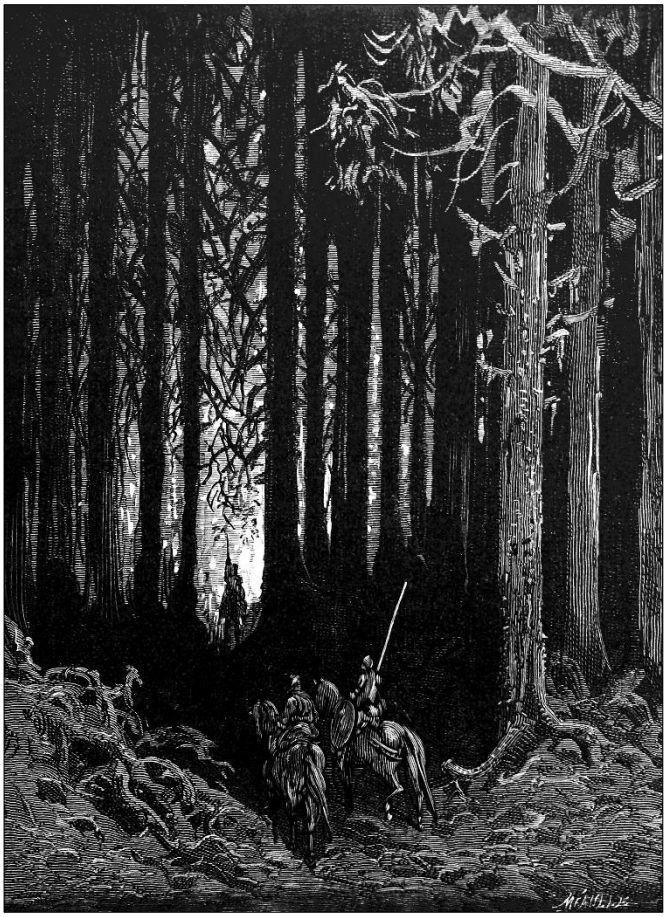
I believe no rope e'er bound so tightly, 1
No nail e'er pinned a plank to the spot,
As good faith binds the soul, true and surely,
In its tenacious, indissoluble knot.
Nor was Holy Faith herself shown in any
Other way, in days past, but to allot,
To her, a pure white veil that covered all,
That one speck would but mar beyond recall.

For good faith, should ever be unstained, 2
Whether that of one, or of a thousand;
As well in caves, or midst the trees, maintained,
As well in town, as in some foreign land;
As though, before some court, it was obtained,
Witnessed, and set down in one's own fair hand.
Without oath, or any other such expression,
One's promise is an adequate concession.

In each enterprise, the good Zerbino, 3
Served ever faithfully, as serve one ought,
And gave a true account, as on they'd go,
Whene'er the stubborn crone some byway sought,
Though it pained him, as if Disease did show
The way, or Death himself, to their dark court.
But yet more heavily on him there weighed,
Than his own wish, the promise he had made.

Canto XXI: 4-7: Zerbino and the crone encounter Hermonides of Holland

I said of him, who felt that duty press 4
Upon his heart so, of escorting her,
That not a word did our sad knight express,
And so, they rode silently together,
And yet the quiet was broken, nonetheless,
As the sun descended, by another,
For an adventurous knight-errant showed,
And met them in the middle of the road.



Stanza 4

The crone, who knew the approaching knight, 5
(He was called Hermonides of Holland,
And bore on his black shield, as was his right,
A single gleaming transverse crimson band)
With altered face, most humbly, in despite
Of her former proud stance, you understand,
Reminded her guide of the promise made:
To defend her the cost that must be paid.

The knight who came against them was a foe 6
To her and all her kin, for he had slain
Her father, who had done no wrong, also
The only brother that to her did remain;
And nor would he rest, she told Zerbino,
Ere the ruin of them all he should attain.
'While I am here to defend you, lady,'
Said he, 'I'd have you fear no enemy.'

When the warrior came closer, and saw 7
A visage that was hateful to his sight,
He gave a menacing and savage roar.
'Either ready yourself,' he cried, 'to fight
Against me, or defend the crone no more.
She deserves to die!' (So claimed the knight.)
'To contend for her, brings but death to you.
Such is the fate of those that wrong pursue.'

Canto XXI: 8-10: Zerbino unseats him

Zerbino made this courteous reply: 8
That twas a sign of baseness and ill-will,
Nor was it chivalrous, to seek to vie
With any, if the aim was but to kill
A lady; but if twas his wish to die,
None there would flee the fight, yet he should still
Reflect, as a knight, that no knight should
Seek to dip his hand in a woman's blood.

Such words he spoke, and more, but all in vain, 9
And it was needful, in the end, to fight.
When they'd covered enough of the plain,
They turned, and charged together, in their flight
Speedier than rockets that the skies attain,
And burst above, at the feast, to our delight.
With like velocity the warriors sped,
Each one seeking to strike the other dead.

Hermonides of Holland aimed full low. 10
Seeking to strike the left flank of the other,
But his weaker lance shattered at the blow,
Allowing his opponent to recover,
While a fierce stroke was dealt by Zerbino,
That broke the knight's shield, and pierced the shoulder,
The sharp lance penetrating, through and through
As to the ground Hermonides it threw.

Canto XXI: 11-16: Hermonides begins the tale of his brother

Zerbino, who believed he'd slain the man, 11
Moved by concern, down from his steed did leap,
And, from the deathlike visage, he began
To raise the visor, while, as if from sleep,
The other, dazed, attempting to scan
Zerbino's face, did but dumb silence keep.
Then said: 'That I have lost cannot grieve me,
Downed by the flower of knight errantry,

Yet it pains me that twas done to defend 12
A traitorous woman, whom, I know not why,
You champion, and your efforts thus expend
On behalf of one whom all men should deny;
For, when the true reason you comprehend
That leads me to demand that she should die,
You'll be dismayed to think that e'er you fought
To save her, but great harm to me, thus, brought.

If sufficient breath remains in my breast, 13
(Though I fear the contrary) I'll explain
How all that she has done can but attest
To a depth of wickedness that few attain.
I had a brother once, young, full of zest,
That sailed, from our dear Holland, o'er the main.
To serve Heraclius he did aspire,
The Emperor of the Eastern Empire.

There, brother-in-arms and friend was he 14
To a knight of the Imperial court,
A baron, who, in Serbia's border country,
In a pleasant place, commanded a fort.
Argeo, he of whom I speak, this lady
Had to wife, a vile and wicked consort,
Whom he loved, yet who passed every bound
Fitting to a man of worth, so well-renowned.

For she was flightier than is a leaf 15
That in autumn is deprived of its moisture,
One a chill wind sends to the ground beneath,
And blows before it like a hunted creature.
From her husband, she'd loved awhile, in brief,
She'd concealed the worse side of her nature,
For, such was her every thought and desire,
She now sought my brother's love to acquire.



Stanza 12

Yet the Acroceraunian mountains 16
Stand not so firm against the raging sea,
Nor, against Boreas, the pine that strains,
But still renews its vigour endlessly,
And on the Alpine ledge its place retains,
Its roots having pierced the rock so deeply,
As did my brother stand, against her pleas,
That nest of ills, and vile iniquities.

Canto XXI: 17-21: Who resists the woman's advances

Now, as befalls a daring cavalier, 17
That the conflict he seeks will swiftly find,
My brother was wounded, while quite near
His friend's castle, which he oft was inclined
To visit while his friend, the noble peer,
Was at court, or had been elsewhere assigned;
He thus retired there, to wait, patiently,
Until of his slight wound he should be free.

And while he lay there wounded, indeed, 18
Argeo was about some needful mission,
While, quite soon, the lady, as seemed her need,
Approached him with a base proposition.
Yet, being loyal, pure in thought and deed,
He scorned her bold attempt with derision,
And chose, since her attentions never ceased,
Midst many evils to endure the least.

Of the many evil courses, he chose this: 19
To relinquish all contact with his friend,
And journey far enough, that her ill wish
Would be thwarted, and her approaches end.
It would be hard to bear, but less amiss
Than that an honest man to such should bend,
Or that he should disclose all to her lord,
Who his heart's deepest love did her accord.

Though his wound yet required some attention, 20
He donned his armour, and then left the fort,
And journeyed far, with the firm intention
Of ne'er returning to it, e'en in thought.
But to what end? Fortune, in contention,
Gainst his fair plan fresh obstruction brought.
Behold, the husband had returned, meanwhile,
And found his wife weeping (in her guile),

Her face all flushed, her hair in disarray. 21
He asked his partner what had troubled her,
Although, before a single word she'd say,
More than once that plea he had to proffer,
While she was mulling o'er the perfect way,
She'd devised, to punish one who'd spurned her.
It suited well her changeable nature,
That desire, to disdain, should so alter.

Canto XXI: 22-24: While she falsely denounces him

At last, she spoke: "Why seek to hide the error, 22
The fault committed while you were away?
For though I hid it from the world forever,
To conscience twould be always on display.
My soul that feels its sin, and must suffer,
Will feel such penitence within, alway,
As exceeds all other mortal suffering
Inflicted upon any for so erring;

If error it was, since incurred through force. 23
But be that as it may, hear now the deed,
Then let my unstained spirit take its course,
Delivered from the flesh, if so decreed;
So let my light be dimmed at its source,
My gaze forever quenched, that would indeed
If I lived, be lowered neath a weight of blame;
Since, before all I saw, I'd blush for shame.

Tis your friend has robbed me of my honour, 24
For he, by force, has ravished my body,
And fearing I would tell you of my horror,
He departed, the monster, silently!"
She roused her husband's hatred and anger
Against his dearest friend, with her story.
Argeo armed himself, without delay,
And, breathing death and vengeance, sped away.

Canto XXI: 25-28: Argeo imprisons the brother, Philander

Since he knew well the country all around, 25
In a brief while, he came upon the knight,
For my brother, still weakened and unsound,
Rode slowly, not suspecting he must fight,
And in a dark place that Argeo had found

Fit for revenge, he overcame him quite
Nor would he hear my brother's excuse
But would have him suffer cruel abuse.

The former was sound, and full of anger, 26
My brother weak, and as yet still his friend,
And so unfit to counter this new danger,
Against which he was forced to defend.
Philander (such the name of my brother),
Who had earned no such fate, was, in the end,
Being far too frail to withstand a blow,
In a brief moment, captured by his foe.

"God forbid I should be so led astray 27
By my rightful wrath, and your wrongdoing,"
Argeo cried, "as to seek to up and slay
One I loved, and who loved me, that did bring
Nonetheless, ill upon me, on a day;
Yet I'd have the world know, of this thing,
That, as I was the kinder in my love,
So, in hatred the crueller I shall prove;

I'll punish you in another manner 28
Than staining my hands with your blood."
And, with this, he ordered a follower
To make a sled of branches, sound and good,
And draw the half-dead knight to his tower,
Where he prisoned him, be it understood,
As a form of unending punishment,
Though my brother, indeed, was innocent.

Canto XXI: 29-33: The woman, Gabrina, still attempts to seduce him

Not that he lacked aught but liberty. 29
All else, indeed, he could command at will.
As if he were at large, as formerly,
He gave orders, and men obeyed him still.
But this evil woman was never weary
Of pursuing her desire, to his ill,
For, possessing the keys, every day
She would enter the rooms where he lay.

Endlessly, she assailed my poor brother, 30
With even greater boldness than before.
"What was loyalty worth to you ever,"
She would cry: "branded a traitor for sure?
Oh, how sweet are the plaudits you gather!
How glorious the prize your deeds secure!
Oh, what merit you have gained, in the end,
Scorned by all as a false, disloyal friend!

Yet how easily you might have yielded 31
To my love, without staining your honour.
With that obstinate rigour you revealed,
Enjoy now the bitter fruit you gather,
For your sentence will never be repealed
If you remain as unmoved as ever.
Yet if you comply with what I demand,
Then both freedom, and honour are at hand."

Yet: "No, no, hope not," Philander replied, 32
"That my mind will alter, and I concede,
Even though, against all right, pent inside
This tower, I suffer harshness, indeed,
And my honour all men seek to deride.
He, that sees all, knows of no such deed,
And may free me of His eternal grace;
My innocence revealed before His face.



Stanza 32

If Argeo thinks it not sufficient 33
To imprison me, let him slay me straight,
Perchance in heaven, proving innocent,
I shall win my reward, despite my fate.
Perchance, when I am dead, he will relent,
He, who thinks himself so wronged of late,
And see that he has wronged me, instead,
And mourn a loyal friend, when I am dead."

Canto XXI: 34-38: Argeo pursues a local feud

The shameless woman often pressed her case, 34
With Philander, yet did so fruitlessly;
Nursing a blind desire, in every place
Un-resting in pursuit of treachery.
She thought on every past deed of the race,
And considered every scheme, carefully;
A thousand thoughts she rehearsed, one by one,
Before deciding on what might be done.

It was a good six months before she sought 35
To visit Philander's gaol, as before,
So that he'd hoped she no longer thought
To seduce him, or trouble him the more.
Behold, Fortune, that ever ill doth court,
Found occasion for wickedness galore,
And gave memorable effect, full dire,
To her blind and irrational desire.

Her husband had a feud of long-standing, 36
With a baron named Morando the Fair,
Who oft came to the castle, hunting,
Whenever this Argeo was not there,
While ne'er within ten miles lingering
If Argeo was present in his lair.
The latter schemed against him, to his woe,
Telling all: to Jerusalem he must go.

He departed thence, watched by one and all, 37
So, they might spread the news of his going.
None heard a whisper of his scheme at all,
But his wife whom he trusted; at evening,
He would return, as the night began to fall,
And would set forth again in the morning,
In disguise, and with fresh arms on display,
Then, unseen by any other, go his way.

He'd go wandering about, here and there, 38
Around his castle seeking to discover
If Morando, knowing naught of the affair,
And believing he was gone, might endeavour
To visit; to woods and fields he'd repair
But whene'er he saw the sun sink lower,
He'd seek the castle, and by a secret gate
Was drawn within, by his disloyal mate.

Canto XXI: 39-44: The woman inveigles Philander in her plot

Except for this iniquitous woman, 39
All thought he was many miles away,
And when opportunity to her did come,
She visited my brother, on a day,
Full of malice, but gave many a tear room,
That eyes and breast did, fulsomely, display.
"Oh, where shall I find aid," cried this lady,
"So, my honour may not be lost, completely,

And my husband's honour with my own? 40
For I'd tremble at naught if he were here.
Yet you know this Morando; I'm alone,
And neither man nor gods does he fear.
With threats and pleas, more than once, he's shown
He'll attempt anything, if he comes near.
The servants he's corrupted, to his side,
Nor are there any to help, far and wide.

Now that he knows my husband is away, 41
And may not return for some great while,
He's had the boldness to appear this day,
Without the least excuse; such is his style,
Who if my lord were here would not, I say,
Have ever dared to come within a mile
Of the castle, or e'en a hundred more,
Nor e'en there would he think himself secure.

And what by messenger before he sought, 42
He has requested of me, face to face,
So strongly that, upon me, must be brought
The burden of dishonour and disgrace;
And had I not spoken sweetly, and taught
The man that I might yield, with ready grace,
He would happily have taken that by force
Which he hopes to win by a gentler course.

I have promised, not meaning to comply, 43
(For tis no contract that is forged in fear)
My intention being simply to deny
What he would then have done by force, tis clear.
So stands the case; the remedy is nigh,
It lies with you to save me, twould appear,
And Argeo's honour, which you alone
Hold as dear as, or dearer than, your own.

Should you refuse me this, I shall say, 44
You have shown not the loyalty you cried,
But that, out of cruelty, you told me nay,
And that my every tearful plea you denied,
Nor showed respect for him, who is away.
That excuse you once proffered, though I sighed,
For our affair had been our secret game,
Yet now I stand exposed to scorn and shame."

Canto XXI: 45-49: And through her guile he slays Argeo in error

"Such a prologue is not needed," said he, 45
"For I am bound by friendship to Argeo,
Tell me your wishes, and I swear to be,
As I have always sought, friend not foe;
And though I have been wronged grievously,
I would not have Argeo wronged also.
For him I will contend to my last breath,
Though all the world and fate intend my death."

She replied: "Tis my wish you slay this man, 46
That seeks to bring upon us dishonour.
Fear no ill will come to you, if you can,
I will show you how; you shall not suffer.
When he comes to me (perceive my plan),
At the third hour, when tis darkest ever,
I'll give a signal, here within the tower,
Noiselessly, as is within my power.

Be patient, lie low, within my chamber, 47
For the baron; there, I will show no light,
And let me first rid him of his armour,
And, half-naked, present you with the knight."
So, the wife plunged her poor husband deeper
In the mire, if wife she is named aright!
Rather should she not be termed a Fury,
Sprung from Hell and its depths of cruelty?

When the darkest hour of night arrived, 48
She drew my brother forth, sword in hand,
And, to the unlit chamber, she contrived
To bring the baron, just as she had planned.
At her sign, all was done (ill plans devised
By such folk seldom fail, you understand)
Thus, Argeo fell to Philander's blade,
That thought it was Morando he'd waylaid.

One stroke sufficed, ere he could defend, 49
Himself, no helm protecting him, and so
His wretched life now found a bitter end,
And without the victim striking a blow.
Philander had, thus, slain his dearest friend,
Yet ne'er would have believed it. Rare, I know,
Is this case, in which, while seeking to please,
He wrought worse than the worst of enemies.

Canto XXI: 50-56: Gabrina then forces him to do her will

Once, unbeknownst to all, Argeo lay 50
Dead on the ground my brother gave the blade
To Gabrina (tis her name) who to betray
All those who fall into her hands was made.
Silent till then, she told him to display
A light, to view the victim he'd unmade.
And so, he did, and to the corpse was led,
And saw it was Argeo that lay dead.

She threatened him, then, saying that if he 51
Did not consent to gratify her wish
She'd claim twas all due to his perfidy
And none could contradict her in this.
He would be taken and slain, swiftly,
As a murderer and traitor, and, to finish,
She told him not to scorn his own good name,
If he held life cheap, but think on the shame.



Stanza 52

When he realised his error, Philander, 52
Full of grief and fear, was half-persuaded
To despatch this woman, in his anger,
And if, unsure, he'd not been dissuaded
By Reason, who in his ear did whisper,
That he must face a hostile house, unaided,
Though lacking, now, a weapon in his hand,
He'd yet have struck her down, where she did stand.

Like a ship, on the high seas, that is caught 53
By opposing winds, and driven to and fro,
Blown by one o'er the waves, the sails taut,
Then laid aback, as the other doth blow,
Now assailed from starboard, then from port,
Till the stronger, at last, its might doth show,
So, Philander, twixt the ocean and the devil,
Was persuaded to choose the lesser evil.

Reason showed the extent of his peril; 54
Worse than death, the stain of infamy.
Twas not Argeo he had sought to kill,
Yet little time was there to struggle free;
In his trouble, though all against his will,
He must drain the bitter cup, silently.
Thus, finally, in seeking a solution,
Fear conquered his former resolution.

Anticipating shameful punishment, 55
He swore a thousand times to comply,
And so, fulfil Gabrina's vile intent,
If, yet secure from harm, they could but fly.
And so, the wicked jade in triumph went,
And plucked the fruit by force, and by and by
Philander returned to us, leaving behind
His shame, in Greece, and yet not out of mind.

For, in his heart, lay the image of his friend 56
Whom he had slain, though all unknowingly,
Having gained, from his torment, in the end,
A Medea, a cruel, a vengeful Procne.
If his oaths, and the faith he must defend
Had not acted as a curb, he would, surely,
Have ensured that she swiftly met her fate;
Yet she lived, though mightily he did hate.

Canto XXI: 57-62: And subsequently seeks to poison him

Thereafter, he was never seen to smile, 57
All his talk was of life's dull miseries;
Often sighs issued forth; all seemed vile,
He became but a second Orestes
(Who slew the bold Aegisthus, for his guile,
And his mother Clytemnestra; for these
Two murders, the Furies plagued his head.)
Philander sickened, and took to his bed.

Now the pernicious woman, when she saw 58
With what little favour he viewed her,
Felt hatred where desire had burned before;
Her amorous longing turned to anger.
She felt the same revulsion now, or more,
Once felt for Argeo, for this lover.
She decided to remove him, as accursed,
And slay the second husband, like the first.

She found a physician, full of guile, 59
Sufficient for the work she had in hand,
Who knew more of poisons, strong and vile,
Than aught the art of healing did demand.
She pledged more than he sought, if in a while
He would do as she asked and had planned,
And some fatal liquor, covertly, devise,
That would serve to remove him from their eyes.

In the presence of myself and more beside 60
This doctor brought the means for the crime,
And said he would a medicine provide,
That would grant robust health, in rapid time.
Gabrina now a wicked scheme applied,
Ere the doctor the drinking cup could prime,
To rid herself of her foul accomplice,
And retain the payment she did promise.

She seized his hand, as he touched the cup. 61
"Resent it not, if in my present fear,
I am cautious as to what my love might sup,
For I hold him most precious and most dear,"
She cried: "As I would have him drink it up,
For his benefit, I would show him, here,
It will not harm him, so would have you try
The medicine, before you bring it nigh."

What state would you think the man was in? 62
Placed, so swiftly, in a thankless quandary,
And with all poised to observe their sin,
He lacked a space for thinking, and so he,
Lest any there should doubt what lay within,
Tasted but a drop (adding it, quickly,
To the cup the patient emptied sans alarm),
Trusting so slight a taste would do small harm.

Canto XXI: 63-66: But all is revealed, though he dies

Like a trained hawk, that has a partridge gripped 63
In its talons, and stoops its head to eat,
Yet is robbed by the hound, which it trusted
As its comrade, and must forego the meat,
So, the physician intent on gain, instead,
Of the prize he hoped for, met with defeat.
A prime example of audacity;
May all such be denied their victory.

This done, he thought to be on his way, 64
So as to partake of the antidote,
Seeking to counteract, without delay,
The poison that yet lingered in his throat.
But to this the vile Gabrina said nay,
Rather his time he should as yet devote
To her spouse, till the draught had done its work,
And its value proved, nor his task should shirk.

Nor earnest prayer nor aught he could offer 65
Could secure her leave for him to depart,
The desperate man, who now saw death hover
Before his eyes, confessed; and, for his part,
Revealed every detail he could proffer,
Nor could she refute it by any art
Of deceit she possessed; and then the state
He had sought for another proved his fate.



Stanza 65

His soul fled, as my brother's had before, 66
Though all the essentials we had learned
Of the crime, ere it had done so; and more,
We seized the evil monster who had earned
Harsh punishment (for she, in tooth and claw,
Is worse than any beast man ever spurned
For its violence) and imprisoned her then,
That she might die in the fire, as and when.'

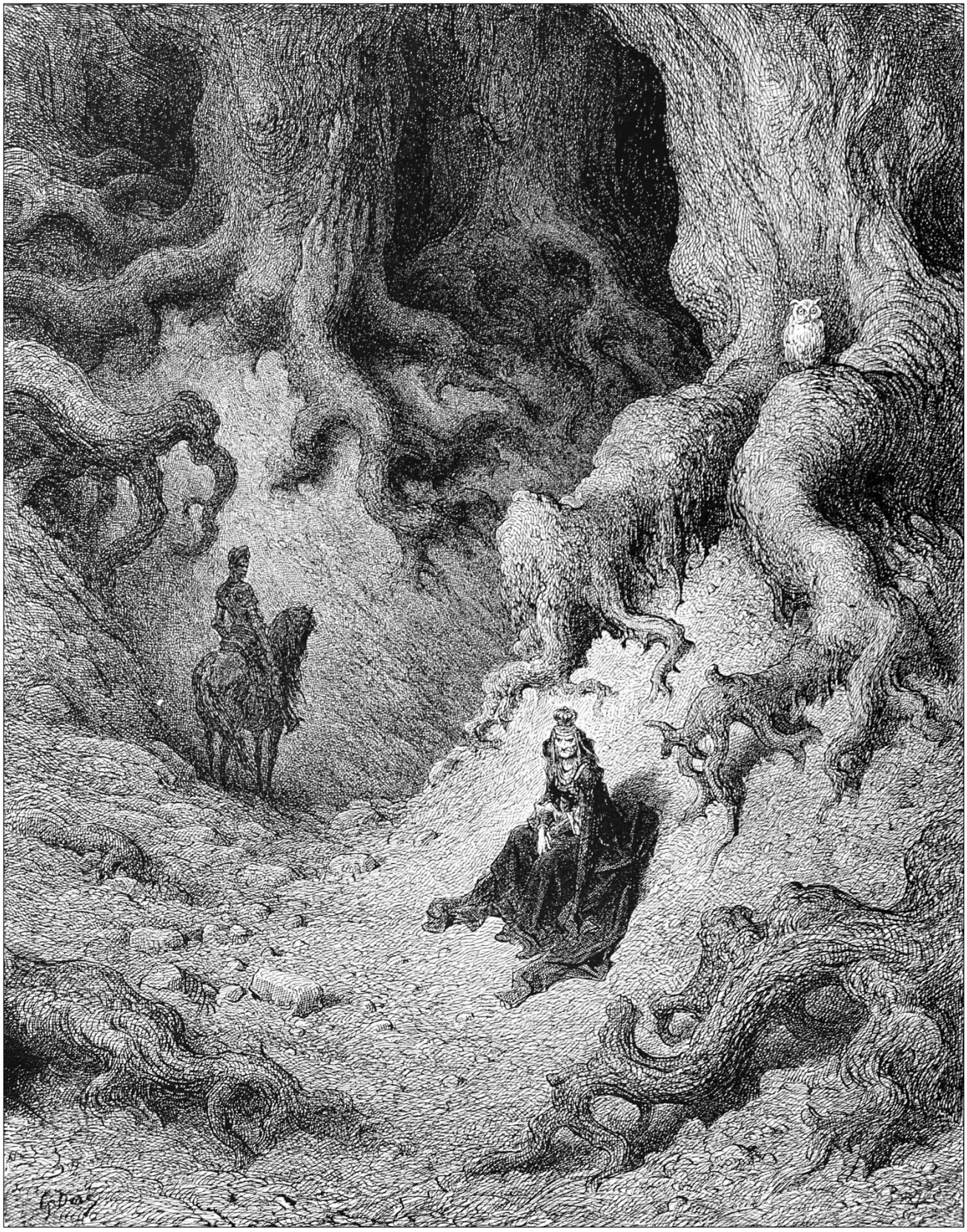
Canto XXI: 67-72: Hermonides ends his tale; Zerbino and the crone depart

So Hermonides ended, though, indeed, 67
He'd have spoken further if he could,
But suffered such a pang that fate decreed
He turned pale, and fell back, while two who stood
To serve him, upon seeing his dire need,
Made a bier of green branches from the wood,
Laying their master down upon that bed,
Ere bearing him away, nigh on half-dead.

Zerbino excused himself for his action, 68
Which must increase the ill that had been done,
But, as was customary, his companion
He was yet obliged to protect, as one
Of the knightly order, in his opinion,
Or be dishonoured; for the promise won
From him, on receiving her, was clear,
He must defend her from all that came near,

Yet if he might, in some helpful way, 69
Assist him, then he would wish to do so.
Hermonides replied he could but pray
The knight was be free of her, ere great woe
Came upon him, for her scheming that day
He might regret, so malicious was his foe.
Gabrina, meanwhile, kept a downcast eye,
For twas plain truth, nor could she make reply.

Zerbino now departed with the crone, 70
Having promised down that road to lead her,
But he cursed her in his heart, I must own:
For her, he'd harmed a good man, earlier.
And having heard all the evil she had sown,
From one who knew her, and thus did suffer,
If, before, he'd been less than pleased, the knight
So loathed her now, he wished her from his sight.

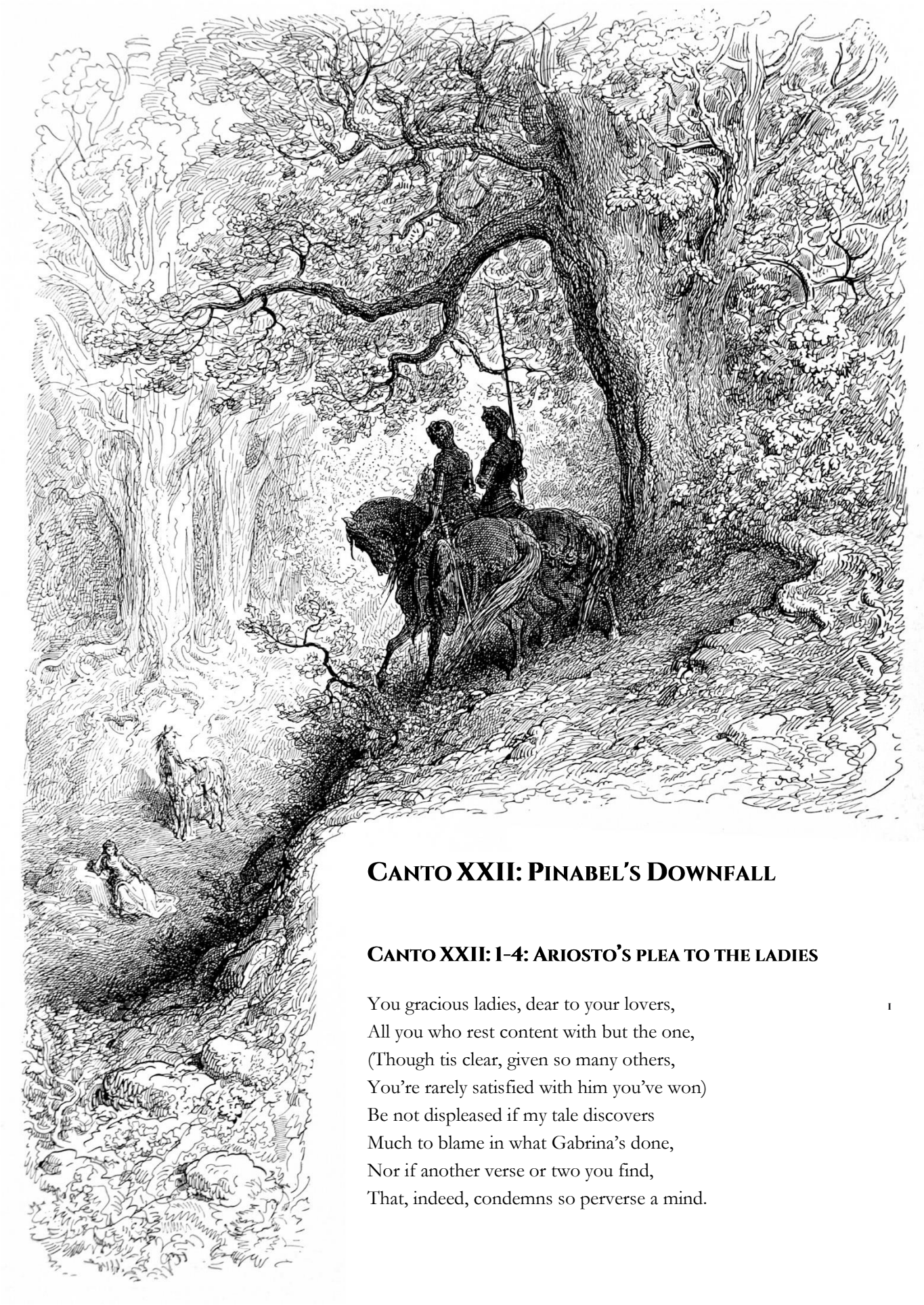


Stanza 70 "*Zerbino now departed with the crone*"

Comprehending his hatred, completely, 71
She'd not be outdone by him in malice,
For in that ill game, she played so slyly,
She aimed to land him two for one, no less.
Her heart was full of venom, endlessly,
While her face too was a poisoned chalice.
So it was in sweet concord, as I say,
That through the ancient wood they took their way!



But, behold, as the sun dipped at evening, 72
The sound rose of many a blow and cry,
That signified some harsh fight progressing,
While, by its loudness, it came from nearby.
Zerbino, to know what was occurring,
Towards the source of it did swiftly fly,
Nor was Gabrina slower to follow;
What passed, I'll tell, in another canto.



Canto XXII: Pinabel's Downfall

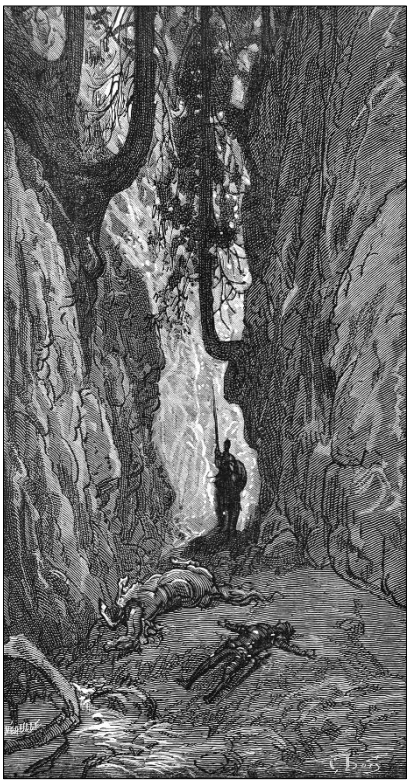
Canto XXII: 1-4: Ariosto's plea to the ladies

You gracious ladies, dear to your lovers, 1
All you who rest content with but the one,
(Though tis clear, given so many others,
You're rarely satisfied with him you've won)
Be not displeased if my tale discovers
Much to blame in what Gabrina's done,
Nor if another verse or two you find,
That, indeed, condemns so perverse a mind.

Such was hers; and this task imposed on me 2
By one from whom I must not hide what's true.
And, in executing it, I honour, surely,
All those who are sincere in what they do.
He who betrayed his master, wickedly,
Neither John nor Peter could wrong anew.
Yet still renowned is Hypermnestra's fame,
Despite her sisters' wickedness and shame.

For every one whose sins I choose to sing, 3
(For such the tales demand, that I recite)
My high praise of a hundred here shall ring,
And, brighter than the sun, display their light.
Now, turning to the work that I'm weaving,
In which, of their grace, many take delight,
I'll speak of the Scottish knight, Zerbino,
That towards the sound of conflict did go.

Twixt two mountains, he entered on a pass, 4
From whence those cries arose, and in a while
Came to a vale, closed by their stony mass,
Where a knight was lying dead, of whom I'll
Tell, but first must leave there, on the grass,
And quit France for the Levant, mile on mile
I must go, to seek Astolfo once more,
Midst his journey to find our western shore.



Stanza 4

Canto XXII: 5-10: Astolfo reaches France from the Levant

I left him in that cruel Syrian city, 5
From which, with his formidable horn,
He'd chased those women full of enmity,
And so, himself from dreadful peril torn,
While obliging his friends to sail swiftly,
To fly that shore, and put the land to scorn.
Now, as I follow, he took, perforce,
The road to Armenia; such his course.

Through Anatolia, at a brisk pace, 6
He rode along, thereby reaching Bursa,
And thence crossing, o'er the Black Sea, to Thrace.
Up the Danube, through Hungary, later,
As his good horse had wings, he flew apace.
In less than twenty days, the border
Of Moravia he passed, then Bohemia,
And so crossed the Rhine, in Franconia.

Through the Ardennes he rode to Aix, 7
Then Brabant, and in Flanders went aboard;
With a southerly, the vessel made its way
At full sail, such speed did the wind afford;
And, by noon, there the shores of England lay,
Where he landed, once more the English lord.
He spurred his steed, and advanced so well,
That he reached London ere the shadows fell.

On hearing twas in Paris Otho lay, 8
(His father) since many moons ago,
And nigh every baron had made his way
To France, to follow his example so,
He returned to his vessel, that same day,
And downriver to the Thames' mouth did go,
And thence, issuing forth with all sails set,
To Calais steered; full brisk the winds they met.

The light breeze to starboard had persuaded 9
The peer's vessel to brave the open sea,
Which grew in force, and the sails invaded,
And so commandeered the ship, utterly;
While the captain was, swiftly, dissuaded
From doing aught but letting her run free,
Lest he, and all, were swamped; so, perforce,
He allowed the driving wind to set her course.

Now to starboard, now to port, they were thrown, 10
Here or there, o'er the waves, as Fortune wrought,
And, at last, to the Seine's mouth they were blown.
To Rabicano the harness he now brought,
And our knight, armoured, took his way alone.
His good sword was at his side and, if he fought,
That which was worth a thousand men or more,
His magic horn, o'er his shoulder, he bore.

Canto XXII: 11-15: He chases a thief to the enchanted mansion

He traversed a forest, and swiftly came 11
To a fountain at the foot of a hill,
At an hour when the flock, close by that same,
Ceased to graze, and having eaten their fill
Rested in cave or fold, and, as the flame
Of the sun had raised a thirst, twas his will,
To doff his helm, then tether his courser,
And approach the fount, to drink its water.

He had scarce wet his lips, when a youth 12
Who had been lurking nearby, fast appeared,
Seized the horse, and leapt upon it, forsooth.
Then away, through the darkest woods, he veered.
Astolfo raised his brow, confused, in truth,
But on seeing the harm, as his head cleared,
Left the fountain behind, without drinking,
And sped after the lad, without thinking.



Stanza 12

The thief a steady course did maintain, 13
Once he had, so suddenly, the creature got,
Often loosening, then tightening the rein,
And fled at now a canter, now a trot.
From the forest he entered on a plain,
Astolfo close behind, and reached the spot,
Where so many noble knights, in that mansion,
Were more captive than in a walled prison.

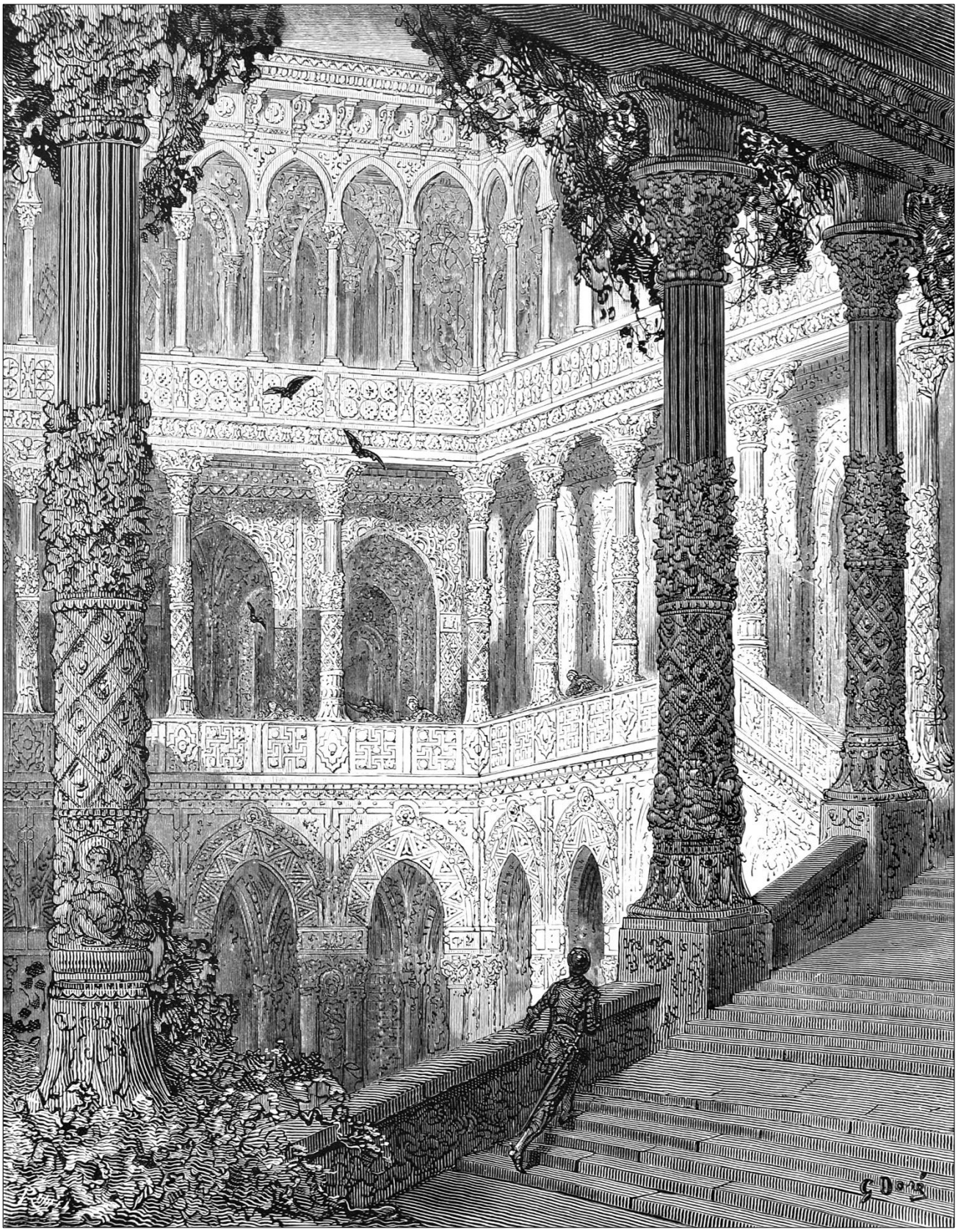
The youth vanished then, within that place, 14
On that steed that ran faster than the wind,
While Astolfo, far behind him in the chase,
Ran, within his helm and armour pinned,
And with his shield, so he found not a trace,
Of the lad that so blatantly had sinned,
Nor there did he meet with Rabicano,
Though he looked hard, and walked all round also.

He strode around, but his search proved all in vain, 15
Traversed the halls, rooms, and every gallery,
But, although he took nigh every pain,
Of the bold lad, not a sign did he see,
Nor caught a glimpse of Rabicano's mane,
That finest mount for sheer velocity.
He searched, quite fruitlessly, I may say,
Up and down, and here and there, all that day.

Canto XXII: 16-19: He consults Logistilla's book, then contends with Atlante

Confused and weary, he roamed everywhere, 16
And finding that the place was enchanted,
Viewed the book that Logistilla the Fair
As a gift to him, in India, had granted,
So that if a spell, one new, strange, and rare,
Ever his own given powers supplanted,
He might find succour; in the index he
Sought the page that might yield a remedy.

Of that enchanted mansion he read much, 17
And there it was written how he might
Foil the enchanter, and his evil touch,
And so, untie the knot that held each knight.
Beneath the sill a spirit lay, and such
Was its power the captives were bound tight,
But raise the stone that buried it below,
And the rooms and halls as mere smoke would show.



Stanza 15 "*He strode around, but his search proved all in vain*"

All eager to bring that spell to an end, 18
And embracing the glorious enterprise,
Astolfo to the task his strength did lend,
To raise the marble flagstone was the prize;
But Atlante, seeing how he did bend
His arm to foil his art, and subtle lies,
Suspecting what was likely to ensue
Assailed him with enchantments, strong and new.

He, with devilish shapes and imagery, 19
Made him look quite other than before.
One perceived a giant, the next would see,
A peasant or a vile knight, old and hoar.
They, in the form in which *he* formerly
Appeared within the wood, Astolfo saw,
(*The wizard, that is*), and set upon him;
The prize Melissa took, to win from him.

Canto XXII: 20-23: He uses the magic horn, then undoes the spell

Ruggiero, Gradasso, Bradamante, 20
Brandimarte, Iroldo, Prasildo,
And many others, deceived entirely,
Attacked, bent on destroying Astolfo.
But remembering the horn, instantly,
He swiftly brought their foolish pride full low;
Though if not for the sound of its loud call
He had been slain, that must fight them all.

But as soon as the knight had blown the horn, 21
And raised its dreadful clamour all about,
Like doves that on hasty wings are borne,
At the sound of a musket, or loud shout,
They fled, while the necromancer, shorn
Of his powers, from his lair issued out,
Pale and trembling, and ran away, in fear,
Till the pain of the thing might disappear.

The warder and his prisoners were gone, 22
And many a courser broke from its stall,
While more than just a rope, tied fast, thereon,
Twould have needed that swift flight to forestall;
Not a cat or mouse remained, for 'On! On!'
Was divined, in their own way, by them all;
And, with the rest, had vanished Rabicano,
Had he not been seized by brave Astolfo.

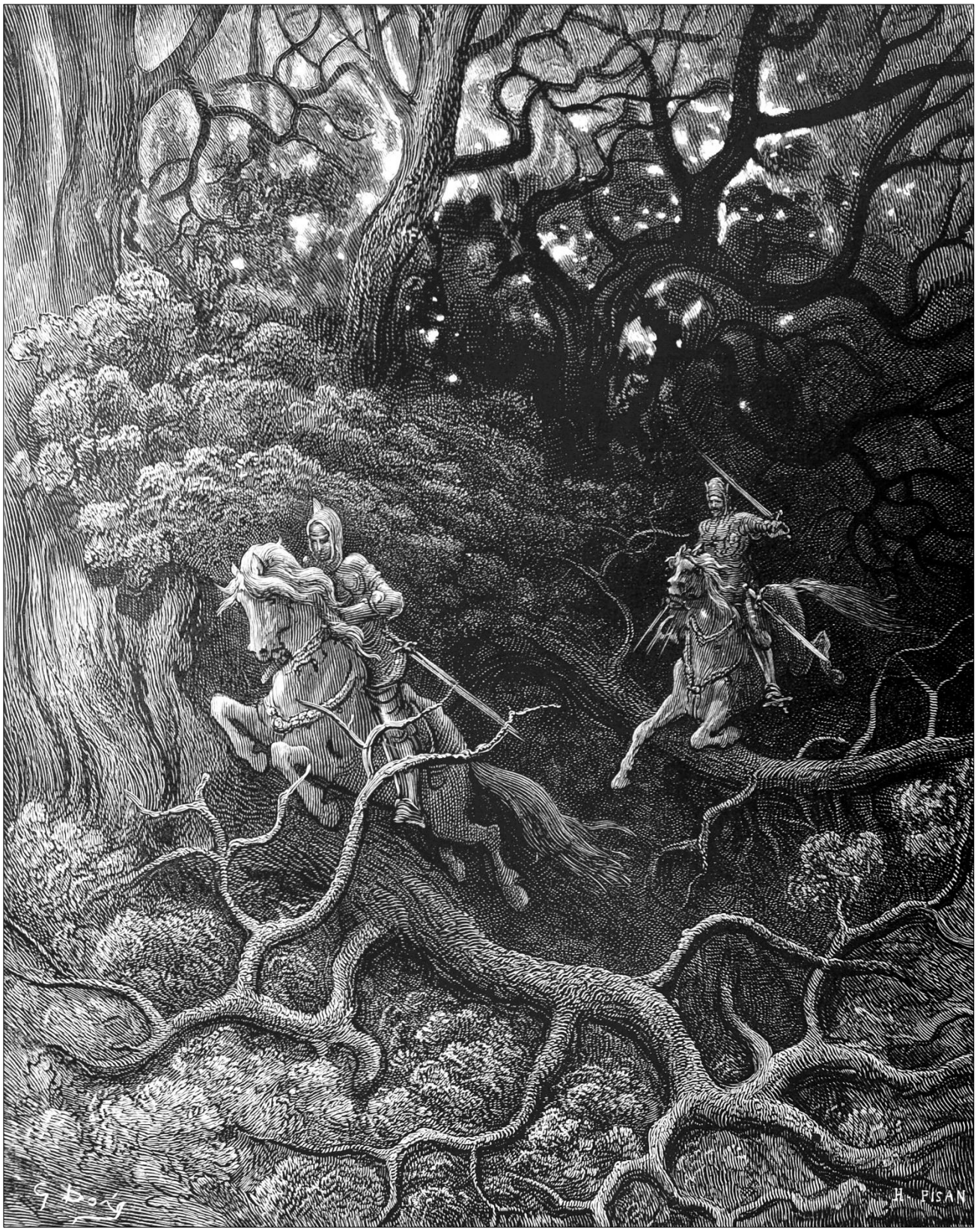
He, having chased the enchanter away, 23
Now raised the heavy stone above the sill,
And there, beneath it, sundry figures lay,
And other things I shall omit at will.
To destroy every spell, that on them lay,
He shattered all, that the dark space did fill,
As the book had informed him that he ought,
Thus, the mansion to smoke and mist was brought.

Canto XXII: 24-27: Astolfo chances upon the hippogriff

Then, tethered by a golden chain, he saw 24
Ruggiero's hippogriff, the winged steed.
I speak of that mount Atlante the Moor
Had sent, that magic creature of rare breed,
To bear him to Alcina's realm, then bore
Him back, as Logistilla then decreed,
From India to England, to reach France,
Over half the Earth's watery expanse.



Stanza 24



Stanza 21 "*Like doves that on hasty wings are borne*"

You may yet recall how Ruggiero 25
Had left the creature fastened to a tree,
When Angelica, naked, scorned him so,
And vanished from his presence suddenly.
The flying steed had departed also,
Returning to its master, Atlante,
Much to his wonder, and with him had stayed
Till the necromancer's spell was unmade.

Now, Astolfo was more than pleased by this, 26
For the hippogriff would offer him a way
To fly o'er land and sea, as he might wish,
Thus, all he had not seen he might survey,
And circumnavigate the Earth, with relish,
For he knew that the creature could convey
Him thus, in any journey through the air,
Since he'd made ample trial of it elsewhere.

He'd proved its powers that day in India, 27
When by Melissa he was sped, swiftly,
From the realm of that wicked Alcina,
Who had changed him there, to a myrtle tree,
For he'd noted the response of the courser
To the rein, how it moved obediently,
So trained by Logistilla, who with care
Had taught Ruggiero to fly everywhere.

Canto XXII: 28-30: And ponders what to do with his steed Rabicano

To ride the hippogriff was his intent, 28
So, he saddled the creature, and then found
A bridle and bit from all those present,
That suited the steed, one strong and sound,
For many were still there, that had been meant
For the steeds that had fled o'er the ground;
And he was, thus, prepared to up and go,
Had he not then thought of Rabicano.

For he loved that steed, and with good reason, 29
None better while jousting with a lance;
And from remotest India he'd ridden
That fine courser to the fair land of France.
He pondered awhile, and his decision
Was to gift him, thus leaving naught to chance,
To some friend, not abandon him, a prey
To the first passer-by who came that way.

So, he gazed about the forest, to see 30
If some farmer or huntsman was around,
Who might lead the charger to the city,
And stable Rabicano there; but found
No sign of such, and waited, fruitlessly,
All day and night, yet, as dawn lit the ground,
Though the light was dim, as yet, where he stood,
He saw a knight approaching through the wood.

Canto XXII: 31-33: Ruggiero and Bradamante find each other

Yet I should seek, before I tell you more, 31
For Ruggiero and Bradamante.
The moment the horn's magic call was o'er,
Our two warriors having fled most swiftly,
Ruggiero looked about him, and saw
What had been hidden from him, formerly,
All that Atlante's powers had concealed,
And so, their own true faces were revealed.

Ruggiero now gazed at Bradamante, 32
And Bradamante at him, in wonder
That mere illusion, and but trickery,
Had led both mind and eyes so to blunder.
Ruggerio, with joy, clasped his lady,
Who the bright rose's crimson did plunder,
While the first sweet flowers of love, intently,
He gathered from her lips, yet most gently.

A thousand times they embraced anew, 33
And, lovingly, they clasped each other tight.
So happy, and contented, were those two,
Their hearts could scarce contain their pure delight.
Great their grief, that a magic spell, untrue,
Had so wrought its enchantment on their sight,
That neither had recognised their lover,
Thus, many a joyful day was lost forever.

Canto XXII: 34-36: She insists he is baptised before they wed

Bradamante who was disposed to grant 34
Whate'er a wise and prudent virgin might,
So as to ease his pain, and make all pleasant,
So long as her honour received no slight,
Told the knight that he must ask her parent,
Duke Amone, for her hand, as was right,
(If the true fruits of love he now would gain,
For no objection would she then maintain)

Yet first must be baptised. He, not only 35
Would live a Christian for love of her,
As his father had been, and formerly
His whole past line down to his grandfather,
But would lay down his life, entirely,
And without a thought, he said, for her,
Crying: 'Twould be naught if tis your desire,
To be baptised not with water but with fire.'

Then Ruggiero, that he might soon be wed, 36
Went to seek a means to the baptismal rite.
To Vallombrosa, Bradamante led
Her lover, till the abbey came in sight,
(Rich and fair, yet upon religion fed
And welcoming to many a brave knight)
Where they met, coming from the woodland chase,
A woman with a sad and mournful face.

Canto XXII: 37-41: They meet a woman who tells a sad tale

Ruggiero, ever courteous and kind, 37
But to women most of all, when he saw
How she wept, and seemed so troubled in mind,
Her lovely eyes all reddened, and full sore,
Felt pity for her then, and sought to find
What grieved her so, and thus did her implore,
After a courteous greeting, to say
What had caused her tears to flow, in that way.

And she, raising eyes full moist, yet bright, 38
Granted the knight a courteous reply,
And told him of the reason for her plight,
Since he had asked, with many a deep sigh.
'You should know,' she said, 'most gentle knight,
My cheeks are wet with tears, because I cry
For a youth who, prisoned in a keep near this,
Has been condemned, in the flames, to perish.

Loving a lovely, young, and noble lady, 39
The daughter of Marsilius of Spain,
Neath a white veil, in a woman's gown, he
A maiden's looks and manners did maintain,
All so that he might lie with her, nightly,
With none suspecting either of the twain.
But none can e'er work such so secretly
That their affair is not exposed, finally.

One became aware, and told another, 40
And they the rest, till to the king twas fed,
And then there came a faithful follower,
That ordered they be taken in their bed.
In the fortress then, the one and the other
To separate cells within the keep were led,
And now there is scarce time for anyone
To save the youth, before the day is done.

I fled, swiftly, so that I should not see 41
Their cruelty, for he must die by fire;
And naught could prove such bitter grief to me
As to behold him burnt upon that pyre;
Nor could I after that live happily,
But rather in pain and sorrow suspire,
Were I then to recall the vicious flame,
That, searingly, upon his body came.'

Canto XXII: 42-46: And decide to rescue the youth she speaks of

Bradamante heard her tale, and appeared 42
Greatly troubled at heart, by her story,
As anxious for the youth, for whom she feared,
As if her brother knew such cruelty;
Nor without cause were her own eyes teared,
For of him you shall hear later, from me,
She turned to Ruggiero then, and cried:
'Shall this youth our brave weapons be denied?'

Then to the weeping maid, Ruggiero said: 43
'Be of good comfort, and but place us two
Within the walls and, if he be not dead,
He shall not die, and that I promise you.'
For Ruggiero his lover's face had read,
And saw the kindness there, the pity too,
And felt, within, a flame, a fierce desire
To rescue this poor youth from out the fire.

Then, to the melancholy soul, he cried 44
Viewing her flowing tears: 'Why do we wait?
Here is there need for aid, not tears; but ride
To where this youth is; once beyond the gate,
We'll save him from lance and sword beside.
So, we promise, yet pray we be not late,
Show forth the way, ere we delay too long,
And he be burnt, and love be dealt a wrong.'

The noble speech, and the proud semblance, 45
Of this pair, who such brave ardour showed,
Brought fresh hope to her, whom circumstance
Had robbed of thoughts of aid, as on she rode,
Yet, fearing the distance less than mischance,
And that some obstacle the way bestrode,
Such that they might make their way in vain,
The maiden lingered; heart filled with pain.

And then she said: 'If the way ran but straight, 46
A highroad, clear and wide, to that same place,
Then there might well be time to reach the gate,
Before the youth those dreadful flames must face,
But we must take a path, such is our fate,
That needs a day or more, and God's good grace,
To bring us there, and so, when we come near,
We shall but find the youth is dead, I fear.'

Canto XXII: 47-51: She explains the dangers of their taking the highroad

'Why not the highroad?' asked Ruggiero. 47
'Because that way, a mighty castle lies;
The Count of Poitiers is all men's foe,'
She answered, 'and a law he did devise
Unjust and savage, but three days ago,
This Pinabel, who knights and ladies tries,
He the son (the worst man living ever),
Of Count Anselmo of Altaripa.

No noble knight nor lady may pass by 48
Without incurring harm and injury,
Both are despoiled of their horses thereby,
And his armour, and her robes, are his fee.
And no finer knights with him, there, ally,
No finer for many a year shall France see,
Than the warriors who have sworn, being four,
To maintain Count Pinabel's savage law.

How this custom (which is but three days old) 49
First began, I shall relate to you, sir knight,
This same law which they have sworn to uphold,
Of which you may judge if tis wrong or right.
Pinabel has a lady who, I'm told,
Is so vile and bestial none match her quite:
She, on a day, when the Count was beside her,
Encountered a bold knight, who scorned her.

The knight, because it had caused her laughter, 50
To view the crone carried on his crupper,
Had fought with Pinabel, of little power
But overweening pride, and gave him bother,
And made her dismount as well, then put her
To the proof, whether she was lame or other;
For he left her to walk, and took her dress
To adorn the crone, much to her distress.

Being stranded, on foot, and filled with spite, 51
And longing, for revenge, nay thirsting,
She joined with Pinabel, who, all in sight
That bodes ill, embraces, ever-willing,
Declaring she'd not rest, or day or night,
Nor ever be content again, till, sighing,
A thousand knights and ladies paid her tax,
Left to walk, sans dress or armour on their backs.

Canto XXII: 52-57: And tells of the four knights who guard the castle

As it happened, four knights arrived, that day, 52
At his fortress, mighty warriors indeed,
Who'd journeyed from afar, upon their way,
Four whom, to his realm, their travels did lead.
Of such valour our age ne'er saw in play
Such fine and warlike knights, all folk agreed:
Aquilante, Guidon Selvaggio,
And Grifone they, with Sansonetto.

Pinabel, full of seeming courtesy, 53
Received them at the place of which I've told,
But, that night, he had them seized suddenly,
In their beds, nor loosed those warriors bold
Till he had made them swear that they would be
His champions, for a thirteen-month, all told,
And of their armour and their steeds deprive,
Whatever brave knights-errant might arrive;

And any lady riding at their side, 54
Must go afoot, and be stripped of her dress.
Thus constrained, the four were forced to abide
By his terms, though with anger and distress;
And, against the four, it seems none can ride,
But are forced to walk, their ladies no less.
Many a knight has come, and gone, indeed,
Bereft of his fine armour, and his steed.

Their rule is that whichever of them first 55
Rides from the keep (as determined by lot)
He fights alone, but if he has the worst
Of the encounter, then, rightly or not,
The other three, all in conflict well versed,
Must seek to slay the foe upon the spot.
And imagine how powerfully they fight,
When each man alone is peerless in might.

Given the importance of our mission, 56
No distraction befits us, nor delay,
And so, we should avoid such diversion,
For grant that you be victors in the fray,
(Since your appearance yields that impression)
Tis a matter that might well take all day,
And were it that long ere we brought him aid,
He'd have perished in the flames, I'm afraid.'

'Pay no regard to that!' cried Ruggiero, 57
'But let us, rather, do whate'er we may.
Let Him who rules above, the rest bestow,
Or Fortune, if He wills that she holds sway;
Indeed, the outcome of this joust will show
If we can aid the youth, this very day,
Who for so slight and baseless a reason,
They will burn, for such is your impression.'

Canto XXII: 58-62: They approach the castle, and the first knight appears

Without another word, the maid led on 58
Towards the castle, by the shortest road,
And no more than three brief miles had they gone,
Before they reached that dangerous abode
Where many a brave knight had been undone,
And armour, dresses, even lives, were owed,
In fee; at sight of them the sentinel
Beat twice upon the castle's warning bell.

And behold, in great haste, from out the gate, 59
On a nag, came a fellow old and staid,
And he approached them, crying: 'Wait, now, wait!
Halt, sirs, for here a levy must be paid;
Should you know naught of our law passed of late,
Then I am here that it might be relayed.'
And then the three he straight began to tell
Of the custom brought about by Pinabel.

He proceeded to instruct them further, 60
As he'd instructed many a brave knight,
'Let the lady be unrobed,' said this elder,
'And forgo, sirs, your steeds and armour bright;
Twere unwise to put yourselves in danger,
Here, four warriors wait, eager for the fight.
Dresses, armour, mounts, you'll find elsewhere,
But loss of life no mortal can repair.'

'Enough! Enough!' bold Ruggiero cried, 61
'I am informed of this and hither rode
To prove that I am what my heart, inside,
Declares I am, and ill doth that now bode
To all who threaten; such shall be denied
Horses, armour, and robe, where none are owed.
And my comrade here, I, as surely, know,
For such words alone, little will bestow.

But, by Heaven, let me see before me, 62
Those who would obtain both horse and armour,
For we must pass beyond the hills, swiftly,
And have but little time, thus, to linger.'
'O'er the bridge, to perform the task,' cried he,
'Behold, he comes.' Nor was he in error.
For thence a knight came, crossing o'er the moat,
With white flowers upon a crimson surcoat.

Canto XXII: 63-69: Ruggiero downs Sansonetto

Bradamante begged her Ruggiero 63
To allow her, of his great courtesy,
To lay this fine and handsome warrior low,
Whose costume was so rich and flowery,
But could not move the knight an inch, and so,
Was forced to leave him to his chivalry,
For he wished to perform the task alone,
That Bradamante to his skill might own.

Ruggiero asked who the knight might be 64
That was the first to issue from the gate,
'Tis Sansonetto,' the maid said, 'tis he,
By the flowery crimson coat, he wears of late.'
Without a word they wheeled, separately,
But their onlookers had not long to wait,
For now, with lowered lances, on they came,
Spurring their chargers, set to kill or maim.

Meanwhile, from the fort, came Pinabel, 65
With many men on foot, all ready now
To seize the horse, with the armour as well,
From the knight, once he had made his bow.
The two brave knights, each aiming to impel
The other from his seat, should fate allow,
Gripped their strong lances, made of native oak,
Full two palms thick, preparing for the stroke.

More than ten of these, had Sansonetto 66
Ordered cut from a mighty, living tree,
In the woods nearby; these he did show
To his opponent, most courteously,
And then had one of them borne to his foe,
And took another for himself, equally,
While an adamantine breastplate and shield
Were needed to withstand such in the field.

With lances that might pierce an anvil through, 67
(So sharp, and strong, their tips appeared to be)
They came together, in mid-course, those two,
Though but found each other's shield, mutually.
Ruggiero's (that an imp had wrought when new,
Naked and sweating) released him wholly
From fear; Atlante ordered it, of old;
While of its powers I've previously told.

For I've explained, before, with what great force 68
Its enchanted light struck upon the eye.
All that saw it were blinded in their course,
And half-dead, or stunned, upon the earth did lie.
Unless the knight to it must make recourse,
He kept the shield concealed, but ever nigh;
And it was thought to be impenetrable,
Since it was unharmed in every battle.

Sansonetto's wrought by a lesser art, 69
Could not endure the force behind that blow;
As if struck by lightning, it flew apart,
The steel giving way, its core did show;
The steel gave way, the lance-tip, thus, did dart
Towards the ill-protected arm below,
So that Sansonetto was forced to yield,
And, despite himself, toppled to the field.

Canto XXII: 70-75: Bradamante recognises and pursues Pinabel

This was the first, then, of the band of four 70
That maintained the custom of the keep,
Who had failed to gain the spoils, as before,
But had left his saddle, in a sudden leap.
He who smiles must sometimes weep the more,
And may find that Fortune lies fast asleep.
The sentinel now beat the bell again,
To signal to the other knights his pain.

Meanwhile, Pinabel neared Bradamante, 71
Seeking to know who was this knight
That had unhorsed his champion so swiftly,
And with such skill and valour, in the fight.
God's justice, to ensure that he might be
Rewarded as was due, and as was right,
Had led him to appear on the courser
He'd seized from Bradamante earlier.

For it was exactly eight months before, 72
(If you recall) that, together on the way,
This Maganzese thrust her to the floor
Of a cleft before Merlin's tomb; that day,
She might have died, yet a bough did ensure
Her fall was broken, or good Fortune, say,
Though Pinabel had made off with her horse,
Thinking the cave her tomb, without remorse.

Bradamante knew the steed, instantly, 73
And, by the horse, the iniquitous count.
Hearing his voice, and seeing him clearly,
She gazed at him more closely, and his mount.
'Here is the traitor, without doubt,' said she,
'Brought here by his sin, to render account,
And receive all he deserves for his treason,
That offended me, and for no good reason.'

To threaten him with vengeance, and to set 74
Her hand upon her sword, and then advance,
Was a moment's work; nor did she forget
To bar the road, so he might not, perchance,
Flee, like a fox to earth, for she had met
That thought of his with her own lowered lance;
He shouted aloud, and fled, hopelessly,
As soon as that mighty weapon he did see.



Stanza 74

Pale and dismayed, the villain spurred away, 75
Whose last hope lay, indeed, in taking flight,
While Dordona's warrior-maid her sword did lay
To his flanks as he went, and pressed the knight,
Hounding him close, pursuing him alway.
Loud the sounds rose to the forest's height,
Though naught of this was known yet at the fort,
Where Ruggiero attracted every thought.

Canto XXII: 76-79: Pinabel's consort exhorts her champions to fight

The fort's remaining champions, meanwhile, 76
Had issued forth to maintain the battle,
Bringing with them the woman, full of bile,
That had devised the custom, base and evil.
The faces of those three knights, free of guile,
Who had rather died than serve the devil,
Burned with shame, while their hearts were full of woe,
At being forced to counter one man, so.

The cruel courtesan who had designed 77
The rite, which by the four was executed,
The content of their oath, once more, defined:
To avenge her in fight, they were recruited.
'If this lance, alone, your foes can unbind,
Cried Guido, 'why then is aught else mooted?
Why fight in company? And if I lie,
Off with my head, I am content to die!'

So said Aquilante, and Grifone, 78
For both knights preferred to fight one on one,
Or, instead, be taken, and die swiftly,
Than combine, and see scant justice done.
The woman cried: 'Why waste words, fruitlessly,
Since it brings no profit? For here is none.
I brought you here to win the man's armour
Not with some new law replace the other.

When I had you in prison, there was time 79
To offer your excuse, now tis too late;
You must apply the law to other's crime,
Not, with a false tongue, seek to alter fate.'
Ruggiero cried: 'Behold, now, my prime
Steed; its saddle and cloth are new of late;
And my fine armour, and the maiden's dress;
Why linger, if these things you would address?'

Canto XXII: 80-83: Ruggiero encounters Grifone

The mistress of the keep urged her troops on, 80
While Ruggiero summoned them to fight,
Till all three charged forward with abandon,
Though with shamed expressions, blushing bright.
Foremost were the one and the other son,
Of Burgundy's marquis, then came the knight,
Guidon, who rode a heavier charger
And reached them slowly, and a little later.

Ruggiero bore his lance, the very same 81
That had overthrown brave Sansonetto,
And the shield whose use Atlante did claim
On the Pyrenean height, whose magic glow,
Too much for human eyes, did almost maim
Folks' vision, for it struck them like a blow;
To this, Ruggiero, as a last resource,
When in the gravest danger, made recourse.

But three times only had he felt the need 82
(And ne'er but in great peril) for its light.
Twice, when from Alcina he did speed,
And to a calmer region made his flight;
The third when that vile orca that did feed
On human flesh had plunged down out of sight,
That would have sought to eat the naked maid;
She, so cruel to the knight that brought her aid.

But for those three occasions, well-concealed 83
He kept the shield, veiled in such a manner
That the thing could be readily revealed,
If he was ever in need of succour.
With it there, he might enter on the field,
Which he did now, and with as much ardour
As if the three knights he encountered then,
Were less to be feared than little children.

Canto XXII: 84–88: By chance, the magic shield is unveiled

Ruggiero's lance struck Grifone 84
Where the top of his shield met the visor,
Who swayed to either side, perilously,
Falling earthwards, at last, from his courser.
He too had aimed at Ruggiero's shield,
The glancing blow fell slantwise however.
The lance-tip sliding, as he was upended,
Wrought the opposite of that intended;

For it tore apart the concealing veil, 85
That hid its dangerous enchanted light,
The intense splendour serving, without fail,
To rob all those who gazed there of their sight.
Aquilante, close on his brother's tail,
Tore off the rest, so that it blazed outright.
The pair were, by its brightness, rendered blind,
With Guidon, who was riding close behind.

This way and that, they tumbled to the ground, 86
Nor did the light confound their sight alone,
For every sense that magic did astound.
Ruggiero, to whom all this was unknown,
As he wheeled his mount about, turning round,
Sword in hand, to reap the harvest he'd sown,
Found not one mounted foe for him to fight,
For on the earth lay, winded, every knight.

His opponents he viewed, and the footmen, 87
And the ladies who had come from the hall,
And the horses panting from their sudden
Tumble, as silence now embraced them all.
At first, he marvelled, and then the hidden
Shield, he realised, was stripped of its pall,
Which hung down on the left, and no longer
Served to guard against unwanted error.

He swiftly turned and, in turning, sought 88
For a sight of his beloved warrior-maid,
Then rode to where the joust was first fought
And where, he believed, she must have stayed.
Not finding her, she must have sped, he thought,
To bring the poor condemned youth her aid,
Fearing lest he'd been offered to the flames,
While they were all delayed in warlike games.



Stanza 86

Canto XXII: 89-94: Ruggiero drowns it in the well

He found the maiden who had led them there, 89
Slumbering among the rest; set her before
Him, on the steed, still asleep and unaware;
Then, greatly troubled, took his way once more.
He veiled the shield (the face, as yet, was bare)
With her cloak, its powerlessness to ensure,
And, once the enchanted thing was hidden,
Her senses she recovered, unbidden.

Away he rode, his cheeks suffused with shame, 90
Nor did he dare his crimsoned face to raise,
Since all, it seemed to him, were like to blame
A victory, in truth, worth little praise.
'What shall I do? he thought, 'to clear my name
Of shameful error, and its stain erase,
Twill be said my conquests, past and present,
Were simply due to powers of enchantment.'

While he rode on, debating in his mind, 91
Ruggiero came upon what he sought,
For beside the track there lay, as if designed
To assist him, a deep well, soundly wrought.
There the cattle, in the summer heat, could find
A trough from which to drink. 'Tis how,' he thought,
'I may shun further shame, and so ensure,
That you, enchanted shield, work harm no more;

Once you are gone, the last time shall this be: 92
That I earn shame, through the powers you command.'
Thinking so, he dismounted, eagerly,
And took a large, and heavy, stone in hand,
Which he fastened to the shield, full tightly,
And threw both into the well, as he'd planned,
Crying: 'Be drowned now, this your sepulchre;
You, and my shame, lie hid, forever, there!'

The well was full to the brim with water; 93
Full heavy was the stone, as was the shield.
They sank into the depths, bound together,
Both by the liquid element concealed.
Yet the fact of his deed spread by Rumour,
That, wandering wide, his noble act revealed,
And trumpeted it, everywhere, he found,
In France and Spain, and all the lands around.

Once that strange tale, by word of mouth, had passed 94
Through all the world, then many a bold knight
Undertook the quest for that which he had cast
Into the depths, all hoping to alight
Upon the forest, and the well, at last,
As yet unknown, that hid the shield from sight;
For the maid that told the tale was unclear
Where the well lay, nor if twas far or near.

Canto XXII: 95-98: Bradamante slays Pinabel but cannot find Ruggiero

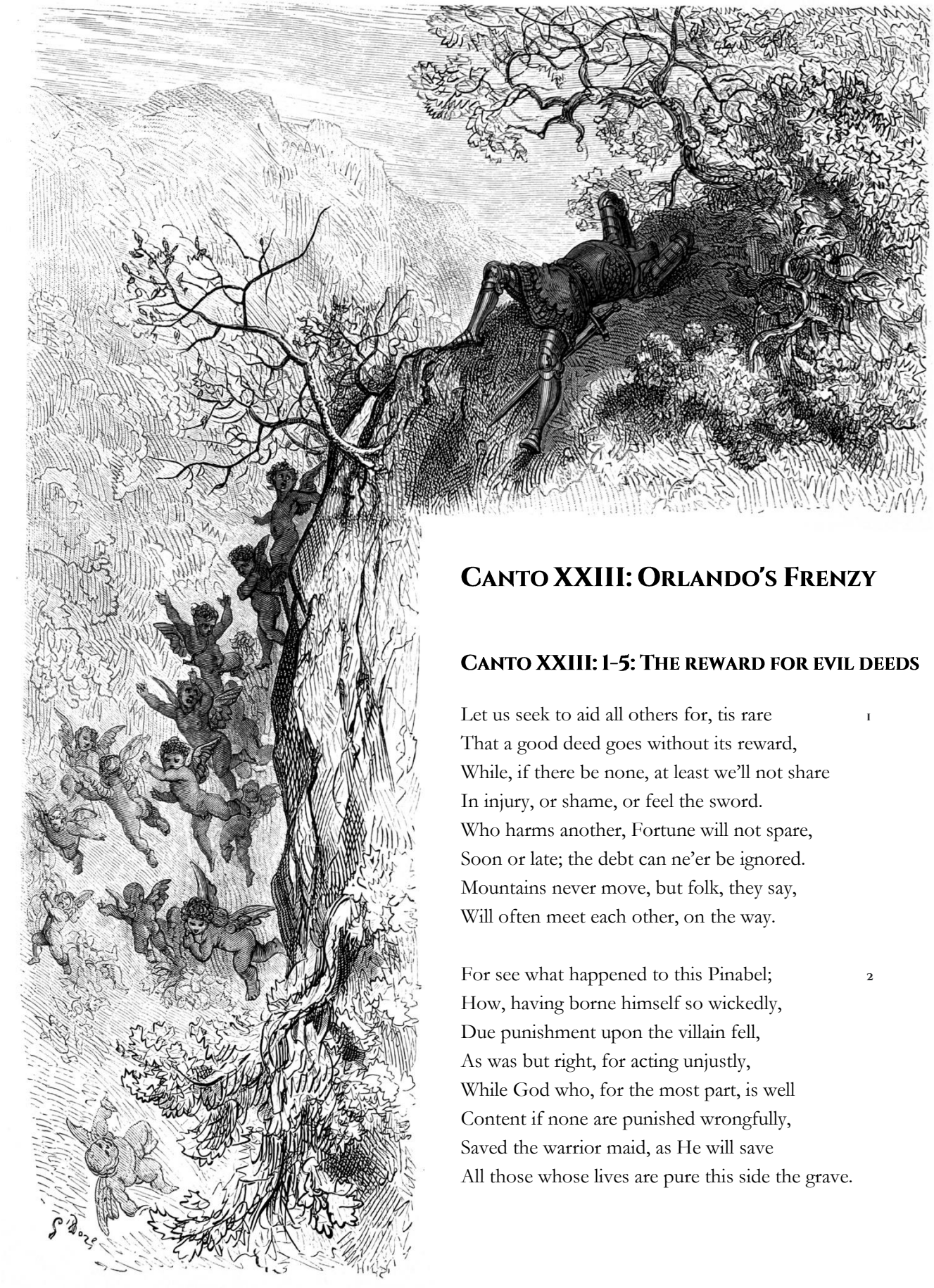
Once Ruggiero departed from the field, 95
Where he'd conquered. and with little trouble,
Where, like to men of straw, the four did yield
Who'd championed Pinabel and the castle,
Withdrawing the shield, he stole the light
That did all folk confound and bedazzle,
And the many who had lain there, half-dead,
Rose to their feet, in wonderment, instead.

Nothing else did they speak of all that day, 96
Among themselves, but of the strange event,
And how each of them had, in deep dismay,
Been conquered by the light, ere it was spent,
Or rather removed, till news came there way
Of Pinabel, whom, they'd found, was absent.
Count Pinabel was dead, they were advised,
But by whom, as yet, no one had surmised.

Twas the ardent Bradamante, meanwhile, 97
Who had pressed Pinabel hard, in flight,
Then half her blade had buried in that vile
Wretch, in every place, with all her might.
Once she'd removed that man of evil guile,
That upon the lands around had laid his blight,
She, from the place that witnessed it, did go,
With the steed he had stolen long ago.

She wished, then, to return to Ruggiero, 98
But could no longer find the way she'd come,
And thus, o'er hill and dale, she wandered slow,
Searching half the forest that she'd issued from;
But her ill-fortune now pursued her so,
She failed to find the way to him, in sum.
Another canto must speak of the knight,
O you, that in my story take delight.





Canto XXIII: Orlando's Frenzy

Canto XXIII: 1-5: The reward for evil deeds

Let us seek to aid all others for, tis rare 1
That a good deed goes without its reward,
While, if there be none, at least we'll not share
In injury, or shame, or feel the sword.
Who harms another, Fortune will not spare,
Soon or late; the debt can ne'er be ignored.
Mountains never move, but folk, they say,
Will often meet each other, on the way.

For see what happened to this Pinabel; 2
How, having borne himself so wickedly,
Due punishment upon the villain fell,
As was but right, for acting unjustly,
While God who, for the most part, is well
Content if none are punished wrongfully,
Saved the warrior maid, as He will save
All those whose lives are pure this side the grave.

Pinabel believed foul death he'd brought 3
Upon the maid; that she was buried deep.
No fear of her haunted his every thought;
Nor dreaded he her vengeance in his sleep.
And yet it served the wicked fellow naught
That his father held many a fort and keep,
Where Altaripa midst the mountains lay,
Near to his own broad realm of Poitiers.

For old Anselmo held Altaripa; 4
From him was sprung this fount of wickedness,
That to flee Chiaramonte's hand forever
Needed more than mere aid, in his distress.
At the foot of a hill, she slew the traitor,
With the greatest of ease, who, nonetheless,
Cried for aid, though twas but, in misery,
To weep, and beg Bradamante's mercy.

Once she had slain the treacherous knight, 5
He that had sought to murder her before,
She wished to find Ruggiero, while twas light,
Yet her harsh fate had other things in store,
Sending her, by narrow paths, to left and right,
Amidst the deepest woods, and ways unsure,
Where all was strange to her, until the sun
Had left the world to night, and day was done.

Canto XXIII: 6-8: Bradamante reproaches herself

Not knowing where she might find safe shelter, 6
She resolved to rest where she was, that night,
On the fresh grass, the branches above her,
Now sleeping gently, till it should be light,
Now watching Saturn shine, now Jupiter,
Venus, or Mars, heavenly wanderers bright;
Though always, waking or in sleep, her mind
Dwelt on Ruggiero, whom she'd left behind.

From the depths of her heart, she often sighed, 7
(Sighs of sorrow and regret compounded)
That love had bowed to anger and to pride.
'Anger,' she cried 'has my love confounded,
If only I'd looked about while I did ride
With vengeful intent, though twas well-founded,
So that I might return now, whence I came;
For sight and memory find naught the same.'

These, and other words, oft broke the silence, 8
And many more she mused on in her mind;
Meanwhile her gusts of sighs and penitence,
Her rain of tears, rendered her deaf and blind.
At last, the new dawn announced its presence,
Bright sunlight, in the east, the world defined;
She found her steed, now grazing by the way,
Mounted, and so rode forth, to greet the day.

Canto XXIII: 9-11: She meets Astolfo with the hippogriff

She had not ridden far, when, midst the wood, 9
She came to where they'd met with such delay,
For there the enchanted mansion had stood,
And there the wizard held them many a day.
She found Astolfo who, as best he could,
Had equipped the hippogriff for his foray,
Yet was lost in thoughts of Rabicano,
And on whom he might that fine steed bestow.

By chance, she found him as the warrior 10
Removed his helm, his face was thus in view,
So that, clear of the forest, riding nearer,
She saw that it was her cousin, and flew,
Hailing him, from afar, as a brother,
And once there, clasped him to her anew,
Said her name, and raised her visor, swiftly,
So, he could clearly see that it was she.

Astolfo could not have found a better 11
Person with whom to leave Rabicano,
Than the Duke of Dordona's brave daughter,
Knowing she would care for him, and also
She'd yield the steed when he returned later,
And felt that God, in truth, had sent her, so
To do, ever pleased to see her, indeed,
Yet even more so in his hour of need.

Canto XXIII: 12-16: Astolfo departs leaving his armour and lance behind

Three times at least, the cousins now embraced, 12
With familial affection, and sought,
Each, to know how the other one was placed,
And then Astolfo of his wishes gave report:
'I would see the land where chargers are graced
With wings, yet I linger here.' His thought
He exposed to the warrior maid, and showed
Her the flying horse, which Ruggiero rode;

Though it was scarcely a marvel to her, 13
To see the wondrous beast its wings unfold;
For, long ago, the wizard had assailed her,
When he had flown about his mountain hold,
While she had strained her eyes; far above her,
She had gazed his soaring flight to behold,
That day when, on a journey long and strange,
Ruggiero had been borne beyond her range.

Astolfo wished upon her to bestow, 14
His Rabicano, so swift of its kind,
That, departing with the dart from a bow,
Twould ever leave that arrow far behind;
And his armour he also would forego,
Which to Montalban should be consigned,
And kept there, till he returned once more,
Since he would need it not, he felt most sure.

For, wishing to ascend the air in flight, 15
He desired to lighten the load further,
Yet he kept his sword and horn, did the knight,
Though the horn, alone, repelled all danger.
His lance he abandoned, once of right
Borne by Galafrone's son, Argalia,
That whoever it touched, in its swift course,
Would topple, in an instant, from their horse.

Astolfo leapt upon the steed, and promptly 16
Set it moving, though slowly, through the air,
Then spurred it on, such that Bradamante
No longer in their movements could share.
So, the pilot guides a ship, cautiously,
Through the reefs, fearing danger everywhere,
And then, once the shore is left in its wake
Its captain, with full sails, his course will take.

Canto XXIII: 17-21: Bradamante seeks Vallombrosa but reaches Montalbano

The warrior-maid, now the duke had flown, 17
Was most troubled in her mind, as to how
She might lead Rabicano, on her own,
To Montalbano, with all he did endow.
For the ardent desire of flesh and bone
Was to seek Ruggiero, you'll allow,
Whom she hoped to find at Vallombrosa,
If she met him not ere she rode closer.

But, while standing there musing, she espied 18
A peasant lad, who o'er the plain did go,
Who, at her request, the duke's armour tied,
As best he could, on brave Rabicano;
And gave him charge of the other beside.
Two he led, one burdened, and did follow,
For Bradamante owned the horse as well,
That she had now retrieved from Pinabel.

She thought to proceed to Vallombrosa, 19
Hoping that Ruggiero might be there.
But knew not which was shorter or better,
Of the many roads o'er which she might fare,
While the lad's knowledge ran little deeper,
And thus, they might well wander everywhere.
So, she decided, at a venture, to stray
Down a path that, perchance, led where it lay.

She looked to left and right, as on they went, 20
Yet found none there of whom to ask the way,
But on leaving a wood, a keep did present
Itself to weary eyes, about mid-day,
Upon a mount, above the road they went,
It seemed like Montalbano, and held sway
O'er all the land around; twas no other;
And there dwelt her mother, and a brother.

When the warrior-maid saw the place, 21
She was sadder at heart than I can say;
She would be known, if any saw her face,
Which would, rightly, cause a long delay,
And yet, were she not to depart, apace,
To the ardent fire, within her, she'd fall prey.
Nor would her Ruggiero be closer,
Nor aught she'd reserved for Vallombrosa.

Canto XXIII: 22-27: Which she must visit, but sends a messenger to Vallombrosa

She pondered a while, and then decided 22
She would turn her back on Montalbano,
And head towards the abbey, for she prided
Herself on knowing, now, the way to go;
But Fortune, for good or ill, now guided
One of her brothers there, named Alardo,
Ere she could issue forth from out the dale,
Nor had she time to hide; fate would prevail.

He came from billeting the men that lay 23
About that place, foot and horsemen too;
King Charlemagne's decree he must obey,
To whom a further levy, now, was due.
He embraced her in a most kindly way,
And so, they went forward, two by two,
And thus, talking together, side by side,
Up to Montalbano, that pair did ride.

The warrior-maid entered Montalbano, 24
She, whom her mother Beatrice with tears
Had longed for, seeking news of her also
Through every part of France, it appears.
Now all was kisses, hand in hand, although
She could not but compare (though fondness cheers)
Their welcome with her lover's sweet embrace,
That time could never from her mind efface.

She thought to send, because she could not go, 25
A messenger, instead, to Vallombrosa,
Instructed to let Ruggiero know
Why she herself could not be there sooner,
Praying him (if prayer were needed, also)
To be baptised, at once, if he loved her,
And then come, and effect what was required
To bring about the marriage both desired.

By the same messenger, she intended 26
To return his good steed to Ruggiero,
Which he held ever dear, and extended
His fond care to one so worthy, for no
Courser could be found quite so splendid.
Nor the Saracens, nor France could show
A finer, braver steed (as all did know)
Other than Bayard, and Brigliadoro.

When, with great audacity, Ruggiero 27
Had soared aboard the hippogriff, on high,
He'd left the steed, that was named Frontino,
To Bradamante's care, who, by and by,
Sent him, to be kept, at Montalbano,
At great cost; he was well-treated thereby,
Richly fed, yet rendered sleek, by the grace
Of brief excursions, at a modest pace.

Canto XXIII: 28-32: The messenger is her maid, Ippalca

She soon set her ladies, and every maid, 28
To labour with her on embroidering
A piece of silk in white and black, o'erlaid
With finest gold, and, with this, covering
The bridle and the saddle, she then bade
One of the women come to her, choosing
The kind daughter of Callitrefia,
(Her nurse) who shared her secrets ever.

A thousand times she had told the maid 29
How Ruggiero had conquered her heart;
To his virtue, beauty, manners, had paid
Great tribute, holding him a man apart.
'None better than yourself,' she said, 'to aid
My true love and myself, with all your art,
None, my Ippalca, so faithful, so wise,
As an ambassadress, beneath the skies.'

Ippalca then was this fair maiden's name. 30
'Go!' said Bradamante, pointing the way,
Having told her all about that same,
And what, to Ruggiero, she should say,
Of her tardiness, and what was to blame:
That bad faith was not a cause of delay,
But to Fortune he should impute that ill,
That, more than ourselves, rules us still.

She had helped her mount a palfrey, then set 31
Frontino's reins in her hand, and told her
That if any man so rude or mad, she met,
As to seek of that steed to deprive her,
She was to tell him, and must not forget,
Who it was that owned the mighty charger,
For she thought there was none, here below,
That feared not that name of 'Ruggiero'.

Of many and many a thing she'd told her, 32
To be relayed to Ruggiero in her stead.
Ippalca having gathered all this to her,
Now set upon her way, and onwards sped,
By road, and field, and forest, however
Gloomy, more than ten miles his steed she led,
Yet none crossed her path that sought her harm,
Nor asked here where she went, nor gave alarm.

Canto XXIII: 33-38: Ippalca encounters Rodomonte

About mid-day, on descending a hill, 33
In a narrow and unpleasant defile,
She encountered Rodomonte, armed to kill,
And guided by a little dwarf the while.
The bold Moor, expressing his proud will,
Gazed at her and blasphemed, in evil style,
Cursed the heavens above, that this fine steed
She led yet lacked a knight, to meet his need.

For he had sworn to seize the first good horse 34
That he chanced to encounter on the way,
And this was the first, and none perforce
Seemed finer, or more suited to affray.
Yet to take it from a maid, seemed a course
To be frowned upon, and so he chose delay,
Gazed covetously at him, and then said:
'Where is his master now; alive or dead?'

'Ah, would that he was here,' the maid replied, 35
'For he, perchance, would force to you think twice.
That steed a better knight than you doth ride,
Unequalled in this world, to be precise.'
'Who claims that honour, then?' the pagan cried,
'Ruggiero!' she answered, in a trice.
'Then I will have him for my own,' he said,
'Since for so great a champion he was bred.

And if this knight is as great as you say, 36
So fine, and worth more than any other,
Then not for the horse but its hire I'll pay,
And render it at his master's pleasure.
Relate the tale, say I am Rodomonte,
And if he'd like to joust with me a measure,
He shall find me, where'er I go or stay,
A man who e'er shines forth, in his own way;

For, where'er I go, I leave behind me, 37
Like lightning, the traces of my passage.'
With this, he threw the gilded reins swiftly
O'er Frontino's head, and then, stage by stage,
Backed up the steed, and so left her sadly
Bemoaning its loss, and this cruel outrage.
Ippalca cried shame, threatening the Moor,
But he hearkened not, and rode on as before,
The dwarf ever guiding him in his pursuit 38
Of Doralice and bold Mandricardo,
While Ippalca, at a distance, followed suit,
Cursing and taunting him, as they did go.
What came of this, my later verse shall bruit.
Bishop Turpin wrought this tale long ago;
Here he digresses too, and turns again,
To that same place where Pinabel was slain.

Canto XXIII: 39-43: Zerbino and the crone come upon the dead Pinabel

Bradamante had scarcely turned her back 39
On his corpse, and departed on her way,
Ere Zerbino came there, by another track,
With that deceitful crone he must obey,
And saw the body there, that life did lack,
Though who the knight might be, he could not say.
Yet as the prince was kind and courteous,
He felt saddened by a sight so piteous.

Now, Pinabel lay dead upon the ground, 40
From whom so many streams of blood did flow
It seemed as though a hundred swords had found
His poor flesh, and combined to lay him low.
From all the hoofprints that did there abound,
He sought to understand, the good Zerbino,
If, perchance, those traces he might read,
And find who had wrought the murderous deed.

And so, he told Gabrina to wait there, 41
And he'd return to her without delay,
But she towards the corpse did swiftly fare,
And gazed all about her, every way,
Since whatever caused her eyes delight,
She wished to prosper from, by night or day,
As one who was more filled with avarice,
Than any other woman ever was, or is.

If she'd thought she could carry off the theft, 42
She countenanced, in any secret manner,
The victim's costly surcoat, that was left
Upon him, she would have seized, together
With his armour, yet only that she reft
From him, that she could conceal thereafter,
Dropping the rest, full sadly, but a belt
She took, and hid about her, as she knelt.

In a little while, Zerbino returned, 43
Who'd followed Bradamante's tracks in vain,
For he found her trail twisted so and turned
It led deep within the trees, to his pain,
And by the fast-fading light now concerned,
And desiring to retreat towards the plain,
To find lodging, with the evil crone in tow,
From that fatal valley, forth he did go.

Canto XXIII: 44-50: Zerbino is wrongfully accused of his death

Two miles away, a castle they did spy, 44
Twas the great fortress of Altaripa.
They halted for the night; since, o'er the sky,
The darkness gathered, swifter and swifter;
Yet were not long in the city, ere a cry,
A lament, arose, mournful and bitter,
While from every eye the tears did fall,
As if some tragedy had touched them all.

Zerbino asked to know what had occurred, 45
And was told news had come to Anselmo,
That in a narrow pass, so they had heard,
Pinabel his son lay dead, hence their woe.
Zerbino lowered his gaze, said not a word,
And feigned an unknowing face to show,
Though doubtless aware that this must be
The corpse he'd come across on his journey.

After some time, the funeral bier was seen, 46
Amidst bright fiery torches, and the cries
Were louder, while, about that mournful scene,
The crowd's lament rose to the starry skies.
And faster flowed the tears, as they did keen,
The bitter streams descending from their eyes,
But far cloudier and darker was the face
Of his most wretched father, in that place.

While most solemn preparations were made, 47
For the funeral pomp, and the obsequies,
According to such honours as were paid
In days of old (corrupted now, in these),
Their master's proclamation was relayed,
That all but made the louder mourning cease,
And pledged a rich reward to anyone
That could discover who had slain his son.

From voice after voice, to ear after ear, 48
News of the proclamation spread further,
Until that wicked woman chanced to hear,
She more savage than a bear or tiger;
Twas news that would cost Zerbino dear.
Either from hatred, or that she was ever
Human in form yet lacked humanity,
To ruin the prince, she schemed, secretly;

Or perchance she but wished for the reward. 49
Granting an air of truth to her false tale,
She told a falsehood to the grieving lord:
That the prince had slain his son, in the dale,
While the belt as evidence she did afford,
Which the father recognised without fail.
And from this, with the crone's testimony,
Assumed the prince was the guilty party.

Lamenting, he raised his hands to the sky, 50
Demanding vengeance on the murderer,
While men surrounded the lodgings, nearby,
Where the prince lay, in their sudden fervour.
Zerbino, thinking that no foe was by,
And expecting no harm whatsoever,
Was soon seized by Anselmo's soldiery,
Accused of having wrought the injury.

Canto XXIII: 51-55: Orlando and Isabella arrive on the scene

That night, Zerbino lay in a dark cell, 51
Chained in heavy fetters, till the morn.
His execution, but delayed a spell,
Had been ordained for the first light of dawn:
That he be quartered in that very dell
Where the wicked crime itself had been born.
No other evidence did any show,
Twas enough that the Count believed it so.

When, with the dawn light, came fair Aurora, 52
Turning the heavens yellow, white, and red,
A crowd, seeking vengeance for the murder,
Crying: 'Death! Death!' o'er the innocent's head,
Came to lead him, in angry throng, together,
Some mounted, some on foot running ahead,
To the place, as the prince, with eyes downcast,
On a sorry nag, to his death now passed.

But God, who often aids the innocent, 53
Nor deserts those who trust in his goodness,
Granted him help in thwarting their intent;
He would not die that day, whom God did bless;
For there Orlando came, as on they went,
That Zerbino might be saved nonetheless.
For Orlando saw the crowd upon the plain,
The young prince, riding deathwards, in their train.

With Orlando, rode that royal daughter 54
Whom he had found in the savage cave,
Galicia's fair child, Isabella,
Whom from the band of thieves he'd chanced to save.
Into their hands she'd fallen, earlier,
When her vessel had sunk beneath the wave.
She, held Zerbino dearer to her heart
Than her own soul, though they were long apart.

She'd travelled in Orlando's company 55
Since being rescued from that stony cell;
Now she sought to know who this crowd might be
Proceeding noisily towards the dell.
Orlando left the maid, and rode there swiftly,
For who and what they were he could not tell,
But gazing on Zerbino, at first sight,
Knew him to be a true and noble knight.

Canto XXIII: 56-61: Orlando proceeds to rescue Zerbino

Drawing closer, he demanded to know 56
Where they were taking the captive, and why.
At this, raising high his head, Zerbino,
Comprehending the question, gave reply,
Spoke the truth, and thereby showed Orlando
That, in no way, did he deserve to die.
Orlando, finding he was innocent,
Now aimed to foil this crowd of their intent.

And when he understood that all was done 57
On the orders of the Count of Altaripa,
He was sure the prince had not slain the son,
Since naught but ill was born of them ever.
Moreover, his line were foes to one
In whose veins ran the blood of Maganza,
By reason of the ancient enmity
Twixt his house and that of Chiaramonte.

'Untie the knight, if you would not be slain!' 58
Cried Orlando to Altaripa's crew,
'And who is this, that would that same ordain?'
Answered one, who seemed bravest and most true.
'Were he of fire, that tone might appertain,
And we of wax and straw, of pallid hue!'
And, with that, charged the champion of France,
Who'd responded, by lowering his lance.

The bold Maganzese's shining armour, 59
Which he'd taken, at night, from Zerbino,
Now proved no defence whatsoever,
In his fierce encounter with Orlando,
Whose blow struck his cheek and, though no deeper
Did it penetrate the helm, even so,
His neck was broken and, without a sound,
Robbed of life, he fell sideways to the ground.

Without pausing, without raising his lance, 60
Orlando pierced another horseman through,
Then, Durindana in his hand, did advance
And attacked the rest of the motley crew.
One's head he lopped, in his deadly dance,
Another's skull he neatly cleft in two,
Pierced full many a throat and, in a breath,
A hundred he'd shattered, or put to death.



Stanza 60



Stanza 61 "*Two thirds or more he slew, dispersed the rest*"

Two thirds or more he slew, dispersed the rest, 61
And struck, and pierced, and cleft as he rode on,
Here a helm, there a shield he dispossessed
Its owner of, pikes and billhooks too were gone.
One along, one o'er the road, lay at rest,
While some hid in woods or caves, here and yon,
Orlando, on that day, showed no pity,
Twas in his power to deny them mercy.

Canto XXIII: 62-66: Who thinks Isabella is in love with Orlando

Of a hundred and twenty (so maintained 62
Bishop Turpin) at least eighty men died.
Orlando, from the field, at last, regained
The spot where the fearful prince did abide.
I could scarce express the joy he attained,
When Orlando rode swiftly to his side.
He would have knelt, in thanks, on the ground,
If, there, upon the nag, he'd not been bound.

While Orlando, once he had freed the knight, 63
Had him don his shining armour, as before,
Stripped from the captain who in the fight
Had worn it, to his own harm, now no more.
The prince on Isabella turned his sight,
Who once she saw that the battle was o'er,
Having halted on the hill, roused her steed,
And, to the field below, brought beauty indeed.

When the lady, so dear to Zerbino, 64
Appeared close by, on that very ground,
She for whom he had felt such sorrow,
She, that a lying tongue had claimed was drowned,
He felt his heart had turned to ice, although,
After feeling chilled within, he soon found
The coldness ebbed, and all his flesh entire
Seemed engulfed in flames of amorous fire.

Respect for Orlando made him refrain 65
From embracing her as he might have done,
Reflecting, though indeed it gave him pain,
That the Count, most surely, her love had won,
So, from pain to pain he passed, and little gain
Had he from all his previous joy, or none;
To view her as another's, seemed instead
Far worse to him than hearing she was dead.

He grieved the more in that she rode beside 66
A knight from whom his life he'd received.
To reclaim her, it could not be denied,
Was neither honest, nor easily achieved.
He'd have much preferred to have fought and died,
Than relinquish the maiden, he believed,
But so profound, in this case, was his debt,
He must bow to the Count, and lose her yet.

Canto XXIII: 67-69: But soon finds that all is otherwise

Riding, silently, they soon came to a spring, 67
Where they dismounted, and rested awhile.
Here the Count undid his helmet, assisting
The prince to so yield, after his sore trial.
When the lady saw his face, free of the thing,
She grew pale with sudden joy, in such style
As does a flower, that drenched with rain, grows bright,
When the sun re-appears, and sheds fresh light.

Without a thought, in a moment, she ran 68
To her love, and clasped him in her embrace,
And not one word could she speak to the man,
But with happy tears bathed his neck and face.
Count Orlando whose eyes the pair did scan,
Required naught else the path of love to trace,
And words, indeed, were needless to show
That this youth must be her own Zerbino.

When Isabella her speech could recover, 69
Although her tear-drenched cheeks were not yet dry,
She spoke only of the courtesy that ever
Had been shown her by the Count; by and by,
Zerbino, who held the maiden dearer
To him than was his life, much moved thereby,
Fell at Orlando's feet, and praised this lord
That, in an hour, had two young lives restored.

Canto XXIII: 70-74: Mandricardo appears, in pursuit of Orlando

Many a word of thanks, and many an offer, 70
Would have followed between the knightly pair,
Had they not heard, beneath the leafy cover,
The darkened ground echo swift passage there.
Their helms they ran, quickly, to recover,
Late removed, and to their steeds did repair,
When they saw a knight and maiden appear,
Almost ere they'd mounted, and draw near.

It was the Tartar king, Mandricardo, 71
Who had followed behind the Count, in haste,
To avenge Alzirdo, and Manilardo,
Whom Orlando had previously faced.
Though his pace after that was somewhat slow,
Since Doralice now his presence graced,
Whom he'd seized from a hundred men in armour,
With but an oak staff, she now his lover;

Though the warrior knew not he did pursue 72
The Lord of Anglante, Count Orlando,
Yet by certain indications he knew
It was a powerful knight he followed so.
He examined, from head to foot, the two,
Though the Count more closely than Zerbino,
And, finding the signs he'd noted, and more,
Cried: 'Here is one whom I was searching for!

For ten days now I have followed you,' 73
He added, 'and have never left the trail,
To such a degree did those tales of you
Rouse me, that in our camp did then prevail,
When, of a thousand men, barely a few,
Returned to tell us how you did assail
The ranks of Tremisenne and Norizia,
And put their warriors to the slaughter.

Once I had heard of you, I was not slow 74
To follow, that I might behold your face,
And prowess, while by your surcoat I know
You are the knight whom I desired to trace,
Yet if some other garb you were to show,
And midst a hundred did yourself efface,
That proud gaze of yours would yet have told me,
You are the one I sought most urgently.'

Canto XXIII: 75-79: He has sworn an oath to win Orlando's sword

'No man dare say,' replied Count Orlando, 75
'That you are not a knight of high honour.
For such a bold desire, it must follow,
Could not arise in a heart sans valour.
Since you, it seems, have come to view me so,
Then behold the inner, not just the outer,
I shall remove the helmet from my brow,
Thus, the object of your quest you may avow.

Yet once your eyes have dwelt upon my face 76
Attend then to that other wish of yours,
The desire I shall address, in this place,
Which also set you on this warlike course:
To prove if, now, that valour I embrace
That in my noble semblance you endorse.'
'Then,' cried the pagan king, 'let us fight,
For, so, my second wish you shall requite!'

While he spoke thus, the Count's enquiring eye 77
Was searching the bold knight, from head to toe,
Examined too his steed, yet failed to spy
Any sign of sword or mace; he sought to know
How the warrior would his valour try
If his good lance was broken at a blow,
'Be not concerned,' replied the pagan knight,
'Many a man yet feared me in the fight;

I have sworn to wear no blade at my side, 78
Till Orlando's Durindana is my own,
And after him I everywhere did ride,
And upon more than one steed have I shown.
I swore it (and by that oath I abide)
When I donned this helm, that Hector alone
Bore on his brow, a thousand years ago,
And my other armour he then wore also.

All that I lack now is Orlando's sword. 79
When the thing was stolen, I cannot say,
But now, it seems, tis borne by that great lord,
And hence he has such courage in affray.
Yet if I can but meet him, I'm assured
Of his rendering what he stole that day;
And I seek true vengeance, moreover,
For the death of Agricane, my father.

Canto XXIII: 80-88: The two knights contend and Orlando falls from his steed

Count Orlando slew him by treachery, 80
For he could not have done so otherwise.'
The Count could not but speak: 'Tis false!' cried he
'And whoever said so is but full of lies.
For him, you have sought for you now see.
I am Orlando, that all falsehood defies;
I slew him fairly, and here is the sword
Which you shall have, if such you can afford.

Although the sword is mine, and mine by right, 81
We'll contend for it, in knightly manner,
Nor shall either man own it, while we fight;
I shall hang it in this tree; if you conquer
You shall have it, freely, obtained by might;
That is, if I am slain, or I surrender.'
And, with this, Durindana he revealed.
And hung it on a sapling in the field.

Half a bow-shot's distance from each other, 82
The two warriors placed themselves apart;
And then the two met swiftly together,
With a fine display of the horseman's art,
Striking fiercely against one another,
That matched blows to their visors did impart.
Like shafts of ice the lances broke in two,
As a thousand splinters to the heavens flew.

Though both the knight's lances were shattered, 83
Neither to that stroke of fortune would bend,
Both men charged again, if somewhat battered,
And with the stumps of their lances did contend.
These warriors who their steel weapons flattered,
Like two farmers sought to uphold their end,
That o'er a boundary or stream, proudly, fight,
Armed with clubs, each man arguing his right.

No more than four blows could their weapons 84
bear,
Then broke apart with the fury of that battle,
With growing rage, they staggered here and there,
With only their fists to display their mettle.
They grasped the armour, at chain-mail did tear,
Twisting steel in their hands, as they did grapple.
None could desire, smiting in that manner,
Better tongs, or a weightier hammer.

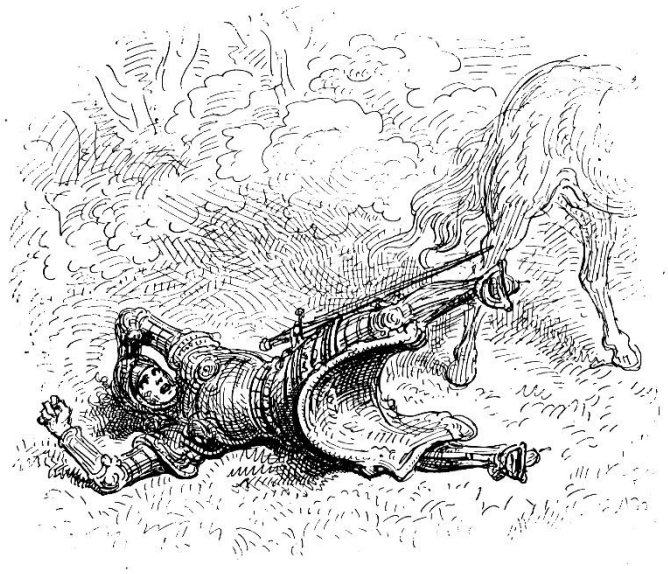
How might the Tartar king devise a way 85
To conclude the fight his honour had sought?
Twere madness to continue that fierce fray,
Where each but harm to himself now wrought.
They drew each other close, as they did sway;
Full tight the pagan, thus, Orlando caught,
Against his chest, as Heracles once clasped
Antaeus to him, while his arms he grasped.



Stanza 85

Mandricardo exerted all his power, 86
Pushed him away, then seized him more tightly,
But Orlando sat firm, like some strong tower,
Neither to right nor left moved easily,
The Count waited his moment, face full dour,
And then stretched forward his hand slily,
Sensing victory, caught the other's bridle,
Above, then dragged it down, and let it fall.

The Tartar king meanwhile had vainly sought 87
To drag him from his mount, but Orlando
Grasped his steed, with his knees, as they fought;
Naught for his efforts could the pagan show.
Yet the force he exerted broke the taut
Girth that held the saddle firm below;
The Count tumbled sideways, not knowing why,
His feet in the stirrups, pointing at the sky.



Stanza 87

With the sound made by a sack of armour, 88
As it falls to earth, so Orlando fell,
While the king's steed (its bridle lost) in terror,
Sped away, by dark grove, and woodland dell,
On a ruinous course, hither and thither,
As if maddened by some demon's spell,
Blind with fear, stumbling as it did go,
Still bearing on its back Mandricardo.

Canto XXIII: 89-91: Mandricardo is carried off by his steed

Doralice who saw her companion 89
Borne from the field and her vicinity,
Unwilling to remain now he was gone,
After his swift charger sent her palfrey.
The proud king cursed his steed, that yet flew on,
And struck at him with hands and feet, vainly,
Threatening the horse as if twere human,
Yet the more he did, the faster it ran.

The creature, of a somewhat fearful kind, 90
Not looking to its course, careered about.
Three miles it had gone, still running blind,
When a ditch arrested that sudden rout,
Into which, upside-down, both were consigned,
And naught to break their fall; with a shout,
Mandricardo to the hard earth was thrown,
Yet was neither slain, nor broke a bone.



Stanza 90

Thus, their travels came swiftly to an end; 91
While, on its feet now, the horse lacked a rein,
Which the king, in a rage, sought to amend,
By grasping the poor creature by the mane.
Doralice now called out to her friend:
'Take the bridle from my palfrey, if you deign,
For the horse is gentle, without a doubt,
Whether ridden with a bridle or without.'

Canto XXIII: 92-95: He meets Gabrina and takes her bridle

The Tartar thought it a discourtesy 92
To accept Doralice's kind offer,
But won another bridle, most strangely,
Fortune operating in his favour;
Since the wicked Gabrina he did see,
Who'd betrayed Zerbino; for the traitor
Like a she-wolf had fled, o'er hill and dale,
That hears the hounds and hunters on her trail.

The old crone was still wearing that same dress, 93
And the same youthful adornments, as well,
That Zerbino had seized, as fair redress,
From that ill-mannered maid with Pinabel,
And on the maiden's horse she did progress,
One of the choicest, and sound as a bell.
Upon the Tartar, and his friend, she came,
Ere she was, indeed, aware of those same.

Fair Doralice and Mandricardo 94
Were moved to laughter by her youthful dress;
She resembled a baboon, in that show
Of finery; a human ape, no less.
The Tartar king, in a moment, did go
To strip the bridle from her steed, with success,
And then, with a loud and threatening cry,
Scared the creature, till, away it did fly.

The horse sped through the wood, together 95
With the old crone, now almost dead with fear,
O'er hill and dale, by straight ways and other,
O'er bank and ditch, much like a startled deer;
Yet my verse must no more dwell on either,
To Orlando's path I again must steer,
Who, with none left to engage in battle,
Repaired, at length, the girth on his saddle.

Canto XXIII: 96-99: Orlando takes leave of Zerbino and Isabella

He remounted, and then waited, for a space, 96
To see if Mandricardo would return,
But seeing he did not, prepared to trace
His passage, the Tartar's course to learn;
Yet as was his custom, born of grace,
Ere he departed, to his friends did turn;
A sweet and courteous speech he did air,
Then took his leave of the loving pair.

Zerbino was much grieved at their parting, 97
And Isabella wept from tenderness.
They wished to ride with him but, on starting,
He declined their company nonetheless,
Though he thought it fair and good, declaring
That a knight who would an enemy address,
Must not take with him his dearest friend,
And upon his arms and succour thus depend.

He begged them, if they met Mandricardo, 98
Before he should come upon him, to say
That, for three days, his opponent Orlando
Would, willingly indeed, prolong his stay,
But then, to Charlemagne's aid he must go,
Where the gold fleur-de-lys was on display.
Thus, the Tartar, if his foe he still sought,
Would know where to find him; with the court.

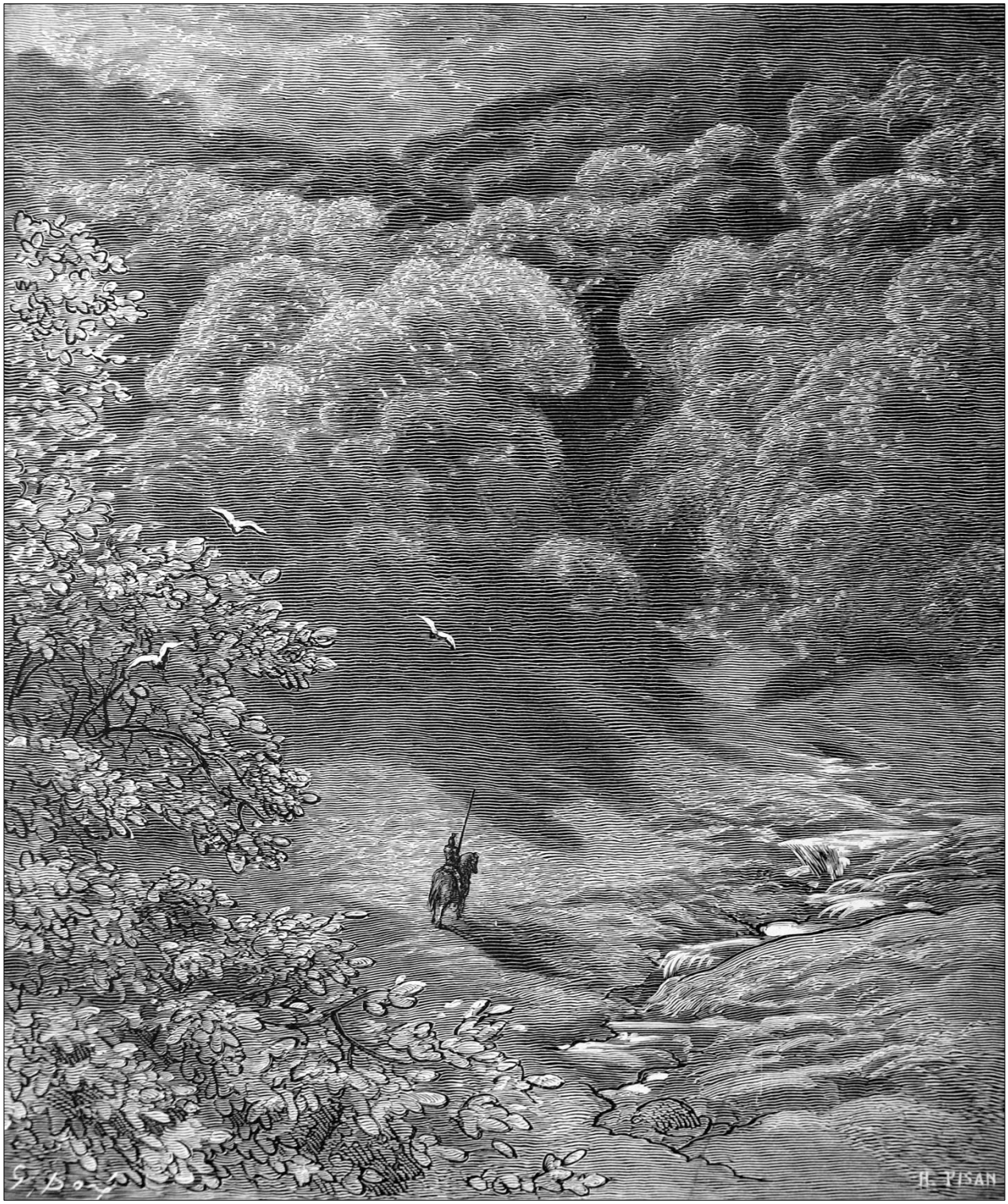
The lovers promised that they both would do, 99
This, and whatever else he might command.
They parted, their different roads to pursue,
They by the plain, Orlando the woodland.
The Count ere he went, his sword withdrew
From the sapling, and then as he had planned,
Steered his steed in the Tartar's direction,
Where he best might meet with further action.

Canto XXIII: 100-104: He reaches the place where Angelica and Medoro had stayed

The errant course the pagan's steed had taken, 100
Amidst the forest, and on pathless ways,
Led our knight through many a forsaken
Wooded vale, and wasted nigh on two days.
Thence he came where crystal waters, shaken
By a breeze, through a meadow went their ways,
A flowery place, decked with various hues,
And many a fine tree, amidst sweet views.

The shade was welcome in the mid-day heat, 101
To the herd, and their naked herdsman too;
While Orlando, who the sun's rays did meet
In plate armour, felt them through and through.
He entered, for respite, that cool retreat,
Yet found it but a cause for pain anew,
A place more bitter than the tongue could say,
On that unhappy, and ill-omened day.

Gazing, about him, at many a tree 102
On that shaded bank, Orlando saw,
(As soon as he had scanned it more closely)
That the bark his beloved's writing bore;
This was the place I spoke of previously,
Whence, from the herdsman's hut, some time before,
Medoro and Angelica would stray,
She the lovely queen of far Cathay.



Stanza 100

With a hundred knots all interlaced, 103
On a hundred trees, there, 'Angelica'
And 'Medoro' the rugged surface graced,
Those letters, barbs, sinking ever deeper.
Despite himself, believing, she had traced
Their outlines, though, ere this, he'd have never
Believed the like, he sought to see another
Hand, here, than that of his erstwhile lover.

'And yet I know those characters,' he cried, 104
'That I have seen so many times before;
Perchance a name for me she has supplied,
And myself as one Medoro does adore.'
Such fantasies, far from the truth, did glide
About his brain, as that sudden pain he bore.
Orlando grasped at hope, though ill-content
With those illusions self-deception sent.

Canto XXIII: 105-111: And then the cave where they had dallied

Yet the more he sought to quench suspicion, 105
The more it was rekindled and renewed,
Like the unwary bird whose inattention
Leaves the creature netted, or limed and glued,
While the more it struggles in contention,
The more tis caught, tangled and subdued.
Orlando reached a place where the mount,
Like an arch, overhung a crystal fount.

Clinging ivy, and the straggling vine, 106
The lofty entrance to that cave did grace,
Where, in the heat of day, would oft recline
That pair of lovers, locked in fond embrace,
Who'd writ their passion there, in bold design,
With chalk and charcoal, all about the place;
And, likewise, were those same two names displayed
Engraved in the stone, with a knife's sharp blade.

From his steed, descended Count Orlando, 107
And read the words carved about the opening,
Seemingly inscribed by this Medoro,
And but recently, judged by their cutting.
These lines, in verse, his delight did show,
Regarding all the pleasure appertaining
To the cavern, writ in his native tongue,
And here's the sense, in ours, of what he sung:

'Sweet foliage, green herbs, and clear water, 108
Dark cavern, with your cool and welcome shade,
Where Angelica, Galafrone's daughter,
Beloved in vain of many, here, displayed
Her naked charms to me, for the shelter
You kindly granted us, when here we strayed,
I, Medoro, poorly recompense you,
With these lines, that will forever praise you;

And I ask of every lord passing by, 109
And every amorous knight and lady,
Every native, each traveller, neath the sky,
Led here by Fortune, or proclivity,
To the herbs, shade, stone, grass, and water, say:
"Be blessed by the moon and sun, endlessly,
And may the lovely choir of Nymphs decree
That of his flocks the shepherd keeps you free.'"

This was writ in Arabic, which Orlando 110
Read as well as Latin and, of all those
Tongues he knew greatest skill in this could show,
And, therefore, could wander where he chose;
It had saved him from harm, and shame also,
Amidst the Moors, when occasion arose.
Yet twas a vain boast such things to recall,
For the pain that it brought now paid for all.

Five and six times, or more, he read the verse, 111
The unhappy wretch, and still searched, in vain,
For some other meaning he might rehearse,
Yet ever found the thing most clear and plain.
All, the while, a hand, icy and perverse
Gripped within him, and did his heart constrain.
He stood, in sum, eyes and mind upon the stone,
As if made such, and no longer flesh and bone.

Canto XXIII: 112-115: Troubled in mind, he halts at the farm

He fell prey to an overwhelming woe, 112
And well-nigh lost all sense and perception.
Tis believed by such folk as anguish know,
That this pain e'er proves the worst affliction.
His brow, of pride bereft, bowed full low.
His chin upon his chest, devoid of action,
He found he could not weep (so deep his grief)
Nor in dire lamentation find relief.

Within him that impetuous woe was pent, 113
That sought to issue with too swift a flow;
Like water in some bottle, his lament,
The vessel ample, the neck too narrow,
That when up-ended, with the fond intent
Of emptying it, doth but a trickle show,
The liquid meeting with so great a stop,
It emerges but slowly, drop by drop.

Returning to himself, it crossed his mind 114
That perchance the whole thing might prove untrue,
That someone bent on shaming her he'd find,
Who'd plotted, yearned, and sought so to do;
And, with such jealousy, hoped to blind
Him, her lover, that would slay him too;
And that the man who had this whole thing planned,
Had forged the writing in his lady's hand.

With such slight and feeble hopes, he sought 115
To rouse his spirits, and pursue his way,
And so, to Brigliadoro made resort,
As moonlight now replaced the glow of day.
He had not gone far, ere the sight he caught
Of smoke, above a farm, that near him lay,
Heard cattle lowing, and the dogs barking,
And drawing closer to it, sought lodging.

Canto XXIII: 116-120: He learns the tale of Angelica and Medoro

Dismounting, he left Brigliadoro 116
To the care of a lad, while another
Removed his gilded spurs and, to follow,
Another relieved him of his armour.
This was the farmstead where Medoro
Lay wounded, and met with high adventure,
Orlando, without seeking to be fed,
Yet sated with sorrow, now sought his bed.

But the more the Count searched for peace and ease, 117
The more he found but pain and sore travail;
For that vile writing seemed his mind to tease,
On every door, wall, and window left its trail;
He rose to ask, but in mid-flight did cease,
Fearing to learn the plain truth of the tale,
Wishing rather that all might be concealed,
That might the more offend him if revealed.

Yet the Count's silence proved of small avail, 118
For it was spoken of without his asking.
The herdsman, who thought his face seemed pale,
And he distressed, raised the matter, seeking
To cheer him, accustomed to regale
The ears of those delighted by listening
To the story of the lovers; sans respite,
He commenced to relate it the knight.

He told how, at Angelica's request, 119
He had carried young Medoro to his farm,
Gravely wounded, where the lady then dressed
His hurt, and in a short space healed the harm;
Yet Amor had a deeper wound impressed
Upon her heart; his youthful grace and charm,
From a small spark, now kindled such a fire
That she burned within, with hot desire;

And forgetting that she was the daughter 120
Of the mightiest monarch in the East,
Now chose to be the wife of a soldier,
Driven by raging passion, to Love's feast.
At the end of the tale the Count was further
Engulfed by sorrow, while his woe increased
When he was shown the gem Angelica
Had bestowed on them, in thanks, thereafter.

Canto XXIII: 121-124: And quits the farm

This conclusion to the story was the blow 121
That, with a single stroke, lops off the head,
When Love after tormenting his poor foe,
Is sated, and would strike the lover dead.
Orlando sought now to conceal his woe,
And yet his sorrow gained in strength instead,
And looked to issue forth in tears and sighs,
Despite himself, from out his mouth and eyes.

When he, at last, could give his grief full rein, 122
(Once in solitude, with none other by)
The tears poured down from his eyes, amain,
In a stream o'er his breast, while many a sigh
And groan he gave, and tossed about in pain,
On the bed, much like a man about to die,
Which felt harder than stone, and more stinging
Than a shirt of nettles, fierce and clinging.



Stanza 122

It came to him, amidst that cruel travail, 123
That to that very bed, in which he lay,
The vile ungrateful woman, without fail,
Must oft have led her lover, on a day.
He loathed that couch no less, nor did sail
Less swiftly forth from there, I might say,
Than a farmer's lad, about to close his eyes,
Springs from the grass, if a snake he espies.

The bed, the house, the herdsman, now had bred 124
Such hatred, in him, he could not remain,
Till the moon rose, or dawn broke in its stead,
That sheds a half-light, ere all things show plain;
But, with his steed and armour, forth he fled,
And the sombre heart of the woods did gain;
And when, at last, he felt he was alone,
Uttered his grief, in many a shout and groan.

Canto XXIII: 125–127: His lament

He ceased not from his weeping and moaning, 125
Nor could Orlando find peace, night or day,
He shunned the towns and villages, lodging
In the woods; there, on the hard ground, he lay.
He marvelled at his tears' endless flowing,
How such a fount could rise from human clay,
How it held the breath for so many sighs;
Then spoke thus, amidst many groans and cries:

'These can no longer be true tears that flow, 126
From my eyes in such a copious stream.
Naught could such fountains, on my grief, bestow,
For when my pain was half as fierce, I deem,
They ceased; now forth my vital liquids go,
Driven by the fires within me, it would seem,
Through the pathway of my eyes, no other;
So, cease my sorrows, and my life, together.

These, that are the index of my torment, 127
Are not sighs; no sighs are such; they fail,
While the pain I feel is ever-present;
Nor can my breast find peace but must exhale
Its anguish; for Love, who this fire has sent,
To scorch my heart, his wings create the gale.
Love, by what miracle have you so doomed
This heart to burn, and yet ne'er be consumed?

Canto XXIII: 128–136: Orlando gives way to wild frenzy

I am not what appears to others' sight. 128
That which was Orlando's, dead, interred;
While that ungrateful woman I indict,
Whose faithlessness my bitter wound conferred.
I am his spirit, parted from the light,
That suffers in this hell, doomed, at a word,
To wander as his shade, alone, above,
An example to all those that trust in love.'

The Count roved through the forest all that night, 129
And, at the rise of the diurnal sphere,
Fate brought him to the fountain, at first light,
Where Medoro's inscription did appear.
When that source of injury met his sight,
It so inflamed him, so those lines did sear,
That all was rage, wild frenzy, hatred, ire.
He drew his sword, destruction his desire,

And cut away the writing and the stone, 130
And sent the fragments soaring to the sky;
Unhappy was that cave, the trees-half-grown,
Where 'Angelica', 'Medoro', met his eye!
Left in a state that day, such havoc sown,
That herd nor herdsman nevermore would lie
In their shade, while the fount, so clear and pure,
From that same anger was no more secure;

For trunks and branches, grassy turf and rock, 131
Orlando hurled into the lovely wave,
Thus, he, in its far depths, the source did block,
Till its clear flow no more the banks did lave.
At last, he ceased, for having run amok,
All bathed in sweat, to weariness a slave,
His strength now failed his hatred, anger, pride;
He fell upon the ground, and skywards sighed.

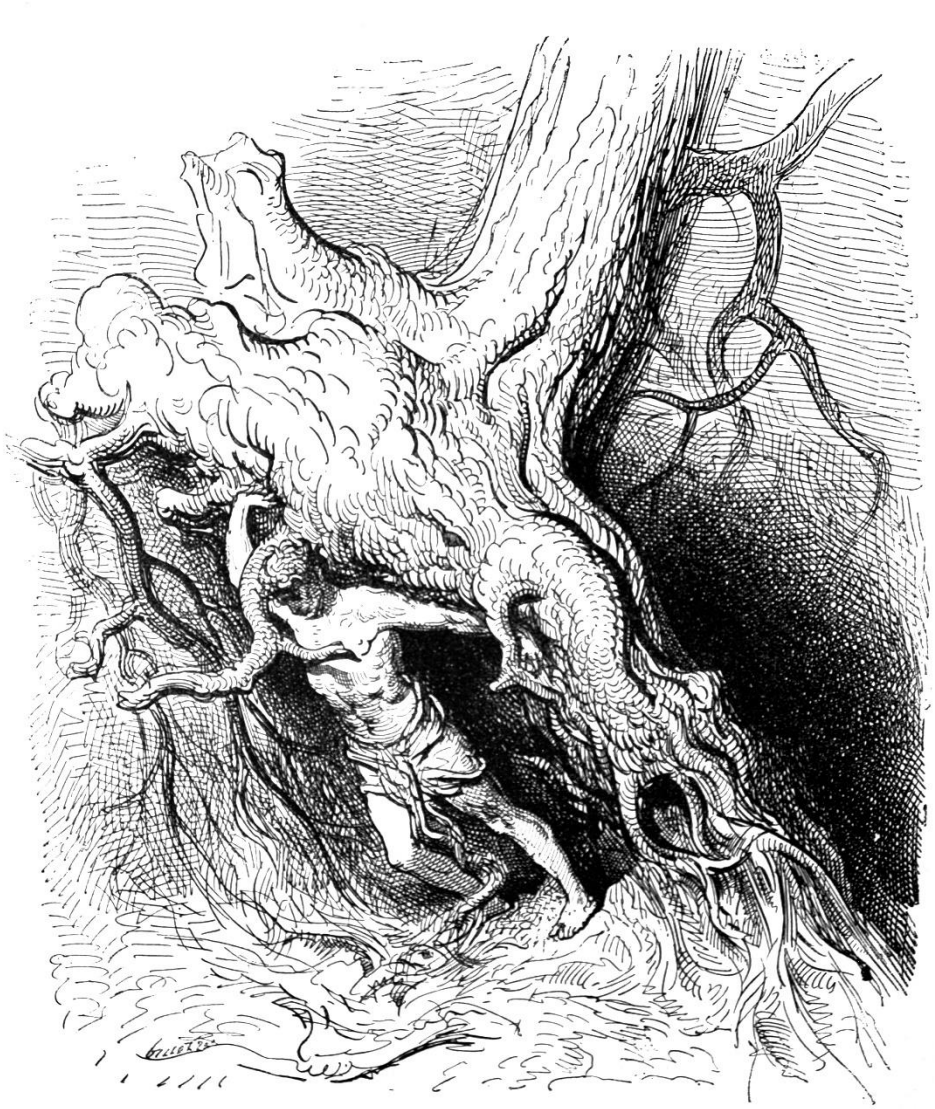
Tired, and afflicted, thus, he slumped to earth, 132
And gazing at the heavens, said not a word.
Without food or drink he lay, while the birth,
Thrice, of the rising sun new light conferred.
His wound pained him ever, with the dearth
Of hope; and both his mind to madness stirred.
Moved to frenzy, at length, on the fourth day,
He stripped off his armour, casting it away.

133
Here he hurled his helm, and there his shield,
His chain-mail far off, his breastplate further;
All through the wood, and scattered far afield,
Lay the lodging places for his armour.
And then he rent his shirt, the rest did yield,
His hairy chest and back he did uncover;
And upon that dreadful frenzy, he began
The strangest ever seen in mortal man.

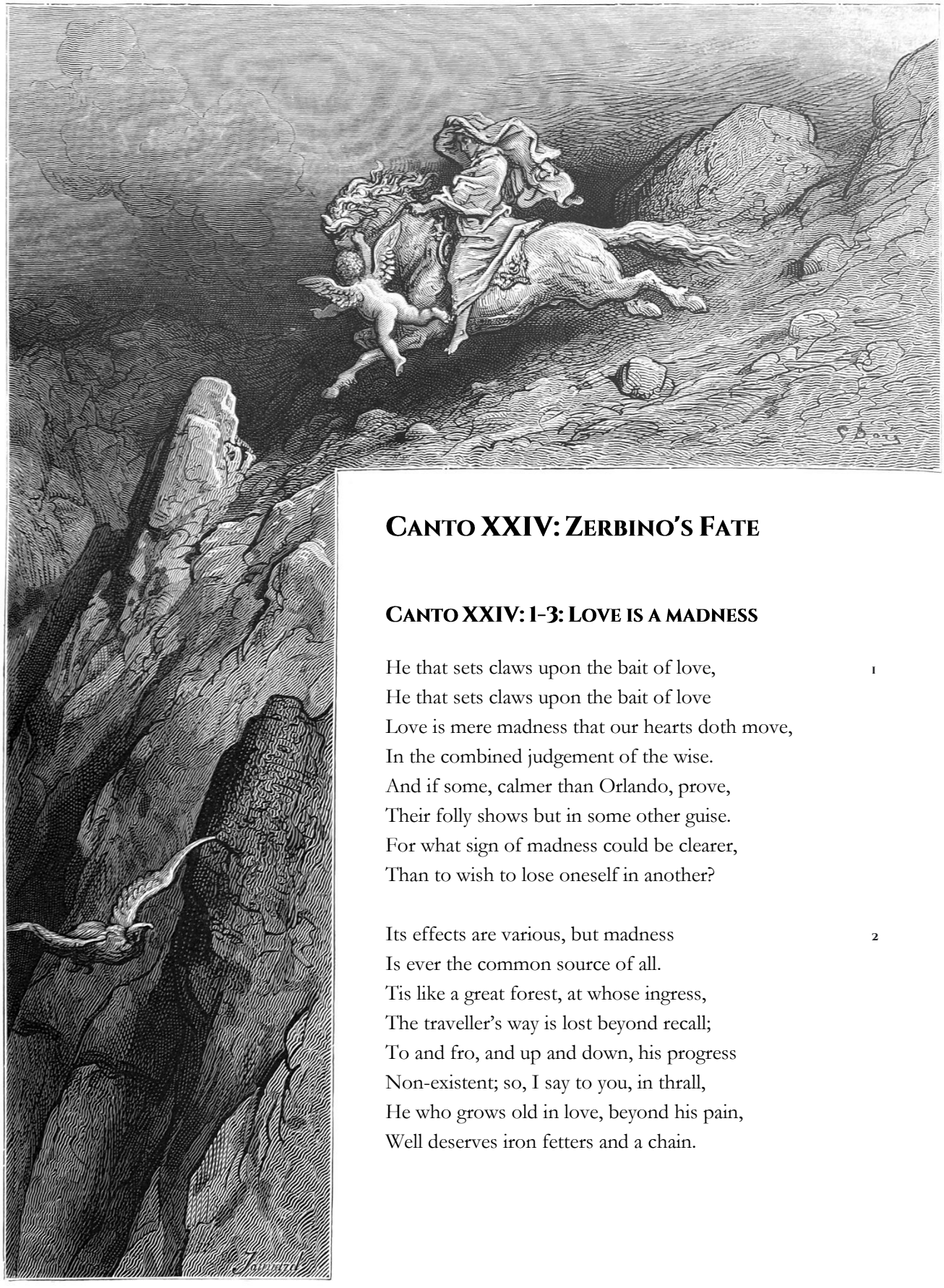
134
So fierce was his rage, so great his fury,
That his every sense was obfuscated.
The sword in his hand told not the story,
To his mind, of his deeds long celebrated;
(For wondrous deeds he'd wrought, bringing glory)
Nor double-bladed axe his hand awaited,
For his great strength and vigour served, alone,
To raze the pine-tree low, and split the stone.

135
He followed that by downing many a tree,
As if they were but fennel, mint or dill;
To elm, and rowan, showed little mercy,
Ash and beech, fir and ilex, all lay still.
As the fowlers in the field do, so did he,
Before the nets are spread; all at their will,
They flatten stubble, nettles, at a stroke;
Thus, he flattened many an ancient oak.

136
The shepherds, who heard the hillsides echo,
Left their flocks to scatter midst the wood;
They ran, from here and there, and proved not slow,
To seek the reason for it, if they could.
But, if beyond the point I've reached I go,
The tale may weary you; tis understood;
And so, I'll choose, for now, to save my strength,
Rather than, thus, offend you with its length.



Stanza 135



Canto XXIV: Zerbino's Fate

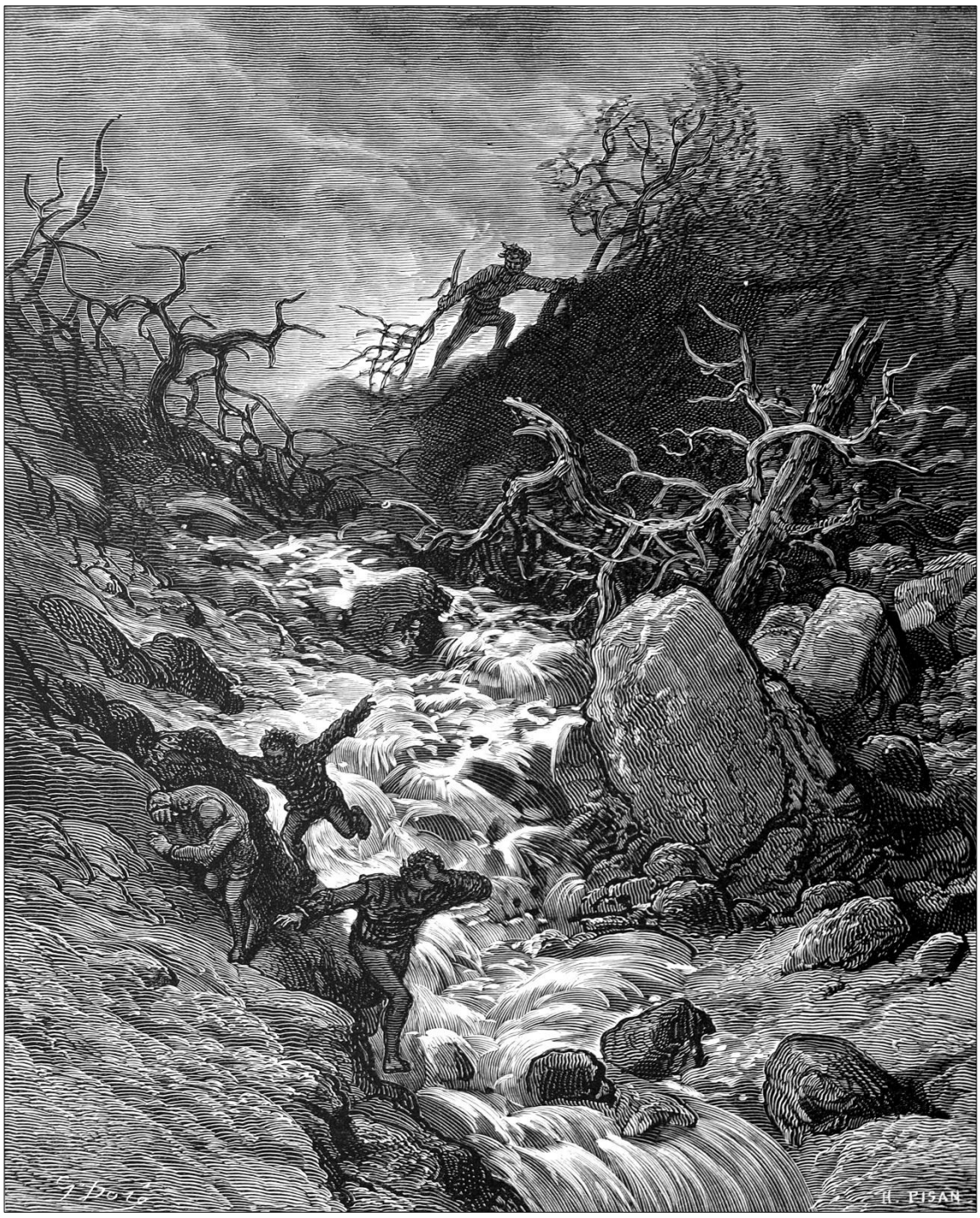
Canto XXIV: 1-3: Love is a madness

He that sets claws upon the bait of love, 1
He that sets claws upon the bait of love
Love is mere madness that our hearts doth move,
In the combined judgement of the wise.
And if some, calmer than Orlando, prove,
Their folly shows but in some other guise.
For what sign of madness could be clearer,
Than to wish to lose oneself in another?

Its effects are various, but madness 2
Is ever the common source of all.
Tis like a great forest, at whose ingress,
The traveller's way is lost beyond recall;
To and fro, and up and down, his progress
Non-existent; so, I say to you, in thrall,
He who grows old in love, beyond his pain,
Well deserves iron fetters and a chain.

Canto XXIV: 4–7: Orlando attacks the shepherds in his frenzy

In the previous canto, I have told you 4
How the frenzied, insensate Orlando
Tore off his armour, and its pieces threw
About the woods, and shed his sword also,
Uprooting trees, while echoes rose anew
From forest heights, and stony caves below,
Till their past sins, or fateful planets, drove
Nearby shepherds to that noise in the grove.



Stanza 4

You might well say: 'Brother, there you go, 3
Advising others, to your own faults blind.'
I reply that I can see the madness though,
In the lucid moments fate grants my mind,
And strive and hope, that I may yet forego
The dance of folly, and some peace may find.
Yet twill not be as soon as I desire,
For to my very marrow sinks the fire.



Stanza 5



Stanza 6

On a closer view of this wild display, 5
And the extremes of strength Orlando showed,
They turned to flee, every and which way,
As men do, in fear, careless of their road;
For the madman seemed at their back alway.
So he was; and he caught them when they slowed.
Plucking off a shepherd's head, as one might
An apple from the branch, or blossom bright.

By a leg, he lifted one's weighty mass, 6
And of him made a mace to strike the rest;
He stretched a pair, in a trice, on the grass,
To awake on the last day, midst the blessed.
The others, more alert, from there did pass,
(Or much fleeter of foot, when sorely pressed);
The madman would soon have followed too,
Had he not chosen their flocks to pursue.

The farmers, now warned by their example, 7
Abandoned every scythe, and hoe, and plough,
And made for the roof of house, or temple,
For unsafe proved the elm or willow bough,
And from there, they watched the madman trample
All about, and with kicks, bites, blows endow
All creatures; cattle, horses were his prey;
Swift was the courser that escaped that day.

Canto XXIV: 8-12: Then turns upon the farmers

You might have heard the clamour, already, 8
Rise in the air, from all the farms nearby,
Horns and rustic trumpets, notes unsteady,
And the bells, ringing loudly, from on high.
With pikes, and bows, and slings, at the ready,
A thousand rustics gave their battle-cry.
From the hills, with as many from the vale,
They charged, the vicious madman to assail.

As a wave will tumble on the briny shore, 9
Raised, at first, by a playful southerly,
But then a second greater than before,
Precedes a third, breaking yet more fiercely,
As the waxing gale rises evermore,
And lashes the sands, roaring loudly,
So, the growing crowd attacked Orlando,
From the hills above, and the dale below.

He slew ten farmers, then another ten, 10
That, in scattered groups, fell to his strong hand,
And their example taught the other men
To choose a safer place to make their stand.
And none drew blood from him, but then again
His skin was tough as steel, you understand;
As a guardian of the holy faith, the Lord
Such protection to that knight did afford.

Orlando would indeed have been in danger, 11
If he'd not been equipped with such defence;
He might have learned that quitting his armour
And his sword, was unnecessary expense;
But the crowd retreated, without honour,
Since his hide was too steely, or too dense;
And Orlando, as no other sought renown,
Made his way, now, to the neighbouring town.

Since the citizens had fled the place in fear, 12
He found not a soul there, great or small,
But copious stores of food, far and near,
Suiting the rustic palates of them all;
And bread from ground-up acorns is as dear
To a man as aught else, in hunger's thrall.
And so, he there employed his hands and jaws
On whatever he found, with scarce a pause.

Canto XXIV: 13-14: He roams France and reaches a lonely tower

From thence, he roved about that country 13
Hunting down every creature that he saw,
Scouring the woods and fields, in his frenzy,
Slaying now a deer, a goat, whate'er they bore.
Oft a bear or wild pig, he would harry,
And with his bare hands their deaths ensure;
Gorging on the flesh, and hide, and all,
Of whatever living things to him might fall.



Stanza 13

He roamed up and down the land, far and wide, 14
Through the whole of France, and came one day
To a bridge, beneath which the stream did glide;
Twixt steep and slippery banks, its flow did stray.
And there a tower could be seen, from every side,
A turret built for strength, and not display.
What he did there, you shall hear elsewhere,
For Prince Zerbino is my present care.

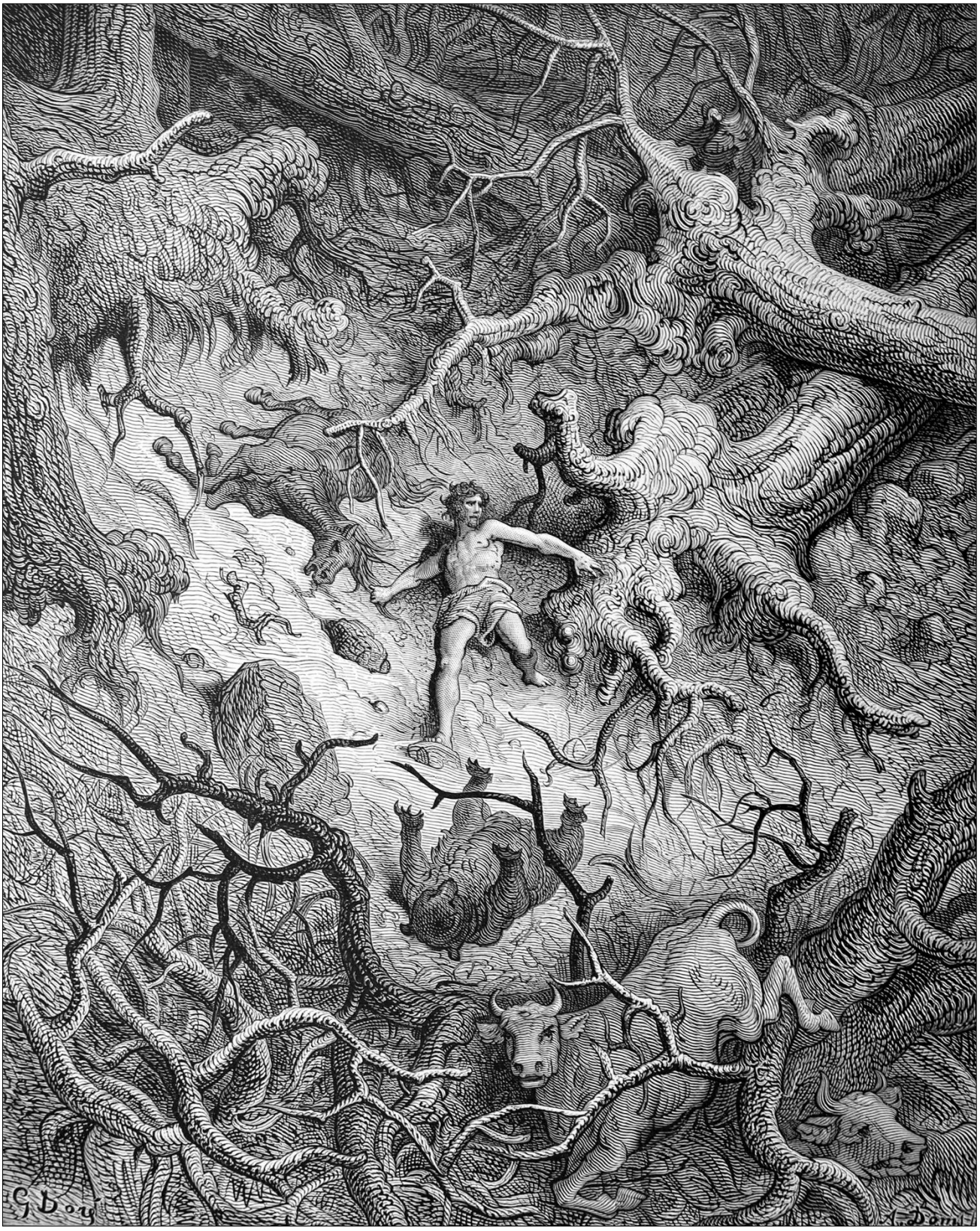
Canto XXIV: 15-19: We return to Zerbino and Isabella

The prince, once Orlando had departed, 15
Stayed a little while, then made his way
By the road, down which the Count had started;
With Isabella, slowly, onwards then did stray.
Yet not two miles of the road had they charted,
When a knight, tightly bound, met their survey;
Upon a sorry nag, the man was tied,
Accompanied by a guard, on either side.

The prince soon recognised their prisoner, 16
As did Isabella, once they'd drawn near,
Twas Odorico of Biscay, who earlier
Had been appointed her guardian, I fear,
Like a wolf o'er a lamb, for his master
Zerbino, as a friend, had held him dear,
And confided the lady to his care,
Trusting his loyalty, in that affair.

As it chanced, the maid had been relating 17
The tale of what had happened, as they rode:
How she was rescued, the ship forsaking,
Ere it sank in the sea, with all its load;
Then the assault of Odorico's making;
And how the robbers, in a cave, had bestowed
Her, as their captive; and her whole story
Was not yet done, ere they met that party.

The two that had hold of Odorico, 18
In turn had recognised Isabella,
And, therefore, concluded twas Zerbino,
Beside her, now her lord and her lover.
More, the emblems on his shield did show
His noble ancestry, his House, and further,
As they, more closely, observed his face,
They decided they'd rightly judged his place.



Stanza 13 "*Oft a bear or wild pig, he would harry*"

Dismounting, with open arms, they ran 19
To embrace her lord, and clasped Zerbino
Where a lord is embraced by his man,
On bended knee, and their bared heads did show.
Corebo of Biscay he knew; his scan,
Of the other, revealed Almonio,
Both of them he'd commanded, as well
As Odorico, to the charge of that vessel.

Canto XXIV: 20-28: Almonio tells the tale of Odorico's capture

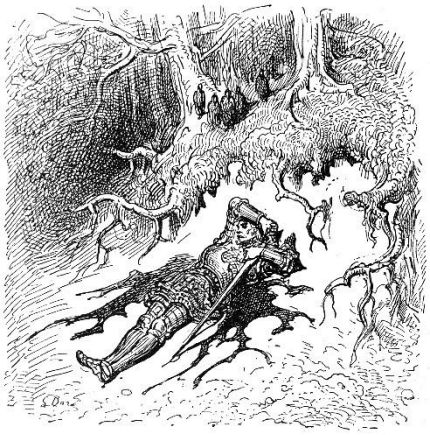
'Since God is pleased, of His great mercy, 20
That Isabella should be here with you,'
Said Almonio, 'my lord, my tale, clearly,
Would scarce be news, were I to tell anew
Why I lead this captive along with me,
The very worst of the worst, in my view,
For she who has endured the most offence,
Will have told the tale, ere you came hence.

Thus, how the traitor fooled me you know, 21
When he left me behind; and of the harm
That was suffered by our friend Corebo,
He that sought to keep the maid from alarm.
But that which followed she cannot know,
On my return, an, though with far less charm,
I shall tell of the things she did not see,
And so, reveal the rest of the story.

From the town to the shore I came, swiftly, 22
With the string of horses that I had found,
And, once there, looked carefully about me,
For those I'd left behind, gazed all around,
And advanced to where not far from the sea
I'd seen them last, twas unpeopled ground,
Except that, as I rode along the strand,
I found a trail of footprints in the sand.

Following those tracks, they soon led me 23
Into the wild wood; in a yard or two,
Sounds struck my ears, and advancing quickly,
My wounded comrade came within my view.
I asked what had become of the lady,
And Odorico, and of his wounding too,
And once he'd exhausted the matter,
I searched amidst the cliffs for the traitor.

I rode about the shore, went to and fro, 24
But found no further trace of the pair.
And so, at length, returned to Corebo,
With the ground all about him, bloodied there.
And had I waited longer ere I did so,
He'd have needed a grave, and a prayer
From a priest, not a bed and a doctor,
Blessed with the soothing hands of a healer.



Stanza 24

I had him borne to the town, from the shore, 25
And lodged with a kindly host, I knew,
And there a skilful surgeon found the cure
For his ills, and restored our friend anew;
Then provided with a horse, arms and more,
We next searched for Odorico, we two,
And found him hiding at Alfonso' court,
Where I challenged the man, and so we fought.

The monarch's justice (for he granted me 26
Both true and level ground on which to fight)
And my cause (that was Fortune's cause clearly,
She who grants victory, as she thinks right)
So aided, that the wretch was readily
Defeated, and surrendered to my might.
Alfonso, once the crime had been confessed,
Left me to deal with him as I thought best.

I neither wished to leave him or to slay 27
The wretch, so have led him, thus, by a chain,
All that you might judge him, on a day,
And say if he should die or live, in pain.
Hoping to find you, forth I took my way,
On hearing that you fought for Charlemagne,
And now, my thanks to God, I have found you,
Both where, and when, I least thought so to do,

And give thanks too, that your Isabella, 28
Is here, present at your side as before,
Of whom, all due to this evil traitor,
I thought not to hear news evermore.'
Zerbino, gave ear to the narrator,
In silence (Odorico's fear he saw)
Yet not in hatred, saddened by the end,
Of past amity, pitying his friend.

