

THE FANTASTIC GUSTAVE DORÉ

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Gustave Doré

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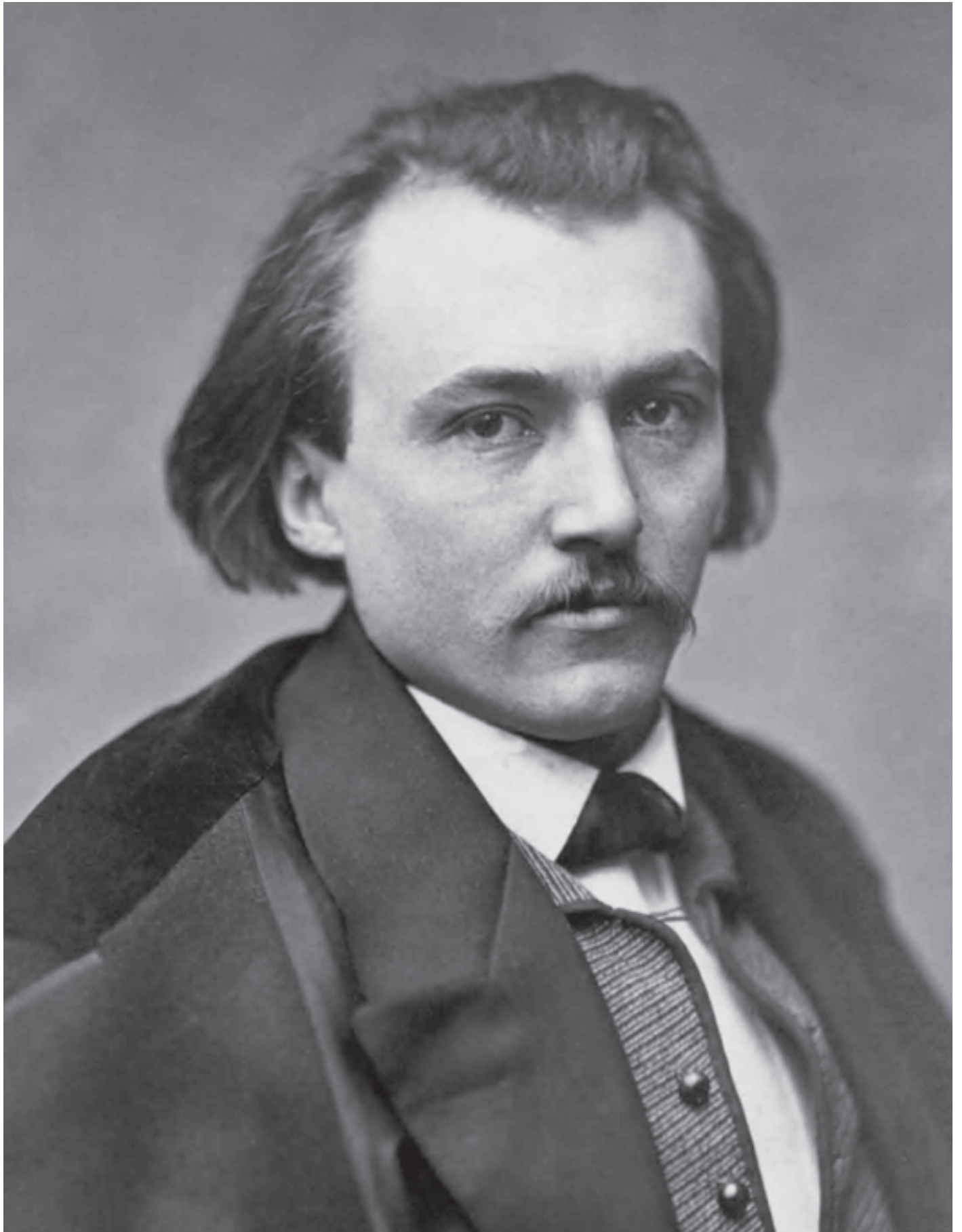
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PREFACE

Illustrator, printmaker, painter, sculptor... Gustave Doré was a complete artist. His literary illustrations have become part of our collective unconscious and continue to influence cinema, animation, graphic novels and advertising. He was one of the most gifted as well as one of the most prolific draughtsmen of the nineteenth century. Aged thirty-three, he ironically declared that he had 'done only 100,000 drawings.' Needless to say, when he died at the age of fifty-one his catalogue raisonné was colossal. The aim of this book is neither to compile nor take stock of his gargantuan production but to highlight the works we consider the most important, most visually striking and most reflective of his career and style.

