

CANTO VI--Dyscomfytur

As one who strives a hill to climb, Who never climbed before: Who finds it, in
a little time, Grow every moment less sublime, And votes the thing a bore:

Yet, having once begun to try, Dares not desert his quest, But, climbing,
ever keeps his eye On one small hut against the sky Wherein he hopes to
rest:

Who climbs till nerve and force are spent, With many a puff and pant: Who
still, as rises the ascent, In language grows more violent, Although in breath
more scant:

Who, climbing, gains at length the place That crowns the upward track.
And, entering with unsteady pace, Receives a buffet in the face That lands
him on his back:

And feels himself, like one in sleep, Glide swiftly down again, A helpless
weight, from steep to steep, Till, with a headlong giddy sweep, He drops
upon the plain-

So I, that had resolved to bring Conviction to a ghost, And found it quite a
different thing From any human arguing, Yet dared not quit my post

But, keeping still the end in view To which I hoped to come, I strove to prove
the matter true By putting everything I knew Into an axiom:

Commencing every single phrase With 'therefore' or 'because,' I blindly
reeled, a hundred ways, About the syllogistic maze, Unconscious where I
was.

Quoth he "That's regular clap-trap: Don't bluster any more. Now DO be cool
and take a nap! Such a ridiculous old chap Was never seen before!

"You're like a man I used to meet, Who got one day so furious In arguing,

the simple heat Scorched both his slippers off his feet!" I said "THAT'S VERY CURIOUS!"

"Well, it IS curious, I agree, And sounds perhaps like fibs: But still it's true as true can be - As sure as your name's Tibbs," said he. I said "My name's NOT Tibbs."

"NOT Tibbs!" he cried--his tone became A shade or two less hearty - "Why, no," said I. "My proper name Is Tibbets--" "Tibbets?" "Aye, the same." "Why, then YOU'RE NOT THE PARTY!"

With that he struck the board a blow That shivered half the glasses. "Why couldn't you have told me so Three quarters of an hour ago, You prince of all the asses?"

"To walk four miles through mud and rain, To spend the night in smoking, And then to find that it's in vain - And I've to do it all again - It's really TOO provoking!"

"Don't talk!" he cried, as I began To mutter some excuse. "Who can have patience with a man That's got no more discretion than An idiotic goose?"

"To keep me waiting here, instead Of telling me at once That this was not the house!" he said. "There, that'll do--be off to bed! Don't gape like that, you dunce!"

"It's very fine to throw the blame On ME in such a fashion! Why didn't you enquire my name The very minute that you came?" I answered in a passion.

"Of course it worries you a bit To come so far on foot - But how was I to blame for it?" "Well, well!" said he. "I must admit That isn't badly put."

"And certainly you've given me The best of wine and victual - Excuse my violence," said he, "But accidents like this, you see, They put one out a little."

"'Twas MY fault after all, I find - Shake hands, old Turnip-top!" The name was hardly to my mind, But, as no doubt he meant it kind, I let the matter drop.

"Good-night, old Turnip-top, good-night! When I am gone, perhaps They'll send you some inferior Sprite, Who'll keep you in a constant fright And spoil your soundest naps.

"Tell him you'll stand no sort of trick; Then, if he leers and chuckles, You just be handy with a stick (Mind that it's pretty hard and thick) And rap him on the knuckles!

"Then carelessly remark 'Old coon! Perhaps you're not aware That, if you don't behave, you'll soon Be chuckling to another tune - And so you'd best take care!'

"That's the right way to cure a Sprite Of such like goings-on - But gracious me! It's getting light! Good-night, old Turnip-top, good-night!" A nod, and he was gone.