

The *Inferno* of Dante Alighieri

Translated By

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Inferno - Canto 1

1 Upon the middle of our mortal way
2 I found myself within a forest black
3 As from the rightful path I went astray.

4 Ah! how 'tis hard to tell my toilsome track
5 Amidst that forest weird and wild, that stirs
6 New dread in me whene'er its thought comes back.

7 So bitter is that death is little worse.
8 But of the boon I found ere I can tell,
9 Of other things I saw must sing my verse.

10 How did I enter there I know scarce well,
11 Such was the heavy sleep that on me weighed
12 When from the truthful path adrift I fell.

13 But as to the foothills my way I made,
14 There, where that dreadful vale arrived to its end,
15 Which had the clutch of fear on my heart laid,

16 Upwards I looked, and saw a glow ascend
17 On the hill's shoulders, from that planet's light
18 On which for guide all travelers depend.

19 Then in some measure was dispelled the fright
20 By which had been my heart's lake overrun
21 While in that place I passed such piteous night.

22 And as breathless and exhausted man
23 Who toiled ashore out of the foaming blue
24 Turns to the bitter waters and looks on—

25 Thus, while my frightened soul still forward flew,
26 Lingered eyes I turned upon that strait
27 That living man never permitted through.

28 Hardly was my weary body with rest satiate
29 When that deserted slope to climb I sought,
30 The foot stops lower pivoting my gait.

31 Scarcely the ascent begun, before me shot
32 A leopardess, of agile body and spare,
33 Whose skin was bright with many a colored spot.

34 Into my face undaunted she would glare,
35 And hindered so my progress up the incline
36 That oft I turned me backwards in despair.

37 It was the hour when morn begins to shine
38 And with those other stars the Sun up came
39 Which were with him when first the Love Divine

40 Set those fair creatures moving in their frame:
41 So that all things conspired to give me cheer,
42 That beast's fair skin with brilliant spots aflame.

43 The day's bright hour, the sweet time of the year.
44 And yet I could not help a novel dread,
45 Sighting a lion who did then appear.

46 Straight a path against me he seemed to tread,
47 His head thrown high and with such hungry mien
48 That through the very air alarm was spread.

49 And a she-wolf came after, wondrous lean,
50 Full of all cravings in her body slight—
51 And many lands through her distressed have been—

52 'Twas she who filled me with such deep fright.
53 Her very semblance holding me aghast,
54 That I lost hope of conquering the height.

55 As man who has his winnings gaily amassed,
56 If comes the time he must disgorge his gold
57 In all his thoughts is worried and downcast—

58 Like such made me that restless beast and bold
59 Who, pressing always closer, pace by pace,
60 Pushed me again down to the sunless word.

61 While I thus ruined toward a lower place,
62 Suddenly appeared within my vision One
63 Who through disuse seemed to have lost the grace of speech.

64 Soon as my eyes upon him ran In the great waste
65 "Have pity!"—I cried, forlorn,
66 "Whate'er thou art, a shade, or living man."

67 "Not man, but human body I too have worn"—
68 Said he—"My parents came from Lombardy,
69 And Mantua their city.

70 I was born *sub Julio*, in his late time, and lived to be
71 Under Augustus, citizen of Rome,
72 When men knew only a lying Deity.

73 I was a Poet, and sang in my tome
74 Anchises' noble son who came from Troy
75 After the burning of proud Ilium.

76 But why shouldst thou come back to gloom and noy?
77 Why not pursue the happy mount's ascent
78 Which is the cause and reason of all joy?"

79 "Art thou that Virgil then, that opulent
80 Spring in whose flow such wealth of words is stored?"
81 I answered him, and my forehead was bent.

82 "Of all the other poets honored lord,
83 Reck me the tireless study and loving heart
84 With which upon thy volume I have pored.

85 My only author thou, my teacher art:
86 The new sweet style from thee only I could take
87 Which to my name some honor did impart.

88 Behold the beast for fear of whom I spake.
89 Help me from her, O famous sage, I pray,
90 Because she makes my veins and pulses quake."

91 "Thou must direct thy steps another way"
92 Moved by my tearful aspect he then saith—
93 "Lest of these dangers thou become the prey.

94 The beast that made thee cry in fear of death
95 No living man can suffer to cross o'er,
96 But vexes him till he gives up his breath.

97 And is her nature so malign and sore,
98 Her ravenous desire is never sated,
99 And when well fed, she hungers even more.

100 Many an animal foul with her has mated,
101 And many will mate, until arrives the Hound
102 The one through whom her direful death is fated.

103 Hunger for land or pelf him shall not bound,
104 But Wisdom, Love and Virtue will be at his side.
105 'Twixt Feltro and Feltro he shall his kingdom found

106 And humble Italy to strength and pride
107 Restore, for whom Camilla virgin fair,
108 Euryalus, Nisus, Turnus, warring died.

109 For this beast he shall hunt everywhere
110 Till she will be chased into that cave infernal
111 Whence the first sinner's envy loosened her.

112 Therefore I judge, for thine own good supernal,
113 Thou must under my guidance now remain,
114 From here to go through that abode eternal

115 Where thou shalt hear the shriekings loud and vain,
116 And see the ancient spirits deep in woe,
117 A second death all calling in their pain;

118 Then also those who are contented, though
119 Compassed by fire, for they live hoping, once
120 Their sins atoned, among the blest to go.

121 To enable thee unto these last to advance
122 A worthier soul than I shall then appear
123 To lead thy steps after our severance.

124 For He who rules as Emperor that sphere
125 Permits me not to enter his domain
126 As to his law my mind did not adhere.

127 In ev'ry part He rules, there cloth He reign:
128 There is his own great city, there his throne
129 Happy are indeed those who that port attain."

130 "For that true God who was to thee unknown"—
131 I begged him—"Poet, help me thou to flee
132 This ill and worse by which my path is strewn.

133 Where'er thou leadst I gladly will follow thee,
134 That I may see Saint Peter's gate, and those
135 Who pine, as thou hast said, so grievously."

136 He then moved on, and him I followed close.

Inferno - Canto 2

1 The day was drawing to a close, the browning air
2 All animals on earth from laboring
3 Released, and I girt me for the warfare

4 Waiting me alone—against the harrowing
5 Road and the pity of what I was to see
6 Which my unerring memory shall sing.

7 O Muses, O high genius, succor me!
8 O Mind, in which all that I saw is writ,
9 Give here the proof of thy nobility.

10 —"Poet to whom myself I fain commit—"
11 I then began— "ere on this arduous trail
12 Thou trustest me, see if my virtue is fit.

13 Of Silvius' father has declared thy tale,
14 That to the immortal regions sensibly
15 He went, while clothed yet in mortal veil.

16 But if so favored him the enemy
17 Of ev'ry evil, for the high effect,
18 The who and what that was from him to be,

19 A thinking man will fain such truth accept
20 Because to father noble Rome and her
21 Empire, he was the Empyrean's elect.

22 Which both, if the full truth we must declare,
23 Established were to be the holy ground
24 Where of the greatest Peter sits the heir.

25 While on this journey, through thy verse renowned,
26 He heard of things which were the argument
27 That he should rule and there the Popes be crowned.

28 The chosen vessel thither also went
29 To carry comfort to that faith divine
30 Through which is man unto salvation bent.

31 But I, why should I go? By whose design?
32 I'm not Aeneas nor Paul. To all is plain
33 That my deserts of this are not condign.

34 Thus if from coming I do not refrain
35 I fear myself a fool; thou, who art wise,
36 Know'st even more than what I can explain."

37 And as a man who wills and then decries
38 What he has will'd, and new thoughts change his scope
39 So that he never starts on his emprise,

40 As such I found myself on that dark slope
41 And in my thoughts the task already was ended
42 With which so promptly I had resolved to cope.

43 "—If I have now thy words well apprehended—"
44 Replied of the Magnanimous the shade
45 "Thy spirit is by cowardice offended

46 Which oft the soul of men so doth pervade
47 That from praiseworthy purposes they turn
48 As shying beast that backs when vainly afraid.

49 To loose the bonds of fear, listen and learn
50 Why here I came and at whose words I felt
51 For thy distressful plight the first concern.

52 While I with the suspended spirits dwelt
53 Called me a Lady in whom such beauty shone
54 And blessedness that I was fain impelled

55 To do her will; her eyes more than the sun
56 Were bright, and she began in language sweet,
57 In her own tongue and in angelic tone:

58 "—O noble Mantuan soul whose flame the fleet
59 Passing of time could not on earth displace
60 And never will till time be itself complete,

61 A friend of mine, but not in fortune's grace,
62 On the deserted slope is so belayed
63 That from his journey he may his steps retrace.

64 Perhaps he stands already so dismayed—
65 As I have heard in Heaven—that I fear
66 Lest I have risen late to bring him aid.

67 Now go, and with thy words ornate and clear,
68 And all that may help him against the foe,
69 Thy succor lend to him and give him cheer.

70 I, Beatrice, bid thee now to go:
71 I come from place where to revert I yearn,
72 Love made me come and Love made me speak so.

73 When with my Lord again I shall sojourn,
74 Before Him often I shall sing thy praise."
75 She was then silent and I thus spoke in turn:

76 "O virtuous Dame, through whom alone the race
77 Of men exceeds all else that is contained
78 Within the heaven circling the least space,

79 So pleased am I by what thou hast ordained,
80 Had I already obeyed, I would feel remiss;
81 Thy wish no further needs to be explained.

82 But tell the reason why to this abyss
83 Thou art not loath to come from that most high
84 Abode for which thou cravest and where is bliss."

85 "—Since thou desir'st to delve so inwardly
86 To know the reason why to this low ground
87 Fearlessly I come, I shall briefly reply.

88 To dread only those objects are we bound
89 Which with the power of doing harm are fraught;
90 But nothing else, as there no fear is found.

91 But, through the mercy of God, I am so wrought,
92 Your misery can never reach my sense,
93 And of this fire the flames assail me not.

94 A gentle Lady in Heaven so laments
95 This hindrance which prompts me to send thee there
96 That Heaven's stern decree her pity bends.

97 Twas she who made Lucia of this aware
98 And said to her, 'Thy friend has need of thee
99 And I commend him now to thy good care.'

100 Lucia, foe to ev'ry cruelty,
101 Then hastened to the place where I adored
102 With ancient Rachel, to present her plea.

103 She said: 'Beatrice, true praise of the Lord,
104 Canst thou help him who has lov'd thee so well,
105 Who rose for thee above the vulgar horde?

106 Dost thou not hear his plaint, nor see the fell
107 Dangers of death by which he now is faced
108 Upon that stream that mocks the ocean's swell?'

109 On earth were never persons in such haste
110 To court their gain or evil chance to quit
111 As after hearing this, I quickly raced

112 Down from the blessed mansion where I sit,
113 And in thy noble speech my trust is laid
114 That honors thee, and all who harked to it."

115 After she had her message thus conveyed
116 She turned aside, in tears, her gleaming eyes
117 Making me yet more prompt to bring thee aid.

118 And thus I came to thee, at her advice,
119 To rescue thee when by that beast oppressed
120 Which the short climb of the fair hill denies.

121 What then there is? Why, why shouldst thou here rest?
122 Why with such coward thoughts shouldst thou consort?
123 Frankness and daring why not in thy breast?

124 Since three high ladies up in heaven's court
125 For thine well-being never cease to sue
126 And mine own words such happiness purport?—"

127 As flowerets that beneath the hoar night dew
128 Droop down and fold; when bright then shines the sun
129 Straighten their stem and show their brilliant hue,

130 Such I became, my strength no longer wan,
131 And with such courage soon my heart was filled
132 That as a person bold I thus began:

133 “Truly generous she who succor willed,
134 And kind art thou who dost so promptly obey
135 The words she spoke that are with truth instilled.

136 Thou hast disposed my heart in such a way
137 With eagerness to come, by thine good word,
138 That back to my first purpose now I sway.

139 Lead on, for we are both of one accord:
140 Thou art my Teacher, thou my Lord and Guide."
141 Then he moved on, and I, with hope restored

142 Through a rough and woody trail with him kept stride.

Inferno - Canto 3

1 Through me ye go into the City of woe,
2 Through me ye go into distress diuturnal,
3 Through me among the people lost ye go.

4 Righteousness moved my Architect Supernal:
5 The Power Almighty did my ramparts rear,
6 The Highest Wisdom and the Love Eternal.

7 No things but timeless were created ere
8 My walls were built and timeless I endure:
9 All hope abandon ye who enter here.

10 These warning words, of color quite obscure,
11 On a high portal's lintel I descried,
12 And: "Master, of their sense I am not sure."

13 And he to me, as person wise, replied:
14 "Here must be left every doubtful mood,
15 All cowardice must here be cast aside.

16 We have now reached the place where must be view'd
17 As I told thee, those people's misery
18 Whose mind is reft of its transcendent good. "

19 And with his hand in mine to comfort me,
20 With smiling look that gave me confidence,
21 He led me into that fearsome secrecy.

22 Here sighs and plaints and harrowing laments
23 Sounded beneath a dark and starless pall
24 So that I felt at first a sorrow intense.

25 Most divers tongues and gibberish from all
26 Foul jargons, shrieks of woe and angry roars,
27 Groans loud and hoarse and smiting hands withal,

28 Came from a crowd that flies a rounded course,
29 Ne'er resting, through that air timelessly blacked,
30 As sand that on the wind in circles soars.

31 And I, who felt by many doubts attacked,
32 Said: "Master, what is this I hear? What race
33 Are those that here are by such torments racked?"

34 He answered me: "Torn in this ceaseless pace
35 Thou see'st the sorry souls of those who passed
36 Their life untouched by honor or disgrace.

37 Mingled with them is that unworthy caste
38 Of Angels who not daring to rebel,
39 Fought not for God, but for themselves held fast.

40 To keep unsullied Heaven must repel
41 Their kind, and lest the damned should conceive
42 Some pride o'er them, they are barred from the deep Hell."

43 And I again: "Why, Master, do they grieve,
44 And shout their woe with cries so desperate?"
45 And he: "Brief words my answer shall achieve.

46 No hope of death may their distress palliate
47 And their black days are in such meanness spun
48 That they would welcome any other fate.

49 For them the world has only oblivion;
50 Justice and mercy both ignore their breed:
51 Wasted are words of them: look and pass on."

52 I looked and saw a streaming flag proceed
53 Around the circle in such rapid strain
54 It seemed to me nothing could check its speed.

55 After the flag, rushed on such endless train
56 Of people that my mind was in a maze
57 Wondering that so many death hath slain.

58 I recognized a few of that low race,
59 And among them I saw, while looking close,
60 Him who faint-hearted, left the mighty place.

61 Then quickly in me the certitude arose
62 That those must be the caitiffs who contrive
63 To give offense to God and to his foes.

64 Those 'wretches, none of whom was e'er alive,
65 Naked go 'round and painfully are stung
66 By wasps and fleas that on their body thrive.

67 They line their cheeks with blood which flows along
68 With burning tears and then is avidly
69 Sucked at their feet by worms there thickly strung.

70 And then, as further on I strove to see
71 I spied some people by a turgid stream,
72 Wherefore I said: "Now, Master, do grant me

73 To know what kind are those and why they seem
74 So eager and impatient to cross o'er
75 As I discern through the dusk-swathed gleam."

76 And he to me: "Of this shalt thou know more
77 When we shall come to a halt in our advance
78 On the distressing Acherontian shore."

79 I walked then on with humble countenance
80 Afraid lest through my speech I grieve my Guide,
81 Until we stood upon the river sands.

82 And lo! then came by vessel toward our side
83 A man of ancient age and snowy hair,
84 And: "Woe to you, O wretched souls!—" he cried.

85 "To you the sight of Heav'n is lost for e'er;
86 You to that yonder bank I shall convey,
87 Darkness and fire and frost await you there.

88 And thou, O living soul, get thee away
89 From there: thy place is not among the dead."
90 Then, when he saw that I did not obey:

91 "By other path, through other ports"—he said—
92 "Not from this shore, shalt thou thy passage gain,
93 And on a lighter boat shalt thou be sped."

94 "Charon"—then spoke my Guide " thy wrath restrain;
95 It is thus willed up there where but to will
96 Is power to do: other demands are vain."

97 Then straightaway the woolly cheeks grew still
98 On that old boatman of the livid slough
99 Whose piercing eyes a flaming circle fill.

100 But at those cruel words that weary crew
101 Of naked spirits loudly gnashed their teeth
102 While o'er their faces spread a pallid hue.

103 God they blasphemed, their parents, all that breathe
104 The worldly air, their own birth's place and hour,
105 And the seed that to them did life bequeath.

106 Huddling together close I saw them cower
107 Sobbing and wailing, on the accursed shore
108 That all awaits those who defy God's power.

109 Then Charon beckons them aboard, the hoar
110 Demon whose eye is like a fiery ball:
111 Any that lingers he beats with his oar.

112 As leaves that in the autumnal season fall
113 One following the other, till the tree
114 Has rendered to the soil his garment all,

115 Likewise, that Adam's evil progeny
116 Fling them, each at his call, down from the strand,
117 As birds that to their lure drop eagerly.

118 Thus by this crowd the darkened waves are spanned
119 And ere they step upon the other side
120 Gathers already on this another band.

121 "My son—" spoke then to me my kindly Guide—
122 "All those that die under the wrath of God
123 From ev'ry clime assemble on this tide.

124 Justice Divine is their unceasing prod
125 Changing into desire their abject fear
126 So that they are prompt to cross beyond the flood.

127 Never good soul is given passage here,
128 Therefore if Charon did of thee complain
129 What meant his words must now to thee be clear."

130 This he had finished, when the dark champaign
131 So fiercely quaked and gave me fright so intense
132 That mem'ry of it bathes me with sweat again.

133 The tearful earth gave forth a windstorm, whence
134 Flashed through the heavens a vermillion glare
135 That conquered in my body ev'ry sense;

136 And as if seized by sleep I droppéd there.

Inferno - Canto 4

1 The heavy slumber in my head was shaken
2 By roaring thunder that roused me at once
3 As when a man is made by force to awaken.

4 My eyes were rested and with keener glance,
5 Standing upright, I looked intently around
6 To see what place I was in those strange lands.

7 Truth is that on the brink myself I found
8 Of the grief-laden valley of that foul pit
9 Wherein of endless plaints the thunders sound.

10 Twas dark and deep with clouds overhanging it,
11 And though I scanned its bottom fixedly
12 No certain view the darkness would permit.

13 Then said the Poet, pale as death, to me:
14 "Down to the blinded world we shall proceed:
15 I shall be first and second thou shalt be."

16 And I who to his color had giv'n heed:
17 "How can I come if thou art torn by fears
18 By whom alone I am from doubting freed?"

19 And he to me: "The suffering that sears
20 The souls below has painted on my face
21 That pity which to thee as fright appears.

22 Avaunt! The lengthy road spurs on our pace."
23 Thus entered he and bade me follow where
24 The first of circles rounds the abysmal place.

25 Here as by listening I grew aware,
26 No plaints arose but sighings loud and long
27 Which kept a-trembling that eternal air.

28 These were by grief and not by torments wrung
29 From infants, men and women there confined
30 And grouped in many a vast and varied throng.

31 Then the good Master: "Askst thou not what kind
32 Those spirits are whom thou art meeting here?
33 Ere thou goest further, keep this firm in mind:

34 They did not sin, but baptism did not clear
35 Their souls, hence in their works no merits lie,
36 According to the faith thou hold'st so dear.

37 And if they lived before Christianity
38 They did not worship God in manner true:
39 And with this kind my place have even I.

40 No other crime, only this fault we rue;
41 And while we are lost, but this our life offends
42 That vainly we hope, with yearning ever new."

43 When this I heard, was my heart's grief intense
44 For I perceived that many worthies were
45 Within that Limbo living in suspense.

46 "Tell me, Master of mine, tell me, Seigneur,"
47 Said I, desirous of that certitude
48 That makes one's faith against all errors square—

49 "Has hence a spirit to supreme blisshood
50 Through his or others' merits ever gone?"
51 As he my covert speech well understood,

52 Thus answered me: "I saw a Mighty One
53 Appear, when to this state I had but come,
54 Upon whose head the sign of vict'ry shone.

55 And our first parent's shade He drew herefrom,
56 Abel his son and him who built the Ark,
57 Moses the fount of laws, and Abraham

58 Most tried and most obedient patriarch;
59 King David, Israel with his sons and sire,
60 And Rachel whom he won by the long cark,

61 And many more who joined the heavenly choir.
62 And thou must know that till the time of these
63 No human spirits could to glory aspire."

64 While thus he spoke, our progress did not cease
65 But through the forest thick we went along,
66 The one, I mean, where spirits were the trees.

67 Down from the crest our way had not been long
68 As yet, when a great blaze my vision smote
69 That a dark hemisphere far outward flung.

70 It was from us still a good deal remote,
71 But I already could discern in part
72 That in that place were people worthy of note.

73 "O thou who gracest ev'ry science and art,
74 Who are those shades whose noble countenance
75 Their manner from the rest seems to disport?"

76 And he: "The honor which their name commands
77 Up in the world where is thy living sphere
78 Gains them from heaven grace for this advance."

79 Meantime a voice resounded in my ear:
80 "All ye give honor to the bard most high:
81 His shade that had left us, again is here."

82 I saw, once spent the echo of that cry,
83 Four mighty spirits toward us hastening:
84 Joy was not in their traits, nor misery.

85 Then in my ears the Master's words did ring:
86 "Mark him whose hand a gleaming sword holds fast,
87 Who leads the other three as would a King.

88 Homer is he, the poet unsurpassed;
89 Horace the satirist next thou canst see,
90 Ovid is third and Lucan is the last.

91 The name that by one voice was called, with me
92 Joins in a bond the spirits of all four,
93 And so they honor me quite properly. "

94 Thus was the noble school convened once more
95 Around the master of the noblest style
96 Whose eagle wings above all others soar.

97 Among themselves they held converse a while,
98 Then turned to me and a sweet welcome bade
99 And that from my good master drew a smile.

100 A greater honor still to me they paid
101 As they took me within their group as guest:
102 Thus I amidst such wisdom sixth was made.

103 Thus toward the light together we progressed
104 Reasoning things which were fair arguments
105 Then in that place, but now to ignore is best.

106 We came to a noble castle that extends
107 Its lofty walls for seven times around
108 While a clear running stream adds a defense.

109 O'er this we crossed as on a solid ground;
110 Then seven gates to us a passage gave
111 Till on a fresh green meadow ourselves we found.

112 There people dwelt whose gaze was slow and grave;
113 Authority in their traits showed plainly through,
114 They spoke with leisure and their voice was suave.

115 To a corner of the place we soon withdrew
116 Upon an open and light-bathed height
117 Whence all the spirits clearly stood in view.

118 From there upon the green enamel bright
119 The mighty spirits to me pointed were
120 And still I exalt myself now for that sight.

121 Electra I saw, with many courting her
122 'Midst whom Aeneas and Hector I descried;
123 Then Caesar, armed, his falcon eyes a-glare.

124 Penthesilea with Camilla abide
125 I saw elsewhere, to King Latinus close
126 Who sat with fair Lavinia by his side.

127 I saw that Brutus who 'gainst Tarquin rose;
128 Lucretia, Julia, Marcia standing by
129 Cornelia, and by himself in lonely pose

130 Saladin; then I somewhat raised my eye
131 And saw the Master of all men who know
132 Sitting with philosophic family.

133 All him admire and praise on him bestow.
134 I could see Plato there, and Socrates
135 Closer to him than all the rest may go.

136 Dioscorides who knew the properties
137 Of things, Diogenes, Heraclitus,
138 And Anaxagoras: Empedocles

139 Thales, and Zeno, and Democritus
140 Who ascribes the world to chance—and Orpheus then,
141 Seneca stoic, Linus, Tullius,

142 Euclid and Ptolemy and Avicen,
143 Galen, Hippocrates, there I beheld
144 Averroes who did the Comment pen.

145 Many I must leave that in that meadow dwelled,
146 As oft the facts more of my words would take
147 But forth by the long theme I am impelled.

148 The sixfold company comes now to a break.
149 We are but two: another way I am led
150 From this quiet air to that which the winds shake,

151 And thus I came to where all light is dead.

Inferno - Canto 5

1 From the first circle thus took me my trail
2 Into the next, which narrower margin molds
3 But where more grief causes a louder wail.

4 There Minos' horrid shape the entrance holds
5 Who probes each sinner with a snarl and leer,
6 Judging and sending by his various folds.

7 I mean that when the ill-born souls appear
8 Before him, all their sins they are prompt to tell,
9 And he, to whom the depths of sin are clear,

10 Sees for each soul which is place in Hell:
11 As many times his tail 'round him is swung,
12 As many circles down the soul must dwell.

13 Before him always stands a changing throng:
14 Each soul in turn to its hard judgment goes;
15 They speak, they hear, and downward they are flung.

16 "O thou who comest into this house of woes"—
17 To me said Minos, heedless of his high
18 Office a while, as he saw me come close—

19 "Mind how thou movest and whom so daringly
20 Thou trust'st; beware of this too ample door."
21 And my Leader to him: "Why such outcry?

22 Bar not his way by Fate provided for.
23 It is thus willed up there where but to will
24 Is power to do, and thou must ask no more."

25 And now the doleful wails began to fill
26 My ears, and of that place I must recite
27 Where I was struck by rumbling plaints and shrill.

28 There, where I came, is mute every light:
29 There mounts a roar as from tempestuous main
30 When with its waves the winds discordant fight.

