

The *Inferno* of Dante Alighieri

Translated By

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Inferno - Canto 1

Upon the journey of our life midway
I came unto myself in a dark wood,
For from the straight path I had gone astray.

Ah, how is hard the telling what a drear
And savage and entangled wood it was,
That in the very thought renews the fear!

So bitter is it death is little more;
But to show forth what good I gathered there,
I tell what else for me it held in store.

How I had entered there I scarce can say,
So full was I of slumber at the point
At which I first abandoned the true way.

But when I reached the rising of a hill,
Whereunder came that valley to an end
Which on my heart had laid its deadly chill,

I looked, and saw the shoulders of the height
Mantled already with the planet's rays
That each in every pathway guides aright.

Then was the fear a little quieted
That in the deep recesses of my heart.
Outlived the night so piteously led.

And as a man who, overspent of breath,
Has clambered from the deep upon the shore,
And turns, and gazes on the watery death,

Even so my spirit, which still fled away,
Turned back to look again upon the pass
Which leaves none living who within it stray.

After some rest to body spent and sore,
I took my way on up the desert slope,
So, that the firm foot always was the lower.

And lo! almost where first the steeps begin,
A leopard, light of foot and very fleet;
And she was covered with a spotted skin.

She would not yield her from before my face;
Rather so blocked all passage that my steps
At many turns I turned me to retrace.

It was the moment of the morning's prime,
When up the sun was mounting with those stars
That were in company with him what time

Divine Love set in motion each bright globe;
Wherefore assurance gave me of good hope
Against that creature in the gaudy robe

The gracious season and the hour of day,—
Yet not so that there brought not terror back
Appearance of a lion in the way;—

He looked as if against me he were come
With head erected and with hunger mad;
It seemed the very air took fright therefrom;—

And of a she-wolf, that with every want
Seemed to be burdened in her meagerness;
And she has made how many to live gaunt!

Together with the terror of her sight,
She put upon me such a heaviness
That I lost hope thereafter of the height.

And what the man is whose one will is gain,
And comes the time that destines him to lose,
And he can only sorrow and complain,

Such made of me that peace-forbidding brute;
Which, coming at me, drove me step by step
Downward again to where the sun is mute.

Whilst to the lowland I was taking flight,
Before mine eyes one offered him to me,
For long time silent and still dim to sight.

When I perceived him in that lonesome glade,
"Have pity on me!" I cried out to him,
"Whate'er thou art, man verily or shade."

"Not man," he answered, "man I was on earth;
And both my parents were of Lombardy,
And both were also Mantuans by birth.

Sub Julio I was born, though late; at Rome,
Under the good Augustus in the time
Of false and lying gods, I made my home.

Poet I was, and sang of that just son
Of great Anchises who came out of Troy
After the burning of proud Ilion.

But why returnest thou to this duress?
Wherefore not climb the mount delectable,
Cause and beginning of all happiness?"

"Art thou that Virgil then, that fountainhead
Which pours abroad so wide a stream of speech?"
In answer, with awe-stricken brow, I said.

"O of all other poets light and glory,
May the long zeal avail me, the great love
That made me meditate on thy high story!

My master and my author verily,
Thou only art the one from whom I took
The seemly style for which men honor me.

See thou! the beast from which I turned again.
Deliver me from her, illustrious sage.
Tremble she makes my every pulse and vein."

"Thou must betake thee by another path,"
He answered then, on seeing how I wept,
"If thou wouldst save thee from this place of wrath;

Because this beast, at which thou raisest cry,
Lets not another by her pathway pass,
But still harasses him until he die.

By nature mean, malignant, ever more
She seeks to feed her ravenous desire;
And fed, she is more famished than before.

Many the creatures are with which she mates,
And many more shall be, until the hound
Come that shall make her die of baffled hates.

He shall not feed on either earth or pelf,
But wisdom, love and virtue; and between
Feltro and Feltro shall be born himself.

Shield he shall be of Italy low-laid,
For which Eurialus and Turnus died,
And Nisus, and Cammilla the young maid.

Trailing her through the cities without truce,
He shall drive back again that wolf to hell,
Wherefrom aforetime envy set her loose.

So I, discerning for thy best, deem fit
Thou follow me; and I will be thy guide,
And will conduct thee through the eternal pit,

Where thou shalt hear the desperate shrieks, and see
Spirits of eld that for the second death
Are all clamorous in their misery;

And see thereafter them that are at rest
Within the fire, for that they hope to come,
When so it be, among the people blest;

Whither if thou wilt also rise, for guide
Shall be a spirit worthier than I;
And parting, I will leave thee by her side;

Because the Emperor who reigns on high,
Seeing me rebel to his law, wills not
That to his city one through me come nigh.

And everywhere He rules, and there He reigns;
There is his city and exalted seat.
Happy who, chosen, unto it attains!"

And I to him: "Poet, I beg of thee,
Even by that God who was to thee unknown,
So that this evil and yet worse I flee,

That thou conduct me whither thou hast said,
Where I may see St. Peter's gate, and find
Those thou accountest so discomfited."

Then moved he onward, and I went behind.

Inferno - Canto II

Day was departing, and the dusky air
Was taking every creature upon earth
From all its toiling; and I only there

Was putting me in readiness to face
The warfare of the way and of the woes
That memory, which errs not, shall retrace.

O Muses, O high genius, aid me here!
O memory, dictating what I saw,
In this shall thy nobility appear.

"Thou poet," I began, "who art my stay,
Look well upon my power, if it be strong,
Before thou trust me to the arduous way.

Thou sayest that the sire of Silvius went,
While yet corruptible, unto the world
Immortal, and was in the body sent.

But if the Adversary of all wrong
Was gracious, thinking of the high effect—
The Who and What—to come of him erelong,

Unmeet it seems not to a thoughtful man;
For of benignant Rome and of her rule
He was named father in high heaven's plan.

This Rome, that rule (to speak as truth befits)
Were both established for the holy place
Where the successor of great Peter sits.

And through this going, which drew praise from thee,
Things he beheld which were the cause as well
Of papal robe as of his victory.

That whither went the Chosen Vessel then
To reassure that faith which to the way
Of their salvation first admitteth men.

But I, why should I go? Who can permit?
Aeneas am I not; I am not Paul.
Not I, not any others, deem me fit.

Wherefore if I should yield myself to go,
I fear it might prove folly. Thou art wise,
And better than I argue thou dost know."

As one, unwilling that which he has willed,
On second thought reverses his design,
And stops before he has begun to build,

Such I became upon that gloomy waste;
And thus, thinking annulled the undertaking
Which had been entered into with such haste.

"If I take not indeed thy words amiss,"
Answered that shade of the Magnanimous,
"Attainted is thy soul with cowardice,

Which oft the spirit of a man so palls
That he is turned from honorable deed,
Like beasts that shy at shadows when dusk falls.

That from this dread thou mayst now set thee free,
Harken to why I came, and what I heard
That first time I was moved to pity thee.

I was among those who are in suspense;
When called to me a lady fair and blest,
Such that I asked her will in reverence.

Her eyes shone brighter than the star; and meek
And gentle, with an angel's voice, to me
In her own parlance she was moved to speak:

'O thou of Mantua, and most noble soul,
The fame of whom endures yet in the world,
And shall endure the while the heavens roll,

A friend of mine, and yet not fortune's friend,
Is so beset upon a lonely waste
That fear has turned him back who would ascend.

He may by now, I fear, be so hard-driven
That I am late in rising to his need,
In view of what I heard of him in heaven.

Go then; and by that gifted word of shine,
And with what else be needful for his succor,
So give him aid that comfort may be mine.

And I am Beatrice, who bid thee go;
I come from place whither I would return;
Love moved me, and compels me to speak so.

When I shall be once more before my Lord,
Often I will extol thee unto Him.’
She ceased; and I began thus in accord:

Lady of the virtues which alone
Raise man above the content of the sphere
Which has the smallest circles for its own,

So is command of shine to me a grace
That not to have obeyed it yet is tardy.
To me no further need'st thou plead thy case.

But tell me what the cause that thou shouldst deign
Descend down hither to this center, far
From the wide place thou burnest to regain.

‘Since to the very inmost thou wouldst know,
She answered, ‘I will tell thee in few words
Wherefore I feared not to come here below.

Those things alone are to be feared by us
Which have themselves a power of doing harm;
But others not; they are not dangerous.

And I am made by God, in mercy, such
That not a flame of all this fire assails me,
Nor any misery of yours can touch.

A gentle Lady is in heaven, who takes
Such pity on his cheek to whom I send thee
That the stern judgment passed on high she breaks.

She called Lucia unto her in prayer,
And said: "Thy faithful one hath present need
Of thee, and I commend him to thy care."

Lucia, foe of every cruel pride,
Arose, and hastened unto where I was,
Who had my seat by ancient Rachel's side.

"Beatrice," she said, "thou praise of God in truth,
Why aid'st not him who in his love for thee
Turned from the vulgar many in his youth?"

Hearest thou not the pity of his plea?
Seest thou not the death which he combats
Upon that stream o'er which vaunts not the sea?"

And in the world was there not ever zeal
To follow profit, or to flee from loss,
Like mine, after the close of that appeal,

To come down hither from the blessed sphere,
Confiding me to thy trustworthy word,
Which honors thee, and also those that hear.'

When she had spoken in this wise to me,
She turned away her shining eyes in tears;
Which brought me hither the more hastily.

And so I came to thee on her account;
I took thee from before that savage beast
Which blocked the short way to the beauteous Mount.

And now, what? Why, why stand'st debating there?
Why harbors in thy heart such cowardice?
Why hast thou not the will to do and dare,

Seeing that three such blessed ladies deign
To act thy counsel in the court of heaven,
And my words promise thee so great a gain?"

As flowers in the frostiness of night
Close up and droop, then, whitened by the sun,
Open upon their stalks and stand upright,

So was it with my spirit faint and wan;
And such fresh courage coursed into my heart
That I made answer fitting a free man:

"Oh, merciful is she who succored me,
And courteous thou who hastened to obey
The words of truth which she addressed to thee!

And with thine own words hast thou so inclined
My heart in willingness to come with thee
That I am brought again to my first mind.

Go then; and be one will between us twain;
Thou art my lord, my leader and my stay."
Thus I replied; and when he moved again,

I entered upon the deep and wooded way.

Inferno - Canto III

THROUGH ME THE WAY IS TO THE WOEFUL CITY;
THROUGH ME THE WAY UNTO ETERNAL PAIN;
THROUGH ME THE WAY AMONG THOSE DEAD TO PITY.

JUSTICE MY MAKER MOVED WHO RULES ABOVE;
THERE CAME UNTO MY MAKING POWER DIVINE,
WISDOM PREEMINENT AND PRIMAL LOVE.

BEFORE I WAS; NO THINGS CREATED WERE,
UNLESS ETERNAL; ETERNAL I ENDURE.
LEAVE YE ALL HOPE BEHIND WHO ENTER HERE.

I saw these words, colored so cloudily,
Engraven above the archway of a gate.
"Master," said, "their sense is hard to me."

And he, as one acquainted with the place:
"Here must thou do away with all mistrust;
Let die in thee whatever fear is base.

We come now to the place where I have said
Thou shouldst behold the hapless folk by whom
The true good of the mind is forfeited."

And thereupon he took my hand in his
With look so kind that I was comforted,
And drew me in among the mysteries.

Here sighs and clamors and shrill wailings burst
Loud echoing upon the starless air;
Whereby to weeping was I moved at first.

Uncouth tongues, utterances horrible,
Words of despondency and tones of wrath,
High voices and hoarse, and sound of hands as well,

Made up a tumult, which so swirling goes
Forever in that air of timeless murk
As sand in deserts when a whirlwind blows.

And , who felt my brow with horror bound,
Cried out: "What is this, Master, that I hear?
What is this folk whom sorrows so confound?"

And he to me: "These miserable ways
They hold, the most unhappy souls of those
Who lived without disgrace and without praise.

Commingled are they with that caitiff choir
Of angels who rebelled not, yet to God
Were faithless; all for self was their desire.

Heaven refuses them, lest they should stain
Its glory; and deep hell admits them not,
Lest even the damned from them some glory gain."

And I: "Master, what weighs so heavily
Upon them that thus loudly they lament?"
He answered: "Briefly I will tell it thee.

These have not hope of death; yet odious
so their blinded life that any lot,
Be it but other, leaves them envious

Their fame on earth is as a breath on glass;
Mercy and justice hold them in disdain;
Let us not speak of them, but look and pass."

And I beheld a banner as I looked,
That ever ran in circles rapidly,
As if no instant of repose it brooked;

And such a train of people followed on
Behind it, that I hardly had believed
So many death already had undone.

When I had noted there some known to me,
I saw and recognized the shade of him
Who made the great refusal cravenly.

Forthwith I thought, and was assured, that these
Made up the congregation of the cowards
Hateful to God and to his enemies.

These wretches who had never been indeed
Alive, were naked, and were sorely stung
By flies and wasps which in that darkness breed.

And these had made their faces stream with blood,
Which dripping intermingled with their tears
For filthy worms there underfoot was food.

Then looking out yet farther, I could see
People upon the bank of a great river;
Wherefore I said: "Master, now grant it me

To know who these are, and what discipline
Has made them show such readiness to cross,
As even in this faint twilight can be seen."

And he to me: "Things will be clear anon
To thee, so soon as we have stayed our steps
Upon the dismal shores of Acheron."

And thereupon, with eyes cast down in shame
For fear my speaking vexed him, I now spoke
No more until we to the river came.

And lo! coming by boat there unto us
An ancient, hoary with the hair of eld,
Crying: "Woe unto you, ye impious!

High heaven hope ye not ever to behold.
I come to take you to the other shore,
Into eternal shades, to heat, to cold.

Thou living soul, that standest there apart,
Depart hence from these others which are dead."
But when he saw that I did not depart,

"By other passage, other ports," he said,
"Thou yet shalt come to shore, not here; to pass,
A lighter boat must needs stand thee in stead."

My Leader then: "Charon, frett'st thou for what?
Willed is it so where can be brought to pass
That which is willed; and further question not."

Then were at rest the hairy jaws of him,
That ferryman upon the livid fen,
Whose eyes two wheels of fire, encircling, rim.

But in their nakedness discomfited,
Those spirits, changing color, gnashed their teeth
So soon as they had heard the words of dread.

They cursed God and their parents, man on earth
Created, and the place, the time, the seed
Of their begetting, and itself, their birth.

Then were they herded in a huddled crowd,
Bitterly weeping, to the evil shore
That waits for every man who fears not God.

Charon the demon with the eyes of coal,
Beckoning, garners them together there;
Beats with his oar each backward-hanging soul.

As in the passing of the autumn's breath
Fall one by one the leaves, until the bough
Sees all its spoils upon the ground beneath,

So did the evil seed of Adam fall,
Down dropping, one by one, from off that shore
At signal, as the falcon to its call.

So they set out upon the dusky tide,
And before yonder they have disembarked,
Yet a new host assembles on this side.

"My son," said the kind Master, "understand
That whoso perish in the wrath of God
All congregate down here from every land;

And are in readiness to pass the river,
Because justice divine so spurs them on
That fear turns to desire; but yet not ever

Passes this way a spirit that is good;
And so, if Charon fret because of thee,
The words he uttered may be understood."

He ended; when the murky plain was set
Trembling so mightily, that of my terror
The mere remembrance bathes me in cold sweat.

The tearful land gave forth a wind; from whence
Vermilion lightning flashed—so as to quell
In me the action of my every sense;

And as a man whom sleep has seized, I fell.

Inferno - Canto IV

There broke upon the slumber of my sense
Loud thunder; whereupon I started up
Like one awakened by some violence;

And my recovered eyes I cast around me,
Risen erect, with eager scrutiny
To know what place it was wherein I found me.

Upon the brink I found me, as God knows,
Even of the gully of the great abyss
Which gathers thunder of unnumbered woes.

So deep and dark it was, beclouded so,
That, strain as might my vision to the depths,
Nothing whatever I made out below.

"Down into the blind world descend we now,"
Began the poet, and his face was pale;
"Henceforth I will be first, and second thou."

And I, that of his color took good heed,
Exclaimed: "How shall I follow, if thou fear
Who hast been mine accustomed strength in need?"

"The anguish of those multitudes down here,"
He answered me, "has painted on my face
That pity thou mistaken hast for fear.

But let us onward, for the long way calls."
And thus he entered, thus he made me enter,
The first encircling of the abysmal walls.

Therein, at least to one that listened there,
Sounded not any plaint, except of sighs
Setting atremble the eternal air.

They came of sorrow, without other pain,
Of all those throngs, so many and so great,
Of little babes, of women, and of men.

Then the good Master: "Thou dost not demand
What spirits these thou seest are; but now
Ere we go farther, let thee understand

They have not sinned; but this their merit due
Avails not; unbaptized, they never passed
The portal of the faith thou holdest true.

Because they were before Christianity,
They rendered not due worship unto God;
And I myself am of that company.

For such defect, not fault, the almighty Sire
Condemned us; yet no torment have we worse
Than without hope to live on in desire."

When I had heard, with sorrow my heart swelled,
Imagining how many of high worth
Must in that Limbo be forever held.

"Tell me, my Master, tell me, O my Lord,"
Began I, seeking comfort to the faith
Which against error is a flaming sword,

"Has ever one gone hence by his desert,
Or by another's to be then in bliss?"
And he, to my veiled reference alert,

Answered: "While this estate was new to me,
I saw come unto us a Mighty One,
Crowned with the token of His victory.

From here He wrested our first parent's shade,
And that of his son Abel, and of Noah,
Of Moses, voice of Law himself obeyed;

Abraham patriarch and David king;
Israel with his father and his sons
And Rachel, won by so long travailing;

And many more; and made them blessed then.
And I would have thee know that till these were,
Not ever saved were any souls of men."

We paused not in our going though he spoke,
But all the while were passing through the wood,
The wood, I mean, of huddled spirit-folk.

From where we lay in slumber we had come
Not far, when I beheld a radiance
That overcame a hemisphere of gloom.

From it we still were distant a short space,
Yet not so far but I in part could see
That people of high honor held the place.

"O thou, who broughtest honor to all art,
All science, who are these so honored here
That from those others they are set apart?"

And he to me: "The honorable report
Which sounds of them up in that life of thine
This grace hath won for them in heaven's high court."

Then presently a voice was heard of one
Crying: "Honor ye the most high poet! Lo,
To us his shade returneth, that was gone."

When the voice finished, and was quieted,
I saw there coming toward us four great shades,
That were in seeming neither sad nor glad.

Then said the Master in his courtesy:
"Look well upon that one who, sword in hand—
As if he were their lord leads on those three;

For he is Homer, poet unsurpassed;
Behind him Horace comes, the satirist;
The third is Ovid; Lucan is the last.

Since each of them with me holds laudable
The name late sounded by the single voice,
They do me honor, and in that do well."

So I beheld the fair school mustering
Of these, the lords of that exalted song
That soars above the rest on eagle's wing.

When they had talked together for a while,
They turned to me with sign of salutation;
Which my good Master noted with a smile.

They paid me yet the greater deference
Of making me one of their company;
And I was sixth among such sapience.

And so we went together toward the light,
Speaking of things that call for silence now,
Even as their utterance there was fit and right.

We reached a noble Castle, by high wall
Within high wall encircled seven times,
And girt by a fair stream that flowed round all.

This, as on solid ground, we made to pass;
By seven gates I entered with those sages;
We came into a meadow sweet with grass.

People were there with serious eyes and slow,
Of great authority in their demeanor;
They spoke not often, and in voices low.

Off to one side we presently withdrew
To a high place, open and full of light,
From which they all of them were in plain view.

And there in front, on the enamelled green
Were pointed out to me the mighty shades
I glory in myself for having seen.

I saw Electra in great company,
In which I noted Hector and Aeneas,
And full-armed Caesar of the falcon eye;

And with Camilla, over opposite,
Penthesilea; and saw the Latian king
Beside Lavinia, his daughter,

I saw the Brutus that drove Tarquin off;
Lucretia, Julia, Martia, and Cornelia;
Saw Saladin stand lonely and aloof.

My gaze extending to a wider span,
I saw the master of all them that know
Seated among the philosophic clan.

All look to him; all do him honor meet.
And here I saw both Socrates and Plato
Standing before all others by his seat;

Democritus, who all to chance decrees;
Diogenes, Anaxagoras and Thales;
And Heraclitus, Zeno, Empedocles;

That Dioscorides who made the list
Of herbal virtues; Orpheus and Tully,
Livy, and Seneca the moralist;

Galen and Avicenna, Averrhoës,
Who uttered the great Comment; Ptolemy,
Euclid geometer, Hippocrates

I cannot here touch worthily on all;
Because the lengthy theme so drives me on,
That short of the fact the word must often fall.

The sixfold party dwindles to a pair;
My sage guide led me by a way of his
Out of the quiet, into quivering, air;

And to a place I came where no light is.

Inferno - Canto V

From the first circle I descended so
Down to the second, which engirds less space
And greater pain, that goads to cries of woe.

There horrible and snarling, Minos stands;
Examines, as it enters, every guilt;
Dooms and despatches as himself he bands.

I mean that when before him is come in
The soul ill-fated, it confesses all;
And that assessor of each mortal sin,

Discerning what should be its place in hell,
Around him wraps as many times his tail
As are degrees down where he dooms it dwell.

Ever before him numbers of them stand;
They come to judgment, every one in turn;
They speak, and hear, and then below are banned.

"O thou who seekest this sad hostelry,"
So soon as he had seen me, Minos said,
Pausing in act of his high ministry,

"Heed how thou ent'rest, and in whom putt'st faith;
Be not by wideness of the gate beguiled."
And unto him my Guide: "Why too, waste breath?"

Block not a passage which the fates allot;
Willed is it so where can be brought to pass
That which is willed; and further question not."

Now are beginning notes of misery
To make them heard by me; now am I come
To where immoderate weeping harrows me.

I came into a place, of all light hushed,
That bellowed like the ocean, when in storm
By wind with wind contending it is brushed.

The hellish hurricane, that ne'er relents,
Hurtles along the spirits in its raging,
And buffeting and whirling them, torments.

When on before the ruin they come driven,
There the shriekings, the groanings and the wailings
There they blaspheme the omnipotence of heaven.