Canto XXIV: 29-32: Odorico offer his excuse

When Almonio had finished his tale, 29
The prince stood awhile, astounded that one
That had the least cause a friend to assail
Had proved treacherous, with little reason.
Yet, though long amazement did prevail,
He sighed, at last, at what the man had done,
And asked Odorico if all was true
That the knight had said. Without more ado,

The traitor dismounted and, on his knees, 30
Answered: 'All folk that live on earth, my lord,
Err and sin, slaves to their infirmities;
Nor does the world a happier view afford,
Except that, while ill wins its victories
Because the 'sinner' doth a path accord
To desire, yielding to that stronger foe,
The 'good' a sound defence do ever show.

If you had set me to defend a fort, 31
And at the first attack I'd raised, on high,
Some hostile banner, my loyalty bought,
Or through cowardice or treason, then I
Had but deserved my fate, if you had sought
To hide me in some cell far from your eye;
But, yielding to a greater force, I say
I should not be blamed, but praised alway.

If the enemy proves the stronger, 32
The loser ever has a fair excuse;
I kept faith, as one the foe doth ever
Besiege, a fort he seeks for his own use,
Thus, all the wit and sense I could gather
That Providence, at birth, did introduce
To my poor being, I essayed to wield,
But, at last, to a greater force did yield.'

Canto XXIV: 33-37: As Zerbino considers his punishment, Gabrina appears

So said Odorico, then added more, 33
(In a speech too long to recount it here)
To show how great the urge that went before
His deed, how fierce the flame that did sear.
And if ever prayer might clemency assure,
If ever humble speech might error clear,
It must have done so then; all that might melt
The hard heart, in words, Odorico spelt.

Whether to now avenge his infamy, 34
Twixt 'yea' and 'nay', Zerbino hovered;
Reviewing the crime's enormity,
He was inclined to see the villain dead;
But then their friendship and the memory
Of long accustomed loyalty, instead,
Cooled his anger, with the dew of mercy,
And tempted him to spare the man, in pity.

With Zerbino thus in a quandary, 35
Whether to hold him, or set him free,
Or remove him from his sight, quickly,
Doom him to die, or live on painfully.
That very steed appeared, neighing loudly,
Whose bridle Mandricardo, forcefully,
Had snatched away, as the old crone it bore,
That had nigh caused Zerbino's death, before.

The palfrey, that the others there had heard 36
Afar, thither Gabrina now conveyed,
That came weeping, though in vain; every word
She uttered, seemingly, a cry for aid.
Zerbino with the skies above conferred,
And, hands raised, thanked them for the gift so made,
Of deciding her and Odorico's fate,
Those whom he had the truest right to hate.

Zerbino held her captive while he thought 37
What might offer the fittest punishment;
To remove her nose and ears, so he ought,
As an example; or perchance rest content
With condemning her to the vultures' court,
And letting them be judge of what he sent.
He considered these various fates a while,
And then resolved the matter, in this style:

Canto XXIV: 38-45: The ultimate fate of the treacherous pair

He turned to the company, and declared: 38
'I am content to grant the man his freedom.
Though he merits not being wholly spared,
Death is not deserved; he has my pardon,
Inasmuch as, though the traitor has erred,
Twas Love that made him do as he has done,
And all excuses we must readily accept
When on Love himself the guilt doth reflect.

For Love will oft turn all things upside-down, 39
And has overturned stronger minds than his;
Love renders many a sober man a clown,
To outrage us, far more so than did this.
For Odorico pardon, mine the crown
Of sad misjudgement and utter blindness,
In granting him my trust yet minding not
That fire burns straw, such is our common lot.'

Gazing at him, he uttered his decree: 40
'This is the punishment for your offence.
You must endure this woman's company
For one whole year; with her you'll travel hence,
At your side, day and night, where'er you be,
Nor shall you quit her on the least pretence,
And must at all times prove her defender,
Against any who would seek to harm her.

And, if this woman, here, doth so command, 41
You must take up arms against whatever
Armed warrior you may meet; through this land,
Of France, I so order you to wander.'
So, he spoke. While, deserving, at his hand,
To die, for his attempt on Isabella,
Odorico now faced a deep dark pit,
And would do well indeed to escape it.

The crone had so many men and women 42
Betrayed, and had offended so many
That whoever accompanied her, then,
Could ne'er pass by a knight-at-arms freely.
Both would be punished thus, time and again,
She, for the deeds that she'd wrought vilely,
And he because he must those crimes defend;
Nor would he go far, ere he met his end.

Zerbino made him swear to keep the pact, 43
And a mighty oath Odorico swore,
That if he broke his pledge by any act,
And were brought before the prince's face once more,
Without prayer or mercy, twas a fact,
A cruel death he'd die, such was the law.
Then to Almonio and Corebo,
He turned, that they might free Odorico.

Corebo, with Almonio's consent, 44
Freed the traitor, at last, though tardily,
For both the prince's mercy did resent,
Who'd seemed to thwart revenge entirely.
Thus, the traitor, on his way, swiftly went
With Gabrina at his side for company.
Of them, Bishop Turpin said naught further,
Yet I've found more, in another author.

This author said (I shall not give his name) 45
That they were not a day on their journey
Ere Odorico, indifferent to blame,
Broke the pact, threw a rope o'er an elm tree,
Tied a noose about her neck, with that same,
And left her suspended, swinging freely;
While, within a year, careless of his cries,
Almonio served the traitor likewise.



Stanza45

Canto XXIV: 46-50: Searching for Orlando, Zerbino finds the cave

Zerbino, who had followed Orlando, 46
And was loth to lose all trace of the knight,
Sent news of his state to his troops, so
As to quell their doubts of his health, outright.
With the missive, he sent Almonio,
Its contents far too long to here indite;
And then, after him, Corebo did ride,
Leaving only Isabella at his side.

So great was his respect for Orlando, 47
No less than his love for Isabella,
That (regarding the Tartar, Mandricardo)
He longed to find the Count and discover
If he'd met the infidel, who'd downed him so,
And left him, and his saddle, in some bother.
He, therefore, his return to camp, delayed.
For three days, thus, patiently, they stayed;

For that was the term set by Orlando, 48
To wait for the sword-less knight to appear,
While all about the woods rode Zerbino,
Where'er the Count had gone, far and near,
And, at last, to that place, came riding slow,
Where the names were carved, deep and clear,
Of Angelica and her love, Medoro.
And there, the fountain and the rocks he found
In disorder, and ruin all around.

Not far from him, lay something bright; 49
Twas Orlando's breastplate, on the ground,
And then his helm, gleaming in the light,
But not that which Almonte's head had crowned;
He heard a neighing steed, that of the knight,
In the wood, and raised his head at the sound,
And saw Brigliadoro grazing there,
With his rein hanging loosely in the air.

Then he searched for the sword, Durindana, 50
And found it, far apart from its sheath,
With pieces of the surcoat, a scatter,
A hundred fragments, in the trees and beneath.
Grieving now, the prince and Isabella
Stood, and gazed on the woodlands and the heath,
They knew not what to think; not, certainly,
That the Count's mind might be lost to frenzy;

Canto XXIV: 51-57: They gather Orlando's gear, and meet with Fiordelisa

Had they but seen a single drop of blood, 51
They might well have believed that he was dead.
But a shepherd appeared, between the wood
And the water, one that seemed pale with dread.
Not long before, where, on a hill, he'd stood,
He'd seen the madman's fury, who had shed
His clothes, and once rid of arms and armour,
Had caused havoc, slaying many a farmer.

The shepherd, when questioned by Zerbino, 52
Gave them a true account of all he'd seen.
The prince scarce believed it of Orlando,
Though the traces clearly showed what had been.
He dismounted, on the plain, even so,
Full of pity, with sad and troubled mien,
And went about gathering all he found
Of Orlando's gear, scattered on the ground;

Isabella also, now, descended, 53
And gathered all the things she could find.
Behold, a maiden towards them wended,
Sad of face, and seeming troubled in mind.
If you ask why many a sigh she expended,
Why she sorrowed, as if to grief resigned,
I reply that the maid was Fiordelisa,
That came seeking traces of her lover.

Brandimarte had left her at the court 54
Of King Charlemagne; all without a word,
For eight months, she'd awaited a report
Of her knight, yet no news of him was heard.
From the Alps, to the Pyrenees, she'd sought,
From sea to sea, and had much pain incurred.
In every place she'd looked for her lover,
Except the mansion of the enchanter.

If she'd entered that house of Atlante, 55
She'd have found the knight there, with Gradasso,
With Ruggiero, and Bradamante,
Wandering, with Ferrau and Orlando,
But when Astolfo blew his horn loudly,
And chased the wizard forth, he did go,
Brandimarte, once more, straight to Paris,
Though Fiordelisa had known naught of this.

As I say, it was by chance Fiordelisa 56
Encountered the lovers searching there.
She knew Brigliadoro, the armour,
And the sword and, gazing everywhere,
Explored the relics of the mad endeavour,
While hearing all the story from that pair,
As told by the shepherd, who had seen
Orlando, running frenzied midst the scene.

Zerbino had brought the things together, 57
And hung, them like a trophy, from a pine;
And, to preserve them from some traveller,
Native or foreign, carved a single line
In the bark of the tree, for every reader:
'Orlando's arms and armour, and not thine'
As if to say, let none to greed now yield,
That dare not meet Orlando in the field.

Canto XXIV: 58-62: Mandricardo seizes the sword Durindana

On completing this praiseworthy deed, 58
Zerbino was mounting his horse, once more,
When, behold, Mandricardo came at speed
O'er the plain, fast approached, and there he saw
What hung from the pine; and set to read,
And next sought to know what had gone before.
Then, pleased by what he heard, the Tartar lord,
Hastened to the pine-tree, and seized the sword,

Saying: 'None shall take this weapon from me; 59
Before today, this sword I held as mine,
To be claimed as my possession, rightly,
Whene'er, where'er, its presence I divine.
Orlando who fears to meet me, clearly,
Is quite maddened, and does the sword resign;
And if madness is claimed as his excuse
Tis no reason not to put the thing to use.'

'Yet, take not the weapon,' Zerbino cried, 60
'Or think to have unchallenged possession.
Though you wear Hector's armour, in your pride,
Tis by theft you gained it, without question.'
And, without further words on either side,
They met, with equal skill and aggression.
While ere they were yet deeply engaged,
A hundred echoes sounded, as they raged.

Zerbino seemed a flickering flame in flight, 61
As he twisted to evade Durindana,
Leaping, like to a deer, amidst the fight,
Wherever the footing looked the firmer.
And well that he gave not an inch, the knight,
For, if that great sword had touched him ever,
He'd have joined the enamoured shades that rove
Amidst the shadows of the myrtle grove.

As the sure-footed hound that finds a boar, 62
Wandering from its kind, and far afield,
Now circles round it, now in air will soar,
While the fierce creature waits its tusks to wield,
So, the weapon rose, behind and before,
While Zerbino watched, nor his ground did yield,
Seeking to preserve both life and honour,
Smiting when he could, but fleeing never.

Canto XXIV: 63-67: They fight and Zerbino is lightly hurt

On the other side, where the Tartar king 63
Landed, now and then, an almighty blow,
He seemed much like an Alpine gale raging,
That shakes, in March, all the woods below,
That now, to the ground, their summits bending,
Now shedding branches, must endure it so.
Though Zerbino scaped many, in the end
Came a blow gainst which no man could defend.

He failed to evade the descending sword, 64
That struck upon his chest, twixt blade and shield.
Through breastplate, and corselet, it bored;
Though the steel was dense, it could but yield.
Then the cruel weapon sliced and scored
All down his front, skin and flesh now revealed,
As it cut right through the armour, and fell
To the saddle-bow, which it then cleft, as well.

Were it not that the blow fell somewhat short, 65
It would have split Zerbino like a cane,
But it scarcely penetrated, piercing naught
But the skin, and dealt him less harm than pain.
The wound was a span in length, but brought
No greater damage to the knight, in its train,
Than staining the steel with a line of blood,
That dripped to the earth, in a crimson flood.

Thus, do I see a vermilion ribbon 66
Betwixt a silver sleeve and a hand
Seeming as white as pure alabaster,
And feel my heart split open where I stand.
Little did his great skill serve its master,
Nor the strength and ardour, at his command.
In the temper of his blade, and his power,
The Tartar king was the ruler of the hour.

Though the blow was, in reality, 67
Far greater in appearance than effect,
Poor Isabella felt the stroke deeply,
As if upon her heart it fell direct,
Zerbino, full of ardour, answered swiftly,
Inflamed with anger and, swinging unchecked,
With a two-handed blow from his sharp sword,
Upon the helm he struck the pagan lord.

Canto XXIV: 68-70: But then receives further wounds

The proud Tartar knight was thus forced to bow 68
His neck, and lower his face towards his steed.
Had the helm not been enchanted, I vow
His head had been split; and yet fate decreed
That the king would have revenge; even now,
He raised the sword, as he wheeled at speed,
Thinking not: 'Leave it, for another season,'
But intending to cleave Zerbino's person.

Zerbino, his mind in tune with his eye, 69
Now wheeled his mount swiftly, to the right,
But not so quickly that they could outfly
Durindana, that struck his shield outright,
Dividing it, top to bottom, cleanly,
Cutting the sleeve beneath it, while the knight
Felt the blow on his arm; rent the harness;
And descended to bruise his thigh, no less.

The prince sought every way that he could 70
To achieve his end, but to no avail,
For while he struck the armour as he would,
It escaped all marks, all dints, without fail;
On the other hand, the Tartar, who'd withstood
Every blow, now began to prevail,
Wounding him often, and sought to overwhelm,
The knight, denting his shield, and half his helm.

Canto XXIV: 71-74: Isabella seeks Doralice's aid and the fight is ended

Zerbino was losing both strength and blood, 71
Though he seemed to feel it not, twould appear;
His vigorous heart yet the pain withstood,
And sustained the body of the cavalier.
Isabella, who'd turned pale where she stood,
Ran towards Doralice, then drew near,
And, for the love of God above, prayed her
To halt that fierce contest, then or never.

Doralice, courteous as she was fair, 72
All uncertain how the matter would end,
Willingly granted Isabella's prayer,
And requested peace of her martial friend,
While Zerbino was persuaded by the other,
To calm himself, and to her pleading bend;
And so, they took to the road, sans discord,
Forgoing now the business of the sword.

Meanwhile, Fiordelisa who decried 73
The abandonment of Orlando's blade,
Grieved wordlessly, though angrily she sighed,
And wept bitter tears in the woodland glade.
She wanted Brandimarte by her side,
Who, once found, and all the tale relayed,
Would, she believed, seek out Mandricardo,
That but a brief while the sword must know.

She enquired for Brandimarte, but in vain. 74
From morn to eve, and now she wandered,
Far from that knight, who did his path maintain
To Paris, where he, equally, was wanted.
So far, she went, o'er mountain height, and plain,
That soon a river passage she adventured,
Where she met with the wretched Orlando.
Yet first I'll say what happened to Zerbino.

Canto XXIV: 75-85: The death of Zerbino

So great a fault it seemed to him to leave 75
Durindana, it surpassed every ill,
Yet could scarce ride a horse, you may conceive,
Since the blood was seeping from him still.
And the pain of his wounds made him grieve,
As his ardour ebbed, and his strength of will;
So swiftly was his anguish increasing,
As it deepened, he felt his life departing,

He could no longer stir, such his weakness; 76
Near the fountain he was forced to remain.
Isabella gave thought, with scant success,
To how she might yet aid him, in his pain.
She thought him dying of his sore distress;
All help lay far away, beyond the plain,
Every township where a surgeon might dwell,
That would, for gold or pity, make him well.

She knew not whether in vain she grieved, 77
Calling on heaven, and the cruel sky:
'Why was I not drowned, as he believed,
When my vessel was wrecked?' such was her cry.
Zerbino, whose languid gaze she received,
Felt greater pain at each complaint and sigh
Than the strong and fierce anguish that he felt,
Which the rapid advance of death now spelt.

'Promise me, truly, my dear heart' he cried, 78
'That you will love me still when I am gone.
To leave you now alone, without a guide,
Renders me distraught and I grieve thereon.
Were I a safer refuge not, thus, denied,
Where I might end my life, my journey done,
I'd be content to die, and thus to rest
Most fortunate, indeed, upon your breast.

But since my fate, cruel in its harshness, 79
Forces me to leave you, and with whom
I know not, I swear by those lips, no less,
Those eyes, that hair that ever spelt my doom,
(I, whose spirit into the darkened depths,
Of hell must go) the thought, amidst the gloom,
Of abandoning you, will assail me
More than all else, and ever more fiercely.'

At this, Isabella, sorrowing, 80
Bowed down her moistened face, in tearful pose,
Her lips with Zerbino's conjoining,
He who seemed now as languid as a rose
Gathered out of season, swiftly fading,
From the shadowy hedgerow where it grows,
And said: 'My life, oh, think not to depart,
On this last journey, without your true heart.

Of that, my love, you need possess no fear, 81
For to heaven or to hell, I'll follow you,
Tis right that both together quit this sphere,
One with the other, ever one not two.
No sooner shall your eyelids close, my dear,
Than either grief will kill me (tis your due)
Or, if my sorrow has not power to slay,
The sword's a means to end this life today.

I cherish no small hope that, being dead, 82
Our bodies shall meet a happier fate.
Moved by pity, some kind soul may be led
But a single tomb for both to create.'
As she spoke, from his lips she yet gathered
The last living breath, ere it was too late,
Collecting on her lips, that could but sigh,
The final thoughts of one about to die.

For his faint voice strengthened a moment: 83
'My living deity, I beg, and pray,
By the love you showed me, and intent,
In forsaking your father's home that day,
And command you (if I may), but consent,
While it yet pleases God above, to stay
Alive, for me, and to this thought be true:
I, in all ways I could, have so loved you.

God will, of His great mercy, grant you aid, 84
And keep you free from all vile oppression,
As when Orlando his powers displayed,
In rescuing you from the robbers' cavern.
God saved you, when to that shore conveyed
From the waves; He foiled the vile Biscayan.
Should you seek death, in dire extremity,
Yet ever the lesser evil let it be.'

I believe his last words were not expressed 85
With voice enough that he was understood;
He died, like a taper no longer blessed
With wax enough to brighten as it should.
Who could relate how pale and distressed,
The maid became? None but a lover could.
For her Zerbino, with pale and icy face,
Cold and dead, lay still in her fond embrace.

Canto XXIV: 86-93: Isabella aided by a hermit transports Zerbino's body

Over the blood-stained corpse the maiden wept, 86
Bathing it in her tears, in her distress,
Her lament so great that the woodland kept
Repeating her sad cries, that ne'er grew less,
In distant echoes, nor did she except
Her breast, her cheeks, from misery's excess,
Tearing, perversely, at her golden hair,
And calling out his name, in her despair.

She was so possessed by pain and frenzy 87
That she might easily have turned the sword
Against her breast, thus, failing, completely,
To obey that command of her dead lord,
If a hermit had not, unexpectedly,
Appeared. He, since the fountain did afford
A ready source of fresh water, came there,
And now opposed her wish, with a prayer.

The venerable man whose great goodness 88
Was combined with an inborn prudence,
And who, filled with pity and with kindness,
Many a truth expressed, with eloquence,
Persuaded the sad maid, with an excess
Of most effective reasons, to patience.
Placing, from the Testaments, old and new,
Woman, as in a glass, before her view.



Stanza 88

Thus, he made her see that true contentment 89
Lay in faith in God alone; that all other
Hope was but fleeting, of little moment,
A human thing and transitory, as ever;
And so, her savage, obstinate intent
He thwarted, such that the maid did render
The time still left to her, as he did wish,
A tribute to her God, spent in His service.

Not that she sought to forget her love, 90
Nor allow his dear remains from her sight,
And these, whether she stayed or did remove,
The maiden kept beside her, day and night.
In this the hermit helped, who did prove,
For his age, one whose powers were not slight;
On his sad steed Zerbino's corpse they placed,
And, many a day, the woodland paths they traced.

The prudent old hermit would not consent 91
That they be alone together; the fair maid
He concealed in a cave, with good intent,
Not far from his cell, and there she stayed.
To himself he said: 'All is innocent,
Yet the fire midst the fuel has often strayed.'
He trusted neither age nor discretion,
Where such experiments were in question.

To conduct her to Provence was his thought, 92
For, not far from Marseilles, a castle stood.
There the wealthy nunnery might be sought,
Well-built and fair, in its neighbourhood.
So, to carry the knight's corpse as they ought,
They placed it in a chest of sound oak-wood,
Wrought in a village by the road, and which
Was long and broad and deep, and sealed with pitch.

Then, o'er a vast extent of land they passed, 93
Amidst many a wild and savage place.
For, everywhere, the war all folk harassed,
And so, they ever sought to hide their face.
And yet a knight thwarted them, at the last,
That barred their way, much to his disgrace,
Of whom far more, in due time, you shall learn.
But, now, to the Tartar king I return.

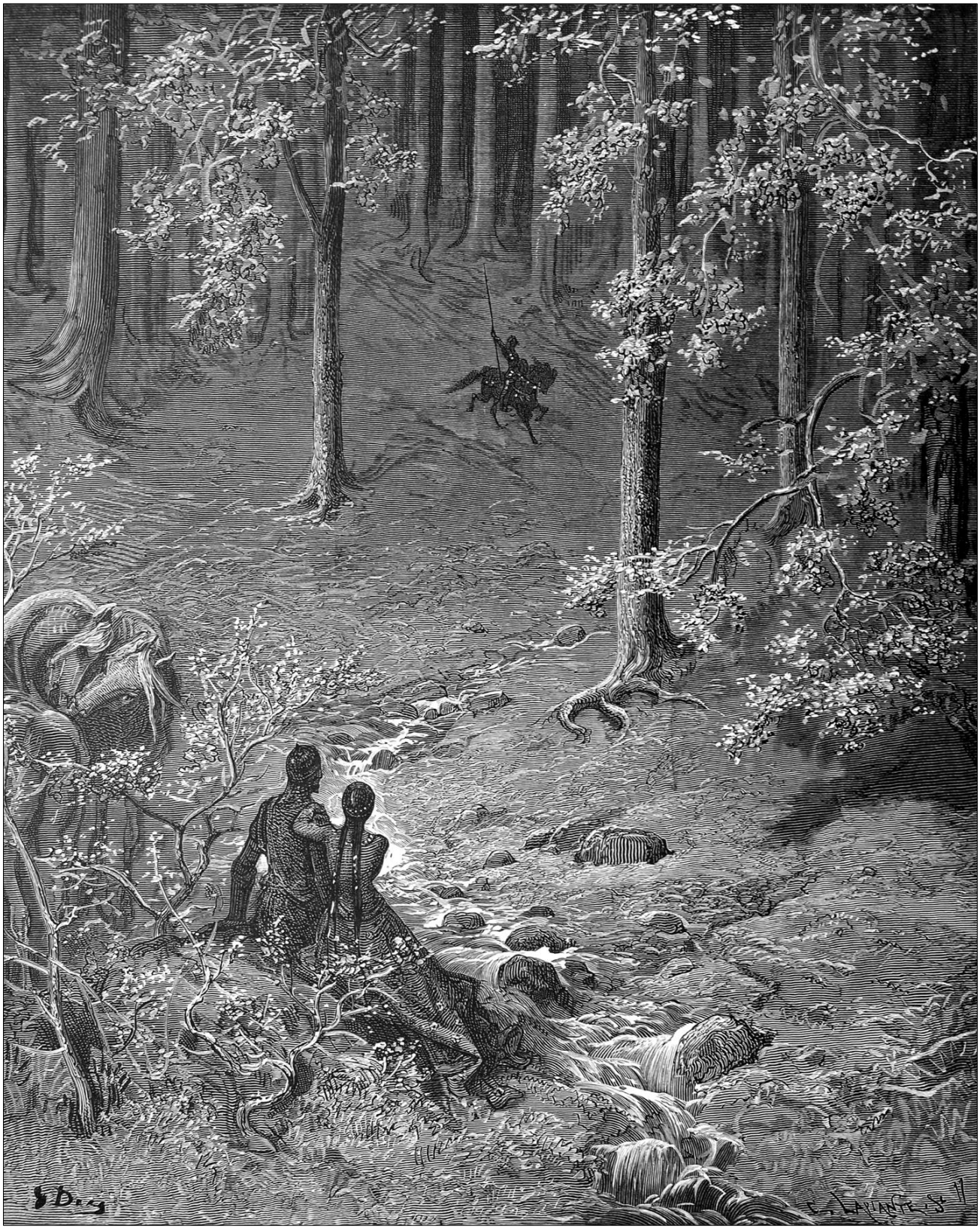


Stanza 90

Canto XXIV: 94–96: We return to Mandricardo, who encounters Rodomonte

After the fight, I've spoken of, was over, 94
Mandricardo betook himself to the shade,
And refreshed himself, beside the water,
Leaving his weary steed to browse the glade,
And roam amidst the grass, fresh and tender,
At will, for fine pasture the moisture made;
But was not long there, ere, far off, he saw,
A knight descending to the valley floor.

Recognising the man, once he drew near, 95
Doralice named him to her lover,
'Behold, proud Rodomonte, journeys here,
Unless, perchance, my sight proves in error.
He descends the mountain, it would appear,
To challenge you; so, arouse your valour.
To have lost one he deems great injury,
That was his wife, true vengeance he would see.'



Stanza 95 "*He descends the mountain, it would appear*"

As a fine hawk, that sees its prey on high, 96
Wild duck or partridge, or dove, or pigeon,
Flying towards it, in the distant sky,
Will fix its sharp gaze in that direction,
Proud and alert, so Mandricardo's eye,
Was fixed on the knight. Sure, in that action,
Of slaying Rodomonte, he bestrode
His steed, and to the duel swiftly rode.

Canto XXIV: 97-107: They fight, the outcome uncertain

When the two drew nearer to each other, 97
That they might barter words, fittingly,
Rodomonte, with fierce look and gesture,
Commenced to state, loudly, and threateningly,
How he would serve one that for his pleasure,
Had robbed him, and injured him so rashly,
And had not scorned to insult, and incite,
One who now sought vengeance, as a knight.

Mandricardo, replied: 'In vain his cry 98
That thinks his threats will engender fear;
Women or children, such things terrify,
Or other folk that hold not warfare dear,
Not I, that ever love a fight; not I,
That scorn the thought of rest, prepared as here,
To meet my foe, in the lists, or in the field,
Mounted and armed, or not, and never yield.'

They passed to insults, and shouts of anger, 99
To naked blades, and then the clash of steel,
As, first, a breeze, offering little danger,
The oak and ash amidst their branches feel,
Next as a wind, then a gale, grown stronger,
Making the soundest trees and houses reel,
Raises the waves, and brings the tempest on,
Till the herds, midst the glades, are slain and gone.

The valiant hearts, and the unmatched power 100
Of that pair, that on earth had no equal,
Gave birth to such blows, so great a dower,
Befitting warriors of their brave metal,
That the very ground trembled at that hour,
As their blades crossed; the combat mortal.
Their weapons sent bright sparks into the sky,
Thousands upon thousands did upwards fly.



Stanza 100

Without taking breath, and never resting, 101
That fierce battle they waged together,
On this side and that, forever striving,
To pierce the chain-mail, or split the armour,
Neither one nor the other ever yielding,
As if bounded by a wall, men no longer
Prepared to give an inch of that ground,
And thus, within a narrow circuit found.

Amidst a thousand blows, Rodomonte 102
Upon the forehead, smote the Tartar king,
With a two-handed stroke; its savagery,
Turning the man about, sent him reeling;
Dazed he saw but stars in flight, all fiery.
Mandricardo, as if lost now, and weakening,
Bent low, and in full sight of his lady,
Seemed about to quit his mount completely.

Yet like an arbalest, cranked back slowly, 103
That strains against the tension in its steel,
The more the bow narrows, the more fiercely
The bolt flies, the greater hurt it will deal,
While the steel, returning to its shape, swiftly,
Deals more damage than any it may feel.
So Mandricardo now, with gleaming blade,
Rose and, with twice the force, the blow repaid.



Stanza 101 "*That fierce battle they waged together*"

Rodomonte, in the very place where he 104
Was hit, struck Mandricardo in reply,
But failed to wound the Tartar sorely,
Since his Trojan helm did the blow defy,
But so stunned the man that he scarcely
Knew night from day, and heaved a mighty sigh.
Meanwhile, Rodomonte ceased not, but dealt
A lesser blow at his head, that yet was felt;

For the Tartar's mount, abhorring the sound 105
Of that blade whistling, falling from the sky,
In saving his master, his own death found;
For, while backing, and rearing up on high,
To escape the steel, as the blade swung round,
It struck him, not his rider, in the eye,
Cleft his head and (lacking Trojan armour
Like his lord) he sank beneath the Tartar.

He fell, but Mandricardo, his mind clear, 106
Slid to the ground, and whirled Durindana.
His steed stretched dead, yet still devoid of fear,
He turned about, now blazing with anger.
Rodomonte, in a new attack, drew near,
Yet the Tartar's stance was but the firmer.
He stood like a rock that waves beat upon;
Twas the other's steed fell, while he lived on.

Rodomonte, feeling his mount give way, 107
Quit the stirrups, then leapt from the saddle,
Landed, and kept his feet; thus, for the fray
Both were ready, once more poised for battle.
They recommenced, more fiercely, I may say,
In wrath, hatred, pride, about to grapple
And fight on, when a messenger appeared;
He called out, as towards the pair he steered.

Canto XXIV: 108–115: They are summoned to Paris, so make peace

He had come from the Moorish camp, apace, 108
Sent, with others, through the whole of France,
Summoning knights and captains, to replace
Men lost, and then beneath the flag advance;
For Charlemagne had set a siege in place,
And menaced them all, with sword and lance,
And if aid came not soon, with bold intent,
Their campaign's collapse seemed imminent.

The messenger had recognised the pair, 109
And not only by surcoat and emblem,
But by the mighty blows they traded there,
Champion matched against brave champion;
Thus, to come between them he did not dare,
His status, in his humble opinion,
Not certain, in this case, to be respected,
Though by custom envoys are protected.

He feared naught from fair Doralice though, 110
Approached her, and said that Agramante,
With Marsilio and Stordilano,
Behind slight walls, with a weakened army,
Were now besieged, requesting her to go
To the two, explain the matter, plainly,
And seek a truce, and urge the warring pair
To cease, and to the Moorish camp repair.

Twixt the two, the courageous lady 111
Now set herself, saying: 'I command you,
To end this fierce conflict; if you love me,
Sheathe your swords, ride now to the rescue
Of those menaced by this Christian army;
Our forces are besieged; what will ensue
Is utter ruin, which this news portends,
If they receive not succour from their friends.'

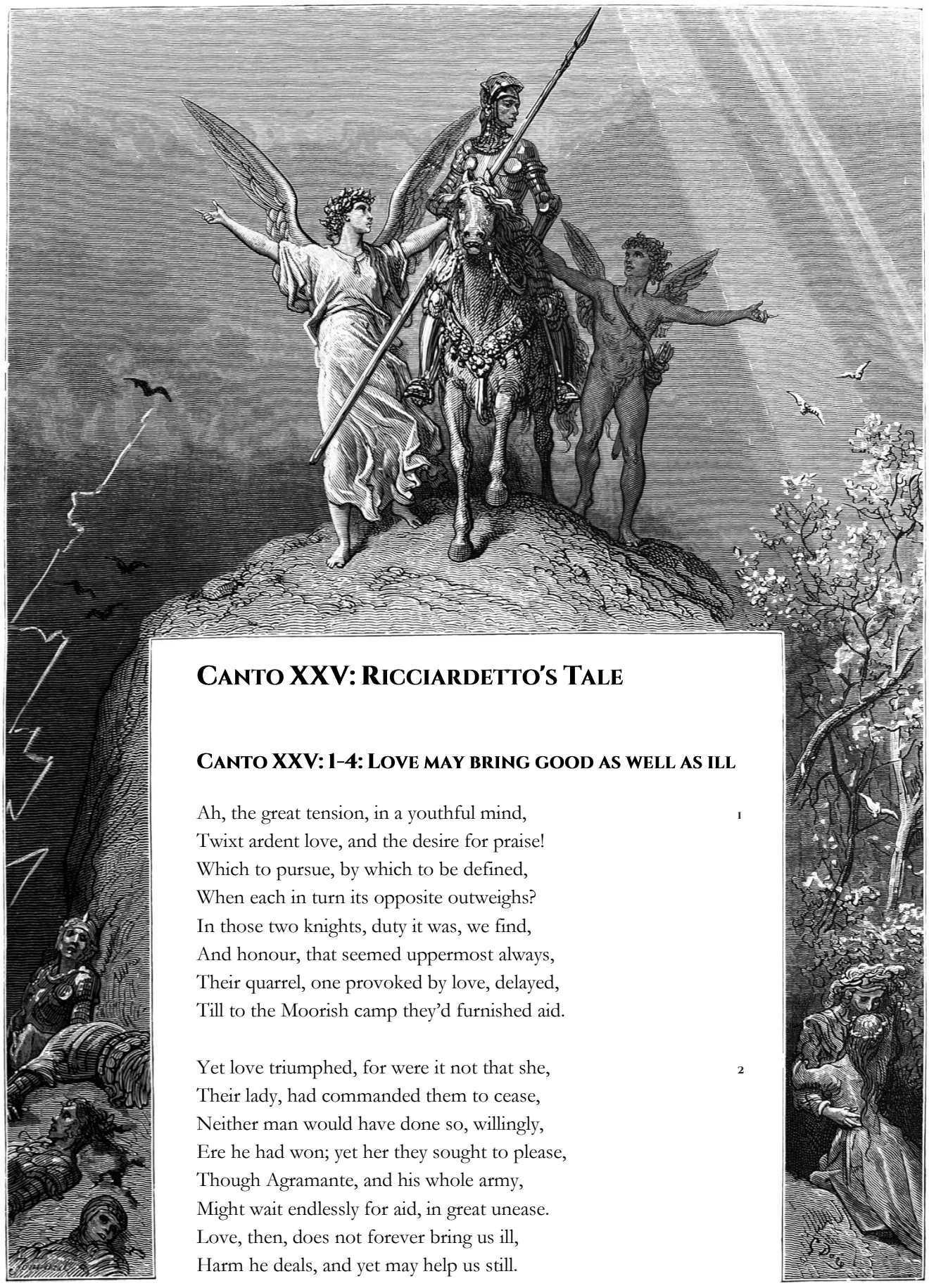
Then the messenger explained the danger 112
In which their army stood, told all the tale,
And handed Rodomonte a letter
From Agramante. Peace did now prevail,
Twixt the lords, who agreed that, together,
They would ride, and thus, of a truce avail
Themselves, till the current siege was over,
And this, they so pledged to one another;

Intending, once the army was secure, 113
The siege was lifted, and their duty done,
To keep each other's company no more,
But with true ardour fight, beneath the sun,
And by their use of weapons, therefore,
Determine which of them the maid had won,
While she, twixt whose fair hands their firm oath
Was pledged, stood security for them both.

With this, Discord revealed her discontent, 114
Scorning truces, to peace an enemy;
While Pride too disdained their fresh intent,
And scarce could bear this new-found amity.
But Love, the greater power, being present,
Unequalled by any, in chivalry,
With his sharp arrows forced them to retreat;
Thus, Pride and Discord went down to defeat,



And the truce was concluded twixt the pair 115
In a form that pleased her, their commander.
The Tartar now had lacked a steed, for there,
Void of life, lay Mandricardo's charger;
Yet Brigliadoro chanced that way to fare,
As he strayed, grazing grass, by the river;
Though I find myself at this canto's end,
So, of your grace, I shall my tale suspend.



Canto XXV: Ricciardetto's Tale

Canto XXV: 1-4: Love may bring good as well as ill

Ah, the great tension, in a youthful mind, 1
Twixt ardent love, and the desire for praise!
Which to pursue, by which to be defined,
When each in turn its opposite outweighs?
In those two knights, duty it was, we find,
And honour, that seemed uppermost always,
Their quarrel, one provoked by love, delayed,
Till to the Moorish camp they'd furnished aid.

Yet love triumphed, for were it not that she, 2
Their lady, had commanded them to cease,
Neither man would have done so, willingly,
Ere he had won; yet her they sought to please,
Though Agramante, and his whole army,
Might wait endlessly for aid, in great unease.
Love, then, does not forever bring us ill,
Harm he deals, and yet may help us still.

Now that both the pagan knights had simply 3
Postponed their bout of hostility,
They travelled towards Paris, with the lady,
To add their strength to the Moorish army;
And the little dwarf was of their company,
Who, to satisfy the other's jealousy,
Had tracked the Tartar warrior and, lately,
Brought him face to face with Rodomonte.

They came to a meadow; there, knights they saw, 4
Resting beside a stream and, of these, two
Were free of armour, two bright helmets wore,
A lovely lady also met their view;
Of these five, elsewhere, I'll tell you more.
But first Ruggiero I seek anew,
That true knight, who had hurled the magic shield
Into the well's dark depths, as I revealed.

Canto XXV: 5-10: We return to Ruggiero and the lady

He had scarcely gone a mile from that well, 5
Ere came a messenger, one of those sent
By King Agramante that he might swell
The Moorish army, his need full urgent.
This messenger the whole tale did tell,
Of how, within the camp, they were pent,
Who if they were not aided in the fight,
Would lose life or honour there, outright.

Ruggiero paused awhile, assailed by doubt, 6
Many a thought pursued, yet this was not
The place, nor had he time, to ravel out
Which cause was best; and so, upon the spot,
Dismissed the courier, then turned about:
Let the lady and the youth be not forgot!
He halted but a moment, and was gone,
And, from hour to hour, he hastened her on.

In pursuing their former road once more, 7
(As the sun declined) they came to a city,
That Marsilio, in mid-France, in that war,
Had won from Charlemagne, previously;
Yet no challenge, at drawbridge, gate, or door
Did they meet, nor was there threat of any,
Though in the ditch, and round the palisade,
Stood many men, their arms about them laid.

Because they had recognised the lady, 8
Who accompanied him, they allowed her,
And our Ruggiero, to pass freely,
Nor asked them whence they rode, or whither.
They reached the square (a pyre waiting darkly)
So full, their arrival caused little stir,
And beheld there the youth, condemned to death,
Pallid of face, that scarce could draw a breath.

Ruggiero, who upon that face did stare, 9
(One bowed low, and wet with many a tear)
Twas as if he saw Bradamante there,
The two so like to his eyes did appear.
The greater the likeness seemed twixt that pair,
The more at that fair visage he did peer.
'Oh, tis Bradamante,' he cried, 'or I
Am not Ruggiero; her form I spy.

She's proved too bold, in seeking to defend 10
The fair youth who was, here, condemned to die;
And has met with some ill chance, in the end,
Been captured, and exposed here to the eye.
Ah, why was she in such haste to expend
Her brave effort, ere my bright steel came nigh?
But, thank God, I am here, and my sharp blade,
And come in time, it seems, to bring her aid.'

Canto XXV: 11-16: Ruggiero sets upon the hostile crowd

Without more delay, he drew his weapon, 11
(His lance he'd broken, in that former place)
And with his charger he bore down upon
The hostile crowd, striking at back and face,
And brow, and cheek, and throat, till all were gone
In sudden flight, and left but empty space.
Shouting, with cries of woe, those folk had fled,
Many with bruised limbs, or an aching head.

Just as a flock of birds, feeding, quietly, 12
Will take flight across the marsh, if they see
A hawk in the air, descending swiftly,
Amidst them all, to seize one, savagely,
Scattering o'er the wide sky, suddenly,
Caring but for their own precious safety,
While leaving some companion to die,
So that crowd when Ruggiero drew nigh.

Our brave knight beheaded five or more, 13
Who proved too slow, in running from the square;
And to the chest he split another four,
Or to the jaw, or eyes, none did he spare.
Admittedly not one a helmet bore,
Yet many a steel cap gleamed, here and there,
Though, had a helmet clad each wicked head,
His sword would still have left as many dead.

His strength was greater in my opinion 14
Than any you will find in our own day,
And likewise greater than a bear or lion,
Or any beast, found here or far away.
An earthquake, or that devilish invention,
None of Satan's but my lord's, I should say,
Might compare (his bombard, wreathed in flame,
E'er parts earth, sea, and heavens, in his name).

For with every stroke one or more he slew, 15
And left them bleeding there, on the ground.
Even four or five at once he overthrew,
Until soon a hundred corpses lay around.
That sword of his, that rose and fell anew,
For cutting steel like butter, was renowned:
In Orgagna, had Falerina made
(Bent on Orlando's death) that very blade.

Having done so she was most unhappy 16
To see her garden ruined by the sword.
What havoc it must have wrought, when, fiercely,
It was wielded there, by Anglante's lord!
For if e'er Ruggiero, in a frenzy,
E'er such fury, such power did record,
Twas here revealed, and here displayed,
In his efforts to bring his lady aid.

Canto XXV: 17-24: The youth Ricciardetto, Bradamante's twin brother, is rescued

Much as a hare runs when the hounds are freed, 17
Those in the crowd now fled, before the knight.
Numberless those who vanished at full speed,
While many Ruggiero slew outright.
Meanwhile the young man, bound as was decreed,
The lady released, and then armed the knight,
As swiftly as she could, with sword and shield,
So that he might boldly take the field.

He, who was greatly riled, as best he could 18
Sought vengeance on the wicked populace.
And, readily, gave such proofs of knighthood,
As showed a worth to match his noble face.
The Sun dipped his gilded wheels in the flood
And sank into the west as, with God's grace,
Ruggiero issued from the city square,
With the youth and went, victorious, from there.



Stanza 18

Now, once the young man found himself safely 19
Beyond the city gate, he sought to render
His thanks to Ruggiero (speaking nobly,
And warmly) for aiding one who never
Had met with him before, twas surely
At the risk of the knight's life, and his prayer
Was to know the name of his saviour,
To whom he would be obliged, forever.

'I see', thought Ruggiero, 'the fair face; 20
The features and aspect are as lovely,
And yet I do not hear the flowing grace
And charm, in my ears, of Bradamante;
Nor do such thanks as these seem quite in place,
Addressed to a lover, whose loyalty
Is not in question; if this were that same,
How could she have, so soon, forgot my name?'

To ascertain the truth, accordingly, 21
Ruggiero said: 'I've seen you elsewhere,
And have thought and thought, yet seemingly
I neither know, nor can remember, where.
If you yourself can recall it, tell me,
And I request that you your name declare,
So, I may know whom I have saved today
And rescued from the fire, and the affray.'

'Tis possible you've met me,' he replied, 22
'And yet, in truth, I know not where nor when,
Though I like to roam the roads, on every side,
Seeking strange adventure. It may be, then,
That it was my sister, who doth often ride
Clad as a knight, and fights amidst the men.
My twin is she, we so alike to view,
E'en kin fail to distinguish twixt us two.

Not the first to find yourself in error, 23
Nor the second, are you, for this is true:
My father, my brothers, e'en my mother,
Have made the very same mistake as you.
My hair is cut short, as many another,
Hers she wore coiled and plaited, to the view,
And, with her tresses wound about her head,
She often acted for me, in my stead;

And then she was wounded by a Moor, 24
(A head-wound; the tale too long to teach)
And a holy man, so he might restore
Her to health, trimmed her tresses; each from each
To tell is now e'en harder than before,
Differing but in sex, and name, and speech.
She is Bradamante, I Ricciardetto,
She sister, and I brother to Rinaldo.



Stanza 24

Canto XXV: 25-28: Ricciardetto begins his tale

Were I not afraid of displeasing you, 25
A most wondrous tale I might recite,
Arising from the likeness twixt us two,
Ending in woe, though starting in delight.'
Ruggiero, who no greater pleasure knew
Than hearing news of his fair maiden-knight,
For no sweeter music his ear could win,
Begged him to do so; thus, he did begin:

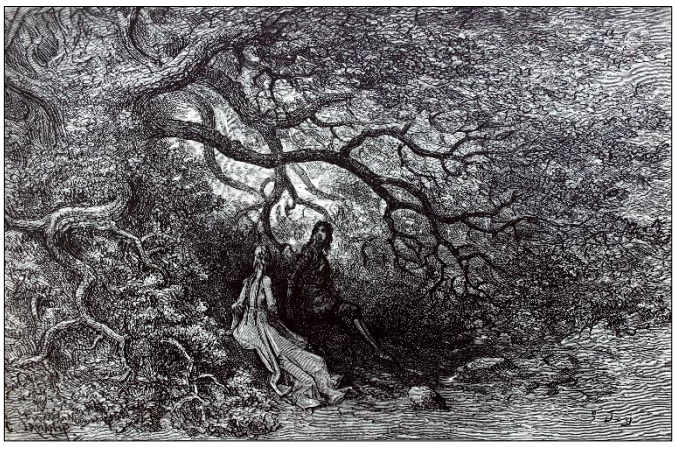
'It had chanced, one day, that my fair sister 26
Was riding within a neighbouring wood,
When she was wounded by a warrior;
Her head, un-helmeted, was drenched with blood.
Her hair was trimmed, so as to uncover
The cut, and render what was damaged good.
Once it was healed, and she with rest restored,
With shorn locks, once again she roamed abroad.

Wandering, she reached a shaded fountain, 27
Where, both tired and troubled, she dismounted,
Removed her helm and, freed from it again,
Upon the grass, with sleep her pain surmounted.
A sweeter tale, than this you entertain,
I think was never in this world recounted,
For, there, appeared Fiordispina of Spain,
Hunting freely in the woods, with her train.

And finding my sister there, in the shade, 28
Fully-armoured, but for her head and face,
(With a sharp sword for a distaff displayed!)
Believed that she was male, and, for a space,
A survey of that martial form she made,
And her heart was conquered, and did race.
Then, waking her, she sought her company,
And they hunted midst the woods, happily.

Canto XXV: 29-33: Bradamante reveals to Fiordispina that she is female

Once they were in a solitary glade, 29
No longer fearing they might be surprised,
In words, and manner, she her heart displayed;
Wounded deeply, Bradamante surmised.
For her ardent sighs, the glances she relayed
Expressed her soul's desire, quite undisguised.
The colour of her cheeks thus waxed and waned,
While, boldly, a stolen kiss she obtained.



Stanza 29

My sister was certain that she, in error, 30
Thought her to be a man, nor could she see
Any way to aid her in that matter,
And found herself in some perplexity.
"Tis, better," she thought, "I disabuse her
Of that foolish belief, and she in me,
Finds a chivalrous woman, rather than
Let myself be taken for some vile man."

And she spoke true; for it would be vile, 31
Though befitting a man but made of straw,
If, set beside a lovely lady the while,
One so sweet, and amorous, and more,
She was to speak in a deceptive style,
A cuckoo in the nest, and pain ensure.
Shaping her speech in a careful manner,
My sister therefore revealed the matter:

That she, like Hyppolite and Camilla, 32
Sought glory in arms; that she was born
On the Moroccan coast, in Asilah,
Trained, from a child, to weapons, night and morn.
This quenched not Fiordispina's fervour,
Won by the rose of love, pricked by the thorn.
Too late, for that deep wound, the remedy,
Love's dart having pierced the maid so deeply.

For my sister's face seemed no less lovely, 33
No less pleasing her manner, nor her guise,
Naught eased that heart, in its extremity,
Still delighting in those beloved eyes.
Viewing, in her, the flower of chivalry,
Desire could not but in her heart arise.
Yet, when she thought "She is indeed a maid,"
How could she not be saddened and dismayed?

Canto XXV: 34-37: Fiordispina's lament

Whoe'er had heard her sorrow and lament, 34
That day, would have wept sad tears beside her.
"Who, she cried, e'er suffered cruel torment
That would not have deemed mine the crueller?
With another love I might have been content,
Pure or impure, and known how to gather
The rose from the thorn, to my heart's delight;
This alone plagues me, with no end in sight!

If twas your wish, Love, to torment me so, 35
Because my happy state has angered you,
You might have found some other form of woe,
One you've provoked in others, old or new.
Nor midst the herds, nor among people, though,
Do females mate with females, maid nor ewe;
Woman with woman cannot procreate;
Nor shall doe with doe; yet it seems my fate,

To long for that which none on earth can gain, 36
And suffer your harshness, Love, and cruelty.
All is your doing, till, in my woe and pain,
I stand a prime example of folly.
Semiramis did a passion entertain,
For her own son, it seems, impiously,
Myrrha for her father, and Pasiphae
For that bull, yet my folly's worse I say,

The female there was but drawn to the male, 37
And hoped to mate, and did, or so I've read;
For the Cretan queen did herself avail
Of a wooden cow, the others their bed;
Yet if Daedalus flew here, he'd now fail,
With all his many skills, this conch to thread,
For Nature, wrought this puzzle, with great care,
She the most powerful here, as everywhere."

Canto XXV: 38-44: She offers Bradamante hospitality

So, the fair lady spoke, and lamented, 38
And was slow to end her sorrowing,
Then tore at her hair, as if demented,
As if cruel vengeance she was seeking,
On herself; my sister too, tormented,
Wept for pity, her pain and woe sharing;
From folly, and from vain desire, she sought
To draw her, but in vain; scant ease she brought;

For, she who searched for aid, and not comfort, 39
Merely lamented, and was grieved, the more;
While the day declined, and time grew short,
Ere the sun passed from the western shore,
For those who a place of rest now sought,
Nor would spend the night on the woodland floor.
Thus, the lady invited Bradamante,
To her dwelling in the nearby city.

My sister could scarce deny her request, 40
And so, they reached the place together,
Where, but for you, those folk, who sore oppressed
My poor self, had ended me forever.
There Fiordispina, saw her guest caressed,
By all, welcomed with grace and honour.
And there in female dress she was arrayed,
That all might know her for a warrior-maid;

She, deeming no advantage would be won 41
By assuming her male garb in that place,
Sought to avoid reproach from anyone,
And, therefore, her bright armour did replace,
Thinking that the ill to the maiden done
By viewing that virile gear, might, of grace,
Through this other that the eye did greet
Chase away Fiordispina's fond conceit.

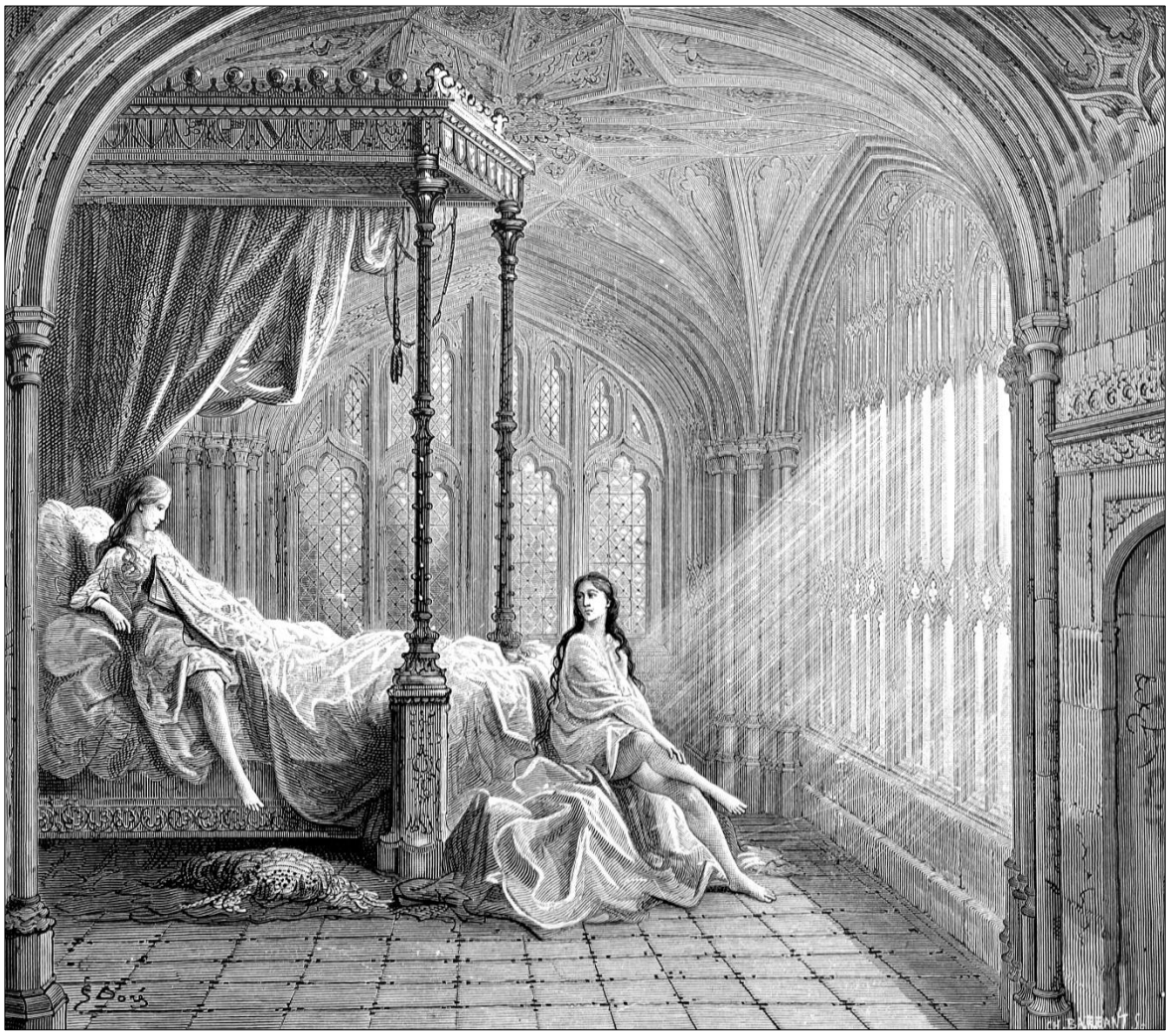
The two maids shared a common bed, that night; 42
Their couch the same, yet different their repose.
For the one slept; the other, in sad plight,
Wept, as the flames of fiercer longing rose.
If, sometimes, sleep did on her lids alight,
Brief was it, and deceitful were its throes;
For, therein, heaven had granted freely,
A more helpful sex to Bradamante.

As a feeble patient, oppressed by thirst, 43
Closes her eyes, possessed by longing
For water, and, in restless sleep, is cursed
With fond memories of fountains bubbling,
So poor Fiordispina's dreams rehearsed
Cruel images of delight, in passing.
She woke, and then, the form she loved she sought,
Yet found but vain all that those dreams had brought.

How she prayed that night, what vows she made, 44
Offered to her Mahomet, in despair,
Hoping that by some miracle displayed,
My sister might another sex now share!
Yet all her vows brought her but little aid,
While heaven, it seemed, mocked every prayer.
Night passed, and Phoebus his bright locks unfurled,
Rose from the sea, and shed light on the world.



Stanza 39 "*Thus, the lady invited Bradamante*"



Stanza 45

Canto XXV: 45-48: Bradamante returns to Montalbano

When they left their bed, as dawn was breaking, 45
Fiordispina's sadness was augmented,
For Bradamante now spoke of leaving,
(So that the maid no longer was misled).
The fair lady, as a gift in parting,
Gave her a Spanish jennet, nobly bred,
With gilded trappings, and a surcoat too,
Embroidered by herself, and rich to view.

She accompanied Bradamante some way, 46
Then fair Fiordispina returned, weeping.
My sister rode so quickly that same day
She reached Montalbano, and a greeting
From her brother and mother, I may say,
Most joyful, for, both fearful and doubting,
We were concerned, hearing nothing of her,
Lest she might be dead, and lost forever.

Her helmet doffed, we wondered at her hair, 47
Cut short, once coiled in braids above her brow,
No less than at the surcoat she did wear,
Foreign in appearance, while she did now
Rehearse her story that with you I share,
From start to end, the very same, I vow:
How she was wounded in the wood, and so
Her locks were shorn in healing of the blow;

And then how, sleeping by the river-bank, 48
She was surprised by the lovely huntress,
That, deceived by her appearance, drank
Of Love's potion, and to foolish excess;
Then of the sorrow into which she sank.
(The tale stirred pity for the maid's distress)
And how she'd lodged with her, and all that passed
Ere she returned to Montalbano, at the last.

Canto XXV: 49-52: Ricciardetto seeks to take advantage of their likeness

I'd long taken note of Fiordispina, 49
Her sweet face, her eyes, her lovely glance,
Having seen her once in Saragossa,
Found her pleasing there, and later in France.
Yet would not my desire fix upon her,
For hopeless love is a dream, a mischance;
But now, within, my winged hopes did soar,
The ancient flame rekindling one more.

By means of such hopes, Love weaves his net. 50
Though he'd failed to spin such threads, ere now,
I was caught, and he thus taught me to forget
All else, and when to win the maid and how.
For the snare with which to catch her was set;
My likeness to my sister, you'll avow,
Means I'm oft taken for Bradamante,
And thus, might deceive the maid completely.

To act, or not to act? It seems to me 51
Always good to pursue what brings delight.
My thoughts and plans I mused on privately,
Nor sought advice regarding what was right.
At night, I went to where I might, quietly,
Don my sister's armour; long ere twas light,
I did so, took her steed, and rode away,
Down that same road, not waiting for the day.

I journeyed all that night (Love was my guide) 52
To seek the home of fair Fiordispina,
And arrived, ere the sun that long did hide
In the western flood, had risen higher.
Blessed was he that hastened to her side,
And spoke the good news ere any other,
Hoping to acquire, for his diligence,
Grace, and favour, of her countenance.

Canto XXV: 53-57: And is welcomed by Fiordispina

All who were there took me, mistakenly, 53
As you yourself did, for Bradamante,
The more so since I rode her steed, clearly
Clad in the armour she'd worn previously.
Fiordispina soon came to welcome me,
Embraced me, and showed every courtesy,
With a face so happy, that such love betrayed,
No greater joy could she have e'er displayed.

About my neck she threw her lovely arms, 54
Clasped me sweetly, and my mouth she kissed,
(Think how the arrow then, with which Loves harms
The lover, pierced my heart, it ere had missed!)
Then took my hand, employing all her charms,
Led me to her chamber, and let none assist
With stripping me of my helm and armour,
Asking that none trouble us thereafter.

To my attire, she then herself addressed; 55
And, as if I were a maid, with great care,
Soon had me in most costly garments dressed,
And, in a golden net, then veiled my hair.
My eyes a female modesty expressed,
Nor aught to deny that sex did declare;
While my voice, that might yet have betrayed me,
I attuned to the notes of the lady.

Then we issued out among the many 56
Personages that now adorned the hall,
Who showed us honour as great as any,
That royalty ere received, one and all.
Yet, many a time, I smiled, covertly,
At all those men my fair looks did enthral,
That yet knew not what lay beneath my dress,
As they eyed me with lasciviousness.

When that festive eve was more advanced, 57
And the tables had been cleared (we had dined
On seasonal fare, yet richly enhanced)
Fiordispina could find no peace of mind
Till she had sought to know why it so chanced
That I'd returned thus, or if twas designed;
And so invited me, by kindness led,
To sleep that night with her, and share her bed.

Canto XXV: 58-64: He tells a tale of how his sex was changed

Once her ladies, the maids, and all the rest 58
The chamberlains and pages, were away,
And we lay in bed together, undressed,
While the torches shed light as if twere day,
"Wonder not, lady," I her form addressed,
"If I return after but brief delay,
Whom, perchance, you thought not to find again
Before your eyes, until Heaven knows when.

I shall tell you now, why I left your side, 59
And then of my return you'll hear anon.
If, for your ardour, I might have supplied
Some remedy, then I would ne'er have gone,
And in your service would have lived and died,
Nor wished to do aught but dwell, on and on,
Beside you; yet seeing how my presence
Harmed you, twas better to choose absence.

Fortune then drew me from my proper road, 60
And into the midst of a tangled wood,
Where I heard one call for aid, as I slowed.
Her cries echoed about the neighbourhood.
More swiftly, nigh a crystal lake, I rode,
And there I saw her, hooked amidst the flood,
A naked maiden, whom a Faun had caught,
And to devour her flesh, now, cruelly sought.



Stanza 60

I unsheathed my sword, and ran, blade in hand 61
And (since naught otherwise could I do)
I slew the fisherman, where he did stand.
Beneath the water, instantly, she flew,
Then rose, and said, 'You helped me not in vain,
And most richly will I reward you too,
With whate'er you wish, for a nymph am I;
This crystal water does my art supply.

I have the power to do wondrous things, 62
And can overcome the force of Nature.
Ask then; come, seek what my magic brings,
And leave to that art the form and feature.
The moon shall descend, as if on wings,
Fire I can freeze, and alter any creature,
Harden the air, and with a single word
Move the earth, or halt the sun, if preferred.'

I chose not to reply to her offer 63
By demanding a royal throne, or treasure,
Nor sought for greater strength nor valour,
Nor success in war and martial honour,
But only some way to sate your ardour,
For that was the reward I asked of her;
Nor sought one or another outcome there,
But left her as sole judge of the affair.

I'd scarce made my request, before I saw 64
Her hands dip neath the surface; her answer
She gave, yet not in speech; she turned once more,
And doused me with the enchanted water.
No sooner was I touched by that downpour,
Than I was changed (by some means or other).
I see, I feel, and yet it scarce seems true,
That, no longer female, I'm shaped anew.

Canto XXV: 65-70: And encourages her to prove his new state

And if, an unbeliever, you would prove 65
That such is my new state, without delay,
And that in my new sex I will remove
Every obstacle, and your needs obey,
Command that which to you will show my love
Alert, awake for you, and so alway."
Thus, I spoke, and urged her, as I had planned,
To seek the truth revealed, with her own hand.

Like to those whose hope is lost entirely, 66
Not thinking to possess that which they sought,
And weep to be deprived of it, sorely,
Who grieve, and pine, and ever grow more fraught,
Yet win it; from being used so badly,
And having sown the sand that yielded naught,
They will, relieved of their desperation,
Scarce believe, possessed by consternation.

So, the lady, now, as she touched and saw, 67
That for which her longing had been great,
Yet scarce trusted sight or touch, still unsure,
Doubtful if she slept, and proved my state
While dreaming, seeking proof all the more
That she felt what she felt, blessed by fate.
'God,' she cried, 'if I dream, let me remain
Asleep forever, and ne'er wake again!'

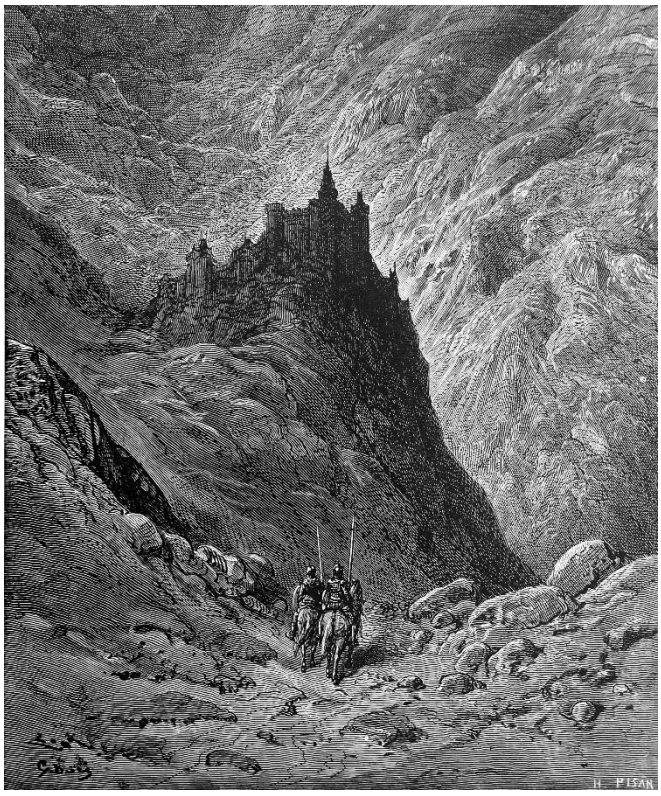
No sound of trumpet or of drum, withal, 68
Did there announce the amorous assault,
But kisses like to doves gave the signal,
To turn about, rise above, move or halt.
Other arms than arrows for the battle,
Or sling, I deployed, yet the wall did vault
Without a ladder, planted my banner
Firmly, and thrust the enemy under.

If that same bed was full, the night before, 69
Of deep sighs, and mortal anguish, and woe,
Now it was lightened by a greater store
Of cries of joy, sweet games, and laughters low.
The ivy clings no more tightly, I'm sure,
To the tree than did we, nor makes more
Knots than we did there, I may attest,
Ever clasping neck or arm, thigh or breast.

The thing remained a secret twixt us two, 70
And thus, some months it lasted, our affair,
Till, discovered, to my harm, the news flew
To the king's ears; twas now beyond repair.
You, who freed me from the vicious crew
That sought to light my pyre in the square,
Know all the rest, yet God alone may know
The depths of my enduring pain and woe.'

Canto XXV: 71-72: As his tale ends, they reach Agrismonte

So Ricciardetto told his woeful tale 71
To Ruggiero, lightening the darkness,
As they ascended that nocturnal trail,
Twixt cliffs with many a shaded recess,
A steep and narrow, and a stony, vale
The key to the heights, that granted access,
At the top, to a fortress, Agrismonte,
Held by Aldigier of Chiaramonte,



Stanza 71

He being the bastard son of Buovo, 72
His brothers Viviano, Malagigi;
While those who would assert that Gherardo
Begot him lawfully, do so wrongly.
Be that the case, he e'er did wisdom show,
Strength, grace, humaneness, and courtesy.
And for the brothers, night and day, assured
The defence of the castle, as its lord.

Canto XXV: 73-76: Ruggiero learns of the capture of Viviano and Malagigi

He received his cousin Ruggiero, 73
Whom he loved like a brother, courteously,
And, likewise, of respect, treated him so.
Yet he welcomed him less than cheerfully,
And not as he was wont, but full of woe,
With saddened aspect, troubled inwardly;
For he'd received ill news, that very day,
That concerned him, far more than he could say.



Stanza 70 "*Till, discovered, to my harm, the news flew*"

Now, in exchange for his cousin's greeting 74
He said: 'Cousin, I have sad news indeed,
By a sure messenger the tale receiving.
Bertolagi of Bayonne has agreed
To yield gold to Lanfusa, she granting
(Ferrau's cruel mother) for that same deed,
Him power over my two brothers so,
Good Malagigi and Viviano.

She's held them in a dark and noisome place, 75
From the day Ferrau captured them, until
This pact the Maganzese's seal did grace;
And, intending to keep the bargain still,
Tomorrow the evil pair will embrace
Twixt Bayonne and his castle, where he will
The reward for her wickedness advance,
So, purchasing the truest blood in France.

A messenger is, even now, hastening 76
To advise our Rinaldo of their plight.
But, given the distance he is travelling,
He'll prove too late in reaching the knight.
I lack resources to address this thing,
The spirit willing, yet the strength but slight.
If the traitor acquires them, they will die,
Nor know I how that deed I might deny.'

Canto XXV: 77-80: He proposes that that they free the brothers

The tragic news saddened Ricciardetto, 77
As it did him, and Ruggiero likewise,
Who when he saw them silent, full of woe,
And unable some sound scheme to devise,
Exclaimed, with strength and ardour: 'Grieve not so;
To me shall fall this whole fair enterprise;
This sword will be worth a thousand men.
I shall grant them their liberty, again.

I ask no other men, nor other aid; 78
I think my own strength equal to the deed.
I seek naught but a guide, one not afraid
To lead me to the place they have agreed.
And when with me tis blows that they must trade,
You'll hear their cries as the villains bleed.'
So, he ended, claiming naught that was new
To one who had witnessed his own rescue.

The other listened only as one might 79
To those who speak a lot, yet do little,
But Ricciardetto did their host invite,
To hear the tale of the earlier battle,
And how he was saved, and said the knight
Would make his statement good; for his mettle
He would prove at the proper time and place.
Aldigier then showed him fitting grace.

At table, where Plenty dowered all three, 80
He honoured him as if he were his lord,
And agreed the brothers might be set free,
Without other aid; thus, all were in accord.
Then came the time when Sleep, languidly,
Closed their eyes, and repose did them afford.
All save Ruggiero, troubled by a thought,
That pricked his conscience sore, as ease he sought.

Canto XXV: 81-85: He agonises over his delay

That Agramante was besieged, he knew 81
From his summons, and had taken it to heart.
He saw the least delay that might ensue
In yielding aid dishonoured him in part.
What infamy, what shame would fall anew,
On a knight that from his king stood apart!
How great the crime that must be realised;
And charged to him, if he were now baptised!

It might be believed, at a later date, 82
That he'd been moved by religious feeling,
But now his aid was needed ere too late,
To relieve his true master and his king.
Twas more likely that others would relate
His tale as that of some craven being,
Rather than as witnessing his belief.
It pricked his heart, and brought no little grief.

Then it stung him that he'd quit his lady, 83
Without her leave, and she now all alone.
To this thought now, and that, piercing deeply,
He turned his mind, wherein much doubt was sown.
He'd looked about for her, yet fruitlessly,
At Fiordispina's castle, I should own,
Where, as I've said, they had gone, together,
To rescue Ricciardetto, her brother.

Then he recalled the promise he'd made her, 84
To meet at Vallombrosa's sanctuary,
Thinking, now, she must have travelled thither,
And be wondering where her lover might be.
He could at least send the maid a letter,
So that she be not worried, needlessly,
Given he'd not merely disobeyed her,
But without a word had parted from her.

Once his imagination ceased to stir, 85
He decided to write, without delay;
And though he was unsure in what manner
He might yet send the missive on its way
So as to reach her, some sure messenger
He hoped to find as soon as it was day.
Malingering no more, up leapt the knight,
And called for pen, ink, paper and a light.

Canto XXV: 86-91: He writes to Bradamante

Thus, the attentive servants of his host, 86
Brought Ruggiero all he requested;
He began to write his screed, and foremost
Greeted her, as courtesy suggested,
Then told how Agramante had utmost
Need of his help, being sorely tested,
And that if he did not soon go to his aid,
His king would be slain or a captive made.

Then added that him being in that state, 87
And turning to him for aid and succour,
She must see that shame would be his fate,
If he were to refuse, and dishonour.
And since she was about to be his mate,
He must guard himself from every error,
For it was wrong that aught ill should appear
Near her, where all was pure and sincere.

And since he'd laboured to keep his name 88
Clear of all taint, done so, and held it dear,
And sought to keep it so, that very same,
He kept it now, as with a miser's fear,
That she might bear that emblem without shame,
For she as his dear wife would soon appear,
And, though a separate body, ought to be
At one with him, in spirit, endlessly.

And as, in speech, he had explained before, 89
And now would set down here in his letter,
When e'er his service to his king was o'er,
Unless he were to die, he assured her
He'd be a Christian, her god adore,
As was e'er his wish, and so forever.
And of her father, and Rinaldo, in this life,
Ask no more than that she should be his wife.

'I would,' he wrote, 'by your good leave, help raise 90
This siege of King Agramante's army,
So that the vulgar crowd might grant me praise
Rather than pour shame and scorn upon me,
Saying that while their king felt Fortune's rays,
Ruggiero was at his side, endlessly,
But now that she to Charlemagne has fled,
He flies his flag for the victor, instead.

I ask for a mere twenty days, or less, 91
So that I might take to the field once more,
And help the army to win fresh success,
And free them from the siege they now endure.
Meanwhile, I'll seek just reason to address
My change of creed, and baptism ensure.
I, of my honour, make this sole request,
Then my whole life is yours, I, here, attest.'

Canto XXV: 92-97: The cousins set out to free the brothers

In like words Ruggiero then expressed 92
Himself the more, nor could I tell you all;
Many a word he wrote, and could not rest,
Until the sheet was filled with his fair scrawl.
Then the letter he sealed, and at his breast
Concealed it, lest some harm to it befall,
Hoping to find next morn, upon the way,
One that, to the maid, might his screed convey.

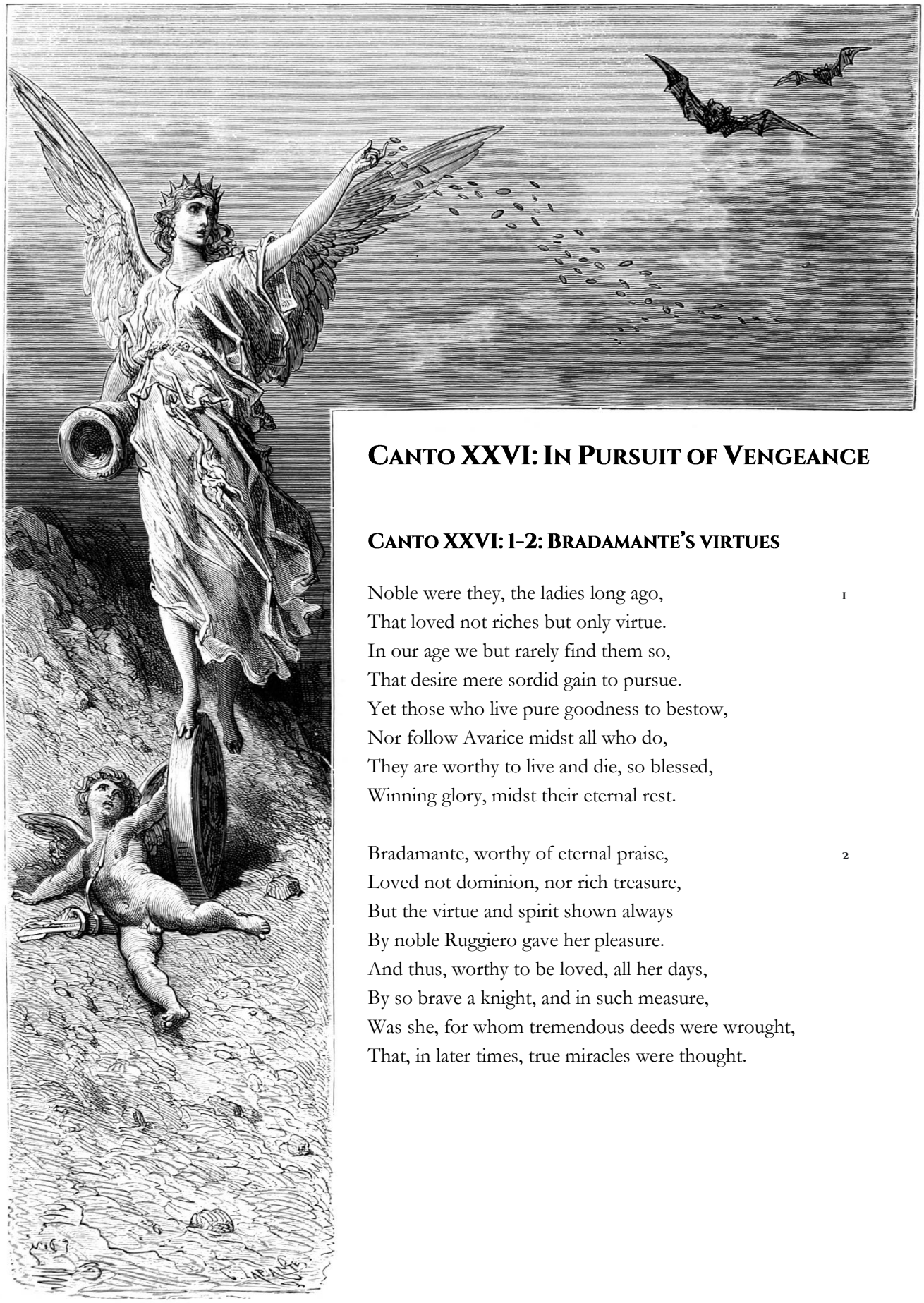
Having brought all to a close, with weary eyes, 93
To bed he went, and found peace thereafter;
For Sleep now came, and sprinkled, from the skies,
Dew from some branch wet with Lethe's water.
He slept, till the white and red of sunrise
Appeared and, scattering flowers, fair Aurora,
Filled the east with her colourful display,
As from her gilded house, she brought the day.

Then, as the birds hailed the returning light, 94
Amidst the greenwood, joying in the dawn,
Aldigier (who sought to guide the knight
And his cousin, as they set out, that morn,
Eager to save the brothers, and to fight
Bertolagi, for his sake, as they had sworn)
Was first upon his feet; and then the two
Arose, on hearing him, and armed anew.

And once they were in armour fresh arrayed, 95
Ruggiero, with his cousins, took his way,
Though as we know, he had already prayed
That the adventure with himself should stay;
Yet they, by love of those two brothers swayed,
Believed it shameful simply to obey,
And denied his plea, as if made of stone,
Not consenting that he should go alone.

They reached the place at the time proposed 96
For Lanfusa's exchange with Bertolagi.
It was an open tract of land exposed
To Apollo's rays; all that barren country,
Neither myrtle nor laurel scrub disclosed,
Nor beech, cypress, ash, for all lay empty;
Twas but naked gravel, and humble weed,
Where none had ever ploughed, or scattered seed.

The trio of brave warriors halted there, 97
Where a wide track ran o'er the silent plain,
While at a knight, who towards them did fare,
They gazed, his armour all with gold o'er-lain.
His emblem, on a green field, was the rare
Phoenix, that for an age or so doth reign.
Yet, no more; for the end of this, my canto,
I perceive here and rest, too, I would know.



Canto XXVI: In Pursuit of Vengeance

Canto XXVI: 1-2: Bradamante's virtues

Noble were they, the ladies long ago, 1
That loved not riches but only virtue.
In our age we but rarely find them so,
That desire mere sordid gain to pursue.
Yet those who live pure goodness to bestow,
Nor follow Avarice midst all who do,
They are worthy to live and die, so blessed,
Winning glory, midst their eternal rest.

Bradamante, worthy of eternal praise, 2
Loved not dominion, nor rich treasure,
But the virtue and spirit shown always
By noble Ruggiero gave her pleasure.
And thus, worthy to be loved, all her days,
By so brave a knight, and in such measure,
Was she, for whom tremendous deeds were wrought,
That, in later times, true miracles were thought.

Canto XXVI: 3-8: Marfisa joins forces with the three

As I told you earlier, Ruggiero, 3
With two of the House of Chiaramonte,
Aldigier and Ricciardetto,
Had gone to aid those in captivity.
And I told you of a knight they met, also,
One that sat a gallant steed, most proudly,
Whose emblem was the phoenix, that rebirth
Finds in the flames, unique upon this earth,

When the warrior had drawn near the three, 4
(Poised on the wing, as if about to strike)
He wished to try their prowess, instantly,
To see if show and substance were alike;
'Is there, here, one of you that would meet me,
One that may deem himself the more warlike,'
Cried the knight, 'that will fight with sword or lance,
Till one yield to the other's swift advance?'

'I would,' said Aldigier, 'at your wish, 5
Swing a sword about me, or run a spear,
But another enterprise conflicts with this,
Which you may witness if you linger here.
It grants us the time our speech to finish,
But scarce leaves us time for jousting, I fear.
Six hundred men or more, we now await,
With whom we'll battle, ere it proves too late.

Love and Pity have brought us to this place, 6
To rescue from their chains two of our own.'
He followed by explaining, face to face,
All the reason, till the whole tale was made known,
'The justice of your cause I must embrace,'
Said the knight, 'nor should you contend alone,
For, in my judgement, you appear to be
Peerless in valour and in chivalry.

I sought but to exchange a blow or two, 7
To witness all your prowess in the field,
But at another's cost would thus pursue,
The joust, and so to reason I must yield.
I pray you, let me join what will ensue,
And so, lend to your cause my helm and shield,
Hoping to show, amidst your company,
Such a companion as may prove worthy.'



Stanza 7

It seems to me that some might ask the name 8
Of the stranger, who sought to fight beside
Ruggiero and his friends, and thus lay claim
To share the risk, in being thus allied;
She (for a warrior-maid was that same)
Was Marfisa, who Zerbino, for a guide,
Had granted to the wretched Gabrina,
That vicious, and unrepentant sinner.

Canto XXVI: 9-11: They prepare to fight Bertolagi

Those of Chiaramonte, with Ruggiero, 9
Accepted her kind help, most willingly,
While believing her a male knight, although
She was not quite what she appeared to be.
Soon Aldigier saw riders, neath the flow
Of a banner, and warned the company,
Viewing the flag quivering in the breeze,
That showed the passage of their enemies.

Soon after, as the riders came closer, 10
They saw that they were clad in Moorish gear,
And knew them for Saracens, and further,
Perceived two prisoners towards the rear,
Each on a sorry nag led by the halter,
To be purchased by Bertolagi, here.
Said Marfisa to the other three: 'Why wait,
Since our food's already on the plate?'

Ruggiero answered: 'Part is lacking, 11
For the guests have not all appeared as yet,
And, since a grand ball is now preparing,
Not one of all our arts should we forget;
Nor is it not long they'll keep us waiting.'
As he spoke, both the parties were now met,
For the traitor from his side did advance,
And all was ready to commence the dance.

Canto XXVI: 12-25: And put to rout both the enemy parties

From one side those Maganzeses came, 12
Leading pack-mules bearing chest-loads of gold;
Costly garments, they carried with that same,
And other gear, the worth well-nigh untold.
On the other, armed, in Lanfusa's name,
Men had brought the two brothers to be sold.
They saw Bertolagi speaking further
With the Moorish captain, their bold leader.

Nor Aldigier, nor Ricciardetto 13
Could rest, when they saw the villain there.
With lances levelled, set to strike him low,
They charged, and in the death both knights did share.
One pierced his guts, and saddle, at a blow,
The other his vile face refused to spare.
May like to Bertolagi's wretched fate
O'ertake all evil doers, soon or late!



Stanza 13

At this, Marfisa and Ruggiero 14
Gave spur to their brave steeds, and joined the fray.
The warrior-maid three victims soon could show,
That on the bare earth, in their death-throes, lay.
Ruggiero's lance dealt with his mark also,
The Moorish leader, his life reft away.
And then, with a glancing blow to the helm,
Two more he sent to the infernal realm.

An error those villainous bands now made, 15
That caused their final ruin, and downfall,
For the Maganzeses thought themselves betrayed
By the Moors, on seeing Bertolagi fall.
While on their side, the Moorish cavalcade
Called the others assassins, traitors all,
And attacking, with dart, and lance and sword,
Fell, in a trice, on the opposing horde.

Ruggiero now charged at both the bands, 16
And took twenty or thirty in his stride;
While the like fell to the maiden's hands,
Toppled from their steeds on either side.
As many as were touched by those sharp brands
Vanished from their saddles, and so died.
Breastplates and helms ne'er kept them from the pyre,
Destroyed like dry wood in some forest fire.

If ever you remember having seen, 17
Or heard report, of how, when they're disturbed,
Wasps gather in the air, and fill the scene,
Ready to sting their foe, if left uncurbed,
And how a swallow then will seek to glean,
A meal, and swoop upon them unperturbed,
Slaying and devouring, so fell those two
Upon the fearful men from either crew.

Ricciardetto and his cousin, though, 18
Chose not to dance between the parties,
For, leaving the Moors, the pair did go,
With fiery gaze, towards the Maganzeses.
There, Rinaldo's brother, Ricciardetto,
Possessed of both strength and spirit, to these,
Brought all his fury, doubled by the spite
That well-nigh consumed the vengeful knight.

Aldigier, who shared his cause, likewise, 19
Seemed like an angry lion, as he sheared
Each helmet that came before his eyes,
Or crushed it like an egg, as it appeared.
Who'd not have dared aught beneath the skies,
Or proved another Hector to be feared,
When Ruggiero and Marfisa there did ride.
Each the flower of chivalry, by his side?

Marfisa, while all the time waging war, 20
Oft turned her gaze upon their company,
And finding how well each warrior bore
Himself, marvelling, praised them equally.
Yet Ruggiero, in his valour, was, she saw,
Unparalleled, in strength and mastery,
Descended to earth, like the war god Mars,
Quitting that fifth heaven among the stars.

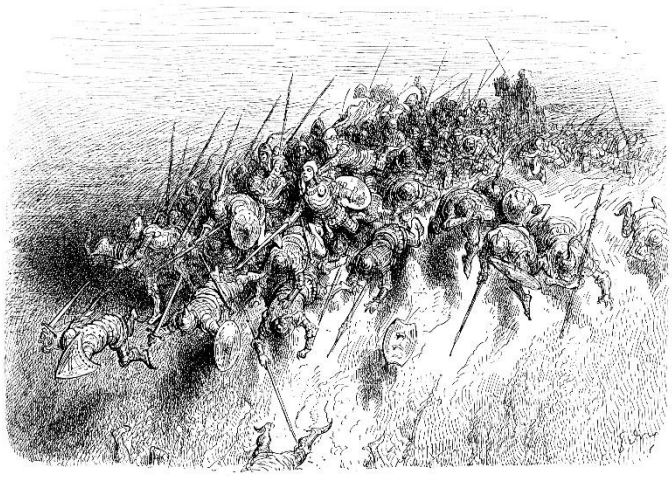
She marvelled at the force behind his blows, 21
And how they ever fell as he intended,
For, whene'er his sword, Balisarda, rose,
Steel seemed but paper, where it descended.
He pierced helm or breastplate, as he chose,
And oft upon some saddle its fall ended,
Splitting those who that fell blade defied,
Sending half to this, half to the other side.

And oft the same blow slew the steed as well, 22
And horse and rider tumbled to the ground.
Heads from shoulders flew, beneath its spell,
While thighs from chests were parted, all around.
Five with one blow he cleft, and sent to hell.
But lest you think but lies herein are found,
Where all is true, and yet shows falsehood's face,
Though I have more to tell, I'll keep my place.

Good Bishop Turpin who, in all he said, 23
Knew he spoke the truth, leaving you and I
To think as we please, wrote, as I have read,
Wondrous things, that yet may seem a lie.
Thus, turned to ice, frozen in utter dread,
Marfisa's victims seemed, as on she sped,
A blazing fire, and Ruggiero no less
Marvelled at hers than she at his prowess.

And if like Mars she had thought Ruggiero, 24
Perchance the war-goddess, fierce Bellona,
She'd have seemed to him, amidst the foe,
If he'd but known she was a maid in armour;
And emulation had been nurtured so,
Contending, with their cruel blades, to muster
The greatest number slain among that crew,
Flesh, bone, and sinew, pierced, through and through.

The spirit and the valour of those four 25
Was enough to shatter both the parties.
To put both sides to rout nothing more
Than their own spurs was needed, for to seize
A horse, then ride, was all each warrior
Desired, and then to seek the distant trees;
While those without a steed sadly learned
How the poor foot-soldier's pay is earned.



Stanza 25

Canto XXVI: 26-29: Marfisa is seen to be a warrior-maid

To the victors the field and spoils remained; 26
Every horseman and muleteer had fled.
Here the Maganzese, there the Moors had gained
Their escape; these their load of gold had shed,
Those had left the captives, as yet constrained,
Viviano and Malagigi; all now sped
To free them, and their squires, and unload,
All that upon the mules had been bestowed.

As well as a quantity of silver
In the form of various vessels, they found
A wealth of female clothes; and, far finer,
A set of Flemish tapestries, once bound
For some royal palace, where the weaver
To form the figures, threads of gold had wound,
Amidst the silk; and then, on which to dine,
Meat and bread, and many a flask of wine. 27

When they removed their helmets, all could see
That they'd received a warrior-maiden's aid,
Known by her golden hair, now falling free,
And the lovely and delicate face displayed.
They honoured her greatly, and asked that she
Reveal her name, in glory now arrayed,
And ever courteous among friends, the maid
At last, by their polite requests was swayed. 28

They were ne'er sated, gazing on her so,
Such had been her appearance in the fight,
While she spoke with none but Ruggiero,
Seeming, indeed, to prize no other knight.
Meanwhile, the squires to and fro did go,
Setting the feast, then the six did invite
To dine there, beside a neighbouring fount,
Shaded, from the sun's rays, by a low mount. 29

Canto XXVI: 30-37: Merlin's fount described

This fount was one that Merlin had made,
One of four in France, set all around
With polished marble, figures there inlaid.
No whiter stone than that had e'er been found.
And, as I say, the fountain there displayed,
Many carvings that did the spring surround,
Wrought with godlike skill, and but that they
Lacked a voice, the breath of life did convey. 30

There a beast seemed to issue from a glade,
Cruel in aspect, hideous to the sight,
Ass's ears, a wolf's mask, the beast displayed;
Lean with hunger, lion's claws showed its might,
While the rest a fox's body portrayed.
It appeared to be ravaging outright,
France, England, Italy and all of Spain;
Of Europe, Asia, the whole world, the bane. 31

All folk this vile beast had slain or maimed,
The lowest of the low, to those on high,
And the latter it had most surely claimed,
King and satrap, prince and lord, far and nigh.
Many a victim in Rome might be named,
For cardinals and popes, carved, met the eye;
Peter's throne it had contaminated,
Brought shame on the faith, there celebrated. 32

Whate'er the vile creature touched, was laid low,
Every temple, every palace, roof and wall;
No castle could defend against that foe,
To its onslaught every fortress must fall.
To be worshipped as divine, here below,
That creature seeks, and hold all folk in thrall,
For it claims to keep the keys to the skies,
And the abyss beneath the world likewise. 33

Next a knight was depicted, on his brow
A crown of imperial laurel shown,
With him three youths, each bound by his vow,
Golden lilies upon their garments sewn.
And a lion did that same device allow,
Set to challenge that thing all skin and bone.
And each form had a name above its head,
Or beneath its feet that same could be read. 34

The noble knight had driven his good sword
Up to the hilt, into the beast's belly,
'Francis the First', his lettering did record;
Twas Maximilian kept him company.
Then, the Emperor Charles the Fifth, had gored
The beast's throat with his lance, while Henry,
The eighth English king to bear that name,
With a dart, in the chest, had pierced that same. 35

A lion's back 'Leo the Tenth,' displayed.
It held the beast, by the ears, in its jaws,
And had so shaken, and had so dismayed
The creature, that others had joined the cause.
Their fears, it would seem, had been allayed,
Amending past errors; towards its roars,
Those noble folk thus trooped, though not many,
Yet the beast's life had been taken swiftly. 36

Marfisa and the five knights stood and gazed, 37
Desirous, as they did so, of learning
Whose hands they were that had the beast amazed,
Which had set so many countries mourning;
For though their names upon the stone were raised,
Whom they signified had left them guessing.
They asked, among themselves, if any knew
The history, and could the tale pursue.

Canto XXVI: 38-42: Malagigi prophesies the future harrying of the beast (Avarice)

Viviano turned to Malagigi; 38
(He had listened, yet failed to say a word)
'It is for you, to tell that history.
Come, say who they might be, and what occurred;
Who wields (in stone) the lance of chivalry,
That here upon the beast has death conferred?
And he replied: 'None yet has told the story,
Nor yet enshrined in memory their glory.

Know that those whose names are carven here, 39
Have not yet graced the world with their presence.
After seven hundred years they'll appear,
To honour that future age, their task immense.
Twas Merlin the enchanter, that wise seer,
That carved this fount, at Arthur's expense,
And displayed here things to come, formed in stone,
Sculpted with art and skill, to make them known.



Stanza 39

The creature issued from the depths of hell, 40
When men first set boundaries to their lands.
Wrought weights and measures, all to buy and sell,
Their agreements recorded with cunning hands.
Yet not every place did of this creature tell,
It left many a country free of its demands;
Now everywhere the beast goes wandering,
All nations thus troubling and offending.

From its first appearance to this age of ours, 41
The monster has grown, and will e'er do so,
And, till its time is past, will shows its powers,
Ever the most hideous root of woe.
The Python, that from old pages glowers,
Though vast, and fierce, and terrible a foe,
Proved not half so dreadful to mortal sight,
Nor so abominable, its presence slight.

Slaughter and desolation it will bring, 42
All lands contaminated and tainted.
In sculpture you see little of the thing,
Nor its wickedness where'er tis painted.
To a world of its evil wearying,
And with its power too long acquainted,
These lords like bright jewels free of flaws,
Combined, will dare to aid the greater cause.

Canto XXVI: 43-47: Francis I's campaign in Italy (1515-1516)

None more fiercely will that beast molest 43
Than Francis, of fair France the noble king,
Who will surpass full many in that quest,
And none shall equal him in so doing,
For he, in splendour, as in all the rest,
Will make many a fine lord seem wanting
In virtue, seeming perfect; so, must yield
All other splendours by the sun revealed.

In the first year of his glorious reign, 44
The crown not yet secure upon his brow,
He'll cross the Alps, and so shall render vain
Those who would hold Milan, for such his vow.
Spurred on by just and generous disdain
That unavenged is the affront, ere now,
The French army had suffered at their hands
When they issued forth from their pasture-lands.

And from there he'll descend to Lombardy, 45
With all the flower of fair France at his side,
And break the Swiss, so that, fruitlessly,
Their horns they'll ever raise in foolish pride.
To the shame of Spain and the Papacy,
And the Florentine Pope, in this defied,
He'll subdue the mighty Sforza castle,
Deemed, ere that, to be impregnable.

His glorious sword will be of more avail 46
In that than all else with which he'll arm,
Which first against the vile beast will prevail,
That corrupts every country, and works harm.
Every banner will flee him, without fail,
Or fall to the earth, at the first alarm.
Against that blade no rampart, moat or wall
Will serve as a defence; he'll conquer all.

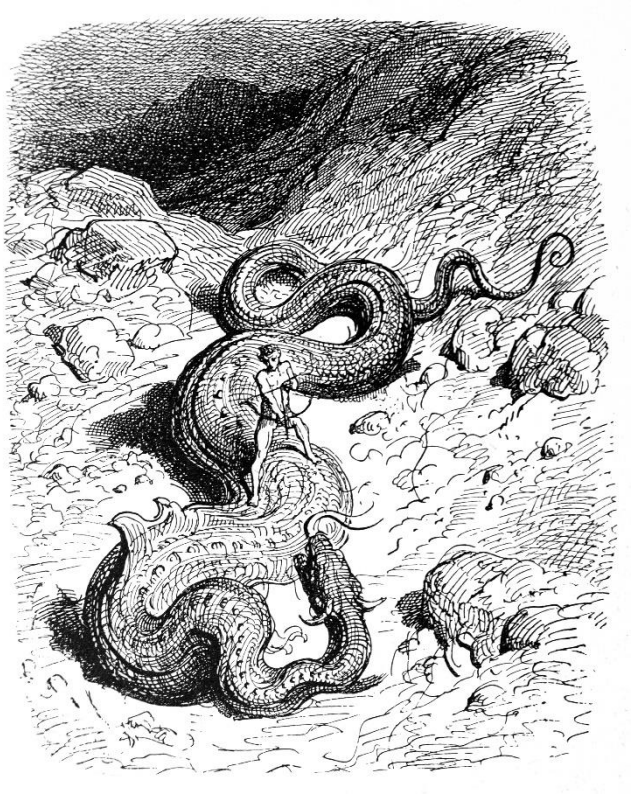
This prince will own to every excellence, 47
That may be seen in a great commander:
Caesar's spirit, the caution and prudence
Shown by Hannibal at the Trebbia,
And by Lake Trasimene, with the immense
Good fortune of a modern Alexander,
Without which all designs are smoke and mist.
Add peerless munificence to the list.'

Canto XXVI: 48-53: Other virtuous enemies of Avarice

So said Malagigi, and stirred their longing 48
To know the names of others who would fight
And so combine to slay the hellish thing,
That creature that had others' deaths in sight.
And, among those found in Merlin's writing,
Upon Bernardo's name he did alight.
'Through him', said he, 'Tuscan Bibbiena,
Will be as famed, as Florence, or Siena.

In this, none will be more relied upon 49
Than Sismondo Gonzaga, Giovanni
Salvati, and Ludovico of Aragon,
Each of that creature a sworn enemy.
While Francesco Gonzaga will make one,
His son, Frederico, of a surety,
His brother-in-law, and son-in-law, also,
The dukes of Ferrara and Urbino.

The son of the latter, Guidobaldo, 50
Will not lag behind his sire or any other;
Ottobon dal Flisco, Sinibaldo,
And he, will hunt the creature together.
Its neck seared by Luigi da Gazolo,
With an arrow from Apollo's quiver,
One granted him, with a bow, long before,
And a brave sword, from Mars, the god of war.



Stanza 50

Two Ercules, two Ippolitos d'Este, 51
Another Ercule and Ippolito,
Of the Gonzagas, of the Medici,
Will chase the beast where'er it might go.
Ferrante will match his brother closely,
Guiliano his son, and there also
Will be Andrea Doria, while by none
Shall bold Francesco Sforza be outdone.

Of the generous and illustrious line 52
Of Avalo, bearing the vast mountain
That hides evil Typheus as their sign,
(That serpent, thus, shall not rebel again!)
Two will appear, who will ne'er resign
First place, but the beast of blood shall drain.
"Francesco di Pescara" see written,
Nigh "Alfonso del Vasto", his cousin.'

Shall we neglect Consalvo Ferrante, 53
The pride of Spain, such his reputation,
Who was so praised now, by Malagigi,
Few might equal him midst any nation?
Or William the Ninth of Montferrat? He
Too was named in that brief summation.
Yet they seem but few beside the number
That shall be slain by that evil creature!

Canto XXVI: 54-57: Ippalca now appears, seeking Ruggiero

In simple games and pleasant conversation, 54
They spent the height of day, their meal done;
Upon the finest tapestries, their station,
Midst the grass and herbs by the river-run.
Viviano, armed, for the duration
Of that pleasant hour or two, neath the sun,
Keeping watch with Malagigi, now saw
A lady, all alone, traverse the shore.

Ippalca it was, from whom Frontino, 55
Had been taken by fierce Rodomonte,
(The charger belonging to Ruggiero);
With pleas and cries of 'shame', fruitlessly,
She'd followed, but then sought Ruggiero
Who, she had heard, was at Agrismonte,
(Though who relayed the news I do not know)
He having rescued Ricciardetto.

And because the place was known to her, 56
(She had been there many a time before)
She'd tried the fount, and in that manner
Found them, as I've said, beside the shore.
But, as a sage and cautious messenger,
That knows to act wisely, when she saw
Bradamante's brother, Ricciardetto,
She pretended not to know Ruggiero.

To Ricciardetto, herself she addressed, 57
As if it were to him that she did fare,
While he, who knew her well of old, expressed
His greetings, and then asked why she was there.
Sighing, her eyes yet red, at his behest,
She spoke, but loudly, so the whole affair
Might be heard by Ruggiero, nearby,
On whom she sought not to cast her eye.



Stanza 57

Canto XXVI: 58-60: And tells her tale

'I brought a good and wondrous steed,' she said, 58
'From Montalbano, at your sister's wish,
One much loved by her, and nobly bred;
Frontino is his name, and one to cherish,
And more than thirty miles the horse I led
Towards Marseilles, the reason for this
Being that she designed that way to fare,
And I was to wait, and attend her there.

I travelled, slowly, in the fond belief 59
That there was none so foolish as to take
Rinaldo's sister's steed, and play the thief,
Once I had pointed out their sad mistake.
But in that I was wrong, for, to my grief,
A Saracen seized him, the cunning snake;
Nor, when I explained who owned Frontino,
Would return the horse, but away did go.

I followed; all yesterday and today, 60
Have I pleaded and threatened, yet in vain;
I cursed him then, as he went on his way,
And left him not far off, upon the plain,
Where his steed, and he, are hard at play;
For he, with sword in hand, seeks to maintain
Himself against one who doth so contend
He shall gain revenge, for me, in the end.'

Canto XXVI: 61-65: Ruggiero seeks vengeance for the theft

Ruggiero, hearing this, leapt to his feet, 61
Scarce waiting for her to end her story,
Turned to Ricciardetto, and did entreat
Him to yield the chance to garner glory
To himself, as a favour, just and meet,
To mark his rescue, and with the lady
Let him depart; she would show the way,
So, he might yet restore the steed that day.

Ricciardetto, though it seemed to be 62
A discourtesy to yield to the knight
That which he should perform himself, nobly
Gave way to Ruggiero, as of right,
Who then took leave of the company,
With Ippalca, who expressed her delight,
And, departing, left the rest stupefied
Marvelling at his valour, open-eyed.

As soon as they were far enough away, 63
Ippalca told him that she had been sent
By one who in her heart, night and day,
Felt the sense of his worth ever-present;
And, without more ado, did then convey
All her lady had said, and her intent,
Adding that she had hid all this before,
For fear of Ricciardetto learning more.

She added that the thief who, in his greed, 64
Had taken the horse, had said with pride:
'Because I know Ruggiero owns the steed,
More willingly I seize it from its guide.
If he would reacquire it, by some deed,
Tell him, since my name I would not hide,
That I am Rodomonte, whose great worth
Casts its splendour throughout all the earth.'



Stanza 63

On hearing this, Ruggiero's face revealed 65
The extent to which his heart was aflame.
Since his love for the steed he'd ne'er concealed,
Given, also, the source from which it came,
And since the thief's scorn was unconcealed,
He saw it meant dishonour, and much blame,
If he failed to challenge Rodomonte,
And seek due vengeance for the theft, promptly.

Canto XXVI: 66-68: But misses Rodomonte and Mandricardo who arrive at the fount

The lady guided him, and took no rest, 66
Wishing to see him meet the pagan king,
And, as the road they swiftly addressed,
Came to where it split, one branch winding
O'er the plain, one seeking the mountain crest,
The one flat, the other steep, both leading,
To where she'd left the pagan; the latter
She chose, it being harsher but shorter.

Her desire to regain the steed, Frontino, 67
And revenge the wrong on Rodomonte,
Thus dictated her choice, and rightly so,
Since, as I say, they'd arrive more swiftly;
But Rodomonte and Mandricardo,
And the others I spoke of previously,
By that easier path o'er the plain did go,
And failed to encounter Ruggiero.

Their quarrel they'd suspended (as you know), 68
Until they'd brought aid to Agramante,
While Doralice rode with them, although
The cause of their ongoing enmity.
Now hear the story's outcome, for lo,
Their road had led to the fount directly,
Where were Marfisa and Ricciardetto,
Aldigier, and his two brothers also.

Canto XXVI: 69-72: Mandricardo picks a fight

At the request of the others, Marfisa 69
Had donned the dress and ornaments of a maid,
From amongst the riches that Lanfusa
Had to that traitorous tryst conveyed,
And though it was not the custom for her
To appear lest in full armour arrayed,
At their plea she had laid the armour down,
And deigned to appear dressed in a gown.

As soon as the Tartar saw Marfisa, 70
He thought he might win her in recompense
For Doralice, and yield the latter
To Rodomonte, as if it made sense,
To believe that Love in such a matter
Would countenance that rude offence,
Or fail to wound, with reason, a 'lover'
Who'd exchange one maiden for another.

Yet he thought to give her to Rodomonte, 71
So that he might Marfisa then retain,
Thinking her most graceful and lovely,
And well worth a warrior's toil and pain.
Thus, as if one were as good, suddenly
As another, and the maid his to gain,
He challenged all the knights about her
To joust singly, or be assailed together.

Malagigi was armed, and Viviano, 72
Since they were standing guard for the rest,
And thus, they rose to meet Mandricardo,
Springing from the grassy turf they pressed,
Thinking to face Rodomonte also,
But he, who thought the Tartar mad at best,
Gave not a sign, nor moved as if to fight,
So, their opposition was this lone knight.

Canto XXVI: 73-77: And overcomes the four male knights

Viviano was the first to advance, 73
And great of heart he went to meet the foe,
While Mandricardo, lowering his lance,
Seeming stronger, prepared to lay him low.
Each aimed where lay the greater chance
Of planting a fierce, all-conquering blow.
But Viviano struck the helm in vain,
For the other bent not, but wheeled again.

The pagan king whose blow was the stronger, 74
Burst Viviano's shield as if twere straw,
He tumbled to the ground in short order,
To sit midst the grass and flowers, as before.
Came Malagigi, to avenge his brother,
And down upon the Tartar warrior bore.
Yet, such his haste for vengeance, he found
He merely joined his brother on the ground.

Aldigier was armed before Ruggiero, 75
And, in a moment, leapt upon his steed,
Then, defying the might of Mandricardo,
He charged the Tartar monarch, at full speed.
An inch below the visor, his fierce blow
Resounded on the helm, and yet no heed
The Tartar paid, though Aldigier's lance
Dispersed, in fragments, over half of France.

The pagan king meanwhile aimed at his flank, 76
With a lance-blow delivered at full strength,
Nor had he his good shield or mail to thank
For saving him, their thickness seemed a tenth
Of the other's; thus, to left, then right he sank,
And fell amongst the grass and flowers, full length,
His shoulder pierced, his armour to be seen
Dyed crimson, he, pale-faced amidst the green.



Stanza 76

After him, Ricciardetto sought the foe, 77
And, boldly, his great lance he displayed,
Set on showing, as he was wont to show,
That a worthy French champion he made.
And would have taught Mandricardo so,
If all things had been equal, yet was laid
Upon the ground, not through his fault indeed,
But through the sudden fall of his good steed.

Canto XXVI: 78-83: Marfisa takes up the challenge

Now, when no further challenger appeared, 78
To joust with the pagan king, he thought
The maiden was his prize, so he neared
The fount, to lay claim to the one he sought,
And cried: 'You are mine, save one endeared
To aiding you remains, and offers aught;
Nor can you refuse, or seek excuse,
Such is the rule of war, in common use.'

Marfisa gazed at him, pride in her face, 79
And said: 'Sir, you seem to be in error,
Tis true that your company I would grace,
According to the rules of war, if either
My lord or knight lay there, in deep disgrace,
Among those you've tumbled in the heather.
Yet not theirs, nor another's, but mine own,
He who'd win me, must deal with me alone.

I know how to employ both lance and shield, 80
And more than one upon the ground have laid.
Bring my steed,' she cried, 'arm me for the field!'
And her young squire most readily obeyed.
With surcoat beneath, her gown she did yield,
And her slim body, full of strength displayed,
For in every aspect, save her lovely face,
She resembled Mars in form and warlike grace.

Fully armoured, she girded on her sword, 81
And with a light leap mounted her charger.
She made the horse wheel, once she was aboard,
Rearing on high, then the ground did quarter.
Levelling her lance at this pagan lord,
Then gripping it tight, she charged the Tartar.
So, on Troy's far field, Penthesilea
Assailed Achilles in his bright armour.

Their lances flew to pieces as they met, 82
Splintering like glass in that encounter,
Though neither warrior seemed harmed as yet,
But merely seemed ready to strive harder.
Marfisa, hoping to reduce the threat,
And test his skills more, if they came nearer,
Sought closer combat with the Tartar lord,
And wheeled round, to attack him with the sword.

He cursed the elements, and cursed the sky, 83
Once he saw she held the saddle still;
And she who'd sought to split his shield thereby,
Cursed no less loudly at heaven's ill-will.
Both the warriors whirled their swords on high
And made their foe's enchanted armour thrill,
That enchanted armour, that both knights bore,
Never more needed than in that fierce war.

Canto XXVI: 84-87: Rodomonte achieves a reconciliation

So strongly-wrought their plate was, and chain-mail, 84
That neither lance nor sword could win through,
So that they might have fought, to no avail,
Another day, it seemed, or even two.
But Rodomonte on the Tartar did prevail
To cease, and not seek to prove the issue;
Saying: 'If there's a battle to be fought,
Then let us recommence the one we sought.

For we both agreed a truce, as you know, 85
So that we then might grant the army aid,
Nor should we joust, or battle with a foe,
Until the debt we owe them has been paid.'
Then he turned, to Marfisa, bowing low,
And the message they'd received he relayed.
And explained the reason they were there:
To aid Agramante in that fierce affair.

Then he begged her, as did Mandricardo, 86
To now abandon or defer the fight,
To travel with them where'er they must go,
And aid Troyano's son with all her might,
While raising her fame to the heavens so,
On wings of glory, in worthier flight
Than in a joust of such little moment,
That one might term it an impediment.

Marfisa who was ever keen to prove 87
Charlemagne's champions, with sword and lance,
(By solely that, induced to make remove
From a far-off clime to the land of France)
And discover if the tales she might approve,
That their fame was due to skill and not chance,
To accompany the pair, at once, agreed,
Once she'd heard of Agramante's need.

Canto XXVI: 88-90: Meanwhile Ruggiero sends Ippalca to Montalbano

Meanwhile Ruggiero had, all in vain, 88
Followed Ippalca o'er the mountain height,
To find that Rodomonte, o'er the plain,
Had swiftly sped, and was no more in sight;
Yet, reading that fresh trail, the news did gain
That he towards the fount had gone, and might
Be not so far ahead, so took his way,
Hoping to meet the Saracen that day.

He asked Ippalca to return once more 89
To Montalbano, a good day away;
Since for her to seek the fount, he was sure
Would take her far too far from her way.
And he would find Frontino yet, he swore;
Upon her mind, let not the steed's loss prey,
For to Montalbano, or wherever
She might be, he'd send a messenger.

Then he gave her the letter he had written, 90
In Agrismonte, that was at his breast,
And many a verbal message was given,
Praying his love's forgiveness for the rest.
Ippalca, having memorised all, then
Took leave of him and, on her way, she pressed,
Nor did that messenger cease from riding,
Till she reached Montalbano, that evening.

Canto XXVI: 91-97: He finds Rodomonte who declines to fight

Chasing the Saracen went Ruggiero, 91
Along the road that crossed the level plain,
But only came upon him, even so,
As he drew closer to the fount again.
There too was the Tartar, Mandricardo;
Both had agreed, on the way, to restrain
Themselves from conflict, till they'd brought aid
To their king, facing Charlemagne's blockade.

On arriving, he recognised Frontino, 92
And, therefore, the knight upon his back,
And crouched o'er his lance, bending low,
Threatened him with immediate attack.
Humbler than Job proved Rodomonte though,
All his customary pride he seemed to lack,
While the battle that he was ever used
To seek, on all occasions, he refused.

This was the very first time, and the last, 93
On which the Moorish king chose not to fight.
But his desire to help his monarch surpassed
His wish to prove his prowess as a knight;
And even if he'd held Ruggiero fast,
As a greyhound grips a hare, felt it right
Not to linger for a sword-blow or two,
But rather his prime purpose to pursue.

Even though he knew twas Ruggiero, 94
So famous that none matched him in glory,
That was set to fight him for Frontino,
A knight of whom (in any other story!)
He would, indeed, have gladly liked to know,
By trial, if his fame was but vainglory,
He nonetheless refused the encounter,
So keen his wish to bring the army succour.

A hundred miles, a thousand, he'd have gone, 95
Were it not so, to purchase this brave quarrel,
Yet if Achilles himself had brought it on,
He'd still have sought exit from the battle,
So deeply had the ash been poured upon
The fire within; he further grasped the nettle,
And told Ruggiero why he dared not rise,
While asking him to join their enterprise;

For, in doing so, a knight, he said, but showed 96
The loyalty a follower owes his lord,
And when the siege was lifted, it followed,
They might resume, being of one accord.
Ruggiero said: 'Tis easily bestowed;
Let us defer our fight till, by the sword,
Agramante is saved from Charlemagne,
But first you must render the horse again.

If you'd have me refrain, till we're at court, 97
From proving that you did an ugly deed,
And one unworthy of a knight in short,
In taking, from a maid, my own true steed,
Then give me back Frontino; I'll support
The deferral then, in principle agreed.
Yet, if not, then the battle twixt us two,
And no truce e'en for an hour, I'll pursue.'

Canto XXVI: 98-102: But Mandricardo finds sufficient reason

As he made clear his sole demand again, 98
Either to fight, or return Frontino,
While Rodomonte yet denied his claim,
Another sight had stirred Mandricardo,
And set another cause for strife in train.
He saw the emblem borne by Ruggiero
Upon his shield: an eagle, painted there,
That, above all the birds, commands the air.

The eagle, argent on an azure ground, 99
Was once the emblem of the Trojan race,
For to the famous Hector, twill be found,
Ruggiero could his own fair lineage trace.
But Mandricardo, viewing it, was bound,
Not knowing this, to deem it a disgrace
That any but himself had there revealed
Famed Hector's puissant emblem on his shield;

For Mandricardo showed the very same: 100
The bird that, on Ida, snatched Ganymede.
How, in the perilous castle, he'd laid claim
To that emblem, of old, and by what deed,
I suspect you may know, and how that same
The enchantress bestowed on him; indeed,
She granted him that, and all the armour
That Vulcan had forged for Trojan Hector.

For this reason alone, they had fought before, 101
Mandricardo and Ruggiero, although
Why they'd ceased the fight, I am unsure,
For naught in my books the cause doth show.
They had not met again, nor fought the more;
But now the shield he saw, and Mandricardo
Shouted aloud, and gave a threatening cry,
Then proclaimed: 'I challenge you, hereby!

You, that dare my own emblem, thus, to bear, 102
Tis not for the first time I challenge you.
Madman, think you that I shall let you wear
It so, because I chose, once, to spare you?
Since threats, nor aught else, it seems, can repair
Your brain, and drive this folly forth anew,
I'll show you why it had served you better
Simply to obey me to the letter.'

Canto XXVI: 103-108: Rodomonte and Marfisa intervene

As smouldering wood suddenly takes light 103
At a breath of air, and fierce flames ascend,
So, Ruggiero's anger burned, at the slight
Mandricardo offered, seeking to offend.
'You think,' he said, 'to carry on our fight,
Merely because you see I must contend
With this other, but you'll learn, in the field,
I'll have Frontino and good Hector's shield!

For when before (twas not so long ago) 104
I encountered you in battle, I recall
I refrained from dealing you the fatal blow
Because you lacked a sword; that was all.
Here deeds, and not sweet mercy, I'll bestow;
Let this pale bird be presage of your fall.
Here stands the ancient emblem of my race;
Tis you that snatch it from its rightful place.'

'Rather tis mine, and you usurp the thing!' 105
Cried Mandricardo, and unsheathed the sword
That Orlando had hurled, midst his raging,
Into the glade, to lie upon the sward.
Ruggiero, that chivalrous being,
Could not but draw his own, in accord,
Seeing Mandricardo hurl his lance
To the ground, and then, blade in hand, advance.

He gripped his shield tight, and Balisarda, 106
(His own blade) and then prepared for the fight;
But Rodomonte drove his steed, then Marfisa
Betwixt the two, and each implored their knight
To end the contest, sooner not later,
Regardless of whiche'er was wrong or right.
While Rodomonte cried that the Tartar king
Had twice broken their pact, without trying,

Since firstly, he'd thought to win Marfisa, 107
And more than once had jousted for the maid,
And now sought to deprive a warrior
Of his device, while both of them delayed,
He said, in aiding their royal leader:
'Twere better that the start we both made
To our worthier contest were resumed,
Than see our time, in lesser strife, consumed.

On such condition was our treaty made, 108
And the truce between us is still in force.
When we have fought, and thus its terms obeyed,
Then he and I may battle for the horse,
While, if you survive, you may turn your blade
Against that ill shield of his, in due course.
Though I'll deal you such a mortal blow
There'll be little left for Ruggiero.'

Canto XXVI: 109-114: Yet fail to resolve the issue

'That which you expect, you shall not gain,' 109
Said Mandricardo to Rodomonte,
'I'll grant you what you'd rather not obtain,
And make you sweat, from head to toe, freely,
Yet sufficient strength and more I'll retain,
(As the fount never fails, that yields plenty)
To meet Ruggiero and a thousand more,
With all the world beside; a plenteous store.'

The anger, and the flow of words, increased, 110
On this side and that; for Mandricardo
A torrent of disdain and scorn released,
Directed at the Moor, and Ruggiero,
Who unused to defiance that ne'er ceased,
No longer wished for peace, but to show
His warlike face; Marfisa hovered there,
But the rift she alone could not repair,

Like a farmer, who if the river leaches 111
Through its high bank and seeks to find
A new channel, hastes to stem the breaches,
And save the pasture and the crops behind,
Yet sees the flow drown the farthest reaches;
For though each open gap is filled and lined,
Yet, elsewhere, the foundering bank gives way,
And the water through further holes will play.

So, while Ruggiero, and Mandricardo, 112
And Rodomonte, quarrelled together,
Seeking their greater vigour to show,
And labouring to outdo one another,
Marfisa sought to dam the angry flow,
Yet wasted her time, and all her labour;
For as soon as she drew one from the fight,
The others but resumed with greater spite.

Marfisa, seeking to achieve accord, 113
Said: 'Listen, lords, to my wiser counsel,
Twould be best to defer, and yet record,
These arguments, until, all being well,
You have your monarch's safety assured;
Or I'll fight Mandricardo for a spell,
If you so wish, and see if he can win me,
By force of arms, as he sought, formerly;

For if to succour Agramante is your aim, 114
Let us do so, and not contend together.'
'I make no obstacle, naught do I claim,'
Said Ruggiero, 'but my stolen charger,
Let him grant me my Frontino, for shame,
Or look to his own defence, as ever.
I'll return with my fine steed from the field,
Or remain, while my parting breath I yield.'

Canto XXVI: 115-118: Ruggiero fights Rodomonte, and loses his sword Balisarda

'The former's not so easy in the doing,' 115
Rodomonte replied, and then again:
'I protest; if any harm comes to our king,
The fault is yours, for I, as yet, maintain
That I shall perform whate'er is fitting.'
But Ruggiero found no way now to contain
His fierce anger, and gave him little heed,
But gripped his sword, while readying his steed.

Like a savage boar, he drove at Rodomonte, 116
Striking him with his shoulder, and his shield,
And dismayed Algiers' king so completely,
That one foot left the stirrup, as he reeled.
Mandricardo cried: 'Cease, or as surely
You'll fall to me, and your surrender yield!'
Savagely and fiercely, he charged Ruggiero,
Striking his helm, and with a mighty blow.



Stanza 116

Upon his horse's neck, Ruggiero bowed, 117
Nor could he rise again, as he now sought,
For Rodomonte's blade, echoing loud,
Had struck against him also, as they fought,
And if the helm had not been well-endowed
With adamantine steel, his face had caught;
The pain assailed him with its fierce demand,
And sword and bridle fell from either hand.

His charger bore him swiftly o'er the field, 118
While Balisarda fell towards the ground.
Marfisa, his true comrade was revealed,
For she was all aflame, a queen uncrowned,
Angered that the pair had sought to wield
Their swords against a single foe; she found
Mandricardo, yet unscathed, and her blade,
To his head, a mighty stroke now conveyed.

Canto XXVI: 119-123: Viviano gives his sword to Ruggiero who stuns Rodomonte

Rodomonte chased after Ruggiero, 119
For one more blow and Frontino was won:
But Ricciardetto and Viviano
Drove between them, ere the course was run.
The former warrior parted, so,
Rodomonte from his prey, the latter one,
Viviano, placed his sword in the hand
Of Ruggerio (no longer unmanned).

Returned, now, to himself, Ruggiero, 120
Re-armed by Viviano with that blade,
Charged at Rodomonte, as if the blow
Were naught; much as a lion, undismayed,
Raised on a bull's horns from the ground below,
Denying pain, would see the beast repaid,
And, spurred by indignation and anger,
Is merely goaded to revenge thereafter.

Ruggiero struck at Rodomonte's head, 121
And had it been his own sword in his hand
(That, through a treacherous blow, as I have said,
Had slipped his grasp, he by the stroke unmanned)
I doubt the helm, that stood him in good stead,
Had protected him, though forged to withstand
Many a blow, by Babel's king once wrought,
That a war with the heavens long had sought.

Discord (thinking naught could there exist 122
But contention and strife, now stirred anew,
Nor could truce, pact, or treaty e'er persist)
Advised her sister she might thus renew
Acquaintance with her monks so sorely missed,
And she would seek, with her, that godly crew.
Let both depart; while we turn to the blow
That had nigh on laid Rodomonte low.

Ruggiero's blade had struck with such force 123
That the helm and cap Rodomonte wore
Had landed on the crupper of his horse,
Brave Frontino, that is; three times or four
The Saracen swayed on his errant course,
As if he might fall head-first to the floor,
And would have lost his sword, I insist,
If the hilt had not been tied to his wrist.



Stanza 123

Canto XXVI: 124-126: Marfisa is unseated

Marfisa meanwhile fought with Mandricardo, 124
Till sweat ran down his brow, face, and chest,
And he had no doubt wearied her also,
Though their breastplates were as yet un-distressed,
So impenetrable the armour both did show,
And both, in the saddle, as yet, did rest;
But Marfisa, with a turn her charger made,
Found herself in need of Ruggiero's aid.

For Marfisa's valiant steed, in wheeling, 125
Where the ground was all soft and slippery,
Was unable to stop itself from sliding,
And fell upon its right side, heavily,
And then was struck, while swiftly rising,
By Brigliadoro (scant courtesy
Being shown by his rider, Mandricardo)
Such that her horse fell again, at the blow.

Seeing Marfisa tumble to the ground, 126
Ruggiero galloped swiftly to her aid,
Free to do so, since Rodomonte he found,
Partly stunned and helpless, retreat had made.
He'd have had the Tartar's head, at a bound,
As he struck at his helm, had he his blade,
Balisarda, and not Viviano's, instead,
Or Mandricardo other helm on his head.



Stanza 122 "*Let both depart; while we turn to the blow*"

Canto XXVI: 127-130: Malagigi's spell sends Doralice's mount fleeing

Rodomonte, who his senses had regained, 127
Wheeled around, and espied Ricciardetto,
Recalling how his charge had been contained
By that knight granting aid to Ruggiero.
He drove at him, and his charge maintained,
And had dealt him his reward, a fierce blow,
Had not Malagigi taken his part,
With a fresh display of enchantment's art.

Malagigi, who knew every evil spell 128
That could be cast by the sagest enchanter.
(And could halt the sun, and the moon as well;
The book he needed, he lacked however)
Recalled now how to conjure, out of hell,
A tame demon, and then bade it enter
The body of fair Doralice's horse,
And sting it, till it took a random course.

Into that gentle palfrey, which now bore 129
King Stordilano's most lovely daughter,
Viviano's brother conjured, by his lore,
A fallen angel summoned from the lower
Depths, while the steed, that had ne'er stirred before
Except, indeed, at its mistress' order,
Now took a sudden leap towards the sky,
A good thirty feet long, and sixteen high.

It was a mighty leap, yet not the kind 130
That ejects the rider from the saddle;
Yet seeing herself leave the earth behind,
The lady gave a cry (as if twere fatal).
The palfrey, having leapt, running blind,
Took off, as one possessed by the devil,
The lady crying out for aid, in haste,
As an arrow's speed that palfrey outpaced.

Canto XXVI: 131-133: She is pursued by Rodomonte and Mandricardo

On hearing her loud cry, Rodomonte 131
Retired from the battle, and pursued her,
And, wherever went the maddened palfrey,
He sped after it to bring her succour.
Mandricardo did no less, ending swiftly
His tussle with Ruggiero and Marfisa,
And seeking neither truce, nor peace, wildly,
Set off in his pursuit of Rodomonte.

Now, Marfisa had risen from the ground, 132
Her mind ablaze with anger and disdain,
Thinking to win revenge, and yet she found
Her enemy had vanished o'er the plain.
Ruggiero roared, as he gazed around,
Like a lion, the fight deferred again,
He knew their own steeds would chase Frontino
In vain, not to speak of Brigliadoro.

Ruggiero would not cease till he'd received 133
That brave steed of his from Rodomonte;
Marfisa would not rest till she'd achieved
Vengeance on her hateful enemy,
To leave their quarrel thus, they believed,
Seemed against the true law of chivalry,
And the mutual intention of the pair
Was to follow those offenders everywhere.

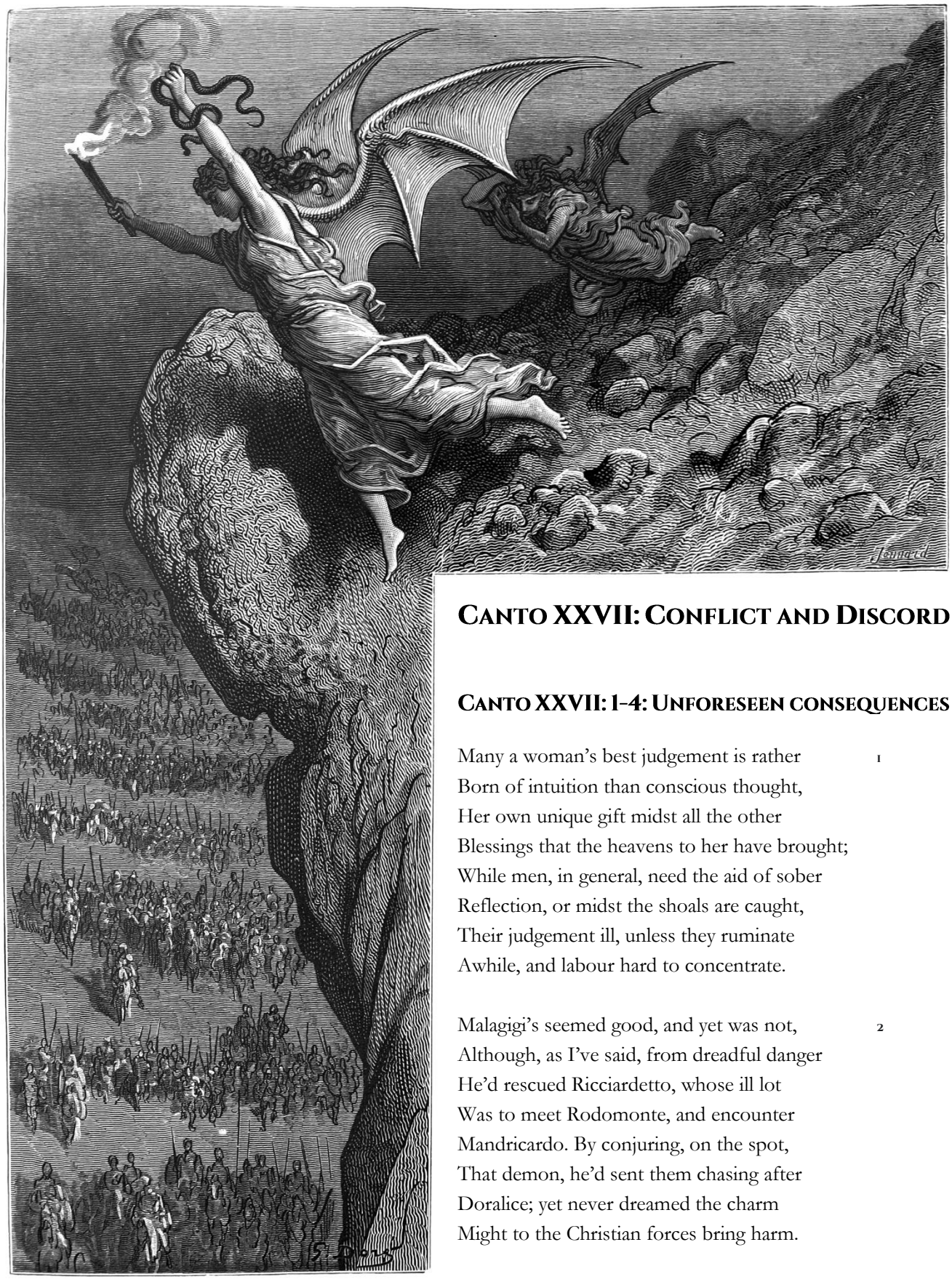
Canto XXVI: 134-137: Ruggiero and Marfisa decide to pursue them in turn

If they failed to overtake them on the way, 134
They would find them with the Moorish army,
Knowing that summons they must yet obey:
To fight the Franks, or fail in their duty.
So, for Paris, they both would ride that day,
Where they thought to pursue their enmity
Against the other pair, yet Ruggiero
Wished first to speak with Ricciardetto.

So, he returned to seek his lady's brother, 135
Professing himself a friend, who would share
In good or evil fortune, while, together,
They might venture an action, anywhere.
He begged him then to salute his sister,
In his name (and o'er this he took great care)
Such that not e'en the slightest suspicion
Did he raise, regarding his own position.

He of Viviano, and Malagigi, 136
And the wounded Aldigier, took leave;
While those three knights (in his debt) repeatedly,
Proffered their services, as you'll conceive.
Marfisa (her mind on Paris, ready
To depart) neglected them, as I believe,
But, a little way, the two brothers rode,
And a distant salute on her bestowed,

As did Ricciardetto, but his cousin, 137
Aldigier, suffering, needed rest.
The two fierce kings to Paris sought to win,
While the two behind pursued an equal quest.
In the very next canto, I'll begin
To reveal the deeds (wondrous I'd suggest,
Nigh superhuman others will maintain)
Wrought by those warriors gainst Charlemagne.



Canto XXVII: Conflict and Discord

Canto XXVII: 1-4: Unforeseen consequences

Many a woman's best judgement is rather 1
Born of intuition than conscious thought,
Her own unique gift midst all the other
Blessings that the heavens to her have brought;
While men, in general, need the aid of sober
Reflection, or midst the shoals are caught,
Their judgement ill, unless they ruminate
Awhile, and labour hard to concentrate.

Malagigi's seemed good, and yet was not, 2
Although, as I've said, from dreadful danger
He'd rescued Ricciardetto, whose ill lot
Was to meet Rodomonte, and encounter
Mandricardo. By conjuring, on the spot,
That demon, he'd sent them chasing after
Doralice; yet never dreamed the charm
Might to the Christian forces bring harm.

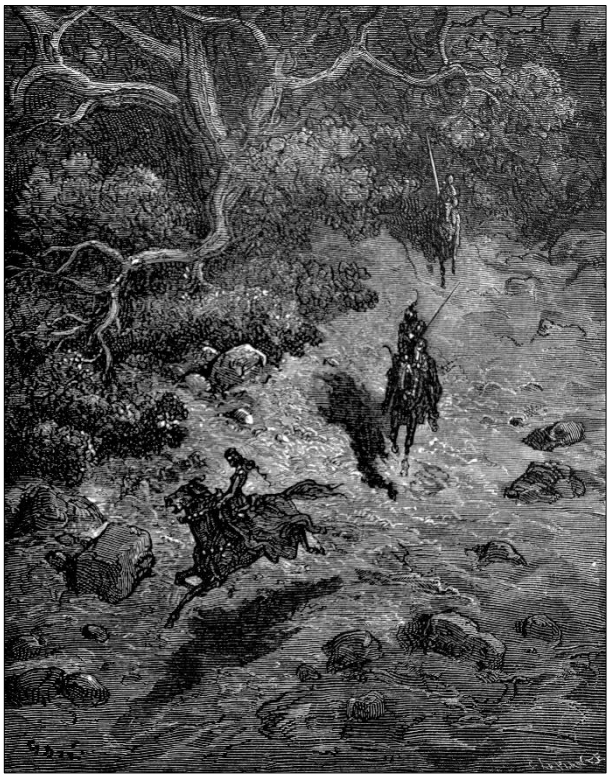
Had he but time for a moment's thought, 3
He might have granted his young cousin aid,
Without his doing harm to those who fought
For Charlemagne, and greater sense displayed.
He could equally have ordered, as he ought,
The demon in the steed, that e'er obeyed,
To bear the lady so far, west or east,
That France would hear no more of them, at least.

Thus, the warriors, following as she fled, 4
Might elsewhere than to Paris have been sent,
But, to ruin, inadvertently, it led,
All through Malagigi's reckless intent;
For Malice, whose great hunger's ever fed
By blood and fire, and slaughter, was content,
Exiled from the heavens, to make her way
To Charlemagne's host, bringing great dismay.

Canto XXVII: 5-6: Rodomonte and Mandricardo pursue Doralice to Paris

The palfrey, with the demon there inside, 5
Led fair Doralice not so far astray,
That she was halted by some ditch, yawning wide,
River, wood, marsh, or cliff, along the way.
Through the English, and French lines they did glide,
And the rest of the Christian array,
And the steed never stopped till it bore her
To the King of Granada, her father.

For a portion of that day, Rodomonte, 6
With Mandricardo, pursued her apace,
Their eyes fixed on her back, though, finally,
She was lost to sight; yet, hot upon the trace,
Rode those warriors, like hounds running free
Hunting some hare, or roebuck, in the chase,
Nor did they cease till they the news did gain
That she was safe with her father again.

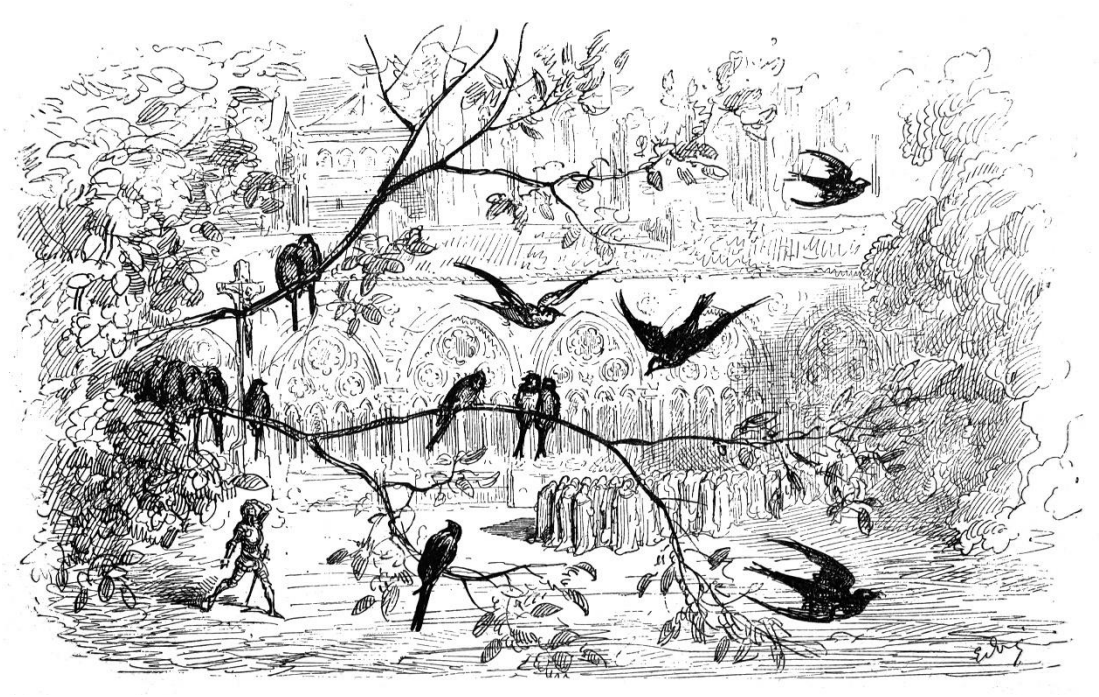


Stanza 6

Canto XXVII: 7-12: Rinaldo returns there still seeking Angelica

Guard yourself, Charlemagne for upon you 7
Comes such a storm I see no help at hand,
For not only these, but Gradasso too,
And Sacripante, heed the king's command;
While Fortune, who would probe your strength anew,
Has drawn away those twin lights that did stand
At your side, e'er shedding wisdom and light;
Thus, you are blinded, midst the dark of night.

I speak of Orlando and Rinaldo, 8
Of whom the one is in a maddened frenzy,
And naked o'er the hills and plains doth go,
Neath sun and rain, in cold or heat, wildly,
While the other, likewise, wanders to and fro,
Nigh lost to you, when you need him greatly.
He, failing to locate Angelica,
Had left Paris, swiftly, in search of her.



Stanza 10

By the cunning old enchanter deceived 9
(As from an early canto you should know),
Deluded by a phantom, he believed
Angelica had fled with Orlando,
And hence by bitter jealousy aggrieved,
More than any lover yet, he did go
To fair Paris, where appearing at court
He was sent to Britain, his quest cut short.

Then the field won, where he had the honour 10
Of inspiring the siege gainst Agramante,
He'd returned to Paris, still searching for her,
Through every fort, and tower, and nunnery;
And, save she were sealed in bricks and mortar,
That restless lover had surely found her.
Yet finding her not, nor yet Orlando,
He'd gone forth, again, to wander to and fro.

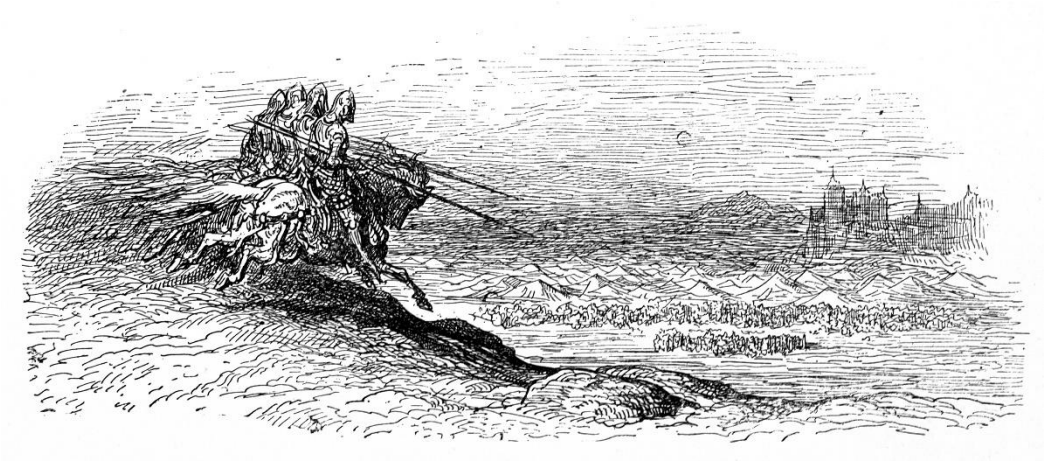
Fearful that in Brava, or Anglante, 11
Orlando enjoyed her, in joyful play,
Up and down, he journeyed, joylessly,
Nor found her, here or there, by night or day.
He'd then returned to Paris, thoughtfully,
Deeming that in a while he might waylay
The Count, who could not simply roam at will,
Beyond the walls, bound by stern duty still.

Once there, he'd rested but a day or two, 12
And, finding that Orlando came not there,
To Brava and Anglante had gone, anew,
Seeking news of the knight and lady fair;
And thus, at noon and midnight, would pursue
His dream, in light and darkness, nor did spare
His steed, but full two hundred times had run
That same round, by the light of moon and sun.

Canto XXVII: 13-16: The warriors bring aid to the Moorish army

But the ancient adversary, through whom 13
Eve raised her hand to the forbidden fruit,
Turned livid eyes on Charlemagne once more,
While Rinaldo was far upon his route,
And, seeing what great harm he might ensure
Among the Christian forces, in pursuit
Of their doom, led there, to the Saracen
Camp, their finest warriors, maid and men.

Those kings, Sacripante and Gradasso, 14
He'd joined in company, that very day
When from Atlante's mansion they did go,
And then had set them swiftly on their way,
To aid the Moors, and strike many a blow
Against this Charlemagne and his array.
Ever, through unknown lands, he was their guide,
And smoothed their path to Agramante's side.



Stanza 18

To another fiend from Hell he'd given 15
The task of conducting Mandricardo,
And Rodomonte, to where the demon
Had carried Doralice, beyond the foe;
And then he had sent a third to summon,
Lest their hands be idle, Ruggiero
And Marfisa, guiding them more slowly,
Such that the pair had appeared but lately.



Stanza 15

Half an hour at least behind the other two 16
He'd kept Marfisa and Ruggiero,
Because the Dark Angel who would pursue
The final ruin of the Christian foe,
Ensured no more delay could now ensue
From their dispute with Mandricardo
And King Rodomonte, which it well might
Have done, if that bold pair had met their sight.

Canto XXVII: 17-19: The first four arrivals launch a surprise attack

The first four to arrive viewed, together, 17
The camps of the besieged and besieger,
The field of banners in the wind all a-flutter,
And there took counsel with one another.
The result of their discussions as to whether
To press on, and grant Agramante succour,
Despite the seeming strength of Charlemagne,
Was that sudden advantage they might gain.

Keeping close, they spurred across the plain, 18
To where the Christians were closely packed;
Crying, as they rode: 'Africa, and Spain!'
Thus, turning mere suspicion to bold fact,
Among their foes, who must now maintain
The call to arms; but caught there in the act
Of arming, e'en the rear-guard felt the blow,
That not only were attacked, but routed so.

Amidst the tumult, the Christian army 19
Was confounded, though how they scarcely knew,
Thinking it some insult, treacherously
Wrought by the Swiss or Gascons; midst the hue
And cry, confused, they gathered swiftly
To each nation's banners, forming up anew,
Here to the drum, and there the trumpet's cry,
Echoing, loudly, from the earth and sky.

Canto XXVII: 20-22: Charlemagne surveys the damage

Save for his helmet, Charlemagne was armed, 20
With his paladins about him, and sought
To know what it was that had so alarmed
His brave squadrons, and havoc midst them wrought.
He threatened those that tried to flee, unharmed,
Though many a fugitive had, briefly, fought,
For bloodied faces, chests, arms, hands, he saw,
And heads and throats, the evil gifts of war.

Advancing, he viewed many on the ground, 21
Or rather weltering in a crimson lake,
So that, in their own blood, the living drowned;
No surgeon or magician such could wake.
Torsos, devoid of heads, lay all around,
And legs and arms, that none could now remake;
And cruel slaughter there, from first to last
Of the encampments, witnessed as he passed.

Where the band of warriors had sped by, 22
(Each of them worthy of eternal fame)
A lengthy wake, of corpses, met his eye,
A record of the exploits of those same.
At that cruel slaughter he heaved a sigh,
Filled with wonder, and anger, and disdain.
So, one who has felt the lightning's force
Strike his ruined house, might chart its course.



Stanza 22

Canto XXVII: 23-28: Ruggiero and Marfisa reach Agramante's camp

This sudden aid, employed amidst the foe, 23
Had not yet reached Agramante's army,
When, from another side, bold Ruggiero
And Marfisa, approached most suddenly,
Who, once they had cast their gaze to and fro,
And made a survey, however briefly,
Of the swiftest way to afford him succour,
Rode thence, to defend his life and honour.

When, by the gunner, the mine's fuse is lit, 24
So swiftly through the powder will the fire
Run its course, that the eye scarce follows it,
Astounded by the speed it will acquire,
While ruin descends where the mine has hit,
As walls of stone are razed, and men expire.
So, Ruggiero and Marfisa sped
To battle, leaving but a line of dead.

Forward, and sideways, swept each sharpened blade, 25
Severing arms, and heads, and shoulders too,
Where'er the Christian ranks the pair delayed,
Too slow to move, as they swept through that crew.
Whoe'er has seen the trees by tempest swayed,
Midst hill or valley, while it passes through,
Leaving the rest untouched, may conceive
How those two the enemy ranks did cleave.

Many, that feared Rodomonte's fury, 26
And that of the other furious three,
And thanked God He'd seen fit, in His mercy,
To grant them legs and feet on which to flee,
Now found themselves but mocked perversely;
Marfisa and Ruggiero, they could see
Before them and, whether they stood or ran,
None could escape, but perished to a man.

For whoe'er dodged the one, faced the other, 27
And paid the penalty in flesh and bone.
So, do fox cubs die, beside their mother,
In the hounds' jaws, when she and they have flown
The den, forced by blows to break their cover;
For, unearthed, when fire and smoke were sown
Through all their ancient run beneath the ground,
Yet another form of death the creatures found.



Stanza 25

Marfisa and Ruggiero, by and by, 28
Within the Saracen camp, took shelter,
Where while raising their gaze towards the sky
All gave thanks for their successful venture.
Indeed, the humblest Moor might now defy
A hundred Christians; he much the braver!
And so, it was agreed they'd, once again,
Set forth to drench with blood the open plain.

Canto XXVII: 29-33: The Christians retreat behind the walls of Paris

Trumpets, horns, and Moorish timpani 29
Filled the sky, with a formidable sound.
While banners in the wind fluttered gently,
Casting flickering shadows on the ground.
On the other side Charlemagne's army,
With the Bretons and Germans could be found,
Those men of England, France and Italy;
Fierce war now was waged most bitterly.

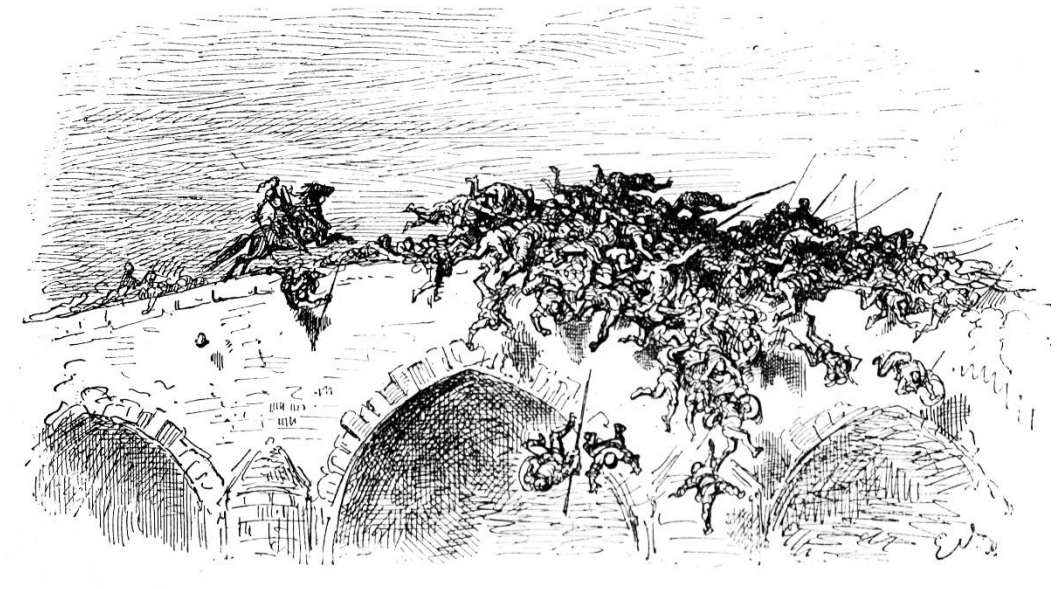


Stanza 29

The might of the furious Rodomonte, 30
With that of the Tartar, Mandricardo,
And that of Ruggiero, of virtue, truly,
The fountain, and of renowned Gradasso,
And Marfisa, that intrepid lady,
With that of King Sacripante also,
Made Charlemagne upon Saint Denis call,
Then Saint John, then seek Paris, and its wall.

The wondrous skills and the martial ardour, 31
Of Marfisa, displayed by every knight,
Was not, I must claim, of such a nature
As to be shown, or e'en conceived aright.
The number that they put to the slaughter,
You must imagine, and how, in that fight,
Charlemagne felt the blow. Add to these same,
Ferrau, and many a Moor known to fame.

Many a Christian drowned in the Seine, 32
(The bridges could not support so many)
And longed for Icarus' fine wings, in vain,
With death before, and behind them, surely.
Save Oliviero, and Uggieri the Dane,
The paladins now faced captivity;
Oliviero's shoulder ached and bled,
Uggieri was bruised about the head.



Stanza 32

And if, like Rinaldo and Orlando, 33
Brandimarte had been lost from the game,
Charlemagne had been forced to forego
His Paris, or be scorched in the flame.
Where Brandimarte could hold, he did so,
Where he could not, he yielded the same.
And thus, Fortune smiled on Agramante,
While Charlemagne was penned in the city.

Canto XXVII: 34-36: Saint Michael hastens to intervene

The laments of the old rose to the sky 34
With the cries of the orphan, and the widow,
Reaching Saint Michael's blessed realm, on high,
Set far beyond the troubled earth below,
And brought him news of how men fight and die,
And how their flesh yields to the ravening crow.
Those faithful of England, Germany, France,
Mere corpses, filled the field of that advance.

