

Before me things create were none,
 save things
 Eternal, and eternal I endure
 All hope abandon ye who enter
 here.

Entering the dark abode of wretchedness, they found themselves among the cowardly or pusillanimous, the shameful ones too low for either good or evil, cast out from Heaven and Hell, the scorn of all, who had no energy even to commit sin. "Speak not of them," says Virgil, "but look and pass them by," and they pass on through the host of shadows forever following a whirling banner in endless pursuit. They cross the River Styx, where Charon, the infernal ferry-man, carries over the myriad of unhappy souls to the presence of Minos, who, in the second circle, appoints them their place among the lost.

The first circle, the Limbo of Hell, holds all the souls of unbaptised infants and of the virtuous heathen. Here is no suffering, no sorrow except the absence of God, while on a green plain, watered by a clear river, rises a noble castle, where dwell all the great and noble of antiquity, those who from no fault of theirs, did not worship the true God. Here are Homer, Horace, Lucan, Electra, Antigone, Marzia, Aristotle, and many others, who give Dante kindly greeting. Here he is hailed as a brother among the great poets, a goodly company, one feels that one's lot might be worse cast than in this dim abode of noble spirits. Life could hardly fail to be interesting in such company.

In the next three circles are those punished for the abuse of natural passions and desires. In the second circle the incontinent in love are forever

carried round in a furious whirlwind. Among them are the famous lovers Paolo and Francesca. In the third circle are the intemperate in food and drink, punished with hailstorms and freezing cold. In the fourth circle are the spendthrifts and the avaricious who are rolling great weights. In the fifth circle the passionate are choked beneath foul waters. Then follows the descent to the City of Dis, which is seen from afar, burning with lurid glow; here Dante and Virgil have difficulty in entering, for demons and furies oppose their entrance. A rushing sound is heard and across the foul waters appears an angelic being whose feet scarcely touch the surface. At the touch of his wand the gates fly open; he rebukes the cowering spirits and demons, who retreat before him, and the pilgrims enter unhurt, and come to where in the sixth circle, the heretics are imprisoned in burning tombs. They then descend by a steep rock to the abode of the violent, who are punished in three successive rounds of the seventh circle.

Dante distinguishes between the sins arising from the nature of Man (Natural Passion, Intemperance, Lust, etc.,) and those which do violence to his nature (Fraud, Treachery, etc.,) and punishes the latter with far greater severity. From the last place they descend a chasm on the back of a monster, with the face of a beautiful human being, the image of Fraud, to Malebolge where in ten lessening rounds, the fraudulent ones are punished in the eighth circle. Here are the seducers, flatterers, soothsayers, thieves and many others. They are punished by scourg-