I came to know how unto punishments
So ordered is the carnal sinner damned,
Whoever reason subjugates to sense.

As their own pinions bear the starlings on
At the cold season in broad and serried flights,
So bore that blast the spirits woebegone.

Hither, thither it sweeps them, high and low;
They are not comforted by any hope
Of quietness, not even of less woe.

And as the cranes go singing their sad lay,
Making themselves in air a long-drawn line,
So I saw coming, carried on that fray,

The host of shades, all uttering long wails.
Wherefore I said: "Master, what folk are those
Whom the black air so bitterly assails?"

Then answered he: "The first among the throngs
Whose story thou desires" to hear told,
Was empress on a time of many tongues.

She was so soiled with vice of lechery
That, to dispel the blame she had incurred,
The lustful she made lawful by decree.

She is Semiramis, of whom men say
That Ninus she succeeded; and was his wife;
And held the land now under Sultan's sway.

The next is she who life for love resigned,
And faith with the ashes of Sichaeus broke;
And sensual Cleopatra comes behind.

Then Helen see, for sake of whom men sinned
Such length of days; and see the great Achilles,
Who strove with Love unto the very end.

See Paris, Tristan." And he showed above
A thousand shades, and as he named them, pointed,
Who all were exiled from our life by love.

After I so had heard my Teacher name
Those ladies and those gentle lords of old,
Pity assailed me, and nigh overcame;

And I began: "Poet, gladly I might
Speak with those two that close together go,
And seem upon the wind to be so light."

And he to me. "Tarry until their doom
Shall bring them nearer; then in that love's name
Which led them hither, ask; and they will come."

Soon as the wind had driven them our way,
I lifted up my voice: "O weary souls,
Come speak to us, if no one bid you nay!"

As doves, when their desire is calling, fly
On spread and level wing to the sweet nest,
Carried by their own will along the sky,

So, issuing from the troop where Dido is,
Came these through the malignant air to us,
Such virtue had my gentle urgencies.

"O mortal one, courteous and humane,
Who through the livid air goest greeting us
That left upon the world a crimson stain,

Were friend the Ruler of the universe,
Truly we would entreat him for thy peace
For having pity on our fault perverse.

Whate'er to hear or say it be thy will,
That we will hear, and thereof speak to thee,
The while for us the wind, as now, is still.

Seated the city is which gave me birth
Upon the seashore, where the Po descends
To peace with them pursuing him on earth,

Love, who on gentle heart at once attends,
Allured this other with the comely form
Reft from me,—and the manner still offends.

Love, who none loved not loving will allow,
Allured me with delight in him so strong
That, as thou seest, it leaves me not e'en now.

Love both of us delivered to one death;
Caïna waits for him who quenched our life.
These were the words borne to us on her breath.

When I had heard those spirits sore-betrayed,
I bowed my face, and kept it lowered so,
Until "What ponderest thou?" the Poet said.

When I made answer, I began "Alas!
How many a sweet thought, what great desire
Led on these spirits to their woeful pass!"

And then to them I turned, and spoke again;
And I began: "Francesca, thine afflictions
Move me to tears of pity and of pain.

But tell me, in the season of sweet sighing,
By what and how might love empower you
To know the longings dimly underlying?"

And she to me: "There is not greater woe
Than recollection of the happy time
In wretchedness; and this thy Sage cloth know.

But if in thee so great affection seeks
To see laid bare the first root of our love,
I can but do as one who weeps and speaks.

For pleasure on a day of Lancelot
We two were reading, how love mastered him.
We were alone; misgiving had we not.

And oftentimes that which we read would call
Our eyes to meeting, and make pale our faces;
But one part only brought us to our fall.

When we had read there how the longed-for smile
Was kissed by such a lover, this one then,
Who parts not from me this eternal while,

Kissed me upon my mouth all tremblingly.
A Gallehaut was the book, and he who wrote it.
That day we read no further, I and he."

While to me thus one spirit was replying,
The other wept so, that for pitying dread
Faintness came over me as I were dying;

I fell, as falls the body of one dead.

Inferno - Canto VI

My sense returning, which had shrunk away
Before the pity of those kindred souls,
Which had confounded me with such dismay,

New torments, new tormented I descry
About me, whichsoever way I move,
Which way I turn, which way I fix mine eye.

I am in the third Circle, of the rain
Accurst, eternal, crushing, cold; not ever
In mode or measure shall it change again.

Coarse hail; discolored water mixed with snow
Pour down together through the murky air;
And the ground stinks that drinks them in below.

Cerberus, monstrous and bloodthirsty hound,
Is doglike barking through his triple throat
Over the multitude thereunder drowned.

Eyes has he red, beard black and full of grease,
Belly obese, and hook-nailed paws; he claws
The spirits, skins them, tears them piece from piece.

And the rain makes them howl like dogs; a screen
For one side they are fain to make the other;
So turn and turn those sufferers obscene.

When Cerberus, the great Worm, took note of us,
He opened all his jaws, and showed his fangs;
Rage made his every member tremulous.

And reaching down with outspread clutch, my Guide
Took of that earth, and cast it with full fists
Into those gullets never satisfied.

As is the dog that, barking, begs a bone,
And quiets as he bites the proffered bait,
And to devour it strives and strains alone,

Such was the seeming of each squalid face
Of the fiend Cerberus, who thunders so
Upon the souls that deafness were a grace.

We passed on over shades the pitiless
Rain was subduing, and went setting foot
On what seemed persons, but was emptiness.

Groveling all upon the ground they lay
Save only one, who raised him and sat up
Suddenly, seeing us who passed his way.

"Thou who art led through this infernal shade,"
He said, "see if thou canst remember me;
Thou wast, before myself was unmade, made."

And I to him: "The anguish which thou hast
Perchance has put thee from my memory,
As if I saw thee never in time past.

But tell me who thou art, that art the while
Set in so grievous place, in torment such
That others may be greater, none so vile."

And he to me: "Thy city, which is rife
With envy so that now the sack spills over,
Held me within it in the tranquil life.

You townsfolk called me *Ciacco* not in vain;
For the damnable vice of gluttony,
As thou canst see, I grovel in the rain.

Nor I, poor soul, am lonely in my lot;
For all these suffer a like punishment
For like offense." And further he spoke not.

I answered: "Ciacco, thine unhappy doom
So weighs upon me that it moves to tears;
But, if thou knowest, tell—to what shall come

The citizens of that divided town;
If any there be just; and what the cause
Wherefore such discord drags it ever down."

And he: "After long quarrel come they all
To blood; whereat the Party of the Wilds
Chases the other out with heavy toll.

Thereafter, it is ordered, this shall bow
Within three suns; the other raise its head
By help of him who coasts and hedges now.

A long time this shall carry its head high,
Keeping that other under heavy loads,
Howe'er it sorrow, or be shamed thereby.

Just are two; but unheeded go their ways;
For pride, envy and avarice—these three—
Are there as sparks to set all hearts ablaze."

Here ended he the lamentable tune.
And I: "I pray thee still enlighten me,
And of yet further speaking grant the boon.

Tegghiaio, Farinata, that were so leal,
Jacopo Rusticucci, Arrigo, Mosca
And more, whose talents served the commonweal,

Where are they? Tell, that I know them again;
For I am fain to learn if on them heaven
Bestow its bliss, or hell spit out its bane."

And he: "Among the blacker souls these are;
And divers guilt down drags them to the depths;
Thyself shalt see them, if descend'st so far.

But when thou back art under the sweet sky,
I pray recall me to the minds of men.
No more I tell thee, and no more reply."

He rolled his straight eyes then asquint; some time.
Regarded me; then, bowing down his head,
Sank with the other blind ones in the slime.

Whereat my Leader said: "He shall not rise
This side the sound of the angelic trump.
When comes the Doomsman of the dread Assize,

Each one shall find again his sorry tomb;
Take on again his feature and his flesh;
Hear thunder to eternity his doom."

And so we passed on through the filthy scum
Of shadows mixed with slush, with steps that lagged,
Touching a little on the life to come.

I questioned: "Master, when that day is done
Of the great Judgment, will these torments lessen,
Or have increase, or as they are burn on ?"

And he: "Back to thy science turn again,
Which holds that the more perfect a thing is,
The more it feels of pleasure, the more of pain.

Although to true perfection nevermore
Shall this curst people come, they look to be
After that Day completer than before."

So we pursued our devious way around,
Speaking of more than may be told by me.
We reached a place where fell away the ground.

Here we found Pluto, the great enemy.

Inferno - Canto VII

"*Pape Satàn, pape Satàn,*" began
Pluto with clucking voice to cry, "*aleppe!*"
And my all-wise and gentle Guardian

Said for my comfort: "Suffer not the shock
Of any fear; whatever be his power,
He shall not bar thy passage down this rock."

Upon those swollen lips then turned the Sage,
Saying: "Be silent, thou accursed wolf;
Within thyself consume thee and thy rage.

Causeless we go not to the deep; decree
Went forth for it on high where Michael took
Vengeance upon the proud adultery."

As the ship's sail, full bellying in the wind,
Drops in a tangled heap if the mast snap,
So crumpled to the ground that cruel fiend.

Descending to the fourth ditch, we traverse.
Now more and more of the distressful bank
That bags the evil of the universe.

Ah, Justice of high God! Who packeth in.
All those new pains and travails which I saw?
Wherefore do we so waste ourselves in sin?

As yonder above Charybdis billows spread
To break on other billows butting back,
Just such a measure here the gentry tread.

More and too many here I saw that pressed
From one to other side, and howled aloud,
Rolling great boulders on by push of breast.

They clashed against each other, and then yonder
Each turned him round about, and pushing back,
Shouted: "Why be so grasping?" and "Why so squander?"

So they went swinging round the joyless ring
On either hand to the point opposite,
Ever their shameful measure muttering.

And there arriving, round again each swung
Through his half-circle to the other joust.
And I, who felt my heart now fairly wrung,

Demanded: "Master, now declare to me
What folk is this; and if are clerics all
These tonsured ones upon our left." And he:

"They each and all of them were so squint-eyed
Of judgment in the former life that, spending,
They never took the golden mean for guide.

Clearly enough their voices bark this out
When they have reached the two points of the circle
Where both by counter guilt are turned about.

Those with heads covered not with hairiness
Were clerics all, both popes and cardinals,
In whom avarice works her worst excess."

And I: "Master, among this crowd of such,
I should forsooth have cognizance of some
On whom these vices left their sordid smutch."

And he to me: "A vain thought framest thou:
The undiscerning life which made them mean,
Still dark to all discernment keeps them now.

Forever they shall come to the two shocks;
They shall arise up from their sepulchres,
These with tight fists, those others with cropped locks.

Ill giving and ill keeping took away
Their pleasant world, and set them in this scuffle,
And what that is I waste not words to say.

Now canst thou see, my son, the sorry jest
Of those good things committed unto Fortune
For which men buffet men in brutal quest.

For all the gold that is beneath the moon,
Or ever was, of all these weary souls
Could not bring ever peace to any one."

"Master," I said, "pray also tell this much:
This Fortune, whom thou speak'st of, what is she
Who e'en so holds the world's goods in her clutch?"

And he to me: "Creatures infatuate,
Oh, what an ignorance is that which shames you!
But thou, may'st thou take in what I dictate.

He that by all-transcendent wisdom made
The heavens, and gave them those who should so guide
That each part's glory is to each part rayed,

And light in equal distribution rained,
Likewise unto the glories of this world
A guide and general minister ordained,

Who these vain goods from time to time transmits
From folk to folk, from one to other blood,
Past all impediment of human wits.

So may one race prevail, another pass,
Both in obedience to her decree
Who hides, as hides the serpent in the grass.

Your knowledge cannot counterweigh her odds;
She makes provision, judges, and maintains
Her governance, as theirs the other gods.

Respite ever her permutations spurn;
Necessity compels her to be swift,
So fast he comes who follows up his turn.

And this is she so often crucified,
Even by those who ought to give her praise,
Yet wrongly and with evil-speaking chide.

But she is blessed, and hears not their voices.
Among the other primal creatures, glad,
She turns her sphere, and, blessed, she rejoices.

But let us now descend to greater grief.
Already sinks each star uprising then
When I set forth; our biding must be brief."

We crossed the circle to its farther bourn
Above a fount that boils, and pours itself
Down through a gully which itself has worn.

Darker than darkest purple was that tide;
And we, companioning the dingy waters,
Came by a devious pathway at their side.

Into a marsh, which men call Styx, it falls,
This melancholy river, having reached
The foot of those malignant leaden walls.

And I, that stood with fixed, attentive glance,
Saw people there bemired within that slough,
All naked and of rueful countenance.

They smote each other, not with hands alone,
But even so with heads and breasts and feet;
With teeth they tore each other, bone from bone.

"Son," said the worthy Master, "here mayst view
The souls of those whom anger overcame;
And also I would have thee take as true

That under water here are some whose sighs
Send bubbles to the surface of the slough,
As, looking, thou mayst see with thine own eyes.

Fast in the slime, they say: 'Sullen were we
In the sweet air made gladsome by the sun,
Bearing within us fumes of lethargy;

So we are sulking now in the black mire.'
Such psalmody they gurgle in their throats,
Because they cannot speak with words entire."

On a wide circle round the viscid flood,
Between the dry bank and the wet we passed
With eyes turned towards those gulping in the mud.

To foot then of a tower we came at last.

Inferno - Canto VII

I say, continuing, that long before
We came unto the foot of the high tower,
Our eyes went upward to its crest, which bore

Two beacon flares; and then, afar off lit,
We saw another answering, so far
The eye was scarcely sensible of it.

And to that sea of all true wisdom turning,
I said: "What means this one? and what replies
Yon other fire? and who has set it burning?"

And he to me: "Over the slimy flood
Already what is looked for mayst thou see,
If veil it not the vapors of the mud."

Bowstring not ever shot forth bolt, to run
So rapidly along the paths of air
As toward us over the waters coming on

I saw a little bark. Therein, to steer it,
A solitary boatman stood, who now
Greeted us: "Art thou come then, truculent spirit?"

"Phlegyas, Phlegyas, thou hast barked too soon
This time," my Lord rejoined; "shalt have us two
No longer than to ferry the lagoon."

As one who listens to some gross deceit
That has been practiced on him, and then chafes,
Such was that Phlegyas in his wrathful heat.

Into the boat descended then my Lord,
And after him he made me enter it;
And laden it seemed but when I was aboard.

Soon as the Guide and I were come upon't
The ancient prow moved outward, cutting more
Of water than with others is its wont.

And as we ran that channel of dead slime,
There rose up one before me foul with filth,
And said: "Who art thou, come before thy time?"

"Yet if I come, I stay not," I in scorn
Replied; "but thou so filthy, who art thou ?"
"Thou seest," he said, "that I am one who mourn."

And I to him: "With weeping and with woe,
Accursed spirit, do thou still abide!
Soiled as thou art, I know thee even so."

Then with both hands he clutched the vessel's side
Until my wary Master thrust him off.
"Away there with the other dogs!" he cried.

Then round my neck he threw his arms, and kissed
Me on the face, and said: "Disdainful soul,
Blessed be she that bore thee at the breast!"

This was on earth a haughty personage;
Not any kindness gilds his memory;
Hence is his shade here eaten up with rage.

How many now up there are held great kings
Who yet shall wallow here like swine in mire,
Leaving behind them hateful reckonings!"

"Master," said I, "it were a very boon
To see him once well soused here in this broth
Before we take our leave of the lagoon."

And he to me: "Before the farther side
Show itself clearly thou shalt have thy will;
'Tis fitting such a wish be gratified."

And soon I saw that rabble of the mud
All set upon him with such savagery
That still I render praise and thanks to God.

"Have at Filippo Argenti!" all cried forthright.
And the petulant spirit Florentine
Turned on himself with his own teeth for spite.

We left him here; no more of him be said.
Now presently a wailing smote mine ears,
Such that, intent, I strained mine eyes ahead.

"My son," said the good Master, "now thou go'st
Nigh to the city which is named of Dis,
With the gross citizens, with the great host."

And : "Master, already can I see
Yonder within the moat, indeed, its mosques
Vermilion, as if builded verily

Of fire." And he replied: "The fire eternal,
Kindling them inward, outward paints them red,
Even as thou seest them in these depths infernal."

We passed soon after into the deep moat
Encompassing that city desolate.
Iron its walls seemed; and perforce our boat

Followed their circuit far ere we drew near
A certain privy place, where raucously
"Debark!" the boatman cried; "Ye enter here."

More than a thousand saw I on the gates,
Rained from the heavens, who now all angrily
Were crying: "Who is this that death still waits,

And through the kingdom of the dead goes free?"
And my most prudent Master made a sign
Of wish to parley with them privily.

Somewhat they bridled then their high disdain,
And said: "Come thou alone, and bid him go
That all so rashly enters this domain.

Let him go back his foolish way alone;
Prove if he know it. Tarry thou, who led
Through the dim regions his steps with thine own."

Think, reader, if I heard with deep concern
The utterance of these accursed words;
For I believed not ever to return.

"O my dear Master, who times more than seven
Hast heartened me anew, and brought me safe
Out of sore straits, wherein I was hard-driven,

Leave me not thus," I said, "undone. So be
That going farther is denied, together
Let us retrace our steps hence instantly."

And he who had brought me whither I so chafed
Said to me: "Have no fear; our onward way
No one shall block; by Such is it vouchsafed.

Await me here; take comfort to thy soul
That now so frets, and feed it on good hope;
I will not leave thee in this world of dole."

So the kind Father goes-ahead, even so
Abandons me; whilst I cling fast to *Maybe*,
For in my head are wrangling *Yes* and *No*.

What he set forth to them I could not tell,
But there with them he had not parleyed long
Before they all rushed in again pellmell;

And they that were our adversaries shut
Their gates against the bosom of my Lord,
Who turned him back outside with lagging foot.

His eyes were downcast, and of boldness shorn
His brows. Sighing, he said: "Who unto me
Denies the houses of the ones that mourn?"

And then to me: "If I am angered, thou
Hast not to fear; for I will bide the test
However they within may think to cow.

Not new with them is this their rash revolt;
Of old they tried it at less secret gate,
Which ever since remains without a bolt.

On it thou read'st the deadly malison.
Even now descendeth on the hither side,
Passing the circles without escort, One

By whom the city shall be opened wide."

Inferno - Canto IX

The color cowardice impressed on me,
Seeing my Leader so turn back, repressed
His own new color the more speedily.

He stopped attentive, as a man who lists,
For that the eye could not direct him far
Through the black air and through the heavy mists.

"Yet it shall fall to us to win this fight,"
Began he, "else... Such an one gave herself...
Oh, long, how long ! and no one comes in sight."

I well took notice how he covered o'er
The one beginning with another, set
To words ill-matching those that went before.

And no less terror his so speaking brought
For that perchance I drew the broken phrase
To worse conclusion than was in his thought.

"To the deep bottom of the dismal trough
Descends one ever out of that first grade,
Where the sole punishment is hope cut off?"

I put the question, and he answered: "Rare
Is the occasion on which one of us
Follows the pathway by which now I fare.

'Tis true another time I passed these grades,
"Conjured by fell Erichtho on a day
When to their bodies she called back the shades

Naked of me my flesh had not been long
When through yon walls she sent me to fetch out
One that in Judas' circle rued his wrong.

His is the lowest place and loathliest,
And farthest from the heaven which circles all.
I know full well the way; so be at rest.

This marsh, which vomits a so noisome breath,
Girds the unhappy city round about,
Wherein we cannot enter without wrath."

Though more he said, I mind not of the rest;
Because mine eyes were wholly drawing me
To the high tower of the flaming crest.

There on a sudden, quick as lightning plays,
Uprose three hellish furies, dripping blood.
Members they had of women, and their ways;

All with green hydras they were girded round;
Vipers, little and horn'd, they had for hairs,
And round about their temples had them bound

And he who knew full well that handmaids these
Were of the empress of eternal woe,
Said to me: "Mark the fell Erinnyes!

This is Megaera on the left, and that
Alecto howling on the right, and she
Between, Tisiphone." He paused thereat.

Each with her talons tore at her own breast;
They beat them with their palms; and shrieked so loud
That to the Poet close I, fearful, pressed.

"Let come Medusa; we will turn him stone,"
They cried out all, still staring down: " 'Twas ill
We made not Theseus his assault atone!"

"Turn, turn thy back, and cover up thine eyes;
If show herself the Gorgon, and thou look,
For thee were no returning toward the skies."

So said the Master; and himself forthright
Turned me; and to my hands he trusted not,
But with his own besides shut in my sight.

O ye who have sound understanding, mark,
Mark well the doctrine which is hidden here
Under the veiling of these verses dark.

And over the wan waters even now
Came a great hubbub of terrific sounds
Until it shook both barriers of the slough.

It was a sound as of a wind set loose
In headlong fury from conflicting heats,
And buffeting a forest without truce.

Branches it breaks, beats down, and hurls about;
Dusty of front, it marches on superb,
Scattering beasts and shepherds both in rout.

Then setting free mine eyes, he said: "Direct
The nerve of vision over yon stale foam
To where densest the acrid fumes collect."

As frogs before their enemy the snake
Scatter about the water, every one,
Till all upon the bottom crouch and quake,

Thousands of ruined souls I saw that raced
Headlong in terror, fleeing One who crossed
That river of Styx dry-footed and slow-paced.

From off his face he fended the gross air,
Lifting before him often his left hand;
And only of that anguish seemed aware.

I knew it was heaven's messenger I saw,
And turned me to the Master; who made sign
That I be silent, and bow down in awe.

Ah, how he showed himself of high disdain!
Unto the gates he came, and with a wand
Opened them wide; for all their bolts were vain.

"O ye outcasts of heaven, people accurst,"
Thus he began upon that loathly sill,
"Whence is this overweening in you nursed?"

Why are ye still against that Will stiff-necked
Whose purposes can never be gainsaid,
And which hath made you many times abject?

What boots it butt against the fates? Remind
Yourselves how in good sooth your Cerberus
Carries this day his jaw and gullet skinned."

Then he turned back upon the noisome road;
And paid no heed to us, but wore the mien
Of one whom other cares beset and goad

Than that of him who stood before his face.
Unto the city then we moved our feet,
Given new courage by those words of grace.

Within we entered without further brawl;
And I, that had great eagerness to know
What might be hid behind that iron wall,

Cast round mine eye so soon as I was in,
And saw on every side a mighty plain
Full filled of anguish and of tortured sin.