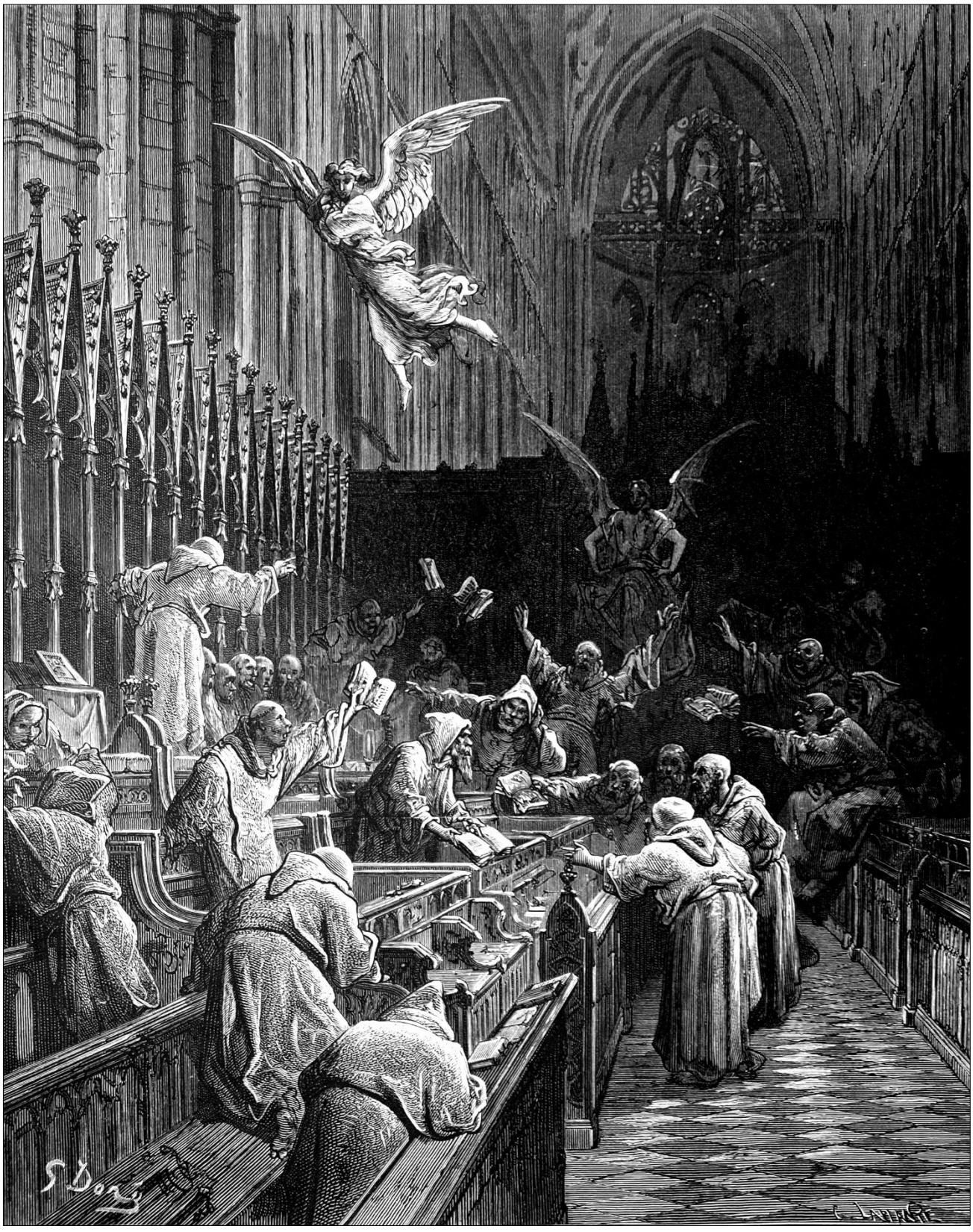
It reddened, the blessed Archangel's face; 35
For it seemed he'd executed the command
Of his lord most poorly, feeling his disgrace,
Betrayed by faithless Discord, all unplanned.
He'd been told to foster strife amidst the race
Of Saracens, such was the Lord's demand,
Yet the opposite he had achieved, I ween,
To those eyes that now gazed upon the scene.

Like a faithful servant (weaker in memory 36
Than loyalty, who finds he has forgot
That which to his heart and mind should be
As precious as his life and soul, whose lot
Is now to mend the error, speedily,
Nor see his lord before) he might not
Ascend to God, the Lord of Creation,
Till he'd first fulfilled his obligation.

Canto XXVII: 37-39: He sends Discord to rectify the problem

Once more, to the monastery, he flew 37
Where he'd seen Discord, and found her there,
Seated in chapter, as they chose anew
Their officers, a desperate affair,
In which the monks hurled, a delight to view,
At each other's heads, their books of prayer.
Gripping her by her hair, mercilessly,
The angel kicked and struck her, endlessly.

Then he broke his cross's handle on her head, 38
With which he belaboured her arms and back.
She cried aloud, as if to wake the dead,
And embraced his knees, stunned by the attack.
Yet he ceased not until, at last, she fled
Before him to the Moorish camp. A thwack
He gave her, crying: 'I've yet more in store,
If I find you've quit the task, I sent you for.'



Stanza 37 "*In which the monks hurled, a delight to view, at each other's heads, their books of prayer*"



Stanza 39

Though her head, and back, and arms, were aching, 39
For fear of his attacking her again,
(Since his anger there was no mistaking,
And a further beating meant further pain)
She ran to her furnace and, there, raking
The coals, and adding fuel, set to strain
At the bellows, thus lighting many a fire,
To kindle, in many a heart, a blaze of ire.

Canto XXVII: 40-44: The warriors' quarrels are renewed

Rodomonte, she inflamed, Ruggiero, 40
And Mandricardo, who went together
To King Agramante (for since the foe
Had retreated, they now held the upper
Hand) and told him the tale, that he might know
The seed of their dissension, and its bitter
Fruit, and to his judgement they appealed
As to which of them should first take the field.

Marfisa put her case to him, also, 41
Saying she wished to complete the fight,
Which she'd begun with Mandricardo,
Provoked to commence it by the knight,
Nor would accept delay in doing so,
Not a day, not an hour, for twas her right;
To be the first to joust, she demanded,
With the Tartar, if the king commanded.

No less did Rodomonte seek first place, 42
Wishing to end the fight with his rival,
Which they'd interrupted that they might face
The foe, bringing aid by their arrival.
While Ruggiero chose to speak a space,
And said, for far too long, he'd suffered mortal
Aggravation from the theft of his steed,
While Rodomonte sought delay indeed.

Then the Tartar added more complexity, 43
Complaining that Ruggiero had no right
To the eagle emblem; in his fury,
So filled with bitter anger and with spite,
That he cried, if the rest would so agree,
They might all engage together in fight,
Which indeed the others were prepared to do,
If that had been King Agramante's view.

Agramante, with prayer, and kingly speech, 44
Would have forged a truce twixt them if he could,
But since they all seemed deaf, beyond the reach
Of reason, and required not peace but blood,
He decided that the best that he could preach
Was that they fought in order, for their good;
And, to that end, he decided, on the spot,
That they should each take to the field by lot.

Canto XXVII: 45-48: Lots are drawn and a place assigned

Four lots were thus prepared, and on the one 45
'Rodomonte gainst Mandricardo' was writ.
'Mandricardo gainst Ruggiero' once done,
'Ruggiero gainst Rodomonte', joined it,
Then 'Mandricardo gainst Marfisa'. None
Left, one was drawn, to the benefit,
Of Rodomonte and the Tartar king,
As Fortune now wished, that fickle being.

'Mandricardo gainst Ruggiero' showed then, 46
'Ruggiero gainst Rodomonte' still third,
While 'Mandricardo gainst Marfisa' again
Was drawn the last, at which the maid demurred.
Nor was Ruggiero happier that the men
Before him, when the first fight occurred,
Were like to conclude in such a manner
As to leave naught for him, or Marfisa.

Not far from Paris' walls there was a place 47
That measured a mile or so, all around;
An embankment held it in its embrace,
Like a theatre that doth the stage surround.
A castle, once, that site, it seems, did grace
Siege and fire had levelled it to the ground;
The like a citizen of Parma may survey,
If from thence to Borgo they make their way.

Upon that site the lists were soon displayed 48
A square of turf sufficient for their need,
The ground enclosed by a low palisade,
With two gates, as is commonly decreed.
The warriors seeking not to be delayed
Had the day for the joust at once agreed,
And now behind the fence, on either side
Facing those gates, pavilions were descried.

Canto XXVII: 49-53: Mandricardo is angered

The tent on the west housed Rodomonte, 49
And there his serpent-hide was soon clad
In steel, by Ferrau and Sacripante;
His giant members they adorned as he bade.
Falsiron and Gradasso made entry
To that on the east and, there, were glad
To dress Mandricardo in the armour
That had once been worn by Trojan Hector.

On an ample throne sat King Agramante, 50
Marsilius beside him, King of Spain,
Then Stordilano, and the heads of the army
Most revered, among the host, upon that plain.
Whoe'er could climb a nearby hill or tree,
Was happy such a noble view to gain.
Great was the crowd, on every side arrayed,
A wave of folk against that fencing swayed.

And there, beside the Queen of fair Castile, 51
Sat queens, princesses, noble ladies too,
From Aragon, Granada, and Seville,
And from where Atlas' Pillars one might view.
Stordilano's daughter every eye did steal;
Doralice wore rich robes, though of the two,
One crimson, and one green, that she bore
The first looked worn, behind and before.



Stanza 50

In a short and skimpy dress was Marfisa, 52
Such as was suited to a warrior-maid,
The river Terme might, in that manner,
Have seen Hippolyte and her troop arrayed.
Now, the king's herald, midst the clamour,
Who the royal coat of arms there displayed,
Proclaimed that none must side, twas their duty,
In their deeds or words, with either party.

The dense throng of folk waiting for the fight, 53
Complained at the lateness of the duo,
(Each of the combatants a famous knight)
When from the tent of bold Mandricardo,
Cries and shouts were heard, and not of delight.
Twas the King of Sericane, Gradasso,
And the fierce Tartar, who'd stirred, at a word,
The tumult, shouts, and cries that they heard.

Canto XXVII: 54-58: Gradasso lays claim to Orlando's sword

Having clad in armour the Tartar king, 54
Gradasso had approached to gird a sword
About the pagan, the blade revealing
Which was Orlando's (that he'd flung abroad).
Twas then Gradasso saw the engraving,
'Durindana', with the arms of that lord
Young Orlando had slain, brave Almonte,
Beside a crystal fount, in Aspramonte.

At once, he knew it for the famous blade 55
That Anglante's count, bold Orlando, bore,
For which, the finest fleet had anchor weighed,
That had ever sailed from Levantine shore.
Castile, they had conquered, and France dismayed,
Beneath his flag, a few short years before,
Nor could he now imagine how that sword
Had been acquired, thus, by the Tartar lord.

He asked him where and when the sword was won, 56
And if by force or not. Mandricardo,
Lied, and said fierce battle he had done
For that illustrious blade with Orlando,
Who'd feigned madness, neath the midday sun,
Seeking to conceal his cowardice so,
'For he knew,' he added, 'that I'd afford
Him endless trouble till I had the sword.'

And said that he'd behaved like the beaver 57
That tears out its own castor sacs whene'er
Tis closely pursued by the fierce hunter,
For the castoreum secreted there.
Gradasso, who none of this would suffer,
Cried that he alone the blade should bear:
'Tis owed to me, for me alone tis meant,
For all the effort, gold and lives I've spent.

Seek out some other blade you might employ; 58
That this is mine, should not be news to you.
Whether the Count sanity may enjoy
Or madness yet, tis mine, this blade you view.
That you fought for it is some mere ploy;
You found it by the wayside; tis my due.
My sharp scimitar will uphold my cause,
Here, in the lists, according to our laws.

Canto XXVII: 59-63: Mandricardo seizes it from him

You must retain the blade ere you can fight 59
Gainst Rodomonte with it; as you know,
Tis an ancient custom that every knight
Must earn his sword, ere he may meet the foe.'
'No sweeter sounds could on my ear alight,'
Replied the Tartar, proudly, 'here below,
Than those that summon me to the field,
Yet Rodomonte his consent must yield.

Be you the first, and let Rodomonte 60
Be the second that I shall attend to,
And doubt you not that I'm good and ready
To reply to every other after you.'
But Ruggiero called out: 'Not so swiftly
Would you now set aside the lots we drew;
Either Rodomonte first you must meet
Or fight me, and their order thus defeat.

If Gradasso's reasoning shall prevail, 61
And a knight must win the arms he'd wield,
Your claim to show the eagle can but fail,
Unless you first can bear away my shield.
But since I've deemed all that of no avail,
I say none here should their placement yield,
And mine should be the second battle fought,
When Rodomonte first his cause has brought.

Yet, should you disturb the order of the day, 62
Then I'll confuse the matter utterly,
For I'll not yield the eagle I display,
Unless you then can wrest my shield from me!'
'Were you both Mars, desirous of affray,'
Mandricardo now replied, wrathfully,
'Neither one nor the other might deny
My title to the shield or sword, say I!'

Then, possessed by anger, he upped and flew, 63
With clenched fist, at the amazed Gradasso.
He lost the sword, in what did then ensue,
For the hilt slipped his grasp, at that fierce blow.
Not thinking Mandricardo would pursue
So mad and spiteful a course, nor was so
Foolish as to try, no defence he'd made,
And so, he found himself robbed of the blade.

Canto XXVII: 64-68: Agramante temporarily resolves the dispute

Thus scorned, righteous hurt and anger 64
Flared o'er Gradasso's face, his cheeks aflame,
While the pain that he suffered was greater,
In that twas done in public, to his shame.
He now stepped back, to draw his scimitar,
Bent on revenge, and to defend his name;
While Mandricardo, trusting in his skill,
Sought Ruggiero, if twas his will.

'Come on, in arms, together!' so he cried, 65
'Let Rodomonte be the third I'll fight.
Come Africa and Spain, the world, allied
In force, I'll ne'er turn my back in flight.
And fearing none, those warriors he defied.
Whirling Almonte's blade, the Tartar knight,
Grasped his shield, a formidable foe,
To meet with Ruggiero and Gradasso.

'Leave this task to me,' Gradasso said, 66
'And to this madman I shall bring the cure.'
'Not so,' Ruggiero cried, 'tis I instead
That claim the right, for I deserve it more.'
'Retreat!' 'Stand back!' The counter-claims now sped
Between the two, yet neither would withdraw.
And thus began a feud between the three,
And strange the issue there, had not many

Well-nigh bought themselves a deal of pain, 67
By intervening, though with scant wisdom,
And learnt, to their sad cost, what men obtain
That to the aid of warring madmen come.
For all the world had sought peace there, in vain,
If Marsilio had not struck them dumb,
And Agramante, whose sudden presence
Subdued them now to awe and reverence.



Stanza 67

Agramante demanded that they reveal 68
The cause of this fresh and ardent quarrel,
And, once known, to Gradasso made appeal.
He should yield Hector's blade, for a little,
To Mandricardo, who required the steel
To face Rodomonte in fierce battle.
Twas for but a day, till they were done,
And had resolved the matter, one on one.

Canto XXVII: 69-74: Meanwhile Sacripante lays claim to Frontino

While Agramante pacified the three, 69
Reasoning with one and then another,
A second pair were heard to disagree,
In the nearby tent, arguing together.
Sacripante, as I've said previously,
Had helped Rodomonte with his armour,
And he and bold Ferrau had clad the king
In plate of his forebear Nimrod's making,

And then had gone to where spraying spume 70
His horse champed at the bit; of Frontino
I now speak, that valiant charger, for whom
Longed yet, in indignation, Ruggiero.
Sacripante who thus acted as groom
For the steed, and had led it to and fro,
Had marked the shoes, and trappings that it bore,
And thought that he had seen the like before.

Then, in gazing, more closely, at the steed, 71
His doubt dispelled, he recognised the creature,
And surmised it was Frontino indeed,
Not merely by the form, but its proud nature.
A horse that he'd held dear he now did lead,
One, in a thousand feuds born to feature,
And one whose capture from him long ago,
Leaving him on foot, had pained him so.

Brunello had seized it that same day, 72
Before Albracca, when he'd taken
Angelica's ring, and snatched away
Orlando's horn, his Balisarda stolen,
And Marfisa's blade; he did convey
Balisarda to brave Ruggiero, then,
And with the sword, this noble steed, also,
That Ruggiero had renamed Frontino.

Once certain that he was not in error, 73
He turned to Rodomonte, and cried:
'This horse was seized from me in Albracca!
The steed is mine, as may be verified
By many that know its rightful owner;
Yet since those folk are scattered far and wide,
If any should deny it, I'll maintain
The truth, sword in hand, and make all plain.

Yet I'm content, since we for many a day 74
Have been companions, to lend the steed
To you, until the morrow, so you may
Perform the fight, at the hour now agreed,
Though on the understanding, as I say,
That the horse is mine, lent to you at need,
Else hope not to mount him for the fight,
Unless you first win him, from me, outright.'

Canto XXVII: 75-79: He and Rodomonte spar together

Rodomonte, possessed of greater pride 75
Than all the finest knights put together,
His strength and courage, not to be denied,
Such as ancient stories rarely offer,
To the kindly King Sacripante cried,
'If such words had come from any other,
He'd have been dealt such bitter fruit
Twere better if from birth he'd proven mute.

Yet, for the comradeship that we have known, 76
And for the action we have seen together,
I'll offer the respect that should be shown,
And merely suggest you take some other
Path, for now, and adopt some other tone,
Till you have witnessed the fight; thereafter,
When I've made of him a brave example,
You'll cry: 'Keep the courser, and the saddle!'

'Tis your form of courtesy to be rude?' 77
Sacripante asked, in anger and disdain.
'I'll needs be clear, given your attitude:
Forgo possession of the steed! Is that plain?
For I'll defend my right, with fortitude,
As long as my brave sword I might maintain,
And I'd battle for it then, tooth and nail,
If all other forms of weapon were to fail.'

From dispute they progressed to mockery, 78
Then threats and cries, and thence to fighting,
Their anger blazing higher, more quickly,
Than fire amidst the straw, swiftly kindling.
Rodomonte had his breastplate, while sadly
Sacripante lacked mail, or steel cladding,
Yet seemed (so well he fenced, that nimble lord)
To be as well protected by his sword.



Stanza 78

No greater were the strength and bravery 79
(Both immense) that Rodomonte displayed,
Than were the awareness and dexterity
That Sacripante summoned to his aid.
No grindstone was e'er rotated faster
By the mill-wheel, ere the grain is weighed,
Than Sacripante's circling hands and feet
Moved at his need, his actions trim and neat.

Canto XXVII: 80-84: Agramante again seeks the cause of dispute

But then Ferrau, and bold Serpentino, 80
Drew their gleaming swords, parting the pair,
With Isolier, and Grandonio,
And the other Moorish lords who were there.
It was the sound of sword blow upon blow,
And the shouts, that gave news of the affair
To the king, striving to calm Ruggiero,
Gradasso, likewise, and Mandricardo.

A fresh report came, then, to Agramante 81
Of the quarrel, regarding the said steed,
Twixt Rodomonte and Sacripante,
That seemed bent now on war, as all agreed.
The king, disturbed by their great enmity,
Said to Marsilio: 'Ensure no deed
Renews the fight here, or breeds another,
While I now seek to resolve the other.'

Rodomonte, on seeing the king appear, 82
Reined in his wrath, and then stepped back a pace,
While Sacripante, with like awe and fear,
Retreated too, before the king's stern face.
He asked to know the cause, as yet unclear,
(Grave his voice, imbued with regal grace)
Seeking, once the matter was made plain,
To reconcile the pair, yet all in vain.

Sacripante demanded Rodomonte 83
Return the steed, and ride it no longer.
Unless the latter requested, humbly,
That for a day he lent him the charger,
To which Rodomonte answered proudly,
'Neither you nor heaven, in this matter,
Will see a thing that I have won by force,
Deemed another's, be it sword or horse.'

The king asked Sacripante to explain 84
What right he thought he had to the steed,
And how it had been taken; so, with pain
And reddening cheeks, he told of the deed,
Whereby the thief the animal did gain,
Having surprised him, as ill fate decreed,
Deep in thought, his saddle pinned on high
By four spears, the horse stolen, on the sly.

Canto XXVII: 85-93: Marfisa seizes Brunello and issues a challenge

Marfisa, also drawn to the shouting, 85
When she heard about the theft of the charger,
Displayed a troubled face, remembering
How her sword had been lost at Albracca,
For she recognised the horse that, fleeing
From her, had seemed winged, and further
She recalled Sacripante, she felt sure,
Whom she had failed to recognise before.

The others there, who'd often heard Brunello 86
Boast of the matter, turned against the thief,
And signalled that he was the very fellow
That had stolen it, such was their belief.
Marfisa, who had thought it might be so,
From all that had been said, now, in brief,
Was convinced, since those about her agreed,
That Brunello it was who'd done the deed,

And that, for the crime, the man was worthy 87
Of being hanged by the neck, yet to the throne
Of Tingitano he'd been raised by Agramante,
(An ill choice) and held that realm for his own.
This again made Marfisa more than angry,
(For the seeds of vengeance had long been sown)
Set to punish him for all the shame and scorn
She'd incurred when the sword from her was borne.

She had a squire set her helm on her head, 88
Being clad already in her armour;
Nor do I find that steel was ever shed
More than ten times all her days for, ever,
Was she dressed so (such the life she led)
Since she had first become a warrior.
Then, helmeted, she sought out Brunello
Amidst the high seats, in the loftiest row.

When she reached him, she gripped him by the chest, 89
And then raised the thief high above the ground,
As an eagle will a pullet's course arrest,
With its fierce talons, while the squawks resound,
And carried him where the king, and the rest
Of his monarchs and lords could yet be found,
While Brunello, moaned and wept, endlessly,
And, midst his cries and groans, begged for mercy.

Amidst the shouts and noise, with which the field 90
Was equally alive, Brunello's pleas
For pity and for aid, so loudly pealed,
That a crowd gathered round, to mock and tease,
(His great cowardice being thus revealed)
As bold Marfisa carried him with ease
To the African king, then, in her anger,
Addressed him proudly, and in this manner:



Stanza 89

'I wish to hang this thief, your vassal, high, 91
And with this hand suspend him by the throat,
For, the day he stole that horse, tis no lie,
He stole my sword as well, let all here note.
And, if any would the facts of it deny,
Let him stand forth, and this man's lies promote,
For, in your royal presence, I'll sustain
My rights, and e'er the truth will I maintain.

Yet if some here would seek to accuse me, 92
And say I take advantage of a quarrel,
While the finest warriors in this army
Are committed to meet, and so do battle,
I'll wait to hang him for his villainy,
For three whole days, unless and until
One comes, or sends another in his stead;
For failing that I'll see the fellow dead.

From here to that tower, three leagues away, 93
That overlooks the little wood below,
With but one servant, and a maid, this day,
And with no other company, I go.
And, to any that would rescue him, I say:
Visit the tower, for you I seek to know.'
So, she spoke, and having done so, she went;
And, with that, they were forced to rest content.

Canto XXVII: 94-98: Agramante is persuaded not to respond

She set Brunello on the steed before her, 94
While still grasping the villain by his hair,
As he cried to all about for succour
And ever wept and moaned in his despair.
Meanwhile Agramante, troubled further,
Saw no end to wild affair upon affair,
While he grieved to see Marfisa convey
His vassal to the tower, in that vile way.



Stanza 94

Not that he prized or cared for the fellow, 95
For many a time he'd aroused his disdain,
And at heart he'd longed to see him hanged so,
Since the ring he'd lost, and to little gain.
But, in this thing, dishonour might follow,
So that his face was reddened, once again.
He would follow the maid he thought, at speed,
And avenge the slight, ere she did the deed.

But King Sobrino, who was yet present, 96
Attempted to dissuade him from the quest;
Saying twas ill if a king should consent
To such as demeaned him, and twere best,
(Since he could, with impunity, prevent
The execution, and e'en the maid arrest)
To avoid the shame, for there was scant honour
In defeating the maid, though he must conquer.

Great was the risk and small was the reward, 97
In any battle to be fought with the maid,
While better counsel he could now afford,
Which was to leave Brunello, and not aid
The fellow; though the latter might accord
With his majesty's powers, he was afraid
That the slight nod, which was all it needed,
Meant that justice might well be impeded.

'You can send to Marfisa, now,' he said, 98
'And request her to leave justice to you,
With a promise to her that he'll be led
To the gallows, and her wish so pursue;
Or, should the maid refuse, let her, instead,
Perform that same deed, if all this be true.
Better her friendship, such is my belief,
Though she hangs Brunello, and every thief.'

Canto XXVII: 99-101: Discord rejoices

Agramante conceded, willingly, 99
To Sobrino's calmer, wiser counsel,
And let Marfisa retire, in safety,
Nor did he seek, otherwise, to compel
The maid to aught, but suffered her, bravely,
Letting her in that lonely tower dwell,
So that he might quench the greater strife,
And his whole court pursue a calmer life.

Mad Discord smiled at this, with little fear 100
That peace or a truce might be forthcoming,
But scoured all about the field, far and near,
Nor could she find a pleasanter dwelling.
Pride leapt and gambolled with her peer,
And to the flames she added fresh kindling,
And cried aloud, so Saint Michael might know,
That victory had been gained on Earth below.



Stanza 100

All Paris trembled, turbid ran the Seine, 101
At that loud voice, that fierce inhuman cry;
The Ardennes Forest heard it sound again,
Wild creatures found their dens, birds fled the sky;
The Alps, the Cevennes all heard it, plain,
O'er Arles, and Blois and Rouen, it did fly;
Rhône and Saône, Garonne and Rhine, east and west,
While mothers hugged their children to their breast.

Canto XXVII: 102-108: Agramante seeks to resolve the first quarrel

The five male knights had each resolved to be 102
The first to conclude their duels outright,
And yet were involved so intricately,
Not Apollo himself could see the light.
To untie the knot, King Agramante
Began with what had caused the first sad fight
(Fair Doralice, Stordilano's daughter!)
Between Rodomonte and the Tartar.

Agramante, who sought a firm accord, 103
Went here and there, from one to the other,
To and fro, between each angry lord,
Now a just king, now a faithful brother.
But when he found that neither would afford
Grounds for peace, each seeming deaf as ever,
Refusing to relinquish the lady,
The reason for strife, to their enemy,

He appealed at last to a course that might 104
Serve to satisfy the lovers: that the maid
Should now be married to whichever knight
She preferred, and with that decision made,
Naught must be done, and none must fight
To overturn it, with words, or lance, or blade.
Both of them were pleased with the compromise,
Both hoping to find favour in her eyes.

King Rodomonte who had, long before 105
That other, told her of his love, now thought
(Since she'd ever seemed his suit to favour,
As much as a chaste lady might, in short)
That once she passed judgment on the matter,
His case could not but weigh more in that court.
Nor was the king alone in his belief;
Such was agreed by every Moorish chief.

All knew what deeds he had wrought for her sake, 106
In jousting, and in tournament, and war,
Thus, regarding the judgment she must make,
Mandricardo seemed ill-matched gainst the Moor;
Yet he, who'd talked with her, and time did take
To woo her, when the earth its shadows wore,
Knew, thus, what grounds he had for confidence,
And smiled at the foolish crowd's innocence.

Once they had ratified their agreement 107
Twixt the king's hands, the valiant pair
To seek the lady's final judgement went.
She lowered her gaze modestly, and there
To the Tartar gave her love and consent,
While Rodomonte could but stand and stare,
Then lower his own gaze, in deep dismay,
While the rest their sheer wonder did display.

But then the usual anger chased the hue 108
Of shame from his face; unjust he called
The judgment, and false, and gripped anew
The sword hilt in his hand, sadly galled,
And said, in the king's hearing, the issue
Should be decided not by one enthralled,
Not by woman's fickle choice, but the blade,
For oft where they should not her feelings strayed.

Canto XXVII: 109-111: Rodomonte departs the camp

Mandricardo again arose, and cried, 109
'Let it be as you wish, then!' Thus, it seemed
That a wide tract of ocean must be tried
Ere the ship made port as the king had schemed.
But he reproved Rodomonte, on his side,
For the quarrel was at an end, he deemed,
In vain could the conflict be maintained,
The sails had now been furled; the harbour gained.

Rodomonte, considering he had been 110
Doubly shamed, both by his sovereign lord,
Whom he revered, and his affection's queen,
Deemed he was doomed to wander now abroad,
And thus, determined to depart that scene,
Taking two sergeants with him, out the horde,
Went from the cantonment that same day.
A sad and angry man, he took his way.

He left as a defeated bull might go, 111
Relinquishing the heifer to the victor,
That seeks the river, or the woods, in woe,
Or some barren shore, far from the pasture,
Nor ceases in sun or shade to bellow,
Still lost in his longing for the other.
So Rodomonte, parting from the maid,
Overcome by deep sorrow, widely strayed.



Stanza 111

Canto XXVII: 112-116: He is followed by Sacripante

Ruggiero thought now to reclaim his steed, 112
Being already armed for that same quest,
But recalled Mandricardo, who'd agreed
To fight in strict order, as had the rest.
And so, he wheeled his horse, such was his creed,
So that he might the Tartar's claim contest,
And then meet with Gradasso, thereafter,
To challenge his claim to Durindana.

To see Frontino vanish neath his eyes, 113
And yet do nothing, grieved our knight sorely,
Though his resolve was to pursue that prize,
Once he'd dealt with the other two, briefly.
But Sacripante was not bound likewise;
Naught stopped him from chasing Rodomonte.
Hence, being of no other aim possessed,
To o'er-take the Saracen was his quest.

He would have come upon him, were it not 114
That he now met with a strange adventure,
Which detained him till he'd almost forgot
His pursuit of both the steed and warrior.
By the Saône a maid, such was her ill lot,
Had slipped, and was drowning in the river,
And would have perished so, you may be sure,
Had he not plunged in, and brought her to shore.

When he would remount and seek the trail, 115
His steed would not wait but broke astray,
Nor could he capture it, and yet prevail,
Till he came upon it, nigh the close of day.
And caught at last, it proved of small avail,
For he had lost the hoofprints, and his way.
Two hundred miles he roved, o'er hill and plain,
Ere he found Rodomonte once again.

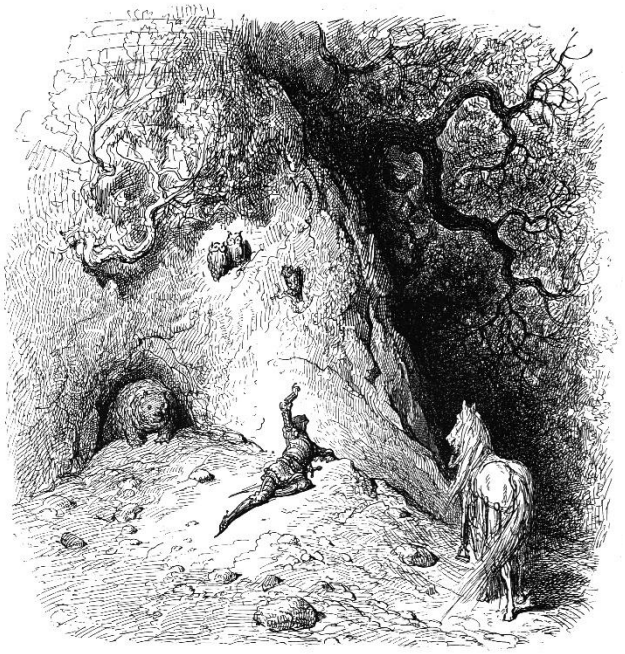


Stanza 115

Where he found the Saracen, who then fought 116
And was overcome by Sacripante,
And lost the horse which the other sought,
I'll not speak of now, for my first duty
Is to tell of the disdain, the charges brought
Gainst Doralice and Agramante,
By that knight, as the road he did cover,
And what he said of one, and the other.

Canto XXVII: 117-121: Rodomonte's lament

The air was all aflame with burning sighs 117
Where'er the grieving Saracen now went,
While Echo, out of pity, sad replies
Repeated from the cliffs, as is her bent:
'O feminine mind, in what fickle guise,
You stray, transformed in mood and intent,
Opposed to every form of loyalty!
The man that trusts in you, wretched is he!



Stanza 117

Neither my endless service, nor my love, 118
That I, a thousand times and more, have shown,
Had the power to hold your heart from remove,
That changed so soon, and left me all alone;
Nor has love died, although, to you, I prove
Less than this Mandricardo, as you've shown;
Nor for all this can I find a reason,
Save this alone, that you are a woman.

For I think that God and Nature bore you, 119
O evil sex, as a weighty punishment
For man's grave earthly sin, who, without you,
Had been far happier, and e'en content;
Much as the bear was wrought, the grey wolf too,
And that devil in the grass, the serpent;
Much as the wasp and flies, that buzz in air,
Or the weeds that mar the crop, everywhere.

Why has generous Nature not decreed 120
That man could be born without your aid?
As pear, apple sorb, can, without seed,
Be obtained by grafting? Yet, I'm afraid,
Nature cannot create the world men need,
Rather, I perceive that world betrayed,
For naming her, I see naught perfect can
Be wrought by Nature, for She's a woman.

Yet, ladies, be not so proud or scornful 121
In proclaiming that man is born of you,
For the rose midst the thorns springs eternal,
And the lily out the slime gleams anew:
Importunate, arrogant, and spiteful,
Lacking love, loyalty, and wisdom too,
Unjust, ungrateful, reckless, cruel from birth,
You were formed to forever plague this Earth!'



Stanza 121

Canto XXVII: 122-124: Ariosto's hope and prayer

These complaints, and many another, I find, 122
The Saracen king yielded to the air,
Now, murmuring low to ease his troubled mind,
Now, in great cries that echoed everywhere,
Casting blame and reproach on womankind.
Yet in this the king, I deem, was wont to err,
Since for every evil maid to be found,
A hundred are thought goddesses, and sound.

Though I have loved many a maid, to date, 123
And I've found none faithful, not a one,
I lay the blame upon my sorry fate
That all have proved disloyal, neath the sun.
Many have been, and many are, of late,
Such as give no cause for a man to shun
Their presence, yet if there be one or two,
Of evil cast, I'll form their prey, tis true!

Yet I'll seek, so thoroughly, ere I die, 124
(Rather before my hair grows whiter still)
That one day, perchance, I may cast my eye
On one that will keep faith, despite her will.
And if that happens (for my hopes are high)
I pray the happy task I'll yet fulfil
Of rendering her glorious, ere the close,
With tongue, and pen and ink, in verse and prose.

Canto XXVII: 125-129: Rodomonte reaches the Saône

The Saracen king felt no less disdain 125
For his sovereign than for the maiden,
Blaming one, then the other, for his pain,
And passing thereby the bounds of reason.
He wished to see such ill, such storms, maintain
Their assault against that monarch's kingdom,
That every house in Africa might fall,
Nor stone rest yet on stone in standing wall,

While, thrust from his realm in grief and woe, 126
Agramante should live a wretched beggar,
And he himself might then his fealty show,
And restore him to his throne, thereafter,
And, thus, the fruits of loyalty bestow,
And make that sovereign see that twas better
To choose a true friend, whether wrong or right,
Though all the world against him should unite.

And now upon his monarch, now the lady, 127
He turned his troubled thought, as he passed by
Upon his way; he journeyed, restlessly,
Yet was neither weary, nor closed an eye.
(Nor did Frontino!) Two days later, he
Found himself upon the Saône for, thereby,
He might reach Provence, then sail from there
To his realm in Africa, his native lair.

The water was filled with many a boat, 128
The surface covered o'er from shore to shore,
Vessels from many a place there afloat,
To supply the host, and deficits restore,
For south of Paris every stream of note,
Was in the power of the advancing Moor,
From Aigues-Mortes, and the watery main,
O'er the land, to the west, as far as Spain.



Stanza 127



Stanza 131

The stores that were carried to dry land 129
Weighed down the carts, and beasts of burden,
Which were then despatched, on every hand,
Where no barge could reach, to many a region;
While oxen were seen, grazing, now un-spanned,
Brought from elsewhere, their sources legion;
Their drovers sleeping near the river-side,
Or in herdsmen's huts, scattered far and wide.

Canto XXVII: 130-136: And is lodged at an inn

Rodomonte, since the light was fading fast, 130
Responded to an innkeeper's request,
For the air filled with shadows as he passed,
To stay the night at his inn, as his guest.
His horse once stabled, he took his repast,
And wine, from Greece and Corsica, addressed,
For, a Moor in every other way, he drank
Of the forbidden beverage like a Frank.

The landlord, with good fare, and honest face, 131
Thought to pay Rodomonte honour,
Judging from his manner, full of grace,
That he was one renowned for his valour,
Yet one divorced from himself a space,
And as dull of heart as any man ever,
(For his thoughts dwelt upon his lost lady,
To his detriment) that sat there silently.

The host, more diligent in his good trade, 132
Than any e'er recorded in fair France,
(In that despite the fierce incursions made,
He'd kept his tavern whole, midst that advance)
His kin, that they might cheer the knight, displayed,
And ease his troubled countenance, perchance,
Yet not one of them dared smile, or say aught,
On finding he was mute, and lost in thought.

Far distant from himself, Rodomonte, 133
From one thought to another, wandering,
His gaze on the ground, quite melancholy,
So, none there could see his face; then, sighing,
After long silence, raised his head slowly,
As if he were roused from his dreaming,
And gathered himself and turned his eyes
On the host and the rest, in mild surprise.

And then, the silence broken, with a face 134
Less troubled, and a far calmer manner,
He asked the host, and others in that place,
If any had a wife, and those made answer
Who had, accordingly, and for a space
He was silent again, then he asked further
What belief as to her did each espouse:
Did he trust in her keeping to her vows?

And all, except the host, said they believed 135
Theirs was chaste, and good, without exception.
The host retorted: 'Then you're all deceived!
Every one of you but errs, in my opinion.
And your foolish belief, howe'er conceived,
Stands as witness to your loss of reason.
And in that he will concur, this noble knight,
Unless he would persuade us black is white!

For, as there is but one phoenix living 136
On this Earth, at any hour, only one,
So, tis said, there's but one husband breathing,
That's not betrayed by his wife, neath the sun.
Yet each believes he's that happy being
And that he the solitary palm has won!
Though how can all achieve that blissful state,
If there's but one appointed so by fate?

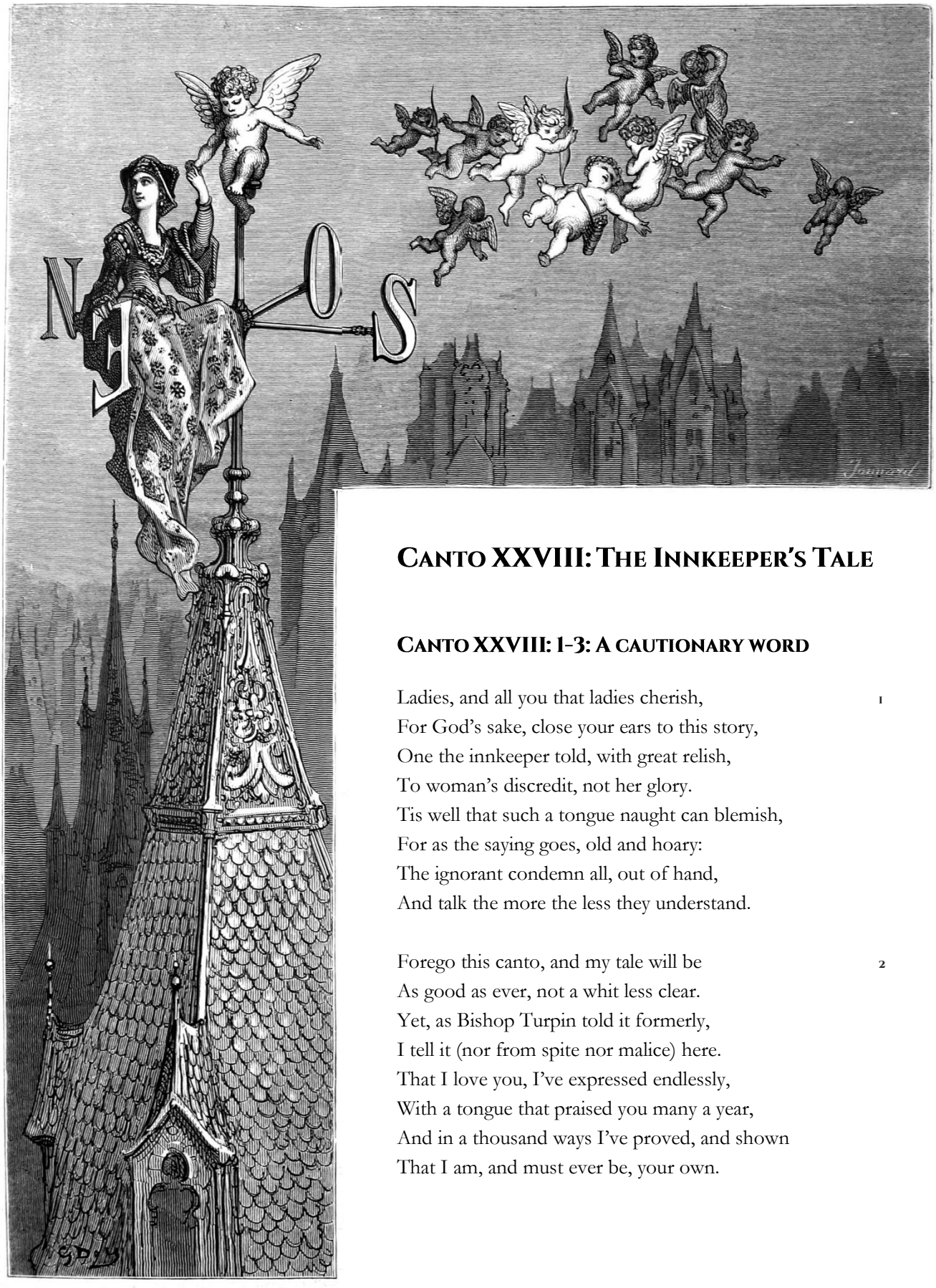
Canto XXVII: 137-140: Whose landlord offers to tell a tale

I once made the same sad error as you, 137
Thinking more than one of them was chaste,
Until a gentleman of Venice, who,
By great good fortune, my poor tavern graced,
Condescended, with examples, sound and true,
To counter a belief so wrongly-based;
Gian Francesco Valerio his name,
And forever I'll remember that same.

He knew every tale of their treachery, 138
That of wives, and mistresses, one and all,
Culled from new and ancient history,
And on his own experience could call,
That showed that not one woman that we see
Is chaste, or rich or poor, or great or small;
And that if one seems purer than another,
She's but learnt to hide her nature better.

And amongst other tales (he told so many 139
That a third of them at least I've forgot)
One was engraved in my mind, so deeply
Twas as if carved in marble, on the spot;
And what I learnt of the sex was, surely,
Impressed on all that heard, like it or not.
And if, my lord, twould not displease you
I'll tell these fools the tale, and tell it true.'

The Saracen replied: 'There's naught could better, 140
Please me at this hour, and entertain me,
Than to hear a story, illustrating further
Your opinion, which I hold to, wholly.
And that I may listen close, draw nearer'
He said, 'thus, I may see you more clearly.'
In the following canto, I'll relate
All he told Rodomonte, if you'll wait.



Canto XXVIII: The Innkeeper's Tale

Canto XXVIII: 1-3: A cautionary word

Ladies, and all you that ladies cherish, 1
For God's sake, close your ears to this story,
One the innkeeper told, with great relish,
To woman's discredit, not her glory.
Tis well that such a tongue naught can blemish,
For as the saying goes, old and hoary:
The ignorant condemn all, out of hand,
And talk the more the less they understand.

Forego this canto, and my tale will be 2
As good as ever, not a whit less clear.
Yet, as Bishop Turpin told it formerly,
I tell it (nor from spite nor malice) here.
That I love you, I've expressed endlessly,
With a tongue that praised you many a year,
And in a thousand ways I've proved, and shown
That I am, and must ever be, your own.

Pass this portion by, and ne'er read a verse, 3
Or read whate'er you wish, and move on,
And believe in the matter we rehearse,
As much as you do in works of fiction;
But (turning to the story) our perverse
Innkeeper, seeing how they hung upon
His every word, ere the thing grew stale,
Seated, there, before the knight, began his tale.



Stanza 3

Canto XXVIII: 4-7: The beauty of Aistulf, King of the Lombards

'Aistulf, King of the Lombards, who received 4
The kingship from his brother Ratchis (he
That entered a monastery) was perceived
To be the most handsome youth in Lombardy.
For nor Zeuxis nor Apelles achieved,
In their art such, a rare form of beauty.
Handsome indeed he was, and all thought so;
He thought himself yet more beautiful though.

He esteemed himself less for his kingdom, 5
In which he ranked above all other men,
The number of his subjects, or his income,
(That of his neighbours, and as much again)
Than the fact that he was young and handsome,
Deemed so by Christian and Saracen.
It so pleased him to have his beauty praised,
He was thrilled whene'er the subject was raised.

One amongst the court, dear to the king, 6
Was Faustus Latinus, a Roman knight,
That, hearing Aistulf, yet again, praising
His own lovely visage (a pleasing sight)
On being asked, by him, while so doing,
If any he'd seen offered more delight,
Such that his primacy might be denied,
To that monarch's profound surprise, replied:

"From all I see, and from all I hear tell, 7
None on Earth compares to you in beauty,
(A beauty that o'er all folk casts its spell)
Except for one, a brother dear to me,
Iocondo is his name; yet one might well
Say that, but for him, you, assuredly,
Leave all behind, all the unlovely mass,
For he alone your beauty doth surpass."

Canto XXVIII: 8-10: Faustus claims his brother's looks to be superior

Aistulf thought the thing impossible, 8
For he'd assumed the palm was his indeed,
And so, he longed to meet with this mortal,
A lad whose beauty such great praise could breed.
He asked Faustus, if such were feasible,
To bring his brother there; so, twas agreed,
Though Faustus declared twould prove a labour,
To persuade one living far from Pavia

Where Aistulf held his court, who ne'er had been 9
Away from Rome, not even for a day;
For, since the lad had great good fortune seen,
He dwelt there tranquilly, at peace alway,
His inheritance intact, his gaze serene,
His wealth nor more nor less; he might well say
That Pavia seemed as far as to another
Tanais might prove; such was his brother.

And then the difficulty would be greater
In tearing him from the wife he so loved,
That he was bound to her, and was ever
Subject to no will but hers, and unmoved
By others' wishes; and yet his brother
He would seek out, since his sovereign proved
So persuasive; while, in his turn, the king,
Offered gifts designed to bring about the thing.

Canto XXVIII: 11-17: Iocondo departs for Pavia, to his wife's seeming distress

Faustus departed, and a few weeks later
Entered Rome, and the paternal mansion.
There, his fervent pleas so moved his brother,
That he made him of his own persuasion,
And, though twas difficult, found the counter
To the wife's dismay, and each objection,
By propounding the good that must ensue,
And the gratitude that must prove their due.

Iocondo named a day for his departure,
And gathered his servants and his steeds,
And prepared the finest clothes (our nature
Benefitting from fine dress, as fine deeds).
At his side, by night and day, did feature
His tearful wife, who, seeing to his needs,
Declared she knew not how she might endure
Such long absence; not death could pain her more;

That the thought alone produced such misery
Twas as if her heart was drawn from out her side.
"Ah, come, weep not, my life, that this must be!"
(Weeping no less than her) Iocondo cried.
"So may this journey prosper, happily,
That here but two brief months shall you abide
Without your spouse, no longer shall it be,
Though the king should grant half his realm to me."



Stanza 13

But little comfort to his wife this brought, 14
For such an absence was too long, she said,
And it would be no wonder if he sought
For her, on his return, and found her dead;
Grief, night and day, so weighed upon her thought,
That she could eat not, nor could rest abed.
So that, for pity, the youth repented
Of his promise, having thus consented.

From her neck, she unloosed a costly chain, 15
Which a gemmed cross and holy relics bore.
(These a Bohemian pilgrim, with much pain,
Had garnered, on some distant sacred shore.
From Jerusalem, in sickness, once again
Returned, he had entered her father's door,
Died in that house, her father was his heir)
And she gave this to Iocondo to wear,

That he might place it round his neck, and so 16
Bear it and thus remember her forever.
Her spouse was happy to receive it, though
Needing naught to prompt him to recall her,
For neither time nor absence would e'er show,
In good or ill, cause for him to waver,
Or forego the love, deep and strong, that he
Felt then, and must through all eternity.

The night ere the dawn of his departure, 17
Iocondo thought his wife would die, indeed,
Of the pain inflicted by her loving nature,
Though he must leave her at the time decreed.
She could not sleep, a wretched creature;
He left an hour ere twas morn, as agreed,
Mounted his horse, and then away he sped,
While his weeping spouse returned to bed.

Canto XXVIII: 18-20: He misses her gift and swiftly returns for it

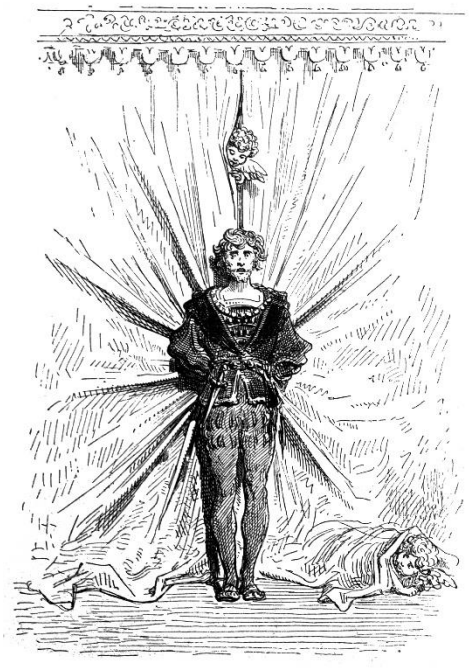
He was scarce ten miles upon his way, 18
When the holy cross, her gift, came to mind,
Placed neath his pillow, the previous day,
And now, through forgetfulness, left behind.
"Alas," he thought, "what could I do or say,
To save myself, if she that gift should find?
She must not know how careless I now prove,
Forgetting that which speaks of boundless love."

He sought an excuse, then fell to thinking 19
That any such would not be well received
If a servant were to speak it, conceding
That he must go himself; the thought conceived,
He said to Faustus: 'While I'm returning,
Go on to Baccano; once I've achieved
My errand, as I must, or ill twill bode,
I'll hope to join you later, on the road.

The task no other should perform but I, 20
Doubt not but I'll soon you join further on."
Then said adieu, and down the road did fly,
At a trot, then a gallop, and was gone.
As he crossed the river, the sun was high
And the shadows had all vanished therefrom,
He reached his house, sought the bed, and found
His wife, neath the canopy sleeping sound.

Canto XXVIII: 21-23: He finds himself betrayed, but leaves silently

He raised the coverlet, without a word, 21
And scarcely could believe the dreadful sight,
For his chaste and faithful wife ne'er stirred
From the arms of the youth who held her tight.
He knew this adulterer, a lad preferred
By him, for the sun was shining bright
Through the window; this was a page he'd raised,
Of humble birth: Iocondo stood amazed.



Stanza 21

Tis better to speak it, and bear witness, 22
That others might credit an affair,
Than experience Iocondo's sadness,
And such pain and distress be forced to share.
Assailed by anger, he, nonetheless,
Drew his sword so he might despatch the pair,
But the love, despite himself, he still felt
For that wife of his, their salvation spelt.

Nor did this love that mocked him so, permit 23
(So utterly was the poor man its slave)
Him to wake her, lest she be pained by it,
Being caught, that is, in a crime so grave.
As best he could, he made a swift exit,
Descended the stair, mounted, and gave
His horse the whip, Love having whipped him so,
And joined Faustus ere he'd reached Baccano.

Canto XXVIII: 24-27: His beauty is impaired by his sorrow

His looks seem altered now, to one and all; 24
They saw his heart was heavy, yet none knew
The secret of his sorrow; bitter gall
It seemed, and yet the reason none could view.
They thought he'd gone to Rome, you recall,
Yet Corneto (that 'horned' town) saw him too!
All believed twas Love had caused him pain,
But in what manner none could yet explain.

Faustus thought his brother grieving 25
At having left his wife sad and lonely,
While he on the contrary was cursing
That she enjoyed such brave company.
Meanwhile, with furrowed brow, and ever musing,
His brother now eyed the ground, morosely,
As Faustus, sought to comfort him again,
But with the cause unknown, twas all in vain.

The salves that he now sought to employ 26
To heal the wound, increased the misery,
For his speaking of his wife brought no joy,
But simply incised the wound more deeply.
His brother took no rest, all must annoy;
His appetite was lost, as if completely,
And the face that shone with beauty before,
So changed that it was handsome no more.

His eyes now seemed quite sunken in his head; 27
Thinner in the face, his nose seemed larger;
Little beauty now remained, and instead
Of a paragon's, he cut a graceless figure.
By the Arbia and Arno, half-dead,
He journeyed, nigh consumed by wasting fever,
Aught of beauty that sorrow had not undone
Doomed to fade, like a cut rose in the sun.

Canto XXVIII: 28-32: Iocondo languishes in Pavia

Faustus, besides grieving that his brother 28
Had been reduced to such a sorry state,
Regretted that he'd deceived his master,
Aistulf, to whom he'd praised him, of late,
Promising the most handsome courtier
Of all, and bringing one ruined by fate.
But they still rode on their way together,
And so came, in the end, to Pavia.

Fearing to bring the youth before the king, 29
And thus reveal his own lack of judgement,
He first informed him of his bringing
One whose deep sorrow had caused impairment,
And that the beauty of his face was fading,
Harmed by his heart's woe, to his detriment,
A secret wound matched by a vile fever,
Such that he seemed himself no longer.

King Aistulf welcomed his brother' coming, 30
With a show of friendship great as any,
Though in this mortal world there was nothing
That he'd wished to view more than his beauty.
Nor was he displeased that it was waning,
Noting his own's superiority,
Which might well have been matched, the monarch feared,
By Iocondo's, that some bitter flame had seared.

Lodged in the palace, his new visitor 31
Could be seen every hour of every day,
And, thus, the king could observe the stranger,
And to Faustus and his brother honour pay.
Meanwhile Iocondo languished, as ever,
Thoughts of his wife tormenting him alway.
For neither pastimes nor sweet music eased
His endless woe a jot, and nothing pleased.

Before his chambers, on the upper floor, 32
Next to the roof, there was an ancient hall.
Where alone (since he could delight no more
In seeing others, and so shunned them all)
He withdrew, while ever adding, to his store
Of heavy woe, fresh grief to pierce and gall.
Yet there he found (who'd have thought it, truly?)
That which healed him of his wound completely.

Canto XXVIII: 33-36: He spies the Queen and a dwarf together

At the end of the hall, where it was darker, 33
(For the windows set there were closed alway)
A beam of light issued from a corner,
Where the walls fitted ill, and there did play.
He set his face to the gap and saw, further,
Something hard to believe if but hearsay;
Naught was he told, but saw with his own eyes
What none could believe, or e'en surmise.

He could see into the Queen's apartment 34
Her finest, and her most private, chamber,
Which none could enter lacking her consent;
None but the most faithful saw it ever.
As he gazed, he saw, to his amazement,
That a dwarf was wrestling closely with her;
Though little, he'd the better of her so,
Since he was atop, and the queen below.

Iocondo was dumbfounded and amazed, 35
And, thinking he was dreaming, stared awhile,
Until, no longer thinking he was dazed
And this a dream, he realised all was vile.
As at that scorned, misshapen form he gazed,
"She submits to such a man as must defile
One who's wed" he cried, "to the fairest knight,
And most gracious king. Oh, what appetite!"

And then his wife whom he ne'er ceased to blame, 36
He thought of, who a pageboy had received,
And deemed excusable her want of shame,
Though the pair had betrayed him, and deceived.
Twas the fault of her sex that one should name,
Ne'er content with but one man, he perceived;
And if each shared the same sad taint, at least
His spouse had foregone coupling with a beast.

Canto XXVIII: 37-40: He is pleased when the dwarf neglects the affair

The following day, at that self-same hour, 37
Iocondo returned to the self-same place,
And espied the dwarf in the lady's bower,
Bringing upon the king the like disgrace.
He found them to the utmost of their power
Doing so alway, with ne'er a day's grace,
While the queen (much to Iocondo's wonder)
Denounced the neglect shown by her lover.

One day, before the monarch, with the rest, 38
He saw she was possessed by melancholy.
For she had, through her maidservant, addressed
This lover, and yet had found him tardy.
Sent there a third time, the girl expressed
Her annoyance: "He's gambling, my lady,
And lest he lose some fraction of his stake
The churl will not that game of his forsake."



Stanza 38

At this strange spectacle his eyes grew bright, 39
His brow was smoother, and his whole face cleared;
As joyful as his name, now seemed the knight.
Once restored, smiles not tears then appeared;
He gained weight, and a Cherubim in flight
Borne from Paradise, he seemed, his heart cheered.
The king, his brother, all the household there,
Of the change in his looks were now aware.

If Aistulf wished to learn, from Iocondo, 40
What had caused the sudden transformation,
No less keen was he for the king to know
All about the queen's vile situation.
Yet he wished him to refrain, even so,
From revenge, based on his information.
To expose and yet not harm the lady,
He made the king swear on the Agnus Dei.

Canto XXVIII: 41-44: He reveals the situation to the king

He had him affirm that whate'er he saw 41
Or heard, which might seem to him most ugly,
(Even though the appearance that it bore
Looked to harm His Majesty, directly)
He would ne'er seek revenge; furthermore,
He bound Aistulf to utter secrecy.
(So that the malefactor would not learn,
By word or deed, what the King might discern.)

The king, who aught else would have believed 42
Before such a thing, gave his oath freely.
Iocondo then affirmed he'd been deceived,
And that was why he, in truth, had slowly
Languished from the hurt that he'd received,
On viewing his wife with one most lowly;
And said that he'd have died, twas his belief,
If he'd had to wait much longer for relief.

Twas in His Highness' palace he had seen 43
The thing that had greatly eased his woe,
For if he were deceived, he had not been
Alone in that, he claimed; and, saying so,
He led the king to where a man might glean
A view of that vile brute, and there, below,
The mare, and not his own, that he did ride,
And spurred, and made her rear her back, beside.

You may believe the act seemed to the king 44
A deed of shame, without me swearing so,
He seemed distraught, raging at everything,
And striking the walls, with his head, in woe,
He cried aloud, his oath intent on breaking,
Yet forced himself to silence, drove below
His boundless anger and his bitter scorn,
Since twas upon the sacred host he'd sworn.

Canto XXVIII: 45-49: They set out to prove all women fickle

"What counsel can you offer me, brother?" 45
He asked Iocondo, "Since you've ensured
I may not wreak vengeance on the sinner,
Nor sate my anger, nor cry this abroad."
Iocondo answered, "Naught let them suffer
But rather let us greater proof afford
That all women are as weak, let us begin
To take what others from our wives now win.

We are both still young, and of a beauty 46
That cannot easily be found elsewhere,
What woman will not please us readily
If with the ugly their delights they share?
And, if beauty and youth fail completely,
Then our wealth may aid us everywhere,
Nor would I that we come here again,
Till the spoil, from a thousand wives, we gain

Long absence, viewing places far away, 47
And the company of other women,
Will both serve the heart's passions to allay,
That much pain and trouble oft have given."
The king was pleased, nor would he brook delay,
And so, the next morn, when the sun had risen,
He and the Roman knight took to the road,
With two squires, on whom their gear was bestowed.

Disguised, they passed through Italy and France, 48
Then Flanders, and so reached the English shore,
And when they met a lovely woman's glance
Found her open to their pleas, and much more.
They gave, and yet regained their advance,
For what was spent another would restore.
They made request of many a wife indeed,
But many a wife prayed to them, in need.



Stanza 48 "*And when they met a lovely woman's glance*"



Stanza 48 "*They made request of many a wife indeed*"

They stayed a month in this land, and that, two; 49
And solid proof they thus did ascertain.
Those women were as faithless and untrue
As their own wives, whatever they might feign.
But ever chasing after something new,
Led the two, more often, to complain,
For entering another's door (or purse)
Meant risking their death, or something worse.



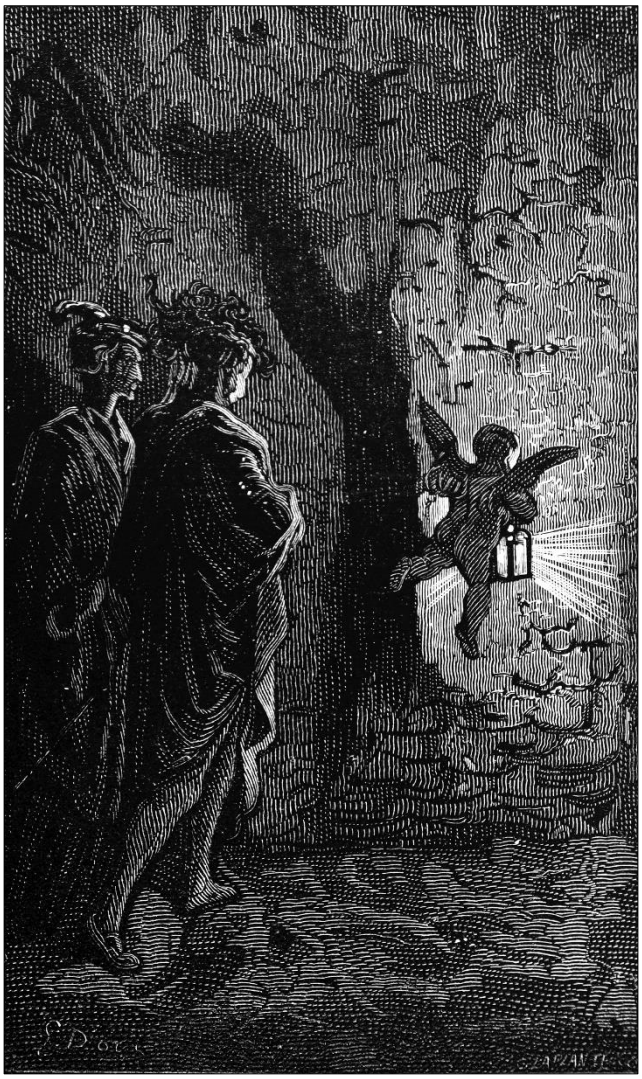
Stanza 49

Canto XXVIII: 50-52: They determine on finding one woman to suit both

"Twere better," said Iocondo, "if we found 50
One wife whose face and manner pleased us both,
One where we may meet on common ground,
And ne'er show jealousy, as if on oath."
"Why should I," the king exclaimed "not be bound
By such, as any other?" nothing loath;
"It seems that to each of this female crowd
More than one man is, frequently, allowed.

One we want who will not constrain us, 51
But whene'er natural need should arise,
In joy, and peace, she may entertain us,
Without any conflict, or tears, or sighs.
Nor would the harm to her be grievous;
If every wife had two spouses, likewise,
She needs but be faithful to two, not one,
And we might hear less quarrelling, or none."

The king's proposal seemed to well-content 52
The Roman knight and so it was, the pair,
Upon achieving their ambition bent,
O'er hill and plain pursued the bold affair.
They found a woman matching their intent,
Fair in form and manner, they might share,
She was a Spanish innkeeper's daughter;
The inn he kept was at Valencia.



Stanza 52

Canto XXVIII: 53-55: They take the innkeeper's daughter with them

Still at an age as yet unripe but tender, 53
She was in truth a flower in her first bloom.
Many a child, already, had this father,
And sought to grant poverty little room;
So, twas but a swift and simple matter
To yield them his daughter, I presume,
For they promised to treat her courteously
Where'er they might go; and thus made three.

She went with them, and pleasing they found her, 54
Taking turns, in peace, most generously,
As if they passed each other the hammer
And struck the anvil fiercely or gently.
To see all Spain was the wish of either,
So, through Siface's realm they sped swiftly,
And that same day they left Valencia
They halted at the inn at Xàtiva.

The travellers went to view the palaces, 55
The streets, and public and holy places,
A practice they employed, more or less,
In every country where they left their traces;
The girl remained at the inn, with the rest,
The valets seeing to the beds, the horses,
And taking care that a meal awaited
Their masters return when they were sated.

Canto XXVIII: 56-61: She meets her former companion

Now, a youth there was, in that hostelry, 56
Who'd worked in her father's inn before,
As a groom, and knew her from infancy,
And love towards each other this pair bore.
They would glance, at each other, secretly,
Without seeming to, fearing to do more,
And, when their lords and masters could not see,
Spoke with each other, surreptitiously.



Stanza 54

The lad sought to know why she was there, 57
And asked which of the two lords thus laid claim
To her; Fiammetta told him of the pair,
Such was she called, "The Greek" was his sole name.
"Just when I'd hoped to make you mine, and care
For you, forever," cried that very same,
"Fiammetta, my life, you're lost to me,
No more, it seems, your face shall I e'er see.

All my sweet hopes are turned to bitterness, 58
Since you are others' now, and leave me so.
For I'd planned, having laboured with success
To earn a little, and to save a tithe, also,
From my scant earnings, and from what the guests
Are kind enough to grant me as they go,
To seek Valencia and ask permission
Of your father, to wed you; such my mission."

The girl shrugged her shoulders, and replied 59
That he came too late, and naught could be done.
The Greek now feigned grief, and wept, and sighed:
"Will you then see me die, my lovely one?
In your arms let me expire," the lover cried,
"Let me but once your tender charms have won;
For every moment, ere you leave, that's spent
Beside you will grant that I die content."

Fiammetta, pitying him, gave answer: 60
"Believe me, I wish that no less than you;
But, surrounded by as many eyes as ever,
Neither time nor opportunity accrue."
Yet the Greek pursued the matter further:
"Were you but true to me as I am true,
I think you might yet find somewhere tonight,
Where we might lie together till first light."

"How can I," she cried, "when all night through 61
I'm forever trapped, now, between that pair,
Pestered by one or tother of those two,
And clasped in an embrace that I must share?"
"Why," cried the Greek," the thing's naught to you,
No doubt you know how to escape from there,
And could slip from between them easily;
And that you shall, dear, if you pity me."

Canto XXVIII: 62-65: He sleeps with her covertly

She thought awhile, then told him he must come, 62
When he believed the household were asleep,
Then how to reach her silently, where from,
And next, in going, what watch he must keep.
He approached as she'd said, noiseless and dumb,
When he thought all were lost in slumber deep;
Then he pushed, till it yielded, at the door,
Entered softly, and tiptoed o'er the floor.

Short and cautious steps he took, and was sure 63
To always keep one foot planted firmly,
As if glass was scattered o'er that chamber floor,
Or he feared to tread on eggs; carefully,
He extended his arms a little more,
Till his fingers found the bed, then, quietly,
Headfirst he entered where the others lay,
Claimed his Fiammetta, and began to play.

He placed himself between her tender thighs, 64
Since she lay on her back; when all was set,
He clasped her in his arms, stifled her sighs,
And pressed himself upon her, till they met;
He rode hard upon that steed, his fair prize,
Nor needed any other; without let,
He trotted, galloped, ambled, like a knight
Nor dismounted, but continued, all the night.

King Aistulf and Iocondo both perceived 65
Wild movements that shook the bed about,
And yet the self-same error both deceived,
For each thought "My companion tis, no doubt."
Once the Greek's destination was achieved,
As he'd entered, he silently slipped out.
And as the sun a new day did begin,
Fiammetta rose, to let the valets in.

Canto XXVIII: 66-70: She confesses to Iocondo and the King

Aistulf said to Iocondo, as in jest, 66
"Brother, tis a journey you have gone,
Twere well that you took some time to rest,
Having ridden so, all night, off and on."
"I was about to say the same:" confessed
Iocondo, "you've performed a marathon;
Tis you that should lie down, though it be light,
Having hunted, up and down, all this night."

"I?" said the king, "I'd have unloosed my hound 67
And run a course, if you had been so kind,
As to lend me the horse, and quit the ground,
And not left me to toss and turn, behind."
Iocondo cried: 'As your vassal am I bound,
You may dictate whatever comes to mind;
Tis unseemly to claim what is not so,
Tis yours to say whether she's mine or no."

If one spoke, then the other added more; 68
They ended by quarrelling most fiercely,
And dealt each other such brave words of war,
Both of them were well-nigh mocked entirely.
The pair summoned Fiammetta, therefore,
(As witness to the truth, the girl was clearly
Most afraid) each demanding she not hide
That his friend had done the deed, and had lied.

"Confirm", the monarch said, with haughty gaze, 69
"You need not fear, now, either of us two,
That twas he who in pastures sweet did graze
While I remained a world away from you."
Each disbelieved the other, in a phrase,
And waited for the answer, that fell due,
While Fiammetta threw herself on the floor,
Once discovered, of surviving this, unsure.

She begged their pardon that love had urged her 70
To introduce a young man to their bed,
Out of pity for one she'd made to suffer
Heart's torments; twas a youth she'd hoped to wed.
That night she'd fallen into mortal error,
Yet had hoped that, when the hours were sped,
They'd both be of the same opinion:
That the deed was done by his companion.

Canto XXVIII: 71-74: After much laughter, they decide to return to their wives

Iocondo and the king gazed at each other, 71
In a stupor, from amazement and confusion,
Never having heard of two such, ever,
That had suffered from a like delusion.
Open-mouthed sat fond lover by lover,
And then roared with laughter; in conclusion,
Scarcely able to breathe, with what she'd said
Delighted, they fell backwards, on the bed.

They laughed so hard their chests ached, and their eyes 72
Were full of tears of joy; their sole request,
Of each other: "How can we now disguise
Our folly, and not be but woman's jest;
For we have failed to guard our lovely prize,
Betwixt us two, by neither one possessed?
Though a husband acquired more eyes than hairs,
He'll be fooled yet by these schemes of theirs!

We've assayed a thousand, and all fair, 73
And found not one that worked otherwise.
If we tried the next, her actions would compare;
Yet let this one be the last; let us be wise.
That our wives are no worse, in this affair,
Than others, and as chaste, we may surmise.
If they but do as all the rest have done,
Twere better to return to them anon."

This decided, they despatched Fiammetta 74
To find the lad, and next, before the rest,
Declared her his wife, and then her lover
Accepted gifts from both, at their request.
Then they mounted, and made their departure,
And headed for the east, since to the west
They'd strayed, and so they sought their wives again,
Nor thereafter found reason to complain.'

Canto XXVIII: 75-84: Rodomonte is offered an alternative view of women

Thus, the innkeeper ended his bold tale, 75
Listened to by all, with great attention.
With Rodomonte silence did prevail,
He revealed not a sign of dissension,
Then declared: 'Tis the truth in each detail;
For every woman's powers of invention,
Seem infinite, and not a thousandth part
Could one grasp, despite all one's skill and art.'

There was an elder midst that company, 76
Wise yet bold, and sounder than the rest,
That unable to sit there silently,
And hear all women slandered, though in jest,
Turned to him who had told the story,
Crying: 'Many a thing folk will attest
That not an ounce of the truth doth contain;
That this fine tale of yours is one, tis plain.

I give credence to not a word you've said, 77
Not though the Evangelist said the same;
Mere opinion, not experience, has led
You to lodge, against woman, such a claim.
Your malevolence against a few has bred
A desire that the sex should bear the blame.
Yet, if you can be calm, I'd have you hear
Praise of them not blame, so lend an ear.

For he that would praise them has a greater 78
Field to exploit than he that would speak ill.
A hundred he might name we should honour,
For every one that shows but evil will.
Blame not all, and aim to laud those rather
That excel, and seek their virtues to distil.
And if Valerio has taught you otherwise,
His true feelings he's laboured to disguise.



Stanza 78

Tell me, is there one among you, truly, 79
That has never proved unfaithful to his wife?
Who, when granted the opportunity,
Has not gone with another? Why, tis rife.
Is there one, in all this world? Inform me.
Whoever claims so, lies, upon my life,
Yet how many have had designs on you?
(Except those that for a living so do?)

Know you a single man that would not leave 80
His wife alone, though she were young and fair,
To follow another, and that wife deceive,
If he thought he'd gain ready access there?
What would he not do were he to receive
Gifts from a woman, with her plea and prayer?
I think he'd give his soul to please that one,
Or his flesh at least, when all is said and done.

Those that leave their husbands have good 81
reason;
The man is bored at home, and listless too.
When he's not he'll gladly commit treason,
And other women eagerly pursue.
Wishing to be loved, at every season
They but seek love, and grant what is their due;
And I would pass a law, this very hour,
That no man could oppose, had I the power.

It would read that every woman taken 82
In adultery, should be slain, there and then,
If she could not claim and it be proven
That her spouse had but done the same again.
If proved it was, she'd regain her freedom,
Neither spouse nor court might hound her, amen.
Christ in his precepts said as much, indeed;
"Do as you would be done by" was his creed.

Ascribe incontinence to those who show it, 83
And not to the whole sex, because some do.
Who do so more than us? (And you know it!)
Not to one sex alone adultery's due.
Let ours be the shame if we'd bestow it.
Blasphemers, thieves, rapists, traitors too,
Usurers, murderers, we rarely see
Except among our own sex; there they be.'

Then, his speech sincere and just, the elder, 84
Gave many an example, of good women,
That, in both their thoughts and deeds, had ever
Proven chaste, though, at this, the Saracen,
Scowled threateningly, disinclined to suffer
The truth to be heard, till, there and then,
The wiser man, through fear, ceased to name
Such women, his opinion, though, the same.

Canto XXVIII: 85-90: He descends the River Saône

Having put an end to all contention, 85
Rodomonte left the table, and went
To his bed, to rest, until the morning sun
Drove the shadows from the air, though he spent
More of the night sighing for the one
He loved than sleeping, foiled of his intent;
And so, with the sun's first dawning ray,
Boarded a vessel to pursue his way.

For he held the respect for his good steed 86
That a knight should have for one so fine,
(Though twas his despite Ruggiero indeed,
And Sacripante) and thus his design,
Having travelled two full days at speed,
And wearied it, was to find a more benign,
Mode of transport, for his own ease as well,
And make better speed by water, for a spell.

Without delay, the bargeman launched the boat, 87
And commanded each man to ply his oar,
While the lightly-laden craft, once afloat,
Was soon gliding by the Saône's pleasant shore.
Yet his gaze was still troubled and remote.
Care travelled behind him, and before.
He found it at the stern, and at the prow;
He'd borne it as he rode, and did so now.

In his head or in his heart, care sat alway, 88
Depriving him of comfort, and of rest.
The wretched man could not his pain allay,
For the enemy was there in his own breast,
Nor could he hope for mercy, night or day,
Since by his very self he was distressed;
Warring within, vexed ever by his foe,
That cruel one who brought not aid but woe.

All that night, and the next day, his journey 89
Rodomonte pursued, with heavy heart,
Still musing on the lasting injury
Dealt by both king and lady, that fierce dart.
For the self-same thoughts brought him misery
Once on board, as before they did depart.
Such a flame could not be quenched by water,
Nor could change of place his anguish alter.

Like one who's wearied by burning fever, 90
That tosses, weakly, from side to side,
Now the left, now the right, hoping ever
To reach a state of ease, and there abide,
Yet finds it not, this way nor the other,
But in all ways is by discomfort tried,
So, upon land and water equally,
That anguish was felt by Rodomonte.

Canto XXVIII: 91-94: And reaches Avignon, then Aigues-Mortes

He lost patience with travelling by water, 91
And had them land him on the eastern shore.
By Lyon, Vienne, and Valence, the courser
Sped, till the bridge at Avignon he saw.
These lands, and all those upon the other
Shore of the Rhône and conquered in the war,
Between the river and the Pyrenees,
Were Africa's and Spain's new territories.

He crossed the Rhône, and to Aigues-Mortes he rode, 92
Thinking to pass to Africa with ease,
And came to a stream and village, that showed
Allegiance to Bacchus and to Ceres,
But emptied now was every last abode,
Due to the conflict, and its injuries.
Here, and there, he viewed wave after wave,
That, here the vale, there the sea-shore, did lave.

And came upon a church, upon a hill, 93
New-built, yet abandoned like the rest,
For the war all about was raging still.
Rodomonte, the place at once possessed,
For its situation did calm instil,
Sequestered from the fields, and seeming blessed,
In that ill news could scarcely reach him there,
And, thus, for his Algiers he ceased to care.

He abandoned thoughts of Africa; the site 94
Appeared most suitable, and fair indeed,
And here he lodged his household outright,
And quickly found a stable for his steed.
Montpellier not far, yet out of sight,
Lay a few leagues distant, where every need
Might be satisfied; a stream ran nearby,
And their food the fields about might supply.

Canto XXVIII: 95-98: He meets Isabella, and his affections turn to her

Musing there, one day, Rodomonte
(Who spent most of his days deep in thought)
Saw a maid, whose face was sweet and lovely,
Tread the narrow path (as if the place she sought)
That crossed the flowery field below, while she
Was accompanied by a monk, of bearded sort,
And he led behind him a mighty steed,
Clothed in black trappings, of noble breed.

Now, who the monk is, and who the lady
You surely know, and what the steed bears there;
Isabella, it must be, and with the body
Of her once dear Zerbino in her care.
When she to Provence began her journey,
I left her with the old monk, thus, to fare.
He'd persuaded her to devote her days
To the service of the Lord, and His praise.

Though with pale and troubled face she went,
Though the maiden's hair was loose and astray,
Though sighs from her burning breast she spent,
Though founts of tears fell from her eyes alway,
And though to grief her mien was testament,
(Many a tribute to the dead she did pay)
Yet such beauty her face and form did share
Love and the Graces sought a dwelling there.

As soon as Rodomonte saw the maid,
He laid the thoughts he'd harboured aside,
All that loathing of the sex he'd displayed,
The one by which the world is beautified.
While Isabella, to his eye, portrayed
All that a new affection might provide;
This fresh love now displacing the other,
As a nail extracts a nail from timber.

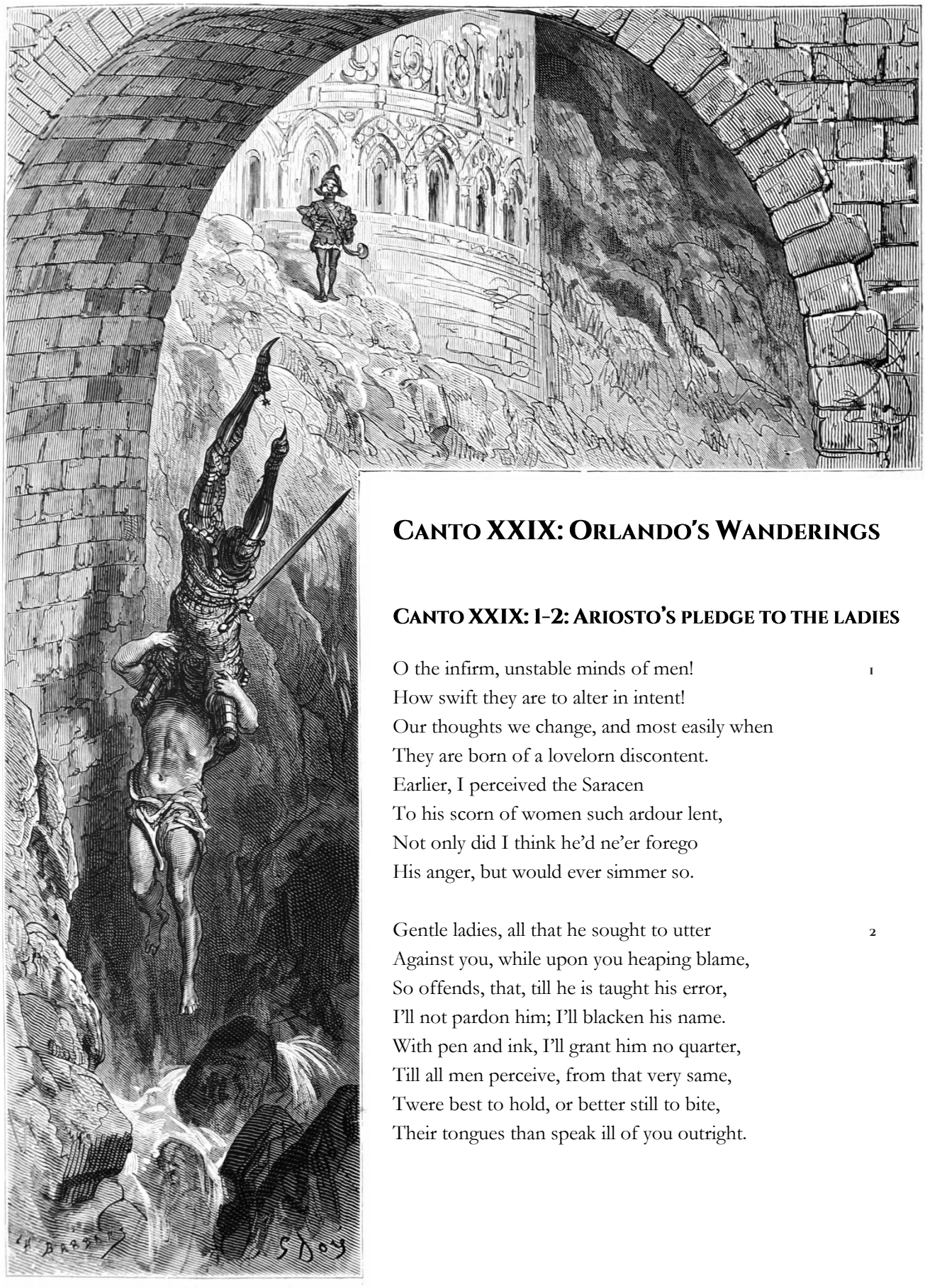
Canto XXVIII: 99-102: He seeks to seduce her from her intent

He met her with the mildest gaze he knew,
And the gentlest tones that he could muster,
And asked about her health, politely, too.
All that was in her mind she did utter,
As to how she'd left the world to pursue
Holy works, and to the Heavenly Father
Offer prayer, at which Rodomonte smiled,
Who gods, and law, and faith e'er reviled.

He called her intent a foolish error,
And said that she'd but wandered astray,
And as much to blame as any miser
That kept his treasure buried deep alway,
Such that none e'er received a measure,
Nor found profit in its use, night or day:
Enclose the lion, bear, and the serpent,
Not that which is yet fair and innocent.

The monk, that to all this had lent an ear,
Ready to prevent the incautious maid
Straying from a path, straight and clear,
And keep her to the course that he'd displayed,
Sought to spread his table with holy cheer,
A spiritual feast, most swiftly laid.
Yet to Rodomonte, all seemed bitter,
No sooner tasted than loathed, as ever.

He, having vainly sought to interrupt,
And perchance force the monk to hold his peace,
The rein of patience broke and, with abrupt
Blows of his fists, encouraged him to cease.
Yet, lest you're, likewise, ready to erupt,
At my torrent of words, and seek your ease,
I'll end the canto, and the like end reach
As the old monk attained by too much speech.



Canto XXIX: Orlando's Wanderings

Canto XXIX: 1-2: Ariosto's pledge to the ladies

O the infirm, unstable minds of men! 1
How swift they are to alter in intent!
Our thoughts we change, and most easily when
They are born of a lovelorn discontent.
Earlier, I perceived the Saracen
To his scorn of women such ardour lent,
Not only did I think he'd ne'er forego
His anger, but would ever simmer so.

Gentle ladies, all that he sought to utter 2
Against you, while upon you heaping blame,
So offends, that, till he is taught his error,
I'll not pardon him; I'll blacken his name.
With pen and ink, I'll grant him no quarter,
Till all men perceive, from that very same,
Twere best to hold, or better still to bite,
Their tongues than speak ill of you outright.

Canto XXIX: 3-7: Rodomonte hurls the monk into the sea

That he spoke in ignorance and folly, 3
Is clearly demonstrated by our tale;
His anger he displayed, indifferently,
Against all women, yet to no avail;
One glance at Isabella, and swiftly
Another mode of speech did prevail.
Though he'd scarce seen her, and knew her not,
His other love already was forgot.

And, being pricked and burned by this new love, 4
He offered arguments of scant merit,
Her sound and settled mind and heart to move,
Which she had fixed on God; while the hermit,
As her shield and armour, now sought to prove
Lest the maiden's chaste thoughts should such permit,
With stronger arguments, that he was right,
And, thus, aimed to protect her from the knight.

Rodomonte, though, thinking he'd suffered 5
The monk's bold and irritating sermon
Long enough, his own advice then offered,
That to his hermit's cell he should be gone,
Without her, but finding he yet proffered
His arguments, and would ne'er have done,
He laid fists upon the valiant monk at will,
And whate'er he struck was striking still.

And, as with tongs the smith will grasp the steel, 6
He now grasped him by the neck, furiously,
Whirled him twice about his head, in his zeal,
And hurled him far, into the raging sea.
I know not, and so cannot here reveal,
What became of him (the rumours vary);
Some say he met the stony reef below,
And all his bones were shattered, head to toe.

Some insist that a graceful arc he made, 7
Flying two or three miles before he fell,
Yet, despite the fervency with which he prayed,
Not knowing how to swim, was drowned; some tell
Of a patron saint who came to his aid,
Whose saving hand was visible as well!
Whate'er might be the truth of the matter,
In this tale, you'll hear of him no further.



Stanza 6

Canto XXIX: 8-12: Isabella seeks to evade his clutches

Cruel Rodomonte, having sent him flying, 8
With a less troubled visage, now applied
His efforts to comforting and wooing
The sad, bewildered woman at his side,
She was his very heart and life, employing
The language use by lovers, thus, he cried;
His comfort and his fondest hope, was she;
With other phrases still used commonly.

And he showed himself so temperate now, 9
That not a sign of violence was revealed.
The gentle eyes beneath her lovely brow,
Subdued the pride in him, now well-concealed,
And though he possessed the power to cow
The maiden, he'd not force her, thus, to yield,
For possession was ill, he yet believed,
Unless as a gift from her twere received.

And so, he thought to mould Isabella, 10
By degrees, to his desire, while the maid
In that secluded place, alien to her,
Like a mouse with which a cat now played,
Had much rather be plunged in the water;
While, her mind, but one thought conveyed,
Twas that of seeking, ere she was attacked,
A means to remain untouched, and intact.

Thus, she resolved that she would seek to die, 11
By her own hand, before the barbarous king
Could compass his fell intent, though thereby
She'd betray her pledge made to the dying,
Her dear Zerbino, for, when he did lie
In her arms, she had promised no such thing,
But to live, devoted to his memory,
While vowing perpetual chastity.

She thought Rodomonte's passion growing, 12
And seeing this, she knew not what to do,
Believing he'd assault her, on this showing,
She unable to contest the issue.
Yet, within herself furiously debating,
She found at last a course she might pursue,
To save her chastity, and through that same,
As I shall tell, acquire enduring fame.

Canto XXIX: 13-18: And devises a deception

To the cruel Saracen, who, already, 13
Had revealed, by his words, his true intent,
For he'd put by all that passing courtesy
Which at first to his sweet discourse he'd lent,
She said: 'Preserve my honour, entirely
Beyond suspicion, and I'll be content
To grant you a gift that is far greater
Than aught won by robbing me of honour.

For the sake of the pleasures of a moment, 14
Of which, on Earth, there is ample supply,
Despise not the perpetual contentment,
The joy, second to none, I'll not deny.
A hundred, a thousand, will give assent,
Fair maidens, ever pleasing to the eye,
But there are few or none, perchance, that live,
That can grant you the gift that I can give.

For a herb I viewed, as I came on my way, 15
And I recall where I did see the thing,
That boiled with rue and ivy, for a day,
O'er a fire of cypress wood simmering,
And then squeezed in a virgin's hands, I say,
Gives a juice such that when a valiant king
Bathes his flesh thrice, such virtue he'll acquire
Twill protecs him thenceforth from steel and fire.

If he anoints himself thrice, as I've said, 16
For a month, then, he'll be invulnerable,
And then every month, from heel to head,
Since for only so long is it powerful.
This I can work, before the sun has fled,
And thereby you may prove if I'm truthful.
And, if I'm not wrong, more grateful you'll be
Than if o'er Europe you won sovereignty.

As my reward, I but demand of you, 17
That, upon your sword, you swear to me
That you will attempt naught that's untrue,
And, in word and deed, respect my chastity.'
At this the knight his passion did subdue,
For so great a desire had Rodomonte
For that protection he'd have accepted
More than Isabella now requested.

He would obey her till the thing was done, 18
And the marvellous liquid was achieved,
And ensure, until its virtue was won,
That no sign of violence was perceived.
But he vowed that same pact to abandon,
Thereafter, as a man who'd ne'er believed
In God or His saints and, like faith lacking,
Thus, wayward Africa yielded to this king.

Canto XXIX: 19-24: She proposes a trial

To Isabella, Rodomonte swore, 19
A thousand times, he'd not molest her,
As long as he could win what long before
Achilles had, and Cygnus, from another.
So, she, from cliffs and dells, along the shore,
Far from any human gaze, did gather
A store of herbs, while the Saracen
Kept an eye on her, ever and again.

When she'd gathered enough, from every place, 20
With roots or without, to serve her aim,
They returned, as cool shade the Earth did grace;
And all that night she boiled and squeezed those same,
That paragon of continence, her face
And every action observed (in this game)
By the Saracen, who watched, most carefully,
As she rehearsed that arcane mystery.

Rodomonte spent the night though drinking, 21
And so did his people who remained,
For the heat from her fire had him sweating,
And was then in such a small space contained
He was parched, and drank, without thinking,
Till between them two barrels they had drained,
Of Grecian wine that a few days before,
Had been seized by the squires who served the Moor.

Now Rodomonte was unused to wine 22
Because his creed denied it him, by law,
So, to his taste the liquor seemed divine,
Sweet as nectar or manna, or yet more.
Great cups of it he quaffed, and thought it fine,
Thus, resuming the pagan rites of yore.
He drank the potent wine, and drank it still
Though his head turned like the wheel of a mill.

Meanwhile, the maiden lifted from the fire 23
The cauldron in which she'd boiled the lot,
And said to the monarch: 'Since I aspire,
To prove, thus, that my pledge is not forgot,
And that lies are quenched by truth we acquire
Through experience, with what's in the pot,
I'll demonstrate its virtues; not on you,
But first upon myself, to show tis true.

I will, ere you attempt it, try the liquor, 24
Happily, blessed with power and virtue,
Upon myself, lest you're fearful of danger,
And think symptoms of poison may ensue.
I'll anoint myself with it, all over,
From my head down to my breast, and then you
May with your sharpened sword demonstrate
Herein lies power enough to counter fate.'

Canto XXIX: 25-30: And sacrifices herself to preserve her chastity

She bathed herself, head to breast, as she'd said. 25
Before the unthinking pagan, filled with wine;
Then she knelt, bared her neck, and bowed her head.
His blade, which on helm and shield did dine,
Then fell (an act of faith), and struck her dead,
So true the steel; thus, furthering her design.
That head, where Love had found a place to rest,
Was severed from the snowy back and breast.



Stanza 25

Thrice it bounced, and then was clearly heard 26
A voice that proclaimed Zerbino's name,
To follow whom that death she had incurred,
While fleeing Rodomonte and vile shame.
Soul, that held faith dearer, in a word,
And, nigh unknown to our age, the sweet name
Of chastity, to us an alien thing,
Dearer than life to you, and your green spring,

Soul, go in peace, forever blessed and fair! 27
Oh, if my tongue had but the power to show
Your virtues, with what endless joy and care
I'd ply my art, that grant verse here below
Rare beauty, so the light that you shed there,
Should for ten thousand years, hereafter, glow!
Depart in peace, to that sweet realm above,
And leave to Earth the story of your love.

Upon that deed, unequalled, tremendous, 28
The Creator, in heaven, turned his eye,
And said: 'I deem her act as virtuous
As Lucretia's ousting Tarquin thereby,
And I shall make a law, impervious
To time, and swear, though I am here on high,
By the inviolable river below,
That ages yet to be this law shall know:

I decree that, in future, all who bear 29
Her name shall be blessed with genius,
The banner of true honour they shall share,
And be noble, wise, fair, and courteous,
That to all writers matter rich and rare
They may supply, and so on Parnassus,
And Pindos' spur, Helicon, forever,
"Isabella" shall sound; fair "Isabella".

So spoke the Lord, and rendered all the air 30
About the place serene, and calmed the sea.
Her chaste soul to the third sphere did repair,
To her Zerbino, for eternity.
On Earth, with shame and scorn for his share,
A second 'Breuse sans Pitié', we see,
Who, once he had recovered from the wine,
Cursed his error; though not one to repine.

Canto XXIX: 31-34: Rodomonte constructs a mausoleum

Yet the blessed soul of Isabella, 31
He thought to placate to some degree,
Although of her death he was the author,
And at least give life to her memory,
While the means was easy to discover:
He could convert the church readily
To a sepulchre, near where she had died,
In which the lovers' relics might abide.

He brought stonemasons there from all around, 32
Some came out of respect, some out of fear.
Six thousand there were that he thus found,
That quarried stone from the hills, far and near.
Ninety yards, from the top to the ground,
Was the wall that they built, both strong and sheer,
To enclose the church where Isabella
And Zerbino were entombed together.

Twas like that which Hadrian constructed, 33
(Castel Sant'Angelo) by the Tiber,
And a tower by its side he erected,
Intended as his own brave sepulchre,
With a bridge, six feet wide, that connected
That site to the far bank of the river.
Long and narrow was the bridge, while a pair
Of steeds could barely pass each other there.

Two great coursers yet might meet together, 34
Or rather clash together on its height,
Nor at each side was there any barrier,
To guarantee the passage of a knight.
He would pay a heavy toll, the traveller,
Moor or Christian, who'd pass it and alight,
For, a thousand trophies, the monarch swore,
Would adorn the maid's tomb, from roof to floor.

Canto XXIX: 35-39: The passage o'er the river

Ten days or so it took to span the river 35
With the bridge, that arched o'er the stream below,
While the wall and the tower took far longer,
Though presenting, when done, a mighty show.
A guard, on the summit of the latter,
Upon his bugle a warning would blow,
Whene'er to the bridge a knight sought entry,
Alerting his master, Rodomonte,

Who would arm and, if he was opposed, 36
He on this, his foe on the farther side,
He'd ensure the narrow passage was closed,
For every knight that came there he defied,
And, upon the bridge, a duel he proposed,
While if their steed but swerved a foot aside,
They plunged to the water, wide and deep.
No greater peril than to seek that keep!

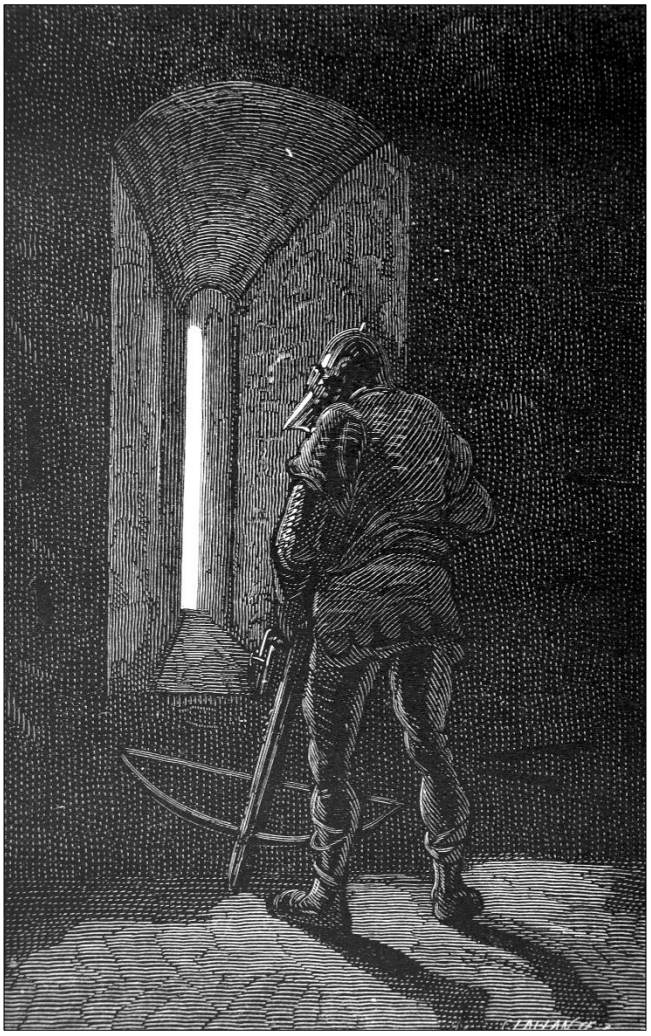


Stanza 36 "*And, upon the bridge, a duel he proposed*"

The Saracen, in his imagination, 37
Conceived that by oft tumbling to the flood,
Head-first, from the bridge to damnation,
Gulping the water, ere he could make good,
He might cleanse himself, by that oblation,
Of the fault wine had induced, if aught could,
As if, any more than wine, it might erase
The errors wine, in act or speech, displays.

On many a day, some knight would appear. 38
Oft he'd followed the road beside the main,
For none was more direct, running clear
Across that land, from Italy to Spain;
Or courage urged him on, or, as dear,
Honour, which he thus sought to maintain.
Yet all, who'd hoped to win, but met with strife,
And oft lost arms, and armour, and their life.

If they were Moors or Saracens, he acquired 39
Their arms, content to let the living go,
And of the best among them, whom he fired
From the bridge into the waters below,
He hung the arms, named (once he had enquired)
In the tomb; with Christians twas not so:
To Algiers were many sent, in his name,
Ere mad Orlando to the bridgehead came.



Stanza 41

Canto XXIX: 40-43: Orlando appears and attempt to cross

The frenzied Count had reached the river, 40
Where, as might be witnessed, Rodomonte
Had completed his work, though the tower,
And the sepulchre, were not quite ready.
The bridge was scarce finished, moreover,
Yet, visor open, else armoured fully,
Rodomonte appeared, all set to fight,
As the Lord of Anglante came in sight.

As his madness dictated, Orlando 41
Leapt the barrier, and o'er the bridge did fly,
But Rodomonte, frowning at his foe,
As he stood by the tower, gave a cry
From afar yet full of menace, although,
Foregoing sword or spear, he let them lie.
'Halt, villain,' he called, 'and curb your rashness;
Tis pride and arrogance fuel recklessness.

For lords and valiant knights that bridge was made, 42
Not for you, mad creature!' Yet Orlando,
With mind distracted, but scant notice paid,
And deaf to every threat, onward did go.
'This madman on the ground must be laid,'
Thought the Saracen, 'or drowned there below!'
And drew nigh to despatch him to the river,
Not thinking some fell blow he might deliver.

Meanwhile a gentle lady reached the place, 43
Wishing to cross to the further shore,
Most richly arrayed, and most fair of face;
Reserved in mien, wisely herself she bore.
You may recall her, she whose steed did pace
The roads around, while ever searching for
Some trace of her beloved Brandimarte,
Except where he lay (in Paris seemingly!)

Canto XXIX: 44-47: Fiordelisa witnesses the fight

Fiordelisa came upon them, suddenly, 44
(For she it was, as you no doubt have guessed)
As Orlando grappled Rodomonte,
And sought to hurl him down, his mind oppressed,
Into the flood. His emblem she could see,
And recognised; his name she could attest,
Yet she wondered at the cause that had led
To his roaming here half-naked and, in dread,

She halted, that the end she might know 45
Of the fury with which this pair now fought.
For the one made every effort to throw
The other in the stream, and all for naught.
'How can a fool such strength and prowess show?'
The Saracen cried, every sinew taut,
While shifting here and there, and back again,
Filled full with pride, and anger, and disdain.

He gripped with one hand, and then the other, 46
While seeking a fresh hold, as best he might,
And, with a leg twixt his foe's, sought further
To throw him to the left, and then the right.
Rodomonte, clasping the Count tighter,
Mirrored the fierce bear that, with all its might,
Seeks to uproot the tree from which it fell,
Filled with anger, hatred, and guilt as well.

Orlando whose wits were lost (though where 47
I know not) and now used his strength alone,
That kind of strength in which few others share,
And seldom in this world is ever known,
Hurled himself from the bridge into the air,
Still clasping the Saracen's flesh and bone.
They plunged into the river together,
And the bank groaned neath the weight of water.

Canto XXIX: 48-50: Of Orlando's wanderings and feats

The current swiftly bore the pair apart. 48
Orlando, naked, swimming like a fish,
Flung his arms and legs about, with inborn art,
And gained the bank, nor sought to embellish
His victory, but on his way did start,
Careless of praise or blame, at the finish,
While the Saracen, impeded by his armour,
Reached the shore later, and with much labour.

Meanwhile, the fair Fiordelisa had crossed 49
The bridge, and thus had reached the further shore,
And then had searched for the one she'd lost,
Some trace of Brandimarte to secure,
But, finding not one sign, to her sad cost,
Still, in hope, turned to her long search once more;
While we turn to our tale of Orlando,
Who'd quit the tower, bridge, and river also.

Twere madness if I offered to relate 50
Orlando's mad endeavours, one by one;
There were so many we'd be here till late,
And who knows when their tally would be done.
Yet some of his wild deeds I should narrate,
As seem pertinent here, rather than none;
Nor to tell of that wonder should refuse
Wrought in the Pyrenees, above Toulouse.

Canto XXIX: 51-56: He encounters two youths in the Pyrenees

The Count now wandered through the countryside, 51
Urged on by his wild and reckless frenzy,
And reached the top of that range, high and wide,
Twixt Tarragona and fair France, madly
Pursuing a straight course, to where he spied
The descending sun sink beyond a valley,
There he joined a path o'er the mountain steep,
Which hung above that vale both dark and deep.

He chanced to meet there, on the mountain track 52
Two bold young foresters that led a mule,
With a heavy load of wood on its back;
And since he had the semblance of a fool,
And his head every sign of sense did lack,
They shouted to the Count, in accents cruel,
To retreat, or stand aside, not block the path
Unless, indeed, he wished to feel their wrath.

To their threats, the Count answered not a word, 53
But kicked the mule, in the chest, violently,
Then stood his ground, as if he had not heard.
His strength, unparalleled, used furiously,
Sent it flying through the air like a bird,
The mule descending, less than gracefully,
To strike the mountainside above the track,
A mile beyond the vale, upon its back.

Then he turned on the youths, his ire increased. 54
One, with better luck than sense, made a leap
From the path, and fell sixty yards at least,
Such his fear, yet few injuries did reap.
For amid the brambles his speed decreased,
Since they were green, and prickly, damp and deep,
And while he was scratched, copiously,
He was rendered safe thus, and at liberty.

The other clung to an outcrop of stone, 55
Thinking he might regain the path once more,
And then, once among the cliffs swiftly flown,
Might well hide from the madman, he was sure.
But, once he'd climbed, with many a loud groan,
The Count grasped his feet, raised him from the floor,
Pulled his legs apart, and tore the lad in two,
Though, in his madness, scarce intending to,

Much as a falconer deals with a heron, 56
Or a chicken, whose entrails he removes,
To feed a merlin, or some other falcon,
With the offal that such a bird approves.
The other was all too happy to abandon
That place, and flee alive, as history proves,
For he told of it so oft (it ne'er grew stale)
Bishop Turpin heard it, and retold the tale.

Canto XXIX: 57-63: Angelica and Medoro encounter him on the shore

Orlando wrought these and other marvels 57
As he strayed all about the mountain peak,
But, after many a wandering on his travels,
A path descending towards Spain did seek,
And roamed the coast, amidst the infidels,
By Tarragona, disinclined to speak,
Till driven, by his madness, as before,
He made his dwelling on the barren shore,

Where he countered the burning midday sun 58
By covering himself in powdery sand.
And such indeed was his situation,
When Angelica passed that lonely strand,
(With Medoro, as you know, for they'd won
Their way from the mountains to that land)
And had approached within a yard or so,
Before she'd realised it was Orlando.

But not the Orlando she remembered, 59
So altered from his former self was he.
The madness his wits had so encumbered
Naked in sun and shade, roaming free,
Had he midst Syene's folk been numbered
Or where Ammon is worshipped endlessly,
Or midst the hills the Nile its way doth win,
He could ne'er have revealed a darker skin.

His eyes were well-nigh buried in his skull, 60
While his face was thin, and dry as a bone,
His hair was all dishevelled, long and dull,
Like his beard, vile, and sadly overgrown.
As soon as they were close, she, now fearful,
Drew backwards, all atremble, with a moan,
And shrieked aloud, at him, and as she cried
Turned about, for protection, to her guide.

Once he was aware of them, Orlando, 61
Leapt to his feet, to seize on one so fair,
So pleasing was her face to him, and so
Wildly his mad passions he must share.
And yet the maid he did no longer know.
His memory seeming lost beyond repair,
He ran behind her now, in such a manner
As a dog will pursue a hunted creature.

Medoro, seeing him chase his lady, 62
Drove his courser against him at full speed,
And struck at Orlando long, and fiercely,
When he turned his back, though he scarce gave heed.
He dealt him a blow on the head, sharply,
Though the skin was hard as bone, indeed
Harder than steel, for that same from birth,
Was rendered quite as hard as aught on earth.

The Count, feeling himself struck from behind, 63
Turned and, lunging at his youthful foe,
With a strength that few in the world can find,
Dealt the Saracen's horse a mighty blow.
He broke its skull like glass, to death consigned
The creature, which slumped to the ground below,
While, in an instant, the Count turned, and sped
After Angelica who'd onwards fled.

Canto XXIX: 64-66: She employs the ring and vanishes

The lady drove her mare, and spurred her on; 64
The whip upon her flanks she did bestow,
And would have thought her too slow if she'd gone
As swiftly as an arrow from the bow.
Then the ring, she yet wore, she thought upon;
And set it twixt her lips, to scape the foe,
Then vanished (twas every bit as powerful)
As the light does when you snuff a candle.

Either from fear, or from her hand shaking 65
As she slipped the ring from her finger,
Or because the mare stumbled in fleeing,
(That may have been the cause, or another)
At the very moment when she was handling
The ring, and then vanished altogether,
One foot left the stirrup, all unplanned,
And she fell upon her back, on the sand.

If her leap had been two inches shorter, 66
She's have ended in the madman's embrace.
He would have slain her if he'd caught her,
But good fortune now had charge of her case.
Let her, by a second theft, gain another
Fair steed, as she did in that other place,
For she will ne'er regain this mare once more
That, pursued by Orlando, pounds the shore.

Canto XXIX: 67-71: Orlando pursues and seizes her mare

Doubt not that she must needs go find another, 67
While we'll pursue the Count's wild career,
Whose rage and fury were as great as ever,
Though she had sought the means to disappear.
Over the naked sand he chased the creature,
Drawing close to the mare till, looming near,
He touched her, and then grasped her by the mane,
And, at the end, held her fast by the rein.

He seized the palfrey with the same delight 68
As another might seize a fair maiden,
Dragged at the bit and bridle, held on tight,
Leapt to her back, then urged her on again.
Thus, the creature many a mile in flight,
Without repose, here and there, was driven,
Never rid of his weight in the saddle,
Nor allowed to run free of the bridle.

Meeting a ditch, and leaping over all, 69
She went head over heels with her rider;
He was unharmed, and never felt the fall,
But the mare landed hard on her shoulder.
From the depths, Orlando sought to haul
The winded steed, and in the end raised her
On his back, then climbed out, and thus he bore
Her along, for three bowshot-lengths or more.

Then, finding the beast was somewhat heavy, 70
He set her down, and led her by the rein,
While, lamed, the poor creature followed slowly.
'Walk on!' Orlando cried, but all in vain.
Though if she'd followed at a gallop, truly,
She'd still not have pleased a man insane.
So, he unloosed the halter from her head,
Then he tied it to her hind legs instead.

And thus, he dragged her all along the ground 71
So that she might follow, at her ease,
While she was scraped by the stones all around,
And hide and hair were reduced by degrees,
Till with constant wear and tear, ne'er unbound,
The beast died. One would think that he might cease
To drag the corpse, and yet he halted not
But pursued his way, the mare well-nigh forgot.

Canto XXIX: 72-74: Then continues on his mad way

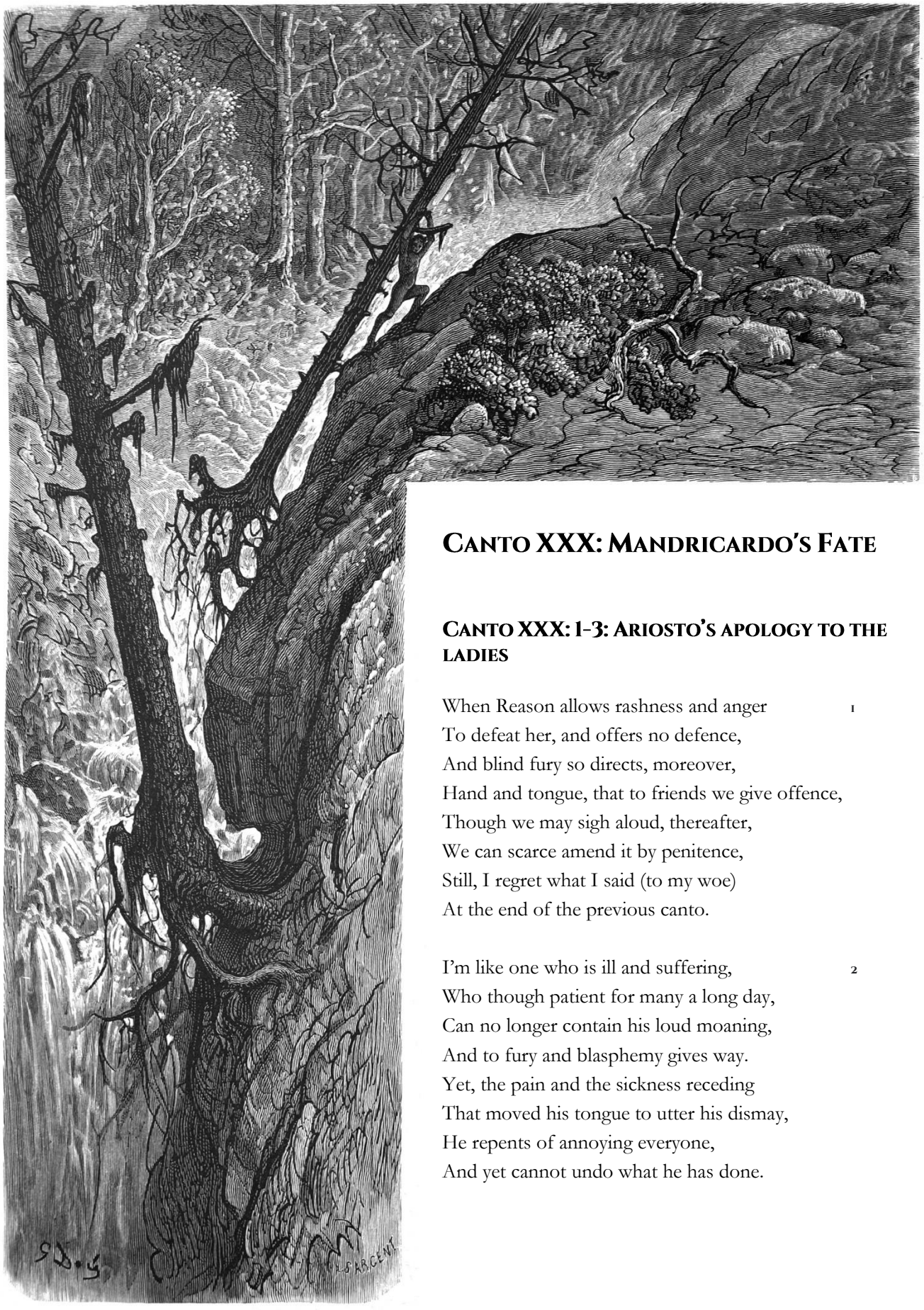
Though the mare was dead, he dragged her yet, 72
Continuing his course, towards the west,
While some farmhouse or hamlet he'd beset
When in need of food or otherwise oppressed,
And using force on everyone he met,
Seizing bread and meat, leaving some distressed,
Beaten, crippled, and the rest as good as dead,
Halting but a moment, ere on he sped.

And he'd have done as much to the lady, 73
If she'd not used the ring and disappeared;
He knew not black from white in his folly,
And harmed, where he would not, all he neared.
A curse upon that same enchanted thing,
And he that gave it her, and interfered!
For, were if not for that ring, Orlando
Would have avenged a thousand lovers so;

And not slain her alone, but every other
That he might have laid his mad hands upon,
Of those at whose hands men must suffer,
And not an ounce of virtue in them, none!
But lest my notes now jar upon the hearer,
And sound discordantly before I'm done,
I'd best defer this to another time,
Lest the ladies find tedious this, my rhyme.

74





Canto XXX: Mandricardo's Fate

Canto XXX: 1-3: Ariosto's apology to the ladies

When Reason allows rashness and anger 1
To defeat her, and offers no defence,
And blind fury so directs, moreover,
Hand and tongue, that to friends we give offence,
Though we may sigh aloud, thereafter,
We can scarce amend it by penitence,
Still, I regret what I said (to my woe)
At the end of the previous canto.

I'm like one who is ill and suffering, 2
Who though patient for many a long day,
Can no longer contain his loud moaning,
And to fury and blasphemy gives way.
Yet, the pain and the sickness receding
That moved his tongue to utter his dismay,
He repents of annoying everyone,
And yet cannot undo what he has done.

Still, I hope, ladies, of your courtesy, 3
I'll yet obtain the pardon that I seek,
And you'll excuse that, in bitter frenzy,
I, there, expressed so damning a critique.
Lay the blame upon my fair enemy,
She, who renders my state but sad and bleak,
And makes me utter what none should approve:
God knows how she wrongs me; she, how I love.

Canto XXX: 4–9: Orlando goes on the rampage

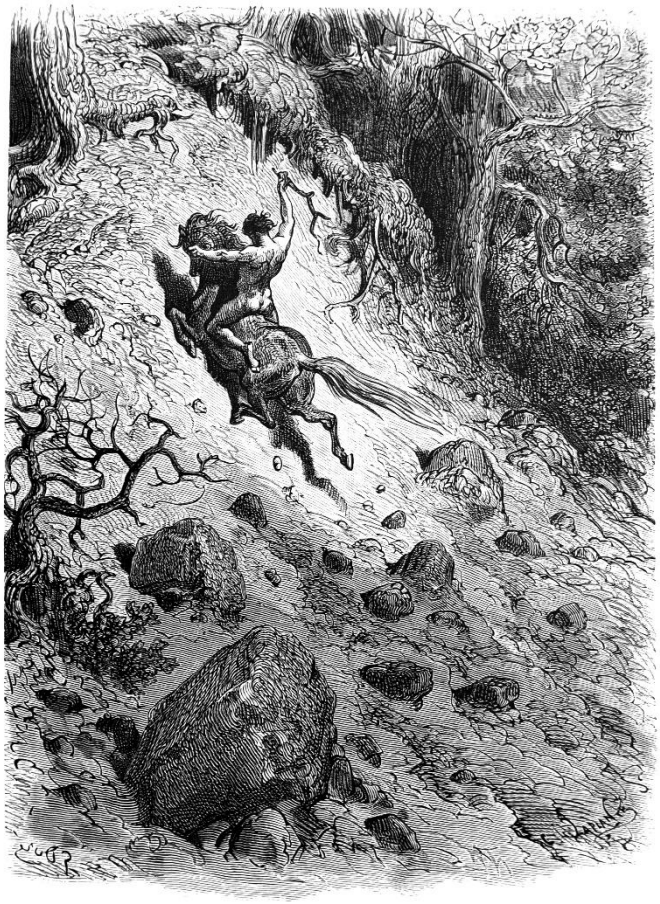
I was no less beside myself, tis plain, 4
Than Orlando, and as worthy of pardon;
He who'd scoured the better part of Spain,
Wandering o'er shore, and plain, and mountain,
While still dragging that dead mare by the rein,
To no good purpose, a useless burden;
But when he came to where a river met the sea,
He abandoned the corpse, indifferently.

And, since the Count could swim like an otter, 5
He leapt in, and landed on the further side.
Behold, a shepherd brought his horse to water,
And to that bank of the stream turned aside.
He scorned not the Count, although, as ever,
He was naked and alone. Orlando cried,
Like the madman he was: 'I will barter,
My mare for your steed, she's o'er the river.

If you'd have me show you her, I'll do so. 6
She fell down dead, upon the other shore.
You'll be able to cure her of it though,
For she's scarce another defect, I'm sure.
Grant me yours, with something else also,
To make the thing fair, for the mare's worth more.'
The shepherd laughed, not one word did afford,
But quit the fool, and rode towards the ford.

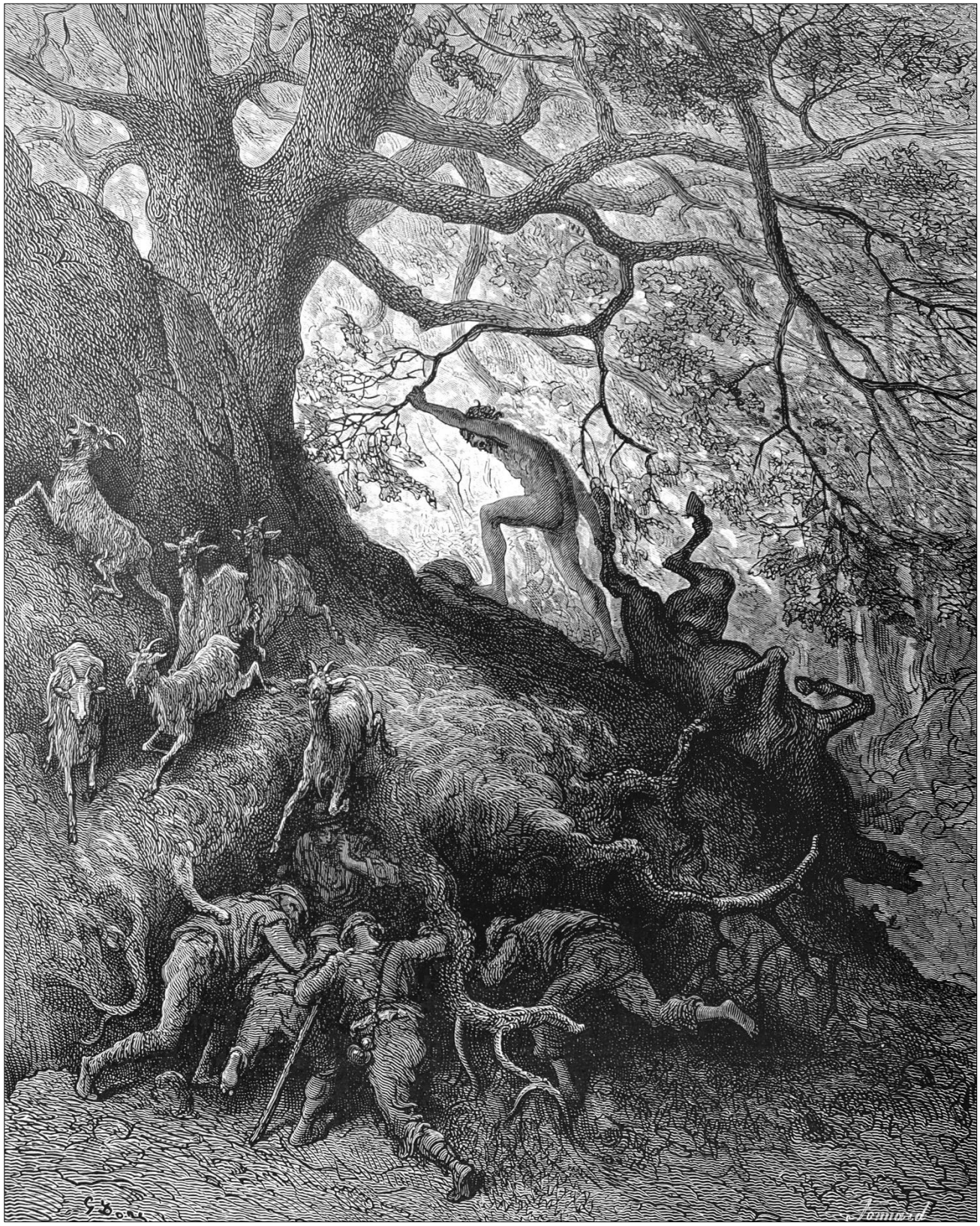
'Hey there, do you hear? I want your horse!' 7
Cried Orlando, who towards him did go,
While the shepherd stayed him in his course
With his sound knotted staff, though the blow
Only fired the Count's wrath, who, with force,
A solid thump of his fist did bestow
Upon the shepherd's unprotected head,
Split his skull so, and left the fellow dead.

Then, leaping on the horse, he went his way, 8
Wandering madly everywhere, pillaging,
While the horse, that saw not a sight of hay,
Was soon done for, half-famished and limping.
Yet Orlando went on foot not a day,
Nor e'er lacked for transport, acquiring
Some other. For whene'er he felt the need,
He'd slay a rider, and purloin his steed.



Stanza 8

He came at last to Malaga, and wrought 9
Greater harm there than any place before,
For besides the mighty havoc that he brought,
He left the folk unable to restore
Their wealth in less than a full year; he fought
Wildly, killed many, and furthermore,
Orlando pulled so many houses down,
He destroyed nigh on a third of the town.



Stanza 4 "*While still dragging that dead mare by the rein*"

Canto XXX: 10-15: And nigh on drowns in the sea

Leaving there, he came to Algeciras, 10
On the shore of the Bay of Gibraltar,
(Or Jabal Tariq, for either will pass
As the name for that rock o'er the water)
Here he saw a boat departing, that alas,
He felt he wished to board; bound for pleasure
Were its occupants; to the morning breeze,
They'd spread their sail, and were taking their ease.

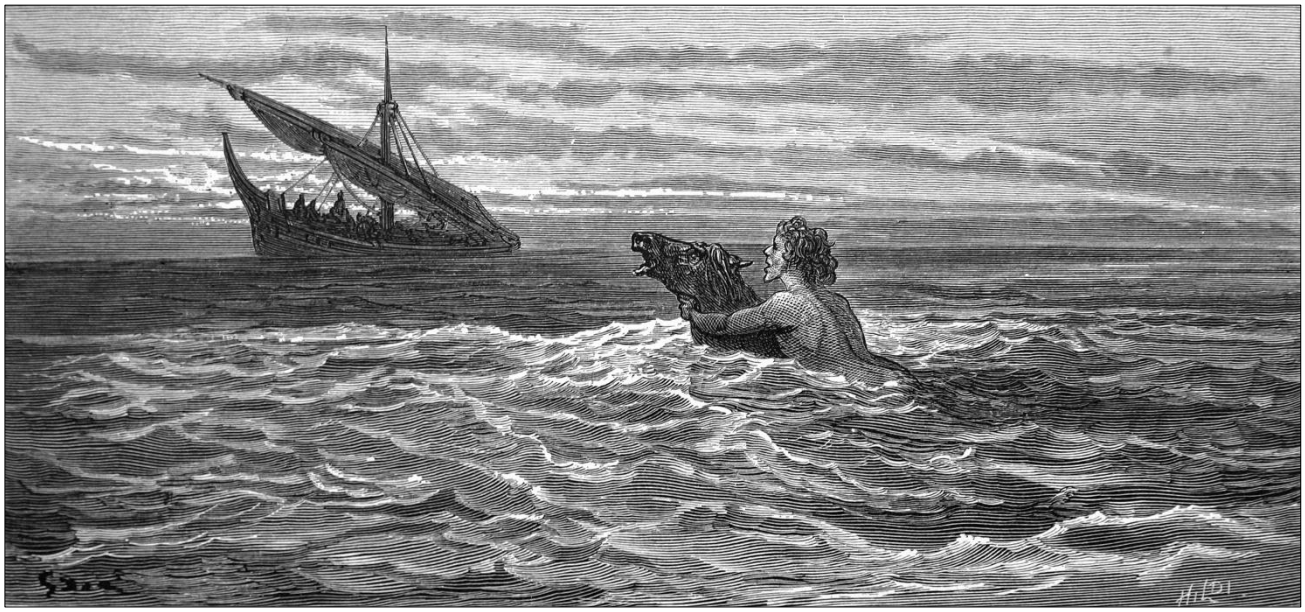
'Put back, for me!' the mad Orlando cried, 11
Yet shouted to those voyagers in vain,
For sadly on their ears his clamour died,
Nor sought they such a cargo to obtain.
As swiftly as they could, the oars they plied;
Like a swallow, the boat sped o'er the main,
While Orlando struck his steed, violently,
And, flailing hard, drove it on, into the sea.

Lacking strength to counter wave or rider, 12
Urged on by mighty blows, the horse plunged deep,
Bathed first his knees, belly, then the crupper,
And scarce his head above the waves could keep.
Let him not hope to turn, or tire and founder,
While the Count seeks towards that boat to leap.
Wretched creature! Forced to drown, gloriously,
Or plough on, to Africa, o'er the sea.

For neither prow nor stern were now in sight, 13
Since the vessel was far distant from the shore,
And the mounting tide was of such a height
The boat was hidden; waves were all he saw.
Still, he drove the creature on with all his might,
As if he'd gallop o'er the sea's deep floor.
The horse, lungs full of water, I'll be bound,
At last, gave up the effort, and was drowned.

He sank, and would have dragged down the rider, 14
If Orlando had not turned himself about,
Worked his legs, and drawn his palms together,
And then swum, bare shoulders in and out,
As from his face, he blew the briny water.
The waves had calmed, the breeze quiet no doubt,
For fairer weather he required, the tide
Else would have swamped the Count, and he'd have died.

But Fortune, that ever cares for the mad, 15
Cast him from the waves on Ceuta's shore,
Two bow-shots from the wall, and still unclad,
For scarcely a stitch of clothing he bore.
Along the coast he ran, and hence did add
Many a day's wild wanderings to his score,
Till he came to a place, along the strand,
Where a host of dark-skinned folk clothed the sand.



Stanza 12

Canto XXX: 16-22: We return to the warriors and their quarrels

Let us leave the Count to wander on his way, 16
The time will come to speak of him again.
While of fair Angelica, of Cathay,
Who'd escaped from the madman, as is plain,
And was bent for her land, without delay,
Seeking passage, and fair weather, o'er the main,
And Medoro, whom, once there, she made king,
Perhaps some finer voice than mine may sing.

For, upon other matters, I'm intent, 17
And Orlando I'll not, as yet, pursue,
But rather I'll direct my argument
To Mandricardo (free now to renew
His ties with Doralice) while content
That Europe has none lovelier in view,
Since fair Angelica has left its shores,
And chaste Isabella to heaven soars.

Mandricardo, proud of the judgement 18
That the lady had given in his favour,
Was not wholly satisfied; discontent
Pricked him, twas a question of honour;
Ruggiero's shield a cause for dissent,
That silver eagle he displayed, as ever,
And then Gradasso's wilful claim,
To that sword Durindana, known to fame.

Agramante had sought to untangle 19
This knot, with Marsilius, in vain.
Seeking, while pursuing every angle,
To end their quarrels, and the peace maintain,
He'd failed to resolve the endless wrangle
Over Hector's shield, between the twain;
Nor indeed would Gradasso yield the sword,
While this and other conflicts were abroad.

Ruggiero refused to meet some other 20
With his shield, nor did Gradasso wish
To meet any, ere he met the Tartar
And did battle for the sword. 'Chance in this,'
Cried the king, 'shall now decide the matter,
And to these arguments put a finish,
Let us see what Fortune shall propose,
And let her of the question now dispose.

For, if you would do what would please me, 21
And I be obliged to you, evermore,
Then cast lots, as to the priority,
And agree who'll fight the Tartar, on this score.
But he who does shall end this for all three,
And the result none of you may ignore.
If the one of you wins, he wins for two,
And if he loses his comrade loses too.

I think twixt Ruggiero and Gradasso 22
There is little to choose, in such a fight,
And whichever man to this duel shall go
He'll reveal himself as a perfect knight.
Yet we'll let Divine Providence now show
Who is wrong in the matter; who is right.
And on the loser no great blame shall fall,
For to Fortune's will we'll impute it all.'

Canto XXX: 23-27: The contest meets with disapproval

Ruggiero and Gradasso said naught 23
While Agramante spoke, but then agreed
That whoever was preferred, and then fought,
Would champion them both by that deed,
Thus, two lots, of the same form, were wrought,
And their names were inscribed, as decreed,
And these were placed inside a sealed urn,
Thrice shaken, and given many a turn.

A servant lad then dipped his hand within, 24
And drew a lot forth, and Ruggiero's
Was the one that did the preference win,
While the one left behind was Gradasso's.
I know not what the sorrow and chagrin
The latter felt, or the joy that arose
In the former, but to the pact they kept.
Fortune's decree each agreed to accept.

Gradasso now gave every thought and care 25
To preparing Ruggiero for the fight,
That the latter might prove the winner there,
And gave of his experience outright,
Regarding all the use in that affair
Of sword and shield, and how a skilful knight
Might avoid empty blows, and so strike true,
And all the moves, one by one, did review.



Stanza 16 "*And Medoro, whom, once there, she made king*"

The rest of the day, that yet remained 26
Once the lots were drawn, the warriors passed
In sending (for the custom they maintained)
Mementos to the friends they'd amassed,
While folk greedy for the fight had attained
The lists at once and, better first than last,
Not content to delay till it was light,
Were preparing to camp there for the night.

That mindless crowd anxiously attended 27
On the warriors' arrival, till the morn,
Fools who neither saw nor comprehended
What was before their eyes, so were they born.
But Sobrino, and Marsilius the intended
Battle, with like-minded folk, viewed with scorn;
Both the contest, and their king, Agramante,
Who'd conceded so much to either party.

Canto XXX: 28-36: Doralice seeks to persuade Mandricardo not to fight

They continued to emphasise, indeed, 28
The harm that the Saracens would know,
If Fortune, in that fight, the death decreed
Of Ruggiero or Mandricardo;
Of their presence there was far greater need,
As against Charlemagne they did go,
Than of ten thousand others, to their mind,
Midst whom a champion was hard to find.

King Agramante knew that this was true, 29
But what he'd promised he could not deny.
Yet he asked now a favour of those two,
To yield the right he'd conferred thereby.
And, besides, what they sought to pursue
Was not worth martial combat, to his eye,
And, if this new request they'd not obey,
At least to countenance a short delay.

And if they would both defer their quarrel 30
For five months or six, they might chase
Charlemagne from his realm, take his mantle,
Crown, and sceptre, and he rule in his place.
Yet though neither man wished to trouble
Their king and disobey, they sought his grace,
For it seemed, to them both, a thing of shame
To be the first to concede and mar their fame.

But more fervent than the king's (who in vain 31
Sought to change the mind of Mandricardo)
Were the pleas, and expressions of true pain,
That the daughter of King Stordilano,
Fair Doralice, uttered; she, again,
Begged him to do as all desired, her woe
Being great, that through him she must be
Subjected, thus, to deep anxiety.

'For, alas, what remedy can I find 32
(She bemoaned) to allay my constant fear,
If ever some new passion fills your mind,
Such that in armour you must e'er appear?
What joy have I, ever to woe resigned,
In seeing the one quarrel ended here,
If you through love of me must discover
A reason to commence yet another?

Woe is me! Twas in vain that, so proudly, 33
I saw a worthy king and valiant knight
Put himself at risk for me, and fiercely
Fight as if his life's worth were but slight,
When, thus, he but chances himself hourly
For so trivial a cause, with death in sight.
It is your inborn fury drives you now,
More than your love for me, I'll avow.

But if tis true that it is love you show, 34
And that urges you to do me honour,
By that, and by the depths of my sorrow,
Which brings pain to my soul and heart, ever,
Cease to fret if on his shield Ruggiero
Now bears the eagle blazoned in silver.
Why should it matter so to you, that he
Bears that shield and emblem? Tis naught to me!

But small reward, though a world of pain, 35
Shall come of this brave quarrel you pursue,
While, if from Ruggiero you regain
The shield, tis slight benefit to you.
But if Fortune turns her back, then tis plain
(Since she it seems decides between the two)
You'll cause such harm, as to think upon
Pains my heart, e'en before the fight is done.

If life be not a thing that you hold dear, 36
And a bird, painted on a shield, weighs more,
Then value life for my sake, since tis clear
One shall not die without the other, nor
Do thoughts of death beside you cause me fear;
I'm bound to follow you, as heretofore.
And yet I would not die a malcontent,
As I shall die, if thus your life is spent.'

Canto XXX: 37-42: Mandricardo replies

With such words and the like, which the lady 37
Accompanied with many a plaintive sigh,
She ne'er ceased to pray him, sincerely,
To seek peace, and let the quarrel go by,
While he, all that night, sucked in the dewy
Sweetness of her bright tears that fell thereby,
And the loving complaint from lips more red
Than a crimson rose, as, tenderly, he said:



Stanza 37

'Ah, come, love of my life, for Heaven's sake, 38
Cease to weep, over so slight a matter,
For if Charlemagne himself were to make
War upon me alone, and on no other,
And our king too, did such action take,
You'd have no cause to fear it; however,
It shows what little faith you have in me,
Fearing, thus, Ruggiero's enmity.

And then you should recall how I, alone, 39
Without my good scimitar in my hand,
Only a broken lance, yet held my own,
And scattered and dispersed a warlike band.
Gradasso, though he hates to have it known,
Admits, to those who make of him demand,
He was my prisoner, in far Syria;
And Ruggiero's power is no greater.

Nor will Gradasso, likewise, e'er deny 40
Nor Isolier, nor Sacripante,
Circassia's great king, the fact, say I,
Nay nor Grifone nor Aquilante,
Nor hundreds more, gathered from far and nigh,
That at the fearful pass I freed many,
Treating Muslims and Christians alike;
And, in like cause, I will forever strike.

Even now, warriors marvel at the deed, 41
And the wondrous things I did that day,
Greater than if the Moorish host indeed,
United with the Franks, I'd held at bay.
To Ruggiero then, should I give heed,
When in battle I shall the blade display
That once was Hector's, fierce Durindana,
And fight protected by Hector's armour?

Why sought I not to win you from the foe, 42
That you might have seen me charge, and defend,
With all my skill and valour there on show?
Then you'd foresee Ruggiero's certain end.
Dry your tears, for God's sake, speak not so;
Let no ill omen evil thus portend;
Tis for honour alone, I take the field,
And not the eagle blazoned on his shield.'

Canto XXX: 43-46: Mandricardo and Ruggiero prepare to joust

So, he spoke; yet many a good reason 43
To desist she offered, with saddened face,
Enough not just to change his opinion,
But to move a solid pillar from its place.
Behold, her knight was as good as beaten,
Though he was in armour, and she in lace;
She induced him to say that, if the king
Asked again, he would please her in this thing.

And he would have done so, but Aurora, 44
Accompanying the sun, as was her way,
Revealed Ruggiero, there, beneath her,
That his right to the eagle would display,
And would cut the quarrel short moreover,
By deeds, lest more words brought more delay.
And so, before the lists, that pleasant morn,
He appeared, in armour, and blew his horn.

When proud Mandricardo heard that sound, 45
Whose loud cry now summoned him to the fight,
Every excuse he, as swiftly, found
To close his ears, and leave his bed outright;
And with so angry a face gazed around,
Doralice dared not speak, in her fright,
Of truce or peace, or of some new accord;
Of more conflict she was sadly assured.

He armed himself at once, while fretting 46
At his squires, all less prompt than he desired,
And then he mounted on his horse, being
That which was Orlando's, that he'd acquired.
Then, to the place appointed for jousting,
He rode, to end the quarrel he'd inspired.
And at once the king and his court appeared;
Nor delayed, as Ruggiero had feared.



Stanza 46

Canto XXX: 47-52: They fight and Mandricardo strikes a mighty blow

Their helms were set upon their head, and laced, 47
And each warrior was handed his lance,
Then the trumpet's sound the hearers graced,
While a thousand cheeks paled at their advance.
Upon its rest each levelled spear was placed,
They spurred their coursers on (to death perchance),
And met together with so fierce a blow
The skies nigh fell, the Earth nigh split below.

On both sides the eagle emblem showed, 48
That Jove himself in air did once maintain,
That oft, in Thessaly, the currents rode,
Though with far darker feathers, o'er the plain.
How bold and strong they were the heavy load
Of wooden lance revealed, each did sustain,
That worse than that encounter had withstood,
As towers gainst the wind, or cliffs the flood.

The flying splinters soared towards the sky, 49
As Bishop Turpin writes, and is no liar,
For two or three returned thence, by and by,
That had ascended to the sphere of fire,
The warriors brandished their swords on high,
Displaying little fear, but great desire
For a fresh encounter, and so they met,
Their aim upon each other's visor set.



Stanza 49



Stanza 45 "*Doralice dared not speak, in her fright*"

The visor twas each struck, at that first blow, 50
For neither man sought to unhorse a knight
By thrusting at the valiant steed below,
Since their steeds were not to blame for the fight.
Who thinks this was a pact, twixt foe and foe,
Knows not the ancient custom, for twas right,
In the absence of a pact, to scorn and shame
Any man that another's steed did maim.

They struck the visor, which was doubly strong, 51
Yet would scarcely serve to deflect the blow,
And many such they dealt, to right a wrong,
Like bursts of hail that mar the crops below,
Breaking stalk and stem as they drive along,
Destroying every hope of harvest so.
What Durindana and Balisarda
Could do, you know: if wielded with ardour.

And yet so prudent were the pair, that they 52
Failed to land a blow worthy of their might,
Till Mandricardo made a frenzied play
That nearly did for Ruggiero outright;
His shield was sliced in two, and torn away,
By one of those strokes that either knight
Was able to land, while his breastplate too
Was pierced, and the cruel blade drove on through.

Canto XXX: 53-57: Ruggiero recovers and wounds Mandricardo

That fierce blow nigh on stopped every heart 53
Amidst those there, thinking Ruggiero slain,
For most had taken that warrior's part,
As he sought right and honour to maintain;
And had Fortune not seen fit to depart
From his side, those folk had hoped he'd attain
To Mandricardo's death or his capture:
Thus, the blow seemed ruinous in nature.

That an angel intervened, is my belief, 54
To save Ruggiero from that blow,
For without delay, seeking scant relief,
He pointed Balisarda at his foe,
Struck the helm, but much to his great grief,
Such was his haste it failed to bestow
All he sought, though he was less to blame
Being with indignation all aflame.

Yet if his aim had been but straight and true, 55
The virtues of the helm had proved in vain;
So fierce the blow that Mandricardo knew,
From his hand he let fall the courser's rein.
Thrice he swayed, was nigh lost, then anew
Raised himself, as his steed scoured the plain,
Twas Brigliador, whom you already know,
Whose change of master yet filled him with woe.

Never did trampled snake or wounded lion 56
Rage with such fury as did the Tartar,
As he swayed, and was carried here and yon,
While from that blow he sought to recover.
Yet as his anger and his pride drove him on,
So, his strength he regained, and his valour.
He wheeled and drove the steed at Ruggiero,
With his sword raised on high to deal a blow.

He rose tall in his saddle, and then aimed 57
His sword at Ruggiero's head, and thought
To cleave him to the chest, and yet unmaimed
Was that skilled warrior; who swiftly sought
Before the stroke had thus his helmet claimed,
To lunge beneath its arc, and so he caught
The other's chain mail, opening a space
Neath the right armpit, while guarding his face.

Canto XXX: 58-64: And then finally slays him

He drew brave Balisarda backwards then, 58
As spouted forth the hot and crimson blood.
Durindana was denied the strength of ten
His foe's arm had possessed, yet, midst that flood,
Ruggiero felt the sharp sword strike again,
And closed his eyes with the pain, ere he could
Compose himself, while great the harm indeed
Had been, had he a lesser helm, and steed.

Ruggiero paused not, but drove the courser on, 59
And, in the right side, pierced Mandricardo,
While the latter's strong chain mail, thereupon,
Burst, though of fine steel, at that fierce blow.
The result of that blade's fall was foregone,
Its enchantment intended to bestow
A power against which such could not prevail,
Whether charmed breastplate, or enchanted mail.

Whate'er the sword thus pierced it sheared away, 60
And left the Tartar wounded in the side,
Such that he cursed the sky, his rage in play,
Roaring more loudly than the breaking tide.
He yet prepared to strive, and win the day,
And so chose to hurl his shield far and wide,
With its eagle emblem, in his anger,
And then, with both hands, grasp Durindana.

'Ah,' cried Ruggiero, 'it needs no more 61
To show your lack of right to that fair shield,
Since you hurl away what failed you before,
And your claim upon the emblem must yield'
Yet was forced a further blow to endure
From that mighty blade, famous in the field,
Durindana, that struck him with such power
It seemed a mountain's weight was its dower.

Through the midst, it pierced his steel visor, 62
And well for him it failed to take his sight;
It struck the saddle's pommel, then his armour,
And the steel case and skirts it oped, outright,
Though the metal was of a hardened temper;
And then, grievously, it wounded the knight.
For it struck his left thigh, and pierced the flesh,
And long it was ere that deep wound would mesh.

The blood that o'er their shattered armour 63
played
Rendered it crimson, with its double stain,
Such that various were the claims now made,
As to which had achieved the greatest gain.
But Ruggiero soon the doubts allayed,
With his sword, many a knight's true bane,
He dealt a blow to Mandricardo's side,
Where the shield a defence had once supplied.

He pierced the left side of his breastplate 64
And found a passage to the heart below,
The sword-tip entering deep, such was fate,
And forcing Mandricardo to forego
His title to the eagle, claimed of late,
And Durindana; yielding to his foe,
What was dearer to him than sword or shield,
Sweet life itself, upon that bloodied field.

Canto XXX: 65-70: Though receiving a further wound himself

Not unavenged did Mandricardo die, 65
For at the moment that he felt the blow
The sword, still his awhile, that king let fly,
And had split the skull to the visor so,
If Ruggiero had not thrust the weapon by,
Having robbed him of his vigour, then, below
The right arm, struck the Tartar knight once more,
Who'd failed to strike as he had struck before.

Thus, Ruggiero was smitten by that blade, 66
At the very moment he slew the king,
And the iron band and steel cap that weighed
Upon his brow were both split by the thing,
While Durindana's blow, though delayed,
Cut deep, two finger widths, in descending.
Ruggiero, stunned, fell backwards to the ground,
And dyed the earth bright crimson all around.

Twas Ruggiero fell first, with a clatter, 67
While so slowly did Mandricardo fall
Twas believed it surely was the latter
That had maintained his right before them all.
While Doralice made the like error
That on both tears and smiles was wont to call,
That day, for she gave thanks to God above
That the victory was gained by her true love.



Stanza 67

But when by manifest signs it was known, 68
That the living lived, and the dead did not,
Their supporters were swift to change their tone,
Some relieved, while some bemoaned their lot.
The king, the lords, and those about the throne,
Gathered round, Mandricardo now forgot,
And embraced Ruggiero, friend to friend,
And did him grace and honour without end.

Most rejoiced with Ruggiero, and the joy 69
They showed without, their hearts felt within,
Yet Gradasso did other thoughts employ
Than his tongue spoke, amidst the happy din.
Pleasure his face showed, rather than annoy,
Yet envy, covertly, lurked neath the skin;
Blind chance or fate, he knew not which to blame,
Cursing both, the lots, and Ruggiero's name.

How to tell of the affection, the kindness, 70
The favour by King Agramante shown
To Ruggiero, as a mark of his success,
Without whom not a banner had he flown,
Nor had sought foreign lands to possess,
(His allies' loyalties as yet unknown)
And, whom, now Mandricardo was no more,
He prized above the rest, on this far shore?

Canto XXX: 71-73: Regarding Doralice's fickle nature

Ruggiero's support lay not merely 71
Among the menfolk, but the women too,
Who had left, midst the host, their own country,
Spain or Africa, their husbands to pursue.
E'en Doralice, though grieving loudly,
From her dead lover might have turned anew,
And, perchance, felt exactly the same,
Had her doing so not been curbed by shame.

I say perchance, since I lack certainty, 72
Though it might, readily, have proved so,
For such was the worth, and such the beauty,
The manners and address, of Ruggiero,
And she (as we know from her past story)
So ready some new lover to follow,
That she might indeed have taken his part,
And upon Ruggiero set her heart.

Though a living Mandricardo was of use, 73
What good was he to her, now he was dead?
Twas right to seek one, so she did deduce,
To meet her needs, night and day, in his stead.
Meanwhile the doctors were told to produce
Every remedy to mend the hero's head,
And, addressing the results of the strife,
They, expertly, secured Ruggiero's life.

Canto XXX: 74-75: The spoils are distributed

He was attended to, most diligently, 74
And beside him, oft, at night or by day,
To demonstrate his care, sat Agramante,
Such was the love for him he did convey.
Mandricardo's shield and armour too, he
Ordered hung beside the bed, on display,
Except for Durindana, that fine sword,
Which the king to Gradasso did award.

Mandricardo's other weapons and armour 75
Were, thus, granted as spoils to Ruggiero,
With Brigliador, that warlike charger,
Left behind, in his frenzy, by Orlando.
But Ruggiero gave the steed to his master
Agramante, knowing twould please him so.
Yet, enough, I must turn from Ruggiero
To she who longs and sighs for that hero.

Canto XXX: 76-80: We return to Bradamante

I speak of Bradamante, who had yearned 76
For the arrival of her messenger.
To Montalbano, Ippalca now returned,
Bringing news of the valiant lover.
Of Frontino Bradamante now learned,
And Rodomonte's baseness did discover,
And how she'd found Ruggiero at the fount,
With Ricciardetto, and Agrismonte's count;

And how Ippalca had left with Ruggiero 77
In hopes of finding said Rodomonte,
And punishing his theft of Frontino,
Seized from a woman, so abruptly,
And how, although they had sought to follow,
They had lost Rodomonte on the journey;
And then the reason why Ruggiero
Had not yet arrived at Montalbano.

And she spoke the words in full to her 78
That Ruggiero had offered in excuse,
And then she drew, from her breast, the letter
That he'd placed in her hand, to thus produce.
Bradamante, troubled, took the paper,
And read its contents; far more profuse
Her thanks had been had she not hoped to see
Ruggiero there, and not this proxy.

Having waited for Ruggiero, and instead 79
Obliged to have him there but in writing,
Gave her face a saddened air, as she read,
And a semblance of fear too, in so doing.
Ten times she kissed the page, and bowed her head
Ten times more, to him her love directing.
Only the tears she scattered from her eyes,
Kept it from kindling to her ardent sighs.

Five times or more she perused the letter, 80
And returned as many times to the maid,
Asking her to repeat, as messenger,
All that she was told, and now relayed,
Weeping all the while, nor would she ever
Have ceased, and an end to this have made
If she had not been solaced by the thought
That he must soon return, the one she sought.

Canto XXX: 81-85: Bradamante's lament

A term of but fifteen, or twenty, days 81
Had Ruggiero set to his absence,
Sworn to Ippalca in a thousand ways,
Bidding her rely upon his presence.
'Yet perchance adventure his course delays,'
Cried Bradamante, 'or some brave nonsense
Oft present in war; what can assure me,
That he will indeed return to me shortly?

Alas, Ruggiero, who would have thought, 82
For I love you more than myself, that you
Could yourself love aught more, and, by report,
Not some friend but the foe that you pursue?
You harm where you should help, offer naught
To aid the one that loves you, and is true.
Nor know I if you think it praise or blame
To neither punish nor reward this same.

That your father was slain by Troiano 83
I know not if you know; yet these stones do!
And yet to aid Troiano's son you'd go,
Agramante and his cause thus pursue.
Is't your idea of vengeance, Ruggiero?
And is this the reward you grant those who
Did so avenge him? By rendering me,
Of his House, a martyr to his memory?'

Such words, and others, the lady addressed 84
To her dear Ruggiero, while weeping,
Though Ippalca sought to grant her some rest
By saying, often, that Ruggiero's keeping
To his word was not in doubt, and twas best,
Since no other crop was worth the reaping,
To wait most patiently for that fair day
That he'd promised would soon end all delay.

Hope, that ever comforts those who love, 85
And Ippalca's kindly solace so eased
Bradamante's fears and grief as to prove
Of such virtue that tears and sorrow ceased.
She'd stay, at Montalbano, nor remove,
Until the term was done, and he was pleased
To return, as he had promised, though twas ill
His keeping of his pledge, she waiting still.

Canto XXX: 86-89: Ricciardetto gives her further news

But that his promise was not yet fulfilled 86
Was scarcely the fault of Ruggiero
The time by one thing and other filled
Until the term was passed, nor could he go
For he had after all been nigh-on killed,
In that fierce fight with Mandricardo,
And lay abed, at risk of death, I'm sure,
So deep his wound, for a month or more.

Bradamante waited, day after day, 87
Beyond the time that her knight had said,
With no more than Ippalca could relay,
And Ricciardetto who had homeward sped.
He told her how Ruggiero had made play
Of his foes, and freed the brothers that men led
Towards their death, and she the news did meet
With joy, though there was bitter midst the sweet.

For Marfisa figured in that discourse, 88
With somewhat of her valour and beauty,
While brave Ruggiero pursued his course
With her beside him to relieve the army,
Where, besieged and with the weaker force,
Agramante held his ground, though insecurely.
Such companionship Bradamante praised,
Yet was not pleased, nor were hopes thus raised,

Nor slight were the suspicions it aroused, 89
For if Marfisa was as fair as said,
And if such close friendship he'd espoused,
Twould be strange if his heart were not misled;
Yet she would not believe it, though it roused
Both hope and fear, that on its heels doth tread,
For the day that would bring joy or sadness,
And, in Montalbano, waited, nonetheless.

Canto XXX: 90-95: Rinaldo arrives, then returns to Paris with his brothers

Meanwhile, came Montalbano's prince and lord, 90
Rinaldo, among her brothers first of all,
For proof of his brave deeds the tales afford,
(Yet in honour not in age, for she could call
On two who were his elders, I'll record)
He who shone in splendour, midst that hall,
As the sun among the stars. He came at noon,
With one page, that was all, and none too soon.

The reason he was there was that from Brava 91
He was returning to Paris once again,
(He'd gone there searching for Angelica
As he did frequently, though all in vain)
And hearing the news from another
That Viviano and Malagigi, the twain
Were sent to the Maganzese that day,
Had hence to Agrismonte made his way.

There, hearing of their rescue, and the fall 92
Of their adversaries, scattered or slain;
That Ruggiero and Marfisa midst all,
Had triumphed there, and the spoils did gain,
And had arrived at Montalbano's hall,
With his brothers and cousins once again,
Each hour had seemed to him as twere a year
Until he could embrace them, without fear.