31 That never still infernal hurricane
32 Carries the spirits with its whirling urge
33 Turning and smiting them in endless pain.

34 And when before the chasm the souls emerge,
35 There loud the cry, the plaint and the lament,
36 There against God their blasphemies insurge.

37 I understood that such a punishment
38 Was to the sinners of the flesh assigned
39 In whom by passion had been reason bent.

40 As in the fall the starlings, all aligned
41 In a long stream and thick, are by their wings
42 Borne on, thus are the sinners by that wind.

43 Them here and here and up and down it flings,
44 And of a pause or pain of lesser form
45 There is no hope for them that comfort brings.

46 And as the cranes stretched out in lengthy swarm
47 Go through the air singing their doleful lay,
48 Thus there I saw upon that whirling storm

49 Come grieving spirits in a long array;
50 So that: "What shades are these, Master"—I said,
51 "Chastised by the dark air in such a way?"

52 He answered me: "She coming at the head
53 Of those thou seek'st to know, has famous name
54 As queen whose power o'er many tongues was spread.

55 So deeply lost was she in carnal shame
56 That lustful deeds as lawful she decreed
57 To take away from her own vice the blame.

58 Semiramis she is, whom—as we read—
59 What is now Sultan's land as ruler knew.
60 Ninus she espoused and him she did succeed.

61 She who comes next, herself, love-maddened, slew
62 And to Sichaeus' urn made vain her gage.
63 Lustful Cleopatra see beyond those two."

64 Helen I saw, who brought upon her age
65 Such deep distress and great Achilles passed
66 Who did with Love his final battle wage.

67 Paris, Tristan I saw: a number vast
68 Of spirits, whom my Leader pointed all,
69 That suddenly, through love, from life were cast.

70 After thus hearing my good Doctor call
71 The names of many an ancient dame and knight
72 I felt like lost, as pity held me in thrall.

73 –"Poet"—then I began—"I wish I might
74 Speak to those two who embraced together fly
75 And seem upon the wind to be so light."

76 He answered me: "Wait thou till they come by,
77 Closer to us, then ask by that intense
78 Love that moves them and they shall fain comply."

79 Soon as the wind toward us that couple bends,
80 Lifting my voice: "O wearied souls"—I cried
81 –"Come, speak a while to us, if none contends."

82 As doves with moveless wings and opened wide
83 Called by their longing, fly to their sweet nest,
84 And by their will alone they seem to glide—

85 Thus, from the ranks of Dido, came abreast
86 Of us those two, upon the air malign;
87 So strong had been my passionate request.

88 "O thou most gracious creature and benign,
89 Who goest through this black welkin, visiting
90 Us who in the world have left a blood-red sign,

91 If friendly were the Universal King
92 We gladly would lift our prayer for thy peace,
93 Since on our plight thou look'st so pitying.

94 Whate'er to hear or speak to thee may please,
95 Willingly hear or speak we shall with ye,
96 While stays the wind, as thou canst see, at ease.

97 The city where I was born sits by the sea
98 Where Po's wide-shored stream at last descends
99 With all its followers, at peace to be.

100 Love that a gentle heart quickly apprehends
101 Seized this my fellow for the body fair
102 Taken from me—in way that still offends.

103 Love, that no one beloved will ever spare
104 From loving, with his charms my heart so caught,
105 That, as thou seest, e'en now his fate I share.

106 Twas love that to one death both of us brought.
107 Our murderer... Caina waits for him."
108 Such were the words that came from them unsought.

109 As of these souls I heard the story grim
110 I bowed my head and long I held it thus
111 Till said my Guide: "What does thy thoughts bedim?"

112 When I could answer I began: "Alas!
113 What sweet imaginings, what passion burning,
114 Must have led them to that most woeful pass!"

115 Then I bestirred myself and to them turning,
116 I thus began: "Francesca, in presence of
117 Thy sorrow, I can but weep with pity and mourning.

118 But, at the time of the sweet sighs above,
119 Do tell me how and when to certainties
120 Your dubious yearnings were transformed by love."

121 And she to me: "No sorrow greater is
122 Than to recall the bliss of time ago
123 When misery stings: thy Guide well knows of this.

124 But since thou crav'st so eagerly to know
125 Our love's sad story and to its root most sheer,
126 I'll be like one who speaks while his tears flow.

127 We read one day, for pleasure, the career
128 Of Launcelot, when caught in love's sweet net:
129 Alone we were, of all suspicion clear.

130 During that reading oft our glances met
131 And pallor on our faces oft spread o'er;
132 But by one point alone our fate was set.

133 When reading that the smile long yearned for
134 Suddenly was kissed by him in love so blest,
135 This who shall be from me disjoined nevermore,

136 His lips upon my mouth all trembling pressed.
137 The writer and the book were Gallehaut
138 To us; that day we did not read the rest."

139 While spoke one spirit, wailed the other so,
140 That overwhelmed by pity's mounting swell
141 I fainted as a man in death's last throe—

142 And to the ground, like a dead body, I fell.

Inferno - Canto 6

1 Soon as my mind came back, which had been locked
2 Before the pity of the kindred pair
3 That with its grief had all my senses shocked,

4 New tortures and new tortured everywhere
5 I see 'round me, no matter how I strain
6 My sight, or move, or turn me here and there.

7 I am in the third circle of the rain
8 Accursed, eternal, wearisome and cold
9 Whose rule and nature e'er the same remain.

10 Snow, thick hail and dark water I behold
11 Pouring down through the air timelessly dimmed;
12 Stenches the earth that soaks this slimy mould.

13 Cerberus, cruel monster, strangely limbed
14 From his three throats emits a dog-like bark
15 Over the crowd with which that lake is brimmed.

16 He has red eyes and unctuous beard jet-dark:
17 His belly is huge, his hands are clawed to wound:
18 He tears and skins and hews the sinners stark.

19 Hit by the rain each howls as would a hound,
20 And tries to shield one flank with the other side:
21 Often the godless rabble turns around.

22 The great worm Cerberus, soon as he spied
23 Us two, displayed his fangéd triple jaw,
24 His members all a-quiver 'neath his hide.

25 And here my Guide with palms outspread I saw
26 Bend down and pick some earth which then he tossed
27 By handfuls, into each ravenous maw.

28 As dog who barks at all who him accost
29 But calms when on the sop his teeth he places
30 And in his rush to feed is wholly lost,

31 Thus suddenly fell down the filthy faces
32 Of Cerberus the fiend, whose barks so stun
33 The souls that they for deafness would give graces.

34 Over the rain-trod shades we then walk on
35 In our advance and stamp beneath our feet
36 Those phantoms vain that mock a living man.

37 Prostrate were all of them deep in that sleet
38 But after seeing us arose one shade
39 Quickly, and on its haunches made its seat.

40 "Thou who art led through this infernal grade"—
41 It said— "Hast thou of me some memory?
42 Thou hadst been made before I was unmade."

43 And I to it: "The anguish vexing thee
44 Perhaps has taken thee so from my mind,
45 Meseems I never did thy person see.

46 But tell me who thou art and why assigned
47 To such sad place and such a horrid fret
48 Than which no viler, if a harder kind."

49 And he to me: "Thy country so beset
50 With envy that the measure overruns
51 Kept me while life for me serene was yet.

52 My name was Ciaccio to you citizens.
53 Gluttony's damning sin has, as thou seest,
54 Brought me to break beneath the rain that stuns.

55 I, sad soul, do here alone exist.
56 Similar penalties on these requite
57 Similar faults." And here his sermon ceased.

58 I answered: "Ciaccio, thy distressing plight
59 So weighs on me that e'en to tears I mourn;
60 But tell me, if of this thou hast foresight,

61 To what will come the people of the torn
62 City, and if any just is there alive
63 And what has upon it such discord borne."

64 And he: "Among themselves long will they strive,
65 Then come to blood, and with much injury
66 The forest party will forth the other drive.

67 But soon the former overturned shall be
68 Within three suns—while shall the latter rise
69 By force of him who now steers by the lee.

70 This a long time the other will despise
71 Oppressing it beneath a heavy load
72 Although it resents its shame and vainly cries.

73 There are two, to whom no heed is showed.
74 Envy with pride and greed past any bound
75 Are the three flames that all their hearts corrode."

76 With this he brought to an end his tearful sound.
77 And I to him: "A gift of words again
78 I ask, that may another thing expound.

79 Farinata and Tegghiajo, such worthy men,
80 Jacopo, Arrigo, Mosca, and all the rest
81 Who strove for good according to their ken,

82 Tell where they are and so direct my quest,
83 As deeply I yearn to know whether they are
84 Sweetened by Heav'n or poisoned by Hell's pest."

85 He said: "Their souls are black with heavier tar.
86 Through various guilts lower in the pit they lie.
87 Thou shalt see them, shouldst thou descend that far.

88 But when thou art in the sweet world up high,
89 See that my mem'ry among men is stirred:
90 No further shall I speak, nor yet reply."

91 From straight, his eyes turned crooked and hate-blurred;
92 A while he looked at me, then bowed his head:
93 Headlong he fell among the sightless herd.

94 My Leader then: "He shall not leave that bed
95 Until the Angel's trumpet blast shall boom
96 When will appear the Powerful whom all dread.

97 Then each shall find again his doleful tomb,
98 Shall take his flesh with ev'ry former trait
99 And hear his timelessly resounding doom."

100 Thus we proceeded on with slackened gait
101 Over the mixture foul of shades and rain
102 Touching a little on the future state.

103 Therefore I questioned: "Master, will this pain
104 Harder become, beyond the great decree,
105 Or less perchance, or shall the same remain?"

106 "Consult thy knowledge —" he replied to me—
107 "Which states that when more perfect is a thing
108 More feels the good and so the misery.

109 And though this cursed crowd shall never spring
110 To true perfection, yet that last event
111 To them a higher entity shall bring."

112 Over the road on a round course we went,
113 Speaking of much that here I do not set,
114 Till to the point we came of the descent.

115 And Plutus the great en'my here we met.

Inferno - Canto 7

1 *Pape Satan, Pape Satan, aleppe"*
2 Plutus began with his deep throated squawk;
3 And then to steady mine uncertain step,

4 Said the all-knowing Sage: "Thou must not balk
5 Through fear of him, as he cannot contest,
6 For all his power, thy coming down this rock."

7 Then those swollen cheeks he coldly addressed,
8 Saying: "Accursed wolf, hold thou thy tongue,
9 And be consumed by rage within thy breast.

10 There is a cause this journey to prolong
11 To darkest hell: 'tis willed where Michael
12 Wrought heaven's vengeance on the prideful throng."

13 As sails that with the wind their bosom swell
14 And drop to a heap if haply cracks the mast,
15 Thus to the around that cruel monster fell.

16 Down to the fourth of circles then we passed
17 Taking of those sad shores a larger span
18 Where all the evil of the world is cast.

19 Ah me! justice of God that so heaps on
20 Such new travails and pains as there struck me!
21 And why doth sin make such a wreck of man?

22 As by Charybdis does the broken sea
23 While the contrasting waves clash and rebound,
24 Thus must the people here dance wretchedly.

25 The crowds that here larger than e'er I found
26 With loud outcries moved on from left and right
27 By force of breast rolling great weights around.

28 Facing each other they would clash and smite
29 And turning then and there they would start back
30 Shouting: "Why letst though go, why holdst thou tight?"

31 They circled then again the doleful track
32 From either side to the point opposite
33 And cried their insult at the other pack.

34 And after a half circle was complete
35 To the near jousting, each again would turn.
36 My heart through grief almost had ceased to beat,

37 And—"Master—" I then said—"I fain would learn
38 What kind are these and whether clerics were
39 Those tonsured ones that on our left so churn."

40 And he to me: "They were all faulty in their
41 Mind's vision during their first life career,
42 And never used their wealth in measure fair.

43 This by their voice is shouted plain and clear
44 When they reach those two points midway the ring
45 Where of their sins adverse the cleft is sheer.

46 Clerics were those with no hair covering
47 Their heads, and Popes and Cardinals were some
48 In whom ruled avarice past reckoning."

49 And I said then: "Master, amid this scum
50 Should I not recognize at least a few
51 That were by these sad evils overcome?"

52 He to me: "Vain thoughts dost thou pursue;
53 Their undiscerning life so them besoils
54 That human sight must find too dark their hue.

55 They shall forever come to the two broils;
56 Those with fists closed, and these with locks all shorn
57 Shall rise again from the sepulchral toils.

58 Ill giving and ill keeping makes them mourn
59 The beauteous world and sets them to this grief:
60 Whate'er it is, my words need not adorn.

61 Now canst, my son, see how the jest is brief
62 Played by those goods that trouble so mankind
63 And of which Fortune donor is or thief.

64 All gold that 'neath the moon a man could find
65 Or that these wearied souls had power to obtain
66 Could not for one of them assuage this grind."

67 —"Master—" said I to him—"this also explain:
68 What is this Fortune, as I hear thee tell,
69 That in its claws thus holds all the world's gain?"

70 And he to me: "Fool creatures, how the spell
71 Of ignorance your minds so deeply offends!
72 I want thee now to absorb my sentence well:

73 The One whose wisdom past all things transcends,
74 Making the heavens set on them a guide
75 So that each part unto the rest resplends,

76 As equal light is shed on ev'ry side.
77 Likewise he set a guide and minister
78 Over the splendors of your worldly pride.

79 Such vanities to change 'tis given her
80 From blood to blood and so from race to race
81 Beyond all shifts of human wit and care.

82 Thus languishes one race and its high place
83 To another by her judgment she transfers,
84 Which is hid as in grass a serpent's trace.

85 Nor can your knowledge her decrees traverse:
86 With her foresight she judges and her reign
87 Disposes as the other gods do theirs.

88 Her permutations come in endless chain,
89 Necessity makes her hasten her stride
90 So often comes who would his turn attain.

91 Such is the one by many crucified
92 With evil words and with reproach amiss
93 E'en when her praises should by them be cried.

94 But she is blessed and hears naught of this:
95 Sharing the primal creatures' happiness
96 She turns her sphere and thus enjoys her bliss.

97 Let us go deeper now in this distress;
98 Already falls every star that rose
99 When I first moved, forbidding tardiness."

100 We crossed, and on the nether bank came close
101 Upon a fount that boiling over pours
102 Into a gullet wide that from it flows.

103 Rather than dull, the stream was dark and worse;
104 Along its murky waves we made our way
105 Downward proceeding in a devious course.

106 These dismal waters in the end allay
107 Forming the lake of Styx after descending
108 To the foot of the crags malign and grey.

109 And as my eyes to novel sights were bending
110 I could see people in that miry bed
111 Naked and muddy and a mad rage portending.

112 Not only with hands, but even with their head
113 And breast and feet they wildly each other smote
114 And bit and rent each other shred by shred.

115 My Master said: "The souls that here we note
116 Are those whom anger held in slavery:
117 Hold this also for sure that in that moat

118 Under the water people are who sigh
119 And make those bubbles at the top appear
120 As thou canst see, wherever turns thine eye.

121 Sunk in the slime they say:—We had no cheer
122 In the sweet air where the Sun's gladness shone,
123 Holding within a vapour bleak and drear.

124 Now fixed in this black mire we sadly groan—
125 Within their choking throat this hymn they cluck
126 As no word they can say with clearer tone."

127 We circled thus around that slough of muck
128 An arc far-reaching—between stream and bank
129 Keeping our eye on those who that mud suck.

130

Stopped us at last a tower's forbidding flank.

Inferno - Canto 8

1 I say, proceeding, that a while before
2 We had drawn close to that high tower's foot
3 Our eager eyes went up its top to explore

4 As from up there we saw two flamelets shoot
5 Answered by another from so far away
6 That to see that our eyes were scarce acute.

7 Turned to the sea of all sound wit, I say:
8 "Master, what does this mean? What th'other fire
9 Doth answer back? Who are that both display?"

10 And he to me: "Upon the filthy mire
11 Already thou canst see what is expected,
12 If the reek mounting foils not thy desire."

13 Never an arrow was from cord ejected
14 To speed so swiftly toward its distant goal
15 As I just then perceived—toward us directed—

16 A smallish boat that came upon the shoal,
17 Under the guidance of a lone coxswain
18 Who cried: "I have thee now, O evil soul!"

19 "Flegyas, Flegyas, thou criest in vain,
20 This time"—my Master said—"Only as we pass
21 Over the mud, we shall tread thy domain."

22 As one who hears of a great fraud that has
23 Been played on him, and feels of wrath the goad
24 Thus looked in baffled anger Flegyas.

25 Down in the vessel then my Leader strode.
26 Following him I entered, at his word,
27 And only then it seemed to carry a load.

28 As soon as I and Virgil were aboard,
29 The ancient prow went on—with this new crew
30 Deeper than is its wont it plowed the ford.

31 While we were running o'er the stagnant slough
32 One filled with mud stood up in front and cried:
33 "Who art who comest before thine hour is due?"

34 And I: "I come, but shall not here abide.
35 And who art thou by filth disfigured so?"
36 "Thou seest a man who weeps—" he then replied.

37 I answered him: "With all thy tears and woe,
38 Accursed soul, remain thou here mud-bound,
39 For though thou art all filth, well thee I know."

40 Then toward our boat he stretched both hands, but found
41 My Guide alert to ward him off his quest,
42 Saying: "Away; down with the pack, thou hound."

43 And then, his arms around my neck, he pressed
44 His lips upon my cheeks: "Disdainful soul—"
45 He said: "She who bore thee be ever blessed.

46 That man in life played a most prideful role.
47 By no good deed is left his mem'ry imperaled:
48 Thus here his soul is wrathful past control.

49 How many hold themselves kings of the world
50 Up there, who shall stay here like pigs in mire
51 And after them shall horrid scorn be hurled."

52 Said I then: "Master, 'twere my fond desire
53 To see him choked beneath this dismal grume
54 Before we leave behind this lake entire."

55 And he to me: "Ere the far shore shall loom
56 Unto thy sight, thy yearning shall be met;
57 Justly its fulfillment on such wish shall bloom."

58 And soon I saw on him such fierce onset
59 Made by that crowd bedecked in murky pall
60 That God I praise for it and thank Him yet.

61 "Have at Filippo Argenti"—cried they all:
62 And with his teeth, that spirit malcontent
63 From Florence, vented on his flesh his gall.

64 We left him there, nor shall more words be spent
65 On him. Then by such woe my ears were jarred
66 That I oped wide my eyes and forward bent.

67 Said my good Master: "Soon we shall be hard
68 By the great city known as Dis — and there
69 On mighty crowds the citizens stand guard."

70 "Master, indeed its minarets a-glare" "
71 Said I—"already I see within the gorge;
72 So red they gleam as if from fire they were

73 Issued." Said he: "Heat from the eternal forge
74 Burns within them and makes them red outside:
75 In this low Hell now comes the fiery scourge."

76 Thereon we came to the deep moats and wide
77 Circling all 'round the city desolate
78 By iron-like high ramparts fortified.

79 We covered a wide circuit, till our mate
80 Having now reached the place he sought, aloud
81 Shouted: "Go ye now forth, here is the gate."

82 Above I saw the heaven-fallen crowd
83 More than a thousand strong, whose cry arose
84 Raging: "Who's this who still by death unbowed

85 Through the realm of the dead so daring goes?"
86 And my sagacious Master signaled back
87 That aught in secret parley he would disclose.

88 Then as their furious wrath grew somewhat slack
89 They said: "Come thou alone and bid him gone
90 Who recklessly this kingdom dares to track.

91 Let him retrace his frenzied journey alone
92 Let him try out his wit: thou shalt stay here
93 Who hast to him this darkened country shown."

94 Think, reader, how I was then chilled by fear
95 When rang the accursed words—as I felt sure
96 I ne'er would see again the upper sphere.

97 "Dear Guide"—I said—"who hast made me secure
98 More times than seven, and unscathed brought
99 Out of the perils I have had to endure;

100 Now that I am so undone, desert me not.
101 Our steps so far conjoint let us retrace;
102 Further advance we may well leave unsought "

103 But he who had led me up to that place
104 Spoke then: "Have thou no fear, our passing through
105 None may prevent: from Such we hold this grace.

106 Wait here for me and let thy soul renew
107 Its strength with food of hope for a good end:
108 In this low world I leave not thee to rue."

109 Thus goes away and leaves me alone to fend
110 My gentle father; I, in my suspense,
111 Feel "yes" and "no" within my head contend.

112 I could not hear what were his arguments
113 But with the fiends he was but a short space
114 When, milling, they rushed back of their defense.

115 Those foes of ours the gate shut in the face
116 Of my good Master who remained without
117 And turned to come toward me with tardy pace.

118 His eyes were bent and from his brow was out
119 All boldness while amidst his sighs he said:
120 "Who has denied to me this sad redoubt?"

121 Then to me: "By my wrath be not misled
122 Into dismay: this trial I shall meet
123 Whatever hindrance there is hazarded.

124 It is not new their arrogant conceit;
125 At a less secret gate 'twas shown of yore
126 And even now that stands with bolts all split.

127 Thou saw'st the deadly script upon that door.
128 This side of it now comes—and needs no guard
129 To pass the circles down this abrupt shore—

130 One for whose sake shall be this place unbarred.

Inferno - Canto 9

1 That color which faint heart to my face drew,
2 Seeing my Guide turned back from his first plan
3 More quickly drove within his novel hue.

4 He paused as bent on list'ning stands a man,
5 Dark air and thickly fog making his sight
6 Helpless to reach over a lengthy span.

7 "And yet we needs must conquer in this fight"
8 He said—"or else... such One has promised aid!
9 Oh! how I long to see Him here alight!"

10 I noticed well the way he overlaid
11 His starting words with those that after went:
12 His later words having another shade.

13 Yet fear within my heart was not all spent,
14 As I deduced from his truncated phrase
15 A sentence worse perhaps than what he meant.

16 "Here to the bottom of this doleful vase
17 Comes ever any down from the first ring
18 Where broken hope sole penalty purveys?"

19 To this my query he said: "Only as a thing
20 Quite rare is any of us permitted through
21 This downward path I am now following.

22 And yet another time I came hereto
23 Conjured by Erichto, the fiend sinister
24 Who many a shade back to its body drew.

25 Shortly the flesh had been of me left bare
26 When she caused me to go inside that wall
27 To evoke a shade from Juda's very lair.

28 That is the lowest, blackest place of all
29 And farthest from the all-revolving heaven;
30 I know the road: no harm shall thee befall.

31 This marsh by which such fetid stench is given
32 All this sad city girds, where 'gainst my thought,
33 Only by wrath a passage can be riven."

34 And more he said which I remember not
35 As through my eyes I was all drawn and glued
36 On that high tower whose summit glowed red-hot,

37 Where, at one place, erect suddenly stood
38 Three hellish Furies tinted a blood-red:
39 Women they seemed in shape and attitude.

40 Green hydras 'round their waist were riveted,
41 Small serpents and cerastes made their hair
42 Which clustered thickly on each malign forehead.

43 He who well recognized the maids of her
44 Who is the crowned queen of timeless woe,
45 Warned me: "Behold the fierce Erynnis there.

46 Upon the left thou may'st Megaera know;
47 Weeps on the right Alecto, and Tisiphone
48 Stands in between." No further did he go.

49 With her own claws her bosom tore each one
50 And beat her palms and cried so loud and strange
51 That, fearful, near my Master I moved on.

52 "Let come Medusa, and he to stone shall change!"
53 They shouted all and looked down from their height—
54 —"Woe us that Theseus' stroke we failed to avenge!"

55 "Turn back and keep thine eyelids closed tight,
56 For should the Gorgon come and shouldst thou see
57 Her face, thou ne'er would go back to the light."

58 This said, the Master forcibly turned me
59 Around, and of my hands not satisfied
60 His own as shield pressed on me heavily.

61 O Ye who have sound reason for your Guide
62 Now for the shrouded doctrine closely look
63 Which these strange sounding rimes are meant to hide.

64 Coming already along the turbid brook
65 Was heard a crashing sound such that both shores,
66 Meseemed, as if in terror heaved and shook.

67 Twas not unlike a stormy wind whose force
68 Is driven on by adverse heats in play:
69 It hits the wood and naught can stay its course.

70 The limbs it wrenches, smites and brings away.
71 Proudly it proceeds fronted by a cloud of dust
72 And beasts and shepherds flee its crushing sway.

73 Freeing my eyes said Virgil: "Now thou must
74 With all thy mettle, sight that ancient flow
75 There where the smoke raises a thicker gust."

76 As do the frogs when fleeing from their foe,
77 The snake, and through the water scamper fast
78 Till on the ground each in a heap lies low,

79 Like them I saw lost souls in number vast
80 Fleeing ahead of One whose feet unwet
81 At the crossing of Styx the waters passed.

82 Oft his left hand in front he waved, to set
83 His face at ease from the thick fetid air,
84 Only that anguish seeming to regret.

85 Well knowing him as Heaven's messenger
86 I watched my Guide whose signs to me made plain
87 I should keep mute and bow to such seigneur.

88 O, how he seemed to me full of disdain!
89 He approached the gate that quickly I saw reclude
90 Touched by his wand—as naught could him restrain.

91 "O ye outcasts of Heaven, spiteful brood"—
92 Thus he began upon that horrid sill—
93 "Why should ye harbor such a brazen mood?

94 Why should ye balk against that higher will
95 Whose end cannot be cleft by wrath or scorn,
96 And more than once has added to your ill?

97 Of what avail, to lift 'gainst Fate your horn?
98 Your Cerberus, as you have not unlearned,
99 For that, gullet and chin bears scarred and shorn."