And as at Arles where, stagnant, Rhone expands,
Or as at Pola by Quarnaro's bay,
Which shuts in Italy and bathes her strands,

The tombs have made uneven all the place,
So made those here the plain on every side,
Save that the mode was grimmer in this case.

For all about the tombs were scattered fires,
By which they were enkindled to such heat
As never for his iron smith requires.

Lifted were all their lids; and issuing
From out their depths came lamentable cries,
Telling too well of woe and suffering.

And I: "Master, who might these people be
Who, having their entombment in these vaults,
Make themselves known by groans of agony?"

"Here the arch-heretics are," he said, "with all
Their followers of every sect; and more
Than thou imagines" the tombs inwall.

Here like with like is buried; and the heat
Within the tombs is more and less intense."
Then turning to the right, we moved our feet

Between the torments and high battlements.

Inferno - Canto X

Now go we onward by a secret track
Between the torments and the city-wall,
The Master, and myself behind his back.

"O lofty Virtue, which at thy good will
Down through these impious circles turnest me,
To me make answer, and my wish fulfil.

The people who within these tombs are barred,
May they be seen? Already are the lids
Uplifted everywhere; and none stand guard."

I thus; and he: "They all shall be locked in
When from Jehoshaphat they shall return,
And with the bodies which they left therein.

Upon this side in burial are laid
With Epicurus all his followers,
Who say the soul is with the body dead.

But of the question thou hast put to me
Shalt herewithin have satisfaction soon,—
And of the wish which thou didst hush in thee."

And I: "Good Master, never have I hid
My heart from thee, save to make speaking short,
Even as thou, and not this once, hast bid."

"O Tuscan, thou who through the city of fire,
Alive, goest speaking all so modestly,
May stopping here comport with thy desire.

Native, for thine own tongue betrays thee such,
Art thou of that most noble land toward which,
Perhaps, I was vindictive overmuch."

The voice suddenly issued from inside
One of the coffers; wherefore in alarm
I drew a little closer to my Guide.

And he to me: "Turn thee! What doest thou?
Behold there Farinata who has risen;
All from the girdle up canst see him now.

Already my own gaze met his again;
And he uprose erect of breast and brow,
Even as though hell he held in high disdain;

And with quick hands my Leader without fear
Pushed me between the sepulchres to him,
Saying: "Now let thy words be measured here."

When had reached the tomb, and stood thereby,
Awhile he eyed me; then as in contempt
He asked: "Who were thy forbears?" And then I,

As one that gladly to obedience bows,
Hid from him nothing, but laid open all;
Whereupon he some little raised his brows;

Then muttered: "Savagely were they adverse
To me and to my house and to my party;
So that I made them, twice indeed, disperse."

"If scattered, came they back from every part,"
Retorted I, "both one and other time;
But yours not ever mastered well that art."

Rising beside him then, a shade revealed
Uncovered to the chin its countenance;
Upon its knees, I think, it must have kneeled.

It looked about me as it had intent
To see if there were with me some one else;
But when its curiosity was spent,

Weeping, it said: "If so thou goest free
Through this blind prison by loftiness of wit,
My son where then is he? Why not with thee?"

And I to him: "Not by mine own will borne
I come; he leads me hither who there waits,
And whom your Guido haply held in scorn."

His language, and the mode of punishment,
Already unto me had read his name;
Hence was my answer of such plain intent.

Instantly rising erect, he said: "But why
Saidst thou, he *held*? Is he not living still?
Does the sweet light not strike upon his eye?"

When he took cognizance that I forbore
An instant, as though loth, to make reply,
He fell supine, and forth appeared no more.

But that great-hearted other, who to bide
Had bidden me, changed not in countenance,
And neither moved his neck, nor bent his side.

"And if," he, picking up the former thread,
Continued, "they have learnt that art so ill,
It irks me more than torment of this bed.

But fifty times shall not be set ablaze
The face of her who is Our Lady here,
Ere thou shalt feel how heavy this art weighs.

And so again the sweet world thou mayst see,
Tell me, why is that people yet so hard
Upon my kindred in each new decree?"

And I replied to him: "The havoc played,
And the great slaughter dyeing Arbia red,
Make such petitions in our temple made."

He at that saying, sighing, shook his head.
"There I was not alone," said he, "nor sooth
Had thither without cause those others led;

But there I was alone where all agreed
That Florence should be blotted out, alone
And to their faces I forbade the deed."

"Ah, so hereafter may thy seed have ease,"
I then besought him, "cut for me this knot
Which has entangled here my faculties.

It seems, if I hear rightly, that ye see
Beforehand what time brings with it, yet show
Towards present things another quality."

"As they that have spent eyes," he said, "the thing
Which is from us far off we see; this much
Of light is left us by high heaven's King.

When it is near, or happens, of no worth
Is our intelligence; and if not told,
We have no knowledge of your state on earth.

So mayst thou grasp that death will be imposed
Upon our knowledge from that moment when
The portal of the future shall be closed."

Then in compunction for my fault, "You will,"
Said I, "say therefore to that fallen one,
His son is present with the living still.

And if in lieu of answer I was dumb,
Give him to know that even by then my thought
Strove with the doubt which you have overcome."

Now was the Master bidding me repair;
Wherefore I begged the spirit more in haste
That he would tell me who was with him there.

He said: "With full a thousand here I lie;
Here is the second Frederick, and here
The Cardinal; the others I pass by."

Therewith he hid himself; and pensively
Back to the ancient Bard I turned my steps,
Weighing those words which seemed adverse to me.

He started; and as we were journeying,
He said to me: "Why art thou so perturbed?"
And I appeased him in his questioning.

"What thou hast heard here to thy prejudice,
Keep ever in thy mind." Thus bade the Sage;
Then with raised finger added: "And mark this:

When thou shalt stand in face of the sweet ray
Of her whose fairest eyes see all, of her
Shalt learn the fortunes of thine earthly way."

Therewith he turned his footsteps to the left;
Leaving the wall, we towards the middle brink
Passed by a path that led to a deep cleft,

Whence even up there we sickened with the stink.

Inferno - Canto XI

At the edge of a great precipice, there formed
By a ring of lofty jagged cliffs, we came
Above where yet more desperate sinners swarmed.

And here, for the excessive and obscene
Stench that the deep abyss was giving forth,
We both took cover close behind the screen

Of a great monument, upon which graven
I read: "Pope Anastasius I hold,
Drawn by Photinus from the path of heaven."

"Somewhat our going down must be retarded,
Until there be some seasoning of the sense
To the sad blast, and this be unregarded."

The Master thus; and I: "Then prithee find
Some compensation, that all lost the time
Pass not." "That," answered he, "have I in mind.

My son, within the compass of these stones,"
Began he, "are three circles, ring in ring
Included, as thou saw'st the upper zones.

And of damned spirits each one has its load;
But since to that suffices thee thy sight,
Harken to how and why they thus are stowed.

Of every malice that in heaven wins hate
Injury is the end; and each such end
By force or fraud injures another's state;

But because fraud is man's peculiar vice,
It more displeases God; hence lowest stand
The fraudulent, and pay the bitterer price.

All the first circle violence impounds;
But since against three persons force is used,
So is that framed and parted in three rounds.

To God, to self, to neighbor may there force
Be offered,—unto them and unto theirs,—
As thou shalt hear set forth in plain discourse.

Upon one's neighbor violence can bring
Death and sore wounding, and to his effects
Wrecking and burning and ruthless levying;

Hence slayers of men, and they that deal foul blows,
Wasters and plunderers all these the first round
Commits by divers bands to divers woes.

Upon himself can man lay violent hand,
And on his goods; unto the second round,
Therefore, is he for vain repentance banned

Who robs him of your world, or who in mad
Gaming and wasting melts away his means,
And turns to weeping when he should be glad.

Force can be offered to the Deity
By heart denying and blaspheming him,
And scorning Nature's bounteous ministry;

Wherefore the round here inmost and least broad
Seals with its signet Sodom and Cahors,
And him who in his heart makes light of God.

Fraud, which pricketh each conscience that is just,
A man may use on one who lendeth faith,
And upon one who pocketeth no trust.

This latter fashion, as seems manifest,
Breaks but the bond of love which Nature makes;
Wherefore within the second circle nest

Hypocrisy, flattery, and who black arts profess,
Cheating and plundering, and simony,
Panders and grafters, and like filthiness.

By the other mode both is that love forgotten
Which Nature makes, and that which afterward
Is joined thereto, of special trust begotten;

Whence in the smallest circle, where the core
Is of the universe, and where sits Dis,
Whoso betrays must languish evermore."

And I: "Master, most close and clear is knit
Thine argument, full well distinguishes
This cavern, and the ones possessing it;

But do thou tell me: those of the fat marsh,
Those the wind drives, and those the rain beats on,
And those encountering with tongues so harsh,

Why then in the red city are not they
Chastised, if God hath them in wrath? and if
Not so, why are they in such sorry way?"

And he to me: "What lunacy is this
Which addles so thy late well-ordered wits?
Or doth thy memory somewhere look amiss?"

Treasurest thou not still those words in mind
Wherewith thy *Ethics* probes three dispositions
Which are abhorred of heaven in mankind,—

Incontinence and malice and insane
Bestiality? and how incontinence
Least angers God, and least draws man's disdain?

If thou consider well this evidence,
And to remembrance summon who they are
Who bear up there, outside, their punishments,

Clearly wilt see why from these miscreants
They are set off, and why less heavily
On them the hammers of God's justice dance."

"O Sun that healest all distempered sights,
So thou contentest me when thou dost solve
That, little less than knowledge, doubt delights.

Yet turn again a little back," said I,
"To where thou said'st that usury offends
Celestial Goodness, and that knot untie."

"To him," he said, "that drinketh at her source
Philosophy imparts, and not in one
Place only, how that Nature takes her course

From Intellect divine, and from its art;
If in thy *Physics* thou but turn the page,
Thou wilt discover, almost at the start,

How after such art, as it may, must plod
Your own, even as disciple after master;
Hence is your art, as 'twere, grandchild of God.

And by both arts, if thou recall to mind
The first of Genesis, behoves it man
To make his living, and to amend his kind.

The usurer, who takes another way,
Both in herself and in her follower
Scorns Nature, and another makes his stay.

But follow; for I would go on again;
On the horizon now the Fishes leap,
And wholly over Caurus hangs the Wain,

And far beyond, our way goes down the steep."

Inferno - Canto XII

The place was, where we came to cross the brink,
Stark in its steepness, and for something there
Such, that away from it all eyes must shrink.

As is the wreckage, which the hither side
Of Trent, smote the Adige on its flank,
Whether by earthquake tumbled or landslide,—

For whence it started on the mountain-cop,
The crag, scattered in splinters to the plain,
Offers some passage downward from on top,

Such was the stairway set before our feet;
And on the brink there of the broken ridge
Lay at full length the infamy of Crete,—

He that was in the spurious cow conceived;
And catching sight of us, he bit himself
As one by anger inwardly aggrieved.

To him my Master shouted: "Possibly
Thou think'st to see the Duke of Athens here,
Who in the world above gave death to thee!

Off with thee, monster! for this man comes not
Instructed by thy sister, but he goes
To view the pains of them that share thy lot."

As a bull, broken loose even as he feels
The mortal stroke upon him, knows not how
To go, but plunging hither, thither, reels,—

Such I beheld the Minotaur. "Now run,"
Whispered the wary Guide, "run to the pass!
Best we descend whilst the mad fit is on."

So down then we betook us by that road
Of tumbled boulders, which time and again
Rolled underfoot with the unwonted load.

I went on, thoughtful; and he said: "Dost brood
Perchance upon this ruin under guard
Of that brute fury I but now subdued.

Then I would have thee know, that time when first
I came down hither to the nether hell,
Not yet the crag had, toppling over, burst.

But verily, if I reckon not amiss,
Not long before He came who the great spoil
Of the first circle took away from Dis,

The loathsome deep abyss from base to brink
So trembled that I thought the universe
Had felt that Love whereby, as many think,

Oft back to chaos has been turned the world;
And in that instant this most ancient rock
Down to this place and elsewhere thus was hurled.

But on the valley fix thine eyes; for near
Is now the river of hot blood, where boil
All those whose violence cost others dear."

O blind cupidity, both bad and mad,
Which so dost spur us in the fleeting life,
And in the eternal leavest us how sad!

I saw an huge trough rounding to an arc
That seemed as it might girdle all the plain,
Even as my Guide had said; and I could mark

Between it and the cliff, running apace
In single file, Centaurs with arrows armed,
As they on earth had followed once the chase.

At sight of us descending, to a stand
Each came; and from the troop forth issued three
With bows and bolts already set to hand.

And from afar one called: "Unto what woe
Come ye who down the cliff are clambering?
Speak whence ye are; if not, I draw the bow."

"To Chiron there at hand, who hath desert,"
The Master said, "shall our response be made;
Thy will was ever hasty to thy hurt."

Then nudging me he said: "Nessus is this
Who for the fair Deïanira died,
And for himself himself brought nemesis.

He that stares down so at his breast, and hath
The center, is great Chiron, who trained up
Achilles; Pholus next, that lived in wrath.

Thousands on thousands go they round that flood,
Transfixing any soul that, more than guilt
Allots, wrenches itself from out the blood."

Those nimble-footed creatures now we neared;
An arrow Chiron took, and with the notch
From round about his jaws put back the beard.

So soon as he had laid his great mouth bare,
He said to his companions: "Take ye note
That he behind moves what he touches there?

Not wonted so to do are dead men's feet."
And my good Leader, come now to the breast
Where, blending into one, two natures meet,

Answered: "He lives, and thus in loneliness
I needs must lead him through the sombre vale;
Not pleasure moves him hither, but duress.

From singing *Alleluia* unto God
One turned to lay upon me this new charge;
He is no thief, nor spirit I of fraud.

Now by that Puissance through whose grace I guide
My steps along this all so savage way,
Grant one of thine whom I may go beside,

That he may lead to where one fords, and bear
The while this man upon his back; for sooth
This is no spirit that can walk the air."

On his right breast then Chiron swung him round,
And said to Nessus: "Turn, and guide them thus;
And make whatever troop oppose, give ground."

Then onward with that trusty guard we went
Along the very brink of the red boil
Wherein the boiled were making shrill lament.

Sunk to their brows I saw there many a soul;
And the great Centaur said: "Tyrants were those,
Who gave themselves to blood and grasping toll.

Here for misdeeds dispiteous they shed tears;
Here Alexander; here Dionysius,
Whose rule to Sicily gave dolorous years.

And yonder forehead with the jet-black mane
Is Azzolino; and that other, fair,
Obizzo, he of Este, who was slain

Past peradventure by a base son's guile."
Then turned to me the Poet, and he said:
"Be this one first, and second I the while."

Presently came the Centaur to a stop
Above a people which as far as throat
Were seen to issue from the seething slop.

A solitary shade upon one side
He showed, and said: "He in God's bosom cleft
The heart that on the Thames is glorified."

Then saw I folk who from the stream uprose
Some with the head, and some with all the bust;
And I remembered many a one of those.

Thus ever shallow and more shallow poured
That blood, until it cooked alone the feet;
And here across the moat we found the ford.

"Even as on this side, the boiling flow
Thou seest to be dwindling all the while,"
The Centaur said, "I fain would have thee know

That on the other, more and more sinks down
The bed of it, until it circles back
Unto where, groaning, tyranny must drown.

Justice divine here with hot torment sears
That Attila who was the scourge of earth;
Pyrrhus and Sextus; and for aye milks tears,

By boiling loosed, from Rinier Pazzo's eyes
And Rinier's of Corneto, who both warred
Upon the highways in such cruel wise."

About he wheeled then, and repassed the ford.

Inferno - Canto XIII

Not yet the farther side had Nessus neared
When we were pushing onward through a wood,
Wherein no sign of any path appeared.

Not green the leafage was, but ashen gray;
Not lissome boughs, but tangled and convulsed;
And not sweet fruits, but thorns with venom'd ray.

Not the wild creatures which avoid in fear
Twixt Cecina and Corneto the tilled lands
Have such entangled thickets, or so drear.

Herein the haggard Harpies make their nests
Who chased the Trojans from the Strophades
With dismal boding of impending pests.

Broad wings and human visages have these,
And necks, claw-feet, and a great feathered paunch;
They make lament upon the uncouth trees.

And the kind Sage: "Ere we go deeper still
Know that thou art within the second round,"
Thus he began, "and there shalt bide until

Thou comest out upon the horrible sand.
Wherefore look well; and thou wilt see what told
Would rob me of the credence I command."

Wailings I heard that came from every side,
Yet saw not any who should utter them;
Wherefore I stopped me short, all stupefied.

I think he thought I might be thinking then
That from among the trunks these voices came,
Where now because of us were hiding men.

And therefore said the Master: "If one bough—
Nay, but a twig- thou break from any plant,
The thoughts will be cut short thou harborest now."

And I reached forth my hand all timidly,
And plucked a tiny branch from a great thorn;
And the trunk cried aloud: "Why breakest me?"

And when with blood all darkened was the bole,
It recommenced its cry: "Why tearest me?
Hast thou not any pity in thy soul?"

Men were we once who are no more than stakes;
Well might thy hand have been more merciful
Had we indeed been but the souls of snakes!

As from a green brand, burning, flames may flare
At one end, while it at the other drips
And haply hisses with escaping air,—

So from that broken splinter words and blood
Came forth together; wherefore I let fall
The tip, and like a man in terror stood.

"If but beforehand he could have believed,"
My Sage made answer, "O thou wounded soul,
What only through my verses he conceived,

He had not lifted hand to injure thee.
Incredible the thing was; hence I urged
On him the test which now distresses me.

But tell him who thou wast; so that in place
Of more amends, he may refresh thy fame
On earth, whither he shall return by grace."

And the trunk: "So allures me thy sweet charge
That I cannot be silent; nor be vexed
If in my answer somewhat I enlarge.

I am that one who once held both the keys
To Frederick's heart, and locked it and unlocked,
Turning so softly that his secrecies

I kept from most men's knowledge and forecast;
And to the glorious office brought such faith
That sleep I lost, and living pulse at last.

The harlot who not ever from the hall
Of Caesar turns aside her strumpet eyes,
The vice of courts and common death of all,

Against me set there every heart aflame;
And those inflamed inflamed Augustus so
That joyous honor turned to bitter shame.

Against disdain my spirit put her trust
In dying, and by her disdainful choice
Unto my just self made myself unjust.

By the new-springing roots that stay this tree
I swear to you that never I broke faith
Unto my lord, so worthy loyalty.

If one of you be for the world reclaimed,
Let him there comfort my good name, which lies
Still broken by the blow that envy aimed."

Waiting a little, then: "Since he is done,"
The Poet said to me, "lose thou no time;
Speak, and if still it please thee question on."

And I replied: "Ask thou that he impart
What thou mayst deem sufficient for my need;
I cannot for the pity in my heart."

And he resumed: "So may this man feel free
To do that which thou hast entreated him,
O prisoned spirit, may it pleasure thee

To tell how comes the soul within the noose
Of these hard knots; tell also, if thou canst,
if any ever from such limbs break loose."

Mightily thereupon that tree-trunk blew;
And the wind turned anon to such a voice:
"Briefly it shall be answered unto you.

So soon as the insensate soul has quit
The body whence itself has torn itself,
Minos consigns it to the seventh pit.

To the wood falls it, to no spot picked out,
But whereso fortune flings it, there at once
Like any grain of spelt it starts to sprout;

Shoots to a sapling, to an uncouth tree;
On whose leaves feeding, agony to it
The Harpies give, and vent to agony,

We too shall seek our bodies from the grave,
But not that any be re clothed withal,
What one has cast away, one may not save.

Here shall we drag them, and in this sad glade
Then hanged shall be these bodies, every one
Upon the thorn of its injurious shade."

Thinking that haply it might tell us more,
Attentive were we standing by the trunk,
When we were startled by a loud uproar,

Like one who hears the wild boar with the hunt
Coming nearer and nearer to his stand,
And hears branches and beasts in crashing brunt.

And lo! then two—leftward of where we stood
That stript and bleeding fled so furiously
They burst through every bulwark of the wood.

And the one foremost: "Haste thee, death! oh, haste!"
The other, who now felt himself to flag,
Was calling: "Lano, not so nimbly raced

Thy legs at Toppo in that tilting-match!"
Then he, perhaps because his breath gave out,
Made of himself and of a bush one patch.

Back of them, all along the forest burst
She-mastiffs, black, voracious, fleet of foot
As greyhounds when they slip the leash; and first

They set their fangs into the squatting one,
And tore him all to pieces, bit by bit;
Then with the aching fragments all were gone.

My Guide then took me by the hand again,
And led me over to the bush that wept
Through all its broken bleeding limbs in vain.

It said: "What hast thou gained, thou Jacomo
Da Sant' Andrea, making me thy screen?
What blame is mine because thy life was low?"

So soon as over it the Master stood,
He said: "Who wast thou who through all thy wounds
Breathest out lamentable speech with blood?"

And he: "Ye spirits who come hither, bent
On witnessing this most injurious strife
Whereby from me my every leaf is rent,

Under the sorrowing plant now gather those.
Mine was the city that for Baptist changed
Him who was first her patron; whence endless woes

Ever he hath brought upon her by his art;
And were it not that still on Arno bridge
Is left some semblance of the god in part,

Those citizens who builded yet again
On ashes left by Attila's decree,
Would verily have labored all in vain.

Gibbet I made me of my own roof-tree."

Inferno - Canto XIV

So love of homeland laid on me constraint
That I then gathered up those scattered leaves,
And gave them him who was already faint.

Departing thence, we reached ere long where fell
The second round into the third, and where
Justice was seen in guise most horrible.

To picture clearly the new happenings,
I say that we were coming toward a plain
Which outlaws from its bed all growing things.

The dismal forest is a garland round
About it, as the dismal foss to that.
We checked our steps there at the edge of ground

Which everywhere was dense and arid sand,
Not other in its kind than that of old
Trodden by feet of Cato and his band.

Vengeance of God, how ought the fear of thee
To be in everyone of them who read
That which was manifested unto me!

Many a troop of naked souls I saw
Weeping among themselves most piteously;
And there seemed laid on them a diverse law.