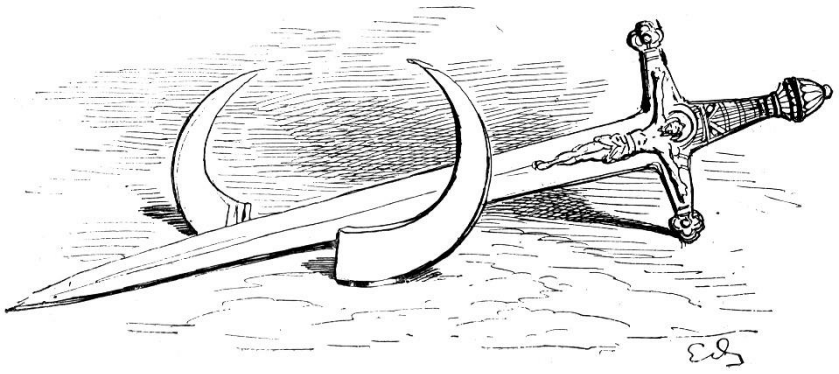
Came Rinaldo to Montalbano, and there, 93
Embracing his mother, wife, and children,
His brothers, and his cousins free as air,
Seemed like a swallow, nesting o'er a garden,
That to its famished chicks did thus repair,
With full beak, bringing gladsome burden.
He stayed with them for but a day or two,
And then issued forth, companied anew.

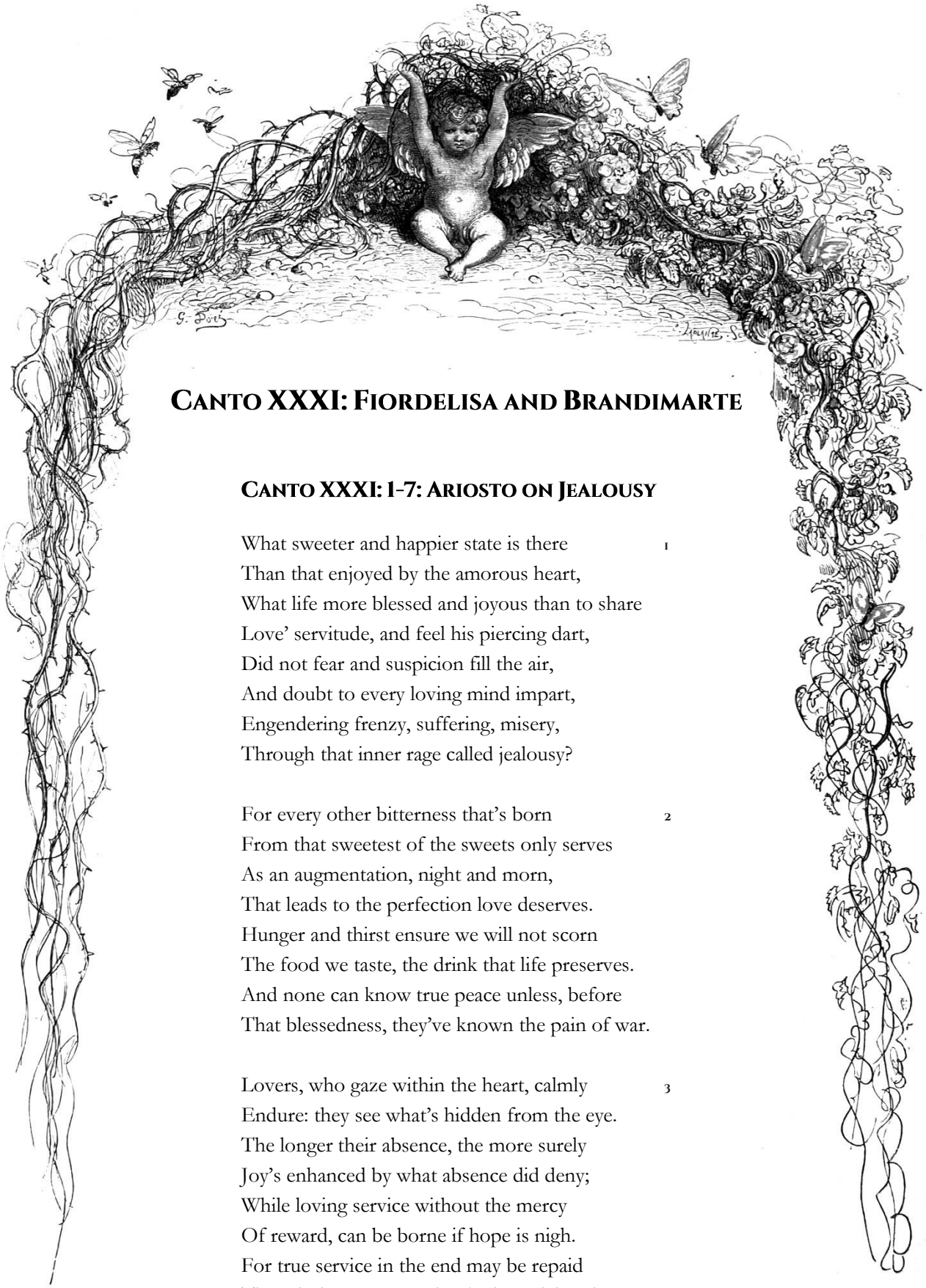


Stanza 93

Amone's eldest son, Guicciardo, 94
Was there, Viviano, Malagigi,
Ricciardo, Ricciardetto, Alardo,
And all rode behind Rinaldo proudly.
But Bradamante waited on Ruggiero,
And on that day that came all too slowly,
Feigning to her brothers that she was ill,
And could not go, but must reside there still;

And, in saying she was ill, spoke most truly, 95
Though twas not a bodily pain or fever,
It was longing that weighed on her unduly,
Her love it was that made her soul suffer.
So, Rinaldo went his way with his party,
And with him, to the war, led the flower
Of his folk, and how to Paris then he came,
Another canto of mine shall proclaim.





Canto XXXI: Fiordelisa and Brandimarte

Canto XXXI: 1-7: Ariosto on Jealousy

What sweeter and happier state is there 1
Than that enjoyed by the amorous heart,
What life more blessed and joyous than to share
Love' servitude, and feel his piercing dart,
Did not fear and suspicion fill the air,
And doubt to every loving mind impart,
Engendering frenzy, suffering, misery,
Through that inner rage called jealousy?

For every other bitterness that's born 2
From that sweetest of the sweets only serves
As an augmentation, night and morn,
That leads to the perfection love deserves.
Hunger and thirst ensure we will not scorn
The food we taste, the drink that life preserves.
And none can know true peace unless, before
That blessedness, they've known the pain of war.

Lovers, who gaze within the heart, calmly 3
Endure: they see what's hidden from the eye.
The longer their absence, the more surely
Joy's enhanced by what absence did deny;
While loving service without the mercy
Of reward, can be borne if hope is nigh.
For true service in the end may be repaid
Though the compensation be long delayed.

Disdain, refusal, scorn, the pangs, in sum, 4
Of love, the hurt endured, the suffering,
Of a heart that recalls its martyrdom,
To love's delights a greater joy will bring.
But if that plague, hellish and unwelcome,
Infects the mind, poisoning everything,
No longer can the lover taste or savour
The pleasures of love, and its sweet flavour.

Tis like a cruel, envenomed wound; its harm 5
No balm, or soothing potion, can address,
Nor incantation, spell, nor subtle charm,
Nor favourable stars; seek not redress
From magic arts that would all ills disarm,
Those taught by Zoroaster, scant success
Attends on such. Cruel wound, of deepest woe,
That sends sad lovers to the grave below;

That wound, incurable, so readily 6
Inflicted on the lover, and no less
By false than true suspicion, cruelly,
Doth intellect and reason so oppress,
That judgement goes astray, endlessly,
Accompanied by sorrow and distress.
Wretched jealousy that thus, so wrongly,
Denied all solace to our Bradamante!

Twas not what her brother, or Ippalca 7
Had said that affected her so deeply,
I speak of the cruel news thereafter,
News that she took to heart, so bitterly
The former scarce compared to the latter.
The substance of it I'll relate shortly,
But I must pause to tell of brave Rinaldo
And his folk, that to Paris first must go.

Canto XXXI: 8-12: Rinaldo's company encounter a knight

On the following day they met a knight 8
With a fair lady riding at his side,
Both his shield and his surcoat black as night,
Save for a bar across it, white and wide,
He challenged Ricciardetto to fight,
As seeming chivalrous, that first did ride;
And he, who ne'er refused a challenge, wheeled
His steed, and sought the space his lance to wield.

Without more notice, not a single word 9
From either, they charged to the encounter.
Rinaldo and his company ne'er stirred,
But awaited the outcome of the matter.
'I'll soon unhorse the fellow,' as he spurred
Onwards, Ricciardetto, chose to murmur,
'If the ground is but solid, where we meet.'
But when they met twas he who lost his seat:

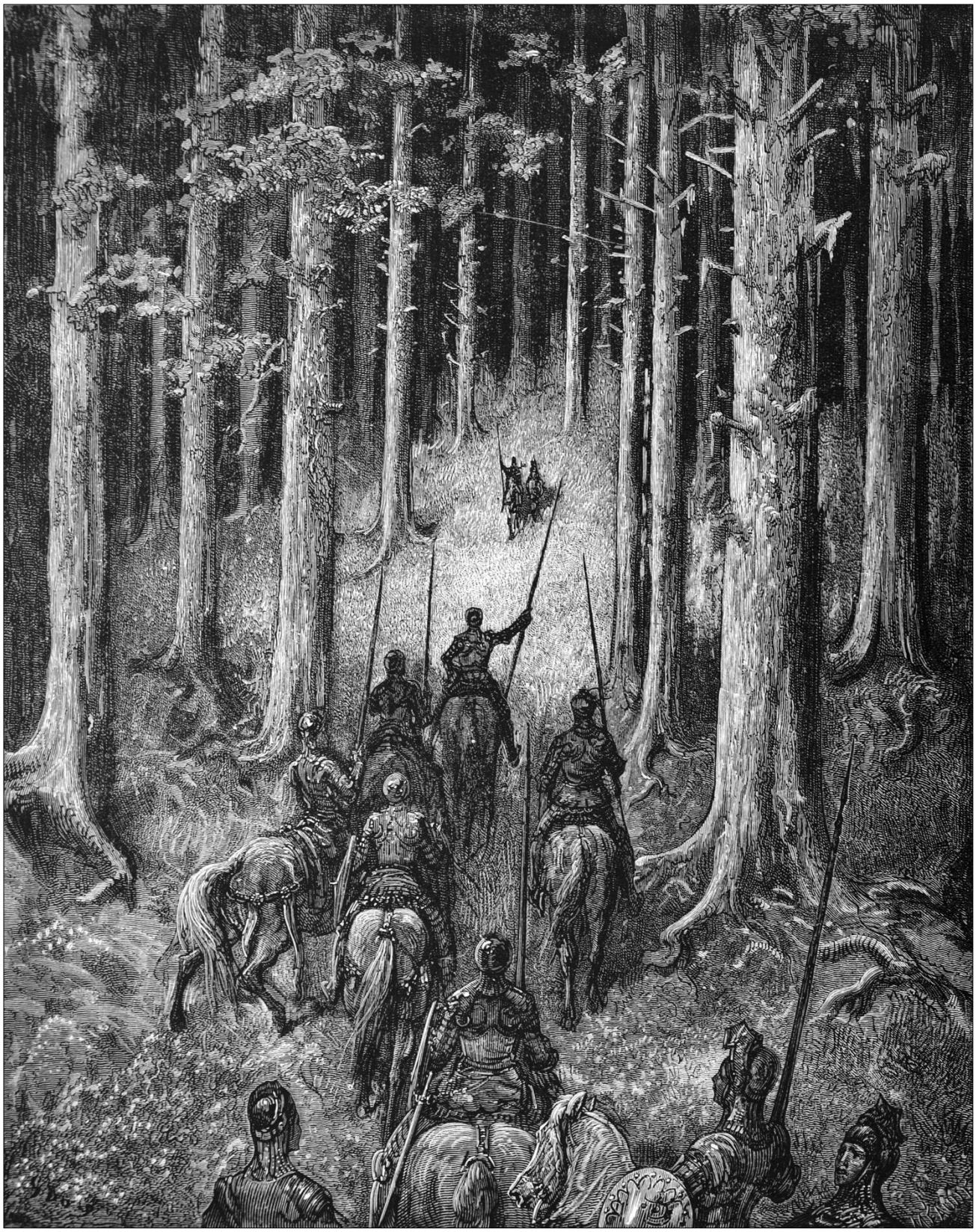
For he was struck hard below the visor, 10
And lifted with such force that he fell,
Despatched, by the might of that stranger,
Two lance-lengths beyond his steed, as well.
Alardo rushed to vengeance; however,
He was sent, his head ringing like a bell,
To lie prostrate upon the ground below;
He stunned, his shield shattered by the blow.

Guichardo levelled his lance, in a trice, 11
When he saw his two brothers on the ground,
Though Rinaldo cried: 'Pause awhile, think twice,
For this course to my fame should redound.'
But his helm was untied, and his advice
Went unheard, as Guichardo forth did bound,
Held his seat no better than the others,
And ended in the dust like his brothers.

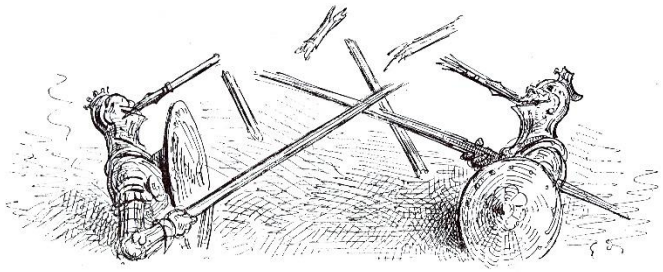
Riccardo, Malagigi, Viviano, 12
All now desired the outcome to contend,
But before their coursers rode Rinaldo
And thus to their contention put an end,
Saying, gently: 'To Paris we must go,
And if each of you to earth must descend,
Unseated one by one, in this tourney,
We'll be delayed too long on our journey.'

Canto XXXI: 13-17: Rinaldo fights and the stranger's horse is slain

So, he spoke, but not in such a manner 13
As to give offence to the other knights.
Then he and his opponent came together
While bold Rinaldo held him in his sights,
Nor was he despatched to the ground either,
Being worth all the others in such fights;
Their lances were shattered, like fine glass,
But neither went backwards, in that pass,



Stanza 8 "*On the following day they met a knight*"



Stanza 13

For their coursers had met with such great force, 14
That both steeds sank back, towards the ground.
Yet Bayard rose at once, the stronger horse,
Scarce delayed, his bold rider safe and sound,
While spine and shoulder broken, in its course,
The other charger lay a lifeless mound;
Though its master had leapt from his seat,
As the steed fell dead, and rose to his feet.

And turning, then, to the mounted Rinaldo, 15
His empty hand outstretched, the warrior said:
'Sir, this fine steed whose life is ended so,
Dear to me when alive, now he is dead
I'd ill repay if I landed ne'er a blow,
So let the debt now fall upon your head;
Lay on, and do the best that you can do,
For there is quarrel yet betwixt us two.'

Replied Rinaldo: 'If we must battle here 16
For no more than a charger, do not pine,
Since one of equal worth that I hold dear,
I shall grant you, a fine courser of mine.'
'No, no, you are in error, twould appear,'
Answered the knight: 'You fail to divine
The meaning of my speech; I shall explain
More clearly, lest you treat me with disdain.

It seems to me I would commit an error, 17
If I failed to meet you now with the sword,
Not knowing if in our dance, earlier,
You were my peer, or less or more, milord.
So, as it pleases you, on foot or courser,
A second close encounter here afford,
And every advantage I shall grant you,
I so long to match blades betwixt us two.'

Canto XXXI: 18-22: They continue to match swords on foot

Pausing but a moment, brave Rinaldo 18
Cried: 'I promise you as fierce a fight.
Yet if you fear that my friends might show
Undue support, you being a lone knight,
They must ride on, and wait for me, and no
Other, but my own squire, remain in sight.'
So Montalbano's lord; and, thereupon,
Commanded his company to ride on.

The stranger rightly praised the chivalry 19
Of our paladin, who dismounted outright,
And then handed Bayard's rein as promptly
To his squire, and when his banner bright,
Gone o'er the plain, he could no longer see,
He gripped his shield and faced the other knight,
Drew his sword and, raising the bright metal,
Challenged his foe in black to do battle.

And a battle indeed they now began 20
For fiercer contest none has ever seen.
Neither believed himself the lesser man
Nor that the other could resist, I ween,
Yet perceiving neither was stronger than
His foe, nor a swift advantage could glean,
They contained both their fury and their pride,
And every last skill they knew they applied.

The cruel and pitiless blows echoed round, 21
Filling all the air with their loud clashing;
Now from their shields was raised a dreadful sound,
Now from their plate and chain-mail, set ringing.
Yet twas more needful to maintain their ground,
Than seek to wound, and so keep their footing,
For the first error either warrior made
With irreparable harm would be repaid.

More than an hour and a half they fought so, 22
Until the sun had sunk into the sea,
While the sky filled with many a shadow
From horizon to zenith, steadily.
They had not stopped or rested, either foe,
Since they'd begun the joust, for chivalry
And the desire for honour made them fight,
Not anger or rancour, knight against knight.



Stanza 22 "*And the desire for honour made them fight*"

Canto XXXI: 23-27: They cease for the night, and Rinaldo offers hospitality

Rinaldo pondered as to who this stranger, 23
Whose right arm was so powerful, might be,
That had put himself in mortal danger,
Many a time, and fought so valiantly,
And so hard and hotly at the task did labour
The issue was in doubt, and willingly
He'd, in truth, have desisted from the fight,
Had such not marred his honour as a knight.

His opponent likewise was unaware 24
That he fought the lord of Montalbano,
Who was so famed in joust and warfare,
And whom he now encountered as a foe,
Sword in hand, in so causeless an affair,
(For deep enmity did neither of them show)
Though he was certain greater excellence
None could display, or more experience.

He too wished to end their present game, 25
Of his making, regarding his charger,
And, if he could do so without blame,
Withdraw from thence, ere he met disaster.
So long were the shadows, that to maim
Was possible though neither was master
Of his blows, fighting blindly, two lords
That could barely see their outstretched swords.

Twas Rinaldo that proved the first to say 26
That they should not fight on in the darkness,
But their duel they might reasonably delay
Till the Wain had turned, with Arcturus,
And that he could rest until twas day
In his pavilion, his safety no less
Than his own, and be met there with honour,
And as well served as he had been ever.

The stranger needed little persuading, 27
And accepted his offer courteously.
Together they went to where the waiting
Company had pitched their camp securely.
A fine steed, adorned with every trapping,
His squire now led forth, and graciously
Rinaldo gave it, with a lance and sword
Both well-proven, to the delighted lord.

Canto XXXI: 28-33: They identify themselves to each other

The stranger then learned it was Rinaldo 28
Of whom he was now the honoured guest,
For the paladin had named himself so,
Before they had reached their place of rest;
They were half-brothers, and a tender flow
Of feeling did his softened heart invest,
While, moved by fond affection and surprise,
Tears of love and joy started from his eyes.

This warrior was Guidon Selvaggio 29
Who, you'll recall, had sailed with Marfisa,
And Oliviero's sons and Sansonetto,
On that long course o'er the sea together.
The vile Pinabel had delayed him, so
He could not seek his kinfolk earlier;
Seized by that rogue, he'd been made indeed
To enforce the rule the wretch had decreed.

Guidon, when he learned who was his host, 30
(That Rinaldo, famed beyond every knight,
Whom he'd been longing to see, almost
As much as a blinded man longs for light)
Cried gladly: 'Of good fortune I may boast
That led me to engage, my lord, in fight,
With one whom long I have loved, and love,
And, of all men on earth, do most approve.

Guidon am I, born on the Black Sea's shore, 31
At Constanta, and of Amone's seed,
As you are likewise, whom fair Beatrice bore,
Thus, we are brothers then, as fate decreed.
To see you, and my other kin, therefore,
Was my desire, and here my course did lead,
Yet though my wish was but to honour you,
I see my coming has brought injury too.

Yet pardon me for so gross an error, 32
For I knew you not, nor your company,
And, to amend it, bid me do whatever
You may desire, ask aught you will of me.'
When each had fondly embraced the other,
For they clasped each other repeatedly,
Rinaldo cried: 'Seek no more to excuse
A fight that neither of us dared refuse.

No better witness is there to your blood, 33
And that you too are of our ancient line,
Than the manner in which you here withstood
Our fierce contest, mingling that blood with mine.
If your manner were less warlike, we would,
Perchance, have doubted, such is not a sign
Of our House; the deer bears not the lion,
Nor is the eagle born of the pigeon.'

Canto XXXI: 34-36: Guidon joins their company

Not ceasing to speak as they rode on, 34
Nor ceasing to ride as thus they spoke,
They'd soon reached Rinaldo's pavilion,
Where that knight then introduced to his folk
Their kinsman, and a half-brother, Guidon,
Whom they'd long desired to see; at a stroke,
He was welcomed among them, and further,
All noted the likeness to his father.

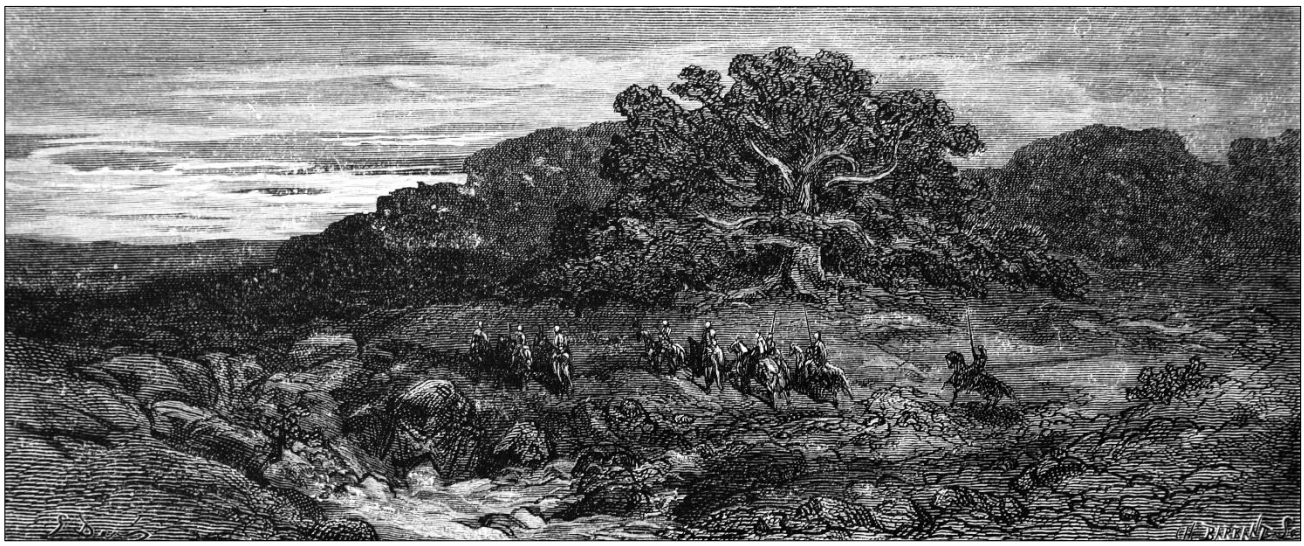
The greetings he received, I'll not follow, 35
Those of Ricciardetto, then Alardo,
Then of his three cousins (Viviano,
Malagigi, Aldigier), Ricciardo,
And his eldest half-brother Guicciardo,
Nor the honour every captain did bestow,
But, in conclusion, I will merely say,
He was welcomed by his whole House that day.

At any time, Guidon had been held dear, 36
By his brothers, yet now, in time of need,
He was dearer still, and thus he did appear
Not only welcome, but fêted indeed.
And when the newly-risen sun shone clear,
Crowned with golden rays, from ocean freed,
Guidon, with his kin, as their new brother,
Found his place beneath Rinaldo's banner.

Canto XXXI: 37-40: They meet Aquilante and Grifone

That day, and the next, upon their journey 37
They rode, till ten miles from Paris; there,
Upon the Seine's wide shore, Aquilante
And Grifone they encountered; that pair
(Met by chance) you'll recall, for completely
White was Grifone's armour everywhere,
While Aquilante's was black, and the two
Were Oliviero and Gismonda's issue.

They were in conversation with a lady, 38
Nor was she of low condition to the eye,
For in white robes of samite clad was she,
Edged with gold; yet, rendered lovely thereby,
(Though she was else fair enough to see)
She seemed most sad, and tearfully did sigh,
Showing, by her manner, that she sought
To hold forth on matters of great import.



Stanza 36

They knew Guidon, as he to them was known, 39
They'd been together some few days before;
And to Rinaldo he cried: 'Those two alone
Are worth a hundred other knights and more.
Were they to fight for Charlemagne's fair throne,
The Saracens and Moors would flee our shore.'
Rinaldo believed that such was true,
On recalling sundry tales of those two.

He'd also recognised the pair on sight, 40
From their usual contrasting armour
The one in black, the other all in white,
Their weapons, the trappings, and their manner.
While the brothers knew Montalbano's knight,
And saluted Guidon too, and every other;
While both embraced Rinaldo as their friend,
And brought that former quarrel to an end,

Canto XXXI: 41-46: Fiordelisa tells them of Orlando's frenzy

For they'd been involved in a lasting feud, 41
Through Truffaldino (the tale too long to tell),
Yet now expressed a kindly attitude,
And sought their former anger to dispel.
Meanwhile, Sansonetto he now viewed,
That came to join their little group, as well,
And Rinaldo welcomed him with honour,
Knowing his reputation, and his valour.

As the lady had watched our knight draw near, 42
She had recognised that mighty warrior
(She, acquainted with every knight and peer)
And shared her ill, most woeful, news further:
'Orlando, your cousin, whom all hold dear,
In whose debt are Church and Empire ever,
Once honoured for his wisdom and prowess,
Now wanders the world, possessed by madness,

Through which things strange and ill have occurred, 43
Of which I know not how to tell the tale;
I saw his armour which he did ungird
Scattered o'er the field, in a lonely dale,
And a respectful knight, without a word,
Gather them, piously, from that sad vale,
And hang that fine and glorious panoply,
In the manner of a trophy, from a tree.

But the sword Mandricardo acquired, 44
The son of Agricane, that same day;
You may conceive the ills that might be sired
By Durindana, what harm that it may
Inflict on Charlemagne, what undesired
Fell part that sword, in pagan hands, might play.
Brigliador as well, that strayed, forsaken,
Round the scattered arms, was also taken.

Tis but few days since I saw Orlando, 45
Running naked, bereft of sense or shame.
With most dreadful cries and shouts, to and fro
He sped about; stark mad I deemed that same;
And had these eyes not seen it, such a show
I'd ne'er believed, so pitiful a game.'
Then she said how she'd seen him fall, swiftly,
From the bridge, embraced by Rodomonte.

'To all those that were not an enemy 46
Of Orlando's,' she said, 'I've told the tale,
So that one of those who heard the story,
(Strange, indeed) in whom mercy might prevail,
Might strive to bring him to Paris, shortly,
And purge his brain (perchance to small avail)
For, I know, if Brandimarte heard the news,
Despite all else, that task he'd not refuse.'

Canto XXXI: 47-49: Rinaldo pledges to cure Orlando of his madness

Fair Fiordelisa it was, the very same, 47
Dearer than his life to Brandimarte,
That in pursuit of him to Paris came.
And then she told of the sword, though briefly,
The source of dispute and rival claim
Twixt Gradasso and the Tartar, which he,
(Gradasso) once the Tartar king was slain,
Had been granted as a gift, and did regain.

By events so strange, and so full of woe, 48
Was Rinaldo pained, grieving, endlessly;
He felt his heart melting, in his sorrow,
As snow does in the sun on field and tree;
And was disposed, immutably, to go
And seek Orlando where'er he might be,
In hopes, could he but find the Count again,
Of purging that vile madness from his brain.

Yet, having gathered that fair company, 49
(Whether by pure chance or heaven's will)
His next thought was to rout the enemy,
Ere that, leaving Paris unconquered still,
But thought to delay his foray, briefly,
Seeking to benefit from darkness, till
Deep in the first, or second watch, maybe,
Sleep sprinkling, then, the waters of Lethe.

Canto XXXI: 50-58: But first leads an attack on the Saracen camp

He placed his martial host within a wood, 50
And made them lie in ambush all that day;
But, when the sun had quenched his flame for good,
To his ancient nurse withdrawn, and so made way
For darkness, while the Bears and Dragon stood
In the sky, beasts invisible by day,
Hidden by the blaze of his greater light,
Rinaldo led his forces through the night.

With him went Aquilante, Grifone 51
Alardo of his blood, and Viviano,
A mile at least, and all most silently
And slowly; there too was Sansonetto.
Asleep lay all the host of Agramante.
They took no prisoners, but slew the foe,
For they were in amongst them well before
They were seen or heard by a single Moor.

That first move against the infidel band 52
Took the sentries posted round by surprise,
So swift, so fierce they scarce could raise a hand.
Soon all lay dead there, nevermore to rise.
The first point taken, and the guards unmanned,
The Saracens were lost to wild surmise,
For those not slain while helpless in their sleep
Scarce understood the harm their foes did reap.

To stir the greater dread, the bold Rinaldo 53
At the very instant of their attack,
Had the drums sound and the trumpets blow,
And his war-cry ring out, as with no lack
Of vigour he spurred Bayard gainst the foe,
Clearing the fences, hurling on their back
Those who tried to rise, and in his wrath
Tearing down the tents and booths in his path.

There was none so brave before Rinaldo 54
That did not stiffen, all their hair on end,
Hearing the mighty shouts of 'Montalbano!'
While groans and cries did to the sky ascend,
The hosts of Africa and Spain scarce slow
To abandon what they'd failed to defend,
Unwilling to stand firm and fight, in vain,
Against a foe that brought such grief and pain.

Guidon followed him, in eager quest, 55
With the warrior sons of Oliviero.
Onwards Alardo, Guicciardo, pressed
Ricciardo, and Ricciardetto,
With Sansonetto; each the foe addressed,
While Aldigier and Viviano,
Following the flag of Chiaramonte,
Fell valiantly upon the enemy.

Seven hundred men had Rinaldo drawn 56
From Montalbano, and the lands around,
Used to heat and cold, to fighting born,
Like Achilles' Myrmidons, strong and sound;
Ever were they to Chiaramonte sworn.
A hundred gainst a thousand would be found
Firmer of stance, while many known to fame,
Proved less valiant than many of those same.

If Rinaldo's estate was not so wealthy, 57
He less possessed of cities or treasure,
He drew them by fair speech and courtesy,
And granted to every man just measure,
Rewarding their valiant service freely,
Such that none deserted him at pleasure,
And men from Montalbano mustered there,
Unless some pressing need found them elsewhere.

Thus, had he brought them to aid Charlemagne, 58
Leaving his own great castle lightly guarded.
Down upon the African camp like rain
They fell, that force that brave Rinaldo led,
Wreaking the havoc that a wolf is fain
To wreak upon the fine flocks that are bred
By the Galeso, or some lion at the throat,
By the Libyan Cinyps, of many a goat.

Canto XXXI: 59-63: Fiordelisa tells Brandimarte of Orlando's state

Charlemagne who had news from Rinaldo 59
That he was close to Paris, and would seek
To assault the Saracen camp by night also,
Had thereon summoned up his troops to wreak
Vengeance, and aid Rinaldo gainst the foe,
And now they came, as needed, midst the reek
Of death, with them the son of Monodante,
Fair Fiordelisa's love, Brandimarte,

Whom she had searched for many a day, 60
Throughout the whole of France, and yet in vain.
By the emblem he alone did display
She knew him, in the dawn light, saw him plain,
And when he found her gazing on the fray,
He shunned the battle, and her side did gain,
Embraced her warmly, on her eyes did feast,
And kissed the maid a thousand times at least.

Great trust was placed in maidens in those days. 61
Women journeyed, without escort, everywhere,
O'er hill and dale, in strange lands, rode the ways,
And yet, on their return, were thought as fair
And virtuous, and earned not scorn but praise;
None earned doubt and suspicion for their share.
Fiordelisa told her Brandimarte
Of Orlando, and his sudden frenzy.

He found the news so strange he received, 62
He'd not have believed it from another,
And yet stranger things she had perceived,
Thus, he believed it, from fair Fiordelisa;
Nor had she heard the tale, and been deceived,
Her eyes had seen it, she told her lover,
For she knew the Count as well as any,
And told him where and when, midst many

Other details, and how Rodomonte 63
On his perilous bridge had met the knight,
Beside the sepulchre where in glory
He hung the arms won in many a fight.
Of Orlando's frenzy she told the story,
And of the battle they had fought outright,
And how the Saracen fell to the flood,
In grave danger of sinking there for good.

Canto XXXI: 64-67: They go to seek Orlando

Brandimarte, whom the Count loved as much 64
As one could love a friend, son or brother,
Was disposed to seek for him, and do such
As he could Orlando's wits to recover,
Through healing arts or some wizard's touch,
Scorning, as he went, all thought of danger.
As he was in the saddle, armed and ready,
He swiftly took his way, beside his lady.

They directed them both to the place, 65
Where she had last seen the mad Orlando,
Riding many a day, at a steady pace,
Until they reached the bridge that spanned the flow.
The guard called out, and, as was e'er the case,
Rodomonte appeared, gazed at his foe,
And received from his squire steed and lance,
Prepared for Brandimarte's bold advance.

In a voice, well-suited to his anger 66
The Saracen called to Brandimarte:
'Whoe'er you may be, that in error,
Of one sort or another, fate has sadly
Guided here, be prompt to doff your armour,
And pay homage at the tomb ere, swiftly,
I despatch you to the shades, there below,
Though scant merit I gain by doing so.'

Brandimarte offered naught in reply 67
Other than to level his sturdy lance,
And spur his steed Batoldo, by and by,
And show his ardour by his fierce advance,
To show his spirit was as great, thereby
As any valiant warrior in France,
While Rodomonte levelled his also,
And at full pace along the bridge did go.

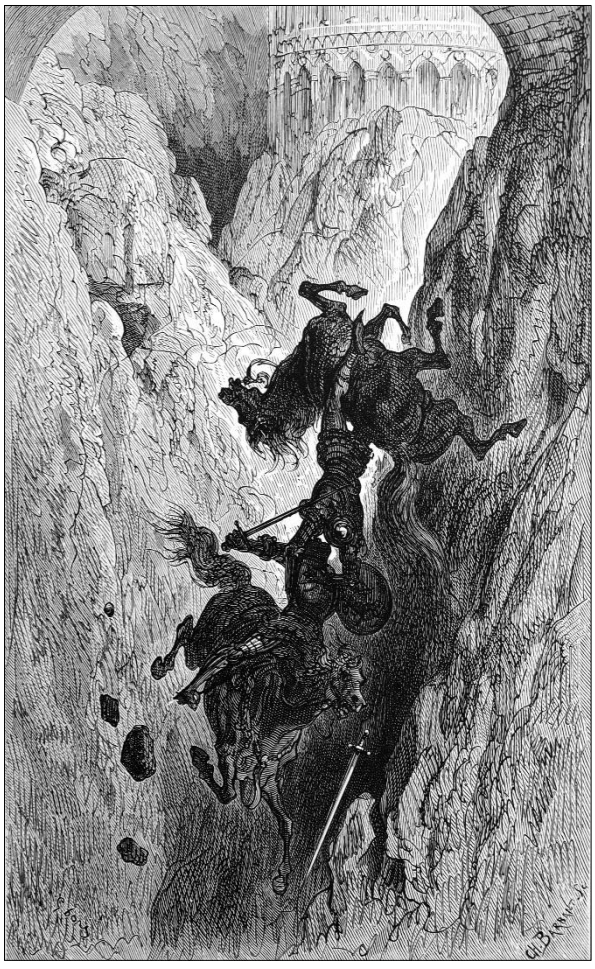
Canto XXXI: 68-71: Brandimarte and Rodomonte fight, and plunge into the river

His steed charged safely to the encounter 68
Accustomed to make that very crossing,
Where the fate of many another
Was to fall to the stream while advancing;

Batoldo, not used, like the king's charger,
To the bridge, was doubtful and trembling;
The stones seemed to shake, the world to sink,
And twas narrow, and unwalled at the brink.

As a master of the joust, each knight 69
Bearing his lance weighty as a spar,
A sapling cut and hewn for the fight,
Dealt thus no gentle blow, but aimed to mar;
Nor was the experience or the might
Of their advancing coursers a bar
To disaster, upon the bridge both fell,
The riders downed, and their steeds as well.

Both the horses tried to rise, with that haste 70
That a spur in the flank sought to ensure,
But on the narrow bridge were yet ill-placed
To gain a footing, their swift steps unsure,
And both, of equal fate, the air now graced,
While a mighty splash Fiordelisa saw,
Like that which issued from the River Po,
When Phaethon, scorched, fell to the earth below.



Stanza 70

Each courser, with the full weight of its knight, 71
Upon its back, had plunged into the deep,
The riders no doubt hoping to catch sight
Of a lovely water-nymph to grace their leap.
Not the first descent, nor the second flight,
Was this in which the king had, by a steep
Descent, attained the river's watery bed,
By now in all its mysteries well read.

Canto XXXI: 72–75: Fiordelisa pleads for Brandimarte's life

Where it was firmer or softer, this he knew, 72
And where the water was deep or shallow.
His head, and chest, and flanks thus rose anew,
And, standing there, he landed many a blow.
Brandimarte the current nigh overthrew,
While his horse was rooted in the mud below,
And sand and gravel too, such that the courser,
And his master, risked drowning in the water;

Great plumes of spray they raised, and fought the flow, 73
Yet only slid down deeper in the stream,
The horse now uppermost, the knight below.
Fiordelisa, from the bridge, her fear extreme,
Tears, prayers, and vows on them did bestow.
'Rodomonte,' she cried, 'for her you deem,
Though dead, your goddess, now, uphold the right;
Spare, for her sake, so valiant a knight.

Oh, most courteous lord, if you have loved, 74
Show me, that loves him, a little mercy,
If by such prayer your heart may be moved,
Make him your prisoner, such is my plea;
Hang the spoils on the wall, your deed approved
By all the powers that be, none more worthy.'
And her plea had been framed with so much art,
It served to move even so hard a heart.

Rodomonte, now brought aid to her lover, 75
Held by his horse almost beneath the flow,
His life itself in question, moreover,
And thirsting not, yet drinking even so.
Before he gave him succour, however,
The helm and sword he chose not to forego,
Then drew the knight, half-dead, from out the deep,
To hold him with the others in his keep.

Canto XXXI: 76-79: Then goes to seek help in freeing him

The lady's unhappiness was great, though, 76
When she saw her knight made a prisoner,
Though she was better pleased to view him so
Than see her lover drown in the river.
That she was now the reason for his woe,
She regretted, blamed herself, no other;
For her tale of the Count, and that affair
At the perilous bridge, had brought him there.

She departed, while planning to return 77
After seeking the aid of Rinaldo,
(Who would surely her lover's freedom earn)
Or that of Guidon or Sansonetto,
Or some other who to joust might yearn,
Not on land alone, but in water also,
And, if not stronger yet more fortunate
Than Brandimarte might escape his fate.

She rode for many a day ere she found, 78
A knight who had the semblance of being
What she was seeking, one who might astound
The Saracen, her lover then freeing;
Butt, after searching all the country round,
Such a man now came within her seeing,
A richly embroidered surcoat he wore,
For woven cypress trees the garment bore.

Who he was I will tell you of elsewhere, 79
For first to Paris I must go, then speak
Of how Malagigi and Rinaldo there
Great discomfort upon the Moors did wreak.
Countless numbers fled in sheer despair,
While countless other folk the Styx did seek.
Let the dark leave Bishop Turpin to tell
How many were slain amidst the infidel.

Canto XXXI: 80-84: King Agramante flees towards the south

Agramante was sleeping in his tent 80
When a guard awoke him, and warned the king
That he was like to be a prisoner, pent
Among the foe, unless, the camp forsaking,
He chose to make swift flight his sole intent.
He looked about, and saw the army fleeing,
Naked and unarmed, o'er the darkening field,
Lacking the time to grasp a sword or shield.

Confused by these events, lacking counsel, 81
He had forced himself to don his armour
When Falsiron joined him, his son as well,
Grandonio, and many another
With Balagante, while the noise did swell.
They too advised the king of his danger,
And that Fortune would now prove most kindly
If he could issue from the camp, in safety.

So said Marsilio and Sobrino, 82
While the others confirmed it with one voice;
Their destruction was nigh, for Rinaldo
Came upon them; flight was his only choice.
For to await the fierce paladin so
Given the strength in which he did rejoice,
And seek to make a stand, amidst that strife
Would be to risk his liberty and life.

To Narbonne or to Arles he might retreat, 83
With all the troops he could yet command,
Since either place was sound, and complete,
And many a day gainst the foe could stand;
While, having saved his person from defeat,
He could avenge himself, his force re-manned,
And then expunge every trace of shame,
By destroying these friends of Charlemagne.



Stanza 84

Agramante now favoured their opinion, 84
Though thought of retreat he did abhor.
Towards Arles he went, on swift pinion,
By the path that seemed the most secure.
Beyond all else, the darkness held dominion,
And rendered their flight the more obscure;
Twenty thousand men of Africa and Spain
Escaped Rinaldo's grip, to fight again.

Canto XXXI: 85-88: The wounded Ruggiero is conveyed to Arles

Those whom Rinaldo and his brothers slew, 85
With Oliviero's sons, that valiant pair;
Those whom his seven hundred, good and true,
Encountered, and then slaughtered everywhere;
Those whom brave Sansonetto overthrew,
That drowned themselves, in the Seine, in despair;
He who'd count them all, might count indeed
The flowers that Zephyr and fair Flora breed.

One might surmise that Malagigi bore, 86
A large part in the victory that night,
Not that he drenched the field with blood and gore,
Nor broke as many heads, but that the might
Of the infernal angels, he, through magic lore,
Conjured from Tartarus, to join the fight,
Bearing many a banner and sharp lance;
More than twice the force deployed by France;
And raised so great a noise of clashing metal, 87
And made so many different drums resound,
And invoked so many sounds amidst the battle,
Of horses neighing, feet trampling the ground,
Echoing from hill and dale, to rattle
The startled enemy with deafening sound,
That the Moorish troops were filled with dread,
And from the field, in panic, turned and fled.

Yet the king forgot not Ruggiero, 88
Who was wounded, and in desperate plight,
But had them bear him to a steed, and so,
Convey him from the field, as best they might.
They bore him, their pace secure and slow,
By a safe path, aboard ship set the knight,
And so bore him to Arles, in comfort; there,
The army his safe haven soon might share.

Canto XXXI: 89-93: While Gradasso seeks out Rinaldo

Those who fled Rinaldo and Charlemagne, 89
(A hundred thousand, I believe, at least)
Through the woods and dales, over hill and plain,
Sought escape from the Franks' most bloody feast,
Yet the greater part was penned in, and slain,
And stained the pale grass ere the battle ceased.
Though Gradasso's tents lay further away,
And he chose to fight on that fatal day:

For finding the foe led by Rinaldo, 90
His heart rejoiced, filled with such delight
That he strode here and there, to and fro,
Thanking his god for his grace that night,
And blessing his fate for aiding him so,
In allowing him to face that fierce knight,
Hoping to garner Bayard, that rare steed,
In valiant duel, and on the terms agreed.

For Gradasso had longed, many a year, 91
(As you may have read in another place)
To own that mighty horse devoid of fear,
And have Durindana his armour grace;
Thus, with a hundred thousand, in full gear,
He'd sailed to France its warriors to face,
And this Rinaldo he had sworn to fight,
Hoping to gain the charger from the knight.

And thus, his passage led him to that shore 92
Where the ownership might be contested.
But Malagigi marred his attempt before
They'd met: his cousin's course he arrested
Then, by enchantment, o'er the waves he bore
Rinaldo (long the tale, its truth attested)
While Gradasso thought both timid and base
A knight that would not meet him face to face.

So, he rejoiced knowing twas Rinaldo 93
Who'd assailed the camp, and with delight
He leapt upon his fine steed, Alfano,
And went searching for him in the dark of night.
And, where'er he went, he trampled on the foe,
And left them dead, or wounded, in the fight;
Though men of Libya not just of France,
In that darkness, were food for his brave lance.

Canto XXXI: 94–100: And encounters him in the field

He searched for Rinaldo here and there, 94
Summoning him, as loudly as he could,
Then steered his charger to the region where
The corpses were piled highest, like dead wood.
Till they met; blade to blade was that affair,
For their lances had broken; to the mud
Fell the fragments, while sharp splinters, in flight,
Rose to strike the starry chariot of Night.

Once Gradasso had recognised his foe, 95
(And not by the insignia he bore,
But by the force of his every blow,
And by Bayard, driving men on before)
He was not slow to call upon Rinaldo,
To amend his quitting of that shore,
(Where he'd left him alone upon the field
Appointed for their battle) and to yield.

And then he said: 'You had hoped perchance 96
That by your hiding on that occasion
You might for evermore escape my lance,
(Or, as now, my sword) and, by evasion,
Avoid us meeting more, yet I advance
To meet you now, needing no persuasion,
For I'd search for you in heaven or hell,
Above the earth, and deep below as well,

Until that mighty charger you forego. 97
Yet if you think the odds are unequal
And honour of less worth than life, bestow
Your horse on me, and this piece of metal,
And life you'll have, if life is dearer; so
Amend the wrong, and now quit the battle,
On foot, being unworthy of the steed;
If on Chivalry you'd work so ill a deed.'

In hearing, was Guidon Selvaggio, 98
Who brandished his gleaming sword on high,
As did his half-brother Ricciardetto,
Who thought to strike Gradasso, by and by;
But they were both thwarted by Rinaldo,
Who preserved him, with his sudden cry;
'Am I not man enough then, in your view,
To respond without aid from both of you?'

Then he turned to the infidel and said: 99
'Hark, Gradasso, and you may understand,
Without my raining blows upon your head,
That I did indeed seek you, on the sand,
And this I tell you true, ere you lie dead,
And such I shall maintain, by strength of hand,
And that you lie, if you should choose to say,
The laws of chivalry I'd e'er betray.

But I pray you, ere we decide to fight, 100
To, courteously, accept my fair excuse,
And pardon so my vanishing from sight
Against my will, and cease this vile abuse.
And, as to Bayard, I pray you sir, alight,
Contend for him (unless you would refuse)
As you desire, and in some sandy place
We may duel, on foot, and face to face.'

Canto XXXI: 101-105: They agree to contend for Bayard and Durindana

King Gradasso, fuller now of courtesy, 101
(For all magnanimous folk behave so)
Was thus content to hear the whole story,
And perchance excuse the brave Rinaldo.
Towards the river bank, immediately,
They repaired, where our knight sought to show
In simple words, thereby lifting the veil,
The truth (by Heaven!) of his honest tale;

Then called on Aldigier as witness 102
To the history, which he knew entire,
And asked him that same tale to address
To Gradasso, once more, twas his desire,
And tell of the enchantment, while no less
Would Rinaldo prove it true, or expire
In duel, where'er, whene'er Gradasso chose;
'For there's no finer proof of it, God knows.'

King Gradasso who, not for a moment, 103
Wished to trade one quarrel for another
Accepted the excuse and was content,
Though doubting the truth of the matter.
They agreed to execute their intent
On Barcelona's sandy beach, hereafter,
Then set the time for the following morn,
Hard by a neighbouring spring, and at dawn.

And there Rinaldo would lead the charger, 104
And tether it between them on the sand,
And if Gradasso then proved the victor,
Why brave Bayard would be his, to command;
But if the king failed to kill or capture
Rinaldo and (not dead upon the strand)
Sought mercy, let Gradasso not mistake
That the sword, Durindana, he would take.

For it had been with wonder and sorrow 105
That Rinaldo had heard (as I explained),
From the fair Fiordelisa, of Orlando,
And of his frenzy, wild and uncontained,
And how the sword was gained without a blow;
How, through a quarrel, it was then ordained
That Gradasso should, thus, hold in his hand
That blade long-famed in many a fair land.

Canto XXXI: 106-110: They prepare for the fight

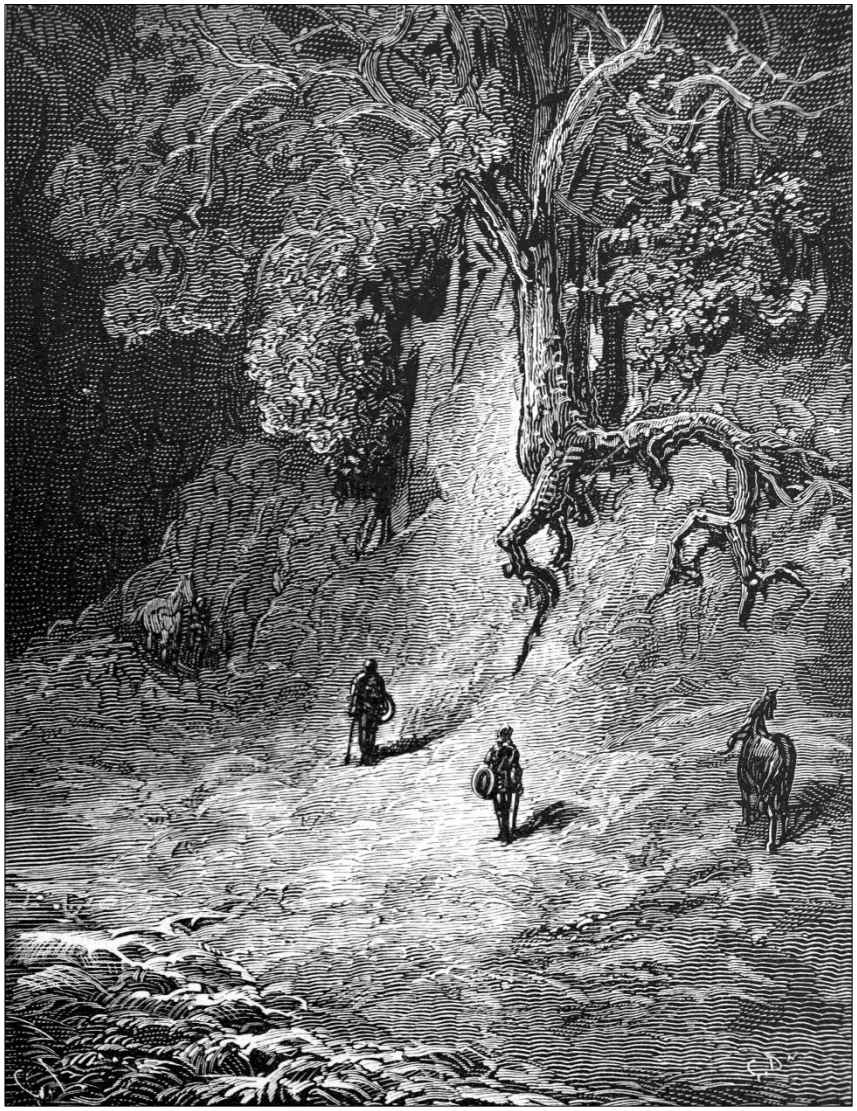
Once decided, the king rode to his tent, 106
Though Rinaldo suggested he might stay
The night with him; the king would not relent,
And so, to his own household made his way.
In accord with their solemn agreement,
Both armed themselves and, at the break of day,
Rode to the place by the spring; there, either
Might attain both Bayard and Durindana.

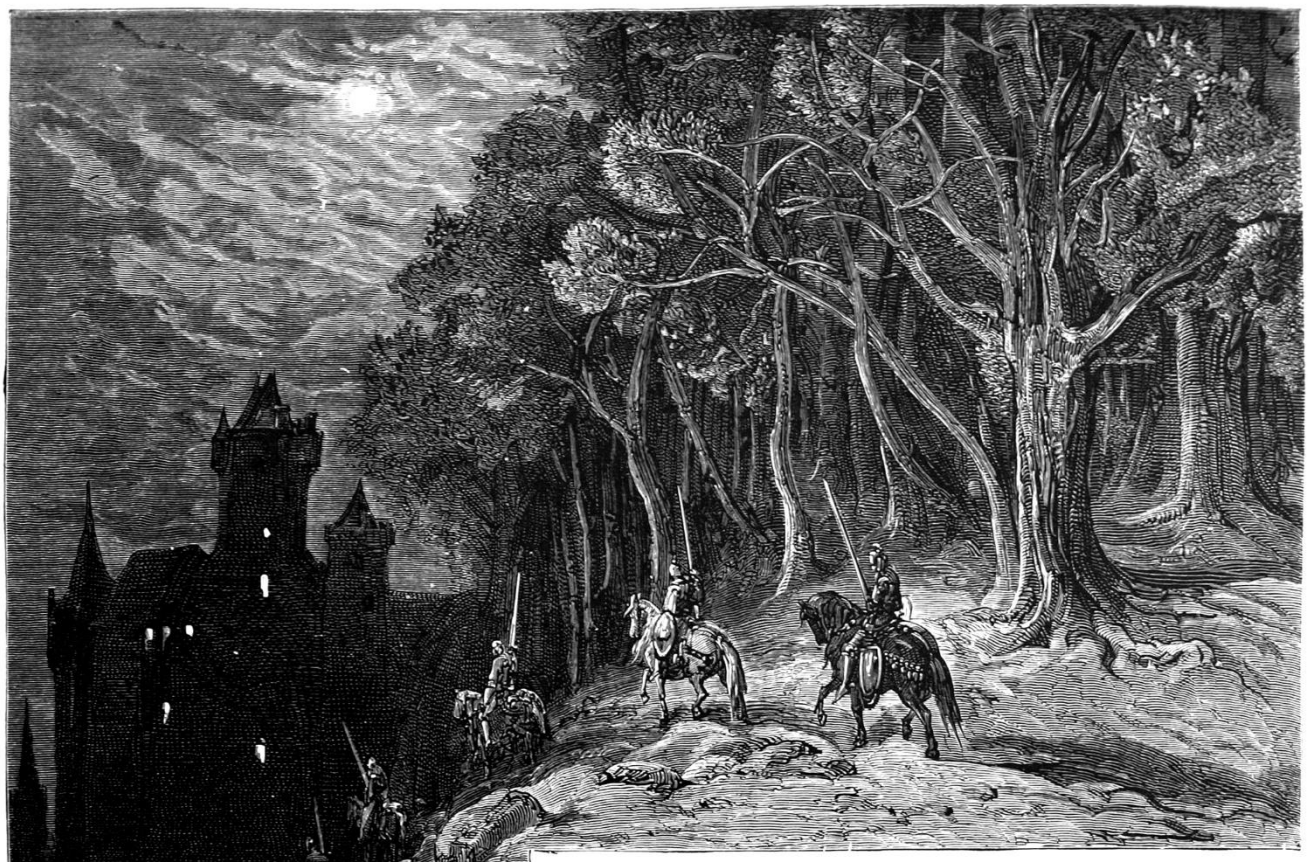
Of this battle, where they'd fight one to one, 107
It seemed Rinaldo's friends were much in fear,
And were grieving ere the thing was begun,
Lest he should fall, who to them was most dear,
King Gradasso's strength was second to none,
He had skill and ardour, and wielded here
Orlando's sword, that dealt a mighty blow;
Thus, their cheeks were pale who hailed Rinaldo.

Malagigi was more fearful than the rest, 108
And, doubtful of the outcome of the fight,
Would willingly have done his very best
To thwart the paladin's intent, outright,
Yet was concerned if he should seek to, lest
He made an enemy of that brave knight,
Still angry with him from the time before,
When he had made him vanish from the shore.

Yet leave those others to their doubts and fears! 109
Rinaldo went his way and, dreading naught,
Sought to erase the shame which, it appears,
Was far too great to bear; such was his thought,
And to silence slander, in after-years,
In Altafoglia, Poitiers, or at court,
Confident that he'd triumph midst the sand,
And return with Durindana in his hand.

They appeared, well-nigh at the same moment,
From opposite directions, near the spring,
Greeting each other, seemingly content
To show a friendly and a welcoming
Countenance, despite their grave intent,
As if they were kin, and gifts did bring.
But to another time I shall defer
The tale of what was destined to occur.





Canto XXXII: Bradamante's Jealousy

Canto XXXII: 1-2: Ariosto's promise

I recollect my pledge that I would sing 1
(The promise made it somehow slipped my mind!)
Of a dread suspicion destined to bring,
To one whom jealousy now rendered blind,
(Bradamante, I mean) much suffering;
Sharper its sting than is Love's dart she'd find;
For what she had heard from Ricciardetto,
Plunged to her heart like a poisoned arrow.

So, was I pledged to sing, but sang another, 2
For brave Rinaldo arrived, ere I did so,
And then was delayed by his half-brother
On the way, one Guidon Selvaggio;
And so ran on, only to discover
That Bradamante's ills I've failed to show.
I recalled her but now; of her you'll hear,
Ere Rinaldo and Gradasso reappear.

Canto XXXII: 3-9: We first return to Agramante and Marfisa

But tis needful, ere I speak of the maid, 3
That I give you news of Agramante.
He had, successfully, to Arles conveyed
The remainder of his scattered army,
A useful place to grant them food and aid,
And muster them after their long journey,
On the banks of the Rhône, and nigh the shore,
With Spain not far, and Africa before.

Marsilius meanwhile scoured all his land, 4
For cavalry and infantry, good or bad,
And armed his ships on Barcelona's strand,
Persuading some by force; all that he had.
Agramante, with his council e'er to hand,
Spared neither cost nor labour, I may add,
While heavy taxes, and harsh levies, weighed
On Africa, that good his losses made.



Stanza 4

He now wished Rodomonte at his side, 5
Offering him, in vain, Almonte's daughter,
(She was his cousin) as a noble bride,
Oran her dowry in Algeria.
But he, defending now his bridge, with pride,
Cladding with the spoils of death and capture
The sepulchre's stone walls, refused to move,
While one more passing knight he yet might prove.

Marfisa had sought the opposite course 6
To Rodomonte; indeed, when she heard
Of the success of Charlemagne's force,
The army dead or scattered, and had word
That her king was at Arles, she took horse
And, unsummoned, she to that city spurred.
Offering her skills, and her wealth, to aid
Agramante, and the troops there arrayed.

As a gift, she had brought him Brunello, 7
Nor had she harmed him in any way,
Although for ten nights the wretched fellow
Had lived in fear of being hung next day;
And while, to his every groan and bellow,
None responded, howe'er hard he did pray,
She disdained to dip her hands in base blood,
And let him loose, to manage as he could;

He, pardoned for the harm he had done her, 8
To Arles, and Agramante, was conveyed.
You may imagine that monarch's pleasure
And with what delight he welcomed the maid.
Wishing to show how much he must treasure
Her assistance, once her account she'd made.
The deed which she had said she wished to do,
To slay the wretch, the king did now pursue.

He hung the villain in a barren place, 9
To suffer the crows' and vultures' abuse.
Ruggiero who'd protected him a space,
And might well have saved him from the noose,
Yet lay, his wound unhealed, pale of face,
In his bed, without power to cut him loose.
By the time the news was out, twas too late,
For Brunello, friendless, had met his fate.



Stanza 9

Canto XXXII: 10-13: And then again to Bradamante

Meanwhile Bradamante grieved, complaining 10
That the term of twenty days seemed so long,
At the end of which Ruggiero, returning,
Would, once more, to the Christian faith belong.
To the prisoner or the exile, yearning,
The time drags no less, while no less strong,
Is their pain, as they pine for liberty,
Or that their lost homeland they might see.

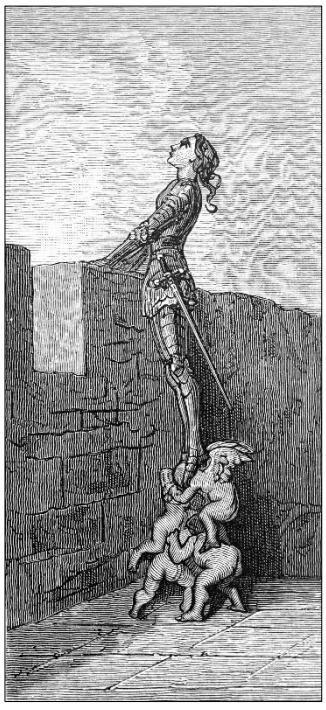
And she thought her own fate to be far worse 11
Than that of Tityus, or Ixion
Bound to a wheel his endless days to curse;
Or Pirithous, ere the time was gone;
Far longer than the day Job did rehearse
Heaven's injustice, patiently, thereon.
The night wherein Hercules was conceived,
Could ne'er have proved so long, she believed!

Oh, how often that slumber, long and deep, 12
She envied in the hedgehog, dormouse, bear,
Wishing she could but pass the time in sleep
Until the term was done, and he was there;
Nor wished to hear aught, nor watch to keep,
Till Ruggiero came, his love to share.
Yet not only was this beyond her power,
She failed to sleep at night beyond an hour.

Here and there she squirmed about instead, 13
Tossed and turned, and never found repose,
Oft oped the window, and thrust out her head,
To see, ere she returned to hers to doze
If Eos soon would leave Tithonus' bed,
Her arms filled with the lily and the rose.
Nor did she less, in the bright glow of dawn,
Long for the stars, to darkened skies re-borne.

Canto XXXII: 14-17: She awaits Ruggiero in vain

When but four days, or five, were yet to go 14
Until the term was ended, she awaited,
Full of hope, a message, from the gate below,
Saying: 'Behold. he comes!' never sated
With gazing from a tower, whose height did show
The woods and countryside, cultivated
Fields and, beyond, a portion of the road
That led from France to her lonesome abode.



Stanza 14

When she saw a glint of armour draw near, 15
Or aught that might betoken a knight,
She though it her Ruggiero, her dear,
And then her lovely eyes were filled with light.
If one, unarmed, on foot, should next appear,
She trusted his messenger loomed in sight,
And, though she would find herself in error,
But replaced one (failed) hope with another.

Then she would arm, and go to meet him, 16
Descending from the mountain to the plain,
Yet found him not and, hoping to greet him,
Thought by another route he must attain
The castle, and so made her way to him,
To welcome him there, yet all in vain,
For she found him in neither place, and so
The term he'd set passed at Montalbano.

It passed, and then a day or two went by, 17
And three, and more, till twenty days had flown.
Without a trace of him before her eye,
Nor any news of Ruggiero known.
She sighed aloud, and bitter tears did cry,
Enough to move the Furies with her moan,
They from whose brow vile serpents glare,
And beat her breast, and tore her golden hair.

Canto XXXII: 18-25: Bradamante's lament

'Can it be true,' she cried, 'that I await 18
One who seeks to fly and hide from me?
And prize a man that cares naught for my fate?
One that answers not, and but disdains me?
And let one hold my heart that proves ingrate?
A knight that ranks his virtues so highly
That some immortal goddess needs descend
From the heavens, his loveless will to bend?

He knows of my love, nay adoration, 19
Yet desires not my service, nor my love;
Knows of my pain and deprivation,
And yet would see me to my grave remove,
Ere he would aid me; to my vexation
Lest to him an obstacle it might prove,
Lends not an ear, as if I were an asp
Whose hissing he'd not hear, nor body clasp.

Love, halt this lover who runs so swiftly 20
From one that with slow steps seeks to pursue,
Or to my former state now return me,
Where I was slave to neither him nor you!
My hope is foolishness, mere fallacy,
That you are ever moved to pity, who
Take delight in, nay live and feed upon
The tears when a fond lover weeps thereon!

And yet, what reason have I to lament 21
Except my own irrational desire,
That sends me soaring, with a wild intent,
To the heights, where my wings are set afire,
Then, weary, with no lesser flight content,
Sees me fall, from the air, to my sad pyre;
Nor ends my woe, on new wings has me fly,
But to scorch, and plunge again from the sky?

Of myself, and not desire, I should complain, 22
This burning ardour that consumes my heart,
Whereby reason from my weak form is fain
With all my other powers to depart.
So that unbridled, freed from bit and rein,
From bad to worse I flee, past wit, or art,
And makes me feel that to vile death I'm led;
Through this delay, awaiting greater dread.

Ah, and yet why should I grieve also? 23
What fault, except to love, did I commit?
What wonder if, through weakness, all this woe
Women bring upon themselves stole my wit?
Yet why defend myself lest noble foe,
With wise words, and fair form, engender it?
Should I protect myself lest harm be done?
Wretched are they that scorn the living sun!

And, besides, my destiny this path ordained, 24
Led by others' words, full worthy of belief,
That claim rare happiness shall be attained,
And such must recompense all passing grief.
If Merlin's counsel was but ill or feigned,
And naught but sorrow here and scant relief,
I might lament, and blame him for my pain,
Yet ne'er love for Ruggiero hence disdain.

I should blame them, Merlin, and Melissa, 25
And condemn them both, eternally,
Who to reveal a House and its future,
Conjured spirits from the depths, infernally,
And then fed my foolish hopes, thereafter,
To keep me ever bound in slavery;
And why? If not through envy, I suppose,
Of my secure, and sweet, and blest repose.'



Stanza 29

Canto XXXII: 26-34: She hears news of Ruggiero and Marfisa

Sorrow so occupied the maiden's mind 26
It left no room for comfort or for rest,
Yet, despite her misery, Hope, though blind,
Still found a silent lodging in her breast;
The memory of him for whom she pined
And his last words so lovingly addressed
To herself, left her, despite his lateness,
Waiting, hour upon hour, for Love's redress.

It was hope, therefore, that thus sustained her 27
For a full month beyond the twenty days,
Such that the troubled spirit within her
Was ne'er grieved quite as deeply, nor her gaze;
Yet ill news now made its way towards her,
By the road where she looked for him always;
Of him it told, and yet it brought such dread,
As painful as the last, that Hope now fled.

For a Gascon knight passed by, returning 28
From Agramante's camp, a captive there
Since the fight before Paris, and sharing
His news he brought the lady to despair;
She had prayed him to tell her everything
That he knew, although it be full of care,
Yet asked but of Ruggiero, her lover,
And barely took note of any other.

The knight gave good account of all he knew, 29
Being one well acquainted with the court,
And spoke of how her Ruggiero slew
Mandricardo, as o'er the shield they fought;
How, wounded, from the field he made issue,
And lay a month half-dead, the outcome fraught;
And had he ended there, had shown, I'd say,
Sound reason for her lover's long delay.

But then he added that a warrior-maid 30
Was in the Moorish camp, named Marfisa,
As beautiful as she was brave, who played
A valiant role indeed, and fought with ardour;
And she loved Ruggiero, and he paid
Her like attention, so oft beside her
That all, amidst the Moorish host, now thought
That they must soon be wed, and such they sought,

Hoping that once Ruggiero was healed, 31
The marriage of the two would soon follow;
And every Moorish king and prince revealed
Their delight at that fair prospect, for so,
Given their peerless valour in the field,
On the world a great House they might bestow,
In a brief while, warlike, ardent in war,
Mightier than any on this Earth before.

The Gascon had believed all that he'd heard, 32
And with good reason, for amidst the host
Such was the rumour, such the constant word,
Within the camp, and e'en along that coast.
From many a sign, all who saw concurred,
Till it appeared more than rumour almost,
Rumour which is, for good or ill, once bred
In one mouth, by many another spread.

That she, like Ruggiero, sought to aid 33
Their king, the pair but seldom seen apart,
Had helped to breed suspicion, and had played
Its role in fuelling rumour, from the start,
But what seemed to confirm it, and thus made
All certain, was, or so felt every heart
The fact that, having carried off Brunello,
It seemed she'd returned to tend Ruggiero.

Solely for him, who languished, wounded, there, 34
She had come to the Moorish camp, it seemed,
And, not just once, but often, would repair
To his sick-bed, until the pale moon gleamed;
Which gave occasion for the troops to share,
Their view that she, who proud and high was deemed,
And one that disdained all those beneath her,
Was, for him alone, humbler now and sweeter.

Canto XXXII: 35-43: And reproaches her lover

Since the Gascon knight claimed the tale was true 35
Bradamante was possessed by such deep pain,
The dart so pierced her heart, through and through,
That she could scarce an upright stance maintain,
And then, inflamed with jealousy anew,
Wheeling round, without a word, turned again
Full of disdain and anger, all hope lost,
And to her chamber went, to count the cost.

Mail-clad, she flung herself upon the bed; 36
Her face she buried there, as sore she grieved;
Biting the sheets that naught might yet be said,
And none suspect the fact she now believed,
While repeating the news lodged in her head,
Till such woe filled a heart perchance deceived
She could no longer her sad plaint restrain,
Forced to voice all her suffering and pain.

'Alas, who can be thought true, from this day! 37
All men are false and cruel, I declare,
If, false and cruel, Ruggiero doth betray
Our love, whom I thought loyal, full of care.
What villainy, what treachery, I say,
Is heard in tragedies that players share,
That is not lesser if, in thought, is set
My noble worth against his endless debt?

Why, Ruggiero, since there exists no one 38
More ardent or more handsome to be seen,
Or that approaches you in valour, none,
Nor in grace nor nobility, I ween,
Why should loyalty be the grace you shun,
And steadfastness be absent from the scene?
Why is it that these two you disavow;
To which all other virtues yield a bow?

For, know you not that lacking both those two, 39
All nobility proves worthless, in a knight?
Just as there is naught lovely to the view
That is perceived without the help of light?
Tis easy some poor maid to draw to you,
Her lord, divine, an idol in her sight,
With cunning speech, and make her heart conceive
The sun is cold and dark, and such believe.

What crime can e'er trouble you, cruel lover, 40
If of her murder you shall ne'er repent?
If, so lightly, you view the sin, moreover,
Of breaking faith with one so innocent?
What dire ill-treatment must your foes suffer,
If I, who love you, you would thus torment?
Justice lies not in Heaven I declare
If such wrongs high Heaven doth not repair!

Of all the sins committed here below 41
Impious ingratitude is far the worst,
And, for that, the fairest angel, as you know,
Was banished to the darkness, and accursed.
And if great errors earn the deepest woe,
And cannot be amended, like the first,
Beware lest deepest vengeance fall on you,
Ungrateful, thus, yet unrepentant too!

And of theft, I accuse you, cruel man 42
That grieves me, besides your other vice;
Not of stealing my poor heart, a fine plan;
For that I pardon you, not once, but twice.
Rather I say that once our love began,
You stole yourself from me, by ill device.
Wretch, restore my heart, tis not your toy,
For what some other holds none can employ!

You depart from me Ruggiero, and yet I 43
Have not the will or power to quit you;
But to leave all pain and grief, and to die,
That strength I own, and the longing too.
And yet, without your favour, so to fly
From sorrow, makes me but lament, anew.
If the gods required it, and you loved me,
Then death, indeed, would seem but sweet to me.'

Canto XXXII: 44-48: Bradamante decides to seek vengeance and death

And, so saying, she was for death disposed. 44
Leaping from her bed, inflamed with anger.
Against her breast her naked sword she posed,
Ere she recalled she was clad in armour!
But then the better spirit that lay enclosed
Within her mind, reasoned: 'Oh, fair sister,
Born to such high lineage, that great name
Would you yet mar, and end your days in shame?

Is it not better to that field to go; 45
On which you may win both praise and honour?
There, if you fall to Ruggiero's blow,
He must repent of slaying, you forever.
And if it were his sword that laid you low,
Then what death could suit your purpose better?
Tis reasonable if he robs you of life
That condemns you, living, to pain and strife.

And then, perchance, before you must remove, 46
You may take vengeance on this Marfisa,
That with fraudulent and treacherous love
Has seduced your lover; and destroy her.'
This thought of revenge seemed to prove
More pleasing to the lady, who, moreover,
Chose to weave a surcoat, that would imply
Her desperation, and her wish to die.

The surcoat was of that tawny colour 47
That dyes the autumn leaves before they fall,
Scattered from the branches, in November,
That made the woods appear a living wall,
Embroidered with cypress sprigs all over,
Sad emblems to adorn a noble pall,
(That tree once bared will ne'er recover)
The garment suited to a grieving lover.

She took the charger that Astolfo rode, 48
His golden lance as well, whose touch alone
Would relieve a knight's courser of its load.
Perchance the story is already known,
Why he gave it her, where and when bestowed,
And from whom he obtained it for his own.
The maiden took the lance, yet little guessed
The nature of the power that it possessed.

Canto XXXII: 49-59: The embassy of the Queen of Iceland

Alone, without a squire, or company, 49
She descended the hills, and took her way
To Paris by the straightest road, and swiftly,
Thinking the Saracens before it lay,
Not having heard yet that the enemy,
Routed by brave Rinaldo (helped, that day
By Malagigi and King Charlemagne)
Had abandoned the siege, and fled the plain.

Quercy lay behind her, and the city 50
Of Cahors, with all the mountains where
The Dordogne is born (tis the country
Of Clermont, and Montferrand the fair)
When she met, on the way, with a lady,
Of a kindly face, who her road did share;
And by her saddle hung a golden shield,
While three brave knights at her side, held the field.

Before her, and behind, many a squire 51
And many a maiden kept her company,
And Bradamante expressed her desire
To one that passed, to learn of the lady.
He replied: 'She, of whom you thus enquire,
Comes to the French king, on an embassy,
From nigh the northern pole, many a mile
She has sailed, o'er the sea, from the Lost Isle,

Though others say that Iceland is its name, 52
That far island, of which its lovely queen
Excels all other beauties known to fame,
For Heaven gave her charms ere now unseen.
To Charlemagne she sends a shield (that same)
Upon condition that he should convene
A muster of his knights, and grant it there
To whichever, to his mind, is past compare.

She deems herself and, in truth, is fairest 53
Of all the ladies there have ever been,
And so would find the mightiest and bravest
Of warriors, one fit to wed this queen;
And thus, she is resolved to seek the best,
E'en though a hundred thousand haunt the scene.
The man most famed in fight with lance and sword,
She desires as her lover and her lord.

She hopes there may be found at the court 54
Of France's Charlemagne, a noble knight,
Who has proved himself where'er he fought,
The best of those of whom the king has sight.
The three that do the lady here escort,
Rule mighty realms, each one a king, of right,
The lords of Gothland, Sweden, and Norway;
Few equals there in arms, or none, have they.

These three whose lands are far from hers, although 55
They are the closest ones to her Lost Isle,
(So called because few sail those seas, or know
Of that island, distant many a mile)
Have wooed, and woo her yet, and often show
Their valour in the fight, to win her smile,
For they have done many a deed to please her,
That, while the sky turns, we'll speak of ever.

And yet the queen will have none of these three, 56
Nor any that is not the best knight known.
'I hold as naught the deeds you do for me,
In this benighted place; though one alone'
She says, 'a shining sun might seem to be
Matched against the other two, I'll not own
That he could boast of being the best knight
Of all who carry arms, and wage a fight.

To King Charlemagne, whom I honour 57
And esteem as the wisest king of all,
A golden shield I'll send, a rich favour
To be granted to the knight in his hall
He considers the best in strength and valour,
Of the many upon whom he may call.
Whether knight or vassal or some other,
It shall be the monarch's choice however.

When King Charlemagne has received the shield 58
And granted it to one so brave and strong
That to him all others (he believes) must yield,
Though to his court or not he may belong,
Then regain, one of you three, in the field,
That golden targe, before the noble throng;
All my love, and realm, to him I'll afford,
And he shall be my husband and my lord.'

Her closing words thus caused these lords to sail 59
Across the sea, from that far distant land,
To fight for the shield, seeking to prevail
Or die, gainst he who grasps it in his hand.'
Bradamante listened to the squire's tale,
Then mused on the contest thereby planned,
While he sat his horse, stirring restlessly,
Then spurred it, and re-joined his company.

Canto XXXII: 60-68: Bradamante learns of Tristan's Tower

She followed them, though scarcely hastening, 60
For twas but slowly she pursued her way,
Upon the fight for the shield pondering,
And on what might occur in that affray,
And, in sum, could see the matter bringing
Great discord to fair France, and disarray,
Amidst the king's paladins, and the rest,
If he must grant the shield, thus, to the best.

Indeed, the thought weighed greatly on her heart, 61
Though another burden proved the greater
The fear that Ruggiero, for his part,
Had transferred his love to this Marfisa.
It so occupied her mind, that bitter dart,
That she barely saw the road, forever
Straying so, and despite the fading light,
Scarcely caring where she might spend the night.

Like a vessel that, by chance, or by a gale 62
Is driven from the river-bank, and ever
Drifts about, at the whim of wind and sail,
While lacking its customary master,
So, she wandered, far and wide, o'er hill and dale,
Her mind and heart absorbed, and, wherever
He wished, she was borne by Rabicano,
While lost in thoughts of her Ruggiero.

She raised her eyes, at last, and saw the sun, 63
Had turned his back on Mauretania,
Then, like a cormorant, his journey done,
Had plunged, beyond Morocco, to the water;
And that twas foolish now for anyone
To be lodged out of doors, without shelter,
For a blustery wind began to blow,
One chill enough, that eve, to threaten snow.

She, therefore, urged her mount to greater speed, 64
And had not gone much further ere she saw
A shepherd with his flock (that there did feed)
Bent for the fold, driving his sheep before.
The maiden-warrior told him of her need
For lodging, no matter how ill or poor,
Since never was there lodging e'er decried
That proved less pleasant than a night outside.

The shepherd answered her: 'I know of none, 65
That I could point to you, that is nearer
Than six leagues from this place, but for one,
That the folk hereabout call Tristan's tower;
Though not readily, there, is entrance won,
For, lance in hand, and in grave encounter,
Prepared to hold their ground, and to defend,
Must those knights be that entry there intend.



Stanza 65

If, when a knight arrives, the tower is empty 66
But for its castellan, the knight may stay,
But if another knight appears, then swiftly
The former must despatch him on his way.
If none appears, the knight may rest easy,
Else, the lance and sword must set in play,
For whoever's bested in the joust, say I,
Must yield their place, and seek the open sky.

Should two or more knights arrive together 67
They are allowed to dwell there in peace,
While if they're followed by a lone stranger
His task must, correspondingly, increase.
If but the one is lodging there, moreover,
He must joust with two or more, ere they cease,
Should that number appear later; therefore,
Great valour's needed to approach that door.

No less if wife or maid approach the tower, 68
Whether they're alone, or in company,
And another should arrive, then the fairer
May remain, yet not the other, sadly.'
Bradamante now sought to know further
Where this brave tower was, and he, gladly,
Described the place, pointing with his hand
To where, six miles away, the keep did stand.

Canto XXXII: 69-74: She seeks lodging there

The lady, though Rabicano went well, 69
Had no heart to drive him any faster
Along that broken path, nor magic spell,
(The surface rendered worse by the weather)
So as to reach it first, ere evening fell,
And thus darkened all the world around her.
Arriving there she found the door was barred,
Yet she asked a night's lodging of the guard.

He answered that the place was occupied 70
By three knights, and a lady, come before,
Who were seated now, about the fire-side,
And awaiting their supper, to be sure.
'I doubt the meal is ready,' she replied,
'If these three knights but lately passed the door,
Go say that I attend their presence, here:
They, as your rule decrees, must now appear.'

The guard bore his message to the place 71
Where the knights were seated, at their ease.
They, obliged now to fight outside, and face
The wintry weather, it did much displease.
A heavy rain had fallen for a space,
And was it seemed unlikely now to cease;
They donned their armour slowly, then the rest
Remained within, while they their task addressed.

They were the three knights, most fine and worthy, 72
(For few were, in this world, worth more than they)
Bradamante, had met, with the lady,
On the open road, earlier that day,
The three who'd, in Iceland, boasted bravely,
That the golden shield they would bear away,
Who, by pursuing their path more swiftly,
Had arrived there before Bradamante.

Of all the folk in arms few were better, 73
Though Bradamante among those made one,
Nor would she remain to brave the weather,
Wet-through and cold, when all was said and done.
Those within at the windows chose to gather,
To peer at the course the knights must run.
Though the moon's rays often pierced the cloud,
Yet the rain sheeted down, a murky shroud.

As a welcome lover's filled with delight 74
Seeking entry to the furtive realms of love,
When, at last, they hear the bolt in the night,
Nigh-on silently, in its socket move,
So Bradamante, who desired to fight
These three, and their skill and mettle prove,
Rejoiced, when she heard the door flung wide,
The drawbridge lowered, and the three descried.

As soon as they had reached the open field, 75
Together (or with no great space between),
She turned her valiant steed aside, then wheeled,
And charged, full speed, across the darkened green,
Lowering Astolfo's gift, that had sealed
Many a knight's fate (that fey lance I mean)
That would unseat, its power being such,
Even Mars himself, with a single touch.

Canto XXXII: 75-81: She defeats the three kings in joust, and reveals herself

The King of Sweden was the first she met 76
And, thus, the first to topple to the ground,
Such the touch of the lance on his helmet,
The unfailing spear ever strong and sound.
Gothland's king was next, a slighter threat,
Who feet in air, at some distance, might be found.
The third king was left gasping, upside-down,
Half-buried in the mud, and like to drown.



Stanza 76

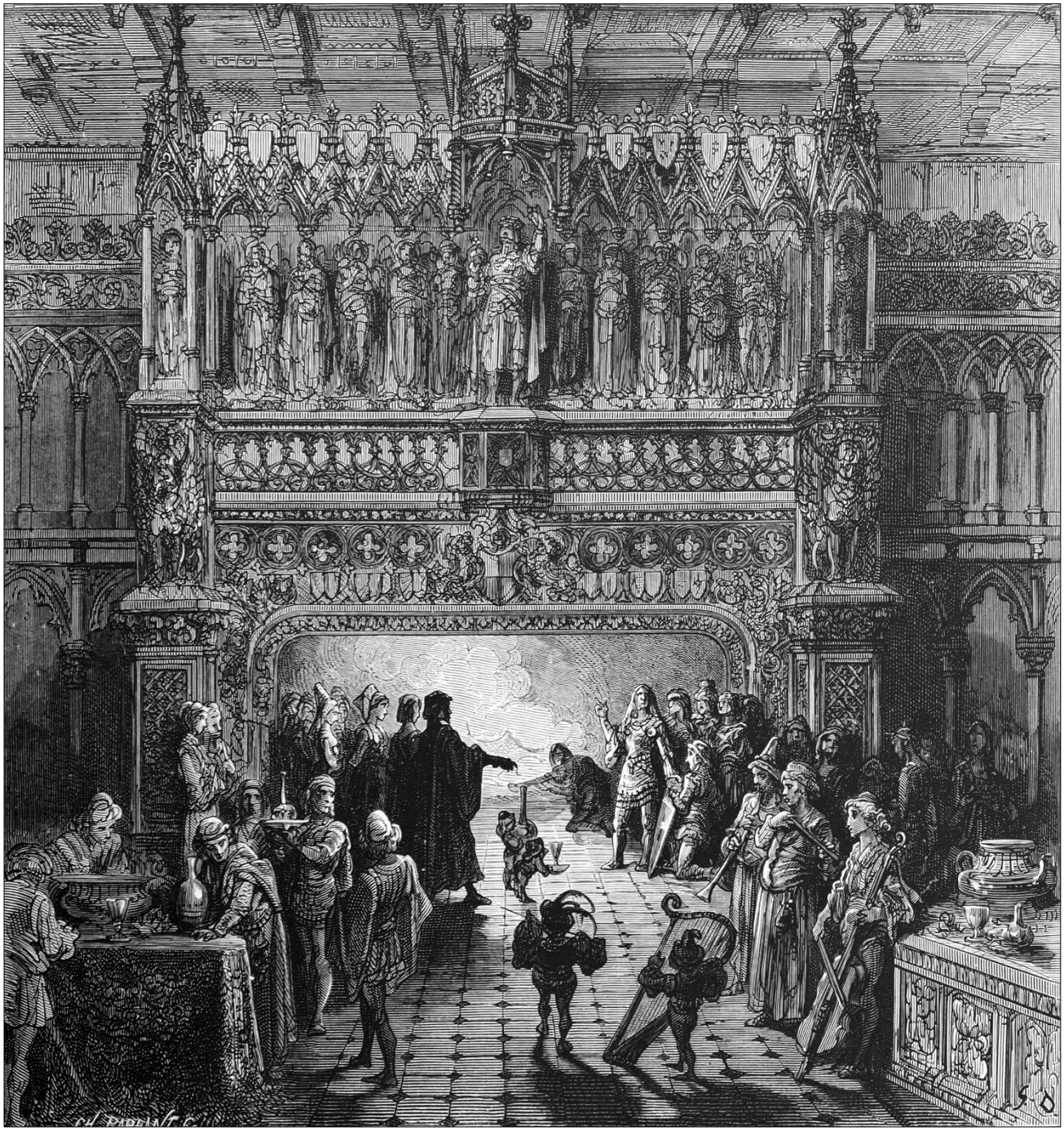
Once she'd dealt each of the three a fierce blow, 77
Their heads now on the earth, their feet in air,
She rode to the tower, which thus did owe
Her lodging, though indeed obliged to swear
That she would issue forth if one did show
That sought the same, and so do battle there.
Its lord within, a witness to her valour,
Now welcomed Bradamante with honour,

As did the lady who'd arrived that night 78
With the three, who'd journeyed as I said
From the Lost Isle to seek the finest knight
At France's court, sent by a queen unwed;
Courteously she welcomed her, on sight,
Being gracious, and kind, and nobly bred,
Rising to greet her, calmly and serenely,
Then leading her to stand near the chimney.

Then she began to remove her armour, 79
First taking her helmet and her shield,
But, when the helmet was off, a cluster
Of golden tresses was at once revealed,
That fell, in a cascade, to her shoulder,
The maid within the armour unconcealed;
And a maid no less lovely to the eye
Than fierce in battle, none there would deny.

As when the curtain's raised o'er the stage 80
And a thousand lamps or more light the scene,
With many an arch and tableau (all the rage!)
Statues, paintings, perchance a gilded screen;
Or when the bright sun deigns to disengage
From the clouds, and show a face all serene;
So, as she doffed her helm, before their eyes
Each gained a sudden glimpse of paradise.

Those lovely tresses that the hermit sheared 81
Had now re-grown, though shorter than before,
And gathered in a knotted coil appeared,
Behind her head, free of the helm she bore,
While the lord of the tower, as she neared,
(He had viewed her in former times) now saw
Twas Bradamante, and more warmly then,
He welcomed her, and honoured the maiden.



Stanza 81

Canto XXXII: 82-95: The history of Tristran's Tower

With simple and pleasant conversation, 82
Seated before the fire, their minds were fed,
While, to nourish their bodies, a collation
Was brought to them, a light but tasty spread.
Bradamante, seizing the occasion,
Asked if the custom were but newly-bred,
To which she had adhered, or when and where,
And by whom, it had been established there.

'In olden days, when Faramund was king, 83
Replied the warden, 'Clodion, his son,
Had a mistress, more beautiful and pleasing
Than any woman in that age, bar none.
And he loved her deeply, no more losing
Sight of her than Io's watchful guardian
His charge; for his jealousy waxed as great
As his love, and seclusion was her fate.

Here he kept her (for this tower, his father 84
Had granted him) and rarely went abroad;
Ten proud knights lodged here with him, moreover,
The best in France, set to defend their lord.
To this keep came Tristan with another,
A fair lady, whose rescue he'd ensured,
For, from the savage grip, he'd released her
Of a fearsome giant who had seized her.

They arrived when the sun had retreated 85
From Seville, and all the land of Spain,
Hoping with fair welcome to be greeted,
(For ten miles around naught else graced the plain)
But jealous Clodion, though entreated
To grant them lodging there, ne'er would deign
To permit a strange knight to lie therein,
Who acquaintance with his lady might win.

When despite his request, oft repeated, 86
He was still denied entry to the tower,
Tristan cried: 'I yet hope, undefeated,
Despite you, to demonstrate my power.'
And Clodion, and his knights, he greeted
With a challenge, to fight that very hour,
Offering, with lance and sword in hand,
To mark him with Discourtesy's vile brand,

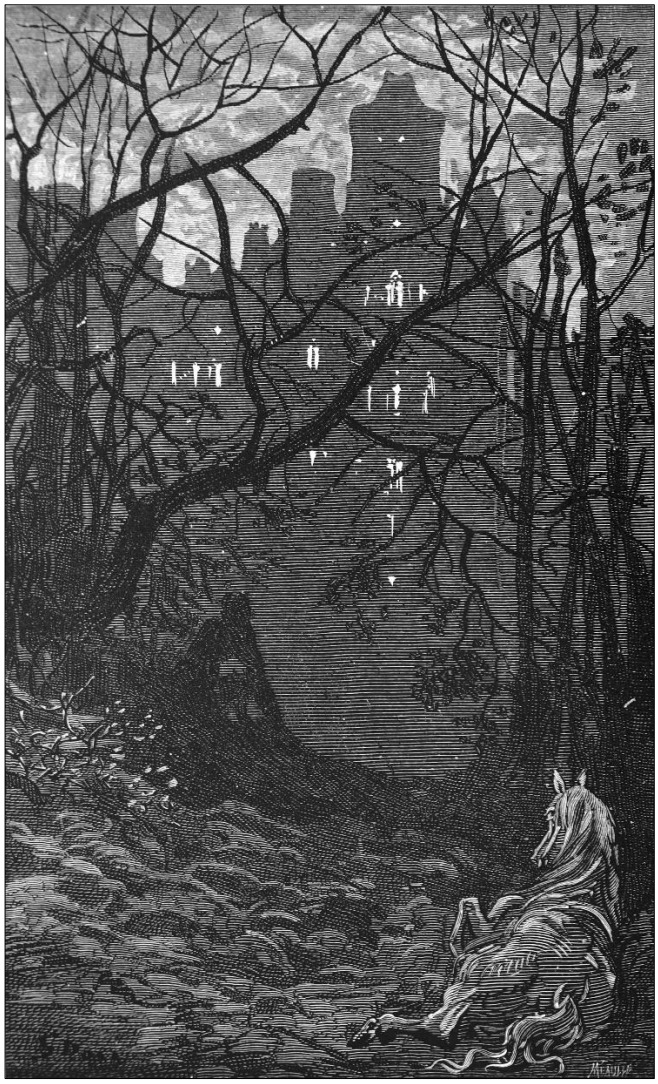
And, if he should unseat them, villains, all, 87
While in the saddle he did yet remain,
The lady and he would lodge in the hall;
Let Clodion, and the rest, enjoy the rain.
So as not suffer shame, at this bold call,
Prince Clodion and the ten sought to maintain
Themselves against one man alone, but Fate
Saw them fall; and Sir Tristan barred the gate.

On entering the tower, he found the maiden, 88
So dear to Clodion and passing fair,
Wrought so by Nature, the gift so given
Not one She grants to maidens everywhere.
They spoke, as, by fierce jealousy riven,
Clodion hammered at the gate, in despair,
While begging and praying that the knight
Would grant him his lady, now, outright.

Tristan, though not prizing her as deeply, 89
For none but Iseult could win his heart,
(He'd loved not, nor embraced, another, truly,
Since the potion had worked its magic art)
Yet would avenge the vile discourtesy
That Clodion had shown, so, for his part,
Replied: 'Twould be wrong it seems to me,
To deny this tower to such rare beauty;

Since you grieve, sorely, in the open air, 90
Beneath your tree, and company demand,
There is a maid, perchance not quite as fair,
Though she is young and lovely, close to hand,
And I would rest content were she to share
Your lodging, and obey your least command.
Yet the most beautiful, I think, sir knight,
Should belong to the best man in a fight.'

Clodion, excluded, discontented, 91
Huffed and puffed, about the tower, all night,
As if he were guarding the contented
Residents who slept there, out of sight.
More than the cold and wet, he resented,
His lady's bold retention by the knight,
Yet, in the morning, Tristan, moved by pity,
Ended his woes, and restored the lady.



Stanza 91

And said to Clodion, and made it clear, 92
That he now returned her as he'd found her.
Twas reason for shame, he told the peer,
That grave discourtesy, shown earlier,
Yet he was content he'd spent a drear
Night outside, contending with the weather;
Though Love was scarce an adequate excuse
For his offering a stranger such abuse,

For Love should render an ill nature kind, 93
And not achieve the contrary effect!
Long enough Clodion remain behind
Once Tristan had departed, to select
A knight to keep the tower (who, to his mind,
Was welcome to it) one sworn to reject
All requests for lodging made at random,
Unless they accorded with this custom:

That the knight that was of greater power, 94
And the fairest lady, might there remain,
While any lesser guest must quit the tower,
And lodge outside it, in the wind and rain.
Thus, the rule, that has lasted to this hour,
He fixed, and we the custom yet maintain.'
While the lord of the tower told his tale,
A meal was prepared, on a larger scale.

In the great hall the tables had been laid, 95
No finer chamber has there ever been,
And to it the two ladies were conveyed,
By the light of torches, nor had they seen
Aught so fine; Bradamante now surveyed,
As did the other lady, that fair scene,
Where noble paintings there adorned the hall,
Rather than tapestries on every wall.

Canto XXXII: 96-100: The least beautiful lady must leave the Tower

So fine were the paintings that they marvelled 96
At the art, and scarcely thought of dinner,
For there was little further they needed,
Wearied by the long day past, moreover.
The servants saw their plates went unheeded,
And the food untasted, though the master
Cried: 'Come, tis surely better, if you're wise,
To feed the stomach first, and then the eyes!'

The company were seated at the board, 97
When, all at once, the master realised
That to lodge them both was scarce in accord
With the custom of which they'd been apprised.
Room for the loveliest he must afford,
While the other faced the wind and rain, despised;
Since they had come there separately that day,
One lady must depart, the other stay.

He summoned two sage elders to the hall, 98
And the women of the household likewise,
Then asked, when they had hastened to his call,
Which lady was loveliest, to their eyes;
After gazing at the two, one and all
Said Bradamante best deserved the prize;
And no less in beauty outdid the other
Than she had surpassed the kings in valour.



Stanza 95 "*In the great hall the tables had been laid*"

To the Icelandic lady, who'd surmised 99
The outcome of the matter, he then said:
'Lady, that the custom was so devised,
Is scarce our fault, we must refuse a bed
To one of you, and you are best advised
To seek for one elsewhere, for it is clear,
That, unadorned, she's yet the fairer here.'

As, in an instant, a dark mist will rise 100
From out a rain-drenched valley to the sky,
Veiling the sun's bright face from our eyes
So, from that lady issued a deep sigh,
Clouding her face, that she must realise
The cruel sentence; cold and rain thereby
Her lot; with altered look she was no more
That lovely lady she had seemed before.

Canto XXXII: 101-106: Bradamante challenges the judgement

The colour fled from her visage, dreading 101
To face the darkness, while Bradamante
Full of pity, and opposed to her going,
Cried: 'It seems to me that little mercy
Accompanies all such judgements, lacking
True justice, indeed, where ere a hearing
In which opposing arguments are weighed
The court's decision is already made.

I, that now take upon myself her cause, 102
Say this: 'That however fair I may be,
I came not as a woman to your laws,
Nor would be judged as such, assuredly;
And can you say, and this should give you pause,
That naked I am less or more than she?
For what we know not we should not assert,
And least of all if others may be hurt;

Many another wears their hair as long, 103
And yet is not a woman. You now know
Whether, fighting here, I proved as strong
As any, and could deal an equal blow;
Then why should I to womanhood belong
To suit your custom, and be treated so?
You law is that a woman shall lose place
To a woman, not a knight kings must face.

Let us assume I am, as you believe, 104
A woman (though I here concede it not)
And less than her in beauty (so conceive)
Would you then, all my chivalry forgot,
Drive me from here, and this fair maid receive?
Twould be less than justice, were such my lot:
To lose, through lack of beauty, what was won
By conquering, in the field, as I have done.

And though tis your custom that the lady 105
Who is of lesser beauty must depart,
Though ill might come of my obstinacy
I would insist on staying, for my part.
An unequal contest it seems to me,
Twould be, and a judgement lacking heart,
For in such a matter she has much to lose,
And I little to gain, if thus you choose.

And if unequal be the loss or gain, 106
The contest is undoubtedly unfair,
So that, as of right (I do here maintain)
If not courtesy, the lady must share
Our lodging, and if any would again
Challenge my conclusion, then let them dare
Take the field, for I'll there uphold my cause,
Decrying the injustice of such laws!'

Canto XXXII: 107-110: And wins the argument

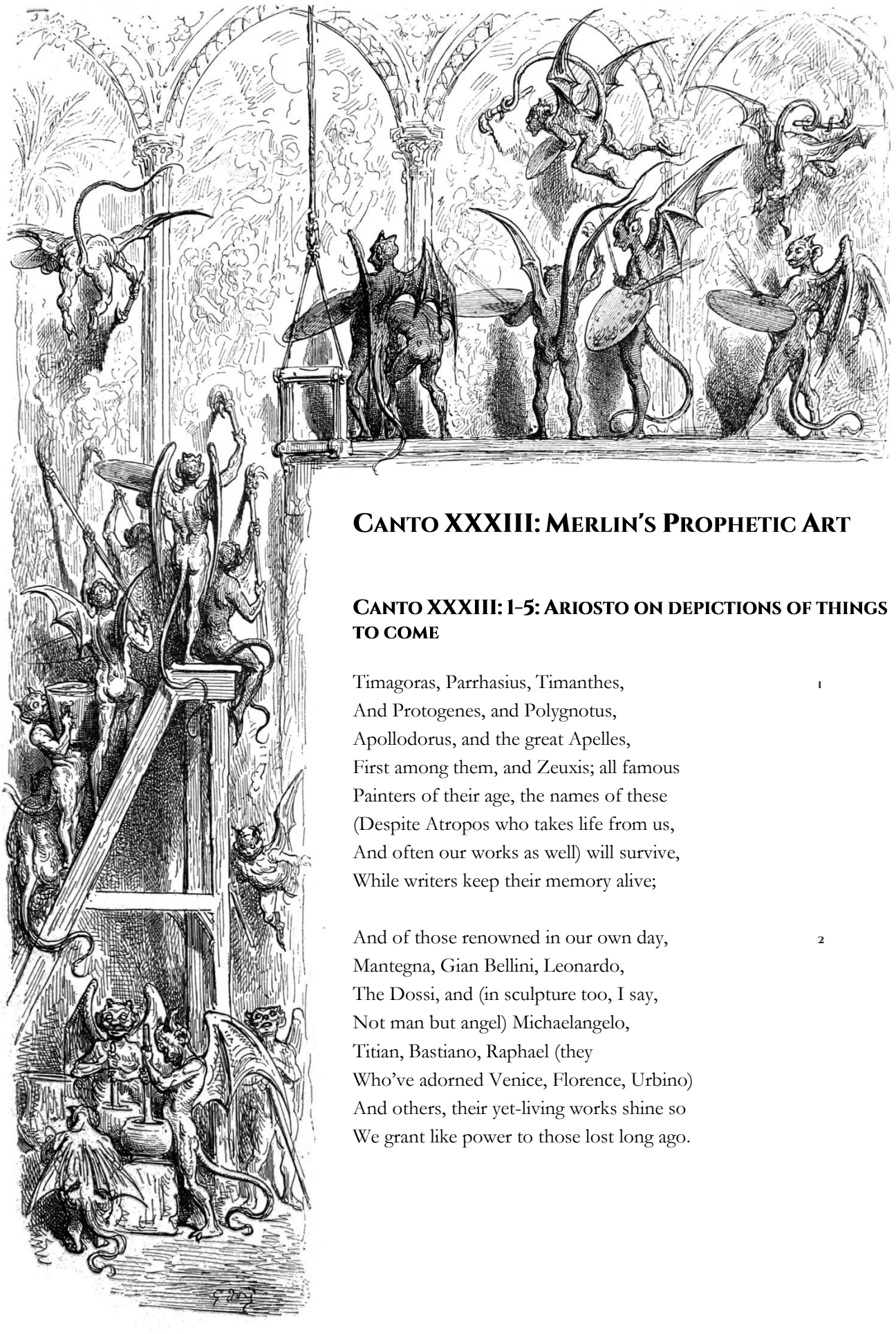
Thus, Bradamante, moved to pity, 107
That such a noble lady should be wronged
And driven forth to shelter neath a tree
From the blustery showers (which were prolonged)
Persuaded the lord to show her mercy
And concede that she was where she belonged.
Especially her last words were in his thought,
So, he proved content to yield, and say naught.

When a plant, in the burning summer heat, 108
(Well-nigh parched, and so thirsting for water,
Sap ebbing in the stem once full and sweet,
And close to withering its fair flower)
Shakes its leaves, the welcome rain to greet,
So, after that defence, the messenger
Appeared revived, and showed her delight,
And seemed as lovely as before, to the sight.

The dinner which had long been neglected, 109
Being heated once more, they now enjoyed.
With no further knights-errant expected,
They were, at last, more pleasantly employed.
All but Bradamante, who rejected
The thought of food, or at best but toyed,
Still plagued by the suspicions, doubts, and fears
That robbed her of the joy shown by her peers.

When the meal was done (though rendered shorter 110
By their desire to feast their eyes once more)
She rose to her feet, Amone's daughter,
And, after her, the queen's ambassador.
A servant ran, at the warden's order,
To light the torches that the chamber bore,
Shedding splendour on walls, and floor as well;
Of what followed, the next canto must tell.





Canto XXXIII: Merlin's Prophetic Art

Canto XXXIII: 1-5: Ariosto on depictions of things to come

Timagoras, Parrhasius, Timanthes, 1
And Protogenes, and Polygnotus,
Apollodorus, and the great Apelles,
First among them, and Zeuxis; all famous
Painters of their age, the names of these
(Despite Atropos who takes life from us,
And often our works as well) will survive,
While writers keep their memory alive;

And of those renowned in our own day, 2
Mantegna, Gian Bellini, Leonardo,
The Dossi, and (in sculpture too, I say,
Not man but angel) Michaelangelo,
Titian, Bastiano, Raphael (they
Who've adorned Venice, Florence, Urbino)
And others, their yet-living works shine so
We grant like power to those lost long ago.

The things that we see now, artists portray, 3
As artists did two thousand years before,
On wall or wood, yet never could convey
Things of the future, only what they saw.
The ancient masters had, ours have, no way
Of viewing what's to come; though, to be sure,
There are things and deeds known to history,
Which were depicted ere they came to be;

Yet no artist can, or could, possess the skill 4
To create such works, nor can the credit take;
Tis the enchanter's art, spells cast at will,
That can cause the infernal shades to shake
With fear; so, the chamber, I speak of still,
Wise Merlin, with demonic aid, did make,
(Chanting from a book, to Norcia's grotto
Sacred, or to Avernus' Lake, below),

All in a single night. The art displayed 5
In ancient times which such wonders wrought
Is lost to ours; I speak of things portrayed
Upon those walls. Torches now lit the court,
That dispelled the dark around, every shade
Dismissed completely, and so served, in short,
To fill with splendour, and glorious light,
The chamber, that by day was ne'er so bright.

Canto XXXIII: 6-12: Merlin's prophetic art: Faramund

The castellan now spoke: 'I'd have you know 6
That, of the battles you see here portrayed,
Few have been witnessed, for these paintings show
Events not yet enacted; here, arrayed,
Are the works of that sage who did foreknow
The victories, the defeats, in paint displayed,
That the armies of Italy shall see,
And you may view, ere they are history.

The wars the Franks would wage, for good or ill, 7
Beyond the Alps, for a good thousand years
From his day, Merlin showed; here are they still,
Here his prophecies we view, here each appears;
For Arthur, Britain's king, had him fulfil
The task for Faramund, who was Marcomir's
Great heir; and why the king decreed that day
That Merlin must so labour, I shall say.

King Faramund, the first of those who crossed 8
The Rhine, entering Gaul, with his great army,
Once it was occupied for little cost,
Thought how he might rein in proud Italy.
That the Roman Empire had all but lost,
Or was fast losing, power he could see,
And so, with his peer King Arthur, he sought
To act in league, and compass this, in short.

Arthur (who never wrought a single thing 9
Without prophetic Merlin's wise counsel,
Merlin, the Devil's son, he who could sing
I say, of future deeds) now sought to tell
Faramund of the danger he would bring
To his armies, and his own realm as well,
If he entered that land the Apennines
Divide, the Alps bound, and the sea confines.

For Merlin had revealed that almost all 10
The future kings destined to rule in France
Would see their ill, exhausted armies fall
Through famine, fever, war by such advance,
And that but little joy, great sorrow, small
Profit, and a deal of harm, perchance,
Italy would yield them, for the lily
Would fail to take root in that proud country.



Stanza 9

Faramund had such trust in the royal word, 11
That he turned his mind to other conquest,
For Merlin who saw (as the king had heard)
Past, present and future, was now his guest.
The paintings on this chamber he conferred,
Through his magic, at Faramund's request.
Here every deed of the Franks, in the field,
As if already wrought, would be revealed.

And, thus, his successors might comprehend 12
That victory and honour would be won,
If they but sought to muster and defend
Italy gainst barbarous incursion;
While if they simply sought to descend
Upon her to enforce their dominion,
They might there foresee their armies' doom,
And that beyond the Alps lay but a tomb.'

Canto XXXIII: 13-15: Merlin's prophetic art: Childebert II to Childebert III

Saying so, he then led the ladies where 13
The painted history commenced; to view
Childebert the Second venturing there,
The Emperor Maurice's offer to pursue;
Behold him, descending from Alpine air,
Whence the Ticino and Lambro issue.
See Clothar the Second deter his foe,
Then put them to flight, conquering so.

See Clothar the Third's army cross the pass 14
With more than a hundred thousand men,
And the Duke of Benevento face, en masse,
The mighty foe, yet drive them back again;
See him feign to retreat, then reap like grass
The Franks that seek to win the Lombard plain.
To shame and death they go, drawn to the wine,
And caught like mullet, without net or line.

How many Childebert the Third now sends, 15
Led by his generals, into Italy!
Yet no more than Clothar achieves his ends,
Failing to rape and conquer Lombardy;
For Heaven's sword so weightily descends
On his men, their corpses clog the country,
Slain by the flux, and the heat of the sun,
So that of every ten there's left but one.

Canto XXXIII: 16-20: Merlin's prophetic art: Pepin to Charles of Anjou

Pepin the Short, he showed, and Charlemagne 16
Descending again into Italy,
And how each some success would there obtain,
Because both sought to ensure her safety;
Pope Stephen, Pope Adrian, they'd sustain,
And Leo the Third defend from injury;
The one would conquer Aistulf, the other
Desiderius, gaining the Pope honour.



Stanza 14

He showed young Pepin of that royal line, 17
Whose mighty host would appear to cover
The sea from Venice' shore to Palestine;
He would build a costly bridge, moreover,
At Malamocco, to cross o'er the brine,
Reach the Rialto, and seek to conquer,
But be forced to flee, leave his men to drown,
His fine bridge, by the wind and sea, brought down.

Behold how Louis of Provence descends 18
To where he first conquers, then is taken;
And, to guarantee he no more offends,
Must swear his warlike plans now forsaken.
Behold, he breaks the oath, for his own ends,
And falls once more into the snare, mistaken
In his aims; then, by his foes rendered blind,
Borne o'er the Alps, leaves Italy behind.

See Hugh of Arles do many a great deed, 19
And from Italy expel the Berengari.
Yet, now Huns, now Bavarians, succeed,
Defeating him twice or thrice utterly.
He is now forced to sue for peace, indeed,
Not surviving long, nor his heir, we see,
Leaving Berengar of Ivrea to rein,
He possessed of his kingdom once again.

Behold another Charles, he of Anjou, 20
Who, to save a Pope, sets Italy aflame;
A pair of kings he slays, behold, the two,
Are brave Manfred, and Conradin, by name.
Yet his soldiers, who with vile wrongs (no few)
Oppress the land, to their and Charles' great shame,
Scattered, here and there, throughout Sicily,
Are slain, as the Vesper-bells ring wildly.

Canto XXXIII: 21-24: Merlin's prophetic art: Jean de Armagnac to Charles VIII

Then (though it seems not merely a few years 21
But many and many an age has gone by)
A Gallic captain o'er the Alps appears,
To war on the famed Viscontis, thereby;
And here, with foot and cavalry he nears
Alessandria's walls, and a siege will try.
Gian Galeazzo garrisons the place,
And lays an ambush, clasps in his embrace



Stanza 20

The French force under Jean of Armagnac, 22
Caught by the artful net that Duke has spread,
Such that, all around, felled by his attack,
Lie the Gallic soldiers, full many dead,
While the rest, that all hope of flight thus lack,
Prisoners, to Alessandria are led;
Thus, swollen now with blood, Tanaro's flow
Sends crimson tribute to the River Po.

One named De la Marche, and three D'Anjou, 23
The warden showed, one upon another,
And said: 'The Brutti, and the Marsi too,
The Daunians and Salentines, they bother,
But tis not Franks, nor Latini, renew
Their aid, nor their position recover;
As often as these Gallic foes attack
Alfonso, then Gonsalvo, drive them back.

Behold, here, Charles the Eighth descending 24
From the Alps, with all the flower of France,
Crossing the Liri, fair Naples conquering,
And yet without deploying sword or lance;
All but the isle, o'er Typheus lying,
Ischia, he takes in his bold advance,
Held, here, yet, by Iñigo del Guasto
Of the House of Avalos; a worthy foe.'

Canto XXXIII: 25-30: Merlin's prophetic art: Alfonso d'Avalos future Sixth Marquis of Pescara

The warden of the tower, once their brief tour 25
Of those scenes was done, and he had named
That isle for Bradamante, said: 'Before
You view aught else I'll tell you what was claimed
By my great-grandfather, a thing of lore,
While I was still a child, which was proclaimed
To him alone, likewise, by his father,
And to his father by his grandfather,

And so twas told, by one or the other, 26
Starting from he that was the first to hear
These prophecies; recited, then, moreover
By him who'd had them magically appear,
Thus painted, in crimson, white, and azure;
When that enchanter made their meaning clear
To Faramund, who the isle's name did learn,
And told the king what I'll tell you, in turn,

He heard him tell how (in that very place 27
You see him defending with such ardour
He seems to scorn the flames before his face,
That reach to the Pharo nigh the harbour)
From that knight a warrior of his race
Would spring (then or very shortly after;
Indeed, he named the year and week and day)
A warrior that all others would outweigh;

One who'd prove stronger than great Achilles, 28
Wiser than Nestor, both long-lived and sage,
More daring even than bold Ulysses,
Nimbler than Ladas, athlete of his age,
More generous, and readier to ease
The errant through clemency, and assuage,
Than was famed Caesar; Ischia's delight,
Against whom others' virtues would seem slight.

If ancient Crete rejoiced when Zeus was born, 29
Or Thebes, of old, when Dionysus, there,
And Bacchus did that famous place adorn;
If Delos the divine twins' light did share,
Then no less glory would in time be borne
By Ischia, her head raised high in air,
She that this great Marquis would come to know,
On whom Heaven would every grace bestow.

Merlin said, and many a time repeated 30
That this Marquis was destined to arrive
In an age when the Empire, oft defeated,
Was much oppressed; a soldier born to strive
For liberty. But since I've not completed
Our review, I'll not seek to so deprive
You; first, ere that valiant knight I hail,
With Charles I shall again take up the tale.

Canto XXXIII: 31-33: Merlin's prophetic art: Alfonso d'Avalos Fourth Marquis of Pescara

Ludovico Sforza will soon regret 31
Inviting Charles to enter Italy,
Whom he summons but to aid and abet
Him in countering the bold Papacy,
Not to overthrow it; though in his debt,
On his return, he deems him an enemy.
He leagues with Venice, and yet his new foe
Despite him, his skill in war will show.

The king's forces, remaining in command 32
Of his new realm, will meet another fate,
For Ferrante, Sforza's defence in hand,
Will return to the fight, his strength so great
He'll leave not a foreigner in his land,
Slays them all, on land and sea, and saves the state;
Yet through King Ferdinand's ingratitude
Will be deprived of the honours he's accrued.'

And then that lord, showing Bradamante 33
The portrait of Alfonso d'Avalos,
Fourth Marquis of Pescara, said: 'When he
Shall have acquired the fame and gloss
Of a thousand deeds, bright as the ruby
Will he shine, yet men will mourn his loss,
Deceived by a Moorish slave's treachery,
Pierced by a barb, departing thus the stage,
The finest knight and general of his age.'



Stanza 34

Canto XXXIII: 34-41: Merlin's prophetic art: Louis XII's Italian Wars

And now Louis the Twelfth, escorted by 34
Italians, descending the Alps, they see,
Uprooting Il Moro's mulberries, thereby
Planting, in Visconti ground, the lily.
'Treading in Charles' footsteps, by and by,'
Said the castellan: 'strong bridges will he
Fling o'er the Garigliano, and yet later
Mourn his troops drowned in that fatal water.

See the French army there, again in flight, 35
Routed in Apulia, scourged, no less;
Gonsalvo Ferrante, bold Spanish knight,
Twice springs the subtle trap, and wins success.
Yet Fortune reveals to Louis her bright
Face; upon the Padan plain, grants redress,
Twixt Alps and Apennines, Agnadello
The field of war, close to the River Po.'

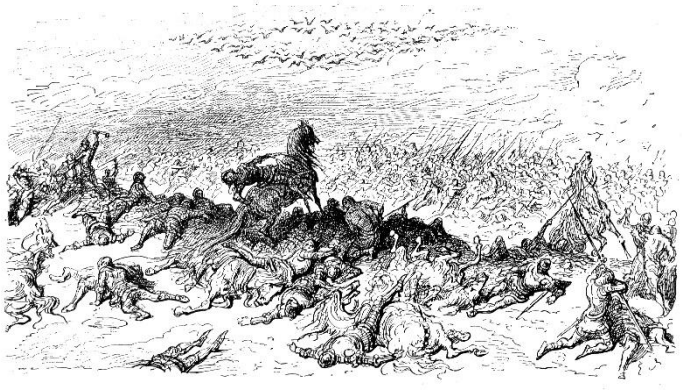
The host reproved himself for neglecting 36
To speak of first things first, and in order,
And returned to show the overthrowing
Of a strong keep betrayed by its warder;
Then a lord imprisoned after hiring
A Swiss traitor as his sole defender;
Which double-treason, without sword or lance
Grants swift victory to the King of France.

Cesare Borgia next he shows and names, 37
Raised to power, by that king, in Italy,
For all Rome's lords, and all those lords she claims
As hers, he drives into exile, promptly.
The king will help the Pope meet his aims,
Driving Bentivoglio, ruthlessly,
From Bologna; then the rebel Genoese
He'll put to flight, and that fair city seize.

'Behold,' the warden said, 'the many dead 38
That o'er the Gera d'Adda hide the field,
While each city opes to the king in dread,
And Venice herself scarce fails to yield.
See how he ignores the Pope, instead
Leaving Romagna's confines; here revealed,
See Modena wrested from Ferrara's lord,
Nor does he linger there, or rest afford,

But draws Bologna, now, to his party, 39
Which the Bentivogli then re-enter.
Next the French king lays siege swiftly
To Brescia, and accepts its surrender.
Then he promptly routs the Papal army
While yet bringing Bologna his succour.
And then it seems the hostile armies lie,
On Chiassi's level shore, before your eye.

On this side France, and on the other Spain, 40
Engage their troops in battle, there we see
Many fall, on both sides, and with the stain
Of crimson blood paint the earth, and sadly
Dye every stream bright red, ditch, and drain.
Mars doubts to whom belongs the victory,
Till, Alfonso d'Este wins the field;
The French prevail, and the Spaniards yield.



Stanza 40

The Pope bites his lips in woe and anger, 41
As his Ravenna is sacked, and brought low,
And draws German mercenaries, moreover,
O'er the Alps, to storm all the lands below.
While the French, unable to recover,
Are chased home, beyond the mountain snow,
Il Moro's scion, there, ousts the lily
From his rich soil, replants the mulberry.



Stanza 41

Canto XXXIII: 42-44: Merlin's prophetic art: Francis I

Behold the French return, and here behold 42
One broken, by the faithless Swiss betrayed,
The same who had his father seized and sold,
Whom he had rashly summoned to his aid.
Here you see an army, o'er which has rolled
Fortune's wheel, before the new king arrayed;
Francis the First prepares thus to efface,
In swift revenge, Novara's late disgrace,

With better auspices the victory gains. 43
Tis Francis, at the head of his vast army,
That will ensure that not one Swiss remains
To thwart him, destroying them entirely.
Such that nevermore will they lay claims
To their title of defenders of the Holy
Faith, the Church, and the scourge of princes,
Borne by those whom it no more evinces.

Behold, despite the League, he takes Milan, 44
Then with the young Sforza strikes accord;
Here the Duke of Bourbon fights man to man
To keep that city from the German horde.
While Francis wars elsewhere, as he began,
With cruel pride, so rules this ducal lord,
That soon the king discovers, to his cost,
Thereby, once more, a city gained is lost.

Canto XXXIII: 45-53: Merlin's prophetic art: The Battle of Pavia

A second Francis, see, a Sforza, heir 45
To the founder's rare virtues, and his name.
He, with the French expelled, we witness there
Regaining lost Milan which now he'll claim.
France too returns, but under tighter rein,
Nor scourges Italy, as did that same,
For Mantua's noble duke, Federico,
Bars their passage o'er the Ticino.

Though o'er his cheeks youth's bloom doth scarce advance, 46
That duke seems worthy of eternal glory,
For tis not merely by the sword and lance,
But through diligence, and ingenuity,
He defends Pavia from the men of France,
Frustratings the Lion of Venice equally.
Here, are two marquises, Italy's pride,
And the bane of we French, tis not denied,

Both of one blood, born in the one nest, there, 47
The first, Fernando (son of that Alfonso
Who, through the Moorish slave, caught in a snare,
Drenched with a crimson stream the ground below)
You see how, through his counsel, like a hare
From Italy he oft hounds the French foe,
The other, of benign looks and manner,
Alfonso, Sixth Lord of Pescara later.

He is the famous warrior wise and bold, 48
That I spoke of when we viewed Ischia,
Of whose mighty deeds wise Merlin foretold,
Speaking to King Faramond, earlier,
Saying his birth would be deferred, untold
Ages, until needed more than ever,
By Church, and Empire, and poor Italy,
To counter their most barbarous enemy.

He, following his cousin, Fernando, 49
Under Prospero Colonna's command,
Makes the Swiss, at Bicocca, and more so
The French, pay dearly, for all they've planned.
Behold how France again must prove a foe:
Seeking to restore her losses, out of hand,
The king descends once more on Lombardy,
His other force on Naples fair city.



Stanza 49

But she that makes us like the dust that flies 50
Before the wind, whirling that dust around,
Who raises it, awhile, towards the skies,
And then returns it swiftly to the ground,
Has a hundred thousand men, to the eyes
Of Francis, Pavia's mighty walls surround.
He marvels at what lies before his hand,
But marks not the weakness of his command.

Through the greed of a cunning minister, 51
And the goodness of a most trusting king,
The ranks are but thin that seek to muster,
When, by night, the call to arms forth doth ring,
For his camp the cunning Spaniards enter,
Guided by those two of Ischia's making;
Avalo's ardent blood drives that pair on,
That in search of heaven or hell are gone.

View the finest of the French nobility 52
Suddenly extinguished, on that field;
While a host of swords, and lances, you see,
That, nigh the monarch, these Spaniards wield.
Behold, his horse falls under him, while he
Neither owns himself conquered, nor will yield.
Though to him, alone now, the foemen run,
Abandoned there, to aid him he finds none.



Stanza 52

The King of France, on foot, makes his defence, 53
Drenched in the enemy's blood, head to toe,
But courage yields to force (and better sense),
He is taken, and to Spain must swiftly go;
While true praise, and glory, both immense,
On brave Fernando all men now bestow,
And on Alfonso, ever at his side,
For a king is captive, and his aims denied.

Canto XXXIII: 54–57: Merlin's prophetic art: The Naval Battle of Capo d'Orso

Once force is routed on Pavia's plain, 54
The other, Naples bound, quelled on the way,
As an oil-less lamp, a wax-less candle wane,
Till quenched is each illuminating ray.
Behold the king returns to France again
Leaving his son in Spanish hands; away
From fair Italy, where he wages war,
Others do likewise on his native shore.

Rome is grieving at the rape and murder, 55
Theft and arson, that everywhere we see,
And all is cursed by insult and anger,
The profane and the divine equally.
The League, as they advance, view with terror
This sore disaster and where they should be
Moving swiftly towards Rome, they retreat,
Abandoning him who holds Saint Peter's seat.



Stanza 55

Francis sends Lautrec with a fresh army, 56
Not to wage war anew in Lombardy,
But to save the Pope from the enemy,
And free the Church's head and limbs entirely.
But Lautrec and his men move so slowly,
The Pope by then has gained his liberty,
And now has conquered Naples fair city,
With its tomb of the Siren, Parthenope.

And here the Spanish ships southwards steer, 57
To thwart the French blockade, as best they may;
Set afire, sunk, engulfed, they disappear,
Met by Andrea Doria mid-way.
Behold, how lightly Fortune now shall veer,
That seems to aid the French, for from that day
Their troops are slain by fever not the lance;
Of a thousand not one returns to France.'

Canto XXXIII: 58-64: Bradamante's vision of Ruggiero

These and other things the walls portrayed, 58
Whose contents would be lengthy to relate,
In lovely, varied, colours that conveyed
Their meaning well, their import seeming great.
Twice, or thrice, they returned and honour paid
To their excellence, viewing those turns of fate.
And knew not how to leave the scenes foretold,
Reading the words beneath, writ there in gold.

When the lovely ladies, gazing with the rest, 59
Had viewed and conversed, sufficiently,
Their host, who sought to honour every guest,
Led them to their chambers, courteously.
Yet Bradamante was by thoughts oppressed,
Though the others were soon slumbering deeply;
Turning this way and that, of sleep bereft,
Leaning upon her right side and her left.

Near dawn, at last, she closed her weary eyes, 60
Only, in dream, to see her Ruggiero,
Who seemed to say: 'Why such doubts realise?
Why grant substance to things that are not so?
For rivers will flow backwards, ere such lies
Possess truth, and I turn from you; and, know,
I'll cease to love this heart of mine, still true,
And these eyes, ere I'll cease to care for you.'

Then he seemed to suggest: 'I am come here, 61
To be baptised, fulfil the pledge I made,
For by a wound not wrought by Love, I fear,
I have been long oppressed and, thus, delayed.'
With that, the vision chose to disappear,
While its vanishing broke her troubled rest.
The warrior-maid shed fresh tears of woe,
And then spoke to herself, in accents low:

'What pleased me so was but an idle dream, 62
This that torments me is the truer sight;
The dream of joy is but a vanished gleam,
No dream my suffering, my sorry plight.
Why must my joyless senses rule supreme,
And wrest him, thus, from hearing and from sight?
What condition afflicts my poor eyes, still?
That they must close on good yet ope to ill?

Sweet sleep thus promised both repose and peace, 63
Yet bitter the dream wakening me to war.
Sweet sleep but brought what proves illusory,
Yet bitter my sight that doth the truth restore.
If falsehoods please, while truth brings misery,
Let me not see or hear such truth and more:
If sleep brings pleasure, and if sight brings pain,
Then let me sleep, never to wake again.

Happy the creatures that sleep half the year, 64
Nor open, for six months, their shuttered eyes!
For if such sleep like death must e'er appear,
The title 'life' scarce to my state applies;
So contrary my fate, my suffering here,
My heart, alive in sleep, in waking dies.
And, if such sleep is deathlike, ah, come Death,
Close up my eyes, and ease my parting breath.'

Canto XXXIII: 65-76: She jousts again with the three kings at their request

The sun had crimsoned the far horizon, 65
And all the clouds had vanished from the sky,
Thus, a fresh view of things met her vision,
With the promise of sweet times by and by,
When Bradamante rose, and made provision
For her journey, armed herself, gave a sigh,
Then thanked the tower's courteous commander
For the kindness and honour he had shown her.

She found the ambassadress and her maid, 66
With the squires too, had issued from the keep,
And had joined the three kings, there arrayed,
That had been obliged in that place to sleep.
Those three monarchs her golden lance had laid
On the ground, for whom the lady might weep,
Since they'd spent the night in deep discontent,
Wind and rain proving most malevolent.

Add, then, their empty stomachs to their ire, 67
For both they and their good steeds yet remained,
Grinding their teeth, and trampling the mire,
But what increased their fury, now unfeigned,
Was that they knew the lady ne'er would tire
Of telling their fair queen how they'd sustained
Defeat at a warrior's hands, this the first lance
That they'd encountered in the land of France.

Ready to gain revenge, or die, were they, 68
For the insult to himself each perceived,
If but Ullania might see her way
(Such was her name, if I'm not deceived)
To disregard the defeat they'd met that day,
And quell the ill opinion she'd conceived,
So, once more, they challenged Bradamante,
As she had crossed the drawbridge already,

Not dreaming that she was a maiden, though, 69
For she showed naught of that in her manner.
Bradamante refused, in haste to go,
But the three so begged her, and harassed her,
That it seemed shameful to deny them so;
Three thrusts she gave, and each descended
To the earth; and, thus, the warfare ended.

Without another glance, she turned her back, 70
And, in a trice, disappeared from the field,
While they who had launched the fresh attack,
Come to this land to gain the golden shield,
Who now both courage and fair speech did lack,
Rose slowly, their amazement unconcealed,
Seeming dumbfounded, in their great surprise,
Nor to Ullania dared raise their eyes.



Stanza 70

Full many a time when they were on the road, 71
They'd boasted to her of their great prowess;
For there was ne'er a knight of France, they'd crowed,
Could match the least of them in skilfulness.
The lady, to dispel their pride, and goad
Them for their arrogance, and scant success,
Told them the knight, who'd laid them at her feet,
Was a maid; and rendered their shame complete.

'What must you think of Orlando's might, 72
Or Rinaldo's, for which the pair are famed,
When you are all three overthrown in fight
Defeated by a maid, who goes unnamed?
If you would have the shield, I ask outright:
Shall you joust as well as you have claimed,
If this, against a maid, is all you do?
I think not, and perchance you think not too.

Let this suffice you all; there is no need 73
To show a clearer proof of your valour.
If there be one that seeks a reckless deed
And to gain experience through another,
Or add danger to his shame, and thereby bleed,
He'll but deepen that shame and dishonour;
Unless he thinks it useful, or wins praise,
To meet such warriors, and end his days.'

As soon as Ullania had made plain 74
That a maid was the cause of their downfall,
And blacker than pitch dyed, to their great pain,
Their honour once so fair (beyond recall,
Twas lost, or so did more than one maintain
Where but the one sufficed) twas bitter gall.
They felt such sorrow, that they well-nigh turned
Their weapons on themselves, their anger burned,

The doffed their armour (in the moat it went 75
That ringed the Tower) stung by rage and fury,
Cast away e'en their swords, in discontent,
And left themselves devoid of arms, entirely,
And swore that, since their previous intent
Was thwarted by a maid, and they swiftly
Hurled to the ground, they would now appear
Unarmed, in every place, for twelve months clear,

And that they'd travel on foot, everywhere, 76
Up and down the hills, over every plain,
Nor, when the year had ended, would they bear
Chain-mail and plate, or mount a horse again,
Unless they had, in some warlike affair,
Acquired those same, as fortune might ordain.
Thus, in penance for their failings they went
On foot while others rode, with quiet lament.

Canto XXXIII: 77-78: She hears news of King Agramante's flight from Paris

Bradamante lodged in a keep, that night, 77
Which lay upon the road from Paris; there,
She heard the news of Agramante's flight,
And brave Rinaldo's role in that affair,
For her brother was indeed a man of might.
The bed and board were fine but, full of care,
She ate little, and she slept even less,
Denied repose, by thoughts that caused distress.

Yet, for now, I shall say no more of her, 78
And return to Rinaldo and Gradasso,
For each bold knight had tethered his charger
Beside the solitary fount, as you know,
And I'll speak of their duel a little further,
Though they fought not for land or power, so,
But that the best might Durindana wield,
And ride Baiardo o'er the battlefield.

Canto XXXIII: 79-83: We return to the duel between Rinaldo and Gradasso

Without a signal, or a trumpet sounding, 79
To announce their joust, without a master
To advise them on their moves when fighting,
Or spur them on to attack each other,
They drew their mighty swords, and commencing,
With one accord, lunged at one another.
The blows rained thick and fast, and their ire
Waxed, as from the first spark grows the fire.

I know no other blades of shining steel 80
As sound and solid, forged to so endure.
Three blows alone from them, could one but deal
Such strokes, surpassed all measure, I am sure;
So perfect was their temper, near ideal,
From many a trial they'd emerged secure;
And they might strike a thousand blows, say I,
Before a splinter from those blades would fly.

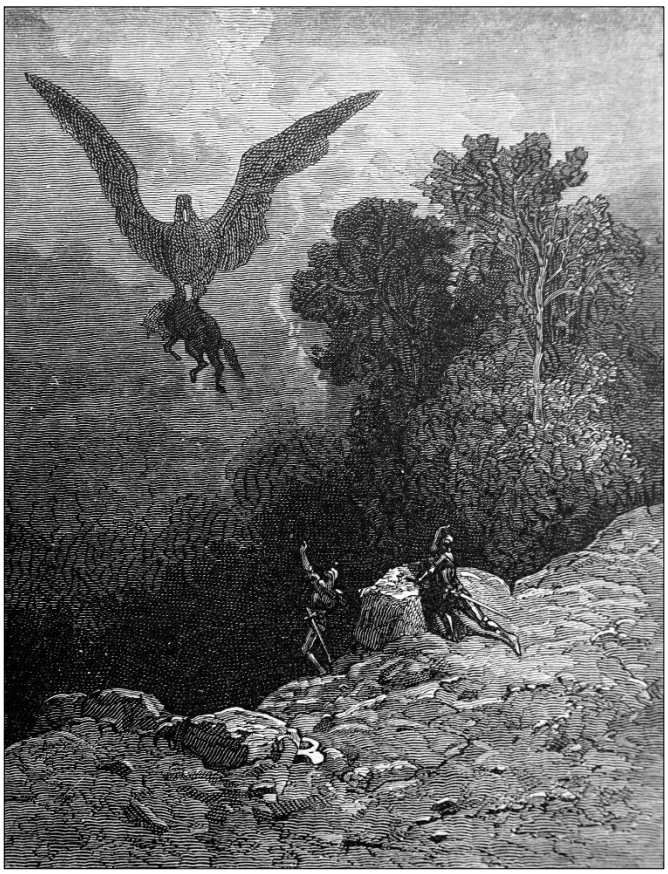
Here and there, Rinaldo danced, as he sought, 81
By skill, and effort, and dexterity,
To evade Durindana as they fought,
Knowing that weapon's sheer lethality.
Gradasso's heavier blows oft fell short,
Or cut the air, or landed but idly,
Or, if they struck home, fell upon some spot
Which resounded, while little harm was got.

Rinaldo fought far more effectively: 82
He numbed Gradasso's arm with a blow,
And often struck his helm, or flank sharply,
Or his breastplate, as to it they did go,
Yet found the other's armour, endlessly,
Impenetrable, for all his brave show;
Though if his every effort seemed to fail,
Twas no wonder, it was enchanted mail.

Without seeking rest, the two had fought 83
Some little while, on their duel so intent
That their eyes scarce another thing had sought
Save that on which their labour was spent,
When suddenly an equal noise they caught,
And upon other strife their sight was bent;
Such was the sound they both turned away
And saw Baiardo troubled, and at bay.

Canto XXXIII: 84-88: A flying creature appears and Baiardo flees

The horse was in conflict with a monster, 84
Or rather a monstrous bird, whose great beak
Was three yards long, the bird in bulk bigger
Than the steed; batlike, if more facts you'd seek,
Except with feathers, deepest black, all over;
Piercing talons, it possessed; it gave a shriek,
And with blazing eyes, and a vicious look,
Two wide wings, like a ship's mainsails, it shook.



Stanza 85

A bird perchance, and yet I know not where 85
Or when, such a bird did ever feature;
I've seen no pictures, nor read anywhere
Except in Turpin's work, of such a creature.
Which moves me to believe the monster there
A devil out of hell, vile in nature,
That Malagigi conjured, in such guise
As to shock them, and thwart the fight likewise.

This Rinaldo too believed, and thereafter 86
Many a scornful word passed twixt the two;
Malagigi would not confess, rather
He swore by the fires that light the sun anew,
That he had naught to do with the matter,
To claim so was unjust, nor was it true.
Whether bird or demon the thing once more
Swooped on Baiardo, wielding beak and claw.

The mighty steed broke free, suddenly, 87
And, with disdain and ire, it kicked and bit
At the creature, which retreated swiftly
Into the sky, where it might not be hit,
And wheeled round and round the charger, calmly,
Plunging down, then gripping and beating it.
Baiardo, unequipped for such a fight,
Suffering badly, quickly took to flight.

The courser sped towards the wood nearby, 88
Searching for the densest thicket there.
The feathered monster followed with its eye
While, from above, it marked the path, with care,
But the horse so hid itself none could spy
Its whereabouts, then found a stony lair.
Once the creature lost all trace of its prey,
In search of other flesh, it sailed away.

Canto XXXIII: 89-92: Rinaldo fails to find the steed

Rinaldo and Gradasso when they saw 89
The reason for their quarrel departing,
Agreed to suspend the fight once more
Till they'd rescued the steed, though agreeing
That whoever found it first must ensure
He returned to the fount it was fleeing,
And be present by that source to defend
His honour, till their duel reached an end.

In pursuit, they left the fount far behind, 90
Following fresh hoofprints on the ground,
Though Baiardo ran faster to their mind,
And looked to vanish soon, as they found.
Gradasso now to mount his steed designed,
Alfano, that was yet both safe and sound,
And left Rinaldo stranded midst the trees,
Never filled with less joy, or more unease.

A few steps more and he had lost all trace 91
Of Baiardo, who his strange course had run,
The courser making for some thorny place
Midst trees, streams, and rocks, so as to shun
Those cruel claws, that struck at his bare face,
And now hiding from the light of the sun.
Rinaldo whose labours proved all in vain,
Returned, and lingered by the fount again,

Trusting Gradasso would, in time, repair 92
To the place, as agreed twixt them before;
But, having waited, quit the whole affair,
And returned to camp, his heart (and feet) full sore.
We'll pursue Gradasso; see him there,
Happier than Rinaldo, to be sure,
For not through skill, but destiny, say I,
He heard Baiardo neigh aloud, nearby.

Canto XXXIII: 93-95: Gradasso succeeds, and sails for home

He found him hiding in a gloomy cave, 93
So oppressed by fear of the creature
He dared not emerge, no longer brave
And bound to obey Gradasso's pleasure.
The king remembered that the first to save
The steed was pledged to return the charger
To the fount, and yet he scorned so to do,
Seeing fit his silent thoughts to pursue:

'Whoe'er covets him for conflict and war, 94
To possess him in peace is my desire.
From the far side of the earth, I sailed, before,
To seek him, and to that alone aspire.
Having my Baiardo now, you may be sure,
Any that seeks him risks more than my ire.
If Rinaldo wants him, let him grasp his lance,
And search all India, as I have France.

Sericana he'll find no less secure 95
Than his France has, twice, appeared to me!'
And, so saying, he spurred his steed once more,
Rode to Arles, and chartering a boat, he,
(With Durindana) departed that fair shore,
His Baiardo, safe aboard the galley.
But of this hereafter; for Gradasso
I leave behind, and France, and Rinaldo.

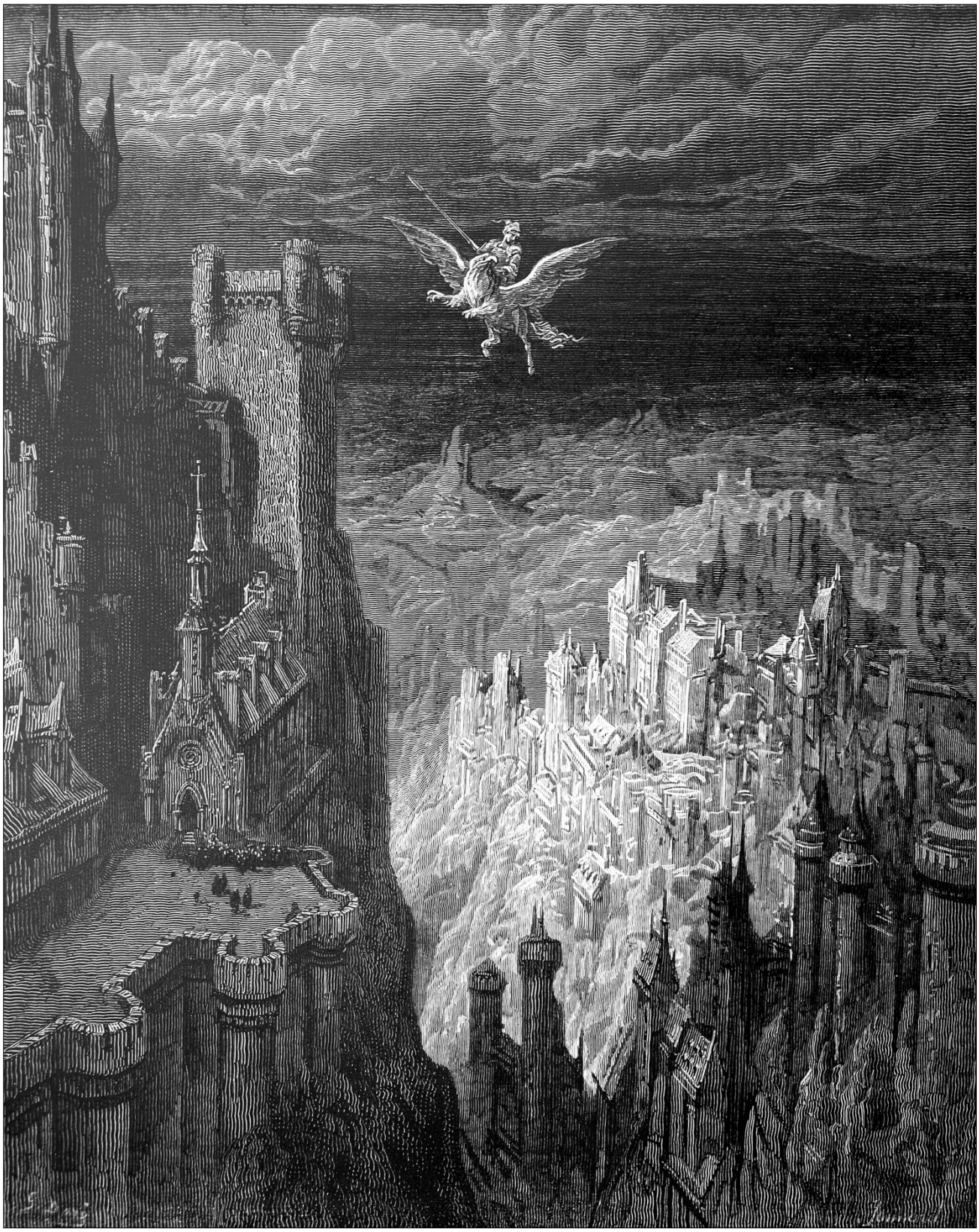
Canto XXXIII: 96-102: We turn to Astolfo who reaches Ethiopia

I turn to bold Astolfo, still in flight, 96
Riding the hippogriff like a palfrey,
Saddled and bridled, thus, to bear the knight,
On a course that the eagle spurns entirely,
Over all of Gaul, gleaming in the light,
From Rhine to Pyrenees, from sea to sea,
Rising to those mountains, from the plain,
That separate the whole of France from Spain.

He passed Navarre, flew over Aragon, 97
(Leaving those who saw the sight to wonder)
Tarragona southwards, Biscay upon
His right, and reached Castile and, over
To the west, saw Galicia, then Lisbon,
Reaching thence Seville, beyond Cordoba;
Outspread beneath him, all of Spain he saw,
Each of her fair cities, shore to shore.

Cadiz, he viewed, and those bounds the sailor 98
Marks, once set there by mighty Hercules,
(Intending, thus, to traverse Africa,
To the ends of Egypt, from those western seas).
The Balearic Isles he now flew over,
And saw Ibiza, there, beneath his knees,
Then tugged the reins, and turned for Asilah,
O'er the sea from Spain, yet seeming closer.

Moroccan Fez he sees, Oran the fair, 99
Algiers, Béjeïa, Annaba (all those
Great cities that the crown of laurel bear,
Yet, wrought in gleaming gold, its leaves disclose),
To Bizerte headed, gliding through the air,
O'er Tunis, Gabes, Djerba's isle, he goes,
Tripoli, Benghazi, Tolmeita,
Towards the Nile's mouths opening on Asia.



Stanza 96 "*Astolfo, still in flight,* **r***iding the hippogriff like a palfrey*"



Stanza 99

Twixt Atlas' wooded ridges and the shore, 100
He viewed thus the landscape all around,
Turned his back on Carena's peaks, to soar,
Then skim o'er Cyrenaica, near the ground,
And, above the desert, south-eastwards bore,
With Battus' tomb behind, yet ne'er a mound
Where Zeus-Ammon's shrine once stood, at Siwa,
Till he reached Albaiada, and Nubia.

Then to another Tlemcen he came, 101
Where upon Muhammad's tenets they smile,
And a second Ethiopia in name,
Which faces the other, beyond the Nile;
Twixt Coallee and Dobada he took aim
(Bound for the royal city, in fair style)
Here the Muslims, there the Christians stand,
And each side guards the borders of their land.

In Ethiopia, their emperor, 102
Was Senapo, the cross was his sceptre,
Possessed of cities, gold, and men, and more,
As far as the Red Sea's southern water;
He held a faith much like ours, wherefore
He may have won salvation thereafter.
Tis there, lest I err and prove a liar,
That their baptismal rite makes use of fire.

Canto XXXIII: 103–112: Senapo, Emperor of Ethiopia (called Prester John)

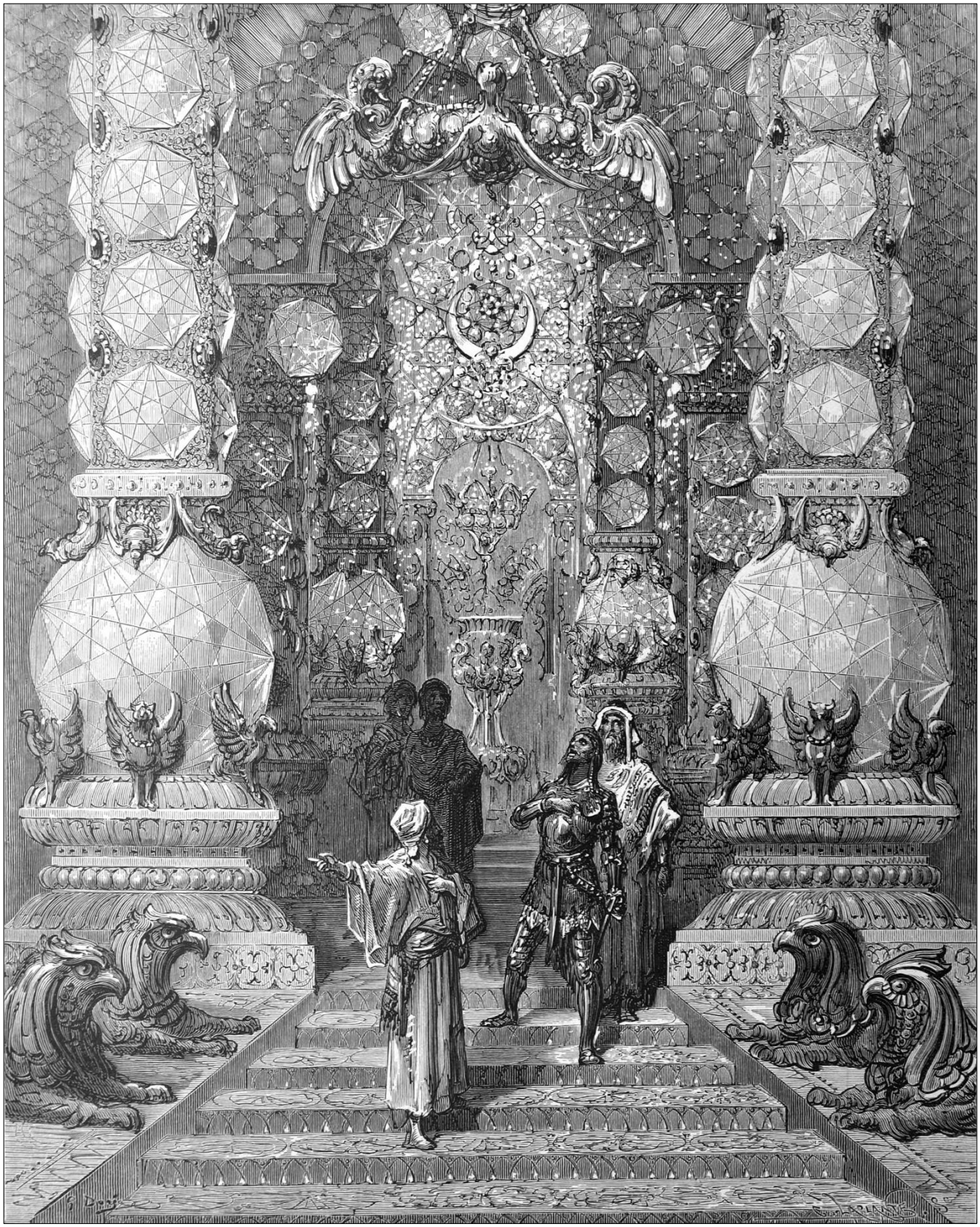
Astolfo set down in the spacious court 103
Before the palace, to visit the king.
Less strong than splendid was the royal fort,
From which this emperor ruled everything;
The fittings of the bridges, gates, in short,
Every bolt, and hinge, and chain, and ring,
Which with us would be iron, I am told
Was in this palace wrought of solid gold,

And the metal which was so abundant there 104
Was of the very finest purity.
Columns, of translucent crystal, did bear,
Here and there, a hanging balcony,
While, beneath these, ran a frieze, an affair
In red, white, yellow, azure, verdigris;
Divided, with clear spacing, by many
A topaz, sapphire, emerald and ruby.

In the walls, roofs, and pavements, embedded, 105
Gleamed many a pearl, many a rich gem.
There the balm thrives, more fully tis said
Than do the plants found near Jerusalem.
The musk we utilise from there was sped,
And amber too has been obtained from them;
Many a thing, in sum, comes from that country
Which we, in our domains, value greatly.

Twas said the Sultan that in Egypt reigned 106
Paid tribute to this Emperor, Senapo,
For of the Nile flood, twas maintained,
He controlled both the timing and the flow,
Such that Cairo and its districts obtained
Their water, and so grew their crops, below.
Senapo is the name all folk gave, yon,
To one we call the Priest, or Prester John.

Of all who ruled in Ethiopia 107
He was the richest and most powerful;
Yet, with all his riches and his power,
He yet was blind, and therefore pitiful.
And greater trouble did his life devour,
More miserable still, and more harmful,
For however rich seemed that emperor
He was afflicted with ceaseless hunger.



Stanza 104 "*Columns, of translucent crystal, did bear, here and there, a hanging balcony*"



Stanza 108 "*An infernal vengeful brood flew to greet*"

When the wretched man sought to drink or eat, 108
Tormented by that great and pressing need,
An infernal vengeful brood flew to greet
His efforts, monstrous Harpies (in their greed,
With beaks and talon, battening on the meat,
Overturning the jars) that stayed to feed.
And what their stomachs failed to contain
They'd leave soiled and foul, then flee again.

Now he, because he was so green in years 109
Yet had been raised to such supreme honour,
And because he was endowed, it appears
More than any, with courage and vigour,
Grew proud as Lucifer, amidst his peers,
And thought to wage war upon his Maker,
And proceeded to attack the very mount
Where Egypt's mighty river has its fount.

He had heard that upon this Alpine peak, 110
That thrust above the clouds, and touched the skies,
The realm of Eve and Adam one might seek
That we name the terrestrial Paradise.
With a mighty army, he of whom I speak,
Elephants and camels massed before his eyes,
Went to find if any lived where that mount soars,
And render them obedient to his laws.

God reproached him for his audacity, 111
And sent an angel to destroy his sight,
That slew a hundred thousand in his army,
And condemned him to perpetual night.
And then, to his board, flew many a Harpy,
Those horrendous monsters, a hellish blight,
That contaminated all, with their stink,
And left him nothing fit to eat or drink.

So, it was prophesied, things would continue 112
(To the emperor's uttermost despair)
The Harpies would that same foul course pursue
And would only forego the royal fare
When a knight on a winged horse hove in view,
And descended upon them from the air;
Which, indeed, seemed a most unlikely thing,
And brought little hope to the wretched king.

Canto XXXIII: 113-116: He begs Astolfo to alleviate his plight

So it was with amazement that they saw 113
The English knight now circling in the sky,
Then, in haste, the news to the emperor bore,
Of what wheeled above the walls and towers, on high.
Recalling the prophecy wrought before,
Neglecting the staff, he was supported by,
The king sped joyfully this knight to greet,
That seemed destined to land, there, at his feet.

Sweeping widely, Astolfo now descended, 114
And touched down in the courtyard far below.
The emperor knelt, his arms extended,
(His attendants had helped him, thus, to show
Humility). 'If I have offended,
Yet may still mercy find,' he cried 'you know,
Angel of God, sin is e'er Man's intent,
As tis yours to pardon those that shall repent.

Aware of my fault, I dare not conceive, 115
Nor dare to ask, that you'll restore my sight,
Though you possess the power, I believe,
Being dear to God, and blessed by His might.
Let it suffice that I, no more, perceive
The light of day, yet ease my other plight,
Drive my hunger, and those vile Harpies hence,
Let them not foul all here; be my defence.

And a marble temple I will promise you, 116
Built on high, its roofs and walls of gold,
Beside this palace, glorious to the view,
Decked without, and within, with gems untold,
And your name it will bear, as is your due,
And through sculpture will the miracle be told.'
So spoke the sightless emperor and, again,
He sought to kiss the duke's feet, but in vain.