The works reproduced and discussed in this book were chosen with an array of chronological, thematic and aesthetic criteria in mind. Doré tried his hand at everything, caricaturing his contemporaries, illustrating reports from the battlefield, fables, poetry and novels as well as painting allegorical pictures and landscapes. He produced comical caricatures, serious images, epic visions and contemplative views; he observed reality and yet was a virtuoso of fantasy. It is this profusion and diversity that we have sought to present.

The choices we have made of these works for their aesthetic power are subjective. For this, we take full responsibility. Thematically, stylistically and formally, they strongly reveal Gustave Doré's personality as an artist and his virtuosity, but also his personal tastes: his love of starry nights, forests of tall dark pines, rugged landscapes, sword fights, fairy-tale castles, flying creatures, sea monsters... In short, Doré loved to dream and make us dream. He cultivated the marvellous, the wonderful, the fantastic.



Gustave Doré's List

IN 1865, GUSTAVE DORÉ DICTATED TO HIS MOTHER
A LIST OF THE LITERARY WORKS HE WANTED TO ILLUSTRATE
IN THE YEARS TO FOLLOW. SOME HE HAD ALREADY DONE AND OTHERS
HE WOULD UNFORTUNATELY NEVER DO. THIS LIST WAS REALISED
FOR BLANCHE ROOSEVELT'S BIOGRAPHY OF THE ARTIST FIRST
PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH IN 1885 AND THEN, IN 1887, IN FRENCH.

I conceived at this epoch (1855) the plan of those large folio editions, of which Dante was the first volume published. My idea was then, and always has been since, to produce in a uniform style an edition of all the masterpieces in literature of the best authors, epic, comic, and tragic. But the publishers to whom I submitted this project did not consider my plan a *practical* one. They tried to prove to me that it was not at a time when the business of booksellers and publishers had extreme cheapness for its basis, that they could venture to offer to the public, works which must cost at least *one hundred francs* per volume. They insisted that I had not the slightest chance of success in creating this counter current; whilst I, for my part, reasoned from an entirely opposite point of view, basing my arguments and hopes upon the fact that, in every age when art or industry has exhibited a tendency to languish, there have always remained a few hundred individuals who have protested against so pernicious a state of affairs, and have been ready and willing to pay a handsome price for any careful and well-published work which should be brought out. My arguments, alas! were unavailing; and to prove my words, I was obliged to publish at *my own expense* the first of these books, which happened to be the *Inferno* of Dante. The success, and more especially the sale, of this work fully justified my forecast; and thenceforth my publishers recognized the possibility of producing a grand collection of illustrated books in folio. Of this projected series seven volumes have appeared up to the present time, and should my plans be carefully followed out, this collection should comprise about thirty volumes, the names of which I give you in the following list. I venture to think that it may not be wholly uninteresting to know by anticipation the work I have mapped out for the next *ten years*:

Dante: <i>Inferno</i>	Done.	<i>Romancero</i>	To do.
Dante: <i>Purgatory</i>	To do.	<i>One Thousand and One Nights</i> .	To do.
Dante: <i>Paradise</i>	To do.	Molière	Done.
<i>Fairy Tales of Perrault</i>	Done.	La Fontaine	To do.
<i>Don Quixote</i>	Done.	Racine	To do.
<i>The Imitation of Christ</i>	To do.	Corneille	To do.
<i>Lives of the Saints</i>	To do.	Milton	To do.
Homer: <i>Iliad & Odyssey</i>	To do.	Byron	Done.
Virgil: <i>Georgics & Aeneid</i>	To do.	Spencer	To do.
Ovid: <i>Metamorphoses</i>	To do.	Shakespeare	To do.
Aeschylus: <i>Tragedies</i>	To do.	Goldsmith:	
Horace	To do.	<i>The Vicar of Wakefield</i>	To do.
Anacreon	To do.	Goethe: <i>Faust</i>	To do.
Lucan: <i>Pharsalia</i>	To do.	Schiller: <i>Plays</i>	To do.
Ariosto: <i>Orlando Furioso</i>	To do.	Hoffmann: <i>Tales</i>	To do.
Tasso: <i>Jerusalem Delivered</i> ...	To do.	Lamartine: <i>Poetic Meditations</i> ..	To do.
Ossian	To do.	Plutarch: <i>Lives</i>	To do.
Excerpts from the <i>Edda</i>	To do.	Boccaccio	To do.
<i>Nibelungenlied</i>	To do.	Montaigne	To do.