For supine on the sand were some stretched out;
And some were sitting, hugging their own knees;
Others continually moved about.

Those that were moving were the greater host;
And fewer those that in their pain lay prone,
But loosed for wailing were their tongues the most.

Over the interminable sand, with slow
Fall, fire was raining in dilated flakes,
Like those of snow on alps when no winds blow.

As were the flames which Alexander found
In India's hot regions on his hosts
Dropping in jets unbroken to the ground,—

And had the wit to tramp the soil about
With all his legions, since when by themselves
The vapors with more ease were beaten out,—

Such were the heats eternal that here fell,
Kindling the very sands, as tinder steel,
To make the torment so twice terrible.

Ever incessantly the dance of hands
In anguish quickens, beating here, then there,
Wherever fall anew the burning brands.

"Master," began I, "who dost dominate
All things, excepting when the stiff-necked fiends
Disputed us the entrance to the gate,

Who is that great one seeming to disdain
The fiery scourge, who lies there in his scorn,
Writhing as if unripened by the rain?"

And that same one, aware that what I said
Unto my Guide was pertinent to him,
Called out: "What I was living, am I dead.

If Jove should weary out his smith, from whom
In wrath he took the rending thunderbolt
Which that last day brought upon me my doom,

If, turn by turn, the rest he wearied out
In Mongibello at the smoky forge,
Crying: "Good Vulcan, help!" as at the rout

At Phlegra erst he did,—yea, though at me
He kept on hurling still with all his might,
Yet would his vengeance not have victory."

Then with such vehemence my Leader cried
As never I had heard him use before:
"O Capaneus, even in that thy pride

Is quenchless, is thy retribution worse;
No torment other than this rage of thine
Were to thy frenzy a befitting curse."

Then unto me he turned with lip less cold,
Saying: "One of the Seven Kings was he
Who vanquished Thebes; he held, and seems to hold,

God in defiance, and His might a jest;
But, as I told him, these his vaporings
Are but fit ornaments for such a breast.

Now follow me; yet on the burning sand
Be thou all heedful that thou set not foot,
But close keep ever to the wooded land."

In silence we passed on to where a rill
Was gushing forth from out the wood, whereof
The redness leaves me horror-stricken still.

As from the Bulicame takes its flow
The stream wherein the sinful women share,
So poured this other to the sand below.

Its bottom and both shelving banks of stone
Were fashioned, and the bordering shores besides;
Whereby a way for us, I saw, was shown.

"Of all things thou hast witnessed at my side
Ever since first we entered at the gate
Whose threshold unto no one is denied,

Nothing has been submitted to thine eyes
So notable as is this present stream,
Which quenches every flame that o'er it flies."

These were the words of that benignant Sire;
Wherefore I begged for bounty of the food
For which was given the bountiful desire.

"In mid-sea lies a country gone to waste,"
He answered me, "which bears the name of Crete,
Under whose king the world of old was chaste.

A mount is there, which on a time was glad
With leaves and waters; Ida is it called;
But is abandoned like a thing gone bad.

For a safe cradle of her infant son
Once Rhea chose it; and had shoutings made
That the child, crying, might be heard by none

A huge Old Man under the mountain-dome
Stands with his back to Damietta turned,
And facing, as it were, his mirror, Rome.

His head is fashioned all of finest gold;
Of purest silver are his arms and breast;
Thence to the crotch is cast from brazen mould;

And thence on down is tested iron all,
Save for the right foot of baked clay, and more
On this than on the left his weight doth fall.

And every part except the gold is split
By a great fissure, which is dripping tears,
That pierce through, as they gather, to the pit.

Into this vale from rock to rock they flow;
Acheron, Styx and Phlegethon they form;
Then downward by this narrow duct they go

To parts beyond which is no falling lower;
Then form Cocytus; and what that pool is
Thyself shalt see; so of it now no more."

"If downward from our world," I asked of him,
"This selfsame rivulet is flowing thus,
Why do we see it only at this rim?"

And he to me: "Thou know'st the place is round;
And though already thou art come so far,
Winding down leftwise to the bottom-ground,

Yet the full circle thou hast still to trace;
Wherefore, if show itself a something new,
It should not bring amazement to thy face."

"Master, where then are found," I asked again,
"Lethe and Phlegethon? Of one wast dumb;
The other, said'st, was fashioned by this rain."

"Truly, in all thy questions thou dost please,"
He answered; "but the boiling of the red
Water might solve for thee the one of these.

Lethe shalt see, but outside of this trough,
There whither go the souls to lave themselves
When sin repented of has been stripped off."

Then he: "Time is we from the wood should turn;
Take heed that thou now close behind me hold;
The margins offer way, that do not burn,

And over them is all the vapor cold."

Inferno - Canto XV

.
Now onward we were borne by one stone-rim;
And the brook's fume, which overshadowed all,-
Saved from the fire the water and the brim.

As 'twixt Wissant and Bruges the Flemings guard
Their borders from the swift encroaching tide,
Building a dyke by which the sea is barred;

And as along the Brenta Paduans meet
Menace to town and castle in like wise,
Or ever Chiarentana feel the heat:

So were these modelled which here met the eye,
Save that the master's hand, whose'er it was,
Fashioned them not so massive or so high.

Already we were distant from the wood
So far that if I back had turned to look,
I would have seen no longer where it stood,

When we encountered, coming on that side,
A troop of souls; and every one at us
Was peering as do men at eventide

Who under a new moon pass others by;
And they were screwing up their eyes at us
Like an old tailor at his needle's eye.

Thus I was peered at by that company,
When one, as if he knew me, on my skirt
Laid hold, and cried: "Oh, what a prodigy!"

And when he stretched his arms to me, so hard
On his baked countenance I fixed mine eyes
That not its all so blackened aspect barred

Remembrance from my mind; and thereupon
Inclining down my face to his, I said:
"Are you here, Ser Brunetto?" "O my son,"

He answered, "may it please thee of thy grace
That now Brunetto Latini turn him back
With thee a little, and leave off this chase."

"With all my heart," I said, "I pray you so;
And if you wish that I sit down with you,
I will, so it please him with whom I go."

"O son," said he, "whoever of this pack
One instant stops, shall for an hundred years
Lie without brushing as the flames attack.

Wherefore go on; I follow at thy skirts;
And will thereafter join again my band,
Which goes bewailing its eternal hurts."

Down from the path I dared not make descent
To go beside him, yet I kept my head
Bowed, as a man who bears him reverent.

And he began: "What fortune or what fate
Before thy last day brings thee here below?
And who is this that keeps thy footsteps straight?"

"Up there above in the life beautiful,"
I answered him, "I lost me in a vale
Before the measure of my years was full.

On it but yestermorn I turned my back;
This one appeared, as once again I lapsed,
And he now leads me homeward by this track."

And he then: "So thy star thou follow still,
Thou canst not fail to reach the glorious port,
If in the pleasant life I gauged not ill;

And were I not thus all too early dead,
Seeing that heaven is unto thee so kind,
Thee at thy task I would have comforted.

But that ingrate, malignant populace
Which from Fiesole came down of old,
And of the crag and flint still carries trace,

Will be to thee, for thy well-doing, foe;
Which is as should be, for among sour sorbs
Ill unto fruitage may the sweet fig grow.

Ancient repute on earth reports them blind,
A people greedy, envious and vain;
See that thou leave their practices behind.

Fortune shall bring thee into such high note
That hunger shall both parties have for thee;
But far shall be the pasture from the goat.

Let the Fiesolan beasts make fodder out
Of their own selves, and not profane the plant,
If any such upon their dunghill sprout,

In which again the sacred seed is nursed,
Sown of the Romans still remaining when
This nest of malice had its making first."

"If might desire of mine fulfilment find,"
I answered him, "you would not yet indeed
Be thus in exile from our humankind;

For in my mind is fixed, and in my love,
The image fatherly and dear and kind
Of you still hour by hour up there above

Teaching how man eternally may live;
Wherefore whilst I have breath, of gratitude
My tongue gives tribute, and shall ever give.

That which you tell of my life's course I write,
And keep it to be glossed with other text
By her who, if I reach her, can aright.

To you indeed let this much be declared:
So be it that my conscience chide me not,
Do Fortune what she will, I am prepared.

New to my ears is not such earnest; so
Verily I say, let Fortune ply her wheel
At her good pleasure, and the churl his hoe!"

And thereupon the Master turned his head
To right about, and first looked hard at me,
And then, "Well hears he who well heeds," he said.

Nor less the while I go in colloquy
With Ser Brunetto, asking who well-known
Are of his comrades, and of high degree.

And he to me: "'Tis well thou hear of some;
As to the rest, since for report so long
The time is short, 'twere better to be dumb.

Know then, in brief, that all of them were clerks,
Men notable in letters, high in fame,
Who yet on earth bore one sin's bestial marks.

Priscian goes with the wretched company,
And Francis of Accorso; and if it chanceth
Thou feelest for such scuff, mayst also see

Him whom the Servant of the servants reft
From Arno to bestow on Bacchiglione,
Where his most foully fevered nerves he left.

Of others I would tell, but that now banned
Is going more in parley; for I see
New reek ascending yonder from the sand.

There people come with whom I may not be;
To thee my *Tresor* I commend, in which
I live on still; and more ask not of thee."

Then round he swung him, and of those seemed one
Who across country at Verona race
For the green mantle; and he seemed to run

As one there gaining, and not losing, place.

Inferno - Canto XVI

Already was I where was heard the chime
Of waters falling to the farther round,
Like humming of the hives in summertime;

When running came three shades across the plain
Out of a party that was passing by
Beneath the bitter torment of the rain.

Toward us they ran, and each one of the band
Kept calling: "Stay thee, stay! who by thy garb
Must needs be one from our benighted land."

Ah me, what wounds they showed in every part,
Recent and old, deep branded by the flames!
Even the memory of them wrings my heart.

Unto their hail my Teacher harkened, drew
My notice by a look, and "Tarry now,"
He said; "to these all courtesy is due;

And were't not for the nature of the place,
So raining fire, I would affirm that more
Befitted thee than these to quicken pace."

So soon as we stood still, their first appeal
They recommenced; then coming up with us,
All three at once made of themselves a wheel,

As wrestlers do, when stripped and oiled they go
Circling to seize their vantage and their hold
Or ever interchanging lunge or blow.

Thus wheeling round us, every one his eyes
Toward me directed, so that constantly
Their necks and feet were going counterwise.

"Ah, if the meanness of this arid place,"
Began one, "bring us and our prayers to scorn,
And the besmirched, scorched aspect of each face,

Yet may our fame incline thy mind to tell
Who mayst thou be, that dost thy living feet
Set forward with such confidence through hell.

He in whose footsteps thou dost see me tread,
For all that he goes naked now and peeled,
Was higher in rank than thou perchance hadst said.

A grandson of the good Gualdrada he;
His name was Guido Guerra; and in life
With wit and sword won many a victory.

This other, who behind me treads the sand,
Tegghiaio Aldobrandi, whose good name
Should be most precious to his native land.

And I, who with these others feed the flame,
Jacopo Rusticucci; and forsooth,
More than aught else, a cold wife caused my shame."

If from the fire I might have found reprieve,
Into their midst I would have cast me down,
And think my Master might have granted leave;

But lest I burn and bake me in such case,
Misgiving overmastered the good will
Which made me hungering for their embrace.

I answered: "Not disdain, but such distress
Has your sad plight so fastened on my soul
That not for long to come can it be less,

Ever since this my Lord spoke unto me
Words which indeed induced me to suppose
There might be coming persons such as ye.

True, I am of your city; and from the first,
Your goodly deeds and your most honored names
I ever heard with homage, and rehearsed.

I leave the gall, and for the sweet fruit go
Held up in promise by a truthful guide;
But first must plumb the center here below."

"So may for long the guiding spirit dwell
Within thy members," answered he, "and so
May thy good name shine after thee, now tell

If courtesy and valor yet abide
Within our city as in olden days;
Or are they altogether cast aside?

Guglielmo Borsieri, who bewails
With us but newly, and with mates goes yonder,
Enough has mortified us with his tales."

"An upstart people and too sudden gains
Have pride engendered in thee, and excess,
My Florence; whence in tears thy spirit plains."

I spoke, my face upraising in the act;
And the three, taking this for my reply,
Stared at each other as men facing fact.

"If at so small a cost thou mayst content
Others at other times," they all replied,
"Happy thou, speaking after thine own bent!

So, if from these abysses of black air
Thou come again to see the beauteous stars,
When thou shalt joy in saying 'I was there,'

Of us be mindful in thy parlayings."
At that they broke the wheel; and in their flight
Their nimble legs one would have said were wings.

Nor time could anyone have had to say
Amen before they all had disappeared.
It pleased my Guide then to be on our way.

I followed him; and presently so near
Sounded the waters that if one of us
Were speaking, hardly might the other hear.

As roars that river which first holds its course
From Monte Veso eastward on the slope
Leftward of Apennine, and near its source

Is called the Acquacheta, ere it pours
To its low bed, then at Forlì is robbed
Of that first name,—I say that as it roars

On hillside o'er San Benedetto, when
It tumbles at a single leap to where
There might be harbor for a thousand men:

Thus, far below a brink that fell off sheer,
We heard the roaring of the turbid water,
Such that erelong it would have stunned the ear.

I was around me with a cord girt in;
And once upon a time had thought therewith
To take the leopard of the spotted skin.

And having presently the cord unbound,
As my Conductor had directed me,
I passed it to him, knotted and upwound.

Thereupon backward to the right he swung,
And out some distance from the brink the cord
Down to the depths of the great cavern flung.

"Needs must, indeed, some novelty reply,"
I said within me, "to the novel sign
Which so the Master follows with his eye."

Ah, how much caution need we to be taught
With those who look not merely at the act,
But pierce with all-wise insight to the thought!

He said to me: "Up hither soon shall rise
What I await; and what thy mind now sees
Shall then be manifested to thine eyes."

To truth that wears the aspect of a lie
'Twere wise to close our lips the while we may,
Else without fault we come to shame thereby.

But here I cannot so. Reader, I swear
By all the notes of this my Comedy,
So may some meed of favor be its share,

I saw a shape come swimming up athwart.
That gross and gloomy air which might indeed
Cause consternation in the stoutest heart,—

Just as a man, who dives to loose at times
An anchor, which has grappled under seas
A rock or other snag, returning climbs,

Stretching his arms, and drawing up his knees.

Inferno - Canto XVII

"Behold the monster of the pointed tail,
Which passes mountains, bursts through walls and arms;
Behold what spews out on the world its bale."

Thus unto me my Leader said at last;
And beckoned to the beast to come ashore
Where ended the stone causeway we had passed.

On came that filthy counterfeit of Fraud,
And landed on the bank his head and trunk,
But left his tail still dangling out abroad.

His face appeared the face of a just man,
Skin-deep it was of such benignity;
And all the rest into a reptile ran.

To the armpits bristled his two paws with hair;
And on his back and breast and both his flanks
Were painted knots and circles everywhere.

More colors, woven in or overlaid,
Set never Turks or Tartars in their stuffs;
Nor ever webs like these Arachne made.

As sometimes wherries are drawn up on shore,
Half in the water, half upon the land;
And as the beaver squats to wage his war

Up yonder in the guzzling German's land:
So stretched himself that meanest of wild beasts
Upon the brink that walls with stone the sand.

Over the void his tail was quivering,
And twisting upward the envenomed fork
Which armed the tip much like a scorpion's sting.

"Now," said my Leader, "falls it that we bear
Aside our steps a little unto yon
Accursed monster that is couching there."

On downward therefore to the right we came,
And made ten paces on the outer merge
Better to keep us from the sand and flame;

And soon as we were come nigh unto him,
A short way off upon the sand I see
People that sit close by the gaping rim."

And here the Master: "So that thou mayst freight
Thyself with full experience of this circle,"
He said, "go now and gaze upon their state;

But let thy converse not have undue length;
Till thy return I parley with this beast,
That he may yield to us his shoulders' strength."

So farther still upon the outermost
Rim of the seventh circle, all alone
I went to where there sat that grievous host.

Their grief was gushing from their eyes; their hands
On this side and on that were warding off
Now the hot vapors, now the burning sands.

The dogs in summer do not otherwise,
With now their muzzles, and with now their paws,
When gnats are biting them, or fleas, or flies.

When I had scanned the faces of some there
That so were pelted by the dolorous fire,
I knew not any, but became aware

That from the neck of each a wallet hung
Which had a certain color and device,
To which, feasting, it seemed that their eyes clung.

And as among them I, observant, came,
I saw a purse of yellow, on which shown
In azure were a lion's face and frame.

The range extending farther of my sight,
Upon another wallet, red as blood,
A goose I noted, more than butter white.

And one displayed a sow in brood, set off
Azure against the argent of his pouch;
And this one said: "What dost thou in this trough?"

Now leave us; yet since thou art still alive,
Know that a neighbor of mine, Vitaliano,
To sit here at my left shall soon arrive.

Paduan, I with Florentines am here;
They are forever dinning in my ears
Their cry of 'Come the sovereign cavalier,

Who on his wallet three beaks will disclose.
Here he his mouth distorted, and his tongue
Curled outward like an ox that licks its nose.

Fearful lest my delaying more might find
With him disfavor who had bid be brief,
I turned, and left those weary souls behind.

I found my Guide already laying hold
Upon the haunches of the hideous brute;
And he cried out: "Now be thou stout and bold;

Henceforth by such a stair is our descent.
Mount thou in front; for I would be between,
So that the tail do us no devilment."

As one on whom the quartan first has laid
Its chill, who sees his fingernails turn blue,
And shivers merely looking at the shade,

Such was I at his words; but afterward
His chidings roused in me the shame which makes
The servant bold in presence of his lord.

I seated me upon those shoulders. "See,"
I wished to say, only the voice came not
As I had meant, "that thou hold fast to me!"

But he who otherwhiles from other harms
Had sheltered me, so soon as I was up,
Clasped and supported me within his arms;

And then he said: "Set forth now, Geryon;
Be wide thy circling; thy descending slow;
Mind the new burden thou hast taken on."

As backward, and still backward, from the merge
A vessel slips, so he from thence took off;
And then, soon as he felt himself at large,

Turned round his tail to where his breast had been,
And moved it, far extended, like an eel,
And toward him with his paws the air drew in.

Nor greater fear, I fancy, ever felt
Young Phaeton what time he loosed the reins,
And made, as still appears, the heavens to melt;

Nor yet when wretched Icarus his back
Felt all unfeathering with the warming wax, to
His father shouting: "Ill thou keep'st the track!"

Than was mine own when upon every side
I saw myself in air, and saw all sight
Of everything, save of the beast, denied.

And he goes swimming onward, slow and slow;
Circles, and sinks; but I perceive it not,
Save that my face is fanned, and from below.

Already underneath us on the right
I heard the rapids roaring horribly;
So stretched my head out, and strained down my sight.

Then all the more, with clutching knees, I quailed
And cowered, all atremble, when I saw
Flamings of fire, and heard the hosts that wailed.

I saw then, what I could not see before,
Our circling and descending, by the woes
On divers sides approaching more and more.

As falcon, that for long has circled high
All without sighting either lure or bird,
And 'Ah, thou stoopest!' makes the falconer cry,

Wearily drops where late it lightly rose
Up through an hundred circlings, and alights
Far from its master, scornful and morose,–

So Geryon set us down upon that floor,
Close unto where the cliffs rose threatening;
Then, by our bodies burdened now no more,

Bounded away as arrow from the string.

Inferno - Canto XVIII

In Hell a place is, Malebolge called,
All of hard stone, and iron in its hue;
As are the circling cliffs by which 'tis walled.

In the dead center of this doleful field
There yawns a well exceeding wide and deep
Whose plan shall in due order be revealed.

Round is the margin, therefore, which is left
Between the well and the high rocky wall;
And all the floor is by ten valleys cleft.

As the configuration of that ground
Where for the better guarding of the walls
Moat within moat girdles a castle round,

After such pattern were these valleys planned;
And as about such strongholds from their gates
The fosses to the farthest banks are spanned,

So from the bottom of the cliff here jut
Craggs which traverse the moles and moats to where
Those by the pit are gathered in and cut.

In such a region, shaken from the back
Of Geryon, we found ourselves; the bard
Held to the left; I followed in his track.

Upon the right I saw new misery,
New torments, and tormentors new, who made
In the first pocket a great company.

Naked the sinners were upon its floor;
Our side the center came they facing us;
Beyond it with us, but outstriding more.

So have the Romans, for the mighty throng
In year of Jubilee upon the bridge,
Devised a means to pass the hosts along;

For all there going on the one side front
The Castle, and proceed unto St. Peter;
And on the other all go toward the Mount.

Horned devils with huge scourges I could see
This side and that, up on the livid ledge,
Who from behind were lashing cruelly.

Alack, how they did make the laggard herd
Lift up its heels at the first blows! And sooth,
None waited for the second, or the third!

As I was going on, one in that chase
Had caught mine eye, and instantly I said:
"Unfed ere now I am not with that face."

Wherefore I stayed my steps to make him out;
And my sweet Guide paused with me, and agreed
That for a little I might turn about.

And the whipt rascal thought to hide his face,
Bending it down; but little that availed,
For said I: "Thou that dost thine eyes abase,

Unless indeed that face of thine betray,
Caccianimico art, and Venedico;
But what has put thee in this pickle, pray?"

And he to me: "Unwillingly I tell;
But thy clear accents, which call up to mind
The world that used to be, thereto compel.

I am that one who Ghisola the fair
Induced to do the Marquis' will,—howso
Rumor recount the rascally affair.

And not me only has Bologna brought
To weeping here; this place is full of us;
Nor between Reno and Savena taught

Is *sipa* to so many tongues today.
Wouldst thou have credence and attesting, think
How in our hearts has avarice held sway."

While he was speaking thus, a devil near
Struck with his mighty lash, and said: "Move on,
Pander, there are no girls for coining here!"

And I rejoined my Leader. In a while,
After not many steps, we came to where
Outjuttred from the bank a rocky pile;

On which we mounted without ought to stay,
And bearing to the right along the ridge,
From those eternal circles turned away.

When we were come where, underneath, the dyke
Was hollowed out to let the whipt ones through,
My Leader said: "Wait here, and let there strike

On thee the sight of others evil-born,
Upon whose faces thou hast not yet looked,
Since alongside of us they have been borne."

