

Another common objection is the inquisitorial character of the investigation into one's business and personal affairs which such a system makes necessary. This is, however, easily met by the consideration that a revenue has to be raised in some way, and that the inquisitorial method is necessarily still more trying and offensive under a tariff system. It is not easy to see why a good citizen should seriously object to letting a properly accredited official, or even the whole community, know the amount of his annual income, but it is often not a little annoying to be obliged to exhibit to the customs collector or his clerks the contents and cost of every little or large importation we may choose to make, with all the accompanying trouble and loss of time.

NOTES ON DANTE.—V.

PURGATORIO.

Passing from the Inferno to the Purgatorio we are struck by resemblances and differences. The Inferno is a hollow, inverted cone, the passage of which becomes more difficult as we descend. The Purgatorio is a mountain of which the ascent ever grows easier. Both are places of suffering; but the one has the suffering of hopeless misery, which hardens and destroys; the other the suffering of hope and joy, which purifies, elevates, and qualifies for higher life and experience. The reason in each case is plain. The one class is out of Grace, the other is in grace. Impenitence and unbelief shut out every gracious influence; penitence and lowliness and love lay the soul open to every higher power. In the Inferno we see sin in actual working. In the Purgatorio we see the *principle* of sin purged away.

Both have nine circles. Both have a Vestibule; although in the Inferno this is not one of the nine circles; it is one of the nine in the Purgatorio. In the vestibule are those who delayed their repentance to the last. On the summit of the mountain is the earthly paradise, lost in Adam, recovered by the second Adam, and entered by those who have passed through cleansing fires. Between those two extremes are seven circles in which the seven cardinal sins are cleansed away. There is another difference: As we descend into the Inferno, the sins become more heinous; as we ascend the mount of purification, they become lighter. For example, sensuality is the first sin punished in the Inferno, it is the last cleansed in the Purgatorio. Instead of the horrid Charon, the ferryman of hell, there is an angel in a boat with no other sail than the angel's wings.

We do not propose here to enter into any discussion of the Intermediate State. We take Dante's representations just as they stand, and we shall find a profound spiritual meaning in them. However it may be in the state between death and the resurrection, we have at least in this life the spiritual process which is represented in this great poem, the purification of the regenerate soul from natural defilement and acquired evil habit.

The opening lines of the poem declare the change which has taken place since we left the Inferno.

"O'er better waves to speed her rapid course
The light bark of my genius lifts the sail."

All is changed. We have passed from darkness to light, from fierce hurricanes to gentle gales, from pestilential vapours to pure and fragrant air. Beginning at the shore of humility, we pass into the vestibule, lying at the base of the mountain inhabited by the negligent, who had delayed their repentance until the hour of death and are detained there for a season before entering Purgatory proper.

But we must begin at the beginning. The first thing that caught Dante's eye was the Southern Cross, a constellation of four stars, which symbolize the four cardinal virtues of Plato—wisdom or prudence, courage, temperance, and justice. We should note here that afterwards three stars are seen, symbolizing the Christian graces, or theological virtues—Faith, Hope and Charity—the seven altogether making up the seven virtues of the schoolmen.

Next they see an old man, Cato, the highest embodiment of merely human morality, the four luminaries shining on his face. Cato tells Virgil to bind Dante with a tender reed in token of humility, the starting point of all evangelical goodness; and to bathe and cleanse his face which had been soiled and disfigured by the smoke of hell. As the sun rises, the poet, looking across the sea, beholds a light approaching swiftly and growing brighter as it approaches. The brightness takes the form of wings. It is the angel of God, the heavenly ferryman, with the bark in which he conveys passengers to Purgatory.

Many souls are in the boat; they are being conducted by the angel from the estuary of the Tiber to the mount of purification. Having been absolved by the Church they are ready to enter on the new life. In the vestibule to which they now come they find four classes of those who delayed repentance. 1. Those dying excommunicated, but contrite. 2. Those presuming on God's mercy and delaying their repentance till death. 3. The negligent of the same class who died by violence. 4. Those who, through pre-occupation of political cares, delayed repentance. These are punished by periods of detention in the vestibule before being allowed to enter Purgatory proper.

Dante falls into sleep and is conveyed by S. Lucy, prevenient Grace, the illuminator, to the gate of Purgatory, which is entered by three steps, the first of white marble in which the face is reflected, signifying self-examination and self-knowledge, the second cracked and broken, signifying contrition, and the third of porphyry, signifying fervent resolve passing into love. An angel is seated on the upper step who, with his blunt sword, marks the brow of Dante with seven P's, signifying the seven cardinal sins, which have to be effaced as he rises from stage to stage in the process of purification.

1. The first of the terraces, or cornices, to which the ascent is made by a spiral stair, is occupied by the proud (ix-xii.). Pride, the principle of self-idolatry, the principle which makes self and not God the centre of all things, is the deepest root of every form of evil. It is the same which modern theologians and moralists generally designate as selfishness. At the back of the terrace a high cliff of white marble rises, sculptured with stories of humility in bas relief, designed for the instruction of

the penitent. First comes the beautiful story of the Annunciation, followed by others containing the same lesson of humility.

The proud are chastened by having to march along, bowed to the earth by great weights. Dante could hardly make out the human form in them. But this is the cure as well as the punishment of pride. If he that exalteth himself must be abased, it is equally true that those who humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, He will exalt in due time.

The proud repeat the Lord's Prayer, of which a beautiful expansion is given (xi. 1-24). Then illustrations are given of the different forms of pride: Pride of birth, pride of art and intellect, ambition and the love of popularity. There are no purse-proud people mentioned. That form of pride could hardly have been unknown, although perhaps it was not so fully developed as in our own day. Dante is now cleansed of pride, the angel brushing his brow with his wing and removing the first P. As they go up they hear voices singing: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Lightened by the removal of a letter and the cleansing of a sin, he ascends to the next terrace with ease.

2. In the second cornice, the sin of envy is purged (xiii. and xiv.). Just as in the first circle there were representatives of examples of humility, for the instruction of the proud, so here, as they pass along, they hear invisible spirits singing songs commending the exercise of love to friend and foe. In the one case pictorial art is introduced as an instrument of moral instruction and progress, in the other case music. Shortly they come upon a number of persons, "Shadows with garments dark as was the rock." They are sufferers leaning on each other and on the cliff, blinded by a thread of wire passing through the eye ball. Blindness is at once a cause and an effect of envy. Virgil consoles them with the hope of vision hereafter. A beautiful passage, beginning "Evening was there, and here the moon of night" (xv.) should be noted. They now ascend the mount and hear the chant, "Benedicite misericordias—Blessed are the merciful," and the second letter is effaced.

Before leaving Dante is anxious to understand one element in the condemnation of envy, namely, that the wider distribution of good does not take from those who possess, but adds to their happiness (xv., 106).

Virgil replies:

"The highest good
Unlimited, ineffable, doth so speed
To love, as beam to lucid body darts,
Giving as much of ardor as it finds.
So that the more aspirants to that bliss
Are multiplied, more good is there to love
And more is loved; as mirrors that reflect
Each unto other, propagated light."

3. They are now approaching the circle of the wrathful. As they go on they become gradually enveloped in a fog which gathers around them, so that Dante moves like a blind man, to be led by Virgil. On the way they meet with examples of meekness, for instance, Mary and Joseph finding Jesus in the temple, and Stephen praying for his persecutors. The sufferers are praying to the Father of God, as the embodiment of divine meekness. Among the wrathful they find Marco Lombardo who explains that the evil which exists is not the fruit of nature or of necessity, but the cause of man's perversion of his freedom.