Here I stop, because I am no longer writing biographical notes, but drawing largely on the future. However, should you need any other special information, I shall be happy to send it by return of post.

Yours, Gustave Doré'

← **Opposite page and subsequent double page:**
Gustave Doré photographed as a portrait by Pierre Petit, ca 1865, and reclining by Oscar Gustave Rejlander, ca 1860.

Gustave Doré

Eclectic Artist & Traveller

1832

6 January, the birth of Louis Auguste Gustave Doré in Strasbourg.

1843

Does his first caricatures and draws from Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

1847

Aged fifteen, he shows his drawings to Charles Philipon, who launches his career in the press.

1837

Aged five, illustrates his letters and school exercise books with drawings.

1845

Aged thirteen, *Vogue de Brou* is his first published work, lithographed at Bourg-en-Bresse.

1848

The Doré family joins Gustave in Paris. With two drawings, he exhibits for the first time at the Salon of Painting and Sculpture, known simply as 'The Salon', and contributes to the satirical *Journal pour rire*.

1883

On 23 January, Gustave Doré dies of a violent attack of angina at his home in Paris.

1879

Last major literary illustration, Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. He is made an officer in the Legion of Honour.

1877

Shows a sculpture, *Fate and Love*, for the first time at the Salon.

1882

Last large-scale religious painting: *The Vale of Tears*.

1878

An asthmatic, he has his first attacks of angina, which he remedies with stays in the Swiss Alps and the use of opium.

1873

Ten-week trip to Scotland.

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

Doré led a very active social life in Paris. His famous friends included the photographer Nadar, the newspaper publisher Paul Dalloz, the writer Théophile Gautier and the composers Franz Liszt, Gioachino Rossini, Richard Wagner and Camille Saint-Saëns. Doré was fond of hosting artistic salons and social soirées for them.

WELL TRAVELLED

Throughout his life, Doré regularly spent his holidays in the Alps, in Savoy, Switzerland or Italy. An extensive traveller for his time, he went to Brittany, Holland, Cologne, Belgium, Tyrol, Venice, the Pyrenees and Spain, and regularly went to London and Scotland.

HIGH-PROFILE LIAISONS

Doré never married and had no children, but he is known to have had affairs with several prominent women: the actress Alice Ozy, the opera sopranos Hortense Schneider and Christina Nilsson, the prima donna Adelina Patti (whom he hoped to marry), the demi-mondaine Cora Pearl and the stage legend Sarah Bernhardt.

1849

His father dies. Gustave, his mother and his two sisters move into a mansion in rue Saint-Dominique.

1852

Begins his career as a literary illustrator with *Œuvres illustrées* by the bibliophile Jacob Paul Lacroix (known as 'Bibliophile Jacob').

1855

His illustrations for François Rabelais's *Works* and then Honoré de Balzac's *Droll Stories* establish his fame.

1851

Shows his first painting at the Salon: *Pins sauvages*.

1854

The Crimean War is the subject of his first political drawings and caricatures.

1861

The publication of Dante's *Inferno* by Hachette is a huge success. He also shows three works inspired by the *Divine Comedy* at the Salon.

1872

Finishes his masterpiece in etching, *The Neophyte*. Exhibits his enormous painting *Christ Leaving the Praetorium* (the canvas had been rolled up and buried during the war).

1868

Completes the illustration of Dante's *Divine Comedy* with *Purgatory* and *Paradise*.

1866

The height of his glory as a literary illustrator and a year rich in publications, including John Milton's *Paradise Lost*

1870

Enlists in the National Guard during the Franco-Prussian War. During the Paris Commune, he moves to Versailles.

1867

Opening of the Doré Gallery in London, where he is already famous and well-established in the British publishing world.

1862-1863

Publishes numerous illustrations for Perrault's *Fairy Tales*, Cervantes's *Don Quixote* and Chateaubriand's *Atala*.