So from the ancient bridge we watched that throng
Which came on toward us on the farther side,
And likewise by the lash were whipped along.

The worthy Master, waiting not to hear
My question, said: "Look at that mighty one
Who comes, and for his anguish sheds no tear.

How royal is the mien he carries still!
He is that Jason who the Colchians
Robbed of the Ram by courage and by skill.

For isle of Lemnos then he set his sails,
After the wanton women pitiless
Had unto death delivered all their males.

There with love-tokens and sweet sugared speech
Hypsipyle he cozened, her the maid
Who late the others all could overreach.

There lonely and with child was she forsaken.
Such guilt condemns him to such punishment;
And for Medea too is vengeance taken.

With him goes whoso in such manner tricks.
For gloss of this first valley let this much
Suffice thee, and of those its fangs transfix."

Already were we where the narrow ridge,
Thrusting across the next embankment, makes
Of that a shoulder for another bridge.

Therefrom could we hear people whimpering
In the next pouch, and snorting with their snouts,
And with their palms their bodies buffeting.

The banks were crusted over with a scum
Which caked upon them from the nether breath,
And to the eyes and nose was troublesome.

So hollowed is the bottom that full sight
Was had but when we climbed the arching ridge
Up to its utmost overhanging height.

Here came we; and thereunder in the trough
I saw a folk stifled in excrement
As if from human privies draining off.

And as I with mine eyes down thither strain,
I saw a head so all with ordure smeared
That whether clerk's or layman's was not plain.

"Why so agog," began that one to bawl,
"To stare at me more than at other swine?"
And I: "Because, if rightly I recall,

Already have I seen thee with hair dry,
That art Alessio Interminei of Lucca.
If specially I eye thee, that is why."

And then, beating upon his skull, he said:
"They sank me down to this, the flatteries
Wherewith my tongue was never surfeited."

Thereupon said my Guide: "Do thou thy glance
Thrust forward yet a little, till thine eyes
May turn them full upon the countenance

Of yonder slovenly, disheveled slut
Scratching herself with dung-filled nails, who now
Squats on her haunches, now is up afoot.

Thais it is, the harlot, even she
Who answered when her lover questioned, –'Much
Shall I be thanked by thee?' 'Nay, wondrously.'

But we have seen enough, and more, of such."

Inferno - Canto XIX

O Simon Magus! O ye his wretched apes,
Who things which are of God, and should be brides
Of righteousness, unto unholy rapes

For silver and for gold do prostitute!
Now verily for you must sound the trump,
Seeing that this third gully ye recruit.

Already we had climbed above the tomb
Beyond, upon that portion of the rock
Over the gully's center hanging plumb.

O thou All-Wise, how is thine art august
In heaven, on earth, and in the evil world;
And in allotment how thy Power is just!

Along the sides and on the level ground
I saw the livid stone all full of holes,
All of one magnitude, and each one round,

Nor looked of lesser or of greater size
Than those which in my well-loved San Giovanni
Are made for them to stand in who baptize;

And one of which since not so many years
I broke to save one drowning there: a seal
Be this to undeceive each one who hears.

Out of the mouth of each so ordered nest
A sinner's feet protruded, and his legs
Up to the calves; within was hid the rest.

All flaming was the sole of every foot;
Wherefore the sinews quivered with such force
As would have snapped green withe or twisted root.

Even as flame upon things oily goes
Gliding along the outer skin alone,
So was it there with these from heels to toes.

"Who is he, Master, who seems so distressed
He quivers more than all his mates?" said I;
"And whom a flame sucks redder than the rest?"

"If by yon bank more sloping," he replied,
"Thou suffer me to bear thee down, from him
Shalt learn of him and of his grasping pride."

And I: "What pleases thee, is my good made;
Thou art my lord, and know'st that I depart
Not from thy will, and know'st what is unsaid."

Straightway to the fourth buttress me he bore,
Then turned, and thence descended to the left
Out on that narrow, thickly pitted floor.

Nor did the worthy Master from his flank
Release me, till he brought me to the hole
Of him that so lamented with his shank.

"Whoeter thou art, that hast thy top beneath
Planted, unhappy spirit, like a stake,"
Began I, saying: "Speak, if thou hast breath."

I stood there like the friar that must shrive
The base assassin, who, when he is fixed,
Recalls him—to be a moment more alive.

For then "Stand'st thou already there?" he cried;
"Stand'st thou already there, O Boniface?
Indeed then, by some years the scripture lied.

Hast thou so soon had surfeit of that gain
For which thou didst not fear to take by fraud
The Lady fair, to bruise and to profane?"

As people, being given a reply
They comprehend not, stand as they were mocked,
And know not what to answer, so stood I;

When Virgil said: "Say unto him straightway;
'I am not he, I am not he, thou thinkest;'"
And I replied what I was bid to say.

Both feet the spirit writhed convulsively;
Then, sighing, with a lamentable voice
It said: "What then requirest thou of me?"

If upon knowing who I am such store
Thou sett'st that thou hast therefore scaled the steep,
Know then that the Great Mantle once I wore.

The She-Bear's son I was; and all so dear
I held advancement of her whelps that wealth
I pocketed above; myself, down here.

Under my head are others tucked away,
Flattened within the fissure of the rock,
Who practiced simony before my day.

Down thither also I myself shall slip
When he shall come who I believed thou wast,
When burst the hasty challenge from my lip.

But longer is the time already sped
Since, with feet baking, I am upside down,
Than he shall here stay planted with feet red;

For after him will come out of the west
A shepherd, lawless and of uglier deed,
Who him and me shall cover in this nest.

A new Jason he will be, of whom is told
In Maccabees; by that one was his king,
By this shall be the Lord of France, cajoled."

I know not if I dared beyond due measure,
But promptly I made answer in this strain:
"Indeed, I pray you tell how great a treasure

Our Lord required of Peter first, before
Unto his care he would commit the Keys?
Nay, 'Follow me!' He asked; and asked no more.

Nor of Matthias Peter and the rest
Claimed gold or silver to allot the post
Whereof the guilty soul was dispossessed.

Stay therefore,—for thy torment serves thee right,—
And keep good guard on the ill-gotten coin
Which against Charles so bravely armed thy spite.

And were it not that I am bid forbear
By reverence still of the all-sacred Keys
Whereof in happier moments thou hadst care,

Mine should be words yet weightier; for sad
Your avarice is making all the world,
Trampling the good, and raising up the bad.

Truly, you shepherds did the Evangelist mean
Even when she that sitteth on the waters,
Whoring with kings, by him, he says, was seen,

She that was given indeed seven heads at birth,
And for assurance of her right ten horns
The while her husband gloried in true worth.

Silver and gold ye make your God; and how
Differ ye from the idolater, except
That he to one, ye to an hundred bow?

Ah, Constantine, mother of how much woe
Was, not thine own conversion, but that dower
Which on the first rich father didst bestow!"

And whilst I sang to him these notes, as stung
Whether by wrath or haply by remorse,
Wildly about with both his feet he flung.

I think indeed my Leader was well pleased;
For to the sound of those outspoken truths
He listened with the look of one appeased.

And then he took me with both arms, and when
He had me altogether on his breast,
The way down which he came he climbed again.

Unwearied, with me to himself held fast,
He bore me to the summit of the arch
Which from the fourth foss to the fifth is cast.

And there all gently down he laid his load,
All gently on that steep and rugged stair,
Which for a goat would be no easy road.

Thence was another vale to me laid bare.

Inferno - Canto XX

Now falls it to make verses of new pains
To fill the twentieth canto of the first
Canticle, which the sunken ones arraigns.

Already I was made all eagerness
To look down into the uncovered depths
Which so were bathed in waters of distress.

People I saw within the valley's girth,
Silent and weeping, coming at the pace
They hold who chant the Litanies on earth.

As down among them came my sight to rest,
Strangely distorted seemed each one to be
Between the chin and where begins the chest;

For toward the reins was turned about the face;
Wherefore, from looking forward thus forbid,
They needs were coming on with backward pace.

There may have been ere now, for aught I know,
Someone by force of palsy so deformed,
But I ne'er saw it, and I doubt if so.

Reader, so may God grant thou profit by
That which thou read'st, consider for thyself
If I my face was able to keep dry,

Who saw the image of our humankind
Distorted so, that weeping of the eyes
Watered the buttocks at their cleft behind.

Surely I wept, leaning against the side
Of the hard crag, until—"And art thou yet
Among the other fools?"—my Leader cried.

"Here lives true piety when pity dies.
Who is more reprobate than he that scans
The doom of heaven with protesting eyes?"

Lift up, lift up thy head, and see for whom
Earth yawned before the Thebans' eyes, when they
Cried all: 'Whither dost rush? and to what doom,

Amphiaraus? Why dost leave the war;
And he checked not his rushing headlong down
To Minos, from whose clutch men slip no more.

Mark how of shoulders he has made a breast!
Because forward he wished to see too far,
Backward he looks, backward pursues his quest.

Behold Tiresias, who altered guise,
Turning him woman that had once been man,
And changing all his members in such wise;

And who again thereafter must assail
The two entwining serpents with his rod,
Ere he won back the plumage of a male.

Aruns is he that this one's belly backs,
Who high among the hills of Luni, where
The dalesman of Carrara plies his axe,

Himself among white marbles had a cave
For dwelling-place, whence with unbroken view
It might be his to study star and wave.

And she whose loosely flowing tresses hide
Her breasts, which are not visible to thee,
And has all hairy skin upon that side,

Is Manto, who through lands remote and near
Made search, then settled there where I was born;
Whereof awhile I fain would have thine ear.

When from this life her sire had passed away,
And Bacchus' city had become enslaved,
About the world she roamed for many a day.

Up in fair Italy, under Alps that wall,
Germany roundabout above Tyrol,
There lies a lake which they Benaco call.

The waters of a thousand fountains slake
'Twixt Garda and Val Camonica the thirsts
Of Apennine, and settle in this lake.

Midway a place is where the priest of Trent
And he of Brescia and the Veronese
Might each give blessing, if that way he went.

Peschiera sits, a fortress fair and stout,
Fronting the Brescians and the Bergamasks,
Down where the shore sinks lowest roundabout;

And thither falls, o'erflowing, that must needs
Which in Benaco's bosom cannot bide,
To grow a river down through verdant meads;

Which, as its waters gather head to flow,
No more Benaco, but is Mincio called
Far as Governo, where it falls in Po.

Not long its course, when by a lowland checked,
It spreads therein, and makes thereof a swamp
Likely in summer heats to be infect.

And the stern maiden, passing there by chance,
Saw in the middle of the fen a land
Untilled and naked of inhabitants.

There, to escape the world's unquietness
She with her servants dwelt, and plied her arts,
And lived, and left her body tenantless.

And then from roundabout there gathered men
Unto that place, seeing that it was strong,
So on all sides surrounded by the fen.

O'er those dead bones their city builded these,
And named it after her who picked the place,
Mantua—without other auspices.

Formerly crowded closer were its folk,
Before the lunacy of Casalodi
Received from Pinamonte the foul stroke.

Wherefore I charge thee, shouldst thou hear forsooth
My city otherwise have origin,
Let not a falsehood so defraud the truth."

And I: "Master, thine every argument
Appears so sure, and so invites my faith,
That others were to me as embers spent.

But tell me of these coming, if dost find
Any among them worthy of remark;
For ever unto this reverts my mind."

And answered he: "That one who from his cheeks
Spreads out his beard upon his shoulders was,
When so was stripped of males the land of Greeks

That in the cradle scarce remained one more,
Augur, and first with Calchas gave the sign
To cut the cables upon Aulis' shore;

Euripylus his name; of him withal
Sings my high Tragedy in a certain place,
As thou know'st well, for well thou know'st it all.

The one next coming, all so spindle-shanked,
Was Michael Scot, who in the game forsooth
Of magical deception foremost ranked.

Mark Guido Bonatti; mark Asdente's fate,
Who that he stuck not to his hide and thread
Repents him, but repentance now is late.

Mark the hags who to read Dame Fortune's chart
Forsook their needles, shuttles, and their spindles,
By herb and image practicing black art.

But come; already stands upon the sill
Of both the hemispheres Cain with his thorns,
And touches now the wave below Seville.

Already round was yesternight the moon;
Well shouldst recall, for in the dim defile
Of the deep wood she proved at times a boon."

These words he spoke; and we went on the while.

Inferno - Canto XXI

Evenso on we came from bridge to bridge
With talk my Comedy cares not to sing.
We came, and held the summit of the ridge,

And by another fissure stood to hark
To other vain laments of Malebolge;
And I looked down, and saw it wondrous dark.

As boils in the Venetians' Arsenal
In winter the tenacious pitch, to pay
The ships which, strained by billow and by squall,

None longer dare to sail, and one instead
Is building a new ship, and one recaulks
The seams of his by many a voyage spread;

One hammers forward, and another aft;
Some fashion oars, and some are twisting ropes;
One patches jib and mainsail of his craft:

So, not by fire, but by the art divine
Far down below was boiling a thick pitch,
Which coated on each side the steep incline.

I saw it, but saw nothing in it, save
Only the bubbles which the boiling raised;
And saw the whole mass swell, then shrink and cave.

Whilst I was peering down, preoccupied,
My Leader, crying out: "Take care, take care!"
Drew me, whence I was standing, to his side.

Whereat I turned as one who fain would stay
To see what thing it is that he should flee,
Then overmastered by a swift dismay,

Even while looking, waits not to be gone;
And I beheld behind us a black imp
Coming along the ridge upon the run.

Ah me, how in his aspect he was dread!
And in his actions how malevolent,
And light of foot and with his wings wide spread!

His shoulder, all high-humped and talon-tipped,
Carried both haunches of a sinner, whom
Fast by the tendons of the feet he gripped.

"O Malebranche," cried he from our shore,
"Here is an alderman of Santa Zita;
Have under with him, whilst I go for more

Back to that town which has them in excess;
For all are grafters there, except Bonturo;
And there for money No is turned to Yes."

And down he cast him; then along the cliff
He wheeled, and never was a mastiff loosed
In such a hurry to pursue a thief.

The other sank; then all hunched up, he rose;
But under cover of the bridge the fiends
Cried out: "This place no *Santo Volto* knows;

And not as in the Serchio swims one here;
Wherefore, unless thou itchest for our hooks,
Above the pitch let nought of thee appear."

With full a hundred prongs they prodded then,
Saying: "So dance thou under cover here,
And grab in secret, if thou canst, again."

Not otherwise make cooks their scullions poke
The meat down to the middle of the pot
With great long forks to keep it all asoak.

And the good Master: "So it be not seen
That thou art here, now crouch thee down," he said,
"Behind some block, to serve thee for a screen;

And for no outrage that may me befall
Be frightened: I have reckoned with these things,
And have already been through one such brawl."

Beyond the bridgehead thereupon he passed;
And on the sixth bank when he set his feet,
Well had he need his front should be steadfast.

With all the storm and fury of stray bands
Of street-curs rushing out upon some wretch
Who hurriedly is begging where he stands,

The fiends from underneath the bridge broke loose,
And turned against my Leader all their grapples;
But he called out: "Offer me no abuse!

Before ye spit me with your forks, let one
Come forward from among you, and give ear;
And then advise if ye would hook me on."

They shouted all: "Let Malacoda go;"
Thereat one started, and the rest stood still.
He came, yet muttered: "What avails it, though?"

"And dost thou, Malacoda, think to see
Me coming hither," said the Master, "safe
From every snare the while of such as thee

Without heaven's favor and fair fortune's stay?
Let me then pass; for it is willed above
I show another this entangled way."

And then so fallen was that other's pride
That, letting drop his draghook at his feet,
Unto the rest "Now strike him not!" he cried.

And then my Guide to me: "O thou crouched there
Asquat among the ruins of the bridge,
Come back again to me, and have no care."

And I rose up, and came to him with speed;
And the fiends all were crowding forward so,
I feared they might not keep the pact. Indeed,

I do remember when such terror froze
The troops leaving Caprara under truce
And seeing themselves surrounded by their foes.

With all my person I was fain to cling
Close to my Guide; yet took my eyes not off
Their visages, which were not comforting.

They lowered each his hook, and "Now wouldst prick him,"
Said one there to another, "on the rump?"
And answered some: "Aye, see that there thou nick him!"

But he that to my Leader's testimony
Was giving ear, turned him round hastily,
And shouted: "Quiet, quiet, Scarmiglione!"

Then said to us: "No farther by this ridge
May one have passage, for all shattered lies
Down under on the bottom the sixth bridge;

And if it still may please you to go on,
Go ye then up along this ledge; nearby
Way by another bridge is offered one.

Yesterday, later by five hours than now,
Fulfilled twelve hundred six and sixty years
Since broken was the way across that slough.

And I am sending thither some of mine
To see if anyone be airing him;
Go ye with them; they will not be malign.

Come, Alichino and Calcabrina then,"
Began he shouting, "and Cagnazzo, thou;
And Barbariccia, do thou lead the ten.

Come, Libicocco too, and Farfarello,
And tusked Ciriatto and Draghignazzo
And Graffiacane and lastly that mad fellow,

Rubicante. Go search the boiling tar;
And to the other crag that, still entire,
Crosses the dens, let these be safe that far."

"Oh me, my Master, what is this I see?"
Said I; "Ah, without escort let us go,
If know'st the way; I ask no more for me.

If thou art wary as time was thou wert,
Dost thou not see how they do gnash their teeth,
How with their brows are threatening our hurt?"

And he to me: "I will not have thee fear;
Let them be gnashing at their own sweet will;
They do that for these boiling wretches here."

They turned along the left bank presently;
But first had, for a signal, towards their guide
Thrust out their tongues between their teeth; and he

Had made a bugle of his own backside.

Inferno - Canto XXII

I have ere now seen horsemen strike their camp,
Go into battle, muster on parade,
And more than once to save themselves decamp;

Scouts have I seen, ye Aretines, upon
Your land, and forage parties on the march,
And tourneys clash together, and jousts run,

At times with trumpet, and at times with bell,
With drum, and at a signal-flare from castle,
With things familiar, foreign things as well;

But never with clarion so singular
Have I seen setting forward horse or foot,
Or ship by sign of landmark or of star.

We went along with our ten demon-leaders
Ah, fearful company! But in the church
With saints, and in the tavern with good feeders.

And only with the pitch was my concern,
To study each condition of that pit,
And of the people set therein to burn.

As dolphins, when by arching backs they give
Warning to mariners that it is time
For safety of the ship to look alive,

So now and then, to ease a bit his pain,
Some one among the sinners showed his back,
Then quick as lightning hid himself again.

As at the water's edge in ditches skulk
The frogs with just their muzzles peeping out,
So that they hide their feet and other bulk,

So here were hiding sinners all about;
But soon as Barbariccia came too close,
Back in the stew each quickly drew his snout.

I saw—and my heart shudders to this day
One staying on, as often will one frog
Linger behind, another duck away.

And Graffiacane, who was near enough,
Hooked his tar-matted locks and haled him up,
As one pulls up an otter by its scruff.

I knew the names by this time of them all,
So well I marked them when they first were picked,
And since had heard one to another call.

"O Rubicante, look to it thou screw
Thy claws in him until thou hast him skinned,"
Shouted together all the cursed crew.

"Master," I said, "do thou, if able, please
To learn who is that hapless one now come
Into the clutches of his enemies."

And my Conductor, drawing nearer by,
Asked of him whence he came; and he replied:
"Born in the kingdom of Navarre was I;

My mother made me lackey of a lord;
For she had borne me to a reprobate,
Waster of self and substance; afterward

Servant I was of Thibault the good king;
There gave me over to sharp practices
For which I in these heats pay reckoning."

And Ciriatto, from whose mouth a tusk
Issued on either side as from a boar's,
Gave him to feel how one of these could husk.

Now among evil cats the mouse was cast;
But Barbariccia locked him in his arms,
Crying: "Stand back! I have him grappled fast."

And to my Master turned he then his face.
"Now ask," he said, "if wouldst hear more from him
Before another put him in worse case."

My Guide: "Tell then; among so many a mate
In sin, dost thou know one who is a Latin
Under the pitch ?" And he: "I parted late

From one who near by there was born and bred.
Would I were under cover with him still,
Where I might have no hook or claw to dread!"

And Libicocco: "We have stood enough."
He spoke, and clamped his hook upon an arm,
And tearing out a sinew, bore it off.

And Draghignazzo made as if to hook
The dangling legs; when his decurion
Turned round upon him with an ugly look.

When in some measure they were pacified,
Of him that still was gazing at his wound
Demanded without more ado my Guide:

"Who was the man from whom thou said'st was made
The luckless parting, when thou cam'st ashore?"
And he replied: " 'Twas Fra Gomita's shade,

He of Gallura, vessel of all fraud,
Who had his master's enemies in hand,
And dealt with them in ways they well may laud:

Took cash, and let them as he tells it since
Go without process; in each office was
Not of the petty sharpers, but their prince.

With him Don Michel Zanche is foregathering,
That one of Logodoro; and their tongues
About Sardinia never tire of blathering.

Oh me! now that one grinning yonder watch;
I would say more, but I do fear me much
He is about to give my scuff a scratch."

And the grand marshal, turning to a devil
That rolled his eyes to strike, said: "Farfarello,
Be off with thee! Be off, thou bird of evil!"

"If ye desire to see or talk with some,"
At once resumed the other, reassured,
"Tuscan or Lombard, I will make them come.

Keep but the Malebranche back a pace,
So of their malice these be not afraid,
And I, not ever moving from this place,

Will soon have seven times my number here
When I shall whistle, as it is our wont
When any one of us is rising clear."

Cagnazzo raised his nozzle at this speech,
Shaking his head, and bellowed: "Hear the trick
He has thought up to cast him out of reach!"

Whereupon he, who had a wealth of tricks,
Retorted: "Tricky am I overmuch
When I get all my fellows in worse fix!"

Contain himself could not that Alichin,
But cried, despite the others: "At no trot
Will I be after thee if thou div'st in,

But o'er the pitch will flap my wings; so be
This height abandoned, and the bank a screen
To see if thou count single more than we."

O thou that readest, thou shalt hear new sport.
Each to the far bank turned his eyes, he first
Who had opposed all action of the sort.

Well chose his moment then the Navarrese;
Firmly planted his feet; and in a trice
Leapt; and so freed him from their purposes.