100 Then on the filthy path his steps he turned
101 To us not speaking, but with countenance
102 Of one with other gnawing care concerned

103 Than that of him who in his presence stands.
104 As at those holy words our spirits rose,
105 Into the city we hastened our advance.

106 We entered it, as none dared us to oppose.
107 Scarcely within, I, for the keen desire
108 To observe whate'er condition in the close

109 Of the strong ramparts, turned myself around
110 And saw a field, as far as eye could peer,
111 Replete with sorrow and with torments dire.

112 As where the Rhone stagnates—to Arles near—
113 Or as at Pola where Quarnaro's bow
114 Italy closes, bathing its frontier,

115 The varied sepulchres so strangely strong
116 The ground, thus here they loomed from ev'ry part—
117 Only is their mode more bitter here below.

118 For in between the tombs are flames that dart
119 Up high and heat them all with fire so intense
120 That hotter iron asks no wordly art.

121 All the tomb coverings were held suspense
122 And as from souls in wretched misery
123 Issued forth from the graves heart-wrung laments.

124 Then I enquired: "My Master, who might be
125 The people kept within these sepulchers
126 And whom I hear bemoaning grievously?"

127 And he to me: "Here with their followers
128 Heresiarchs of ev'ry sect are found:
129 And more than thou mayest think lie here immerse.

130 Each one with his own kind is here flame-bound
131 While in the tombs the heat is more or less."
132 Then as upon the right his path he wound
133 Between the walls we passed and the distress.

Inferno - Canto 10

1 And now through a narrow path my Master goes
2 Between the walls and the tormenting fire,
3 While I behind his shoulders follow close.

4 "O virtue excels who lead'st me through these dire
5 Circles—" then I began— "at mine own will,
6 Speak now and satisfy all my desire.

7 The people that within the coffers lie,
8 May they be seen? Already all o'er the field
9 The lids are lifted and no watch stands by."

10 And he to me: "All shall be shut and sealed
11 When back from Josaphat they to this bed
12 Shall bring their body which the graves shall yield.

13 In this graveyard of fire are buried
14 With Epicurus all his school who thought
15 That when the body dies, the soul is dead.

16 And as regards the knowledge thou hast sought
17 Thou shalt be here and shortly satisfied
18 And so as to the wish thou speakest not."

19 And I: "If aught I hide—O my good Guide—
20 Within my heart, 'tis so my words be spare
21 And by thy recent counsel thus abide."

22 "O Tuscan through this city's burning glare
23 Moving alive and speaking words so wise,
24 May it please thee a while with us to bear.

25 Thy mode of speech makes me clearly surmise
26 As thy birthplace that noble motherland
27 Which I too harshly did perhaps chastise."

28 Quite suddenly such sound came, near at hand,
29 Out of a coffer, causing me to haste
30 And closer to my Guide to take my stand.

31 Thereon he said to me: "Turn, why delay'st?
32 See Farinata there standing upright;
33 Thou may'st see all of him above the waist."

34 Already into his own was fixed my sight:
35 And he stood there with head erect and bust
36 As holding hell itself in great despite.

37 By ready hands and bold I felt me thrust
38 Amidst the sepulchers on to his place
39 While said my Guide: "Thy words now wisely adjust."

40 Soon as I reached his tomb, into my face
41 He peered a while and almost scornfully
42 He questioned me: "Who were first of thy race?"

43 And I, who felt all eager to comply,
44 Hid naught, but fully unfolded my forebears,
45 So that he raised his eyelids somewhat high.

46 And then he said: "They were most fiercely adverse
47 To me and to my sires and to my part,
48 So that two times I caused them to disperse."

49 "Though chased"—I answered—"they still took new heart
50 And did come back both of those times—as yet
51 Your own have mastered not so well that art."

52 Just then, above the uncovered parapet,
53 Rose by the first a shade to its chin distent—
54 Upon its knees I think that it was set.

55 Eagerly it looked 'round me, as if it meant
56 To see if someone else was haply with me.
57 And when its expectation was all spent,

58 Weeping it said: "If through nobility
59 Of mind thou mov'st across this lampless jail,
60 Where is my son? Why came he not with thee?"

61 Then said I: "Not alone I took this trail:
62 He there awaiting shows to me the road,
63 Whom haply your Guido did to honor fail."

64 The words he spoke and of his pain the mode
65 Had spelt to me that man's name clearly enow,
66 Therefore so full my answer to him flowed.

67 Suddenly erect he cried: "Ah me! say'st thou
68 "He did?"—My son is then alive no more?
69 Sweet light no longer strikes upon his brow?"

70 And noting then a brief delay before
71 I gave him answer, down he fell supine
72 Nor did he stir again up from the floor.

73 But that great soul on whom all heed of mine
74 Was then engaged, changed not his countenance,
75 His neck turned not, nor did his flank incline.

76 "And if"—he said, his speech resuming once
77 Again—"so badly learnt that art have they
78 That hurts me more than e'en this fiery stance.

79 But hark! Ere fifty times shall a new ray
80 Relume that woman's face who doth here reign
81 Thou too shalt know how much that art can weigh.

82 May thou some day see the sweet world again,
83 Tell, why such fury is by that city shown
84 Against my people, in all it doth ordain?"

85 And I: "The horrid slaughter that brought on
86 With the swift stream of Arbia a crimson crest
87 Makes in our temple sound such orison."

88 I saw him shake his head and heave his breast.
89 "I not alone was there, and good cause made
90 Me move"—he said "when I went with the rest;

91 But I was there alone when plans were laid
92 By all to level Florence to the ground,
93 I who alone for her fought unafraid."

94 "May by your seed some day repose be found"—
95 I said to him—"Solve ye that knot, I pray
96 That on this subject has my judgment bound.

97 It seems, if right I hear, that while you may
98 Perceive ahead what in its course time brings,
99 In present things another is the way."

100 "As one whose sight is faulty we see the things
101 In distance"—he replied—"This much of light
102 Grants the High Ruler in our sufferings.

103 When close they draw, or are, darkness of night
104 Surrounds our mind, and so your human lore
105 Save for what others tell, is past our sight.

106 Therefore thou see'st that there shall be no more
107 Knowledge of things in us, that point beyond
108 When of the future shall be closed the door."

109 I grieved then, as on me my error dawned,
110 And said: "Tell him who is fallen by your side
111 His son has not yet loosed of life the bond.

112 And if to him by silence I replied
113 Explain my act because my thoughts were all
114 Coiled in the error that you have untied."

115 I had already heard my Master call,
116 Therefore I urged that soul to tell me more
117 Quickly what others were with him in thrall.

118 He said: "With me a thousand lie and o'er:
119 The second Frederick here is buried
120 And so the Cardinal—I may ignore

121 The rest." He vanished, and with cautious tread
122 Back to the ancient bard I moved, oppressed
123 By those dark words that danger heralded.

124 Onward we sped and while we thus progressed,
125 He gently said to me: "What clouds thy brow?"
126 And I was quick to answer his request.

127 The Sage commanded: "Keep in mind what thou
128 Hast heard that promises to thee ill chance."
129 And lifting then his finger: "Mind this now:

130 When thou shalt look on the sweet radiance
131 Of her whose eye sees all, she shall not fail
132 To tell of thy whole life the circumstance."

133 Soon after that he took a leftward trail:
134 We left the walls and on a path that wends
135 To the pit center, came upon a vale

136 Whose noisome stench even up there offends.

Inferno - Canto 11

1 We reached a bank whose margin high and steep
2 Encircled with the jagged massiveness
3 Of broken rocks a more tormented heap.

4 And here, against the horrible excess
5 Of stench that from the cavern overflowed
6 I found, led by the Master, a recess

7 Back of a large tomb's lid whereon this showed
8 Inscribed: "Pope Anastasius here I guard
9 Whom drew Plotinus from the rightful road."

10 "Our going down 'tis proper to retard
11 So that we gradually inure our sense
12 To this foul breath, which then will not be hard."

13 My Master thus, and I: "Some recompense
14 Find then for our delay lest time be cast
15 Away."—and he: "My mind to that intends.

16 My son, beneath the heavy rocks there massed
17 Three circles are"—to me he then explained—
18 "Graded like those that thou so far hast passed.

19 In all of them doomed spirits are contained;
20 But that henceforth enough may be thy sight,
21 Hear how and why they find them so constrained.

22 All evil that the heavens must requite
23 Has injury for end: such end to attain
24 Men will afflict their kind by fraud or might.

25 Fraud, as an evil wholly in man's domain
26 More hateful is to God: the fraudulent
27 Further below are kept, in greater pain.

28 All the first circle holds the violent,
29 But as three persons are the aim of force,
30 Three tiers are built distinct in its enceinte.

31 To God, to self, to neighbor from this source
32 Injury comes: to them or to their things
33 As thou shalt learn from me in plain discourse.

34 Forced death a man upon his neighbor brings
35 Or wounds him sore, or wastes his estate
36 By ruins, arsons or foul plunderings.

37 All who kill wantonly—or perpetrate
38 Bloodshed, lay waste or rob, in various bands
39 Through the first tier feel of their doom the weight.

40 One on himself may lay violent hands
41 Or on his goods thus through the second tier
42 Vainly repent in their eternal stance

43 Who cut themselves off from your worldly sphere,
44 Gamble away or waste their property
45 And sorely grieve where they should have good cheer.

46 Others use force against the Deity
47 By scorning Nature and her rule benign,
48 Denying God or cursing His decree.

49 Therefore the lowest tier imprints its sign
50 On Sodom and Cahors—and on all those
51 Who from their heart despise the power divine.

52 Fraud—whose remorse every conscience knows—
53 One may use where a trust comes into play
54 Or else where such a trust does not repose.

55 This manner from behind appears to slay
56 Only that love that from nature proceeds:
57 In the next circle then we shall survey

58 Hypocrisy and flattery and all deeds
59 Of magic, falsehoods, thefts and simonies,
60 Panders and barrators and such foul breeds.

61 In th' other way, that love forgotten is
62 Which nature makes and that one added o'er
63 So that a special trust is born from this.

64 Thus in the smallest circle where the core
65 Is of creation and where Dis resides,
66 Traitors—consumed fore'er—their sin deplore."

67 Then I said: "Master, by well marked strides
68 Thy speech proceeds, and makes distinction neat
69 Of this abyss and what in it abides;

70 But tell me more: those in the greasy sleet
71 And those wind-tossed, and those beneath the hail,
72 And those that with such fierce invectives meet,

73 Why not within the flaming city's pale
74 Are they, if God is wrathful on their kind?
75 If not, why are they punished in this vale?"

76 Replied he to my query: "Why so blind
77 Thy wit is now, against thy former use?
78 Or is to something else intent thy mind?

79 Hast thou forgotten what so clearly issues
80 From those well marked in thy *Ethics'* frame—
81 Three dispositions that God's wrath induce?

82 Incontinence and malice and the shame
83 Of mad bestiality: incontinence
84 Less scorning God and less deserving blame?

85 If thou wilt note this doctrine's inner sense
86 And keep in mem'ry who those people were
87 That suffer up above for their offense,

88 Thou shalt know why their place they do not share
89 With these miscreants and why from the mace
90 Of Heaven's vengeance lighter blows they bear."

91 "O sun that on weak sight pour'st healing rays,
92 Thy solving satisfies so well my thought
93 That doubt no less than knowledge seems a grace:

94 But let"—said I—" thy reasoning be brought
95 Back where thou say'st that usury offends
96 The vast goodness of God, and loose that knot."

97 "Philosophy if to it one well attends "
98 He said—"points out, not in a single part,
99 But oft, how nature's course moves and depends
100 From the celestial mind and from its art.
101 Again, if well thou hast thy *Physics* read,
102 Thou shalt find out, and close to its very start,
103 That after that your art strives hard to tread
104 As scholar after master, and for this
105 Your art grandchild of God might well be said.
106 From both of these, if thou hast Genesis
107 In mind—where it begins comes to our race
108 Its proper life and hence its progress is.
109 But usurers drift off on other trace
110 And nature in itself and through its handmaid—
111 They spite, because elsewhere their hope they place.
112 But follow me: enough we here have stayed
113 On the horizon now the Pisces bond,
114 The Bear is all upon the Caurus laid
115 While the path down the bank is far beyond."

Inferno - Canto 12

1 That place we reached in quest of downward track
2 Alp-like appeared and Such was there, beside,
3 That any sight would have been ta 'en aback.

4 As south of Trento shows that ruinous slide
5 That hard upon its flank swift Adige hit
6 –Caused by earthquake or shoring from it pried–

7 And from the mountain top whence it was split
8 Sheer rocks are left down to the valley bed
9 Which hardly a path to one above permit:

10 Such was the way that to that bottom led:
11 And on the margin where the rocks were shorn
12 We saw the shame of Crete there lay outspread

13 Which from the spurious cow of old was born.
14 And when he saw us coming, rabidly
15 His flesh he unawed as one by anger torn.

16 Said then the Sage of mine: "Thinkest, maybe,
17 That here the Duke of Athens comes again,
18 He who up in the world brought death to thee?"

19 Move off, vile beast, because to this domain
20 Not by thy sister taught this man arrives,
21 But goes through here only to see your pain."

22 As does a bull that haply breaks his gyves
23 After he has received the mortal blow,
24 And cannot run, but a few bonds contrives.

25 I saw the Minotaur then leaping so.
26 Cried Virgil wisely: "For the pass now jump;
27 While thus he raves, 'tis well to get below."

28 Thus we began our way down o'er the dump
29 Of those great stones, that often shook impelled
30 Under my feet, by the unaccustomed thump.

31 "Thou thinkest of this cavern sentinelled"—
32 His words the fancies of my mind thus met—
33 "By that dishuman wrath I just have quelled.

34 Know then that when for the first time I set
35 My feet upon this path through Hell's lower ground
36 This rock thou see'st had not been broken yet.

37 But certes shortly—if is my judgment sound—
38 Before came here He who retrieved from Dis
39 The mighty prey held in the upper round,

40 Trembled in all its parts the foul abyss
41 So hard that all creation, I then thought,
42 Was stirred by love as some affirm that this

43 Several times back into chaos has brought
44 The world. Twas then that in this ridge of old
45 Here and elsewhere was such upheaval wrought.

46 But look down to the bottom and behold
47 The stream of blood, now near. Any that hath
48 Done harm by force those boiling waves enfold."

49 O blind cupidity, O foolish wrath
50 By which in our short life we are so spurred
51 And, in the eternal, steeped in such a bath!

52 I saw an ample foss belike a gird
53 That with its arc the plain entire embraced,
54 As from my escort wise I had just heard.

55 Between the foss and the high bank there raced
56 Centaurs in file, with shafts on bow-strings pressed
57 As in the world above their prey they chased.

58 Perceiving us, came all of than to a rest
59 And shortly from the troop I saw three start
60 With chosen shafts and bows ready at their breast.

61 And from afar one shouted: "In what part
62 Is set your doom, ye who come down that hill?
63 Answer from there or I shall loose my dart."

64 My Master said to him: "Our answer will
65 Be made to Chiron standing there by thee.
66 Too eager always wert—for thine own ill!"

67 Then, nudging me: "Thou see'st there Nessus, he
68 Who for fair Dejanira's love was slain
69 And his own fate avenged so cruelly.

70 That looking downward, 'mid those other twain
71 Great Chiron is, Achilles' prudent nurse;
72 Pholus the last, feared for his rage insane.

73 Thousands of them add to that foss a curse:
74 Quickly are the spirits by their arrows speared
75 If they move out from where they should be immerse."

76 Those agile beasts I and my Master neared:
77 Chiron took out an arrow, drew in place
78 The notch and pushed back of his jaw his beard.

79 Thus his great mouth uncovered he displays,
80 Then to his mates: "Did you note the fact
81 That things are moved by him of slower pace?

82 Feet of dead men are not so wont to act."
83 Already my good Guide stood up to plead
84 Reaching the breast where are both forms compact.

85 "Indeed he lives and him, alone, I lead
86 Down this dark valley to the nethermost.
87 Pleasure does not move us but his own need.

88 Where Alleluia is sung One left her post
89 Coming to entrust me this new embassy,
90 He is not a thief, nor I a robber's ghost.

91 Now for that virtue by whose order I
92 Thus move my steps and this wild road I dare
93 One of thy troop give us who shall stand by

94 To show where is the fording and to bear
95 Upon his back my charge as for his weight
96 Cannot he, like a spirit, waft on air."

97 Swerving on his right breast, Chiron his mate
98 Nessus commanded: "Turn and be their guide;
99 If other troops you meet, their zeal abate."

100 We started, by the trusty escort's side
101 Along the margin of the crimson flood
102 Wherein the scalded spirits loudly cried.

103 Covered to their eyebrows I saw a squad
104 Of whom the Centaur said: "There tyrants stay
105 Whose hands for booty were eager and for blood.

106 Thus for their ruthless outrages they pay.
107 There Alexander, Dionysius there,
108 Who held o'er Sicily long; direful sway.

109 That brow so clustered with a thick black hair
110 Is Azzolino, and that flaxen head
111 Obizzo d'Esti—truth to tell, howe'er

112 His slayer was the son he had not bred."
113 Here spoke the Poet at my mute request:
114 "Let him be first—I stand in second stead."

115 Shortly beyond I saw the Centaur rest
116 His eyes upon a crowd that with their throat
117 Stood of the seething stream above the crest.

118 Pointing to a shade from all the rest keynote
119 He said: "Mark him: right in the house of God
120 The heart yet honored on the Thames he smote."

121 Others I saw who held above the blood
122 Their head and e'en their trunk, and many I knew
123 Whom I had met when the world's path they trod.

124 Thus lower and lower the channel level grew
125 Until the sinners' feet only it would bake:
126 And here took place our fording of the slough.

127 "As from this side thou see'st"—the Centaur spake—
128 "The boiling stream decrease to a lower line,
129 Thus thou for very truth my word must take

130 That on this other, more and more the incline
131 Slopes of the bottom till again the tide
132 Reaches the height where tyranny must pine.

133 Heaven's high justice goads upon this side
134 Attila, on earth a scourge: with him stand there
135 Pyrrhus and Sextus—tears no instant dried

136 Shed there—wrung by the seethe—that evil pair
137 Rinieri Pazzo and he of Corneto, both
138 For fouling your highways with such warfare."

139 Then he turned back and crossed again the froth.

Inferno - Canto 13

1 Not yet had Nessus reached the other side
2 When the Master and I set out through a wood
3 Where no trace of a path could be descried.

4 No verdant foliage there, but darkly hued,
5 No branches smooth, but crooked and gnarled that yield
6 No fruits, but poison through sharp thorns extrude.

7 No such hard brambles in their thickets shield—
8 Between Corneto and Cecina—the herds
9 Of savage beasts that hate the cultured field.

10 Harpies here make their nest, those ghoulish birds
11 Who from the Strophades once chased the race
12 Of Troy, predicting woe with doleful words.

13 Broad wings they have, and human neck and face;
14 Clawed are their feet and plumed their belly vast—
15 Upon the trees they wail their dismal lays.

16 Then my good Master said: "Before thou hast
17 Proceeded further, thou must understand
18 That to the second round we now have passed:

19 Through it we move down to the horrid sand.
20 Look sharp therefore, as things now shall appear
21 That would my sermon as untruthful brand."

22 From ev'ry side a groaning I could hear
23 Nor from what souls it came my sight could find
24 So that I stopped by wonder struck and fear.

25 I believe that he thought I had in mind
26 That all the moans among the trunks came from
27 Some wretched souls who hid, the trees behind.

28 Then spoke my Master: "Shouldst thou break off some
29 Light splintering from any of these plants
30 Thy present thoughts all baseless will become."

31 At that, I dared my hand a bit to advance
32 And from a thorny bush I plucked a joint
33 While its trunk cried: "Why so tear me thy hands?"

34 Then while with blood imbrowned the loppéd point:
35 "Why break'st me thou?"—sighing, again it said—
36 "What has from thee all charity purloined?

37 Brambles we are, but a man's body we had.
38 Indeed more piteous should thy hand have been
39 If souls of serpents we had been instead."

40 As when burns at one end a brand still green,
41 Drips on the other, and a hissing sound
42 Is made by air escaping from within,

43 Thus did together from that splintered wound
44 Both words and blood issue, so that I let
45 The tip fall down, and stood as terror-bound.

46 "If short of proof this thing could faith beget,
47 O injured soul—" My Sage thus to his plea—
48 "Although the same that in my rhymes he met,

49 His hand would never have stretched out to a tree,
50 But the incredible thing led me to lend
51 Counsel to a thing which weighs even on me.

52 But tell him who thou art, that for amend
53 He may relume thy name with a fresh glow
54 In the world where again he may ascend."

55 The trunk: "With thy sweet words thou lur'st me so
56 That I must needs reply, and you forbear
57 If, in my speech enmeshed, diffuse I grow.

58 I am the one who kept into his care
59 Both keys to Frederick's heart and was so suave
60 My hand to shut and ope, that my Seigneur

61 Almost all others from his secrets drave.
62 Faithful to my great charge I paid the price
63 When veins and pulses for its sake I gave.

64 That harlot who has ne'er her strumpet eyes
65 Withheld from roving within Caesar's hall—
66 A common death, and of all courts the vice—

67 Against my person fired the minds of all
68 And those thus fired so fired my Prince august
69 That honor's joys turned into mourning's gall.

70 And I through my disdain and my disgust,
71 Believing that by death disdain I would flee,
72 Against my justice I became unjust

73 For the new roots that anchor here this tree
74 I swear that the high trust I ne'er betrayed
75 Which my Seigneur, so worthy, placed on me.

76 If ever one of you shall climb the grade
77 Back to the world, let him my name restore
78 Which now by envy's stroke so low is laid."

79 A while awaiting—: "Since his words are o'er—"
80 The Poet spoke to me— "our time waste not
81 But speak, and what thou wishest ask him for."

82 And I to him: "Ask him thyself for aught
83 Thou thinkest would my wishes satisfy;
84 I couldn't, as pity has my heart distraught."

85 Then he, resuming: "May this man comply
86 Freely with the prayer in thy speech contained,
87 O fettered spirit, tell us by what tie—

88 I beg of thee—a soul is here constrained
89 Within these knots, and, if thou canst, tell too
90 If e'er a soul was from these limbs unchained."

91 Hard from the trunk the hissing splutter blew
92 And then that wind into this voice made shift:
93 "An answer briefly shall be given you.

94 The ruthless soul soon as it goes adrift
95 Self-wrenched from the body where it dwelt,
96 Is sent by Minos to the seventh rift.

97 It strikes without set place this wooded belt
98 And where it happens to be thrown by chance
99 There it starts sprouting like a grain of spelt;
100 Thus grow our saplings and our forest plants.
101 Feeding on the green leaves the Harpies then
102 Pain, and to pain a vent, produce at once.
103 We, like all souls, shall come, our spoils of men
104 To take, but not to wear, it being wrong
105 What has been spurned, to receive again.
106 Hereto our corpses we shall drag along
107 And through the dismal wood hung they shall be
108 Each at the thorn its hateful soul has sprung."
109 While still we were attending to the tree
110 Thinking it was about to speak some more,
111 By crashing noise we were struck suddenly.
112 As hunter who is list'ning for the boar
113 That comes, pressed by the chase, on toward his post—
114 And hears the branches crash and the beasts roar—
115 We saw two spirits come from the left coast,
116 Naked and torn, on such a headlong run
117 That broke whatever branches their path crossed.
118 The one ahead: "Come on, now, Death, come on—"
119 The other, seeming of his sloth afraid,
120 Cried: "Lano, smart indeed thy legs have grown
121 Since when on Toppo's field the jousts were played!"
122 His wind then haply failing for the strain,
123 Of him and of a bush a pile he made.
124 Behind the two was filled the wooded plain
125 With bitches black of skin, eager and grim
126 And running as greyhounds freed from their chain.
127 The one who hid soon felt their teeth, and him
128 They lacerated into many a shred
129 Carrying off every sorry limb.

130 Then giving me his hand, my escort led
131 To that torn bush which vainly cried its wail
132 And through its many wounds in large drops bled.

133 "James of Saint Andrew"—it said—"to what avail
134 Didst for a shield to my green limbs resort?
135 What guilt have I for what thy sins entail?"

136 Over the bush my Master stopping short,
137 Said: "Who wert thou whose words full of despair
138 Out of so many points with thy blood snort?"

139 And he to us: "O souls who here did fare
140 To witness this mad slaughter and this shame
141 For which of all my boughs I am left bare,

142 Gather them at the foot of my sad frame.
143 The Baptist's city once I calléd mine;
144 For him she changed her early patron's name

145 And he for that will always make her pine.
146 And but for this that yet not all is gone
147 There, over Arno's pass, his ancient sign

148 The citizens who built again upon
149 The ruin that Attila left in his raid
150 Would have in vain their work caused to be done.

151 For me a gibbet of my house I made."

Inferno - Canto 14

1 As love for my own land stabbed me with acute
2 Pangs, I collected the tree's broken parts
3 Giving them back to him who now was mute.

4 We came then to the limit that disports
5 The second from a lower tier and where
6 Justice displays other horrendous arts.

7 That I may well the novel things declare,
8 I say that we came now upon a weald
9 Whose floor of any plant is wholly bare.

10 By the dark forest's wreath its bounds are sealed
11 As by the fosse is girt the wooded land;
12 And here we held our steps 'twixt wood and field.

13 The soil was like an arid and thick sand
14 Similar to the shore which in their flight
15 Pressed down the feet of Cato and of his band.