Canto XXXIII: 117-125: Astolfo rids the king of the Harpies

The knight replied: 'No angel of the Lord 117
Am I, no new Messiah, from the sky;
A mortal sinner, nor of grace assured,
Unworthy to bestow such things, am I.
Yet all my aid to you I may afford,
To drive the creatures hence, or see them die.
If I do so, then praise the Lord alone,
In that a means to help you, thus, is shown.

Make your vows to God, to Him they are due, 118
To Him your churches, and your altars, rear.'
Discoursing so, they took their way those two
Towards the palace, amidst many a peer.
The king commanded his cooks anew
To prepare a feast, that swiftly did appear,
Hoping the knight might quell that vile band
That sought to snatch the food from out his hand.

Within a nearby chamber, Senapo 119
Commanded that the table should be laid,
And, seated alone, he and Astolfo
Were served the solemn dinner, there conveyed.
Lo, a whirring sound above was heard, and lo,
Monstrous creatures beat the air, on their raid;
Down from above, the thieving Harpies came,
Drawn by the scent of food, to snatch that same.

Seven in number were that horrid crew, 120
With the faces of women, pale and wan,
Dry-lipped they were, emaciated too,
More dreadful than death, as they began
To flap their great misshapen wings, anew,
And arch their crooked claws; the evil clan
Had large and fetid bellies, and long tails,
Like coiling serpents, that left slimy trails.

They heard them in the air, as they plunged, 121
And swooped together on the plates of food,
Overturned all the jugs and jars, and lunged
At the scraps, while there rained a noisome flood
Of foul ordure, not readily expunged,
Upon the board; wrath fired Astolfo's blood,
And, unable to withstand the smell, the knight,
Drew his sword, and whirled it with all his might.

He struck one on the neck, then another 122
On the rump, and the breast, and the wing,
But, as if he'd hit a bag of dough, ever
The strokes failed, effecting not a thing,
While they left not a plate or cup, never
Turning for a moment from their feeding,
Till they had ravaged what was thereby doomed
To be fouled and soiled, or otherwise consumed.

The king had pinned his hopes on the knight, 123
Trusting he'd send the creatures on their way,
But now his hopes had vanished (like the light)
He moaned, and groaned, and sighed, in his dismay.
But then the duke remembered that he might
Employ the magic horn, that helped alway
In times of war; and thought it just the thing
To ensure that those evil birds took wing.

First, he told the king, and all the court, 124
To stop their ears with wax so the sound
Would not send them all fleeing, for, in short,
It maddened all who tried to stand there ground,
Then he seized the bridle and, ere he fought,
Mounted on the hippogriff and wheeled around
With the horn in his hand, and had a board,
With another set of cups and plates, restored.

This was sited in an open gallery, 125
Where the Harpies soon returned as of old,
While Astolfo blew the horn, full loudly,
As soon as he those creatures did behold,
And since their ears performed perfectly,
The noise soon penetrated every fold.
They fled in fear, while they showed not a care
For the food e'er again, nor aught else there.

Canto XXXIII: 126-128: And sends them fleeing to Hades

At once, in hot pursuit, Astolfo spurred, 126
And issued forth, flying from the court,
He left the emperor, without a word,
As o'er the distant sky those birds he sought,
He blew the horn, and all the people heard,
(Unless their very ears were stopped, in short)
While the vile Harpies fled to heights forlorn,
Those highest peaks where the Nile is born.

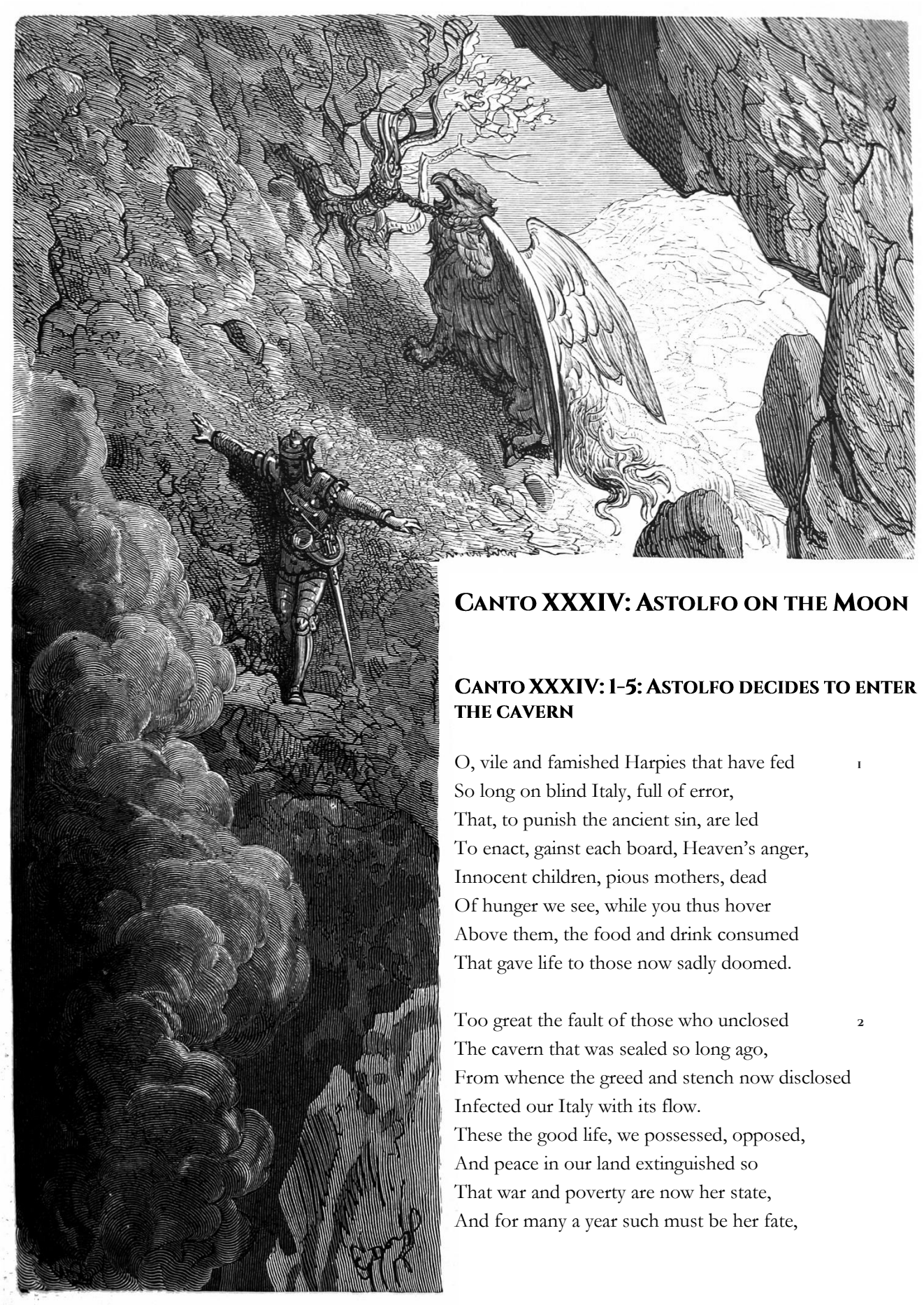
Almost to the roots of that great range 127
A cavern pierces, plunging underground;
And they do say twould be more than strange
If it leads not to Hades: from the sound,
The Harpies fled, seeking to exchange
The echoing air for silence, this they found,
Descending, swiftly to Cocytus' shore,
Where the horn's fearful cry was heard no more.



Stanza 125 "*While Astolfo blew the horn, full loudly*"

Outside that deep, and dark, infernal hole, 128
Where a way opes to those who flee the light,
Astolfo ceased to blow, achieved his goal,
And let his courser furl its wings in flight.
Yet ere I lead him further, that brave soul,
Or seek to scorn my customary rite:
This canto's long enough; I think it best,
To end it here, and then go seek some rest.





Canto XXXIV: Astolfo on the Moon

Canto XXXIV: 1-5: Astolfo decides to enter the cavern

O, vile and famished Harpies that have fed 1
So long on blind Italy, full of error,
That, to punish the ancient sin, are led
To enact, gainst each board, Heaven's anger,
Innocent children, pious mothers, dead
Of hunger we see, while you thus hover
Above them, the food and drink consumed
That gave life to those now sadly doomed.

Too great the fault of those who unclosed 2
The cavern that was sealed so long ago,
From whence the greed and stench now disclosed
Infected our Italy with its flow.
These the good life, we possessed, opposed,
And peace in our land extinguished so
That war and poverty are now her state,
And for many a year such must be her fate,

Till she grips her thoughtless sons by the hair, 3
Drags them from Lethe, and cries out: 'Where, now?
Like to Calais and Zetes, that bold pair,
Are those who will free her, and will vow
To cleanse the board, and her sad state repair,
The claws and stench that plague her, disallow,
As they saved Phineus from his suffering,
Likewise, Astolfo Ethiopia's king?'

For our brave paladin, the English knight, 4
Had chased the Harpies, blowing on his horn,
Till they reached the mountains, in their flight,
Where a cavern, from the depths, once was torn.
To that fissure, to which they'd plunged, outright,
He set his ear and heard their cries forlorn;
While groans, deep sighs, and endless sad lament,
The path to Hades rendered evident.

He was doubtful whether he should enter, 5
And view the shades denied the light of day,
Penetrating to the Earth's deep centre,
There the infernal abyss to survey.
'Yet, why fear,' he cried, 'when, as ever,
The enchanted horn's call will clear the way?
Dis and Satan, will both flee from the sound,
As will Cerberus, the triple-headed hound.'

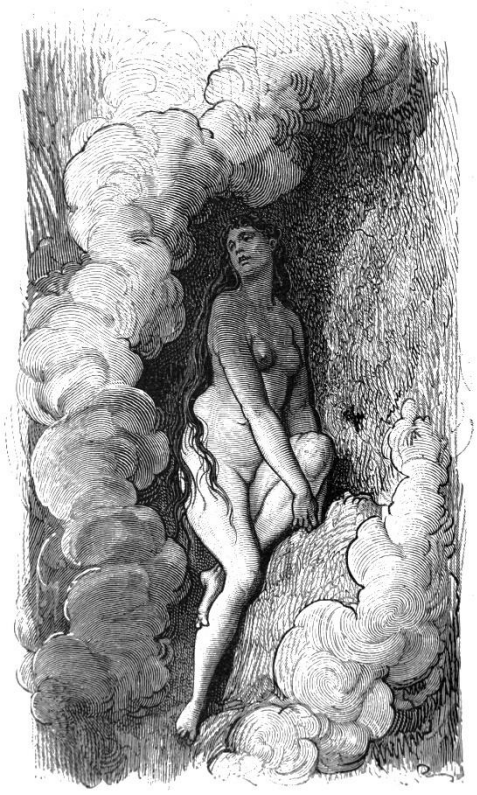
Canto XXXIV: 6-10: Where he encounters the shade of Lydia

He dismounted, swiftly, from the winged steed, 6
Then tethered it to a sapling nearby,
And entered the cavern (though, indeed,
He grasped his magic horn tight, as would I)
He'd not gone far before he felt the need,
To sneeze, and wipe the damp soot from his eye;
For blacker than pitch, and much thicker,
Was the foul darkness; though ne'er a flicker

Of fear did he show; the deeper he went, 7
The worse the fog, and the vile stench, became,
And it seemed to him, within that noisome vent,
That he best retreat, and issue from that same.
Yet, behold, something moved, with darkness blent,
From the vault above, naught that he could name,
Hanging, as a corpse, from the gallows, might,
Withered by the wind, and bleached by the light.

Though there was little light by which to see, 8
Within that dark, and deep, and smoke-filled place,
So, to Astolfo twas a mystery
What thing it was that hung before his face;
Meanwhile, to ascertain what it might be,
He gave it a thrust or two, and made a space,
With his sword, deeming it then a shade,
That he'd but seemed to strike at with his blade.

But then he heard a mournful voice that cried: 9
'O, without harming others, thus descend,
For in these dark fumes, suffering, I abide,
That from infernal fires, below, ascend.'
At these words, the duke, amazed, slacked his stride,
And replied to the voice: 'May Heaven send
You relief from the fumes the depths exhale,
And, if it please you, tell your woeful tale,



Stanza 9

For, if you'd have me bear the news above 10
Of your sad state, I shall most readily.'
The shade replied: 'If to the light I love,
My name returns, that is so dear to me,
That I must do, an orator must prove
Despite myself, to win such charity,
And who I am may say, if this you seek,
Though tis tedious and wearying to speak.'

Canto XXXIV: 11-15: Lydia speaks of the ungrateful lovers

And thus, she began: 'Lydia am I, 11
The King of Lydia's noble daughter,
That, by the judgement of the Lord on high,
Am condemned to this darkness, forever,
Because a lover's faith, his every sigh,
I met with ingratitude, and scorned him ever;
While countless others fill the cave below,
Condemned by that same sin, to the same woe.

Deeper still you'd find Anaxarete, 12
Who scorned Iphis, great is her suffering;
Turned to harsh stone was her living body,
Her spirit was sent here to feel the sting
Of seeing her lover, eternally,
(That killed himself for love of her) hanging.
Nearby is Daphne, who scorned Apollo,
Yet erred, in fleeing one that loved her so.

It would take long to name them, one by one, 13
The shades of the ungrateful women here,
If I but told of them, as I have done,
An endless number haunt these depths, I fear;
Longer still to tell of the men undone,
Damned, by ingratitude, to many a tear,
That in a fouler place may thus repent,
For those the harsh smoke blinds, and flames torment.

Since women oft prove the more trusting, 14
Men that deceive them, should suffer more.
There are Theseus and Jason, ever groaning,
And Aeneas that, in Latium, made war,
And Amnon that, fair Thamar abusing,
Led Absalom swift vengeance to ensure.
Many another haunts this place of strife,
That abandoned a husband or a wife.

But to speak of myself, and no other, 15
And reveal the sin that brought me here,
Lovely when alive, yet still haughtier
Than beautiful, was I, without a peer;
Nor do I know now which was the greater,
My beauty or my pride; both cost me dear;
For it is certain that my pride was born
Of a loveliness that no man might scorn.

Canto XXXIV: 16-19: She tells of herself and her suitor Alcestus

At that time, there lived a brave knight in Thrace, 16
In warfare, the most valiant of men,
Who, by many a witness to my grace
Was told of my beauty, and so often
That he desired to gaze upon my face;
(His longing and desire were most sudden)
Thinking that mere valour, on his part,
Was more than enough to win my heart.

To Lydia he came, and by so strong 17
A love was snared that he remained.
And great renown he earned there, ere long,
Amidst the other knights my sire maintained.
His valour and his deeds, worthy of song,
Would take too long to tell, who had obtained
Far greater reward if he'd but served
One who had honoured him as he deserved.

Through him, Pamphylia, and Caria, 18
My father conquered (who, scarcely ever,
Himself led out his men) and Cilicia,
(For this knight directed all with valour).
He, believing that none was worthier,
Deeming he had earned it, pressed my father
To grant him my hand, as his just reward
For the victories gained for his new lord.

His request was rejected by my father, 19
Who intended his daughter to be wed
To one of higher rank, not some warrior,
Who owned courage alone it must be said;
For my father was bent on gain, and further
A slave to greed, all vice's fountainhead,
And he esteemed courage just as highly
As the sweet sound of the lyre the donkey.

Canto XXXIV: 20-24: Alcestus turns against her father

Alcestus (such was the warrior's name 20
Of whom I speak), finding his suit denied,
Repulsed by one he thought would now proclaim
Himself his debtor, and see him gratified,
Sought leave to go; the gross slight to his fame,
He threatened to avenge; with wounded pride,
He sought the court of Armenia's king,
Our rival, and arch-foe in everything.

And he so roused that monarch he made war, 21
Sent out his troops, and attacked my father,
While Alcestus, given his deeds and more,
Was named his champion, and their leader.
The knight declared that he would now secure
Possession of our lands for Armenia,
Only asking that, when he'd conquered all,
Myself to him should, as his guerdon, fall.

I can scarce express the great harm he wrought 22
My father in that war; four great armies
He overthrew, and such fierce battle sought
That in a year he'd conquered all, with ease,
Our lands and castles lost, except one fort,
Sited on high cliffs, that he might not seize,
And here with a chosen few, my father
Took refuge with the wealth he could gather.

This keep Alcestus besieged, and swiftly 23
Drove my father to such desperation,
That the latter would have granted me
To this foe with, indeed, half the nation,
If by my marriage, nay my slavery,
He might retain his wealth, and high station;
Else the loss of his riches he foresaw,
For he would die a captive, he felt sure.

To forestall, by every means, his defeat, 24
And thus attempt every last remedy,
He sent myself, the cause of this complete
Disaster, forth to meet my enemy.
I went to yield myself, fall at his feet,
And grant him thus my person utterly,
With whatever of our realm he sought,
If it but brought us peace, and calmed his thought.

Canto XXXIV: 25-30: Lydia persuades him to relent

Now, when Alcestus heard that I drew near 25
He came to meet me, trembling and pale,
More prisoner than conqueror did appear,
With bashful look, for there did Love prevail.
I, perceiving his ardour, and his fear,
Did myself of this passion now avail.
Seizing the sudden opportunity,
Offered by his state, I changed my plea.

I began by speaking ill of his manner, 26
And the cruelty he'd shown towards me,
Of the disloyalty he'd shown my father,
And that by violence he'd sought to gain me,
That would have welcomed him as a lover
Nor delayed many days, if only he
Had behaved towards us as at the start,
Whereby he had conquered many a heart.

If the honest request that he had made, 27
Had at first been denied by my father,
Well, he never a greater warmth displayed
On initial request, twas his nature;
But he himself should, indeed, have delayed,
And not fallen prey to such deep anger,
And by showing restraint would have acquired
The reward, for all his labours, he desired.

And if he'd still been thwarted thereafter, 28
I would have prayed my sire, earnestly,
To make a son-in-law of my lover;
And had he proved as obstinate, with me,
I'd have done for Alcestus moreover,
What would have satisfied him, secretly;
But since he had now turned to force instead,
No thought of loving him was in my head.

And if I came to him, moved so to do 29
By my deep respect for my dear father,
He might be sure he'd not long pursue
Violence against me, seeking to plunder;
For my death must swiftly then ensue,
Should he seek to gain what he was after,
And thereby achieve upon my person
What by force alone could thus be won.

Such words, and the like, I thus employed 30
Seeing the power that I now possessed;
His penitent pleas more than those deployed
By any hermit saint, ranked with the blessed.
At my feet he fell, with a blade he toyed,
That he had by his side, then addressed
Its hilt to me, and begged me to avenge
His most grievous fault, and gain revenge.

Canto XXXIV: 31-34: Alcestus restores all he has gained

Since I'd won so much, I sought to pursue 31
My swift and welcome victory to the end.
And gave him hopes of being worthy to
Enjoy the fruits of love should he amend
His former fault, restore to us anew,
Our wealth and kingdom, as an honest friend,
And, in time to come, enjoy my charms
Through loving service, not by force of arms.

All this he promised, and then returned me 32
To our fortress, as intact as I'd arrived,
Nor did he even venture to kiss me.
Was he not yoked securely? He derived
His pleasure from Love's longing entirely,
Love who had slain him, though he'd survived!
He took himself to the Armenian king,
To whom the least of spoils he yet must bring;

In his most courteous manner, he besought 33
The king to grant our realm to my father,
Over which he had campaigned, in short,
And rest content with the former border.
The monarch answered no, that all he'd brought,
As gains from the war against that other,
Must be retained, and war he would demand,
Till his foe possessed not a foot of land;

And if a vile woman had persuaded 34
This change of heart, then let her bear the cost,
He himself would never be dissuaded
From retaining the lands her sire had lost.
Alcestus asked again, his deeds paraded,
And then complained, finding himself star-crossed,
Of this rejection, threatening in due course
To restore them with consent, or by force

Canto XXXIV: 35-40: Lydia seeks to destroy him

Their anger so increased that they passed 35
From mere ill words to many a worse deed.
Alcestus took to battle, at the last,
(Thousands flocking to aid the king, at need)
And, slew him, despite the troops amassed,
Making many an Armenian bleed.
Aided by Cilicians and Thracians,
And mercenaries of other nations.

He pursued the victory and, at his cost 36
Without his asking aught of my father,
He restored all the lands that we had lost,
In a month, and to pay for the slaughter,
Beside the splendid spoils, his gifts he glossed,
By taking the whole of Armenia,
And Cappadocia, on our border,
And, to its shore, scouring Hyrcania.

In place of a triumph, we thought to slay 37
The victor on his return, suddenly,
And yet fearing failure, we chose delay,
For he'd amassed friends far too readily.
Feigning love for him, from day to day,
I nurtured his fond hopes of wedding me,
But said I'd have him fight against the foes
That remained, and prove his worth against those;

And alone, or with but few, had him ride, 38
On many a strange and perilous campaign,
On which a thousand knights might have died,
Though, victorious, he'd thence return again,
Or I'd send him through all the countryside
To fight the monstrous creatures e'er our bane,
The fierce Giants and the Laestrygonians,
That infested our and others' nations.



Stanza 38

Hercules was ne'er sent on such a chase, 39
By Eurystheus, or Juno ever,
On Erymanthus, in Nemea, Thrace,
Lerna, Numidia, Aetolia,
By Tiber, Ebro, or some other place,
As I decreed, to exercise my lover,
With feigned pleas, and murderous intent,
Hoping that his demise I might lament.

Lacking the power to gain my foremost aim, 40
I devised a scheme with no less effect:
He brought harm to all who had praised his name,
And, thus, was hated by that injured sect,
For he was pleased to work that very same,
Enacting all I asked, without respect
To whether they were friends; a sign from me,
And all, alike, became his enemy.

Canto XXXIV: 41–43: She causes him to sicken and die

Once I perceived that every mortal foe 41
Of our House had been eliminated,
And Alcestus conquered by himself, also,
Whose every friendship was terminated
Through our efforts, I did the mask forego;
Discarded the fondness I had imitated,
Revealed the hatred behind every breath,
And that I sought to bring about his death;

Aware that if I did so, I would know 42
The burden of public ignominy,
(Too many knew my debt to him, and so
Would deem my actions born of cruelty);
It seemed to me enough to see him go,
Offend my eyes no more, exiled from me;
Nor would I view, or speak to, him again,
While messages, or letters, I'd disdain.

My ingratitude caused him such suffering, 43
That, at last, overcome by deepest woe,
Seeking mercy in vain, then sickening,
He sank to death, neath the weight of sorrow.
Through this punishment, of my own making,
My face is blackened, my tears overflow;
Such my eternal fate, here must I dwell,
For none are redeemed from the fires of Hell.'

Canto XXXIV: 44–46: Astolfo blocks the entrance to the cave

Since the hapless Lydia spoke no more, 44
Astolfo thought to find what lay below,
But the dense, and bitter, fog, that stretched before
His eyes, decreed no further might he go,
Not a yard could he now descend, therefore
Our knight returned above, nor was he slow
To deliver himself from that seething deep,
But, hastening to the light, he climbed the steep.

He moved at a run, not a walk or trot, 45
And, fleeing swiftly, as if out the grave,
He sought his exit from that dismal spot,
And mounted to the entrance of the cave,
Where, through the smoke and mist, those ingrates' lot,
The light of day now shone, that they did crave.
After serious effort, and well-nigh blind,
He issued forth, and left the fumes behind.

Then, to bar the way against the Harpies, 46
Whose greed drove them to attack the food,
He gathered stones, cut branches from the trees,
(With cardamom or pepper all imbued)
And built a sort of rugged fence with these,
Before the cave, to thwart that hellish brood,
And so successful did his efforts prove,
The monsters could, no more, emerge above.

Canto XXXIV: 47–52: Then climbs to the mountain summit

The smoke, as of burning pitch, dense and black, 47
That had obscured his sight in the cavern,
Had not only soiled his clothes, front and back,
But had sunk to the flesh, at bow and stern,
He sought for some stream, beside the track,
To cleanse himself and, at last, neath a fern,
Found a rill, born from the rock, that filled a rut
By a tree, and washed himself, head to foot.



Stanza 47

Then he mounted the hippogriff, and rose 48
Through the air, to reach the mountain summit,
Which to him seemed close enough, heaven knows,
To the moon's far sphere, and all within it,
And such a longing to see it now arose,
He aspired to the heavens, Earth would quit,
To reach the sky, every nerve he strained,
And, thus, the mountain-top they attained.

Topazes, sapphires, rubies, pearls, and gold, 49
Diamonds, chrysolites, and jaspers, set on
The heights, like glowing flowers, he did behold,
Catching the light that on their surface shone,
The grass so green that, if some field or fold
It clothed down here, see emerald foregone,
Its colour we'd prefer; while no less fair
Blossom, leaves, and fruit its trees did bear.

Amidst the branches fluttering, birds did sing, 50
Their hues of azure, white, green, yellow, red;
A peaceful lake, its clear waters showing
Brighter than crystal, murmuring freshets fed;
While a sweet breeze there, forever blowing,
In gentle fashion through the branches sped,
Making the pure air tremble, all around,
To quell the heat of day, and cool the ground;

Plundering the odours from fruits and flowers, 51
And from the foliage each varied scent,
Forming a fragrance from those pleasant bowers,
That filled the soul with sweetness and content.
There, on the heights, a palace, with its towers,
Uprose, to which some living flame had lent,
It seemed, such splendour, a glow so bright
That, beyond mortal fashion, shone its light.

It covered more than thirty miles around, 52
And towards it Astolfo turned his steed,
Moving slowly, at his ease, o'er the ground,
(All, to his gaze, seemed beautiful indeed)
And thought that all that down below was found
In wrath Heaven and Nature had decreed;
Brutish and ugly, this sad world we face,
So sweet and clear and happy was that place.

Canto XXXIV: 53-57: Where he encounters Saint John

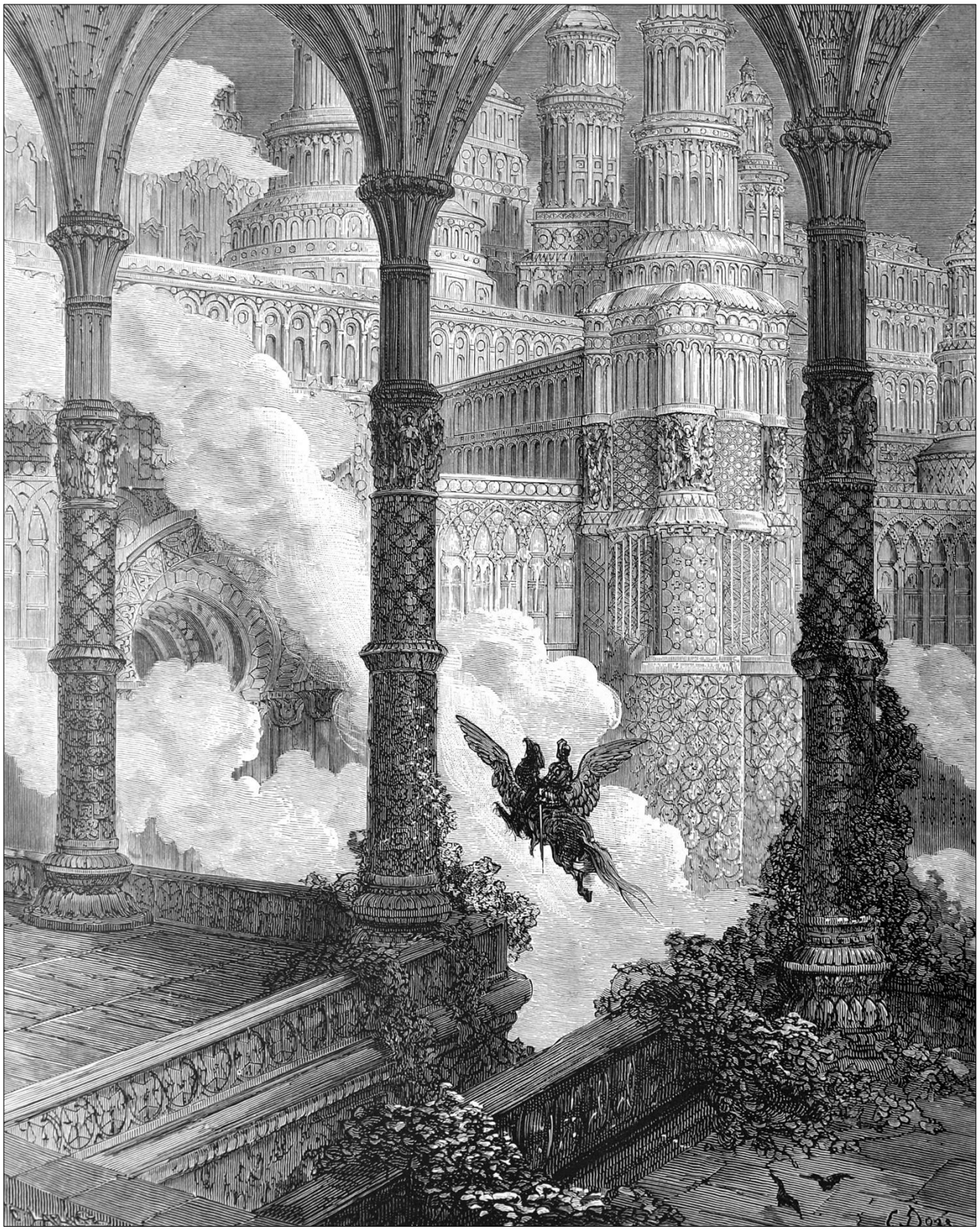
As to that bright palace he drew near, 53
Astonished, on its wondrous walls, he gazed,
Wrought from a single gem they did appear,
That, redder than ruby, the eye amazed.
What mighty work, Daedalian art, is here?
What palace below could, thus, be praised?
Be silent those who exalt the glory
Of the Seven Wonders, famed in story!

An elder, from the gleaming entrance-hall 54
Of that fair house, strode towards Astolfo,
White his robe, crimson his mantle all,
The mantle as red-lead, the robe as snow;
White was the elder's hair, and white did fall
His bushy beard down to his chest also,
So wise and kindly seemed his face, his eyes,
He seemed of the elect of Paradise.

To Astolfo who'd humbly descended 55
From his steed, he, with glad face, now cried:
'O noble knight, you who have ascended
To our earthly paradise, God your guide,
Though you know not why it is you wended
Your way here, nor to what end tis applied,
Believe: profound mystery brings you here,
Drawing you from your northern hemisphere.



Stanza 51 "*There, on the heights, a palace, with its towers*"



Stanza 53 "*As to that bright palace he drew near*"

You are brought here to learn, from my counsel, 56
You who without counsel have long journeyed,
How to Charlemagne, and the Church as well,
You may bear succour, by such counsel led.
Not to your wits, nor skill, all that befell
Should you ascribe, nor the course you sped,
Nor to your winged steed, your magic horn,
For God alone has brought you to this bourne.

We will converse together, you and I, 57
And I will tell you how you must proceed,
But first find ease, and to our board apply
Your thoughts, for food and drink you surely need.
And continuing his speech, by and by,
He set our knight to marvelling indeed,
For his revered name, thus, his lips disclosed,
And that he the fourth Gospel had composed.

Canto XXXIV: 58-62: With Enoch and Elijah

Twas John, so beloved of the Redeemer, 58
His role questioned by Peter, of whom some
Said that he would ne'er see death; however,
'If I will that he tarry, till I come
What is that to thee?', rebuking Peter,
Were the words of The Son of God, wherefrom,
Though He did not say John would not die
It is clear that was what He meant thereby.



Stanza 58

Led within, the duke encountered there, 59
Enoch, the patriarch, in company
With Elijah the prophet; none would share
Death's last corruption, of these holy three,
But, far from all foul and pestilential air,
Would ever that perpetual springtime see,
Until they heard the Angel's trumpet blow,
And Christ returned, amid the white clouds, so.

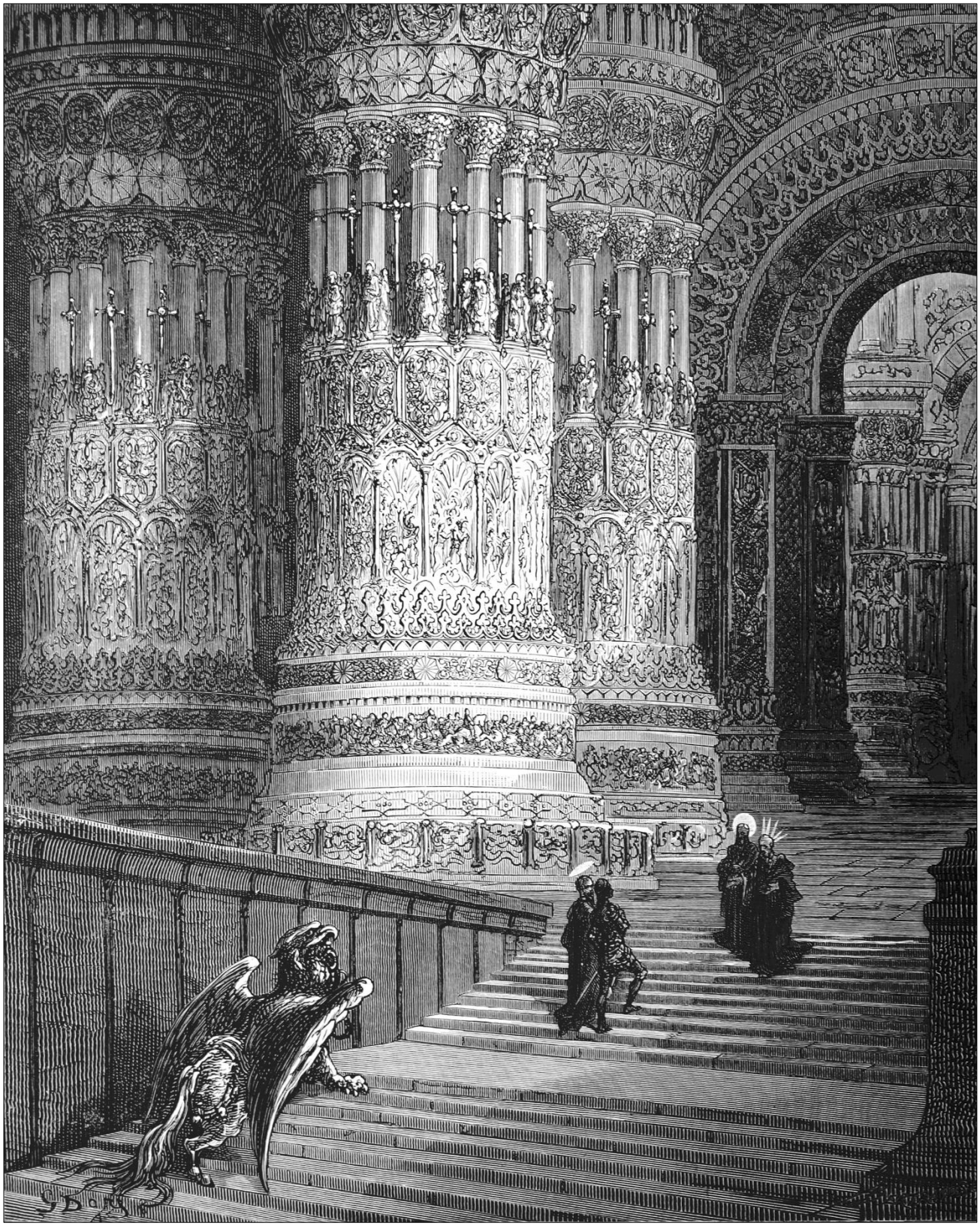


Stanza 59

With a welcoming grace, the ancients led 60
The knight to a palatial chamber,
And stabled his good steed, where it was fed
On fodder enough for any creature,
While he gave his attention to the bread
And fruits of paradise of rarest savour,
Such that our first parents might be excused
If, to gain such, God's edicts they abused.



Stanza 60



Stanza 60 "*With a welcoming grace, the ancients led, the knight to a palatial chamber*"

When Astolfo had paid the debt we owe 61
To Nature, both in food and in sweet rest,
(For he found a calm repose there also)
And Aurora had left her spouse's breast,
(Burdened with years her prince, beloved though)
Our knight-errant rose from his bed, and dressed,
And issuing forth, met, with true delight,
The apostle he'd seen the previous night,

Who took his hand; spoke of many a thing 62
That's worthy of reverent silence here;
And then said: 'Son, of events happening
In France you as yet know little, I fear:
Learn that your Orlando, now straying
From the true path decreed it would appear,
Is punished by the Lord who will descend,
In wrath, on those He loves, if they offend.

Canto XXXIV: 63-68: Astolfo learns of Orlando's mad frenzy

To your Orlando, at his birth, God gave 63
Sovereign courage, and sovereign might,
And more than mortal hide, destined to save
Him from hostile blades in many a fight;
For the Lord set the Count amidst the brave
To defend Holy Church, and all that's right,
As, against the Philistines, He did choose
That mighty Samson, to defend the Jews.

Your Orlando for such great gifts has made 64
An ill return unto his Heavenly Master,
Quitting his people though they need his aid,
And vanishing from their sight thereafter,
So blinded by love for a pagan maid,
That twice at least this great warrior
Has attempted in cruel and wicked strife
To rob his faithful cousin of his life.

For this God has maddened him, and now 65
He goes naked, with chest and flanks all bare,
While his head is so empty, I avow,
That none, least of all himself, knows him there.
In that manner did Nebuchadnezzar bow
To the ground, and then at the grass did tear,
Like a bull, for seven years, in mad fury,
At God's decree, as we read in story.

And yet because your maddened warrior, 66
Has transgressed against his Creator less,
Tis for a mere three months he needs suffer
The punishment for error and excess.
Tis, to address this matter, and no other
That the Redeemer did your journey bless,
So that we the swiftest means might show
Of restoring sense to your Orlando.

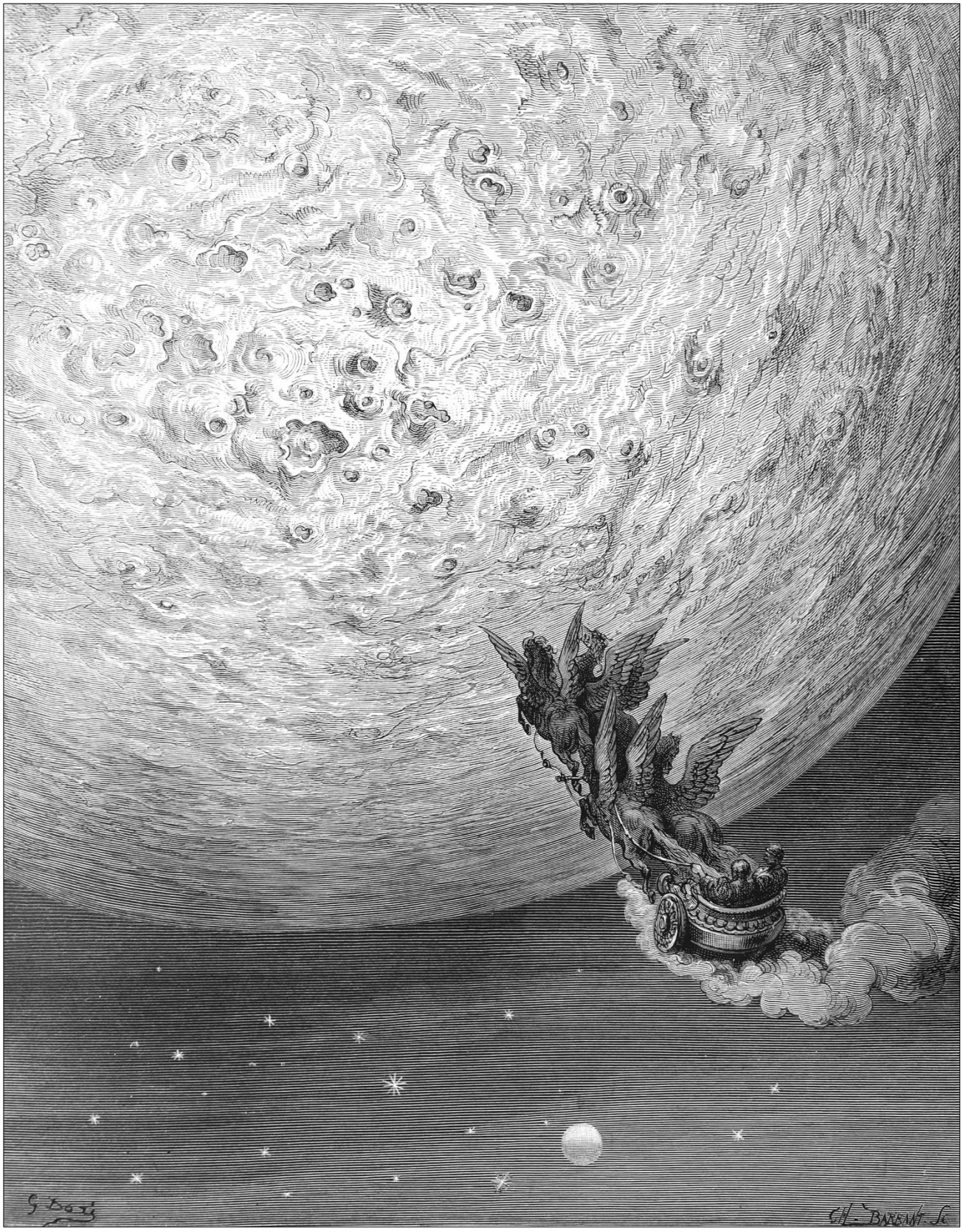
You'll need to journey far with me, tis true, 67
And thus, abandon this Earth completely,
For tis to the moon's sphere I must lead you,
Set nearest to ours, since the remedy
For his sad affliction, there, you may view,
That which will cure his madness most swiftly.
And when, this night, the moon sheds its bright ray
Upon our heads, we'll set out on our way.'

On this, and many another matter, 68
The apostle discoursed, till day was done.
But when above their heads the moon did glitter
And to the Ocean depths had fled the sun,
A chariot was prepared, used by another
To soar through the sky, for twas the one
In which, from the mountains of Judea,
Had sped, lost to mortal sight, Elijah.

Canto XXXIV: 69-72: He journeys to the moon

Four horses, redder than flame, the saint led 69
To the chariot, and then prepared to fly,
For, once he and Astolfo were seated,
He took the reins, and sped towards the sky,
Rising, in wide circles, oft repeated,
Till they had reached the realm of fire, thereby,
Its heat miraculously suspended,
By the evangelist, whilst they ascended.

So, through all that fiery region, they passed, 70
Soaring swiftly to the moon's sphere above,
Which they saw, when they had reached it at last,
Like to unblemished steel did mostly prove;
And found the size of what was there amassed
(Or the half that they could see, at that remove)
Much the same as distant Earth's to the eye,
Comprising our seas, and the part that's dry.



Stanza 70 "*Soaring swiftly to the moon's sphere above*"

For the knight was doubly surprised to see 71
Its surface was so large viewed close at hand,
Which seemed a little orb, when seen fully,
From the enormous Earth on which we stand,
While forced to strain his eyes to view clearly
How Earth's distant oceans embraced the land,
That, from the arc subtended by its light,
Appeared quite small at that wondrous height.

There other rivers, lakes, and countryside, 72
Are seen than those which we view here below,
Other valleys, plains, and mountains are descried,
Whole cities, towns and castles, there on show.
With houses of such splendour that, beside
Their majesty, our own seem base and low.
Broad, solitary woods also feature,
Where nymphs pursue every kind of creature.

Canto XXXIV: 73-82: And reaches a vale where all things lost from Earth go

The duke stayed not to gaze upon them all, 73
Since he'd not journeyed there for that reason,
But followed the apostle, at his call,
Towards a vale where, twixt hill and mountain,
Those things we have lost beyond recall
On Earth are found, miraculously, again
Retrievable; all things lost by error,
Down here, through time or chance, whole as ever.

Not just of crowns, or treasure, do I speak, 74
O'er which the ever-moving wheel holds sway,
But that too o'er which Fortune's power is weak,
Unable to grant such, or sweep it away.
Fame and renown are here, that many seek,
Things slowly gnawed by time, and by decay;
Here countless idle vows, and prayers lie,
Made by us sinners to the Lord on high;

And many a lover's sigh, many a tear, 75
All the long idleness of foolish men,
All the time we lose in gaming here,
And vague plans made, and never seen again.
Our vain desires are such that they appear
To cover a vast portion of that glen;
For all that, on Earth, you've lost entirely,
You'd find there, if you but made the journey.

Passing through things piled on every side, 76
The meaning of the various heaps he sought;
Of a great mound of bladders, asked his guide,
From which rose cries and tumult, and was taught
That ancient realms lay there, concealed inside,
Assyrian, Lydian, with conflict fraught,
Or Greek, or Persian, famous in their day,
Whose very names swift Time has washed away.

A mass of gold and silver gifts, he saw, 77
The kind that courtiers offer to their lord,
Hoping to win their favour, or far more,
Those to king, prince, or patron, they afford.
Many a garlanded snare, that vale bore;
Of such signs of adulation, vast the hoard.
While from the loud cicadas poured forth verse
Poets had made to praise their lords, or worse.

Knots of gold, and jewelled stumps he found 78
The remnants of unhappy loves, ill-starred.
And many an eagle-claw did there abound,
To show the power invested in some guard.
Bellows filled every patch of barren ground,
Their fumes the favours graceless king's discard
They once granted some Ganymede, whose hour
Has passed, whose springtime ceased to flower.

Ruined castles, cities, and lost towns lay there, 79
With all their wealth; he, on request, was told
They were emblems of treaties, and the bare
Dust of cunning plots, that failed to unfold.
Serpents with women's faces found a lair
In that place, and coiners, and thieves untold,
While broken bottles, of many a varied sort,
Marked fair service at some graceless court.

He saw a huge puddle of soup, and sought 80
To know what that liquid signified,
And learned twas almsgiving, one last thought,
Of those folk who had willed it, and then died.
He passed a pile of flowers that had brought
Scent to the air, and now stank far and wide;
Much like that list, of gifts, left to fester,
That Constantine granted Pope Sylvester.



Stanza 79

He saw a great lake of viscous birdlime 81
The which, ladies, signified your beauty!
Twould take too long to relate in rhyme
All the things he saw there, in that valley,
Viewed thousands upon thousands, at a time,
The results of our lives, each casualty;
Yet little or no sign of that madness
Rarely absent from Earth one must confess.

He turned back to search for some day or deed 82
Of his own, that had vanished long ago;
Lost, without his interpreter to read
Its form much altered from that down below.
Then he came to that which all are agreed
They need none of, since they seem so slow
To ask the Lord for more; I speak of sense,
Of which the pile was even more immense.

Canto XXXIV: 83-87: He finds Orlando's store of sense

It was like a thin and subtle liquor, 83
Evaporating if not well-enclosed,
Collected in vessels, large or lesser,
As required, that all about were disposed.
In one flask, larger than any other,
Was the Count's vast store of it, he supposed,
For there he found, written on the side,
'Orlando's Sense' in letters tall and wide.

And there were labels too on all the rest, 84
That revealed whose sense was bottled within.
A great part of his own was there a guest,
But he was more amazed to see, therein,
That of folk of whom he'd ne'er have guessed
That they'd lost a drop; yet, with some chagrin,
He saw, clearly, they had scant sense to spare,
Considering the amount that was there.

Some lose theirs in love, or seeking honour, 85
Some scouring the seas for rich merchandise,
Some pin their hopes on a wealthy master,
Others lose theirs in dreams of paradise,
Some buy works of art, or gems they gather,
Or lose theirs on what seems the highest prize.
Astrologers' and sophists' sense they bore,
Those vessels, and many a poet's he saw.

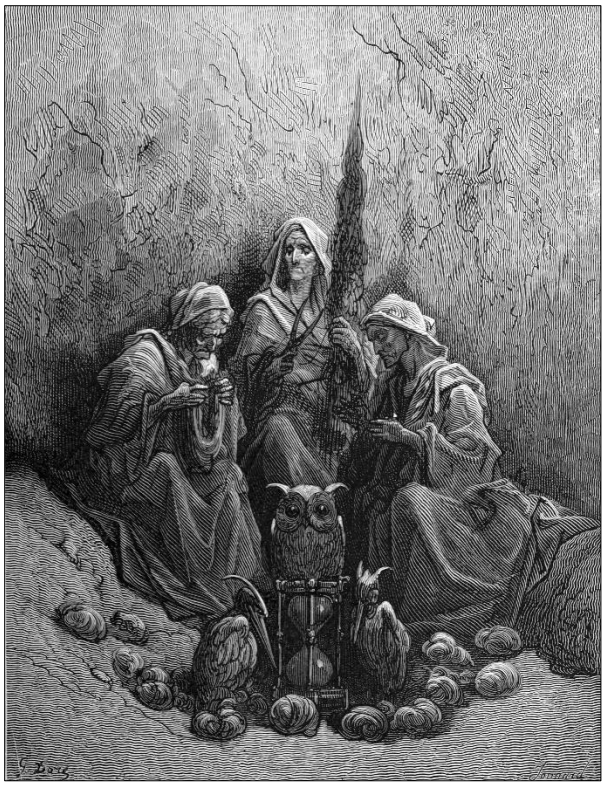
The author of the Book of Revelation 86
Granting consent, Astolfo took his own;
And to his nose raised the distillation
Till, to its proper place, his sense had flown.
Henceforth Bishop Turpin's indication
Is that he was wise, as far as is known,
All his days, until a further error
Deprived him of his brain altogether.

The vessel that contained Orlando's sense, 87
He took; twas the amplest, and the fullest,
Though heavier when he took it thence,
Than it had seemed when heaped amidst the rest.
Ere his earthward journey he could commence,
From that sphere of light to our own sad nest,
The evangelist led him, still his guide,
To a fair palace by the riverside.

Canto XXXIV: 88-92: The Palace of the Fates

Bales of raw cotton, flax, silk, and wool 88
Filled every single chamber of that same,
And all of various shades, bright or dull.
In the first cloister, a white-haired dame
Thread for her spindle, from a bale, did cull,
As on a summer's day a view we claim
Of some villager twining the damp thread
From the silk-worms, thus to her spindle fed.

When one bale was finished, came another 89
Dame, replaced it, and bore the work away.
A third, from all the threads twined together,
Picked the fair from the foul in close array.
Astolfo asked Saint John: 'All their labour,
What purpose has it?' The saint paused, to say:
'They are the Parcae, whose powers are great,
For here are spun the threads of mortal fate.

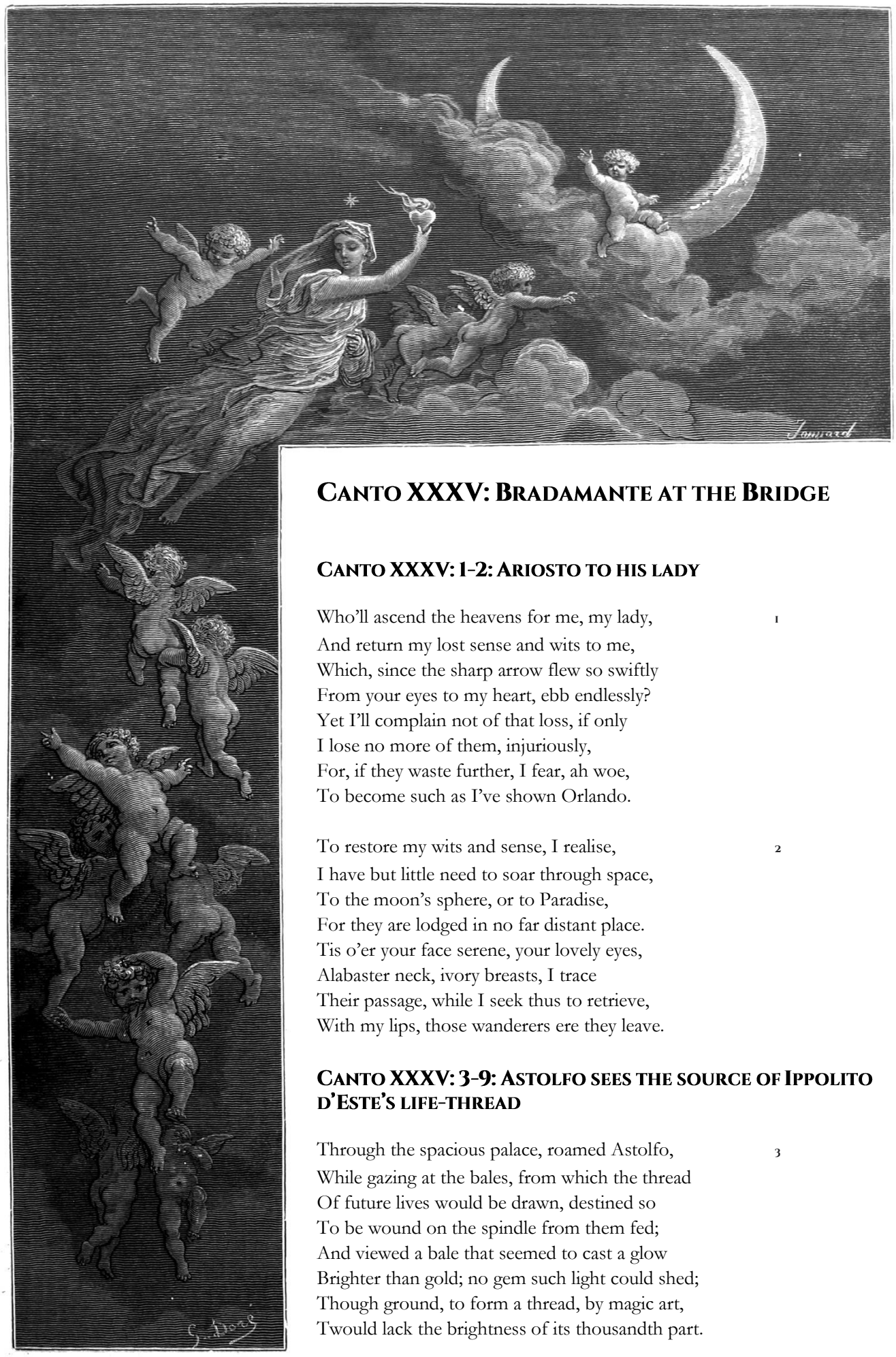


Stanza 89

As long as each single thread might extend 90
So long lasts that one life, and no longer,
For Nature and Death pay heed to its end,
To know the hour when that life is over.
The fairest threads the third dame will commend,
Which are woven into many things, thereafter,
To adorn paradise; while the lesser
Serve as cruel bonds, the damned to fetter.

On each spindle, on which thread was wound, 91
Which had been marked for further attention,
A name, engraved on a small plate, was found,
These plates of gold, or silver, or iron.
And there were heaps of these, upon the ground,
That were ne'er reduced enough to mention,
Though an old man, unwearied, ever bore
Some of these thence, and then returned for more.

This old man was so nimble and slender 92
He seemed from birth made for such exercise.
As, from those heaps, he gathered, forever,
In his cloak the names, engraved in such wise.
Where he went, and the aim of his labour,
The next canto shall reveal to your eyes,
If you would but grant, and so commend me,
The kind attention, that you now extend me.



Canto XXXV: Bradamante at the Bridge

Canto XXXV: 1-2: Ariosto to his lady

Who'll ascend the heavens for me, my lady, 1
And return my lost sense and wits to me,
Which, since the sharp arrow flew so swiftly
From your eyes to my heart, ebb endlessly?
Yet I'll complain not of that loss, if only
I lose no more of them, injuriously,
For, if they waste further, I fear, ah woe,
To become such as I've shown Orlando.

To restore my wits and sense, I realise, 2
I have but little need to soar through space,
To the moon's sphere, or to Paradise,
For they are lodged in no far distant place.
Tis o'er your face serene, your lovely eyes,
Alabaster neck, ivory breasts, I trace
Their passage, while I seek thus to retrieve,
With my lips, those wanderers ere they leave.

Canto XXXV: 3-9: Astolfo sees the source of Ippolito d'Este's life-thread

Through the spacious palace, roamed Astolfo, 3
While gazing at the bales, from which the thread
Of future lives would be drawn, destined so
To be wound on the spindle from them fed;
And viewed a bale that seemed to cast a glow
Brighter than gold; no gem such light could shed;
Though ground, to form a thread, by magic art,
Twould lack the brightness of its thousandth part.

That lovely bale pleased him marvellously, 4
Without an equal in that wondrous space,
And he desired to know who's that might be,
What life it signified, its time and place.
That life's brief span would commence but twenty
Short years (Saint John declared) ere that of grace
(If they were counted from the Incarnation)
Containing both an M and D, when written.

'And just as, in splendour and in beauty, 5
That bale's rich substance is beyond compare,
So will the age be fortunate and happy,
That in his most singular life shall share.
For all the grace that Nature and Study
Can grant a man, both excellent and rare,
Or which kind Fortune on us can shower,
Such shall be his fair, unfailing dower.

Between two noble stretches of the river, 6
(The Po, the king of rivers) stands a town,
Small and humble still, while pale mists cover
The land behind it, which deep marshes drown.
She, as the years revolve, shall prove ever
First of Italian cities in renown,
Not only for her palaces on view,
But for Ferrara's arts, and customs too.

Such exaltation, rapidly achieved, 7
Will not arrive fortuitously, by chance,
But ordained there on high shall be conceived,
Prepared for him I speak of, in advance.
(The stem to bear fine fruit, its graft received,
Must be protected from ill circumstance,
As the artificer refines the gold
That the precious gem, he sets will hold.)

Ne'er in so fine a raiment e'er was dressed 8
That soul that, in mortal guise, shall appear;
Ne'er so worthy a spirit, Earth's fair guest,
E'er descended from the heavenly sphere,
As by the Eternal Mind shall be blessed;
Ippolito d'Este, his fair name here
Shall be; this man, on whom God doth elect
To shower such gifts, and his brave form perfect.

All the virtues that, scattered among many, 9
Would serve to adorn them all most richly,
Will be combined, in his person, wholly,
This prince of men, of whom you ask me,'
Saint John declared, 'And fine arts, and study,
He shall sustain; indeed, if you'd have me
Speak of his other merits, to regain
His sense, poor Orlando shall wait in vain.'

Canto XXXV: 10-17: Of the old man, and the name-plates he bears away

Thus, Christ's servant spoke with Astolfo, 10
And when they had seen every chamber,
The bales and threads of mortal lives on show,
Through which the path of destiny flows ever,
They viewed a river, that stirred the sand below,
Thus, turbid, discoloured was the water;
And saw that aged man upon the shore
That with the name-plates hastened, as before.

I know not if you have him still in mind, 11
He that I spoke of in the last canto,
Ancient in looks, but nimble enough, you'd find,
As to outrun a stag when in full flow.
He filled his cloak with names, but left behind
Swiftly replenished heaps as, to and fro,
He went, gifting the names to Lethe's stream,
Or drowning them there, rather, it would seem.

For, I tell you, whene'er he reached the shore, 12
That prodigious old fellow shook his cloak,
And into the turbid waters cast, once more,
A countless number, lost at a single stroke;
Nor were they then of use, none could restore
Those names that a host of lives might evoke,
For tis scarce one in a hundred thousand
Survives, of those that fall to the hidden sand.

Around, and along Lethe's waters, flew 13
Flocks of rapacious vultures and crows,
And ravens and others, that did e'er pursue
Those spoils, and from the birds loud cries arose,
Whene'er he re-appeared to their view;
Then all would plunge from the sky, God knows,
To seize those that remained, in beak and claw,
Yet little distance those fair names they bore.

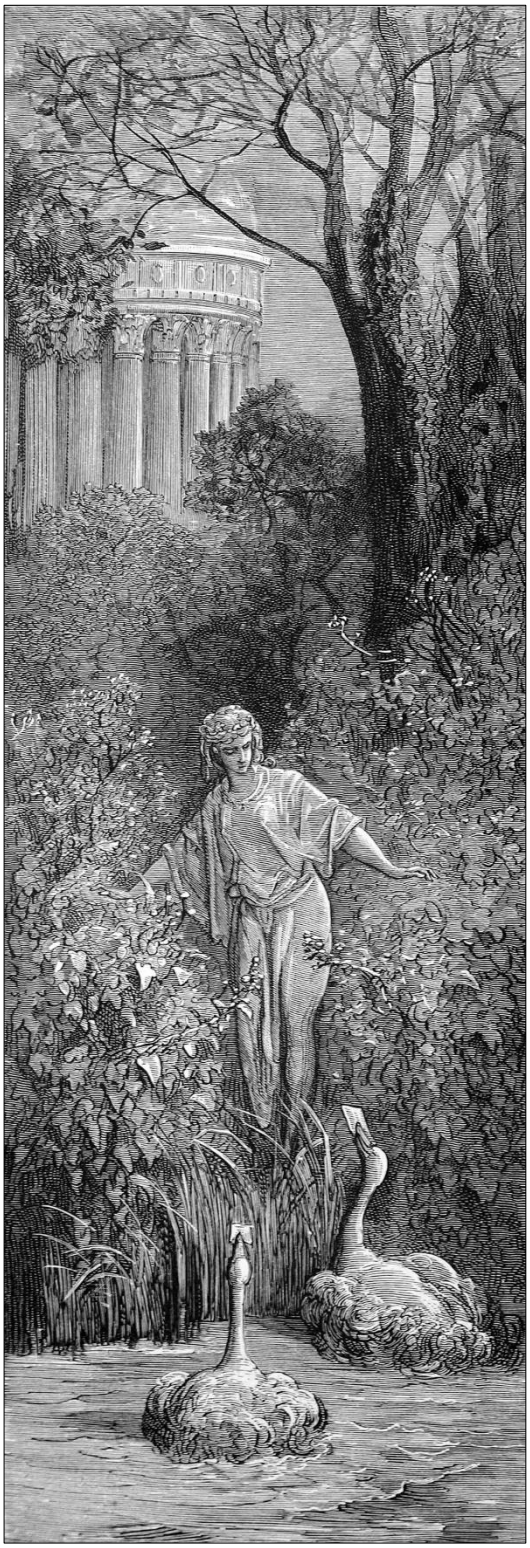


Stanza 13

For when those birds, again, sought the air, 14
They'd not the strength to long sustain their flight,
And so, the names worthy of memory, there,
Fell to dark Lethe's waters, lost from light.
And yet two snowy swans that might compare,
In their whiteness, to Este's eagle bright,
Caught what names they could, for, evermore,
They bore them, safely, to dark Lethe's shore.

Thus, counter to the thoughts, ill and malign, 15
Of that old man who casts them in the water,
Some names are saved by means of those benign
White birds, though oblivion every other
Fair name consumes, while that pair divine
Now swim, now beat the air, till they recover
Their place upon the bank of that ill stream,
Below a hill, on which a shrine doth gleam,

Sacred to Immortality; from there 16
A lovely nymph descends the grassy hill,
To those shores, that sad Lethe's waters share,
And those bright names, that the dark beaks fill,
She hangs about a statue, high in air,
Upon a column in mid-shrine, where still
They may glow, and eternity outlast:
Consecrated by the nymph, and held fast.



Stanza 16

Of that old man, and why he chose to throw 17
Those names into the waters, all in vain,
And of the swans, and sacred shrine, also,
From which the nymph descended to the plain,
Astolfo had a great desire to know
Their solemn mystery, and a sense would gain
Of their import, and prayed he would disclose
The man of God, the meaning of all those.

Canto XXXV: 18-30: Saint John explains the things they have seen

'You must know not a single leaf can move 18
On Earth without some sign of it up here.
Since all on Earth and in the skies above
Corresponds, yet differently will appear.
That old man, who the names doth e'er remove,
So swift that naught delays him, year by year,
Performs the same task in this lunar clime
As is performed below, by passing Time.

The thread that on the spindle here is wound 19
Of some human life down there, is the sign;
Of those famed below, here, the name is found,
And both would be immortal and divine,
If not for that greybeard who scours the ground,
And Time below; both to one end align.
He casts their names, here, into the river;
Time submerges them, forgot, forever.

And just as here, the raven, vulture, crow 20
And other birds attempt to seize the names
That shine most brightly, so there below
Pimps, and informers, thieves with all their games,
Fools, and accusers, equally do so,
Whom never a soul thinks less of, nor blames,
As do all those courts nourish, all that are
Better rewarded than the good, by far,

And are addressed as noble courtiers, 21
Although, like swine or asses, oft ill-bred;
They, when the Fates, or more oft, it appears,
Venus and Bacchus, snip their master's thread,
Those base and idle rascals, his for years,
Born but to wine and dine; once he is dead,
Bear his name on their tongues a day or so,
Then let it fade to oblivion, there below.

Yet as the swans here carry to the shrine 22
Those spoils that bear the memory of a name,
So are men, worthy of some authors' line
Saved from oblivion, preserved for fame.
O princes, cautious and discreet as mine,
That Caesar's example prize, do the same:
Win yourselves some fine poet as a friend,
And fear not Lethe's waters, at life's end!

Are not such poets rare as swans, indeed? 23
That of the name of poet prove worthy?
Since as rarely have the heavens decreed
That some prince shall tread the path of glory,
While, the rest, in error, full of greed,
Let sacred genius starve (e'er the story!),
Suppress the Virtues, see the Vices thrive,
Banish art, and watch bare ignorance thrive.

Such princes God deprives of intellect, 24
(And from them He conceals pure wisdom's light)
That loathe all poetry, and its claims reject,
Such that bodily death consumes them quite.
Those other few fresh life may yet expect,
Evil though they may be, far from the right;
Those Delphi's god yet chooses to befriend
Shall savour of myrrh and nard, in the end.

Aeneas was ne'er as pious, nor as brave 25
Was Hector, nor great Achilles as strong
As they have been claimed to be, while the grave
Holds many a man fine as those in song,
Yet the rich farm that some descendant gave
To the poet helped to move their fame along,
And raise those heroes to the heights of honour,
Exalted by the more than grateful author.

Augustus was ne'er as sacred or benign 26
As Virgil's epic makes him out to be,
Yet, given his taste for the flowing line,
He's forgiven Ovid's exile, as we see.
Nero's injustices none would divine,
Nor would the man be known for cruelty,
Though both heaven and earth had proved his foe,
Had he won Lucan to his side below.

Homer shows Agamemnon a victor, 27
And makes the Trojans ever vile and base,
While Penelope's as faithful as ever,
Suffering the suitors with a noble grace,
Yet if you'd have me speak true (as ever!)
History would show quite another face:
The Trojans won, the Greek battalions ran,
While fair Penelope proved a courtesan.

Yet hear what fame Elissa left behind, 28
That fair Dido, who bore a humble heart,
Whose reputation is so poor we find,
Because old Virgil scorned her in his art.
Marvel not that I bring all this to mind,
And speak at length, for I too played my part;
Authors I love, and pay the debt I owe,
For I was an author too, down below.

And there, beyond all other men, I earned 29
What Time, and Death can never take away;
So, tis befitting that, to me, Christ turned,
Whom I so praised, to show that future day,
And him of glorious fate of whom you've learned;
While sad for those that in the dark night stray,
Whom Courtesy denies, midst rains that pour,
Though, pale and wan, they beat upon her door;



Stanza 29

Such, pursuing thus my previous theme, 30
Are the poets and scholars; the honest few,
Who, finding no bed or board, it would seem,
In princes' halls, must search the world anew.'
So said the holy saint, whose eyes did gleam;
(Much like twin flames of fire blazed the two)
Then Saint John turned calmly, with a smile,
Towards the duke, and was at peace the while.

Canto XXXV: 31-34: Bradamante meets Fiordelisa on the road

We'll leave Astolfo to his peaceful viewing, 31
While I leap to the Earth from out the skies,
For I can't hang for ever on the wing,
But must turn to Bradamante, and her sighs,
Who, wounded by jealousy's sharp sting,
Was flying from Tristan's Tower, likewise.
I'd left her at the point where she had won
The field, and downed three kings there, one by one,



Stanza 31

And had then arrived at a nearby town, 32
On the road from Paris, where she had heard
That Agramante, to preserve his crown,
Had retreated to Arles; such was the word.
Convinced Ruggiero, given his renown,
Would be there, with the king, she sought to gird
Her loins, at dawn, and set out on the way
Charlemagne had pursued with scant delay.

Towards Provence then by the shortest road 33
Travelling swiftly, she came upon a maid,
Whose face with copious tears overflowed,
Yet beauty and nobility conveyed.
Twas the lady on whom Love had bestowed,
This longing for Brandimarte she betrayed,
She who'd left her lover at the bridge, lately,
Where he'd surrendered to Rodomonte.

She was searching, now, for a valiant knight, 34
Used to land or water, like an otter,
And so brave he would champion her in fight,
Against the Saracen lord, and not fail her.
As this sad and tearful lady came in sight,
Bradamante, also sad, riding nearer,
Saluted her courteously and, to follow,
Asked her the cause of her deep sorrow.

Canto XXXV: 35-40: And agrees to challenge Rodomonte

Fiordelisa, gazing at her, saw 35
A warrior most suited to her need,
And began to speak of the bridge, and more
Of Algiers' mighty king of evil deed,
That sought to slay the one she did adore;
Not that the king was mightier indeed,
But that he'd gained no small assistance
From the bridge and river, in that instance.

'Are you,' she said, 'so courteous and brave, 36
As you appear to show by your manner,
That for love of God, you'd my lover save,
And take vengeance on that cruel warrior,
Who's saddened me, and doth him enslave,
Or counsel me where to find some other
So skilful that neither river nor bridge
Will grant the fierce Saracen advantage.

Besides the fact that you will thus extend 37
Your aid to a courteous knight, acting so,
By your courage you would surely befriend
The truest of true lovers known, also;
His other virtues, on which I depend,
Let me not speak of, many are they though,
Such that those who mark them not, I fear,
Must lack the eyes to see, or ears to hear.'

The warrior-maid to whom was welcome 38
Every noble quest that might yet enhance
Her honour and her fame, wherever from,
Resolved to ride at once, with sword and lance,
To the Saracen's bridge, for she, in sum,
Would rather die, in her sad circumstance,
Than live believing that her Ruggiero
Was lost to her, and suffer endless woe.

'For what it may be worth' she now replied, 39
'I will undertake this dread encounter,
Because, sweet lady, you have testified
To the many virtues in your lover,
That few men may claim and all else beside
Among those, you maintain, moreover,
That he is constant, strong in loyalty,
While I thought all were prone to perjury.'

She ended with a sigh, our warrior-maid, 40
A sigh that issued from her very heart,
And said: 'We should go.' Then through the glade
They took their way, both eager to depart,
And reached the bridge, where the trumpet brayed
Which summoned the king to play his part,
On the following morn; Rodomonte
Armed, and sped to the encounter, swiftly.



Stanza 40

Canto XXXV: 41–47: With whom she agrees the terms of their encounter

As she seemed to be a well-armed knight 41
He threatened to despatch her in a trice,
Unless her horse and armour were outright
Conveyed to him, for such was, there, the price
All must pay, or be slain in mortal fight,
In tribute to the tomb; such would suffice.
Bradamante knew, from Fiordelisa,
How he'd caused the death of Isabella,

And cried: 'You brute, why should the innocent, 42
Do penance for a sin that was your own?
Tis fitting that you bleed, such my intent,
For you killed her; such by all folk is known;
So that, of the spoils, that hang for ornament
About her tomb, from those here overthrown,
Most fitting of all would be your armour;
Your death would pay her the greatest honour.

And sweeter would the gift be from my hand, 43
For as she was a woman so am I,
And here, for no other reason, I stand,
Than to avenge her, and to see you die.
But first a pact between us I demand,
Ere I now challenge you, and you reply:
If I am overthrown, then you may do
As you have done to those you overthrew,

But if, as I think and hope, you shall fall, 44
I'll have your steed, and your amour too,
And remove the other amour from the wall
And hang yours there alone, for all to view,
And free the captives that you hold in thrall.'
'Tis just,' the king replied, 'and yet tis true
Those prisoners cannot be rendered so,
They were transported elsewhere, you should know.

To my African realm have they been sent, 45
But I promise you now, and swear the same,
That if you should succeed in your intent
While I'm unseated in our little game,
Then I will free them all, and rest content,
In such time as an order in my name
May be carried to those in my command,
Instructing them to do as you demand.

But if you're overthrown, as is likely, 46
And I am sure the outcome will prove so,
I'd not hang your amour, nor proudly,
Add your name, as my victim, there below.
But on your face, eyes, hair, on your beauty
That breathe but love and grace, I'll bestow
The victory, and ask but that you love me,
Where now, so it would seem, you hate me.'

'If am of such valour,' the maid replied, 47
'And of such skill that you need not disdain
To bow to me.' And smiled, upon her side,
Although she smiled in a most bitter vein,
And more in anger than aught else beside.
Then returned to the bridgehead once again,
Spurred her steed, levelled her lance before,
And rode to the encounter with the Moor.

Canto XXXV: 48–52: Bradamante defeats King Rodomonte

King Rodomonte now came on at speed, 48
And with such a mighty sound of thunder,
It echoed all about the bridge, indeed,
Enough to fill a listening ear with wonder;
Yet, in an instant, the golden lance decreed
That the Saracen, who tore his foes asunder,
Was lifted from the saddle, hung in air,
Then fell upon the bridge, its dust to share.

The warrior-maid found scant room to pass 49
Her enemy now lying on the ground,
And was at considerable risk, alas,
Of ending in the river, yet she found,
Or rather Rabicano did, from the impasse
(For the steed was dextrous and, as yet, still sound)
A path of sorts along the outer ledge,
As if he trod a sword-blade set on edge.

Bradamante, turning the horse about, 50
Addressed the king, in a sportive manner:
'The loser of the joust is scarce in doubt,
For, now, we may see who proves the winner.'
Indeed, thus overthrown, in their first bout,
The king said naught, merely gazed in wonder,
Amazed that a woman had laid him low,
As dumb as if his wits were ever slow.

He rose, both gloomily and silently. 51
When he had gone six paces, less perchance,
He doffed his helmet, mail, and plate, sadly,
(Once he'd laid down his shield, and sword, and lance)
Flung it down on the stones; alone, and slowly
He walked away having issued, in advance
Of his departure, his command to a squire
To order all as the maiden might desire.

He went, and was heard of, there, no more, 52
Except twas said he dwelt in some dark cave;
While Bradamante to the tombstone bore
His gear, and hung it high above the grave.
Then, removing all the arms that she saw,
From the writing, had belonged to some brave
Knight of Charlemagne's court, she left the rest,
Nor allowed what remained to be addressed.



Stanza 52

Canto XXXV: 53-56: She removes the trophies taken from Charlemagne's knights

Besides those of Brandimarte, the heir 53
Of Monodante, those of Oliviero
And Sansonetto she found, for that pair
Had arrived in search of Count Orlando,
And, the day before, had been taken, there,
And despatched to Africa, by their foe.
Their arms and armour, that very hour,
She saw removed and stored in the tower.

All those once borne by some pagan knight, 54
Bradamante left hanging midst the fane,
Among them Sacripante's, who day and night,
Sought his steed, Frontilatte, all in vain.
His arms had Rodomonte seized outright,
Thus, he, after wandering hill and plain
In search of the steed, had lost another,
And gone his lonely way, bereft as ever.

Now on foot, and stripped of his armour, 55
The Circassian king left the bridge behind,
For Rodomonte (twas a point of honour)
So treated those to his own faith aligned;
Yet Sacripante had no wish to further
The war, as he'd previously designed,
Ashamed to show his face after boasting,
In such a fashion, from defeat yet reeling.

A fresh desire now claimed his stricken heart, 56
To seek Angelica, whom he still loved;
For he had learned, while seeking to depart,
(The source unknown, yet by him approved)
That she had sailed for home, for her part;
And now, spurred on by Love, he was moved
To pursue her who plagued him, and swiftly;
While I turn again to Bradamante.

Canto XXXV: 57-61: She hands Frontino to Fiordelisa

Once that maid had added an inscription 57
To the tomb, stating how she'd freed the way,
She asked of Fiordelisa, whose affliction
Of weeping kept her head bowed alway,
With great courtesy, in what direction
She now proposed to go, if she could say.
Fiordelisa answered: 'I would go now
To Arles and the Saracen camp; I vow

To seek a ship, and fitting company, 58
And cross the sea, and there, in Africa,
Not rest until I've found my lord, for he
Is imprisoned there, and every measure
I shall try that might serve to set him free.
If what Rodomonte promised further,
Is not so, if some treachery I discover,
I shall seek his liberty from some other.'

Bradamante replied: 'May I offer, 59
My company for part of your journey;
Till we have sight of Arles, but no closer.
There I'd have you seek, for love of me,
Agramante's Ruggiero; that warrior
Is named with praise in every country;
And render to that knight this fine steed
From whose saddle the Saracen I freed.

I would have you tell him this: "A knight 60
Gave me charge of this horse, that you might be
Equipped for the joust, who seeks to fight
And prove to the world your disloyalty."
Then hand the courser's reins to him outright,
And say again you had the horse from me,
While he must don his armour, and await
My coming, who shall there decide his fate.

Say this and naught else, and if he'd know 61
Whom I might be, say you know not my name.'
The other answered, in her kindness, so:
'I'll not weary of performing that same
And other tasks for you, that I might show
My gratitude, and so discharge the claim
You have upon me.' So, Bradamante
Handed her Frontino's rein, gratefully.

Canto XXXV: 62-65: Fiordelisa seeks out Ruggiero

Down the Rhone's fair course, all the livelong day, 62
The two fair travellers rode in company,
Till they reached Arles, and heard the distant play
Of waves upon the bare shores of the sea.
Near the edge of the town, before the way
Crossed its boundaries, fair Bradamante
Halted to grant time for Fiordelisa
To seek Ruggiero, with the courser.

Fiordelisa passed the bridge and the gate, 63
And found a guide to keep her company,
And show her where Ruggiero lodged and ate.
There, she descended from her steed, promptly
Found the warrior; and the message, of late
Entrusted to her by fair Bradamante
She conveyed to him, with the horse, Frontino,
Then, without waiting, on her way did go.



Stanza 62

Ruggiero stood bemused, in deep thought, 64
Unable to make head nor tail of who
Had issued the challenge, and had sought
To speak ill of him yet courteously too.
Who had this charge of disloyalty brought,
Or might any charge at all so pursue,
He could not conceive, and least of all
Did his thoughts upon Bradamante fall.

His suspicions fixed on Rodomonte, 65
Much the most likely in his opinion;
Though that he should speak of disloyalty
Was a thing, seemingly, without reason.
Yet none other, as far as he could see,
Had so quarrelled with him on occasion.
Meanwhile Bradamante blew her horn
The warrior to summon, and to warn.

Canto XXXV: 66-72: Bradamante seeks to joust with him

To Agramante and Marsilio, 66
Came the news that a warrior sought battle,
While in their presence stood Serpentino;
He now gained their leave to show his mettle,
Promising that such pride would be brought low.
The walls of the town soon filled with people,
A willing audience, as young and old
Sought to see what fine deeds might now unfold.



Stanza 66

In a rich surcoat, over splendid armour, 67
Serpentino of the Star sped to the fight,
And yet he fell at the first encounter,
While his courser, as if twere winged, took flight,
With Bradamante chasing swiftly after.
She returned the steed to the winded knight,
Saying: 'Mount, and go tell your lord to send
A better knight with whom I might contend.'

The Moorish king, who, with his company, 68
Stood on the battlements to gaze thereon,
Marvelled at this warrior's courtesy,
Towards poor Serpentino, whereupon,
The king remarked: 'He sets the vanquished free,
Though he need not,' this heard by everyone.
Serpentino re-appeared and, as commanded,
Claimed a better knight was now demanded.

The fierce Grandonio di Volterna, 69
The proudest warrior in all of Spain,
Begged King Agramante for the honour
Of the second joust, and then took to the plain.
'Courtesy shall not avail you further,'
He cried to Bradamante, 'I shall deign
To unhorse you and lead you to my lord,
Or slay you, if I can, with lance or sword.'

'I would not wish your lack of courtesy,' 70
She replied, 'to deprive me of my own,
But I beg you to turn again, swiftly,
Ere but solid ground greets your flesh and bone.
Return, I pray, and tell your lord from me,
Not to place such as you again, on loan,
For to find a true warrior of worth,
I have come, one whose name is known on earth.'



Stanza 71

Her stinging answer, both sharp and bitter, 71
Fanned the knight's fury to a mighty flame,
Who, rendered speechless, now wheeled his courser,
His face filled with anger and with shame.
The warrior-maid wheeled her own charger,
Rabicano, and spurred hard at that same,
The deadly golden lance now struck his shield
And, heels in air, he tumbled to the field.

The magnanimous maid returned his horse, 72
Saying: 'I told you such would prove your fate;
Better if, ere we'd fought, you'd had recourse
To your lord than stayed, to feel my lance's weight.
Tell the king, I pray, from his mighty force
To choose a knight, and not one second-rate,
And not weary me so, by sending more
Knights, like you, inexperienced in war.'

Canto XXXV: 73-80: She encounters and defeats Ferrau

Those on the walls knew not who this might be, 73
This warrior that had so well held his seat,
Calling out the names of knights, though vainly,
That made them shiver in the noonday heat.
Some thought it was surely Brandimarte,
Others that Rinaldo was more complete,
While others claimed this to be Orlando,
Though his state of madness all seemed to know.

The third joust, bold Ferrau, Lanfusa's son 74
Now claimed, saying: 'Not that I hope to fare
Better than those before me have done,
Yet their falls may seem easier to bear.'
Then he donned fine armour he had won,
And, from a hundred steeds, stabled there,
He chose the best there was, famed indeed
For its great strength in battle, and its speed.

He rode to the encounter with the maid, 75
But first saluted her, as she the knight.
'If tis permitted, midst those here arrayed,
Pray, tell me who you are, before we fight,'
She said; and he his name and rank conveyed,
Who concealed it not from her, as was right,
'You I'll not refuse,' she cried, 'though I
Came to seek another, I'll not deny.'

'And who might that be?' bold Ferrau replied, 76
She answered: 'Ruggiero,' in a whisper,
And then, her lovely face with crimson dyed,
Blushed like a rose, and added, thereafter,
'I would prove if his claim be not mere pride,
To great skill and bravery; that I'd discover.
I seek naught else; I have no other wish,
But that I prove myself gainst him, in this.'

She spoke these words, in all simplicity, 77
Which some might have thought to show ill-will.
Ferrau replied: 'The laws of chivalry,
Demand that I should fight against you still;
Yet if perchance I fall, as previously
Those others did, then he my place shall fill,
At my request, that noble knight, you say
You'd so like to encounter, this fair day.'

While she was speaking, the lovely maid 78
Had kept her visor raised above her face.
Ferrau marvelled, as he quietly surveyed
Her beauty, and was half-conquered apace;
And to himself he said: 'Here is portrayed
An angel from paradise, filled with grace,
And though as yet not pierced by his lance,
I fall already, conquered by a glance.'



Stanza 78

They took the field and, as occurred before, 79
Ferrau shot from his saddle, in brief flight.
The horse Bradamante seized once more,
And cried: 'Return, and speak my wish, sir knight.'
Shamed, he went and looked about, and, when he saw
Ruggiero, told him of that angel bright,
And how he'd been informed the fair stranger,
Sought to meet him, now, in brave encounter

Ruggiero, knowing not whom this might be 80
That had summoned him to fight in the field,
Yet assured, in his mind, of victory,
Had his armour borne to him, and his shield;
Nor was his brave heart the least uneasy
At having seen those others swiftly yield.
Yet how he armed, went forth, and what befell
Our brave knight, a further canto must tell.



Canto XXXVI: Reconciliation

Canto XXXVI: 1-4: Ariosto on Courtesy

Tis fitting that a noble heart should be, 1
Courteous, it could not be otherwise,
For by habit, as by nature, surely,
It acquires what it nevermore denies.
Tis fitting that a base heart, as we see,
Should ever prove discourteous, likewise
Nature bows to evil, and tis not strange
If the heart forms ill habits hard to change.

The noblest examples of courtesy, 2
Seldom matched in modern times, are found
Amongst the warriors of antiquity,
While examples of discourtesy abound
Among ourselves, Ippolito, as we see,
Recalling Polesella (whence a mound
Of spoils adorn our churches) where you bore
Those laden galleys captive to our shore.

Every cruel, inhuman deed of the Moor, 3
The Tartar or the Turk, was there outdone,
(Though tis not the Venetians we deplore,
Who've ever proven just, beneath the sun)
By that band of mercenaries we abhor,
Who committed every sin, to evil won.
I'll not tell of the fires, of which the traces
Remain, that burnt cities and fair places,

Though twas a vile revenge, aimed ever 4
It would seem, against you; while, at the side
Of the Emperor, at the siege of Padua,
Tis known that you often turned aside,
To quench some roaring flame; moreover,
When the fire was spent, you oft denied,
All attempts to relight it; owing, surely,
To your noble, your inborn, courtesy.

Canto XXXVI: 5-10: The cruelty of the Slav mercenaries at Polesella (1509)

I'll say no more of that, or their other 5
Cruel and discourteous deeds, save one alone
A deed that when spoken of, moreover,
Still has the power to draw tears from stone;
Twas that day you gave your men the order
To take the fort to which the foe had flown
Quitting their fleet, in defeat's shadow,
The auspices ill for them, the morrow.

As Hector, and Aeneas, on Trojan shore, 6
Fired the Greek fleet, amidst the waves, there, I
A Hercules, an Alexander, saw,
Burning with noble ardour, spirits high,
Spurring side by side, and so far before
The rest that, entering the river thereby,
The latter of the two could scarce fight free,
While leaving the former to the enemy;

Faruffino there escaped, Cantelmo died. 7
What were your thoughts and feelings, at that hour?
O, Duke of Sora, when your son you spied,
Bare-headed, and in the enemy's power?
Led aboard ship and, by the river-side,
Beheaded, as you watched, in the flower
Of his youth? I marvel you did not die,
Seeing your son struck dead before your eye.

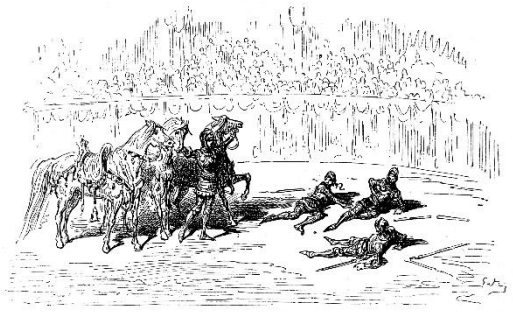
Merciless Slavs, say whence you brought this mode 8
Of warfare. In what Scythian land is it the rule
To slay one who's defenceless? By what code
Do you live, performing an act so cruel?
Was it a crime that he his ardour showed
Fighting for his land? Such is but misrule;
Deprived of light, ill is the world that sees
Tantalus, Atreus and Thyestes.

O cruel barbarians, you that reft the head 9
From the most daring lad twixt pole and pole,
Twixt farthest India's shores, and Ocean's bed,
Where the descending sun is swallowed whole.
His youth and beauty pity might have bred
E'en in some creature born without a soul,
But not in you, whose deeds have now outdone
The Cyclops, or vile Laestrygonian.

No, not the like example could we find 10
Midst the ancient warriors, whom we study
Who, in victory, were ne'er so unkind,
Possessed by mercy, full of courtesy.
While Bradamante, of like noble mind
Not only had forborne to harm the three
She had unhorsed, but had returned their steeds,
That they might rise again to further deeds.

Canto XXXVI: 11-14: Ruggiero learns his foe is Bradamante

Of that fair, courageous warrior-maid 11
I have related how she swiftly downed
Serpentino of the Star, and then laid
Grandonio and Ferrau on the ground.
And how a gift of his steed she made
To each warrior, and how, at the sound
Of her summons, Ruggiero to the fight
Had ridden, whom she deemed the finer knight.



Stanza 11

Ruggiero met the call most joyfully, 12
And had his weapons brought, and his armour,
Which he donned before King Agramante,
While wondering who was this warrior
That fought so skilfully, and elegantly,
Wielding the lance with such great valour;
And asked Ferrau, who'd addressed the knight,
If the latter was known to him by sight.

Ferrau replied: 'Be sure, it is not one 13
That you have spoken of, ere this, to me.
For I thought, the visor opened to the sun,
Rinaldo's younger brother I did see;
But now that, with this same, a course I've run,
Ricciardetto fights far less skilfully.
I believe this is his sister, whom I hear
Much like to him in visage doth appear.

She is said to be as valiant in a fight 14
As her Rinaldo, or any other,
And yet, from what I've seen, the maid well might
Exceed both her cousin and her brother.'
Ruggiero's cheeks, hearing this, burned bright,
With that dye with which the sun doth colour
The morning clouds; such now was his hue,
His heart so throbbed he knew not what to do.

Canto XXXVI: 15-19: Marfisa pre-empts their encounter

Stung, and aroused, by the amorous dart, 15
At this, he felt the living flame within,
Yet while upon his flesh he felt the smart
Of Love's fire, a chill to his bones did win,
A chill of fear that she might, for her part,
Disdain the love, with which they did begin.
Confused, he stood, uncertain in his mind
If he should go or stay, and lagged behind

The fierce Marfisa, thus, who had desired 16
To meet this bold warrior in the field.
And being armed (since always so attired,
Clad in armour, next her sword and shield)
And hearing that Ruggiero now aspired
To victory, his lance about to wield,
Thought to pre-empt him there, before all eyes,
Defeat that warrior, and gain the prize.

She leapt upon her horse, and swiftly flew 17
To where with beating heart Bradamante
Awaited Ruggiero, thinking to
But take him prisoner, striking lightly
With her lance, in whatever might ensue,
Seeking not to wound the warrior deeply.
Marfisa issued from the gate, to war,
Who, on her helm, the phoenix emblem bore,

Either to so proclaim, in her great pride, 18
Her own unique reserves of bravery,
Or that she'd never seek to play the bride,
Remaining single, bound to chastity.
Bradamante this fresh warrior eyed,
But finding not the one expected, she
Demanded this other's name, and so heard
Twas she on whom his love he had conferred;

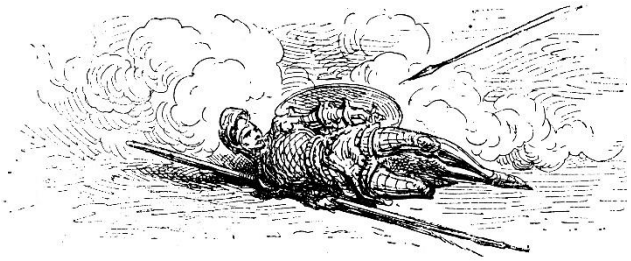


Stanza 17

Or rather she believed he had conferred 19
His love upon this maid, she hated so
That a most painful death she'd have incurred
Rather than fail to avenge her deep woe.
Angered, she wheeled her horse, without a word,
Yet less with longing to unhorse her foe,
Than with her lance to pierce the other's breast,
And put all thoughts of jealousy to rest.

Canto XXXVI: 20-25: The two warrior-maidens fight

Marfisa was obliged, at her first blow, 20
To prove if the ground below was soft or hard,
And all unused to being treated so,
Nigh maddened by disdain, at once, on guard,
She rose, drawing her blade upon her foe,
To avenge the stroke while as yet unmarred.
Bradamante, no less proud, called to her:
'What would you now? You are my prisoner!



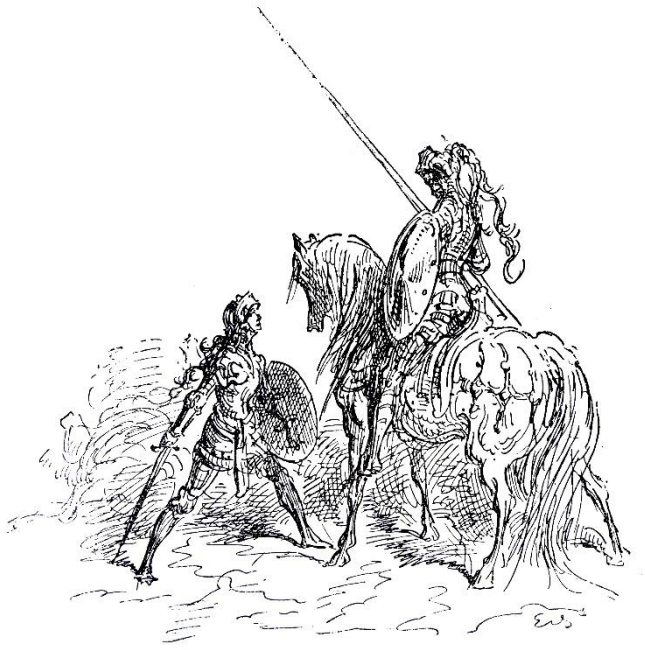
Stanza 20

Though I show courtesy to others, none 21
Shall I show to you, Marfisa,' she cried.
'Ever, indeed, I hear of you as one
Bedevilled by discourtesy and pride.'
At these words, Marfisa, not to be outdone,
Cried aloud, as does the wind the cliffs abide,
And screamed a reply, all meaning drowned
Such was her anger, in that burst of sound.

With her drawn sword she sought to strike 22
The knight, or the steed, in breast or belly;
Bradamante tugged the reins, in warlike
Manner, turned, and used her lance, suddenly,
In anger and disdain, thrusting the spike
At her foe, and thus striking again swiftly,
And, though the lance scarce touched Marfisa,
She fell backwards to the ground beneath her;

Yet scarce touched the earth ere she rose once more, 23
Intent on wreaking vengeance with her blade.
Bradamante couched her lance as before,
And, again, overthrew the furious maid.
Yet though of martial strength she had full store,
Bradamante had not Marfisa stayed,
Upending her, whene'er she would advance,
Had it not been for her enchanted lance.

Meanwhile a band of knights upon our side, 24
Christian knights I mean, had issued out,
And sped to where each warrior replied
To the other's strokes in that angry bout;
(Midway twixt the camps, half a mile the ride)
Since their warrior showed such skill throughout;
'Their warrior', but otherwise unknown,
Seen to be 'theirs' by the emblems shown.

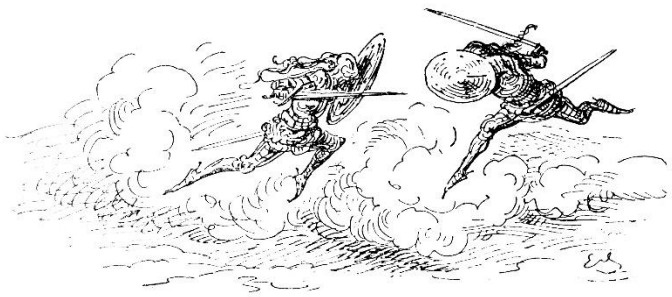


Stanza 23

Agramante, Troyano's generous son, 25
On seeing them draw near the city wall,
And concerned at all that might there be done,
Every risk, every peril to forestall,
Ordered his men to arm, and, once begun,
Sent them forth from the city, at his call;
Amidst them went Ruggiero, pre-empted
By Marfisa's haste, with naught attempted.

Canto XXXVI: 26-29: Their contest sparks conflict between the camps

The enamoured youth gazed on, to see, 26
Fearing the outcome for Bradamante,
Knowing Marfisa's skill and bravery,
Doubting where might lie the victory.
He doubted at the start, I say, wholly,
When they first engaged, but latterly
As the duel progressed before his eyes
Was filled with amazement, and surprise.

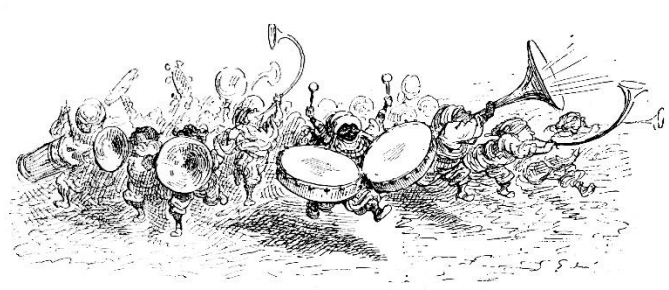


Stanza 26

And seeing that the battle failed to end, 27
As such often did, at the first encounter,
His doubt increased, in that it might portend
Unaccustomed harm to one or the other.
He feared for his lover and his friend,
With deep concern for them both; however,
His heart felt burning passion for the one,
For the other less love than affection.

He would willingly have parted the two, 28
If he could yet have done so with honour,
But his company, fearing they might view
A victory for Charlemagne's warrior,
Who seemed by far the stronger, in their view,
Drove between them, ending the encounter;
While, from the other camp, the Christians sped,
And battle waged between the foes instead.

On both sides they now sounded the alarm, 29
Which indeed occurred almost every day,
Bidding those on foot mount, the unarmed arm,
And summoning all to this fresh affray.
More than one horn cried out impending harm,
With a piercing note, o'er the trumpets' bray,
And as their notes sent forth the cavalry,
Tabors, and side-drums roused the infantry.



Stanza 29

Canto XXXVI: 30-36: Bradamante attacks Ruggiero

As fierce and sanguinary a skirmish 30
As any could imagine now took place,
While Bradamante thwarted of her wish,
Her foe thus vanishing before her face,
Unable to fight on to the finish,
And slay Marfisa, paused there, for a space,
Turning this way and that her questing eyes
Seeking her love, the cause of all her sighs.

By the eagle argent, on an azure shield, 31
She recognised Ruggiero midst the throng;
Her thoughts and gaze intense, o'er the field
She saw those mighty shoulders, broad and strong,
The manly features, and the grace revealed
By his movements, yet, conscious of the wrong
He'd done her, thinking he loved another,
Spoke thus, to herself, in pain and anger:

'Shall another, then, kiss those lips, so sweet 32
And fine, if those same lips are lost to me?
Ah, no other shall with those favours meet;
For, if not mine, no other's must you be.
Rather than die alone, in sole defeat,
Ere I die beside you, your death I'd see.
Then, if I lose you here, at least in hell
I'll have you; there, eternally, to dwell.

Or if you slay me, I shall have obtained 33
The solace of vengeance still, for the law
And justice will demand he who's deigned
To take another's life shall die; far more
Painful my death, if such were thus ordained;
I'd die unjustly, you beneath the claw
Of justice. I'd slay him who would slay me,
You, a maid that has loved you endlessly.

Why, my hand, do you lack the power 34
To drive true steel to my enemy's heart?
He's wounded me to death many an hour,
Secure in the love I showed for my part,
And still would slay me, and my life devour,
Without an ounce of pity, then depart.
Fight, brave spirit, and the wretch dismiss;
Let me avenge my thousand deaths with his!'

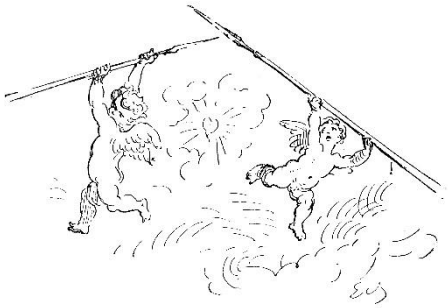
So saying, she spurred her brave steed, and cried: 35
'Guard yourself, O faithless Ruggiero!
The heart of a proud maid shall be denied
You here, as the spoils of war, this I know.'
Ruggiero heard her call, where he did ride
Amidst the hostile ranks, and felt the blow,
Knowing it was her voice, forever prized,
That, midst a thousand cries, he recognised.

Furthermore, he recognised from that cry 36
That she'd accused him of disloyalty,
And so, with the aim of explaining why
He'd been delayed, and seeking parley,
He signalled to her; but it passed her by,
Her visor being closed; she came swiftly,
Full of hurt and rage, with vengeful hand;
And twas on hard earth he seemed like to land.

Canto XXXVI: 37-39: He eventually addresses her

Ruggiero, seeing her so angry, 37
Settled into his armour, and his seat,
Raised his lance, and held it vertically
So that he would not harm her should they meet;
While riding towards him, mercilessly,
Intending now to wound, nowise to greet,
The maid yet could not bear, seeing him near,
To unhorse the form that she yet held dear.

Void of effect their lances at that meeting, 38
And, indeed, that was well, since Love had so
Jousted with each ere they came to greeting
The other, he'd pierced their hearts at a blow.
Since she would do naught, her passage fleeting,
Bradamante turned her fury on the foe,
And did such deeds as fame and glory earn,
While the heavens above such warfare turn.



Stanza 38

In a brief space of time, that golden lance 39
Flung three hundred or more to the ground.
Alone she won the fight with her advance,
Scattering the Moors all that field around.
Ruggiero, with the aid of circumstance,
Made his way towards her, his tongue he found,
And cried: 'Alas, what have I done to you
That you should fly? Hear me; for I hold true!'

Canto XXXVI: 40-42: They turn aside to a nearby vale

As, when a southerly blows from the sea, 40
The deep snow melts, the icy claws relent,
While the imprisoned rivulets flow free,
Hearing that fervent cry, that brief lament,
Bradamante's heart melted, at the plea,
Seemingly vanished, all her discontent,
Filled now with mercy, and compassionate,
The heart that had seemed turned to stone, of late.

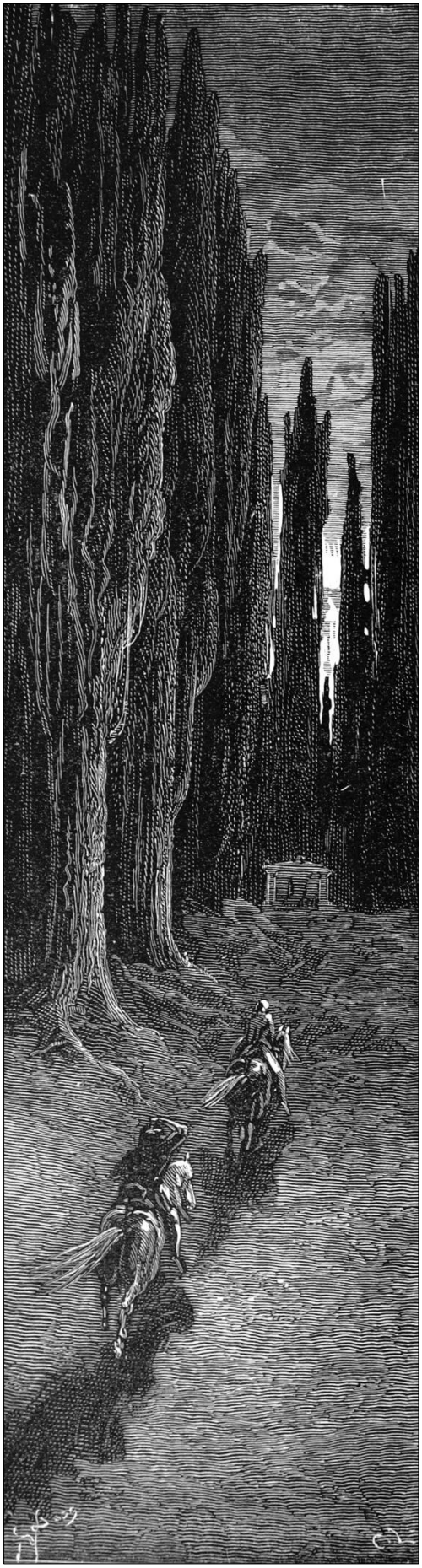
She could not, or she would not, make reply, 41
But spurred brave Rabicano to one side,
And signing to Ruggiero, gave a sigh,
As forth from the battlefield she did ride.
Far from the multitude, and yet nearby,
A sheltered vale lay hid, and deep inside
A grassy lawn about some cypress trees,
That, seeming of one stamp, the eye must please;

Within that grove, a noble monument, 42
Of snow-white marble stood; twas newly made;
With a brief inscription to represent,
To whoe'er cared to know, who there was laid.
Though, meseems, upon her thought now intent,
Bradamante noticed little of that glade.
Ruggiero spurred his horse, hard as he could,
And joined the warrior-maiden in the wood.

Canto XXXVI: 43-46: Marfisa follows, only to be attacked by Bradamante

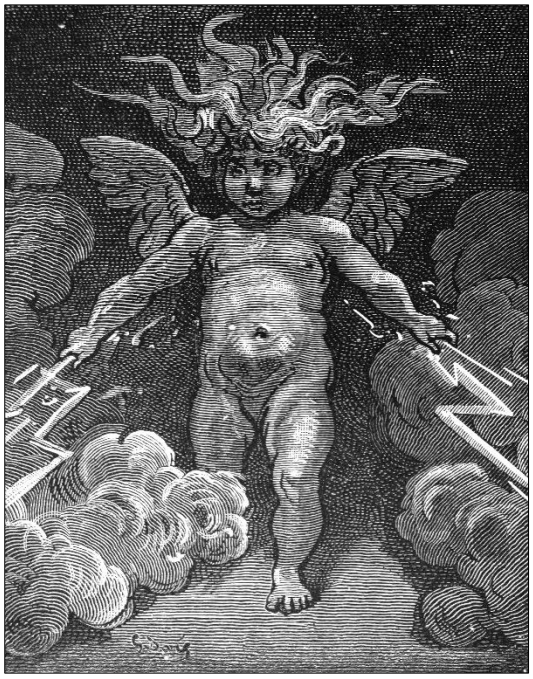
Meanwhile we return to bold Marfisa, 43
Who remained there, mounted on her steed,
Her eyes searching for the valiant warrior,
That had toppled her to earth with such speed,
And saw Ruggiero meet with that stranger,
And then depart, the latter in the lead,
Deeming not that he followed out of love,
But to end the joust, and his honour prove.

So, she spurred her horse, and followed after, 44
Almost reaching the vale as soon as they,
How much pain this might cause to either,
Any lover here knows, without my say;
Yet to Bradamante more than the other,
Vexed by finding her 'rival' still in play;
For who could not believe the truth to be
That love for Ruggiero drew her enemy?



Stanza 42

And faithless, she called him once again: 45
'Was it not enough, you faithless traitor
That I must learn of what has brought me pain,
Through rumour, without having thereafter
To bear witness to it? Your desire, tis plain
Is to drive me away; that aim I'll further;
But my own is, with my last parting breath,
To slay her, the true reason for my death.'



Stanza 45

Bradamante, with this (more spite revealed 46
Than a viper's) advanced upon her prey,
And with her lance pierced her enemy's shield,
Who fell upon the ground, in such a way,
That half her helm was buried in the field;
Nor was she taken by surprise, I'd say,
Resisting the blow with all her worth,
Yet her head nonetheless struck the earth.

Canto XXXVI: 47-50: The warrior-maidens resist attempts to part them

Bradamante, who wished to slay Marfisa 47
Or die herself, was now in such a rage,
She disdained to use the lance against her,
To hurl her to the ground, but would engage
Now, with her glittering blade, and sever
That head trapped in the sand, and assuage
Her need for vengeance, and, losing the lance,
Dismounted, drawing her sword in advance.

But her arrival was tardy, for Marfisa 48
Had scrambled to her feet, so full of ire,
At having felt the ground rise beneath her
A second time, so burning with desire,
That Ruggiero's pleas failed to move her,
Who gazing on, begged either to retire;
Yet both were so possessed by spite and rage
That neither maid would quit that martial stage.

They were at less than sword-length, suddenly, 49
Yet such was their great pride, you understand,
Both pressed hard, and were so close, so quickly,
They'd no choice but to grapple hand to hand;
For their swords they both let fall, and swiftly
Sought some means to hurl their foe to the sand.
Meanwhile Ruggiero begged the pair to cease,
Gaining scant success with his prayers and pleas.

Finding his shouts and cries were all in vain, 50
He decided to part the two by force;
The dagger from each maid he thought to gain,
And thereby stop the battle in due course.
He won both weapons, and returned again
To plead, then threaten, shouting himself hoarse,
Yet in vain, since they used their fists and feet
Lacking aught else, for neither would retreat.

Canto XXXVI: 51-57: Marfisa turns upon Ruggiero

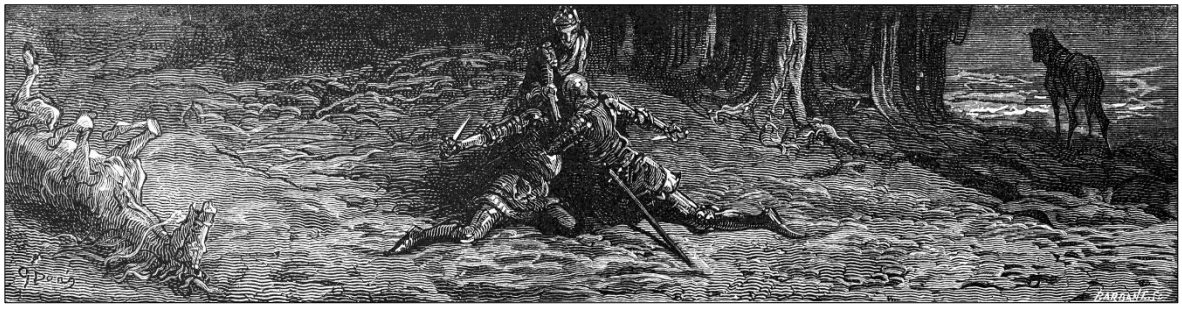
Ruggiero persisted, grasping either 51
One or the other, by hand or arm,
Such that Marfisa, waxing in anger,
Was quite ready to work the knight some harm,
For, disdaining all the world, as ever,
To her his friendship held no special charm;
And, quitting the fight with Bradamante,
She ran to seize her sword, and then, swiftly,

Attacked the knight, crying: 'Discourtesy 52
And treachery it is to interfere;
Yet I'll punish your lack of chivalry;
My sword will serve to conquer any here.'
Ruggiero sought to quell hostility
With fair and gentle speech, but found, I fear,
Marfisa filled with such pride and disdain
That all he uttered was sent forth in vain.

In the end, Ruggiero drew his sword, 53
Deep anger reddening his face also.
I think no other sight could have ensured
Such joy as Bradamante now did show,
(None, indeed, that the ancient texts record
Of Rome or Athens; nor of which I know)
As this battle, viewed by the jealous maid,
That, to her every doubt, had now put paid.

She'd recovered her own sword from the ground, 54
Yet she stood aside to watch, for her part,
For it seemed to her the god of war had found
A home on Earth, in the knight's strength and art,
While, if he seemed Mars, in Marfisa bound,
A hellish Fury, to and fro, did dart;
Though tis true Ruggiero yet refrained
From exerting all his power, tightly reined.

He well knew the virtues of his weapon, 55
So extensive the use of it he'd made;
Where it fell, every spell of the magician
Was rendered vain, by that enchanted blade.
He wielded it so that, within reason,
Nor point nor edge, but flat alone was laid
Upon the other's sword, continuing so
Till he suddenly lost patience, at a blow,



Stanza 50

A mighty stroke, that bold Marfisa dealt, 56
Intending, thus, to split his skull in two.
For he'd raised his shield, and slightly knelt,
So the blow would the eagle emblem hew.
And, while upon his arm the stroke he felt,
The enchanted shield yet denied his foe;
Still, were it not that he wore Hector's mail
His swift defence had proved of small avail,

The blow would have sheared away his arm, 57
And struck his head, at which the maid had aimed,
He could scarce lift the limb without a qualm,
Nor sustain the shield, somewhat split and maimed.
At this all mercy fled; to do her harm
The sole thought that his attention claimed.
He smote, and smote as fiercely as he could:
Ill for you Marfisa, had the stroke proved good!

Canto XXXVI: 58-62: The voice from the tomb

I know not how it came about, but, lo, 58
His weapon struck against a cypress tree,
And, to a hand's depth, it was buried so,
While the trunk shivered, and rang loudly.
At this the mountain, and the plain below,
Shook with a mighty tremor while, clearly,
A more than mortal voice arose on high,
From the sepulchre, in the grove nearby.

This dreadful cry issued forth: 'No more! 59
Twould be a deed unjust, and inhumane,
If a brother slew a sister, nor forbore,
Or a brother by a sister's hand were slain.
My Ruggiero, my Marfisa, this is sure,
(Nor the words that I deliver said in vain)
In one womb, of one seed, were you begot,
And born together; entwined is your lot.

Galaciella's children are you; whom 60
She bore to Ruggiero the Second,
Whose brothers had sent him to his doom,
Leaving her to her grief, the fair and fond.
Not knowing that she carried in her womb
You, his offspring, e'er bound by mortal bond,
She, in the fragile timbers of a boat,
They set adrift to flounder, or to float.

But Fortune, that had destined you, unborn, 61
To many a glorious enterprise,
Drove the boat to that lonely and forlorn
Shore, that by Syrtes sandy waters lies,
Where, having given birth to you at dawn,
She rose to join the souls in Paradise.
As God willed, and your destiny say I,
It so happened that I found myself nearby.

I granted her a simple burial, 62
Such as I could amidst the desert sand,
And wrapping you both then in my mantle,
Bore you to Mount Carena, close inland.
I drove a lioness from her cubs to suckle
Your infant selves, although, with my own hand,
I learnt how to nourish you, with her milk,
Nigh on two years, or something of that ilk.



Stanza 62

Canto XXXVI: 63-66: Atlante tells the tale of the twins' separation

One day, while abroad in the countryside, 63
And, thus, far from the chamber where you lay,
An Arab host discovered you, inside,
As perchance you recall, for, on that day,
They seized you, Marfisa, who sought to hide,
While Ruggiero wisely sped away.
I was left to grieve your loss, most deeply,
While guarding Ruggiero more closely.

You know, Ruggiero, if Atlante 64
Guarded you well; to do so, I did try.
For the fixed stars revealed your destiny,
That by treachery, midst the Christians, you'd die.
And so, to thwart their influence wholly,
I sought to avert your fate, kept you by.
Lacking power in the end to stay your will,
I fell sick, and grieving died, yet not until,

Through infernal aid, this tomb was complete, 65
Whose stones were laid by more than human might,
For I had foreseen that you two would meet,
With Marfisa you were destined to fight.
And I told Charon, deep beneath your feet,
That my spirit should rest here, day and night,
In this glade, till a sister and a brother,
Marfisa and yourself, fought one another.

And so, my shade has waited for your coming, 66
In this pleasant glade, for many a day.
Bradamante, from jealousy now ceasing,
Know Ruggiero has loved but you alway.
And, thus, from the light I go, receding,
For, to the shadows, I now make my way.'
His voice failed there, no sound his going raised,
Leaving the three astounded and amazed.

Canto XXXVI: 67-69: The three warriors are reconciled

Ruggiero, with joy, now knew Marfisa 67
As his sister, and she him as her brother;
They, without hurting the maiden-warrior,
Met together, and embraced each other,
And one thing from childhood and another
They remembered, this brother and sister,
And confirmed with, 'I was', 'I did', 'I said',
All the wizard had told, or left unsaid.

From his sister, Ruggiero did not hide 68
That Bradamante occupied his heart,
And by what obligations he was tied
To a maiden he had loved from the start;
Nor ceased till he had taught either side,
To change hatred to love, and with such art
That they embraced, without affectation,
As a mark of true reconciliation.



Stanza 68

Marfisa then turned to Ruggiero 69
And asked who and what was their father,
Who had killed him, and the means also,
And if in the field or someplace other;
And who's the request, what savage foe
Had brought about the death of their mother,
For of aught she had been told, earlier,
Little or nothing could she remember.

Canto XXXVI: 70-74: Ruggiero tells Marfisa of their family history

Ruggiero told her they were descended 70
From Trojan stock, of Hector's lineage;
That after Astyanax amended
His state, and somehow escaped the outrage
Proposed by Ulysses, and had ended
His presence in his own land, he wended
His way upon the deep sea, till he gained
Sicily's shores, and in Messina reigned.

'His descendants were the lords of Faro, 71
In Calabria and, many a long year after,
Departed thence for Rome, and prospered so
That more than one king and emperor
Of their blood there held court, elsewhere also;
Many a name known to fame and power.
Thus, from Constantius, and Constantine,
To Pepin's Charlemagne extends their line.

Ruggiero the First, and Gianbarone, 72
Were scions of his, Buovo, and Rambaldo,
Down to Ruggiero the Second, for twas he
Who, as Atlante said, sired us; and, know,
Of our line, many a deed, famed in story
Shall be celebrated in this world below.'
Of Agolante, and Almonte he then told
(Galaciella's father); with Troiano bold

They had come, and how Almonte's daughter 73
Accompanied him, who was so valorous
That many a paladin fell before her;
And how for Ruggiero, e'en then famous,
And, his love, she rebelled gainst her father,
Was baptised, and wed; of the incestuous
Love of the traitor, named Beltramo,
For his brother's wife, he told also.

He his country, and his father, betrayed, 74
And his two brothers, hoping to have her,
Laying Risa open to a hostile raid,
Such that all his kin were made to suffer;
While Agolante (whom his sons obeyed)
Set Galaciella, their dear mother,
Great with them and six months gone, in a boat
In winter, midst a tempest, there to float.

Canto XXXVI: 75-79: Marfisa exhorts him to avenge their parents

Marfisa, listened, face calm as the dawn, 75
As her brother pursued his tale's course,
Delighted to learn that they were born
Of a line that flowed clear from its source.
Thence Chiaramonte's House came to adorn
The halls of fame, Mongrana's drew its force;
Renowned throughout the world many a year,
For peerless leaders, famous in their sphere.

When, finally, she learned from her brother 76
That their father's death had been contrived
By Agramante's grandfather, and father,
And uncle, and that all three had connived
To destroy her mother, listening no further,
(Though, often, to contain herself she'd strived)
She cried: 'Brother, too long have you delayed
In seeking vengeance; wrongs should be repaid!

Almonte and Troiano, both are dead, 77
Yet why should this race of theirs survive?
Why not vengeance on Agramante's head?
Why, since you live, is he, as yet, alive?
Tis a stain upon our name that, instead,
Though you are wronged, you but watch him thrive.
Not only have you failed to slay this king,
You take his pay, serve him in everything!

I swear to God, for I shall worship now 78
Christ the Lord, worshipped by my father,
That I'll not doff this armour, such my vow,
Until I've avenged him, and my mother.
I'll grieve for you as, here, to grief I bow,
If midst those ranks, or those of some other
Of the Moors, I find you, unless you go,
Sword in hand, amongst them as their foe!'

Oh, how Bradamante raised her lovely head 79
At those words, and inwardly rejoiced!
She urged Ruggiero, for vengeance bred,
To heed the sentiments his sister voiced,
And join Charlemagne's camp, his cause to wed,
(Where he'd be praised) and there his banner hoist.
For Charlemagne honoured his father's name,
And, as a peerless knight, revered that same.

Canto XXXVI: 80-84: It is agreed he should remain awhile in the Moorish camp

Ruggiero, cautiously, answered her, 80
That long ago he would have done the deed,
But the facts were hidden from him ever,
And, when he knew them, twas too late indeed;
For having been knighted since, moreover,
By Agramante, he would be decreed
A traitor, and thus everywhere abhorred,
Should he slay the one deemed to be his lord.

Yet, as he had promised Bradamante, 81
Ere now, he would seek a fit occasion
To quit the king, and do so plausibly,
Not marring, thereby, his reputation,
If he could; and if he was not yet free,
Then twas of Mandricardo's creation,
For she knew he'd been wounded by that knight,
And left sorely stricken from the fight;

And she, who'd sat beside his bed each day, **82**
Was as good a witness to that as any.
The two warrior-maids had much to say
Twixt them regarding this, yet did agree,
In conclusion, he should return that day
To the Moorish king, and his company,
Till he found a sound occasion to resort
To Charlemagne, and thereby join his court.

'Let him depart now', cried bold Marfisa, **83**
To Bradamante, 'Doubt not that before
Many days shall pass, I will discover
A means by which he'll cease to serve the Moor.'
So said the maiden, without, however,
Revealing, there, the plan she had in store.
Bidding leave of them both, Ruggiero
Had turned his steed towards the Moorish foe

When they heard a plaintive cry from the vale, **84**
Which, nearby, now caught all three's attention.
They paused to listen, there, amidst the dale,
To what seemed some poor maid's lamentation;
Yet I must end this canto here, and avail
Myself of rest, ere, for your delectation,
I bring, I promise, finer things to you,
When the very next canto you pursue.





Canto XXXVII: The Tale of Marganor

Canto XXXVII: 1-8: Ariosto in praise of women's talents

If, in order they might other gifts acquire, 1
(For Nature grants nothing without study)
Courageous women, night and day, aspire
To win, through great diligence, mastery
Of many an art, grant works we admire,
And with much labour gain the victory,
They must be equipped for every mortal
Effort that renders virtue immortal;

And if they their own selves could praise, 2
And, thus, be known to all posterity,
Without begging aid, as they must these days,
From male critics filled with hate and envy,
That hide the good they find in them, always,
Yet all the ill they hear repeat gladly,
To such glorious heights would mount their fame,
As ne'er perchance was reached by any name.

Tis not enough for them that mutual aid 3
May render them glorious to a world,
That does it best to see their faults displayed,
And keep them prisoned in some netherworld,
Such that they cannot rise from out its shade;
Rather it sinks them, banners ne'er unfurled;
As did the ancients, as if glory won
By a woman dimmed theirs, as mist the sun.

But hand or tongue ne'er possessed the power, 4
By foolish speech, by penning some ill page,
(Though both the tides of ignorance empower,
And diminish the fine arts, in this blind age)
To eclipse women's glories for an hour;
They still remain to light our heritage,
Though they may fail to reach their proper height,
Nor reach the regions augured by their flight.

Not only Harpalyce, Queen Thomyris, 5
Penthesilea, and Camilla,
And Dido who crossed the sea, in peace,
To found, from Tyre, Carthage in Libya,
Zenobia, who saw her power increase,
In India, Assyria, and Persia,
And some further few, were truly worthy
Of, through arms, gaining eternal glory.

For brave women were strong, and chaste, and wise, 6
Not in Greece and Rome alone, but where'er,
From far India to our Western skies,
The Sun sheds brightness from his golden hair,
Their virtues, honours, hid so from our eyes
That scarce one in a thousand names we share
Amongst ourselves; because they, in their day
Had false and envious, chroniclers, I say.

Yet, rest not, bold women, that glory so; 7
Follow your path, ever your aims pursue,
Nor pause a moment on the road you go,
For fear of failing of the honours due;
Though good lasts not forever, as we know,
Still, the ills of this world must perish too.
Ignored, to date, within the written page,
It yet may champion you, in this our age.

Marullus and Pontano, ere now, declared 8
For you, with the Strozzis, father and son,
Capello, Bembo, Castiglione who's shared
With us the courtier's goal, lost or won;
Luigi Alamanni, and those two, paired,
Beloved of Mars and the Muse bar none,
Born of the line that reigns in Mantua,
That Mincio cleaves, and three lakes border.

Canto XXXVII: 9-14: Of Francesco II Gonzaga, Isabella d'Este and others

The one, besides his wish to honour you, 9
And respect, nay reverence, you likewise,
Makes Parnassus, and Mount Cynthus too,
Sound with his praise of you, to reach the skies.
The love, the faith, the mind forever true,
When threats of conflict, and of war, arise,
That calm spirit Isabella has shown,
Have made him more your champion than his own.

Such that he never wearies of praising, 10
And honouring you, in his lively verse,
And if others censure you in anything,
None seems swifter your defence to rehearse.
For no knight in this world is more willing
To yield his life for virtue (and his purse).
Material for others' pens he gives,
While, in his writings, others' glory lives.



Stanza 10

And he's worthy of a lady so blessed 11
(Blessed with every virtue that may be
Found in any woman of East or West,
Though none can equal her in constancy)
A pillar of support to him, possessed
Of disdain for Fortune's inconstancy,
She's worthy of her lord, as he of her,
No truer match, here, could e'er occur.

New trophies now adorn the Oglio, 12
For he afloat, ashore, midst fire and sword,
Has scattered many a well-penned folio,
To swell the river's envy of its lord.
And then, Ercole Bentivoglio,
To you, with his clear note, praise doth afford,
Renato da Trivulzio, my Guidetto,
And Molza, blessed you claim by Apollo;

And Ercole, the Duke of Carnuti, 13
Alfonso d'Este's son, who spreads his wing,
And soars, and trills so harmoniously,
Praising woman to the skies in everything;
With my lord of Guasto, who not only
Yields such as a thousand Athens might sing,
A thousand Romes, but promises, again,
To exalt your sex forever, with his pen.

And, besides the many alive today, 14
Who granted you, and grant you still renown,
You yourselves may exalt yourselves, I say;
For many, laying silk and needle down,
Have accompanied the Muses, to allay
Their thirst at Aganippe's spring (not drown),
And shall do so; and, thus, your works we need
More than you do our efforts, I'd concede.

Canto XXXVII: 15-24: Ariosto praises Vittoria Colonna, and honours all women

If I were to give a full account of these, 15
Each and every one, and do them honour,
More than one folio I'd need, and cease
To speak of aught else in my cantos ever.
While if with five or six I sought to please,
I'd rouse all the rest of them to anger,
What then? Shall I pass all the others by,
Or bring but one alone before your eye?

I shall choose one, and such a one I'll choose 16
As quells all envy and in such a manner,
That no one else, thereby, shall I bruise,
By praising her alone and none other.
She has not yet gained immortality,
Through her sweet style (I know none better)
Yet she, more than any of whom you write,
Or speak, will escape Death's eternal night.

As Phoebus adorns his gleaming sister 17
More, and lends her orb a brighter fire,
Than he does Venus' orb or some other,
That moves on high with the heavenly choir,
Or shines alone, so (as Apollo) ever,
The one of whom I speak he doth inspire
With greater eloquence, and grants such power,
That a second sun illuminates our hour.

Vittoria is her name, and, fittingly, 18
She was born midst victories, while she
Deserves many a triumph and trophy,
Preceded (or followed) by Victory;
One like to Artemisia, who nobly
Honoured her Mausolus, for thus we see
Tis finer, more beautiful, to raise his vault
On high, whene'er a man we would exalt.

If Laodamia, if Porcia, 19
If many a faithful wife, desiring
To join their dead spouse (Argia,
Arria, Evadne) are deserving
Of praise, then how much more Vittoria,
That hers, from Lethe, and the encircling
Styx (that nine times about the shades winds tight)
Despite the Fates and Death, draws to the light!

If Macedonian Alexander 20
Was envious of proud Achilles' fame,
How he'd envy, Francesco di Pescara,
Were he living now, your glorious name,
While your chaste wife, so dear to you, ever
Sings the eternal honour due that same,
Such that your virtue, through her, so sounds
No clearer trumpet from the skies resounds.

If all there is to tell, and all that I'd say 21
Of that lady, I sought to pen, indeed
Long might I do so and yet leave alway
A large part still untold; and I have need
To save my errant tale from more delay,
And to Marfisa and her comrades speed,
Whom, I promised you, I'd seek to follow,
If you but lent an ear to this canto.

And now you are here, and all attention, 22
Since I'd not break my promise, I'll delay
Any further praise of her, nor mention
Her again, here, though she needs not, I'd say
Any aid from verse of my invention,
That herself the debt can readily repay,
Verse with which I but sate my own desire
To praise and honour one whom I admire.

Many a woman worthy of story, 23
I claim, dear ladies, every age can show,
And yet, through many an author's envy,
Unknown, those paragons to death did go;
Yet shall no more, since, for posterity,
Your virtues you shall sing, so all may know.
Had those two warrior-maids owned the skill,
Word of their prowess had spread wider still.

I speak of Bradamante and Marfisa, 24
Whose great deeds and victories I labour
To bring to light though, it seems, as ever,
Of nine in ten I know naught, yet honour
Those I find, and willingly uncover
Many that are hid, in my endeavour
To please you, dear ladies, that I might prove
Loyal to those whom I admire and love.

Canto XXXVII: 25-29: The three warriors come upon Ullania and two other ladies

Ruggiero, was in the act of leaving 25
As I said; he'd plucked his sword from the tree,
Which remained still quivering and shaking,
But looked much as it had previously,
When a loud cry, not far distant, sounding
From the vale made him pause suddenly;
Then, with the warrior-maids, he went at speed
Towards it, bringing aid in time of need.

As the three advanced, the cries grew louder, 26
While they heard the words of woe more clearly,
Finding three women, as they rode further,
Making their lament, and clothed most strangely,
Their skirts sheared to the waist, the shearer
Having treated them most discourteously.
Not knowing how better to hide their state,
They sat upon the ground, disconsolate.



Stanza 26

Just as Erichthonius, Vulcan's son, 27
Who sprang from the earth, without a mother,
Whom Minerva saw nursed, with care, by one
Aglauros, Cecrops' over-bold daughter,
Sat in a cart he'd built, and from the sun
Hid his ugly feet, so, in like manner,
Those three maids, seated, kept concealed,
That which is seldom to the world revealed.

At that outrageous and most shameful sight, 28
The warrior-maidens, as they drew near,
Blushed, their faces like two roses, bright
Of hue, that in Paestum's gardens appear,
Bradamante drawing closer, saw outright
That Ullania was one, that fact was clear,
Ullania, who'd been sent from the Lost Isle,
To France, and had journeyed many a mile.

She recognised the other two no less, 29
Ullania's companions then as now,
Though the envoy herself she did address,
Being the noblest, though with troubled brow,
Demanding who, with utter wickedness,
And scorning decency all must avow,
Had exposed what Nature has concealed,
And their secrets to all the world revealed.

Canto XXXVII: 30–34: They set out to avenge the wrong done them

Ullania knew twas Bradamante, 30
By her voice, and by her insignia,
She that but a few days previously
Had overthrown those three kings before her.
She told how the folk, unmoved by pity,
In a nearby town, had brought them bother,
Not only caused them harm and injury,
But shorn away their clothes as she could see.

She knew not where the golden shield was gone, 31
Nor, the three kings, who'd kept her company
And guided her through lands here and yon,
Whether they'd died, or lost their liberty.
And said the three of them, had thereupon,
Journeyed on foot, though twas pure misery,
To report the outrage to Charlemagne,
Who'd avenge both the insult, and their pain.

The warrior-maidens' faces, as she told 32
Her tale, were robbed of their serenity,
As was Ruggiero's who though fierce and bold,
Yet possessed a heart attuned to pity.
They forgot all but the wrong she did unfold,
And without her asking, of chivalry,
Resolving to avenge this wickedness,
Sought the road to the castle, and redress.

With one accord, it seems, they had removed 33
Their surcoats, moved by pity and concern,
The which were most well-suited, as it proved,
To clothing the fair maids, whose cheeks did burn.
Bradamante, who plainly disapproved
Of their being seen on foot on their return,
Placed Ullania before her, while so,
With the two, did Marfisa and Ruggiero.

Ullania pointed out to Bradamante 34
The nearest path to the keep, while they rode;
As, promising to wreak vengeance promptly,
She, in turn, comfort on her ward bestowed.
They left the dale, and by a way most weary,
Their horses burdened by the double load,
Ascended slowly, and, while it was light,
Sought to find a fitting lodging for the night.

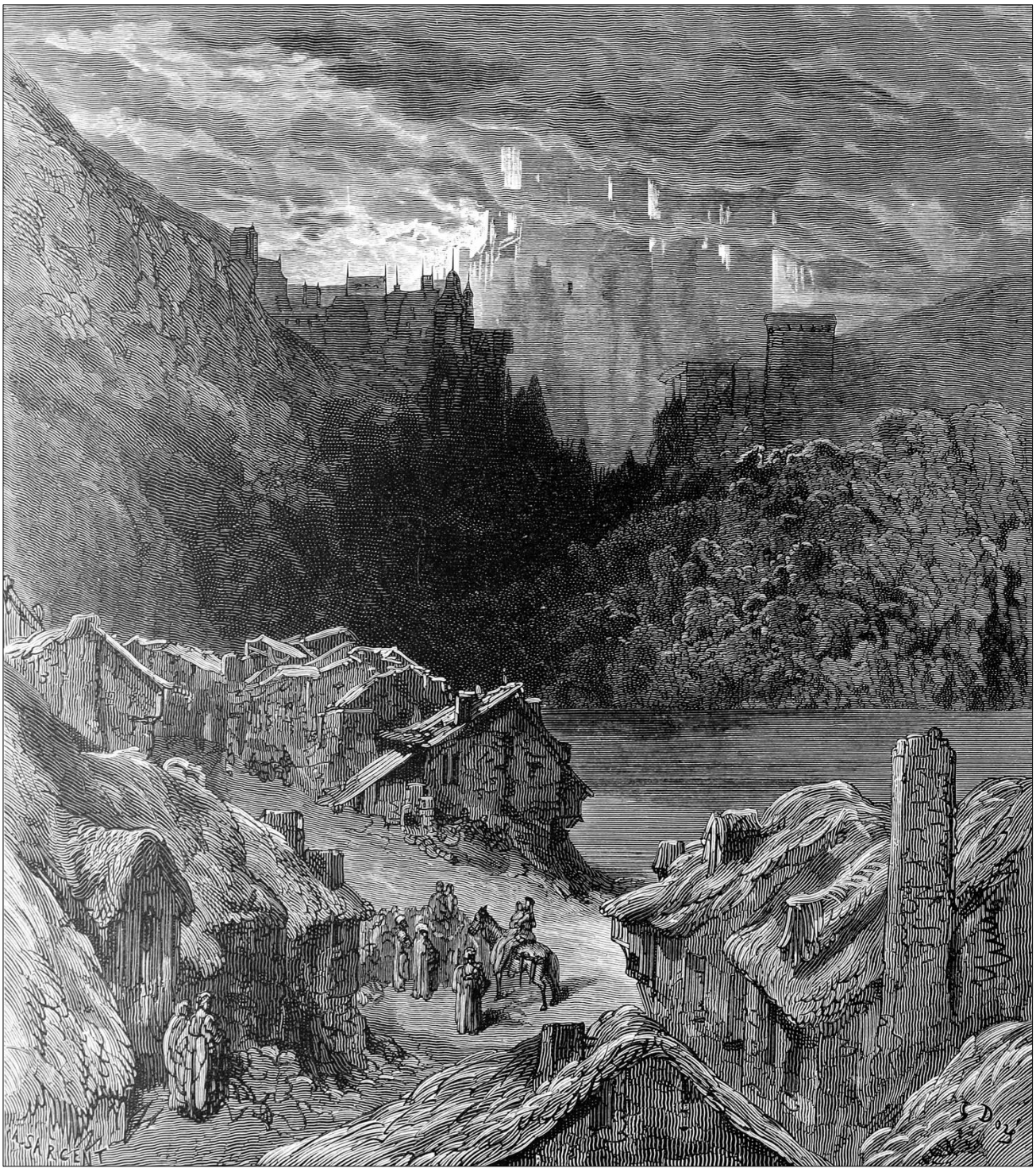
Canto XXXVII: 35–43: The village of women

Upon those mountain heights, harsh and steep 35
They found shelter, and a bed, till the morn,
In a village somewhat distant from the keep,
And dined on such as poor folk's boards adorn.
They looked about them, ere they sought to sleep,
And found that all were women there; timeworn,
Middle-aged, or younger still, as if some ban
Permitted not one solitary man.

No greater wonder Jason, and the crew 36
Of Argonauts who formed his company,
Felt, gazing on those women who once slew
Their husbands, fathers, brothers, sons, when he
Touched on Lemnos' rocky isle (but two
Males surviving there, in all that country)
Than did Ruggiero, and his company, feel
At the scene their night's lodging did reveal.

The warrior-maidens sought some fresh attire 37
For Ullania, and the maidens with her,
Which, though mean, might at least prove entire,
And such was brought their limbs to cover.
He, of one seeming wisest, did enquire,
Where their men were, none could he discover,
And asked her what the cause of this might be,
While she answered him most courteously:

'That which perchance seems marvellous to you, 38
A place so full of women, and no man,
Is a punishment to us and grievous too,
That live here sorrowing and under ban.
For to deal us greater harm, and pain anew,
Our fathers, husbands, sons, every man,
Have long been parted from us, cruelly,
At the pleasure of our lord; a tyrant he.



Stanza 35 "*They found shelter, and a bed, till the morn, in a village somewhat distant from the keep*"

And this savage has ordered us confined 39
On these heights, yet but two short leagues away
From his land, to harsh exile thus assigned,
Banned from where we saw the light of day;
And our men are to death or worse resigned,
Threatened with torture if they should stray,
Should seek to visit us, or we offer
To receive them, and to grant them shelter.

He's an enemy to us, one and all, 40
Who'll have us no nearer than I've said,
Nor permits a single female in his hall,
As if a woman's face might strike him dead.
Autumn's leaves twice already we've seen fall,
To be replaced with others in their stead,
Since he was possessed by this mad whim,
With not a one here that can counter him:



Stanza 40

For the folk here fear him worse than death, 41
And added to his evil will, and nature,
He could slay us with but a single breath,
Since this tyrant is a giant in stature,
While his sex acts much like a shibboleth,
All who possess it not are in danger.
Stronger than a hundred men, his anger
Is worse towards any female stranger.

If your honour, sir, and that of those three, 42
That are in your keeping, is dear to you,
'Twould be safer, as far as one can see,
To leave this, and another path pursue.
It leads to his tower, well-known to me,
And a most savage use he puts it to,
That brings lasting shame and woe, say I,
On every knight and dame, that passes by.

Than Marganor (such is the villain's name, 43
The lord and tyrant of that evil keep)
Not even the monstrous Nero has claim
To be crueller, nor others dyed as deep
In human blood; for he thirsts for that same,
(Woman's most) as wolves for the lives of sheep,
Dealing shamefully with all women led,
By their ill fate, to seek, there, board and bed.'

Canto XXXVII: 44-47: The history of the tyrannical giant Marganor

Ruggiero, and the warrior-maids, irate, 44
Asked her what had brought about his rage.
And begged her, of courtesy, to relate
This history that now adorns my page.
'The castle's lord was from an early date
Fierce and inhumane, yet at that stage
His evil heart was ever well-concealed,
And twas long ere his baseness was revealed:

For, while,' she said, 'his two sons were alive, 45
Two fine youths who were quite unlike their sire,
(Since they loved strangers and did ever strive
To deny every false and cruel desire)
Courtesy and good manners there did thrive,
Pleasant customs and noble deeds; his ire
The father suppressed, and e'er did treasure
His sons, and indulged their every pleasure.

All the knights and ladies that passed by 46
Were welcomed with such grace and courtesy,
Every one departed conquered thereby,
Won by the kindly brothers' chivalry;
In this the youths shared equally, say I,
Ordained to the sacred order, mutually.
Cilander one, Tanacro his brother,
Each noble, strong, and bold as the other.

Both were worthy of their fame, and they 47
Would deserve both praise and honour still,
If the pair had not rendered themselves prey
To that desire we call love, each lad's will
Was seduced from the right and proper way,
Drawn into folly's maze, to error's mill,
And all the wealth of good they had done
Was corrupted in a trice, ere they'd begun.

Canto XXXVII: 48-50: Cilander errs and is slain

An imperial knight of Greece came to court, 48
And brought his lady there for company,
Of learned ways, and as lovely, in short
As any man might wish for in this country.
Cilander fell in love, was truly caught,
And was like to die unless he, suddenly,
Possessed the wife, for, if she should depart,
He'd surely perish of a broken heart.

As naught could be won by prayer or plea, 49
He was disposed to take the girl by force,
And, to a path by the keep, armed fully,
Where both of them must pass, he had recourse.
Through recklessness, and amorous folly,
He'd given little thought to his mad course,
And, when he saw them, wildly did advance,
To attack the knight, bold lance against lance.

He thought to down the man with that first blow, 50
And seize the woman, and the victory,
But the Greek, who'd mastered many a foe,
Shattered his plate like glass, instantly.
To the father sped the tidings of woe,
Who had him borne back on a bier, promptly,
And finding he was dead, laid him beside
His buried ancestors, then wept and sighed.



Stanza 50

Canto XXXVII: 51-56: Tanacro slays Olindro and seizes his wife Drusilla

And yet guests were made welcome as before, 51
And lodged as graciously, for Tanacro
Was as courteous as his brother, if not more,
And the same graciousness did ever show.
There came that year, from a foreign shore,
A noble baron, and his wife also,
He marvellously brave, she full of grace,
And, beyond all description, fair of face,

And as honest and true as she was fair, 52
And worthy of honour, and of praise.
The baron to a famous name was heir,
And brave as any heard of in those days.
Twas fitting to such valour that so rare
And rich a prize was at his side always.
Olindro he, lord of Lungavilla,
While his fair lady was named Drusilla.

No less for her did young Tanacro burn 53
Than bold Cilander had for the other,
Whose errant desire had seen him earn
An end that was both tragic and bitter;
No less than he, Tanacro chose to spurn
The laws of hospitality, forever
Holy and sacred, sooner than endure
A deep longing that must his death ensure.

Yet with the example of his brother 54
Before his eyes, and his desperate end,
He thought to make the abduction surer,
Such that this Olindro might not defend
His wife or take revenge; lost forever
Was the courtesy he'd formerly extend,
Virtue, that kept the tide of Vice at bay
That sunk his father in its depths alway.

A score of armed men, in the dead of night, 55
He gathered, and, far from the castle keep,
Deployed them in the caverns, left and right
Of the road, while all else was drowned in sleep.
He blocked Olindro's way when it was light,
Who rode the path beneath the mountain steep;
The baron fought hard to prevent the wrong,
Yet was robbed of wife, and breath ere too long.



Stanza 55

With the husband slain, the lady was led 56
Captive, and so overwhelmed with sorrow,
Wishing that she herself had died instead,
That she begged Tanacro to end her woe.
Then, crying out that she would join the dead,
She leapt from a ledge to the vale below.
Death was denied her, but as dead she lay,
Her head and limbs sore damaged on the way.



Stanza 56

Canto XXXVII: 57-60: She plots revenge

She could not to the castle thus repair, 57
Except on a stretcher borne by his men.
He had the doctors tend to her with care,
Fearing his prize might yet be lost again.
While she was healed, he thought to prepare
To celebrate their marriage, as and when
She was well, wishing her to bear the name
Of wife not mistress, and her true place claim.

Tanacro had no other thought nor wish, 58
Nor other care, nor spoke of aught beside
Save that he'd wronged her deeply in this,
On him lay all the blame, and thus he tried
To amend his fault, himself would punish,
Yet all in vain, the more he sought a bride
And laboured to please her, the more that she
Longed to slay him, hating most vengefully.

But hatred failed to blind her to the fact 59
That if she wished to strike the fatal blow,
She must dissimulate, prepare to act,
Yet her true feelings she must never show;
But the contrary part, in every way, enact,
(To that of a plotter gainst Tanacro)
And lead him to believe that her first love
She had forgot, and did his suit approve.

She wore a tranquil mask, but inwardly 60
Swore vengeance; to little else gave care.
Sundry plans she now conceived, some that she
Accepted, then rejected, some most rare
Yet doubtful of success and, finally,
Resolved to die that he her death might share;
For how better to avenge Olindro
Than by dying, yet while slaying his vile foe?

Canto XXXVII: 61-65: She devises a means

She wore a face of joy, and thus she feigned 61
A fervent longing that they soon might wed,
And all delay to the course now ordained
She overcame, e'en though her heart nigh bled.
To adorn herself most richly she deigned,
(Olindro seemed forgotten and long dead)
While insisting that the ceremony
Should be performed as in her country.



Stanza 61

A false custom she devised, devoid of fact, 62
Yet said that, in her land, all was done so,
While she gave her every thought to the act
Of vengeance, by which to slay Tanacro,
And thought only of how she might enact
Her plan, by a means she alone could know.
She said she wished to marry in the manner
Of her own folk, and explained the matter:

The widow that would take a husband, there, 63
Before she approached her spouse-to-be,
Would placate, with solemn mass and prayer,
The dead shade, lest it proved her enemy;
And would to that holy temple, thus, repair
Where lay her dead husband's tomb, and she,
When the proper rites were duly over,
Then received the ring from her new lover.

Amidst all this, the priest, having brought, 64
A flask of wine with him, in due order,
With orisons, devout and fitting, sought
To bless and fill a chalice with the liquor,
Handing them the vessel, though he ought
If the solemn task were performed as ever,
To bear it first to the bride, who would sip
The contents ere it touched Tanacro's lip.

The latter, who gave not a single thought 65
To the true reason for her insistence,
Said, as long as it achieved, in short,
Their marriage, and ensured they issued thence
As man and wife, her pleasure he but sought,
Seeing not that revenge for his offence
Was the sole object that possessed her mind;
To her consuming passion he was blind.

Canto XXXVII: 66-69: And achieves her aim

Drusilla had an old crone in her service, 66
Seized with her, that with her had remained.
She summoned her, and then shared all this,
So, none could overhear, as she explained:
'Prepare a sudden poison, whose malice
I know you have the secret of; once strained,
Fill a phial with it, for I've found a way
This wicked son of Marganor to slay,

And no less save myself, and you also. 67
Of that I'll tell you later; now depart.'
The old woman left; and when all was so,
Returned to the palace; while, for her part,
Drusilla had filled a flask, neck to toe
With sweet wine of Candia; now, with art,
She mixed the fatal poison, gainst the day
When she was to be wed; nor would delay.



Stanza 67

On the day ordained, to the church she came, 68
Adorned with gems, and in rich garments dressed,
Where a marble tomb, worthy of his name,
For Orlindo, had been built at her request.
A solemn mass was sung, to mark his fame,
Many a knight and lady, midst the rest,
Attended, and Marganor, happier
Than of late, with his friends there did gather.

Once the holy rites had been completed, 69
And the priest had, devoutly, blessed the wine,
He filled a chalice, and the bride he greeted,
With the golden cup, as was her design.
Drusilla sipped, then (scarcely depleted,
Was the chalice, twas her intent, in fine)
Handed it to her spouse with joyful face,
Which he took, and downed, draining it apace.

Canto XXXVII: 70-74: She curses Tanacro

Returning it to the priest, he, blithely, 70
Opened his arms to embrace Drusilla,
But her calm sweet expression had, swiftly,
Changed to one of fierce disdain and anger.
She thrust him back, scorning him completely,
And with ire and menace in her manner,
In a dreadful voice, with fiery eyes and face,
Cried: Traitor, away now; keep your place!

Shall you have joy and solace then, of me, 71
While tears are mine, and torment, and deep woe!
Vile death, from out my hand, I grant to thee,
Twas poison laced the cup, as you shall know.
It grieves me that too swift a death you'll see,
For I've ne'er heard of punishment so slow,
So harsh a death as that I'd wish on you,
To equal your grave sin; such is your due.

I grieves me that I could not live to see 72
The perfection of my sacrifice complete.
Had I wrought all, ere I thus set you free,
That I desired, twould smack less of defeat.
Yet may my own sweet consort pardon me,
And approve my true intent, if not the feat:
Lacking the power to compass all I would,
Yet I have wrought the utmost that I could.

The punishment I failed to grant you here, 73
That might have matched the depth of my desire,
I trust your shade will suffer many a year,
(While I look on) scorched by eternal fire.'
And then with joyous face it would appear
Yet clouded eye, her gaze she lifted higher,
And cried: 'Olindo, take this victim's life,
Receive this gift, from your avenging wife;

And beg grace for me, of the Lord above, 74
That I may dwell with you, in paradise.
If He should say that only those that prove
Worthy of merit, come before His eyes,
Say such am I; in honour of your love,
This evil wretch, before His altar, dies.
What greater merit could there be than this,
To end such vicious sinfulness as his?'

Canto XXXVII: 75-79: Marganor wreaks havoc in his grief

Her life now ended, as she ceased to speak, 75
And yet her face still seemed suffused with joy,
At having slain the man (such did she seek)
Who had her husband laboured to destroy.
Whether Tanacro, who the harm did wreak,
Followed or preceded her, as her envoy,
To Death, I know not, yet, I must believe,
He died first, that most poison did receive.



Stanza 75

Marganor, who saw his remaining son 76
Slump to the ground, and die in his embrace,
Was like to die himself, well-nigh undone
By the grief that pierced him in that place.
Two sons he had possessed, and now had none;
While two women had thus destroyed his race,
The death of his first son caused by the one;
Of the second by what this wife had done.

Love, pity, deep disdain, grief and anger, 77
With the desire for death, yet vengeance too,
Agitated the now-childless father,
Who moaned, as wind and wave in winter do.
Towards Drusilla, to avenge the murder,
He hastened now, yet found but death anew,
And, lashed by burning hatred, pain his lot,
Sought to offend her corpse that felt it not.

As a snake, pinned by a stick to the sand, 78
Will fix its jaws upon it, writhing madly,
As a mastiff, seeing some missile land,
Thrown by a passing lad, gnaws it fiercely,
Worries at it in rage, and there will stand,
Taking vengeance on a stone, uselessly,
So Marganor, worse than a dog or snake
Marred the bloodless corpse, for revenge's sake.

Finding his lust for vengeance unfulfilled
By this foul abuse of the voiceless dead,
He turned upon the women there, and killed
One, then another, with his sword, instead,
Mowing us down, as his fierce anger willed,
Like to dry reeds scythed in some marshy bed.
Few could escape; he struck, and struck again;
A hundred were wounded, and thirty slain.

Canto XXXVII: 80-85: And banishes the women

Marganor filled his people with such fear
That not a man there dared to meet his gaze;
The women, with the weaker of them, near
Dead with fright, fled their separate ways.
Then, by plain force, his friends, it would appear,
Restrained his rage (naught else this man obeys)
And made him to his rock-bound castle go,
Leaving tears and desolation there below.

The depth of his anger yet remaining,
He determined to exile all the women;
His friends there, and the populace praying
That he'd not slay us all, but think again,
While that same day he decreed the thing,
And banished all of us, but spared the men.
He has placed this restriction on us all:
Woe to those that approach the castle wall.