And thus to shame they all of them were brought,
He most that for the blunder was to blame;
So off he started, shouting: "Thou art caught!"

But little it availed him, for such fear
No wing might follow; and that other plunged;
And he that flew lifted his bosom clear.

Not otherwise the duck in sudden haste
Dives as the hawk approaches, and then he
Mounts again up, indignant and disgraced.

Now Calcabrina, angry at the jape,
Was flying close behind, and glad to pick
A quarrel, hoped the sinner might escape;

And seeing that the sharper had got off,
He straightway turned his talons on his mate,
And grappled with him right above the trough.

But the other was a hawk full grown, no fear,
To use his claws as well; and both plumped down
Into the middle of the boiling mere.

The heat was an ungrappler in quick time,
But for all that there was no getting out,
So were their wings besmeared with that birdlime;

And Barbariccia, with the rest sore-nettled,
Made four fly over to the farther bank
With gaffs and all; and speedily all settled,

Everyone to his post, upon both sides;
Reached out their drag-hooks to the glued-up pair,
Who cooked already underneath their hides;

And in that sorry mess we left them there.

Inferno - Canto XXIII

Silent, apart, and without company
We went on, one before, the other after,
As go the Friars Minor commonly.

By the late witnessed quarrel in the bog
My thoughts were carried back to Aesop's fables
Which tells the story of the Mouse and Frog;

For closer mated are not Yes and Yea
Than one case with the other, if with heed
End and beginning of the two one weigh.

And as from one thought will another burst,
So now from this there was a second born
Which made a twofold terror of the first.

For thus I thought: "Now these because of us
Are put to scorn with injury and scoff
Such as, I doubt, must make them furious.

If anger so upon ill-will be wound,
They must come after us more merciless
Than to the hare he catches is a hound."

I felt my hairs already stand on end
For fear, and back was staring when I said:
"Master, if not by hiding thou canst fend

Thee and me quickly from them, I do fear
The Malebranche; we have them now behind;
Whom I imagine I already hear."

And he: "Were I of leaded glass, less prompt
I were to draw thine outward image forth
Than now to have on me thine inward stamped.

Thy thoughts this moment entered in with mine,
So like of feature and in act so like
That of them both I fashioned one design.

If haply so the right embankment slope
That down it we may reach the pit beyond,
To flee the dreaded chase there yet is hope."

Hardly, thus planning, had he closed his lips,
When I beheld them coming with spread wings,
And not far off, to get us in their grips.

My Master caught me unto him in haste,
Ev'n as a mother, wakened by the din
To find herself by flames outbursting faced,

Snatches her son, and flees, and will not stay,
Having more care for him than for herself,
To cast one shift about her on the way.

Down from the brink of the grim precipice
Supine he gave him to the pendent rock
Which blocks upon one side the next abyss.

Water more swiftly never ran through duct
To turn the wheel of any brookside mill,
Even where nearest to the paddles sucked,

Than down that bankside did my Master run,
Bearing the burden on his breast of me,
Not as a comrade, but as his own son.

Hardly he had set foot upon the bed
Of the abyss, when they were on the height
Above us. But no occasion was for dread;

For as the purpose of high Providence
Had made them of the fifth foss ministers,
So power it had denied them to go thence.

We found a painted people thereabout,
Which moved along with steps exceeding slow,
Weeping, and looking weary and worn out.

Over each one of them a cloak was thrown,;
With cowl drawn low before the eyes, and made
Like those the monks do make them in Cologne.

Gilded outside, it dazzled all that saw;
But inside was of lead, and of such weights
That those which Frederick fashioned were as straw.

O weary mantle for eternity!
And yet again we turned us to the left
Along with them, marking their misery;

But for the weight that weary fellowship
Came on so slowly that our company
Was new at every movement of the hip.

So to my Leader I: "See if be found
Among them some by deed or name well-known,
And as thou goest cast thine eyes around."

And one that caught the Tuscan words now cried
Unto us from behind: "Stay ye your steps,
Who through the murky air so swiftly stride.

Mayhap what thou dost seek mayst have from me."
Whereat my Leader turned, and bade me: "Wait;
Then going, let thy pace with theirs agree."

I stopped, and by their looks saw two betray
Great haste of mind to be with us; yet back
Their burdens held them, and the narrow way.

When they had reached us, both with sidelong eyes
Looked hard at me without a word; then turned
One to the other, speaking in this wise:

"He scenes by action of the throat alive;
But be they dead, then by what privilege
Without the heavy stole do they arrive?"

And then to me: "O Tuscan, who dost gain
The college of the sad-faced hypocrites,
To tell us who thou art do not disdain."

And I made answer: "I was born and bred
By the fair stream of Arno, in the great town;
And am still with the body garmented.

But ye two, who are ye, in whom is woe
Such as I see distilling down your cheeks?
What punishment is on you glittering so?"

"The yellow cloaks which over us are thrown,"
He answered, "are of lead, and all so thick
That underneath their burden the scales groan.

Both Jolly Friars are we, and Bolognese;
I Catalan, and Loderingo he;
And to be wardens of thy city's peace—

We two, and not as wonted one alone—
Were called together; and what kind we were
Round the Gardingo still is plainly shown."

"Friars," I began, "your doings ill-renowned..."
But said no more, for one there caught my eye,
By three stakes crucified upon the ground.

He writhed all over when he saw me near,
And blew into his beard with many sighs;
And Friar Catalano, quick to hear,

Said to me: "That impaled one thou dost eye
Counselled the Pharisees that for the people
It was expedient that one man die.

Crosswise and naked lies he in the path,
As thou canst see, and thus he needs must feel,
Whoever passes, first what weight he hath.

And his wife's father in this gully rues
Likewise his folly, with others of the Council
Which proved a seed of evil for the Jews."

And Virgil then I marked all marvelling
Over him who was stretched upon the cross,
So in the eternal exile a vile thing.

Then to the friar he addressed this speech:
"Be not, if so permitted, loth to tell
Whether upon our right be any breach

By which from hence we two might issue find,
Without allowing the black angels chance
To come and fetch us from this bottom blind."

And he responded: "Nearer than dost think
There is a rock which out from the great belt
Stretches, and bridges every cruel brink,

Save that, crumbled, it covers not this place;
Yet may ye by its ruins still mount up,
Which slope the side and pile up at the base."

The Leader stood a little with bowed head,
Then said: "Ill answered he the business
Whose hook the sinners yonder husbanded."

And the friar: "Back in Bologna I heard surmise
The Devil hath many vices, 'mongst which heard
He is a liar and the father of lies."

Whereupon with large strides my Guide passed on
With something in his countenance of heat;
Wherefore I parted from that burdened one,

Following the prints of the beloved feet.

Inferno - Canto XXIV

What time in the still youthful year the sun
Tempers his locks beneath Aquarius,
And somewhat of the night has southward run,

When often on the ground the hoar-frost casts
A counterfeit of his white sister's face,
Though little while his pencil's temper lasts,

The peasant, running low in his supplies,
Gets up, and looks, and sees the countryside
All whitened over; and so slaps his thighs,

Goes in again, strides up and down, and mopes
Like a poor soul who knows not what to do;
Goes out once more, and gathers then new hopes,

Seeing the world to have an altered face
That little while; and now takes up his crook,
And leads his sheep forth to their grazing-place:

So was my spirit troubled by the Master,
When I beheld him with a frowning brow;
So quickly on the sore was laid the plaster.

For as we reached the ruined bridge, his face
My Leader turned to me,—and it was kind
As first I saw it at the mountain's base;

Opened his arms, and after scrutiny
Of all the ruin first, and—with some plan
Resolved on with himself—laid hold on me.

As one in action so conducts himself
That all beforehand seems provided for,
He after setting me upon the shelf

Of a great rock, pointed to one above,
And said: "Grapple thou next on that; but first
Try if beneath thy weight it shall not move."

It was no pathway for one clothed with cloak;
For hardly we—he light and I pushed on—
Were able to mount up from block to block.

And were not from that quarter the ascent
Shorter than from the other, as for him
I know not, but I surely had been spent.

But since the whole of Malebolge's round
Slants toward the mouth of that last lowest pit,
Each valley is by its position bound

To have the one side rise, the other sink,
We came at length, however, to the point
Where the last stone had split off from the brink.

My lungs were of all breath so milked and flat
When I was up, that further I could not;
Rather, no sooner come than down I sat.

"Henceforward," said the Master, "of this guilt
Of sloth beware; not lying upon down
Is fame to be attained, nor under quilt;

And he who goes without it to his grave
Leaves of himself such vestige upon earth
As smoke in air, or foam upon the wave.

Rise up then; and thy panting breath refresh
Even with the spirit that in battle wins,
Unless dragged under by the grosser flesh.

A longer ladder is there yet to climb;
Escape from these is not enough; If well
Thou understandest, thou wilt waste no time."

And I rose up, feigning me better stayed
With breath than yet indeed I felt, and said:
"Go on; for I am strong and unafraid."

Along the bridging rock our path now bore;
And it was narrow, rough and difficult,
And steeper far than was the one before.

Not to seem beaten, as we went I talked;
When issued from the farther ditch a voice
Which of all power to fashion words seemed balked.

I know not what it said, although our path
Had reached midway the arch that crosses there;
But plainly he that spoke was moved to wrath.

I leaned down over, yet my living eye
Could not go through the darkness to the depths;
Wherefore I: "Master, bring me nearer by

This other belt; let us dismount the wall;
For now I hear, and do not understand;
I look, and nothing do I see at all."

"Response," said he, "I make not to thy need
Other than meeting it; the fair request
Should be in silence followed by the deed."

The bridge we then descended to its head,
Where with the eighth embankment it is joined;
And out before me then the gully spread;

And therewithin I saw a monstrous brood
Of serpents, and of so uncouth a kind
That recollection curdles still my blood.

No longer Lybia with her sands may boast;
Cheledri, jaculi, phareae though she breed,
Cenchri with amphisbaena, no such host

Of plagues so fearful ever nurtured she,
Not though with her all Ethiopia joined,
Nor yet the land which lies by the Red Sea.

Amongst this cruel and most dismal shoal
People were running, naked and afraid,
In the vain hope of heliotrope or hole.

They had their hands by serpents bound behind;
And these had through their loins thrust head and tail,
Which into knots in front of them they twined.

And lo! at one that was our side the pit
Darted a serpent, and transfixed his flesh
There where the neck is to the shoulders knit.

Not *O* or *I* so quickly might one pen
As he caught fire, and burned, and fell perforce
Into a heap of ashes there; and then,

When he had been so crumbled on the ground,
His dust gathered together of itself,
And instantly its former shape refound.

Even so from mouths of learned men we hear
How dies the Phoenix, and is then reborn
As it approaches its five hundredth year;

How it in life no herb or grain will eat,
But only tears of incense and of balsam;
How nerd and myrrh are its last windingsheet.

And as a man who falls, and knows not how,
By might of demon dragging him to ground,;
Or sudden stoppage which can lay men low

Who gazes round him when he can arise,
Wholly bewildered by the great distress
Which he has suffered, and so gazing sighs,

Such was that sinner after he arose.
O Power of God, how is it rigorous
That for its vengeance showers down such blows!

My Leader asked him then who he might be;
And he made answer: "Into this dread gorge
A little since, I rained from Tuscany.

I loved the life of beasts more than of men,
Mule that I was: and Vane Fucci am,
Beast, and Pistoia was my fitting den."

"Bid him not budge," I cried then to the Sage;
"And ask of him what crime has penned him here.
I knew him once, a man of blood and rage."

The sinner, who had heard, in nothing failed,
But turned towards me his spirit and his face;
Then to the color of sad shame he paled,

And said: "More it afflicts me to be watched
In this my misery by thee found out
Than when from out the first life I was snatched.

Deny I cannot what thou askest me;
I am set down this far, for that I was
Thief of the fair spoils of the sacristy;

And falsely was it laid at other's door.
But lest this sight rejoice thee overmuch
If from this dark place thou go free once more,

To mine announcement lend thine ear, and heed:
Now first, Pistoia thins herself of Blacks;
Then Florence doth new men, new measures breed.

Mars draws a vapor out of Magra's Vale
Which all enveloped is in turbid clouds,
And by a bitter and impetuous gale

Shall be combatted on the Picene plain;
When on a sudden it shall rend the murk,
And leave there wounded every White, or slain.

And this I say to thee that it may irk."

Inferno - Canto XXV

At the conclusion of his words the bandit
Lifted on high his hands with both the fists,
Bellowing: "Take that, God; at Thee I hand it."

From that time forth those serpents were my friends,
For one of them then coiled it round his neck,
As if to say: "Herewith thy speaking ends!"

And round his arms another back and fore
So bound him fast, clinching itself in front,
He could not give a quiver with them more.

Pistoia, Pistoia, why hast thou not decreed
To turn thee ashes, so thou cease to be,
Since in ill-doing outdoest thou thy seed?

Through all the circles of the blackest hell
I saw no soul towards God so insolent,—
Not he that from the Theban ramparts fell.

He fled; without another word he went;
And I saw come a Centaur full of wrath,
Shouting: "Where, where is he so truculent?"

So many snakes not in Maremma swarm,
I doubt, as he was bearing on his croup
To where for him begins our human form.

Behind his nape, over his shoulders lay
With open wings a dragon, and it sets
Each one on fire it meets with in the way.

And said the Master: "That is Cacus, he
Who underneath the rock of Aventine
Full many a time of blood has made a sea.

He goes not with his brothers by one road,
By reason of his stealing by deceit
The mighty herd that strayed near his abode;

But all his crooked dealings ended then
Under the club of Hercules, which gave
Haply an hundred, and he felt not ten."

Whilst he was speaking, Cacus had run by;
And under us three spirits came, of whom
My Leader had not taken note, nor I,

Until they all had shouted: "Who are ye?"
Whereat a halt was called upon our story,
And we gave all attention to the three.

I knew them not; but soon occasion came,
As commonly it happens by some chance,
For one to call another by his name,

Saying: "Where tarries Cianfa?" To impose
Attention on my Leader, I thereat
Pointed my finger up from chin to nose.

Reader, it were not matter of surprise
If thou be slow to credit what I tell,
For scarce might I, who saw, believe mine eyes.

Even the while I stood there looking on,
In front of them a serpent with six feet
Springs out, and fastens all itself on one;

With middle feet about the belly hangs;
With forefeet grapples fast upon the arms;
Then locks in one and other cheek its fangs;

Stretches its hind feet downward to the thighs;
And in between them both inserts its tail,
And lifts this till along the loins it lies.

Ivy not ever has so overgrown
A tree, as the repugnant monster round
The members of that other twined its own.

As they were heated wax they stuck together,
Commingling colors, each with each, the while;
And what it had been first now seemed not either;—

Just so along before the kindling play
Of flame on paper runs a dusky streak,
Not black as yet, and the white dies away.

And each of the two others looking on
Cried out: "Oh me, Agnèl, how changest thou!
See, thou art longer neither two nor one!"

For one the two heads were become; and crossed
Were so two sets of features in one face
That in their mingling there the two were lost.

Two arms then shaped themselves where four had been;
And thighs with legs, the belly and the bust
Became such members as were never seen.

Lost of their erstwhile aspect was all trace;
Neither and both the perverse image seemed;
And such it moved away with languid pace.

Just as, beneath the dog-day's stinging goad,
Gliding from hedge to hedge, the lizard seems
A flash of lightning if it cross the road,

So now a little fiery snake appeared,
Livid and black as any peppercorn,
And straight at those two others' bellies reared;

And in that region where our nourishment
We first receive, it one of them transfixed,
Then at his feet dropped down, outstretched and spent.

On it the stung one stared, and yet was dumb;
Only with halted feet began to yawn,
As if by sleep or fever overcome.

His eyes on it, and its on him, were set;
One from his wound, the other from its mouth,
Was smoking angrily, and their smoke met.

Let Lucan now be silent where he tells
Of poor Sabellus and Nasidius,
And pause the while to hear of stranger spells.

Of Cadmus and of Arethusa hush
Let Ovid; for if in his verse he turn
Him serpent and her fount, I shall not blush;

For never he two natures face to face
Transmuted so that prompt became each form
To make its matter take the other's place.

Thus did they each the other's changes meet:
Into a fork the serpent cleft its tail;
The stricken man together drew his feet.

His legs and very thighs with them as well
Grew so together that ere long no sign
Of any juncture there was visible.

The shape the legs were coming to discard
The cloven tail was taking; and its skin
Was growing ever soft as theirs grew hard.

I saw the man's arms through their pits drawn back,
And the two feet which in the beast were short
Gaining the length those arms had come to lack.

Then its two hinder feet together grew
To make for it the member which man hides;
His the poor wretch extended split in two.

Now whilst the smoke was veiling the sad pair
With a new color, and was making grow
On one, and from the other stripping, hair,

One raised him up, and down the other dropped,
Not turning once aside the impious lights
Below which each with each their muzzles swapped.

His to the temples he that was upright drew,
And from excess of substance spreading there
Out of once glassy cheeks now two ears grew.

That which remained after the rest receded
Of its redundance fashioned for the face
A nose, and thickened both the lips as needed.

He that lay prone lengthens his snout to scale,
And back within his head withdraws his ears,
Even as doth its horns the frightened snail.

His tongue, which was united, and for tests
Of speaking ready, splits and in the other
The forked one closes up,—and the smoke rests.

The spirit which had so become a brute
Fled hissing through the valley, and behind
The other, speaking and spitting, in pursuit;

Then turning its new shoulders back to say
Unto the third: "I will have Buoso run,
As I have, bellywise along this way."

Thus I beheld the seventh ballast shift
And shift again; and let be my excuse
The novelty, if idly my pen drift.

Even though not a little were mine eyes
Bewildered, and the mind in me dismayed,
Yet not, for all those fleeing ones' disguise,

Puccio Sciancato was to me unknown;
And of those three associated thieves
Which came at first, he was unchanged alone;

The other was he for whom Gaville grieves.

Inferno - Canto XXVI

Rejoice, O Florence, which art grown so great
That over land and sea thou flapp'st thy wings,
And hear'st through hell thy name reverberate.

Amongst the other thieves I found there five
Thy citizens; whereat shame comes to me,
And thou at no great honor shalt arrive.

But if we dream the truth near break of day,
Yet but a little while and thou shalt feel
What for thee, Prato, yes, and others pray.

And were it so already, it were late;
And would it were so, since it needs must be
That weighs the more the longer I must wait.

We turned away; and up the selfsame stair
Of jutting stones that served us coming down,
My leader mounted, and then drew me there;

And following our solitary way
Amongst the crags and splinters of the ridge,
The foot advanced not without hand to stay.

I sorrowed then, and sorrow now again
When I direct my mind to what I saw;
And on my genius I must tighten rein

So it run not where virtue do not guide;
And so if kindly star or more than star
Gave me this good, I cast it not aside.

As in the season when he who lights the sky
Least hides away from us his countenance,
What time the gnat has driven off the fly,

The peasant at his ease upon a hill
Sees myriad glow-worms down along the vale
Where are his vines to tend, his fields to till:

So with as many little flames alight
I saw that eighth great pouch, when I had come
To where the hollow of it was in sight.

And as he who avenged him with the bears
Beheld Elijah's chariot depart,
When horses rose straight upward toward the spheres,

For then he could not follow with the eye
More than to see the flame of it alone,
Mounting, as might a little cloud, on high,

So each flame through the hollow of that trough
Was moving; for not one betrayed the theft,
And each was carrying a sinner off.

To see, I craned so from the spanning wall
That had I not laid hold upon a rock,
There needed not a touch to make me fall.

Whereat my Guide, seeing me so concerned,
Declared: "Within these fires are hidden souls;
Each with that swathing it whereby 'tis burned."

"My Master," I replied, "thy telling me
Makes me the surer, yet I had surmised
That so it was, and would have asked of thee

Who is within that flame which comes with jet
So cleft at tip, as from the pyre it rose
Where with his brother Eteocles was set?"

He answered me: "Ulysses therewithin
Suffers with Diomed; and thus together;
They go to vengeance as they went to sin;

And in that garment of their flame bemoan
The ambush of the horse that made the breach
Through which the noble seed of Rome was sown;

And they bemoan the cunning through which dead
Deidamia still bewails Achilles;
And tears for the Palladium they shed."

"If still within those sparks their power hold
Of speech," said I, "Master, I pray thee much,
And pray my prayer avail a thousandfold,

That thou make not denial unto me
Of waiting till the hornèd flame come hither;
Thou seest how toward it I bend eagerly."

And he: "Thy prayer is worthy of all praise,
And therefore I accept it; but take heed
Thy tongue shall hold itself in check always.

Give me to speak; for that I can divine
What is thy will; and these perchance were shy,
Seeing that they were Greeks, of speech of thine."

Now when the flame had shifted it, to rise
Where time and place seemed fitting to my Guide,
I heard him then hold parley in this wise:

"O ye, who twain are in one fiery pall,
If I had merit with you whilst I lived,
If I had merit with you, great or small,

When in the world I wrote the lofty line,
Move ye not on; but one of you tell where
He met the death that came of his design."

The greater horn of the eternal flame
Began to writhe itself with murmurings,
As one a wind by buffetings would tame;

And to and fro the tip of it so darted
As were a tongue there speaking; and a voice
Came forth from it, and said: "When I departed

From Circe, who for one whole year and more
Had been detaining me there near Gaëta,—
Before Aeneas yet had named the shore,—

Not fondness for my son, not piety
Towards my now agèd father, nor due love
That should have comforted Penelope,

Could overcome in me—not even then—
The zeal to have experience of the world,
And of the vices and the worth of men.

But I put forth on the deep open sea
With one sole ship, and with those followers—
How few!— who still had not deserted me.

I saw one shore and other far as Spain,
Far as Morocco; saw Sardinia
With neighbor isles sea-washed upon that main.

I and my comrades were grown old and slack
By time we entered in the narrow strait
Where Hercules, to warn the wanderer back,

Had set his beacon-towers. Even so,
Seville I left behind me on the right,
With Ceuta on the left passed long ago.

'O brothers,' said , 'who have turned your prow
Through countless perils hither to the West,
To the brief vigil of your senses, now

When its allotted term is almost run,
Be ye not willing to refuse the quest
Of the unpeopled world behind the sun.

Consider ye the seed from which ye grew;
Ye were not made to live like unto brutes,
But to strive after what is good and true.'