16 Ah, how God's vengeance should fill all with fright
17 Who reading these my lines become aware
18 Of what was then made patent to my sight.

19 Large flocks of souls, all naked, I saw there,
20 And all of them were weeping bitterly
21 Though bearing of that woe a various share.

22 Of them, some on the ground supine did lie
23 While others squatting close together clung:
24 Others around were going endlessly.

25 The walking spirits formed the greatest throng
26 And those recumbent the least large of all
27 But to their woe these had a much freer tongue.

28 Upon the sandy waste rained slowly a fall
29 Of fire in widespread flakes that never slacked
30 As drops on windless height the snow's soft pall.

31 As Alexander in the hottest tract
32 Of India saw such flames fall on his camp
33 Which till they touched the ground remained compact,

34 So that he ordered all his troops to tramp
35 About the soil as thus the vapor's blaze
36 By single sparks was found easier to stamp—

37 Thus pours the eternal fire upon that place
38 And kindles all the sand, as doth the steel
39 Striking the flint, thus causing pain two ways.

40 Without a pause went on the maddened reel
41 Played by those wretched hands that tried to shield
42 Ever new flaming darts, from head to heel.

43 Then I began: "O Master, to whom yield
44 All things save the hard fiends that at the main
45 Gate of this city against us took the field,

46 Who is that huge one there that shows disdain,
47 Through scowls and writhings, for the ceaseless flame,
48 So that he lies unripened by the rain?"

49 Soon as he noticed that I asked his name
50 From my good Leader, instantly he cried:
51 "As in my life, in death I am the same.

52 Jove may well tire his workman who supplied
53 The lightning keen that in his rage he threw
54 The day that struck but not yet tamed I died.

55 Or he may work in turns and tire the crew
56 In Mongibello's forge dark as the night
57 Shouting: Good Vulcan, help—as if anew

58 He were engaged in that Phlegraeon fight,
59 Shooting at me with all his strength and hate
60 In his revenge he shall have small delight."

61 Then spoke my Guide, and in such tones irate
62 As never I had heard from him before:
63 "O Capaneus, because does not abate

64 Thy prideful wrath, thou art here punished more.
65 No torment save thine own unending rage
66 Would of thy fury pay in full the score."

67 Then spoke to me with softer lip my Sage,
68 Saying: "He was among the seven Kings
69 Besieging Thebes; time seems not to assuage

70 His hate of God on whom seemingly he flings
71 His scorn; but his ill mood, as I have said
72 Unto his breast as proper ornament clings.

73 Follow me and see thou dost not tread
74 But where the fire within the sand is chilled.
75 Keep with thy feet well to the wood, instead."

76 We came to a place where a small stream is spilled
77 Out of the wood and by its crimson hues
78 My mind is even now with horror filled.

79 As out of Bulicame runs a sluice
80 Whose waters then the sinful women share
81 Thus down that arid sand went the red ooze.

82 When seeing that its bed and both banks were
83 Stone-built, and so the margins on each side,
84 I understood the passage to be there.

85 "Of all strange things on which I clarified
86 Thy wond'ring mind since through that gate we passed
87 Whose threshold to no one is e'er denied,

88 Upon a thing thine eyes have not been cast
89 Notable as the stream that here flows by
90 Upon whose waves none of the flames may last."

91 From my good Leader came such words, and I
92 Eagerly begged of him to grant the food
93 For which he had my yearning stirred high.

94 "Midsea lies now in ruined solitude"—
95 Said he— "a land called Crete; under its King
96 In olden times the world was chaste and good.

97 A mountain rises there, once flourishing
98 With streams and boughs—which Ida was yclept—
99 And is deserted now as blighted thing.

100 There as in sheltered cradle Rhea kept
101 Her growing child, and him better to screen
102 She caused a great outcry whene'er he wept.

103 A great old man stands up—the mount within—
104 His shoulders toward Damietta—as into a glass,
105 His eyes are fixed on Rome, o'er the marine.

106 All of his head is of fine gold a mass,
107 Pure silver are his arms and so his breast,
108 And down unto the crotch he is made of brass.

109 Of chosen iron formed is all the rest
110 Save his right foot of baked clay, and more
111 This than the other by his weight is pressed.

112 Every part except the golden ore
113 Is cracked by a fault, and through it tears are shed
114 Which, gathered, through the cavern's bottom bore.

115 Their course cascades down to the valley bed,
116 Forms Acheron and Styx and Phlegethon,
117 Then through this gullet further down is sped.

118 Breaching the point than which no lower is known
119 It makes Cocytus and what lake that is
120 I shall not say: to thee it shall be shown."

121 And I to him: "If from our world comes this
122 That courses at our feet, why wasn't it found
123 Earlier than at this margin of the abyss?"

124 And he to me: "Thou know'st the place is round
125 And though thy path has been much more inclined
126 To the left hand, e'er to the bottom bound,

127 Not yet did it 'round the whole circle wind;
128 Thus if new sights for thee here still remain,
129 It should not cause a wonder in thy mind."

130 Where then is Lethe"—questioned I again—
131 "And Phlegethon, for thou of that say'st naught
132 And only of this that it comes of this rain."

133 "Pleasure to me is by thy questions brought,
134 Always"—he said— but the red seething wave
135 On that last point, methinks, should clear thy thought.

136 Thou shalt see Lethe, but beyond this cave,
137 Where, when the sin has been all ta'en away
138 After repentance, the souls go to lave."

139 He added then: "No longer need we stay
140 Close to the forest; follow my descent.
141 Our path, the margins free from that hot spray

142 And over which is ev'ry vapor spent."

Inferno - Canto 15

1 We now proceed on one of those hard banks
2 While from the river lifts a cloud of blear
3 Smoke, saving from the fire its waves and flanks.

4 'Twixt Ghent and Bruges much the same barrier
5 The Flemish raise against the rushing tide
6 Keeping away the sea whose might they fear.

7 Castles and towns to shield, such dams provide
8 The Paduans 'gainst Brenta's overflows
9 When warmed by Spring is Chiarentana's side.

10 In such a semblance were erected those,
11 But, whoever their builder might have been,
12 Not quite so high and thick the banks there rose.

13 We had now put a lengthy space between
14 The wood and us; back I'd have turned in vain
15 To find the place where I the wood had seen.

16 And here we met new souls in a long train
17 Sidling along the bank, each peering through
18 The mist at us, as at each other crane

19 The passers-by, the eve the moon is new.
20 And as old tailor into a needle's eye,
21 Those shades appeared their brow toward us to screw.

22 I was surveyed thus by that family
23 Till one knew me; I felt him grab the fold
24 Of my robe and—"What wonder!"—heard him cry.

25 As with his arm outstretched he made his bold
26 Appeal, in his sere traits I fixed my glance
27 So that his scorched looks did not withhold

28 From me the knowing of his countenance.
29 And on his own bending my face, anon
30 I answered: "Sir Brunetto, is here your stance?"

31 Then he up spoke: "May it please thee, my son,
32 If Brunetto Latini a while his way
33 Makes back with thee and lets his file go on. "

34 And I: "With all my heart for this I pray,
35 And here with you I shall be pleased to sit,
36 If he grants this whose word I must obey."

37 "My son, should any of us himself permit
38 To stop—" he said—"he then must lie five scores
39 Of years, while him the flames unshielded hit.

40 Proceed, and at thy heels, matching thy course
41 I shall then join my troop on this hot pike
42 That, pauseless, its eternal loss deplores."

43 I did not dare to step down from the dike
44 To walk along his side, but bent my head
45 And went along as one reverent-like.

46 "What fate or chance"—with eager words he said—
47 "Brings thee to this low place ere thy last day
48 And who is he by whom thy steps are led?"

49 "Above in the clear world I went astray—"
50 I answered—" finding me in a dark vale
51 Before my age had covered all its way.

52 But yester-morn I 'scaped, only to fail;
53 And falling back, I then met with this man
54 Who brings me home over this woeful trail."

55 And he to me: "Aim where thy star leads on
56 And thou shalt reach a glorious goal, as even
57 I had surmised when fair my life still ran.

58 Had I not been so soon to my death driven,
59 Seeing the heavens to thee so benign
60 Some comfort to thy work I would have given.

61 But that ungrateful people and malign
62 That anciently came down from Fiesole—
63 And still of rock and mountain bears the sign—

64 Shall thy good deeds with hatred e'er repay;
65 For 'midst the acid sorbs it is not right
66 That sweet fig tree should its ripe fruits display.

67 Of old they are famous for their crooked sight:
68 A people full of envy, pride and greed.
69 Clean of their customs from thyself the blight.

70 But thy fortune this honor shall concede:
71 While hungrily for thee both sides shall long,
72 Past reach of either goat shall be the feed.

73 Let those beasts that from Fiesole have sprung
74 Make litter of themselves, but let them spare
75 The plant, if any still lives in their dung

76 Through which into some blossoms might yet bear
77 The noble seed of Rome that there remained
78 When of such malice it became the lair."

79 "Had my desire its ripe fulfillment gained—"
80 I answered him—"you would not have as yet
81 From human nature banishment sustained.

82 For in my mind is fixed and with regret
83 Even now fills my heart your suave and fond
84 Paternal image, when long hours we met

85 And you taught me how man may live beyond
86 The bounds of time; and to your loving care
87 Shall, till my death, my grateful tongue respond.

88 I note your words that on my future bear
89 And keep with other texts to be made plain
90 By Lady all-knowing, if I rise to her.

91 But this I want you firmly to retain:
92 When is my conscience pure and unafraid
93 Fortune will deal to me her blows in vain.

94 Even 'fore now such earnest has been paid
95 To me, but I care not how Fortune plies
96 Her wheel at pleasure, and the villein his spade."

97 Then my good Master turned around his eyes
98 Upon his right, and looked at me and spake:
99 "He listens well who minds a sound advice."

100 Meantime my step and sleep I do not break
101 With Sir Brunetto, asking him to tell
102 What great and famous men tread the same wake.

103 And he to me: "To know of some 'tis well,
104 But of the rest 'tis better naught to say;
105 Time would be short on all of them to dwell.

106 This is enough that clerics all they were
107 And scholars great to whom the world has bowed:
108 Tainted with sin in the same reeking way.

109 Priscian is going with that sorry crowd
110 And Francesco d'Accorso; there, too, ranged—
111 Hadst thou desired to see such evil-browed

112 Fellow—was the man to Bacchiglione changed
113 From Arno, by the Servants' Servant; there
114 He left his nerves, from righteousness so estranged.

115 I would say more, but can no longer share
116 My speech and walk with thee, as now I see
117 New clouds that from the sand upon us bear.

118 New people come with whom I must not be;
119 My own "Tesoro" in thy good care I place:
120 Therein I live—I make no other plea."

121 When he turned back and at so fast a pace
122 As that of those who run for the green flag
123 Across Verona's country, and in that race

124 He seemed the winner, not of those who lag.

Inferno - Canto 16

1 Where the stream waters fall I now am coming,
2 On the next circle's brim, and hear a boom
3 That sounds like that of many hives a-humming;

4 When to my sight three shades together loom
5 Running out of a band that struggled by
6 Under the rain of their horrendous doom.

7 They came toward us, and soon I heard them cry:
8 "Stand thou aside who from our city of sin
9 Seem'st to have come, if thy dress does not lie."

10 Alas, what sores I saw deep in their skin
11 Which recent flames and old therein had burned!
12 E'en now that sorrow flares, my memory within—

13 Attending to their cries my Doctor turned
14 His eyes to me and said: "Now must we wait,
15 For courtesy to them should not be spurned.

16 And were it not the land's natural state
17 That shooting fire, more proper I would say
18 To thee and not to them a hurried gait. "

19 As we thus paused, their ancient wailing they
20 Took up again and standing right below
21 All three in a ring wheeled 'round in rapid way.

22 As champions did, their naked body a-glow,
23 Watching for hold and vantage ere they leapt
24 Against each other to deal blow for blow,

25 Thus did those three, as wheeling 'round they kept
26 Their eyes on me their neck held ever bent
27 Against the journey on which their footfalls steps.

28 "Ah, if this putrid place with woe besprent"—
29 One said—" and our own face scorched and flame-browned
30 Towards us and towards our prayers makes pity ill spent,

31 Perhaps our names, up in the world renowned,
32 May prompt the telling who thou art whose feet
33 So safe are scraping this infernal ground.

34 This one whose traces, as thou see'st, I beat
35 Though nothing now but nude and hairless shame
36 Was worthy indeed more than thou may'st conceit.

37 Of good Gualdrada the grandchild, his name
38 Was Guido Guerra and while he lived, for deeds
39 Of arms and wisdom gained a widespread fame.

40 This other who after me the sand thus kneads
41 Was good Tegghiaio, Aldobrandi's pride:
42 Surely to him the world high praise concedes.

43 And I who am with them here crucified
44 Was Jacob Rusticucci and for my dire
45 Doom, above all I blame my savage bride."

46 Had I then had some cover from the fire
47 I would have rushed to them down from my place
48 And, certes, not against my Guide's desire.

49 But with those darting flames before my face
50 By fear of burning was the wish suppress
51 That made me hunger after their embrace.

52 "Not scorn indeed"—the three I then address—
53 "But for your fate great pity stabbed me through—
54 Such as but slowly may fade from my breast—

55 When sight of you from this my Doctor drew
56 Such words that made me think I should look for
57 The coming of famed gentry such as you.

58 I am from your own city and o'er and o'er
59 I heard your names and many a glorious feat
60 And often I retold that glorious lore.

61 I leave the gall for fruits that will be sweet
62 Promised to me by this my truthful Guide,
63 But first to reach the center it is meet."

64 "May yet for a long time thy limbs abide
65 Thy soul's commands"—that spirit answered then—
66 "And after thee may yet thy fame spread wide,

67 Tell: courtesy still and valor have the men
68 Of our and thine own city, as in the past,
69 Or is that now wholly beyond their ken?

70 For Guglielmo Borsiere, among the last
71 To drop down here—he goes with yonder train—
72 With his report deep grief on us did cast."

73 "Alas, new blood and chance for sudden gain
74 A pride beyond all reckoning have bred,
75 Florence, in thee, and now thou wail'st in vain."

76 This much I cried, while holding high my head,
77 And they who took those words as my reply
78 Looked as do men when a hard truth is said.

79 "May it ne'er cost thee more to satisfy
80 All who may question thee"—as one they spoke—
81 "Happy thou art whose mind to words may fly!

82 Shouldst thou from these dark field thy 'scape yet make
83 And see again the heavens star-impearled
84 In saying—I was there—joy shalt thou take.

85 Recall our names to those up in the world."
86 Their circle here they broke and so fast ran
87 That their legs seemed to fly as wings unfurled.

88 Not even an Amen in such brief span
89 Of time could sound, and lost to sight they were.
90 Then thought my Master well to hasten on.

91 He advanced a while with me his follower
92 And came so near the boom of the cascade
93 That of our voices we were hardly aware.

94 And as that stream whose proper course is laid
95 First from Mount Veso toward the eastern shore
96 Proceeding down on Appennine's left grade—

97 Stillwater it is called up there, before
98 Upon the valley its lower channel lies,
99 But at Forli it has that name no more—

100 By the Alp of Saint Benedict the skies
101 Rends with its roar while plunging at one leap
102 Where for some thousands should a hospice rise,

103 Thus over a ravine all craggy and steep
104 That tinted stream loud-bellowing we found,
105 And there no ear its power for long could keep.

106 I had a cord girding my body around
107 With which I had at times hoped to reduce
108 That panther vari-skinned and hold it bound.

109 Soon as I had it all from me made loose,
110 According to the order of my Guide,
111 I handed it all coiled for him to use.

112 And leaning on the right upon his side
113 With a quick casting, o'er the precipice
114 Beyond the brink he threw it somewhat wide.

115 "Now certes must respond some novelties"—
116 I said within myself—" to that new sign
117 Of which the Master such keen watcher is."

118 From utmost caution men should ne'er decline
119 When close to such that not alone the mere
120 Deed may perceive but thought itself divine.

121 He said to me: "Soon That shall come up here
122 Which I await, and solve thy fancy's dream
123 When to thy sight his shape shall plainly appear."

124 When truth and lie of equal semblance seem,
125 Truth speaking should be e'er by men abhorred
126 Lest, guiltless, they may lose common esteem.

127 But now I must needs speak, and for each word,
128 Of this my Comedy, reader, I do swear—
129 —And may to it the world long grace accord—

130 I saw then through that dim and thickened air
131 A swimming figure reach the upper shore
132 Whose sight the stoutest heart would hardly bear,

133 As he returns who dove below and tore
134 way an anchor from its grappling hold
135 On rock or else that hides on the sea floor—

136 His head springs up, and his legs upwards fold.

Inferno - Canto 17

1 "Behold the beast with the keen-pointed tail:
2 It cleaves the hills, wrecks walls and arms of man
3 And with its stench doth the whole world unveil."

4 With such a speech to me my Guide began,
5 Then signaled to the beast to come ashore
6 Close to the stones we had been walking on.

7 Fraud's foul image then advanced before
8 My eyes and landed with his head and bust
9 While off the bank his tail was dangling o'er.

10 His face was of a man in semblance just,
11 So fair his skin appeared—his body, instead,
12 Seemed of a serpent by its shape and crust.

13 Hairy paws from his arm-pits out spread
14 And all his back and breast and either side
15 With colored nodes and rings was garnished.

16 Never Tartar or Turk to a cloth applied—
17 On background or relief—such varied hues,
18 Nor could Aracne's loom such weaves provide.

19 As on the beach small boats, when not in use,
20 Partly rest on the water, partly on land,
21 Or as up there among the gluttonous

22 Germans, the beaver takes his battle stand,
23 Thus there that worst of beasts had ta'en a grip
24 On the stone-covered edge hemming the sand.

25 Upon the void his tail did freely flip
26 And upward rolled its poison laden end
27 That looked as scorpion's tail with forkéd tip.

28 Then said my Leader: "Now we must needs bend
29 Our way a while until we reach down where
30 Thou see'st that evil beast his limbs distend."

31 Going below, on our right breast we bear
32 And for ten steps the very edge we skim
33 As, further in, the sand and flames deter.

34 And when we had arrived quite close to him
35 I saw some souls but shortly away who sate
36 Upon the sand close to the ruinous rim.

37 Here said my Guide: "That knowledge adequate
38 Thou gain about the souls of ev'ry sort
39 Within this round, go now and see their state"

40 And added: "Make with them thy sermon short;
41 I shall bespeak with This till thy return
42 That he may lend his shoulders for support."

43 Thus on that seventh circle's utmost bourne
44 I still move on, and all alone I toil
45 Up to the place where those new people mourn.

46 Out of their eyes their sorrow seemed to boil
47 The while their hands rushed here and there to beat
48 Now 'gainst the vapor, now 'gainst the hot soil.

49 Not otherwise during the summer heat
50 Dogs bit by flies or fleas or by gadflies
51 Belabor with their muzzle or their feet.

52 When upon some of those I fixed my eyes
53 Who from the pelting fire receive their curse,
54 I could amidst that throng none recognize,

55 But saw about their neck a hanging purse
56 Of certain color and with certain crest
57 On which the sinners' eyes appeared to nurse.

58 Then as among that crowd went on my quest
59 I saw a yellow purse with azure dight
60 Which of a lion the bold from expressed.

61 And as upon its course kept on my sight
62 Another I beheld on field blood-red
63 Showing a goose much more than butter white.

64 And one whose little sac showed forth, bespread
65 On white, a pregnant sow in azure traced:
66 "What art thou doing in this ditch?"—then said.

67 "Go now and as thou art by life still graced,
68 Know that my neighbor Vitaliano shall
69 Be at his station on my left soon placed.

70 A Paduan I while these from Florence all;
71 And often thunder on my ears their shrieks:
72 —Let the most noble knight come to his stall,
73 On whom shall hang the pouch with the three beaks."
74 Screwing his mouth, he here put out his tongue
75 As e'en an ox would do that his nose sleeks.

76 Then lest I worry him, by a stay too long,
77 By whom of a brief stay I had been told,
78 I turned my back upon that sorrowing throng.

79 My Guide, I found, had taken a foothold
80 Already, on that ferocious monster's back
81 And he then said to me: "Be firm and bold.
82 Down on this ladder is our only track.
83 Climb toward the neck, halfway I hold my stance
84 And thus his tail all power to harm shall lack."

85 As he who feels the fit of ague advance
86 On him, so that his nails already are pale
87 And shivers if on shade he haps to glance,

88 Such I became hearing my Master's hail.
89 But with his taunts that shame grew in me apace
90 Which in front of good lord strengthens wassail.

91 Thus on those ugly shoulders I found place.
92 I tried to say, but not a sound went past
93 My trembling lips: "Hold me in thine embrace."

94 But as before he had helped me, when cast
95 In other dangers, soon as I was on
96 That mount, his arms 'round me, he held me fast.

97 Then said: "Thou canst now start, O Geryon.
98 With ample circles ease thy downward way:
99 Think of the novel load on thee now thrown."

100 As boat that leaves its mooring on the quay,
101 Backwards and backwards, thus he left the shore
102 And when he felt his length could have full play

103 He turned his tail where was his breast before
104 And holding it stretched out, moved like an eel
105 With his great paws gathering wind to soar.

106 I think that so much terror did not feel
107 Phaeton when from his hands the reins were flung—
108 And the burnt heavens still that flight reveal—

109 Nor hapless Icarus, his back unstrung
110 Of feathers, when the wax began to melt
111 And cried his father: "Watch, thy course is wrong!"

112 As held my heart when only on air I felt
113 Myself supported, while was ev'ry kind
114 Of view, but of that beast, wholly dispelt.

115 He slowly swam and ever more declined,
116 Wheeling around, though this I held in doubt
117 But that into my face blew an upward wind.

118 And now upon our right I heard the spout
119 Crashing below in such horrendous roars
120 That looking down, my head I stretchéd out.

121 Then more I feared the moment to unhorse
122 For I could see great fires and groanings hear,
123 So that I huddled, in myself retrorse.

124 I noticed, too—which first did not appear—
125 Our downward wheeling, for the many troops
126 Of tortured souls that from all sides drew near.

127 As falcon tires after long, aimless swoops
128 And then, though bird or lure is not in sight
129 Makes the falconer cry: "Alas, he droops"—

130 Slowly he comes down whence had been quick his flight
131 With many turns, and sets himself askew
132 Far from his teacher, as if full of spite—

133 Thus at the bottom Geryon dropped us two
134 Right at the foot of the ravine steep-shored,
135 And unburdened of us, upwards he flew

136 Vanishing fast, as dart leaving the cord.

Inferno - Canto 18

1 This place in Hell—'tis Malebolge called—
2 Is paved with stone of iron gray nuance
3 Such as the rock by which all 'round 'tis walled.

4 Right in the midst of that malign expanse
5 Yawns a great well—and deep it is and wide—
6 I shall say later of its ordinance.

7 Between the well and the steep rocky side
8 Is left a space which in a circle bends
9 And ten great gulches its bottom divide.

10 As one may see where, for the walls' defense,
11 Several moats around a fort are set,
12 Such 'round the well the gulches' course extends.

13 Similar built were those that here I met:
14 As in such forts out of each gate are seen
15 Small bridges spanning the moats' parapet,

16 Thus from the bottom of the steep ravine
17 O'er moats and ridges massive crags are thrown
18 Up to the well which breaks and takes them in.

19 Here, shaken from the back of Geryon,
20 We found ourselves; the Poet moved to go
21 Leftwards, and after him I too went on.

22 Upon my right struck me a novel woe:
23 New tortured souls whom a new scourging flays
24 In this first gulch I saw crowded below.

25 Therein the naked sinners, in the space
26 This side of center 'gainst us held their course;
27 Beyond, with us, but at a faster pace.

28 Thus o'er that bridge upon the Tiber shores—
29 The Pardon year—was the vast army sped
30 In manner by the Romans put in force:

31 That on one side, all keeping their forehead
32 Turned to the Castle, to Saint Peter's went,
33 And on the other, to the Hill instead.

34 And here and there, along the ghastly enceinte
35 Horned devils watched, all brandishing great whips
36 With which the sinners' back they cruelly rent.

37 Ah, how they made them lift their legs and hips
38 With the first slashes: surely none would be
39 Waiting the third, nor yet the second flips.

40 As I went on, in that foul company
41 My eyes met one, and I was prompt to say:
42 "The sight of him is not new food to me."

43 Therefore I stayed my step him to survey.
44 Stopping with me, consented my fond Guide
45 That for a while I follow a backward way.

46 The scourged sinner thought himself to hide
47 Lowering his face: no help from it he drew
48 For then I said: "O thou whose eyes are tied

49 Down to the earth, if is thy semblance true
50 Venedico Caccianimico art.
51 What brings thee here in these sharp Muds to rue?"

52 And he to me: "I speak with heavy heart
53 And moved by thy clear words which my mind bear
54 Back to the world where I too played a part.

55 I am the one by whom Ghisola fair
56 To do the Marquis' pleasure was inclined,
57 Howe'er may now be told that shameful snare.

58 Not alone from Bologna I at this grind;
59 We fill this place so that the tongues are fewer
60 Which expert to say "sipa" one could find

61 Twixt Savena and the Reno—and if a sure
62 Token or mark of this thou wishest to bring
63 To mind how for our breast gain is the lure."

64 While thus he spake, with a skin-tearing sting
65 Lashed him a fiend who said: "Off, bawd, with thee;
66 No chance is here for women bartering."