From wives were the husbands separated,
From mothers their sons, and if tis known
That some brave soul visits here, they're fated
To be denounced to him, for spies he's sown.
Many have been punished, mutilated
Or slain in cruel ways; we sigh and groan,
For he has made a law, worse ne'er has been,
At least a worse we've ne'er heard of nor seen:

Every woman who is found within that vale,
(For some will venture down there, even now)
Must be beaten with sticks o'er hill and dale,
And banished from the land; such he did vow;
Their skirts are sheared, no protest doth avail;
That which Nature hides, shame on their brow,
They must reveal; while if some valiant knight
Accompanies a woman, she's slain outright;

She, though she's escorted by a warrior,
Is dragged, by this enemy of piety,
To his sons' sepulchre, where her murder
Is achieved by his own hand, most cruelly,
A sacrificial offering, while his armour
Is stripped from her champion, and he
For his pains is imprisoned neath his hall,
For a thousand men are at his beck and call.

And furthermore, I say, ere one is freed,
He makes him swear, upon the sacred host:
For as long as he lives, he must concede
That to shun the sex he'll do his uttermost.
If it seems good to you to scorn his creed,
And display the prowess you seem to boast,
Then draw near the wall, with these maids, boldly,
Prove his strength is less than his cruelty.'

Canto XXXVII: 86-91: He captures Drusilla's aged servant

The warrior-maids by her words were moved
First to pity, then to scorn and disdain,
And if it had been day, not night, had proved
Themselves against this evil châtelaine;
Thus, when Aurora had once more removed
The darkness, signalling to the stars, again,
That to the rising Sun they must give place,
They armed and mounted, sternness in each face.

Ere departing, they heard a mighty sound
Of trampling hooves, from the vale below,
Such that it drew their gaze, there they found,
At no greater distance than a stone's throw,
A troop that through a narrow gully wound.
A score perhaps in number, passing slow,
Through the winding ravine in close array,
While others too, on foot, pursued their way.

They led an aged woman on a horse,
(Lined and wrinkled was the face of that same)
In the manner of one whose bitter course
Leads to the gallows, prison, or the flame.
Despite the flow of time, amidst that force,
The women of the village knew the dame
As that crone who'd accompanied Drusilla,
And had assisted her in the murder.

Seized, by the rapacious Tanacro, 89
Along with the mistress that she served,
She'd distilled the poison, as we know,
That dealt the punishment which he deserved.
She'd then shunned the church; for what must follow
The crone anticipated; unobserved,
She had fled from the village and had, swiftly,
Sought a distant place offering safety.

Marganor had learnt she was hiding 90
Somewhere in Austria, and he had sought
To lay his hands upon her, desiring
To hang her, or to burn her, at his court.
And finally, with Avarice conspiring
Seduced a greedy baron, richly bought,
Who, to his profit, then, secured the crone,
And sent her to Marganor, for his own,

Tied on a pack-horse, borne to Costanza, 91
Like a bundle of merchandise, indeed,
And gagged so not a peep issued from her,
Imprisoned in a chest, aboard the steed.
From there, at the bidding of their master,
From whom naught of pity did e'er proceed,
His men had led her there, so that he might
Vent all his rage upon her, and his spite.



Stanza 91

Canto XXXVII: 92-97: Who is freed by the three warriors

As the stream that flows from Monte Viso, 92
Grows to form the River Po, descending,
(Fed by the Lambro, and the Ticino,
And a host of tributaries, unending)
Towards the plains and the sea, even so,
His pride and impetuosity increasing,
Went Ruggiero, raging at Marganor,
While the warrior-maids raged even more.

They burned with such hatred, and such anger 93
Against the wretch, incensed by his crimes,
That despite his army, and present danger,
They would press on to punish him betimes;
Yet with no easy death; they'd have him suffer,
By pains unknown e'en to those evil climes,
Rather the fiercest torments he should feel,
Prolonged and bitter, wrought with fire and steel.

But first twas right to free the aged dame, 94
Being led towards her death by that crew.
Loosing the reins, spurring their steeds they came,
Upon them, making short work of them too.
Ne'er had they, who felt the power of those same,
Suffered such mighty blows as from these two,
Thankful, with but the loss of sword and shield,
And the crone, and the horse, to quit the field,

Just as a wolf, that's burdened with its prey, 95
When heading for its den, on paths secure,
Meets a hunter with his hounds on the way,
When it had thought all safe, and, safe no more,
Drops what it bears, and swiftly speeds away,
Through the woods, devoid of spoils, as before.
No less swift were that band to quit the dale,
Than the three were to see those wretches quail.

Not only did they leave the crone behind, 96
And their gear, but many a steed as well,
And from any bank or ledge they could find,
Launched themselves, to escape that dell.
The warriors were pleased, who now assigned
Steeds to the three, that, behind each saddle,
Had been mounted all the long day before,
Burdening their own good coursers sore.

Lightened of their load, their horses bore 97
Our three to the infamous keep nearby,
Determined the old crone, what is more,
Should see true vengeance wrought with her own eye.
She (fearing lest it ended ill, I'm sure)
Shrieked and wept, vainly seeking to deny
The need for her presence, though Ruggiero
Having seized her, conveyed her on Frontino.



Stanza 97

Canto XXXVII: 98-102: Marganor is unseated and his men dispersed

They reached a summit, and from there could see 98
A town, with wealthy mansions, down below,
With nothing to defend it outwardly,
Since it had neither moat nor wall to show,
In its midst a rock towered, and proudly
On its top stood a keep, supported so,
Fearlessly, our warriors forged ahead,
For twas Marganor's castle; on they sped,

Yet no sooner had they their entry made, 99
Than those who kept guard beside the gate,
Placed behind them a solid barricade,
While their exit was in a like, barred state.
Behold Marganor, with a cavalcade
Arrived, and men on foot, armed and irate,
That, briefly and proudly, made them sure
Of the continuance of that vile law.

Marfisa (who had previously agreed 100
Their plan of campaign with Bradamante,
And Ruggiero) at he who had decreed
That ill custom, spurred her charger fiercely.
Nor her lance, nor her good sword, did she need,
But, as valiant as ever, hammered, bravely,
On this Marganor's helmet with her fist,
Till, half-dead, his courser's neck he kissed.

Chiaramonte's maid had with Marfisa gone, 101
Nor was Ruggiero's steed far in the rear.
They, with levelled spears, had soon undone
Half a dozen, and had filled the rest with fear,
One he slew; a paunch, a chest, another one
Clasped his neck, a fifth his head; and then sheer
Through the sixth man's spine and breast went the stroke
Of his lance, which splintered therein, and broke.

As many as Bradamante touched, she downed, 102
With the golden lance, to greet the solid stone;
Seeming like lightning, leaping o'er the ground,
Marring all beneath, striking flesh and bone.
The people scattered, some towards the mound
On which the castle stood, some, swiftly flown,
Seeking the plain, church, or home for shelter,
Abandoning the dead, ran helter-skelter.

Canto XXXVII: 103-106: The people approve of Marganor's downfall

Marfisa, meanwhile, had bound Marganor. 103
His hands behind his back (to the crone,
She consigned him, one happy to ensure
He was guarded closely, and confined alone)
Then sought to burn the town, or see the law
Repealed, and devout repentance shown,
For its past errors, and a fresh law made
That she would see established and obeyed.

To gain her wish required scant persuasion, 104
For they feared she might do more than she said,
And lay about her, on the least occasion,
Or burn the town, above the silent dead,
Killing all (while thwarting all evasion)
That to Marganor and his laws were wed.
They'd done what most folk do, all that host,
And obeyed the one that they feared the most.

Since none could place their trust in another, 105
And none had dared to exercise their will,
They'd seen him banish father or brother,
Steal their goods, and their honour; even kill.
But the heart, silent here, is heard in other
Realms above; God, and all his saints, seek still
The surer judgement, which though oft delayed,
Sees, with harsher punishment, the debt repaid.

Thus, the crowd full, of hatred and anger, 106
Sought vengeance for each evil word and deed,
As the proverb says: all ran with sudden fervour
To strip the tree the wind has felled; indeed,
Let Marganor's fate teach every leader:
Evil actions shall their own downfall breed;
To see the wicked punished for their crime
Delights both great and small, in every clime.



Stanza 106

Canto XXXVII: 107-111: He is handed over to the crone

Many a man whose dear wife, or sister, 107
Or fair daughter, or mother had been slain,
Suppressing his smothered wrath no longer
Hastened to deal the man a world of pain;
While howe'er magnanimous each warrior
None would persuade the people to refrain,
For all three had doomed the villain to death:
Let grief and torment share his final breath.

They gave the wretch, stark naked, to the crone, 108
And bound so tight that he could ne'er work free,
For she bore such hatred to him, I own,
As e'er one could towards an enemy.
She, to assuage her grief, now made him groan,
Bloodying his flesh, nigh universally,
With a sharpened goad that a village lad
Set in her aged hand, that drove him mad.



Stanza 108

Nor did Ullania, or those maidens with her, 109
Who would not soon forget their bitter shame,
Withold their hands, but one then another,
Bent upon vengeance, sought to hurt and maim.
As great as was their longing, yet the power
To savage him was lacking; all the same,
A needle sank deep and, aided by a stone,
Tooth and nail engendered many a moan.

As a wild torrent, swollen by the rain 110
And filled with the melting snow, plunges down,
Tearing out rocks and trees, towards the plain,
Flooding the fields, until the ripe crops drown,
And then, at the point where loss exceeds the gain,
Its force subsides, vanished its brief renown,
Until a woman, a child, can pass it by,
Tread where it flowed, and keep their stockings dry,

So Marganor, who'd caused the folk to mourn, 111
And tremble at the mention of his name.
For one had come to break the tyrant's horn,
To quench his pride, obliterate his fame,
Until the children, too, put him to scorn,
Tugging at mane, and beard, the lion now tame.
Ruggiero and the maidens turned aside
And to the keep, set on its height, did ride.

Canto XXXVII: 112-114: The warriors free the three kings

The place was yielded them without a fight. 112
Of all within, much of it rich and rare,
Part they seized, part gave as gifts outright,
To Ullania, and her companions; there,
They brought the golden shield once more to light,
And freed the three kings from that evil lair,
Who'd reached it, as I think I related,
On foot, unarmed, and been incarcerated.

For from the day that brave Bradamante 113
Had overthrown them, they'd gone unarmed,
Accompanying the Icelandic lady,
On foot, as though their very lives were charmed;
Though who knows if that was better, truly,
Or worse, if they'd see the maid unharmed;
Worse in lacking the means to strike a blow,
Yet better, surely, in not doing so;

For she, like all the other women whom 114
Armed men had guided to that keep before,
Would have been borne off to the brothers' tomb,
And there been sacrificed by Marganor.
And death, indeed, is a more final doom,
Than revealing one's private parts, I'm sure;
Besides, what offset the grief and shame
Was that here the use of force was to blame.

Canto XXXVII: 115-120: A new law is framed

The warrior-maids, ere they rode away, 115
Called the men together, and made them swear
They'd allow the town's women to hold sway,
Ruling all matters there, and everywhere;
And would torment defaulters, night and day,
All those that to breach the law might dare.
In short, whatever, elsewhere, men controlled
The women would handle there, young and old;

And made them promise that no man ever 116
That came to the castle would be received,
Whether on foot, or mounted on a courser,
Nor granted lodging, nor his needs relieved,
Unless he swore, by God above, forever,
(Or stronger oaths if such could be conceived)
To every female he would stand a friend;
And always, from its foes, that sex defend;

And, were he to wed sooner or later, 117
Once joined in marriage with a loving wife,
He would obey her in every matter,
And be her subject, all his wedded life.
Then Marfisa said she'd return hereafter,
Ere the autumn, bringing pain and strife
If they sought to flout the law so declared,
And burn the place, with not a building spared.

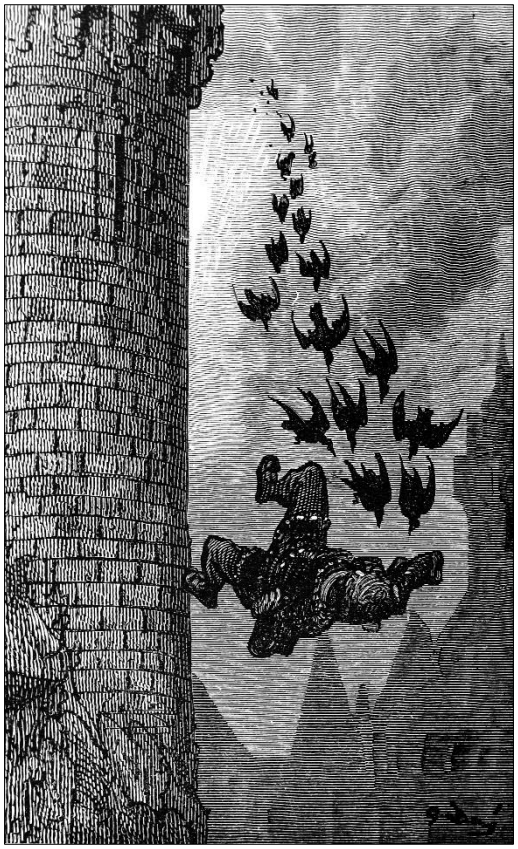
Nor would the company leave, moreover, 118
Till Drusilla's corpse, from an evil place,
Had been brought to light, and the sepulchre
That held her husband's corpse it did grace.
Meanwhile her aged servant, had further
Reddened Marganor, goading him apace,
Only grieving that she lacked the strength
To strike and mar the wretch at greater length.

Beside the church, the warrior-maids beheld 119
A pillar standing in the market square,
On which this Marganor had felt compelled
To inscribe his mad and cruel law; and there,
As if a victory unparalleled
They celebrated thus, the martial pair,
Hung his armour, helm, and shield, and had traced
The law that the men had now embraced.

The company lingered there, till Marfisa 120
Might see the work completed in her name,
Replacing that once carved on the pillar
That had doomed all women to death or shame.
Ullania had withdrawn, however,
To replace her clothes, for it could but maim,
She felt, her honour, given what she wore,
Till she was dressed and adorned as before.

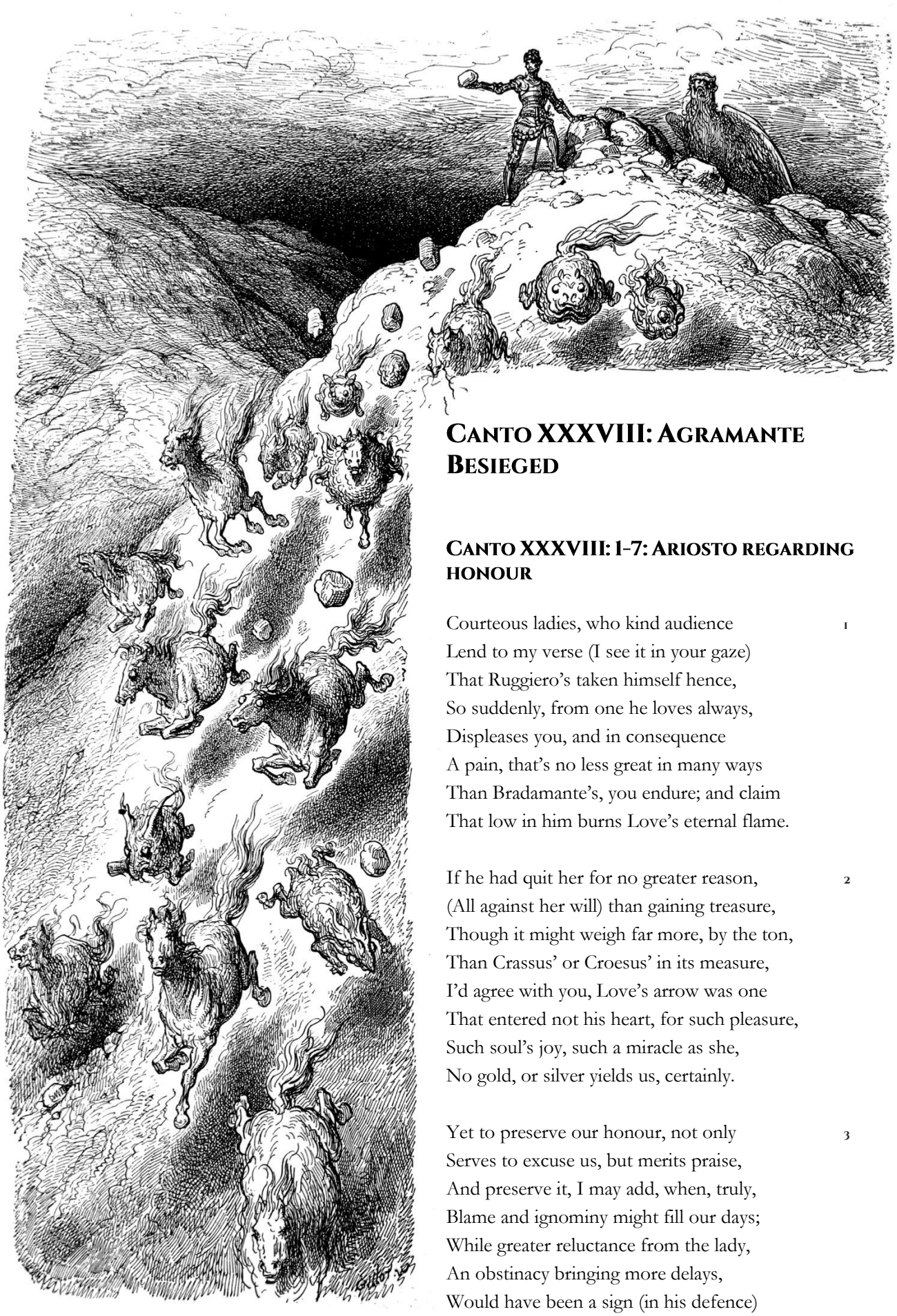
Canto XXXVII: 121-122: The company depart

At that place she remained; in her power 121
Lay the vile Marganor, and she, concerned
That he might escape in some evil hour,
And cause more harm, though now interned,
Had him flung from the summit of the tower,
A leap for which e'en he had never yearned.
Yet speak no more of her and hers, my art,
But tell of the rest, who for Arles, depart.



Stanza 121

All that day, and a good part of next morn, 122
The company rode on, until they came,
To a fork in the road, from which was born
The path to Arles, the other as its aim
Had Charlemagne's camp; the lovers, torn
Apart once more, a sad embrace did claim,
The maidens sought the camp; Ruggiero
To Arles was gone, and so ends my canto.



Canto XXXVIII: Agramante Besieged

Canto XXXVIII: 1-7: Ariosto regarding honour

Courteous ladies, who kind audience 1
Lend to my verse (I see it in your gaze)
That Ruggiero's taken himself hence,
So suddenly, from one he loves always,
Displeases you, and in consequence
A pain, that's no less great in many ways
Than Bradamante's, you endure; and claim
That low in him burns Love's eternal flame.

If he had quit her for no greater reason, 2
(All against her will) than gaining treasure,
Though it might weigh far more, by the ton,
Than Crassus' or Croesus' in its measure,
I'd agree with you, Love's arrow was one
That entered not his heart, for such pleasure,
Such soul's joy, such a miracle as she,
No gold, or silver yields us, certainly.

Yet to preserve our honour, not only 3
Serves to excuse us, but merits praise,
And preserve it, I may add, when, truly,
Blame and ignominy might fill our days;
While greater reluctance from the lady,
An obstinacy bringing more delays,
Would have been a sign (in his defence)
Of her showing little love, and less sense.

For if her lover's life the true lover 4
Should love more than her own, so much the more
(I speak of a lover here, moreover,
Whom Cupid's dart has pierced to his heart's core)
Should she prefer his honour to her pleasure,
And, indeed, set by it the greater store,
For we value our honour more than life,
And seek it o'er the claims of e'en a wife.

His duty to his lord, brave Ruggiero 5
Pursued, he could scarce do otherwise,
Since he had no true cause to up and go,
And gain but endless shame as the sad prize.
And if Almonte had slain his father, no
Blame fell on Agramante who, nowise
Guilty of his cruel father's past offence,
Had treated the youth well in recompense.

And it was now his duty to attend 6
Upon his king, while his Bradamante
Her support to his doing so did lend,
Not begging him to stay; for, put simply,
The youth could at a later time amend
His sad neglect, if aught did now offend;
Two centuries would not erase the blame,
If a moment was lost to honour's claim.

Ruggiero made for Arles, Agramante 7
Camping there with the remnants of his force,
While Marfisa, and his Bradamante,
Whose new-found kinship made them friends perforce,
Rode, side by side, to Charlemagne's army,
He revealing his strength, bent on a course,
Through which he now hoped, by siege or other
Means, fair France's freedom to recover.

Canto XXXVIII: 8-11: The warrior-maidens are received by Charlemagne

Upon reaching the camp, Bradamante 8
Was greeted with joy and celebration,
Saluted and welcomed midst the army
Inclining her head to many a brave one.
Rinaldo, on hearing, hastened swiftly
To meet her; Ricciardo, at the run,
Ricciardetto, and others of her kin,
Met her gladly, and escorted her in.

Once it was known that her companion 9
Was Marfisa, renowned for her prowess,
Who from Cathay to Spanish shores had come,
One crowned with a thousand laurels no less,
All flocked there from tent and pavilion,
A swirling crowd about the two did press,
Pushing, shoving, heaving, but to stare
Upon the beauty of that martial pair.

They greeted Charlemagne with reverence; 10
This the first day (so Bishop Turpin writes)
That Marfisa, in any king's presence,
Bowed the knee, yet here, amidst his brave knights,
To Pepin's son, she did so, for her sense
Of what was great, set him upon the heights,
O'er Christian or Moorish royalty,
Known for their riches or their chivalry.

Charlemagne welcomed her benignly, 11
Issuing from his tent to greet the maid,
And seated her at his side, royally,
Midst kings, princes, barons, there arrayed.
He gave leave to depart to the many
While a few of the good and true yet stayed;
His great lords and paladins remained,
The rest flocked outside, somewhat pained.

Canto XXXVIII: 12-18: Marfisa addresses him

Marfisa, in a grateful tone, began 12
'Glorious, and unconquered, Emperor,
That East to West, makes many a man,
From Scythia, Ethiopia to this shore,
Bow to the white cross borne in your van,
King, wisest and most just, to kneel before
You here, your fame, that knows no boundary,
Has, from a distant land, thus, enticed me.

And, to speak true, envy alone moved me. 13
To make war on you alone, I came here,
Thinking none so powerful, so mighty,
Should rule, and yet not to my faith adhere.
For that reason, we've rendered this country
One pool of Christian blood and, tis clear,
Yet fiercer wrath was kindling here within,
Till one befriended me, who proved my kin.

For, while I sought to do you harm, I found 14
That Ruggiero of Risa was my father,
(I could at greater length the story sound)
One brought to ruin by an evil brother.
I, within my mother's womb yet bound,
Carried o'er the sea, was in that other
Country born; raised, till seven years of age,
And then by Arabs wrested from, a mage.

Those rogues sold me, as a slave, in Persia, 15
To a king who, at a later time, I slew,
For my virginity he'd sought thereafter,
And all his court I slaughtered, but a few.
The kingdom I ruled, shared with no other,
And, such was my fortune, a mere two
Months short of my nineteenth year, I gained
My sixth kingdom, and o'er those realms I reigned.

And then, moved by envy of your fame, 16
I set my heart, as I have said but now,
On assailing the grandeur of your name,
And could, in error, have achieved my vow.
But blind chance, that has served my will to tame,
And clip my fury's wings, has taught me how
I am come of a Christian line, and we
Are bound by ties of consanguinity.

And since my father served you, being kin, 17
Likewise, I bind myself to serve, also.
And that envy, that hatred felt within
Towards you once, all such I will forego.
I reserve for Agramante's father's sin,
And all that race, my anger born of woe;
All those that are descended from the three
That robbed me of my parents, cruelly.'

And Christianity she would embrace, 18
She said and, having slain Agramante,
Would seek leave to return to her own place
And see the folk baptised in that country,
And take arms against those who would replace
Her faith with the infidels'; and she
Promised that whate'er she might thus gain,
Would belong to Holy Church, and Charlemagne.

Canto XXXVIII: 19–21: She takes her place among her kin

The emperor who was no less eloquent 19
Than he was brave and wise, praised the maid,
And exalted her as one of true intent,
And to her father and kin tribute paid.
He replied point by point, gave his assent,
His true heart, in his face and speech, displayed,
And concluded his warm words, thereafter,
By accepting her as both kin and daughter.

Then he rose, and embraced her like a father, 20
And kissed her brow, while, with joyful face,
Those of Chiaramonte, and Mongrana,
Showed the maid honour, and did her grace.
Twould take too long to tell how, thereafter,
Rinaldo praised her, as of his martial race,
Whose valour he had often seen on show
When they'd besieged Albracca, long ago.

Twould take too long to tell here, also, 21
Of how Guidon rejoiced to see Marfisa,
And Aquilante and Sansonetto,
And Grifone (all in that city with her)
And Ricciardetto; and Viviano
And Malagigi, who when Maganza
Had sought to trade with those traitors of Spain
Found in her a true comrade, to their gain.

Canto XXXVIII: 22–23: And is baptised

All was prepared for the following day, 22
Charlemagne himself most carefully
Adorning, with a sumptuous array,
The platform where her baptism would be.
The bishops and the clerics paved the way,
Wise in the rites of Christianity,
So that in all its sacred lore, Marfisa,
Might be instructed, its new-found daughter.

Archbishop Turpin, suitably arrayed, 23
Baptised Marfisa, while Charlemagne,
From the health-giving font, raised the maid,
With fitting ceremony, once again.
But tis high time Astolfo brought his aid,
And the phial that his sense must contain,
To mad Orlando; speeding from the Moon,
In Elijah's fiery car, and none too soon.

Canto XXXVIII: 24-28: Astolfo restores the sight of the Emperor of Nubia and Ethiopia

Down from the shining orb flew Astolfo, 24
To the Earth, and laned on the lofty height,
Bearing the phial destined for Orlando
(Twould end his madness, if he'd judged aright).
Once there, Saint John, to him, a plant did show,
The herb that would restore the emperor's sight,
If, at his Nubian court, he would but touch
His eyes, with a prayer or two and such.

For, having done so, as his first reward 25
He'd be granted men to march on Hippo.
And how he might train them, as their lord,
Clad in plate and mail, to fight, and also
How, from the sandstorms, he might afford
Sound shelter (that blind folk when they blow);
And. point by point. the ordering of his force,
The aged saint explained, and did endorse;

Then had him mount on the winged courser, 26
(Ruggiero's and Atlante's steed before).
On taking leave of Saint John, thereafter,
His holy guide, he sought the Nile once more,
And coasting above one bank or the other,
Flying swiftly, along the river's shore,
To the Nubian realms he came that day,
And to the Emperor Senapo made his way.



Stanza 26

Great was the show of pleasure and delight 27
With which the emperor received the peer,
Who'd not forgotten how the valiant knight
Had made the Harpies things of yesteryear;
But when Astolfo then restored his sight,
The opaqueness gone, and his eyes as clear
As they had seemed at any former time,
He worshipped the peer as a god sublime:

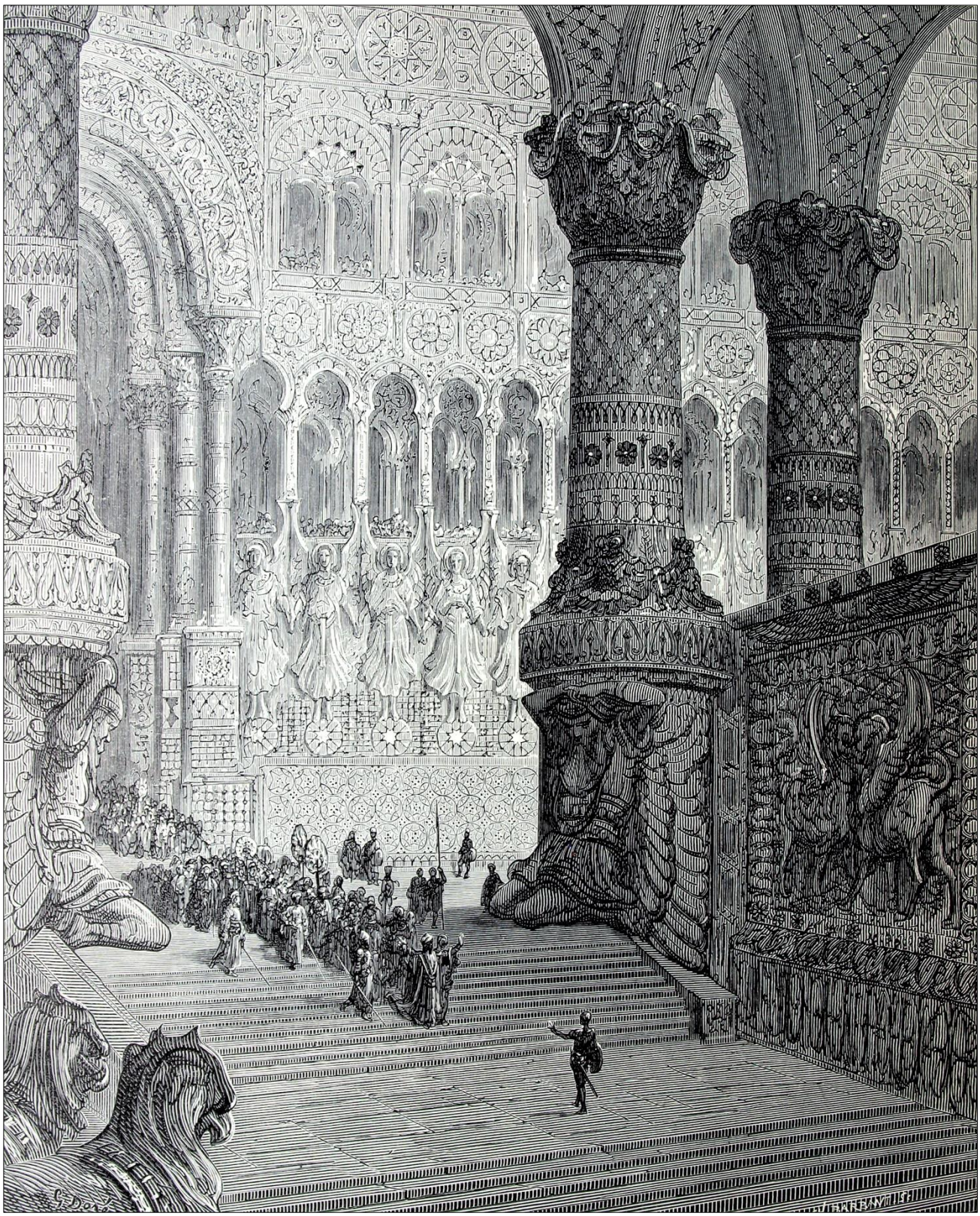
So that not only the force he asked for, 28
To war against Bizerte (which was Hippo)
He gave him, but a hundred thousand more,
And then declared that he himself would go.
Travelling on foot, on that desert floor,
The Nubians, might well be hampered though;
Few were the horses that their sand dunes saw,
Of elephants, and camels, they owned more.

Canto XXXVIII: 29-31: He imprisons the South Wind

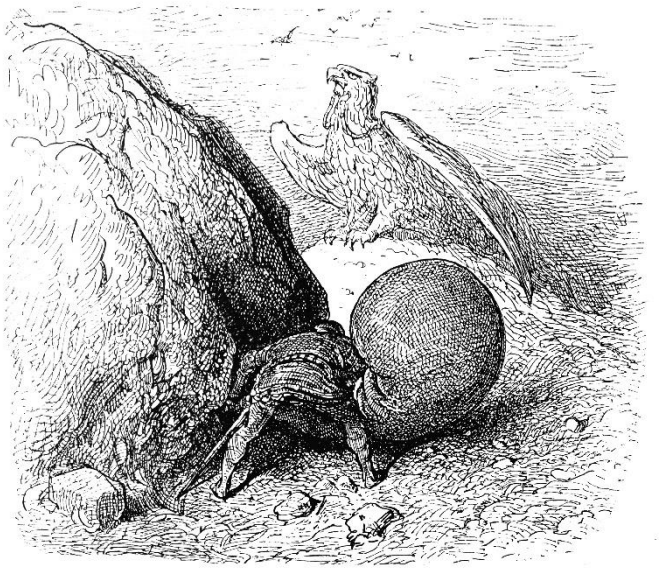
The night before they left (his Nubian force) 29
Astolfo mounted on the hippogriff,
And then flew swiftly on a southwards course,
To where Auster dwelt, on a beetling cliff;
For that angry god, the South Wind's source,
Once he was restrained (twas when not if),
Could n'er thwart their passage (his open mouth,
Forever blew vast sand-storms from the south).

As he'd been instructed by his master, 30
Once Astolfo had reached the lofty cave,
O'er its vent he placed an empty bladder.
The weary wind was resting there; a brave
And silent man it took that crack to cover,
The only exit from that deep enclave.
Auster heard naught, and issuing from within,
At dawn, was held a prisoner, in that skin.

Astolfo, with the bladder, joyfully 31
Returned to Nubia. That very day,
Swiftly leading forth his dark-skinned army,
Supplies behind, he northwards took his way.
O'er the shifting desert lands in safety,
Towards Mount Atlas, with his whole array,
The glorious duke travelled o'er the sand,
Unharmed by captive Auster, as he'd planned.



Stanza 27 "*Great was the show of pleasure and delight, with which the emperor received the peer*"



Stanza 31

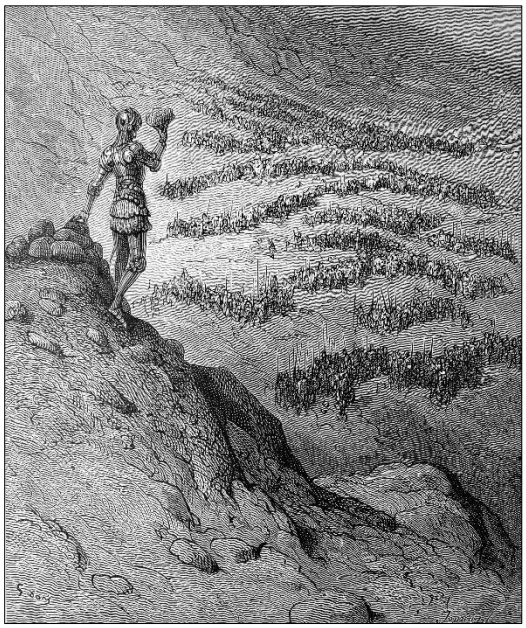
Canto XXXVIII: 32-35: Then attacks Agramante's forces in Africa

Having gained the far side of the mountain, 32
Whence was visible the plain and the sea,
He chose the noblest of his force of men,
Bold, yet disciplined and orderly,
At its foot, divided them in troops, and then
Disposed them o'er the flat ground evenly.
Leaving them there, he once more climbed the steep,
Filled full of thought both reverent and deep.

For, kneeling on the summit of the mount, 33
He now sought aid from his holy master,
And, sure of being heard at that pure fount,
The host of pebbles there began to scatter.
What can he not do, that on Christ doth count!
The stones, descending, grew ever larger,
And, on nearing the level plain below
Heads, necks, legs, and bellies they did show!

Neighing loudly, down the slopes they sped, 34
Leaping lightly, till they reached flat ground,
Arching their backs, bold stallions, strangely bred,
Bay, roan, and dappled grey, yet strong and sound.
The men, who waited, found they could be led
(All were saddled and bridled); at a bound,
Astolfo had acquired his cavalry,
Each man sitting his brave steed, steadily.

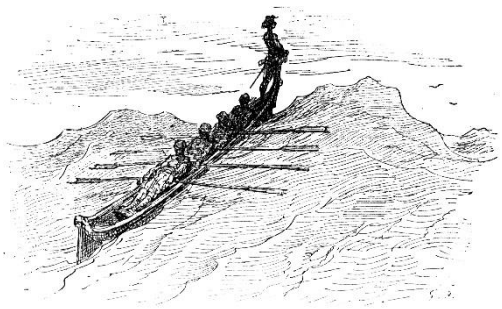
His eighty thousand one hundred and two 35
Men on foot became horsemen, in a day,
Who scoured the plains, and sacked, and burned, and slew,
Felling all who sought to stand in their way.
King Agramante, till he was there anew,
Had left the King of Ferza to hold sway,
The Algazeris' king, and King Branzardo,
And they it was who now opposed Astolfo.



Stanza 35

Canto XXXVIII: 36-41: Agramante seeks counsel

Meanwhile a barque had been sent, promptly, 36
That winged its way, borne by sail and oar,
To carry the news to Agramante
That his power there was less than secure.
It flew on night and day, unwearyingly,
Until it reached the far Provençal shore,
To find the king at Arles, under strain,
For camped within a mile lay Charlemagne.



Stanza 36

Agramante, on hearing of the danger 37
To his realm, threatened by his French campaign,
Summoned to him, to counsel him further
All the brave kings and princes of his train;
Marsilio and Sobrino, ever
The wisest of them, caught his eye again,
And glancing at them once or twice, he then
Addressed that gathering of his noblest men:

'Though I know it ill behoves a leader 38
To say "I had not planned for this" yet when
Tis from a most unexpected quarter
The blow falls, one far from the thoughts of men,
It seems a fair excuse for his failure.
Such is my case; I was in error then
In leaving our realms open to attack
From these Nubians massing at our back.

Yet who but God alone, that ever knows 39
What is to come on Earth, would have conceived
That from a land, through which the far Nile flows,
So great a host would come, or have believed
They could pass where the shifting sand e'er blows
O'er the wastes between us? I was deceived;
To besiege Bizerte they have come in haste,
And the shores of Africa now lay waste.

I, thus, seek your counsel on the matter, 40
On whether, without gaining from this war,
I should return, or not quit our venture,
Till Charlemagne, a prisoner, sees that shore;
And how then, we raise the siege, together
To be threatened by his armies no more.
Let who has aught to say, not be silent,
That the best advice might fuel our intent.'

So Agramante spoke, and turned his eye 41
On Marsilius, who in his glance now read
That he should be the first to make reply,
To all that Africa's great lord had said.
The Spanish monarch, who was seated nigh
The king, knelt graciously, and bowed his head,
And then returned to take his place once more
Ere he, eloquently, addressed the floor.

Canto XXXVIII: 42-48: Marsilius advises that they continue the campaign

'Whatever good or ill news Rumour brings 42
The tale forever grows in the telling.
Thus, I ne'er despair at the news she sings,
Nor am less bold, in all I'm pursuing,
Whether tis good or ill towards us wings,
Treating fear and hope alike, and holding
Them as lesser things, and beside the way,
As many a tongue affirmed in its day.

And I trust the less that news which seems 43
To stretch the bounds of credibility,
And here, to me, tis but a thing of dreams
That one who rules so remote a country
Would dare to set afoot such warlike schemes,
Or succeed in mustering an army,
Or cross those sands where Cambyses, tis said,
Sent his ill-omened force to join the dead.

I well believe an Arab band, or two, 44
Have descended the mountains to the plain,
And finding none to counter them, or few,
Have then sacked, and burned, destroyed and slain.
And that Branzardo who rules there, for you,
As viceroy in control of your domain,
Writes of thousands, where of tens he should write,
To excuse himself for his own oversight.

And if these Nubians, by some miracle, 45
Were to rain down from the skies above,
Or, perchance disguised as clouds, to battle
Came o'er the sands, so none saw them move,
Do you think of your men, there, so little;
Your realm at risk, if such the case did prove?
Cowards indeed your garrisons appear,
If such unwarlike peoples they now fear.

But should you choose to send a modest fleet, 46
As long as your banners at the masts are seen,
Rather than our bold opposition meet,
Whether tis Arabs that now haunt the scene,
Or Nubians indeed, they'll soon retreat,
Tis through hearing you're here with us, I ween,
And parted by the sea from your own land,
That they've dared to send some marauding band.

Seize this moment for revenge; Charlemagne 47
Is without his bold nephew, Orlando,
Scant resistance will you meet, I maintain,
If you choose to go forth against the foe.
If through blindness or neglect, you'll not deign
To engage them, then Fortune will not show
Her shining face to you, for many a day,
To our great shame and harm; such is her way.'

Like arguments Marsilius did advance, 48
Seeking thus to persuade the high command
That the Moorish army should hold to France,
Till Charlemagne was banished from the land;
But Sobrino, who'd perceived, at a glance,
The plan Marsilius would put in hand,
Preferring public good to private gain,
Said this, in answer to the King of Spain:

Canto XXXVIII: 49-65: Sobrino argues for an honourable peace

'My lord, when I exhorted you to peace, 49
If but my prophecy had not proved true,
Or you had placed a little trust, at least,
In me, ere my foresight was shown anew,
And not in those men that I'd be pleased,
To view here, at this moment, before you,
Alzirdo, Marbalusto, Martasino,
And Rodomonte, who boasted so

Of wishing to shatter France like glass, 50
Following you to heaven or to hell.
E'en your royal self he sought to pass,
And send the Christians fleeing pell-mell;
Yet now, immersed in idleness, alas,
In your time of need, he with sloth doth dwell.
While I, that as a coward was decried
For my true prophecy, am at your side;

And will be so, until I reach the end 51
Of this life, bowed by a weight of years,
And every day your honour will defend
Against the bravest among France's peers.
For there's none dare say, be he foe or friend,
That my actions proved ill, despite my fears.
And none has done as much amidst this host,
Some far less, that of their deeds now boast.

This I declare, to show that everything 52
That I said before, and now say again,
Comes from a firm heart, noble, unflinching,
Faithful, and full of truth, inured to pain.
I counsel you to think now of departing,
And returning swiftly to your own domain.
For little wisdom has that man, my brothers,
That would lose his own to gain another's.

If this be gain, you know: full thirty-two 53
Brave vassal kings of yours left Africa,
Yet if we pause to count those kings anew,
Scarcely a third survive; may no further
Losses, God be pleased, henceforth accrue:
If you will pursue this quest, however,
I fear lest not a fourth or fifth remain,
And we yet leave the field to Charlemagne.

It aids us that our foe lacks his Orlando, 54
For where our men are few, none might there be,
But that does little to remove our woe,
Though it delays our fate. Behold we see
No less brave a knight, I mean Rinaldo,
To whom this fight but seems his destiny;
And then his bold race are warriors all,
Whose acts and deeds our Saracens apall,

For a second Mars, a second God of War, 55
(Although it grieves my heart to praise the foe)
Goes with him, Brandimarte; on a par
In terms of prowess with bold Orlando.
His skills I've proven, or have viewed afar,
Or heard from others, and have learned tis so.
Though, of their force, Orlando makes not one,
Still have we lost more fields here than we've won.

If we have lost great noblemen to date, 56
I yet fear we'll lose far more in future.
Mandricardo has met a grievous fate;
Gradasso has ceased his martial succour,
While Marfisa has left her post of late,
And Rodomonte dwells here no longer;
Were he as true, as he's brave, gainst the foe,
Less need for Gradasso, Mandricardo.

And while we have lost the aid of those four, 57
And many thousands, on our side, lie dead,
And our champions are present on this shore
With none left to be furnished in their stead,
Charlemagne is but re-supplied with more;
Like to Orlando and Rinaldo bred,
No less brave, for from here to Bactria
Such as his recruits you'll hear of never.

Of Guidon Selvaggio you may know, 58
And three whom I both respect and fear,
Sansonetto, and the sons of Oliviero,
More than every other bold knight or peer
Of Germany or elsewhere, that doth show
Allegiance to the Christian Empire here,
High though I rate those of newer stamp
That, to our cost, are gathered in that camp.

As often as you ride forth on that plain, 59
So oft will you be scattered o'er the field.
If we, the men of Africa and Spain,
With twice their strength, were yet obliged to yield,
What will ensue when France, renewed again,
With Germany, Italy, England for her shield,
And Scotland too, but half their number meet?
What will we know, but loss and sore defeat?

If you prove obstinate, and seek to stay 60
You'll lose your people here, and there your land,
While if we now depart, you'll save the day,
Your kingdom, and the forces now to hand.
To quit Marsilius, would bring shame, I say,
Since your friends would blame you, yet understand,
The remedy is peace with Charlemagne;
If it pleased you, he would agree that same.

Though it might seem there is small honour there, 61
If you seek peace, who sought not enmity,
And though you would prolong this whole affair,
Which meets with scant success, as you may see,
At least, if you'd be ruled by me, take care,
And perchance by craft achieve the victory.
Let our quarrel lie with but a single foe,
And let our champion be Ruggiero.

For our knight is such, you and I both know, 62
That in fighting hand to hand, one on one,
He's a match for Orlando, Rinaldo,
Or any other warrior neath the sun.
But if to universal war you go,
Though more than mortal are the deeds he's done,
He's but one man amongst a host of men,
And faces as great a host, and what then?

It seems to me, if it seems good to you, 63
That you should seek an end to this conflict.
To spare the waste of blood that would ensue,
The harm each side would certainly inflict.
Say to the Christian king, allow but two,
His champion and yours, and both hand-picked,
To dispute the whole question of this war,
Till one conquers, and the other breathes no more.

Let the pact be that he whose champion 64
Fails, shall pay tribute to the other.
This should not displease the Christian,
Who thinks his warrior is the greater;
While our Ruggiero, set man to man,
Will more than hold his own, and conquer.
The right is with him, in this cause of ours;
He'd succeed, though his enemy were Mars.'

With this, and many a sound argument, 65
Sobrino gained the end he had in sight,
And, on that day, interpreters were sent
To Charlemagne to offer peace outright.
He, seeing the advantage, gave consent,
Thinking the war now won, for the knight
He chose to fight the duel was Rinaldo,
Trusting in none more, except Orlando.

Canto XXXVIII: 66-69: Ruggiero and Rinaldo will duel to end the war

Those of both armies welcomed the accord, 66
For weary both in body and in mind,
This pact would a well-earned rest afford,
And all could there a source of comfort find;
To pass what time their fate would yet afford
In quiet, and sweet repose, all were inclined,
And all now cursed the hatred and the ire
That had filled their hearts with warlike desire.



Stanza 65

Rinaldo was seen to be elated, 67
That he was trusted so by Charlemagne,
Whom the emperor had so highly rated,
And glad to undertake this prize to gain.
Ruggiero's skills he thought over-stated,
That he was bound to win, with little pain,
And deemed Ruggiero the lesser knight,
Though he'd slain Mandricardo in fair fight.

Ruggiero, though honoured for his part, 68
On being chosen likewise by his king,
As better than the rest in warlike art,
And so trusted to accomplish this thing,
Nonetheless revealed a troubled heart
In his gaze, though ne'er the duel fearing,
For he went not in dread of Rinaldo,
Though he were leagued gainst him with Orlando,

But because he knew the Christian knight 69
Was brother to the maid that he held dear,
That in her every word she chose to write
Had complained of his failures, loud and clear.
If with such errors he must now unite
This mortal duel, where both must appear,
He'd prove so hateful to her, as a lover,
She well might be lost to him forever.

Canto XXXVIII: 70-73: Melissa will aid Bradamante by preventing a fatal outcome

If Ruggiero lamented, silently, 70
This battle, that scarcely augured well,
A stream of tears flowed from Bradamante,
On hearing news of all that there befell,
Wetting her fair cheeks, and breast completely,
The latter of which she beat upon as well,
And tore her hair, and called Ruggiero
Ungrateful, and cruel, and her fate more so.

Whatever was the outcome of the fight, 71
To her it promised naught but bitter pain,
If Ruggiero proved the lesser knight,
And died there, twould break her heart in twain;
Yet if Christ would see the fall of France's might,
To punish her for faults that honour stain,
She'd mourn a second wound, deep and bitter,
Besides the loss of her beloved brother,

For she could not, without scorn and blame, 72
And the dire enmity of all her kin,
Return to Ruggiero, his fondness claim,
(Unless twere secretly, as if in sin)
For she had thought to do that very same,
Musing upon it, night and day, within;
And such a promise lay betwixt the two,
That neither could withdraw, nor wanted to.

But she, who, when things were adverse, ever 73
Appeared her most faithful, and helpful friend,
I mean, of course, the mage, kind Melissa,
Hastened now to console her, and amend
Her trouble, sore pained to see her suffer;
And came in time her doubts and woes to end,
Saying she would end the duel proposed,
That such a threat to love and life now posed.

Canto XXXVIII: 74-80: The two sides gather for the fight

The two prepared, meanwhile, for the fight, 74
I refer to Rinaldo and Ruggiero,
The choice of weapons resting with the knight
That championed the Empire, Rinaldo;
He, as one who on foot e'er showed his might
Since he had lost his fine steed, Baiardo,
Decided now, armoured in such metal
As served, with axe and dagger to battle.

Whether moved to do so by mere chance, 75
Or because Malagigi, deep and wise,
Knew how e'en the finest sword of France
Might be shattered in this mortal enterprise,
By sharp Balisarda, nor sword nor lance
He chose; while Ruggiero armed likewise.
Close to the wall of ancient Arles, the place;
They'd meet, on level ground, there, face to face.

Scarcely had the watchful Aurora 76
Put forth her head from Tithonus' dwelling,
Accompanying the light of day, as ever,
The day which this duel now would bring,
When the deputies came there to gather,
Issuing from both sides, then securing
Two pavilions at each end of the ground,
And raising an altar on a nearby mound.

Not long after this, many a squadron 77
Of Moorish warriors appeared, row on row,
And rich in barbaric pomp came on
Africa's king, armed to address the foe.
Twas a black-maned bay steed he sat upon,
With snowy brow, and two legs pied also;
And beside Agramante, came Ruggiero,
Attended by no less than Marsilio,

Who the helm Ruggiero had gained now bore, 78
Wrested with such pain from Mandricardo;
Twas Hector's helm two thousand years before,
And celebrated in a greater canto
Than is mine, such helms ancient heroes wore;
Here other lords and princes bore, also,
The rest of his armour, set with gold,
And enriched with rare pearls, and gems untold.

From the other side came Charlemagne, 79
With equal squadrons in battle order,
The same disposition they'd maintain
If asked to fight, each man a warrior.
His famous peers did his great pomp sustain,
And with him came Rinaldo, in like manner,
Armed save his helm, once worn by Mambrino,
Borne here by the Dane, brave Ugiero.

One of the two axes, Duke Namo bore, 80
To the field, the other King Salamon,
On the one side the host of France one saw,
To the other Agramante's host had gone.
An empty space lay twixt the sides, the floor
Assigned, and none allowed to walk thereon,
But for the pair of warriors, who would fight;
Twas death to any who that rule did slight.

Canto XXXVIII: 81-87: Appropriate oaths are sworn to seal the pact

Once the choice of daggers had been made 81
By Ruggiero, ere the duel began,
Two holy functionaries next conveyed
A book from either side, the Christian
The Gospel carried wherein is displayed
Christ's perfect life, the Moor the Koran.
The emperor took the Gospel in his hand
King Agramante the other did command.

At the altar, he'd decreed, Charlemagne 82
Raised his hands towards the sky and said:
'O God that suffered death, in bitter pain,
To redeem our sinful souls and from the dead
Raise us up; Lady, whom He did sustain,
That in the flesh He might on Earth thus tread,
Borne for nine months in your sacred womb,
While yet the virgin flower preserved its bloom,

Bear witness to the promise that I make, 83
For myself and those who rule after me:
To King Agramante and those who take
Command, later, of his realms, full twenty
Loads of gold each year we shall forsake,
And grant to them, if they have victory;
And I promise the war on them shall cease
At once, and pledge henceforth perpetual peace;

And if I fail, may your dread wrath descend, 84
Upon me, may you scourge us equally,
I and my heirs, if we should so offend;
Yet none but I, and my sinful family,
So that all others swiftly comprehend
My breach of promise wrought the misery.'
In his hand he held the book that Christians prize,
Fixing his solemn gaze upon the skies.



Stanza 84

That done they sought a place which, equally, 85
The Moors had set aside upon the plain,
Where Agramante swore to cross the sea,
With his men, into Africa again,
And pay tribute to France, if it should be
That Rinaldo the victory did gain;
And would observe the pact for evermore,
On the terms Charlemagne had set before.

And, likewise, in a strident voice, he swore 86
Calling on Mohammad as his witness;
And upon the book that his imam bore,
Pledged to perform all this, and no less.
The two having followed their own lore,
Repaired to their tents, to await success.
And then their champions upon the plain
Swore an oath their honour to maintain.

First Ruggiero swore that should his king 87
Attempt to mar their duel, or end the fight,
He would obey him not in anything,
But on Charlemagne attend, as his knight.
While Rinaldo swore a similar thing,
That, if Charlemagne intervened outright,
So that neither he nor Ruggiero
Could win, to Agramante he would go.

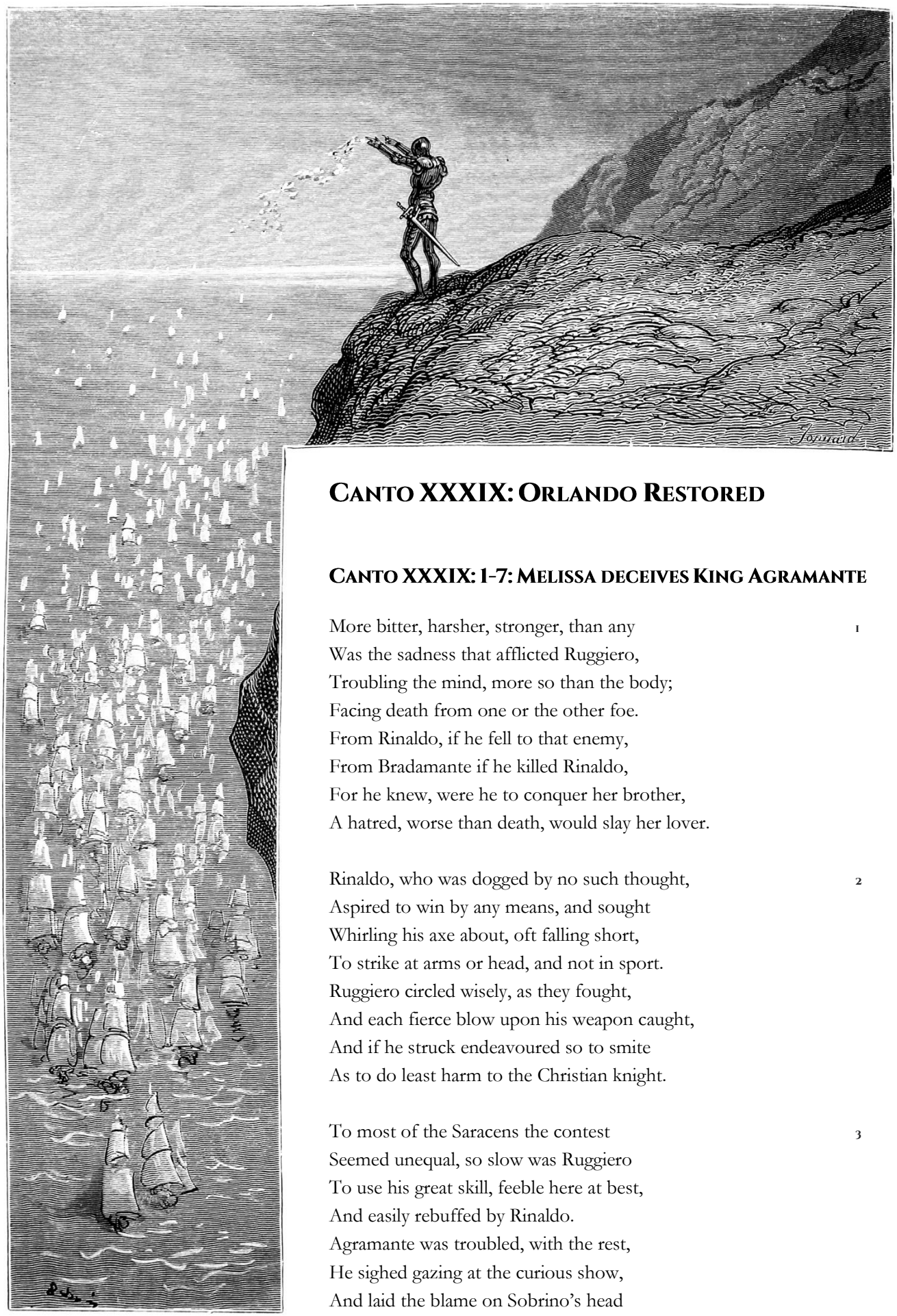
Canto XXXVIII: 88-90: The duel between Ruggiero and Rinaldo commences

Each of them returned to his own side, 88
Once these ceremonies were complete,
Nor waited long ere the trumpets cried
The moment that in combat they must meet.
Now carefully measuring each his stride
They advanced, seeking to avoid defeat.
And lo, the assault began; now high, now low
The sharpened steel rang out at each fierce blow.

Now with the axe's heel now with the blade 89
They struck at head and foot, to win success;
Revealed their great strength, and such art betrayed
As would pass belief could I their skill express.
Ruggiero faced the brother of the maid,
Who did his troubled heart and soul possess,
With such caution, with such subtle blows,
That he was thought the lesser of the foes.

He sought to parry rather than to kill, 90
Having scant desire to slay Rinaldo,
Uncertain of his own desire, yet still
Most unwilling to be slain, even so.
Yet here I must rest awhile, and will
Pursue the matter in another canto;
To the next I'll defer this canto's tale,
If upon your patience I might prevail.





Canto XXXIX: Orlando Restored

Canto XXXIX: 1-7: Melissa deceives King Agramante

More bitter, harsher, stronger, than any 1
Was the sadness that afflicted Ruggiero,
Troubling the mind, more so than the body;
Facing death from one or the other foe.
From Rinaldo, if he fell to that enemy,
From Bradamante if he killed Rinaldo,
For he knew, were he to conquer her brother,
A hatred, worse than death, would slay her lover.

Rinaldo, who was dogged by no such thought, 2
Aspired to win by any means, and sought
Whirling his axe about, oft falling short,
To strike at arms or head, and not in sport.
Ruggiero circled wisely, as they fought,
And each fierce blow upon his weapon caught,
And if he struck endeavoured so to smite
As to do least harm to the Christian knight.

To most of the Saracens the contest 3
Seemed unequal, so slow was Ruggiero
To use his great skill, feeble here at best,
And easily rebuffed by Rinaldo.
Agramante was troubled, with the rest,
He sighed gazing at the curious show,
And laid the blame on Sobrino's head
Whose ill counsel to this display had led.

Meanwhile Melissa who was the fount 4
Of all, that mages and enchanters know,
Had now transformed her shape, by such amount
As needed, Rodomonte's form to show,
Both her face and gestures, by all account,
Seemed his, and her harsh scaly hide also,
And such her sword and her shield beside
She lacked no arms with that fell lord allied.

She rode a steed, a demon trapped inside, 5
That she now steered towards Agramante,
And loudly, with troubled brow, she cried,
'My liege lord, this is no less than folly,
To imperil a mere boy, as yet untried,
Gainst this Frankish lord who fights so fiercely,
Electing him your champion in a cause
That affects all Africa's northern shores,

And her honour; pursue it not, my lord, 6
For twill prove greatly to our detriment;
Rodomonte all the blame you may afford,
For the swift breaking of the covenant.
Let every man among us draw his sword,
Each is worth a hundred, and of adamant,
Now I am here.' This swayed Agramante,
Who advanced upon the foe, recklessly.

Believing Algiers' king was at his side, 7
He gave no further thought to the pact,
Deeming him worth a thousand knights, he cried
A summons to his lords, roused them to act,
Till levelled lances swept in one great tide
Towards the foe; nor could he now retract.
Melissa, as the furious onslaught neared
The Christian ranks, quietly disappeared.

Canto XXXIX: 8-18: Marfisa and Bradamante join the fight

The two champions, their duel ended, 8
Despite all promised by the joint accord,
No longer now attacked or defended,
But pledged that neither knight would wield the sword,
(Setting aside the effort they'd expended)
Until some evidence men might afford
As to which king his honour so did stain
Young Agramante, or old Charlemagne.

They swore, anew, to deem an enemy 9
Whichever of the two had done the deed.
The field was now confused as, hastily,
Men ran to meet the foe, or fled at speed.
Mingling now the coward and the worthy,
In a single throng, where none agreed,
All ran alike, to what end none could say;
Some ran towards the foe, and some away.

As greyhounds on the leash, that some hare 10
Have in their view, as it flees o'er the field,
Thus, unable with the other dogs to share
The furious chase, their passion ill-concealed,
Will fret, and whine, and grieve, in despair,
And pull against the rope that will not yield,
So, till that moment, were the bold Marfisa
And Bradamante, Almone's daughter.

Until that moment, on the spacious plain, 11
Each had waited, eyeing the sought-for prize,
Both obliged, by the treaty, to refrain,
From attempting some hostile enterprise,
Lamenting and sighing, though in vain,
Coveting their prey with greedy eyes.
But now, with the breaking of the treaty,
They pounced upon the Moorish enemy.

Marfisa, piercing her opponent's breast, 12
While her lance two clear yards beyond did go,
Drew her sharp sword, and flew among the rest;
Four helms, like glass, she shattered at a blow.
Bradamante upon the others pressed;
Although not with like effect, even so,
All the golden lance touched she overthrew,
Doubling Marfisa' count, though none she slew.

At first, they fought so closely together 13
That both were witnesses to every deed,
Then, parting swiftly from one another,
Each warrior, where her fury might lead,
Advanced midst the foe, competing ever.
Who could count the Moorish riders, indeed,
Downed by that golden spear, or every head
That Marfisa struck from the bloodied dead?



Stanza 9 "*The field was now confused as, hastily, men ran to meet the foe*"



Stanza 15

As when some more benign wind seeks to blow, 14
Laying bare a snowy Apennine height,
Till a pair of streams start their downward flow,
(Whose fall two separate channels carves outright,
Uprooting rocks, and mighty trees that grow
On those steep slopes, bearing, far out of sight,
Both turf and soil) and seem as if they vie
As to which can do the greatest harm thereby,

So those great-hearted maidens scoured the field, 15
On their separate courses, while each wrought
Huge havoc, forcing many a Moor to yield
Before the lance or sword howe'er they fought.
Agramante scarce could force his men to wield
Their weapons; for flight, not the flag, they sought,
In vain he gazed about him, urgently,
Yet found not a trace of Rodomonte.

At that warrior's urging (so he believed) 16
He'd broken the treaty but lately made,
Swearing by Mohammad (though deceived),
And yet the man had vanished; sore dismayed,
He lacked wise Sobrino too, deeply grieved
By this action, who'd but a moment stayed,
Then retreated to Arles, crying to all
That vengeance would upon the monarch fall.

Marsilio had fled to that same place, 17
The sacred oath now weighing on his heart,
Thus, Agramante could but briefly face
Those that laboured there on Charlemagne's part;
Italians, Germans, Englishmen, apace
Came upon him, with lance, and sword, and dart,
And among them those paladins, full bold,
Rare gleaming gems amidst a cloth of gold.

There rode one, as perfect as any knight, 18
In this our world, Guidon Selvaggio,
Ever intrepid, eager for the fight,
And those two sons of Oliviero;
Of those two warrior-maids, still in sight,
I'll say but this, pressing upon the foe,
They such sterling effort did expend
That of the Moorish dead there seemed no end.

Canto XXXIX: 19-22: Meanwhile Astolfo defeats the foe in Africa

Yet, setting aside this battle for a space, 19
I shall pass, without a ship, o'er the sea,
Not so bound to the Franks, in that place,
That Astolfo has slipped my memory.
I told you of Saint John's act of grace,
And related (or so it seems to me)
How Algeciras' king, with Branzardo,
Had mustered all their forces gainst the foe.

Hastily, they had raised a host of men, 20
Gathering them from all North Africa,
Whether sound or infirm, and had often
Nigh-on drafted the women, in their fervour;
Agramante had so drawn, now and then,
On his resources, that every warrior
Was already assisting his campaign,
And those left were but feeble in the main.

As now was seen; the foe was scarce in sight 21
Before that makeshift army broke in fear,
Driven like sheep before the English knight,
And his more warlike troops; far or near,
They preferred to flee rather than to fight,
Yet few reached Bizerte, with sword or spear;
Brave Bucifaro lost his liberty,
While King Branzardo attained the city,

More grieved at the loss of Bucifaro 22
Than at having squandered all the rest
(In need of repair, the walls of Hippo
Were his charge, and his skills of the best).
And so, the thoughts of King Branzardo
Turned to ransoming the Nubians' guest,
And he recalled Dudon, a warrior
Who'd been for many months his prisoner.

Canto XXXIX: 23-25: And agrees to King Branzardo's offer

This Dudon had been seized at Monaco 23
By Rodomonte, on his first passage,
And had been captive since, to his great woe;
The paladin was of Danish lineage.
Thinking to exchange him for Bucifaro
The king now despatched an urgent message,
To the leader of the Nubian foe;
That, his spies informed him, was Astolfo.

As a paladin himself, Astolfo knew 24
He must seek to free Dudon if he could,
And so Branzardo's offer did pursue,
Agreeing the exchange should be made good.
Dudon, once free, his thanks did e'er renew,
And set himself, as perchance he should,
To support all appertaining to the war,
On land and sea, as he had once before.

Astolfo having such a force in hand 25
As might have conquered seven Africas,
And recalling it was the saint's command
That he should regain, from the warriors
Of North Africa, Aigues-Mortes' captive strand,
And all Provençe, now searched for sailors
Midst his host, or rather such Nubians
As might, aboard ship, execute his plans.

Canto XXXIX: 26-29: A fleet of ships is miraculously created

He now grasped as many fronds in each hand 26
As would fill them, from many a fine tree,
(Palm, laurel, cedar, bay grow in that land)
And scattered them, evenly, o'er the sea.
O grace, ever God's and at His command!
True blessing and divine felicity!
A stupendous miracle He wrought there,
Out of those very fronds the waves did bear!

They grew, in size, beyond all estimation, 27
Becoming vast and curved, long and wide,
Of heavy timber now each new creation,
Their veins great solid beams on either side.
Masts rose on high, as they held their station,
For o'er the bay a fleet of ships did ride,
And all possessing varying qualities,
According to their source amidst the trees.

It was wondrous to see that navy grow, 28
Galleys, frigates, pinnaces, a vast host,
With oars, and sails, and rigging, all on show,
As fine as any another fleet might boast.
Nor was there any lack of men to row,
Or spread the canvas wide, while from the coast,
And from Sardinia, Corsica, came those
Skilled in dealing with every wind that blows.

Twenty-six thousand men went on board, 29
With captains, pilots, and many another,
With wise Dudon as their admiral, that lord
Fit to lead on sea, or land, wherever.
They were anchored, till the winds might afford
Them passage, when a vessel, from over
The water, reached the shores of that country,
Twas that ship despatched by Rodomonte.

Canto XXXIX: 30-35: Rodomonte's ship full of prisoners is intercepted

Those seized at the perilous bridge she bore, 30
Where the field of battle was so narrow,
By Rodomonte, as oft told before.
Amongst them was the bold Oliviero,
Orlando's kin, and there, midst many more,
Were Brandimarte and Sansonetto,
And brave knights from many a fair country,
Gascony, Germany, or Italy.

Her captain, unaware of this hostile foe, 31
Here brought his laden galley to anchor,
With Algiers far behind him, for the blow
Had barred him from that safer harbour;
A gale it was that had pursued him so,
And borne her along the coast much further,
Yet he still thought himself a welcome guest,
Like to Procne when she seeks her noisy nest.

But when the Imperial eagle he saw, 32
Leopards, and golden lilies, raised on high,
He blanched, like one who, wandering o'er the moor,
Treads on a basking adder, that doth lie
Amidst the heather, and, shaken to the core,
Hastens, pale, and fearful he may die,
To flee from the place, and that ill creature,
Of such a venomous and angry nature.

Yet no retreat from peril was on show, 33
Nor could he restrain his prisoners.
He, by Brandimarte, Oliviero,
And Sansonetto, and many others
Was dragged before Dudon and Astolfo,
(Who greeted them joyfully, as brothers)
And condemned him, who'd brought them to that shore,
To labour in the galleys, at the oar.

Great welcome there had each Christian knight, 34
To Astolfo's quarters, with honour,
They were led, and decked out, in his sight,
With all they required of arms and armour.
Dudon delayed his passage, for that night,
Wishing to speak with them, and gain further
News of events elsewhere, though at the cost
Of perhaps a day, or two, that might be lost.

He learned of Charlemagne's situation, 35
That of the Moorish army, and of France,
And of where he might land in that nation
To best advantage, and from there advance.
Meanwhile, to their utter consternation,
A noise was heard, of some assault perchance,
Followed by such a mighty trumpet call,
As to foster great concern, in one and all.

Canto XXXIX: 36-38: A savage man appears wielding a sapling

Astolfo, and his goodly company 36
Who were thus conversing together,
Armed themselves, and mounted instantly,
And hastened to where the cries seemed louder,
Seeking the source of that cacophony,
Gazing here and there, as they rode further,
Till they saw a crazed savage, all alone
Half-naked, who made many a man to moan.

For he whirled a great sapling all around, 37
So hard, and so heavy, and so strong,
That, at every swing, it felled to the ground
Some man that to the force there did belong.
At least a hundred corpses lay around,
And yet none attempted to right the wrong,
Save by their hurling missiles from afar,
Since none with his great strength seemed on a par.

Went, galloping there, each and every knight, 38
Dudon, Brandimarte, Oliviero,
Amazed by this savage show of might,
Hastening behind bold Duke Astolfo,
When a maid on a palfrey came in sight,
Clad in sable gear, as one full of woe,
Who approached Brandimarte at a pace,
And clasped that warrior in tight embrace.

Canto XXXIX: 39–43: The maiden who has appeared is Fiordelisa

Twas fair Fiordelisa, she whose heart 39
Burned with love for her Brandimarte,
And had been sorely troubled, for her part,
To leave him in the hands of Rodomonte.
She'd sailed across the sea, pierced by that dart,
Once she had learned, from that fell enemy,
That the brave knight, with many another,
Had been shipped to Algiers, a prisoner.

She'd sought passage at Marseilles, and had found 40
A Levantine barque there, about to sail,
Which had brought an aged knight, homeward-bound,
Of Monodante's House, who'd heard the tale,
And had searched those foreign shores all around,
For Brandimarte, though all to no avail,
And then had heard, amidst his merry dance,
That he'd find that very same, back in France.



Stanza 40

And she, recognising this Bardino 41
As he who had from Monodante's court
With the infant Brandimarte taken flight,
Then reared the child in the Sylvan Fort,
And learning the reason why the knight
Had journeyed far, had them leave the port,
Having told the old man in what manner
Her lover had been shipped to Africa.

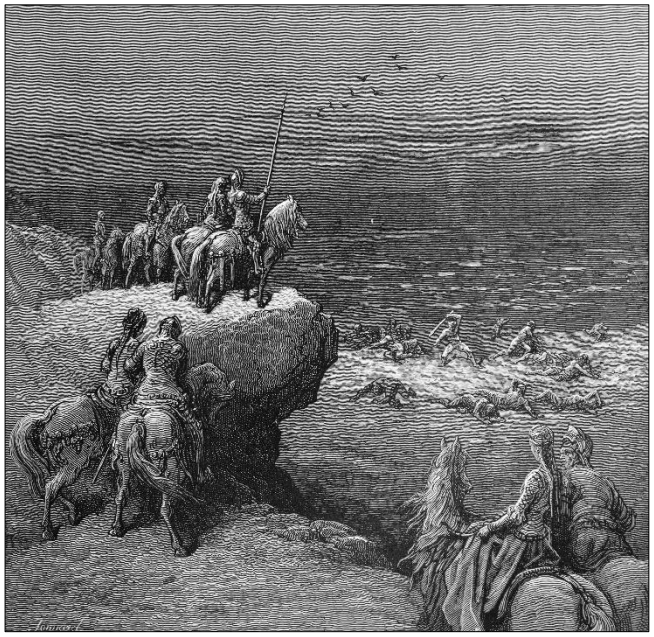
She had news, when they landed, that Hippo 42
Lay under siege, and that Brandimarte,
Was there in company with Astolfo,
Though unconvinced of the tale's verity.
Now, on seeing him, she flew to him though,
And revealed her true delight most plainly,
Finding her grief now proven overblown,
While the joy was great as e'er she had known.

The noble baron felt no less delight, 43
On viewing his loyal consort's face,
For he loved it o'er every other sight,
And he welcomed her with sweet loving grace;
Nor would he have been satisfied, her knight
With only their first, or second, embrace,
Had he not discovered that Bardino
Had journeyed from France with her to Hippo.

Canto XXXIX: 44–47: She recognises in the savage the mad Orlando

He stretched out his arms to clasp Bardino, 44
Ready to ask him why he was there,
But found himself unable to do so,
For all the folk involved in this affair,
Were forced to take flight, to escape a blow
From the tree the savage waved in the air.
Fiordelisa, gazing on the naked fellow,
Cried to Brandimarte: 'Tis Orlando!'

At that very moment, Astolpho too 45
Recognised the Count by certain signs,
Which had indeed been taught to him anew,
In the earthly paradise, by those divines,
Though none of the others, who did view
The savage, yet thought on similar lines.
Through self-neglect, as all about he ran,
In his face he appeared more beast than man.



Stanza 45

His heart transfixed by pity, Astolfo, 46
Bathed his manly chest with many a tear,
And turned to Dudon, then Oliviero,
Who'd failed to recognise the Count, twas clear,
Crying: 'Behold, this is Count Orlando!'
They both now strained their eyes towards the peer,
And, seeing him in such a dreadful plight,
Were filled with compassion at the sight;

And they sorrowed so deeply, on their part, 47
That their salt tears overflowed to the ground,
'Tis time,' Astolfo cried, 'to seek some art,
Cease our weeping, and render his mind sound.'
He sprang from his steed, while, with a start,
Brandimarte followed, then, at a bound,
Dudon, Oliviero, Sansonetto,
Leapt down, to secure the mad Orlando.

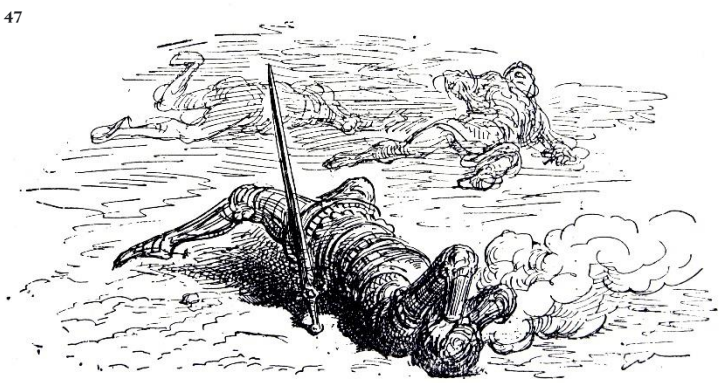
Canto XXXIX: 48-54: The knights struggle to pin Orlando down

Seeking himself encircled, Orlando 48
Swung the sapling round in desperation,
Causing Dudon, who'd dipped his head below
His shield, a degree of consternation,
Since he received from it a glancing blow;
Oliviero saved him from mutilation,
His prompt use of his blade deflecting it,
Or shield, helm, head, and body would have split.

The shield alone shattered, while the blow 49
Still landed with such force that Dudon fell.
Though, wielding his sword, Sansonetto
Trimmed that sapling by two clear yards as well.
Then Brandimarte, grasping Orlando
Sought to drag him to the ground; with a yell,
Both his strong arms round his chest he flung,
While to the Count's bare legs Astolfo clung.

Orlando shook himself (the English peer 50
Landed upside-down, ten clear feet away)
But Brandimarte clasped him, without fear,
All the more tightly holding to his prey;
Yet Oliviero, too bold it would appear,
Was struck by a clenched fist, and down he lay,
That harsh blow nearly ending him for good,
While forth, from eyes and nostrils, poured the blood.

Had it not been for his helm, Oliviero 51
Had died there where he fell, toppling endwise,
And striking the ground as if, at the blow,
He'd just bequeathed his soul to paradise.
To their feet rose Dudon and Astolfo,
Dudon with bloodied face, and swollen eyes,
And with Sansonetto (of the helpful sword)
All rushed together on Anglante's lord.



Stanza 51

Dudon grasped him tightly from behind, 52
And sought to down him, swiftly, with his feet.
Astolfo and the rest now sought to bind
His arms, though the task was left incomplete.
Who has seen some great bull, with fury blind,
Chased by the mastiffs, that his ears mistreat,
Bellowing, tossing them from side to side,
Seeking to fling them from him, far and wide,

Can picture the sight of our Orlando, 53
Dragging those brave warriors o'er the ground.
Meanwhile, rising once more, Oliviero,
Whom that great fist had so harshly found,
On seeing that the efforts of Astolfo
And the rest had done little to confound
The madman, now devised and effected
A way to down him, when least expected.

He had men bring lengths of rope, good and strong, 54
And running-knots in these he swiftly tied,
Threw them o'er Orlando as he ran along,
Noosed his arms and legs, and then supplied
The rope-ends to the others, passed among
Them all, to hold the Count on every side.
They stopped the raging madman in his course,
As farriers down an ox or a horse.



Stanza 54

Canto XXXIX: 55-63: But eventually succeed in restoring his wits

As soon as he was felled, they gathered round 55
And tied his hands and feet more securely.
Though he shook himself, and arched from the ground,
His efforts were rendered vain, entirely.
Astolfo bade them bear him, tightly bound,
To where they might restore his sanity.
Dudon's strong shoulders the Count now bore,
To the sea's edge, nigh the brink of the shore.

Seven times Astolfo had them bathe him, 56
And seven times beneath the wave he went,
Until his visage looked a mite less grim,
And his skin was clean, to a large extent;
Then with certain special herbs they gagged him,
And stopped his mouth, to his deep discontent,
Such that only his nostrils were left free,
As Astolfo intended them to be.

Astolfo now took the flask he'd brought, 57
In which Orlando's sense was confined,
And set it to the Count's nose, as he sought
To breathe, so his addled brain it might find.
He drew all in, and a miracle was wrought!
Sound and whole again was Orlando's mind;
While, by his fluent speech, his intellect
It seemed was yet finer, and more elect.

As one aroused from dark and heavy sleep 58
In which he saw abominable creatures,
Monsters that exist in slumber deep
And nowhere else, with most fearsome features,
Or did things fit to make a demon weep,
Now marvels at himself, and those far reaches
Of slumber, so Orlando, new-restored,
Was left wondering at the depths he'd explored.

On Brandimarte, and Oliviero, 59
Aldabella's brothers, he gazed mutely,
And on him who'd restored him, Astolfo,
Uncertain how he'd got there, restlessly,
Turning his eyes about, for Orlando
Could hardly grasp where he was, and clearly
Was astounded at his nakedness also,
And at why he was bound fast, head to toe.

Then he cried out, as Silenus once cried 60
To those who had bound him in the cave,
'Solvite me: loose me!' this in so clear-eyed
A manner, seeming now both wise and grave,
That they did so, and they clothed him beside
With garments, like one risen from the grave,
And comforted him, now by regret oppressed
For the madness by which he'd been possessed.

Once restored, and then unbound, Orlando 61
Wiser and more vigorous still in manner,
Now found himself free of love's ties, also;
For she he had deemed the fairest ever,
And the noblest maid, whom he'd adored so,
Now seemed but a base, and faithless, lover.
His whole study now, his whole desire,
Was all he'd lost through love to reacquire.

Meanwhile Bardino told Brandimarte 62
That good Monodante his father was dead,
And that, from his kind brother Ziliante,
To call him to rule in his father's stead,
And from his isles scattered sparsely
O'er the sea, and the far Levant, he'd sped,
Than which there were never realms more happy
More pleasant, or populous, or wealthy.

In a lengthy speech he sought to express, 63
That one's homeland was sweet, and whene'er
He was disposed to taste that sweetness
For the wandering life he'd no longer care.
Brandimarte replied that, nonetheless,
He would see the end of all that affair,
Serve Orlando and Charlemagne, and then,
If he lived, return to his realm again.

Canto XXXIX: 64-65: Orlando and Astolfo pursue the siege of Bizerte

The next day, under Dudon, the whole fleet 64
Sailed for Provençe; meanwhile bold Astolfo
Sat down with Count Orlando to complete
His plans, and told him how the siege should go.
The Count agreed, but rather than compete
For glory, gave credit to Astolfo
On every occasion, while the latter
Yet deferred to Orlando in the matter.

Of the order of troops for the assault 65
On Hippo, and upon what flank, and when,
The walls were won, almost by default,
At the first attempt, by Orlando's men,
And of who else that battle did exalt,
Permit me to defer the tale, again.
In the meantime, be pleased to let me show
How the Franks dealt Agramante woe.

Canto XXXIX: 66-73: Agramante flees to Arles

For, in the moment of greatest danger, 66
Agramante remained well-nigh alone;
Marsilio with his troops, together
With Sobrino and his, to Arles had flown;
Who, unsure of their safety, chose, rather,
To board their vessels anchored in the Rhône,
With those knights and lords, that served the Moor,
Who had, at their example, quit the shore.

Yet Agramante still maintained the fight, 67
Until he could no longer make a stand,
Then he turned from the field, and took to flight,
Towards Arles, o'er the intervening land.
Rabicano, spurred hard with all her might
By Bradamante, was now close at hand,
She filled with fierce desire this king to slay
Who'd so oft drawn Ruggiero away;



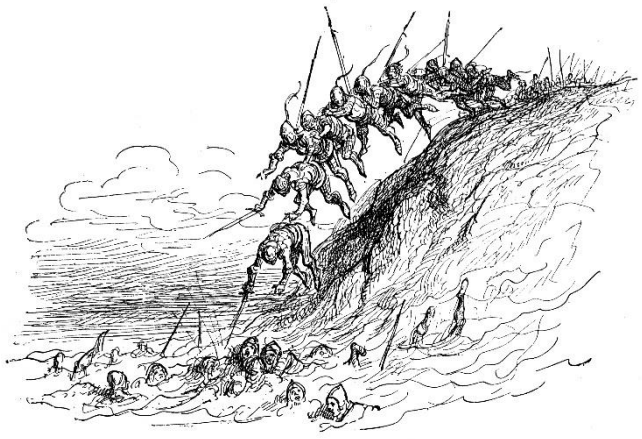
Stanza 67

While the like desire possessed Marfisa, 68
Who her father sought to revenge at last,
As she spurred her own steed to a lather,
And closed upon the fleeing monarch fast.
Yet neither she nor the pursuing other,
Could reach him, now furiously harassed,
Before he had achieved a swift retreat,
First to Arles, and then aboard his fleet.

As a pair of cheetahs, fine and generous, 69
Hunting together in the open plain,
On finding that their prey's more vigorous,
And the victim they desire pursued in vain,
As if ashamed, turn, in inglorious
Defeat, with a show of high disdain.
So, the warrior-maids returned, sighing,
At the hair's-breadth survival of the king;

Yet ceased not in making war, but chased 70
The host of others who had swiftly fled,
And with blow after blow, deftly placed,
Struck full many down, and left them for dead.
The scattered foe was beaten and disgraced,
Nor was there sanctuary for those that sped
From the field, since Agramante, to gain
Advantage, barred the gate that faced the plain,

And downed every bridge across the Rhône. 71
O wretched men, such lives e'er held but cheap,
When tyranny needs not their flesh and bone,
Like flocks of stupid goats, or foolish sheep!
Some to the sea, some to the river flown,
Drowned there, others lay in a bloodied heap.
The Franks slew full many, and at random,
Few worth holding for the sake of ransom.



Stanza 71

Of the many nobles that there were slain, 72
(The dead of both the hosts, in that last fight,
Though the numbers were unequal I maintain,
For far more Saracens were killed in flight
By those two warrior-maids on that plain)
Some trace remains; the traveller has sight,
Near the walls of Arles, by the sluggish Rhône,
Of the Alyscamps, where their tombs are shown.

Meanwhile his vessels of deepest draught, 73
Agramante had await him out at sea,
Leaving a number of his lightest craft
To attend to stragglers that sought safety.
For two whole days, swirling fore and aft,
Fierce adverse winds kept them to that country,
Till, on the third day, he led forth the fleet,
Bound for Africa, hastening from defeat.

Canto XXXIX: 74-79: He sails for Africa, unaware of Dudon's fleet

King Marsilio, who was filled with dread 74
Lest the penalty fell upon his Spain,
And those dark clouds looming overhead
Drenched the land in bitter hail and rain,
With his remnants towards Valencia fled,
Where he fortified the town with much pain,
And prepared for that war which would end
In his fall, and that of many a friend;

Agramante sailed, on Africa intent, 75
His ships poorly-armed and half-empty,
Empty of men, yet full of discontent,
Three-quarters having died in that country.
Some thought him cruel, some chose to lament
His pride and foolishness, and secretly
Hated him, as in like case men will do,
But, fearing him, were silent, save a few;

For oft some group of close friends spoke out, 76
Among themselves, trusting in each other,
And vented their anger at the sudden rout,
While Agramante, deceived as ever,
Thought that respect, nay love, ringed him about,
Since feelings were masked, inner thoughts never
Shown in the face, voices still full of praise,
Though filled with lies and flattery always.

The African king was counselled not to land 77
At Bizerte, for news, borne from the shore,
Claimed that the Nubians were near at hand
And held the coast about against the Moor,
But to disembark on some deserted strand
Far beyond it, not too harsh or insecure,
There marshal his men, and then move, outright,
To aid his people in their sorry plight.

And yet that counsel, wise and provident, 78
Aligned not with the proud king's destiny,
That willed that the fleet Astolfo had sent,
Then bound for France across the foaming sea,
Which had been created with like intent,
From those tree-fronds, so miraculously,
Met with his own, at night, at such an hour
Dismal and dark, that all lay in its power.

The king had heard no word of an armed fleet, 79
Of such magnitude, nor would have conceived
That a hundred vessels could rise complete
From the mere fronds of trees; and so, deceived,
Agramante had sailed in swift retreat,
Not fearing by hostile ships to be received,
Not even setting lookouts at the mast
That might their gaze upon the foe have cast.

Canto XXXIX: 80-86: A naval battle ensues

Thus, the fleet that Dudon commanded 80
Supplied by Astolfo, filled with armed men,
Meeting Agramante's ships, ere he landed,
Stood to battle stations, then tacked again,
Engaging, as the moment demanded,
For they knew, hearing their cries, there and then,
Who these folk must be, from their Moorish tongue,
Boarding them, as the grappling irons were flung.

Driven by the wind, favouring Dudon, 81
His great ships so shocked the enemy
That many of their own were swiftly gone,
Forced by the blow beneath the churning sea,
While the rest with fire and stones were set upon,
As hands and wits now brought them misery,
Pouring down such a tempest from their foe,
As ne'er the seas have seen, to work them woe.

Dudon's men, with more than usual might, 82
And granted fresh strength from above, at need,
(For they could, amidst this opportune fight,
Repay their enemies for many an ill deed)
And having been taught how they could smite
From near and far, sent, as Dudon decreed,
A sudden hail of arrows, while all around
Sword, and pike, and hook, and axe did sound.

Huge, heavy stones descended from on high, 83
Hurled, by catapults, onto bow and stern,
Opening their timbers to the sea and sky,
Caught by the waves that about them did churn,
Yet the greatest damage, creeping nigh,
Was done by the subtle fires, slow to burn,
From which the wretched crews sought to flee,
Yet ran from the flames to the crueller sea.

One, escaping the enemy's sharp blade 84
Leapt to the waves, drowned, and remained.
Another, swimming, his long passage made,
To another ship, also swamped and maimed;
She denied him, his grasping hand delayed
As he sought to climb aboard, and then claimed
His whole arm, while the fellow sank below,
Staining the waves with blood from the blow.

Others who sought salvation in the sea, 85
Or, at least, to perish there with less pain,
Finding naught to aid them, and suddenly
Feeling the strength from out their bodies drain,
Now most afraid of drowning, hastily,
Sought to return, yet met the flames again,
And, grasping a burning plank, in their dread
Of either death by both, to death, were sped.



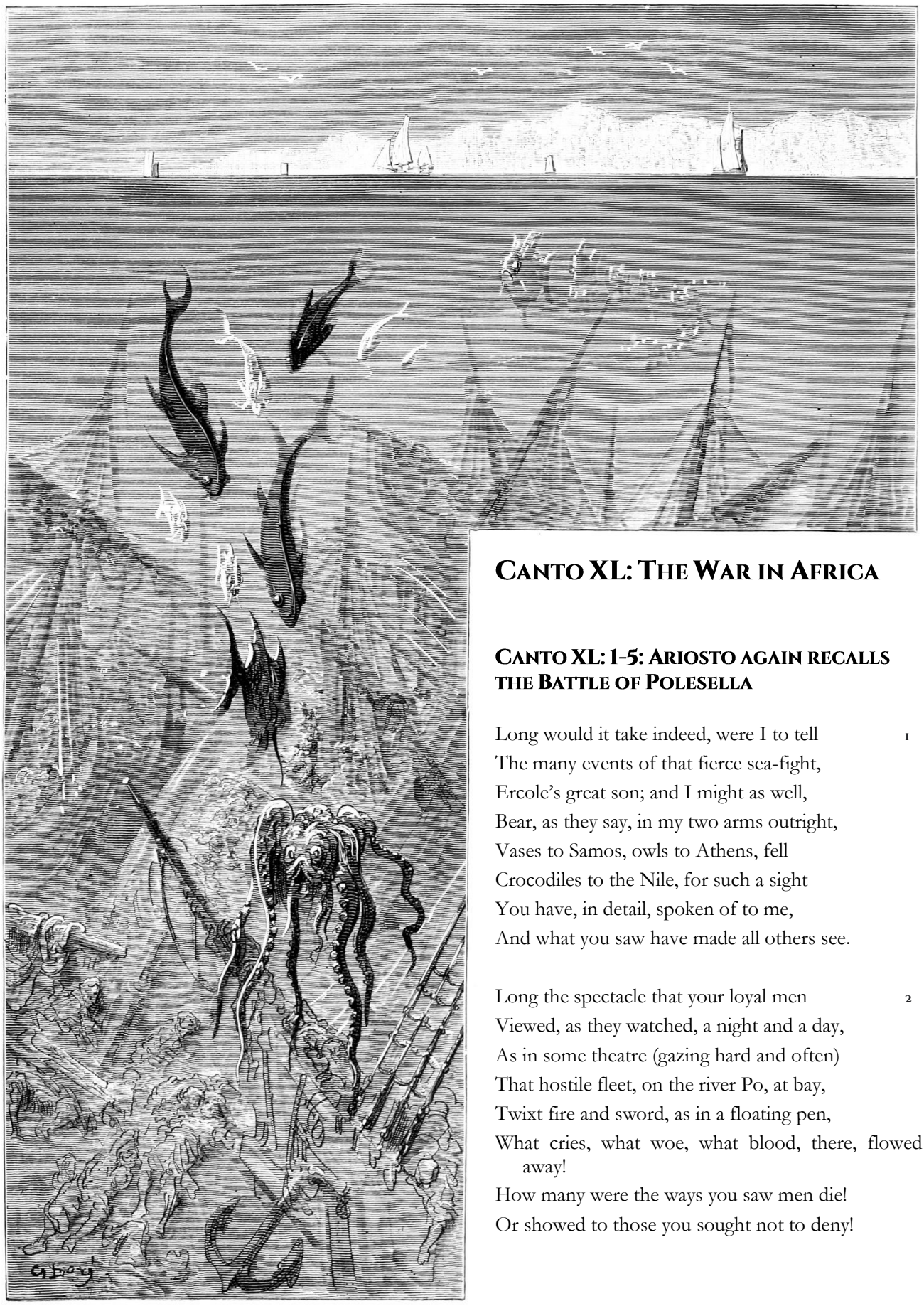
Stanza 85

Others, seeing a pike or axe draw near 86
Ran towards the bulwarks, yet all in vain,
For a stone or arrow, following in the rear,
Caught the coward, ere the waves he could gain.
Now, while perchance it still attracts an ear,
Tis wise, and good, to cease my sad refrain,
Rather than harp upon this theme too long,
And, thus, annoy with its too-mournful song.





Stanza 81 "*His great ships so shocked the enemy, that many of their own were swiftly gone*"



Canto XL: The War in Africa

Canto XL: 1-5: Ariosto again recalls the Battle of Polesella

Long would it take indeed, were I to tell 1
The many events of that fierce sea-fight,
Ercole's great son; and I might as well,
Bear, as they say, in my two arms outright,
Vases to Samos, owls to Athens, fell
Crocodiles to the Nile, for such a sight
You have, in detail, spoken of to me,
And what you saw have made all others see.

Long the spectacle that your loyal men 2
Viewed, as they watched, a night and a day,
As in some theatre (gazing hard and often)
That hostile fleet, on the river Po, at bay,
Twixt fire and sword, as in a floating pen,
What cries, what woe, what blood, there, flowed away!
How many were the ways you saw men die!
Or showed to those you sought not to deny!

I saw it not, who was obliged to go, 3
Full six days earlier, to Rome, in haste,
Changing steeds each hour, muddied head to toe,
To seek aid from the Pope, whom there I faced;
But could have then returned with footsteps slow,
The golden lion's beak and claw defaced,
For you gave Venice such a scare, I say,
She has dared not try the like, since that day.

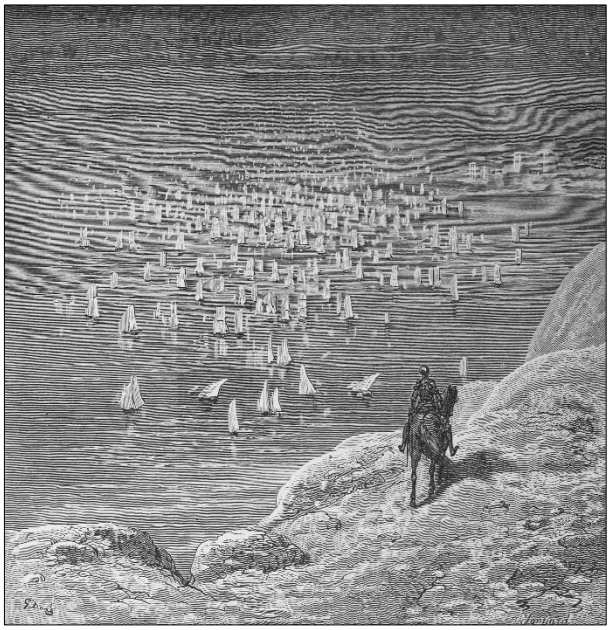
But good Alfonsin Trotto who was there, 4
Hannibal, Alfranio, Alberto,
Three Ariostos, witness to that affair,
Pier Moro, Bagno, and Zerbinatto,
Told me of it; and torn banners, to spare,
High in the church, I viewed, and below;
And fifteen galleys by the river's shore,
With a host of captive vessels too, I saw.

Who viewed that whole fleet, sunken or afire, 5
So many deaths, so various in kind,
(Our vengeance for our palaces, that pyre)
Till all were taken, drowned, or undermined,
May picture the ruin, wretched and dire,
That Agramante suffered (to my mind,
Well-nigh as great) when Dudon midst the wave
At night attacked his fleet (and nigh as brave).

Canto XL: 6-9: Agramante and Sobrino flee

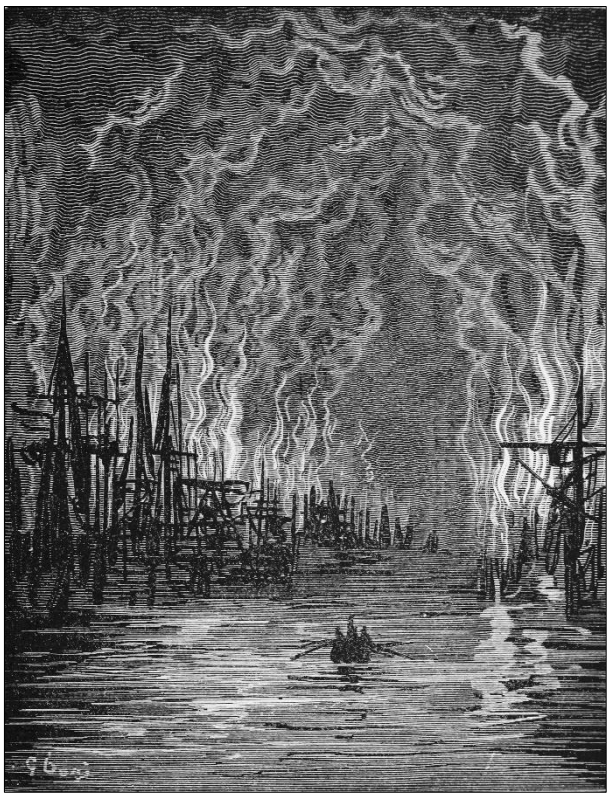
Twas night; not a gleam of light to be seen, 6
When that bitter naval battle first began,
Yet when sulphur, pitch, and tar, flew between
The vessels, and fire through the rigging ran,
To burn at bow and stern, and send its sheen
O'er the waves, consuming all in its span,
There was glow enough to see all about,
And night seemed turned to day, midst the rout.

Agramante, deceived by the darkness, 7
Had not thought the enemy's force so great,
Nor that, once they were met with steadfastness,
They could do aught but bow to their fate;
But now that the night gave way to brightness,
This fleet, that he'd failed to anticipate,
Was, as he saw, nigh twice his own in size,
And destroying his ships, before his eyes.



Stanza 7

He descended to a light barque, below, 8
In which stood Brigliador, near a hoard
Of precious things; and then, silent and slow,
It tacked its way, bearing those aboard,
To safety, far from his men's pain and woe,
Whom Dudon sore bitterness did afford;
Fire scorched their flesh, waves drowned, the fierce steel slew,
While the cause of all fled with but a few.



Stanza 8

With Agramante went old Sobrino, 9
One whom the king now wished he had believed,
When that seer had foreseen a day of woe,
And proclaimed the ill that he now perceived.
Yet I must turn to our Count Orlando
Who, ere Bizerte further aid received,
Counselled Astolfo to destroy the place,
So, France its threat might then no longer face.

Canto XL: 10-14: Orlando and Astolfo attack Bizerte (Hippo)

And, therefore, it was proclaimed, publicly, 10
That all must stand to arms on the third day.
Many a ship was deployed out at sea,
To blockade the port; with Dudon away,
Sansonetto led that squadron, for he
On sea or land, was as brave in the fray;
And his ships remained there, at anchor,
A mile from Bizerte and its harbour.

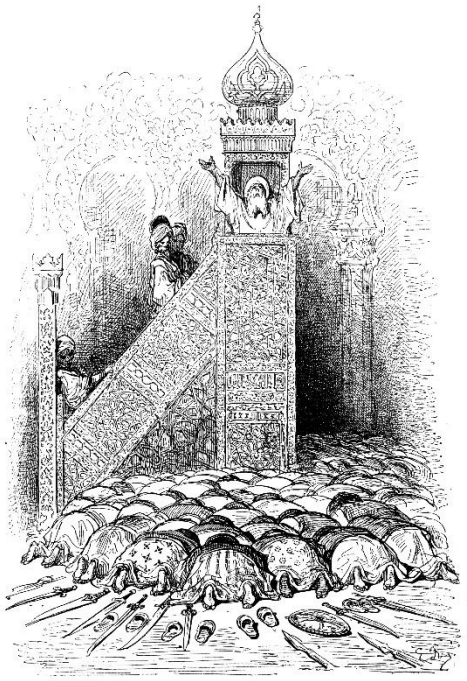
As true Christians, Orlando and Astolfo, 11
Who risked naught without God at their side,
Ordered prayers, and strict fasting also,
Throughout their forces scattered far and wide,
And decreed, on the third day, all must go
To their posts, and when the signal was spied,
Then Bizerte must be ceaselessly attacked,
And, once taken, must be set ablaze, and sacked.



Stanza 11

Once the prayers and the fasting were over, 12
And their vows had been made, friends, and kin,
All those who were known to one another,
Feasted, having cleansed themselves of sin
And restored their strength, then drew together,
Embraced, and wept, ere battle should begin,
And uttered all those words the loving heart
Will seek to express ere friends must part.

Within Bizerte's walls their holy men 13
Prayed with the troubled people and, in tears,
Beat their breasts and, again and again,
Called upon their god, who, it appears,
Heard them not. The vigils and offerings, then,
That were promised, privately, to ease their fears;
The mosques, the domes with lettering engraved,
As eternal monuments, were they but saved!



Stanza 13

When the imams had led them in prayer, 14
The people armed themselves, and manned the wall.
In Tithonus' bed, Aurora the Fair,
Was slumbering yet, and shadows shrouded all,
As Sansonetto and Astolfo, there,
On each flank, waited for the battle-call;
Then, when Orlando ordered it, at last,
They attacked Bizerte, at the trumpet's blast.

Canto XL: 15-19: The assault on the city

On two sides the city faced the sea, 15
Its other walls faced the level plain.
They were excellently made, built strongly,
Dating from ancient times in the main.
No signs of other bulwarks could they see,
For though Branzardo had sought to maintain
Solid defences, skilled masons he lacked,
And little time ere the place was attacked.

Orlando had charged the Nubian king 16
With clearing the walls of their enemies,
By means of the use of crossbow and sling,
Till none dared appear, and not to cease
From firing his missiles, nor retiring,
Till horsemen and foot could pass, with ease,
Beneath the walls, bearing stones and beams,
And other heavy gear, to work his schemes.

They hurled a mass of earth into the moat, 17
Passing the weighty loads from hand to hand,
Having blocked the flow of water at its throat,
Till now it was part marsh, part solid land,
It was quickly filled till naught could float,
And made level from the walls to the strand,
While Astolfo and Oliviero
Prepared the first assault, with Orlando.

The Nubian force, impatient of delay, 18
And certain of the victory they'd attain,
Not anticipating danger, made their way
Sheltered by close shields above, in the main,
Bearing battering rams, in close array,
Towards the gates, to break all down, and gain
An entry to the town; advancing fast,
They found the foe equipped lest they passed.

Fire and steel, and stones from tower and wall, 19
Like a tempest, rained upon the Nubian force.
Shattering the planks and beams, in their fall,
Of those engines meant to win them, in due course.
In the darkness they could scare evade them all,
And many a man was slain o'er that concourse,
But once the sun had issued forth again,
Fortune turned her back on the Saracen.

Canto XL: 20-26: Brandimarte scales the wall

The attack was reinforced on every side 20
By Orlando, from both the sea and land,
Sansonetto with the fleet now did glide
Into the harbour, and approached the strand.
And, with slings, and bows, and engines, applied
His attentions to the foe, where they did stand,
While sending scaling ladder, sword, and spear,
To his comrades, and all kinds of martial gear.

Orlando, Brandimarte, Oliviero 21
Wrought fierce and furious battle, near the wall,
With the aid of the daring Astolfo,
He that had flown so high with ne'er a fall.
Each led a fourth of their host against the foe,
As they'd agreed before, bringing them all
Neath the battlements, or clustered at the gates,
Showing a courage set to tempt the Fates,

While proving their prowess, so as to show 22
Clear indication, midst that confusion,
To a thousand watching eyes also,
Of deeds full worthy of celebration.
Wooden towers were brought against the foe;
And, bearing many a mighty construction,
Trained elephants, a turret on each back
Reared high above the foe, in bold attack.

Brandimarte set a ladder gainst the wall, 23
Ascended, and to those below he cried;
Many a brave man followed, at his call,
For none could fear behind so brave a guide.
None noted or thought to note midst all,
If it would hold their weight once applied,
For Brandimarte, intent upon the foe,
Fought his way upwards, like those below.

Bracing hands and feet against the stone, 24
He leapt upon the wall, and whirled his sword;
Revealing all his skill, though all alone,
With blade and point, he sliced, skewered, and bored.
Then, suddenly, the ladder gave a groan,
And broke, neath the weight of those aboard,
And, but for Brandimarte, to the ground,
The Christians fell, a maimed and writhing mound.

And yet the knight, undaunted by its fall, 25
Not for one moment thought of vile retreat,
Though none of his own answered to his call,
While all the enemy looked to his defeat.
The Christians, fearful of what might befall,
Begged him to turn, but, gazing neath his feet,
He leapt within; the depth of that great leap
Was thirty yards, the wall there high and steep.



Stanza 24 "*With blade and point, he sliced, skewered, and bored*"

Yet he landed without hurt, upon the ground, 26
As though but wrought of straw, and featherlight,
And then tore into those who clustered round
Showing a prowess granted him of right,
Attacking these, and others that he found,
And scattering both these and those in flight,
Though those without, seeing the leap he made,
Had thought him now beyond all human aid.

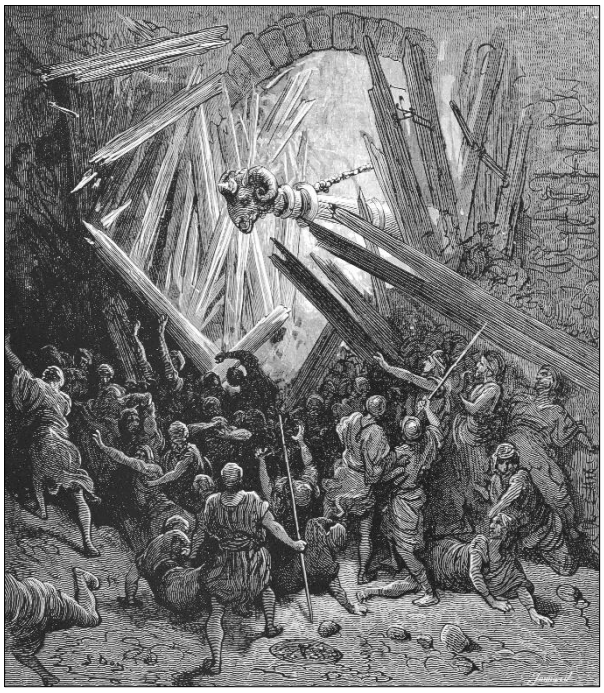
Canto XL: 27-32: The others follow and take the city

Through the army ran the sudden rumour, 27
A murmur and a whisper, far and near,
From man to man, and with every murmur
That rumour grew, and magnified their fear.
To Orlando (amidst the thick as ever,
Where the cost to the foe would prove most dear)
And Oliviero and Astolfo, its flight
Penetrated; there the news did alight.

Those warriors, but most of all Orlando, 28
Who loved and prized bold Brandimarte,
On hearing that if they should linger so
They must yield their friend to the enemy,
Planted their ladders, and upwards did go,
Showing a proud, and noble, rivalry,
While appearing so fierce, and full of might,
That the Saracens trembled at the sight.

As, in some ocean that the storm-winds churn, 29
Mighty waves attack a floundering vessel,
Swamping now the prow, and now the stern,
Seeking an entry, midst that furious battle,
(While crew and pilot groan, and terror learn,
That ought to aid her, and yet lack the mettle)
Till at length a wall of foam sweeps all away
And where it entered, all the rest make play,

So, once that mighty trio had gained the wall, 30
They left a space where the rest could follow,
For upon a thousand ladders men could call,
And where they went a lesser knight might go.
Meanwhile the battering rams' rise and fall
Breached the gates, with many a mighty blow,
So that, from many sides, men now might aid
Brandimarte, fighting on, unafraid.



Stanza 30

With that force the seething waters maintain, 31
When the King of all Rivers overflows,
And carves a course o'er the Mantuan plain,
In his rage, tears the crops from the furrows,
Bears the pens, with the flock, in his train,
Drowns the dogs with the shepherd, and shows
But the tops of the elms, where fish now glide,
(Once the homes of birds) in his muddy tide;

With that same force, the impetuous host, 32
Pouring through every breach in the wall,
Seeking to slay the people of that coast,
And concerted resistance, thus, forestall,
Midst death and ruin, wrought their uttermost,
Hands dyed with blood, killing, plundering all,
Dealing destruction to that fair city,
(Proud Queen of Africa) without pity.

Canto XL: 33-36: Agramante is restrained from suicide

Every street was piled high with the dead, 33
While from innumerable wounds there flowed
A stream, that formed a moat, as deep and red
As that encircling Pluto's dark abode.
From house to house the roaring flames now spread,
Mosque, palace, portico their fabric showed,
And shattered mansions echoed to the sound
Of cries and pleas, where mercy ne'er was found.



Stanza 32 "*The impetuous host, pouring through every breach in the wall*"



Stanza 33 "*From house to house the roaring flames now spread*"

The victors issued forth from that ill place, 34
Bearing the spoils, one a vase, another
Grasped silver plate, wrought by that ancient race,
Or dragged away a child, a grieving mother;
Rape and pillage did the conquerors disgrace,
Which nor Orlando nor any other
Could now prevent, not the good Astolfo,
Nor Brandimarte, nor Oliviero,

By whose blade Bucifaro had been slain, 35
That king of Algeciras, at a blow;
Having lost all hope, midst a world of pain,
His own hand took the life of Branzardo;
While pierced by three deep wounds, staunched in vain,
Folvo was captured, the Duke of Pardo,
And thereafter died, the third to whose care
Their monarch had entrusted his realms there.

Agram ante, who'd deserted his fleet, 36
And with old Sobrino had taken flight,
Wept both long and hard at their defeat,
When the burning city came in sight.
His Bizerte dying, his eyes did greet,
And drawing closer in that dreadful light,
His thought was but to end there, in his woe,
Yet was restrained by the wise Sobrino.



Stanza 36

Canto XL: 37-39: Sobrino counsels him

Sobrino cried: 'What greater victory 37
My lord, could your enemy ever know
Than hearing of your death, for would not he
Hope to rule Africa, untroubled, so?
With you alive, tis denied him, wholly,
For he as yet has cause to fear the foe,
Knowing that she will not be his for long
While you yet live, and your grip is strong.

Your death deprives your people, suddenly, 38
Of their last hope, all that to them remains.
If you yet live, we trust we shall be free,
Redeemed from wretchedness, and all our pains,
While, if you die, we face captivity,
And Africa, a slave, your enemy gains.
Live, my lord, if not for yourself alone,
Live and grant hope to those who are your own.

Your neighbour, Egypt's Sultan, will supply 39
Men, and wealth enough, to aid you ever,
Scarce looking with a favourable eye
On Charlemagne's attempts on Africa;
Norandino your kinsman, he would try
By every means your realm to recover;
Persian, Armenian, Turk, Arab, Mede,
All will assist you, in your time of need.'

Canto XL: 40-42: Ariosto on the danger of trusting in allies

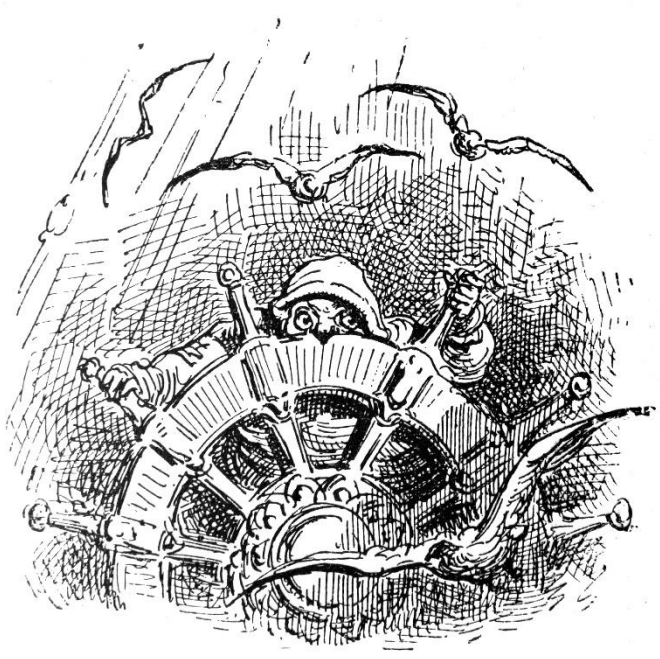
With such and like words, the old counsellor 40
Sought to raise hope in Agramante's mind,
Of winning back his realms in Africa,
Though, in his own, he was perchance resigned
To another end entirely; for, ever,
To an evil pass he is brought, we find,
That's led to forsake his land and honour,
And look to barbarians for succour.

The like, Hannibal and Jugurtha knew, 41
And others in former times, who did so;
Ludovico il Moro, in our own day, too,
Held by France, his ally become a foe.
Through such examples (I speak to you,
My lord Ippolito) wise Alfonso,
Your brother, was ever wont to decry
Those that on others, not themselves, rely;

So (throughout that war waged in anger 42
By a Pope filled with deep ire and disdain,
And though his own forces were the lesser,
His friend driven from the Italian plain,
Whose Naples was lost, seemingly forever,
While France's Charles the Eighth therein did reign)
Neither threats nor promises swayed your brother
That ne'er would yield his dukedom to another.

Canto XL: 43-46: Agramante reaches an isle, and finds Gradasso there

Yet Agramante headed for the East, 43
And was far out on the deep when a gale
Blew hard offshore, that, before it ceased,
Attacked the vessel, and did near prevail.
The master at the helm, as it increased,
Cried: 'My lord, I find tis of no avail
To hold this course (eying the sky above)
Against the storm no boat like ours dare move.



Stanza 43

If you, sire, will take heed of my counsel, 44
There is an isle to larboard, close nearby;
It seems to me the place would serve us well
For shelter till this tempest passes by.'
The king gave his assent, thus it befell
That they escaped, that island being nigh,
Which serves as refuge for the mariner,
Twixt lofty Etna and the coast of Africa.

The isle was uninhabited, grown o'er 45
With juniper and myrtle, granting there
A peaceful sanctuary, a pleasant shore,
Home to roe and fallow deer, and hare,
With its location known, but little more,
Except to fishermen whose nets would share
The silence, drying, while the fish sank deep
Neath peaceful waters, seemingly asleep.

There they found another vessel though, 46
Driven by the gale to that fair island,
Which had carried the bold King Gradasso,
From Arles, and now was beached on the strand,
Warm greetings, worthily, they did bestow,
Clasping each other tightly by the hand,
For they were bosom friends, as you'll recall,
Companions in arms neath Paris' wall.

Canto XL: 47-50: Gradasso offers to counter the incursion

With much displeasure Gradasso now heard 47
Of the king's adverse fortune, and consoled
Agramante, and now offered, in a word,
His counsel, for twas worth its weight in gold,
Warning of the harm that might be incurred,
Through seeking aid from Egypt, for: 'Of old,'
He said, 'tis ill for exiles to seek aid
In that country where Pompey was unmade.

Since, helped by Ethiopia's Senapo, 48
Men are come to steal Africa from you,
Led forth by this Englishman Astolfo,
And now have burnt fair Bizerte too;
While with their army fights Orlando,
That was bereft of sense, restored anew;
I think I know the perfect remedy
To set your troubled mind at liberty.

For love of you, I'll undertake to fight 49
The Count in single combat, publicly.
If he were made of bronze or steel that knight
But slight defence would he find from me.
Once he is dead, the Christians, in might
Like lambs before the hungry wolf shall be.
Next, I've thought (tis easily put in hand)
How to drive the Nubians from your land.

I'll rouse the other Nubians, who hold 50
To the Muslim faith, on our side the Nile,
And the Arabs, and Somalis (rich in gold,
And men, and steeds) to foes of ours hostile,
With Persians and Chaldeans, now controlled
By my sceptre, who those same foes revile,
And, on our enemies, I'll then make war,
Drive them all forth, and your fair realm restore.'

Canto XL: 51-55: They issue a challenge to Orlando

Gradasso's second offer much appealed, 51
Arriving, indeed, so opportunely;
And King Agramante scarcely concealed
His delight at Fortune's generosity,
In bringing his ship there; it appealed,
This last suggestion, yet he, sternly,
Rejected King Gradasso's thought, for he,
Though it might reclaim Hippo, could never
Agree to what impinged on his honour.

'If Orlando must be challenged, it is I,' 52
He cried, 'that must undertake the labour.
I shall be ready; may Allah, thereby,
Work his will, in good or fatal manner.'
'Let us pursue that idea; and why
Not agree to work the scheme together,
For my next thought is that we both should fight,
I, Orlando, and you some other knight.'

'I care not which,' replied Agramante, 53
'So long as I am there, for I contend
I'd find in war no better company,
Than you, though such I sought to the world's end.
'And what then,' old Sobrino said, 'of me?
If you would say I'm old, then condescend
To grant my deep knowledge of chivalry,
And long experience; when in peril,
Youth ever benefits from good counsel.'

Sobrino was robust and vigorous 54
Despite his years, and his skill well-proven,
And he cried that he was still as courageous,
And strong, as in his youth, more so even.
They agreed his claim was meritorious,
And swiftly briefed a messenger, and then
Bade the man sail for Africa, and go
And bear their challenge to Count Orlando:



Stanza 54

That he should with an equal company, 55
Attend them, upon Lampedusa's shore,
Which is an islet in that self-same sea
Whose waves about their present isle did roar.
The messenger went on his way swiftly,
His vessel driven on by sail and oar,
Reached Bizerte, and there found Orlando
Dividing the spoils wrestled from the foe.

Canto XL: 56-61: Which he readily accepts

The challenge from Gradasso, Agramante, 56
And Sobrino, now announced publicly,
Was pleasing to the Lord of Anglante,
That rewarded the king's envoy, richly.
He'd heard it said, among his company,
Durindana was Gradasso's, whereby he
Had resolved to sail to far India,
There, that famed weapon to recover,

Not expecting to meet the king elsewhere, 57
Who had quit, so he'd heard, the shores of France,
Now a nearer place would host the affair,
Where he hoped that same mission to advance.
And then Almonte's prized horn, near as fair,
And Brigliador, spurred his acceptance,
Since both of those possessions he knew
Agramante held; yearning for those too,

He chose as his companions in the fight 58
Brandimarte and Oliviero,
Both were proven warriors of might,
And that they loved him, truly, he did know.
Fine steeds and sound armour, strong yet light,
And swords and lances he desired also,
To arm all three of them (to you tis known
Why none was there possessed of his own).

Orlando (as I've explained before) 59
In his madness, had scattered his abroad,
While Rodomonte, on the Rhône's steep shore,
Had added those of the knights to his hoard.
Then, few in Africa such armour wore,
For rare examples could that land afford
Of the finest arms, while Agramante
Had taken such to France's fair country.

What old and rusted armour could be found 60
Orlando had brought, and rendered bright,
Meanwhile he paced o'er the sandy ground
With the other two, speaking of the fight.
Three miles beyond the camp, gazing round,
A vessel, on the water, met their sight,
In full sail, and approaching nigh the shore,
With no pilot at the helm, as on she bore.

She lacked a helmsman and, it seemed, a crew, 61
Driven where'er the wind and Fortune led,
Nearing the land, for a strong breeze yet blew,
Until she grounded on the strand ahead.
But ere I speak of this strange sight anew
My love for Ruggiero seeks instead
To return me to his story, and show
What took place betwixt him and Rinaldo.

Canto XL: 62-68: We return to Ruggiero and his duty to Agramante

Of those two mighty warriors I write 62
Who had retreated from the fierce mêlée,
On seeing the treaty broken outright,
And every squadron in wild disarray,
And sought to learn from others, if they might,
Who had perjured himself on that sad day,
And caused such havoc on the open plain:
Whether Agramante or Charlemagne.

Meanwhile a servant of Ruggiero's 63
Cautious, astute, and loyal to the knight,
And who, when the conflict first arose,
Had taken care to keep his master in sight,
Now brought his sword and steed, amidst the throes
Of the conflict, so Ruggiero might
Aid his friends. He grasped the sword and mounted,
Yet sought not amidst them to be counted.

He departed, but, ere he went, renewed 64
The pact that he had struck with Rinaldo:
That if he found Agramante had pursued
This evil course, his service he'd forgo.
All that day he took no part in the feud,
One thing alone occupied Ruggiero:
Which leader had committed perjury,
Was it Charlemagne or Agramante?

All, he spoke with, said that Africa's king 65
Had been the first man to break the treaty.
Ruggiero loved him; thoughts of quitting
His service could not be mused on lightly.
The Moorish warriors were fast dispersing,
(As I have said before) all from the heady
Heights of Fortune to the depths now hurled,
As she pleased, whose strange fancies move the world.

Ruggiero debated in his mind 66
Whether he should follow Agramante,
Or keep from Africa, remain behind,
Prompted thus by his love for his lady;
To the former course scarcely resigned,
And so grieved by the thought of perjury
If he now broke his pledge to Rinaldo,
That, restive, he could neither stay nor go.



STANZA 66

For his noble heart was equally pained 67
By his thoughts of dereliction of duty,
That to mere cowardice, if he remained,
Or lack of true honour, would most likely
Be ascribed, or as treachery explained,
And be condemned by the loyal many;
For they would say that no such pledge should bind,
Seeming unjust, unlawful, to their mind.

All through that day and the ensuing night, 68
He remained alone, and the next day too,
Debating what, in good conscience, he might,
Or for fear of perjury might not, do.
At last, on Africa he turned his sight,
Deeming that to his lord he must prove true;
Moved by his love for her he did adore,
And yet by honour and by duty more.

CANTO XL: 69–72: DUDON AND HIS MEN DISEMBARK

He then made for Arles, where he hoped to find 69
A ship to carry him to Africa,
But only the Moorish dead, left behind,
He saw there; no vessels sailed the river;
For so King Agramante had designed,
Taking the best, and burning every other.
His hopes dashed he slowly turned away,
Then took the coast-road leading to Marseilles.

On some vessel he thought to lay his hand, 70
That, through force or plea, might serve his turn.
There, Dudon's mighty ships had now made land,
With Agramante's roped to bow and stern.
You could scarce have passed a grain of sand
Between them all; those that had failed to burn
Of the enemy fleet, to the harbour brought,
With many a prisoner, captive, to that port.

The Moorish ships that had survived the fight 71
Those not wrecked or sunk, or consumed by fire,
(Save for a few that fled) the Danish knight
Had led to Marseilles, his victory entire.
Seven Moorish kings, appalled at the sight
Of their ruined fleet, their situation dire,
Had yielded their seven ships to the foe,
And now stood mute and weeping, full of woe.

Dudon, once disembarked and on dry land, 72
Thought to find Charlemagne that very day;
Of the captives, and the spoils now on hand,
He arranged a vast triumphal display.
The captives were drawn up along the sand,
Flanked by Nubian guards, in joyful array,
Who shouting, happily, with loud acclaim,
Made the shore around ring to Dudon's name.

CANTO XL: 73–78: RUGGIERO ENCOUNTERS DUDON

There, arrived, in hope, brave Ruggiero, 73
Thinking the fleet that of Agramante,
On seeing it afar, and neared the foe,
But recognised, on viewing all, more clearly,
Those seven captive kings, Bambirago,
Nasamona's, Farurante, Agricalte,
Rimedonte, Balastro, Manilardo,
That stood sad-browed and weeping, full of woe.

Ruggiero, who loved them, could not bear 74
To leave them in that unhappy state,
He knew that there was little use in prayer,
Sheer force was needed, ere it was too late.
He lowered his lance and, scattering all there,
Sought his power and skill to demonstrate,
Then swung his sword and, charging those around,
In a trice, had stretched a hundred on the ground.



Stanza 74

Dudon heard the sound of arms, and saw
The destruction wrought by this unknown knight,
He witnessed his people troubled sore,
In fear and anguish, wailing, put to flight.
He called for sword and steed, his helm he bore,
And else was ready-armoured for the fight
Then mounting his steed, and seizing his lance,
Showed he was yet a paladin of France.

Then, shouting to all about to stand aside,
He spurred his bold courser against the foe,
While hope to the captives' hearts was supplied,
As another hundred fell to Ruggiero;
Who, when Dudon's arrival he espied,
Mounted alone (the rest on foot did go)
Deeming him the leader, charged outright,
Driven by the desire to prove his might.

Now Dudon was already on his way,
But Ruggiero having dropped his lance,
In disdain, the knight flung his own away,
Not wishing to gain thus from his advance.
Ruggiero finding such chivalry in play,
Said to himself: 'Some perfect knight of France,
This man must be, that thus refrains from wrong,
Sure, to Charlemagne's court he must belong.

If I can achieve it, I would know his name,
Before aught else in battle here is done.'
Thus, he asked, and was informed by that same
That here was Dudon, Uggiero's son.
And then the Dane to the like now laid claim,
And from Ruggiero his title won;
Their names now exchanged, the valiant foes
Shouted their challenges, and came to blows.

Canto XL: 79–82: But refrains from injuring him

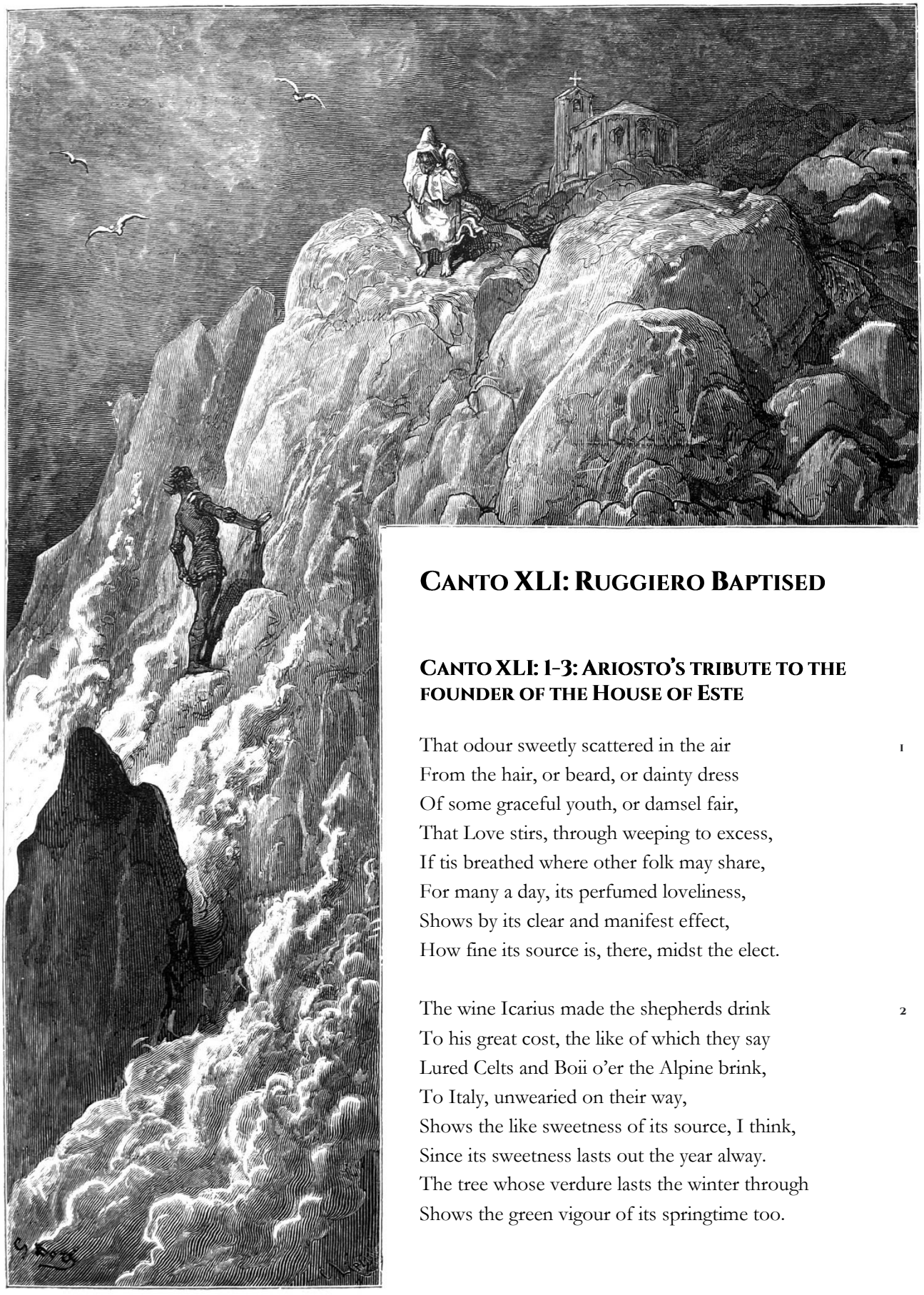
Brave Dudon, there, wielded that iron mace
That in a thousand fights had brought him fame,
Where he'd upheld the honour of his race,
And maintained the glow of Uggiero's name.
That sword which pierced the best-defended place,
That peerless blade, that finest plate could maim,
Ruggiero drew, and prepared to try
His strength against the Dane's, with steely eye.

Yet because the youth ever kept in mind
The need not to sore offend his lady
Which he knew he must do, if she should find
He had shed her kinsman's blood, wantonly,
(For, instructed in the lineage of his kind,
He knew courteous Dudon's mother to be
Armelina, of that Beatrice the sister
That was, in turn, Bradamante's mother)

He now refrained from harming the other,
And seldom struck to wound, if he could;
His shield deflected one blow, and another,
Whene'er the mace descended seeking blood.
The good Bishop Turpin claims, moreover,
That he might have slain Dudon where he stood,
Yet ever when required to land a blow
The sharp edge of his blade did thus forego,

But used the flat as fiercely, even so.
Ruggiero's sword was tempered soundly,
And, in a noisy game of to and fro,
He belaboured Dudon, so forcefully,
And so dazed the man, with blow on blow,
The latter scarce could keep from injury.
I'll spare my hearers and, with one last rhyme,
Save this canto's tale for another time.





Canto XLI: Ruggiero Baptised

Canto XLI: 1-3: Ariosto's tribute to the founder of the House of Este

That odour sweetly scattered in the air 1
From the hair, or beard, or dainty dress
Of some graceful youth, or damsel fair,
That Love stirs, through weeping to excess,
If tis breathed where other folk may share,
For many a day, its perfumed loveliness,
Shows by its clear and manifest effect,
How fine its source is, there, midst the elect.

The wine Icarius made the shepherds drink 2
To his great cost, the like of which they say
Lured Celts and Boii o'er the Alpine brink,
To Italy, unwearied on their way,
Shows the like sweetness of its source, I think,
Since its sweetness lasts out the year alway.
The tree whose verdure lasts the winter through
Shows the green vigour of its springtime too.

So, the famed lineage that, for many a year, 3
Has shed its light, with grace and courtesy,
Yet seems to shine more brightly, ever clear,
Gives indication, through its majesty,
That he that was the source of glory here,
The House of Este, shone as brilliantly,
In all ways that exalt men to the sky,
As does the sun among the stars on high.

Canto XLI: 4–7: Ruggiero frees the seven kings, and sails for Africa

Ruggiero showed clear and manifest 4
Tokens of valour and of courtesy,
His high-mindedness nobly expressed,
In every deed he wrought of chivalry,
So Dudon, he restrainedly addressed,
(As I revealed to you previously)
In feigning some lack of strength or breath,
A reluctance to bring about his death.

For Dudon now knew, of a surety, 5
That Ruggiero wished his foe unharmed;
The Dane's defence was offered but weakly,
So weary was he, yet his life seemed charmed.
Comprehending this, and seeing clearly
How Ruggiero held back, quite disarmed,
Though less in strength and vigour, certainly,
He yet strove to yield naught in courtesy.

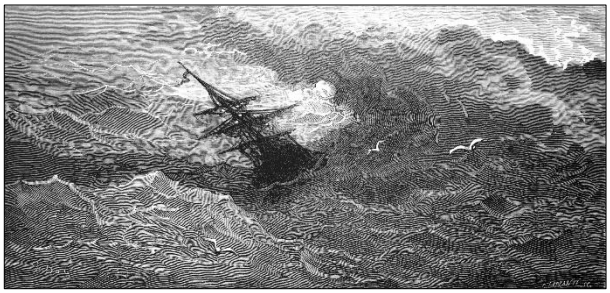
'For God's sake, sir', he said, 'let us agree, 6
To cease this fight, I cannot but confess
Myself thus conquered by your chivalry,
Nor may I, here, achieve the least success.'
Ruggiero answered him: 'And I no less
Desire the truce, that you now wish of me,
Upon condition that these seven are freed,
And rendered to me. Do you so concede?'

He pointed to the seven kings, who stood, 7
Heads bowed, as Ruggiero spoke further,
Adding that no obstruction later should
Prevent their journeying to Africa.
Dudon agreed, and he the truce made good,
By freeing them, granting a barque thereafter
To Ruggiero, whiche'er he pleased, who then
Sailed, with the seven, for Africa again.

Canto XLI: 8–17: His barque encounters a storm

Once loosed, the barque, with gleaming sail outspread, 8
Gave herself gladly to the steady breeze
That, at the start, conveyed her straight ahead,
Leaving her master idling, and at ease.
The land retreated now, as on they sped,
The waves calm denizens of shoreless seas,
Until, at eve, the breeze grew changeable
Showing itself but fickle and unstable.

It blew from stern to bow, then bow to stern, 9
But there did not remain; the vessel reeled,
Confounding the pilot, at every turn,
As the wind altered, his fear unconcealed.
The billows rose, the sea began to churn,
Neptune's pale herd near and far revealed;
As many deaths there seemed, amidst that flow,
As the waves that drove their barque to and fro.



Stanza 9

Now blew the wind before, and now behind, 10
Sending her forth then back, ceaselessly,
Or blew athwart them, rendering them blind,
With spray that lifted high above the sea.
The master, pale of face, oft changed his mind,
Calling, and gesturing, though fruitlessly,
For the sail to be reefed, the mast lowered,
As o'er the helpless craft the waves towered.

Scant use were his gestures, his cries in vain, 11
For naught could be perceived amidst the gale,
His shouts were smothered by the wind and rain,
The wind and rain that ever did prevail,
Drowning the sailors' cries of grief and pain,
Merged with the waves' crash, in an endless wail.
The storm reigned fore and aft, on every hand,
Such that none heard the pilot's least command.

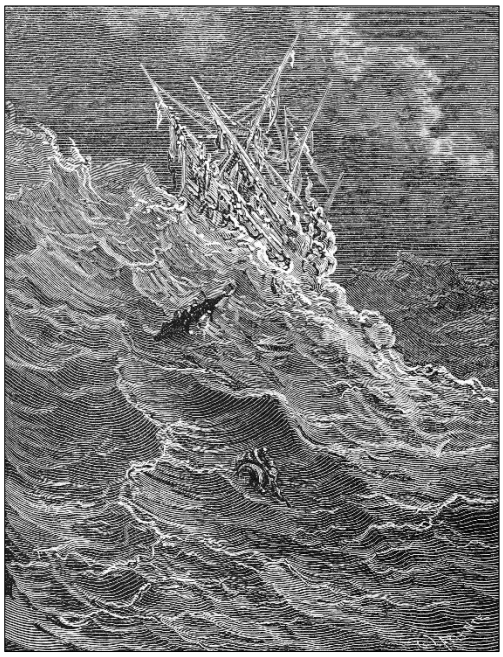
The raging storm roared about the rigging, 12
That ever gave out dreadful moans and screams;
Wild lightning flashed amidst its groaning,
While thunder crashed to company its gleams;
One man gripped the helm, some tried deploying
The weighty oars, that seemed mere useless beams,
One sought to free a rope, one to bind fast,
Others bailed furiously against the blast.

Higher the strident screeching of the gale, 13
As Boreas in sudden fury blew,
Driving against the mast the flapping sail,
While vast breakers rose to the sky anew.
The oars now broke, wielded to no avail,
While to mere chance or fate yielded the crew,
As the prow turned to leeward, and the barque
Yawed, defencelessly, in a sickening arc.

On her beam ends, on her starboard side, 14
About to turn keel uppermost, she lay,
While all, to God above, now prayed and cried,
Certain of being drowned, or borne away;
The sea now gripped them, not to be denied;
The wave was weathered, yet the next, I say,
Caused the barque to split; amidst her beams
The water poured, through the opening seams.

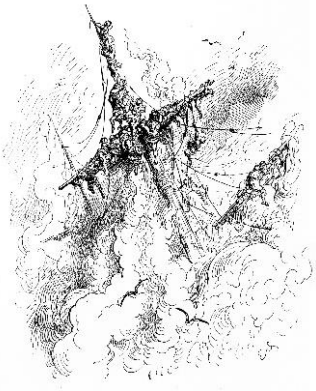
The wintry tide now flowed through every part, 15
Mounting a cruel and merciless attack;
So high the waves rose as they broke apart
They seemed to reach the sky ere falling back,
While so deep the vessel sank, for her part,
Hell seemed rent open to the nether black.
Small hope was there, or none; with trembling breath,
All there foresaw inevitable death.

Through that weary night, o'er the sounding sea 16
They were driven, at the mercy of the gale,
While the wind, that might have dropped completely
With the dawn, gathered force, set to prevail.
A bare rock o'er the prow loomed, suddenly,
That all prayed to avoid, yet, without fail,
Despite themselves, towards that rocky place
The tempest drove them, and at headlong pace.



Stanza 15

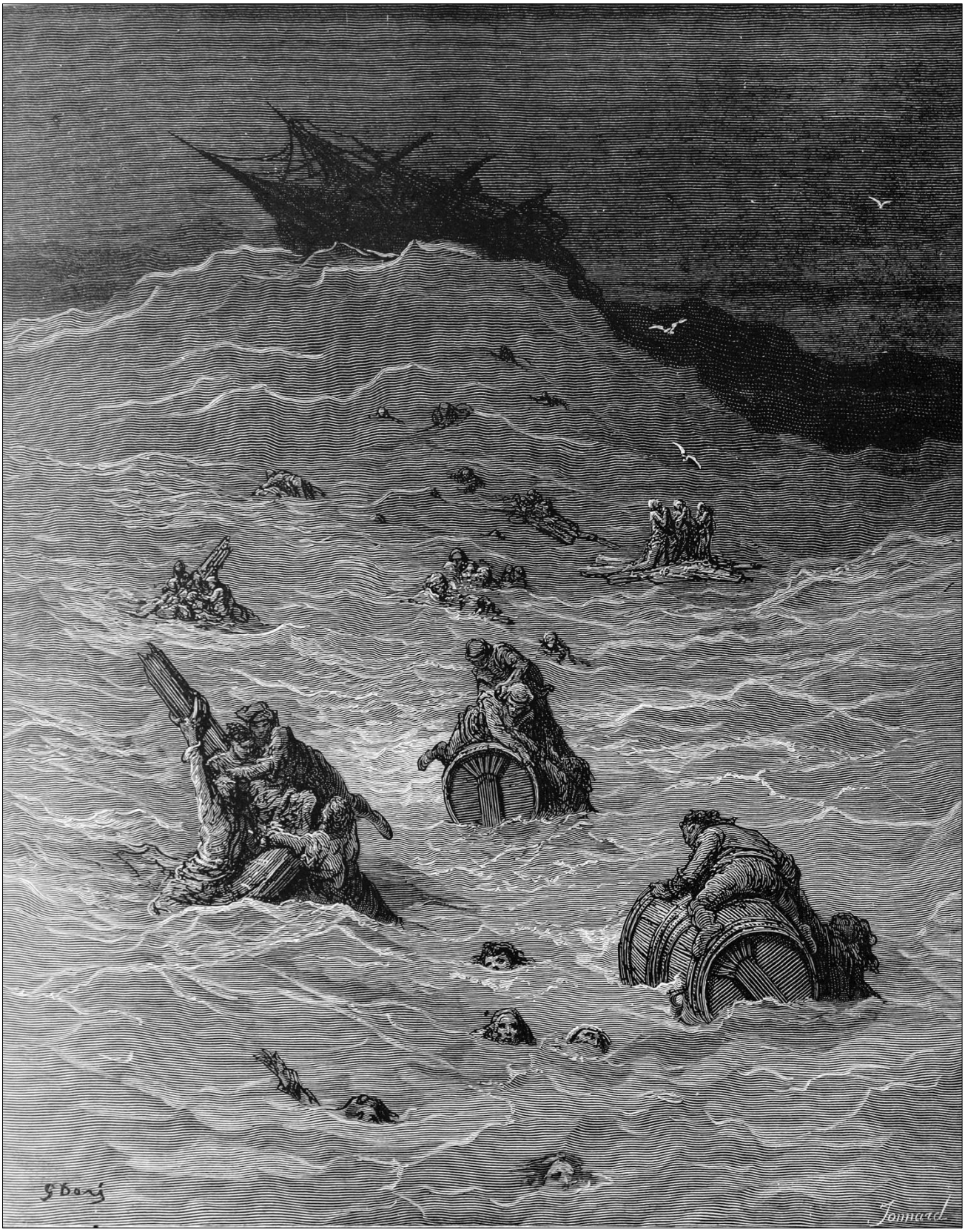
With pallid face, the helmsman, three or more 17
Attempts now made to steer another course,
Seeking escape, yet the vast waves now tore
The splintered helm away, with massive force;
While what canvas was left served the more
To drive them onwards, and their fate endorse.
No time was there to ponder what was best;
Mortal danger now close upon them pressed.



Stanza 17

Canto XLI: 18-23: The skiff sinks while Ruggiero swims to the surface

Perceiving now there was scant remedy, 18
That their barque was certain to be wrecked,
Each to his own affairs tended closely,
Seeking to save his life; to that effect,
The nearest launched the skiff, leaping quickly
Into the little vessel, frail, undecked,
So many thus o'er-whelming the boat
That, driven deep, it scarce remained afloat.



Stanza 18 "*Their barque was certain to be wrecked*"

Ruggiero, seeing the master and the mate 19
Abandoning the barque without a fight,
Unarmed, and in his doublet, chanced his fate,
Leapt down, and in the skiff did now alight,
But found it then so burdened with the weight
And others yet descending from the height,
Who further pressure on the skiff bestowed,
That into the depths it sank, with all its load.

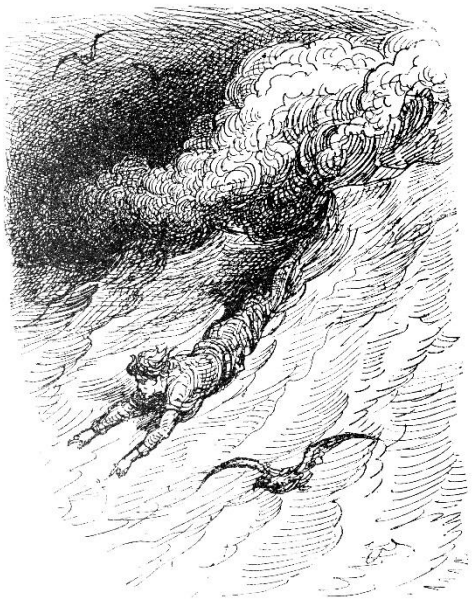


Stanza 19

Into the depths, with those who, in despair, 20
Had left the larger vessel to the sea,
As woeful cries a moment filled the air,
Calling for heaven-sent aid, fruitlessly.
But a brief instant, all those struggled there,
For the waves rose, in anger, scornfully,
And suddenly occupied all that space,
Whence the cries rose, their striving to efface.

Some, plunged in the deep, were drowned outright, 21
Others emerged, and sought to ride the flow,
Swam so their heads were lifted to the light,
While an arm, a naked leg, the waves did show,
Ruggiero, whom danger did ne'er affright,
Sprang to the surface from the depths below,
And found himself not far from the bare rock,
That their every effort had seemed to mock.

He hoped, by use of his strong legs and arms, 22
To swim, climb upon it, and gain the shore.
And breasting the water, despite all alarms,
Unwearyingly, he cleft through the waves before
His face, while, ceasing from their former harms,
Those troubled waters from the sea-cliffs bore
The unmanned barque, abandoning to their fate
Those who had sought to flee her side of late.



Stanza 22

Alas, for the endless errors of mankind! 23
The ship they thought would perish yet survived.
For when the master and the mate resigned
Her to the gale, deserting her, she thrived.
The wind, to which her course was now consigned,
Now drove her on, the waves beneath her dived,
And, now the crew had fled, she floated free
Of danger, to drift safely o'er the sea.

Canto XLI: 24–25: The abandoned barque drifts ashore near Bizerte

Blown astray when her helmsman was aboard, 24
Without him she reached Africa's bare shore,
Three miles from Hippo, on the sands toward
The north, facing Egypt, at rest once more,
(As the winds fell, the waves sank in accord)
On the deserted beach, sans sail or oar.
There, walking o'er the strand, as you will know,
For this I've told you of, came Orlando.

And, wishing to see if she was empty, 25
Or held some last remnants of her cargo,
He approached in a skiff, with Brandimarte
Beside him there, and Oliviero.
Into the hold they descended swiftly,
Yet found naught living there, but Frontino,
And strapped to his saddle, Balisarda,
And, at his feet, Ruggiero's armour.

Canto XLI: 26-29: Orlando takes Ruggiero's sword, Oliviero his armour, Brandimarte his steed

Ruggiero had been swift to take flight, 26
And so had left the famous blade behind,
Balisarda, known by the Count on sight,
And which had once been his, you'll call to mind,
For Boiardo has told the tale outright;
How Falerina lost it, there you'll find,
When he laid waste to her garden, that lord,
And how Brunello later stole the sword;

And how beneath Carena's mount, as well, 27
Brunello gave it, freely, to Ruggiero.
He, from its use, its great worth could tell,
(Peerless its temper, and its edge also)
I mean Count Orlando, who for a spell
Had wielded it, from whom thanks now did flow
To Heaven; believing (as he later said)
Twas sent by God ere to the fight he sped.

For he had need of it against Gradasso, 28
The King of Sericana, who beside
His great valour and strength, had Baiardo,
And the sword Durindana at his side.
Knowing not Ruggiero's armour though,
He ranked it less highly, than his own hide;
Fine was the plate and mail, yet suited more,
He believed, to adornment than to war.

Since he needed it not against the foe, 29
(Being charmed against all weaponry)
He gave the armour to Oliviero,
But set the sword at his side, hanging free;
While to Brandimarte went Baiardo,
The Count sharing out the spoils equally.
And, thus, each companion gained a prize,
One coveted by each of them likewise.

Canto XLI: 30-36: The three warriors set sail for Lampedusa

In rich new gear, for the appointed day, 30
The knights now dressed, to meet the Moorish king.
Orlando on his shield did, there, display
Babel's mighty tower, struck by lightning;
On Oliviero's a greyhound argent lay,
With a leash about its neck, and bearing
A motto: 'Till He comes.' In golden vest,
Signalling his worth, the knight was dressed.

For the day of battle, Brandimarte 31
Had chosen to wear a mournful colour,
Both in his murdered father's memory
And for the sake of personal honour.
Fiordelisa sewed the surcoat, nobly,
As well as she knew how, and its border
Of many a costly gem was possessed,
Although of plain black cloth was all the rest.

She wrought the costly garment with her own hand, 32
To adorn the splendid suit of armour,
In which the knight his courser would command,
With a caparison that steed to cover;
But from the day Fiordelisa first planned
The work till it was done, and thereafter,
The lady never smiled, nor showed a trace
Of happiness upon her lovely face.

Ever her heart was fearful, tormented 33
By the thought that he'd be taken from her,
A hundred times and more she'd consented
To see him fight battles fraught with danger,
But never this terror, that ne'er relented,
Had she felt, that so froze her blood, never
This ceaseless fear within, this chilling blast,
That yet made her poor heart beat twice as fast.

Once armoured at every point, and armed, 34
The trio set sail, with Sansonetto
Remaining there to see that naught was harmed,
Sharing the task of care with Astolfo;
While Fiordelisa, troubled and alarmed,
Heart filled with fear, a saddened face did show,
Prayed and lamented, watching anxiously
Their vessel, as it vanished o'er the sea.

Nor did Astolfo and Sansonetto 35
Find it easy to tempt her from the shore,
And lead her to the palace at last, so
She might seek her bed there, lamenting sore.
Meanwhile a favourable wind did blow
And to Lampedusa, swiftly, bore
The warriors, elected thus to fight;
The chosen isle appearing on their right.

Disembarking, the Lord of Anglante, 36
With Brandimarte, and Oliviero,
Being first to arrive, intentionally
Pitched their tent on the eastern shore, so
That when, on that same eve, Agramante
Came, to the other he was forced to go;
For, since the sun was sinking in the west,
The fight must wait till dawn, and they seek rest.

Canto XLI: 37-46: Brandimarte makes an offer to Agramante which is refused

Placed here and there, until the morning light, 37
Armed servants stood about, to guard the tent.
To where the Saracens thus camped, that night,
Brandimarte, seeking peace, in silence went,
And, by Orlando's leave, in a forthright
Manner, spoke with Agramante, his intent
Most friendly, for he had, a time before,
Neath the Moorish banner reached France's shore.

After a fair greeting, hand clasping hand, 38
The trusted knight many a reason gave
The Moorish king why he should not demand
They fight the battle, though all there were brave.
Every place would yet be his to command,
Between the Nile and the Western wave,
Offered, there and then, by Orlando's leave,
If in the Virgin's Son he would believe.

'Since I've both loved you and do love you still, 39
This same counsel I give to you,' he said.
'And know that I pursue it, of my free will,
And find it good, and to the faith am wed
Of Christ the Lord, and others count as nil;
And would have you follow my way instead,
The way of true salvation, and would move
Your heart to join with me, and those I love.

Therein lies your good; no other counsel 40
That you could follow here would so avail,
And least of all to now engage in battle
With Orlando, whoever might prevail.
For the loss and the gain are unequal,
The one outweighs the other on the scale;
If you win, small the prize that you will gain,
But great the loss, should you defeat sustain.

Were Orlando and we others to die, 41
We who will fight to the death at his side,
I see no path ahead for you, whereby
You may recover your realms far and wide.
If we three dead upon the sand should lie
Then our replacements are identified;
A host of knights Charlemagne could send
The least of his vast domains to defend.'