I made, by the few simple words I spake,
My comrades all so eager for the voyage,
That hardly then could I have held them back.

And turning now our poop into the morn,
We of our oars made wings for the mad flight,
And ever bearing to the left were borne.

Already night was seeing every star
About the other Pole, with ours so low
That it rose not above the ocean floor.

Five times the light beneath the moon again
Was kindled, and so many times was quenched,
Since we had entered on that arduous main.

And into sight there rose a mountain, dun
Because of distance, and yet taller seemed
Than any we had ever looked upon.

We were rejoiced; but soon joy turned to woe,
Because a tempest rose from that strange land,
And beat upon our ship about her bow.

Three times round with the waters she had spun;
The fourth time high she lifted up her poop,
And downward plunged her prow,—as pleased it One,—

Until the water over us closed up."

Inferno - Canto XXVII

The flame was rising now erect and steady,
For that it spoke no longer, and with leave
Of the sweet Poet, was moving off already,

When back of it we saw another come,
Which to its tip caused us to turn our eyes
By a confused sound issuing therefrom.

As the Sicilian bull that as seems fit
Was first to bellow with the cries of him
Who with his file had once attempered it,

Still with the victim's voice kept bellowing,
So that, albeit the creature was of brass,
It seemed as if itself were suffering,

So, having at their start no way or breach
Out of the fire, the melancholy words
Were all subdued unto the fire's own speech.

But when a passage they had forced at last
To the flame's tip, they set that quivering
As quivered had the tongue, sending them past;

And we heard spoken: "O thou, whom I implore
With voice of mine, thou who in Lombard spakest,
Saying: 'Go now; I will not urge thee more,'—

Though I perhaps come tardy in my turn,
Yet be not loth to stay and speak with me;
Thou seest not loth am I, and yet I burn.

If into this blind world but recently
Thou art downfallen out of the sweet land
Of Latium, whence I bear mine infamy,

Tell me if peace or war Romagna makes;
For I was of the mountains there between
Urbino and the chain whence Tiber breaks."

Still downward, listening, I held my cheek,
When my Conductor touched me on the side,
Saying: "This man is Latin; wherefore speak."

And I, who now had ready my reply,
Without delaying more began to speak:
"Thou spirit going there so hid from eye,

This thy Romagna is not, nor was e'er
Without war in her tyrants' hearts, yet none
I left behind me in the open there.

Ravenna stands as years long it hath stood;
And there, spreading his wings o'er Cerva,
Still doth the Eagle of Polenta brood.

The city which the long-drawn test, time was,
Withstood, and made of Frenchmen a red heap,
Again now cringes under the Green Paws.

Verrucchio's elder Mastiff, and the younger,
Who of Montagna made the ill disposal,
Make augers of their teeth where they still hunger.

Lamone and Santerno take for guide
The Lion-cub of the White Lair; and he,
As summer turns to winter, changes side.

And as that town, whose flank the Savio laves,
Sits between plain and mountain, so she lives
Between the lots of freemen and of slaves.

But now I pray thee tell us who thou art;
Be not ungentler than ourselves to thee,
So may thy name on earth hold up its part."

After, according to its wont, awhile
The flame had roared, it darted to and fro
The slender point, then breathed forth in this style:

"If I believed that this my answer were
To one returning ever to the world,
This flame would stay it from all further stir;

But since from out these deeps not ever once
Has living soul returned, if I hear true,
Of infamy unafraid, I make response.

I was a man of arms, then cordelier,
Cherishing hope, so girt, to make amends,
And sure fulfilment of my hope were near

But for the mighty Priest—betide him woe!—
Who thrust me back into my former sin;
And how and why I now would have thee know.

Whilst I was still the form of pulp and bone
My mother gave, not any deed of mine
Was lionlike, but of the fox alone.

The crafty intrigues and the covert ways,
I knew them all, and so employed their arts
That sounded to the ends of earth my praise.

When I perceived me drawing near the slopes
Of mine old age, when everyone were wise
To lower sail, and coil away the ropes,

I found what once was pleasing now had staled,
And penitent, confessing, vowed myself,—
Ah me unhappy! and it had availed.

The Prince of the new Pharisees,—who then
Close to the Lateran was waging war,
And not with Jew, nor yet with Saracen,

But against Christians all had set his hand
(And none had aided Acre's overthrow,
Nor been a merchant in the Soldan's land)—

Was to his own high office recreant,
To holy orders, and to the cord I wore,
Which used to make those whom it girded gaunt.

As Constantine, to cure his leprosy
Sylvester from within Soracte called,
So this man summoned as an adept me

To cure him of the fever of his pride,
Asking my counsel; yet because his words
Seemed as though drunken, I no word replied.

And then he said: 'Let not thy heart mistrust;
I now absolve thee, and do thou advise
How Palestrina may be ground to dust.

Mine is the power, as thou art full aware,
To lock and unlock heaven; two are the keys
For which my predecessor had small care.'

Then when the weighty arguments had urged me
To where silence was made to seem the worst,
I said to him: 'Father, since thou hast purged me

Clean of the sin whereinto I must fall,
Know, that to triumph in the lofty seat
There needs large promise with performance small.'

Francis then came for me, when I erelong
Was dead, but one of the dark Cherubim
Tied to him: 'Take him not; nor do me wrong.

Come he must down among my varlets there;
Because he gave the fraudulent advice,
From that time on I have had him by the hair;

For not absolved can be one who repents not;
Nor both at once can one repent and will,
Because a contradiction there consents not.'

Woe is me! how I woke to my perdition
When he laid hold upon me, saying: 'Maybe
Thou didst not think to find me a logician!'

To Minos off he bore me, who then eight
Times round his rigid back entwined his tail,
And biting it, cried, all infuriate,

'This is a felon for the filching flame
Wherefore I, where thou seest me now, am lost,
And going so garmented, I weep my shame.'

When he had ended thus his words, forlorn,
The flame betook itself away from us,
Writhing and tossing still its pointed horn.

We passed on, I with him that guided me,
Along the rock up on the buttress built
Above that ditch wherein is paid the fee

By them who, sowing discord, gather guilt.

Inferno - Canto XXVIII

Who might, even with words uncramped by rhyme,
Tell of the blood and of the wounds in full
Which I now saw, though telling many a time?

Short of it surely every tongue must fall,
For that our speech and memory itself
To comprehend so much have compass small.

If all together gathered were the folk
Which once upon Apulia's fateful land
Wailed for their blood after the Trojan's stroke,

And wept again after the long-drawn war
Which reared so tall a trophy of the rings,
As truthful Livy writes,—if furthermore

There joined them those who, challenging the will
Of Robert Guiscard, felt the pain of blows,
And they too joined whose bones are gathered still

At Ceperan, where each Apulian failed
In faith, and there at Tagliacozzo, where
Aged Alardo without arms prevailed,—

And some should show their limbs stabbed through, and some
Theirs lopped away: yet all were nought to vie
With this ninth pocket's hideous martyrdom.

A cask with midpiece gone, or stave unpinned,
Gaped open not so wide as one I saw
Ripped from the chin to where is broken wind.

All down between his legs his entrails wallowed;
His pluck appeared, and the unpleasant pouch
Which turns to dung whatever has been swallowed.

Whilst I was gazing hard at him in wonder,
He looked at me, and laid his own breast open,
Saying: "See how I rend myself asunder!"

How mangled is Mahomet for his sin!
See where before me Ali weeping goes
With visage split from forelock unto chin.

And all the others which thou seest left,
Living were sowers of scandal and of schism;
Wherefore are they themselves in their turn cleft.

A devil is here behind who trims our flesh
To these sad patterns, unto his sword's edge
Putting each sinner of the lot afresh

As we return on our unhappy round;
Because ere any pass him by again
Closed up already is each former wound.

But who art thou that on the rock art come,
And dalliest perchance to put off pain
Which on thine own indictment is thy doom?"

"Death has not come to him, nor guilt now leads,"
Replied my Lord, "his soul to punishment;
To give him full experience must needs

I, who am dead, conduct him after me
From circle unto circle down through hell;
And this is true as that I speak to thee."

More than a hundred, hearing him speak so,
Halted them in the ditch to look at me,
Forgetting in their wonderment their woe.

"Do thou then, who perchance shalt presently
Behold the sun, say unto Fra Dolcino
That, if here soon he would not follow me,

He arm him so with food that siege of snow
Give not the Novarese that victory
Which else not lightly might they have to show."

One foot already lifting to be gone,
Mahomet gave me this behest; and then,
Going, along the ground he stretched it on.

Another there that had his gullet cleft,
And nose cut off up to the very brows,
And but one solitary ear had left,

And stood gazing in wonder with the rest,
Opened before them all his windpipe wide,
Making its gory redness manifest,

And said: "Thou on whom guilt sets not its brand,
And whom, if too close likeness cheat me not,
I mind me having seen in Latin land,

Remember Pier da Medicina,
Thou e'er return to see the gentle plain
That from Vercelli slopes to Marcabò.

And make thou known to Fano's worthiest twain—
To Messer Guido and to Angiolello—
That, if our foresight here prove not all vain,

They both shall be in sacks thrown overboard
And drowned in sight of La Cattolica
By the base treason of a ruthless lord.

Not ever Neptune saw so foul a deed
Done between Cyprus and Majorca's isle,—
Not by the corsairs, not by the Argive breed.

That traitor, who with only one eye views
And holds the land which one now with me here,
For having fed his eyes upon it, rues,

Will make them come with him to parleying;
Then deal so, that against Focara's wind
They need not prayer or votive-offering."

And I: "Now show me and declare aright,
Wouldst thou that I bear tidings up of thee,
Who is that other of the rueful sight."

Then laid he hold upon the jaw of one
Of his companions, opening the mouth,
And said: "This is he; and he speaks to none.

It was this outcast brushed the doubt away
From Caesar, arguing that one prepared
Ever to his own loss allows delay."

Oh, how dejected was he to behold,
Now with his tongue all slit up in his gorge,
This Curio, in speaking once so bold!

Another then, who had his two hands lopped,
Lifting the stumps up through the murky air
Till the blood smeared his visage as it dropped,

Called out: "Thou shalt of Mosca too have heed,
Whose saying 'A thing once done is done with' was,
Alas, for Tuscan folk the evil seed."

"And for thy kin death," quick was I to add;
Whereat he, heaping woe on woe, went off
With the demeanor of one sad and mad.

But there still gazing at that troop I stayed,
And saw a thing which even to relate,
Without some prop of proof, I were afraid—

Did conscience not to courage reincite,
The good companion that emboldens man
Under the armor of his conscious right.

I surely saw—and ever seem to see—
A trunk without a head there going, even
As went the rest of that sad company.

And by the hair it held the severed head,
Swinging it like a lantern in its hand;
And the head eyed us, and "Oh me!" it said.

Itself a lamp it made itself at need;
And they were two in one, and one in two—
How might it be, He knows who so decreed.

When by the bridge it stood, just underneath,
High up its arm it lifted, head and all,
Nearer to bring the burden of its breath,

Which was: "Now see the punishment condign
Thou who, still breathing, goest to view the dead,
And see if any sorrow be like mine.

And that of me some tidings thou mayst bring,
Know that I am Bertran de Born, who gave
Wicked encouragement to the young king.

Father and son I brought to mutual war;
And by his evil baits Ahithophel
For Absolom and David did not more.

For that to wedded souls I brought divorce,
Divorced I carry now my brain, alas,
E'en from the trunk wherein it has its source.

Thus retribution comes in me to pass."

Inferno - Canto XXIX

That host of people and their wounds uncouth
Put such a drunkenness upon mine eyes
That these yet longer would have wept for rush;

When to me Virgil said, as one upbraids:
"Why staring still? And why is here thy gazes
So fixed upon the sad dismembered shades?"

Thou hast not done this at the other deeps;
Consider, if thou think'st to count the souls,
Full two and twenty miles this valley sweeps;

And underfoot already is the moon.
Short grows the time that is allotted us,
And more is there for thee to see, and soon."

"Hadst thou but noted," I replied straightway,
"The reason wherefore I so fixed my gaze,
Haply thou wouldst have suffered me to stay."

My Guide had moved to go, and I to follow,
The while that I was making my reply,
And adding further: "Down in yonder hollow

Where late so fixedly I seemed to peer,
I think a spirit of my blood laments
The guilty act which costs down there so dear."

Then said the Master: "Rack no more thy mind
By thinking on him; unto other things
Attend, and let him stay there with his kind.

For close beneath the bridge I saw the fellow
Point at thee, and with finger fiercely threaten;
I heard them calling him Geri del Bello.

So wholly at the time wast thou intent
Upon that sometime Master of Hautefort
Thou didst not look his way; so off he went."

"O Master, his most violent death, whose claim
For vengeance is yet unfulfilled," said I,
"By any that is partner to the shame,

Made him indignant; and upon that score,
I judge, he went without a word to me;
Wherefore I only pity him the more."

So parleyed we on up to the first shelf
Whence from the ridge, but were there better light,
The valley to its bottom shows itself.

When we were well above that cloister, last
In Malebolge, where before our gaze
All the lay brothers visibly were massed,

Shriekings assailed me, and the sound of tears,
Which were as arrows all so barbed with grief
That with both hands I had to close my ears.

What pain there were if every malady
In Valdichiana's hospitals, with all
Maremma's and Sardinia's, piled should be

From July to September in one trench,—
Such was there here; and such as putrid limbs
Are given to emit, came forth a stench.

We took our way down over the last scarp
Of the long crag, still bearing to the left;
Then farther to the deeps my sight grew sharp

Where the handmaiden of the Lord on high,
Justice infallible, doth punish those
Whom she on earth has found to falsify.

I think not sadder was it once to see
The people in Aegina sicken all,
When in the air was such malignity

That living creatures to the smallest worm
Were all laid low, and then that ancient race,
At least as poets in their faith affirm,

Had restoration from the seed of ants,—
Than now to see the spirits languishing
In heaps throughout that valley's dim expanse.

One on the belly, one across the back,
Of yet another lay; one on all fours
Must drag himself along the dismal track.

Speaking not, step by step we passed around,
Viewing and harkening to those sickly ones,
Who could not lift their bodies from the ground.

I saw two sit each by the other braced,
Just as for warming pot by pot is propped,;
And all from head to foot in scabs encased;

Nor currycomb yet ever did I see
Plied by a stableboy whose master waits,
Or by one kept awake unwillingly,

As on himself each one of these there plied;
The bite of his own nails for the great rage
Of itching, which no easement finds beside.

And so their nails kept drawing down the scabs
As knife might scales from bream, or other fish
Which has its coating in still larger slabs.

"O thou that with thy fingers art dismailing thee,"
Began my Leader unto one of them,
"And oft thereof as pincers art availing thee,

Give us to know if any Latin be
Amongst those herewithin, so may thy nail
Last for this labor everlastingly."

"Latin are we, whom now thou seest so marred,
Both of us here," one, weeping, made reply;
"But who art thou that pay'st us such regard?"

My Guide then: "I am one who make descent
With this man living down from ledge to ledge,
And to show hell to him is my intent."

Then broke their mutual support; and round
Toward me each all atremble turned, with more
By whom his words were caught on the rebound.

To me my gentle Lord drew closer still,
Saying: "Say unto them that which thou wilt."
And I began, obedient to his will:

"So may your memory not fade in yon
First world from the remembrance of mankind,
But still may under many suns live on,

Tell who ye are, and what your ancestry;
Let not your vile and loathly punishment
Fright you from opening yourselves to me."

"Then I was of Arezzo," one replied,
"And Albero of Siena had me burned;
But not for that which brings me here I died.

Truth is, I jesting with him made presence
How I could raise me through the air in flight;
And he, who had strong fancy and small sense,

Must in the art be tutored; and alone
For that no Daedalus I made him, had
Me burned by one who held him as a son.

But to this lowest pocket of the ten
Minos, who cannot err, allotted me,
Since alchemy I practiced among men."

"Now ever was," I asked the Poet, "such
A silly people as the Sienese?
Verily not the French themselves—by much."

Whereat the other leper, hearing me,
Answered my words: "Excepting Stricca there,
Who found such ways of spending sparingly;

And Niccolò, who in the garden where
Such seed takes root, discovered first the mode
Of making from the clove a costly fare;

And the Brigade in which Caccia d'Ascian
Threw to the winds his vines and wealth of leaf,
And the Abbagliato showed him a sage man.

But if wouldst know who now so seconds thee
Against the Sieneſe, ſharpen thine eye
So that my face make answer, and ſhalt ſee

I am Capocchio's ſhade, who falſed by ſleight
Of alchemy the metals; nor eſcape
Thy mind it may, if I deſcry thee right,

How I was nature's not unworthy ape."

Inferno - Canto XXX

Upon the time when Juno was incensed
For Semele against the Theban blood,
As one and other instance evidenced,

Athamas ran so altogether mad
That seeing come his wife and their two sons,
And leading by her either hand a lad,

He shouted: "Let us spread our nets, and catch
The lioness that passes with her cubs!"
And out he stretched his cruel claws to snatch

The one who was Learchus named; and round
He whirled him, and then dashed him on a rock;
And she herself and other burden drowned.

And then when fortune turned to overwhelm
The glory of the Trojans daring all,
And ruined was the king and all his realm,

Hecuba sad, neglected, and in chains,
When she had seen the dead Polyxena,
And marked upon the strand the dear remains

Of Polydorus, she—unhappy one—
Went in her frenzy barking like a dog,
By sorrow so was reason's knot undone.

But never furies of such frightfulness,
Theban or Trojan, yet were seen to goad
Even brute beasts, and human limbs far less,

As goaded there two shades I saw run by,
Pallid and naked, biting as they ran,
As will a pig escaping from the sty.

One at Capocchio ran, and in his nape
Locked tight his tusks, and dragging him along,
On the hard bottom made his belly scrape.

And the Aretine, who stood by trembling, spoke,
And said to me: "That ghoul is Gianni Scocchi
Which, rabid, so goes mauling other folk."

"Oh then," said I to him, "so may thy scruff
Feel not his tusk, take it not ill to tell
Who is the other ere it be whisked off."

And he to me: "That is the ancient soul
Of Myrrha, who her father to her love
Past lawful loving dared by guile cajole.

Herself to sin with him so came disguised
In the false semblance of another's form,
As that man who goes yonder, once devised,

To gain the lady of the stud, how he
Buoso Donati's self might simulate,
And make a will, and frame it validly."

Now when had disappeared that rabid pair;
Upon whom I had kept my eye, I turned;
To watch the ill-begotten others there.

One that was shapen like a lute I marked,
If peradventure he had had his groin
Dissevered at the point where man is forked.

Dull dropsy, which with humor ill-transmuted
Mars the proportion of men's members so
That to the face the belly seems unsuited,

Was making him hold wide apart his lips,
As doth one in a fever, who for thirst
The one curls up, the other chinward dips.

"O ye who from all punishment are freed—
And why I know not—in this doleful world,"
Said he to us, "now mark ye and give heed

To Master Adam's woe. Yon side the grave
I had in plenty all that I might wish,
And now alas! one drop of water crave.

The little brooks that down each verdant hill
Flow into Arno from the Casentine,
Making their beds so fresh and cool, are still.

Ever before me, and not all in vain;
For more their image parches than this plague,
Howe'er the flesh from off my face it drain.

The justice which is rigid to chastise
So takes occasion from the place I sinned
To set in flight from me yet other sighs.

There lies Romena, where in counterfeit
I made the coinage of the Baptist's seal,
And left up there my body burnt for it.

If see his miserable soul I might
Guido's, or Alessandro's, or their brother's—
Not for Fount Branda would I give the sight.

One is already in, if have not lied
The maddened shades that wander hereabout;
But what avails it me, whose limbs are tied?

Were I but carrying so light a load
That in an hundred years I gained an inch,
Already had I set me on the road

To seek him out among these people gross,
Ev'n though its circle rounds eleven miles,
And is not less than half a mile across.

Into this clan I came at their decoy;
They tempted me to strike the florins off
Which had in truth three carats of alloy."

Then I: "Who now are these two wretches here
Smoking like wet hands in the wintertime,
And huddling close along thy right frontier?"

"I found them here, nor did they even budge,"
Said he, "when down upon this cliff I rained,
Nor will they through eternity, I judge.

One is that false she who charged Joseph; Greek
From Troy the other, Sinon, called the false;
Sharp fever is the cause why they so reek."

And one of these, who haply could not list
In patience to be named thus scurvily,
Smote on that blown-up belly with his fist;

And like a drum it sounded; and then back
Smote Master Adam him across the face
With arm that seemed as rigid by the thwack,

Saying to him: "However I be reft
Of movement by my legs' dead weight, an arm
I still for such emergencies have left."

Whereat the other: "It was not so quick
When thou wast going to the fire, but so
And more so when wast at thy coining trick."

He of the dropsy then: "Now mayst thou joy
In speaking truth; but witness not so true
Thou wast when questioned of the truth at Troy."

"If false I spoke, thou mad'st the coinage false,"
Said Sinon, "and for one fault I am here,
And thou for more than any devil's faults."

"Bethink thee, perjured sinner, of the horse,"
Replied that other of the swollen paunch,
"And may that all men know it bring remorse."

"May torture thee the thirst which thy tongue cracks,
And the foul water," said the Greek, "which so
High up before thine eyes thy belly stacks."

And then the coiner: "Gaping is thy throat
For speaking evil as has been its wont.
If I have thirst, and with this humor bloat,

Thou hast the burning heat, the aching head,
And to lap up Narcissus' looking-glass
Wouldst need for invitation few words said."

Intent was I upon their mutual taunts,
When said to me the Master: "Gaze thy fill!
For that I quarrel with thee little wants."

When thus in wrath I heard him speak to me,
I turned me toward him with such shame that still
It overwhelms me at the memory.

And even as one who dreams of threatened wrongs,
And dreaming wishes it a dream, and thus
For that which is, as if it were not, longs,

Such I became, that had not power to speak,
Yet, eager to excuse me, was excused,
Nor knew that found which I was fain to seek.

"Less shame a greater fault can wash away,"
Now said the Master, "than thine own has been;
Wherefore unburden thee of all dismay.

Bethink thee I am by thy side always,
Should it befall that fortune bring thee near,
Henceforth, where people are in such lewd frays.

There base the will is, willing to lend ear."