67 Then I rejoined my escort rapidly.
68 Our way for a few steps forward we wend
69 Till a projecting bridge-like crag we see.

70 On that easily enough we then ascend
71 And o'er its ledge, upon our right, we go
72 Leaving those circles that will know no end.

73 When we arrived to where it yawns below
74 For a pass to the crowd under the thong:
75 "Stay, and on thee let strike"—my Leader so

76 Advised—" the vision of this other throng
77 Of wretches who have kept from thee their face
78 Because so far they went with us along."

79 From that old bridge we look upon the trace
80 Of those now coming on contrarywise
81 And whom the lashes similarly chase.

82 And my good Master seeming to surmise
83 My query said: "See that great shade advance:
84 He sheds no tear despite his agonies.

85 How yet he keeps his royal countenance!
86 Jason is, he, whose heart and wit showed when
87 He robbed of their ram the Colchians.

88 Toward Lemnos' isle his sails he opened then
89 After the women bold and pitiless
90 Had put to sudden death all of their men.

91 There he with tokens and with wily address
92 Betrayed Hysipyle, maid young and fair
93 Who in betraying the rest had gained success.

94 But pregnant and alone he left her there.
95 For such a crime in such a pain he grieves:
96 And for Medea his meed also he must bear.

97 With him must walk who such betrayals weaves.
98 This is enough of the first gulch to scan
99 And of the kind its hungry maw receives."

100 We had come where the narrow passage ran
101 Across the second bank and made of it
102 A pier for shouldering another span.

103 And here we heard from the next circling pit
104 The whine of people who snort through their snout
105 And hard with their own palms their body hit.

106 A mouldy crust was spread the banks about
107 As vapors from below stick like a paste
108 On them and sight and smelling put to rout.

109 Looking on that dark gulch our eyes would waste
110 Unless we gain a place upon the verge
111 Of the rock where the arch is loftiest.

112 Hither we come and see people emerge
113 Barely from the dim foes replete with murk
114 That human privies there seemed to converge.

115 As I seek those that on the bottom lurk
116 I note one's head which is so smeared with rot
117 That he shows not either as lay or clerk.

118 He shouted: "Why amidst this filthy lot
119 Keepst thou on me alone thy greedy eye?"
120 "Because, if memory now fails me not,

121 I think I have seen thee with thy hair dry,
122 Alessio Interminei from Lucca"—I said.
123 "Hence thee I mark, more than thy company."

124 Then, as he struck a blow upon his head:
125 "Flatteries have sunk me down in this drain,
126 As ne'er with them my tongue was surfeited."

127 Afterwards said my Leader: "See thou train
128 Thy sight a distance farther from this crag
129 So that thine eyes may well the face attain

130 Of that most filthy and disheveled hag
131 Scratching herself with dirty nails: she stands
132 A while, then on her thighs she seems to sag.

133 Thais she is, most foul of courtesans
134 Who questioned by her lover: –Thank'st me thou?–
135 Answered: –Indeed, and with exhuberance.–

136 And with such sights let us be sated now."

Inferno - Canto 19

1 O Simon Magus and thy wretched breed,
2 Ye who the holy things—to holy use
3 Only to be espoused—through grasping greed

4 For gold and silver wantonly traduce,
5 Of you must at this time my trumpet ring
6 As in this third of gulches your kind rues.

7 We have now reached the charnel following,
8 And to the rocky ridge, right on that part
9 That overhangs the middle fosse we cling.

10 O Thou All-Wise, how well display thy art
11 The earth, the heavens, and the world of woe!
12 How well thy justice doth its method chart!

13 The livid stone that paved the bed below
14 Was pierced with holes—and both the flanks likewise—
15 Round and of equal spread, in many a row.

16 No lesser and no greater was their size
17 Than those that in my beautiful Saint John
18 Are made for use of them who there baptize.

19 One of those wells—not many years have run
20 Since then—I broke for one about to drown:
21 And let this be truth's seal for everyone.

22 Out of each hole I saw—above its crown—
23 A sinner's feet and legs, but only as high
24 As the thick part; the rest was further down.

25 Of everyone both soles were fiery
26 And for the pain their junctures squirmed so
27 They would have snapped a rope of many a ply.

28 As gliding flames along the surface go
29 On things enveloped by some oily drip,
30 In the same manner there, from heel to toe.

31 "Master, who is he whose legs much harder flip"—
32 Said I—"than all who the same torment share
33 And whom the flames suck with a ruddier lip?"

34 "If thou so wishest, I shall take thee there"—
35 Said he "Along yonder less steep incline.
36 His name and crimes he shall himself declare."

37 Then I: "What is thy pleasure also is mine.
38 That from thy will I do not stray, my Lord,
39 Thou knowest, and things unsaid thou canst divine."

40 We reached the outer bank by which is shored
41 This gulch, and to the left my Master strode
42 Down to the bottom, narrow and thickly bored.

43 Nor did he from his flank release the load
44 He carried of my body, until the break
45 Of him who by his legs his torment showed.

46 "Whoe'er thou art, here stuck in as a stake,
47 Wretched soul that holdst up thy nether ends,
48 Canst thou give word to me?"—to him I spake.

49 I stood as when a friar in shriving bends
50 By the earth-hole to hear a murderer
51 Who calls again for him and death thus fends.

52 He cried: "Art thou already standing there,
53 Already standing there, O Boniface?
54 Quite a few years astray the cards then were.

55 So soon sated art thou with the high place
56 And wealth for which thou didst contrive to seize
57 The Beauteous Lady and her so foully abase?"

58 Such I became as those who ill at ease,
59 Failing to understand others' reply,
60 Fear mockery's sting and thus from speaking cease.

61 Then Virgil: "Quickly speak: 'It is not I,
62 Not I the one for whom thou seemst to yearn.'"
63 My answer did his counsel satisfy.

64 The spirit gave his feet a harder churn
65 And with a voice that tears and sobbings tore
66 Said then to me: "What wishest thou to learn?

67 If thirst of knowing who I was of yore
68 Made thee this treacherous embankment tread,
69 Know then that I the mighty mantle wore.

70 Indeed by the she-bear I was well bred,
71 So greedy I was that to advance her spawn,
72 Wealth there, and here myself I pocketed.

73 Beneath my head the others down are drawn
74 Who have preceded me through simony
75 And flattened lie along this rocky yawn.

76 I too shall further drop as soon as he
77 Shall here arrive whom thou hast heard me greet
78 When first I questioned thee too hastily.

79 But longer time already has this heat
80 Roasted my feet and I have stood so upset
81 Then he shall here be planted with red feet.

82 For after him, of deeds more noisome yet,
83 A lawless shepherd shall come from the west
84 Who must o'er both us herein be let.

85 New Jason he, whom Maccabees attest
86 To have been favored by his king of old;
87 Thus the French King shall take him to his breast."

88 I wonder whether here I was too bold
89 But my reply was in this strain: "Pray thee,
90 Do tell me now what was the sum of gold

91 Our Lord asked from Saint Peter as a fee
92 Before He gave the keys into his trust?
93 Indeed naught else he asked but 'Follow me.'

94 Nor Peter nor the others took the cost
95 In gold or silver when Matthias' sort
96 Gave him the place the guilty soul had lost.

97 Stay here then; justly indeed thy sins now hurt;
98 And keep good watch on all that money ill-gained
99 That once made thee so bold 'gainst Charles' court.

100 And were it not that even now restrained
101 I am by veneration for the keys
102 Which were by thee in the sweet life detained,

103 I would speak forth much harder words than these.
104 Seeing the good beneath, the bad above,
105 The world is saddened by your avarice.

106 Shepherds as you the Evangelist thought of
107 When he saw her, o'er many waves the proud
108 Queen, lusting with the kings in filthy love.

109 The one at birth with seven heads endowed
110 Who by ten horns showed her nobility
111 While yet her husband was to virtue vowed.

112 Sliver and gold ye made your Deity;
113 How differ ye from idol-worshipers
114 Save that one they, a hundred worship ye?

115 Ah, Constantine, of what great ills the heirs
116 Made us, not thy conversion but that grant
117 Which first a Father bound to worldly cares!"

118 And while I did to him such numbers chant
119 Whether by conscience or by rage distressed
120 Harder than ever he twisted either plant.

121 That I had pleased my Lord was manifest
122 As he moved not his lips but seemed intent
123 To hear those words of mine, with truth impressed.

124 And then with both his arms around me bent
125 Lifting my body up to his breast, he made
126 Again for the hard path of his descent.

127 Nor was he by my burden overweighed,
128 But of that arch the top he reached with me
129 On which the nave o'er the fourth Gulch is laid.

130 Here only he set his cherished burden free,
131 Gently on that crag so scabrous and so steep
132 That even goats could not climb easily.

133 Hence of another gulch I saw the deep.

Inferno - Canto 20

1 I now must fill my verse with a new woe
2 Giving thus matter to the twentieth strain
3 Of the first part, that sings those sunk below.

4 I was already all settled to obtain
5 A clear survey of the uncovered deep
6 Bathed by the tears of excruciating pain.

7 In that round moat I saw silently creep
8 A weeping crowd that moved at that slow pace
9 Such as our litanies are wont to keep.

10 As further down on them I drew my gaze
11 Each one most strangely twisted I descried
12 From chin to where the neck sets on its base.

13 Their face was turned upon the shoulders' side
14 And they were forced to stride on backwardly,
15 As seeing forward was to them denied.

16 Perhaps there have been men so wholly awry
17 Turned by the force of palsy but I ne'er
18 Have seen nor think there be such misery.

19 So may, reader, for thee this reading bear
20 Some fruits, God willing, think thou in thy mind
21 If I could keep my sight undimmed there;

22 Seeing the figure of our common kind
23 So dislocated that the eyes would let
24 Their tears descend across the parts behind.

25 'Gainst one of the hard crags my body set,
26 Certes I wept, so that my Escort said:
27 "Art thou like other witless people yet?"

28 Pity lives here when it is wholly dead.
29 What fouler sinner breathes than any man
30 Who grieves for those by Judgment visited?

31 Lift up, lift up thy head and see the one
32 For whom Earth opened in the Thebans' sight
33 So that all shouted:—Whither rashest on

34 Amphiaraus? Why leavest thou the fight?—
35 Nor from his downward ruin did he rest
36 Till Minos, from whose grasp there is no flight.

37 See how he has his shoulders for his breast;
38 Backward he looks and backward is his gait
39 Because foreknowledge was his eager quest.

40 And see Tiresias, who was transmutate
41 When from a man he turned into a female,
42 Thus of his body changing ev'ry trait.

43 And first the twisted snakes he had to flail
44 With his own rod, before on him would grow
45 Again the plumage proper of a male.

46 With back against his belly, in the next row
47 Is Aruns who in the hills of Luni, hewed
48 By those that in Carrara live below,

49 Amidst the marbles white dwelt in a rude
50 Cavern so that upon the starry pall
51 And o'er the sea his sight was free to brood.

52 And she beyond, whose loosened tresses fall
53 Over her breast—invisible to thee—
54 And on that side her hairy skin is all,

55 Was Manto who had roved o'er land and sea
56 And in my native place then paused to stay;
57 Whereof I wish thou list a while to me.

58 After her father came to his last day
59 And Bacchus' town 'neath tyrants' heels was ground
60 Long o'er the world she made her wand'ring way.

61 Up north in Italy's fair land is found
62 A lake, Benaco called, beneath that chain
63 Of Alps which Germany, past Tyrol, bound.

64 A thousand o'er, methinks, the springs that drain
65 –Twixt Canonica and Garda–the Pennine
66 Alp, and the quiet of that lake attain.

67 A place is there, halfway, where the Trentine
68 Shepherd, that of Verona and he, beside,
69 Of Brescia, if passing by, could make their sign.

70 Sits fair and strong Peschiera fortified
71 To face onslaughts from Brescia or Bergamo,
72 Where lower shores let further in the tide.

73 Thereto the surplus waters all must flow
74 That in Benaco's breast cannot be held
75 And thence through the green field to a river grow.

76 Soon as this is by a faster head impelled
77 Benaco's name changes to Mincio instead
78 Down to Governo where Po and Mincio weld.

79 Not long it runs when wider grows its bed
80 And on a swampy plain its course is stayed,
81 Where oft in summer are foul poisons bred.

82 In passing thereabout the cruel maid
83 Saw arid land amidst the marshy vale
84 Devoid of men and tilled not by spade.

85 To keep herself beyond the human pale
86 There stopping with her serfs, her arts she plied
87 And there she lived and left her mortal veil.

88 The men who dwelt around the countryside
89 Flew there as to a stronghold, for to all foes
90 The wide surrounding marsh a path denied.

91 On those dead bones in time a city arose,
92 And it was called–no omen being read–
93 Mantua, after her who first there chose.

94 It was indeed closer inhabited
95 Ere Casalodi's madness by the snare
96 Of Pinamonte to such grief was led.

97 Of this I make thee wise, that shouldst thou e'er
98 Hear of my city's birth in other ways
99 No falsehood may for thee the truth impair."

100 And I: "Master, thy speech to me conveys
101 Such certainty and enkindles so my mind
102 That others were to me as burnt out braise.

103 But tell me more of this transposed kind,
104 If any worth of note beneath us go;
105 For only they my thoughts and wishes bind."

106 Then said he: "Mark the one with the long flow
107 Of beard from cheeks to shoulders: when bereft
108 Of all her males was ancient Hellas, so

109 That hardly enough were for her cradles left,
110 He was an augur and with Calchas set
111 The moment the first cable should be cleft.

112 Eurypylus his name, as it is met
113 Also in my lofty tragedy somewhere:
114 Knowing it all, thou must know well of that.

115 The next, about the flanks looking so spare,
116 Michael of Scotland was, and verily
117 Of all the magic frauds he was aware.

118 Guido Bonatti see, Asdente see
119 Who now is wishing he had nothing learned
120 Past thread and leather, but too late is he.

121 See too, those wretches who the needle spurned,
122 Shuttle and spindle, for the magic lore:
123 Worked charms by figures and weird herbs they burned.

124 But come, for where, past the Sevillian shore,
125 Both hemispheres their boundaries enlace,
126 Cain with his thorns touches the ocean floor.

127 And yesternight the moon had rounded face;
128 Thou must recall that she did not impede
129 Thy seeking through the forest deep a trace."

While thus he spoke onward we did proceed.

Inferno - Canto 21

1 From bridge to bridge we thus moved on, and were
2 Our words on things my Comedy heeds not.
3 And when we reached to the next summit, there

4 We stood to view that other fissure wrought
5 In Malebolge and its vain miseries:
6 And that I saw with wondrous darkness fraught.

7 As in the Venice Arsenal one sees,
8 In winter, pitch that boils like viscous brew
9 To caulk their ships that now are moored at ease,

10 As unseaworthy—and meanwhile a crew
11 Builds a new ship; with fillings others stay
12 The leaks of boats that many a tempest knew—

13 Others at prow or poop hammer away,
14 Some twist new cords and some plane out new oars,
15 And some on main or mizzen, patches lay;

16 Thus by God's arts, not by the fire's own force,
17 Seethed down there a pitch half liquefied
18 That spread its clammy hold o'er all the shores.

19 That I could see, but nothing else descried
20 Save for the bubbles that the boiling raised—
21 And saw its surface swell, then shrunk subside.

22 While down below I thus intently gazed,
23 Shouted my Guide: "Look out!"—and drew me near
24 To him from the far edge where I was placed.

25 I turned then quickly, looking at my rear
26 As man who craves to see what he should fly,
27 The while he is unmanned by sudden fear,

28 Yet for his looking does not linger by.
29 And at my back I saw a devil black
30 Who ran upon the rock most rapidly.

31 How fierce his aspect was, and how—alack!—
32 A ruthless cruelty by his act he showed
33 While his wide opened wings made light his track.

34 Astride his pointed and proud shoulders rode
35 A sinner seated on his haunches' spread
36 And by the feet the demon clutched his load.

37 "O Malebranche"—from our bridge he said—
38 "An elder of Saint Zita is coming o'er,
39 Put him below, I must my way retread

40 Back to that city where there is plenty more.
41 Barrators, save Bonturo, everyone.
42 There "Yes" and "No" are changed as one pays for."

43 He threw him o'er, and on the rocky span
44 Turn'd 'round so quick that with such hurry ne'er
45 A loosened mastiff after robbers ran.

46 The sinner sank, then, doubled, came for air,
47 But from their shelter 'neath the bridge up spoke
48 The fiends: "The Holy Face is here nowhere.

49 Not as in Serchio must be here thy smoke.
50 Dare not therefore to show above this brook
51 Unless thou like to feel how sharp we poke."

52 Quickly they grabbed him then with many a hook
53 And said: "All must be covered at this hop.
54 Thieve, if thou canst, but where no one can look."

55 Thus with their prongs do kitchen scullions stop
56 Meat chunks that in a caldron upward rise
57 And press them so they will not come a-top.

58 Then my good Master: "Lest they cast their eyes
59 Upon thee here"—he said "hadst better crawl
60 Behind a ledge that might as screen suffice.

61 Nor for whate'er attack may haply fall
62 On me, fear thou: these things I know of old
63 As I have been already at such a brawl."

64 Then as beyond the bridge's head he strolled
65 And on the sixth embankment set his foot
66 Certainly he needed to be firm and bold.

67 With such a storm of rage as runs a mute
68 Of dogs to chase a mendicant away—
69 Who where he sudden stops cries out his suit—

70 Thus from under the bridge now rushed they
71 Pointing their hooks at him, ready to stab,
72 But he warned them: "None of your fiendish play.

73 Ere with your hooks you dare my flesh to grab
74 Let one of you step forth and hear me through.
75 Then he shall see if he still wants to jab."

76 "Let Malacoda go"—cried the whole crew.
77 And while the others paused, one fiend drew nigh,
78 Saying: "What good to him this parley will do?"

79 "Think'st, Malacoda, thou seest me to thy
80 Domain arrived"—thus did my Guide retort—
81 "Quite safe from any check that you may try,

82 But with God's help and fate to my support?
83 Let me proceed, for Heaven's will hath shown
84 I must another through these crags escort."

85 So by such words his pride was overthrown
86 That he let fall his fork down at his feet
87 And warned the rest: "Let him be harmed by none

88 Then spoke my Guide: "O thou who holdst thy seat
89 Amidst those rocks, afraid of being tracked,
90 Come, by my side thou shalt no danger meet."

91 My haste toward him by nothing could be slacked
92 But all the demons quickly forward drew
93 So that I feared that they would break the pact.

94 Thus from Caprona I saw trembling issue
95 The soldiers, as the covenant did provide,
96 Amidst so many foes loath to go through.

97 With all my body pressed against my Guide
98 I stood in wait, nor did my eyes e'er flit
99 From those ill brows that good resolve belied.

100 They lowered their hooks: "Shall I touch him a bit
101 Upon the back?"—would they among them say.
102 And others: "Aye, get him fast on thy spit."

103 But he whom had my Master held at bay
104 Speaking to him, quickly turned 'round to fend
105 The attack and said: "Stay, Scarmiglione, stay."

106 And then to us: "Your path cannot extend
107 Further upon this rock: a ruinous break
108 Has torn that span, the sixth, at th'other end.

109 But if you wish yet further to betake
110 Yourself, proceed upon this bank, and o'er
111 Yonder next bridge, close by, your passage make.

112 Yester, when had the day but five hours more
113 Twelve hundred years and sixty-five ago—
114 That span was broken off at its far shore.

115 I now send some of mine further below
116 To watch if any should come up for air;
117 Go ye with them; no enmity will they show.

118 Calcabrina, Alichino, move up there,
119 And thou, Cagnazzo"—he shouted to his crew—
120 "The ten of you in Barbariccia's care.

121 Go, Libicocco and Draghignazzo: with you
122 Tusked Ciriatto and Graffiacane: then
123 Mad Rubicante and Farfarello, too.

124 Keep a sharp eye on all the boiling fen.
125 Let these to the next rock go harmlessly;
126 The one that, whole, bespans the sinners' pen.

127 Ah me!"—said I—"my Lord, what do I see?
128 Without a guard let us pursue our road;
129 If thou darest go, I ask no more for me.

130 If so alert thou art as thou hast showed
131 So far, seest thou not now how hard they grate
132 Their teeth, and how for us their frowns ill bode?"

133 And he to me: "Let all thy fears abate,
134 And let them gnash, if so they would as lief:
135 Thus for the boiling ones they show their hate."

136 They turned to go on the left shoring reef,
137 But first each showed his tongue, in act of scorn,
138 Between his teeth, as signal to their chief;

139 And he had made of his behind a horn.

Inferno - Canto 22

1 I have seen horsemen when their camp they break
2 Ready for muster or for storming band,
3 Or falling in retreat their 'scape to make;

4 Foragers, Aretines, throughout your land
5 Oft I have seen, and men off on a raid
6 And knights in tourney or joust taking their stand;

7 At times with bells, with trumpets, or with aid
8 Of drums, of signs from castle ramparts, or
9 With things of our own work or foreign made,

10 But with such strange a signal ne'er before
11 Horsemen or footmen started I had seen,
12 Or ships that sail by sign of star or shore.

13 The ten black demons moved with us: a mean
14 Company indeed, but this I well have learned:
15 "In church with saints, with gluttons at the inn."

16 Still to the pitch was my attention turned
17 Watching for ev'ry movement of the black
18 Basin, and of the people that it burned.

19 As dolphins by the arching of their back
20 Give sign to sailors that to save the boat
21 They must use all their art to make safe tack,

22 Some sinners there thus let their shoulders float
23 Whereof their anguish did perhaps subside,
24 And lightning-fast they dove back in the moat.

25 As at the water edge by the brookside
26 One sees the frogs while but their snouts protrude
27 And underneath their feet and bulk they hide,

28 Thus all around yet other sinners stood
29 And for the seething pitch they left the brink
30 When Barbariccia coming forth they viewed.

31 I saw—and horror-struck of that I think—
32 A sinner waiting thus as one may see
33 A frog that lingers while the others sink.

34 And Graffiacane, of that foul company
35 The nearest, grappled quick his clotted hair:
36 An otter, thus drawn up, he seemed to me.

37 I was of all their names already aware
38 As I had marked when answered each his call
39 And to their hailings I had harked with care.

40 "O Rubicante, it is thy chance to fall
41 On him with thy good claws and skin him through"—
42 Thus shouted with one voice the demons all.

43 And I: "My Master, if thou can'st so do,
44 Find who that wretch may be who has thus run
45 Foul of the wrath of that revengeful crew."

46 At that, my Guide close to his side moved on
47 And of his country asked him: thus answered he:
48 "Of the Navarra soil I am a son.

49 My mother put on me a lord's livery:
50 She had me of a wastrel who, all know,
51 Destroyed himself, after his property.

52 Then I was servant to good King Thibault,
53 And for the barratries I practiced there
54 I pay the reckoning by scorching so."

55 And Ciriatto whose mouth corners were
56 Set with long tushes such as boars display
57 Made the wretch feel how one of them could tear.

58 To wild she-cats the mouse had fallen prey.
59 But Barbariccia embraced him fast and said:
60 While I am hugging him, keep ye away."

61 Then toward my Master turning 'round his head:
62 "What else thou wishest, now of him demand
63 Before these others tear him shred by shred."

64 To him my Guide: "Amidst that sinful band
65 Under the pitch, know'st any Latin shade?"
66 "I have but left"—he answered—"close at hand

67 Someone who from those parts not far abade.
68 Ah, if I were, as he, still covered o'er
69 I would not be of hooks and claws afraid."

70 And Libicocco: "Enough with him we bore."
71 And in the sinner's arm he sank his hook
72 So that, by pulling, off a joint he tore.

73 And Draghignazzo could not wait, but took
74 Hold of his legs. Then he who led the array
75 Turned all around on them with an ill look.

76 When somewhat pacified they kept away,
77 To him who on his wound kept fixed his eyes
78 My Master put a query without delay:

79 "Who was the one that thou, with ill advice,
80 Hast left, to show above the brink thy face?"
81 "There"—was his answer—"Friar Gomita lies.

82 He of Gallura, a fraud-becramméd vase,
83 Who guarding men who 'gainst his Liege had fought
84 Did so that he deserved their hearty praise.

85 He admits he let them go and got his scot.
86 Working in other charges this same trick
87 Not a small thief, but king was he of the lot.

88 Don Michael Zanche of Logodoro is thick
89 With him; Sardinia should in them take pride:
90 To speak of her their tongues are ever quick.

91 Ah, me! How growls that other at my side!
92 Had I no fear, I would of others tell
93 But he seems ready now to scratch my hide."

94 And their great Marshal turned to Farfarel
95 Who rolled his eyes as if about to strike
96 And said: "Move back, thou bird most horrible."

97 "If someone else to hear or see you like,
98 Tuscan or Lombard"—quivering with fear
99 That wretch went on—"I'll call them to the dike.

100 Let those ill claws move somewhat to the rear
101 So that my friends may not their vengeance dread
102 An then I will, keeping my seat right here,

103 Make seven more come in my single stead,
104 Whistling the usual signal when a scout
105 Among us raises o'er the pitch his head."

106 Then Ciriatto lifted up his snout
107 And shook his head: "Hear! A fine scheme, for sure,
108 To throw himself below, he has laid out."

109 But he, well stocked with many a trap and lure,
110 Answered: "Too fine a schemer would I be
111 When I more sorrow to my kind procure."

112 Alichin was not proof against this plea;
113 Forestalled the rest and said: "Shouldst thou dive off
114 I shall not only gallop after thee

115 But with my wings I shall beat o'er the trough.
116 Let's leave the ridge and let the bank be a screen;
117 Let's see if thou alone canst us all scoff."