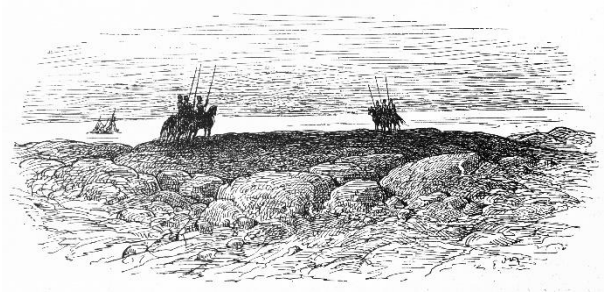
Thus, brave Brandimarte spoke, and many 42
A point he might have added to his speech,
But in an angry voice, Agramante
Interrupted him, ere such he might teach:
'This is pure madness, tis audacity
Alone inspires the words you seek to preach,
Foolish is that counsel where none is sought,
Whether for good or ill its words are wrought.

And how the words you speak can proceed 43
From the affection that you held, you say,
And hold for me yet, I know not, indeed,
Seeing you here, with Orlando, this day.
I deem that, finding that you have agreed
To meet the dragon and become its prey
That e'er devours men's spirits, you would draw
All others to that dark infernal maw.

Whether I win or lose, command my throne 44
As of old, or in exile spend my days,
Is a thing that is known to Allah alone,
Whose will none sees; for ours is but to praise.
Whate'er may come to me, I'll make no moan,
But show myself a worthy king always,
If fated to death or shame, then I shall die,
Rather than mar my princely line thereby.

Now you may return, who, should you display 45
No better prowess in tomorrow's fight
Than as an orator you've shown today,
Would ill accompany Anglante's knight.'
No more did the angry king wish to say,
His heart with both pride and ire set alight;
They parted then, to seek their own repose,
Till o'er the eastern wave the sun arose.

The warriors awoke with dawn's first light, 46
Then armed themselves, and mounted each his steed,
Brief words were said, twixt knight and hostile knight,
And then without delay, since all agreed,
They lowered their fell lances, sharp and bright.
And yet if I should speak of each brave deed
That befell there, will not poor Ruggiero
Drown in that angry sea, and sink below?



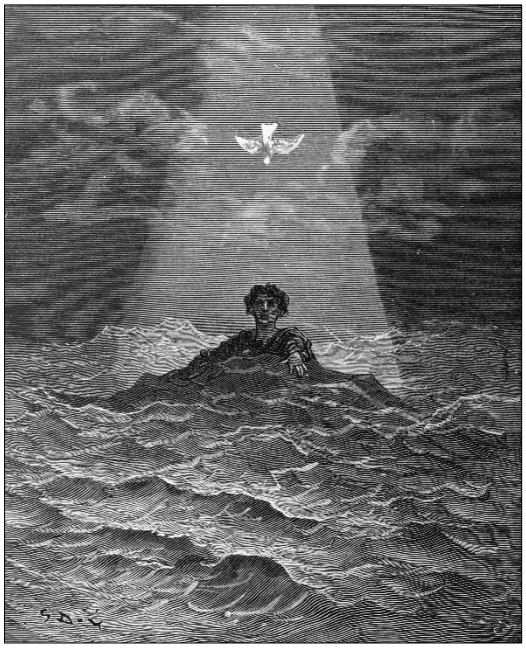
Stanza 46

Canto XLI: 47-50: Ruggiero vows to become a Christian if he escapes the sea

In truth, Ruggiero, swimming strongly, 47
Cleft the wave, and rode the angry sea.
Yet his conscience troubled him more sorely,
Than wind and water, and more urgently.
He feared God's vengeance, in that previously,
When occasion offered, he'd failed to be
Baptised in fresh, and now was in danger
Of a dire baptism in briny water.

All of those promises now came to mind 48
That he had made to his loving lady;
And his oath to Rinaldo that did bind
Him, as an honest knight, made but lately
Yet unfulfilled. To God he now consigned
His being, pledging there his soul and body
To Christ, should he escape a watery grave,
Praying that Heaven might preserve and save.

He swore he nevermore would wield a lance 49
Against the faithful, in aid of the Moor,
And that he'd return speedily to France,
To honour Charlemagne upon that shore,
And marriage to Bradamante advance,
Nor fail in his pledge to her as before.
It seemed a miracle that, with this prayer
His strength increased, and better he did fare.



Stanza 49

His strength increased, and his courage also, 50
He cleft the waves, hurled aside the water,
As they raised him high, and then thrust him low,
Buoyed by one, nigh-smothered by another.
Labouring hard, and yet his progress slow,
He gradually drew closer and closer
To where the land sloped gently to the sea,
And, issuing forth, from the waves won free.

Canto XLI: 51-56: Gaining the shore he encounters a hermit

All the rest who'd been plunged in the flood 51
Were drowned, and sank to rest neath the wave;
Ruggiero, as Providence thought good,
Had issued forth alone, whom God did save.
Yet once upon the barren slope he stood,
Safe from the sea, feeling less than brave,
He dreaded the harsh confines of that shore,
Where he might starve; as troubled as before.

Yet with steadfast heart, prepared to suffer 52
Whatever the heavens above had decreed,
He clambered amidst the rocks, and ever
Sought the far heights above him, in his need;
And not a hundred yards from the water
Had he gone, for the boulders did impede
His progress, when a hermit he espied
Old and lean, descending the mountainside.

And 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' 53
He heard the hermit cry (as the Saviour
Cried out to Saint Paul who did journey,
He falling to the ground, changed forever.)
And then he cried: 'You thought to pass the sea,
Pay naught, and therefore betray another,
Yet found God has an arm to strike alway,
When you thought his influence far away.'

And the hermit added that, the night before, 54
As he slept, God had sent him a vision,
Of how Ruggiero would reach the shore
With His aid, and He would make provision
For his safety, and had then revealed more,
Of the warrior's past and, in addition,
Of his future, and his death, and his heirs,
Sons, grandsons, scions, and all such affairs.

Thus, the hermit reproached Ruggiero, 55
But comforted him also, in the end;
Reproached him, in that he'd failed to follow
The way, scorning his proud head to bend;
Telling him how he should have bowed low,
Willingly, and thus called on Christ to send
Him grace, for he had failed to demonstrate
His own, till threatened with an evil fate.

Yet consoled him that Christ will ne'er deny 56
His Heaven to the sinner, soon or late,
If such will seek it, and all, low or high,
That strive will be repaid at equal rate.
He instructed him in the faith, thereby,
With a warmth and kindness commensurate
With his zeal and devotion, as he led
Ruggiero to the cave where lay his bed.



Stanza 56

Canto XLI: 57-60: Ruggiero is baptised

High on the slope, above that hallowed cell, 57
A chapel glowed there, in the morning light,
Spacious enough, and fair, and wrought full well.
Descending to the shore, as yet in sight,
A stretch of laurel, juniper, myrtle fell,
With fruitful palms, and there a fountain bright
Sent forth its waters, in a crystal flow,
From the heights to the barren rocks below.

It was nigh on forty years, to the day, 58
Since the hermit had retired to that place,
In holy solitude to fast and pray,
Where the Saviour had led him, of His grace.
Berries, and herbs were his sole mainstay,
And the water, wherein he bathed his face,
Yet sound and robust, of all illness clear,
He had lately reached his eightieth year.

Within the cell, the hermit lit a fire, 59
And set a heap of berries on the board,
The which, once he had dried himself entire,
Some sustenance to the knight did afford.
Of the faith to which he now did aspire,
He was taught, and of the words of the Lord;
And in the pure fountain, that next morn,
Was baptised by the hermit, and reborn.

Ruggiero was pleased, awhile, to stay, 60
Since the servant of God showed his intent
To help him forth, on his previous way;
With their conversation he was most content.
Now of God's kingdom they spoke all day;
Now of what to his life was pertinent,
All those matters that applied to his case;
Now of his heirs, and of the future race.



Stanza 60

Canto XLI: 61-65: The hermit speaks of the founding of the House of Este

The Lord, who sees and hears everything, 61
To the holy hermit had revealed, say I,
How Ruggiero now baptised, surviving
A mere seven years, would come to die,
(The death of Pinabel, thereby, requiting,
His lady's deed, though on him it did lie,
And his despatch of vile Bertolagi)
Slain at the hands of the Maganzese;

And how their treachery would be concealed, 62
So that of it none would hear a whisper,
For they would bury him upon the field
Where they'd gathered to commit his murder,
Yet he'd be revenged (their fates were sealed)
By the hands of his lady, and his sister;
And how his wife would seek him far and wide,
(Full with his heir, and near her term beside)



Stanza 61

Twixt Brenta and Adige (neath those hills 63
That had so pleased the Trojan Antenor
With their many sulphurous veins and rills,
Fruitful soil, and pleasant slopes, and more,
Leaving behind the pools that Xanthus fills,
Lamenting Ascanius, Mount Ida hoar)
Bearing her child in the forest, secretly,
Which lies not far from 'Phrygian' Ateste.

And how, in beauty and in valour grown, 64
On his son, likewise named Ruggiero,
His Trojan lineage once proved and known,
Those Trojans would the lordship then bestow.
And how this valiant son, his mettle shown
In fighting, fiercely, gainst the Lombard foe,
As its marquis, the land would then retain,
Through aiding the armies of Charlemagne.

And that king, in Latin, would cry: '*Este*!' 65
On his saying '*Be* lord, here,' so granting
A name to the place now known as Este;
Fair augury to that domain would bring,
Losing but two letters from 'Ateste',
Its former name. Further prophesying,
Through his servant, the Lord had then proclaimed,
How vengeance for his death would be obtained.

Canto XLI: 66-67: And the vengeance to be taken for Ruggiero's death

He would come, in a dream, to his lady, 66
A little while before the dawn of day,
And tell her of his death, and where his body
Bereft of life by those villains, now lay.
And she, and Marfisa, would, valiantly,
Then put to fire and sword fair Poitiers,
While, once of age, his son, Ruggiero,
Would deal the Maganzeses a fierce blow.

Azzos, Albertos, Obizzos, also 67
The hermit spoke of; Borso, Nicolò,
Leonello, Ercole, Alfonso,
Isabella the Fair, and Ippolito,
And then fell silent; on Ruggiero
Not a further word would he then bestow.
He'd revealed all it was fine to reveal,
Concealing all it was right to conceal.

Canto XLI: 68-73: The battle on the island commences

Meanwhile, sword at his side, Count Orlando, 68
With Brandimarte and Oliviero
Went to seek the Saracen Mars, his foe,
(A title well-suited to Gradasso)
And the other two, who had not been slow
To set forth either, I mean Sobrino,
And King Agramante, whose fine coursers
Sent hoofbeats echoing o'er the waters.

When the knights met, in their first encounter, 69
Splinters flew skywards from every lance;
The sea itself almost seemed to quiver,
And the tremors to spread as far as France.
Gradasso and Orlando clashed together,
And that contest had seemed equal, perchance,
If it had not been that King Gradasso
Seemed the stronger mounted on Baiardo.

For the latter steed struck the lesser horse, 70
That Orlando rode, with such might and main,
It staggered to and fro, such was the force
Of the blow, and then fell upon the plain.
Orlando tried to raise the steed, perforce,
Full thrice, and then again, with spur and rein,
And, gaining scant success, quit the charger,
Raised his shield, and then drew Balisarda.

Agramante met with Oliviero, 71
Who seemed on a par, in the encounter;
While Brandimarte unhorsed Sobrino,
Although it was unclear if the courser
Was at fault or the rider, such a blow
Had seldom caused Sobrino to falter.
Whether twas his or his horse's deed,
Sobrino found himself without a steed.

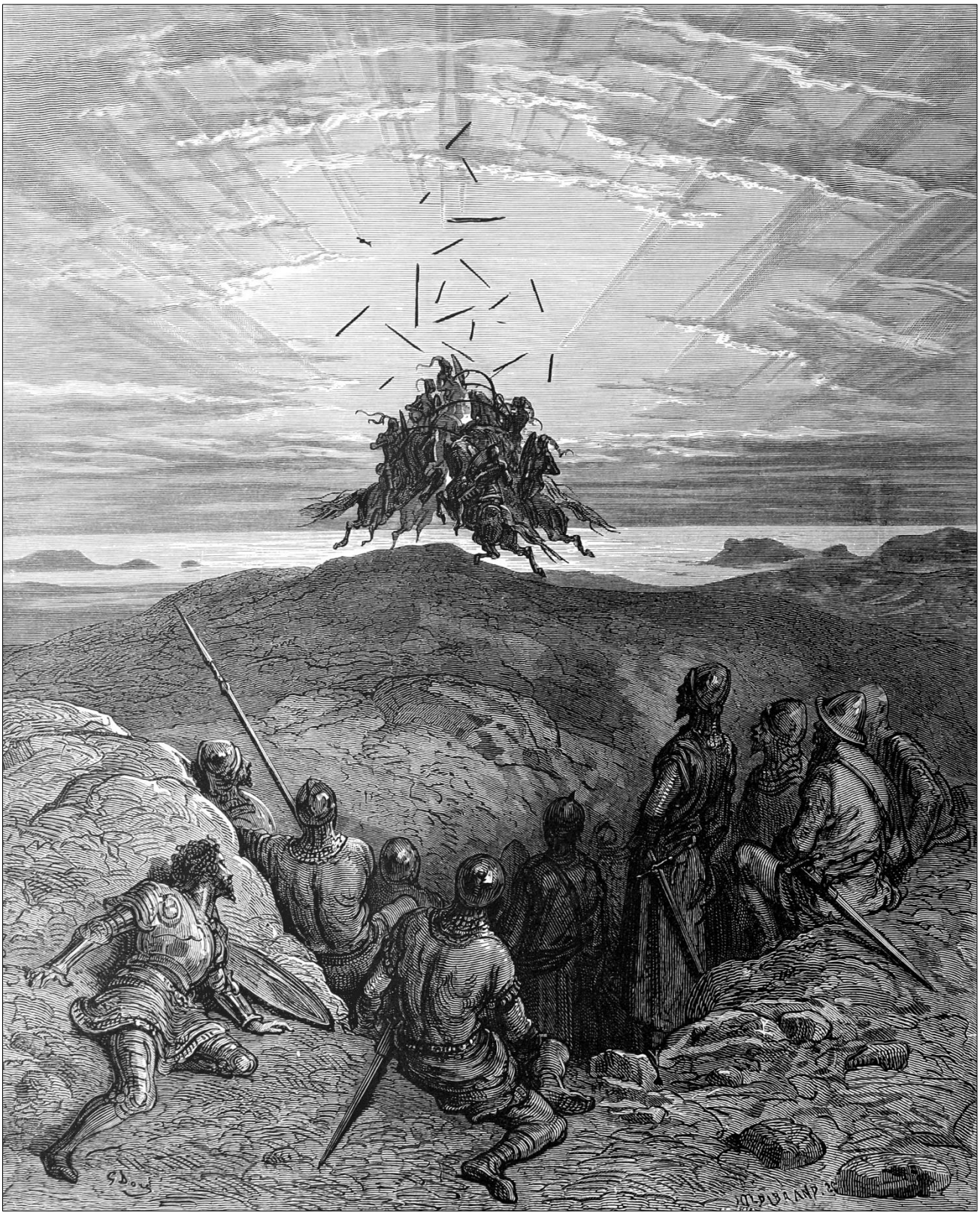
Brandimarte on seeing Sobrino 72
Spread-eagled on the ground, left him there,
And turned his steed to charge at Gradasso,
Who'd unhorsed Orlando; while the pair
That seemed equally matched, Oliviero
And Agramante, each maintained their share
Of the contest, who with swords did advance,
Since, on meeting, each had shattered his lance.

Gradasso seeming not to care to turn 73
And attack him again, for he could not,
(Brandimarte with such rage did burn
That Gradasso his former foe forgot)
Sobrino was Orlando's new concern,
For, like him, to fight afoot was his lot.
He advanced, and made the heavens tremble
At his tread; some god he did resemble.

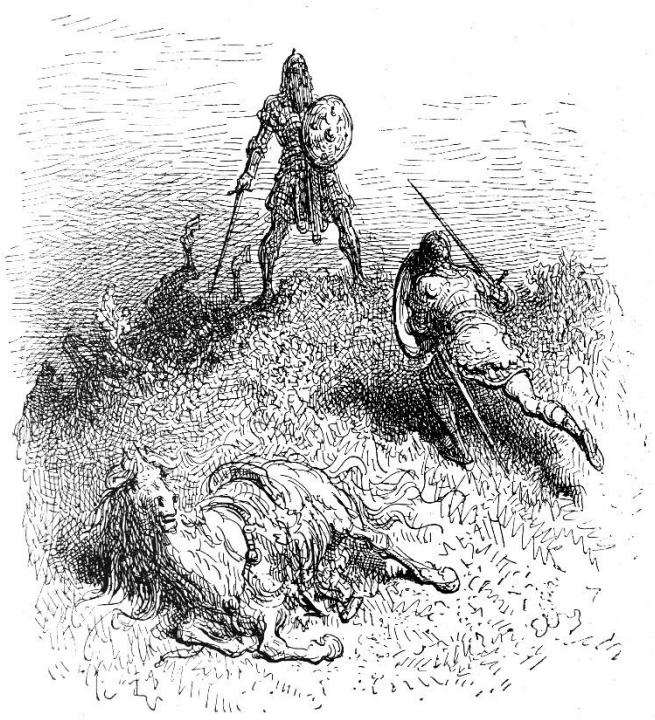
Canto XLI: 74-80: Orlando stuns Sobrino

Sobrino, viewing this new foe, now stood, 74
And prepared to counter the fresh essay,
Like to a helmsman threatened by the flood,
Scared that the waves will sweep him away,
That grips the tiller, fear chilling his blood,
Like a shield; as now, in this dire affray,
Sobrino gripped his hard, ere he was gored
By the point of Falerina's charmed sword.

Of such fine temper was Balisarda, 75
That a shield provided little shelter.
And when wielded by such a warrior,
No targe in the world its blade could counter.
It split the thing, and drove deep, thereafter,
Below it, into Sobrino's shoulder;
The shield though bound with an iron band,
Burst, nonetheless, beneath Orlando's hand.



STANZA 69 "*Splinters flew skywards from every lance*"



Stanza 74

The sword descended, and though Sobrino 76
Was encased in steel plate, and iron mail,
He yet seemed unprotected, even so;
Wounded deep, he found it did scarce avail.
He struck Orlando (though vain was the blow),
Against whom every such attack must fail,
To whom by the Prime Mover was given
A hide resistant to every weapon.

The mighty Count, redoubled his labour, 77
Thinking to remove Sobrino's head;
Sobrino, knowing Chiaramonte's valour,
His shield all but destroyed, withdrew instead,
And yet not so swiftly that a further
Blow fell not, that looked to strike him dead;
He felt the flat of the blade, yet such again
As to crush his helmet, and stun his brain.

Its force drove Sobrino to the ground, 78
And long it was before the knight could rise.
Orlando thought, because he gave no sound,
He'd struck the other dead before his eyes;
And, lest Brandimarte fell, swung around,
And charged at Gradasso, to surprise
That pagan king, superior perforce,
In his strength, and in armour, blade and horse.



Stanza 78

Bold Brandimarte, mounted on Frontino, 79
The which was Ruggiero's steed before,
Had fought so well, trading blow for blow,
That Gradasso's strength seemed little more.
Had he owned as fine a breastplate to show
As the king he'd have fought the better war,
But, feeling less well equipped, the knight
Gave ground slowly, swinging left and right.

There was no horse better than Frontino 80
At understanding his master's intent
And then he seemed to anticipate each blow
Of Durindana, as here and there he went.
Meanwhile Agramante and Oliviero
Fought well and fiercely, skill with courage blent,
And both judged themselves equal in a fight,
Given their great experience and might.

Canto XLI: 81-85: And then fells Gradasso

The Count, as I said, had left Sobrino 81
Stunned upon the ground, and desiring
To aid Brandimarte, on Gradasso
Turned his eye anew; and, while yet speeding
To reach that warrior and land a blow,
He came upon the horse, now wandering,
Which earlier had old Sobrino thrown,
And, having grasped it, made that steed his own.

Uncontested, he seized the horse, and then 82
Mounted the willing steed, and shook the rein,
One hand steered the creature, as and when;
The other grasped his sword; as o'er the plain
Gradasso spied him, and defied both these men,
Shouting out Orlando's name, with disdain,
Hoping to send both foes far from the light,
To greet eternal darkness, ere twas night.

Turning from Brandimarte to the Count, 83
He thrust at the junction of his helm and mail,
Of all but Orlando's hide it took account,
Against which no mere weapon might avail.
At the same moment there arose a fount
Of his own hot blood, for naught could prevail
Against Balisarda, that sheared his helm, and shield
And breastplate, and the flesh beneath revealed,

Wounding Gradasso in face, breast and thigh, 84
Which neath that armour had ne'er bled before.
And it seemed strange (he felt about to die
Of rage and pain) a blade could deal so sore
A blow not Durindana's, one whereby
He might have scarce survived a moment more.
Had the Count stretched further or been closer,
He'd have cleft the bone from crown to shoulder.

He could trust no more in his strong arm, 85
That many a time had been proved in war.
With greater care, to keep himself from harm,
He prepared to parry, not as before.
Brandimarte seeing the Count's right arm
Draw Gradasso from him, o'er the shore,
Now placed himself between the pairs of knights,
To lend aid, if he might set things to rights.



Stanza 85

Canto XLI: 86-90: Sobrino recovers and attacks Oliviero

With the fight in that perilous state, 86
Sobrino, who had lain there on the ground,
Recovering from the blow he'd felt of late,
Rose, though badly bruised as he now found.
He lifted his gaze, to ascertain his fate,
And Agramante, at some distance, found,
To whom he hastened, to grant him succour,
Silently, unseen by any other.



Stanza 86

From the rear, he crept upon Oliviero, 87
Whose eyes were fixed upon Agramante,
And dealt the former's steed a sudden blow,
Behind the knee, landing it so fiercely,
That the courser was, in a trice, brought low,
While Oliviero lay beneath, his foot caught tightly
In the stirrup; thus, unexpectedly,
He found himself unable to fight free.

With a back-handed sword-stroke, Sobrino, 88
Pursuing, thought to, now, behead the knight,
Yet forgot Hector's armour that, below
Etna's Mount, Vulcan wrought with all his might.
Bradamante saw the danger, at the foe
He drove, on viewing Oliviero's plight,
Struck Sobrino on the head; hard the blows,
But the veteran swiftly to his feet arose.



Stanza 88

And turned upon Oliviero to send 89
The knight's soul more promptly on its way
Or at least ensure that he must defend
His limbs, and so keep him there at bay.
Oliviero, whose right arm could amend
His state, sought to keep his blade in play,
And, lunging and striking, here and there,
Stopped Sobrino from ending that affair.

He hoped, if he could hold him off awhile, 90
Though the ground beneath him ran red with blood,
He might shortly issue forth from this trial.
Yet he was bleeding, and thus understood,
The ending might prove ill, and fate hostile,
For his weakness augured nothing good.
Often Oliviero strove to rise,
Yet could not move his leg in any wise.

Canto XLI: 91-93: Brandimarte attacks Agramante

Brandimarte had reached Agramante, 91
And swiftly set about the Moorish king,
Spurring Frontino at him fiercely,
Frontino, ever lunging, and wheeling.
A fine steed had the son of Monodante,
No lesser a steed the Moor was riding,
Brigliador, his gift from Ruggiero,
That the knight had reft from Mandricardo.

And a further advantage he enjoyed, 92
For his armour was as yet good and sound,
While Brandimarte another's employed,
Nigh-on the first, in his need, he had found;
Yet his courage ever his hopes now buoyed,
And he intended to wrap his frame around
With the monarch's yet; though a sudden blow
Had made the blood from his shoulder flow,

And Gradasso had pierced him in the side, 93
(Naught to smile about) in their encounter.
The Frank the perfect moment did abide,
And then struck hard at the royal warrior,
He broke the shield, the left arm sorely tried,
And, on the hand, barely touched the other.
Mere play their fierce battle seemed when matched, though,
With that twixt Orlando and Gradasso.

Canto XLI: 94-98: Gradasso causes Orlando's horse to flee

Gradasso had half-disarmed Orlando, 94
Shattering his helm, at sides and top,
(His breastplate was split, his mail also,
His shield, part torn away, he now let drop)
Yet had wounded not that charmed hide below.
Worse had Orlando done who'd sought to lop
His head away, wounding, face, throat and breast,
Thus, adding to what he'd wrought on the rest.

Gradasso, desperate, when he espied 95
Himself now dyed bright red with his own blood,
Yet Orlando, from head to foot, descried
Unstained, all his flesh still sound and good,
Thinking the Count's whole body to divide
(His sword raised in both hands) if he could,
Struck hard, as he had planned, at Orlando.
Smiting him on his forehead with the blow.

Had it not been the Count but another, 96
He'd have cleft him to the saddle, straight,
But the sword merely bounced backwards, rather
As if naught but the flat had struck his pate.
Orlando was quite stunned, and a scatter
Of bright stars filled his eyes, such was the weight
Of that blade; he dropped the rein, nigh unmanned,
His sword though was still chained to his hand.

The horse was so frightened by the sound 97
(The steed that bore the Count on its back)
That it galloped off, o'er the sandy ground,
Showing that no turn of speed it did lack,
Unrestrained by its lord, escape it found,
He being dazed, and weak from the attack.
Gradasso would have caught him, soon after
If he'd spurred Baiardo somewhat faster,

But, in truth, his eye fell on Agramante, 98
Now in the utmost peril in his fight,
For he'd been gripped by Brandimarte
By the gleaming helm, and the Frankish knight
Unlacing it, might have slain him surely,
Or at the best have robbed him of his sight.
Nor had the king his blade at his command,
For Brandimarte had torn it from his hand.



Stanza 97

Canto XLI: 99-102: Brandimarte is felled by Gradasso

99

Gradasso turned about, and left the chase,
And sped to where he had espied the king.
The incautious Brandimarte, whose face
Was turned towards his task, never thinking
That Orlando might Gradasso outpace,
Remained fixed upon what he was doing.
Gradasso in a trice had swung his blade,
Two-handed, and upon the helm it weighed.

100

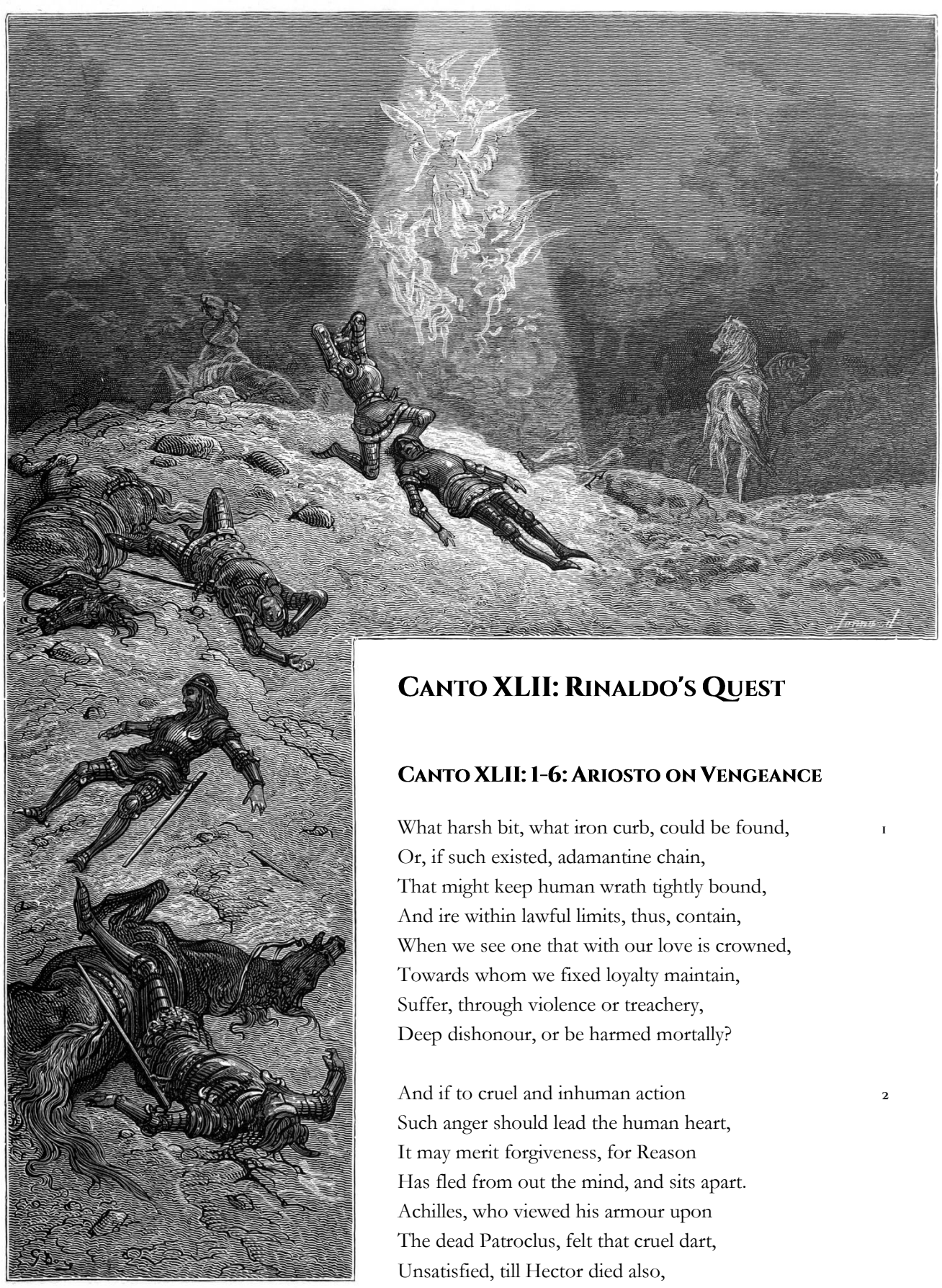
Heavenly Father, grant midst your elect
A place to one most faithful, ever true.
Whose voyage having ended, ne'er shipwrecked,
Now furls his sails in port, and comes to you.
O Durindana, how, to such cruel effect,
Could you betray your lord, obey the new;
Slaying his dearest and most loyal friend,
With Orlando a witness to his end?

101

An iron ring, two inches thick, that bound
His helm about, was broken by that blow,
And with that metal, circling it around,
The cap of steel was cleft that lay below.
Brandimarte, unhorsed, fell to the ground,
Whose pallid face his fate did sadly show,
While there issued forth from his poor head
A stream of blood that dyed the gravel red.

102

Regaining his stunned senses, Orlando
Turned his gaze, and saw him lying there,
And, standing beside the knight, Gradasso,
Caught in the act, the culprit thus laid bare.
If anger filled him more, or deep sorrow,
I know not, yet little time for despair
Had he; his anger rose, he stayed his woe.
While, here, I must end the present canto.



Canto XLII: Rinaldo's Quest

Canto XLII: 1-6: Ariosto on Vengeance

What harsh bit, what iron curb, could be found, 1
Or, if such existed, adamantine chain,
That might keep human wrath tightly bound,
And ire within lawful limits, thus, contain,
When we see one that with our love is crowned,
Towards whom we fixed loyalty maintain,
Suffer, through violence or treachery,
Deep dishonour, or be harmed mortally?

And if to cruel and inhuman action 2
Such anger should lead the human heart,
It may merit forgiveness, for Reason
Has fled from out the mind, and sits apart.
Achilles, who viewed his armour upon
The dead Patroclus, felt that cruel dart,
Unsatisfied, till Hector died also,
And he'd thrice round Troy dragged his mangled foe.

Unconquered Alfonso, a like fury 3
Engulfed your company on that ill day
When a stone struck your forehead, so cruelly,
All thought your soul had, there, been reft away.
And were filled with such anger, they swiftly
Overran the foe's defences, made them pay,
Till all, behind wall and rampart, lay dead,
And none was left the sorry news to spread.

Seeing you fall caused ours so deep a pain, 4
That they were moved to wrath and cruelty.
If you had yet been standing, to maintain
Some order, they'd have wrought less viciously.
Twas enough in one brief hour to regain
Your Bastia of Zaniolo, more swiftly
Restored than won, o'er many days, before,
By Cordoba and Granada, in that war.

Perhaps the Lord above the wound ordained, 5
Preventing you from leading on that day,
So that ere the deed was done, He'd pained
Your House for their most cruel excess, I say;
For once the Bastia had been regained
The wretched Vestidello, without delay,
Was slain with all his men (unarmed, unbowed)
By an uncircumcised, and evil crowd.

Thus, in conclusion, I would e'er assert 6
There is no other anger half so great
As when our lord, our kin, our friend is hurt.
So twas just that, in Orlando, the fate
Of his dear friend should, like Nessus' shirt,
Sting with such fire as will not soon abate,
Seeing Brandimarte stretched on the sand,
Where Gradasso, with bloodied sword, did stand.

Canto XLII: 7-11: Orlando slays Agramante and Gradasso

Like to the wandering shepherd, who sees 7
The angry viper sliding on its way,
Fangs emptied of their venom ere it flees,
That killed his infant son, erstwhile at play,
And, seeking to slay it, his crook will seize,
So did Orlando grasp his sword, I say,
Keener than other weapons, and swiftly
Rushed first upon the king, Agramante,

Who all drenched in blood, and without a blade, 8
His shield in two, his helm loose on his head,
Wounded, more than I can say, sore dismayed,
Escaped from Brandimarte's clasp, half-dead,
(Like a sparrowhawk by eagle's talons flayed,
Leaving its tail behind) now swiftly fled.
Yet Orlando caught him, and with his sword
He lopped the head from that treacherous lord;

The helm was loose, and all the neck displayed, 9
The head was severed, like a nodding reed;
The trunk collapsed, beneath the passing blade,
And fell upon the sand, to drain and bleed.
His shade then for those Stygian waters made,
Where old Charon dragged it aboard, at speed.
Orlando, o'er the corpse, scarce stayed longer,
Seeking Gradasso and Balisarda.



Stanza 9

Gradasso, seeing head and trunk parted, 10
And Agramante's headless corpse laid low,
(No sight for the weak, or the faint-hearted)
His heart shook, a pale visage he did show;
He seemed to quail, his courage departed,
Foreseeing his fate, as on sped Orlando.
No defence did he make, nor sought to flee,
From that mortal blow descending heavily.

Orlando struck him hard, on his right side 11
Beneath the lowest rib, and then the blade
Through all the flesh and innards swift did glide
Till a hand's-width of sharp steel was displayed
Beyond the left, which more than testified,
To the strength of the greatest knight e'er made,
Who'd consigned that lord to death at a blow;
The finest warrior Pagandom could show.

Canto XLII: 12-15: Then returns to the dying Brandimarte

The Count knew little joy in victory. 12
Leaping from his saddle he now sped
(His face the pattern of pure misery)
To Brandimarte's side, where he yet bled.
The sand all about was soiled and bloody,
The helm as if an axe had struck him dead;
Had it been frailer than a piece of rind,
No worse could it have served him, to my mind.

Orlando raised the visor from the face, 13
And found the skull cleft, to betwixt the eyes,
Yet, such was the hardiness of that race,
That the knight, of the King of Paradise
Sought pardon for his sins, of His grace,
And ere he died was able to apprise
Orlando of his wishes, and exhort
To patience the Count, with grief distraught;

Whispering: 'Orlando, please remember 14
My life, in your prayers of thanks to the Lord.
While to you I must commend my Fiorde…
…lisa he would say, yet that final chord
Was denied him. Thus, he died, while ever
Angel voices sounded, as his soul soared,
The which, dissolved from out its earthly veil,
Midst sweet music, to the heavens did sail.

Orlando, though he knew he should delight 15
In so blessed a death, and was assured
That Brandimarte's soul had taken flight
To Heaven, opened to him by the Lord,
His human nature sorrowed at the sight,
That which, to our weak senses, can afford
But suffering, when we lose one dearer
And more to be mourned, than is a brother.

Canto XLII: 16-19: Orlando frees Oliviero and aids Sobrino

Sobrino, who had lost a deal of blood, 16
Which poured forth from his face, and from his side,
Had been lying some time amidst the flood,
That, draining from his veins, spread far and wide.
Oliviero too, although he would,
Could not withdraw his leg, and must abide,
The foot nigh crushed, so long the limb had lain
Beneath his steed, that proved his master's bane;

And had Orlando not come to his aid, 17
(He being weakened, and so full of woe)
He had remained there, and was like to fade;
And once he was freed, it pained him so,
He could not stand alone; each step he made
Was agony, the whole leg numbed also,
Such that he could not move without help;
At each pace issued forth a groan or yelp.

Despite the victory, Orlando grieved, 18
For too harsh, too bitter it was to see
Brandimarte's corpse, the wound he'd received,
Nor was Oliviero's life a surety.
Old Sobrino would survive he believed,
Yet but little light in darkness had he,
For with his blood his strength had ebbed away
And he was like to die that very day.

He had him carried, still bleeding freely, 19
To be treated by a surgeon, with great care,
And, as if he were kin, he discreetly
Consoled Sobrino, with words ever fair;
For when a fight was over, clemency
Was his way, he was ever prompt to spare
The injured, though the arms and the steeds
He would take from the dead, to serve his needs.

Canto XLII: 20-23: He spies an approaching sail

Now on the truth of this my history, 20
Federigo Fulgoso has cast doubt.
For, sailing near the shores of Barbary,
He landed, and the whole isle he did scout,
Lampedusa that is, found it hilly,
And saw no level place, thereabout.
There is nowhere, he claims, in all the isle,
Where one might fight, the going is so vile;

Nor can he believe, that, in this affair, 21
Six valiant knights, the flower of chivalry,
Rode to battle with levelled lances there.
I shall answer his objection, civilly,
There was indeed a strand that they could share,
Beneath the cliffs, though the isle is hilly,
But an earthquake since loosed a mighty block
Of stone that covered all that place with rock.

So, O shining light of your fair line, 22
Dear Fulgoso, O everlasting ray,
If you must question this tale of mine,
And here, before my lord, must have your say,
(He who's brought us peace, and all that's fine)
Forego your hatred, let love win the day;
I pray you, delay not, choose the latter,
And concede: I lie not in this matter.

Orlando, meanwhile, gazing out to sea, 23
Saw a barque approaching, in speedy style,
A handy vessel that nearing, swiftly,
Looked set indeed to touch upon the isle.
What she was, I'll not yet say, for clearly
More than one is awaiting me this while,
And, to France I must go, for we must see
If our friends there are woeful or happy.

Canto XLII: 24-28: Bradamante again complains of Ruggiero's cruelty

There we shall see how the loyal lady 24
Fares, who saw her knight depart once more,
I speak of the afflicted Bradamante,
For the pledge he had broken, as we saw,
That he'd made with Rinaldo, formerly,
And had, instead, sought to follow the Moor.
Since he'd failed her again, as she thought,
Her hopes, of their marriage, had turned to naught.

Her tearful complaints were now repeated, 25
All the tale of Ruggiero's cruelty,
Bemoaning again how she'd been treated,
Cursing her harsh and evil destiny.
Then, by her misery well-nigh defeated,
The heavens, that allowed such perjury,
She called unjust, since they gave no sign,
Or lacked the power to alter fate's design.

The wise Melissa she accused; then cursed 26
That deceitful oracle in the cave,
For, persuaded by its lies, she'd immersed
In that ocean of love that drowns the brave.
And then, before Marfisa, she rehearsed
Her woes, and called Ruggiero a knave,
And demanded, midst her complaints and cries,
That warrior-maid's help, with tearful eyes.



Stanza 26

Marfisa shrugged her shoulders and offered 27
What comfort it was in her power to give,
Not believing (such the advice she proffered)
That he would fail her; she ought to forgive.
If he returned not, twould not be suffered;
She swore to right the wrong if she but lived,
Twixt her and him there would be mortal war,
If he failed to do as he'd pledged before.

By speaking so, she quenched the other's grief 28
Somewhat, that once vented, seemed to lessen.
Now we've seen Bradamante gain relief,
(Despite that 'proud, wicked, perjured' person)
Let's see if Love has shown himself a thief
Where her brother is concerned, whom reason
Has departed from, whose bones and marrow,
Nerves and veins, are afire; I mean Rinaldo.

Canto XLII: 29-33: Rinaldo seeks the help of Malagigi

That Rinaldo, the brave (who, as you know, 29
Was full of love for Angelica the Fair,
Though twas enchantment that had drawn him so
To love her, more than her eyes or her hair)
Since the victory had laid the Moors low,
While the other knights seemed free of care,
Amidst the victors, had alone remained
A prisoner to Love, enthralled, enchained.

He'd sent a hundred envoys to find her, 30
While he himself sought the errant maid,
Then to Malagigi went the lover,
Who had, when needed, offered him his aid.
With blushing face, his gaze ever lower,
He told him of his longing, and prayed
That he might, in his great wisdom, say where
Might be found this Angelica the Fair.

Wonder at the strangeness of the matter 31
Arose in Malagigi's mind, and he said,
To himself, that Rinaldo might have drawn her
Oh, a hundred times or more, to his bed,
And, being so persuaded, had ever
Tried to seal that, with all he'd done and said;
For, with prayers and threats, he'd sought to bend
Rinaldo's will, yet failed to gain his end;

And the more so in that Rinaldo, then, 32
Would have freed Malagigi from prison,
Yet now, of his own will, he sought again
Her company, and with far less reason.
He begged him to remember how and when
He had offended on that occasion,
Since, by his failing to yield, out of pride,
Malagigi himself might well have died.

The more importunate, to Malagigi, 33
Rinaldo's fresh demands of him appeared,
The more it indicated, and more clearly,
How deeply she'd made herself endeared.
Unable to refuse him, the memory
Of that injury from his mind he cleared,
And a friendly countenance he displayed
As he prepared to grant him welcome aid.

Canto XLII: 34–37: Who discovers the cause of Rinaldo's passion

He set a time by which he'd give his answer, 34
And gave Rinaldo hope that he might say
Where in France, or elsewhere, Angelica
Had sped to in her flight, and point the way.
And then Malagigi left, to conjure
His demons in their customary array.
In a cave, neath an impenetrable mount,
He oped his book, and called them to account.

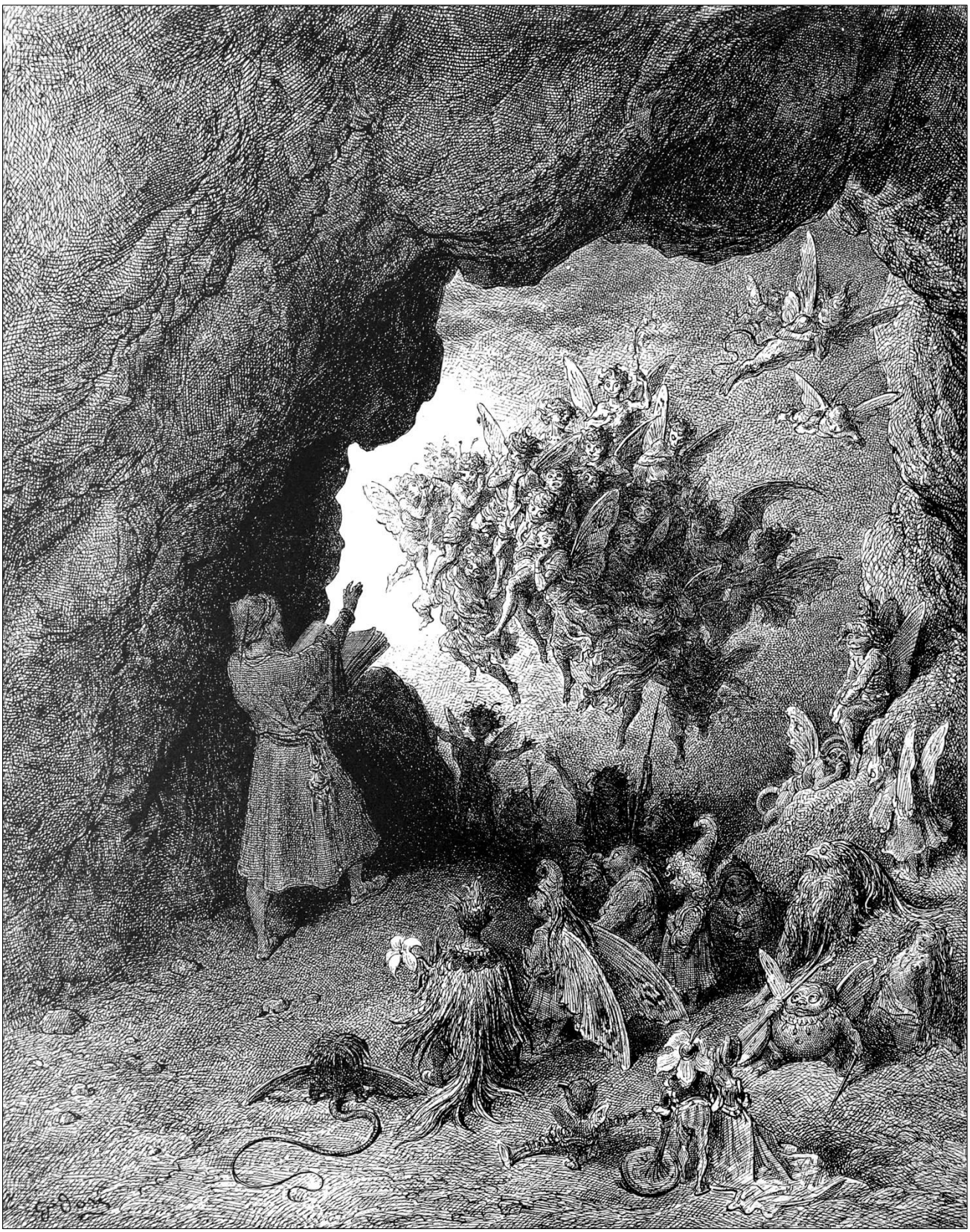
Then he chose one skilled in the ways of love, 35
To discover why Rinaldo's heart, before
So hard, was now so soft as to approve
The lady, and that circumstance explore.
The demon told him of twin founts that move
To prompt or quench desire, evermore;
For the ill each one breeds there's no succour
Except to drink deeply of the other.



Stanza 35

And Malagigi learned that Rinaldo 36
Had drunk of the fount that quenched all longing;
Harshness and obstinacy then did show
To Angelica whose love was unending,
And then his ill stars led him to the flow
Of the other fount, and of it drinking
He was filled with endless love for the maid
Whom he'd loathed before, and sought to evade.

While ill stars and cruel destiny had led 37
Rinaldo to sip flame from icy water,
Angelica had slaked her thirst instead
In the other stream, whose taste was bitter,
And drove all thoughts of love from her head,
Till she loathed him, worse than any viper;
Yet he loved her, desiring all the more
The one he'd hated and disdained before.



Stanza 34 "*Malagigi left, to conjure, his demons in their customary array*"

Canto XLII: 38-41: Rinaldo asks leave to sail for the East

Malagigi was instructed most fully 38
By the imp, in the details of the case.
He'd had news of Angelica, who lately
With her love a young African did grace,
And said she'd left Europe, o'er the sea,
For the East, where lay her native place,
Aboard a Catalonian galley,
Bound for India, and her own country.

When Rinaldo arrived for his answer, 39
Malagigi sought to dissuade the knight
From his love for the false Angelica
Who in a barbarous lad had found delight;
While since, now, he was so far from her,
It was foolish to pursue her sudden flight.
She must have travelled more than halfway,
With this fellow Medoro, to Cathay.

That she was far away now, o'er the deep 40
Troubled not our Rinaldo, I may say,
Nor did the notion much disturb his sleep
That to the East, thus, he must make his way.
But that a lad, a Saracen, should reap
The fruits of her love, his nerves did fray;
Such heart-ache, such passion, and such strife,
He'd never felt before, in all his life.

He lacked the power to speak a single word; 41
His heart trembled inside, his lips also,
His tongue moved but not a thing was heard,
His mouth tasted bitter; there bile did flow.
He fled from Malagigi, anger stirred,
In one now filled with jealousy and woe;
After a mighty plaint, and mighty rant,
He thought to make his way to the Levant.

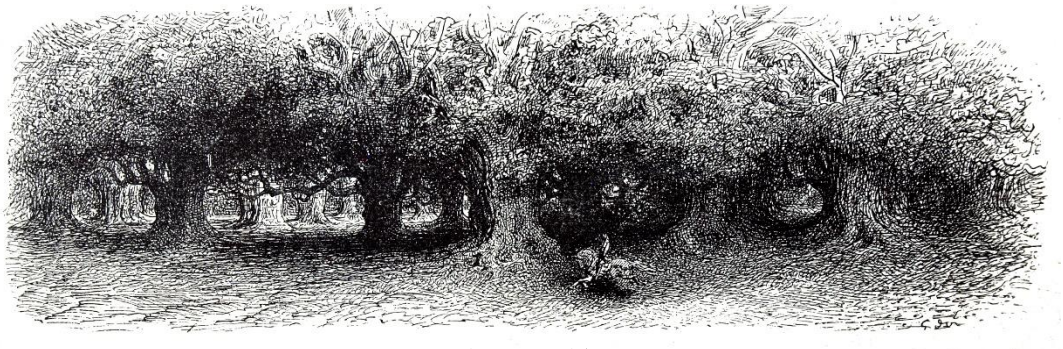
Canto XLII: 42-45: He reaches the Ardennes

In Paris, he sought leave from Charlemagne, 42
Making the excuse that brave Baiardo
Should not be used against his knights again,
And, so, his honour urged him thus to go,
That he might make his ownership quite plain,
Believing the horse still with Gradasso,
That must not be left to claim that his lance
Had won the courser from a knight of France.

Charlemagne, thus, gave him leave to depart, 43
Though all of France lamented that he should;
And yet could not deny him, for his part,
Since bold Rinaldo's intention seemed good.
Dudon, with brave Guidon, should also start,
He said, his firm friends, but Rinaldo would
Have naught of this, and from Paris, alone
He took his way, with many a plangent moan;

For, in his mind, he dwelt upon the thought 44
That a thousand times he might have won her,
Yet, obstinate and foolish, though besought
By her a thousand times, declined her offer,
Considering her love a thing of naught;
That sweet and lovely chance was lost for ever.
Yet now, but for a day, he'd have her nigh,
And after that brief moment seek to die.

Twas ever in his mind, and ne'er did part 45
From his sad thought that, for a soldier-boy
She had driven her first love from her heart,
Despite its worth, exchanged it for a toy.
Vexed by this, that nigh tore his soul apart,
To the East he sped, the hours did employ
In making for the Rhine and Basle, and found
Himself in the Ardennes, on wooded ground.



Stanza 45

Canto XLII: 46-52: And is attacked by a monstrous female form

Venturing many a mile, midst the trees, 46
Far from habitation, where all was drear
And perilous, possessed by some unease,
The sky above seemed darkened, far and near,
The sun was lost in cloud, and stilled the breeze,
And where a cliff arose, its heights unclear,
From a shadowy cave that there did gape,
A monstrous form emerged, female in shape,

A thousand lidless eyes set in her head. 47
With no way to close them, she never slept.
She had as many ears as eyes and, spread
O'er her skull and brow, evil serpents crept.
From the infernal shadows, dark and dread,
Out of the depths, to which alone she kept,
This creature came; a tail about her wound,
A larger serpent coiling all around.

What had never troubled our knight before, 48
Not in ten thousand ventures, did so now,
As that most strange and dreadful form he saw
Emerging from her cave with snaky brow;
Chilled was the blood that through his veins did pour,
Deep fear he felt, twas fear he did allow,
Yet feigned his usual look of bravery,
Merely gripping his good sword more tightly.

So fierce the attack the monster now made, 49
Her mastery of such assaults was evident,
For she brandished the serpent like a blade.
It hovered, then struck, in venomous descent,
And, swaying about him, her calls obeyed.
Rinaldo dodged its fangs; with vain intent
He thrust and swept his sword against the foe,
Yet failed to land a single wounding blow.

Now she would aim the serpent at his chest, 50
Freezing his heart within his coat of steel,
Now at his visor flung the evil pest,
That did the warrior's face and eyes conceal.
Rinaldo fled the field, his steed addressed
With flailing spurs, his blood like to congeal.
The infernal Fury scarcely seemed to halt;
In a trice, to the crupper, she did vault.



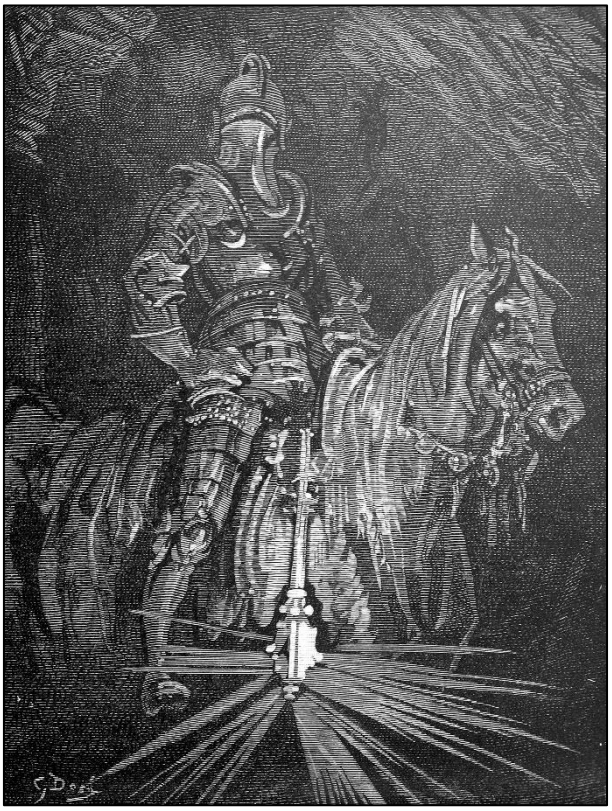
Stanza 50

To right, to left, where'er he sought to go, 51
That accursed pest was ever at his back,
Nor could he manage to remove her so,
Though the horse reared, and plunged, about the track.
His heart shook like a trembling leaf, and though
Her snaky locks refrained from close attack,
Those things such horror and such loathing bred
He moaned and groaned, and wished that he were dead.

Down the saddest gloomiest paths he went, 52
Threading his way through the tangled wood,
By vilest leap, and thorniest vale, half-spent,
Where all seemed darkest, seeking, if he could,
To thwart that hideous creature's foul intent,
Rid himself of the monstrous form, for good.
Even so, all might have ended badly,
If one had not appeared to aid him, promptly.

Canto XLII: 53-58: A knight, Disdain, comes to his rescue

For succour, just in time, a knight now brought, 53
His crest a broken ploughman's yoke, his shield
(For he was armed, as if some joust he sought)
Showed crimson flames upon a yellow field.
So was his coat embroidered, thus he fought;
His steed's caparison the like revealed.
A lance he grasped, his sword was at his side,
And, to his saddle, a blazing mace was tied.



Stanza 53

The mace was wreathed in an undying flame, 54
Being always alight, but ne'er consumed,
Nor shield, nor amour, could escape that same,
Nor solid helm, but all such things it doomed.
And all made way where'er that warrior came,
Yielding to this thing, that flared and fumed.
No less was needed, you will understand,
To free Rinaldo from the monster's hand.



Stanza 54

As a warrior full of courage should 55
He galloped to the source of those load cries,
And there he saw the monster, midst the wood,
Gripping Rinaldo in her serpent ties,
That would have cast her from him, if he could,
For, from her grasp, he sought himself to prise.
The knight approaching struck her evil hide,
Until she fell, upon her left-hand side.

Yet she had scarcely fallen ere she rose, 56
And shook the vile serpent all about her.
The knight, abandoning his lance, now chose
To scorch her with the flame, and make her suffer.
He gripped the mace, and a hail of blows,
Upon that serpent form, thought to deliver.
Nor allowed a moment for the monster
To recover, or charge at him in anger:

And the while he struck, or held her at bay, 57
So, avenging a thousand acts of shame,
He advised our knight to ride, without delay,
And ascend the mountain, flee the evil dame.
He took that sound advice, and went his way,
Without glancing back to learn what became
Of the creature, who soon was lost to sight,
Though twas hard to climb the rugged height.

The warrior who'd sent the infernal monster 58
Scurrying to her dark cave, far below,
Where she bit and gnawed herself, forever,
Shedding tears from her eyes, in ceaseless flow,
Sought Rinaldo to guide him thereafter,
Caught him, and lest he wander to and fro,
He rode along beside him, without fail,
And led him from that ill and gloomy vale.

Canto XLII: 59-64: Rinaldo drinks of the love-quenching fount

Finding him there beside him, Rinaldo 59
Declared he owed the knight thanks indeed,
And that he would repay what he must owe,
With his life, if ever there should be need.
Then he asked his name that he might know
Who twas that to his aid had thought to speed,
So that he might, before King Charlemagne,
Praise to the skies and, there, exalt that same.

The knight replied: 'Let it not displease you, 60
If I choose not to give my name, for now;
Before the shadows grow a pace or two,
I will, if you'll that short delay allow.'
Then, as they rode, a river came in view,
That drew the passer-by to bathe his brow,
And shepherd-lads, likewise, to stop and drink,
And banish fruitless longings, at its brink.

For, clear and cold, here flowed that chilling 61
stream,
That ever quenched the burning heart's love-woe.
By drinking there, Angelica, I deem,
Had conceived her hatred for Rinaldo.
And if he once had loathed her, it would seem,
And her sweet love been ready to forego,
Naught else as the cause, I would offer,
But drinking of its enchanted water.

The knight who accompanied Rinaldo, 62
When he beheld the river flowing there,
Reined in his weary steed, beside its flow,
And said: 'We might halt here; it seemeth fair.'
'It cannot but be good, I say also,'
The other replied, 'such coolness to share.
The midday sun is hot; tis for the best
Free of that evil creature, to seek rest.'

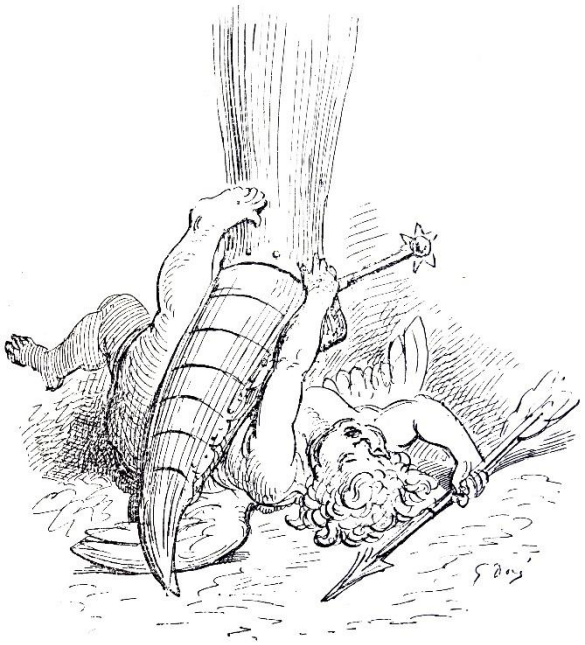
The pair dismounted, and each let his steed 63
Graze, untethered, through the forest glade;
And set their helms upon the flowery mead,
Whose yellows, greens, and reds, a picture made.
Then our knight to the crystal stream did speed
Driven, by thirst and heat, therein to wade,
And with one cooling draught, Rinaldo proved
Free, in his mind and heart, of thirst and love.

When the other knight saw Rinaldo 64
Raise his head from the murmuring water,
And that the knight repented, in his woe,
Of his foolish love for Earth's fair daughter,
He lifted his head and proudly did bestow
His name upon the air, that earlier
He had withheld, and cried: 'I am Disdain,
Come to free you from suffering in vain.'

Canto XLII: 65-69: He still determines to seek Gradasso in Sericana

And, so saying, he vanished in a trice. 65
As the courser too vanished from his sight,
The good Rinaldo blinked, not once but twice,
In wonderment, and asked: 'Where is the knight?'
Thinking this was, perchance, some charmed device
Of Malagigi's, who had sent this sprite,
And had commanded it to break the chain
Which had so fettered him, and end his pain,

Or that an angel, from the heavenly sphere, 66
The Lord above had sent, of His goodness,
And so ordered all, as, it would appear,
He'd once ordered Tobit healed of blindness.
Whether good or evil, and from there or here,
Who, thus, had freed him from his close duress,
He thanked and praised him, and only knew
That he had granted liberty anew.



Stanza 66

He loathed the thought now of Angelica, 67
While his aim of pursuit seemed unworthy;
Nor should he seek to follow her further,
Not half a league, but forego her wholly.
Yet, to win Baiardo, to Sericana,
He still proposed to pursue his journey,
For his honour was involved and, again,
He'd spoken of the thing to Charlemagne.

Indeed, he reached Basle the following day, 68
To which the news had come awhile before
That Orlando, in arms, had sailed away,
On Gradasso and the king, to wage war.
Twas not the Count who'd sent word, I must say,
That they would meet on Lampedusa's shore,
But a messenger had sailed from Sicily,
Who swore the thing was so, in verity.

Rinaldo wished to be with Orlando, 69
And yet he found himself far from the fight.
He changed his steed every ten miles, though,
And spurred away, as hard as any might.
Across the Rhine, at Konstanz, he did go,
Then o'er the Alps, to Italy passed the knight,
Left Verona, and then Mantua, behind,
Crossing the River Po, as he'd designed.

Canto XLII: 70-73: He meets a knight who leads him to his palace

The sun was declining towards evening, 70
And the first stars were gleaming in the sky,
As our knight stood, on the shore, deciding
Whether to ride on, or to lodge nearby,
Until, the shadows and the mists pursuing,
Fair Aurora would chase them forth, thereby;
When he saw a cavalier approaching
His courtesy, in face and manner showing.

Greeting our knight, thus, graciously, he sought 71
To ascertain if he were wed or no.
Wondering at the question, in a thought,
He answered: 'I, indeed, am knotted so.'
'I joy at that,' came the other's retort,
And, to explain himself to Rinaldo,
Added: 'I pray you'll lodge with me this night,
And be content to view a pleasant sight,

For I would have you see what any man 72
That is so wedded, willingly, would see.'
Rinaldo thought this a most fitting plan,
For, of travel, he was more than weary,
And then adventures oft with such began,
Which he ever desired (he loved them dearly).
He accepted this kind offer from the knight,
And followed on behind, to view this sight.

Not a bowshot from the road went the pair, 73
And, before them, a palace came in view,
Whence brave squires came, in haste, to light them there,
Their torches flaring, ever and anew.
Rinaldo entered, and saw all was fair,
A place of beauty, such as few men knew,
Of fine and sound construction, on a plan
That befitted none but some princely man.

Canto XLII: 74-79: The palace described

The archway's stones were all of porphyry, 74
And of serpentine, and bronze, was the door,
With figures cast there, that apparently
Lived and breathed, while, embedded in the floor,
Mosaics in bright hues, attractively
Arrayed, deceived the eye, with fair allure.
The quadrangle, within, was long and wide,
A hundred yards of colonnade on each side.

Each gallery was entered through a gate, 75
With archways set there between the two,
Each of equal breadth, variously ornate,
For the architect had splendour in view.
Each arch led to a stair, wide and straight;
The ascent a steed could easily pursue,
It was so gentle; arches topped them all,
And each archway gave entrance to a hall.

These arches above projected some way, 76
And so shaded the grand portals below,
While twin pillars supported each tall bay,
Of bronze, or of marble white as snow,
Twould take too long to speak of the array
Of ornamented chambers row on row,
In that courtyard, beneath which, indeed,
The architect hidden rooms had decreed.

Tall columns, with their capitals of gold 77
Supporting gemmed entablatures, and rare
Slabs of marble decorated with untold
Forms and figures all finely carved and fair,
Pictures, and bronze casts, that court did hold,
(Though, in truth, obscured by the shadows there),
Showing that two king's riches would ne'er
Have sufficed to raise that palace in the air.



Stanza 69 "*Then o'er the Alps, to Italy passed the knight*"

Over the ornaments, which occupied 78
That pleasant quadrangle, a fountain played,
Scattering in many threads, on every side,
Fresh water midst the items there arrayed.
In this court many tables, long and wide,
Servants set at equal intervals, and laid,
Where the four gates any there might see,
And be seen from those four gates, equally.

That fount had been made with subtle labour, 79
And great skill, by a master of such art,
Colonnaded with a sloping cover,
With eight faces, thus shaded, at its heart.
A gilded roof capped the court, moreover,
With enamelled work below in every part,
While eight statues supported it below,
(With their left arms) of marble white as snow.

Canto XLII: 80-82: The female statues supporting the roof

In each right hand, the ingenious master 80
Had sculpted the horn of Amalthea,
From which water fell, with pleasant murmur,
Into a vase carved from alabaster,
And had likewise fashioned each pilaster
In female shape, and ever modelled after
Some great lady, in both form and face,
And all of equal loveliness and grace.

The feet of each female statue rested 81
On two male statues, fashioned equally,
Whose open lips graciously attested
To their delight in song and harmony.
And their attitude indeed suggested
That all of their effort, and close study,
Was but to laud those ladies set above,
Whose living likenesses they each did love.

These statues below proffered, in their hand, 82
Fair scrolls, both broad and long, the which contained
The names and praises of those who did stand
Above (more worthy) with their roles explained;
While their own names were also close at hand,
Thus, their identities were, there, maintained.
Rinaldo reading, midst the blaze of lights,
Named, one by one, the ladies and their knights.

Canto XLII: 83-95: The identities of these Este women, and their poets

The first inscription there that met his eye 83
Spelled out, at length, Lucrezia Borgia's fame.
Whose chastity and beauty, Rome, say I,
Places her above one that once bore her name.
Antonio Tebaldeo, on high,
With Ercole Strozza, supported that same.
(So said the scroll, so that tuneful pair
A Linus, an Orpheus, fill the air.)

No less lovely a form followed after, 84
On the scroll this sentiment was expressed:
'Ercole's daughter, fair Isabella,
Behold here, by whom all Ferrara's blessed,
(Born here within its confines) more than ever
That realm is favoured, and all the rest
Of the gifts benign Fortune there bestows,
As time upon its endless journey flows.'

The pair below, who desire, hereafter, 85
To sing her praises, both Gian Jacobi
Are named, Bardalone and Calandra.
On the third and fourth sides (there, lightly,
Through narrow channels, the gleaming water
Escaped the octagon) there stood a lady
With a second, equal to her in birth,
And in realm, honour, beauty, and in worth,

Elisabetta, and Leonora; 86
And, if we believe what the marble said,
The latter was born in fair Mantua
(That honours Virgil, he who there was bred,
Yet honours her no less, moreover,
Nor her that to its gracious lord is wed)
Whose feet on Pietro Bembo were set
And upon Jacopo Sadoleto.

Castiglione and Aurelio sustained, 87
With elegance and art, the other lady,
Or so the scroll's inscription there maintained,
(Both then unknown, now well-set for glory)
Next came a lady on whom heaven rained
Such virtue as was never known in story;
She, to the good or ill brought to our age
By Fortune, inured; e'er gracious and sage.

Engraved in golden letters, our knight read: 88
'Lucrezia Bentivoglio (of Este)
Whom Ferrara's Duke joys in having bred,
Amidst his other praise, such her beauty.'
Camillus sang of her (above his head)
Reno and Felsina moved profoundly,
By his sweet voice, showed wonder at the strain
(Like that with which Amprhysus heard his swain)

With one through whom that lovely city's name, 89
Set where Foglia meets the sea, Pesaro,
Africa and India shall acclaim,
And farthest north, and farthest south, yet know;
And, thus, for more that city shall win fame
Than enriching the Papal coffers; lo,
Silvestri, I mean (Guido Postumo)
Crowned by both Minerva and Apollo.

Dian d'Este was the next in order, 90
'Care not,' in the marble was carved, there,
'That she seems proud of face, for within her
Is a heart as humane as she is fair.'
Celio Calcagnine shall praise her
And bear her name and glory everywhere,
Till Juba's and Moneses' Parthians hear,
With Spain to farthest India, far and near.



Stanza 90

And Marco Cavallo, who such a fount 91
Of poetry shall bring forth in Ancona,
As did Pegasus on that fairest mount,
Parnassus (no, twas Helicon rather).
Beatrice now appeared, of whom account
Was made in the scroll that she did offer:
'A blessing to her spouse, while she had breath,
She, thus, left him grief-stricken at her death,



Stanza 91

And our Italy, indeed; victorious 92
While she yet lived, a mere captive after.'
A lord of Correggio has granted us,
In lofty style, a poem on the matter,
And the Bendedeis' pride, Timotheus;
Twixt its banks, this pair shall halt forever
Our River Po (whose trees shed tears of amber,
When Phaethon fell) with their sweet endeavour.

Between her place and that lofty pillar 93
Carved in Lucrezia Borgia's likeness,
A statue had been carved in alabaster,
A lady of such grace and nobleness,
That neath a veil, simple in its manner,
And free of gold or gems, in plain black dress,
Midst the bejewelled, she seemed no less bright,
Than Venus does amidst the stars of night.

None might tell, though gazing fixedly, 94
If her beauty was greater, or her grace;
Or more intelligence or honesty,
Or more majesty present in her face;
'Who that would speak of her,' was writ clearly
In the marble, 'wherever speech takes place,
Upon no worthier task could e'er expend
His labour, yet that task shall find no end.'

Though her statue, both well-wrought and lovely 95
Was, thus, filled full of grace and sweetness,
She seemed disdainful that one so lowly,
And devoid of wit, should sing her greatness;
One that stood alone, lacking company
(I know not why) to sustain her likeness.
The names of all those others were revealed;
This pair's the artist had, it seems, concealed.



Stanza 98

Canto XLII: 96-104: Rinaldo is offered a drink from an enchanted cup

The statues formed a circle, at the centre, 96
While of coral was the pavement below,
Cooled and sweetened by the falling water,
Pure as crystal, that sent its murmuring flow
Along a channel through the wall, to further
Moisten and cool a flowering meadow,
Gladdening the plants and flowers that grew
Nearby, their colours yellow, white and blue.

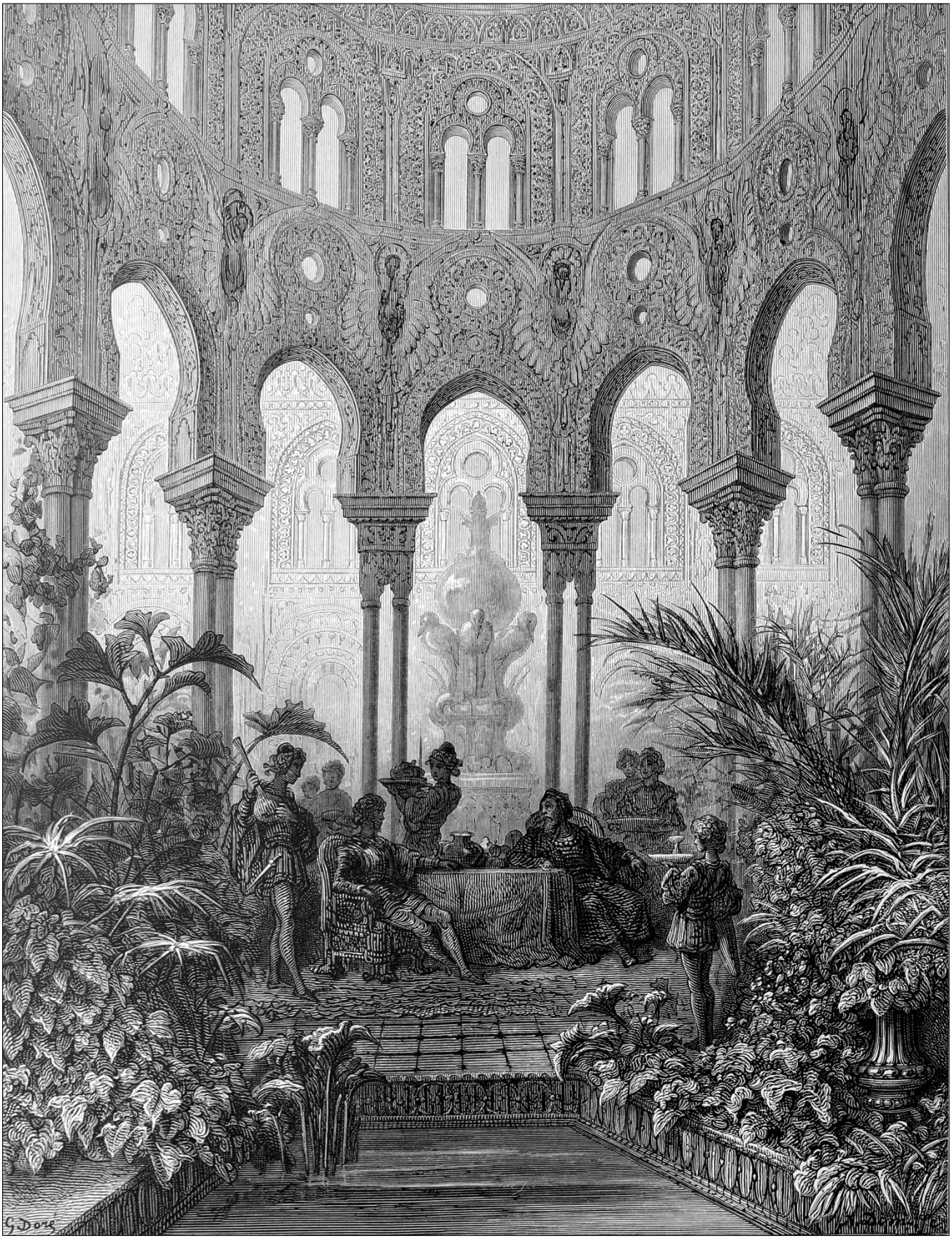
Rinaldo sat at table, and conversed 97
With his host, all impatient now to hear
Of the matter he'd earlier rehearsed,
(To his promise, he'd have him thus adhere)
While observing his visage, for accursed
With some deep woe the knight did e'er appear,
Since, as he spoke, not a moment went by
Without his yielding forth a burning sigh.

Oft our knight was on the point of asking 98
The reason, and yet smothered the request,
Refraining, through courtesy, from seeking
An answer, thinking reticence was best.
But now, as their meal approached its ending,
A youth, who was standing midst the rest,
Placed a golden cup before our paladin,
Bejewelled without, and full of wine within.

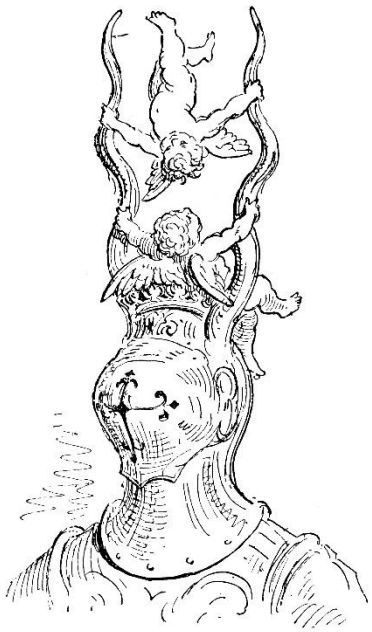
Then, with a seeming smile, the host raised 99
His eyes, and fixed them upon Rinaldo,
Who yet thought, as on his host he gazed,
That he smiled less in joy than in sorrow.
'I'm reminded,' twas thus the host now phrased
His address, 'that, the time has come to show
A wondrous way of knowing, without strife,
What every man should know that has a wife.

Every husband, in my judgement, ought 100
To keep an eye on whether he is loved,
To know if shame or honour haunts his court,
And whether man or beast he thus is proved;
And yet the weight of antlers is as naught
Though to ridicule all the world is moved,
For though his shame, by all, thereby is read,
He feels them not, that wears them on his head.

If you know that she's faithful to you ever, 101
You've more reason to love and respect her
Than he who knows his wife has a lover,
Or he who is but doubtful of her honour.
Many a spouse from jealousy will suffer
Though his wife ne'er glances at another,
While many a man has felt himself secure
That on his brow most splendid antlers wore.

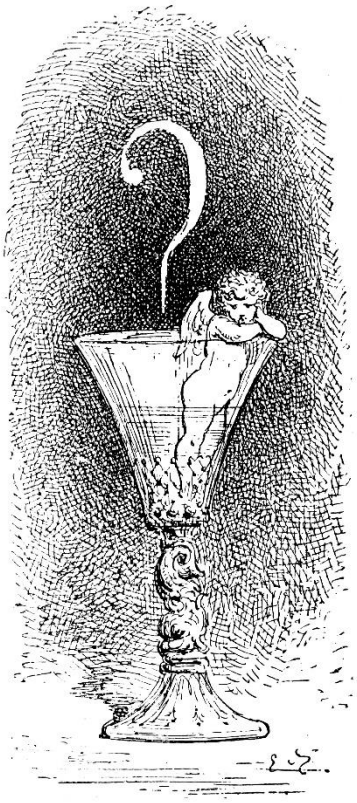


Stanza 97 "*Rinaldo sat at table, and conversed*"



Stanza 101

If you would know whether your wife is true, 102
(As I trust you believe, and should believe,
For tis wrong to think aught else, unless you
Clear proof of unfaithfulness should receive)
None other than you yourself shall view
What she is at, thereby to joy or grieve,
If you'll drink from the cup that's here displayed,
That I might fulfil the promise that I made.

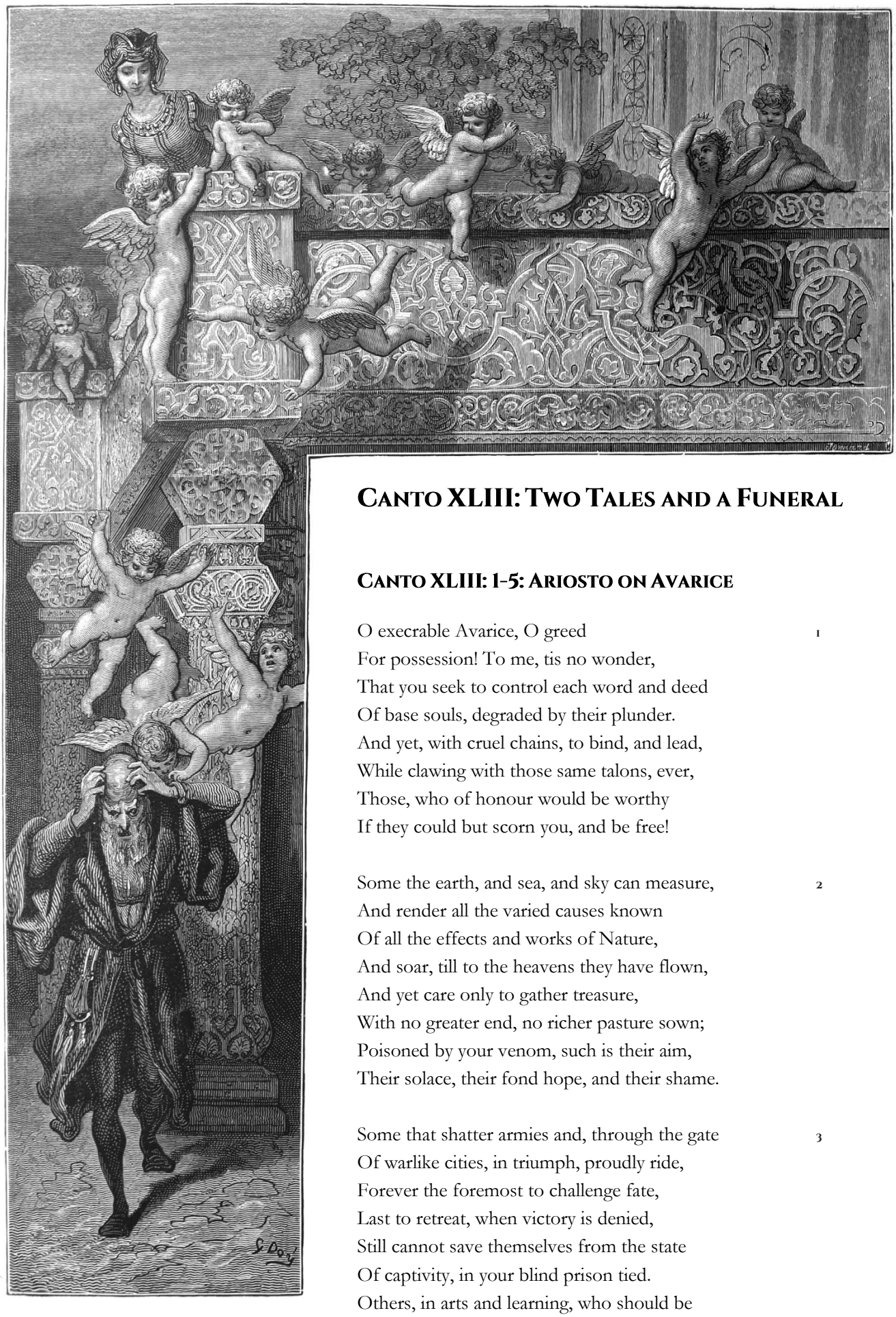


Stanza 102

Drink from this, and a marvel you shall see, 103
For if you bear King Mark's Cornish crown,
Ne'er a drop shall pass your lips, but freely
Shall descend, and all your clothing drown.
But if she's faithful you may quaff it deeply.
Now try your fate, and drink the vintage down!'
With that, he fixed his gaze on Rinaldo,
To find if he would quench his thirst or no.

Rinaldo was nigh tempted to discover, 104
That which, perchance, twas better not to know.
He reached out his hand, watched by the other,
And took the cup, disposed to doing so,
When, suddenly, he thought on the danger,
Ere it touched his lips and the wine did flow.
But let me rest a moment here, ere I
Continue with the paladin's reply.





Canto XLIII: Two Tales and a Funeral

Canto XLIII: 1-5: Ariosto on Avarice

O execrable Avarice, O greed 1
For possession! To me, tis no wonder,
That you seek to control each word and deed
Of base souls, degraded by their plunder.
And yet, with cruel chains, to bind, and lead,
While clawing with those same talons, ever,
Those, who of honour would be worthy
If they could but scorn you, and be free!

Some the earth, and sea, and sky can measure, 2
And render all the varied causes known
Of all the effects and works of Nature,
And soar, till to the heavens they have flown,
And yet care only to gather treasure,
With no greater end, no richer pasture sown;
Poisoned by your venom, such is their aim,
Their solace, their fond hope, and their shame.

Some that shatter armies and, through the gate 3
Of warlike cities, in triumph, proudly ride,
Forever the foremost to challenge fate,
Last to retreat, when victory is denied,
Still cannot save themselves from the state
Of captivity, in your blind prison tied.
Others, in arts and learning, who should be
Shining lights, you drown in obscurity.

What shall we say of some noble lady, 4
That harder, and less prone to yield, appears
Than marble columns, in her constancy,
Despite her lover's charm and worth, and years
Of service, when foul Avarice we see,
Work such, that she, enchanted, free of fears,
In a moment, without love (who'd believe it?)
Falls prey to some old brute (who'd conceive it?).

Not without cause, do I express my pain; 5
Understand me who can, myself I know;
I've not strayed from my task, I maintain,
Nor have forgot the drift of my canto,
For no less do I apply this sad refrain
To what I've said than what I have to show;
Thus, I turn to the tale of our brave knight,
That was about to taste the wine's delight.

Canto XLIII: 6-8: Rinaldo declines to drink

As I said, Rinaldo paused, thoughtfully, 6
Ere drinking, undecided in his mind,
Saying, to himself: 'A fool, I shall be,
If I seek what I'd give all not to find.
She's a woman, therefore full of frailty,
So let her not be jealously maligned.
Trust ever brought me joy, and joy shall bring;
What joy requires the heart to prove a thing?

Such can bring little good, yet greater woe; 7
Our Lord himself scorned every temptation.
Whether tis wise or foolish, I'll not know
More than I need to, nor chance vexation.
I'll put the enchanted cup from me, so,
And would, and will, decline the invitation,
Which is prohibited by God, as surely
As our first father's plucking of the tree.

For as Adam, eating of the apple so, 8
(A thing that the Lord forbade, expressly)
Fell from a state of grace to bitter woe,
Afflicted, from that hour, with misery,
So, the mad husband that would seek to know
What his wife may say or do privately,
Falls out of happiness, to grief and pain,
Ne'er to be free of either, I'll maintain.'

Canto XLIII: 9-10: The host prepares to tell his tale

Pushing the hateful cup away, Rinaldo, 9
On so deciding, saw, to his surprise,
A copious stream of tears begin to flow
Forth from his gracious host's mournful eyes,
Who said, once he had reined in his sorrow:
'Cursed be he who tempted me, likewise,
To seek such proof, alas, and so tempt fate,
Whereby my dearest spouse was lost, of late!

Would I had known you, sir, ten years ago, 10
And benefited then from your counsel,
Before I knew such bitter grief and woe,
These eyes, half-blind, from which the tears e'er well;
But now the curtain shall be raised to show
The source of all my pain, and what befell.
The headings and the argument you'll find,
All the torment that afflicts my sorry mind.

Canto XLIII: 11-16: The origin of the palace

Past a neighbouring city, came you here, 11
Through which flows a river, the Mincio,
Surrounded by a lake, whose waters clear
Extend, to merge then with the River Po.
The Mincio from Lake Garda doth appear;
While Mantua was built, as all men know,
When Thebes was destroyed; there I was born,
Of noble line, though of all riches shorn.

Though Fortune took but little care of me, 12
Denying me wealth, at my birth, Nature,
Granting, instead, a certain grace and beauty
Made me the equal of any creature.
And, in my youth, many a maid and lady
Was enamoured of my face and figure.
For with my grace went a courteous manner,
Albeit one should praise oneself never.

A wise man dwelt in that place, in those days, 13
Whose knowledge of every science was great,
And when his eyes closed on Phoebus' rays
He'd lived a hundred years and twenty-eight.
Alone, uncivilised in many ways,
He'd lived, until with gifts, urged on by fate
And love, he seduced a married lady;
That then bore him a daughter, secretly.

And to keep the child from that error 14
The mother had made, who for pure gain
Had bartered her chastity, that ever
In worth exceeds all that Earth doth contain.
He fled the paths of corruption, with her,
And, in the loneliest place, he was fain
To build this palace, with a demon's aid
And sundry spells, and lived here with the maid.

Chaste and aged women reared the daughter. 15
She grew to possess a peerless beauty.
And had no contact but with her father,
As far as men were concerned, the while he,
To give her patterns to follow thereafter,
Had pictures and statues made, solely
Of fair women who'd behaved modestly,
And kept from doing aught illicitly;

Not only of those, of sovereign virtue, 16
That adorned antiquity, and whose fame
Is preserved by history, wherein we view
The qualities and manners of those same,
But, also, those that would in ages new
Serve to beautify our Italy; each such dame
Was represented, each true to Nature,
Like these eight that about the fount do feature.

Canto XLIII: 17-19: The marriage and the quarrel

When the old man deemed her ripe to wed, 17
So that the fruits might be gathered, he
By mischance, or by ill fortune, was led
To deem myself worthier than many.
Land beyond the city wall he granted,
Streams rich in fish, fields, and open country,
For twenty miles around, the earth and water
He gave me for a dowry, with his daughter.

She was so accomplished, and so lovely, 18
Naught but herself did she need to bring.
She stitched and embroidered so sweetly
She outdid Minerva; if she did sing,
Walk, play, the viewer, hearer, simply
Thought her a heavenly not mortal thing,
And in the liberal arts she was, moreover,
Almost as learned as was her father.

To her intellect, and equal beauty, 19
That might have melted the hardest stone,
A loving sweetness, more than mere duty,
Was conjoined, that to think on makes me groan.
She found no greater, joy it seems to me,
Than to be with me, the two of us alone,
For many a day we lived thus, without strife,
Then quarrelled, for I sinned and not my wife.

Canto XLIII: 20-23: The host is loved by the enchantress Melissa

My father-in-law had been dead five years 20
Since we two had tied the conjugal knot,
When this affliction began, this well of tears,
This sorrow I yet feel, that is my lot.
While the love, of her I praise to all ears,
Yet blessed me, all her virtues I forgot.
A noble lady, of Mantua's fair city,
Desired my love; none more ardent than she.

All charms, and all enchantments, she knew, 21
More than ever mage could command at will.
Black night she lit, the day could darken too,
And move the Earth, or make the Sun stand still.
Yet could not make me love her, to speak true,
For I could not grant her a remedy,
Without causing my sweet lady injury.

And though she was noble, and passing fair, 22
And though I knew that she loved me deeply,
And though many a gift revealed her care,
And though she begged love of me, endlessly,
Not the smallest spark of love had I to spare,
From the flame my first love had lit in me;
While the knowledge of my wife's faithfulness
Prevented aught that might cause her distress.

The hope, the sound belief, the certainty, 23
That my wife would be ever true to me,
Should have made me scorn the other's beauty,
(As great as Helen's, Leda's daughter, surely)
And those gifts and charms (offered Paris equally,
Ida's shepherd, by those goddesses three).
But rejection of her pleas was all in vain;
She did e'er, on her side, the suit maintain.



Stanza 18 "*She was so accomplished, and so lovely*"

Canto XLIII: 24-31: Who seeks to shake his faith in his wife

Meeting me, one day, a mile from this place, 24
This enchantress, whose name was Melissa,
Knowing she possessed the time and space,
Found a way to disturb my peace forever.
Spurred on by jealousy, she sought to chase
The firm faith I possessed, as a true lover,
From my heart, first praising my loyalty
To one who had e'er seemed loyal to me:

"But that she's truly such, you cannot say, 25
Unless you first see proof that it is so;
If she errs not, where'er she could essay,
Why, then you can believe, and claim you know.
But if she's never absent for a day,
Ne'er sees another man, and may not go
Abroad, is not your confidence misplaced,
When you firmly declare that she is chaste?

Go forth awhile; leave the house and go, 26
And let the fact be known then, far and wide,
That you are gone from home; let all men know
That she remains there, all alone, inside.
If pleas fail to persuade her, or a show
Of gifts (her seeming faithfulness belied)
When acceptance could likely be concealed,
Why, then her faithfulness might be revealed."

With these words, and the like, the enchantress 27
Wrought upon me, until I would be gone,
And, from a distance, banish the mere guess
And prove my loving wife a paragon.
"If I accept," I cried, "and here confess,
That I may hold to some false opinion,
By what sure means can I ascertain
Whether she's true, or will a lie maintain?"

"I'll give you, to that purpose," said Melissa, 28
"A drinking-cup, with virtue strange and rare,
One wrought by Morgana, that King Arthur
Might test the truth of Guinevere the Fair.
He whose wife is chaste may drink, but never
Can he, whose wife is not, its contents share,
For when the wine he'd taste in his mouth,
It sprinkles o'er his chest, he knows but drouth.

Before we part, then you that test must try, 29
And, as things are, then deeply you shall drink,
For as yet it seems her loyalty's no lie,
And of such you'll have proof, or so I think.
Then, if you return and seek again, say I,
To prove her, and sip thus, at the brink,
And it spills not, and she is as you said,
You're the luckiest man that ever wed."

I accepted the offer; thus, received 30
The enchanted cup, and met with success;
For my wife proved as chaste as I'd believed,
Her virtue confirmed, and her faithfulness.
Then Melissa said: "Depart, leave her deceived
As to your intent, for a month, no less,
And then return, and take the cup again,
And find if you may drink, or see all plain."

I found it hard to leave my wife, and go; 31
Twas not that I doubted her loyalty,
But twas the thought that made me suffer so
Of not seeing my wife there beside me.
Then Melissa said: "Another means I'll show
By which to prove this, of a surety.
Your voice and appearance I shall alter,
And you'll approach her as someone other."

Canto XLIII: 32-35: Melissa alters his form to that of his wife's suitor

The River Po, twixt threatening horns, defends, 32
The nearby city, Ferrara, with its flow,
Whose jurisdiction to the coast extends,
Where the murmuring tides sweep to and fro.
It yields in age, but in its wealth contends
With its neighbours, and in resplendent show,
To a Trojan scion owing its foundation,
And surviving Attila's vile invasion.

A rich, and youthful, and handsome knight 33
Holds the reins of that realm in his hand,
Who following, one day, his hawk in flight,
Entered my stronghold; there the bird did land.
He was entranced by my wife, at first sight,
Such that his thoughts her image did command.
Nor did he cease to practise upon her,
To bend her to his will, as her fond lover.

She'd so often rejected his pleas before, 34
That at the last he failed to gain his end.
But the memory of her beauty, Amor
Engraved upon his heart, you may depend.
Melissa altered my shape, and did ensure
That his voice and form to me she did lend.
For she transfigured me (I know not how)
In speech and face, and hair, and eyes, and brow.

I, deceiving my lady into thinking 35
That I'd departed for some Eastern shore,
Once changed, in all aspects of my being,
Returned, in that sure disguise, once more,
With Melssia beside me, by her seeming
My page, that most costly items bore,
(For she her own form had thought to alter)
Gold and gems, from India, and Eritrea.

Canto XLIII: 36-40: His wife is compromised

Knowing every passage, I made my way, 36
With Melissa at my side, to the chamber
Wherein my wife was like to be that day,
And found her alone; no maid was with her.
I made my plea to her, then put in play
The gold and such, to her those gems did offer,
Emeralds, rubies, diamonds, worked with art,
Such as might sway even the firmest heart.

Twas but a fraction of the gifts, I told her, 37
Which she might hope to receive from me,
And then, her husband's absence did proffer
As a reason not to scorn my company.
I promised I would love her forever,
And would cherish her, as she could see.
And that my love and constant faithfulness,
Should be rewarded with her love, no less.

At first, she was utterly confounded, 38
Blushed rose-red, and would not hear a word,
But, by that gold and those gems surrounded,
Came to see her resistance as absurd,
And, briefly and quietly (I, dumbfounded!)
Said what robbed me of my breath, when I heard
That whate'er I desired, she would do,
Just as long as no one else ever knew.

Her words were like a dart dipped in venom, 39
By which I felt my very soul pierced through,
A chill pierced me to the marrow, seldom
Has my voice so failed me; the mage withdrew
The veil of her enchantment; stricken dumb,
I was returned to my former shape, anew.
Think of the colour my wife's face did claim,
Caught, thus, agreeing to an act of shame!

Both of our faces now turned deathly pale, 40
We both stood silent, and with downcast eye,
So powerless my tongue it could but fail
To speak, and faint at last was my sad cry:
"You would betray me then, but to avail
Yourself of that which shames us both thereby?"
She gave no answer, though her tears did speak,
That, streaming from her eyes, her breast did seek.

Canto XLIII: 41-46: And flees him for the other

Her shame was great, her indignation more, 41
Because I had, thus, caught her in the act.
It increased then from what it was before,
Till it turned to wrath and hatred at the fact.
She chose the other, swiftly sought the shore
Of the flowing river, though darkness lacked
But an hour or two; in a barque she fled,
Through the twilight, and to his realm she sped,

With the dawn, presenting herself before 42
The knight who was in love with her, whom I
Had feigned to be, when I his semblance wore
And tempted her, my honour shamed thereby.
To one that loved, and loves her evermore,
You may believe her presence pleased the eye.
From there, she said no hope I should maintain
That she'd love me, nor e'er be mine again.

And, alas, with him she is content to stay, 43
Takes her pleasure, and makes a jest of me.
Of the evil I brought on myself that day
I languish, and am troubled, endlessly;
My sorrow grows; tis right I fade away.
And little, indeed, there now is left of me.
I believe within the year I must have died,
But for one sole comfort, on which I relied.



Stanza 42

My solace is that each and every guest, 44
That, for the last ten years, have lodged with me
(For I've offered every one the self-same test)
None but has drenched his chest; good company
I keep, for I'm no different than the rest,
Which somewhat eases my sore misery.
You are the only one that's proven wise,
By refusing that perilous enterprise.

My wish for knowledge, passing every bound, 45
Seeking to know what every spouse would know,
Means that no peace I have, none may be found,
Whether life is short or long, time fast or slow.
Melissa was pleased at first to see me crowned
With horns, a short-lived joy, for, in my woe,
Deeming her the cause of my bitter plight,
I loathed the witch, and drove her from my sight.

Angered, at being treated with disdain, 46
(By one that she loved more than life, she said)
Where she, indeed, had thought to dwell and reign,
(Now her rival was gone) in my wife's stead,
Scorning to dwell where aught might cause her pain,
Was swift to follow where her fate now led.
And has so far abandoned this country,
No news of her is e'er conveyed to me.'

Canto XLIII: 47-49: Rinaldo condemns the whole affair

Such was the tale his host told Rinaldo, 47
And when he'd reached the end of his story,
The latter, contemplating his host's woe,
Gave this reply, touched, it seems, by pity:
'Ill, indeed, that Melissa counselled so,
And made you stir the wasps' nest; equally,
Little wisdom had you, who poked around,
And found what you'd gladly not have found.



Stanza 47

If your wife was so possessed by avarice, 48
As to be induced to break faith with you,
Small wonder; she's not the first, I promise,
Nor will she be the last one so to do.
For stronger minds have done far worse than this,
Though a lesser prize they sought to pursue.
Many the men we've heard of that have sold
Their masters, or their dearest friends, for gold!

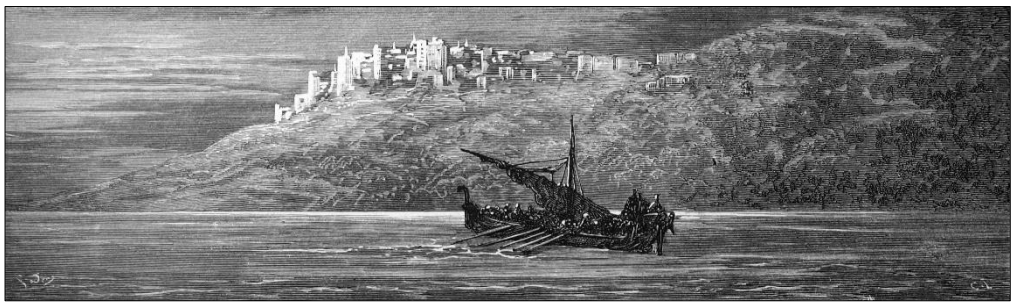
For you never should have tempted her so, 49
If you wished her to offer some defence.
Know you not that steel or stone are of no
Avail, the draw of gold is e'er immense.
The failure was yours, as now the woe,
In testing her, when the consequence
Bore such weight; no doubt you'd have fared far worse,
If your wife had sought the like to rehearse.'

Canto XLIII: 50–55: He boards a boat and heads for Ferrara

Rinaldo ceased and, as he did so, rose, 50
And said he sought a bed until the morn,
Or rather he'd sleep awhile, but chose
To leave an hour or two before the dawn,
Since but little time had he for repose,
And, indeed, none could he spare, he'd be sworn.
And his host said, in truth, if that would please,
He might rest there within, all at his ease.

For he'd prepared a room there, and a bed, 51
But, if he'd take his sound advice, he might
Advance for many a mile, and be sped,
While yet enjoying his rest, through the night.
'For you can take to a boat,' his host said,
And progress with the river in its flight,
As it makes it way through our country,
And so, gain half a day on your journey.'

Rinaldo was pleased with the offer, 52
And thanked his host most courteously,
Then made for the mooring on the river
Where the vessel was waiting, which promptly
Departed. There, at ease beneath a cover,
The knight was carried down the stream swiftly.
Six light and slender oars drove the boat,
And, like a bird on the wing, it did float.



Stanza 56

He was asleep ere he laid down his head, 53
Having told the men to wake him as soon
As they neared Ferrara, for as he said
If they failed to, he might well sleep till noon.
They passed Melara on the left, as they sped,
Then Sermide on the right, neath the moon,
Ficarolo and Stellata they passed by,
The fickle river dividing nearby.

Of the two arms, the helmsman took the right, 54
Leaving that which flowed to Venice behind,
Passing Bondeno, as the morning light
Flowed from the east, the dark hills outlined.
And now Aurora all her crimson and white
Fair blossoms to the glowing sky consigned.
Rinaldo awoke, raised his head, and lo,
He saw the twin forts built by Tealdo.
'O most fortunate Ferrara!' he cried, 55

'Of which my good cousin Malagigi
(The stars and wandering planets having spied,
And forcing some sprite to appear promptly)
Viewing the future centuries, prophesied
(When I accompanied him on a journey)
That you shall prove the pride of Italy,
And men shall set no bounds to your glory.'

Canto XLIII: 56–59: Malagigi's prophecy of Ferrara's future

So, he exclaimed, and forever rushing 56
Along, as if with wings the vessel flew,
Down the king of rivers swiftly passing,
Till the isle, nearest the walls, came in view;
And though it was devoid of any being,
He was pleased to see it, and joyed anew
That in after times that isle would be fair,
Adorned, and beautified, by many an heir.

At other times, on the road, he did hear 57
From Malagigi, that when to Aries
The Sun had returned in his fourth sphere
Seven hundred times, in all the wide seas,
And lakes and rivers, no isle would appear
More beautiful, or more suited to please,
And none who saw it would seek to speak more
Of that isle where Nausicaa trod the shore.

He heard that its palaces would outdo 58
Capri, that Tiberius held so dear;
The Gardens of the Hesperides too
Could but yield in beauty to those found here.
Nor to the rare plants, creatures, trees on view,
Would Circe's have compared, it would appear.
While there, with the Loves and Graces, Venus
Might dwell, no more in Cnidos or Cyprus;

And its prince would, with study and with care, 59
Joining, to his knowledge, will and power,
Would thus the Belvedere fashion there,
Circling the place with moat, and wall and tower,
Until all foreign forces it might dare,
Nor need it call for aid at any hour.
Ercole's son, Ercole's father, twould be,
Alfonso, who its building would o'er-see.

Canto XLIII: 60-63: Rinaldo is borne past the city

So, Rinaldo approached it, recalling 60
The prophecies Malagigi had made,
Those sights, of later times, divining,
The which to him alone he had conveyed.
And marvelling at the place, and wondering:
'How can it be' (his amazement displayed)
'That upon an empty marsh shall flourish
The liberal arts, and most worthy studies;

And, from a little burgh, a town shall grow, 61
And then a mighty city of great beauty;
And where now all about the waters flow,
Rich farmland will prosper, fruitfully?
Ferrara, even now I rise, and honour show
To that line, the noble love, the courtesy
Of your lords, and all the virtues shown
By your knights and subjects, known and unknown.

The Redeemer's ineffable goodness, 62
Your princes' wisdom and care for justice,
With endless care and love, in happiness
Will preserve you, and abundance promise,
Protecting you from that pain and distress,
Inflicted on others, by your enemies.
Let them be angered by your contentment;
Scorn, yourself, base envy and resentment.'

While Rinaldo mused thus, the vessel ran 63
Downriver, with the current, at such speed,
No falcon, flying swift as any can,
E'er descended faster, when the call decreed.
The right branch of the right arm they began
To navigate, and watched the walls recede,
San Giorgio fell behind the parting boat,
The turrets of Gaibana, and the Moat.

Canto XLIII: 64-67: He muses upon the tale he has heard

Our knight, as one thought led to another, 64
Recalled his host of the previous eve,
In whose palace he'd dined, and who, ever,
Was in pain and woe, and scorn did receive
From that city, from his wife, and her lover,
More pain and woe than any could conceive.
And of that cup he was obliged to think,
That revealed all, if one sought to drink.

And at the same moment he remembered 65
What his host had said: of all that had tried
To sip from the cup, none had succeeded
In drinking, but had spilt it far and wide.
Now he repented, now: 'Had I conceded,'
He thought 'no joy could in my heart abide;
Succeeding I'd but have proved my belief,
While failing I'd have brought myself to grief.

Since my faith in my wife is most certain, 66
Naught could amplify that belief in me.
And had I put it to the test, tis plain,
It could ne'er produce greater certainty.
Yet the evil would be great, I maintain,
If I saw of Clarice what I would not see.
That were a bet best not laid, where one
Might lose all, and yet little could be won.'

While the knight of Chiaramonte was musing, 67
Never raising his two eyes from the floor,
The helmsman, seeing him thus pursuing
His thoughts (and gazing at him, not the shore),
And wishing to know what he was thinking
And what occupied him so, sought therefore,
Being bold and well-spoken, to stir him,
And to hold some conversation with him.

Canto XLIII: 68-70: Then enters into conversation with the boatman

The substance of their pleasant colloquy, 68
Was this: a spouse had little common-sense
Who set out to test his wife's loyalty,
And yet gave her little chance for defence;
Though a wife, armed with simple modesty,
That scorned the lure of wealth, howe'er immense,
Would be proof gainst a thousand swords of steel,
And scorching flames, having naught to conceal.

The boatman agreed: 'Tis true, as you said, 69
He should ne'er have proffered gems and gold.
From such temptations, although she be wed,
Not every woman can her hands withhold.
I know not if you've heard or may have read
Of the spouse (elsewhere the tale may be told)
That his wife in the act, did espy,
For which she should have been condemned to die.

Your host should have kept in memory 70
That all resistance yields to gold's allure,
But he forgot when he needed to, you see,
And so brought sorrow to himself, and more.
Had he only recalled the deed, like me,
Done in that city that lies on the shore,
(His and mine) of the marshes and the lake,
Where Mincius its sluggish course doth take.

Canto XLIII: 71-74: The tale of Adonio

'Tis of Adonio I wish to tell, 71
That on a judge's wife a gift conferred
By means of a dog.' 'Whate'er thus befell,
Is known among you only, I have heard
Naught of it beyond the Alps, it may well
Be unknown in France, for not a word
Of it did I hear there: come, tell the tale,
And I shall listen closely, without fail.'

The boatman thus began: 'Twas in Mantua, 72
One Anselmo dwelt, of high family,
His youth spent in flowing gown, forever
Studying Ulpian; who chastity,
Lineage, beauty sought to discover,
In some bride who'd enhance his dignity.
One he found in neighbouring Ferrara,
Of more than mortal beauty, and wed her.

Now, she was of such manners and such grace 73
That everything seemed love and lightness there,
More perchance than seemed fitting for his place,
Or that might leave a husband free of care.
Once wedded, his jealousy grew apace,
More than in any man that breathes the air.
And yet she gave no cause for jealousy,
Except that she was shrewd, and a beauty.



Stanza 73

In Mantua too, lived a knight, who came 74
Of an ancient and an honourable line,
Sprung from the serpent's teeth, the very same
House as Manto's, who that city of mine
Was destined to found; tis known to fame,
And midst the others shall forever shine.
And this bold knight was called Adonio,
That loved the lady, and his love would show.



Stanza 74

Canto XLIII: 75-77: Impoverished, he leaves his native Mantua

And he, to pursue his amorous quest 75
Began to spend his riches lavishly,
Gave many a feast, in rich garments dressed,
And did whatever seemed to him most worthy.
Had he of Tiberius' wealth been possessed
He'd yet have exhausted it completely.
For I think that ere two winters were past,
His paternal fortune he'd run through at last.



Stanza 75

The well-lit house that many did frequent 76
From morn till eve, filled with his many 'friends',
Was empty, now his money was all spent,
And he without the means to serve their ends.
The feasting done, all from his table went,
But for the beggarly few; to seek amends
He thought to leave the city, and to go
Wherever none his name or face did know.

With this intention, he set out one morn, 77
Told not a soul, on not one 'friend' did call,
With many a tear and sigh, all forlorn,
To cross the marsh beyond the city wall.
Yet, to the lady was his heart still sworn,
He forgot her not, forever in her thrall.
Behold, with high adventure he now met,
One destined to reverse his fortunes yet.

Canto XLIII: 78-81: Meets with an adventure, and years later returns

He saw a peasant who beat, with a heavy stake, 78
The tangled bushes, growing all around.
Adonio did question of him make,
As to the man's purpose, and thereby found
That within he'd spied a most ancient snake,
That slithered there, over the marshy ground.
A longer and a thicker serpent he
Had never seen before, nor thought to see.

The peasant said he'd not depart the place 79
Until he'd caught and killed the evil thing.
At this, Adonio, with angry face,
Rebuked the man, his impatience showing,
For serpents were e'er revered by his race;
They bore a snake as emblem, recalling
That their ancestor had issued (twas known)
Forth from the serpent's teeth by Cadmus sown.

He said and did to the fellow what deterred 80
Him from pursuing that aim, in any guise,
Leaving the serpent free, as he preferred,
To go its way unharmed, hid from all eyes.
And, journeying where none of him had heard,
He dwelt in deep obscurity likewise,
Living far from this land, so it appears,
For a space of more than seven long years.

Neither distance nor straightened circumstance 81
Made Love, that ever occupies the mind,
Grant him rest; he recalled her form and glance,
That stirred his heart, and his feelings did bind.
Thus, at last, he returned, and not by chance,
For the beauty he had lost he yet would find.
Unkempt, ill clad, still troubled to the core,
He sought the road to Mantua once more.

Canto XLIII: 82-85: Anselmo is to go on an embassy to Rome

At this same time, an embassy was sent 82
To the Papal See, and at Rome would stay
(To complete its mission, and win consent
For its aims) for how long none could say.
Anselmo, their number would augment
(He ever would repent that fateful day!)
Though he promised, prayed, and bribed, he must go,
And at the end he yielded; to his woe.

It seemed to him no less cruel and bitter, 83
This matter that caused him so much grief
Than if some creature at his side did hover
And plucked at his heart-strings; for scant relief
Could he find from Jealousy; forever
Paling his cheek, for twas his sad belief
His wife would stray, thinking her but frail,
And so, he begged her to be true (to no avail!)



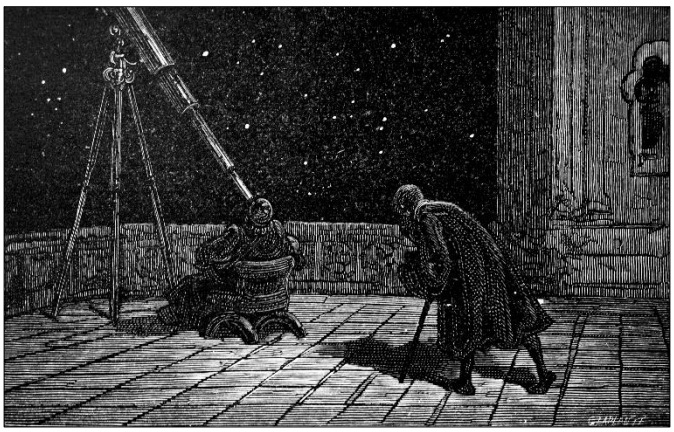
Stanza 83

Not beauty, birth, or fortune would suffice 84
He told his lady, to maintain her honour,
If she failed in chastity, repeating twice
That the prize to be won was ever greater
Where virtue proved strong against all vice,
And now his long absence she must suffer,
And so, a wide field lay open surely
Wherein men might win her from loyalty.

With such exhortations, and many more, 85
He encouraged the lady to be true,
This journey his lady could but deplore;
Heavens, what tears, what sorrow did ensue!
Sooner would the sun turn black, she swore,
Than she should cease his counsel to pursue.
She'd not break her faith, she would expire,
Rather than pander to some base desire.

Canto XLIII: 86-89: A mage prophesies that his wife Argia will be seduced

Though to her promises and abjurations 86
He lent belief, such that his fears grew less,
He could not rest from his lamentations
Till better assured of her faithfulness.
He had a friend, prized for his predictions,
That could see men's future ruin or success;
For of every science, every magic art,
He knew the secrets, or the greater part.



Stanza 86

He asked him, ere he took his departure, 87
To determine if, while he was away,
His wife, whose name, indeed, was Argia,
Would be true to him, or be like to stray.
Swayed thus, by his pleas, the astrologer,
Plotted the orbs' positions day by day;
Anselmo left him to his work, and came
Upon the next morning, to learn that same.



Stanza 86

The mage was silent, not keen to display 88
Such results as might cause his friend much woe,
And with many excuses sought delay,
But, since the spouse declared that he must know,
Revealed that the wife was like to betray
His trust when he left, or it seemed so.
She'd not be won by beauty, he was told
Or lover's pleas, she'd be seduced by gold.

When to his first fears, the threat was added 89
One written in the stars, and thus foreseen,
You'll know, if on Love's mysteries you've fed,
How stood his heart: it stood not well I ween.
And, midst the woes that hung above his head,
One grieved him most; the knowledge twas, I mean,
That by avarice she'd be won (and lost)
Her chastity thus purchased (to his cost).

Canto XLIII: 90-94: Anselmo transfers use of his wealth to her and departs

So, to prevent his wife, as best he could, 90
From falling into such grievous error,
(For a man will sometimes seek the good,
By disposing of the riches on his altar)
All the wealth he had (and be it understood
He was no pauper) he transferred to her,
The rents and produce, all that he possessed
He gave her, all with which he then was blessed.

"Yours is the power," he said, "to buy and spend, 91
And you may do the like without measure,
Consume or waste, give, acquire, or vend,
Just as you wish, according to your pleasure.
If I but find you faithful, in the end,
I shall take no account of my treasure,
Stay but as you are now, you understand,
And you may e'en dispose of house and land."

He begged her, till he was again beside her, 92
Not to spend her weary days in the city,
But in their most pleasant country villa,
Where she might live more comfortably.
This he said thinking to keep her ever
From those who might corrupt her easily;
Fearing not the humble shepherds, or those
That tilled the fields all around (one must suppose).

Argia, her fearful spouse embracing, 93
Her sweet arms about his neck, was I fear
So distressed that her tears, overflowing,
Like two glittering fountains did appear.
She was grieved at her husband for showing
That he thought she was suspect, far or near,
While his suspicion's source was no less
Than his lack of faith in her faithfulness.

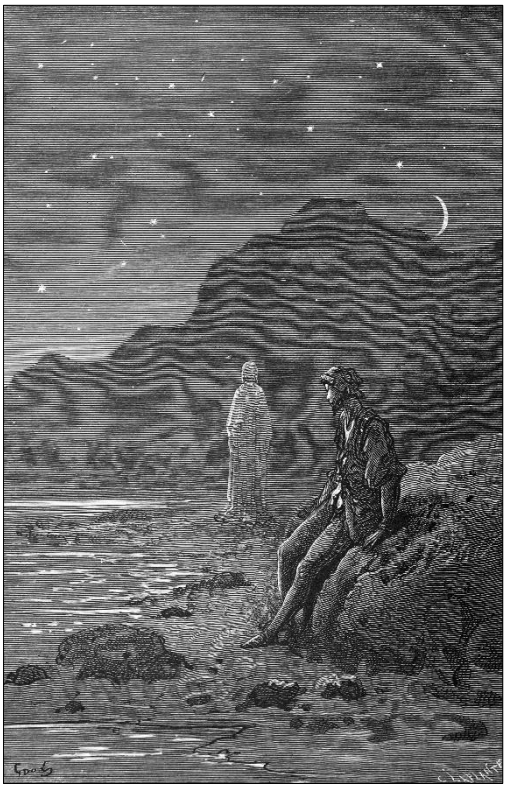
It would take too long, if I sought to tell, 94
Of the tenderness of their last goodbyes,
"I commend my honour to you; farewell."
He cried out, she yet with tears in her eyes.
And he felt a fond tear or two, as well,
As he wheeled his steed, falling from his eyes.
Her gaze long followed him, as on he rode,
While o'er her cheeks the streams of tears flowed.

Canto XLIII: 95-102: Adonio is visited by the shade of Manto

Meanwhile, the pale, unkempt Adonio 95
(As I have said before) made his way
Towards Mantua, hoping none would know
His face, and to his entry there cry nay.
Across the marsh, near the city, he did go,
Where he'd defended the serpent that day.
Which had found a refuge, in the wild brake,
From the peasant, who'd sought its life to take.

Arriving there, with the dawning light, 96
For a few stars still glittered in the sky,
A noble maiden appeared to his sight,
On the brink of the marsh, and to his eye
She seemed alone, a wanderer in the night,
Richly dressed, her rank announced thereby.
She greeted him, in a pleasant manner,
And spoke to him in these words, thereafter:

"Although you know me not, we two are kin, 97
And I am deep in debt to you, also.
From Cadmus did our lineage begin,
We both share his blood, and I am Manto,
Who first a city from this marsh did win,
That now most fine and splendidly doth show,
And as you may have heard (tis often claimed)
Tis after me that Mantua was named.



Stanza 96

Of the faery kind, I am one; and our state, 98
So that you may understand our being,
Is that we suffer all the ills of fate,
All but the greatest ill, that of dying.
Though to our immortality we mate
An ill nigh-on as vile, and more trying,
For every seventh day our bodies take
On the form (thus, are we bound) of a snake.

To find our bodies sheathed in that vile skin, 99
And slither o'er the ground, is such an ill,
As none would ever wish upon their kin,
And we curse the fact we are living still.
The debt I owe you, that I would begin
To redeem, requires I tell you, and I will,
That at the time when we that form display,
We are left to countless dangers a prey.

For no creature on Earth is so hated, 100
As the serpent, and we, in that semblance
Suffer men's outrage and assault, fated
To be hunted and harmed at every instance,
Unless we can ensure they are frustrated,
By sinking underground at their advance;
Tis better to die than be beaten so,
Thrashed, and often wounded, by blow on blow.

The debt I owe you is that, on that day, 101
When you passed by the marsh, as you know,
You rescued me from one who sought to slay,
And had dealt me many a painful blow.
If you had not been travelling that way,
I'd not have escaped, not without more woe,
A broken spine or skull, and there have lain
Broken, though destined never to be slain;

For on those days when we must slither for hours, 102
Clad in that serpent form, along the ground,
The heavens afflict us, rob us of our powers;
They are otherwise by our wishes bound.
At all other times, these virtues of ours
Can make the Sun dim, halt it in its round,
The solid Earth spin backward like a wheel,
And ice take fire, and fire to ice congeal.

Canto XLIII: 103-106: She transforms herself into a dog

Now I am here to pay the debt I owe, 103
In return for the good you rendered me,
Naught shall you ask in vain, now I go
Free of my serpent form; your poverty
Is ended, for upon you I bestow,
Three times your former patrimony,
Nor do I wish you to be poor again,
For the more you spend, the more shall you gain.

And because you are still tied in that knot 104
With which Love has bound you, I aspire
To show you the way you may change your lot,
And so, attain the result that you desire.
For, now that her husband to Rome is got,
My counsel you shall take, free of his ire;
At their villa, the lady you will find,
Seek her there; I shall not be far behind."

She followed by telling him in what guise 105
He should present himself to the lady,
How he should dress, I say, and speak, likewise,
How he should tempt her, and make entreaty,
And what form she would for herself devise,
For, but for those days when at the mercy
Of her serpent shape, as any creature
She could appear, of whatever nature.

She clothed the knight in a pilgrim's habit, 106
Of one who begs for alms from door to door;
She changed herself into a dog, and made it
Of the smallest size, while long hair it bore,
Whiter than ermine; twas for a lady fit,
Fine to see, with many a trick in store.
And in this guise, they went towards the villa,
Wherein dwelt the enchanting Agria.

Canto XLIII: 107-112: The dog's abilities are revealed

At the farm-hands' huts, young Adonio 107
Halted, ere venturing any further,
And on a shepherd's pipe began to blow,
To which the dog danced, hither and thither.
The lady heard the sounds arise below,
And went to find the source of the murmur,
To the courtyard she had the pilgrim brought,
For from such things Anselmo's fate was wrought.

There Adonio told the dog to begin, 108
And the creature obeyed, with canine grace,
And danced the dances that were danced within
Our country, and beyond, at its own pace,
With other tricks as well, and so did win
(For well-nigh human ways it did embrace!)
The admiration of the watchers, with its act;
They scarcely dared to blink or breathe, in fact.

Great wonder that most noble dog inspired 109
In the lady, then deep longing; her old nurse
She sent to the youth, to say she desired
To purchase it, offering a goodly purse.
"If all the treasures woman e'er acquired,
By her cupidity, it might disburse,"
The wary pilgrim said, "twould fail to buy
A single paw of this fine dog, thereby."

And to show why what he said must be true, 110
He took the nurse to a nearby corner,
Instructing the dog, on his given cue,
To summon a gold coin for the messenger.
The dog then leapt, and shook itself anew,
And, lo and behold, produced the treasure!
"Well now," the youth next placed it in her hand,
"What price the finest dog in all the land?

For whatsoe'er I request, the dog supplies, 111
Nor am left empty-handed, night or day,
Rare pearls and rings, and aught that I devise,
And lovely garments, if for such I pray.
Tell your lady, she may acquire, likewise
What she wishes, but not for riches, say;
I ask for one brief night to embrace her,
And she may possess this useful creature."



Stanza 111

And then a gem, that moment born, he gave her, 112
That she might bear it to the lovely lady,
One that, to the nurse, seemed worth a further
Ten gold coins, or perchance even twenty.
Back to her mistress, sped the messenger
And solaced her with the news that surely
The wondrous animal might yet be bought
By a simple gift, that would cost her naught.

Canto XLIII: 113-116: Argia succumbs and her husband returns

Argia, at first, proved most reluctant, 113
Partly due to her vow of faithfulness,
Partly too she doubted, in that moment,
All the claims that the other did express.
The nurse tried all, persuasion and lament,
Saying seldom did rare fortune so bless
The folk on this Earth, and gained consent
To bring the youth, next day, so she might see
The dog's fine tricks, in perfect privacy.

The next appearance Adonio made 114
Was but death and ruin to Anselmo,
For gold coins, on demand, were soon displayed,
And strings of pearls, and jewels in a row.
Her proud heart was tamed, the young man made
A great impression too; she'd not say no
To him who'd made the offer, when she saw
Twas the Mantuan who'd wooed her before.



Stanza 114

The wicked nurse's efforts at persuasion, 115
The pleas, and the presence, of the lover,
The chance offered by this rare occasion
When her jealous husband was far from her,
With small risk of any accusation,
Soon led her to embrace the knight's offer.
The dog was hers, all chaste thoughts overcome,
And she led Adonio to her room.

The knight reaped in full the fruits of love 116
Lying with the lady, whom the faery,
Felt affection for, and did so approve,
She chose to dwell there continuously.
Through all the Zodiac the Sun did move
Ere the justice arrived home, finally,
Fear and suspicion running in his head,
As to all the astrologer had said.

Canto XLIII: 117-120: Anselmo attempts to learn the truth

Once arrived, his first instinct was to fly 117
To the man's abode, and of him demand
To know if his dear wife had sought to lie
With any, or had honoured his command.
The astrologer consulted charts and sky,
To see how might the Sun and planets stand,
And sent to say that as he had foreseen,
So, he could now confirm, events had been:



Stanza 117

That, tempted by the rarest present, she 118
Had fallen prey, yes, to another man.
This grieved the judge, and wounded him sorely.
Sharp lance nor spear so pierce; and so, he ran
To find the nurse and know with certainty
(Although he credited the starry plan)
What had occurred: he drew the nurse apart,
And plied his questions with a lawyer's art.

He circled widely all about the question, 119
While hoping of the truth to find some trace,
And at first learnt naught worthy of mention,
However hard he cared to sift the case.
For being used to countering aspersion,
She met his claim with an immobile face;
And, so instructed, till the month was out,
Left him hanging twixt certainty and doubt.

How good would doubt have seemed to Anselmo, 120
If he'd known the grief certainty would bring!
When he learnt, by pleas or gifts, there was no
Shred of fact the nurse would yield, not a thing,
Sounding no chord that rang true, to his woe,
He chose, as one ever used to biding
His time, to wait till she angered his wife,
Thinking: where'er women are, there is strife.

Canto XLIII: 121-124: Does so, and orders the death of his wife

He waited, and there came the thing he sought, 121
For at the first rebuke, the nurse appeared
And news of all that had occurred she brought,
And nothing she held back; twas as he'd feared.
Twould take long to tell how he was fraught,
And how his heart sank, whene'er his wife neared.
The wretched judge was so by grief oppressed
Of his wits he was well-nigh dispossessed.

Conquered by ire, he was disposed to die, 122
But first resolved to see his wife struck dead,
Clear her from shame, himself from grief, thereby,
The witness a sharp blade stained crimson-red.
To the city he went, with wrathful eye,
Stung by fury, the thought lodged in his head,
And to the farm despatched a loyal man
Whom he ordered to execute the plan.

He sent the servant speeding to the villa, 123
Who was told to say his master was laid low,
With such a fever, he'd have Argia
Come to him, for his fate was touch and go.
Unaccompanied by any other,
She must hasten to him, her mercy show
(He believed she would come, without delay);
Then the man must cut her throat on the way.

The servant thus ran to find Argia, 124
Prepared to carry out his lord's command,
Though her little dog now barked to tell her
That her fate might lie in this servant's hand.
Its manner told her she was in danger,
But she felt she must go, you understand,
For he had cared for her, in word and deed,
And she ought to bring aid in time of need.

Canto XLIII: 125-129: The lady vanishes

Now, the servant turned aside from the road, 125
And went by strange and solitary ways,
And took a path to where a river flowed
(From the Apennines to the Po it strays).
Amidst a dark and gloomy wood, it showed,
Far from farm and town lay that forest maze.
It seemed a silent and secluded place,
Fit for the cruel task he now must face.



Stanza 126

He drew his sword, and to the lady said 126
That she must die, such was his lord's decree,
And she should pray, before he struck her dead,
To be cleansed of her sins. Suddenly
I know not how, she vanished (and so fled)
Just as he thought to slay her wickedly,
He saw her not, searched all the woods around,
But not a trace of Argia he found.

Filled with shame, he then returned to his lord, 127
With a bewildered look, and sore dismayed,
And all the tale to his master did afford,
And that he'd sought her all about the glade.
The judge knew not that Manto did accord
His wife such powers, and her escape did aid,
Because the nurse, who all else had revealed,
That useful fact, I know not why, concealed.

He knew what to do; he thus had failed 128
To exact revenge for all his pain and woe,
What was a mote was now a beam; he paled,
It weighed upon him, and oppressed him so.
Of her error, concealed before, or veiled,
Every fool about, he feared, soon would know.
He might have hidden the truth from them all,
But that power he'd now lost beyond recall;

For he well-knew that his treacherous heart 129
He had shown to his wife, by his vile deed,
While she to escape him, would flee apart,
And run to some great lord in her sore need,
One that would hold him to scorn, for his part,
And deride him that her death had decreed;
Or perchance a worse might now command her,
That would act as her lover, and her pander.

Canto XLIII: 130-133: Manto creates a palace for her to dwell in

To remedy the situation, he 130
Sent messengers with letters, here and there,
Leaving no stone unturned in Lombardy,
Seeking Argia, as hound will hunt the hare.
Then, he went in person through that country,
And he, or his agents, searched everywhere.
Yet no one living there could Anselmo
Discover, who of her refuge might know.

He summoned the servant he'd commanded 131
To do the deed, who yet had failed him so,
And had him lead him to the place he'd said,
Where she'd vanished in the wooded hollow;
For perchance she roamed the place instead,
And at night retired where none could follow.
The servant led him to that tree-lined shore,
Or thought to, but a palace there they saw.

Manto had wrought it there, for fair Argia, 132
And laboured swiftly to raise it on high,
An enchanted dome of pure alabaster,
Where, everywhere, gleaming gold met the eye,
No tongue could tell, no mind compass ever
The treasures that within those courts did lie,
Nor its outer beauty; my lord's great place
Seems a cottage next its splendour and grace.

Costly curtains and Arras tapestries 133
Richly woven in many a different style,
Decked stable walls, not just its galleries,
And chambers, and halls, for mile on mile.
Gold and silver vases, designed to please,
And gemstones carved in forms to beguile,
(Cups and the like, in azure, red, and green)
And cloths of gold, and silk, adorned the scene.

Canto XLIII: 134–139: Anselmo enters and is compromised by his greed

The judge came to this palace, as I said 134
Expecting to find only woodland there,
And his eyes well-nigh started from his head,
On discovering a place strange and rare.
He thought his wits were addled when, instead
Of a wasteland, all about him showed so fair,
He thought he was drunk, or it a dream,
For a marvellous enchantment it did seem.

In the doorway to the palace there stood 135
An Ethiopian woman, with thick nose
And lips, as ugly a sight as one could
E'er see, or e'en imagine, I suppose,
Less fair than Aesop was, tis understood;
Paradise she'd have marred, Heaven knows!
Dressed in beggar's garb, greasy, dirty,
I could ne'er describe the wretch completely.



Stanza 135

There being no other there, Anselmo, 136
Curious as to who it's lord might be,
Now approached her, and demanded to know:
The woman said: 'Why, it belongs to me.'
The judge believed she lied, it was not so,
She'd made the claim by way of mockery,
But the Ethiopian swore that it was hers,
Hers alone, though she welcomed travellers,

And, if he wished, he could view the whole, 137
Enter, and go about there, at his ease,
And through the corridors, and chambers stroll,
And take aught that him or his friends might please.
Anselmo, since that was his present goal,
Threw the reins to his serving-man to seize,
And, led by her, through each hall and chamber,
From top to bottom, gazed around in wonder.

The architecture, and the artistry 138
He admired, and the ornamentation,
Oft saying: "The wealth of every country
Would hardly pay for its construction."
To this his guide replied: "And yet many
A palace has its price, as has this one,
Not in gold and silver, yet, nonetheless,
You may own it for what will cost you less."

She made the same request Adonio 139
Had made to Argia the time before,
The justice thought her addled even so;
As ugly was she as a running sore.
Three times denied, she yet besought him though,
And strove so hard to persuade Anselmo
Offering that fair reward to him still,
Until, at last, she bent him to her will.

Canto XLIII: 140–143: Argia appears and they are reconciled

Argia, his wife, in hiding nearby, 140
Upon seeing him lapsing into error,
Leapt forth crying: "Oh, this deed is worthy,
No doubt, of so great and wise a lawyer!"
Caught in an act of such vile treachery,
You'll imagine his face, and its colour!
"O Earth (he thought) split now from pole to pole,
And swallow this fool of a husband whole!"

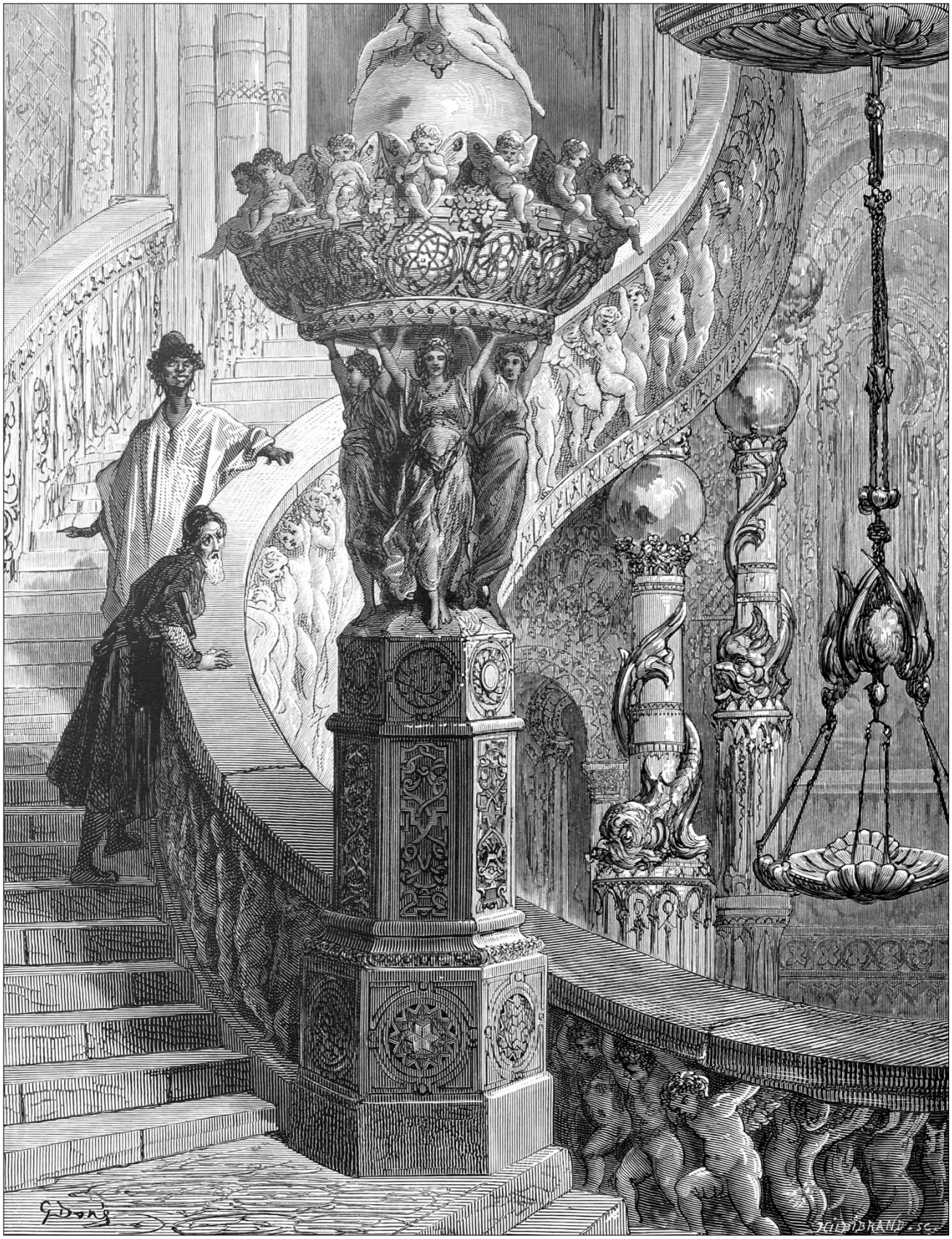


Stanza 140

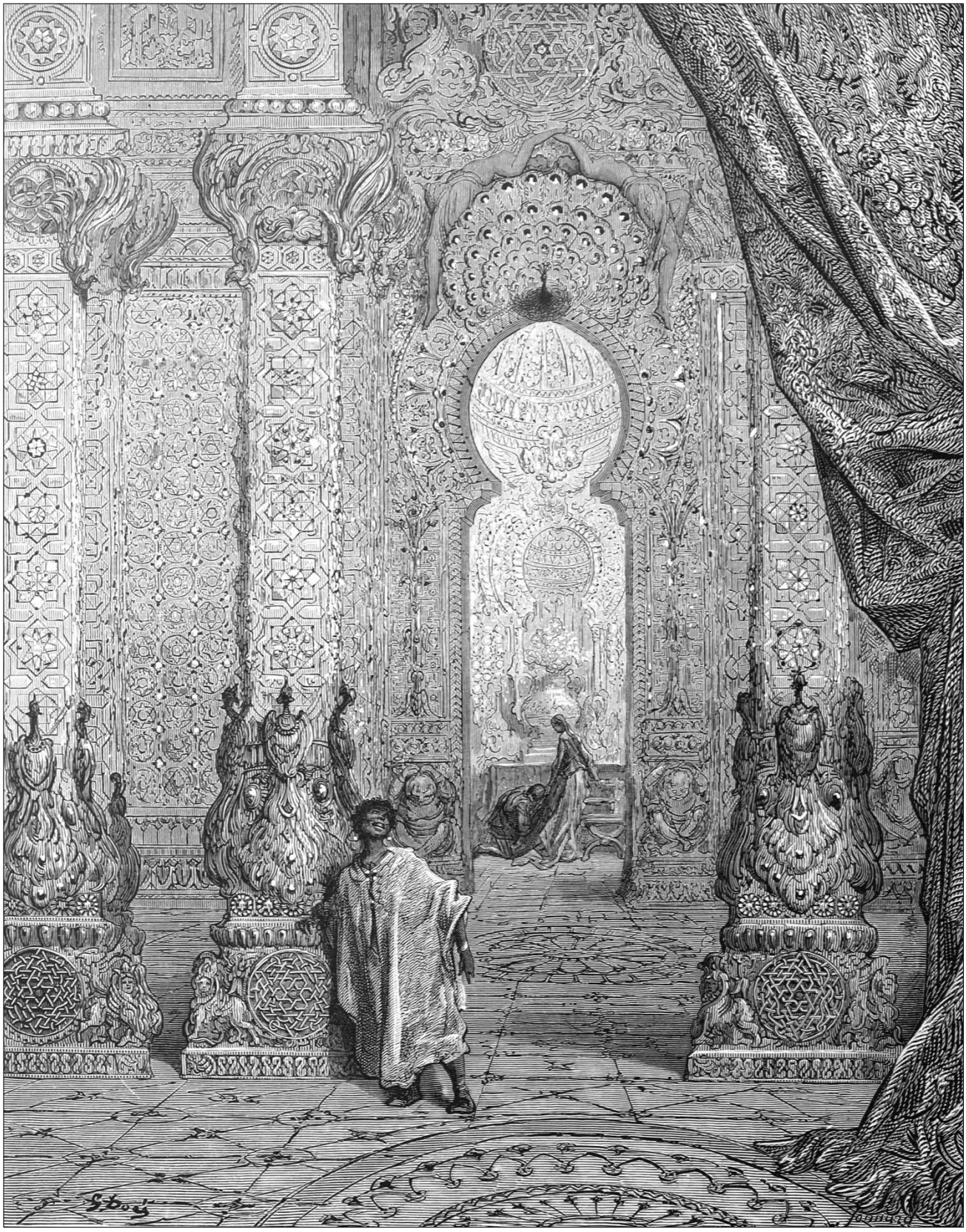
To shift the blame, and shame him, Argia 141
Piled her reproaches on the poor man's head.
"What punishment suffices for a lover
Of such vile deeds?" mockingly, she said,
"When you would have slain me, moreover,
For obeying Nature's urge; to my bed,
Taking a fair and noble knight, who brought
A gift compared to which this place is naught!

If you were prepared to see the end of me, 142
Then, a thousand times, you deserve to die.
Yet though I have power here, and surely
Could wreak revenge on you, yet, say I,
Naught shall be done to mark your treachery
Though you may seek to rut there in your sty.
But, give and take, my husband; think anew,
And pardon me, as I now pardon you;

Let there be peace between us, and accord, 143
And let our indiscretions be forgot.
Oblivion to my past faults afford,
As I to yours, and we'll recall them not!"
It seemed the wisest course to our lord,
Nor was he too unhappy with his lot.
Trust and concord they agreed to restore,
And loved each other dearly evermore!'



Stanza 138 "*A palace has its price, as has this one*"



Stanza 143 "*Let there be peace between us, and accord*"

Canto XLIII: 144-150: Rinaldo journeys to Lampedusa

So went the boatman's tale, and Rinaldo 144
Gave a wry smile at the end of the story.
He'd blushed, indeed, hearing of Anselmo,
As he'd listened somewhat shame-facedly.
He praised Argia's wisdom even so,
Who'd caught him in her mesh so cleverly,
Netting a bird, that, while about the same,
Was exposed by her, yet incurred less shame.

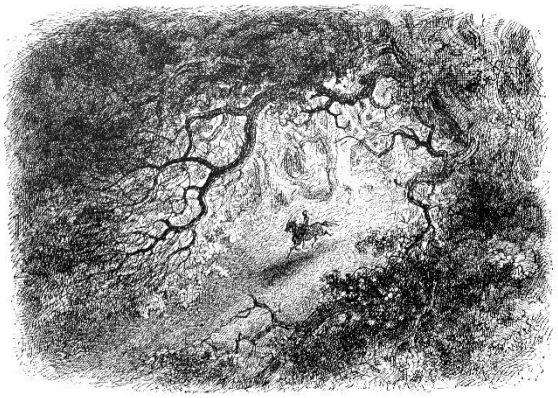
When the sun rose higher in the sky 145
He ordered his breakfast to be prepared,
From provisions the Mantuan laid by,
To sustain our knight as onward he fared.
While Ferrara, fell behind, by and by,
With its marshes, to the daylight now bared.
Argenta came and went, that stretch also
Where the Santerno joins the River Po.

The Bastia was not yet built, I deem, 146
That Spain has little cause to boast of ever,
Where her banner has been raised, it would seem,
That causes greater sorrow to Romagna.
To the right shore, o'er the flowing stream,
They then flew, and, leading to Ravenna,
Followed a stagnant canal, one that soon
Brought them near that city, at nigh-on noon.

Though of gold he'd little to spend freely, 147
He had enough to reward the boatmen,
And wished to do so, of his courtesy,
Before he left, and went his way again.
Changing his mount and guide, to Rimini
He rode, and passed beyond that town, and then,
In Montefiore stayed, till night was done,
Reaching Urbino with the morning sun.

No Federico da Montefeltro, 148
No Isabetta, no Guidobaldo,
Francesco Maria, Leonora, no,
None of that line was there, bowing low,
Courteous hospitality to bestow,
For many a night, on brave Rinaldo,
As that House bestowed on every guest,
And do so now, as I can well attest.

Since none there took his rein, our Rinaldo, 149
Made his way next to Cagli, o'er that height
Where the Metauro, and Candigliano
Carve their way, till no longer on his right
The Apennines lay; onwards he did go
Past Tuscany, and Umbria, to alight
In Rome; from Ostia, sailed to Sicily,
Where Aeneas old Anchises did bury,



Stanza 149

At Eryx; and there changed vessel, and so 150
Made haste for the isle of Lampedusa
That place well-chosen by Orlando's foe,
(Although the fight was already over).
The ship's captain, urged on by Rinaldo,
Employed every sail and oar, however,
The winds both strong and unfavourable
Saw them arrive too late, though by little.

Canto XLIII: 151-153: He arrives there after the conflict has ended

He arrived at the point where Orlando 151
Had completed the great task he'd begun,
Slaying Agramante and Gradasso,
Yet harsh, bloody, had been the victory won.
Brandimarte was dead; Oliviero,
Most sorely wounded, and well-nigh undone,
Languished on the shore, on sandy ground,
Crippled and suffering, with limb unsound.

Orlando could barely restrain his tears, 152
As he embraced Rinaldo, and related
How Brandimarte had died; for long years
Of friendship their deep love had created.
No less moved was Rinaldo, it appears,
At the sight of that wound, so ill-fated.
And he hastened to embrace Oliviero,
That nursed the wounded foot that pained him so.

He comforted him as best he could, and yet
Could find no comfort for himself, for he
Had arrived not when the table had been set,
But when the feast was done, the board empty.
Meanwhile their squires had sailed (lest I forget)
For Bizerte's scorched and ruined city,
To inter Agramante and Gradasso,
Bearing the blood-stained corpses of the foe.

Canto XLIII: 154-159: Fiordelisa learns of Brandimarte's death

Great satisfaction from that victory
Astolfo and Sansonetto derived,
Though the death of their friend Brandimarte
Pierced them through; had the warrior survived
Their hearts had been lighter, certainly,
For, of that valiant spirit now deprived,
Gloom darkened their faces; how best to tell
Fiordelisa, who'd seen all was far from well?

In the dark that preceded this sad day,
She'd dreamed the sable surcoat she had made
That he might go forth in noble array,
Was with bright crimson droplets overlaid,
As if strangely rained upon, one might say,
Or as if tears of blood were there displayed;
It seemed to her that she had wrought it so,
And grieved that thus adorned he must go;

And spoke to herself: 'My lord commanded
That I should work his surcoat all in black,
Wherefore upon it have these strange drops landed?
Naught like this did he wish upon his back.'
The interpretation her dream demanded
Seemed ill to her; twas that same night, alack,
The news had come to them, though Astolfo
Had concealed it; now he and Sansonetto

Entered where she was; she saw no trace
Of joy upon their faces, naught did show;
And ere a word was uttered in that place,
She knew that they both bore a tale of woe;
She knew Brandimarte heaven did grace,
And with that her poor heart filled with sorrow,
Her sight was clouded, the world spun round,
And she fell, as if struck dead, to the ground.

When life returned once more, she tore her hair,
Scored her cheeks with her nails, called out his name,
Harmed herself, in agony, naught did spare,
Forever vainly summoning that same,
Crying out, as if some raging demon, there,
Possessed her, and madness upon her came,
As the Bacchantes at the horn's wild sound,
Would race o'er hill and field, and stony ground.

Now she begged whichever yet bore a blade,
To yield it her, that she might pierce her heart;
And now would board the ship that had conveyed
The corpses of his foes, to tear apart
The lifeless flesh, that ill might be repaid,
And vengeance done, and she thus play her part;
And now would sail for that isle, whereby
She might seek her lord and, beside him, die.

Canto XLIII: 160-164: Her lament

'Ah, Brandimarte,' she cried, 'why did I
Let you hasten, without me, to your fate?
Your departures ne'er before did I spy
But I followed, to seek you, soon or late.
I might have helped you, uttered a wild cry,
Seeing the danger come upon you straight,
As Gradasso stepped behind you, and so
Have warned you of the menace from your foe.

Or, perchance, I might have come between,
And, in your stead, received the fatal blow;
My poor head, as a shield, might have been
Some defence; little harm had I done so,
For I die still, and from this death naught seen
That profits you, for I but die of woe;
While, protecting you to my last breath,
How could I e'er have died a truer death?

Even though Fortune had denied us grace,
Averse to aid, and all the heavens, yet
My last kiss might have caressed your face,
My tears your pallid cheeks might have wet,
And ere the angels wafted you, apace,
Towards your Maker, lest you might forget,
'Depart in peace, my love, await me there,'
I might have cried, 'that we sweet rest may share.'

Is this then the realm, my Brandimarte, 163
Whose sceptre you were destined to wield?
How now shall your fair city, Dammogire,
Welcome us, when to death we both must yield?
Oh, cruel Fortune, how you've wrought against me,
What hopes you render vain, our fate thus sealed!
Ah, let me cease, since lost is he that blessed
My life, why should I grieve to lose the rest?

Repeating these and other words, the madness 164
Gripped her once more, and with such fury
That she tore again at every tangled tress
Of her golden hair, and beat more wildly
At her breast, biting her lip in distress,
Bloodying her face, her body weary.
Yet leaving her to weep, consumed by woe,
I must turn to the Count, and Rinaldo.

Canto XLIII: 165-168: The preparations for Brandimarte's funeral

Orlando with his kinsman, whose kind care 165
And attention he needed, now gave thought
To the matter of where the two might bear
Brandimarte's corpse, for a site he sought
Worthy of that knight, to inter him there.
They sailed for Etna, and its fiery court,
The mount that lights the night and darkens day.
Not far north, to starboard, Sicily lay.

With a fresh wind blowing in their favour, 166
The ship weighed anchor as the evening fell,
The silent goddess lit their path, moreover,
Her shining horn directing them, as well,
And past dawn they lay in gentle harbour,
Near Agrigento, riding with the swell.
Here Orlando ordered, ere the next night,
All that was needed for the funeral rite.

When he had seen his orders executed, 167
The light of the sun being well-nigh spent,
With many a noble from that place recruited,
To Agrigento, the two warriors went,
The shoreline lit with torches; well-suited
Was that sanctuary, loud their lament,
Where the Count would leave his valiant friend,
Whom he had loved, loyally, to the end,

Bardino, bowed down by the weight of years, 168
Stood weeping o'er the sad funeral bier,
That aboard ship had cried so many tears,
He'd well-nigh wept away his sight, I fear.
Calling the heavens cruel, the starry spheres,
Like an old anguished lion, he did appear;
Pawing there, rebelliously, within
His pallid mane, clawing his withered skin.



Stanza 168

Canto XLIII: 169-175: Orlando's lament

On the Count's return the cries grew louder, 169
The sound of weeping, and lamenting, grew,
Then Orlando to the bier drew closer.
And stood awhile, silent, the corpse to view,
Now pale as, at eve, is the acanthus ever,
Or the lily, plucked in the morning dew.
He sighed as he gazed upon the dead,
And with his eyes upon his friend, he said:

'O brave, O dearest, O most faithful friend, 170
That, dead, lie here, yet live in heaven above,
And just reward gain thus at your life's end.
Now heat and cold no longer painful prove.
Look down, forgive the tears I here expend,
Because I linger here, while you remove
To taste of those delights I cannot share,
Though you are here with me, and everywhere.

Alone, without you, naught on Earth can please, 171
Nor ever will, now you from Earth are gone.
If by your side in war, on stormy seas,
Why not now, when calm and peace you've won?
Great must be my sins, that I cannot ease
My soul from out this flesh, and so be done.
Why if I shared your ills, did aid afford,
May I not share in your deserved reward?

Yours is the gain, and mine must be the loss. 172
Your prize is yours alone, not so my woe;
Germany, Italy, France, all bear the cross.
And oh, how Charlemagne, left here below,
And all his knights must lament; the dross
Is left, the gold, refined, above must show!
How the Empire and the Church will groan
Whose best defence, with you, is overthrown!

How cheered will be your every enemy, 173
By your death freed from alarm and terror!
Alas, how strengthened Pagandom will be
What joy they will have of it, what pleasure!
And what of Fiordelisa, what of she?
I seem to share her tears; sighs beyond measure
I hear, e'en now; and she hates me, I know;
Through me her hopes are lost, and all is woe.

Yet one comfort, Fiordelisa, we possess, 174
That are deprived, thus, of Brandimarte,
For every warrior that remains, must bless
His name, and envy his death, his glory.
The Decii, Curtius plunging to success,
King Codrus so renowned in Argive story,
For themselves gained no greater honours,
Nor, by their death, achieved more for others.'

This speech, and others, Count Orlando made, 175
The while a line of monks, black, white, and grey,
And a host of clerics, moved in sad parade,
Following the bier, borne on its slow way.
To God, for the departed's soul they prayed.
That it might dwell among the blessed alway.
Bright torches went before, amidst, around,
Turned night to day, and lit the hallowed ground.