Inferno - Canto XXXI

The selfsame tongue first wounded, so that stain
Was left of it upon my either cheek,
Then ministered a balm to ease the pain.

So have I heard was wont Achilles' lance,
Given him by his father, to be cause
First of unhappy, then of happy chance.

We turned our backs upon that vale of dread,
And up along the bank that girds it round
Were keeping on our way with no word said.

Here it was less than night, and less than day,
So that my sight went scarce ahead of me;
Albeit I heard a mighty horn so bray

That it had put a thunderclap to shame;
And to a certain point it drew my eyes,
Following back the course by which it came;

After the dolorous rout, wherein the last
Most holy gest of Charlemagne was lost,
Roland blew not so terrible a blast.

That way I turned my head, and presently
I saw, as seemed it, lofty towers rise;
So said: "What city, Master, may this be?"

And he to me: "Since from too far away
Thou runnest forward through the gloom, it comes
That in imagining thou goest astray.

Thou shalt see clearly, if thou reachest there,
How much by distance is the sense deceived;
Wherefore the spur behoves it not to spare."

Then tenderly he took me by the hand,
And said: "Ere we go farther, that the fact
May be less hard for thee to understand,

Know that these are not towers, as now dost think,
But Giants; and they all are in the pit,
Down from the navel, round about the brink."

As, when a fog is lifting, one by one
The eye refigures to itself things hid
Under thick vapors darkening the sun,

So, as I pierced the dim, gross air, and near
And nearer drew me to the dreadful brink,
Error forsook me, and gave way to fear.

For as upon her circling battlements
Monteregione crowns herself with towers,
So, with their bodies half protruding thence,

The horrible Giants, woe to whom even yet
Jove from his heaven threatens when he thunders,
Were turreting the ramparts of the pit.

The face of one already I descried,
His shoulders, breast, and great part of his belly,
And arms that hung down close by either side.

Verily Nature, when she set up bars
Against the making of such brutes, did well
To take away such myrmidons from Mars;

And if she not of elephants and whales
Repent her, juster and more sage she seems
To one who weighs the matter in nice scales;

For if the machination of the mind
To evil-will be added, and to might,
Of no defence is competent mankind.

As long and large as is St. Peter's cone
At Rome appeared to me his countenance;
And in proportion was his every bone;

So that the cliff, which from his middle down
Aproned him, yet disclosed of him above
So much that to upraise them to his crown

Were idle boasting for three Frisian folk;
For I could see full thirty palms of him
Downwards from where one buckles on one's cloak.

And then began the bestial mouth to cry:
"Rafel mai amech zabi almi,"—
As if inept for sweeter psalmody.

Whereat my Leader: "Spirit imbecile,
Stick to thy horn, and with that vent thyself
If wrath or other passion stir thy will.

Feel at thy neck, and thou wilt find the thong
Which holds it fast, O thou bewildered soul,
And round thy huge breast thou wilt see it hung."

Then he to me: "Himself he hath accused;
This is that Nimrod, through whose evil thought
On earth no longer is one language used.

There let him stand, nor let us speak in vain;
For such is every language unto him
As his to others, and to no one plain."

Going then farther on our way, a turn
Leftward we made, and in a bowshot came
Upon the next one, far more huge and stern.

Who was the master that had curbed such might
I cannot say, but he had locked in front
The creature's left arm, and behind his right,

And with a chain which held him all so bound
From the neck down that his uncovered part
Was seen encircled to the fifth turn round.

"This insolent was fain to make essay,
Of his own power against the highest Jove,"
"My Leader said, "and finds it thus repay.

'Tis Ephialtes, he who in the war
When giants awed the gods, did mighty deeds.
The arms he managed then he moves no more."

And I: "Fain were I now, if nought prevents,
That of the immeasurable Briareus
These eyes of mine might have experience.

"Behold Antaeus," answered he, "thou wilt
Here close at hand, who speaks, and who, unchained,
Will set us at the bottom of all guilt.

He thou wouldst see is at a far off place;
And he is formed and fettered all like this,
Except that more ferocious seems his face."

Never was earthquake in its wrath so grim,
Shaking with might a tower, as all at once
This Ephialtes took to shaking him.

Then more than ever I feared death; and need
There was of nothing further than the fright,
If to his bonds I had not given heed.

And we, proceeding onward after this,
Came to Antaeus, who for full five ells,
Besides his head, forth issued from the abyss.

"Thou who aforetime in that fateful vale
Which made young Scipio the heir of glory,
When Hannibal with all of his turned tail,

Didst take a thousand lions for thy prey,—
And who, if thou hadst been at the high war
Of those thy brothers, many it seems still say

The sons of earth had forced the gods to yield,—
Now set us down nor do thou grudge the act—
Where by the cold Cocytus lies congealed.

Make us not seek Typhon or Tityus;
This man can give of that which here is craved;
So stoop thee, and twist not thy snout at us.

Fame in the world he can on thee confer;
For he is living, and long life awaits,
If ere his time Grace call him not to her."

Thus spoke the Master; and that other, fain
To take my Guide, stretched forth the hands whereof
Hercules felt of old the mighty strain.

Virgil, when seized he felt himself to be,
Said to me: "Come, that I may take thee up;"
Then made one bundle of himself and me.

As seems it to look up the leaning side
Of Carisenda when it hangs against
Clouds that do counterwise above it glide,

Such, whilst I watched him stooping with his load.
Antaeus looked to me, and willingly
That moment I had gone another road;

But lightly down he set us on that floor
Where Lucifer with Judas sinks abject;
Nor yet so stooping did he tarry more,

But like a ship's mast raised himself erect.

Inferno - Canto XXXII

Had I rhymes harsher than the cluck of hen,
Such as were suited to this sorry hole
Upon which thrust all other rocks, I then

Would press the juice of my conception out
More utterly; but as I have them not,
I bring me to the telling with grave doubt.

'Tis no light task to set before the eyes
In words the bottom of the universe,
Nor for a tongue that *papa* and *mamma* cries.

But may those Ladies now befriend my verse
Who aided once Amphion to wall Thebes,
So from the fact the word be not diverse.

Ye rabble which in evil had your birth,
And pack you in this place unspeakable,
Better ye had been sheep or goats on earth!

When we were in that pit of dreadful night
Under the giant's feet, and farther down,
And I was scanning still the walling height,

Then "Ware thy step!" I heard a voice that said,
"Lest of the weary wretched brotherhood
Thou trample with thy heel upon some head."

Whereat I turned, and where my feet must pass
I saw ahead a lake, which yet through frost
Had semblance not of water but of glass.

So thick a veil the Danube puts not on
In winter for its course through Austria,
Nor under far-off frozen skies the Don,

As was there here; for not all Tambernica
Or Pietrapana, toppling down thereon,
Had made it even at the edges creak.

As, croaking, sits the frog along a trench
With just its muzzle out of water, whilst
Oft of her gleaning dreams the country-wench,—

So, livid up to where shame leaves its marks,
The shades were here lamenting in the ice,
Tuning their teeth unto the notes of storks.

Each had his face turned down; and of the cold
The mouths, and of the sorrow in their hearts
The eyes among them eloquently told.

Awhile I bent my gaze about that waste,
Then at my feet, and saw there two so close
That on their heads the hairs were interlaced.

"Tell me, ye two that breast with breast thus brace,"
Said I, "who are ye?" And they bent their necks;
And when to me was lifted up each face,

The eyes, which but within were moist before,
Gushed at the lids, and the cold, stiffening
The tears between these, locked them up once more.

No clamp yet ever bolted board to board
More tightly. Then they butted like two goats
The one the other,—wrath with wrath so warred.

And one, who through the cold had suffered loss
Of both his ears, with head still lowered, said:
"Why mak'st thou so thine eyes to mirror us?"

If thou so long'st to know who are these twain,
Once was the valley whence Bisenzio flows
Their father Albert's and their own domain.

Out of one body issued forth the two;
And fitter shades to pack in gelatine
Wouldst find not, searching all Caïna through:

Not he whose breast and shadow at one blow
Were broken by the hand of Arthur; not
Focaccia; not this one whose head blocks so

My sight to all beyond it, and whose name
Was Sassol Mascheroni; who he was
To thee, if Tuscan, need I not proclaim.

And that to further speaking there be truce,
Know that I was Camiccion dei Pazzi,
And wait Carlino as my own excuse."

Thereafter I beheld a thousand faces
Dog-like from cold; whence o'er me shudders creep,
And will creep ever, at ice-covered places.

As toward that center we came nearer still
Whereto is drawn whatever thing has weight,
And I was trembling in the eternal chill,

I know not if by will or fate or chance,
But, as I picked my way among the heads,
My foot struck hard against one countenance.

And from it came the tearful cry: "Why bruise me?
If thou com'st not indeed to multiply
Vengeance for Montaperti, why ill-use me?"

And I: "Master, stand thou a moment still
Whilst with this man I free me from a doubt;
Then shalt thou have me hasten at thy will."

The Guide stopped; and I questioned then that shade,
Which had not ceased blaspheming bitterly:
"And what art thou that others should upbraid?"

"Who thou, that goest through Antenora giving,"
He answered, "buffets to another's cheeks?
Marry, it were too much even wert thou living!"

"Living I am; and if thou wouldst have fame,"
Was my reply, "it may be dear to thee
That with my other notes I sound thy name."

And he: "The opposite I ask of that.
Be off then, and no longer pester me;
Ill know'st thou how to flatter on this flat."

Then laid I hold upon his hairy scruff,
And said: "It shall be that thou name thyself,
Or that thy every hair up here come off."

Whereat he: "Not if thou shouldst pluck me bald
Would I tell who I am, nor have thee know,
Even if a thousand times my head were mauled."

Already in my hand had I gripped fast,
And torn out for him, more than one good tuft,
He barking all the while with eyes downcast,

When cried another: "Bocca, now what ails thee?
Is't not enough to clatter with thy jaws,
But thou must bark too? Speak; what fiend assails thee?"

"Now then," said I, "accursed traitor, nought
Care I that thou shouldst speak; in thy despite
True tidings of thee shall by me be brought."

"Go to," he answered, "what thou wilt go babble;
But be not mute, so thou get out of here,
Anent him of the tongue so quick to gabble.

He weeps the Frenchmen's silver in this pool.
'Him of Duera,' thou canst say, 'I saw
Down where the sinners keep them in the cool.'

Shouldst thou be asked who else was in this pit,
Thou hast beside thee him of Beccheria,
The one that had his gorge by Florence slit.

Gianni de' Soldanier I think must weep
Beyond with Ganelon and Tribaldello,
Who trapped Faenza whilst she lay asleep."

When we had left him, and where soon I stood,
I saw two frozen so within one hole
That one head to the other was a hood;

And as a man in hunger munches bread,
So he that was on top had set his teeth
Where to the nape was joined the other's head.

Not otherwise did once with rancorous heart
Tydeus at Menalippus' temples gnaw
Than this one at that skull and each near part.

"O thou that dost by bestial token vaunt
Thy hate of him on whom thou feed'st," said I,
"Tell me the wherefore—on this covenant

That if just grievance thou against him prove,
I, knowing who thou art, and his sin what,
May yet requite thee in the world above,

If that wherewith I speak shall wither not."

Inferno - Canto XXXIII

Then from its loathly meal the sinful shape
Lifted its mouth, and wiped it on the hair
E'en of the head so mangled at the nape;

And thus began: "Thou makest me recall
Sorrow past cure; and I am sick at heart
For thinking on it, ere I speak at all.

But so my words may be as seed to bear
Infamy to the traitor whom I gnaw,
Speaking and weeping mingled shalt thou hear.

I know not who thou art, or how didst reach
These lower places; but a Florentine
Assuredly thou seemest by thy speech.

Know that Count Ugolino men called me;
And this man was Ruggieri the Archbishop.
Hear why to him I am so neighborly.

That in the wicked ambush of his laying
I, who had put my trust in him, was taken,
And after done to death, needs not the saying;

But what is hidden from thy knowledge still—
To wit, how that my death was horrible—
Shalt hear, and know if he has used me ill.

A narrow loophole in the mew since called,
Because of me indeed, by name of 'Hunger,'
And where ere long another shall be walled,

Had shown me through its slits more moons than one
Already, when I dreamed the evil dream
Which rent for me the veil of fate foregone.

Meseemed this man was master of the chase,
Hunting the wolf and wolf-cubs on the hill
That hides all Lucca from the Pisan's gaze.

With chosen hounds, keen on the scent and gaunt,
Gualandi with Sismondi and Lanfranchi
He had sent on before him well in front.

After short coursing, seemed they to be spent,
The father and his sons, and by sharp fangs,
It seemed as if I saw, their flanks were rent.

When I awoke before the dawn was red,
I heard my sons, for they were with me there,
All sobbing in their sleep, and asking bread.

Unfeeling art thou, if it grieve thee not
To think on the foreboding of my heart;
And if thou weep'st not, weapest thou for what?

They were awake now, and the hour was nearing
When wontedly our food was brought; and each
After his sleep was hoping and yet fearing;

And then the door of the dread tower I heard
Being nailed up below us; and I looked
Into my sons' faces without a word.

I wept not, for my heart was stone in me;
Weeping were they; and little Anselm said:
'Thou look'st so, father! What is wrong with thee?'

At that I shed no tear, nor made reply
All that day long, and all the night thereafter,
Until another sun had found the sky.

Then as a little beam of light was thrown
Into the dolorous prison, and I saw
Upon four faces shadow of mine own,

I bit both hands for anguish; and my sons,
Believing that I did this thing with will
To stay my hunger, raised themselves at once,

And said: 'Father, far less will be the pain
If thou wilt eat of us: thyself didst clothe us
With this poor flesh; strip thou it off again.

I calmed me, not to add to misery.
That day we passed, and yet another, dumb.
Ah, stubborn earth, why dost not open thee?

When we were come to see the fourth day break,
Down Gaddo flung him headlong at my feet.
'Why wilt not help me, father?' Thus he spake;

And thus he died. And ev'n as thou canst see
Me now, I saw those three fall one by one
Between fifth day and sixth; so solaced me

Groping, already blind, to where each lay.
And two days long I called them that were dead.
Then more than sorrow, hunger had its way."

With eyes asquint, so soon as he had done,
He took again the wretched skull with teeth
Strong as a very dog's upon the bone.

Ah, Pisa, shame of all that dwell within
The lovely land where sounded is the *si*,
Since neighbors are supine against thy sin,

Caprara and Gorgona let close up,
And make a bar to Arno at its mouth
To drown each human dreg within thy cup.

Suppose Count Ugolino, as talk runs,
Has made thee dupe in matter of the towers,
No right was thine to crucify his sons.

Innocent must they be that were so young,
Thou Thebes revived, Brigata, Ugucione
And those two named already in my song.

Then passed we on to where the frozen racks
Ungently held fast bound another folk,
Not forward bent, but flung upon their backs.

Weeping itself there lets not weeping be;
And grief, meeting a barrier on the eyes,
Turns inward to augment the misery.

For tears together fuse them as they flow,
And turning, as it were, to glassy masks,
Fill up the hollows underneath the brow.

And though it happened that all sentience,
As in a spot made callous by the cold,
No longer in my face found residence,

Yet of a certain wind I was aware,
And so I said: "Master, what causes this?
Are there still vapors in this nether air?"

Hence he to me: "Anon thou shalt have passed
To where thine eyes will answer thee in this,
Seeing the agency that rains the blast."

And one of the wretches of the frozen crust.
Cried out to us: "O souls so dead to pity
That to last pale of all ye so are thrust,

Pluck off these veils that harden on the flesh,
That I may vent the grief that swells my heart,
A little, ere the weeping freeze afresh."

Then I to him: "Wouldst have me help thee so,
Tell who thou art; and if I free thee not,
To bottom of the ice so may I go!"

He answered: "Once I was Fra Alberic,
He of the fruits of the accursèd garden;
And for a fig down here a date I pick."

"Oho," said I, "art thou already dead?"
And he to me: "I have no word how fares
My body in the world there overhead.

To Ptolomea's vantage it must prove
That oftentimes the soul will fall down hither
Ere Atropos has given it the move.

And so that thou may'st clear away this glaze
Of tears more willingly from off my face,
Have thee to know that when the soul betrays,

As I myself did, straight an imp lays hold
Upon her body, and still governs it
Until its time shall all have been unrolled.

She rushes to this cistern; and men see
Up there perhaps the body of this shade
That here is wintering just back of me.

Him thou must know, if thou art just come down;
He is Ser Branca d'Oria; and some years,
Since he was locked up here, have come and gone."

"I think," said I, "thou thinkest to impose
On me; for Branca d'Oria has not died,
But eats and drinks and sleeps and puts on clothes."

"The moat above," said he, "of Malebranche,
There where the sticky pitch is boiling over,
Had hardly yet been reached by Michel Zanche,

Ere this man left a devil in his stead—
In his own body, and in kinsman's too,
Who with him to betrayal was misled.

But now reach forth thy helping hand to me;
Open mine eyes;" and opened them not I;
And to be rude to him was courtesy.

Ah, Genoese, men wanting in all worth,
And overflowing in iniquity,
Wherefore are ye not scattered from the earth?

For with a spirit of Romagna's worst
I found one of you such, that for his deeds
Here in Cocytus is his soul immersed;

Up there, it seems, his body breathes and feeds.

Inferno - Canto XXXIV

"Look, look ahead; for lo! now unto us
Vexilla regis prudent inferni.
Look if thou seest him there." The Master thus.

As, when thick fog is breathing, or when night
Is closing round our hemisphere, far off
A mill, which wind is turning, comes in sight:

Such seemed the structure I now looked upon.
Then for the wind I drew me back behind
My Guide, for other shelter there was none.

I now—and set it unto verse with awe—
Was where utterly covered were the shades,
Yet showing through like glass-imbedded straw.

And some are left erect, and some laid low;
One on its head, another on its soles;
One, face to feet, is bending like a bow.

When so far forward we had come to be
That now it pleased my Master to reveal
The creature that was once so fair to see,

He from before me stepped, and made me stop,
And said: "Behold now Dis; behold the place
Where thou must needs make fortitude thy prop."

How I became then frozen and distraught
Ask it not, reader, for I write it not,
Because all power of speaking were as nought.

I died not, nor was able to draw breath.
Think for thyself, if thou hast grain of wit,
What I became, robbed of both life and death.

The Emperor of the dolorous realm stood high
From midway up his breast above the ice;
And more to be compared with giants so

Than would be giants with his arms alone.
Mark then how huge indeed must be that whole
Which to its parts' proportions fits its own.

If he was fair as he is foul, and yet
Against his Maker lifted up his brows,
Well might from him have issue all regret.

When I beheld three faces on his head
Oh, how it seemed to me a wonderment!
And one he had in front, and it was red;

The others, two adjoined to this, were set
Above the very middle of each shoulder,
And at the topmost crown together met.

Twixt white and yellow seemed the righthand face;
The left was such to sight as those that come
Whence valleyward the Nile begins its race.

From under each came forth two pinions, vast
As was befitting such a bird; no sail
To match them saw I ever on ship's mast.

These had not feathers, but appeared in kind
Like wings of bats; and he was flapping them
So that went forth from him a threefold wind,

Whereby was all Cocytus frozen over.
With six eyes he was weeping; down three chins
The tears were trickling, and a bloody slaver.

A sinner in each mouth continually
He mangled, like a heckle, with his teeth,
And thus in anguish ever kept all three.

The biting to the clawing was but a straw
To him in front, for ever and again
By it his backbone was all curried raw.

"See in that soul worst punished for its sin
Judas Iscariot," said my Lord; "his legs
He plies outside, his head he has within.

And of the other two head-downward hung,
Brutus is he that from the black mouth swings.
Behold him, how he writhes, nor yet gives tongue.

And that one mighty-thewed is Cassius' soul.
But night again is rising, and time is
That we depart, for we have seen the whole."

Then, as it pleased him, round his neck I clung;
And he was on the watch for time and place,
And when the pinions were wide open flung,

Fastened himself upon the furry flanks;
From shag to shag then downward forced his way
Between the ice-crusts and those matted shanks.

When we were come to where is pivotted
The thigh within the thickness of the haunch,
My Guide with strain and gasping turned his head

Around to where had been his legs before,
And grappled on the hair as one who mounts,
Until I thought we entered hell once more.

"Now take fast hold, for by such stairs as these,"
The Guide said, panting like a man forespent,
"We must depart from such iniquities."

Then through a crevice in the cliff he crept,
And set me sitting on the edge thereof;
Then up beside me warily he stepped.

I lifted up my eyes, and thought to see
Lucifer as I had left him, and I saw
Him with his legs thrust upward fixedly.

And if with wonder then I was aghast
May common folk consider, who see not
What point it was that I by now had passed.

"Get to thy feet," the Master said, "and on!
The way is long, and difficult the road;
Already to mid-tierce returns the sun."

No pleasance of a palace was the site
Wherein we found us, but a dungeon formed
By nature, with foul flooring and faint light.

"Before from the abyss I pluck me out,
O Master," said I, risen to my feet,
"A little speak with me to clear my doubt.

Where is the ice? and why should this one turn
Thus upside-down? and how in this short while
Has the sun transit made from eve to morn?"

And he to me: "Thou deemest thou still art
That side the center where I clutched the hair
Of the fell Worm which pierces the world's heart.

The while I yet descended thou wast there,
But when I turned me round didst pass the point
Towards which are drawn all weights from everywhere.

The hemisphere thou now art underneath
Opposite that which o'er the great dry land
Impends, and 'neath whose zenith put to death

Was He whose birth and life were without blame.
Thy feet are set upon the small round block
Which on its far side doth Giudecca frame.

Here it is morning when 'tis evening there;
Still is he planted as he was before
Who made for us a ladder with his hair.

Down out of heaven upon this side he fell;
And earth, which had extended here before,
For terror of him made the sea her veil,

And to our hemisphere withdrew; mayhap
That which of her on this side shows rushed back
To flee him, leaving so behind this gap."

There is a place below as far beyond
Beelzebub as all his tomb extends,
Which not by sight is known, but by the sound

A rill is making as it there finds vent
Along a channel through the rock itself
Has worn in winding gradual descent.

Then entered we upon that hidden way,
The Guide and I, regaining the bright world;
Nor letting any thought of rest delay,

We mounted up, he first and second I,
Till through a breach which there the way unbars
I saw the beauteous burdens of the sky.

Thence came we forth to see again the stars.