118 The Navarrese then watched well for his chance;
119 Planted his feet upon the ground and shot
120 Downward, and fooled their purpose all at once.

121 Therefrom on all of them remorse was brought
122 But more on him who had provoked that plight;
123 Quickly he sprang up exclaiming: "Thou art caught!"

124 But to no avail, because against that fright
125 E'en wings were lagging: thus beneath one went,
126 The other raised his breast in upward flight.

127 Thus suddenly a duck that the descent
128 Spies of a falcon, dives and draws away
129 And he comes up again, wrathful and spent.

130 Calcabrina, though wroth at that foul play
131 Was pleased at that escape and quickly flew
132 After the other, eager for a fray.

133 And as the barrator was lost to view,
134 Upon his mate with his keen claws he fell
135 And closely grappled him, above the slough.

136 But fighting hawk that other was as well
137 And quick at grappling him, so that the pair
138 Together dropped midway the boiling swell.

139 The heat indeed was a fast raveler,
140 But to come up, their nerves they vainly stressed
141 For in the pitch their wings entangled were.

142 Then Barbariccia, smarting like the rest,
143 Sent four to fly upon the other coast
144 With all their forks: obeying him with zest

145 From either side they went down to their post
146 And thrust their weapons toward the two ensnared
147 Who were already baked beneath the crust.

148 Thus tangled we left them and onward fared.

Inferno - Canto 23

1 Silent, alone and escortless we went,
2 The one in front, the other one behind,
3 As Minor Friars upon a journey bent.

4 On Aesop's fable was intent my mind?
5 Where to the mouse the frog its shoulders lends,
6 Being the present broil of equal kind.

7 "Now" and "This moment" match no more their sense
8 Than those two stories, if a man looks close
9 Comparing their beginnings and their ends.

10 And as one thought bursts from another, rose
11 New thought upon the one I fast had weaved
12 And with a double fear my fancy froze.

13 Thus then I pondered: they have been deceived
14 On our account and so much scorn thy bear
15 And injury, that they must feel quite grieved.

16 To inborn ill-will add of this wrath the flare
17 And after us those fiends will surely steal
18 More cruel than a dog that claws a hare.

19 All my hair standing up I then could feel,
20 Such was my fright, and while behind I peer
21 I thus address my Guide: "Thou must conceal

22 Both of us quickly, for I sorely fear
23 Those Malebranche; out of their morass
24 They come: their steps, in fancy, already I hear.

25 And he: "Thine outward form, if leaded glass
26 Were I, no quicker would in me refract
27 Than to thine inner one my eyes can pass.

28 Alike in semblance as well as in act
29 Thy thoughts just now have met my own, and I
30 The same advice from both am forced to extract.

31 If this right bank should happen so to lie
32 That down to the next gulch it gives a stair
33 From this imagined chase we then can fly."

34 Hardly he had time his counsel to declare,
35 I saw them coming with their wings spread wide
36 To capture us, and not so far they were.

37 Suddenly into his grasp took me my Guide
38 As mother whom some noise awakes distraught
39 And sees the flames a-leaping to her side:

40 She grabs her child and runs and lingers not
41 Having him only and not herself in mind
42 So that to her scant dress she gives no thought

43 Thus he, his back on the hard stone reclined,
44 Hurriedly slid a-down that sloping shore
45 By which one side of the next gulch is lined.

46 Never did waters through some conduit pour
47 Eager the wheels of a land mill to feed—
48 When to the paddles close to going o'er—

49 As on that border made my Master speed
50 And carried me held tilt against his breast
51 Not as a friend, but as a son indeed.

52 Hardly on the bed below had come to rest
53 His feet, when they appeared atop the incline
54 Above us, but my Guide no fear expressed.

55 For that high Providence by whose design
56 They are set guardians of the fifth enceinte
57 Denies them power to trespass that confine.

58 And now we found a painted crowd that went
59 Around the gulch at quite a tardy pace,
60 Weeping, and tired in semblance and forspent.

61 They wore a cape with hood down on their face
62 Over their eyes, and in such fashion dight
63 As those that in Cologne the monks encase.

64 Their outward gilt would dazzle any sight;
65 Within, they were all lead and heavy so
66 That Frederick's capes like straw would have been light.

67 O mantle wearisome of timeless woe!
68 Intent on their sad plaint, on our left flank
69 Together with those shades we turned to go;

70 But for their burden moved each weary rank
71 So slow that a new company we found
72 Abreast, with ev'ry motion of our shank.

73 Then to my Master: "Anyone renowned
74 For deeds or words see'st thou upon this track?"—
75 I said—"Move, as we go, thine eyes around."

76 Hearing the Tuscan speech, one at our back
77 Shouted to us: "Pray, slack a while your speed
78 Ye who so hasten through this welkin black.

79 Perhaps thy wish will get from me its meed."
80 Thereon my Master turned and said: "Here stay,
81 And then according to their pace proceed."

82 Halting, I saw the eyes of two display
83 How with their souls to be with me they yearned
84 But their load hindered and the narrow way.

85 When alongside, with slanted eyes that burned
86 With wonder, they looked on—holding their tongue;
87 And then to speak between themselves they turned:

88 "The one who moves his tongue seems to belong
89 Yet to the living: if dead either is
90 Why not on them this heavy stole is hung?"

91 Then to me: "Tuscan, who hast come to this
92 College of Hypocrites in sadness bent,
93 Tell us thy name and think it not amiss."

94 I answered: "I was born and I have spent
95 My youth in that great city on Arno's shores
96 And from my flesh has not my soul been rent.

97 But who are you whose heavy sorrow pours,
98 As I can see, so abundant down the cheek,
99 And what great torment all that glitter stores?"

100 One said: "These orange capes from which we peek
101 Are laden, and so thick that like great weights
102 Their balances beneath they cause to creak.

103 We both were born within Bologna's gates;
104 Both Jovial Friars: I Catalano and he
105 Was Loderingo, whom thy city as mates

106 In power selected, while by use would be
107 One called to guard her peace. Our deeds of yore
108 E'en now 'round your Gardingo all can see."

109 I then began: "O friars, your ills...."—no more
110 I said for then a shape leapt to my eyes
111 Held by three stakes cross-like upon the floor.

112 On seeing me, all writhing 'gainst his ties
113 With harrowing sighs he blew his beard awry,
114 And Catalano, who noticed my surprise,

115 Said to me: "There transfixed thou seest him lie
116 Whose counsel on the Pharisees bestowed
117 Was that one man should for the people die.

118 Transverse is he and naked on the road,
119 As thou well seest. And to give him his dues,
120 All passing make him feel their heavy load.

121 Thus his father-in-law the same abuse
122 Bears in this fosse, and all of that conclave
123 That was the seed of evil for the Jews."

124 I saw that e'en to Virgil wonder gave
125 The sight of him whose limbs so vilely stressed
126 Cross-like, the soil of timeless torment pave.

127 He then the friar with such a voice addressed:
128 "If naught prevents, may it please you to tell
129 If on our right there is the path we quest

130 That may for both of us be passable
131 Before we must on some black angels call
132 To come and to convey us from this well."

133 "Beyond thy hope"—he answered—"at a small
134 Distance, a rick arises that abuts
135 On the main there and scans the gulches all

136 Except that here, a break the archway cuts.
137 A path for you that ruin should provide:
138 Its coast inclines and out its bottom juts."

139 Bowing, his head a while, then spoke my Guide:
140 "The matter was not stated in this guise
141 By him who works his hook on th' other side."

142 The friar then: "In Bologna much advice
143 I heard about the devil, and they said
144 That he a liar and father is of lies."

145 Then with great strides my Leader went ahead
146 Troubled in semblance with a wrathful heat;
147 And from those burden-bearers I, too, sped

148 After the marks of the beloved feet.

Inferno - Canto 24

1 When 'neath Aquarius, in the youthful year,
2 The Sun gives temper to his mane, and night
3 Grows till it reaches half a day's career;

4 And on the earth the frost imprints the bright
5 Image of his white sister, there to lie
6 But shortly, for his pen's temper is slight;

7 The humble churl whose stores are getting shy
8 Rises and looks and sees the hills and plains
9 All glowing white, whereon he smites his thigh:

10 Back in the house, he here and there complains
11 Like as the wretch who knows not what to do,
12 Then going out again, new hopes he gains

13 Seeing the world to a face of other hue
14 Changed in brief hour—and then he drives outdoor,
15 Taking his staff, to pasture lamb and ewe:

16 Thus had disheartened me my Counselor
17 When him I saw in such disturbed mood
18 And came the salve as quickly to the sore.

19 For soon as by the broken bridge we stood
20 My Leader turned to me in aspect kind
21 As when by the hillside first him I view'd.

22 His arms outstretched, after in his mind
23 He had some counsel weighed and had his eyes
24 Well gauged the ruin, he graspéd me behind,

25 And as a man who acts and doth devise
26 Further and seems all things to anticipate,
27 Thus while he pushed me so that I could rise

28 Over a stone, another jutting slate
29 He noted, saying: "Grasp that other crest,
30 But try well first if it will hold thy weight."

31 It was no path for those by a mantle dressed,
32 For he so light, I with the help he lent,
33 From ledge to ledge with much fatigue progressed

34 And only that that coast less eminent
35 Is than the other side I cannot say
36 Of him, but I could not have made the ascent.

37 But Malebolge all in downward way
38 To the pit nethermost slopes from the bluff
39 Around, thus of its parts such is the lay

40 That one bank mounts, one drops, of ev'ry trough.
41 At last upon the summit we both swung
42 Up where the topmost stone is broken off.

43 My breath had been out of my lungs so wrung,
44 That reaching that, I could no more go on
45 And on the ground, right there, myself I flung.

46 "It is now time indeed such sloth to ban"
47 –My Master said–"for idling upon plumes
48 Or under quilt, brings glory to no man."

49 And that without, whoever life consumes,
50 On earth shall leave a vestige lasting less
51 Than smoke in air or, upon waters, spumes.

52 Therefore arise, o'ercome thy weariness
53 With that soul power that all barriers defies
54 If it but spurns the body and its distress.

55 Ahead a longer stair for thee there lies.
56 'Tis not enough to have left those: if clear
57 Are these my words, then act on mine advice."

58 I then arose and made some shift to appear
59 Furnished with zest more than I felt indeed,
60 Saying: "Go forth: I'm strong and have no fear."

61 Then on the crag we started to proceed:
62 Twas jagged and narrow and hard to negotiate,
63 And did in steepness the last one exceed.

64 I spoke to hide my weakness while his gait
65 I kept; a voice came from the next gutter
66 Which could but broken words articulate.

67 I could not make clear sense out of that splutter
68 Though standing now midway the bridge's rise,
69 Yet surely sounds of rage he seemed to utter.

70 Downward I bent, but still my living eyes
71 Could not pierce through that black and heavy pall.
72 –"Master"—I said—"let us by any guise

73 Reach the next rampart and go down the wall
74 For now the sounds I hear all meaning lack
75 And as I look I see no shape at all."

76 He said: "To thee no answer I give back
77 But by my act, for, after fair request,
78 Performance should be silent and not slack."

79 Then down the bridge to where its shoulders rest
80 Upon that eighth of banks we came, until
81 The gulch appeared to me all manifest.

82 And there I saw such an horrendous fill
83 Of snakes in shape and act ne'er known before
84 That all my blood in memory curdles, still.

85 Let Lybia cease from boasting of her shore,
86 Its Chelydri, Phareae and Jaculi,
87 Its Cenchri and Amphisbaena and many more,

88 For ne'er so many and varied plagues did she
89 Display, with also Ethiopia's own
90 Products and those from lands of the Red Sea.

91 Amidst such foul and dismal garrison
92 A naked people ran in fright around
93 Having no hope of hole or witching stone.

94 Upon their back a snake their hands held bound
95 And piercing through their shoulders like a spit
96 Its head and tail upon the belly wound.

97 When lo! to one on our side of the pit
98 Lept up a serpent and transfixed him through
99 Where neck and shoulders are together knit.

100 An O or I so fast pen never drew
101 As he took fire and burned, and a small mound
102 Of ashes from his body was left in view.

103 Then as he lay so undone upon the ground
104 The ashes gathered up themselves and rose
105 Into his body again, all at one bound.

106 Thus as great scholars, as we know, depose,
107 The Phoenix rises from her body charred
108 When the five hundredth year is getting close.

109 She holds all herbs and grains in disregard;
110 Amomum only and incense tears her food,
111 Her winding sheet is made of myrrh and nard.

112 As one, not knowing how, falls where he stood
113 Pulled down by a demon's power or otherwise
114 By hidden ill that may his veins occlude,

115 Rising again he turns around his eyes
116 Wholly bewildered by the great distress
117 That he has suffered and, while looking, sighs:

118 The risen wretch appeared amazed no less.
119 O how exactin'g God's omnipotence
120 Crashing such heavy blows, for just redress!

121 My Guide then asked who he had been and whence,
122 And answered he: "I rained from Tuscany
123 But a short while ago to this foul fence.

124 Bestial, not human life best suited me,
125 Mule that I was—as Vanni Fucci, beast,
126 Knew me Pistoia, my den quite properly."

127 I to my Guide: "That he remain, insist
128 And ask what crime has brought him here, for I
129 Knew him as man who in blood and strifes would feast."

130 The sinner, who understood, yet did not try
131 To feign—with mind and face me alone he sought
132 While sordid shame did his semblance dye.

133 Then said he: “That by thee I have been caught
134 In this distress, for that now more I grieve
135 Than when, above, I to my death was brought.

136 Thy question unreplied I cannot leave.
137 Here so far down I stand for it was I
138 Who did the sacristy's rich dowery thieve.

139 And against others falsely was raised the cry.
140 But lest thou find some pleasure in this view
141 If ever 'scapest this lapless misery,

142 Give ear to this forecast and hear me through:
143 Shorn of her Blacks, Pistoia first shall fail,
144 Then Florence men and manners shall renew.

145 Now-Mars a vapor draws from Magra's vale
146 Of turbid, threat'ning clouds forming the core—
147 And like impetuous and bitter gale

148 Shall upon Pescia's field the battle roar.
149 When he shall suddenly dispel the mist
150 And ev'ry White shall then be wounded sore.

151 Now mayest thou also have some poisoned grist.

Inferno - Canto 25

1 Ending his words, the thief impenitent
2 Both fists with crossed thumbs in spiteful sign
3 Lifted and said: "Take, God, for thee they are meant."

4 Thereon the serpents proved good friends of mine
5 As one about his neck its body wound
6 As if to say: "Enough of words of thine."

7 And then his arms another serpent bound
8 Clinching itself in front so forcibly
9 That all arm motion checked the sinner found.

10 Ah, why Pistoia, shouldst thou not decree
11 To burn thyself and e'en thy name dispel
12 Thou worse in sin than those who founded thee.

13 Throughout the darkened terraces of Hell
14 No soul I met 'gainst God so full of pride,
15 Not even he who from Thebes' ramparts fell.

16 He ran away, while was his tongue so tied,
17 And a Centaur I saw coming in haste
18 Who shouted: "Where, where doth the scoffer hide?"

19 There are fewer snakes in the Maremman waste
20 Methinks, than on his back had made their lair,
21 Save where the beast is by man's form replaced.

22 Back of his mane his mighty shoulders bear
23 A dragon lying with his wings outspread:
24 All that he meets are kindled by his flare.

25 "That one is Cacus"—then my Master said—
26 "Who of Mount Aventine beneath the rock
27 A lake of blood oft with his slaughters shed.

28 With the rest of his kind he does not walk
29 Because to act with fraudulence he chose
30 When stealing from the neighboring great flock.

31 Thereon his treacherous works were brought to a close
32 Under Hercules' mace; and hardly he could
33 Feel only ten out of a hundred blows."

34 While thus he spoke, his quarry again pursued
35 The Centaur. Then by me and by my Guide
36 Unnoticed, near the embankment where we stood

37 Three spirits came, and: "Who are you?"—they cried.
38 Thus did their presence our attention claim
39 And made us leave the story of him aside.

40 I knew not who they were, but then it came
41 To pass, as oft it does in such a case,
42 That one another they were forced to name.

43 Thus: "Where is Cianfa left?"—one of them says,
44 And cautioning my Leader to give heed
45 My finger straight from chin to nose I place.

46 If slow thou art, O reader, to concede
47 The truth of this my tale, no wonderment;
48 I hardly trust myself, who saw the deed.

49 While I with startled brow look on, intent,
50 A snake six-footed leaps in front of one
51 And fastens him with shakeless ligament.

52 The middle claws seemed to his belly ingrown,
53 The upper ones his arms held like a vise,
54 While the snake's teeth bit into each cheekbone.

55 The lower claws were spread upon his thighs;
56 The tail between inserted and upflung
57 Upon the sinner's back was stretched lengthwise.

58 Never was ivy with a grip so strong
59 Rooted to a tree as there that monster weird
60 With all its members on the other's clung.

61 As if of heated wax both forms adhered
62 Close to each other, mixing e'en their hue,
63 And in its proper form neither appeared.

64 Thus in a burning parchment one may view
65 A color brown proceed along the flame
66 And white dies out while black is not yet true.

67 Gazed th'other two, and I heard them exclaim:
68 "Alas, Agnel, what change comes over thee!
69 Another thou are not, nor yet the same."

70 Now the two heads one only seem to be
71 And on one face wherein two figures fade
72 Two semblances commingled I can see.

73 Out of four limbs two arms are being made
74 And thighs and legs as well as belly and chest
75 Grow to such forms that ne'er man's eye surveyed.

76 The former aspect there was all suppressed
77 In that foul shape that two and no form showed:
78 Moving, that thing with tardy steps progressed.

79 As seems the lizard, 'neath the heavy goad
80 Of the dog-days, like lightning fast to gain
81 Another hedge, when crossing o'er the road,

82 Thus toward the bellies of those other twain
83 A burning snakelet quickly ran, whose crust
84 Was black and livid like a pepper grain.

85 And reaching one of them sharply it percussed
86 That part where first our aliment is brought,
87 Then, stretched in front of him, fell to the dust.

88 The one transfixed kept looking but said naught;
89 Nay, he did yawn, while on his feet upright
90 As man by sleep or by a fever caught.

91 Both on each other fixé held their sight:
92 One from his mouth, the other from his sore
93 Poured forth a smoke that seemed, half-way, to unite.

94 Let Lucan now quote in his tale no more
95 Sabellius and Nassidius; let him list
96 To what shall be released from this my lore.

97 And let Ovidius from his song desist
98 Of Arethusa and Cadmus: that to a font,
99 This changed to snake but I have better grist.

100 For never did he bring two forms in front
101 Of one another, ready to renew
102 Their matter with each other's shape and wont.

103 The changed creatures in this manner grew:
104 In form of fork split up his tail the snake,
105 The stricken one his feet together drew.

106 Meanwhile the legs and thighs appeared to bake
107 To a single mass, and shortly, in my regard,
108 No sign appeared of where had been the break.

109 The forked tail took on the semblance marred
110 In him in front: its skin from rough and rank
111 Soft now became and grew the other hard.

112 Then the man's arms within the armpits sank
113 And what had been feet of the beast, not long,
114 Grew to the length from which those others shrank.

115 I saw the snake's hind feet together strung
116 Become the members that a man conceals,
117 While, from the sinner's own, two feet half sprung.

118 As each of them another hue reveals
119 Under the smoke that also weaves new hair
120 Upon one body, while the other peels,

121 One stands upright, the other drops, but ne'er
122 Their evil lamps did swerve, under whose glow
123 Changes about the muzzle of the pair.

124 The one erect up draws it, and the flow
125 Of matter needless to the temples' span
126 Causes those hollowed cheeks their ears to grow.

127 What is retained—as not all backward ran—
128 Of its excess makes to the face a nose
129 While the lips thicken as befits a man.

130 The lying one his muzzle forward throws
131 And draws the ears within his head of beast
132 As snail that doth its tentacles enclose.

133 The tongue that was compact and quickly eased
134 Itself in speech is cleft—while lumped tight
135 The other's points become, the smoke has ceased.

136 The soul with shape of animal, in flight
137 Runs hissing o'er the valley's crowded bed,
138 The other after him sputters his spite.

139 Turning on him his novel back, he said
140 To the third shade: "Let Buoso take my place
141 And run a while with a four-footed tread."

142 That seventh ballast thus in changing face
143 I saw, and let be excuse the novelty
144 If aught my pen upon this subject strays.

145 And though my eyes could but confusedly see
146 And by that strangeness was my soul dismayed,
147 Covertly enough not one of them could flee

148 So that Puccio Sciancato could evade
149 My sight: he alone his shape had kept
150 Of the first three that came; the other shade

151 Was he whose loss by thee, Gaville, is wept.

Inferno - Canto 26

1 Rejoice, O Florence, since thou art so great
2 Thy wings are beating over land and sea,
3 And e'en in Hell thy fame does not abate.

4 Five of thy citizens, of high degree,
5 I found among the robbers, whence I feel
6 Deep shame and little honor comes to thee.

7 But if the dreams near morn the truth reveal
8 What Prato and others wish shall be thy meed
9 Ere a short turn of time's relentless wheel.

10 Revere it already, it weren't too early indeed.
11 Oh, were it now, since it cannot be stayed!
12 I'll bear it harder as my years proceed.

13 Leaving that place, again our way we made
14 Upon the rocky stairs of our descent,
15 I following my Guide and with his aid.

16 Thus on the crag our lonesome way we went
17 Over its rocks and ledges where in vain
18 Labored the foot if hand no succor lent.

19 I then was grieved and stabs me again the pain
20 Recalling what I saw, and must be checked
21 Now more than e'er, of poesy the rein

22 Lest she might stray from where Art would direct
23 And lest what boon fair star or better thing
24 Has granted me, I should myself reject.

25 As villain, on the hillside loitering
26 When he who illumes the wide world and the skies
27 For shorter hours is hid beneath night's wing—

28 The time when to the gnats give place the flies—
29 Sees the glow-worms that flicker o'er the dell—
30 Where haply his plowland or vineyard lies:

31 Thus that eighth gulch gave me such spectacle
32 Of many flames that came into my view
33 When nearness did the bottom haze dispel.

34 And as he whose revenge was carried through
35 By bears, Elijah's chariot rising high
36 Saw when the rearing horses upward flew,

37 And though its wake he followed with his eye
38 He could but see the glowing flame outside
39 That like a cloudlet rose into the sky:

40 Thus through the narrow gullet I descried
41 Those flames that in no way their booty show
42 While all within themselves a sinner hide.

43 Erect upon the bridge I leaned out so,
44 If quick to grasp a stone I had not been,
45 Without a thrust, I would have plunged below.

46 On seeing me so intent upon that scene
47 My Leader spoke: "Therein the spirits stay
48 And what burns them surrounds them as a screen."

49 "Master"—said I—"thy words to me convey
50 A greater sureness, but I had been led
51 To such belief already and craved to say:

52 Whom does conceal that flame with double head
53 Such haply as rose from Eteocles' pyre
54 Which to his brother too, was burial bed?"

55 And he: "Ulysses suffers in that fire
56 With Diomed: together in their pain
57 As they together did boldly conspire.

58 Within that fire now mourn the crafty twain
59 The ambush of the horse which was the door
60 Through which came forth the noble Roman strain.

61 Therein the fraud is also wept wherefore
62 Deidamia's grief e'en death does not assuage:
63 For the Palladium, too, is paid the score."

64 "If they can speak"—I said—"from that red cage,
65 Master, with all my heart I pray thee now,
66 And of thousand prayers let this be a gage,

67 That my awaiting here thou may'st allow
68 Until the forked flame shall pass this place.
69 See how my longing bends toward it my brow."

70 He answered: "Thy request is worthy of praise,
71 And my own will therefore with thine agrees;
72 But see thy voice to them thou dost not raise.

73 I shall be spokesman, knowing what would please
74 Thy fancy, while they might resent, perchance
75 Words from thy mouth, as they were both from Greece."

76 When closer came the flame in its advance
77 And place and time my Guide as proper knew
78 In such a form I heard sound his demands:

79 "O ye, within that flame enclosing two,
80 If, living, for your fame I have done well,
81 Be great or little my desert from you

82 For that high poem where your figures dwell,
83 Stay here awhile and how to him death came
84 When he was lost, let one of you, pray, tell."

85 The greater horn out of that ancient flame
86 Amidst a murmur then began to shake—
87 Worried by wind a flame would look the same—

88 Then as if it had been a tongue that spake
89 I saw its fiery tip toss to and fro
90 And into sound of words I heard it break:

91 "When Circe had held me, as well you know,
92 A year and over, near Caieta's shore—
93 Before the time Aeneas had called it so—

94 Nor my son's fondness, nor the grief that tore
95 My aged parent, nor the love deserved
96 Which would have gi'en my spouse the joy hoped for,

97 Could have within my heart that passion swerved
98 For which I searched the world's remote confine
99 And vice and virtue in mankind observed.

100 I left and sailed the high and open brine
101 Alone, with only one boat and with that band
102 But smell, that from my risks did not decline.

103 Toward Spain on either side we viewed the land,
104 Morocco, too, and Sardinia; and to the rest
105 Of isles that that sea bathes our ship we mann'd.

106 When by our labors and by age oppressed,
107 I and my partners reached that narrow way
108 Where Hercules had set his warnings, lest

109 Man further out should his advance essay.
110 Seville already was left upon our rear
111 To the right hand, and leftward Ceuta lay.