Canto XLIII: 176-180: The funeral procession

They raised the bier; many a count and knight 176
To bear it, turn by turn, had been assigned;
The pall was purple silk, with gold thread bright,
While rarest pearls about the hem did wind.
On gemmed cushions, no less fair, lay the knight;
With no less skill had the fabric been designed.
The corpse in like purple robes was dressed,
Wrought with equal care, fine as all the rest.

Three hundred men headed the procession, 177
Recruited from the poorest in the land,
And all of them were dressed in like fashion,
In black and trailing gowns; then came a band
Of a hundred pages, in warlike succession,
On a hundred coursers, their reins in hand,
While each splendid steed a page rode upon
Swept the ground with its black caparison.

Banners in front and banners to the rear, 178
On them many an emblem depicted,
Accompanied, unfurled, the funeral bier,
Gained by many a defeat inflicted,
All won for Emperor and Church, held dear,
By this knight, whose death now both afflicted.
Many a shield too was borne there, by others,
Showing the arms of worthy warriors.

These folk were followed by hundreds more 179
Ordained for different tasks; shining bright,
The torches that, like all the rest, they bore;
And mantled, say muffled, was every knight,
And dressed in black. Orlando now one saw,
His eyes suffused with tears, a noble sight,
Then Rinaldo, with weeping nigh as blind;
Oliviero, wounded, had remained behind.

It would take too long to tell in verse, 180
All that was done in honour of the knight,
The black and purple cloaks, each weighty purse,
Given in dispensation, all the bright
Torches that thus, at eve, did morn rehearse.
Beside the way, not a dry eye was in sight;
Every age and rank, both sexes, pitied there,
The death of one so good, so young, so fair.

Canto XLIII: 181-185: The death of Fiordelisa

They placed him in the church. When the women 181
With tears, and vain lament, had mourned the dead;
When the Kyrie had been chanted, and when
Other sacred prayers had been sung or said,
He was laid in an ark by several men,
Which they raised to twin pillars, overhead.
Draped in cloth of gold, he would rest so,
Till his tomb was furnished by Orlando.



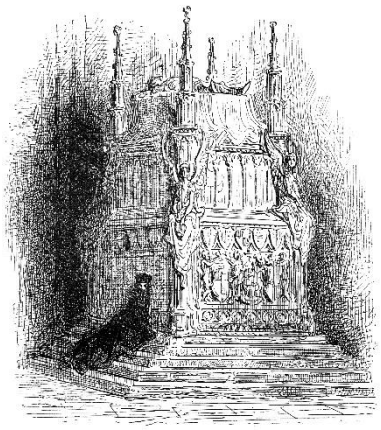
Stanza 181

The Count would not depart from Sicily 182
Till he'd procured enough alabaster
To dress the tomb he wished, and porphyry,
And engaged, for the work, a famous master.
Fiordelisa, arriving there most swiftly,
Saw the stones placed, each slab and pilaster,
Brought there (Orlando having gone before)
From fresh quarries on the African shore.

She, finding her tears ne'er ceased to flow, 183
That sighs, without end, rose from her breast,
Nor mass, nor prayer, repeated, eased her woe,
Nor had the power to grant her longing rest,
Vowed, in her heart, that she'd lie there also
Until her soul had fled its earthly nest.
Within the tomb, they wrought for her a cell,
And, shut within, she in that place did dwell.

Having sent her letters by his messenger, 184
Orlando went himself, to lead her thence.
If she'd but come to France, he would grant her
Galerana as companion; no expense
Would spare; or if she would join her father,
To Lizza they would go; he, her defence;
Or he would build for her a nunnery
If to serve her God now seemed her duty.

Still to the tomb she clung, till, worn away, 185
By penance, lost in prayer from morn to night,
Atropos cut the thread, and darkened day,
And so released her to the heavenly light.
The three warriors of France, from the bay
Departed where the Cyclops lost his sight.
Each was grieving, still mourning in his mind
Their fourth companion who remained behind.



Stanza 185

Canto XLIII: 186-189: The warriors sail to the hermit's isle

They were loath to go far without seeking 186
A surgeon to treat Oliviero,
The wound at first painful in the handling,
And hard to ease with salves; in his woe
The warrior cried out loudly, inspiring
Great fear of his dying, in Orlando.
While they were conversing, the captain thought
Of a means to compass what they all sought.

He said that, not far from that very place, 187
A hermit occupied a lonely isle,
Where none who landed, seeking help or grace,
Would fail of aid, however grave their trial,
And he had treated many a hopeless case,
Cured blindness, and raised the dead erstwhile.
Storms he'd eased and, with the sign of the cross,
Had calmed the waves, and saved vessels from loss.

He doubted not, if they were to sail there, 188
And seek that holy man, whom God so loved,
And place Oliviero in his care,
He'd restore him, as those examples proved.
His counsel pleased Orlando; they would fare
To that isle; swiftly o'er the waves they moved,
And, never swerving from their course, were borne
To that lonely rock, reaching it at dawn.

The crew now worked the vessel to anchor, 189
Safely alongside, and not far from shore.
Oliviero, they sought to lower
Into the longboat (him their servants bore)
Succeeded, and drove the frail craft nearer,
Through the spray, till the hermit's cell they saw,
The hermit who had, not so long ago,
Baptised the shipwrecked Ruggiero.

Canto XLIII: 190-194: Oliviero and Sobrino are healed

The servant of the Lord of Paradise, 190
Welcomed Orlando and his company,
And blessed them, with a smiling face, likewise,
And asked of their situation, promptly,
Though the celestial powers, I surmise,
Had advised of their coming; tis likely.
They came there seeking aid said Orlando,
And asked that he heal Oliviero,

Who'd been brought to a perilous pass, twas clear, 191
While warring for the Christian faith; and lo,
The hermit relieved them of their fear,
And promised he would heal the wound, and so,
Lacking any unguents, it would appear,
Or man-made medicaments, he did go
To the chapel, and prayed to the Saviour,
And then came forth to aid the warrior,

In the name of the Three that e'er are One, 192
The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,
He granted the knight his benediction.
O the power of Christ, and his saintly host!
Their friend was freed from his affliction,
And of a greater vigour he could boast,
For he moved more nimbly than before.
King Sobrino was present at this cure,

That was in such debilitating pain 193
That his state seemed to worsen every day,
And yet as soon as the sight he did gain
Of the hermit, a miracle, I say,
Occurred there, for he did now maintain
He would renounce his faith, and then, alway,
Honour the living Christ, and did demand
With contrite heart, baptism on that strand.

So, the hermit baptised him, and did render 194
His wounds, by prayer, as vigorous as before.
Orlando and his company, filled with wonder,
Were as happy at this miraculous cure
As at Oliviero's earlier,
That was now steady on his feet, once more.
Ruggiero rejoiced more than any,
And his faith and devotion waxed greatly;

Canto XLIII: 195-199: Ruggiero is recognised and welcomed to the company

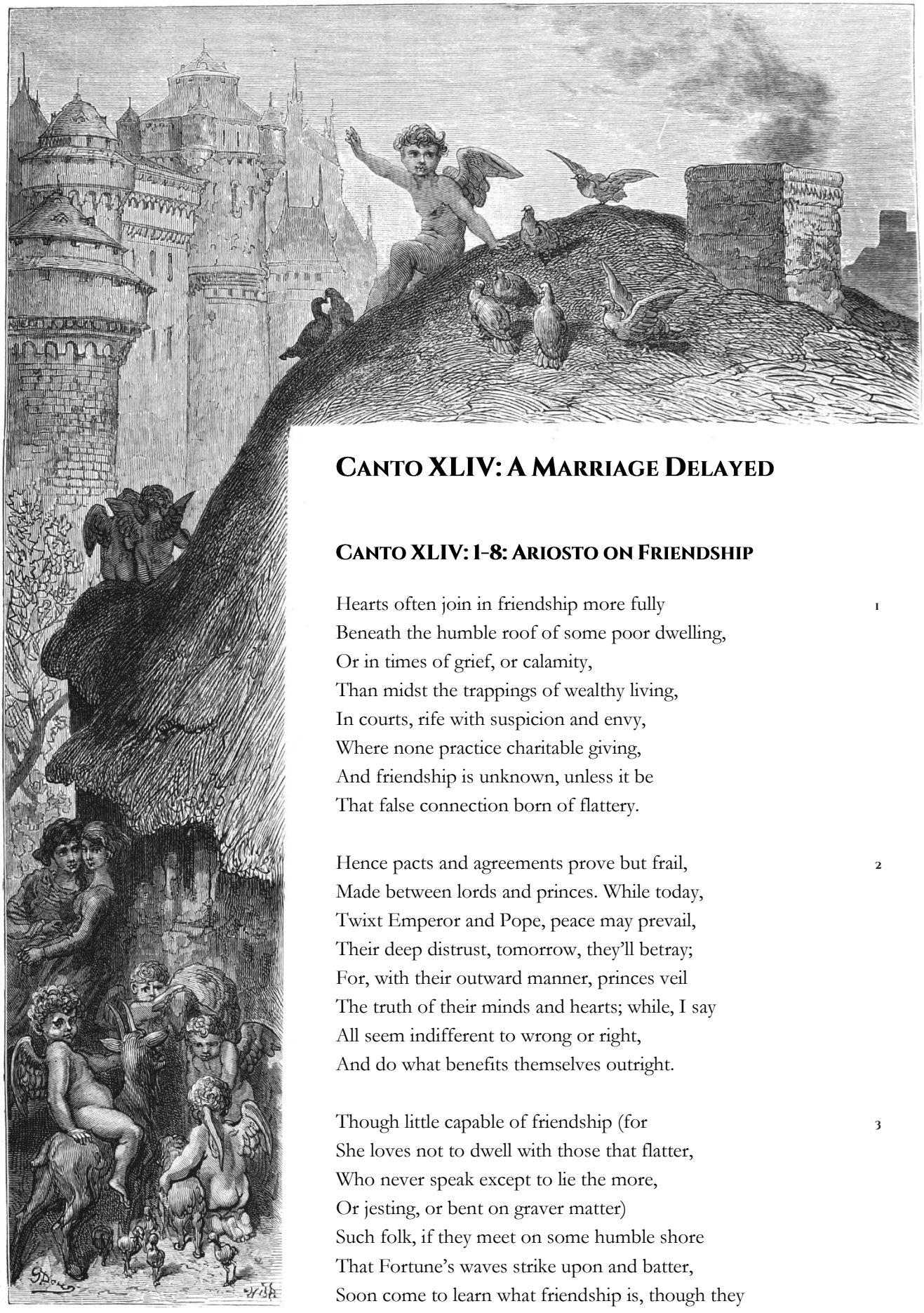
Ruggiero had been dwelling on that isle 195
Since the day on which he had swum ashore.
The old hermit went amongst them the while,
Gently counselled them to resist the lure
Of battle, quit those waters that defile,
And the raging torrent men call 'life' abjure,
And, cleansed of the mire in which fools delight,
Upon the heavens above then fix their sight.

Orlando sent one of his men on board, 196
To bring them meat and wine, and cheese, and bread.
And the man of God who had e'er restored
His strength with fruit, and on naught else had fed,
Ate and drank, with the grace that he did afford
All such guests, for whom his board was spread.
They, when once refreshed by food and wine,
Spoke of many things; as with them did dine

Ruggiero, twas not long ere Orlando 197
Recognised the warrior, and again
His face seemed known to Oliviero,
As one well-renowned amidst fighting-men,
(For praise of his valour flew to and fro,
And that he was a man worth any ten);
While Rinaldo still failed to know the knight
As one whose courage he had proved in fight.

Yet Sobrino had known him, at first sight, 198
As he stood beside the holy man, though he
Had stayed silent, out of fear that he might
Have erred and mistaken him completely.
But, when Orlando spoke the name outright,
And cried that this must be the knight, surely,
Whose courtesy and skill were known to all,
They each rose, and on that warrior did call;

And, on finding him a Christian, did stand 199
Close about him, a smile on every face.
They pressed upon him, and clasped his hand,
Kissed him, and held him in a warm embrace.
Yet more than any other in that brave band,
The Count greeted him, with becoming grace;
Why more than others? Of that you will hear
In the next canto, should you lend an ear.



Canto XLIV: A Marriage Delayed

Canto XLIV: 1-8: Ariosto on Friendship

Hearts often join in friendship more fully 1
Beneath the humble roof of some poor dwelling,
Or in times of grief, or calamity,
Than midst the trappings of wealthy living,
In courts, rife with suspicion and envy,
Where none practice charitable giving,
And friendship is unknown, unless it be
That false connection born of flattery.

Hence pacts and agreements prove but frail, 2
Made between lords and princes. While today,
Twixt Emperor and Pope, peace may prevail,
Their deep distrust, tomorrow, they'll betray;
For, with their outward manner, princes veil
The truth of their minds and hearts; while, I say
All seem indifferent to wrong or right,
And do what benefits themselves outright.

Though little capable of friendship (for 3
She loves not to dwell with those that flatter,
Who never speak except to lie the more,
Or jesting, or bent on graver matter)
Such folk, if they meet on some humble shore
That Fortune's waves strike upon and batter,
Soon come to learn what friendship is, though they
Knew naught of it, while wealth and power held sway.

In his retreat, the ancient hermit could 4
Bind his martial guests with a tighter knot
To love and amity than e'er one would
In royal courts where such things are forgot;
So enduring, the bond, there rendered good,
That naught could sever it, if death did not.
The hermit found them pleasing to his sight,
Purer of heart than swansdown's purest white,

Amiable, and full of courtesy, 5
Free of the sins that I spoke of before,
And such as reveal themselves openly,
Lacking disguise, and honest to the core,
Amongst them buried every memory
Of harm received on some forgotten shore.
If born of a single womb, and one father,
No greater love could they have shown each other.

Beyond the rest, the Lord of Montalbano 6
Embraced and honoured young Ruggiero,
As much for the fire he did ever show,
Lance in hand, in battle, and joust also,
As that he was as humane, fine to know,
As any knight in this our world of woe,
But more because Orlando ever found
Himself, to him, by obligation bound.

He knew that he'd saved from mortal danger 7
Ricciardetto, when the Spanish king,
Had seized that knight and the king's fair daughter;
And that he'd thwarted the evil-doing
Of Bertolagi and all those other
Maganzeses, from the Saracens freeing
Duke Buovo's two brave sons (as I have said)
And had left his foes sore-wounded or dead.

His debt, indeed, seemed to him of the kind 8
That obliged him to hold Ruggiero dear.
It had grieved him, and troubled him in mind,
That he could not as a truer friend appear,
While the youth was still to Africa aligned,
And he for King Charlemagne couched the spear.
Now that he knew him for a Christian
The Count could do what then was under ban.

Canto XLIV: 9-11: The hermit urges the marriage of Ruggiero and Bradamante

With honour, and many a courteous offer, 9
He greeted, and welcomed, Ruggiero.
Viewing his great warmth, the holy father,
Seeing an opening, addressed him so:
'Naught else remains to do (and I rather
Hope that it may be done, and none say no)
But that, being conjoined in amity,
You should seek yet closer affinity;



Stanza 9

So that, from two lineages that none 10
Can match, here below, in nobility,
Shining brighter than the brightest sun,
A race shall appear, whose fame and glory
Will grow as centuries their courses run,
And will endure, in its power and beauty
(This God instructs me to inform you of)
As long as the starry sky shall wheel above.'

And expanding his speech yet more fully, 11
The hermit asked Rinaldo to persuade
Ruggiero to wed fair Bradamante,
Though neither needed her Rinaldo's aid.
Their union the lord of Anglante,
And Oliviero welcomed, while both prayed
That Amone and Charlemagne would bless
Such a marriage, and all of France no less.

Canto XLIV: 12-14: Amone has promised Bradamante elsewhere

They thus agreed, not knowing that Amone 12
Had won the consent of King Charlemagne
To the marriage of the fair Bradamante,
With the heir of the Greek Emperor's domain,
Constantine's heir, Leo, who had lately
Sought the maid's hand, if she would so deign.
Though he had seen her not, the youth, inspired
By talk of her worth, to her love aspired.

Amone had answered the youth, saying 13
That he alone could not decide the matter,
But with Rinaldo must agree the thing,
Who was absent from court; the warrior
He said, would surely welcome the wedding
And rejoice in what would bring great honour
To their House, but his respect for his heir
Meant they could not yet seal the whole affair.

Meanwhile, far from his father, Rinaldo 14
Knowing naught of the imperial request,
Had promised his sister to Ruggiero,
At the hermit's and Orlando's behest,
While such was his own desire, also,
And again, it was welcomed by the rest,
Believing that the marriage would surely
Be pleasing to his father Amone.

Canto XLIV: 15-18: The warriors depart the island and reach Marseilles

They remained with the wise monk that night, 15
And a large part of the following day,
Not wishing to return aboard outright,
Though a fair wind might speed them on their way.
Every message they received, from first light,
The sea being calm, summoned them away,
The master begging them to seek the shore,
Urging the company to depart once more.

The exiled Ruggiero who'd not sought 16
To remove from that island sanctuary,
Now took his leave of one that had taught
Him the virtues of Christianity.
Balisarda, with which Gradasso fought,
Hector's armour, and Frontino, swiftly
To Ruggiero, the Count did now restore,
A mark of love, though they were his before.



Stanza 15

And though that enchanted blade by right 17
Should have been borne by brave Orlando,
(That, with the exercise of his full might,
Gained it, in that dread garden, long ago)
Rather than the youth (who, without a fight,
Had received it from the thief Brunello,
With the steed, Frontino) yet, with the rest,
He granted it the youth, at his request.

They were blessed by the holy devotee, 18
Then returned to their vessel, gave their sail
To the pleasant breeze, their oars to the sea
And sped, with never a sign of a gale,
Nor vows or prayers required, of danger free,
Reaching Marseille's harbour without fail.
There, safe at anchor, let the knights remain,
Till I've brought Astolfo to France again.

Canto XLIV: 19-23: Astolfo ends the enchantments and returns to France

When, following his hard-won victory, 19
That a deal of blood, and small joy, had gained.
Astolfo saw that France would now be free
Secure from the Moors, its lost lands regained,
He thought to send the Nubian army,
Home with its Emperor, and thus maintained
That they should return by the self-same track
That they'd taken to Hippo, ere the attack.

Meanwhile Dudon had emptied all the fleet 20
That routed the pagans: and suddenly,
A fresh wonder, the vessels all complete,
Were changed, bow to stern, miraculously,
To green fronds once more, in a mere heartbeat,
Reverting to what they once were, wholly,
And, lost to the wind, were lifted with ease,
Through the clear air, to vanish on the breeze.

The Nubian soldiers, and the cavalry, 21
From North Africa homeward took their way,
But first Astolfo gave thanks, profusely,
To Senapo, to whom he owed the day,
Who'd lent aid, while helping personally,
And doing all in his power in that affray.
Astolfo handed him the bulging skin
That held the fierce South Wind confined within;

The skin, I say, that kept one prisoned there, 22
Who, when free, would issue forth at midday,
And shift the sand in waves, and through the air
Send it flying, to obscure the light of day;
Thus, he could not, as onwards they did fare,
Emerge to blind, and smother, on the way
The weary troops; and then the emperor
Might free the wind, when they were home once more.

Bishop Turpin says that, once they'd attained 23
The heights of Atlas' range, every steed,
The Nubians rode, its stony form regained,
Till all had vanished of that mountain breed.
But time it is Astolfo the fair strand gained
Of France, having conquered, as decreed,
All of the towns on North Africa's shore;
So let the hippogriff take wing once more.

Canto XLIV: 24–27: He reaches Marseilles then frees the hippogriff

With a single beat, they made Sardinia, 24
And from there to Corsica he did soar,
Then took his way o'er the sea, though further
To the north-west and, in a little more,
Above the marshes, they did gently feather,
And landed in Provençe, upon the shore.
He leapt from the hippogriff, thereupon
Doing as he'd been told to by Saint John,

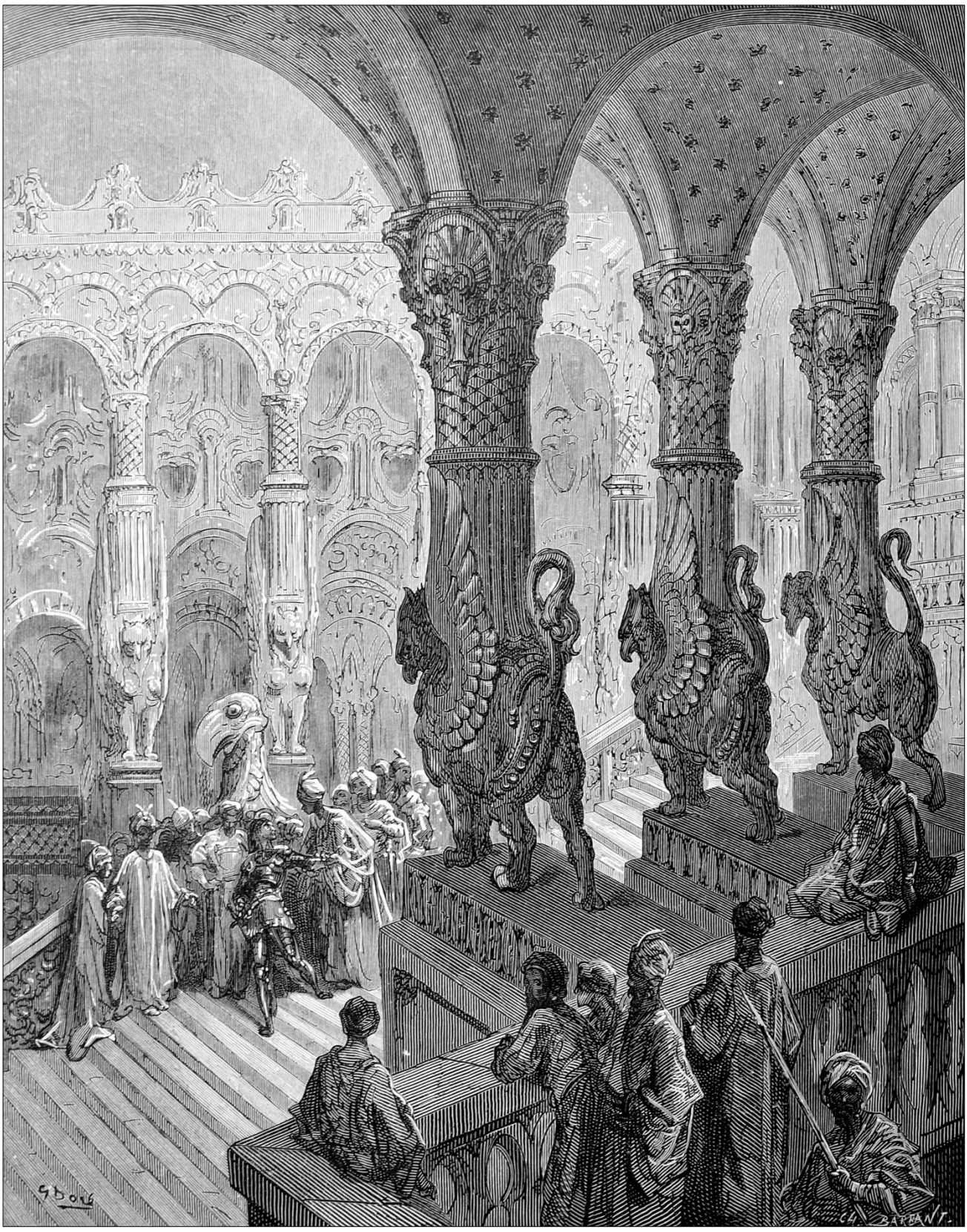


Stanza 23

For he'd committed that he would no more, 25
Once they had reached Provençe, use the bit,
Or saddle the creature, or seek to gore
Its flanks with the spur, but swiftly free it.
As for his horn, its note had fled before,
There, on the Moon, to which all lost things flit;
For not merely hoarse but mute it remained,
Once the knight that sacred place had gained.

To Marseilles he came, on the very day 26
That Orlando arrived with Rinaldo
And Oliviero, anchoring in the bay;
Along with Sobrino, and Ruggiero.
The memory of their friend, on them did weigh,
Such that their welcoming of Astolfo
Was not as glorious or as happy
As they deserved, given their victory.

News from Sicily had reached Charlemagne, 27
Of the kings' deaths, the wound to Sobrino
And that Brandimarte the Brave was slain,
And of the knights' meeting with Ruggiero;
While he rejoiced to hear, and joyed again
At the African defeat of his foe,
From his shoulders the burden lifted, straight,
That had bowed him beneath its grievous weight.



Stanza 21 "*Astolfo handed him the bulging skin, that held the fierce South Wind confined within*"

Canto XLIV: 28-30: Ruggiero is presented to Charlemagne and embraces Bradamante

To honour those who were the strong pillars 28
That had upheld the Holy Empire thus, of late,
Charlemagne had despatched his noble peers,
As far as the Saône to meet them, in state;
He went forth himself, and many others,
Kings, and dukes, and his consort, from the gate,
To greet them, with that goodly company,
And, amidst them, many a lovely lady.

The emperor with clear, unclouded brow, 29
His kith and kin, every lord and knight,
Showed their love for Orlando; all did bow
To him and his company, in their delight.
'Mongrana!' 'Chiaramonte!' these were now
The cries that rose on high, as of right.
Then the Count, Rinaldo, and Oliviero,
Brought before the king brave Ruggiero,



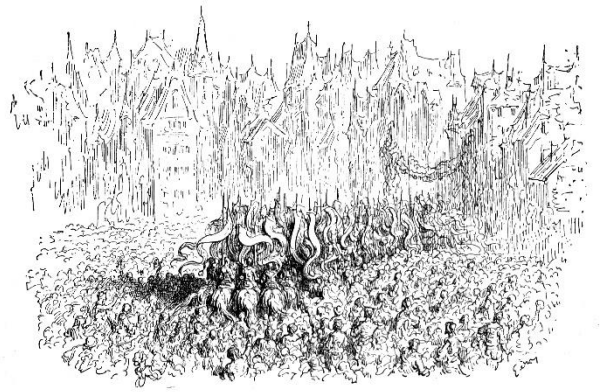
Stanza 29

Saying that of Ruggiero of Risa 30
Here was the son, and of equal virtue,
Ardent and courageous, and his valour
The army could affirm; his lance e'er true.
Then came Bradamante, with Marfisa;
Noble, and beautiful, appeared those two.
The former ran to embrace Ruggiero,
Though more restraint the latter maid did show.

Canto XLIV: 31-35: Charlemagne and all the company return to the city

The emperor had Ruggiero mount again, 31
Who'd quit his steed to show his reverence,
And rode beside him (for King Charlemagne
Would omit naught that his royal presence
Might add to the knight's honour) midst his train.
He knew he was now a Christian, hence
Joyed in him, having learnt of this before
From his companions, once their ship touched shore.

With triumphal pomp, and festive display, 32
These folk returned within the city wall,
Green leaves and garlands lining every way,
Tapestries and canopies shading all.
A host of flowers and herbs rained, that day,
O'er the conquering heroes, light in their fall,
From balconies, and windows; sweetly grown,
And by ladies, and fair maids, gently thrown.

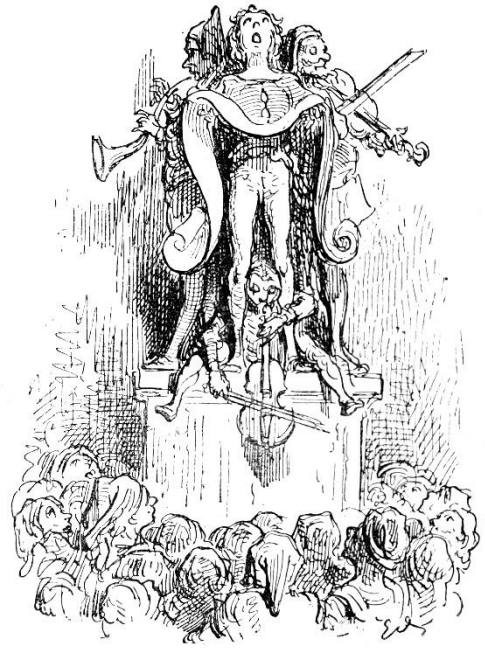


Stanza 32

In every street to which that pageant came, 33
Arches and trophies had been raised on high,
Showing Bizerte, in ruin and flame,
Brave deeds of chivalry wrought neath its sky;
Elsewhere were acted scenes from that same,
Where staged displays of conflict met the eye,
And on banners and inscriptions untold,
'The Saviours of the Empire' was writ bold.



Stanza 32 "*With triumphal pomp, and festive display, these folk returned within the city wall*"



Stanza 34

To the sounds of pipes, and the trumpet's call, 34
Amidst other instruments in harmony,
With laughter and applause attending all,
Surrounded by the people, packed tightly,
The king returned to feast in his great hall,
For many a day, midst noble company;
And many a tournament, and farce, and mime,
Was enacted, to honour that joyful time.

Rinaldo now made known to his father 35
That he wished to give fair Bradamante
In marriage to Ruggiero; that his sister
Had been so promised, Orlando lately
A witness, and Oliviero; and further
They considered that, for nobility
Of blood, and valour, there was none his peer,
None better to wed the lady, that was clear.

Canto XLIV: 36-40: Her parents oppose Bradamante's marriage

Duke Amone reacted with disdain, 36
To the news that, without consultation,
He'd dared to plight the daughter whom he'd fain
Grant to Leo, the Greek Emperor's son,
And not to Ruggiero, who'd ne'er reign
O'er aught, nor yet owned the least possession;
None prized nobility (and virtue less!)
Unless riches their company did bless.



Stanza 35



Stanza 36

But Beatrice his wife, reproached their son, 37
And called Rinaldo vain and arrogant,
And in private, or in open contradiction
To his wishes, showed herself indignant,
Intending her daughter's elevation,
To Empress of the wide and rich Levant.
But Rinaldo proved obstinate, deferred
Not to them, nor would he retract a word.

The mother, believing Bradamante 38
Would ne'er thwart her, counselled her to say
That she'd not marry into poverty
And, indeed, would rather die than obey;
And told her she'd reject her most firmly,
If she let her proud brother have his way.
Let her refuse, boldly, and keep so, still;
He could never force her to do his will.

Bradamante was silent, not daring 39
To directly contradict her mother.
Such reverence, and true respect, bearing
Towards her, she desired to obey her,
Yet it was wrong, to her way of thinking,
To say what she'd ne'er agree to, ever;
Nor would, since she could not, thus approve
A course denied her by the power of Love.

She refused not, nor showed her discontent, 40
But only sighed, and stood there silently.
Yet once alone, and able to give vent
To her wretchedness, her tears flowed freely,
And marks of her misery, nay, her torment,
Carved on her breast, tearing her hair fiercely,
For the one she beat at, the other tore,
And, lamenting thus, but grieved the more:



Stanza 40

Canto XLIV: 41-47: Her lament

'Alas, shall I seek what she desires not 41
Who is more mistress of my will than I?
Shall I thus hold her wish not worth a jot,
Merely that I my own might satisfy?
Ah what greater shame is e'er the lot
Of any maid than boldly to ally
Herself to some man whom her dear mother
Rejects because she approves another?

Woe is me! Shall filial piety 42
Oblige me to abandon you, my love,
My Ruggiero, and so constrain me
To accept another, and that course approve?
Or shall I renounce such ties, entirely,
And from good parents, as mine are, remove
My allegiance, the respect a good child owes,
To gain what alone I wish, heaven knows!

I know, alas, what I should do; I know 43
All that a dutiful daughter should do;
Yet tis vain if Reason fails to follow
The urging of my heart, my senses too,
And, thus, retreats before the stronger foe,
While Love prevents me, binds me anew,
From following suit, and I must obey
That great lord, in all that I do, or say.

Amone's and Beatrice's child am I, 44
And yet the slave of Love, alas for me!
If I do wrong, and so am shamed thereby
I can but seek forgiveness and pity,
Yet, if I offend Love, who'll hear my cry?
Whose prayers will save me from his fury?
He will ne'er wait for one excuse of mine;
To death, he'll instantly my soul consign.

With long and obstinate persistence, 45
I sought to win Ruggiero's conversion.
And now tis so; and yet, the consequence?
It seems that I'll ne'er gain the reversion.
Likewise, the bees, in springtime, commence
To fill the hive with honey, though their action
Brings naught to themselves; yet I shall die,
Ere I wed elsewhere, and my love deny.

I shall reject my parents' fond request, 46
It is my brother's wish I shall obey.
Of far greater wisdom is he possessed;
Age has not left his heart in disarray;
And what Rinaldo wills he has professed
To Orlando; both will my doubts allay;
More to be feared, and honoured everywhere,
Than the rest of my House, in this affair.

They are the flower of Chiaramonte's tree, 47
Its glory, its splendour, esteemed by all,
More than the rest in their true chivalry,
As the head o'er-tops the foot, the great the small.
Why should Amone thus dispose of me,
Rather than Rinaldo, and weave my pall?
He shall not; for I am in no way tied
To Leo; promised as another's bride.'

Canto XLIV: 48-51: Ruggiero is also troubled in mind

If the lady grieved and was tormented 48
No less troubled was our Ruggiero;
If not yet by swift rumour presented
To the city, the news had reached him though,
And his lack of fortune he lamented
That opposed their desires and wishes so.
For wealth he lacked, or a mighty kingdom,
That to many an unworthy heir oft come.

Of all the virtues granted men by Nature 49
Or which are obtained by proper study,
He felt he had acquired a greater measure
Than others; especially of beauty
Such beauty as cannot be bought with treasure,
While few could face him in fight securely.
His magnanimity, his regal splendour
That none did more display, all did honour.

But the vulgar, those at whose disposal, 50
It seemed to him, all great rewards did lie,
(And in the common crowd I include all
But the wise, and condemn most thereby.
Since emperor nor king is raised as high
As such, by sceptre, crown or throne, say I;
For the wisdom and judgement that Heaven
Grants to us here below, to few is given);

The vulgar (to say all that I would say) 51
Who only revere their wealth and treasure,
And who admire nothing more, and betray
No sign of appreciation, ever,
For beauty, ardour, worth, be it what may,
Dexterity, virtue, goodness, honour,
Are more vulgar in this than all the rest,
And of their vulgarity stand confessed.

Canto XLIV: 52-58: He muses on his plight

Ruggiero mused: 'If, indeed, Amone 52
Seeks to make an empress of his daughter,
A year might yet, by fate, be granted me,
Ere he has need to conclude the matter.
I'd hope by then to end that dynasty,
And remove both Leo and his father;
Wearing the crown that the latter wore,
I might prove a more welcome son-in-law.

But if without delay, as has been said, 53
He weds her to this heir of Constantine,
With no respect to that firm promise paid
Which Rinaldo (agreeing she'd be mine)
Before Orlando, and the hermit, made,
(Oliviero, Sobrino too gave sign
Of their consent) shall I but suffer more,
Or die ere such a grave wrong I endure?

What should I do? Take vengeance on her father 54
For the insult; a thing not hard to do!
I doubt the deed would be wise, but rather
An act of folly; with that aim in view
I might slay in a trice that wicked elder,
And all his tribe, and all his fair issue,
But that would hardly render me content,
Twould simply frustrate my whole intent!

For my intent was ever, and is now 55
To win the lady's love, not her hatred.
Slaying Amone to achieve my vow,
Bringing harm to her kindred, as I said,
Would I not prove her foe; and she avow
To forget me, and treat me as one dead
To her, and to her love? Ne'er could I
Seek such a thing, twere better that I die.

I shall not die; rather, twould be better 56
To slay this Leo who disturbs my joy,
Him together with his unjust father.
Fair Helen cost her lover out of Troy
Far less; nor, did the earlier, bolder,
Theft of Proserpine bring such annoy
To Pirithous, as shall prove the cost,
And annoyance, to these, of my lover lost.

Can it be true, my life, that you grieve not 57
To leave your Ruggiero for this Greek?
Shall your father force you to tie that knot,
When your brother so supports what you seek?
I fear lest duty cannot be forgot,
And you'll bow to Amone; twould be weak,
If you chose rather to wed with Caesar,
Than a humble, and yet honest, lover.

Is it possible: that dreams of royalty, 58
Imperial titles, majesty and grandeur,
Could corrupt the mind of Bradamante,
She of noble virtue, and endless valour,
Such that she broke her vow of loyalty
And viewed true faithfulness as lesser?
That she'd not sooner defy Amone
Than dismiss the pledge she made to me?'

Canto XLIV: 59-66: Bradamante's message to him

These were his thoughts, and other things also 59
He debated with himself, and in such guise
That others who were with him, came to know
That he was troubled, nor could he disguise
His torment such that none learnt of his woe.
And Bradamante came to realise
The depths of his suffering, which once known
She sorrowed for no less than for her own.

But of all the sorrows that she was told 60
Were now tormenting Ruggiero, this
Grieved her by far the most, that he might hold
Some suspicion that she shared Amone's wish.
To comfort him, and show her vow of old
Was unbroken, and so ratify her promise,
She sent her trusted maid to him one day,
With a letter, that did her thoughts convey:

'Ruggiero, I would always be to you 61
What I was; even more if such could be.
Whether Love is benign or harsh anew,
Whether Fortune lowers or exalts me,
I am a rock, unmoved, and ever true,
Battered by gales, amidst the raging sea.
Be it winter, or spring and fair weather,
Through all eternity, I ne'er shall alter.

Sooner shall leaden chisel, descending, 62
Varied forms and shapes to diamond impart,
Than shall ill Fortune's blows, never-ending,
Or Love's fierce anger, move my constant heart.
Sooner shall the sounding torrents, raging,
Return to the Alpine heights where they start,
Than fresh events, destined for good or ill
Shall sway my thoughts, or undermine my will.

I have granted you dominion over me, 63
More so, indeed, than any might conceive;
No greater oath of endless loyalty
To new-crowned prince was sworn, I believe,
Nor any realm possessed more securely
Than is yours, Ruggiero; you need cleave
No stone to build high walls, or raise a tower,
For fear lest any other steals your power.

Without others' aid, this I guarantee, 64
Every attack on you shall be repelled.
No display of riches shall e'er win me;
The gentle heart cannot be bought, upheld
Not by nobility, or royalty,
That dazzle the vulgar, plain truth expelled.
No beauty, that moves fickle hearts anew,
Shall make me wish for any, love, but you.

You have no cause to fear that my fond heart 65
Shall bear some new impression, or e'er could.
Your image is etched there, and with such art,
It cannot be removed, set there for good.
That my heart is not of wax, for its part,
Is known; Love has tested its hardihood.
He struck a hundred times, ere he could trace
Your image there, that ever holds its place.

Ivory, gem, or stone of hardest grain, 66
Resistant to the steel edge, may shatter,
Yet else the same form it must e'er maintain
That it first took, and can take no other.
And I am like to marble; none can gain,
With iron blade, a single flake; twould splinter
To a thousand pieces, ere Love's rare art
Could grave a second image on my heart.'

Canto XLIV: 67-71: She makes request of Charlemagne

She added to this many another word 67
Of love, and comfort, and true loyalty,
That, if he were dead, and such might be heard,
Had yet restored his life and liberty.
But when his hope, many a time deferred,
Now looked to anchor, of the tempest free,
A dark and furious gale rose anew,
That seawards from the longed-for shore now blew:

For Bradamante, who wished to follow 68
Her letter by doing more than she'd said,
Her customary boldness then did show,
And straight to King Charlemagne she sped.
Casting all reverence aside, she spoke so:
'If e'er my deeds have good fortune bred,
Or, Sire, to you have e'er seemed worthy,
Be pleased to bestow a gift upon me.

Yet first, Sire, ere I utter my request, 69
By the faith you hold to, promise me
You'll grant this fervent prayer, at my behest,
For what I ask is right and just, truly.'
'Your merit deserves that aught expressed
By you, I shall respond to willingly,'
Said Charlemagne, 'I am content to swear,
Though of my kingdom you should seek a share.'

'Then the gift I crave of Your Majesty, 70
Is that I not be wed to any knight'
Bradamante answered him, 'save that he
Shows greater valour than I, in fair fight.
Who desires me must first, in brave tourney,
Or single combat, prove himself outright.
Let he that defeats me, my life, thus, share;
Him that I defeat, let him seek elsewhere.'



Stanza 69

With smiling face, the emperor replied, 71
That her request was worthy of the maid,
And that upon his word she might rely;
He would accord her that for which she prayed.
This audience was public, and thereby
Others learned of the promise he had made,
And that very day it came to the notice,
Of old Amone, and the mother Beatrice.

Canto XLIV: 72-75: Her parents remove her from court

Her parents were roused to indignation, 72
Both were greatly angered by their daughter,
(Perceiving, and hence their condemnation,
That she despised Leo, as a suitor)
And to thwart Bradamante's solution
To the matter, they simply removed her,
Both withdrawing from the emperor's court,
Taking the maiden with them to Roquefort.

This was a mighty castle, built to plan 73
By Charlemagne, granted to Amone,
Set between Carcassonne and Perpignan,
Commanding the coast, and all the country
Thereabouts; and there prisoned, under ban,
The maid was held, and told she would, shortly,
Be shipped to the Levant, willing or no,
And, Ruggiero now forgot, marry Leo.

The valorous lady who was no less 74
Determined than steadfast and spirited,
Though no guard was posted, nonetheless,
Obeyed her sire, for the moment bested;
Yet prison, death, or pain and harsh duress,
She vowed to suffer, being nobly bred,
(Though at liberty there, to come and go)
Rather than betray her Ruggiero.

Rinaldo, on finding that his father 75
Had spirited her away, out of sight,
And seeing he could achieve naught further
As concerned her marriage to the knight,
Complained to his sire, and his favour
Withdrew from him, saddened by her plight,
Though Amone cared little, I suggest;
He would deal with the maid as he thought best.

Canto XLIV: 76-79: Ruggiero sets out to confront Leo

Ruggiero hearing this, full of dread 76
That he'd be deprived of his loving bride,
And, by consent or force, Leo, instead,
Would have the maid, resolved he'd ne'er abide
Till he had fought the man (though naught he said)
And seen this new Augustus deified;
For, unless his every hope proved in vain,
He'd rest not till the emperor was slain.

So, he dressed himself in Hector's armour, 77
That which had been worn by Mandricardo.
His helm, shield and surcoat he did alter,
In their emblems, and saddled Frontino,
(For no longer on a field of azure
The silver eagle, as before, he'd show,
But a lily-white unicorn he revealed,
As his coat of arms, on a crimson field)

From his faithful squires, he chose the best, 78
For he needed none else, for company,
Commanding him to thwart each request
For Ruggiero's name, where'er they be.
He crossed the Meuse and Rhine, on his new quest,
And passed from Austria to Hungary,
Then along the Danube his way he made,
Riding swiftly, until he reached Belgrade.

The Sava, there, into the Danube flows, 79
And swells it on its journey to the sea,
And there the Imperial banner rose,
And many a pavilion's high majesty,
For Constantine's Bulgarian foes
Held the place against his mighty army.
And Leo, was there beside his father,
With all whom the Greek empire could muster.

Canto XLIV: 80-84: He finds the Emperor Constantine attacking Belgrade

Before Belgrade, and o'er the slopes around, 80
Down to the river flowing at their feet,
The Bulgarian forces held the ground,
While at the Sava both sides deigned to meet.
The Greeks would bridge the river, at a bound,
The enemy were forcing their retreat,
When Ruggiero came there, to behold
That battle that raged, twixt squadrons untold.

The Greeks were four times as strong as the foe, 81
And supplied with pontoon-bridges beside.
They presented a bold and warlike show
Of forcing their way to the eastern side,
As, with considerable guile, Leo
Redeployed silently, and cast a wide
Circuit, then returned and bridged the river,
And, swiftly, led his bold squadrons over.

A host of foot-soldiers and cavalry, 82
(Not less than twenty thousand were there)
He sent along the river-bank, and fiercely,
Charged the foe, and nearly ended the affair,
While the Emperor watching, sought swiftly
To cross the flood, and any loss repair.
From pontoon bridge to bridge, linked boat to boat,
He passed with all his army, half-afloat.

King Vatran, the Bulgarian leader, 83
A warrior, spirited yet prudent,
Laboured hard their attack to counter,
And yet was swiftly foiled of his intent.
The king, toppled, fell beneath his courser,
While Leo his great battle-cry did vent,
As a thousand swords the king did slay,
For they took no prisoners, on that day.

The Bulgarian host had forged ahead, 84
But once they saw their sovereign laid low,
While everywhere their fierce attackers spread,
They turned their backs, and fled before the foe.
Amidst the Greeks, who o'er the bridges sped,
Went our brave cavalier, Ruggiero,
Disposed to aid the Bulgarians though;
Loathing Constantine, and more so, Leo.

Canto XLIV: 85-89: Ruggiero rallies the Bulgarian troops

He spurred Frontino; like the wind he flew, 85
And hence soon outran the Greek cavalry;
Then the Bulgarian ranks came in view,
Fleeing the plain, seeking the slopes swiftly.
He halted their squadrons, bar one or two,
And turned them round to face the enemy,
His gaze so fierce, as they began to move,
Mars and Jove took fright in the sky above.

Out beyond the advancing Greeks he saw, 86
A rider, in a crimson surcoat dressed;
Woven emblems in silk and gold, it bore
Bright millet-pods, sprinkled o'er that vest.
Twas Constantine's bold nephew rode to war,
His sister's son, beloved above the rest,
Bar his own son. Ruggiero ran him through;
A foot behind, his lance appeared to view.



Stanza 86

He left him dead, and raised Balisarda 87
Against a knot of men who fought nearby
One he struck, a second even harder,
Cleft torsos, and saw heads from shoulders fly.
Throat, chest, or flank, he pierced in his ardour,
Hand, or arm, or shoulder, belly or thigh,
Till a river of blood o'er the field did flow,
Slowly draining to the vale, there below.

None, that saw those blows dealt, stood his ground, 88
All were filled with fear, and deep dismay.
Thus, the Bulgarians fresh courage found,
For, taking heart from his wondrous essay,
As some Greek fled, a hare before the hound,
His foe would chase him down, to wound or slay.
In an instant, the Greek ranks were scattered;
Men fled with the banners, wounded, battered.

Leo Augustus, watching from a height, 89
Finding his soldiers routed, was amazed,
Sore troubled, and bewildered at the sight,
(For from there upon all the field he gazed).
He took notice of the prowess of that knight
That alone had slain so many, and he praised
To himself, though his dead now stained the earth,
His deeds, and acknowledged his great worth.

Canto XLIV: 90-95: Leo admires the knight's prowess

By the surcoat, and the insignia, 90
And by the armour, bright with gold, he knew
That although to the foe he gave succour
This warrior was none of their vile crew.
He seemed of some superhuman ardour,
An avenging angel, that to pursue,
And punish, the Greeks had descended,
For their sins that, so oft, the Lord offended.

And, as a man of great and noble heart, 91
While many another might well have sworn
Hatred to Ruggiero, he, for his part,
Would not wish to see the man put to scorn,
And he had rather seen six Greeks depart
Than this one warrior, rather have borne
The loss of some wide tract of his own land,
Than a worthy knight be slain out of hand.

As a child, who has angered his mother, 92
And is driven forth, in shame and disgrace,
Runs not to his father or his sister
But soon returns, to meet a warm embrace,
For momentary wrath love doth conquer,
So, although the knight had put to the chase,
His squadrons, and thereby roused his anger,
Leo's love was kindled by such valour.

If he admired, nay loved Ruggiero, 93
It would seem he gained little by the fact,
For the latter hated him, his mortal foe,
And wished naught but his murder to enact.
The knight was searching for him, high and low,
But naught of sense or fortune Leo lacked,
And the prudence of the battle-hardened Greek
Thwarted him that the emperor's son did seek.

Leo fearing his troops might all be lost, 94
Sounded the retreat, and to his father
Sent a messenger to tell him, at all cost,
To halt his men, and re-cross the river,
For he'd likely meet with a swift riposte.
He himself, gathering a few together,
Made his way to his former crossing-place,
And over the pontoons they went, at pace.

Into the hands of the Bulgarians, many 95
A Greek now fell, and there was swiftly slain,
Corpses hid the slopes, the plain, and surely
All would have died had they not crossed again,
Yet many plunged from the bridges, wildly,
While others, that their first flight did maintain,
For safety, to a distant ford now made,
Or were captured, and taken to Belgrade.

Canto XLIV: 96-100: Ruggiero pursues the retreating Leo

When that day of battle drew to a close 96
In which their chieftain Vatran had died,
His valiant squadrons would, you may suppose,
Have been treated much as the other side,
Had the warrior not won them sweet repose,
Who bore the snow-white unicorn with pride;
With cries of joy, they greeted their hero,
Who'd brought them victory, our Ruggiero.



Stanza 96

Some saluted him, while others made a bow, 97
Some kissed the warrior's foot or his hand,
As closely as circumstance would allow,
They all surrounded him, a joyous band;
More simply touched him, for they did vow
He was scarcely mortal, you understand,
And wished thus, to be blessed; full loud they cried
That he must be their captain, king, and guide.

Ruggiero replied he'd be their king 98
Or their captain, whichever suited best,
But left sceptre and baton in their keeping,
Nor would enter Belgrade but take no rest,
And thus pursue Leo, and his following,
As they retreated swiftly to the west;
He'd renew their attack, nor turn away
Till he had slain the man that very day,

For he had come a thousand miles and more 99
For that alone, and for naught else beside.
And so, with scant delay, he sought the shore,
And by a road revealed to him did ride
For Leo, to the bridge, had gone before,
And he might yet attain the other side.
Now hotly on his heels, sped Ruggiero,
Leaving his squire behind him, to follow.

Yet Leo had so great an advantage 100
In his flight (twas a flight not a retreat)
That he found the way open, free of carnage,
Destroyed the bridges, and then burnt the fleet.
Ruggiero, spurring on, and filled with rage,
Failed to cross, ere the sun sank neath his feet.
He knew not where to rest, and yet rode on,
By moonlight, though lodging found he none.

Canto XLIV: 101-104: He reaches a city and finds lodging

Lacking a place to sleep, he rode all night, 101
And not once from the saddle did descend,
But when the sun arose, and all was light,
He saw a city on his left, and there did wend
His weary way, seeking a day's respite,
When Frontino's sad state he might amend,
That in battle, and on the road, he'd pressed,
Without disburdening him, or granting rest.

Ungiardo was the lord of that city, 102
A liegeman, who was dear to Constantine,
And had supplied the emperor with many
Loyal horsemen and soldiers, brave and fine.
Our knight rode in (none were barred entry)
And, once there, found a welcome so benign
He found little need to journey further
For nowhere else was like to prove better.

In the hostelry he'd found, that very night 103
Was lodged a brave Romanian warrior,
Who had been present at that bloody fight,
Where Ruggiero had aided the Bulgar.
He had scarcely escaped from our knight,
More afraid than he'd found himself ever,
And he trembled yet, sensing at his back
That great warrior bent on fierce attack.

He knew him, when first he saw his shield 104
(That white unicorn, on its crimson ground)
As the knight who had forced the Greeks to yield,
And left the dead heaped in many a mound.
He hastened to the palace, and revealed
All to its lord (a ready ear he found);
Though the tale that he told Ungiardo,
I shall reserve for the following canto.





Canto XLV: Ruggiero's Woes

Canto XLV: 1-6: Ariosto on the Vagaries of Fortune

The higher on Fortune's swift-turning wheel 1
We see some poor mortal rise, the sooner
We see them fall, their head below their heel,
To lie flat on the ground, their reign over.
Polycrates exemplifies, I feel,
This truth, Croesus, and Dionysus, later,
(Of Syracuse) and others who, in a day,
Fell from the heights of glory to dismay.

To counter that, the lower some folk fall, 2
The nearer they are to the ground below,
The sooner and faster, rising amidst all,
As the wheel turns, upwards they will go.
Their head upon the block, they yet rise tall,
And the next day they rule the world; tis so;
To Servius, Marius, such days were known,
Ventidius too; Louis in our own;

Louis the Twelfth (of our Alfonso's son, 3
Ercole, the father-in-law) who when
Captured at Saint-Aubin, the battle done,
Was nearly slain, yet lived to rise again.
Matthias Corvinus too, was such a one,
He that, not long ago, a throne did gain;
To Louis all France swearing fealty,
Matthias crowned as King of Hungary.

It seems clear, from such examples, that fill 4
Reams of ancient and modern history,
That ill's succeeded by good, good by ill,
Glory ends in shame, and shame in glory.
Folk should place no trust, as ever they will,
In land, or riches, or in victory,
Nor yet despair if Fortune runs counter,
For her fickle wheel goes turning ever.



Stanza 4



Stanza 7

Ruggiero, with that fine victory won
O'er Leo, and his sire, the emperor,
With a confidence now second to none,
Trusting in his good fortune and valour,
Without aid, and nary a companion,
With only his own heart's burning ardour,
Midst a hundred squadrons, in close array,
Sought the son and the father both to slay.

But Fortune, who never promises aught, 6
Soon showed him, clearly, how she will raise,
A favourite, then bring them down to naught,
For, now the friend, and now the foe she plays.
The Romanian knight, knowing him, sought
In haste, to work him harm, and not to praise;
He who, in the heat of that dreadful fight,
Had soon turned tail and fled from him in fright.

Canto XLV: 7-9: Ruggiero is taken prisoner

He now made known to this Ungiardo 7
That he who'd put Constantine's men to flight,
And done so much damage (our Ruggiero)
Was in the city, and slept there that night;
And, if Fortune's hair was grasped, even so
He could be taken there, without a fight;
And if he imprisoned him, he could bring
The Bulgars neath the sway of his great king.

Ungiardo learnt what ruin had ensued, 8
From those who had fled the savage plain,
(For, squad by squad, an endless multitude
Arrived, the bridgehead having failed to gain)
And that by a warrior they'd been pursued,
By whom a host of Greeks were swiftly slain;
And that same knight had led the charge alone,
By which one force was saved, one overthrown;

And that, of his own will, he'd run his head 9
Into the net, gave some cause for wonder.
Ungiardo showed his joy at what was said,
With every last word, and look, and gesture.
He waited till Ruggiero was abed,
Then sent his guards to enact the capture,
Who promptly took the unsuspecting knight,
While fast asleep, amidst the dark of night.

Canto XLV: 10-12: Constantine receives news of his capture

In Novigrad our brave Ruggiero 10
Was imprisoned; the fact brought much pleasure
To that cruellest of men, Ungiardo;
He savoured his good fortune at leisure.
Yet what could he have done against the foe,
Our knight, asleep, what countermeasure,
Taken, naked and bound? A messenger
Soon carried the news to the emperor.

Constantine had departed, that same night, 11
From the Sava's shore, with his whole army,
And to Beletrik had gone, though not in flight,
Androphilus his brother-in-law's city,
Father of him whose armour, in fierce fight,
Had been pierced (as if twas soft as putty)
At their first encounter, by Ruggiero,
That now was held fast by Ungiardo.

There, the emperor had strengthened the wall, 12
And, once the gates were repaired, thus defied
The Bulgarian forces, who stood tall
Having such a valiant knight on their side,
That of his Greeks had made a deadly haul;
Nigh every man might easily have died.
Hearing of his capture, now quelled all fear,
Though the whole world in arms were to appear.

Canto XLV: 13–18: Theodora seeks vengeance on Ruggiero

'Swimming in a sea of milk', the emperor 13
Could scarcely express his sheer delight,
'Truly I may call myself the victor,'
He cried happily 'now we have their knight.'
As sure of his success as the soldier
That lops off his foe's two arms in the fight.
Such was the pleasure the news had given
Him, on hearing Ruggiero had been taken.

No less cause had the emperor's son, Leo, 14
For delight, for he hoped to gain Belgrade,
And subdue the country round; Ruggiero
Too he hoped to gain, and deploy his blade,
Fighting with his own men gainst the foe;
Nor need he envy (if his ranks displayed
That mighty warrior) King Charlemagne
His Orlando or Rinaldo, known to fame.

Theodora, was of a different mind, 15
Her dear son slain by Ruggiero's lance,
That piercing his breast had emerged behind,
(A hand's breadth) with the force of that advance.
She was Constantine's sister; and, half-blind
With grief, assailed by ill circumstance,
She knelt at his feet, and stirred his pity,
Tears falling from her eyes, scorning mercy.

'I shall not rise again, my lord,' she cried, 16
'Except you take revenge upon this knight,
Now your captive; through him my dear son died
Who was ever your champion in the fight,
Your nephew, who loved you; for our side,
Many a deed he wrought of skill and might,
Surely it would be wrong not to exact
Vengeance on this man now, for his vile act!

See how the Lord, in pity for our woe, 17
Removes this cruel warrior from the field,
Like some bird, unsuspecting of its foe,
Lures him into the net, so well-concealed,
So that my son need not wait long, below,
On Styx's shore, till our revenge is sealed.
Give him to me, my lord, and be content,
For my pain to be eased by his torment.'

His sister wept and mourned so movingly, 18
And so effective was her woeful plea,
(She would not rise upon her feet, though he
Tried three times and more, pityingly,
To raise her by his words and actions; she
Refused, till he was forced to yield, you see)
That he gave way before her just demand,
And she received the knight, at his command.

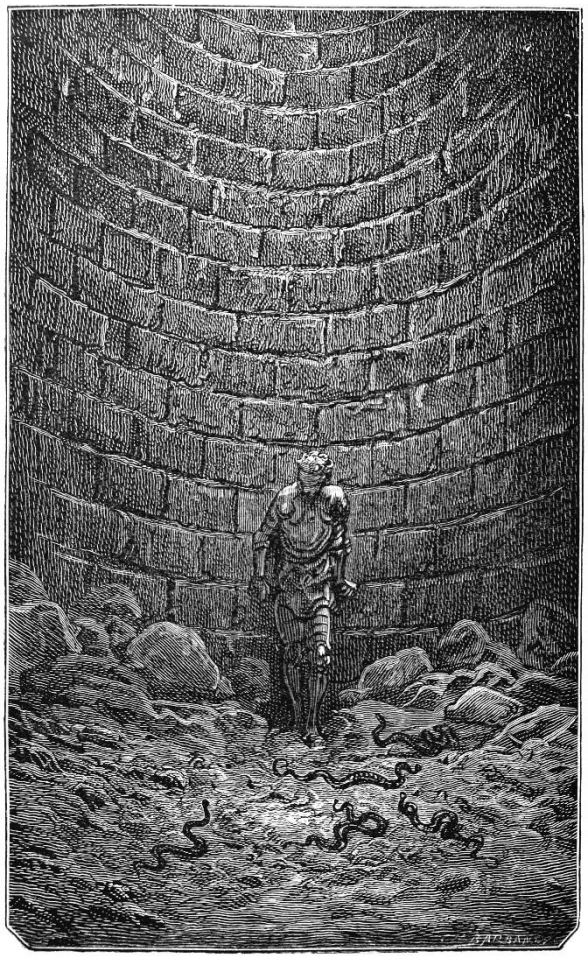


Stanza 18

Canto XLV: 19-24: Charlemagne proclaims the contest Bradamante requested

That they might not appear dilatory, 19
His guards took the 'Knight of the Unicorn'
And led him to Theodora, promptly,
With but a night's respite, in the morn.
Merely to see him quartered, publicly,
With a show of opprobrium and scorn,
Seemed slight revenge; he must undergo
Other novel, and immeasurable, woe.

That cruel woman had him chambered deep, 20
Chains about his neck, and hands, and feet,
In the darkness, beneath a dungeon-keep,
Where never a ray of sunlight might greet
His purblind eyes; a tender heart might weep
To see the mouldy bread he had to eat,
Some days none; his gaoler did her will,
Prompter even than she to work him ill.



Stanza 20

Of, if brave and lovely Bradamante, 21
Or that magnanimous maid, Marfisa,
Had but heard news of such cruelty,
And how he was a wretched prisoner,
Would they not have sought his liberty;
Regardless of every threat and danger?
Nor would Bradamante have obeyed
Her parents' orders, but have brought him aid.

Meanwhile King Charlemagne, who bore in mind 22
The promise he had made to her, that none
Should win her who proved less in martial kind
Than her in battle, that was a paragon,
Had his decree proclaimed to all mankind,
For not only at his court, and in person,
But far and wide the thing was trumpeted,
Thus, swiftly through the land the news was spread.



Stanza 22

This the condition that was stated there: 23
He that would wed Duke Amone's daughter,
Must from dawn to dusk, against the fair
Maintain, with the shining blade, his honour.
And if he could but last out the affair,
Undefeated, then that knight should have her;
The maiden deemed to have lost the fight,
And, thus, obliged to marry him outright;

And she the choice of arms would forego, 24
Without questioning the suitor's right.
(This was not to her disadvantage though,
Being skilled with all weapons, in a fight,
Mounted or on foot.) All this being so,
Amone could not go against the might
Of Charlemagne, and yielding, finally,
Resolved to ride to court, with Bradamante.

Canto XLV: 25-30: She has no news of Ruggiero and is in doubt

Though her mother felt disdain and anger, 25
Twas nonetheless a question of honour
That she should have rich garments about her,
In varied styles, of more than one colour.
Bradamante left for court with her father,
Though, on finding no trace of her lover,
King Charlemagne's noble court seemed no more
As fair a place as it had seemed before.

Who views the garden; its leaves and flowers; 26
In April or May, a most lovely sight,
And then regards it in its autumn hours,
The days short, in the sun's declining light,
And finds it robbed of spring, neath wintry showers,
So, with Ruggiero absent, scant delight
Did Bradamante find on returning
To the court, mere emptiness discerning.

She dared not ask where the knight had gone, 27
For fear of arousing folk's suspicion,
But kept her ears open, lest, here or yon,
Someone might speak, though she asked no question.
That he had left she knew, yet learnt from none
As to which road he'd taken, or his mission.
Since he, on leaving, had said nary a word
Except to the squire with whom he'd conferred.

Oh, how she sighed! What fears she countenanced, 28
Feeling as if he'd not just gone, but fled,
(Oh, how her fears and doubts were thus enhanced!)
Perchance to drive thoughts of her from his head!
Since Leo's cause her father now advanced,
Had he lost hope that they might ever wed?
Perchance far from her he'd sought to remove,
Hoping he might forget her, and her love;

Perchance that very journey he had planned 29
To remove her more swiftly from his heart,
And would wander now from land to land,
And meet some woman who, with subtle art,
Might end that love, he then at her command,
As a nail another from its place will start,
Tis said. A second thought then succeeded:
Ruggiero was true, her heart conceded.

She reproved herself for lending an ear 30
To so unjust and blind a suspicion.
Thus, one thought absolved the cavalier,
The other condemned him; intuition
Helped her not; this way and that, I fear,
She was drawn, unsure of her opinion,
And yet inclined to that which pleased her more;
Ever its opposite she must abhor.

Canto XLV: 31-40: She debates with herself and laments

And then recalling, frequently, to mind 31
What her lover had repeated often,
As if in error, she now grieved and pined,
That she'd felt jealousy and suspicion,
And, as if before her eyes, she would find
His image, and scorn her indecision:
'I see,' she said, 'twas ill such to rehearse,
And yet the cause of it is cause of worse;



Stanza 31

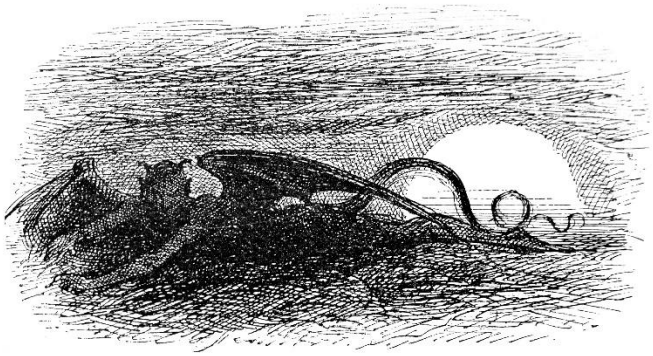
Love is the cause, that on my heart impressed 32
Your form, so graceful and so fine to see,
All your wit and ardour therein expressed,
All your virtues, that folk praise before me,
Such that it seems impossible that, blessed
By the sight of you, every fair lady,
Would not be stirred, and employ every art
To eclipse me, and draw you to her heart.

Ah, if Love would but show me your thought
As it has shown me your handsome face!
Then I am certain I would find, unsought,
Such revealed as all such thoughts efface,
And, thus, be quit of Jealousy, as I ought,
That would not so harass me, in this place.
For she, whose expulsion costs me great pain,
Would not be routed merely, but be slain.

I'm like some miser whose heart is so intent
On hoarding treasure, burying it there,
They cannot for one moment be content,
For to part from it brings fear and despair.
Since I can't see or hear one who's absent,
More fear than hope I feel, in this affair;
Fear is but vain, yet, be that as it may,
I cannot choose but yield myself its prey.

But no sooner shall I see, Ruggiero,
The light of your joyous face, appear,
Countering my every foolish doubt (oh,
I know not from where) than deceitful Fear
Shall, thereby proven false, be vanquished so;
Hope will conquer, and falsehood disappear.
My love, return to me, raise Hope again,
Whom Fear has overcome and well-nigh slain!

The shadows lengthen when the sun departs
And as they do so, idle fears are born,
Yet, when it rises, light restores our hearts,
And the fearful take comfort in the morn.
When he is absent, pierced by cruel darts,
All's dread yet, present, I put dread to scorn.
My love, return to me, lest Hope, again,
Should be oppressed by Fear, and thereby slain!

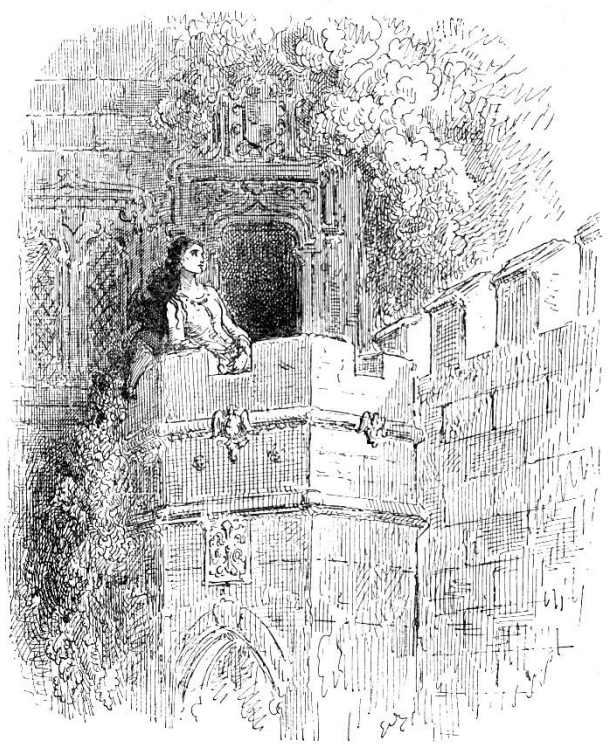


Stanza 36

Every flame seems alive, when tis night,
Yet is suddenly eclipsed by the dawn.
So, when my sun doth take, from me, his light,
Fear fills my heart, and renders me forlorn,
Yet no sooner in the sky does he shine bright,
Than Fear is gone, and Hope once more reborn.
My love, return to me, sweet light, appear,
And rid me of this all-consuming fear!

When the sun turns from us, and days shorten,
All the beauties of Earth are soon concealed,
The fierce gales blow, all the world seems frozen,
No bird sings, no fresh leaf or flower revealed.
Likewise, when your turn your light, unbidden,
From me, O my fair sun, my fate is sealed,
A thousand fears bring harshest winter, here;
Chill me on many a day throughout the year.

My sun, return to me, and bring again
The sweet and longed-for brightness of the spring,
Rid me of snow, and ice, and freezing rain,
Clear my dark, clouded mind; warm everything!'
As Philomena, or Procne that, fain
To feed their fledgling young on returning
Find the nest cold and empty, make lament;
As the turtle dove voices her discontent



Stanza 39

On losing her mate, so Bradamante 40
Grieved, fearing the loss of Ruggiero;
Yet, sighing, and weeping copiously,
She, nonetheless, strove hard to hide her woe.
Oh, how much worse had been her agony,
If she had known all that she could not know:
That, tormented by pain at every breath,
Her love was prisoned, and condemned to death!

Canto XLV: 41-47: Leo enters Ruggiero's prison cell and frees him

Of the pain the cruel Theodora 41
Now inflicted on the imprisoned knight,
While preparing to organise his murder,
The fresh torments, by day and by night,
Eternal Justice, in Leo's ear, did murmur,
And, conveying to him Ruggiero's plight,
Stirred his heart to bring the warrior aid,
Nor let noble virtue be thus betrayed.

The courteous Leo, that loved Ruggiero, 42
(Not that he knew the knight was so named)
Moved by the valour that the knight did show,
Unique, nigh-superhuman some had claimed,
Thought as to how he might his aid bestow,
And found a way, ere the brave knight be maimed;
Such that his cruel aunt might not complain
That he'd wronged her, in saving him from pain.

He spoke to the warder, that held the key 43
To Ruggiero's cell, and said it suited
Him to visit the prisoner, privately,
Before the sentence was executed.
That night, with one sworn to secrecy,
Bold, true, and strong, to the persecuted
Captive he went, and there the gaoler
Gave him free access to the prisoner.

Not knowing it was he, the castellan, 44
Silently led him, with his companion,
To the dungeon where lay the wretched man,
Reserved for torment, then oblivion.
There, as their guide (for such was Leo's plan)
Turned his back, with the plain intention
Of unlocking the door, a noose they cast
About the warder's neck, who breathed his last.



Stanza 44

Raising a trapdoor, by the rope provided, 45
Leo descended, to the cell below,
Lighted torch in hand, for there abided
Bound to a grating, our Ruggiero,
From the darkened torrent scarce divided
That beneath the dungeon walls did flow.
In a brief month, or in some shorter space,
Death must find one, in that noisome place.

Leo embraced Ruggiero and, in pity, 46
Said: 'Sir knight, your virtue binds me to you,
With eternal bonds, and indissolubly.
I shall e'er show you the honour due
To a great warrior, and do so willingly,
Setting aside my safety, to pursue
Your own, putting my love for you before
That I hold for my parents, kin, and more.

I am Leo, you must understand, 47
The emperor's son, here to bring you aid,
In person, and with my own loving hand
Free you, despite all danger, unafraid;
Though, if Constantine knew, he'd demand,
My banishment, and think himself betrayed.
For he hates you for the slaughter, indeed,
You wrought before Belgrade, every deed.'

Canto XLV: 48-50: Ruggiero is deemed to have escaped

He followed with other speech in this style, 48
Seeking to bring new life to Ruggiero,
While loosening his tightened bonds, the while.
The latter cried: 'Infinite thanks I owe,
To you, and yet will render, with a smile,
This life to serve you, if you will it so,
Which I shall ever willingly restore
To you, and spend it if the need be sore.'

Ruggiero, they rescued from the pit, 49
Leaving, in his place, the dead gaoler;
Nor were they seen, in the doing of it.
To his house Leo led our warrior,
Persuading him to stay, till he saw fit,
In safety, secretly, a week or more;
Meanwhile he'd retrieve his steed (Frontino),
His arms, and armour, from Ungiardo.

At dawn the prison gate was found ajar, 50
The gaoler strangled, and Ruggiero fled,
Though none thought, without aid, he could go far;
Much talk there was, all which to nothing led.
The thought twas Leo's doing was bizarre,
And none voiced it, for twas thought instead,
There being a great debt to be repaid,
He would rather slay him than bring him aid.

Canto XLV: 51-55: Leo decides Ruggiero shall fight Bradamante in his place

Ruggiero, struck by Leo's chivalry, 51
Was left confused, and full of wonder,
So other than his thoughts, he seemed to be,
Whom he had sought in hatred, and anger.
Comparing this fair act of courtesy
With his prior conception, dissimilar
They seemed; the latter formed too hastily,
The former a deed of love and mercy.

All day and night he reviewed the matter, 52
With no other care, no other desire,
Than to discharge the debt by some greater
Act of chivalry, and did then aspire,
Whether life be long or short to, ever,
(Gone now was all his jealousy and ire)
Serve this Leo; a thousand deaths, indeed,
Were too little to repay him for his deed.

Meanwhile news came to the emperor's court 53
Regarding Charlemagne's proclamation,
That he who'd wed Bradamante, in short,
Must with sword and lance maintain his station.
News that, to Leo, little pleasure brought,
While his face revealed his agitation;
He believed that, thereby, his fate was sealed,
Feeling he could not match her in the field;

But musing, thereon, saw he might supply 54
All by cunning, if the skill was lacking,
For this unnamed warrior would gladly die
To serve him, and might bear to the jousting
His own insignia; he seeming, to his eye,
A match for any knight, and right willing.
And thought that, if the man would but agree,
He would conquer, and win him Bradamante.

But that required two things, of which the one 55
Was the knight to undertake the enterprise,
The other, since in his name twould be done,
That none must penetrate the youth's disguise.
He summoned him, who to his cause he won
With eloquence; his plan to realise,
Ruggiero must ride to the encounter,
Under a false name, emblem and banner.

Canto XLV: 56-60: Ruggiero agonises over the matter

The Greek's persuasiveness was great, but more 56
Than any eloquence with our Ruggiero
The obligation weighed, which he now bore,
Which he could not discharge except by so
Appearing, though the thought grieved him sore;
It seemed a thing impossible; his woe
He nonetheless concealed, as he replied,
That no request for aid would be denied.

No sooner had he said the words than he 57
Felt sorrow's blade pierce his loving heart.
Night and day, the thought brought misery,
Afflicting, and tormenting with its dart.
Yet though his own death he could now foresee,
He could not repent of it, for his part,
For rather than scorn Leo, and deny
His debt, a thousand deaths he'd seek to die.

And death seemed certain; were he to forego 58
The lady's hand, his life was forfeit too;
For they would slay him, his anguish and woe,
Or if anguish and woe would not so do,
His own soul he would free, of its sorrow,
The very bonds of life himself undo.
For aught he could more readily endure
Than see another wed the maid; therefore

He was disposed to die, as yet unsure 59
Of the manner of his death; now he thought
Twere best to let her pierce him to the core,
Offer his naked flesh, as there they fought;
For never more blessed were a death in war
Than at her hand, to gain the end he sought.
Yet saw that, except he obtained the maid
For Leo, then his debt remained unpaid.

For he'd promised to fight Bradamante 60
In true encounter, so as to win her,
Not feign, and show the semblance only,
Thus, failing Leo; thus, as ever,
He chose the way of honest chivalry,
And although great anguish he must suffer,
He drove all thought away, except this thought:
That he must keep his promise, as he ought.

Canto XLV: 61-63: They reach Paris

With leave from Constantine, his father, 61
Leo had now readied arms and armour,
And had gathered a suitable number
Of men, and they all set out together.
Ruggiero rode Frontino, his courser,
Clad in his own gear, thanks to the other,
And day after day they rode, like this,
Till they entered France, and so reached Paris.

Not wishing to enter that fair city, 62
Leo pitched his pavilion on the plain,
While the arrival of the embassy
Was made known that day to Charlemagne.
The king was pleased, and with true courtesy,
Sent many gifts, and visits did maintain;
Leo gave the reason for his coming,
Asking that he expedite the jousting,

And let the valiant maiden take the field, 63
That would wed no man less skilful than she,
For he was there to make the lady yield,
Or die in the attempt; his bride she'd be.
Charlemagne agreed and, with sword and shield,
She appeared next day; the lists hurriedly
Marked out before the wall, that very night;
Thus, all was ready to commence the fight.

Canto XLV: 64-69: Ruggiero prepares for the contest

The eve before the contest, Ruggiero 64
Felt like a condemned man about to die,
Knowing he must pay upon the morrow
With his life, and so much troubled thereby.
He would be clad in Leo's armour, so
Himself unknown to any watching eye.
His steed and lance would in this be ignored,
For he'd employ no weapon but his sword.

No lance he'd take, but it was not through fear 65
Of that gold lance Argalia once wielded,
And then Astolfo, that had year by year
Downed many a knight howe'er well-shielded,
All unknowing that twas to a charmed spear,
One forged by necromancy, they'd yielded;
Twas King Galafrone wrought the weapon,
And gave it to Argalia, his son.

Astolfo bore it, now Bradamante, 66
Neither thinking that it was enchanted,
But that they used the thing most skilfully,
Not that its power their strength supplanted.
That with some other lance they'd, equally,
Have toppled their foes, they took for granted.
Twas not fear of it deterred Ruggiero,
But of employing his steed, Frontino;

For she'd readily recognise the steed 67
If she saw him, since, in Montalbano,
She had ridden that horse of noble breed.
It presented a problem to Ruggiero,
Filled his every passing thought, indeed,
How he might act so she'd not come to know
That twas he; and so, he hid Frontino,
With all that his identity might show.

He brought a fresh blade to the encounter, 68
For he knew that steel was soft as putty
When twas matched against this Balisarda,
No armour could resist its enmity,
For it beat on other swords like a hammer,
And reduced their strength and their utility.
So armed, Ruggiero entered on the field,
As night, to the first rays of light, did yield.

To seem like Leo, the surcoat he wore 69
Was one the prince was accustomed to wear.
A twin-headed eagle, in gold, he bore,
On the crimson shield, he sported there.
And what sustained the fiction even more
Was the equal size and stature of the pair.
He presented himself so like the one
His true identity was known to none.

Canto XLV: 70-71: Bradamante proves eager to begin

Twas the will of the maid, Bradamante, 70
To have her sword prepared quite otherwise.
While he hammered at his blade till bluntly
It would fall, she whetted hers till edgewise
It gleamed, and she wished herself entirely
Absorbed into the steel, so she might prise
The life from out this Leo, and impart
Such fierce blows as would pierce him to the heart.

As one sees a fiery steed prick its ears, 71
While attending on the sign to commence,
And shift here and there, as the foe appears,
Its nostrils flaring, eager to speed thence,
So, the bold maiden seemed, devoid of fears,
(Thinking he was Leo, in her defence!)
With fire in her veins, awaiting the call,
Pacing restlessly about, yet standing tall.

Canto XLV: 72-77: The fight commences and Ruggiero defends stoutly

As sometimes, after thunder, a sudden gale 72
Troubles the sea, and churns the waves about,
And raises clouds of dust that swiftly sail
Through the sky, and drives on the clouds in rout,
While the flock, and its wise shepherd, turn tail,
As hail and sleet from out the darkness spout,
So, the maid, on the signal, bared her sword,
And fell upon Ruggiero, her sweet lord!

But no more are ancient oak, or mighty wall, 73
Or well-founded tower moved by the storm,
That rages about them; no more the squall,
Shifts the rock that's battered by the swarm
Of waves that, night and day, upon it fall,
Than her blade could those plates of steel deform
That Vulcan had gifted Trojan Hector.
For they yielded not to this storm either.

A hail of blows she landed, lunging too, 74
Wholly intent on entering that steel,
And driving her frantic blade, through and through,
To vent her ire, her hatred thus reveal;
Now here and there, sought, ever and anew,
To pierce his last defence, and have him feel
The fury in her heart, yet grieved to find
He thwarted every move she had in mind.



Stanza 74

Like one who lays siege to some great city, 75
That's flanked by battlements set on high,
And launches many an assault, that surely
Must breach the wall (not caring who must die)
Yet toils in vain to enter, so strongly
The walls defend it, and his blows defy,
So Bradamante toiled, to small avail,
Failing to pierce his armour, and stout mail.

Though sparks flew from his helmet, from his shield, 76
From his breastplate, as she aimed at his head,
And then his arm, and chest, he would not yield
An inch; though blows fell, as on a farmstead
The rain resounds, that sweeps across the field,
Or the blind hail, that o'er its roof is spread,
He defended himself from each attack,
With care and caution, scarcely striking back,



STANZA 76

For he'd cease, or turn aside, or withdraw, 77
As his feet matched the motion of his hand,
Or he'd raise his good shield, when he saw
Her sharp blade advance, and the blow withstand.
His blows flew wide or, if he sought to draw
A drop of blood, some skilful move he planned
To do least harm; ere the sun descended,
The lady wished the fight swiftly ended.

CANTO XLV: 78–80: HE MAINTAINS HIS STAND AND THEREBY WINS THE FIGHT

She recalled her edict now, for she knew 78
Her peril if twas brought to a close
Without her conquering him, nor anew
Could it be fought; her fate lay in her blows.
The time for Phoebus to retreat was due,
Past Hercules' pillars, ere the moon arose,
When she began to doubt her skill and strength,
Appearing to abandon hope, at length.

The more hope faded, the more her ire grew; 79
She redoubled her blows, and strove to break
The steel that had defied their force, anew,
And had endured all day (of charmed make),
Like one who, slow their labours to pursue,
Sees night their toil and effort overtake,
Yet strives and heaves, still, all to no avail,
Till light and strength, together, ebb and fail.

O wretched warrior-maid, had you known, 80
Whom it was you wished to wound and slay;
If Ruggiero to your sight had been shown,
On whom your happiness depended (nay,
You'd have pierced your own flesh and bone,
Ere he was touched by your blade that day);
How swiftly, finding twas your own true lord
You would have rued the blows from your sharp sword!

CANTO XLV: 81–85: BRADAMANTE MUST WED LEO, AND RUGGIERO DEPARTS

Charlemagne, with the rest, thought that Leo, 81
And not our Ruggiero, had won the fight,
Having seen how he'd absorbed blow on blow
And the speed and prowess shown by the knight,
Without dealing her much harm, and had so
Defended himself, that any wound was slight,
Now cried: 'They're well-suited to each other:
She is worthy of him, as he of her.'

Once Phoebus was hidden neath the tide, 82
Charlemagne bade the two go their ways,
Judging that the lady must be allied
To Leo, although both had won his praise.
Ruggiero, knowing he had lost his bride,
Still in armour and helm (for one obeys,
One's king) mounted a sorry steed, and went
To where Leo waited for him, in his tent.

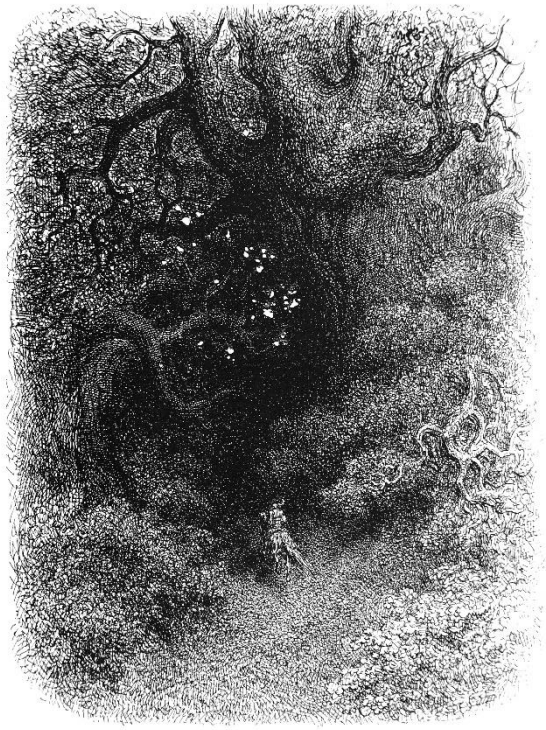
Leo clasped him twice, much like a brother, 83
And then he drew the helmet from his head,
Kissed him warmly on the cheeks, and ever
Held him close against his side, as he said:
'Ask aught of me now, for you shall never
Find I weary of our friendship, instead
Both myself and my whole estate, entire,
I shall expend to serve your least desire.

No recompense, I know of, could repay, 84
The mighty debt I owe you, though I gave
The garland from my head to you this day,
Who proved the very bravest of the brave.'
Ruggiero, upon whom his woes did prey,
And that loathed his life, scarce a word did say,
But, returning the emblems he had worn,
Was once more the Knight of the Unicorn.

He appeared as one now listless and spent, 85
And, as soon as was decent, he withdrew,
And from there to his lodging swiftly went,
Where, at midnight, he armed himself anew,
Saddled his steed, and, filled with sad intent,
Went his way, all while no one was in view,
And then followed the road that Frontino
Was pleased to take, bearing his Ruggiero.

Canto XLV: 86-90: His lament

Now by a straight, now by a winding way, 86
Frontino passed, by wood, by open field,
And bore his lord and master far away,
Whose misery and woe were now revealed.
He called on Death, and in that solace lay,
Since life's deep wounds by death alone are healed,
Thinking naught but death, the sufferer's friend,
Could to this ceaseless torment put an end.



Stanza 86

'To whom should I complain of my anguish, 87
That robs me, evermore, of every good?'
He cried, 'If I must take revenge for this,
On whom would I avenge me, if I could?
None but myself the guilty party is,
None else offends me; then, tis understood,
Upon my own self I must avenge me,
That brought about this endless misery.

If the injury were but done to me, 88
Perchance I could forgive myself, in time,
And yet I cannot, for Bradamante
Was injured, equally, by my sad crime.
How could I do so with impunity
And so, from out this vile darkness climb?
Even if I could cleanse myself of this,
I must avenge my marring of her bliss.

I ought to avenge her, and so must die, 89
Which is no heavy thing to undertake.
Except for death, I know no means whereby
To ease my heart, and twould be for her sake.
And yet I grieve I wrought not thus, ere I
Offended her, and did her poor heart break;
Better if I had died before I fought her,
Executed, at the whim of Theodora.

Though ere I died she'd have tortured me, 90
In many a cruel manner, yet I might
Have retained the hope, in my misery,
That Bradamante pitied my sad plight.
But, knowing honour has meant more to me
Than her love, that, of his will, her knight
Chose Leo over her, and in his stead,
She'll loathe all thought of me, alive or dead.'

Canto XLV: 91-94: He seeks some place to end his life

This, and many another thought, he spoke, 91
Accompanied by many a deep sigh,
And found himself, as the world awoke,
In a dark wood, wild and foreign to the eye,
Where, desiring to shed life's weary yoke,
He sought a hidden place in which to die,
Its silence seeming fitting for such a deed;
Twas remote, and melancholy, indeed.

He plunged within, till he could scarcely see 92
Amidst that dark, dense, and entangled wood;
And first he set the steed, Frontino, free,
Caressing the brave creature where it stood,
'Frontino,' he cried, 'were it granted me
To reward your great merit as I should,
You'd have scant need to envy those, brave, few
Set amidst the stars, glorious to our view.



Stanza 92

Castor's Cillarus, was not more worthy, 93
Adrastus' Arion ne'er earned more praise,
Nor any other steed that's famed in story,
Its name proclaimed in Greek and Roman days;
None, I say, could ever match your glory.
Though they might equal you in other ways,
They could never boast that they had won
Such honours and prizes as you have done;

Then, you are dear to the fairest lady, 94
That ever was, or that will ever be;
So dear that her hands would feed you, daily,
Saddling and bridling you, most graciously.
Dear to my lady fair; ah, woe is me,
Why do I call her mine, so foolishly?
Having gained her for another? Why wait
To use my sword and, thus, fulfil my fate?'

Canto XLV: 95-102: Bradamante's lament

If our Ruggiero was so tormented 95
That he moved the birds and beasts to pity,
(For no human heard how he lamented,
Nor saw the tears he shed so copiously)
Think not Bradamante more contented,
That, as yet, remained in Paris, for she
Lacked all further excuse to justify
Delay, but must wed Leo, by and by.



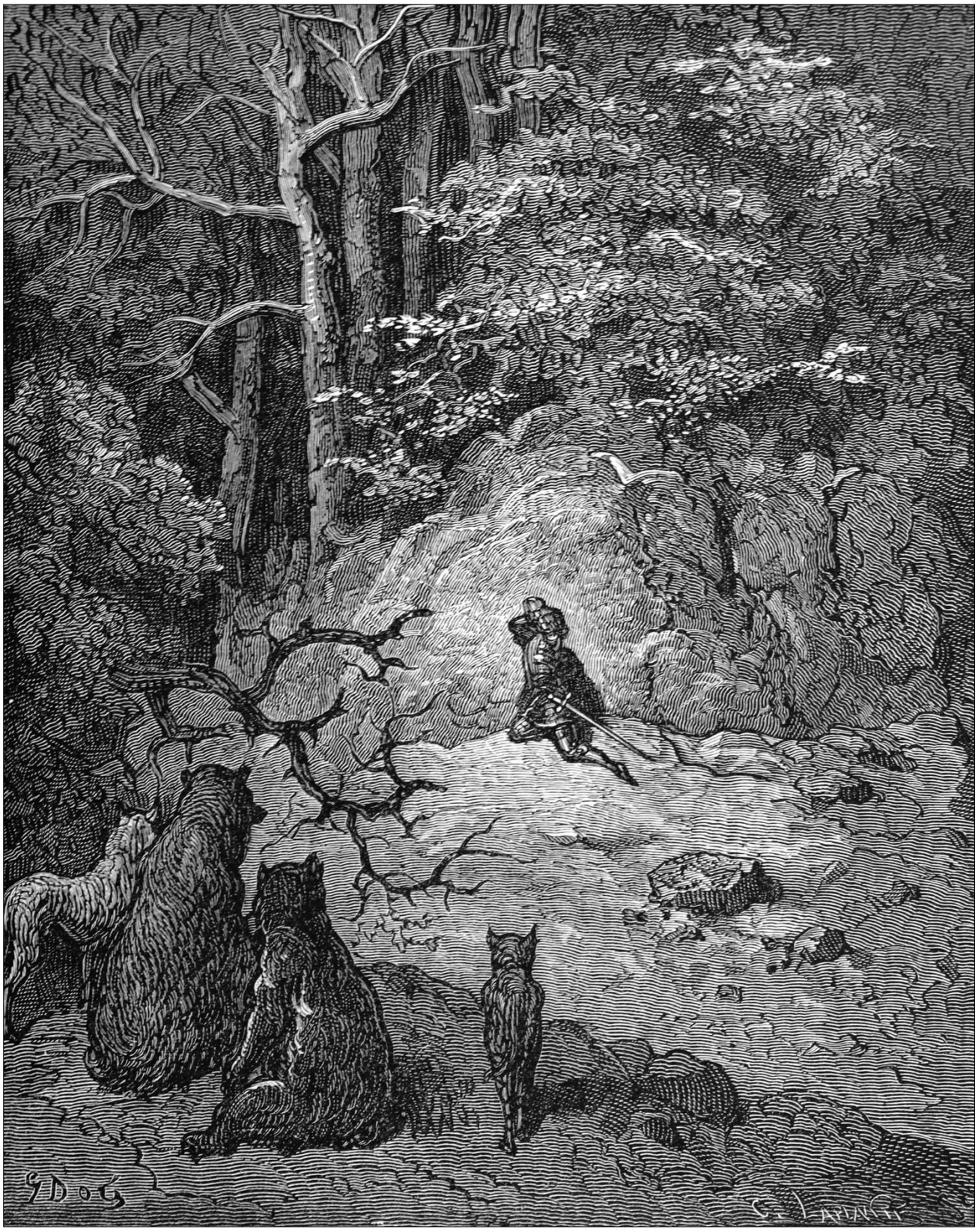
Stanza 94

Ere she must take another to her bed, 96
And lose Ruggiero, she'd do what she might,
Forego her word, belie what she had said,
Anger her parents, and Charlemagne slight;
And, if she could do naught, then better dead,
Of poison, or a sword-thrust, for twas right,
And better far, to take her own life so
Than live on, and yet lack her Ruggiero.

'Ah, Ruggiero,' she cried, 'where were you? 97
Is it that you, so far from me, now stray?
That you heard not the edict, all but you
Must have heard, and were absent on that day?
None would have sped here faster than you,
Had you known of it, my fears to allay.
Ah, woe to me, what else should I believe
Than that which is the worst I can conceive?



Stanza 95 "*No human heard how he lamented*"



Stanza 95 "*Ruggiero was so tormented, that he moved the birds and beasts to pity*"

How is it Ruggiero that you alone 98
Failed to hear what all the world must have heard?
If twas so, and naught of this have you known,
Surely you must be prisoned, or interred.
No doubt that son of Constantine has sown
The seeds of this, spread some misleading word,
Or treacherously barred the way to you,
Such that the thing was hidden from your view.

I gained Charlemagne's promise that to none 99
Less valorous than myself should I be given,
Believing you alone would be the one
With whom I should then have vainly striven,
For I thought by you alone I must be won.
My audacity has been repaid, and Heaven
Grants me now to a man that has never
Done aught in his life that gained him honour.

If he weds me (since I lacked the skill 100
To make him yield, or slay him swiftly)
It yet seems wrong that, all against my will,
I must thus accept Charlemagne's decree.
I know that I'll be thought contrary still,
If I retract what I proposed but lately,
But not the first maid nor the last I'll be
To stand accused of mere inconstancy.

Enough that I keep faith with my lover, 101
And, firmer than any rock, remain true,
And thereby surpass all that have ever
Loved in those ancient times, or in the new,
And, though they call me inconstant, never
Care one iota, if but joy ensue.
Lighter than any leaf they may name me,
If with the Greek I'm not forced to marry.'

These words and others, interspersed with sighs, 102
And many a moan, she murmured to the night,
(Drenched with the tears that flowed down from her eyes)
That closed the day, and robbed the world of sight.
But when to his cave, neath Cimmerian skies,
Nocturnus, midst the shadows, sped in flight,
Heaven, that e'er desired the maid should be
Ruggiero's bride, brought aid, as we shall see.

Canto XLV: 103-105: Marfisa addresses Charlemagne

For, at dawn, Marfisa went to Charlemagne. 103
The noble maid told him that her brother,
Ruggiero, had been wronged, for twas plain,
His sworn spouse would be wed to another,
And naught said against; let him maintain,
Who would, that the truth of it was other,
And prove to her (and stake his sorry life)
That the maid was not pledged to be his wife.



Stanza 103

Let Bradamante say it was not so, 104
And deny it before them, if she dared.
The maid had pledged herself to Ruggiero,
In her own presence, and had so declared.
And, with the usual ceremony, so
Had it been sworn, and sealed, and naught impaired
The contract, they were thus bound together
And neither was free to wed another.

If what Marfisa said was less than true, 105
She was simply concerned, so I believe,
To thwart, rightly or wrongly, and undo,
Leo's design than to a false truth cleave;
For Bradamante's wish was now hers too,
And this was the best means she could conceive
To prevent the marriage to this Leo,
And see Bradamante wed Ruggiero.

Canto XLV: 106-111: Duke Amone complains

Troubled by her claim, King Charlemagne 106
Summoned the reluctant Bradamante,
And what Marfisa had said re-told again,
In the presence of her father, Amone.
Bradamante bowed her head, yet did not deign
To deny the fact, or to affirm it, wholly,
Such that all judged from her confusion
That Marfisa's account was no fiction.

Rinaldo was much pleased, and Orlando, 107
To hear a valid reason now revealed
That no further might that alliance go
Which Leo thought already signed and sealed.
In spite of the objection to Ruggiero
That Amone maintained, and ne'er concealed,
Now, without further argument or strife,
He must give her to the knight, as his wife;

For, if such words had passed twixt the pair, 108
The knot was tied, and might not be undone.
Each must hold to what they'd promised there,
Without argument; each had the other won.
'Tis deception here is wrought, I declare,'
Cried Amone: 'to be credited by none;
For even if twas true, and not a lie,
Ne'er shall your errant wish be gained thereby.



STANZA 108

For presupposing what I'll not allow, 109
Nor will e'er believe in, that she has made
A foolish promise to him, scarce a vow,
As you claim, and he the same to the maid,
Where was the thing achieved? Come, tell me now,
More clearly, plainly it must be conveyed.
Either naught of this is so, as I'm advised,
Or twas done ere Ruggiero was baptised.

If twas ere he became a Christian, 110
I'll not accept a jot of what they did.
Since she is of the faith, and he a pagan,
I hold all such contracts invalid.
Tis not for this that honourable man,
Prince Leo, fought; and the Lord forbid
That Charlemagne, our emperor, should break
His solemn word, and for a pagan's sake.

What you say now, you should have said before, 111
Ere this thing, you claim, was done, and ere
King Charlemagne proclaimed from shore to shore,
That ill contest, swayed by my daughter's prayer.'
Thus, to Rinaldo he laid down the law,
And to Orlando, seeking, then and there,
To deny their cause; while from Charlemagne
No precise opinion could they gain.

Canto XLV: 112-114: Marfisa suggests a further duel between Leo and Ruggiero

As when a south wind, or a north wind, blows, 112
Till the leaves murmur in the woods, on high,
Or as when Aeolus, the Wind-God, shows
His wrath gainst Neptune, till the breakers sigh
Along the shore, so the rumour that arose
Of this affair soon spread, through France did fly,
And prompted such discussion, far and near,
That of naught else did any wish to hear.

Some sided with our knight, some with Leo, 113
Yet, if one was of Amone's party,
Ten, at least supported Ruggiero;
Though Charlemagne felt it was his duty
To choose neither, but have the matter go
To his parliament, to debate it fully.
But, since the marriage had been thus deferred,
Marfisa came to him, for she demurred.



Stanza 113

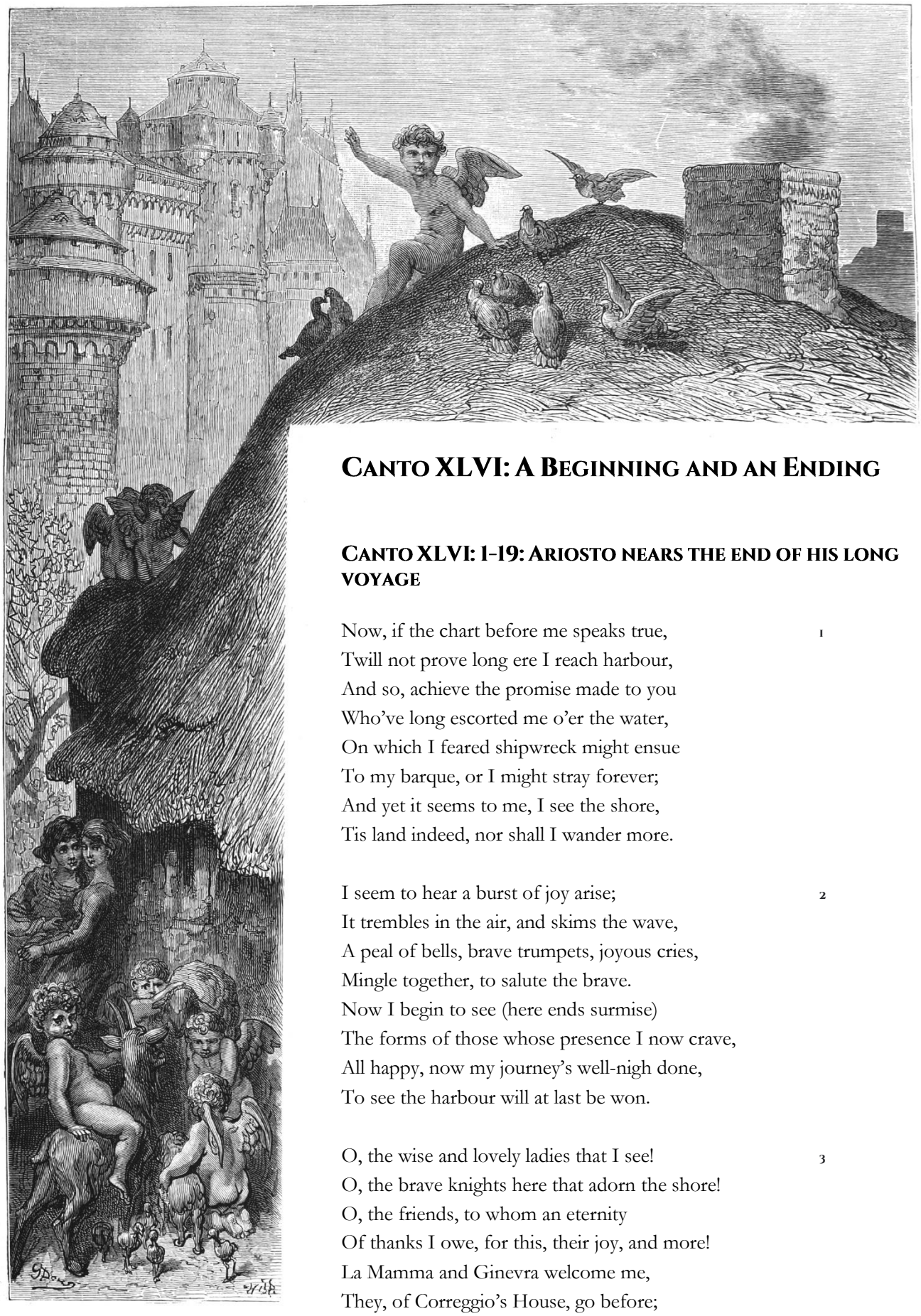
'As Bradamante cannot wed another 114
While my brother is still alive,' said she,
'Let Leo employ, if he would have her,
All his ardour, and end their rivalry;
Let the pair fight for her, and whichever
Kills the other shall wed her, rightfully.'
Charlemagne agreed, and sent to Leo
To so inform him, and soon, all did know.

Canto XLV: 115-117: Leo seeks the Knight of the Unicorn

Leo who felt his cause would be secure 115
If he asked the Knight of the Unicorn
To fight in his place, as he had before,
(One fit to conquer any warrior born)
Not having seen the saddened knight withdraw
Into that lonely woodland ere the morn,
Thinking he'd soon return and had gone
But a mile or two, expected him anon.

He would shortly repent of doing so, 116
For he upon whom he wholly relied
Failed to appear that day, nor to his woe
On the next two, nor any news beside.
And he was like to fight this Ruggiero
Unless, disguised, the knight his weapons plied.
So, he sent, to evade the harm and scorn,
Men to find this Knight of the Unicorn.

Through every town, and city, and castle 117
They searched for the knight errant, far and near.
Not content with this, he took to the saddle,
And sought the man himself, urged on by fear.
Yet, of the absent warrior, not a tittle
Would he have heard – or so it would appear –
Had it not been for Melissa; and, lo,
I shall speak of her, in my last canto.



Canto XLVI: A Beginning and an Ending

Canto XLVI: 1-19: Ariosto nears the end of his long voyage

Now, if the chart before me speaks true, 1
Twill not prove long ere I reach harbour,
And so, achieve the promise made to you
Who've long escorted me o'er the water,
On which I feared shipwreck might ensue
To my barque, or I might stray forever;
And yet it seems to me, I see the shore,
Tis land indeed, nor shall I wander more.

I seem to hear a burst of joy arise; 2
It trembles in the air, and skims the wave,
A peal of bells, brave trumpets, joyous cries,
Mingle together, to salute the brave.
Now I begin to see (here ends surmise)
The forms of those whose presence I now crave,
All happy, now my journey's well-nigh done,
To see the harbour will at last be won.

O, the wise and lovely ladies that I see! 3
O, the brave knights here that adorn the shore!
O, the friends, to whom an eternity
Of thanks I owe, for this, their joy, and more!
La Mamma and Ginevra welcome me,
They, of Correggio's House, go before;
Veronica Gambara follows near
To Apollo and the Muses so dear.



Stanza 3

Then another Ginevra, of that same tree
A slip, accompanied by Julia;
And Ippolita Sforza, there I see;
Giovanni's daughter, Trivulzia,
Emilia Pia, Margharita, three
Fair ladies; beside Angela Borgia,
Ricciarda d'Este, Graziosa,
Bianca and Diana, with their sister.

4

Behold, as wise and chaste as she is fair,
Barbara of the Turchi, beside Laura,
The sun shines not on any kinder pair,
Twixt the Indies and Mauritania.
Behold Ginevra that so gilds the air,
Within the house of Malatesta,
That no more worthy a flame, I'm sure,
Lights the palace of king or emperor.

5

If she had lived, perchance, in Rimini
When Julius Caesar returned from Gaul,
And by the Rubicon stood, all uneasy,
As to whether upon Rome he should fall,
He'd have lowered his banners, swiftly,
Before her, and set down his trophies all,
Agreed to whatever pact she thought best,
And never have fair Liberty oppressed.

6

There, the wife of my lord of Bozzolo,
His mother, sisters, and cousins, I see;
They of the Torelli, Bentivoglio,
The Visconte, and Pallavigini.
Behold her on whom all ladies bestow
The palm; of all in Greece, or Barbary,
Of whom fame tells, and those of Italy,
First among all for her grace and beauty,

7

Julia Gonzaga. Where'er, she goes,
Where'er, she turns her calm and limpid gaze,
Not only must all yield, as to the rose,
In beauty, but a heavenly goddess praise.
And her sister-in-law beside her shows,
That stood firm in her loyalty, always,
Though long ill Fortune worked in her despite;
Tis Anna of Aragon, Vasto's light:

8

Anna, noble, lovely, courteous, wise
Temple of love, and truth, and chastity,
Her sister too is with her, who likewise
Gleams so that she dims all other beauty.
See Vittoria, who, in faithful guise,
In spite of all the Fates and Destiny,
Has from the Styx raised up her lord, on high,
To shine in splendour in the glowing sky.

9

My ladies of Ferrara, they are here,
With those of Urbino's court; I espy,
Those of Mantua; many now draw near
That Tuscany, and Lombardy supply.
The noble knight beside them, whom tis clear
They honour, if naught deceives my eye,
Dazzled by the splendour of their faces,
Is Accolti, whose light Arezzo graces.

10

Benedetto, his nephew, there I see,
Adorned with the scarlet cap and mantle;
Campeggio, glory of the Papacy,
And beside him Mantua's cardinal;
And each of them (or I rave foolishly)
To face and gestures such delight recall,
At my return, no easy task twould seem
So vast an obligation to redeem.

11

Lactantius, Claudio Tolemei, 12
Paulo Panza, the Capilupi, lo,
Giovenale Latino, there, I see,
Molza, Sasso, Florian Montino,
With one who the shortest path doth show
To Hesiod's fount, Giulio Camillo;
And I now discern, it seems to me,
Marco Flaminio, Sanga, and Berni.



Stanza 12

See my lord Alessandro Bernini, 13
'Phaedra', Capella, Porzio as ever
'The Bolognese', Filippo, Maffei,
Blosio, Piero, Vida of Cremona,
His vein inexhaustible and lofty,
Maddaleni, Latin versifier,
Mussuro, Lascaris, Navagero,
Andrea Marone, and Severo.

Lo! Two more Alessandros I see, 14
(One of the Orilogi, one Guarino)
Mario d'Olvito, scourge of royalty,
With the divine Piero Aretino;
Two Girolamos (of Veritade
One, and one of the Cittadino),
The Mainardo, the Leoniceno
Pannizato, Celio and Teocreno.

Bernardo Capel, Pietro Bembo 15
That raised our idiom, both sweet and pure,
Beyond all vulgar usage, and doth show,
By his example, what might lie in store.
Gasparro Obizzi, him doth follow,
Admiring what he bestows, and more.
I see Fracastoro, Bevezzano,
Trifone Gabriel, far-off a Tasso.

Nicolò Tiepoli, Nicolò 16
Amanio now fix their eyes on me,
While, with wonder, Antonio Fulgoso,
Sees my barque nearing harbour joyfully.
Distant from the ladies, my Valerio,
Is there with Barignano, hopefully
Thinking of how he might evade them all,
And not, as ever, for the nearest, fall.

Of high, nay superhuman wit, there, see, 17
Tied by love and blood, Pico and Pio.
He that is with them, whom the most worthy
Honour, I've never met, but wish to know,
For, by certain tokens, he seems to me
To be that Jacopo Sannazaro
Who'd have the Muses leave their mountain peak,
And dwell beside the shore; tis him I seek.

Behold, that diligent secretary, 18
Pistophilus, the loyal and learned,
Who, together with the Acciaioli,
And my Angiar, is now contented
To find I need no longer fear the sea.
Annibale Malaguzzo, strides ahead
My kin, with Adoardo, who grants me
Hope I'll be heard from India to Calpe.

Vittore Fausto, Tancredi, delight 19
In viewing my sail, with a good five-score
Of men and women, gathered at the sight,
That joy at my return, and crowd the shore.
So, since tis a brief space ere I alight,
And the wind blows fair, I'll delay no more,
But turn to Melissa, swiftly, and show
How she saved the life of our Ruggiero.

Canto XLVI: 20-24: Melissa seeks out Leo

Melissa, as I've oft said, and you know, 20
Greatly desired that fair Bradamante
Should be tied in marriage to Ruggiero,
And on their weal or woe pondered deeply,
Such that she must ever seek to follow
Their progress, and sought news of them hourly.
To that end, she sent her sprites to and fro;
As one returned, another one would go.

They found Ruggiero a prey to sorrow, 21
Wandering, midst the shadow of the trees,
Who would not eat a morsel, in his woe,
And sought to die of hunger if you please,
For none was there to stop him doing so.
But soon Melissa would his troubles ease,
Who, issuing forth, had set out that day,
To encounter Prince Leo on the way.

Leo, who'd sent his people, one by one, 22
To seek him everywhere, and no place scorn,
Had, afterwards, set out himself, in person,
To find that brave Knight of the Unicorn.
The wise enchantress, who that day upon
A steed that cloaked a demon form was borne,
(In a bridled nag she did him confine)
Now came upon that son of Constantine.

'If your nobility is such,' she said, 23
'As now appears in your outward show;
If true goodness and courtesy were bred
In you, and did on you that face bestow,
Let some comfort, some aid, now be sped
To one who is the bravest knight I know,
Who if he finds not aid and comfort, soon,
Will surely die; I ask of you this boon:

The best of the knights that ever bore, 24
A shield, or rode with sword at their side;
The fairest and noblest that e'er wore
A helm, of all that live yet, or have died,
Will perish if the courtesy of yore,
Is not readily, to comfort him, supplied.
Come, for the sake of Heaven, sir, and see
If your aid might relieve his misery.'

Canto XLVI: 25-28: They find Ruggiero lamenting

The thought crossed Leo's mind, most suddenly, 25
That the knight of whom she spoke was the same
Whom he had sought throughout all that country,
One that, he now perceived, was known to fame.
So that he spurred behind her, furiously,
Who had invoked his mercy; soon they came,
(For neither long nor tedious was the way)
To where, at the gate of death, Ruggiero lay.

He had been three days without sustenance, 26
And was so overcome, and filled with pain,
He could but walk a pitiful distance,
Unsupported, ere collapsing again.
Girt with sword, helm on head, by his lance
He lay on the ground, where he long had lain,
And of his shield a pillow he had made,
With the white unicorn thereon displayed.

There, musing on the injury he'd done 27
His lady, how unthinking he had been,
How ungrateful, in his deep affliction
Not grief alone troubled him, unseen,
But he bit his hands and lips in passion,
As the tears ran unchecked down his lean
And hollow cheeks, and gazing fixedly,
Neither Leo nor Melissa did he see,



Stanza 27

Or hear, or know, nor left off his lament, 28
Nor tempered his weeping and his sighing.
Leo halted, upon listening intent,
Dismounted, and to the knight went speeding.
He now knew that true love was the torment
That afflicted him, though still unknowing
Who the lady was that had caused such pain,
For Ruggiero had scarcely made that plain.



Stanza 27 "*There, musing on the injury he'd done, his lady, how unthinking he had been*"

Canto XLVI: 29-32: Leo offers the knight his aid

Approaching nearer, and still nearer, he 29
Looked the unhappy warrior in the face,
And, greeting him with sweet and brotherly
Affection, clasped him in a warm embrace.
I know not if twas pleasing entirely
To Ruggiero, his presence in that place,
Who greatly feared disturbance and annoy,
And that some argument he'd now employ.

But Leo, with the gentlest and sweetest 30
Of speeches, sought his warmest love to show,
'Let it not pain your heart, to be confessed'
He said, 'of the trouble that afflicts you so;
Few are the evils with which we're oppressed
That deny us some escape from our woe
If the cause be known, nor is there such strife
As bars all hope, so long as there is life.

It grieves me that you'd hide yourself from me, 31
Whom you know for a faithful friend and true,
Not only am I bound to you, wholly,
Such that the knot no mortal could undo,
But I have been so since I'd cause to be
Your foe, when your worth I scarcely knew.
Know then, that I am here to bring you aid,
Friendship, and life, and see your ills allayed.

Scorn not to share your pain and your sorrow, 32
Let us find if strength, or wealth, may avail;
Art, or skill, or mere affection thus bestow
Some amendment; if not, and all must fail,
Then Death alone may serve to end your woe,
And his dark chariot then, you may hail;
Yet, take the better course, seek not to die
First, let what can be done be done, say I.

Canto XLVI: 33-37: Ruggiero accepts, and offers an explanation

He followed this with such a fervent plea, 33
So benign was his speech, and so humane,
That Ruggiero was forced to yield, sadly,
Whose heart was not of stone nor steel, tis plain.
He deemed that if he, discourteously,
Denied him a reply, failed to explain,
The deed was ill; but twice or thrice he tried
To speak, ere his thoughts he could confide.

'My lord,' he said, at last, 'when I supply 34
My name to you (for I shall tell you all)
I think you'll be no less content than I
To wish for me to pass beyond recall.
For, know, I am the one you wished might die,
Ruggiero, whom you hated, you'll recall,
As I once hated you; and so, from court,
I rode to seek you, for your death I sought,

Since I'd not see you wed Bradamante, 35
Knowing her father was inclined to you.
And yet though man proposes, as we see
Tis God disposes, for my blinkered view,
Was changed by your display of courtesy,
In my great need; my eyes were oped anew;
I renounced the hatred I had felt before,
And pledged to serve your cause for evermore.

Not knowing I was that same Ruggiero, 36
You begged me to help you win the lady,
Nor was that otherwise, you must know,
Than to tear the heart and soul from out me.
Whether I served your wish, by doing so,
Or my own, you have thus been made to see.
She is your fate; marry her now in peace,
More than my own, I wish for your increase.

Be content if, deprived of her I love, 37
I would deprive myself of life also;
Sooner would I my beating heart remove
Than live on, without Bradamante, so;
And ne'er, while I amongst the living move,
Can you legitimately have her; know,
That twixt us pledge was made, and vows were said,
Nor can she, if I live, two husbands wed.'

Canto XLVI: 38-44: Leo foregoes his claim on Bradamante

This speech of his did Leo so amaze, 38
On finding that this was Ruggiero,
That, struck dumb, he could only stand and gaze,
Unmoving as a statue, and naught did show;
A mere statue, like those devout folk raise
To fulfil a vow: that one should forego
Their love, for a rival, seemed so rare
A courtesy, naught else was e'er so fair.

He felt not only had the great goodwill, 39
He had borne towards Ruggiero before,
Abated not, but it had waxed, until
He suffered with the other, if not more.
For which reason, and to show that he still
Was the true son of a great emperor,
Though in aught else he must concede the field
To Ruggiero, in courtesy he'd not yield.

He cried: 'Upon that day, Ruggiero, 40
When my host was routed by your valour,
Though I loathed my rival, yet, even so,
If I had known that you were that other,
As I do now, had known you were that foe,
I still would have loved you as a brother;
For that same valour would have swiftly chased
All hatred from me, by this love replaced.

That I hated the name of 'Ruggiero' 41
Before I came to know you were that same,
I'll not deny; but think not I would so
Mar our true friendship now; but rather claim,
That had I known the truth, as I now know,
On freeing you from that vile place of shame,
I would have done for you, then, what I will
For your benefit, do now, and love you still.

And if I'd willingly have done so then, 42
When I was not, as now, in debt to you,
I would prove the most ungrateful of men
If thus indebted I fail so to do,
When you deny yourself fulfilment; when
You grant that to me which to you is due.
But I restore the gift, one I believe
I'm as content to give as to receive.

She is more suited to yourself than me; 43
Though I love her for her worth, yet tis true
I'd not sever the thread prematurely
If another wed her, as you seek to do.
Nor would I ever wish your death to be,
A valid reason to seek her anew,
(Scorning the bond by which to you she's tied)
And thereby gain her as my lawful bride.

I would rather not only lose the lady, 44
But life itself, with all that I possess,
Than know that it is on account of me
That such a knight should suffer such distress.
Thus, your diffidence grieves me, utterly,
(Who can, indeed, count on me no less
Than on yourself) when you would rather die
Than accept my aid, and be saved thereby.'

Canto XLVI: 45-48: Ruggiero is returned to health

And with these words many more he proffered, 45
Which it would take too long to utter here,
That refuted every argument offered
As to why he should not so interfere.
At last, the knight, in yielding, answered
'Then I am content to live, and yet, I fear
That I can ne'er requite the debt I owe
To one that twice has delivered me so.'

Melissa had nourishing food, and wine, 46
Brought there, and in a trice was obeyed,
And comforted the knight, and made him dine,
That might well have perished without such aid.
Meanwhile Frontino, perchance by her design,
Had appeared and for his master had made,
Whom Leo's squires caught, at his command,
And saddled, and then tethered near at hand.

Ruggiero mounted, with difficulty, 47
Despite Leo's aid, upon the courser,
So feeble was his strength, although he
But a few days before, in full armour,
Had overthrown swathes of the enemy,
And in doing so never lacked for vigour.
Departing, within half a league, they saw
A nearby abbey, and soon reached its door.

There they chose to stay until the morn, 48
Then spent another day, and another,
Resting, till the Knight of the Unicorn
Had been granted full time to recover.
Then Ruggiero, less weary and careworn,
Returned to court, with Leo and Melissa;
Where was found a Bulgarian embassy
That had brought a message from that country.

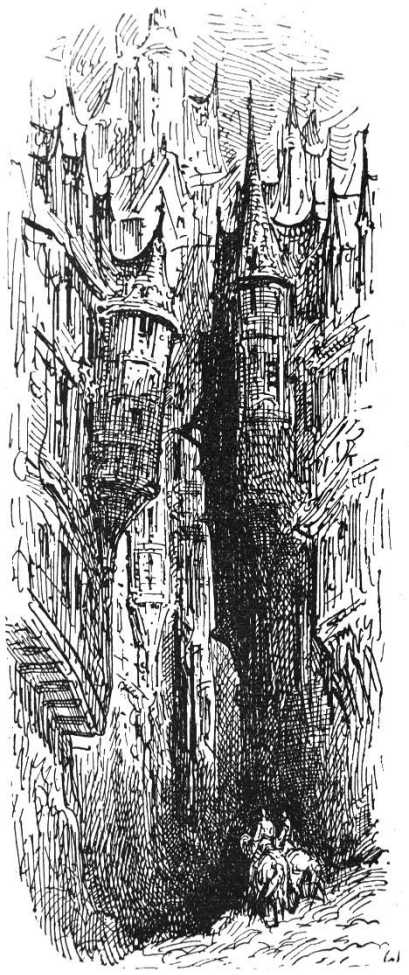
Canto XLVI: 49-52: The Bulgarian embassy

Their nation, who sought him as their king, 49
Wishing him to return, had sent them there,
To France and Charlemagne's court, believing
They might find Ruggiero, and then swear
Allegiance to him, their kingdom granting;
Such was the plea the embassy did bear.
His squire who had met with the embassy
Had spread their news of the knight widely:

The squire had told of the battle he'd won, 50
For the Bulgars, on the field of Belgrade,
How Leo's and his sire's host was undone,
And their people slain, or sore dismayed,
And how the Bulgars now, as a nation,
Wished Ruggiero as king, and so prayed;
And how, at Novigrad, Ungiardo
Having taken him captive did bestow

Ruggiero on the cruel Theodora; 51
And then of how the gaoler was found dead,
And the utter absence of the prisoner;
No more did the Bulgars know, or had said.
Ruggiero, unseen, and under cover
Of a secret path, to lodgings, was led,
And next morn, accompanied by Leo,
To King Charlemagne's court, the pair did go.

He presented himself neath the banner 52
Of the gold two-headed eagle on its field
Of crimson, and he wore, o'er his armour,
A surcoat with those arms; so too his shield
Bore the like; all was the same moreover,
Though damaged, as before had been revealed;
Thus, presenting himself as, by this show,
Him who'd fought Bradamante as her foe.



Stanza 51

Canto XLVI: 53-55: Leo presents the knight who fought the duel with Bradamante

In rich vestments, and adorned regally, 53
Leo, unarmed, approached beside the knight,
And before, and behind him, came a worthy
Flock of noble companions; when in sight
Of Charlemagne he bowed (he, graciously
Had risen to honour him, as was right);
Then Leo took the cavalier by the hand,
As they all watching eyes did, thus, command.

'Behold the champion who did maintain, 54
From the dawn of day to day's end, the fight,
And by Bradamante was nor taken, nor slain,
Nor was driven from the lists; this the knight
Generous sire, whose victory was plain,
If we, here, have read your decree aright,
Who thus has won the right to wed the lady,
And comes here, to be granted her wholly.

Besides the fact that, by that same decree, 55
You can grant to no other man that same,
He has merited her by his valour, surely;
What more worthy husband could one name?
And if the one who loves her best, should be
The one to have her, none has better claim
Than this knight, who will fight against all foes
That would his right to marry her oppose.'

Canto XLVI: 56-60: Who is revealed as Ruggiero

Charlemagne, and all his court, were stupefied, 56
For they'd believed that Leo was the warrior
Who his sword gainst Bradamante had plied,
And not the unknown knight that they now saw.
Marfisa who had heard, and fiercely eyed,
The knight, could scarcely wait to hear more,
And almost before Leo finished speaking
She stood forth boldly, and addressed the king.

'Since Ruggiero is not here, to contest 57
His prior claim and meet this unknown knight;
And lest she, without sufficient protest,
Is borne away from the palace, outright;
I, as his sister, make this just request,
That I, on his behalf, may face in fight
Whoever claims a right to Bradamante,
Or that he, of the maid, is more worthy.'

She spoke with such great anger and disdain 58
In expressing this plea, that many there,
Thought that, without leave from Charlemagne,
She would slay the knight, and end the affair.
It seeming to Leo foolish to maintain
The disguise, Ruggiero's head he did bare,
And called out to her: 'He is ready now
To render his account to you, I'll vow.'

As old Aegeus looked, when he perceived 59
At the accursed feast that, from Medea,
Twas Theseus his son who had received
The poisoned cup she had readied earlier,
The son he might have killed, he believed,
If, by the sword, he'd not known its bearer,
So Marfisa looked when she saw the foe
That she hated, was her Ruggiero!

She clasped him, in a trice, in her embrace, 60
Nor from his neck would she her arms unwind.
Orlando, Rinaldo, the king, did grace
His bare brow with kisses, loving and kind,
Oliviero too thus laved his hands and face,
Dudon and Sobrino close behind.
Nor did paladin nor lord grow weary
Of welcoming a warrior so worthy.

Canto XLVI: 61-64: Leo tells of Ruggiero's deeds and actions

Leo, that was possessed of eloquence, 61
Once they had ceased embracing the knight,
Related before all that audience
(Addressing Charlemagne) how the might
Of the warrior, his skill, martial presence,
And bravery, at Belgrade, midst the fight,
Had outweighed, although he fought for the foe,
For him, the harm that was inflicted so;

Such that when consigned to Theodora 62
(Who was set to torment him, cruelly)
He, had chosen to save the prisoner,
Despite his aunt, and all his family;
And how this Ruggiero had, thereafter,
Repaid his deed with such high chivalry,
With such noble courtesy, that by none
Had he been, or could ever be, outdone.

And then, point by point, he narrated 63
How Ruggiero had served him graciously,
And how, later, believing himself fated,
In his grief at the loss of his lady,
To die, had then starved himself; and stated
How the knight had been aided, in timely
Fashion; and expressed himself so sweetly,
That all were consumed by tears, completely.

Then he addressed such efficacious pleas 64
To the stubborn and prejudiced Amone,
That he not only swayed him, by degrees,
Till his will matched that of Bradamante,
But persuaded that proud lord, on his knees,
To beg forgiveness of the knight, and swiftly
Receive him as his son and son-in-law,
To be bound to Bradamante evermore.

Canto XLVI: 65-66: Bradamante receives the news

To whom the news was brought where she lay, 65
(Her life in doubt) weeping, in her chamber,
With happy cries, as they sped on their way,
By many a breathless, joyful, messenger;
So that the blood that, from the very day
She was first afflicted, had sought to gather
Round her stricken heart, rose in such a tide
Of sudden joy the lady well-nigh died;

The maid was so depleted of vigour, 66
That she could barely stand, yet you ought
To know the strength of spirit within her,
The power of will that to all things she brought.
None dragged to the block, the wheel, the halter,
Or condemned to other death by some court,
And about whose head the black cloth is tied,
Was e'er happier to hear their pardon cried.

Canto XLVI: 67-72: Ruggiero accepts the kingship of Bulgaria

Chiaramonte's and Mongrana's Houses joyed 67
To twine again their kindred branches so;
The Maganzeses, Gano, Gini, were annoyed,
Ginami, Falcone, Count Anselmo,
Though a suitable front these all employed
Their dark and envious feelings not to show,
Yet waited on the time of vengeance, there,
As the fox at the gate awaits the hare;

For they loathed Orlando and Rinaldo; 68
Both had slain many of that wicked clan.
Though curbed by fighting gainst the common foe,
And by the king's wise counsel, to a man
They'd been stirred by the deaths of Pinabello,
And Bertolagi; vengeance was their plan.
Yet naught of their feelings they revealed,
Whilst the truth of those deaths they yet concealed.

The Bulgarians who'd arrived at the court 69
Of Charlemagne hoped (as I have said)
To find the knight who at their side had fought,
(His, the white unicorn on a field of red);
To crown the knight as their king they sought.
Praising their good fortune, with bowed head,
They fell at his feet, on finding him there;
'Return, sire, to Bulgaria,' their prayer;

For, in Adrianople, he'd receive 70
The royal crown, and the jewelled sceptre.
Let him but come, and their folk would believe
They'd be protected by his fame and power;
For Constantine fresh plans did now conceive,
To war in person, and so seize the hour,
While they, with their new king, might aspire
To wrest from him the Eastern Empire.

Ruggiero accepted, won by their plea, 71
And promised to return to Bulgaria,
Within three months, if Fortune was truly
Kind to them all, or even earlier.
Leo, hearing this, addressed him, promptly,
Asking the warrior to trust him further,
For, once Ruggiero was crowned, he'd seek
To make peace twixt Bulgarian and Greek;

Nor need he depart from France so soon, 72
To lead his army and defend his land,
For he'd persuade his father, as a boon,
To return those strongholds he did command.
Of the virtues (to which she'd seemed immune)
Possessed by Ruggiero, you'll understand,
None so endeared Bradamante's mother
To him, as his rise to wealth and power.

Canto XLVI: 73-77: Preparations are made for the marriage

Rich and royal nuptials they prepared, 73
To him who undertook them most fitting,
For Charlemagne in all that pleasure shared,
As if it was his own daughter's wedding.
Such was the promised bride for whom he cared,
Such the merits of her House and following,
The king thought naught too great a measure,
Though it cost him half his kingdom's treasure.

Open court was declared to one and all, 74
And safe welcome to all he did extend,
And whoever the delights of joust did call
To arms there, till the ninth day, might contend.
With leaves and branches he decked every hall,
None e'er as fair, on that you may depend;
In the gardens, too, they wrought sweet bowers,
Rich with silk and gold, adorned with flowers.

All Paris was not able to contain 75
The many guests that now sought lodging there.
Rich and poor, of every quality and strain,
Greeks, Latins, foreigners both strange and rare,
No end of folk from every far domain,
Noblemen, embassies, sought that affair;
But all were found fair shelter, new created,
In huts, tents or booths accommodated.

Melissa had, against the wedding night, 76
Decked out a marriage chamber for the pair,
Filled with finest adornments, fair and bright,
That had taken long hours to so prepare.
For many a year she had, with second sight,
Anticipated their sweet coupling there,
Since, in foreseeing the future, she knew
That their stem would bear a fruitful issue.

She had there arranged a welcoming bed, 77
Beneath a broad and spacious canopy,
None richer, more ornate was ever spread
In war or peace, nor one more lovely,
For to Thracian shores the wise mage had sped,
And from thence she had conveyed it, swiftly.
That costly thing she took from Constantine,
That in his realm did sport, beside the brine.

Canto XLVI: 78-84: The bridal canopy

Melissa, with the knowledge of Leo, 78
And the better to provoke his wonder,
A fine example of her art, would show,
Who could draw Hell's great serpent to her,
And rule him and all his, sunk deep below,
All that brood, God's enemies forever;
Thus, to Paris, she'd made tamed demons bear
It, from Constantinople, through the air.

Constantine lay beneath it, who held sway 79
Over the Eastern Empire; when the sun
Had reached the zenith, they whisked it away,
With its cords, and poles, and curtains every one,
And, flying through the sky thus, at mid-day
Brought it, to roof the bed; the first night done,
They turned about, a like course did maintain,
And, magically, bore it back again.

Two thousand years before, that canopy 80
Had been woven, and in such rich fashion,
Created, midst the heat of prophecy,
By a maid of Troy, and wrought with passion.
Her hands had laboured with care and study,
To embroider the whole, and that Trojan
Prophetess was Cassandra who to brave
Hector, her brother, that fair gift conveyed.

The noblest knight that would, in time, arise 81
From out that brother's stock, she portrayed
(Far distant from that root, neath other skies,
With many a branch betwixt ere he be made)
With her own hand, his form did realise,
In varied silks, and rich gold thread, displayed.
While he lived Hector prized it greatly,
For the work therein, and the learned lady.

But when Troy's great champion lay dead, 82
And the Greeks yet laid siege to the city;
When false Sinon the citizens misled,
And greater ill was done than told in story,
It passed through Menelaus' hands instead,
And to Egypt went with him, its destiny
To be granted Proteus, Egypt's great lord,
When that king, to him, fair Helen restored,

Whom he had taken captive; to free her 83
The Greek gave, in ransom, this canopy,
In time inherited by Cleopatra,
An heirloom of the House of Ptolemy,
To be seized by Agrippa's navy later,
At Actium, midst the Leucadian Sea;
To Octavian, then Tiberius it came,
Held in Rome, till Constantine laid claim;

Constantine the Great, whose reign you'll rue, 84
Fair Italy, while the heavens turn, for he
When wearied of the Tiber built anew;
To his Byzantium went the canopy.
To Melissa, from his namesake, now it flew,
Its cords of gold, its poles of ivory,
Its cloth with lovely figures overlaid,
Far fairer than Apelles' brush ere made.

Canto XLVI: 85-97: Its prophetic portrayal of Ippolito d'Este

Upon it, the Graces, in sweet attire, 85
Were portrayed aiding the delivery
Of a noble son; none finer an entire
Four ages of this world could ever see.
There Venus, Mars and Jove, stood to admire
The child, beside eloquent Mercury,
And scattered, o'er him, heavenly showers
Of ethereal, ambrosial flowers.

'Ippolito', inscribed there, could be read, 86
On his garment, in minute lettering.
There (older now) by Fortune he was led
Tight by the hand, with Virtue preceding.
Next in long robes, with dangling locks outspread,
Came those of King Corvinus' following,
Requesting the young child leave his father,
For Hungary, to be ordained with honour;

Parting respectfully from Ercole, 87
He was seen, and Eleanor, his mother;
Then, beside the Danube, being widely
Adored, with a near-religious fervour,
There where the prudent king of Hungary
To his ripening knowledge did great honour,
And, given the child's tender unripe years,
Esteemed him above all his lords and peers.

Next, while still a child, he was portrayed, 88
With Esztergom's crozier in his hand;
Then with the king at court, and on parade,
And next, afield, as the troops, on command,
Gainst Turks, gainst Germans, some venture made,
Where the king was shown leading his brave band,
Ippolito there (midst the canopy)
Gaining virtue, watching attentively.

Then he, in the flower of youth, was shown 89
His time spent midst the arts, or studying;
With our Tommaso Fusco both well-known
And hidden thoughts of past times revealing.
'Shun this,' he seemed to say, 'mark this alone,
If you'd achieve things worth remembering.'
On the canopy those scenes were displayed,
Where every gesture its maker had portrayed.

Then, as a cardinal, his form was viewed 90
Still young, in council at the Vatican,
With eloquence and intellect imbued,
Such as to stun the conclave to a man.
'What will he become, this but a prelude?'
(They seemed to say, amidst the fabric's plan)
'Were Peter's mantle to grace such as he,
How blessed the age, how fair our century!'

Elsewhere his liberal pleasures met the sight, 91
His youthful sports; as on some Alpine steep
He faced a bear, or, neath the mountain height,
Chased wild-boar, along some marshy deep;
Now, on his jennet, like the wind in flight,
Chasing a goat or deer, some stream to leap,
The quarry falling on the dusty sward,
Near sliced in two by his descending sword.

Next, he was seen amidst a fine array 92
Of poets and philosophers; one there
Charted the planets on their wandering way,
Others Heaven's secrets and Earth's laid bare,
Chanted sad elegies, joyful verse, a lay,
Heard graceful odes, or dined on epic fare.
He was shown listening, in another place,
To sweet music, and dancing with true grace.

Upon the first part of that canopy 93
Was portrayed the youth of this noble lord.
Cassandra had woven there, equally,
Acts of justice, prudence, the brave sword,
True modesty, and generosity
The fifth virtue that goes with them abroad,
The virtue that dictates we give, and spend,
And lights the rest, the other virtues' friend.

In the next, the princely youth was portrayed 94
With the unhappy duke, midst his Insubri;
Seated in counsel with that lord, displayed,
And then, both armed, neath the Biscione,
Bound by a loyalty that could not fade,
Through happy times, and days of misery;
Following him in flight; in affliction
His comfort, in danger his companion.

Elsewhere he was seen, now deep in thought, 95
Fearing for Ferrara, and Alfonso,
Who for proof of treachery had sought,
Such found, and shown to wise Ippolito,
The plot forged by their closest kin, at court,
By two he had held most dear; shown also
His receiving the title, long ago
Bestowed by a free Rome on Cicero.

Again, he was seen in gleaming armour, 96
Hastening to aid Holy Church, his force
Inadequate, and prone to disorder,
Opposing an experienced counter-force,
Yet his sole presence brought such succour,
To those ecclesiastics, that, in due course,
The fire was extinguished ere it spread;
'Veni, vidi, vici,' it might be said.

And, at last, was shown, from his native shore, 97
Fighting a mightier fleet than those sent,
By Venice, against Turks and Greeks before;
And then, once he had conquered it, and sent,
To his brother, spoils and captives, and more,
Was portrayed as, still, upon honour bent,
The sole prize that he could not give away,
But must retain himself, from that great day.

Canto XLVI: 98-100: Bradamante and Ruggiero recognise the hero there displayed

The knight and ladies viewed that canopy, 98
Yet could give no meaning to the tale told,
Since there was none to gloss the prophecy,
Nor that story of things to come unfold.
They took pleasure, simply, in its beauty,
And read the texts; twas like some myth of old.
But Bradamante, taught by Melissa,
Silently rejoiced; she viewed the future;

And Ruggiero as well, though not so taught 99
Unlike Bradamante, now recalled to mind
How Atlante had their descendants sought
To name, and had this prince's deeds outlined.
What shall I say of Charlemagne's fair court;
How tell of every courtesy, there designed?
Of the festive scenes and games, all applaud;
Of the food and drink, weighing down the board?

Knights jousted to test each other's valour, 100
And broke a thousand lances every day,
As, on foot or horseback, they sought honour,
In single combat, or in mixed affray.
Ruggiero shone beyond any other,
Who always conquered, be it night or day.
In fighting, wrestling, dancing, his, the prize;
He the foremost there, in all others' eyes.

Canto XLVI: 101-106: Rodomonte appears and challenges Ruggiero

On the last day, when the sober company 101
Were seated, to begin their sumptuous feast,
With Ruggiero on the left, and Bradamante
On Charlemagne's right, ere the noise increased,
From the fields beyond, there entered, swiftly,
An armed knight, in stature not of the least,
Of proud semblance, and all his courser's back,
And flanks were, like himself, clad all in black.

Twas the bold King of Algiers, Rodomonte, 102
Who had sworn, when from the bridge he fell,
And suffered there such scorn from the lady,
Not to bear arms, or draw sword, for a spell.
A year, a month, and a day, silently,
He'd spent, like some monk in his humble cell;
As, to punish themselves, in former times,
Such knights would do, as penance for their crimes.

He had heard, in those months, of Agramante, 103
And the successes of King Charlemagne,
But not to forswear himself, kept wholly
From the war, and strict silence did maintain.
But when the year and the month had (slowly)
Passed, and then the day, he had armed again,
And with new armour, courser, sword and lance,
Had journeyed, thus, to the court of France.

Without dismounting, or bowing his head, 104
With not a single sign of reverence,
He showed the scorn that e'er in him was bred,
Of this king and his lords, his pride immense.
Astounded, to a wondering silence wed,
The rest were amazed at such bold licence.
They ceased their feast, and all conversation,
And gazed at the knight, in consternation.

Then to Charlemagne, and Ruggiero, 105
With a voice that was loud, and full of pride,
'Rodomonte of Sarza, and your foe,
Am I, and here I challenge you,' he cried,
'You Ruggiero, ere the sun shall go,
That, disloyal to your lord, your aid denied,
That, as a traitor to Agramante,
Of this company have proved unworthy.

And, though your felony is plain to all, 106
Which you, now a Christian, cannot deny,
To proclaim it clearly, here, on you, I call
To show yourself upon the field, and die;
Or if to another such response must fall,
If one will fight for you, or two, say I,
Or three, or more, I'll deal with them instead
And maintain, thereby, all that I have said.'

Canto XLVI: 107-110: Who refutes his accusation and accepts the contest

Ruggiero, at his words, leapt to his feet, 107
And, with licence from the king, he replied.
That if the knight, if all the world complete,
Declared that he was a traitor, then they lied;
That he had served, in victory and defeat,
His lord in a blameless manner, and with pride;
And was prepared in battle to maintain
That he had done so, before Charlemagne.

And that he would himself defend his cause, 108
No need had he for help from another,
Indeed, he hoped (and here he made a pause)
To show that but one his strength would master.
Orlando and Rinaldo, to such wars
Ever drawn, and Dudon sought to offer,
With Marfisa and Oliviero,
And his two sons, to replace him though;

All arguing that, as one newly-wed, 109
He should refuse to contend in person.
Ruggiero answered: 'Let no more be said;
Such I dismiss, tis no valid reason.'
Those arms, once the Tartar's, he, instead,
Took up, thus ending the conversation.
With spurs Orlando decked the youthful lord,
While Charlemagne attended to his sword.

Bradamante and Marfisa encased 110
Him in the breastplate; the rest did follow.
Astolfo led his mount, that nobly paced.
Dudon held the stirrup, while Rinaldo
And Duke Namus, the eager crowd now chased
From the lists, helped by Oliviero;
The lists maintained there in case of need.
And now Ruggiero leapt upon his steed.

Canto XLVI: 111-114: Bradamante watches on anxiously

The ladies, the maidens, their faces pale, 111
Fluttered like doves, round the lists, timidly,
Fearful doves, driven by the wind and hail
From the pleasant field, trembling, anxiously,
Lest lightning and peals of thunder prevail,
As the sky turns threatening, doves prone to flee;
Troubled for Ruggiero, they gazed, in fright,
He seemingly ill-matched with this fierce knight.

So, the crowd thought; so, the majority 112
Of the lords and knights now gathered there,
Whose minds dwelt on all that Rodomonte
Had wrought in Paris, in that late affair,
When, unsupported, with fire and sword, he
Had laid a large part of the city bare,
Leaving the marks of a disaster more
Complete than any it had known before.

Bradamante's heart was disturbed the most; 113
Not that she believed the Saracen king
Could of a greater strength or valour boast;
True valour; than Ruggiero, nor deeming
His, the better cause (which, despite a host
Of troubles, may greater courage bring)
Nonetheless she was not quite free of doubt.
Fear stirred the courage love is ne'er without;

Oh, how willingly she would have lifted 114
From him the burden of that perilous fight,
E'en if she could do naught but join the dead
As seemed certain, facing the pagan knight.
For more than one death she'd die, in his stead,
Were such possible, embracing death outright,
Rather than suffer him she loved to meet
With mortal peril; dreading his defeat.

Canto XLVI: 115-118: The duel begins

It had proved of no avail that she'd prayed 115
Ruggiero to yield her the encounter;
With sad face and beating heart, sore afraid,
She must gaze on as he spurred on his courser.
To right and left, the pair their lances weighed,
And, lowering the steel, charged at each other.
Like ice the lances shattered, and on high
A host of splinters flew towards the sky.

Rodomonte's lance struck against the shield, 116
And did but little harm to Ruggiero,
For Hector's armour its great strength revealed,
Wrought by Vulcan, undamaged by the blow.
His own lance forced the other's targe to yield,
And passed through the heart of it (although
It was clad with steel, solid bone within,
And a palm's width thick) as if twere but tin.



Stanza 115

And had his lance not broken at the blow, 117
Thus, failing him at the first encounter,
Shattering to splinters, that ascended so,
They rained down again, a savage shower,
The lance would have pierced his pagan foe,
Though adamantine had been his armour,
And ended the fight; but breaking withal,
Both coursers reared, and then were seen to fall.

With spur and bridle, the knights, instantly, 118
Forced their steeds to rise, swiftly, from the ground,
Then they, their spears now shattered, turned, fiercely,
To their swords, as fresh ardour both men found.
Their blades struck here and there, remorselessly,
As that pair swung their two coursers around,
Feeling the steel's keen edge begin to bite,
Probing where'er the plate seemed thin and light.

Canto XLVI: 119-123: Rodomonte's sword is shattered

Rodomonte lacked that solid serpent's-hide 119
That had armoured his chest previously,
Nor was it Nimrod's sword he now applied
To the other, nor the helm that which he
Once used to wear, for on the losing side
Was he, at the bridge, gainst Bradamante,
And in the chapel was that armour left,
(As I have said) of which, he was bereft.

The king was clad in other plate and mail, 120
Yet less strong than was the first was the steel,
Though neither those nor finer could avail
Gainst Balisarda whose force all must feel.
All enchantment, all armour could but fail
Struck by the blade that such strokes did deal.
Ruggiero laboured to make each blow tell
That upon the pagan's helm and breast now fell.

When the king saw the blood begin to flow 121
From out his armour, unable to escape
The fearful impact of fierce blow on blow,
That pierced and cut him, till the flesh did gape,
A greater fury through his mind did flow,
Than a wintry sea's that the storm-clouds drape.
He flung down his shield, grasped outright
Ruggiero's helm, and beat with all his might.

With the extreme force which that machine 122
Set on two barges in the River Po,
Raised by both wheels and human strength, I've seen
Apply to the tough sharpened piles below,
He beat upon Ruggiero's helm, with spleen,
As each hand dealt many a might blow.
The enchanted helm stood firm, even then,
Or man and steed had fallen once again.

Twice Ruggiero seemed to bow his head, 123
Arms and legs slack, as if about to fall,
While the Saracen, longing to see him dead,
Smote again ere his wits he could recall,
Using his sword's pommel, but instead
Of him maiming, the steel broke with its fall,
Flew to pieces, leaving Rodomonte
Bereft of the blade, his hand nigh empty.

Canto XLVI: 124–127: Ruggiero is thrown, and fights on foot

Rodomonte ceased not from the attack, 124
But swooped upon the dazed Ruggiero
(His brains so rattled he his wits did lack,
His mind bemused, swaying to and fro).
The pagan king now had him on the rack,
Who, waking him from sleep, his strength did show,
Grasping him, by the neck, with such force
Our hero fell to earth, dragged from his horse.

Nonetheless, Ruggiero rose from the ground, 125
Filled more by vengeful anger than shame,
For Bradamante's anxious gaze he found
Amidst the crowd; sore troubled was that same,
Doubtful his fall had left him safe and sound,
And feeling her heart pounding in its frame.
Ruggiero hastening to avoid dishonour
Grasped his sword, and sped towards the other.

He rode at Ruggiero who, warily, 126
Side-stepped, to escape the sudden blow,
But, as he did, he grasped the bridle, cleanly,
And, with his left hand, thus turned his foe,
While, with his right he struck at his belly
And flank to wound him, striking from below,
Such that Rodomonte, as he passed by,
Was pierced once in the side, once in the thigh.

Rodomonte, still clasping in his hand 127
The hilt and pommel of his shattered blade,
A blow upon Ruggiero's helm did land,
Whom another such might have sore dismayed.
But he, who the better cause did command,
Seized his arm and, as Rodomonte swayed,
Using both hands, a firmer purchase found,
And dragged him from the saddle to the ground.

Canto XLVI: 128–130: The pagan king is weakened by his wounds

Through strength, or skill, the pagan so fell 128
That he was yet a match for Ruggiero.
He landed on his feet, and thus twas well
That the latter had his sword, and not the foe.
With the blade, our hero sought to compel
Rodomonte to retreat, yet even so
Was fearful of the power of that knight,
His height and bulk a threat in any fight.

He could see that he bled from flank and thigh, 129
And many another wound, here and there,
And hoped he might so weaken, by and by,
That he himself could end the dread affair.
Yet that hilt, that pommel, falling from the sky,
Smote hard, pained and bruised him everywhere.
Rodomonte's blows such weight and power bore,
They stunned him, as he'd ne'er been stunned before.

On the cheek of his helm, on his shoulder, 130
Ruggiero was struck, and felt each blow;
He could scarcely keep his wits together,
As he faltered, and staggered to and fro,
Rodomonte sought to close with the other,
But his legs failed him, being weakened so,
(His wounded thigh caused this impotence)
And he fell to his knees, offering no defence.

Canto XLVI: 131–134: They wrestle and Ruggiero gains the advantage

Ruggiero lost no time, striking fiercely 131
With his sword at the pagan's face and chest.
Hammered at him, then gripped him tightly,
To drag him to the ground, he thought best.
But the king rose again, clasped him closely,
Such that the pair were locked, breast to breast,
They shifted their holds, grasped, and heaved
Adding art to their moves, yet naught achieved.

His wounded thigh and his raw, gaping side, 132
Had drained much of Rodomonte's vigour;
Ruggiero, dextrously, fresh force applied,
Being noted, in the ring, for skill and valour.
He felt the advantage did with him abide,
And thus pressed the pagan hard, wherever
His wounds were causing the king most pain,
Such that great drops of blood now fell, like rain.

Filled with fury and spite, Rodomonte 133
Grasped his foe by the neck and shoulder,
Bent him back and forward, then fiercely
Raised him upwards, ere he could recover,
Dragged him about, and clasped him tightly,
Seeking a throw that might swiftly conquer,
Ruggiero yet working his advantage,
With great skill, while containing his own rage,

Who pressed once more, and altering his hold, 134
Thrust his left side against the other's chest,
Clasping tightly; and though the move was bold,
Straining with all his might, gainst arms and breast,
Forced his right leg gainst the knees, and, behold,
From the ground the warrior he did wrest,
And raising him high as he could, he then
Hurled his foe, face upwards, to the earth, again.

Canto XLVI: 135-140: Ruggiero triumphs, Rodomonte is slain

The ground shook at his fall, his head and spine 135
Nigh compressed, such was the force of the blow;
The ground was bloodied, while a crimson line
Of blood and gore from out each wound did flow,
Ruggiero's hand in Fortune's hair did twine,
Yet gripped the throat, lest he rise, of his foe;
He set his knees on his belly, moreover,
Pointing his dagger at the king's visor.

As sometimes happens as they mine gold ore 136
In Iberia or Pannonia,
The workings collapse, the props unsure,
And bury those that avarice would murder,
While the spoil that grips them in its claw,
Passage for the spirit scarce doth offer,
No less oppressed lay that warrior
Pressed to the ground by his conqueror.

Ruggiero to his eyes did now present 137
The tip of the naked blade he'd revealed,
Threatening to slay him, and yet content
To spare Rodomonte if he'd yield;
But the latter, who had rather been rent
Limb from limb than be shamed upon the field,
Who struggled, and sought, with all his vigour,
To pull him down, not one word did utter.

Like a mastiff that beneath a deer-hound lies, 138
That has its teeth fixed in his throat, firmly,
Who struggles hard, and vainly tries to rise,
His jaws smeared with foam, eyes burning fiercely,
Yet fails to free himself, howe'er he tries,
From one that wins by force not by anger,
So, in vain the monarch strove, pinned below,
To issue from the grasp of Ruggiero.

And he so writhed and twisted that he gained 139
The freedom of his good right arm, once more,
And with his hand upon his dagger, strained
(For he had drawn the weapon long before)
To wound Ruggiero in the loins, maintained
Some purchase, but the young knight swiftly saw
The error in his choosing to delay
The evil pagan's end, and not to slay;

For twice, and thrice, he raised his arm on high, 140
As high as strength and will would yet allow,
And buried the steel, falling from the sky,
In Rodomonte's dark and dreadful brow.
From the ice-cold flesh, with blasphemous cry,
The indignant spirit fled, to wander, now,
Acheron's squalid shore, amidst the crowd,
That was, on earth, so haughty and so proud.



Stanza 140



Stanza 134 "*He then hurled his foe, face upwards, to the earth*"

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

A S. Kline is the author and/or translator of the majority of works hosted by Poetry in Translation. He was born in 1947 and lives in England. He graduated in Mathematics from the University of Manchester, and was Chief Information Officer (Systems Director) of a large UK Company, before dedicating himself to his literary work and interests. His work consists of translations of poetry; critical works, biographical history with poetry as a central theme; and his own original poetry. He has translated into English from Latin, Ancient Greek, Classical Chinese and the European languages. He also maintains a deep interest in developments in Mathematics and the Sciences.

He continues to write predominantly for the Internet, making all works available as open access, with an added focus on the rapidly developing area of electronic books. His most extensive works are complete translations of Ovid's Metamorphoses and Dante's Divine Comedy, both published electronically, with a comprehensive in-depth index fully hyper-linked to the text. Many of his works have also been published in printed book and audio formats.