112 'To what remains'—I said 'of your career,
113 To this brief hour before your sense is spent,
114 Brethren, through a hundred thousand perils, here

115 Arrived unto the closing Occident,
116 Do not deny the experience to run
117 With Phoebus to the unpeopled continent.

118 Think of your noble origin and shun
119 A brutish life; seek ye as man's own weal,
120 Knowledge and virtue, always further on.'

121 Such my brief sermon made my partners feel
122 So eager for the goal yet unattained
123 That I could hardly have kept back their zeal.

124 As to the point of dawn our poop was trained
125 Our oars became as wings to our mad flight
126 In which upon our left constantly we gained.

127 All of its stars already I saw by night
128 On th'other pole; our own was then so low
129 The ocean floor itself hid it from sight.

130 Five times resumed and quenched had been the glow
131 Beneath the moon after the time we steered
132 Into that mighty sea our flimsy bow,

133 And then a mount ahead I saw that reared
134 So high above the waves its brownish flanks:
135 Nowhere to me had such a height appeared.

136 We then rejoiced, but soon amidst our ranks
137 Woe spread a whirlwind coming from the lee
138 Which of our vessels struck the foremost planks.

139 Three times it hurled it 'round with all the sea,
140 The fourth, it lifted high its poop and pushed
141 Downward its prow, for such was Fate's decree.

142 Then over us the smoothed billows hushed."

Inferno - Canto 27

1 The flame had straightened and the sound was spent
2 That formed its words; from us it was soon gone,
3 My Master having given his assent.

4 Following that another flame then shone
5 In front of us, and to its top whence came
6 A sound confused, our eager eyes went on.

7 Like the Sicilian bull destined to claim
8 First victim—as well justice did provide—
9 Him who had tempered with his file its frame.

10 Bellowed the groaning of the wretch inside
11 And though of brass constructed all around
12 Sounded as if its own distress it cried—

13 Thus as at first no way nor vent they found
14 In that hard mold of fire, converted were
15 The saddened words into that wordless sound.

16 But when they caught a passage through the flare
17 Up to the top, which they kept quivering
18 Just as the tongue that formed them out of air,

19 We clearly heard: "O thou toward whom I fling
20 My voice and who just said'st in Lombard speech:
21 "Go now, I wish from thee no other thing"

22 Though here perhaps a little late I reach,
23 Pray bear to stay a while and speak with me:
24 It irks not me, shut in this burning niche.

25 If to this sightless world but recently
26 Thou hast arrived from that sweet land of mine,
27 Whence all my guilt I carry, Italy,

28 Romagna doth to peace or war incline?
29 For I was from the hills Urbino 'tween
30 And the source of the waters Tiberine."

31 As I still downward bent was looking keen
32 I felt my Master nudging at my side
33 Who said: "Speak thou, a Latin this has been."

34 Ready to make his query satisfied
35 Without delay I told him what he sought:
36 "O soul, whom those enkindled raiments hide,

37 Never was thy Romagna, and now is not
38 Within its tyrants' heart, deprived of war
39 But in the open now no war is brought.

40 Ravenna stands as for long time before:
41 Polenta's eagle quietly keeps its nest
42 With wings as far as Cervia spreading o'er.

43 The town that was for such long time hard prest
44 Then in such bloody heaps the Frenchmen strew,
45 'Neath the green paws finds now itself at rest.

46 The old Verrucchian mastiff and the new
47 Through whom Montagna in such foul manner died
48 Still where it was their wont their teeth now screw.

49 Lamone's city and Santerno's bide
50 Beneath the lion's cub on white imposed
51 Who 'twixt springtime and winter changes side.

52 And that whose flank is by the Savio closed
53 In part is tyranny, in part free state
54 Just as it lies 'twixt plain and mountain coast.

55 And now about thyself to me relate:
56 So may thy name be honored in the world;
57 More than the others be not obdurate."

58 After the moaning flame a while had purred
59 In its own way, it shook its pointed spear
60 This way and that, then such a voice it hurled:"

61 "Did I believe that my reply would hear
62 Someone who to the world might yet return
63 No flicker on this flame would now appear.

64 But as no one goes back from this deep bourne
65 Alive, if truth I hear, I fear no shame
66 From what thou may'st now from my answer learn.

67 A man of arms, I cordelier became,
68 Trusting, so girt, my evil deeds to shrive;
69 And my belief would not have missed its aim.

70 Twas the Great Priest, a plague on him, to drive
71 Me back into the ways of my old guilt:
72 The how and why to unravel I shall strive.

73 The while of flesh and bone my body was built
74 Such as a mother gives, my works were not
75 Of lion but those in which a fox is skill 'd.

76 For clever ambush and for hidden plot
77 I knew all tricks and of my many a feat
78 To the end of the world the fame was brought.

79 But when I reached that season of the fleet
80 Career of mortals when to trim the sail
81 And coil the ropes for everyone is meet,

82 What had me pleased before now made me quail:
83 Penance I did and was absolved from sin.
84 Ah me! It should have been to some avail.

85 But he the Prince of the new Sanhedrin,
86 Who 'round the Lateran a war had famn'd—
87 And not to battle Jew or Sarrasin

88 For only on Christians he had raised his hand;
89 None of his foes had made proud Acre bleed
90 Nor had been merchant in the Sultan's land—

91 To his high office and priesthood no heed
92 He paid, nor reckoned he the cord that tied
93 My loins, and used to gird a leaner breed.

94 But as the one who from Soracte's side
95 Sylvester called to heal his leprosy,
96 E'en thus, to assuage the fever of his pride

97 This man, as for a master, called for me
98 Asking advice. He saw me mutely object
99 As drunken ravings his words seemed to be.

100 He then spoke thus: "Let not thy heart suspect.
101 I shrive thee now; tell me of some device
102 That Prenestino be subdued and wreck't.

103 Lock and unlock the door of Paradise
104 I can, as thou well know'st; two are the keys,
105 Those that my predecessor did not prize."

106 Then I was moved by such commanding pleas
107 To speak where worse advice seem'd naught to say,
108 And answered: "Father, since thy blessing frees

109 Me from the sin that on my soul must weigh,
110 A promise long and a fulfillment short
111 That mighty seat shall bring into thy sway."

112 When I was dead Saint Francis came to escort
113 My soul on high, but a black Angel said:
114 'Take thou him not; such wrong I ill support.

115 Amidst my sorry crowd he shall be led
116 Because he gave the counsel fraudulent:
117 Since then my hand has been upon his head.

118 None can absolve those who do not repent,
119 To will and to repent cannot combine:
120 The contradiction would not that consent.'

121 Alas, unhappy me! What sorrow was mine
122 When he took me and said: 'It is not writ,
123 Perhaps, that I can follow a logic line.'

124 Minos I faced; he sent me down the pit
125 Folding eight times his tail o'er his hard back,
126 And when its end he had, quite furious, bit,

127 He said: 'The thieving fire shall this insack.'
128 Therefore where thou see'st me I now am lost
129 And walking in this robe myself I rack."

130 When thus the sinner from his speech had paused
131 The flame moved on with its bemoaning shade
132 And its keen-pointed horn writhed and tossed.

133 Forward my Guide and I our way then made
134 Upon the crag and o'er that other span
135 Bridging the ditch in which the fee is paid
136 By those who sowing strife a load take on.

Inferno - Canto 28

1 Who could with words even unbound by rhymes
2 Tell all the blood and wounds I now saw there,
3 Though were the tale repeated many times?

4 Every tongue would of that task despair
5 For in man's speech and memory, the space
6 To compass all of that is but too snare.

7 If ever were assembled all the race
8 That in Apulia's fortune-ridden plain
9 Grieved for the blood that was shed in the frays

10 Against the Romans and the unnumbered slain
11 In the long war where booty of many a ring
12 Was heaped, as Livius' truthful words maintain;

13 And those who felt of heavy blows the sting
14 Contrasting Robert Guiscard, and those, too,
15 Whose bones are by Ceprano mouldering

16 Where ev'ry Apulian to his king untrue
17 Was found; and those by Tagliacozzo, where
18 Unarmed Alardo many thousands slew—

19 And one were showing his stump, and one the tear
20 Wide in his members: to the hideous shapes
21 In that ninth gulch, all that would not compare.

22 Losing the middle or side stave, ne'er gapes
23 A cask as one I saw amidst that throng
24 Cut from his chin to where foul wind escapes.

25 Between his legs his very entrails were strung;
26 His heart appeared and that foul sac where end
27 The foods that man ingests and turn to dung.

28 As all attention towards him I bend
29 He looks at me and says, tearing his breast
30 With his own hands: "See how myself I rend.

31 Watch Mahomet from his own body wrest
32 His flesh. Before me weeping goes Ali
33 Cleft in his face from chin to hairy crest.

34 And all the rest thou may'st in this gulch see
35 Sowers of scism and scandalous discord
36 Were all; wherefore so cleft they now must be.

37 A devil is back there by whom we're gored
38 So cruelly; all of this ilk must go
39 Again under the cutting of his sword

40 Each time we walk around this road of woe;
41 Because our form has been wholly replaced
42 Ere any of us goes by that fiendish foe.

43 But who art thou that on the crag delay'st
44 Thus to put off, perhaps, the penalty
45 That they self-charges have for thee appraised?"

46 "Nor ta'en by death, nor led by guilt is he"—
47 Answered my Master—"to this place of pain,
48 But that by him all things experienced be

49 I, who am dead, must through this dark domain
50 Lead him from gulch to gulch: and true is my word
51 As now in front of thee my sight is plain."

52 More than a hundred, when such words were heard,
53 Stopt in the ditch to look at me and forgot
54 Their torture, so they were wonder stirred.

55 "Tell Fra Dolcino then that he take thought,
56 Since shortly thou perhaps shall see the sun,
57 —Or soon he too down here shall share my lot—

58 And gather food, lest snow shall press upon
59 His force and aid the Novarese to score
60 A vict'ry, else not lightly to be won."

61 Having drawn up a foot when ready for
62 His going, Mahomet thus spoke and left
63 Stretching his raised foot upon the floor.

64 Another shade with piercéd throat and 'reft
65 Of nose clear to the brows and on whose face
66 A missing ear showed only for the cleft,

67 Who, with the rest, had stopt in awe to gaze,
68 Oped his windpipe ahead of all and said:
69 –His throat all outward red from bloody sprays–

70 “O thou who hast no sentence merited,
71 Whom to have met above I call to mind
72 If by strange likeness I am not misled,

73 To Pier from Medicina give a kind
74 Thought if thou shouldst again see the sweet plain
75 To Marcabò down from Vercelli inclined.

76 And from my part warn Fano's worthiest twain,
77 Sir Guido I mean, and Angiolello as well
78 That from their vessel thrown–if is not vain

79 What to us here is given to foretell–
80 Close to Cattolica they shall be drowned
81 Through the betrayal of a tyrant fell.

82 Between Majorca and the Cyprian Sound
83 Neptune ne'er saw such crime by hand of man,
84 Nor by Greek people nor by pirate hound.

85 That traitor curs'd who only sees with one
86 And holds the city–which, one here with me,
87 Wishes his eyes had never fed upon–

88 Will make them come to a parley upon the sea,
89 Then will contrive that 'gainst Focara's wind
90 They shall not need a vow or other plea."

91 And I: "Explain to me and help to find
92 The one so bitter toward that land he saw;
93 And I of thee the world shall fain remind."

94 Then he both hands press'd hard upon the jaw
95 Of one close by, and oped his mouth and cried:
96 "'Tis he; but words from him no one can draw.

97 He is the one who drowned the doubts that tried
98 Caesar by stating that a man prepared
99 Causes, by waiting, damage to his side."

100 How terrified, methought, the sinner stared,
101 His tongue right from the roots having been lopped:
102 Curio, who once such a bold speech had dared.

103 Another then with hands to the wrist chopped,
104 Cried, lifting up his stumps through the dark air
105 So that upon his face the foul blood dropped:

106 "Speak also of Mosca, when thou art up there,
107 Who said, alas!—Things done must have a head—
108 To Tuscany much ill that seed did bear."

109 "And death to thine own house"—I promptly said.
110 Then with another woe upon his woe
111 Like sad and maddened man away he sped.

112 But I stood there to view row after row,
113 And saw a thing I'd dare not to conjure
114 By words alone, having no proof to show,

115 Were I not by my conscience made secure,
116 That good companion that a man makes bold
117 Under the buckler of his feeling pure.

118 I then beheld and still, methinks, behold
119 A headless trunk that was about to pass
120 Walking amidst and like that sorry fold.

121 He held in hand his own head's hairy mass
122 So that in front it dangled lantern-wise
123 And that, looking at us, cried out: "Alas!"

124 A lamp to him he made of his own eyes:
125 Two were but one and one was two; how so
126 Can be, He knows who did such things devise.

127 When 'neath the bridge he was about to go,
128 He lifted high the head at his arm's end
129 So might his voice be not too far nor low.

130 "See thou"—he spoke—"my harrowing amend,
131 Who view'st the dead, still breathing. Didst thou see
132 Harder on anyone God's wrath descend?

133 And that thou may'st bring back some news of me
134 Bertram de Born am I, the counselor
135 Whom the young King heard to his injury.

136 Son against father prompted I to war,
137 The wicked goading of Achitophel
138 For Absalon and David did no more.

139 As persons so close-joined through my arts fell
140 Apart, thus parted is, alas, my brain
141 From what is in this trunk its principle.

142 Thus doth in me the counterpoise obtain."

Inferno - Canto 29

1 The crowd so vast, the divers wounds and dire
2 Had with their woe my eyes thus inebriated
3 That to stay there and weep they felt desire.

4 Virgil said: "Thy sight is not satiated?
5 Why keep'st thy gaze still fixed on that trail
6 Down, o'er the woeful spirits mutilated?"

7 No other gulch has made thee so to fail.
8 Think, if thou carest to number them, that quite
9 Twenty-two miles is all around this vale.

10 Beneath our feet the moon illumines the night.
11 Little remains of granted time's outlay
12 And much is to be seen beyond this sight."

13 "Hadst thou observed"—I hastened then to say—
14 "What I was viewing with such eagerness
15 Wouldst not have grudged to me a longer stay."

16 Meanwhile he moved and I with him no less
17 Hurriedly, giving him such a reply
18 .And adding: "In that cave, amidst the press

19 On which I gazed with such a fixed eye
20 One of my blood, methinks, is paying for
21 The sin whose price comes, in that gulch, so high."

22 Then spoke my Master: "Let thy thoughts no more
23 Henceforth be torn by him and by his fault;
24 Think of aught else: leave him amidst his gore.

25 For at the bridge's foot I saw him halt
26 Pointing a threat'ning finger with great rage
27 At thee—Geri del Bello I heard him called.

28 But Altaforte's Lord did then so engage
29 Thy mind entire, thou failedst in looking thence
30 At him; meanwhile he followed his cortege."

31 "Master of mine, his death by violence"—
32 I said—"not yet avenged by anyone
33 Partaking in the shame of that offense,

34 Made him contemptuous: so he was gone
35 Without a word, if right I explain his ways;
36 For that he has from me more pity won."

37 We had, thus speaking, reached the nearest place
38 Whence would that other valley's very bed
39 Show plainly, if there the light had stronger

40 There Malebolge's final cloister spread
41 Itself beneath our eyes and came to view
42 The many friars that there inhabited.

43 And various complaints at me like arrows flew
44 Their points by sorrow sharpened and by gall,
45 So to my ears both hands I quickly drew.

46 If Valdichiana's ev'ry hospital,
47 Maremma's and Sardinia's, from July
48 Down to September would their ills pour all

49 Into one ditch—what I could there descry
50 Would be such horror, and a stench so rank
51 As out of rotting flesh therefrom rose high.

52 Now we proceed along the farthest bank
53 From that long crag, while leftward still we bear.
54 Then grew my sight more vivid down the flank

55 And to the bottom where the minister
56 Of the High Lord, Justice infallible
57 Deals with the forgers, all enrolled there.

58 To a greater sorrow, I think, could not impell
59 Aegina with all its people languishing
60 And its air heavy with such an evil spell

61 That, to the smallest worm, each living thing
62 Fell lifeless down, and then that ancient folk—
63 As poets for a truthful story sing—

64 From seed of ants again to life awoke;
65 Than did those leprous shades in many a stack
66 Visible through that valley's misty smoke.

67 Some of another on the belly or back
68 Lay sprawling, and yet others on all four
69 From place to place crawled on the dismal track.

70 Silently we moved and slowly on the high shore,
71 Our eyes and ears upon that tribe intent
72 That could not lift their persons from the floor.

73 I saw two sitting, 'gainst each other bent
74 As cover set to cover on the braise;
75 From head to foot with scabs they were besprent.

76 Ne'er I have seen a groom such zeal to place
77 To curry a horse, the while his master waits,
78 Or even one who awak'd unwilling stays,

79 As there without a rest each sinner grates
80 With his own nails his skin, though naught avails
81 Against their itching rage that ne'er abates.

82 Their burning scab was stripped by their nails
83 As bream is cleaned by knife on back or breast
84 Or other fish that has the largest scales.

85 "O thou who with thy fingers ravelest
86 Thy skin, and pinchers mak'st of them"—my Guide
87 One of that crouching couple thus address—

88 "Tell if among the souls that here abide
89 Is any Latin; so thy busy hand
90 Never through eternity be its nails denied."

91 "We both, so wasted here, in Latin land
92 Have lived"—one spoke amidst his tears of woe—
93 But who art thou who voicest such demand?"

94 My Master spoke: "I am assigned to go
95 Leading this living man from round to round
96 And Hell entire to him I plan to show."

97 What help in mutual leaning they had found
98 Was lost as both to me a-trembling turned
99 With all the rest who heard on the rebound.

100 And my good Master, all with me concerned,
101 Told me to speak to them; and I began,
102 As thus of his acquiescence I had learned.

103 "As I desire that from the mind of man
104 In the first world, your memory may not flee,
105 But that it live and many years bespan,

106 Tell who you are and what your ancestry:
107 For all your fierce and hideous pain, no fear
108 Should bar your telling of your name to me."

109 "Aretin I"—one spoke "and my career
110 Alberto of Siena ended on the flame;
111 But what brought me to death leads not me here.

112 Truly I told him, of him but making game,
113 That through the air, at will, I could have flown:
114 He, short of wit, and curious of my claim

115 Would that such art of mine to him were shown.
116 As I made not him Daedalus, he made
117 That one burn me, who held him as his own.

118 But to the last of the ten moats, my shade
119 For alchemy that I performed up there,
120 With his unerring sentence, Minos bade."

121 Then I my Poet thus addressed: "Was e'er
122 People so foolish as are the Sanese?
123 They pass the French with a good deal to spare."

124 That other leper heard and quick to these
125 My words replied: "Thou hast not Stricca meant
126 Who only in careful spending found his ease.

127 Nor Niccolo who was the first to invent
128 Such a rich use for cloves within that cove
129 Where for that seed the soil is excellent.

130 Nor yet that band with whom his vines and grove
131 Caccia d'Ascian destroyed; their deeds to abet
132 With his good judgment Abbagliato strove.

133 So thou may'st know who seconds thy onset
134 'Gainst Siena's folks, fix thou in me thine eyes
135 And in my face their answer they shall get.

136 Thou shouldst in me Capocchio recognize
137 Who made false metals by his alchemy.
138 Thou shouldst recall, if right is my surmise,

139 That well enough was nature mocked by me."

Inferno - Canto 30

1 The time when Juno in such a rage was thrown
2 Through Semelé, against the Theban land—
3 As more than once she had already shown—

4 Athamas in his fury was so unmanned
5 That when he saw his wife who led her young
6 Holding a little one by either hand

7 He cried: "Let in their path our nets be flung
8 To catch the lioness and her offsprings."
9 Then with his claws, through madness fiercely strong,

10 He grasps the one Learchus called and swings
11 And smites his body upon a rock, while she
12 Into the waves herself and th'other flings

13 And when by fate the Trojan vanity
14 That all seemed to defy was brought so low
15 And king and kingdom ceased at once to be

16 Hecuba captive, in her heavy woe,
17 After she saw her Polyxena dead
18 And upon the seashore she came to know

19 (More pity!) Polydorus' body spread,
20 Out of her sense, to bark then she began,
21 So far astray by grief her mind was led.

22 Furies of Thebes or Troy yet at no one
23 With such a rage were ever seen to fly—
24 Not goading beasts, much less the flesh of man—

25 As two pale souls and nude who then my eye
26 Engaged: they run and bit and seemed to ape
27 A boar when being let out of the sty.

28 One reached Capocchio and with keen teeth the nape
29 Seized of his neck and dragging him along
30 On the hard bottom made his belly scrape.

31 The Aretin remained there, all unstrung,
32 And told me: "Gianni Schicchi is that foul sprite
33 Who madly lunging goes amidst the throng."

34 "Oh"—then I said—"may not the other bite
35 Thy flesh, reck not it hard to tell its name
36 Before away from here it takes to flight."

37 And he to me: "There mourns her ancient shame
38 Infamous Myrrha to her father bound
39 By love beyond what is natural claim.

40 To commit sin with him a way she found
41 By falsifying herself in other guise;
42 Even as that who pulls along the ground

43 To gain the herd's best mare, and at no price,
44 Buoso Donati dared to falsify
45 Making his will with norms of fair devise."

46 As the two maddened souls had passed by
47 And my attention from their plight I shook
48 Some other wretch I set me to descry.

49 And one I saw, quite like a lute in look
50 If only he had his groins out off down where
51 To a human trunk the forkéd members hook.

52 Grave dropsy, causing body parts to pair
53 So badly—as awry the humors flow—
54 That face and belly no proportion bear,

55 Made him his widened lips reverse to throw,
56 One downward turned, the other upward curled—
57 Through raging thirst oft hectics hold them so.

58 "O you who are within this dismal world
59 Touched by no pain—and I know not the why—"
60 Such voice at us was from that sinner hurled—

61 "Consider Master Adam's misery:
62 I had the things of life much at my will,
63 Now for a drop of water vainly I cry.

64 Of those sweet brooks that from each verdant hill
65 Of Casentino down to Arno race,
66 Making their grassy channels moist and chill,

67 Always before my eyes the image stays
68 And all the limbs of me more fiercely it dries
69 Than this disease that keeps unfleshed my face.

70 That rigid justice which in me so pries
71 Draws from the place where sinfully I sojourned
72 Reason to make more sadly escape my sighs.

73 There is Romena where base dross I turned
74 To coins wherein the Baptist is impressed,
75 For which up there I left my body burned.

76 Yet Guido's soul could I see here distressed
77 And Alexander's and their brother's, I
78 Would not lap Branda's spring with greater zest.

79 If the mad souls here roving do not lie
80 Already one is here: to what avail
81 Since this disease doth so my members tie?

82 Would that I were so light, while yet so frail,
83 That in a hundred years an inch I would move
84 Already I would have been upon the trail,

85 Seeking for him along this hideous groove
86 Though this eleven miles around must be
87 And half a mile in width at least would prove.

88 Through them I came to join this family;
89 They prompted me to coin the Florins where
90 The carats of base dross were at least three."

91 And I to him: "Who are that wretched pair
92 Crouching upon thy right in a close link
93 And steaming as wet hand in winter air? "

94 He answered: "When I ruined upon this brink
95 I found them there and, since, they stirred not,
96 Nor will they for eternity, I think.

97 One the false charges against Joseph brought;
98 By her, that Greek from Troy, the false Sinon.
99 Sharp ague draws such stench from their rot

100 And one of them, perhaps aggrieved upon
101 So obscure a mention, dealt a smarting clout
102 Unto the other's belly tightly drawn

103 That sounded like a drum. Thereon the snout
104 Of his attacker Master Adam slapped
105 With arm that proved to be no bit less stout,

106 Saying meanwhile: "Though here I may look strapped
107 For all my members are so heavy and sick,
108 Yet to such work my arm is loose and apt."

109 Answered the other: "It was not so quick
110 When to burn on the pyre they carried thee,
111 But even quicker at thy coining trick."

112 The dropsical: "Thou speak'st now truthfully,
113 But truthful word by thee never was told
114 The time the Trojans made for truth a plea."

115 "If I false words, thou gavest away false gold"—
116 Sinon replied—"One crime alone I bear
117 Thou more than any fiend in this sad hold."

118 "Recall to mind the horse, thou perjurer"—
119 Answered the bloated one—"This be thy sting
120 That all the world is of that crime aware."

121 "Be thirst thy rue, for which thy tongue cracks through"—
122 Said then the Greek— "And all that putrid sap
123 That makes thy belly a hedge to thine own view."

124 The coiner then: "Again opens its gap
125 Thy mouth to words, as is its wont, awry;
126 For, if I thirst and have this bloated lap,

127 Thy head aches thee, thy body is parched dry
128 And but to leak Narcissus' mirror, thou
129 With few inviting words wouldst surely fly."

130 List'ning I stood with an attentive brow
131 When to me said the Master: "Now, just look,
132 I would for little with thee quarrel now."

133 His wrathful words quickly my conscience shook
134 And unto him with such a shame I turned
135 That mem'ry of it e'en now I hardly brook.

136 As, dreaming, one with danger is concerned
137 And dreaming wishes it were all a dream,
138 So that what is, as it were not, is yearned,

139 Such I was, while unspoken words did teem
140 Upon my lips. And better plea became
141 My silence than to me then it might seem.

142 My Master said: "Even a lesser shame
143 A greater fault would wash than thy delight;
144 Thus free thyself from any thought of blame.

145 Yet that I am with thee keep e'er in sight,
146 If at another time should chance require
147 Thy meeting people in such wordy fight:

148 Desire to hear such things is base desire."

Inferno - Canto 31

1 The tongue by which so bitten I had been
2 That both my cheeks took on a reddened hue,
3 Afterwards offered healing medicine.

4 Thus I have heard Achilles' spear would do,
5 Or e'en his father's; on the opened wound
6 Would promptly a remedy from them issue.

7 We turned our back upon that woeful round
8 And walked across, without an uttered word,
9 The bank which of the valley forms the bound.

10 There night was not and yet the day was blurred,
11 And only a little went my eyes ahead,
12 But of a mighty horn the note I heard,

13 'Gainst which all thunders whispers might be said.
14 Straight toward its source but going contrary
15 Upon a single point my eyes were led.

16 After the rout which robbed of victory
17 King Charles and made his holy endeavor spent
18 Roland's great horn blew not so terribly.

19 Shortly had been my sight thereon intent
20 When many lofty towers I saw, methought,
21 And asked: "What city closes that enceinte?"

22 My Master answered me: "As thou hast sought
23 To pierce from too far off this darkish blur,
24 Thy fancy into this error has been brought.

25 When near that point, 'twill then to thee occur
26 How sense far from its object goes astray.
27 Do now thyself to faster walking spur."

28 Kindly his hand in mine he thereon lay
29 And said to me: "Ere further on we go,
30 Somewhat the strangeness of the fact to allay,

31 Giants not towers are those, as thou shalt know;
32 They line the bank around the well there dug
33 And from their navel down they are sunk below."

34 As when by sun or wind is cleared the fog
35 And by degrees the eyes come to construe
36 What hide the vapors which the welkin clog,

37 Thus that dark air and heavy piercing through,
38 As we approached the embankment more and more
39 My fear grew stronger while my error flew.

40 In circling crown, like those high towers that soar
41 Upon Montereccioni's battlements,
42 Around the rim that tops that yawning bore

43 Loomed there with half their person's eminence
44 The horrid giants whom from heaven's height
45 Thundering Jove still threatens with offense.

46 One's visage came already within my sight,
47 Shoulders and breast, and of the belly a space,
48 And both his arms along the sides held tight.

49 Certainly Nature when she ceased to raise
50 Such animals did rightly to delete
51 Those ministers of Mars from our earth's face.

52 For if she is not repenting of her feat
53 With elephants and whales, whoe'er looks close
54 More righteous will see her and more discreet;

55 As where the argument of reason grows
56 Upon ill will and brawn—less mighty alone—
57 In no defense could men their trust repose.

58 His face in length and width seemed like the cone
59 that crowns in Rome Paint Peter's with its glare,
60 And on such scale was ev'ry other bone,

61 So that the bank, loin-cloth to him from where
62 The navel shows, so much left of his size
63 Above, that of arriving to his hair

64 Three Frieslanders would make a boast unwise;
65 For I could see of him thirty good hands
66 Down from the point where man his mantle ties.

67 "Rafél maì amech zabi"—at once
68 Such sounds were poured out of that mouth so fierce
69 That sweeter song it would not countenance.

70 "O foolish soul"—at him my Master sneers,
71 "Keep to thy horn and find in it thy vent
72 When wrath in thee or other passion rears.

73 Look 'round thy neck and find thine instrument
74 Belted thereon, and see, O soul confused,
75 How like a hoop o'er thy great breast 'tis bent."

76 And then to me: "By his own words accused
77 There Nimrod stands; he through whose evil plan
78 Comes that on earth more than one tongue is used.

79 Let us leave him and empty language ban;
80 For as he understands no other sound
81 Thus his own tongue can understand no man. "

82 Still toward the left, a longer journey around
83 We made and, at an arrow's throw, arrived
84 Where one more fierce and larger limbed we found.

85 What master had his harness so contrived
86 Is past my telling, but his other wrist
87 In front, his right upon his back was gyved

88 By a chain that made around his neck a twist
89 And down on what of him stood out in sight
90 Turned on itself making a five-fold list.

91 My Master said: "This, boastful of his might,
92 Against the most high Jove a contest sought:
93 Him in such manner Justice doth requite.

94 His name Ephialtes and great deeds he wrought
95 When Gods, with fear, met Giants in a fray,
96 But now his arms will never solve that knot."

97 I then spoke to my Master: "If it may
98 Be done, on Briaraeus' monstrously
99 Constructed shape, my eyes I fain would lay."

100 "Nearby"—he said—"thou shalt Antaeus see:
101 Motion and speech he has and he shall ease
102 Us to the bottom of all reify.

103 The one thou seekst, quite far along this frieze
104 Is standing shackled. Save the fiercer cast
105 Of face, his mould is formed the same as these."

106 Never a temblor or a stormy blast
107 Shook with such violence a lofty tower
108 As Ephialtes quickly shook his vast

109 Body. Then fear of death more made me cower
110 Than e'er before. The fear enough had been
111 Had I not trusted of those chains the power.

112 Many more steps we took 'round the ravine
113 And reached Antaeus who tops his rocky lair
114 Five ells and even more, down from his chin.

115 "Thou who within that fateful valley, where
116 Hannibal and his army at last gave way
117 And Scipio was made of lasting fame the heir,

118 A thousand lions gatheredst once as prey,
119 And who, hadst thou had part in that high war
120 Waged by thy brethren, some still haply would say

121 The Sons of Earth would then have won the score,
122 Lower us below—disdain not to do so—
123 Where are Cocytus' waters locked and hoar.

124 To Tityus or Tiphoeus make not us go.
125 This man can sooth of your desire the flame;
126 Turn not away thy snout but bend thee low.

127 Up in the world he shall refresh thy fame;
128 He lives and hopes his life will be long-spaced
129 If Grace betimes to itself him does not claim."

130 Thus spoke my Guide, and he with eager haste
131 To take my Master both his hands extended,
132 In whose great hold was Hercules embraced.

133 When Virgil felt himself thus apprehended
134 He gave me warning: "Come, that I take thee."
135 And in a bundle him and me he blended.

136 As Garisenda appears to those who see
137 Its sloping side beneath a cloud that goes
138 So that the tower seems leaning contrary,

139 Such seemed Antaeus to me, as I watched close
140 His bending: at that moment any stair
141 Except that one, in my own mind I chose.

142 But lightly on the depth where Lucifer
143 With Judas is engulfed, his cargo he placed.
144 Nor did he keep for long thus bending there

145 But like shipmast upright himself he raised.

Inferno - Canto 32

1 If I had rhymes of harsh and strident sound
2 As would be proper to that dismal bore
3 Which stands the thrust of all the rocks around,

4 I would the juice of my conception more
5 Fully press out, but that my tongue denies
6 And with some fear I come to sing my lore.

7 For it is not a jesting enterprise
8 Of all creation to describe the last
9 Depth, nor for tongue that "mama" and "papa" cries;

10 But help my verse, O Maids, who to the vast
11 Enclose of Thebes helped Amphion, and keep
12 My words so they may not with facts contrast.

13 Rabble worse fated than all in that deep
14 Who fill'st the place of which 'tis hard to tell:
15 Better if here you had been goats or sheep!

16 As we proceeded o'er the darkened well
17 Beneath the giant feet, adown the plain
18 And I still gazed upon its rocky shell,

19 A voice I heard implore: "Thy steps contain;
20 Do so that with thy plants thou dost not tread
21 Upon the heads of brethren here in pain."

22 I turned then 'round and saw some space ahead
23 And underneath, a frozen basin lie
24 But glass, not ice, therein seemed to be spread.

25 Ne'er Danube's waters, in the winter, by
26 The Austrian shores, were held by veil so thick,
27 Nor yet the Don's, beneath that northern sky,

28 As those down there; if even Tabernich
29 Or Pietrapiana on them a power should hurl
30 For all that blow their edges would not creak.

31 As frogs that come to croak out of the swirl
32 And hold above the waters but their throat—
33 When oft of gleaning dreams the peasant girl—

34 Wearing, where shame would show, a livid coat
35 Those woeful souls were in the ice immured
36 And clacked their teeth in mock of a stork's note.

37 With head bent down their pain they thus endured;
38 Cold from their mouth and woe from the dim stare
39 Of their lowered eyes a certain proof procured.

40 After I had a while gazed here and there
41 I looked about my feet and two close pressed
42 To each other saw, whose heads confused their hair.

43 "Tell me, O you there standing breast to breast"—
44 I said—"Who are you two?"—Whereon they bent
45 Their necks and unto me their vision stressed.

46 Their tears within their eyes already pent
47 Dripped o'er their lids; thus many a frozen thread
48 Closed up their eyes and all their sight was spent.

49 Board upon board cannot be riveted
50 So tight; then as he-goats so butted they—
51 Such wrath in them flared up—head against head.

52 Another, both whose ears had lopped away
53 The frost, spoke up while still he did maintain
54 His eyes downcast: "Why such intent survey?"

55 If wishest thou to know who are those twain,
56 The vale whence is Bisenzio's course inclined
57 Their father Albert's was and their domain.

58 Both from one womb, and yet thou shalt not find
59 Another shade in all Caina's crew
60 More worthy of being in this jelly brined.

61 Nor he whose body and shadow were broken through
62 By just a single blow from Arthur's spear,
63 Nor yet Focaccia or this whose head my view

64 So blocks that I see naught in front of here.
65 He Sassol Mascheroni was named; for sure
66 If Tuscan, thou must know of his career.

67 And that more questions I have not to endure
68 Know that the Camicion de' Pazzi was I:
69 Carlino I wait, whose sins shall mine obscure."

70 After, I saw a thousand faces awry
71 And purple with the cold; for that frore lake
72 I shudder now and will though time goes by.

73 And as our way unto that point we make
74 Where to all that has weight must gravitate
75 While for that frosty air my limbs all shake,

76 I know not if by wish, or chance, or fate,
77 But walking 'mid those heads in many a row
78 Against one face my foot struck on right straight.

79 Weeping it chided me: "Why stamp me so?
80 If thou comest not to increase my punishment
81 For Mont'Aperti, why make worse my woe?"

82 Then I said: "Master, may thou not resent
83 A wait, while through this man I solve a doubt;
84 Then with whatever haste I'll be content."

85 My Guide stood still; I spoke, turning about,
86 To him who poured his curses and his wail:
87 "Who art who such abuse keepst splurting out?"

88 "And who art thou through Antenora's vale
89 Going, who smit'st our frozen cheeks? It were
90 Indeed too much, were I alive and hale."

91 I answered: "I still live and shouldst thou care
92 For thy renown above, it might please thee
93 If with the rest thy name I register."

94 And he to me: "I crave the contrary.
95 So trouble me no more and get thee away:
96 With this foul pond thy wiles do not agree."

97 Thereon my hand upon his scalp I lay,
98 Saying: "Indeed thou must thy name disclose,
99 Or not a hair upon thy head shall stay."

100 And he: "Shouldst thou my head all bare expose
101 I shall not tell my name nor yet consent
102 To show myself, for all thy hardest blows."

103 His hair I held in a strong grip distent
104 And had some tufts of it already pried
105 The while he barked and kept his stubborn bent.

106 "What ails thee, Bocca?"—then another cried—
107 "For clattering, thy jaws enough are loose,
108 Without thy barks. What fiend is at thy side?"

109 "Now for thy words"—I said—"I have no use,
110 Vile traitor, but to thine unending shame
111 I shall of thee bring to the world true news.

112 "Get gone, and all that pleases thee proclaim.
113 But if thou 'scapest from here, of him so adept
114 To wag his tongue, do not forget the name."—

115 He said—"Here the French bribe by him is wept.
116 I saw him from Duera—thou canst tell,
117 Down where the sinners' souls so cool are kept.

118 If questioned: there what other spirits dwell?
119 That fiend from Beccheria is at thy side,
120 Whose severed head in Florence' market fell.

121 Gian Soldanier thou reachest by one stride
122 Or two, and there by Ganellone's trap
123 Him who, Faenza asleep, her gate oped wide."

124 My Guide led on, 'tween us but a short gap,
125 Then in one hole two shades I saw—one held
126 His head upon the other's like a cap.

127 And as a man by hunger is impelled
128 To gnaw on bread, the one above kept pressed
129 His teeth where brain and nape together weld.

130 Tydeus, once, when wrath flamed in his breast
131 His teeth on Menalippus' temples set
132 As this that skull was gnawing and the rest.

133 "O thou who all manhood seem'st to forget
134 Gnawing thy partner with such bestial hate
135 Tell me the why you are so closely met.

136 If right thy grievance is against thy mate,
137 Knowing thy name and what has been his guilt
138 Up in the world I may thee compensate.

139 If this with which I'm speaking shall not wilt."

Inferno - Canto 33

1 His mouth uplifted from his fierce repast
2 That sinner, cleansing it upon the hair
3 Back of the skull his teeth had held so fast.

4 Then he began: "Twill freshen the despair
5 That chokes my heart if thy request I heed
6 And speak what in my thoughts hardly I can bear.

7 But if my words are to become a seed,
8 For this traitor I gnaw, fruitful of shame,
9 See how my words with bitter tears I knead.

10 I knew not of thy country, nor thy name,
11 Nor how thou camest down here, but Florentine,
12 If right I hear, thy speech would thee proclaim

13 Know that Count Ugolino I have been;
14 Ruggeri this, the Archbishop; I'll tell now
15 Why upon him so neighborly I lean.

16 How through his plots I was betrayed and how,
17 Prison and death were by his guile my fate,
18 That to recount to thee useless I trow.

19 But what the common tale cannot relate,
20 That is, how cruelly was my death brought on,
21 Hear now, and know if he deserves my hate.

22 A small aperture in the dungeon, known
23 After my death as "Hunger's Tower"—and there
24 Others are yet in durance to be thrown—

25 Already had to me disclosed the glare
26 Of many a moon, when came the dream to me
27 That of the future did the curtain tear.

28 This man was chief and master, eagerly
29 Chasing the wolf and his cubs up the hill
30 For which the Pisan cannot Lucca see.

31 With lean and hungry hounds well trained to kill
32 Gualandi he pushed, Sismondi, and th' other fiend
33 Lanfranchi, all going forward at his will.

34 After brief course seemed to have lost their wind
35 Parent and young—their flanks with blood were red
36 As upon them the hounds their fangs had pinned.

37 I woke that morn long ere the night had fled
38 And heard my children cry while yet asleep—
39 My children there with me and ask for bread.

40 Heartless art thou if stirred to the deep
41 Art not, surmising what my mind discerned;
42 If this cannot, what else can make thee weep?

43 They woke; soon came the hour when we had learned
44 To look for scanty food: each of us struck
45 By a warning dream felt hope to doubting turned.

46 And then I heard below clinched on the lock
47 Of that horrendous tower, and silently
48 I scanned the faces of my little flock.

49 I could not cry: a stone I seemed to be;
50 But they did weep, and my sweet Anselm cried:
51 "Father, so strange thou look'st, what troubles thee?"

52 But I held back my tears, nor yet replied
53 All of that day and while the night went past
54 And on the world again the sun did glide.

55 Then, as a bit of light illumed at last
56 The gloom of that sad dungeon and I saw
57 Four faces with my own dismay aghast,

58 Despair made me on both my hands to gnaw.
59 And they, suspecting it was through distress
60 Of hunger, stood up quickly from their straw

61 And said: 'Oh, father, it will grieve us less
62 Shouldst thou eat of this body we owe to thee;
63 Thou gavest it us, take thou this fleshy dress.'

64 Then, for their sake, I bore more valiantly.
65 One day, another, passed in silent spell:
66 Ah! thou hard earth, hadst thou then yawned for me!

67 Now the fourth day, has crept within our cell
68 And stretched at my feet my Gaddo prays:
69 "Father, why helpst me not? "—and there he fell.

70 There Gaddo died, and as thou see'st my face,
71 I saw them fall exhausted one by one,
72 The fifth and the sixth day, in death's embrace.

73 Blinded and mad I groped o'er all my own,
74 Calling them for three days, while they were dead.
75 Then starving did what sorrow had not done."

76 With turbid eyes, after this much he said,
77 He made that sorry skull again his game
78 Crunching the bones as would a dog unfed.

79 Alas, thou Pisa, thou reproach and shame
80 Of that fair land where "si" is heard to sound,
81 As to the vengeance are thy neighbors lame,

82 Let Capraia and Gorgona shift their ground
83 And build a wall at Arno's mouth across
84 So that each living soul in thee be drowned.

85 For e'en hadst thou indeed suffered a loss
86 Of some strongholds through Ugolino's wrong
87 Thou shouldst not have his sons put on that cross.

88 Thou newer Thebes, guilt could not reach the young
89 Brigata and Uguccione and the twain
90 Whose names above are mentioned in this song.

91 We passed beyond, to where the deep moraine
92 Binds up another tribe in its hard mold,
93 And here the shades wholly on their back are lain.

94 Their very tears the boon of tears withhold
95 As their grief through their eyes cannot be freed
96 And inwards turns, causing a pain twofold.

97 For the first tears clot hard and seem to be
98 A crystal mask that fills and overlays,
99 Beneath the brows, the socket cavity.

100 And though I felt that—as on callous place,
101 Every feeling, through the bitter frost,
102 Had lost its wonted hold upon my face,

103 Still then a wind, methought, my forehead crossed,
104 So that I said: "What moves this air, my Lord?
105 I thought all vapors here their power had lost."

106 "Soon thou shalt be"—such was to me his word—
107 "Where thine own sight will give thee answer true,
108 Seeing the source from which this breath is poured.

109 Then from that sorry frost-encrusted crew
110 Shouted a wretch: "O ye spirits so fell
111 That the last place in Hell is given you,

112 These hardened veils before my eyes dispel
113 That I may vent the woe that wrings my heart
114 A while at least, till tears turn to a hard shell "

115 And I to him: "Reveal then who thou art
116 If help thou crav'st; should I thy scales not break,
117 May I reach of this ice the lowest part."

118 "Friar Alberigo I am"—up then he spake—
119 "He of the fruits in evil garden grown,
120 And for my figs these dates here back I take."

121 "What" said I—"to thy death already gone?"
122 He answered: "How my body is now engaged
123 Up in the world, to me is wholly unknown.

124 This Ptolomea is thus privileged
125 That oft, even before Atropos' thrust,
126 A soul may ruin to be here encaged.

127 And that more willing thou mayest shave the crust
128 Made by these glassy tears upon my face,
129 Know that soon as a soul betrays its trust,

130 As I did, in its body it must give place
131 To a fiend that governs henceforth its career
132 Until its life has run the given space.

133 The soul is plunged into this cistern here
134 And still above perhaps the body all see
135 Of that foul shade that winters at my rear.

136 Thou must know that, coming but recently:
137 Sir Branca d'Oria is he, and many a sun
138 Has turned, since thus encased he is with me."

139 "I think"—said I—"thou art a lying man,
140 For D'Oria has not yet paid death his toll
141 And eats and drinks and sleeps and clothes puts on."

142 "Up there"—he said—"in Malebranche's bowl
143 By thick and seething pitch all overspread,
144 Not yet arrived had Michel Zanche's soul

145 When this man left to a demon in his stead
146 His body, as did that other of his breed
147 Whose hands through the same treason colored red.

148 But now stretch forth thy hand that I be freed
149 And ope my eyes." That I refused to do,
150 And villainy to him was courtly deed.

151 Alas, ye Genoese, ye men untrue
152 To common customs, who in all sins abound,
153 Why is the world not rid of all of you?

154 For with Romagna's foulest soul I found
155 Such one of you who through his vile offense
156 Is now, in spirit, in Cocytus drowned

157 The while, above, his flesh to life pretends.

Inferno - Canto 34

1 "And now the King of Hell his banners grim
2 Displays in front of us"—my Master said—
3 "So look and see what canst discern of him."

4 As when thick fog throughout the air is spread
5 Or evening dusk obscures our hemisphere,
6 Shows from afar a mill by high wind sped,

7 Such structure there I saw ahead appear—
8 Methought—then for the heavy wind I drew
9 Back of my Guide, the only shelter near.

10 With fear I set to rhymes what struck my view
11 There, where all covered was each reprobate
12 But showing as in glass a straw shows through.

13 Some shades were lying, some were standing straight,
14 Here on their soles, with head stuck downward yon,
15 Some—face to feet—in posture arcuate.

16 As o'er enough of distance we had gone
17 When proper thought my Master that I see
18 The creature that for beauty once has shone,

19 He stepped aside and beckoning to me
20 To stay, he said: "Here Dis now and the place
21 Where of strong will thou need'st the armory."

22 How I was frozen into voiceless daze
23 Ask not, O reader; this I cannot write
24 On parchment, as too weak would be my phrase.

25 I did not die and yet I was not quite
26 Alive; think, if I was not that nor this
27 What I became, if hast of sense a mite.

28 The ruler of the desolate abyss
29 Stood up with half his bust out of the ice
30 And to a giant's form mine closer is

31 Than of his arms the giants match the size.
32 How monstrous is that whole, thou canst now know,
33 That in proportion, must such parts comprise.

34 If beauty once as foulness now did show
35 In him, and on his Maker if he frowned,
36 Certes from him must ev'ry evil flow.

37 Ah! how I felt myself by wonder bound
38 When in his head three faces I descried!
39 One showed in front and red was all around;

40 This joined two others, one on either side,
41 Midway each shoulder: at their upper ends
42 All the three faces joined and unified.

43 On the right one, white hue with yellow blends;
44 The left one in its color mocks the race
45 From where the Nile down to the plain descends.

46 Two mighty wings were set beneath each face
47 Such as the vastness of that bird would fit:
48 Never I saw on ship sails of that space.

49 They were not plumed but like a bat's were knit;
50 The monster shaking them, like a great fan,
51 Sent out a triple wind across the pit.

52 Hence locked in frost was all Cocytus's span.
53 He wept, and through six eyes tears found a vent
54 And down three chins a foam blood-crimsoned ran.

55 In ev'ry mouth he crunched with violent
56 Grinding of teeth a sinner—crusher-wise—
57 And thus to three of them gave punishment.

58 To that in front that ever tight'ning vise
59 But little means; the fiends uproots his hide
60 So that all bare of it his back oft lies.

61 "That soul up there who is most sorely tried
62 Is Judas"—spoke to me my Master so.
63 "With head within, he shakes his legs outside.

64 Of th' other two who have their head below
65 Brutus is hanging 'neath the blackish snout.
66 See how he squirms but utters not his woe.

67 Cassius the other, looming there so stout.
68 But now again is coming up the night.
69 Having seen all, our way from here leads out."

70 At his desire, his neck I clasped tight,
71 And he, who watched of time and place the chance,
72 When opened were the wings at proper height

73 Held fast the hairy sides with both his hands.
74 Then downward moved, passing from ply to ply
75 Twixt the thick fur and the frost-bound expanse.

76 When we had come below, to where the thigh
77 Is on the haunches' thickness pivoted,
78 With breath hard-drawn and struggling painfully

79 My Leader did invert his legs and head.
80 Then as a man who ascends he grasped that hair
81 Going toward Hell again, I thought with dread.

82 "Hold on quite fast, for only by this stair"—
83 My Master spoke, breathing as man forspent—
84 "We can depart from all the evil there."

85 Then he came out above a rocky rent
86 And on its rim for me he found a seat,
87 Cautiously making after me the ascent.

88 I lifted up my eyes and thought to meet
89 Lucifer's body as I had it just left,
90 But now I saw that he held up his feet.

91 If I became of all clear thought bereft
92 Let the gross gentry think, into whose ken
93 Comes not the point we passed along that cleft.

94 "Up on thy feet"—to me the Master then—
95 "Long is the way and hard indeed the road,
96 While to mid-tierce the sun returns again."

97 It was no hall within a princely abode
98 Where we were now, but shaft of nature's make
99 With soil unsteady and light that hardly glowed.

100 "Ere this abyss for ever I forsake,
101 Master of mine"—I said, when standing straight—
102 "Speak and my mind out of its errors take.

103 Where is the ice? In such inverted state
104 Why is he stuck? And why in such brief course
105 From eve to morning did the sun rotate?"

106 And he: "'Gainst truth in thee the fancy wars
107 That thou art still this side of center, where
108 I gripped the furry worm that the world bores.

109 While I was climbing down so placed we were,
110 But when I turned, that point we left behind
111 On which from ev'ry side all objects bear.

112 Now in that hemisphere ourselves we find
113 Opposed to that over the dry-land vast
114 And 'neath whose summit was to death consigned

115 He on whose birth and life no shadow was cast
116 Of sin. Thou standest on that little sphere
117 That doth Giudecca on this side contrast.

118 When eve is there, this side the day grows clear.
119 He who gave us as stair his hairy flank
120 Is now, as he first was, infix'd here.

121 From the high heaven on this side he sank.
122 For fear of him the land that here stood dry
123 As 'neath a veil, below the ocean shrank,

124 Coming to our horizon: and to fly
125 From him, perhaps, left here an empty space
126 That which appears this side, and looms up high."

127 Away from Belzebub there is a place
128 Whose spread for all of that tomb's length extends
129 And that by sight alone one cannot trace

130 But for a purling brook that there descends
131 Through a hollowed rock in which a rut has worn
132 Its own wide-winding course that slightly bends.

133 The Guide and I then entered that forlorn
134 Pathway to reach again the clear sunshine,
135 And all desire of rest we held in scorn.

136 He first, I second, moved along the incline
137 Until through a small aperture came to view
138 Some of the beauteous things the heavens shrine:

139 Then we came forth to see the stars anew.